

# Potential interpretation index: a tool for assessing landscape diversity from pathways

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**Abstract** — Nowadays, a well developed net of pathways allows people to enjoy nature in countryside. Into natural protected areas, the pathway network is generally used to bring closer natural /cultural values and visitors. However, the design of these interpretation pathways usually doesn't bear in mind how much representative are them to make a complete visit through all landscapes of the natural protected area. We have developed an index based on useful and popular ecological diversity index (Shannon-Wiener, 1948), which has been applied to 56 pathways open to visitors in 6 Spanish National Parks. This Potential Interpretation Index takes into account several factors with high attractiveness to visitors, like environmental units, water bodies and slopes. In addition, we consider these topics either crossed by the pathways than observed from these ones. Spatial data was processed by GIS tools in order to obtain landscape diversity and viewshed from each pathway in these National Parks. The result of this work is an index easier to apply in natural protected areas and the whole countryside, in order to asses its significance for interpretation activities and for guaranteeing a representative visit to the area. This tool could be added to others planning models in natural protected areas management, with the aim of reconcile conservation and visitors use.

**Index Terms** — Landscape, pathways, ecological diversity index.

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