

Main messages from the Learning Landscape Partnership Project

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Why do we need learning landscape partnerships?

Despite many decades of research within protected area landscapes, many protected area management organisations struggle to use scientific expertise in their management and decision making processes. This project sought to build ‘learning landscape partnerships’ between researchers and protected area management organisations, such that research is better tailored to the end users’ needs and becomes a process of co-producing knowledge to help protect and enhance protected areas.

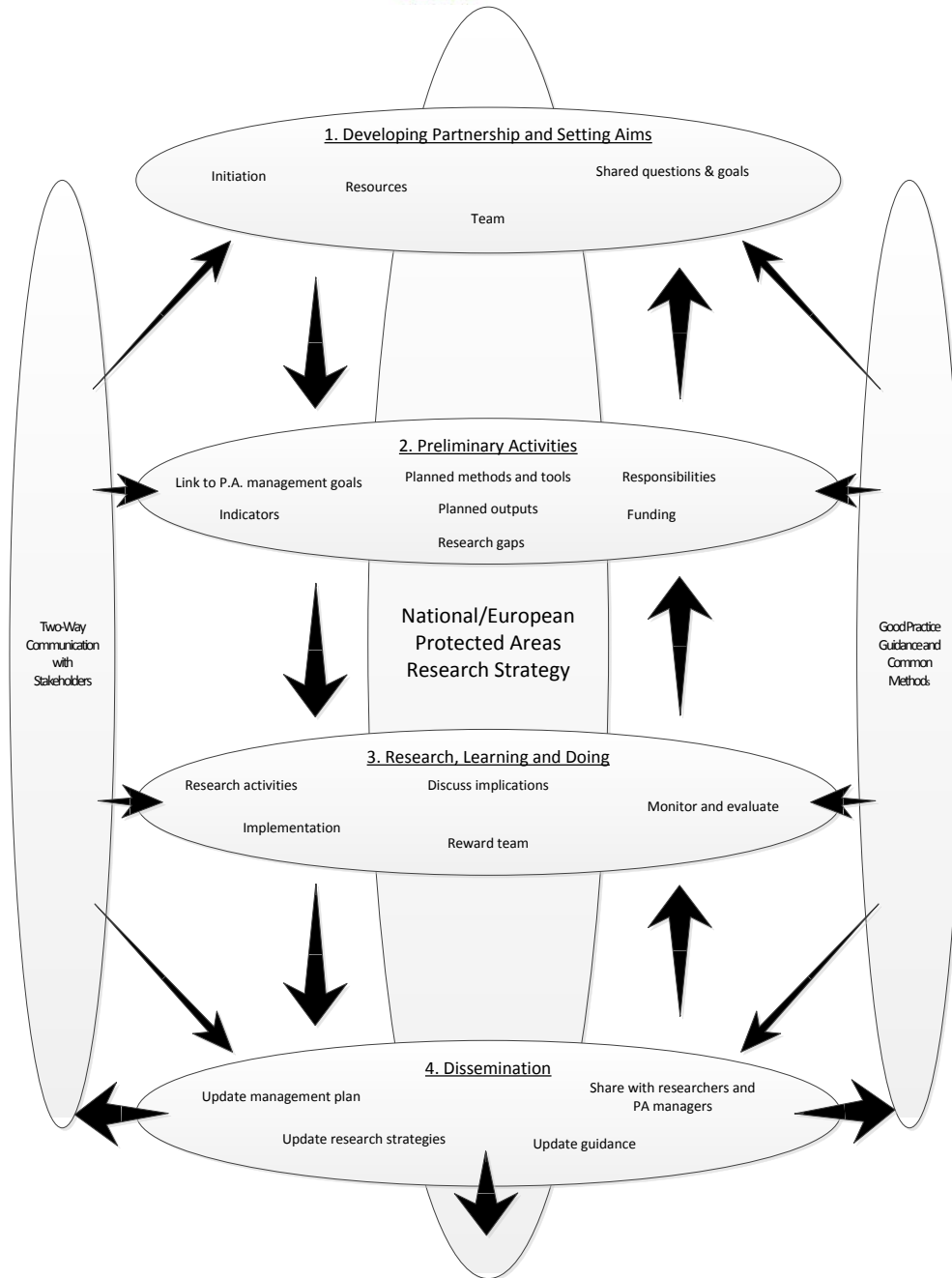
Lesson 1: What are learning landscapes?

There was considerable discussion about terminology – what is a protected area; who are protected area managers, and what is meant by research partnerships? Although protected areas, as defined by IUCN, vary widely in their scale and scope, the focus was on ‘landscape’ scale protected areas, covering multiple habitats and ecosystems and having wider societal and economic implications than single sites for single species. Our focus was on protected area managers (PAMs) with formal, often statutory duties, to manage and protect these landscapes. These are generally employed within governmental agencies or departments. In the authors’ opinion, these are appropriate ‘stakeholders’ with whom researchers could work. However, these ‘stakeholders’ are under-represented in the environmental partnership literature, which tends to focus on either working with policy-makers or with the public or with individual private land managers. The first two points, about working with landscapes and with PAM reflect the membership of EUROPARC. Research partnerships implied a genuine and ongoing commitment to joint working between academic researchers and protected area managers, rather than tokenistic dissemination of post-project findings. There was an interesting difference in the degree of information and control that PAMs had over research activities, from the ability to refuse or redirect permits to often no knowledge of research being undertaken, due to the differences in historical land rights and land ownership patterns.

Lesson 2: Factors in building Learning Landscape Partnerships

The ‘Scottish model’ was elaborated and tested at the Siggen workshop and confirmed by researchers at the EUROPARC conference. The final process model is illustrated over-page and detailed guidance on each stage can be found in the report. Key points to consider in conjunction with the multi-dimensional process model include:

- Depending on history and context, you may be able to enter the model at different stages.
- Communicate with partners *and* wider ‘stakeholders’ throughout the process.
- The process model represents merging the ideal with past experiences.
- This is a model for developing a particular partnership rather than linking partnerships.



Lesson 3: What makes for successful knowledge exchange?

Overall, the results from the Scottish and Siggen workshops suggest that there was often a trade-off between resources invested and having an effect, and that opportunities such as joint project applications were costly but effective; activities like 1:1 meetings were less costly and still quite effective; whereas networking events were more costly relative to their impact. The EUROPARC conference delegates supported these findings. There were differences, reflecting different cultures and personalities, but overall, it was fairly unanimous. The discussions suggested that whilst social media and web-based materials were useful for raising awareness and publicising information to large audiences; partnerships and joint-working were best supported through more low-tech approaches to face to face interaction. Furthermore, busy PAMs would often use trusted researchers to identify information sources, given the quantity of information available on the web and social media, which takes time to sift on basis of quality.

Lesson 4: Where are the ‘climate change gaps’ in Learning Landscape Partnerships?

| Identified Clusters | | |
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| Edinburgh Workshop | Siggen Workshop | EUROPARC Conference |
| Perceptions, attitudes and behaviours This was around how communities, organisations and institutions might understand and respond to messages about climate change mitigation and adaptation in protected areas. | Impact of climate change on biodiversity: How climate change may influence biodiversity, in terms of species types, interactions and range, and therefore the impact on protected area management. | Awareness and definition of Problems: ensuring joint understanding of climate change as a challenge to protected areas |
| Socio-economic mechanisms to consider impact of mitigation and adaptation This was about either change to existing mechanisms or what methods and tools were needed to consider the impacts of mitigation and adaptation. | Socio-economic impact of climate change: The socio-economic impacts of climate change, including the implications for land use, recreation, tourism, local economies, ecosystem services and natural resource provision. | Funding and Recognition of LT research: ensuring investment in long-term data sets and recognition of applied research in academic institutions |
| Working beyond the boundaries of protected areas This was about how protected areas are defined and bounded; how they might change if different criteria were used; and how they fit into the wider landscape. | Perceptions and understanding: The need to better understand changes to public perceptions of protected areas as a result of climate change and the role of the media. | Inter- and transdisciplinary research: ensuring that research took a complex systems approach that incorporates local and traditional knowledge |
| Impacts of climate change on biodiversity This was about research needed to consider how the dynamics of climate change would affect biodiversity and nature conservation. | How to measure impact of climate change: How climate change and its impacts are measured, such as with the use of scenarios and projections, standardised benchmarking, knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary approaches and tools for management, as well as suitable monitoring systems. | Impacts of management practices: ensuring that management practice impacts are understood in a changing climate |
| Systems Approaches A plea for interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches to the system, not mono-disciplinary studies | Impact of climate change on management practice: the impact of climate change on management practice, including long-term development, protection aims, efficient mitigation, species prioritisation, as well as adaptive management and management planning | Monitoring and methods: improved sampling; better integrated long-term data sets, access to data and using data to improve restoration methodologies |
| Planning Processes Research needed on how to develop adaptive management plans. | Sharing good practice: knowledge gaps around innovation practices, cultural heritage management and comparing national park governance structures across Europe to support CC policies | Boundaries and Scales: working with stakeholders beyond protected areas; understanding how site impacts affect the whole area |
| Evaluating the role of protected Areas Research needed on the role of current protected areas and how these roles might stay relevant under conditions of climate change. | Non-climate change knowledge gaps – broader knowledge gaps (e.g. connecting people to nature), of concern to protected area management but with no explicit link to climate change should still be prioritised. | Strategy and Coordination: coordination of research; sharing good practice; making an impact beyond the specific protected area |
| Monitoring and Data-sets Both the need for monitoring and methods to use existing data more effectively. | | Partnership working: sharing knowledge and concerns about good or bad PAM-researcher relationships |
| Total topics = 47 | Total topics =63 | Total topics =38 |

Whilst there are some similarities across the workshops (e.g. monitoring and measurement methodologies), there are also many differences (e.g. lack of focus on biodiversity or socio-economic impacts at the EUROPARC conference), which reflects both different priorities held by participants and different ways in which discussions were framed and facilitated. The summary masks the considerable detail provided on topics that were then clustered in the workshops. This suggests there is a large, and heterogeneous, agenda for climate change focused research-PAM partnerships. There was much less convergence and agreement on priorities here than regarding knowledge exchange or how to build a successful partnership. This heterogeneity is unsurprising given that ‘climate change’ touches all aspects of protected areas and covers both how to adapt to change and how best to mitigate change. However, perhaps the two main areas of commonality are (1) the

recognition that climate change is a complex issue requiring a system approach involving both social and natural science; and (2) the search for tools or data-sets to help digest this complexity in order to make decisions.

What should happen next?

Through role playing, actions were identified for specific stakeholders e.g. researchers could share ideas with PAM and help win funding to put partnerships into action and PAM could make time available to meet with researchers to discuss potential projects. Other stakeholders are also required for a partnership to work e.g. NGOs, government agencies, funders, residents, local policy-makers and journalists. There was a desire to link up between partnerships, in order to make them more strategic and ensure that they have an enduring legacy. There was support for EUROPARC setting up a Protected Area Research Group to continue these discussions, particularly as many researchers felt there lacked a pan-European platform for interacting with protected area managers. There were also many requests for EUROPARC to increase the amount of open access information and data held on their website; and to facilitate more knowledge exchange, beyond their membership. However, this would be very resource-intensive and may not be in the interests of their members. The project identified a number of platforms and networks (e.g. CAMERAS¹ for Scotland; or IUCN for Global issues) that might utilise research for protected area management but this requires researchers to make their research more accessible to non-academic audiences. As highlighted above, active, ongoing face-to-face interactions are generally more useful than posting research summaries on websites, which has implications for how scientists win funding for these kinds of sustained interactions. On an individual level, many people took away ideas for their organisations and were keen to collaborate with new partners met during this project.

How did we learn?

The project utilised three consecutive workshops to share experiences. The first workshop was held in Scotland in April 2014, involving 5 Scottish researchers; 3 Scottish protected area managers; a representative from EUROPARC and an Italian researcher and Hungarian protected area manager. The second workshop was held in Germany in September 2014 involving 5 researchers and 5 managers from across Europe. The results from the first two were fed into a special session on 'Valuing Research' at EUROPARC's 2014 conference in October, involving 4 researchers and 7 protected area managers from across Europe. The focus of the project was to allow in-depth discussions between key players to build partnerships, rather than sample a larger number. Evaluation results suggest that this model was well-regarded (indeed two participants came as part of their holidays!) and could be replicated across EUROPARC regions. The final workshop reports can be found at: <http://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/Learning-Landscape-Partnerships>.

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¹ A Co-ordinated Agenda for Marine, Environment and Rural Affairs Science