

The Heritage Areas are Protected Landscapes

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Abstract. Heritage Areas are areas of great natural, geological, aesthetic and cultural value. They have an important history and keep the traditions alive. Geological and natural processes from the early past to the present have evolved and contributed to the creation of Heritage Areas, so today we experience the heritage of exceptional cultural, natural and scenic resources.

The sustainable management of Heritage Areas focuses on preserving areas of cultural and natural significance for the future generations, while encouraging local communities to continue living and working in the region. These areas deserve special prevention and should be included in the National Systems of Protected Areas in accordance with international conventions and legal frameworks.

The framework for the management of Protected Areas in Greece has changed recently. Four new categories of protected areas now exist. Biodiversity Protection areas, National Parks, Wildlife Refugees, Protected Landscapes and Protected Natural Formations. This research supports the integration of Heritage Areas into the category of Protected Landscapes. By the implementation of the framework, the main advantage will then be to achieve real protection of an area of monuments, cultural importance, great natural value and beauty.

Keywords: Heritage Areas, Heritage Areas Management, Protected Landscapes, Protected Areas, Landscape

1. Introduction

Heritage Areas are areas that include Cultural and Natural Heritage. This designation was consolidated after the year 1972 following the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. According to the Convention, Heritage is considered as both Cultural and Natural.

The Convention links together “the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties” and defines Heritage as “tangible cultural heritage”, which is divided into movable (paintings, sculptures, manuscripts), immovable (monuments, archeological sites) and submarine (shipwrecks, submarines, ruins), as intangible cultural heritage, which includes oral

traditions, arts, rituals, etc., as natural heritage, which contains landscapes, natural sites, natural, biological or geological formations, etc., and as heritage due to an armed conflict " (UNESCO, 2019).

Heritage Areas are divided into *World Heritage Sites* established by UNESCO and *National Heritage Areas*, the establishment of which is subject to the national institutional framework of the countries that these areas belong.

Heritage Areas, either global or national, are areas of cultural and natural value that need protection in such a way that in the context of sustainability they can be preserved for future generations. These are areas that contain both cultural heritage and natural wealth and beauty, with local communities living in them from the past and preserving their traditions. In these areas, historical, cultural and natural resources combine to form cohesive, important, vibrant landscapes (National Park Service of USA, 2019).

For an area to be nominated as a World Heritage Site, it must have exceptional, universal value and meet at least one of the selection criteria set by UNESCO. The criteria are regularly reviewed to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept. The designation is based on six cultural and four natural criteria, with the approval of the revised Business Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

With similar designation criteria that are defined in the legal framework of the protected areas of the countries, the *National Heritage Areas* are also nominated. They can also be referred to as *Heritage Parks* in order to be distinct, including in their name a local or special feature that dominates the area. Examples of such Heritage Areas exist mainly in the USA and UK, which have been institutionally designated and their management aiming at their protection and utilization, is done by governmental or regional bodies (Davison M., 2019).

2. The Necessity of Protection

Heritage Areas, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites and National Heritage Areas, define a special category of areas when it comes to their protection. The aim is to achieve sustainability, so the focus is to maintain their special character in the future.

They are "living" areas and require the protection of all their characteristics, and their high cultural and natural features, but protection also of their societies and traditions. They contain a rich natural environment of high geological, aesthetic, historical value and at the same time have very important cultural features.

Heritage Areas are regions in which nature has determined the evolution of both, the man-made environment and the nature itself and continues to determine it indefinitely. The geological history of these areas which is in interaction with the other natural variables has shaped the rich and beautiful nature of today (Romano I., et al, 2012).

Geology and natural environment have been indicated to the people the proper places to live from the antiquity, the materials to develop their constructions, their temples and the cultural characteristics which survive to this day (Davis G., Kranis H., 2019).

In general, the relationship between natural monuments and cultural monuments is direct. The Oracle of Delphi site would not exist if the monument of nature that is the geological features of the Delphi area did not exist before. The Parthenon would not have been located on the Acropolis hill if the geological rock formation did not already exist. "Monument" and "nature" satisfy the relations of harmony and golden section (Zerefos Ch., Kountouri F., 2019).

Precisely for this result of interaction between environmental variables, the protection of these areas is of particular importance. Importance that is growing in the context of the recent adaptation of the planet to the impacts of climate change. Nature itself, which "gave birth" and shaped these living landscapes, is also the one that threatens them.

In addition and in the context of sustainability, anthropogenic interventions are the other source of threat to the protected object of Heritage Areas.

UNESCO's aim is to preserve the World Heritage Sites globally. In 1994, the World Heritage Committee launched the World Heritage List. "Its aim was to ensure that the List reflects the world's cultural and natural diversity of outstanding universal value. By adopting the objectives of the Global Strategy, the World Heritage Committee wanted to broaden the definition of World Heritage to better reflect the full spectrum of our world's cultural and natural treasures and to provide a comprehensive framework and operational methodology for implementing the World Heritage Convention" (UNESCO, 2019).

This new vision goes beyond the narrow definitions of heritage and seeks to recognize and protect sites that are excellent displays of human coexistence with the land, as well as human interactions, cultural coexistence, spirituality and creative expression.

Moreover, the requirement for protection of the National Heritage Areas from all possible hazards in order to preserve them for future generations

presupposes the planning of systematic and integrated management with rules and a clear institutional framework of the country.

In order to achieve functional and effective management, which will be based on both the principles-priorities and the local peculiarities, the proposal-position of this research is that *Greek Heritage Areas should be included in the National System of Protected Areas*.

Their designation as protected areas implies prudent management by taking actions with respect for the environment.

3. Heritage Areas in the Greek institutional framework

In Greece designated World Heritage Sites based on the UNESCO framework do exist, such as the area of Meteora and the peninsula of Mount Athos. They are protected as the UNESCO framework indicates. At the country's national level, till to date, Heritage Areas have not been institutionalized for protection, since they are not clearly defined in the Greek institutional framework for Protected Areas. This framework, which is relatively new, has recently been modified.

The idea of protection was redefined when the country signed the European Landscape Directive (the directive was transposed into the national legal framework by law 3827/2010). It has been almost 100 years since Carl Sauer wrote in his historical text "Morphology of Landscape" that "culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result" (Sauer C., 1925).

Europe has adopted the view that *Landscape* is a very important natural variable necessary for the study of the natural environment and, going further, considers it necessary in spatial planning. Landscape is therefore defined in the framework as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors". EU member states were forced to review their spatial plans by incorporating Landscape into them.

In Greece the "vessel" for this embedment in the existing framework was law 3937/2011 (titled "for the protection of biodiversity"), which revised the status of protected areas in the country (as previously was defined in law 1650/86). The category of Protected Landscapes in the biodiversity law is the one that includes areas "of great ecological, geological, aesthetic or cultural value and areas that are particularly suitable for public recreation or contribute to the protection of natural resources due to their special natural or man-made characteristics." (Law 3937/2011)

However recently, the legislative framework for the protected areas in Greece has changed. The new categories of Protected Areas under the new law 4685/20 are, Biodiversity Protection Areas, National Parks, Wildlife Refugees, Protected Landscapes and Protected Natural Formations. In these areas, one or

more protection and management zones are defined such as zones of Absolute Protection of Nature, zones of Nature Protection, zones of Habitat and Species Conservation, and zones of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.

The new National Governance System for Protected Areas is now structured at Central and Regional level. At the central level it includes among others two very important bodies, the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA). At the regional level the system includes the Management Units of Protected Areas (PAMUs). NECCA is the main government tool aiming to implement the policy set by the Ministry of Environment and Energy to manage protected areas in Greece, maintain biodiversity, promote and implement sustainable development activities and tackle climate change.

PAMUs participate in the preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and updating of the management plans of the protected areas as well as monitoring the condition of the species and habitat types. The main advantages from nominating an area as a protected one within the new legislation framework still remain and even are strengthened:

- Protection of a region of cultural significance, great natural beauty and rich archaeological landscape
- Encouraging of the local communities to live and work within the protected landscape

Based on the previous analysis it is clear that National Heritage Areas should belong to the status of Protected Areas. This can be done by nominating and including them in the category of Protected Landscapes. The National Heritage Areas should then be institutionally protected and maintained by the approved management plans and protection zones.

The choice of the category of Protected Landscapes to designate an area as a protected one, is appropriate, because the Heritage Areas fully meet the institutional requirements of this category of law.

According to the current institutional framework in the country, an area is defined as a Protected Landscape when it includes "functional parts of nature or individual creations (areas or elements of a point character), which have a special ecological, geological or geomorphological value or contribute to the preservation of natural processes and the protection of natural resources." (Law 4685/2020)

The legislator has fully adopted the scientifically recognized research that proves the functional nature of the concept of natural resources, as defined by E. Zimmermann in 1964. Natural resources do not exist, they become resources. Their functional nature is based on the given level of technology, culture and human needs (Zimmermann E., 1964).

The Protected Landscapes category includes key zone areas of Sustainable Natural Resource Management

defined in the law as zone "in which the protected object may coexist with relevant cultural values and / or anthropogenic activities that promote the sustainable management of natural resources and / or sustainable development, that is, which serves the protection of the environment, economic development, social cohesion and tackling climate change" (Law 4685/2020). The category is wide and may include other areas with special heritage such as the geological one, the so-called geoparks.

3.1. The first Greek Heritage Area to be protected as a Protected Landscape

In Greece the first Heritage Area to claim nomination as a Protected Landscape is the "Parrhasian Heritage Park" of the Peloponnesos. It meets the institutional framework's criteria for characterization and has the full consent of local communities, cultural organizations and associations, and of the local government.

The Parrhasian Heritage Park of Greece is a wonderful region of about 670 square kilometers, with an exceptional natural environment, an invaluable cultural environment and a unique, incomparable landscape. It is an area of great natural, geological, aesthetic and cultural value that is particularly suitable for recreation of the public that contributes to the protection of natural resources due to its particular natural or anthropogenic characteristics (Romano D.G., et al, 2015).

In 2005 the Parrhasian Heritage Park of the Peloponnesos was conceived as an international research project developed through close collaboration between Greek regional leaders in Arcadia and the region, as well as cultural and natural resource specialists, park planners, and other professionals from the United States and Greece.

During the last 15 years, the research project directed by the University of Arizona and the National Technical University of Athens, and the Mt. Lykaion Excavation and Survey Project has, through its discovery of globally significant archeological resources evolved into the emergence of Greece's first National Heritage Park in the western Peloponnesos Mountain (Cassios C. et al, 2019).

Up to the present day the Parrhasian Heritage Foundation of USA, a nonprofit organization, has fully supported the project. Many public meetings were held across the Park where private citizens, village and community leaders, park planners, archaeologists, mayors and governors contributed to the emergence of the Park along with regional supporters. During these meetings, the broad spectrum of participants formulated and agreed upon ways to understand and manage an area important to Greek heritage. Success for the park was described in terms of establishing thoughtful guidelines for managing change in the region through a long-range management plan, and the creation of short-term catalyst projects that encourage preservation and revitalization of the regions heritage (Davison M., 2019).

There was a recognition that increased economic strength in the region should benefit locals and the protection of natural, archaeological, scenic and cultural resources was essential and a benefit from this would be to preserve a way of life associated with the many traditions, local products and festivals in the area.

Similar to other previously described efforts, the creation of this park is an opportunity for local communities to live in balance with a protected and resilient landscape. The preliminary vision of the proposed Parrhasian Heritage Park emerged to “sustain an area of cultural significance, outstanding natural beauty and rich archaeological sites while encouraging local communities to continue living and working within the protected landscape. This ‘living park’ mission encourages natural, cultural and scenic resources to be managed for both long-term vitality and use as an essential part of local livelihoods and traditions” (Davison M., 2019).

4. Conclusion

In Greece National Heritage Areas must be included in the National System of Protected Areas in the category of Protected Landscapes.

It is a fact that Management of Protected Areas and especially Protected Landscape areas is the integrated view of Natural Resources Management. It cannot be dealt in a fragmentary way. It is the essence of Planning.

A shared understanding of how the vision, values, and strategies can come together for a Heritage area can be a great motivator in uniting a common community and generate hope in slowly adapting or retaining the identity of a region.

This will support the building of resilient communities, conserve nature, retain heritage and continue ways of life that are in balance with the landscape.

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