

## Relations Between IUCN-Zoning And Tourism In The Hungarian National Parks

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**Abstract:** Within the 100.000 km<sup>2</sup> area of Hungary, which is located in Central Europe, 10% is protected. The National Park Directorates make an effort to suit the requirements of the IUCN and strive to develop a zoning system. However, the settling of the zones meet had to face many difficulties in this relatively small country, which also has dense regional structure. The extent and the fragmentation of the national parks, the position and threatening of their natural values and the previous utilization and naturalness of their area all influence the classification of the given area. Besides, attractions, tourist destinations and the areas which are used by tourists also have to be taken into consideration during the development of the zones. The aim of this poster is to analyse the role of the position, shape and rates of the zones and their connection with tourism.

### Introduction

The IUCN (The World Conservation Union) was founded in 1948 and brings together states, government agencies, NGOs, scientist and experts from 141 countries. IUCN is legally registered as “The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources”.

It has over the last 27 years worked to develop international criteria for protected area categories around the world. Guidelines have been developed to assist countries to apply a consistent terminology to protected areas. The six Categories are based on the objectives for managing the area.

A National Park, Category II, is defined as a natural area of land (or sea), designated to:

- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and
- provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org>).

IUCN recognises a protected area as a national park only if it meets several criteria. One of the criteria is the introduction of a zoning system. Meeting all criteria is very difficult, that is why there are only so few “recognised” national parks in the world. National Parks with IUCN Category II listing are for example Yellowstone NP (USA), Ras Mohammed NP (Egypt), Tongariro NP (New Zealand), Waterton NP (Canada), Thayatal NP (Austria) and Hohe Tauern NP (Austria).

### National Parks in Hungary

There are already ten national parks in Hungary, the first of which was established in 1973 (Figure 1). According to the Act on Nature Conservation of 1996 “national parks are extended areas of the country whose natural condition has not been significantly altered and whose primary designation is the protection of natural botanical, zoological, geographical, hidrological, landscape and cultural values, the preservation of biodiversity and the undisturbed operation of natural systems, in order to further education, scientific research and recreation.”

There are two levels of protection: beside protected areas there are also strictly protected parts of national parks. Strictly protected areas are indicated with boards and tourists need special permits to enter. Usually an extension board relates the concession: “Do not leave marked routes.” Wherever the sensitivity of the territory did not allow for such a concession, tourist routes were diverted from the path developed over decades (e.g. in the Aggtelek NP).

Hungary is a member of IUCN since 1974. The regulations of the organization are observed by Hungary: to this end the Hungarian law on nature conservation requires that park have to comply with international regulations and introduce a zoning system of various categories requiring different principles of treatment. The principles of the development of zones are put down in Ministerial Decree 14 of 1997 which also include general guidelines.

The purpose of zoning is to make sure that the national park can fulfil all its tasks in the areas most appropriate for each task. The following zones are distinguished:

## Protected Areas in Hungary

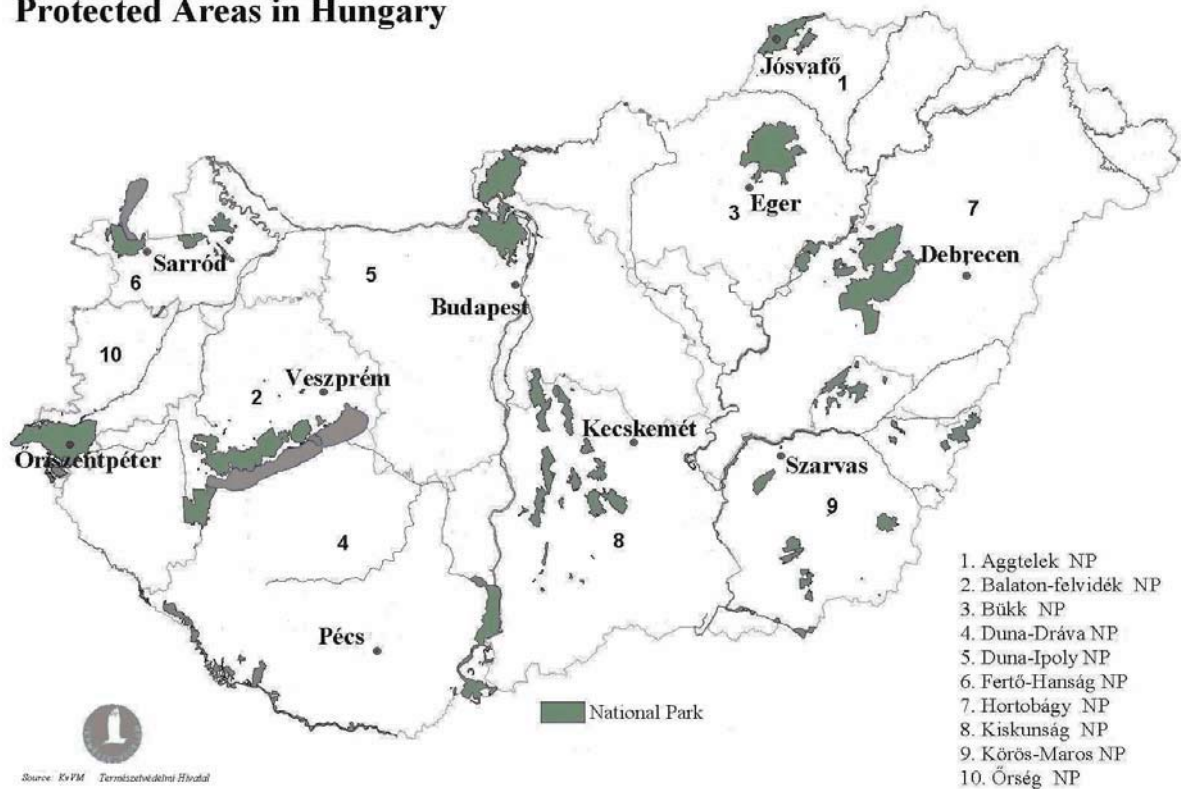


Figure 1. National Parks in Hungary.

- Zone A: nature zone. (It cannot be visited. Its main purpose is the maintenance of natural conditions.)
- Zone B: preserved zone or treated natural zone. (It cannot be visited or only restricted access is allowed with permits.)
- Zone C: tourist zone or exhibit zone. (Open access.)

Beside these three, mention is usually made of Zone D, a puffer zone beyond the borders of the national park, a so called protective zone. National parks are not obliged to designate areas for this zone and in many cases no plans exist to set them up. Such a zone, however, can be useful in the future for the purposes of tourist developments.

The law allows for zones B and C to be designated together in cases when separating the two is not possible or for conservation reasons not expedient. Several of our national parks opted for this possibility, as we shall see in a moment.

It follows from what was said so far that the various forms of tourism are permitted only zone C, so it is important to take a closer look at these permitted territories, especially their position vis-a-vis frequented tourist sights. Although zones have not yet been officially introduced in this country/Hungary, many conflicts arise in the course of visits to strictly protected areas. It is most apparent in the case of mountainous national parks that strictly protected areas, prior to the establishment of national parks, had been beloved tourist destinations. Prohibiting entry into

such areas by way of putting up boards is rather difficult especially in cases where pathways continue to be drawn along the original lines.

### Zones in Hungarian National Parks

Hungarian National Parks look very different from the point of view of Zone C:

Table 1. Extreme zone rates.

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C
Hortobágy NP	15%	80%	<b>5%</b>
Kiskunság NP	24.4%	44.7%	<b>30.9%</b>
Bükk NP	25%	70.75%	<b>4.25%</b>
Aggtelek NP	19.5%	13.2%	<b>67.5%</b>
Fertő-Hanság NP	16%	60%	<b>24%</b>
Duna-Dráva NP*	–	–	–
Duna-Ipoly NP*	–	–	–
Balaton-felvidék NP	19.9%	35.6%	<b>44.5%</b>
Körös-Maros NP*	–	–	–
Őrségi NP	0,5%	7,1%	<b>92,4%</b>

\* No zoning system

It was in the oldest national park of the country, in the Hortobágy NP, that the first zoning system was developed. Tourism in the area is a relatively new-fangled. Visiting the Puszta and its cultural attractions (such as traditional farming or traditional farm

animals) has become a custom only in the twentieth century. These cultural values (Museum of Pastoral Life, Pusztá Animal Park, Meggyes Inn Museum) are usually exhibited in establishments located within settlements or near public roads. Since the founding of the national park, those interested in its natural assets (such as the wildlife of waters) are welcomed at visitors' disposals. Experts show them around on trips that go along nature trails. Controlling tourism and keeping visitors (200.000 yearly) within zones C is further assisted by the introduction of an admission card system in this national park.

That is why there is no significant tension between nature conservation and tourism in spite of the fact that zone C represents only 5% of the park. The only exception is Lake Tisza where there is a widespread practice of illicit camping. It should be noted, however, that the maps distributed by the directorate of national park depict in their zoning system areas open to visitors which cover territories beyond the borders of the park belonging to so called zone D.

Tourists are notified about the various zones and the applicable regulations on boards posted at points of entry for tourists.

The Kiskunság NP (established in 1975) is made up of nine separate units. More than one fourth of the total territory is strictly protected. The park preserves some of the features of the landscape from time before water regulations such as sand dunes, alkalic plains and marshes. The NP has developed the zoning system what is taken into consideration during the planning. Strictly protected areas belong to zone A. The way of life in the farms and traditional farming are exhibited in tourist establishments that fall within the territory of zone C. Wherever pathways go through more sensitive water habitat or geological values, time restrictions have been introduced (e.g. birds' brooding). Following the mosaic like composition of the national park, the zones too are designated in a mosaic manner.

The borders of the various zones are not posted for visitors (130 000 peoples yearly) but strictly protected areas are frequently signaled by boards. In these areas are forbidden to leave the pathway. Given that hiking has no particular traditions in this area, environmental authorities have hardly any conflicts of this nature.

Our first mountainous national park, the Bükk NP (1977) is the most frequented hiking place in the country (about 1,35 million peoples yearly). Already at the end of the nineteenth century crowds flocked here to enjoy the mountain climate, the beauty of wooded mountains, the mysteries of karst (caves, sinkholes). Another result of the woods of the mountains has been a profit oriented forest management. Such a practice is in explicit contradiction with the nature conservation regulations of IUCN. Unfortunately, property relations and the interests of farmers have not yet made it possible to realize plans for the zoning of the national park in a manner that would satisfy everyone. Plans for the zones are based

on assessments of the vegetation and that explains why our most frequented national park has the lowest planned rate for zone C, 4.25% (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Zone C in the Bükk NP (4.25%; 18 360 ha).

The strange long narrow shape of the zone C is the result of the decision to designate areas open to visitors along roads (in many cases public roads) with the heaviest traffic on them. The geomorphological condition is the other cause of the unusual shape. I wonder to what extent compliance be enforced given that the directorate of the national park has already had many conflicts with tourists. The majority of pathways that were developed in the course of long years, well before the establishment of the national park, lead through what is planned to be zone A, and several of the beloved sights are strictly protected values (caves, canyons). Visitors are informed about the rules on boards posted at the borders of the park, but in many cases they do not observe them.

Probably the most fortunate zoning system was developed in the Aggtelek NP (1985). There is a rather obvious system of blocks in which the shape of the zones concentric. In such a way, zone A can serve as a reserve, and zones B and C as protective belts (Figure 3). Besides, areas open to visitors represent 67.5% of the total territory. But this national park enjoys a special status compared, e.g. to Bükk NP. Mass tourism has not started very early due to the peripheral location of its territory. Its romantic sights full of karst formations became highly frequented places after the establishment of the NP and its recognition as part of the World Heritage (1995). This is why not even the rerouting of the so called National Blues Pathway did not cause too big a conflict. Given that more than two thirds of all the tourists how visit the park (200 000 visitors yearly) go only to the cave, more sensitive areas are not disturbed by the tourists. The high rate of areas open to visitors signifies the positive attitude of the park's directorate towards tourism. Thus tourists, who come in great numbers by now, find it easy to comply with rules and observe

regulations. One of the reasons for the success is that tourists are well informed: information leaflets show the zoning system of the park with areas open to visitors highlighted on them. Since this information system has proved to be so effective, the directorate of the NP decided to designate as zone B a particular area whose sensitivity allows for visitors to enter but is not a safe place at all (former mine, collapsed caves).

An interesting point to note is that even in areas designated as zone C there are strictly protected areas.

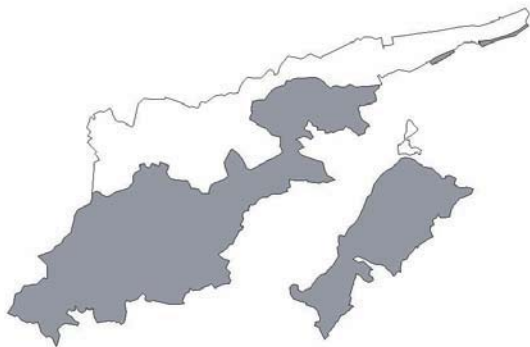


Figure 3. Zone C in the Aggtelek NP (67.5%; 13 300 ha).

Our first NP that we share with another country is the Fertő-Hanság National Park (1991), which lies along the border with Austria. The huge marshes and bogs attract great number of bird watchers (300 000 yearly), many of them from abroad. Although the park is made up of many units, only parts of its largest unit can be visited. In this area, the three zones are formed concentric which is favourable to nature conservation. Areas along the border belong to zones A and B just like in the case of ANP, except for Fertőrákos and its neighbourhood with its heavy traffic. Zone C makes up 24% of the national park and has many open pathways and displays (Figure 4). Hanság forms a separate unit and belong to zone B. Boards inform visitors when and which parts can be visited, mainly under expert supervision. It is forbidden to leave pathways.



Figure 4. Zone C in the Órség NP (92.4%; 40 660 ha).

The long, fractional and narrow contour of the Duna-Dráva NP (1996) is shaped by the two rivers' floodplains, oxbows and dead arms. The directorate of national park is currently preparing a zoning system within the confines of its management plan. Areas fully open to visitors (130 000 yearly), those with restricted access as well as closed areas are indicated on leaflets and boards informing tourists. The majority of visitors come to see the rich animal and plant populations of the gallery forest.

The Duna-Ipoly NP (1997) faces problems similar to that encountered by the Bükk NP. The directorate of national parks disposes only over a fraction (less than 10%) of the territory in the form of property management. Due to ongoing interest reconciliation efforts with forest companies, there are still only plans available for the zoning system – a final version is yet to be seen. This mountainous national park belongs to the recreational zone of Budapest, bringing lots of visitors (about 1,5 million yearly) to areas near to the capital. The park is connected with a narrow neck across the Danube and is made up of two blocks whose frequented sights fall into strictly protected areas, which bring many conflicts given that hiking and skiing in these mountains enjoys a tradition more than a hundred years old.

Since the Balaton-felvidék NP (1997) too has a mosaic like structure, its zones cannot be designated in single blocks. When deciding on areas closed to visitors, territories with a long tradition of viniculture and tourism (about 2 million yearly) present great problems. Being part of the holiday resort around Balaton, this area is highly frequented by visitors who are attracted by the geological values of the Tihany peninsula, the volcanic hills as well as by traditional agriculture. The peaks of volcanic hills are strictly protected areas but pathway does lead into even these territories. Thus the concession can be found here as well: restricted access, do not leave the pathway. The single area that can not be visited at all covers the waters of the internationally reputed Kis-Balaton.

The Körös-Maros NP (1997) created for the protection of alkaline plains, loess grasslands, marsh residues and flood areas is made up of several smaller units. Due to the flatness of the area, hiking does not have significant traditions around here (recently 80 000 tourists per year). Visitors are coordinated to the pathways drawn by the directorate of the national park. There is no zoning system, strictly protected areas count as zone A here as well. These can be visited only with and escort and with the permit of the park's directorate. The rest is open to visitors with the usual restrictions. Pathways are not be left within strictly protected areas. Conflicts are caused by prohibition of fishing in the Körös-valley.

The highlight natural values of our youngest NP, the Órség NP (2002) are bogs, pinewoods and mountain species. The territory also extends over villages, which have preserved ancient forms of set-



tlement and traditional agriculture, all of which contributed towards granting national park status to this area. In spite of its fresh status, the park has already developed its zoning system, which is not official yet. It has the highest rate (92.4%) of areas open to visitors (20 000 yearly) which results from the territory's civilized features (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Zone C in the Fertő-Hanság NP (24%; 5 660 ha)

## Conclusion

The great differences in zone rates and the lack of zones result from many factors of which two are crucial:

- Ministerial decree 14 of 1997 was not followed up by a decree regulating implementation.
- There is no expert agreement on how to designate areas (e.g. to what extent tourism should be taken into consideration).

Further factors are:

- Property relations in many cases make difficult the developing of proper zones.
- There are differences of opinion even within the directorate of national parks as to how to develop zones.
- The location of values to be protected (and Hungary's highly populated land) makes it sometimes impossible to develop zones into single blocks.

Possibilities for enforcing zone C:

- Zones B and C should not be separated but regulations applicable to zone B should be enforced in toto: time restrictions, space restrictions (pathways are not to be left), other restrictions (escort).
- Misinformation (see Aggtelek NP)
- Diversion of tourist pathways.
- Increased enforcement.
- Zone C follows tourist pathways.

In contrast to the areas accepted by IUCN as national parks, there are two difficulties with respect to tourism in Hungary's protected natural territories. One is that due to our geographical features, it is impossible to restrict admission to protected areas across one or two points. This is also why we do not have accurate statistical data on our national parks' visitor flows (this, however, would be essential to any carrying capacity studies).

The other difficulty arises out of citizens' inadequate ecological sensitivity. A previous study (Benkhard 2001) has shown that many visitors, while fully conscious of the rules applicable to a particular protected area, still enter restricted parts and leave pathways.

This is why it is a pressing task to increase tourists' ecological consciousness and to develop their sensitivity toward nature. This would ease conflicts between zoning systems and tourism.

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