



UNE AUTRE VIE S'INVENTE ICI

# Study on the way in which the “French Natural Regional Parks” model is being institutionalised abroad

## SYNTHESIS

July 2015

Author: Na'a kin PINTADO,  
International Research Officer

*This document was drafted at the request of the Council of Europe in the context of the Local Development Pilot Projects Programme with the financial assistance of the CoE, MAEDI and the AFD. The content reflects only the views of the author and not necessarily those of the partners who are not responsible for the use to which the information set out in this publication might be put.*





# Study on the way in which the “French Natural Regional Parks” model is being institutionalised abroad

## **Context:**

In the context of the Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe and the Local Development Pilot Projects Programme (LDPP), the Council of Europe (CoE) is devising territorial heritage development models, in particular the concept of a charter as used in the natural regional parks (NRPs) in France. The Council of Europe is currently considering the possibility of institutionalising this approach. To this end it has asked the Federation of Natural Regional Parks of France for feedback and assistance with analysing how the “French NRP” approach and model might be applied in other countries.

This study also interests the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) and the French Development Agency (AFD), which are technical and financial partners of the FPNRF, with regard to the exploitation and dissemination of the experiences of French parks in terms of European and international cooperation.

## **Methodology:**

This study was prepared on the basis of information gathered from a series of interviews with persons working on the institutionalisation of the NRP model in other countries. A bibliographic review was made to supplement and verify the information presented during the interviews.

This document is the final outcome of the study and comprises seven fact sheets on the cases of Wallonia (Belgium), Switzerland, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, the Lebanon and Madagascar, as well as this executive summary comprising recommendations.

## Summary:

The study concerned seven cases of institutionalisation of the RNP model - in Chile, Madagascar, Mexico, Belgium (Wallonia), Switzerland and Uruguay - at different levels of completion. The analysis shows that although the process of institutionalisation is specific to each country in accordance with its context, there are similarities from one case to the next.

### *a) Points in common*

Experiments with territorial projects prior to the establishment of an institutional framework  
A common objective for territories  
A legislative framework based on nature conservation laws  
The development of tools similar to the Charter  
The problem of land ownership and productive activities: the need to gain the support of socio-professional groups  
The keys to success for gaining the support of different groups of actors

### *Experiments with local and regional projects prior to the establishment of an institutional framework*

The first finding is that, **apart from the case of Switzerland, territorial projects based on the French RNP model were put in place prior to the definition of an institutional framework granting them official recognition.** For example the first cross-border park in Wallonia was set up in 1971, long before the decree establishing parks, which came into force in 1985. In Mexico the study on the institutionalisation of the model has been underway since 2012 at the same time as a pilot project concerning the establishment of a “bio-cultural landscape”, so that feedback from the field is used in the discussions on the legal framework and vice-versa. In the Lebanon and Uruguay discussions on the institutional framework are being conducted at the same time as pilot territorial projects are being set up. In Madagascar and Chile similar approaches have been adopted. **Switzerland**, where the legal framework, in the form of the Ordinance of 7 November 2007 on parks of national importance, which came into force in December 2007, preceded the creation of the first regional natural parks in 2008, **is the one exception.**

### *A common objective for territories*

Irrespective of whether they are development areas, regional natural parks, bio-cultural landscapes, conservation landscapes or nature parks, these areas also have comparable objectives: to develop **territorial management tools characterised by their strong focus on the preservation of the environment and sustainable development, and on territories that have a substantial natural and cultural heritage. The aim of these initiatives is to strike a balance between protection of the environment and development.** Some countries like France and Mexico also focus on the idea of **shared identity**. In Latin American countries and in Madagascar this model is also an alternative to more restrictive forms of protected areas such as national parks.

### *A legislative framework based on nature conservation laws*

It is also noteworthy that, apart from the case of Madagascar, where the initiative is still in its infancy, almost all countries (Belgium - Wallonia, Switzerland, Chile, Mexico and the Lebanon) have elected to take environmental and nature conservation laws as the legal

framework for such initiatives: the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection in Mexico, the draft legislation for the establishment of the National Protected Areas System in Chile, and the Nature Conservation Law in Wallonia, the Law on Nature Reserves in the Lebanon, the Law on the Protection of Nature and the Landscape and the Ordinance on Parks of National Importance in Switzerland. The RNP model has a **strong environmental dimension** and **the environmental legal framework is therefore considered to be the most appropriate**. Only Uruguay does not fit this pattern as it considered that the RNP model corresponded first and foremost to a **territorial planning and sustainable development approach**. It is anticipated that the parks set up under the RNP model will be covered by the **Law on territorial planning and sustainable development**.

*The development of tools similar to the Charter*

Apart from the case of Madagascar, where the initiative is still being developed, all the other countries which have adopted the RNP model have **developed a tool similar to the Charter of French RNPs**. These tools take the form of **documents setting out the commitments, objectives and directions to be taken by the parks for an average of 10 years, which often corresponds to the duration of the Charter of French Parks, which has evolved over time**.

Country / Region	Name	Purpose	Duration
Switzerland	Charter	To ensure the management and guarantee the quality of the park. Commitment to preserving the natural and cultural assets of the park and enhancing them so as to foster the sustainable development of the territory.	10 years
Wallonia	Management Plan	Policy document for the Natural Parks setting out the projects to be developed by the park.	10 years
Uruguay	Charters	Records the agreements reached with regard to the protection, enhancement and development of the territory, as well as the main thematic focuses and the commitments entered into by each party concerned.	10 years
Chile	Action Plan or Roadmap	Plan for managing the area, serving as the agreement between the different parties involved on sustainable practices to be put in place.	7 to 10 years
The Lebanon	Charter	Policy document in which the signatories undertake to give impetus to the territory while preserving its natural, historical and cultural features.	8 years
Mexico	Territorial management agreement	Fixes the strategic objectives, strategies and programmes to be developed in the park.	15 years*

\* The duration of a charter is on the point of being increased to 15 years in the draft legislation on biodiversity currently being prepared in France.

Consequently, in order to be effective, the commitments and policies set out in the charters **should not be seen as merely a tool for the use of the authorities but rather as a project for the development of the territories in the long term.**

*The problem of land ownership and productive activities: the need to gain the support of socio-professional groups*

In Mexico, Chile and Madagascar, the RNP model has established itself as **an interesting alternative to the more restrictive categories of protected areas.** Indeed, local **populations and different socio-professional groups were initially somewhat reluctant** because RNPs were associated with national parks, conveying the idea of conflict. This could be seen in the fact that the word “park” was not used in the names selected but was replaced by “landscape” or “area”. In Uruguay, the same problem arose in the animal husbandry sector but an agreement was reached following the Uruguayan representatives’ visit to the French RNP, without this having any influence on the choice of name, which remained regional nature park and departmental park.

The **issue of land ownership** is closely linked to the previous point and is an extremely important factor that should be taken into consideration in these initiatives. Owing to their colonial heritage, a typical feature of the Latin American countries is that **land ownership is highly concentrated.** In Mexico, Chile and Uruguay, this feature was decisive in adopting a model operating according to the principle of the co-ordinated and sustainable management of natural resources rather than in accordance with regulatory restrictions. Indeed **the support of socio-professional groups who own land is a *sine qua non* condition for the achievement and success of such initiatives.** Moreover, in the Lebanon, in the Upper Akkar, **the issue of property that is not registered on the land registry has led to conflict and the municipalities are determined to withdraw from the scheme.** This has obliged those responsible for the initiative to temporarily abandon plans to mark out the area to be included in the park.

*The keys to success for gaining the support of different groups of actors*

Three main elements have helped to overcome these difficulties:

- observation of the RNP model *in situ*, mainly as a result of the French RNP receiving foreign delegations;
- establishment of a good communication and awareness-raising strategy for the project;
- a participative approach involving the different categories of stakeholders in all stages of the project.

These three elements guarantee that the model is fully understood and taken on board by local stakeholders. The use of a participative approach also helps the different stakeholders to be sure that their interests and concerns are taken into account and ensures that they buy into the project.

**b) Differences**

<p><i>The way in which the French RNP model has been adopted in each specific case</i> <i>The duration of the institutionalisation process</i></p>
--

*Whether or not the areas are classified as 'protected areas'*  
*The scope of the Charter*

*The way in which the French RNP model has been adopted in each specific case*

**The way in which these territorial projects have been put in place is specific to each case, although two main trends can be seen.** In Wallonia, for example, **the establishment of an institutional framework has led to the emergence of nature parks.** Indeed, although a nature park had been set up outside this framework as far back as 1971, eight parks were created between 1987 and 2001 following the decree issued in 1985. In Switzerland the process was very similar – an Ordinance on parks of national importance was issued in 2007 followed by the creation of 13 PNRs from 2008 onwards. In Chile, the Ministry of the Environment came up with the idea of creating conservation landscapes and the first parks were created following its call for projects. In the Lebanon, the creation of 6 regional nature parks was provided for in the national Territorial Land-Planning Scheme. In Mexico and Madagascar, on the other hand, **the introduction of this model was promoted by co-operation programmes.** Uruguay, for its part, enacted a law establishing the national System of Protected Areas back in 2000 and the initiative subsequently received the support of a co-operation project.

*The duration of the institutionalisation process*

**The duration of the institutionalisation process** has varied in each case. In Switzerland and Wallonia, the definition of the legal framework made it possible to create parks based on the RNP model very quickly. In Chile for example 15 years went by between the first initiative of setting up an area for the preservation of culture and the environment (ACCA) in Patagonia and the draft legislation which should lead to the official recognition of conservation landscapes. In Mexico the institutionalisation process began in 2012 and took place at the same time as the project for the establishment of a bio-cultural landscape. In Madagascar the project for the establishment of an area of sustainable development did not set any deadlines for the completion of the institutionalisation process. In the Lebanon, the establishment of a legal framework making it possible to take account of RNPs and NNPs was defined relatively quickly after the beginning of the work but the process has been held up as a result of the political situation. Finally, in Uruguay the decree relating to the actual establishment of the National System of Protected Areas was adopted 10 years ago. The plan to support the actual establishment of the National System of Protected Areas and to try out new models of territorial governance drawing on the RNPs has been in force for seven years, and the work on the institutional framework for these territories is expected to take another four years.

*Whether or not the areas are classified as "protected areas"*

In addition to the choice of name, the question also arises as to **whether or not such areas are classified as protected areas.** Although most of the countries studied (Switzerland, Belgium – Wallonia, Mexico and the Lebanon) have chosen or plan to classify these areas as "protected areas", other countries such as Chile and Uruguay have opted for another solution. In Chile it had been decided not to consider conservation landscapes as protected areas because of the costs and restrictions that would entail. Indeed, under the protected areas legislation in force, it is compulsory to carry out environmental impact studies in every area concerned, to give but one example. In Uruguay it is envisaged that the parks based on the RNP model should be considered territorial planning instruments to be implemented in areas neighbouring on protected areas.

### The scope of the Charter

The intended legal **scope** of these instruments also **differs from one country to the next**. In France, the Charter is a voluntary commitment and only certain aspects (town-planning, outdoor advertising displays, motor vehicles ...) have a binding legal effect. In Wallonia the management plan is a policy document which the signatories undertake to follow but which is in no way binding. In Mexico the bio-cultural landscape model currently under consideration would entail the adaptation of municipal development policies and programmes to ensure that they are in keeping with the territorial management agreement signed by the municipalities concerned. In Chile, it was not considered to be a good idea to make the road map binding; a voluntary approach and consultative procedures are considered to be important, which does not prevent some municipalities from going further<sup>1</sup>. In Uruguay and the Lebanon, the charters combine compulsory elements and guidelines to be followed as a voluntary undertaking.

### **Conclusions**

The French RNP model is a ground-breaking territorial management tool that is well-known beyond the borders of France. In different contexts, this model helps address the problem of protecting biodiversity in inhabited and productive areas where it is not possible to impose the sort of regulatory restrictions that apply to certain categories of protected areas. The concepts of shared identity, cultural heritage and traditional know-how have also been introduced in most countries which had adopted these models.

The institutionalisation process has been different in each context. However, the seven case studies show that a legal framework is not a prerequisite for putting this type of initiative in place. Indeed the case studies show that, apart from in Switzerland, the consideration of the institutional framework, in most cases, took place at the same time as the introduction of pilot projects.

Charters have also become key instruments in territorial projects. They underline the commitment of the different parties involved and define the direction and the measures to be taken with regard to the parks for a duration that allows for a long-term view.

Finally, it is important that such local and regional development projects should be the outcome of a voluntary and consultative process, assisted and backed by the different tiers of decision-making authorities (from local to national level) to ensure their long-term success and sustainability.

### **Recommendations for the LDPP**

- Give thought to the link with protected areas and the consequences of registering parks as protected areas or not.
- Give thought to the sort of law the LDPP model should be incorporated into, depending on the image, vision and scope that the stakeholders wish to give to this process and to this tool.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is what has been done in the municipality of Alhué, which has decided to include the action plan in its 10-year municipal development plan, with the result that measures taken with regard to protecting biodiversity will be binding.

- Define the roles of each stakeholder (institutional levels and local actors): support base, responsibilities and positioning in the creation and implementation procedure.
- Give thought to the duration of the charter and its scope (binding, legal ...) and to the signatories' commitments.
- Give thought to the human and financial resources required to guarantee its implementation and sustainability.
- Monitor and organise communication, consultation and the participation of all stakeholders to foster ownership of the project and involvement in its preparation and implementation.
- Choose a unique name for this process so as to promote its visibility and its recognition, and the weight it carries at both national level and in the field.



## APPENDICES

### Persons questioned / contacts

<b>Geographical area</b>	<b>Pilot structure</b>	<b>Contacts</b>	<b>Mail</b>
<b>EUROPE</b>			
Belgium Wallonia –	Federation of Walloon Nature Parks	Nicolas NEDERLANDT	fpnw@skynet.be
Belgium Wallonia –	Supreme Walloon Council for Nature Conservation	Jacques STEIN, Premier Attaché Research Officer at SPW – DEMNA	jacques.stein@gmail.com
Switzerland	Federal Office of the Environment	Simone Remund, Head of the Parks Team	simone.remund@bafu.admin.ch
<b>LATIN AMERICA</b>			
Chile (national)	MMA	Daniel Felipe ALVAREZ LATORRE, Division of Natural Resources and Biodiversity	DAlvarezl@mma.gob.cl
Chile (national)	MMA	Jaime ROVIRA SOTO Division of Natural Resources and Biodiversity, responsible for the theme Conservation of Ecosystems and Ecological Planning	JRovira.rm@mma.gob.cl
Mexico (national)	CONANP	Erika RODRIGUEZ Bilateral Co-operation Co-ordinator, International Cooperation Directorate	erika.rodriguez@conanp.gob.mx
Mexico (local)	ENDESU	Santiago MACHADO Co-ordinator of the Bio-cultural Landscape Project	jose.machado@endesu.org.mx
Uruguay	SNAP	Guillermo SCARLATO, Division Director	guillermo.scarlato@gmail.com
Uruguay	SNAP	Soledad AVILA, Head of Participation	soleavila@gmail.com
<b>MEDITERRANEAN</b>			
The Lebanon	MADA Association	Carla Khater, Vice-Chair	ckhater@gmail.com
<b>AFRICA</b>			
Madagascar (France)	RNP Marais of Cotentin and of Bessin	Jean-Baptiste WETTON – Head of the technical team	jbwetton@park-cotentin-bessin.fr

## **Bibliography**

**LDPP presentation leaflet, LDPP guide (definition, modalities...).**

**Compilation of 50 questions/answer relating to RNPs.**

A number of texts and laws relating to parks (non- exhaustive list)

**DECREE No. 67-158 of 1 March 1967 introducing regional nature parks.**

**CIRCULAR DEVL1220791C of 4 May 2012**

**relating to the classification and renewal of classification of regional nature parks and the implementation of their Charters.**

**LAW No. 83-8 of 7 January 1983, relating to the division of powers and responsibilities between municipalities, départements, regions and the State, known as the “Deferre” law.**

**LAW No. 93-24 of 8 January 1993 on the protection and enhancement of landscapes**

**LAW No. 2000-1208 of 13 December 2000, concerning urban solidarity and reinforcement. Articles 1, 3 and 4**

**(amending the town planning code), Articles L.121-4, L.122-1, L.123-1 (town planning documents compatible with the Park Charter) and Article 45 (Charter submitted to public enquiry).**

**LAW No. 2006-436 of 14 April 2006 relating to national parks, marine nature parks and regional nature parks.**

## **BELGIUM**

**The case for Walloon NPs, the nature parks of Wallonia, and their functioning. FPNW.**

**Decree of 16 July 1985 concerning nature parks in Wallonia.**

**Decision of the Walloon Government of 25 November 2010 laying down the conditions for the granting of subsidies to the nature park management committees.**

**Law of 12 July 1973 on nature conservation in the federal state of Belgium.**

## **MEXICO**

**Analysis of the Mexican institutional landscape for the purposes of determining the relevance and feasibility of adopting and adapting the RNP model to the Mexican context, as a new territorial management tool for the conservation of natural ecosystems, their biodiversity and cultural values, The Nature Conservancy, Dec 2012**

**Project note “Protection of biodiversity and the ecosystems of the corredor Ameca – Manantlán” and the initiative of establishing a Bio-cultural Landscape in la Sierra Occidental de Jalisco.**

## **MADAGASCAR**

***Fiche de capitalisation*, financial support for the RNP of the Marais of Cotentin and Bessin in establishing a “sustainable development area” in the Atsinanana Region of Madagascar**

## **CHILE**

**Draft law establishing the Service of Biodiversity and Protected Areas, Chile**  
[http://www.senado.cl/servicio-de-biodiversidad-y-areas-protegidas-sala-dio-luz-verde/prontus\\_senado/2015-03-04/191234.html](http://www.senado.cl/servicio-de-biodiversidad-y-areas-protegidas-sala-dio-luz-verde/prontus_senado/2015-03-04/191234.html)

## **SWITZERLAND**

**Official website of the Swiss Federal Office of the Environment, Switzerland**  
<http://www.bafu.admin.ch>

**Federal Law of 1 July 1966 on the protection of nature and landscapes (LPN), RS 451**  
**Ordinance of 7 November 2007 on parks of national importance (Ordinance on parks, OParks), RS 451.36**

**“Handbook on the establishment and management of parks of national importance”,**  
**Communication of the OFEV, 2014**

**Brochure on Swiss Parks, “Discover the most authentic landscapes of Switzerland”,**  
**Network of Swiss parks.**

## **URUGUAY**

**Charter of Park Laguna de Rocha**

**Charter of Park Quebradas del Norte**

**Decree establishing the National Protected Areas System No 52/005 of 16/02/2005**

**Final Evaluation Report “Development of a National System of Protected Areas in Uruguay”, SNAP, June 2013**

**Law No.17234 of 22/02/2000 establishing the National System of Protected Areas**

## **LIBAN**

**Upper-Matn Sustainable Territory Charter**

**Presentation of the Mada Association “The Upper Akkar National Natural Park – Lebanon, a forgotten heritage lost between power and responsibility”**

**Presentation “The role of NGOs in defining national policies: the role of Mada in developing a legal framework for protected areas”**

**Report on a support mission: definition of the status, role, purpose and management mechanisms of national and regional nature parks in the Lebanon and drafting of the relevant legal framework, Development Support Project in the North Lebanon (ADELNORD).**

**Report on phase III, Upper-Matn Sustainable Territory Charter, July 2013**