

PLANNING METHODOLOGIES OF THE PUBLIC USE OF PROTECTED AREAS: BACKGROUND AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The protected spaces (PS) are currently facing major territorial issues. Various studies have shown that the effectiveness of its management presents important deficiencies associated with the impossibility of reconciling activities of use and conservation, and in recent years has increased the interest in public use planning as a strategy to improve the management of these spaces. The concern about the effectiveness of the management of PS has led to a proliferation of many methodologies for evaluating and in the current context; the PS cannot be understood without the presence of human activities.

For this reason it is proposed as a central objective of this work analyzes the main methodologies and techniques in recent years relating to the planning of the public use of protected spaces. In addition, it carried out a methodological proposal for the approach to this complex task, framed in the current situation and with a view of the challenges of the coming years.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The methodology was structured on the basis of three stages or phases. In the first of them the survey was directed toward the identification of the main problems faced by these spaces. In addition an analysis was made of concrete experiences in different countries to identify key factors or patterns in common between the various methodological proposals. The last phase was to develop a methodological proposal that combines the most salient aspects of the various experiences analyzed.

2. THE COMPETITION FOR THE SPACE AND THE NEED OF A LAND USE STRATEGY

The vision of the natural spaces, virgins and pristine is increasingly divorced from reality. The changes in the settings and in the organization of the territory and the new forms of production require to renewing the approaches of the past. Following this notion, we refer in this work to the protected spaces not as natural spaces, but as social spaces, designed and built by man for the preservation of the values primarily natural, but also social and cultural.

It is clear in this situation, which the PS does not escape to the existing territorial problems, mainly articulated around to the possession of the land and conflicts by incompatibilities of use. These are the main reasons that lead us to an urgent need to establish a territorial organization that will help halt this self-destructive expansion and harmonize the relationship between the internal uses in each unit of conservation. The need to reorganize a territory, and in particular the PS, is referred to the construction of a relationship between society and nature that can achieve the objectives of conservation and meet the needs and interests of the communities involved.

In this context of competition for space, we can hardly imagine PS entirely dedicated to the functions of conservation and preservation. Each time it is most needed its multifunctionality and its integration with the interests and activities of the nearby communities. The adaptation of the PS to

certain economic practices of low impact could be a strategy of reduction of social conflicts, allowing their livelihoods in the long term. A strategy that could prevent the colonization of these spaces by the interests of the mega farms or property speculation.

That is why the public use planning cannot be underestimated and should be seen as an essential and strategic tool to achieve the harmonization between the activities of use and conservation. However, to achieve this it will be necessary to establish a new conceptual and methodological framework inspired by a wide-ranging and innovative conception of land use planning that redefine the models of zoning and set new techniques and tools to carry out the planning and management of the PS.

3. PLANNING METHODOLOGIES OF THE PUBLIC USE OF PROTECTED AREAS

Public Use Planning has not been a priority in the management of the PS. In general the decisions regarding the creation, design, the size and the management of these spaces have been dominated by the criteria of the biogeography, conservation biology and the natural sciences in general. The objectives were always focused on the needs of the species to protect and planning processes have been focused on designing strategies to that end.

In spite of this, the PS has historically coexisted with other uses and activities that generate negative impacts and that hinder the attainment of the objectives of conservation. These problems can be attributed to the absence of planning of public use or to the lesser importance given in relation to the objectives of conservation. But what is the best alternative for public use planning? Is the planning of specific activities such as tourism? Is zoning? Is the management of the Territory at regional scales? Or is the search for new comprehensive methodologies for the planning of public use and conservation? Searches have been diverse and there are interesting proposals that could fall within the different trends that emerge from the questions raised.

A first group of methodologies are those derived from the results of the assessments of the effectiveness of the management of PS. The aim of these documents was not planning the public use, but it can be stated that the results obtained showed that many issues were related to the incompatibilities of use and the lack of proper planning and management of the activities. As a result, supplementary documents have developed a strategy of public use planning based on addressing and resolving the problems identified by the evaluations.

A second group is made up of the methodologies associated with the management and territorial planning. These types of proposals are organized on the basis of three main axes: the identification of attractions or areas of interest, according to the activity concerned, the connectivity between the different points and the flows that are created from them. The definition of environmental units or territorial units, and the creation of models of the territory based on previous diagnostic are common in this type of proposals, and tend to be articulated by the use of thematic cartography and the implementation of geographic information systems (GIS).

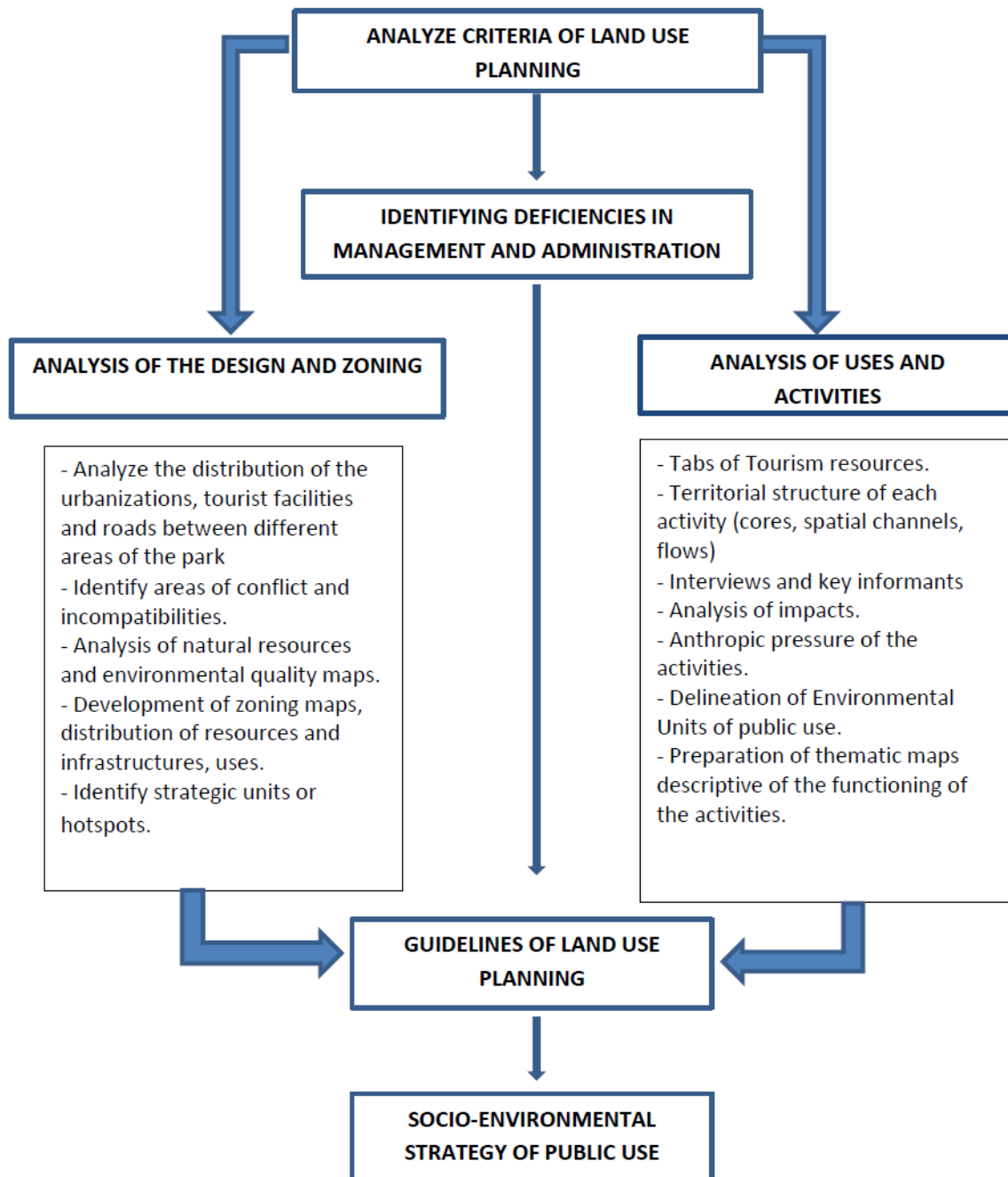
Other important methodologies are those related with zonings. The studies that may fall within this orientation proposed methodologies for integrated public use planning to the processes of zoning. Not all experiences arise with the main objective of public use planning, but it notes that despite the diversity of objectives, there is a common search toward the integration of activities of use and conservation through the proposal of new methods of zoning.

4. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

Figure 1 presents a methodological proposal for public use planning framed within an approach next to the theories of land use planning and the expanded and current vision of this concept. This methodological proposal comprises five moments or fundamental steps that require the articulation of a series of tasks and the achievement of concrete objectives.

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FIGURE 1
Methodological proposal for public use planning



Source: Own preparation

5. PROSPECTS FOR PUBLIC USE PLANNING

The results of this work allow us to establish some discussions regarding the future prospects in the planning of public use. In the first instance is denoted a growing interest in addressing the issues related to the uses and activities within the protected spaces. On the other hand, although are recorded numerous proposals devoted to the resolution of sectoral issues, or to the planning and management of specific activities such as the tourism and fishing; there is a preference toward the approaches from integral visions of the problem, based on the principles of land use planning.

The prospects for public use planning are reflected in the vision of this work through the outline presented in Figure 1. Each one of the stages represents a line of action or a central axis to be taken into account in the processes of current or future planning. Regardless of the order assigned in this case, it is understood that the analysis of these axes and lines of action will be present in a large part of future initiatives.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This work, through the review of various global experiences and through the configuration of a methodological proposal akin to the needs highlighted, tries to make evident a vision on the PS. A vision that seeks to think to the protected spaces as social spaces, where the natural and human needs are articulated in such a way as to allow its joint planning, in post to optimize the functions and objectives with which these spaces were created.

The methodological proposal made, it can be said that it is a construction, or a product derived from the analysis of numerous experiences of recent years. This work allowed us to identify both patterns and common criteria, such as certain shortcomings and deficiencies. In this regard, the proposed methodological scheme represents an alternative that combines the highlights of the methods and techniques of the sectoral proposals, and encompassed within the comprehensive principles of land use planning.

The value of the proposal - beyond their ability to apply them to specific cases- lies in highlighting the main prospect of public use planning, related to the deepening of the pursuit of socio-environmental strategies for the management of the PS. Strategies where the designs and the zonings are not intended only on the basis of the natural and physical criteria and where the planning of the uses and activities are not carried out in isolation and without articulated with the conservation objectives.