

NATIONAL PARKS IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT. In general, the tourist load capacity means the maximum number of visitors that a particular ecosystem can receive them, without having to incur large degradation. This concept emerged in Europe in the early 60s, with the development of mass tourism and recreation, generating the need to plan these activities. To evaluate the bearing capacity of protected territories tourism, we must take in consideration four dimensions that define: ecological carrying capacity, social and psychological load capacity, own resources of planning techniques that alter considerably thresholds, notion of compatibility between multiple uses of the natural landscape.

Keywords: national parks, Europe, tourism, tourists

INTRODUCTION

Considerations about planning in protected areas

A. Tourist load capacity (tourist load) of the landscape

B. The tourism planning European national parks

Preliminary Objectives

- Assessing the carrying capacity of protected areas for tourism activities and facilities;
- Highlighting for favourability and restrictiveness of tourist use or development for the functional areas defined in national parks;
- Analysis of action means that managers of national parks facilitates outdoor entertainment area and their proximity;
- Arrangements intended for tourism in protected areas, particularly in national parks must be preceded by rigorous studies on tourism capacity or load bearing tourism landscape.

Tourist load capacity (tourist load) of the landscape

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To evaluate the bearing capacity of protected territories tourism, we must take in consideration four dimensions that define:

- ecological carrying capacity
- social and psychological load capacity
- own resources of planning techniques that alter considerably thresholds
- notion of compatibility between multiple uses of the natural landscape

a) Ecological carrying capacity refers to the tolerance threshold limit of biological and physical recreational activities ecosystems subject, the threshold limit covering one, two or all of the components that

make up the ecosystem, in terms of tourism planning in a national park is much lower threshold of tolerance compared with that of unprotected spaces for recreation, all the elements that constitute an ecosystem must be considered both in terms of individual specificity and interrelations between them, the level of tolerance threshold is set so that the inserts do not unusual or particularly affect human fragile components of ecosystems. It is indicated that ecological potential analysis studies for protected areas to consider both diagnosis and prognosis of the evolution of ecosystems, especially with how their dynamics depends on the intensity of human intervention, also is recommended that these studies to expand proximity to protected areas as a series of activities in these areas can impact design ecosystem components protected perimeters.

b) Psychological and social carrying capacity of a recreational site should consider overriding its users. In this context, Richard R. Forster (1973) defines social carrying capacity as the level of human impact, beyond which produce poor quality outdoor recreation experience.

Practices, attentions and the perceptions on the same ecosystem are different, depending on the cultural and social level, conscious or unconscious motivation of the visitors, the number of people and their density. On the other hand, the social dimension of carrying capacity is closely related to the geography and landscape characteristics of the territory used, so, for exemple, a forested area will considerably limit the verge of overpopulation; on the contrary, an open surface, through the facilities it offers (eg, lighter car removal due to the possibility of increased surveillance, its use as a playground, picnic area) will attract major tourist flows. In addressing to a recreational space, distance and time factors are closely correlated. Based on this consideration, the directors of Kennemer Dunes National Park (Netherlands) took into account in spatial planning of the correlation distance - duration: in the places where is allowed sea baths, there were arranged parking and access ways

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inside the beaches, which to draw important masses of tourists that are indifferent to the nature show, , attracted especially by the leisure. In this way, was pursued the decrease of human pressure on sites that host objects under protection and conservation. Studies of social carrying capacity of national parks have confirmed the need for differentiated management of their functional areas and the use of techniques that allow targeting tourist flows to itineraries designed to diminish interest in strictly protected perimeters.

c) carrying capacity (load) for facilities.

In many cases there are problems of incompatibility between the multiples uses that may insure the territory of a protected area, so that critical thresholds of the ecological balance are significantly exceeded (for example, in the cases of Circeo National Parks – Italy and TANAP - Slovakia were the arrangements achieved had favoured the practice of tourist activities widely, regardless of their impact on the landscape). In these circumstances, implementation of development plans of protected areas should be preceded by an impact assessment which will classify the proposed arrangements for the territory analysed in: undesirable permitted, provided that a permanent monitoring and maintenance and desirable, through vocation enhancement of resources protected perimeter.

The tourism planning European national parks

For European national parks are generally proposed three main areas of development:

a) access area for tourists, held on the outskirts of the park and valleys favouring access inside the protected area, this area includes points of stationary vehicles, camping and picnic areas, information centres, access to the most spectacular sites will be favoured by well-marked trails, designed to protect the fragile items from protected perimeters, for this purpose, it can be used hedges, preferably conifers, on both sides of access routes and even barriers, where appropriate. Some of the arrangements for informing tourists, accommodation facilities etc. can be performed outside the protected area, contributing to insert the park within the local economic and social.

b) intermediate or buffer zone is characterized by a very reduced infrastructure: communication routes, hotels, restaurants and permanent settlements are prohibited the only desirable facilities are represented by the refuges and tent spaces, roads and paths traced scientifically and in accordance with the principles of conservation, tourism attendance density is much lower (a selection can be made, depending on the cultural and social level of the tourists)

c) strictly protected area or full protection, for scientific research, tourism activities are not allowed at most educational purposes This model of development is dependent on the size of the park and can be applied especially on large areas, with views relatively homogeneous. In the National Patk Plitvice was easy to achieve protection of large area, covered with dense forest vegetation, difficult to access; tourist activities were oriented towards spectacular lakes which also is



the main pole of attraction of the park; also installing the panels with "meaning forbidden "on all the access roads to the woods or to some isolated agricultural holdings are designed to discourage drivers, especially foreign ones.

Apart from spatial zoning to deal with outdoor recreation, parks managers have four main types of action that can be used separately or combined:

- increasing the available space open to visitors

- controlling and limiting the number of tourists

- reduce visitor impacts on ecosystems

- increasing resource sustainability

I) Increasing the available space open to visitors can be achieved by:

- creating new jobs for certain types of tourist facilities

- a better management of the facilities in the recreational sites that already exist

- better use of space temporal protected area, given that in most national parks attendance manifest imbalance of tourism: especially on weekends and in summer season, in these circumstances, it is necessary to increase the space theoretical available for outdoor entertainment, by increasing its use, of course with certain precautions (avoiding of periods of breeding of the birds and large mammals, for example)

- looking for sites that can absorb some of the visitors, close to parks (in fact, often the only way accepted by conservationists)

In fact, increasing the overall capacity for tourists often lead to an increase in risky ecological problems caused by increased tourist flow during vacations or holidays throughout the year.

II) Controlling and limiting the number of visitors is required in case of national parks which are wholly or partly overstretched in terms of tourism. Tourism flow mitigation possibilities that park managers have at their disposal lies in:

- prohibition of one or more recreational activities, especially those that alter the quality of natural environment;

- limited access to fragile areas;

- halting planning and maintenance of access roads, paths and roads;

- introducing parking charges;

- limiting the duration of stays (eg, in National Park Plitvice tickets are issued with a validity of three days);

Unlike American national parks, practice strict limitation of the number of visitors in the parks of Europe is still very shy, especially for those recently declared as such. Effectiveness of applying the measures to limit tourist flow depends on many factors such as: the importance of private property, funds, equipment and personnel (often insufficient), the size of parks, their environmental characteristics. It is obvious that a large national park, situated at a considerable distance the from human concentrations and with poor accessibility will facilitate the control and limiting the number of visitors. An effective measure for limiting tourism flow could be practicing sport activities only by persons certified by diplomas (in riding, underwater diving) and sports licenses or membership of certain clubs (French Alpine Club charter, license kayaking, etc.). , also the camping could be reserved for those who are license holders of an national camping federation and the shelters to beneficiaries of membership card to a club mountain.

III) Reducing visitor impact on ecosystems

Ways in which managers can respond to this desideratum could be:

- concentration of certain activities, on extent of their compatibility in a small space, well defined, which could be monitored and maintained to limit the irreversible degradation;

- dispersal of activities within the perimeter of the park should be done with caution and appropriate to the features of ecological support

- the limitation of certain recreational activities during periods when their impact is significant (eg fire lighting the grill only in winter);

- improvement the maintenance and the performance of materials and equipment that are available, which means adding financial resources and personnel;

- substitution of certain recreational activities with other, less aggressive: deterring skiing track for the background, reduce and even suppress individual car access and encourage the use of public transport, encourage the replacement of motorized means of transport by horseback ridingthe means with animal traction or train, as appropriate, may also be successfully used equipment which originally had another destination (cable cars and ski lifts can be used in summer to avoid compaction and degradation of sensitive surfaces);

- Development of education and awareness to the problems of nature and in this way, improving visitor behavior, in this endeavor, an important role belongs to museums, information centers, professional conferences, school which has the task to develop civic responsibility and respect for nature among young people.

IV) Increasing sustainability of natural resources can be provided by:

- superior protection and management;

- planting of plant species with high resistance;

- artificial arrangements based on the use of exterior materials (concrete, sand, slag, etc..) to protect areas heavily frequented;

- revegetation activities, restructuring or ecological restoration

These measures must be carried out silently, making full use of local resources and indigenous plant species and allowing facilities with rustic character. The problems with which national parks are facing, especially regarding capitalizing of tourism, can be easely overcome with good scientific knowledge of spaces-parks, both in geoecologiei and in the social sciences, in recrealogie, ethology (the science of behavior), communication, sometimes neglected fields in the protected areas. In this sense, it is indicated the presence of a Scientific Advisory Council with multidisciplinary representation in national parks management structures. This board can provide methodological support necessary to develop a theoretical model and generally evidenced by an organization chart showing the algorithm operations the evaluations necessary planning and and management of a national park (impact assessment arrangements. highlighting failures. providing scientific monitoring for the park management).

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