



## ESPON 1.3.2.

### Territorial trends of the management of the natural heritage

Comments on the ESPON132 final report  
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#### **Warning foreword**

*The critical analysis I present here must be taken with great cautiousness.*

*A number of important pages miss in the document at my disposal: in fact 90 pages of part II section I were not technically obtainable (I also tried by myself as unsuccessfully as my colleagues).*

*The particular importance of these pages is due, in regard to the theme of the report, to their content : a whole chapter (20p) deals with “natural heritage” itself; the chapter “management” is devoted to Natura 2000 among other subjects.*

*Concerning “Territorial trends of the management of the Natural heritage” at European scale Natura 2000 is particularly relevant.*

#### **Synthetic analysis**

Asked by EU the aim of the question is to evaluate the influence of European policies when locally applied; this is particularly true concerning natural heritage. Thus the authors did very well when from a global point of view (at the continent scale) they come to a local scale; this corresponds to their three “macro”, “meso” and “micro” levels of analysis; in fact “interrelationships between the strands are central”. It is then a pity they didn’t study the intrusion of one scale into the other. Recommendations (Part 2 section III p.239-s) would then have been other than simply announcing the difficult choices when the two networks (urbanisation and nature) overlap: solving such cross conflict does not depends only on economics or territorial attractiveness; it is now well known that natural ecosystems functioning induces the cheapest management costs. There remains one of the interests of ecological corridors.

In such a humanized space as western Europe, analysing natural heritage requires a clear definition of the studied object. Authors carefully often call it “semi-natural areas”, what suits the proposed definition in the glossary and the reality of the land, but not that which emerges from the maps : maps suggest those areas are mostly forests (apart from high altitude areas which dominate everywhere). This is improper : 1-the authors themselves admit that “only 2% of the total European forest cover is regarded as natural”, 2-it cannot be asserted that all Scandinavian forests are, as written, extensively exploited (i.e. I have seen Norwegian forest cuttings !), 3-it cannot be agreed that natural heritage includes such artificial nature as green in cities. Even if we agree that it “does not only concern the best” but “includes ordinary countryside”, natural heritage is not the whole nature: without a precise meaning or sense given to “natural heritage” could include “roads margins” as suggested from the study case Nord-Pas de Calais!

Natura 2000 is the first European program solely devoted to natural heritage. Even with small funds, this program is major for the territorial trends: with nearly half of Denmark’s territory, 40% of Spain’s ... Natura 2000 covers 25% of the EU-15 area (dated on May 2003; 24% on may 2002; 23% on April 2001; 20% in April 2000) which is more than the 15% given in the report (p.12, Part I Summary).

Natura 2000 deserves much more than 5 pages (Part 2, section 1, chapter 6, p 112-117). Even a recent program (less than 10 years) evaluating its influence on territorial uses is possible by comparison with what was done before. Therefore Région Nord-Pas de Calais is an excellent model (one of the best?) because of its lasting natural heritage policies (more than 30 years). Moreover the effective influence of Natura 2000 goes largely beyond the sole pSPAs (*pSIC en français*): the EU recently decided that Regional Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds should not support actions conflicting with Natura 2000 network: this major decision seems to have been forgotten by the authors.

It is an historical as well as a technical evidence that agriculture needs a lot of space and then is a dominant factor of territorial utilization; the effects of intensive agriculture or forestry on biodiversity are also well known. Therefore the authors were right when taking such an account of these productive activities (other territorial managements –urbanisation, road infrastructures, ...- are less space consuming) ; but this implies by no means they should be so pushed forward up to be the point of view for entering the subject.

The authors change the subject to “what is the influence of the management of natural heritage on spatial development?” Yet the question is clear : what is the influence of the management of natural heritage on territorial utilization? Therefore the analysis should first be devoted to natural heritage national and regional policies, their related areas and pertaining funds; historical data, even recent, would have given some information on the efficiency of those policies and their complementarities. Then, but only then the spatial concurrences with other territorial managements could be analysed: it would then have been observed that no more than 3% of the EU territory are protected areas. Moreover the general recommendation 5 is already on the way: areas under Habitat Directive keep their economic activities, so practicing “protection-by-developing”.

An efficient ecological network consists of both strictly protected, lightly protected and sustainably developed areas: analysing this already existing reality would have stimulated the proposal of real innovations for “Natural heritage territorial management” (Part1 Summary 1.9 p.25); this concerns particularly the “Recommendations” (Part 2 Section III p.241-s) where two opposite gradients (economic development vs. ecological network) appear from macro to micro levels. Beyond its contribution to territorial attractiveness nature affords most of the population’s necessary resources (water, soils, ...).

### **Particular elements**

Knowing nothing about the funds assigned to this research, the following remarks are totally free of this strict constraint.

#### About the methods :

- Most of the information comes from those who apply the European policies (national ministries, ... annex 1) ; it would have been wise to require the collaboration of independent people as has sometimes been done (ECNC, Italian Sciences Academy, ...).

This is particularly outstanding when reading the report about the seven case studies: comparison between them is difficult because of the heterogeneity of the chapters (Report Vol.2) which also impedes reading them.

- Evaluating their own work authors admit great lacks of data (Part 1 Summary 5 p.41). It could be the most interesting information of this work: pointing out the missing information in order to soon collect them. Nevertheless information concerning Natura 2000 are available on the EU internet site.

- At the meso and micro scales networks (urban versus ecological) are conflicting (Part 1 Summary 2.4 p.35): “development corridor” and “Nature 2000 corridor” superimpose one another so that one wedges the other.



- Caution should be inherent when relating DPSIR to GDP: this indicator includes accidents which need reparation which concerns also nature degradation. Thus the greatest the degradation, the greatest and most expensive are the reparations : so more is nature impaired, more is GDP increased.
- the seven case studies have not been selected for their representativeness; it means they afford only qualitative information; as interesting they are they could also be representative of the some natural heritage policies.
- Bibliographic references are often unusable (annex and text).

### **Further research**

- different EU's policies may eventually enter in conflict with one another: the way and conditions of their coherence should be studied.
- mono or polycentric territorial organisation is concentrating populations in cities (opposite to dispersed rural populations); a growing need of nature is observed by urban inhabitants: this leads to growing nature recreation claim. This appears to be a new but important threat to natural heritage which should be integrated in such study.
- as said here, there exists a factual paradoxical influence of agriculture-forestry on natural heritage; innovations are to be found in the ways of compatibility between them.
- a comparison of the efficiency of the three kinds of tools (legal regulations, land purchasing, management contract) for natural heritage policies would be very interesting; among indicators could be social acceptance and the funds-results ratio.