

Potentials for incorporating intergenerational practices in protected areas and implications for visitor management

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Introduction

Mountainous areas in Europe are centres of natural and cultural diversity, but their inhabitants are facing a lack of opportunities for development, and limited possibility to participate in and influence local development processes, such as the development of rural tourism. This causes outmigration of the population, abandonment of rural settlements, especially by the younger generations. The latter leads to the “drain” of fresh perceptions and new skills, such as information and communication technology and entrepreneurial skills, which could prove useful to develop the rural regions.

Moreover, the greater distance and lack of interaction among the younger and older generations results in marginalization of the rural aging population and the loss of traditional knowledge, such as crafts, folklore, traditional forms of land use, and natural and cultural history of the rural areas.

Intergenerational aspects are strongly embedded into the concept of sustainable development and are becoming more relevant as the global population ages. However, the interaction among the members of different generations in the framework of the sustainable development process is not often explicitly addressed.

Intergenerational Practice

Intergenerational practice has received increasing attention, due to ageing and changing family structures. It can be defined as practice, which “aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and may contribute to building more cohesive communities” (EAGLE 2008). It has for centuries provided an informal way of transferring “knowledge, skills, competencies, norms and values” within families (Newman & Hatton-Yeo 2008), and to-date has become more relevant in a broader “extra-familial” social context (Newman & Hatton-Yeo 2008). Its role is recognized in developing sustainable communities (Buffel et. al. 2013), and leading to more inclusive and cohesive societies (Newman & Hatton-Yeo 2008). This could be particularly applicable in the context of demographic changes and economic marginalization of rural areas.

Intergenerational practice in the context of protected areas

PAs, more often situated in rural areas, are supposed to counter the above processes by supporting socio-economic development of the surrounding local communities, in addition to nature conservation, preserving traditional and cultural practices, tourism development, as well as education and research. This diversity of objectives poses a number of challenges for successful PA management.

It is increasingly recognized that an important component of addressing these challenges is the integration of local values and perceptions into PA management (Zanon and Geneletti 2011), participation and co-management by the local stakeholders (e.g. Berkes 2009). Some of the factors associated with successful participatory conservation initiatives have been shown to be: creating or enhancing social capital, engaging with local cultural traditions, institutions, and leaders, and ensuring local participation in project initiation, design, and daily operation (Brooks et. al. 2013).

Intergenerational practice (IGP) has been shown to enhance participation and improve social cohesion. As such, PA administrations could benefit from IGP with respect to their role in community development, as well as enhancing participatory management, and implementation of their other multiple tasks, such as visitor management.

Research Questions

This paper aims at discussing implications of IGP for visitor management in protected areas, via the following research questions: (1) What challenges of PA management are related to the tasks of visitor management? (2) How can IGP help address these Protected Area management challenges? and (3) How can IGP be implemented as part of PA visitor management?

Research Setting and Methods

The paper is based on the working experience of the first author as a consultant in the UNEP Vienna Office – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (The Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Mountains). Practices and experience under the Carpathian Convention could be considered as a showcase of the sustainable regional mountain development initiatives on European level.

This paper summarizes investigations of several activities and partners of the Carpathian Convention, namely: (1) the Carpathian protected areas, members of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA), (2) the project “Big Foot. Crossing generations, crossing mountain” (2011–2013), which aimed to establish intergenerational learning activities in three rural mountain communities, located respectively in Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, and (3) the project “Innovation in Rural Tourism” (2012-2015), which aims at developing innovative training and promotional materials, and training local tourism stakeholders in community-based sustainable tourism development in Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Italy and Austria.

Intergenerational practice examples were investigated, with a special attention to their application in rural mountainous areas and PAs: (1) examples of intergenerational practice were collected from literature; (2) Case-studies of the projects “Big Foot. Crossing generations, crossing mountains” and “Innovation in rural tourism” were examined and (3) data on intergenerational practice in protected areas in the Carpathian Mountains were collected via interactive open – ended expert interviews,

through the network of the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, and the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas.

Results - Implications for visitor management

The results suggest that IGP could be applied in visitor management in protected areas in the following proposed ways: (1) developing offers for the local population and (2) cooperating with the local community on promoting sustainable tourism development.

In case of the former, PAs could develop activities, suitable for people of younger and older ages, and focused on attracting intergenerational groups. This could be done through organization of training courses and events, related to various PA objectives or via volunteer programmes, in cooperation with the local schools and/or retired professionals.

With respect to the latter, IGP can be focused on local tourism development, by using the knowledge and practices of traditional culture, crafts and recipes of the older population, and at the same time, adding innovative aspects attractive to younger and older tourists, and promoting the offers via new media with the help of the younger generations.

The proposed above applications of IGP to PA visitor management are presented in Table 1, with specific solution pathways offered by IGP, which contribute to these applications, outlined.

Application of IGP to PA visitor Management	Potential solution pathways offered by IGP, applicable to PA Visitor Management
<p>1. Development of offers for the local population: both for younger and older ages, as well as intergenerational groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organization of training courses and events, related to PA objectives • volunteer programmes, in cooperation with the local schools and/or retired professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The older generation can teach conservation values to the youth • The younger population can easier accept the PAs, due to more awareness via school programs; IGP can help transmit these values to the older generation; • IGP can facilitate raising local youth interested in conservation and trained as conservationists • The IGP process can facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • park ranger training for the local people • involving students in data collection as a part of IGP education activities • voluntary work by local communities in PA management • IGP can enhance education activities and strengthen their impact on community cohesion • Research and interest in conservation can be promoted more among the younger people by the older professionals, via cooperation of PAs with the Universities
<p>2. Cooperating with the local community on promoting sustainable tourism development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using the knowledge and practices of traditional culture, crafts and recipes of the older population, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IGP can facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapting traditional knowledge to the current situation • sustainable tourism development • creating community natural spaces based on the local lands-cape and vegetation • combining traditional knowledge with innovative ideas, new media and ICT • IGP can support involvement of adults via the younger

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adding innovative aspects attractive to younger and older tourists • promoting the offers via new media with the help of the younger generations 	<p>generation, and vice-versa, including via volunteering programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IGP can enhance community participation, such as via school programs in cooperation with PAs, local seniors and cultural organizations • IGP can strengthen community cohesion and sense of ownership
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