

SYSTEM OF LANDSCAPE-LEVEL COOPERATION THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

TÁJSZINTŰ EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉSEK RENDSZERE A FRANCIA NATÚRPARKOK PÉLDÁJÁN

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INTRODUCTION

More than 50 years have passed since the creation of the first French Natural Park. One of the biggest tasks for the growing number of Natural Parks present in Hungary is to be the sustainable and resilient regional examples and guidelines of life in a way that they respond to the environmental, social and economic challenges of our time. The notion of landscape-level cooperation first appeared in the document titled „Professional concept of Hungarian Natural Parks”, approved by the Ministry for Rural Development in 2014 and prepared, besides other actors, by the Hungarian Natural Park Association. Act LIII of 1996 on nature conservation in Hungary, which was amended

in 2018 and came into effect in February 2019, specifies the renewed definition of natural parks as cooperation. The concept of landscape-level cooperation is becoming more and more common also in Hungary and it is reflected, besides others in the increasing number of studies and researches in the subject matter which try to find the correct definition of this phenomenon (Szilvácsku Zs., 2012, Korom A., 2014, Dancsókné F. E., 2020). A lot of work has to be done to find the most adequate definition and establish the right regulatory framework and the basis of these can be the research activities benefiting from the examples and experiences of landscape-level cooperation already functioning or being in the pipeline. I would like to contribute to the definition and

the frameworks of use of the concept by reviewing some of the specific features of the French natural parks.

The functioning of French natural parks differs in many ways from those in German-speaking (Austrian, German, Swiss) countries, which are better known in Hungary. The overview of French experiences, the transfer and adaptation to the Hungarian conditions of knowledge accumulated in France has not yet taken place, similar to many other professional areas where, typically, we rather turn our attention to the German or, possibly, Anglo-Saxon countries.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS, OBJECTIVES AND LOCATION OF FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

In France, the regional natural park (parc naturel régional) is a rural area which is acknowledged nationwide based on its valuable local heritage and landscape, its sensitive territorial characteristics and networks of cooperation. The objectives of regional natural parks, in a highly complex and integrated approach are the following:

- ① protection, valorisation (recognition and appreciation of its value) and presentation of the natural resources, landscapes, human resources and cultural heritage of the area,
- ② realisation and enforcement of innovative and environment-friendly policies and guidelines in the area of spatial planning, economic, social and cultural development,
- ③ regional natural parks provide education and information, and

promote the combination and development of modern and traditional solutions and the elaboration of innovative solutions on the one hand
④ are the highlighted areas of recreation, recharging, leisure-time activities and catering and
⑤ for the realisation of all these, provide coordination activities promoting landscape-level cooperation on the other hand.

Mission of French regional natural parks: ① foster, protect, safeguard, defend and patronise the common cultural and natural heritage (patrimoine), ② contribute to the development of local community life, ③ promote active economic life through the enforcement and practical implementation of sustainability, ④ merger traditional (slow, local, traditional) and most recent (fast, global, technology change) knowledge, test new solutions and implement innovative initiatives under the aegis of sustainability.

The first park: 1968.

The last park: 2019.

Umbrella organisation: French Association of Regional Natural Parks (Fédération des parcs naturels régionaux de France), founded in 1971

Number and names of parks:

54 regional natural parks (parc naturel régional)

Their area total: approx. 90,000 km² = roughly 15% of the territory of France

Size of the parks: approx. between 500 km² and 6,500 km²

Altogether, 4 100 000 people live on the territory of the 54 regional natural parks already created in France and

about 400 000 enterprises (including approx. 90 000 agricultural enterprises) can be found in these parks.

The total operational basic costs of these regional natural parks was – on an average - 1.4 million euro per park in 2018 (at that time, there were 52 natural parks). The regions contributed to this amount, on an average with 45%, the other member organisations [counties, cities and villages, and Public Establishments for Inter-Municipal Cooperation (EPCI)] with 28%, the government with 10% (in the first place, the Ministry for Environment), the EU subsidies with 4% and other funds with 13%. In addition to this operational budget, there is also a **development budget** dedicated to the natural parks, but the amount of this budget greatly varies by parks.

PROCESS AND ASPECTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

Regional natural parks are based on comprehensive and sustainable development plans (la charte paysagère, namely landscape charter) to protect and support their resources.

Regional natural parks can be designated, based on the decree of the French prime minister and with due consideration to the report of the Ministry for Environment on a given area. The designation is valid for a renewable period of 12 years. In the first phase,

the participants of local initiatives, the region(s), the settlements, the private and business organisations prepare an establishing or basic study based on which decision is made on the establishment of the natural park. New initiatives on natural parks have to comply with three basic groups of criteria:

- **Quality and characteristics of the landscape and regional heritage**
This category also includes the specific and dominant characteristics of the landscape and the region and their significance from national and international perspective, together with the identity-shaping force of the landscape and the region. The term heritage includes the elements of natural values, systems, modes of using the landscape, landscape character, social and cultural heritage and built heritage.
- **Design quality of the preliminary or establishing study**
Quality and connections of fact-finding and the planned measures, the circle of involved and cooperating organisations and the strength, quality and characteristic features of the connection among them.
- **Organisational capacity guaranteeing operation and the implementation of the plan**
Connection between and among the different types of organisations, ensure the personnel and financial conditions, capability and quality of managing alliance-level cooperation.

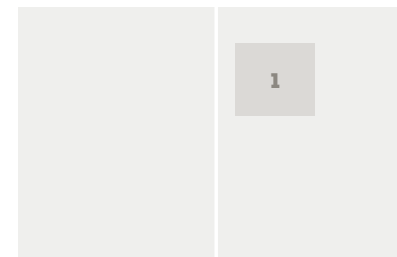
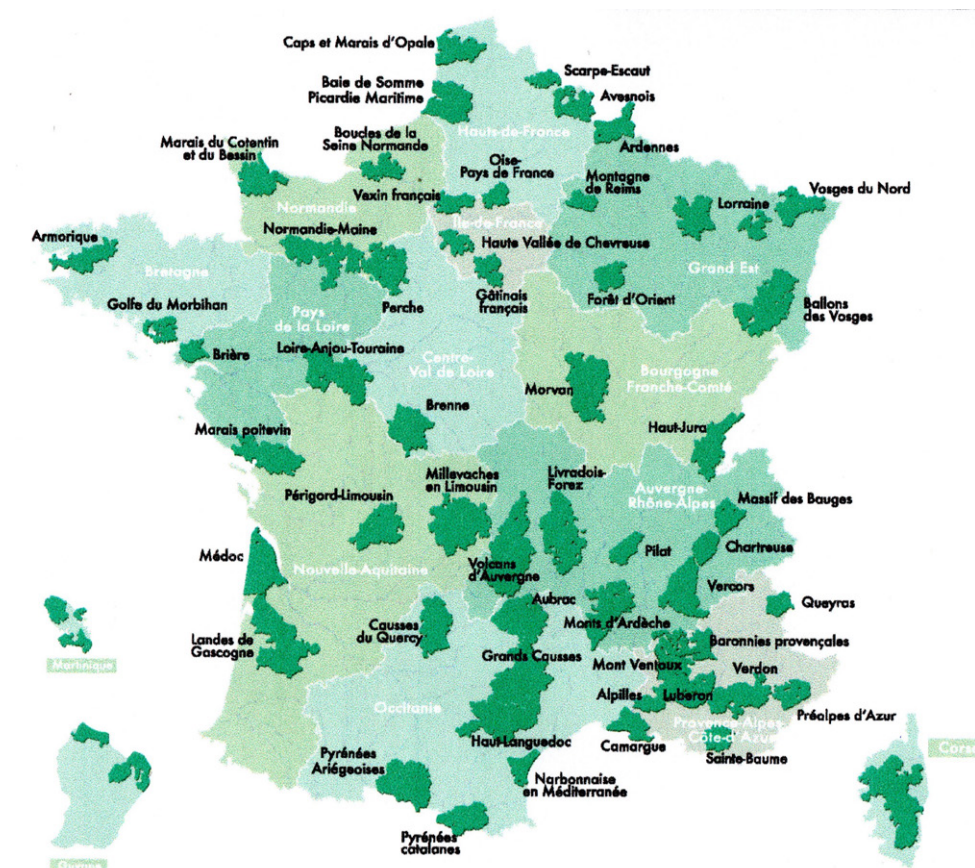


Fig. 1: The French regional natural parks (2020)
(SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.PARC-NATURELS-REGIONAUX.FR](https://www.parc-naturels-regionaux.fr))



The content of landscape charter is based on the initial examination of the territory of the potential natural park, namely on the establishing study.¹

The charter contains the following:

- protection and development plan of the territory of the future natural park for the forthcoming fifteen years and the rules and decrees prescribed by the affected parties, stakeholders for the implementation of the plan
- a map, showing the different applicable approaches in the function of the different territories of the natural park
- the managing authority
- the natural park trademark, including the logo and the name of the natural park, registered by the government at the French Institute of Intellectual Property (INPI).

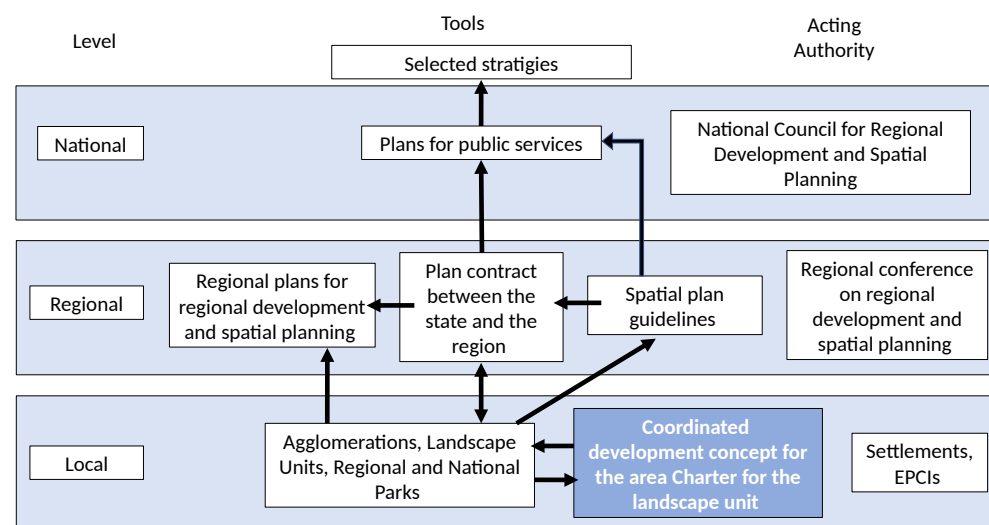
Different documents have to be attached to the charter in the application for classification: a three-year action plan, the related operational budget, the organisational chart of the natural park, the hierarchical structure among the municipalities, etc.

OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

The operation of French natural parks is defined by the landscape charter prepared with the involvement of several actors for the given natural park. The charter is a contract formalising the 12-year protection and development plan of the park. The charter specifies the objectives to be achieved, the strategy

¹ The initial or establishing study contains the analysis of the challenges related to local heritage and the socio-economic situation. If the landscape charter is revised in order to renew the classification of a park, the revision and supervision evaluates the enforcement of the previous charter and the development of the territory on the basis of the initial study.

Fig. 2: System of French cooperation (SOURCE: BRINBAUM D. ET AL. (ED.), 2002., NOUVEAU CADRE LÉGISLATIF ET DISPOSITIF D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT DU DÉVELOPPEMENT LOCAL, CHAMBRES D'AGRICULTURE, NO.911. P. 14. ÉS KOROM 2008)



to protect, popularise and develop the park, together with the measures to be implemented. The charter facilitates consistent coordination among the measures taken by the different authorities on the territory of the park, and provides a framework for cooperation and development realised by the government, the entrepreneurs and civil entities.

The charter also manifests and represents the obligation undertaken by all the signatory organisations – cities and villages, EPCIs² (*établissement public de coopération intercommunale* - Public Establishment for Inter-Municipal Cooperation – the most commonly opted form of inter-municipal cooperation), the affected counties and regions – and the government approving thereof with a government decree. Otherwise, the obligations undertaken by the government are also included in the charter.

The regional natural park is managed by the association of those organisations which approved the charter of the regional natural park. During

the implementation of the charter, the regional natural parks rely on the expertise of local authorities and promote cooperation among the stakeholders to realise the local nature conservation and sustainability initiatives. This way, they also contribute to the birth of exemplary innovative actions. The experiences gained by the natural parks can be beneficial also for other French and foreign regions. One of their most important characteristics is that they are obliged to evaluate their efforts jointly, giving each other this way a feedback about the influence of their activities on each other and the landscape.

The activities of regional natural parks cover a wide range of initiatives undertaken by the organisations approving the charter in the function of their field of expertise: socio-professional organisations (associations, farmers, producers, etc.) by means of partnership agreements; the government in the area of land use and regulations; the managing

² EPCI – it is the most common institutional form of cooperation among the municipalities. The charter is approved by the cities, villages and the EPCIs to classify the area in order to assure that coherent decisions and measures are taken and realised in the future.

authority of the natural park and their multi-disciplinary technical team.

The process of drafting the charter and establishing the natural park is initiated by the regional councils. The region specifies the size of the territory of the park and entrusts a local association to prepare the draft of the charter with the involvement of all the stakeholders. Once the charter is signed by the local authorities, organisations, the EPCIs and the counties concerned, it is validated by the regional council(s) which submit(s) it, through the prefecture of the region to the Ministry for Environment, officially applying this way for the classification of the area as regional natural park.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE CHARTER

According to Article L333-1 of the French Environmental Code:

- Public authorities, regions, counties, cities and villages and EPCIs³ signing the charter are required to comply with and follow the approaches and measures presented in the charter while exercising their jurisdiction and power. In particular, the town planning documents of the local bodies have to comply with the requirements of the charter,⁴ otherwise those will be revised.
- In addition, partners (for example, socio-professional organisations, “gateway-cities”, etc.) can also be

asked to approve the charter in order to fulfil the charter’s objectives. The participation of the partners is regulated in agreements.

- The government, through its regional and county-level services and public institutions is also required to comply with the provisions of the charter.

If these commitments are not fulfilled, appeal for legal remedy can be submitted to the relevant administrative court.

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES OF NATURAL PARKS

For the purpose to implement the charter, the regional natural park relies on the expertise of local authorities and organisations and promotes interaction, cooperation among the stakeholders and fulfils coordination tasks in order to implement the local nature conservation and sustainable development initiatives. In addition, it carries out exemplary and innovative actions, conducts research and promotes the introduction of environmentally beneficial solutions.

The experiences of French regional natural parks are precedential also for other French or foreign regions. One of the characteristic features of the parks, worthy to mention is that it is obligatory for them to regularly evaluate their implemented measures in terms of their efficiency and results.

³ Municipal cooperation with own tax system.

⁴ See, the French settlement planning code (L 122-1-12, L 123-1-9 and L 124-2)



Fig. 3: The map in the charter of Luberon Regional Natural Park shows the "small-landscape" level cooperation

The measures of the regional natural parks cover a wide range of activities:

- measures of the authorities approving the charter: depending on their area of expertise, these measures may include the activities related to urban planning, local heritage, tourism and water quality,
- activities of socio-professional organisations (associations, farmers, producers, etc.) executed through partnership agreements (popularisation of local heritage, raising awareness on environment and sustainable development, promotion of measures regarding sustainable tourism and agro-environment, etc.),
- measures introduced on land-use and in the area of regulations,
- activities of the managing authority of the park, in particular that of the multi-disciplinary technical team.

The activities of the regional natural park are performed in conformity with the project specified by the charter and the challenges represented by the territory.

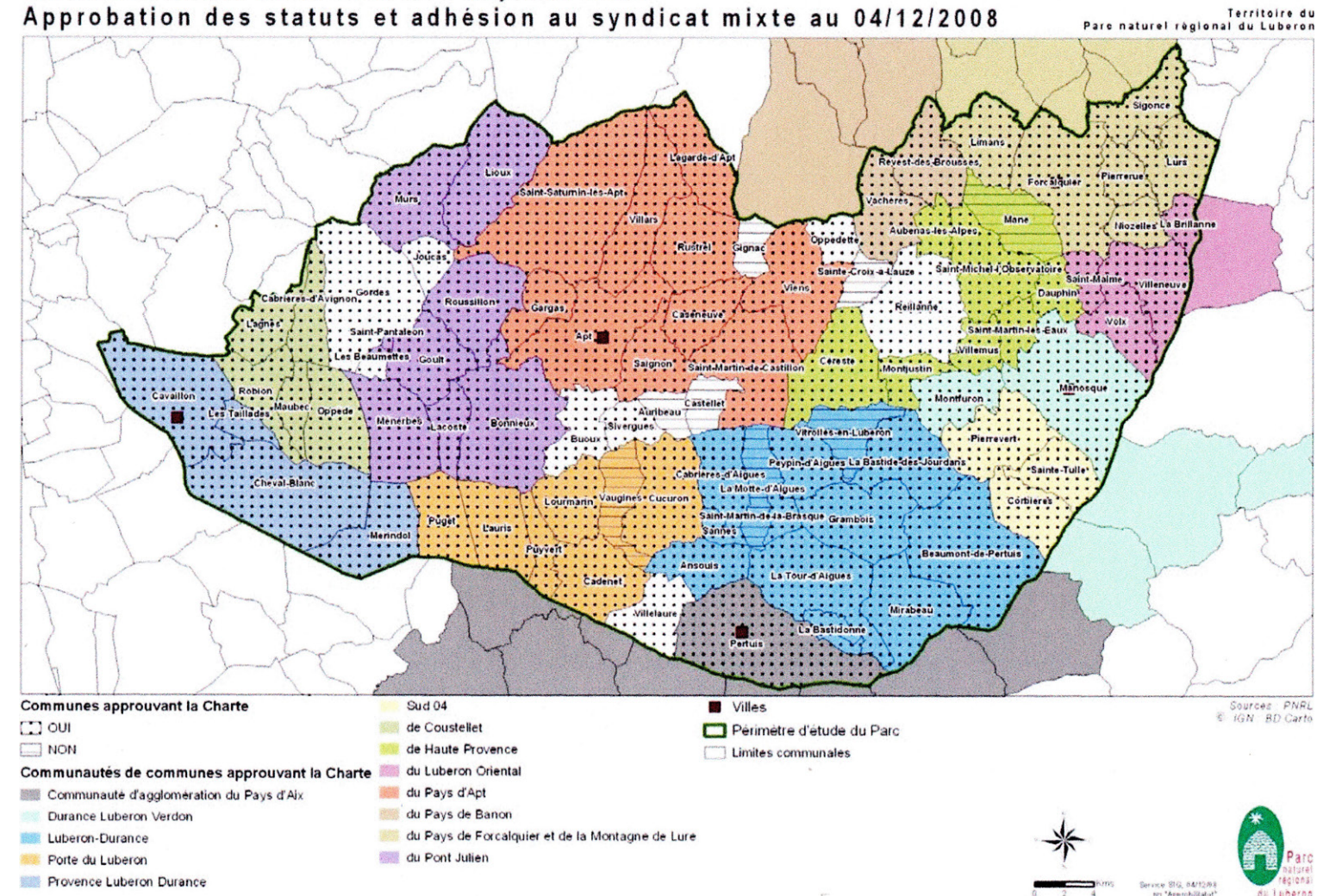
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL NATURAL PARKS

The measures introduced by the regional natural park are defined and executed by the managing authority of the park in compliance with the charter. In legal terms, this managing authority is an association or rather an alliance

gathering the representatives of the affected French region(s) and counties and those of other cities and villages approving the charter. The managing authority may include inter-municipal organisations and gateway cities as well.

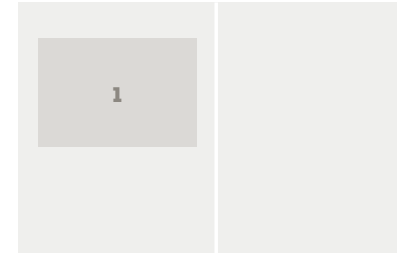
The main objective of the managing authority is to cooperate, as close as possible with the local partners through working committees and consultative bodies which facilitate for the representatives of the associations, socio-economic partners and public bodies to cooperate with each other in the definition and implementation of the action plan of the park. It is the responsibility of a scientific committee to provide information, based on its expertise for the managing authority. For the purpose to elaborate and implement the programmes, the managing authority of the natural park hires a director and a permanent working group with about thirty staff members on an average. Their task is to implement the charter, give ideas and lead actions under the direct control of the managing authority or the partnership of the park. The members of the group are highly skilled in managing and planning environmental protection and land use, economic and tourism development, popularisation of local heritage and culture and provision of information and training for the general public. In general, these collaborators are either civilian employees or contractual employees of the region.

Renouvellement de la Charte " Objectif 2021" Approbation des statuts et adhésion au syndicat mixte au 04/12/2008



The government establishes the regional natural parks based on the proposal of the regions and then provides financial support for the operation of the park and the execution of the measures of the park. Following the revision of the charter the Ministry for Environment asks the French prime minister to classify, in a ministerial decree, the area a natural park. The government possesses the "regional natural park" trademark registered by the French Institute of Intellectual Property (INPI). Prior to the classification of the natural park, also the other ministries concerned are called upon to express their opinion to the Ministry for Environment. In addition, the government contributes to financing the regional natural park by covering 10% of its operational costs

and its facilities. The subsidy provided by the Ministry for Environment can be used within the framework of the agreements (especially the "park agreements" and the special programmes, like Natura 2000 and the nature conservation areas) concluded between the government and the regions. Each associated ministry may contribute to the funding of the regional natural parks under agreements or contracts specified in the application of the agreements concluded between the government and the regions. The charter of the natural park sets out the involvement of the government in implementing the plan in the area. In the event the government's intervention is highly inconsistent in the area of the natural park, the Ministry



Pict. 1: Natural park settlement Cordes acknowledged with several awards (Parc naturel régional du Luberon)

for Environment may request an inter-ministerial reconciliation procedure.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REGIONAL NATURAL PARKS AND THE MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES COVERING THEIR TERRITORY

Nowadays, some park areas overlap with the inter-municipal structures, namely with the so-called EPCIs,⁵ which have their own tax system and authority in spatial planning, spatial development, environmental protection, etc. These structures can be incorporated in part or in full into the operation of the park. For example, they are involved in drafting the natural park charter and the approval of its content.

In fact, these EPCIs, which are required to abide by the signed charter, are key players in implementing the policies and guidelines of the natural park. They are also required to comply with the charter adopted by them. According to its statutes, they can be members of the managing authority of the natural park and based on agreement, they can also participate in the implementation of the charter. In the case of urban communities, in addition to the requirement for town planning documents to be compatible with the natural park charter, the municipal body may extend its cooperation with the natural park to various topics of action, including environmental education, ecological programmes, tourism and short supply chain of agricultural products.

⁵ Public institutions of inter-municipal cooperation among villages, cities and urban agglomerations.

ROLE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARTNERS IN THE REGIONAL NATURAL PARKS

The socio-economic partners of the regional natural parks are local drivers, who can be:

- experts, professionals or rather their representatives (for example, partners delegated by the chambers of commerce or the trade union)
- various organisations and bodies that manage certain areas or facilities of the natural park .

These partners take part in the drafting of the charter and are also involved in the operation and action plans of the natural park. The advisors⁶ act as representatives of the natural park in the working committees of the park and also when they perform special activities in the field. The partners can contribute to the implementation of the project of the natural park through their own activities.

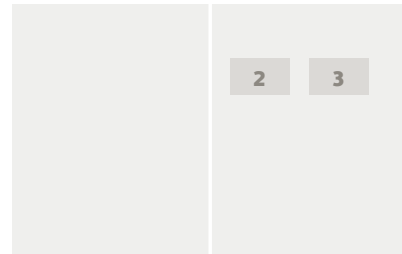
Finally, the natural park cooperates with the local associations

encouraging them to form groups along the lines of their scope of interest or within an ad hoc body often referred to as “Association of the Friends and Visitors of the Natural Park” („Association des amis et users du Parc”).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FRENCH NATURAL PARKS AND THE NEIGHBOURING CITIES, GATEWAY CITIES

The gateway city, should it be a city or an urban agglomeration is located on the periphery of the regional natural park. The regional natural parks have always maintained a privileged relationship with the neighbouring inhabitants, hosting the students of local schools, providing touristic information, increasing awareness of the local population, organising trainings and cultural activities, etc. Some gateway cities are members of the managing authority of the natural park and also

⁶ Some of the bodies managing regional natural parks are “extended” associations, which – based on their own consideration – also involve public institutions, like chambers of commerce, the French National Office of Forestry and the French National Office of Hunting in addition to the government authorities.



Pict. 2: The Lavender Museum, established from own funding, is a good example for the cooperation among the farmers (Parc naturel régional du Luberon)

Pict. 3: Green areas and village border in Cordes



provide funding. In the latter case, their cooperation is set out in the charter. Others are connected to the natural park through partnership agreements.

The relationship between the natural park and the gateway cities is based on geographical, social and economic complementarity and illustrates urban-rural cohesion.

The provisions of the natural park charter do not apply to the villages, cities and EPCIs located outside of the park's territory. However, the natural park may, from time to time cooperate with the peripheral villages, towns or EPCIs to encourage local measures and actions necessary to maintain the quality of its area. Such activities include the maintenance of rivers, management of special areas of nature, the local development plan, improvement of housing, water management, and so on. Over time, these partnerships can turn into agreements.

CONSEQUENCES OF NATURAL PARKS ON THE PARTICIPATING AND NEIGHBOURING SETTLEMENTS

By becoming part of the regional natural park, the cities, villages and

EPCIs freely abide by the rules and limitations discussed by the parties and contribute to the implementation of the plan while exercising their powers.

The policies and guidelines of the natural park are executed by the related cities, villages and EPCIs, with particular emphasis on their town planning strategy and scheme, rules on forestation, municipal law, and approach to planning and development. In addition, the natural parks assist the communities in implementing the regulations on advertising and car traffic in natural areas through the application of the provisions of the charter (see, the Environmental Code).

In return, the cities, villages and EPCIs of the regional natural park will be in beneficial position in the following areas, besides others:

- participation in collective projects utilising local heritage and the environment
- increased participation in land use and nature conservation planning executed by the government or other public bodies operating in the territory of the park
- possibility to use the "Regional Natural Park" trademark which is acknowledged nationwide

- a multi-disciplinary team providing assistance to implement the initiatives through the enforcement of the natural park charter
- additional subsidies for developments or programmes entitled to special support from the regions, counties, government and the European Union in compliance with the natural park charter.

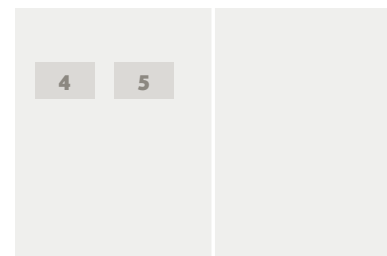
CHARACTERISTICS OF FINANCING THE FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

Each regional natural park has a separate budget to cover the operational and investment costs. The operational budget is financed, in the first place by the association managing the park. Additional budget support is provided by the Ministry for Environment as well as from occasional operating subsidies from various sources. The activities and facilities of the regional natural parks are funded in various proportions in the first place by the local authorities, occasionally from different European programmes and/or from contributions provided by the government and public bodies.

According to the natural park charter, these subventions or funding may originate from agreements concluded as part of the "local development" element of the government or regional plans. These agreements may receive additional financial support also from the "regional development" element of the agreements on government or regional plans, in particular for the assessment and engineering tasks of the natural park. Private businesses and individuals can also help the natural parks with financial support provided for the parks' activities.

Each regional natural park has an operational budget and an investment budget which comply with the accounting principles of the local authorities. The operational budget is financed, in the first place by the association managing the park. Additional budget support is provided by the Ministry for Environment as well as from occasional operating subsidies from various sources.

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Pict 4: Landscape-level cooperation among the farmers-traders-caterers-buyers is a basic feature of the operation of French natural parks

Pict 5: The market of the settlements is not only a place to buy things but it is much more a meeting point

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Private businesses and individuals can also support the regional natural parks by financing the activities targeting the conservation and improvement of cultural heritage, through providing information about sustainable development and raising awareness, improvement of the living environment, boosting cultural life, etc. These associations, companies and private individuals are eligible for tax exemption on their financial support through the “French Regional Natural Park” fund established in 2012. Common values guiding the relationship between the sponsors and the parks are defined in the Ethical Charter of Sponsors.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF FRENCH NATURAL PARKS

Fifty years after their establishment, the French regional natural parks continue to be modern tools combining biodiversity and the challenges of development in rural regions. In the future, the most fundamental building blocks of natural parks will be sustainability of energy management, quality of life and health of the parks’ communities, high-quality food produced on the land of the parks, and new development models created with the involvement of the inhabitants. With the help of all these, the natural parks can create, in accordance with their slogan “a new way of life” (“Une autre vie s’invente ici”). Nowadays they consider, more than ever before, biodiversity and preservation of waters one of the fundamental factors of their economic and social development.

Revising the charter of the individual regional natural park offers an important opportunity for development. The revision has to analyse the implementation of the charter’s strategy, the extent the stakeholders – partners of public authorities and the government – met their obligations and how much the set objectives were realised. In

the course of the revision, the development of the area and the effects of implementing the charter have to be taken into account. At national level, the Association of French Regional Natural Parks and the Ministry for Environment prepare the methodology on the permanent revision of the implementation of the charter and provide the necessary tools for revision (for example, software, training and publications).

At the end of 2010, the Association set up the research team dealing with the future of natural parks. This working group gathered all the parks, regions, national organisations and bodies dealing with environmental, social and economic issues, together with the French Strategic, Research and Prospect Council. The research centre defined, without questioning the five fundamental roles of the natural parks, the new objectives and goals of the natural parks responding to present and future challenges of their area:

- coordination of the different public policies in their area
- promotion of sharing innovation and best practises
- forecasting changes and adaptation
- promotion of social structure and cohesion

- participation in environmental challenges and in the transformation of energy production and use (transition)

These important initiatives, consultations and discussions made and make it possible to introduce changes in the regulations and decrees on natural parks as well.

Expectedly, the number of French natural parks will continue to increase. The annual number of applications submitted for potential regional natural park classification is a clear proof of the interest on the part of the regions and local authorities in this system. However, since regional parks, by definition are special areas their number cannot be increased without limitation. It is the responsibility of the Regional Councils to propose the areas which they consider, based on the areas’ regional heritage the most representative and in which cases they acknowledge that awarding the “regional natural park” classification is a national interest. Furthermore, it is the task of the Ministry for Environment to assure the specific character of the policies and guidelines of the regional natural parks, based on the

opinion of the French Nature Conservation Council and the French Association of Regional Natural Parks.

The richness and authenticity of regional natural parks is assured by the level of requirements specified by the public authorities (during the examination of an area and the development of a project) and the Ministry for Environment (when granting and maintaining the classification).

The regional natural parks are clear and tangible examples for firm and voluntary environmental and sustainable development policies. The objective of the parks is to disclose their approaches and concrete measures (in the form of publications, seminars, meetings, resource centres, etc.) so that other areas in France and abroad gain inspiration from their experiences.

The original “French Natural Park” (Natural Park à la Française” formula:

- implements development policies which are really sustainable (focus on life and human beings) in the inhabited but sensitive areas
- guided by local initiatives and cooperation and involves the local, regional and government stakeholders
- it is based on an agreement with legal effect and ethical, moral content – the charter – and several countries are interested in its adaptation.

The individual regional nature parks and also the French Association of Regional Natural Parks are more and more frequently asked to share their experiences not only in France but abroad as well.⁷ The parks can enrich their experiences also through this type of cooperation.

CLOSING IDEAS ON ADAPTATION IN HUNGARY AND THE NEXT STEPS

Regarding the adaptation in Hungary, French experiences and the possibilities to adapt them in Hungary offer a good chance for development concerning the natural park system of Hungarian landscape-level cooperation in the following areas:

- Creation of the framework for natural park organisations, with special emphasis on the development of cooperation culture among the different administrative actors and the natural parks on the one hand and within the nature park cooperation on the other hand and the regulations applicable for this cooperation.
- Adaptation in Hungary of solutions and French experiences promoting the valorisation, acknowledgement and revitalisation of rural landscapes and the heritage of communities (patrimoine).
- Examining the opportunities offered by the natural park charter and its introduction in sample/test areas, using Hungarian and EU funding, with special emphasis on the development of frameworks facilitating financial support and synergic development of rural areas and landscape-level cooperation.
- Examination of the experiences and possibilities for application of the natural park trademark and elaboration of the possibilities and solutions for its introduction. ©

7 In addition to the fact that some of the natural parks have been acknowledged by different international organisations (for example, UNESCO or RAMSAR), the vast majority of the parks also participate in European or international cooperation as well with about 30 countries. This type of cooperation can take different forms: cross-border activities, technical and methodological training within the framework of decentralised policies implemented by the regions, and mutual actions to support and promote the development of similar approaches in other countries (Brasilia, Chile, Uruguay, Morocco, Benin, Vietnam etc.).

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<https://www.parc-naturels-regionaux.fr> (2020.08)

TÁJSZINTŰ EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉSEK RENDSZERE A FRANCIA NATÚRPARKOK PÉLDÁJÁN

Több mint 50 év telt el az első francia natúrpark megalakulása óta. Hazánkban is egyre gyarapodó számban jelenlévő natúrparkok előtt az egyik legnagyobb feladat, hogy napjaink környezeti, társadalmi és gazdasági kihívásaira választ adó módon, az élet fenntartható és reziliens térségi, példái, útmutatói legyenek. A tájszintű együttműködések fogalma először „A magyarországi natúrparkok szakmai koncepciója” (2014, Vidékfejlesztési Minisztérium) című dokumentumban jelenik meg. A megfelelő megfogalmazáshoz és szabályozási keretek meghatározásához még sok munkára van szükség, amely alapját a már működő és formálódó tájszintű együttműködések példáit, tapasztalatait feldolgozó kutatások képezhetik. A fogalom meghatározásához, használatának kereteihez és a szabályozás megalapozásához kívánok hozzájárulni a francia natúrparkok egyes sajátosságainak áttekintésével.

Franciaországban a regionális natúrpark (parc naturel régional) olyan vidéki térség, amelyet országosan elismernek értékes helyi öröksége és tájképe, valamint érzékeny területi jellege és együttműködési hálózata alapján. A regionális natúrpark célja rendkívül komplex és integrált megközelítést tükrözve

- ⓐ a terület természeti erőforrásainak, tájainak, emberi erőforrásainak és kulturális örökségének védelme és valorizációja (értékességének fel- és elismertetése), bemutatása,
- ⓑ innovatív és környezetbarát területrendezési, gazdasági, társadalmi és kulturális fejlesztési irányelvek megvalósítása, érvényesítése.
- ⓒ a regionális natúrparkok oktatást és információt nyújtanak, és ösztönzik az újszerű és hagyományos megoldások ötvözését, fejlesztését, innovatív megoldások kidolgozását, másrészt
- ⓓ a kikapcsolódás, feltöltődés, rekreáció és vendéglátás kiemelt területei és
- ⓔ mindezek megvalósítása érdekében tájszintű együttműködést segítő koordinációs feladatok ellátása.

A francia regionális natúrparkok küldetése: ⓐ a közös kulturális és természeti örökség megóvása és gyarapítása, ⓑ hozzájárulás a helyi közösségek életének kibontakozásához, ⓒ az aktív gazdasági élet elősegítése a fenntarthatóság érvényesítésével, gyakorlati megvalósításával, ⓓ a hagyományos és a legújabb tudás ötvözése, új megoldások tesztelése és innovatív kezdeményezések megvalósítása a fenntarthatóság jegyében. ©