

Financing natural areas in Spain, a weak point of sustainable development: the case of Castilla y León

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Protected natural areas have become an important tool for nature protection in Spain, although most of them are still quite young. Spain had a Protected Areas Act already before 1975, when a long obscure period of lacking a true policy about natural areas came to an end. It also has a special management system where regions have the responsibilities for the environment and associated legislation, but nevertheless many regions do not have a clear idea of what to do.

Management tools

The National Heritage and Biodiversity Act rules that planning must be a 'waterfall planning process' which includes both management plans and sector plans. These levels are improved by EUROPARC-Spain through an area system plan which affects the whole territory. According to the law, regions have to develop different plans in order to manage and preserve natural areas, but depending on what region is considered, the situation can be very different. Spain has a range of possibilities to study this development. Here, we only want to outline some aspects. There are Autonomous Communities with a long tradition on planning natural areas, like Andalusia, and there are others with a weak planning tradition, like Castilla y León. Moreover, planning means sometimes tools to develop some areas and this lack means in most cases neglect, deprivation, and over-exploitation of some natural resources.

Regarding financial aspects, they seem to have the Marqués de Villaviciosa's old idea of the early 20th century, of developing areas through tourism. However, tourism does in many cases not mean sustainable development and financing is an unfinished business in many natural areas. There are many things that need to be done, but very little money for financing them. Local initiatives have been developed inside EU policies, such as FEDER, Leader or Life, with different agents involved. They put the emphasis also on tourism or initiatives based on tourism, but include other issues as well. In this context one should also consider agricultural grants, but agriculture is less and less important in natural areas. We have seen some areas, which have an old history in tourism and with the same problems as the others which do not have this background.

Financing natural areas

Financing natural areas through public funds is not enough to avoid the loss of their biodiversity. Therefore, it is necessary to increase economic resources. This is an important point to consider, especially in protected areas where development opportunities are needed to maintain populations inside. On the one hand, money has to be provided by different administrations in order to safeguard preservation and conservation, as well as sustainable development in natural areas. However, the amount of money is really an important obstacle and so is the focus on visitors. On the other hand,

many local development groups have obtained grants for local sustainable development initiatives related to tourism. Hence, the outcome is then quite different from the original idea: the development process is not sustainable.

Nevertheless, these areas have important natural and cultural resources to improve their local economies. What is more, many of them have had a better economy in the past, sometimes based on trade because of their location or because of people's background. But nowadays, due to the fact of depopulation and ageing, they have weakly populated areas with few resources to go on and without financial tools to invest into their economies except tourism. According to Work Programme for Protected Areas 2009-2013, the growing involvement of groups from society opens up new opportunities to improve the involvement of society in all aspects of planning and management. This implies new opportunities to financing conservation policies and protected areas through private funds.

Case study: Castilla y León.

We are to study the case of Castilla y León where planning is weakly developed. According to the above described 'planning waterfall process' the situation can be described as follows:

- Areas system plan: Programa Parques Naturales de Castilla y León. It was declared in 2002, it is supposed to be a plan to develop in a proper way the whole protected areas system, not only natural parks, through sustainable development, conservation, use public. But, in reality, none of them has been developed.
- Management plans: Planes de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales (PORN). They should be the most important plans for every area.
- Master plans: Planes Rectores de Uso y Gestión (PRUG). They are important management tools that they do not exist in Castilla y León. Therefore, rules for both allowed and not allowed uses do not exist.
- Sectorial plans: different plans for only an aspect, such as conservation or public use. There are very few and only for internal use.

Instead of developing all these plans, brochures and equipment for visitors have been built and also points of information, as a way of development. Natural areas have to be managed properly and managers have to find a way to manage both public and private funds. It is necessary to promote integrated projects based on multifunctional and multi-sector approaches. All things considered, financing natural areas in Castilla y León are necessary to develop their local economy and at the same time safeguard other dimensions of sustainability. Some of the measures that potentially can work in that direction are described in Figure 1.

General measures	Particular measures
Budgets of the various administrations	Not only mining activities
Taxes from activities and proprieties	
Grants	Hunting and fishing licenses
Permissions	
Support for indigenous breeds	Guides, brochures, ...
Pasture and forest restoration	
Provide services into natural areas	
Admission fees	
Donations	Private developers
Voluntary initiatives	Parque Natural label
Environmental certification and labelling	

Figure 1. Proposed measures to finance natural areas in Castilla y León.

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