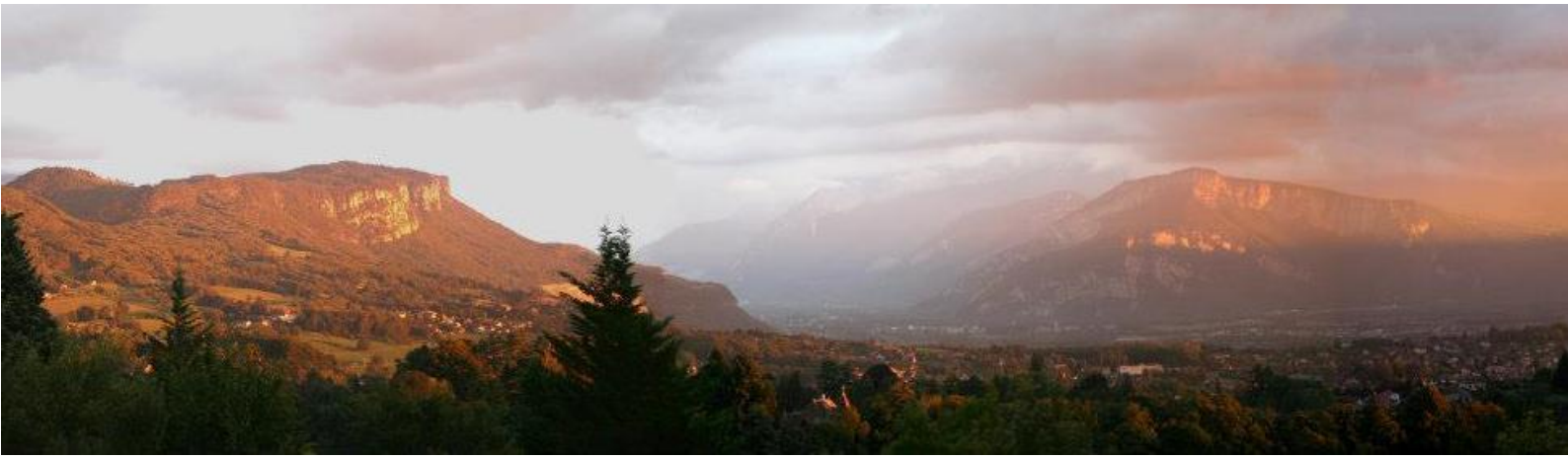
ALFRED TOEPFER NATURAL HERITAGE SCHOLARSHIP 2019



Modelling landscape perceptions in European Protected Areas

A study by Marie Micol, consultant for protected areas

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EUROPARC FEDERATION

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Front cover © Marie Micol – the view from my home, 'my' landscape

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Summary

Landscapes are fascinating. They mean so much to all of us, yet from one person to the next the definition and description of a landscape can vary greatly. For some people, a landscape will be everything natural and human interacting to shape the land and with that the culture of people who live there. For others, a landscape will only exist where there is minimal human impact, and landscapes must therefore be 'beautiful', 'pristine' (which in itself is very subjective). For some, a landscape will be something that is seen from a viewpoint, whilst for others it is something that is felt, individually and / or collectively.

Are any of those perceptions more valid than others? When I started this study, I thought the 'right' way to approach landscapes and to manage them was through an integrated lens: landscapes for me were everything there is and was and will be. 'My' landscape was a blend of childhood memories in the deep forests, roaring economic activity down in the valley, and everything in between. I thought if everyone saw it like me, we could manage it better. My goal was to find a way to make that happen.

With this study I was therefore hoping to find out what lies behind protected area staff perceptions of landscapes and landscape approaches, in order to come up with a framework – a standard way for protected areas across Europe to apply an integrated, holistic management approach to their precious landscapes.

The study was supposed to bring me on a journey across four countries in Europe to uncover landscape perceptions. The global situation from 2020 onwards meant that I only got to visit one country (Italy) besides my home country (France), and the rest was conducted over 'Zoom', but this piece of work has nonetheless been for me a metaphorical journey: a journey of questioning and learning, of feeling inspired by you people who care for those special places we call 'protected landscapes'.

This study is not a review of existing landscape approaches nor a review of theoretical models. The data I collected is a sample, resolutely practical, of what people in protected areas think about landscapes. It is asking important questions to those people who are in the position to shape the future of our most cherished landscapes in Europe. It is an invitation to pause and reflect on what we manage and care for.

With carefully crafted interviews, with 19 people in 7 different protected areas across France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as well as a short online survey to over 40 people, I set out to uncover what landscapes were really all about. I found that there are as many landscapes as there are people. Each individual perception is a blend of many factors

interplaying differently from one person to the next: what we like and care about, what we have lived, our aspirations for the future, our knowledge of a place (its history, its biology, its geology, etc.), our knowledge and appreciation of other places outside of it, and importantly our philosophical view on where humans fit in all of this!

What would become of my idea of a standardised framework to approach landscapes? I moved away from this initial goal and instead realised that the exercise I had conducted could be the basis for a methodology to enable protected area teams (and their partners) to 'have the conversation'. Indeed, what I found is that people working in protected areas rarely get opportunities and time to stop and reflect on the bigger picture. Yet I feel this is hugely important in order for us to be able to tackle the enormous challenges we face (climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality of access to green spaces, and many others, ...). Landscape is indeed a concept which is intimately linked with the way we manage those places we cherish, today and for the future. Making these places resilient, accessible without harming them, is a key consideration when it comes to landscapes.

'Have the conversation' thus means first with yourself, to reflect and sometimes to even realise what landscape means for you. Importantly however, we need to have that conversation collectively. Indeed, I have found through this research that perceptions of landscapes vary enormously even within teams of protected area staff working closely together. They are not in contradiction, but they are different and call for different approaches to managing those places. To enhance local delivery, I therefore believe it is vital to enable this conversation within protected areas teams and with their close partners. We can only solve the complex challenges we face if we understand each other's perceptions of landscapes and behind that, the reasons why we do the work we do.

This study has therefore brought me to develop a methodology to enable protected area teams to uncover variations in landscape perceptions, and what it means for their protected area management. My goal now is to refine this methodology and make it more consistent so that I can use it to empower protected landscapes across Europe to have these important conversations. There are as many landscapes as there are people and their strength comes from the fact that they come together to care for those landscapes and to bring a common vision forward. Protected areas are only as strong as the people who work to protect them.

This is not an academic paper. It is a think piece asking big questions. It is a eulogy to protected landscapes and the power they hold within them, to show the sustainable way forward and set the bar high. Ultimately, it is also a plea to resource them better, to believe in their potential and to enable them to fulfil what they were designed for: to bring people together, connect them to nature, and sustain liveable places.

Introduction

The premise to this study

Protected landscapes or protected areas? They refer to the same entities (designated places broadly encompassing nature reserves, regional and national parks, with variations across Europe), but many prefer using the former, a more evocative term for what we, professionals of this sector, care so deeply about… and yet, ask one person what they think a landscape is, then ask another: their answers will surely be different.

Why is that, and how can we protect landscapes when we all potentially mean different things? Shouldn't we all agree on a definition? Is the way I define 'landscape' more correct than the way others perceive it? And which approach will take us closer to tackling complex challenges and achieving sustainable development in those precious places?

The European Landscape Convention defines the transdisciplinary aspect of 'landscapes', bringing together ecology (conservation, ecosystem services, etc.), economy (growth vs. sustainability, employment, public spending, etc.) and sociology (notably well-being, but also elements of culture and history). Building from that, landscape approaches encompass socio-cultural, economic, and environmental processes managed towards sustainable development.

This was my starting point for this study. I was convinced landscape approaches were the key to our future as protected area managers and staff.

Literature on the topic of landscape approaches is rather scarce, or rather not easily found through a simple 'landscape approach' search on Google. With some time I found a thorough review of landscape approaches (Arts, et al., 2017), which concluded that there was not one, but many landscape approaches. In fact, as many approaches as there are scientific disciplines referring to landscapes (planning, ecology, economy, sociology, political science, and many more). Scientists from various disciplines (combined or not) have devised theoretical models to support landscape approaches. The World Wide Fund For Nature also presents interesting and valuable guidance on the landscape approach (World Wide Fund For Nature, 2016) involving protected areas, but their potential involvement feels rather impersonal. In the literature I have read, I have struggled to find what role could protected landscapes play in all of that (although I recognise, I surely could have read even more).

Yet I know protected areas have an absolutely central role to play. As specialists of nature conservation and local engagement, they represent a substantial pool of knowledge. Many of them are also at the forefront of research and practice in many different areas of work and in

a very good position to define the relationships between natural, economic, and social processes and thus to lead on a landscape approach in their local areas.

Finally, one model caught my attention: the T-shaped professional (Arts, et al., 2017). Professionals managing landscapes need not only their expertise, but also various personal competencies, allowing them to bridge the gap with other disciplines, to understand complex landscape management problems, to handle conflicts, etc. Yes, this is fundamental. I have seen first-hand what fantastic results developing such competencies can bring, having participated in the Competent Inclusive Communications course elaborated by the EUROPARC Federation (EUROPARC Federation, 2021). This is also what my colleagues in the United Kingdom have worked on tirelessly for many years, implementing psychometric profiling and coaching methods with protected area staff to enable better collaboration (NAAONB, 2021). There is no doubt that this approach is the one that will take us forward as a sector.

Yet the question remained for me: what exactly are we managing?

Just a little over two years have passed since I first wrote my application for this scholarship. Then, I had been working in the environmental sector for only 8 months. I have grown professionally and personally but my ambition remains the same: to become a landscape specialist and help protected areas enhance their local delivery through the concept of landscape.

As highlighted above, I did not really know what it meant in practice then. Now with more experience and importantly through conducting this study, I have uncovered what I can do to support protected areas, local organisations, and communities in managing their landscapes for sustainable development, and what it might mean **for them**. Although I could not visit all the places I had planned to because of the global sanitary situation, I can say this study has nonetheless been a fantastic journey.

The objective

My initial goal when I applied for the scholarship was to develop a framework for landscape approaches, replicable in different regions, based on the understanding of 'landscape' and 'landscape approach' perceptions across Europe. The hypothesis was that some cultures (national, local, or organisational) might naturally bring stakeholders together to collaborate to deliver integrated landscape management, whilst others might initiate this approach after a change in legislation or institutions.

This objective has evolved as I carried out my interviews and analysed my results. As you will see in the analysis, I have moved away from defining a framework, and instead felt a more useful approach was to propose an overall model and methodology to capture the variety of perceptions around landscapes and how we manage them.

This is not an academic research, it is not exhaustive, and it is not perfect. Instead, it is an invitation, a short study asking important questions to people who are in the position to shape the future of some of our most cherished landscapes in Europe.

The method

The guiding principle in deciding which protected areas to visit (albeit virtually!) and who to interview was **variety**. By asking a variety of people from a variety of places (and countries) what they thought landscapes were, I was hoping to find some answers about landscape perceptions.

Here are the areas I planned to visit and the reasons why I included them in my application:

- Where I grew up (Isère, France): There is a strong sense of place and dynamic collaboration here. For example, artisan products from protected areas have a marked presence in most convenience stores and supermarkets. Also, the local economy is heavily dependent on mountain tourism (notably winter sports), and protected areas are at the heart of this important source of activity.
- Tuscany, Italy: The first region to set up a regional landscape plan[1] in 2014 after a change in national legislation. I thought this might have some significance. Tuscany is also set between land and sea, renowned for its quality of life and vineyards, dependent on tourism, but also dependent on various land-related industries such as mining. This makes for very distinctive protected areas: 2 regional and 2 national parks and many periurban and rural nature reserves.

[1] A regional landscape plan is a planning tool at the regional level, which gives orientations for local planning and territorial development, with ambitions in terms of landscape and their quality.

- Herford County, Germany: It is made up of 41 small nature reserves (natural and man-made habitats) of an average size of 40 hectares. There are no national nor regional parks in the wider area, notably due to the historic layout of human settlements. This brings variety to the overall study, by looking at the perceptions of smaller protected areas when it comes to their consideration in the landscape.
- United Kingdom: This is where I have developed as an early environmental professional. I have a deeper understanding of the current perceptions and practices there, as well as the legislation. Yet I cannot simply state what 'landscape' means for British professionals working in protected areas.

Each protected area included in this study is presented in the next section.

After conducting some desk research I elaborated an interview guide to uncover what I felt were key elements in understanding landscape perceptions. These were:

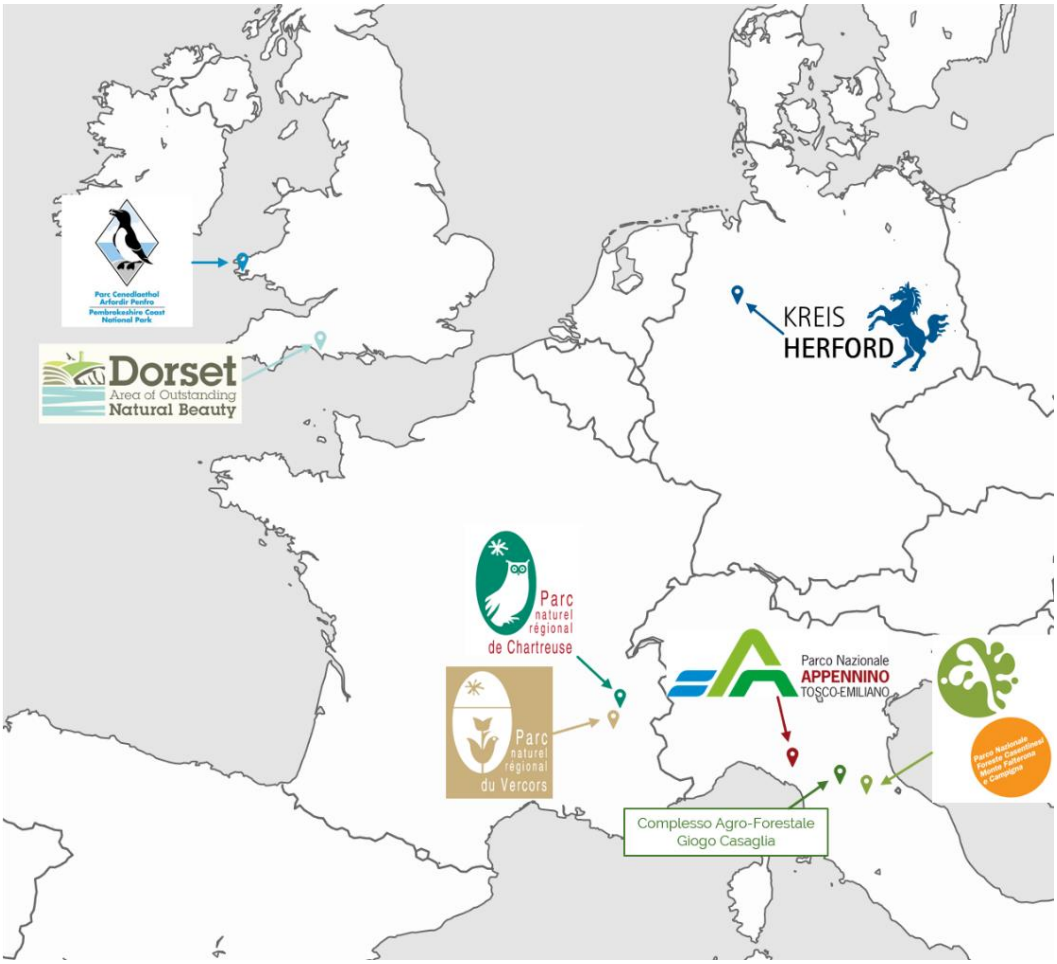
1. Emerging landscape definition
2. Impact of language / culture
3. Composition of a landscape / coherence of several landscapes
4. Perception of landscape fluidity / continuity
5. Protected area role in relation to landscape management
6. Translation of these varied perceptions into practical management
7. Aspirations and blockages around landscape management

The plan was to visit each protected landscape in order to interview staff from various specialties, as well as elected representatives or supporting bodies (depending on the local governance). Naturally, this transformed into conducting virtual interviews for most places, although I was lucky enough to be able to visit protected areas in Italy, as well as, of course, those close to where I live in France.

I also devised a short questionnaire covering some of the above elements, in order to survey a larger population of protected area staff.

The results I would get from these interviews and surveys were completely unexpected and I did not attempt to develop a methodology to analyse them until all interviews were conducted (between July and December 2020). The methodology is thus further defined in the 'Analysis' section of this report.

Short descriptions of protected areas in this study



Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors

1970; 2,062 km²

Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Region, France

53,000 inhabitants

https://www.parc-du-vercors.fr/

© Marie Micol

The Vercors is a very vertical mountain range, rich in **biodiversity and culture**, with an important nature reserve at its core and many N2000 sites, as well as **several designations for artisanal products** and **native breeds** (cattle, horse, poultry). The Park overlooks **three major urban areas** and attracts many visitors year-round for its **outdoor activities**.

The **operational team** is made up of around 50 people. The governance also involves a **committee of elected representatives** (116 members) from all 83 municipalities as well as department- and regional levels, who then select **35 board members** for ongoing strategic decision-making.

This is where I spent most winters growing up – for me, it represents both **adventure** and **tranquillity**.

Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse

1995; 865 km²
Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Region, France
171,173 inhabitants
https://www.parc-chartreuse.net/

The Chartreuse was shaped over 1,000 years by the **order of the Chartreux**, the monks who found there an isolated and quiet place in the **mountains** for their religious calling, as well as **dense forests** to use for economic exploitation. The **timber** is now designated for its high quality and the monks also still to this day produce a famous, 400-year-old plant-based **liquor** (the Chartreuse). Its remarkable **geology** also gives it very **diversified habitats and rich biodiversity**.
The **operational team** is made up of around 30 people, and the governance is the same as the Parc Naturel Regional du Vercors: a **committee of elected representatives** from all municipalities, department- and regional levels, and a **selection of board members** for ongoing decision-making.

The Chartreuse is **where I was born**, and **where I live today**. There is something unique and magical about this place: the smell of the forests, the majestic gorges and towering summits, the elusive presence of the lynx…

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

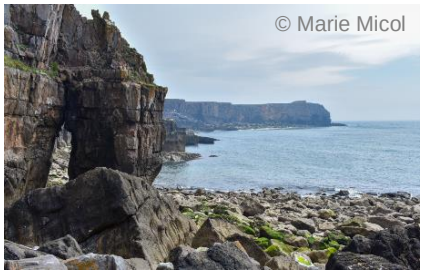
1961; 1,129 km²
Dorset, England, United Kingdom
74,600 inhabitants
https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is made up of both **coastlines** and **countryside**. The geology, ecology and scenery have inspired generations of poets, authors, and artists, as well as scientists, giving the AONB a **rich cultural heritage**. With growing urban populations surrounding the area, **leisure and recreation** are important activities in the AONB, but **agriculture** remains a dominant land use. The **marine environment** is also important for the area as its management can have an impact inland. The AONB is also home to a portion of the **Jurassic Coast**, England's only UNESCO natural World Heritage Site, and a major area for geology and fossils.
The **operational team** is made up of 7 people and is guided by the **AONB Partnership**, made up of representatives from local authorities, landowners, businesses, environment groups, and various government agencies.

Due to COVID restrictions I unfortunately did not get to visit Dorset AONB. However, I had the chance to work on an *ad hoc* basis with some members of the team on national AONB projects over the past few years. They struck me as **strongly committed, creative, and genuinely collaborative**!

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

1952; 615 km^2
Pembrokeshire, Wales, United Kingdom
22,350 inhabitants
https://www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/



This oddly shaped national park **embraces the coastline**, being about 16km wide at its widest point and 100m at its narrowest. It is famous for its **coastal landscapes and beaches**, but also boasts a wide range of **high-quality habitats and rare species**. It is also rich in its **cultural heritage**, with important castles and forts and many other scheduled monuments.
The **team** managing the park has around 150 people, supported by a **committee** of 18 members, 12 of whom are nominated by Pembrokeshire County Council and the remaining 6 appointed by the Welsh government. All together, they form the **National Park Authority**.

I visited Pembrokeshire Coast National Park years ago, before I started my career working with AONBs. Although the Park is small, I remember **very varied landscapes** and a **sense of adventure** at the edge of Wales (notably a wonderful kayaking trip along the coastline!).

Kreis Herford

N/A; 449,95 km^2 (nature reserves 17 km^2)
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
250,547 inhabitants
See 'Naturschutzgebiete' on their website

NB: 'Kreis' in German means district, county.

There are **41 nature reserves** in the Kreis Herford, totalling approximately 17km^2 (3.8% of the total area). Their average size is 41 hectares, and the largest one is 220 hectares. Most of these areas are protected for their rich biodiversity: **species-rich wet grasslands, managed woodlands, brook valleys and floodplains**. A 'typical' view of the district is therefore made of soft rolling hills and creeks, with many agricultural lands and dotted with small woodlands and meadows, with rather dense settlements.
The nature reserves are managed by the **nature conservation authority within the Kreis Herford**, forming a small team of about 10 people. They are supported in their work by the **Biologische Station Ravensberg**, a private association founded by nature conservation NGOs, farmer associations and the Kreis Herford, focusing mainly on the practical care of those protected places and their ecological monitoring.

I did not get to visit the area due to COVID restrictions, but the Kreis Herford is actually **twinned with my hometown** in France (Voiron), so I am sure I will visit at some point!

Parco Nazionale Appennino Tosco-Emiliano

2001; 228 km²
Toscana / Emilia-Romagna, Italy
40,000 inhabitants
http://www.parcoappennino.it/

The National Park is located **where continental Europe meets the Mediterranean climate** and this **dualism** is reflected in the landscapes and the cultures of its Northern and Southern sides. This is what makes it such a **diverse place**, both in terms of biodiversity and cultural heritage. Spectacular hikes, ancient villages, pastures for the Parmesan cheese, age-old woodlands…. From the highest peaks you can see the Alps as well as the sea.
The **team managing the Park** is made of around 10 people, with a **governance structure** including a President, a Board for strategic decisions, a Committee for financial management, and an Assembly made up of representatives from local and provincial public administrations. Since 2015 the National Park is also in charge of the **UNESCO 'Man and the Biosphere' reserve** embracing an area of 223,229 km² all around the Park, reasserting **sustainable development** (maintaining mountainous agriculture), **sustainable tourism and environmental protection** as cornerstones for the area.

I was lucky enough to visit the Park in 2020 – we were mesmerised upon arrival by the **Pietra di Bismantova**, a majestic, **sacred mountain** and a fantastic **panoramic viewpoint** over the Park!

Complesso Agro-Forestale Giogo Casaglia

N/A; 62.4 km²
Toscana, Italy
Very low density, mainly small villages
http://www.parcoappennino.it/

Complesso Agro-Forestale Giogo Casaglia

Giogo Casaglia is characterised by **medium-altitude mountains** (~1,000 meters) carved by water, creating canyons and valleys rich in **woodlands** (approximately 75% of the Park) and pastures. For administrative and legislative reasons, the Giogo Casaglia complex is not yet designated as regional or national park, but it is however a **state-owned area** benefitting from legislative protection and notably hosting **many N2000 sites**. The ambition is very much to protect and enhance its precious landscapes and cultural heritage. It is accessible by car within **less than 2 hours from Florence**, a major urban area, and is therefore very popular for **recreation and outdoor sports**.
The **operational team** managing Giogo Casaglia is very small and supported by technical operators. The team is hosted by the Unione Montana dei Comuni del Mugello, a **federation of municipalities** covering the park area and beyond.

I only managed a short stop at Giogo Casaglia during my tour in Italy in 2020, but I got to wander through the **sinuous roads** to reach a pass overlooking the **mountains and forests**. Such a peaceful place so close to a large urban area.

Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna

1993; 368.43 km^2

Toscana / Emilia-Romagna, Italy

2,000 inhabitants

http://www.parcoappennino.it/

The National Park is characterised by **high mountains and deep forests**, which are some of the **most precious in Europe** for their biodiversity and scenic beauty. At its heart lies the 'Riserva Naturale Integrale di Sasso Fratino' (a nature reserve where no human impact is allowed), instituted in 1959 to protect these **ancient forests**. The entire Park is rich in varied flora and fauna which the team works to protect.

The **team managing the park** is made up of 15 people, with a similar governance as the other National Park I visited in Italy: **a President, a Board for strategic decision, a Committee for financial monitoring, and an Assembly of representatives** from the various public authorities within the Park.

When I visited, I accessed the National Park via a **long, sinuous road**, with no GPS signal, thunderstorms roaring and **forests all around me**. I then reached the small town of Pratovecchio where their office is, just on the edge of the Park. It felt like I had arrived in some sort of **sacred place**, where humans fell silent to let nature express itself. The next day, the weather cleared up and this feeling was confirmed as I admired **vistas of endless forests in every direction**.

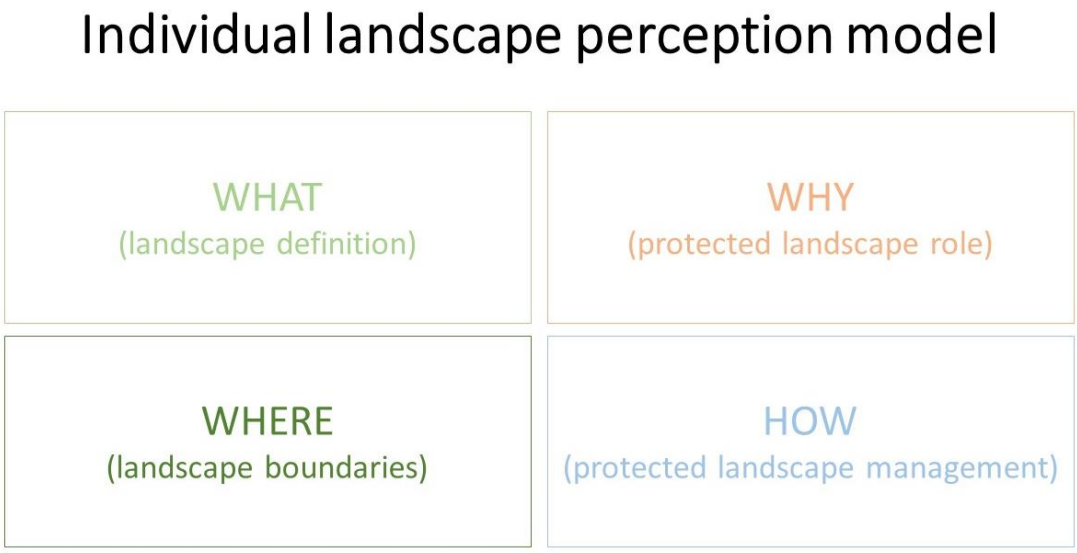
Analysis

Developing a methodology

I conducted a total of 15 interviews with 19 people – most interviews were individual, but I also experimented with group interviews in two places. A total of 44 people answered my online questionnaire (anonymously), from four protected areas. Although a few people I interviewed also answered the questionnaire, I have surveyed about 60 people overall. This was a lot of data to cope with, but also felt representative enough to give meaning to my results. However, please bear in mind this is still only a sample of perceptions from protected area staff in four different European countries and not an exhaustive survey of all European countries nor types of protected areas.

Before analysing the results, I thought I would be able to draw some sort of standard approach to landscapes, or at least a series of approaches based on commonalities between people I interviewed. After reviewing every interview and answers to the questionnaire, by summarising people's answers to the seven elements mentioned in the Introduction, I concluded that standardising would not do justice to the diversity of perceptions, ideas and opinions collected through this exercise. I also concluded that developing a framework might be missing the point: what was powerful was how personal these answers were. There seemed to be as many perceptions of landscapes as there are people working in those places! How could I then capture this variety and make sense of it?

Through brainstorming ideas, I decided to model each individual interview, by grouping answers under four key headings:



Although this meant losing a bit of detail in the process, it also made the results easily comparable across and within protected areas. All 15 models from each interview are presented in Appendix 1. They have been anonymised to respect people's privacy.

Analysing the individual perception models

Comparing the various individual models brought me to re-evaluate my initial objective: what was emerging was not a framework, but rather a method. A tool for protected area teams to ask themselves important questions and enable a conversation on landscapes. Although we all know in theory the purposes or our parks, many people I interviewed told me it was very interesting for them to reflect on the questions I asked them, to pause and take a moment to think about what they do every day when they manage those precious landscapes.

This study was thus not really about what the landscape approach is, but about getting people to reflect on what landscapes and a landscape approach mean for them.

One of my interviewees, James Parkin from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, told me: 'the conversation is the powerful bit'. This strongly resonated with the results from this analysis: there is not one definition of landscape, and there is not a single, 'right' way to manage those landscapes. Trying to set definitions into stone would be risking losing the power that lies within this ambiguity – instead, we can all 'write ourselves into the story' (as James Parkin puts it) and this is how we can move towards achieving common goals.

What struck me though, is that individual perception models within a single protected area vary greatly. They are not contradictory, and they can absolutely co-exist in the same reality, but they are different. They somehow form various pieces of a puzzle and together they form the overall management of a protected area. What I have come up with is thus a methodology to explore landscape management from the field and what I am hoping is that this could be useful for protected area teams to further enhance their delivery and management plans.

Another layer of analysis was then to try and find patterns across the various individual models. Were there more similarities between protected areas of the same country? Or between people with a similar role in their respective organisations? To find out, I extracted key themes from the models, and marked the occurrence of each theme against each interview. This detailed analysis is presented in Appendix 2.

This revealed that there are no visible patterns in this data. My initial hypothesis when applying for the scholarship was that legislation and national / local culture had a central role in explaining landscape perceptions and management. The absence of patterns means culture (nationally or locally) is not a determining factor. As for legislation, it was in fact mentioned only sporadically by a few people, except for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park where several important legal acts were referred to by almost everyone I interviewed (which is due to historic/political reasons, the Welsh government as an institution being rather 'young' in political terms and therefore using its powers to write new laws rather extensively).

This therefore only reinforces the result that there is no such thing as a standard model to approach landscapes. Instead, each person (in each place) has its very unique way of interpreting the concept and of managing it. However, it is worth highlighting that several themes occurred in at least two thirds of the interviews. These were:

- the notion that landscapes change, are dynamic;
- the impact from human activity on landscapes (positive or negative);
- the natural elements of landscapes, i.e. the habitats, fauna, and flora (which is of course something we should expect to see here!);
- the idea that there is a personal connection with a landscape, something to identify with;
- the fact that landscape boundaries are perceived rather than set, and that there is some sort of continuity or fluidity (meaning we cannot really tell when we come out of a landscape and into another one);
- the fact that protected areas are mosaics of diverse landscapes;
- the perception that protected areas exist in order to protect nature and landscapes (again a theme we could expect to be very common anyway!);
- the idea that landscapes are best managed in partnership, and that protected area teams are there to bring people together, to be neutral, to help achieve cohesion;
- finally, the fact that protected area teams are there to serve a place and to represent it, but also to ignite passion and carry a vision forward.

These key themes are somehow a testimony of what protected landscapes are at their core, of what it means to be working to protect these special places.

As for the online survey, this allowed me to generate further quantitative data, but it felt rather like a question mark in terms of usability – as it was online and meant for a high number of people, I wanted to keep it short and to the point. Looking at the results, except for a very small number of people who have written very long answers, it was impossible to draw individual models as I did through the interviews. It allowed however to draw more numbers on the occurrence of the key themes identified in the interviews. In the case of a very large protected area team (e.g. > 100 people), this method could enable them to open the conversation on landscape approaches without running detailed interviews with every single member of staff and making it a very lengthy process.

The online survey also allowed me to test questions and the kind of answers they bring. For example, looking at the overall results, you can see that the first question ‘Think about the landscape you work in: what elements is it made of?’ was answered systematically with natural elements (geology, habitats, fauna, and flora, etc.), and then some other elements. However,

the question ‘In the context of your work, and in your own words, how would you define the word ‘landscape’?’ brought more varied answers, with the nature / environment theme being present in only 20 answers out of the 44. In comparison, in the interviews I asked people to describe ‘their’ landscape, and this is what the ‘WHAT’ in the model was based on, meaning I did not directly ask how they defined landscapes. I felt this gave more powerful and detailed answers – asking for a definition can give rather dry answers, and not necessarily thought-through, whereas asking people what they put in their landscape makes it immediately personal.

Difficulties and limits

This study was resolutely practical – I did not want to create theoretical concepts that no one could apply in their own area. When I started this journey, I thought my approach of landscapes was the ‘right’ one (to simplify, I was abiding to the definition from the European Landscape Convention), and I was hoping to find a framework, a standard way to help protected area teams implement it in their areas. My hypothesis was that culture and legislation were determining factors in making this happen (or keeping this from happening). It is through conversations that I realised that there is no such a thing as right or wrong when defining landscapes, because they are in essence a personal (and yet also collective!) experience.

It was thus a difficult process to let a methodology and conclusions emerge without forcing my own views. For some months I thought I had done it all wrong! However, I did intentionally design my interview questions to not lead people in any particular direction – I wanted to **let them tell me** what they thought about it all. It was after all a study about **perceptions**. I was expecting that answers would vary, but I surely did not expect they would be so deep and unique. Another difficulty came from the amount of data I had collected. Reviewing interviews and processing information was a very lengthy process, notably because I did not initially have a methodology in place and because I did not know what I was looking for. Brainstorming with my colleague and mentor Richard Clarke helped me navigate this phase of the project.

As for limits to this short study, I have identified three:

- The places I chose to visit are all located in Western Europe, meaning the ‘culture’ is, to an extent, rather uniform (although there are variations as we have observed!); I think this study could really benefit from more data from other parts of Europe and other types of protected areas (notably marine ones, where the notion of landscape/seascape could take us to a whole other dimension!).
- I was not fully consistent in the way I asked interview questions: in some cases the people interviewed talked for most of the time without me asking anything, and I then associated their answers back to my questions, but there were sometimes a few gaps;

I also did not always use the exact same set of words, as I was going with the flow of the conversation – how much did that impact final results? This is hard to tell. However, this allowed me to test and reflect on the methodology, and how certain questions can give valuable answers and should not be skipped.

- The list of key themes extracted from the interviews is possibly biased by my own appreciation of what is 'key'. It deserves to be refined further. This would best be done by assessing the individual models with other people and to then test that with yet another group of people, to avoid bias and ensure everything that needs to be captured is indeed present in the list.

Conclusions

How this study will be used

As mentioned above, this scholarship has enabled me to develop a basis for a powerful tool to enable conversations about landscapes within protected area teams. This could also be extended to their local partners. There is now for me a path ahead: to refine this methodology and test it more extensively, with more varied protected areas, in order to propose a thorough and advanced tool for protected areas to carry out this exercise so it serves their management. This could be useful for example in the context of a management plan review, or for any team trying to tackle this complex concept that is 'landscape'. Indeed I believe enabling these conversations around landscapes and how we manage them is crucial to empower teams to work more cohesively, between individuals but also across different services.

It would make sense to start this other journey with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the United Kingdom, since this is where I have a strong, established network of professional relationships. However, I prefer extending this to the rest of Europe right-away, rather than risking making the tool too specific to the British context. Another key step for me will therefore be to call onto the EUROPARC network to test and use the methodology I will propose.

Recommendations

Have the conversation! Ask colleagues and managers what they think landscapes are, what they mean, what we as protected areas are supposed to do with them, and more. I can only encourage every protected area team to stop a moment and reflect on these important questions. Many people I interviewed told me they felt 'landscape' was an important concept for the future, yet they felt unsure how to address it, because it is complex and can be confusing. It can even lead to conflict, as many interviewees have pointed out, when different visions of a landscape are in contradiction.

Another important recommendation falling from the first one is to not try and impose a specific perception of landscapes. Rather, I would invite everyone working in protected areas to accept and even to celebrate the fact that others see their landscapes differently. This is possibly where the key to protecting these special places lies, for us all now and for future generations.

Finally, please do get in touch (marie@integrated-landscapes.eu) if you would like some support to conduct such an exercise within your team!

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Individual Perception Models and Survey Results

Individual landscape perception model

WHAT (landscape definition)	WHY (protected landscape role)
WHERE (landscape boundaries)	HOW (protected landscape management)

How to read the individual perception models?

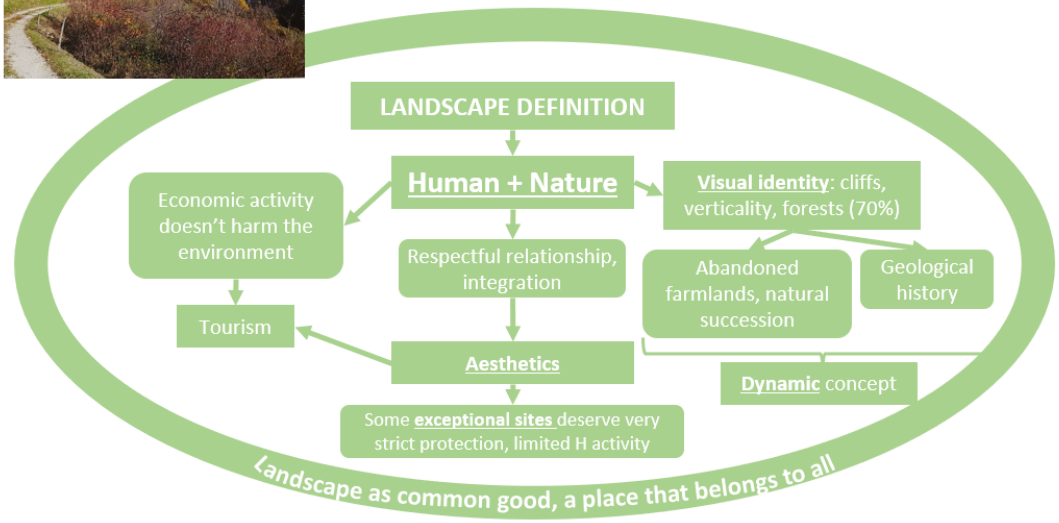
The intended reading of these models goes in the following order:

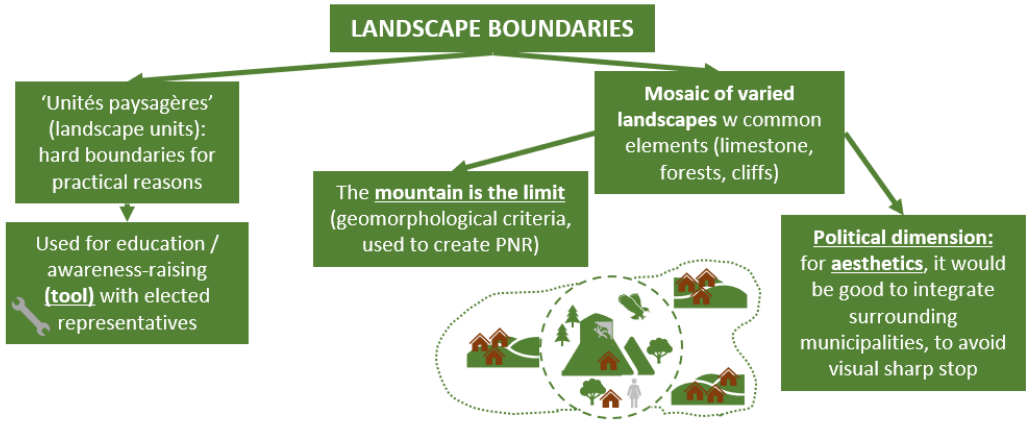
- from the top left (WHAT – landscape definition);
- to the bottom left (WHERE – landscape boundaries);
- to the top right (WHY – protected landscape role);
- and finally the bottom right (HOW – protected landscape management).

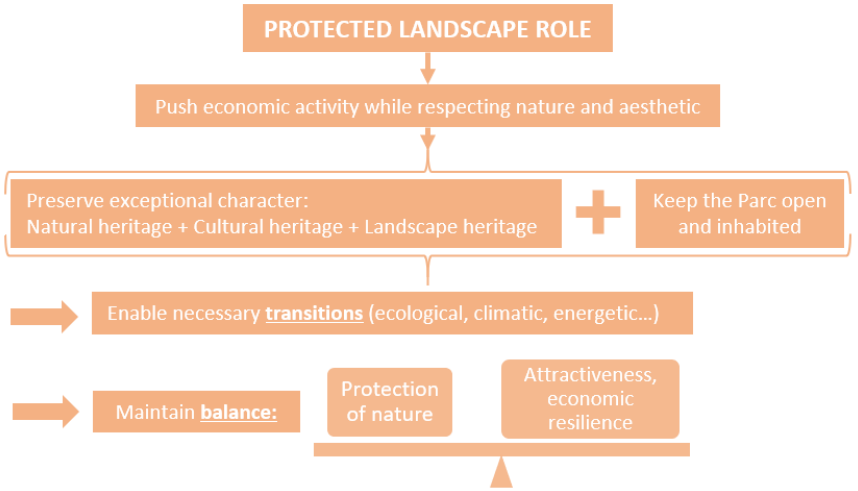
Each individual model is meant to give you an overall picture of a person's perceptions on the various elements assessed in the study (presented in the Introduction of this report).

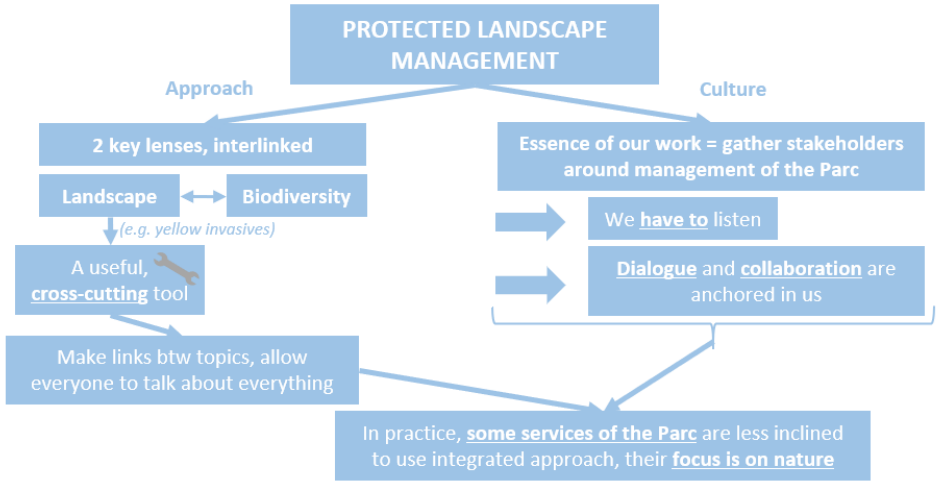
Visual or textual representations of landscapes are added in the very top left corner where people provided them.

Person A
Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors









Person B
Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

Geography, geology, what N gives us

Materiality

Diversity, aesthetic

Everything surrounding a society

"triptych"

Representation
Individual reading of everything I see and perceive, at a point in time

Human intervention
What we transform, how we plan the future layout of our territories

Choices and actions

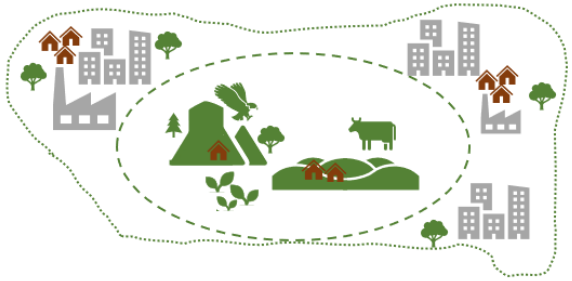
An expression of life as well as a pedagogical and interpretative tool

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

Parc and city are not separated

- link btw where I am (Parc) and what is around me (city)
- as a whole they form meaning
- culturally they are different, a different rhythm and mindset

Millions of landscapes
(w different characteristics)
merging together to form the Vercors



PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Enable the **gathering of all stakeholders** around **common and shared projects**

The Parc will never achieve anything alone

Aim = to build a future together, something different and better (PNR national label = 'une autre vie s'invente ici' = 'another life is invented here')

Maintain **balance** so **life remains**

Never one without the other, this duo gives meaning

- Environmental protection
- Economic development

Parc territory is **alive and inhabited** => H impact

Make it **sustainable**, allow N to renew at its own speed (not H speed)

To manage the landscape and serve the territory

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

Landscape is the key tool for our actions and for sustainable development

Tool to **convey the values of the Parc**, to **convey meaning** of this place

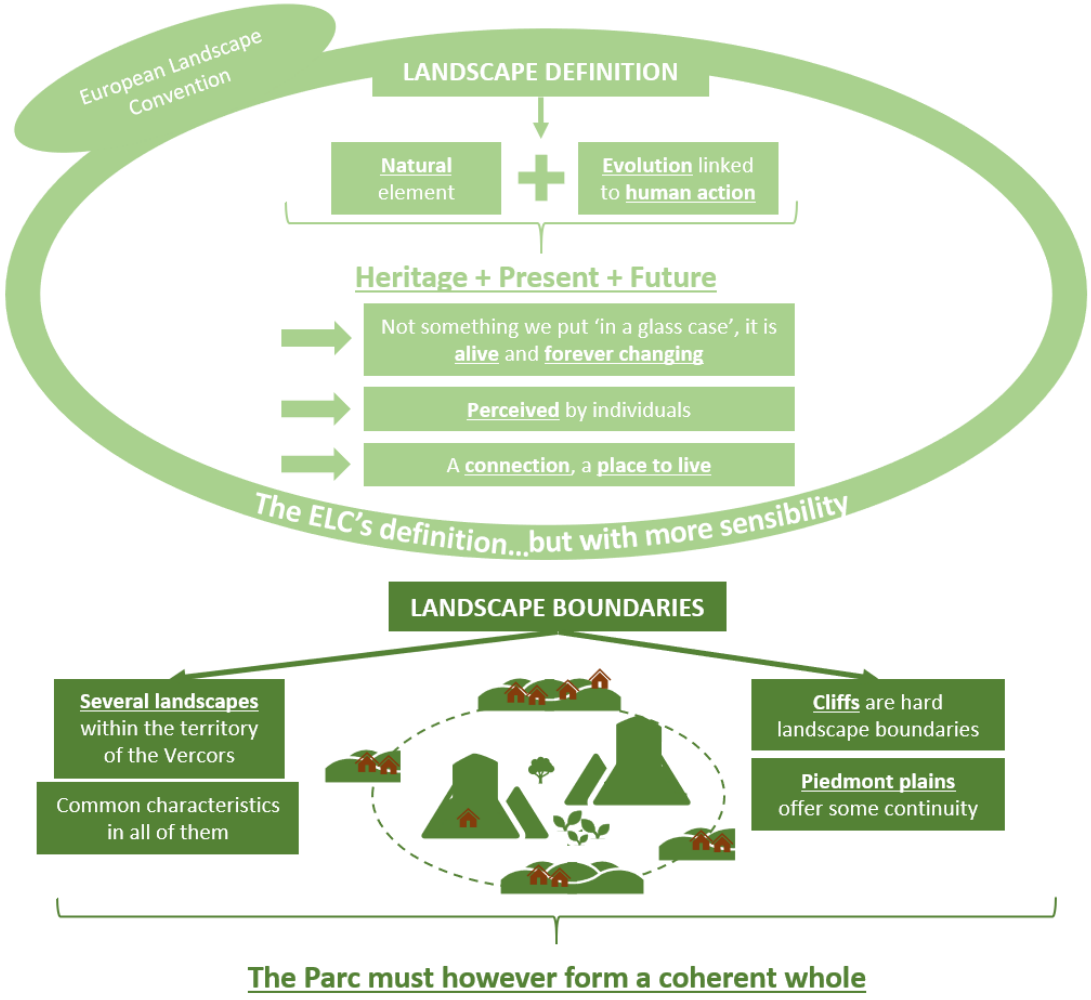
Culture

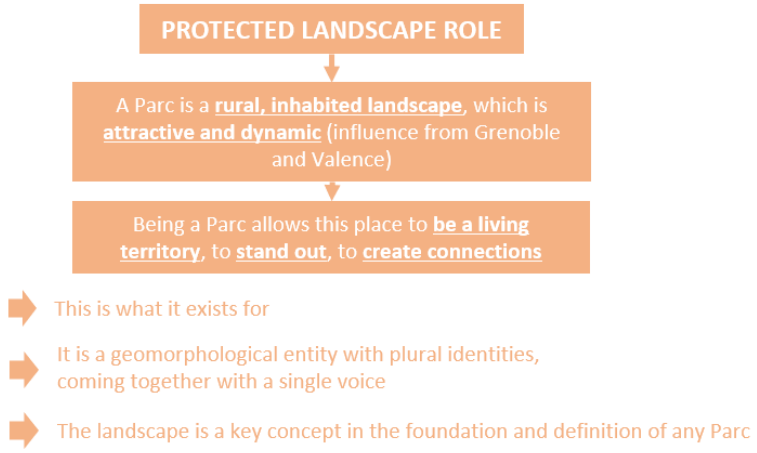
We gather stakeholders with **respect, by listening**

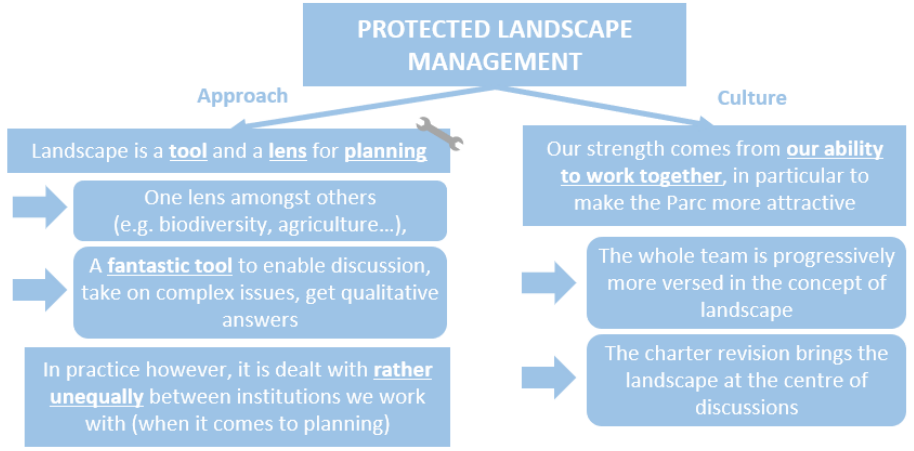
e.g. wolf presence in the Parc:
diverging interests and needs are also different perspectives to a same problem
=> implemented several sub-projects to cover all aspects of the issue and allowed common solutions to emerge

"The landscape is an encounter, a unique encounter between the memory of a place and the movement of societies, between the individual onlooker and a collective living environment, between heritage and project."* *In Histoire et mémoire d'un maquis - Gilles Vergnon - 2002*

Person C
Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors



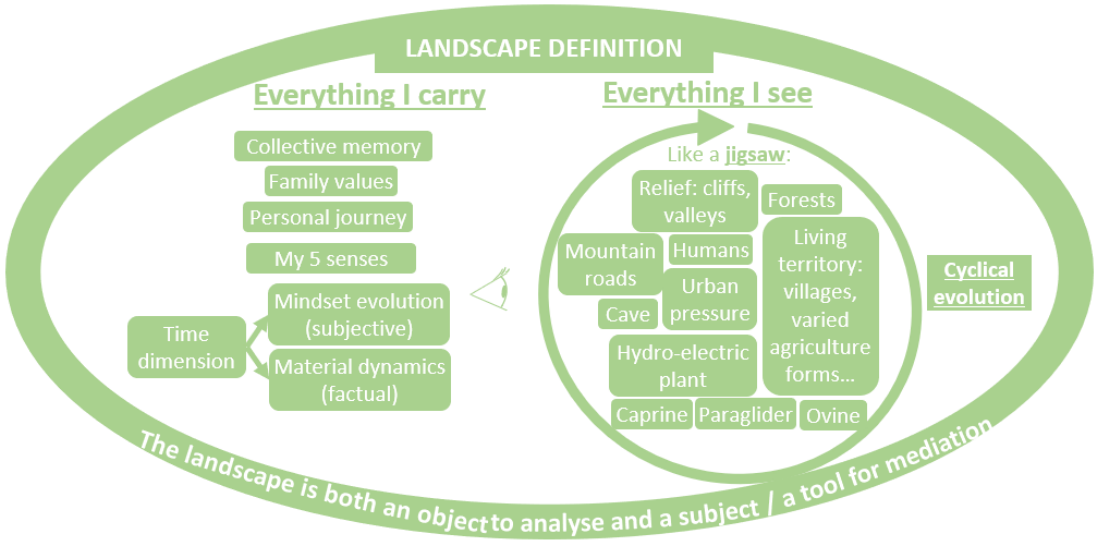


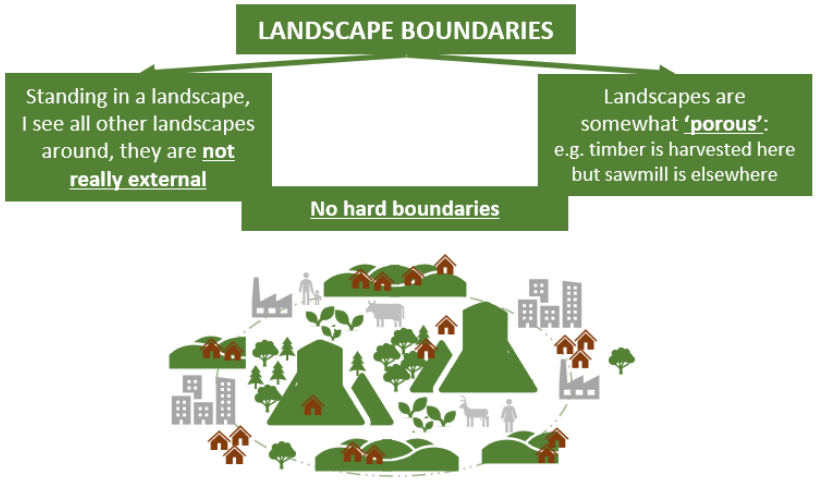


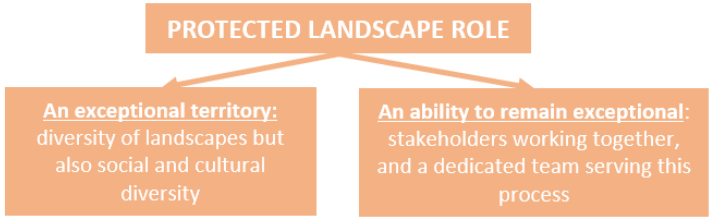
*translated from French

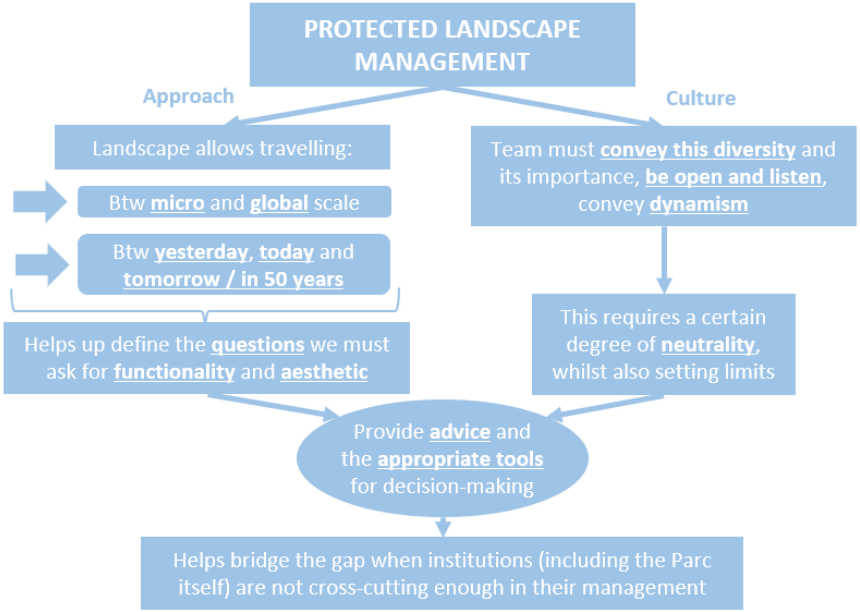
Person D

Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors





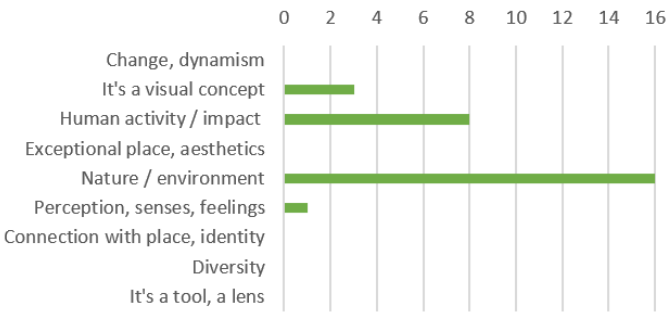




Online survey – theme occurrence
Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors

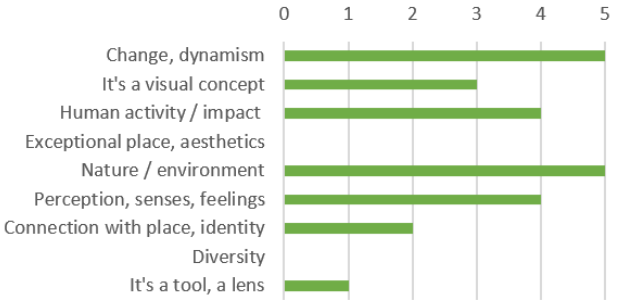
Number of answers: 16

Think about the landscape you work in: what elements is it made of?

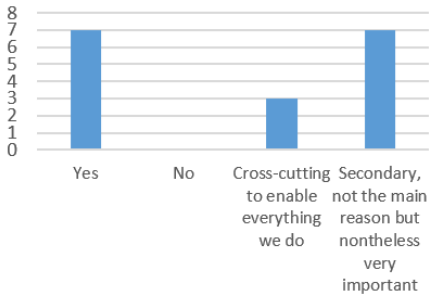


In your own words, what do you think the purpose of a protected area is?

In the context of your work, and in your own words, how would you define the word 'landscape'?

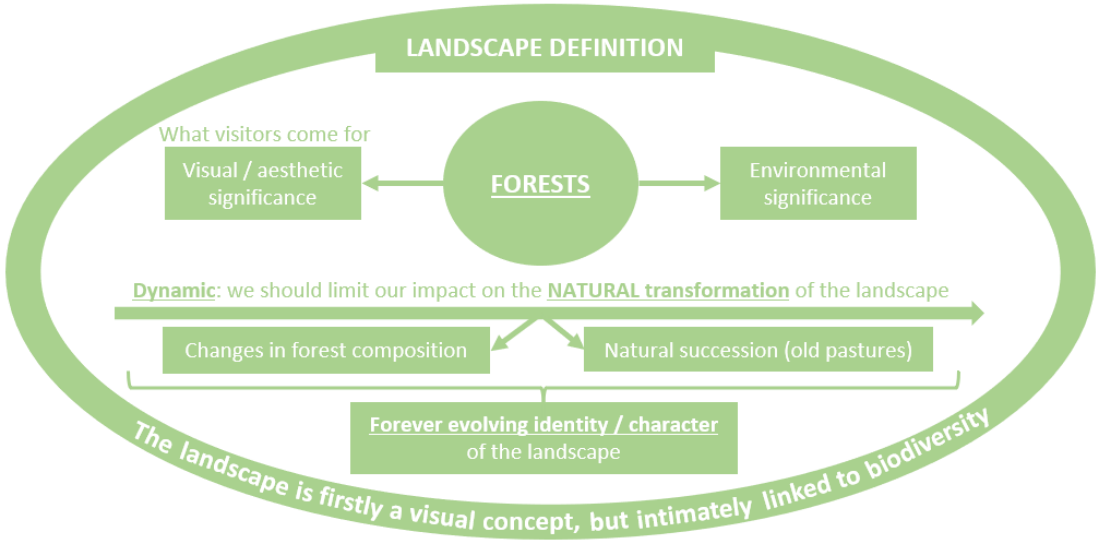


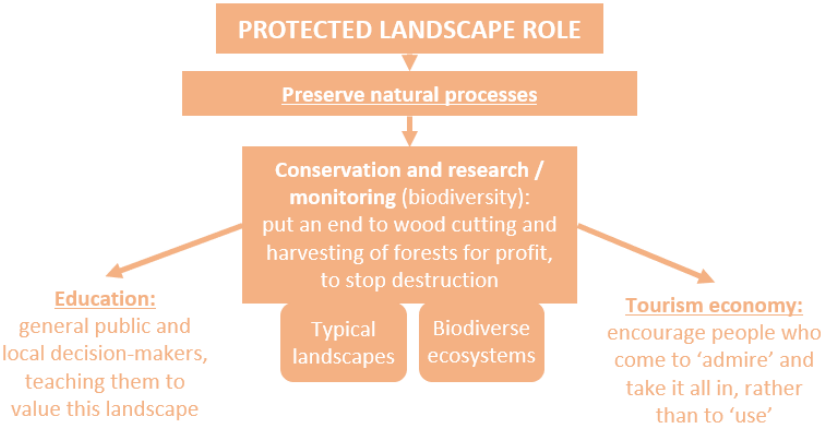
Does your protected area management team exist to bring stakeholders together to manage that landscape?

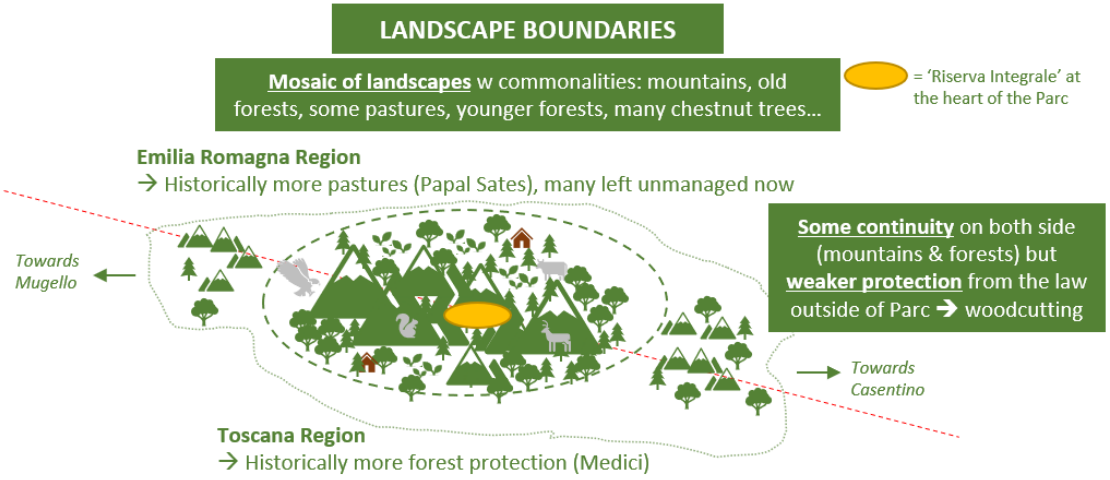


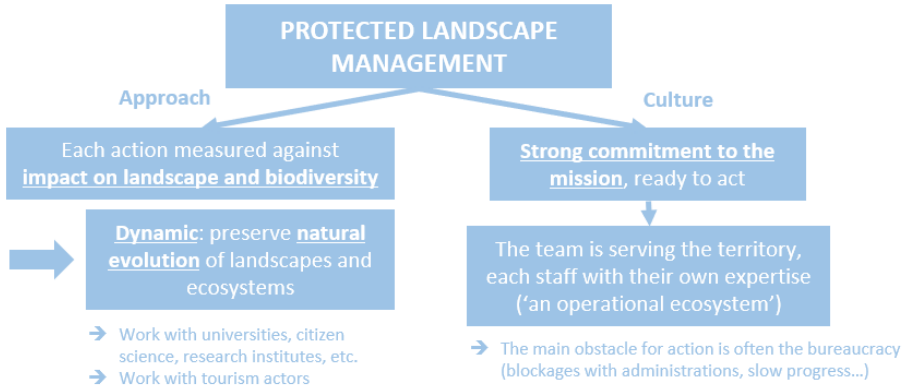
What type of stakeholders do you work with to manage that landscape?

Person E
Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi





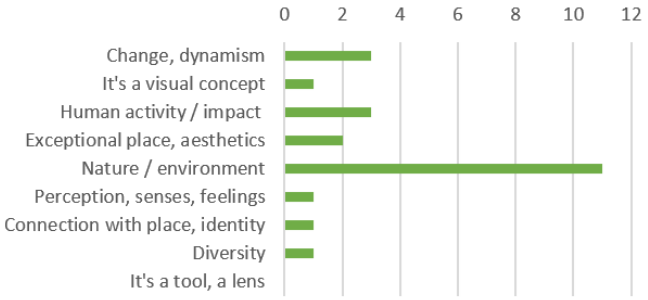




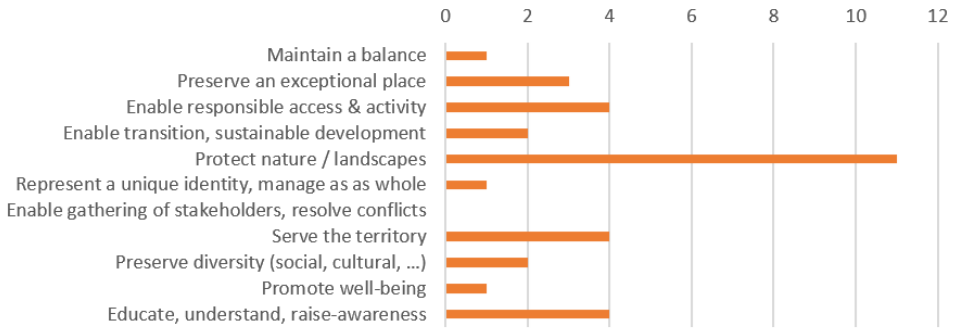
Number of answers: 11

Online survey – theme occurrence
Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi

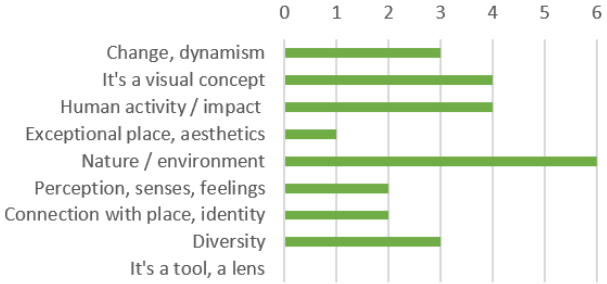
Think about the landscape you work in: what elements is it made of?



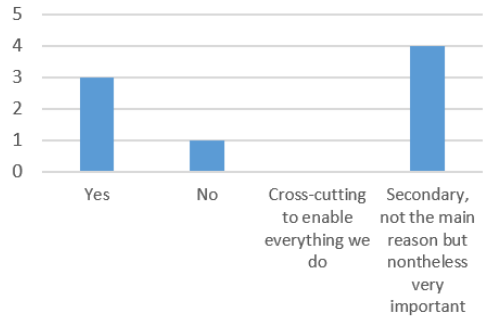
In your own words, what do you think the purpose of a protected area is?



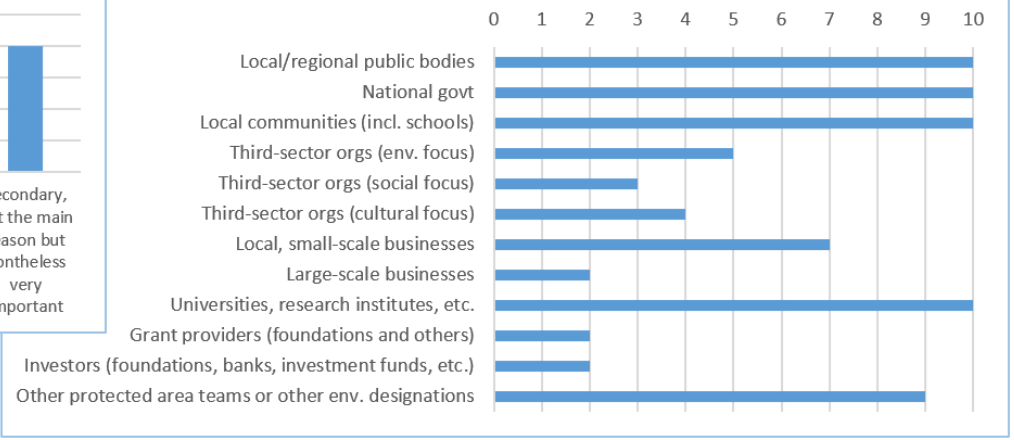
In the context of your work, and in your own words, how would you define the word 'landscape'?



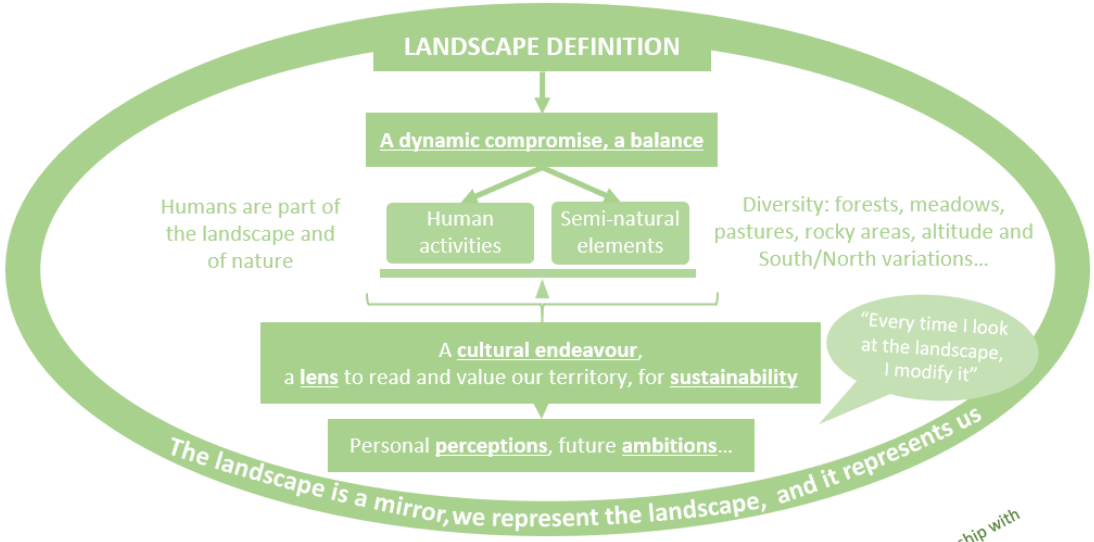
Does your protected area management team exist to bring stakeholders together to manage that landscape?

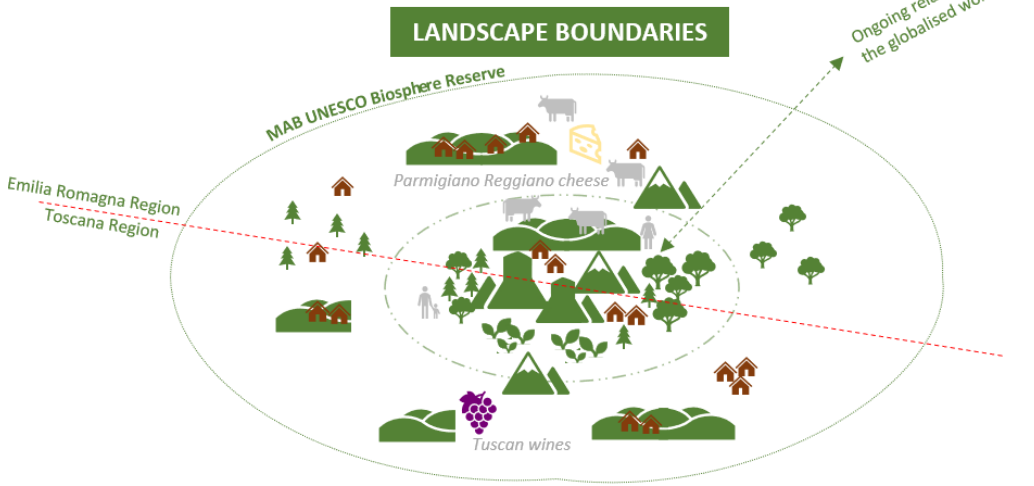


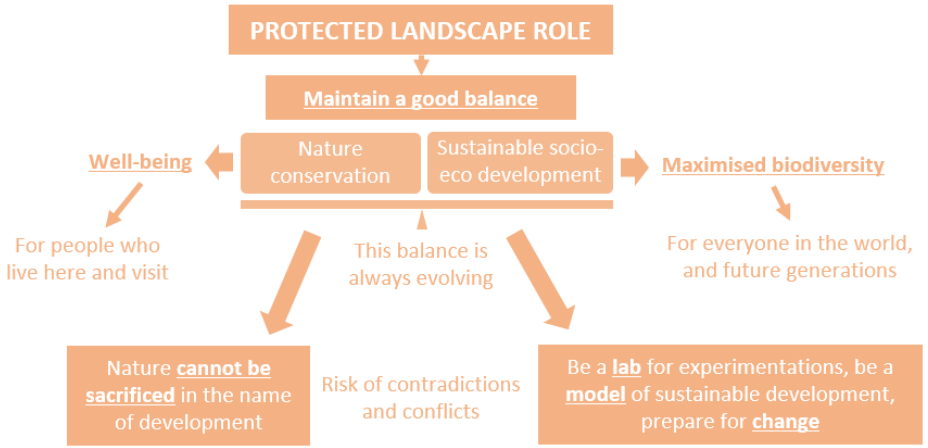
What type of stakeholders do you work with to manage that landscape?

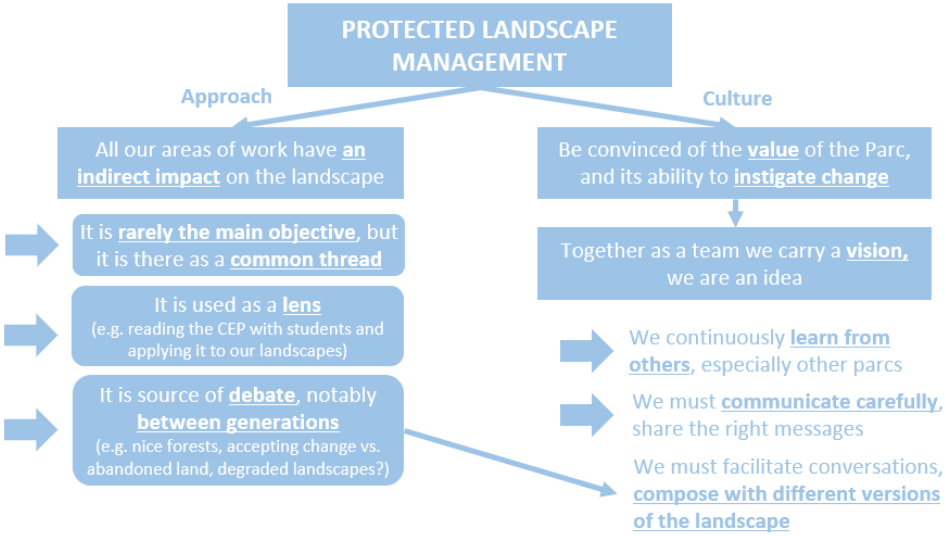


Group interview (4 people)
Parco Nazionale Appennino Tosco-Emiliano

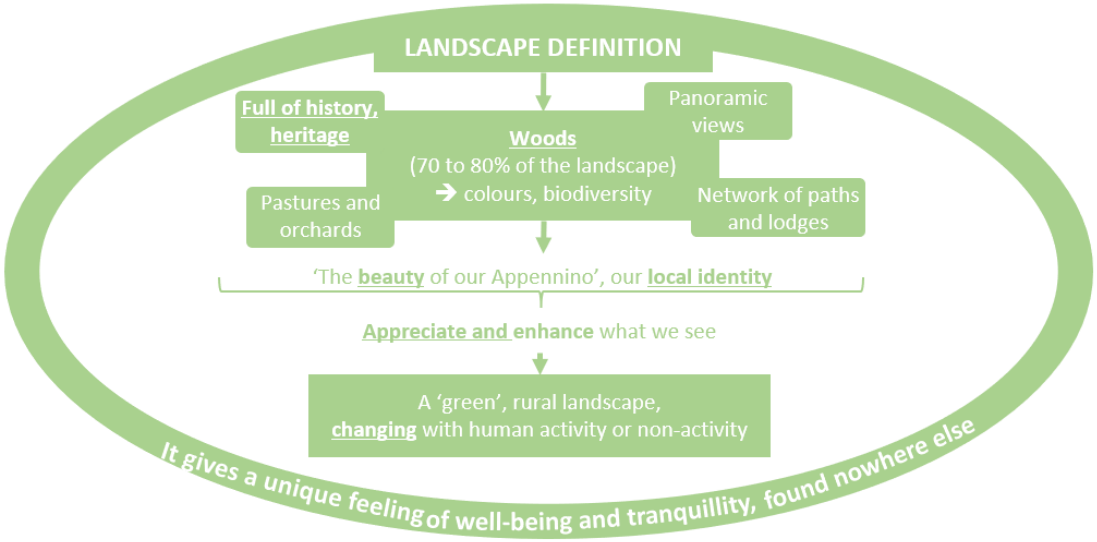


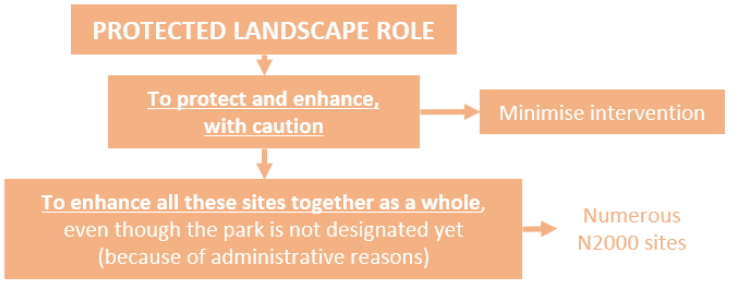






Person F
Parco del Giogo Casaglia

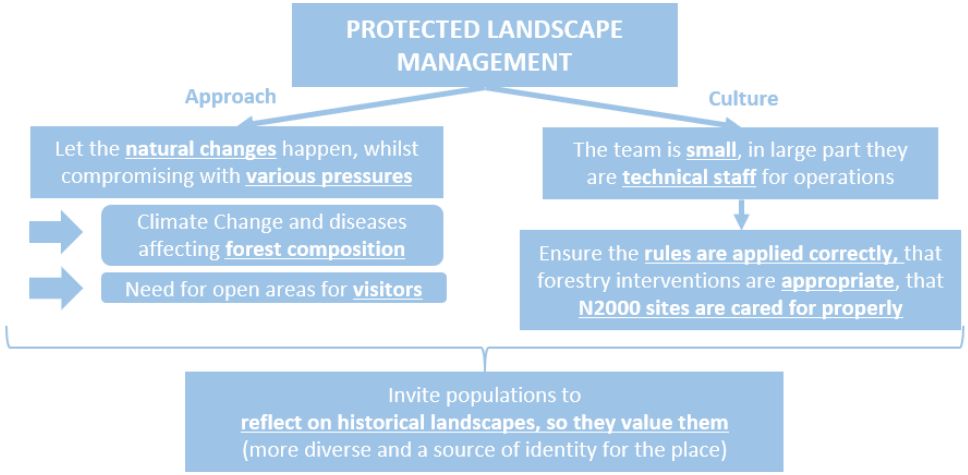




LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

The past forms boundaries with which we perceive and manage the landscapes of the area:

- Old abbey of Moscheta
- Traditional chestnut production
- WW2 Gothic Line
- ...



Person G
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

Beautiful, unspoilt countryside

Feelings and senses

- Ancient monuments
- Biodiversity
- Roaring sea, coast
- Small villages, farm buildings

Human impact

- *negative*: Caravan park approved in the 50s spoils the landscape
- *positive*: Prevent harmful alterations (e.g. wind turbines application rejected)
- Also seasonal dynamic (second homes)
- Invisible

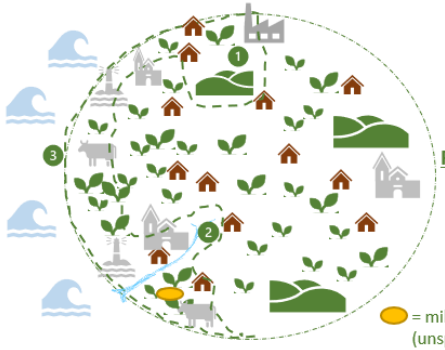
'A few things don't match', but beautiful landscapes characterise the Park

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

Seascapes + Landscapes

Three distinct landscapes:

1. Estuary
2. Preseli Hills
3. Coastline (mainly dairy)



Continuity with Pembrokeshire region: people can't tell when they come out of the Park

= military training zone (unspoilt and special, but impact from noise)

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Protect and enhance the landscape

- Wildlife, biodiversity
- Culture, heritage

... whilst allowing people to **enjoy** it **without harming** it

Education role

For people to understand **what** we are doing and **why**

Resolve conflicts

- Provide opportunities for communities to live and work
- Conservation imperatives

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

Landscape a key consideration in planning: 'What you don't grant planning for is what matters most'

- Stanford principle: **conservation** is priority when there is conflict between our two purposes
- Silkin test: major development must be in the **national interest**
- Valued and Resilient Policy => Park has **more value in the eyes of the public**
- Well-being & Future Generations Act: looking at **long-term impact**
- Env. Act: planning must give regard & **enhance** biodiversity, **not just mitigate**

Culture

We and our partners are **all working towards the same goal**

- We **influence** where interests diverge
- Others help us reach solutions, they **challenge us**
- Making partners aware of their **duty to the Park**
- We draw on their **expertise & power** when needed

Organisations are **willing to work together** in Pembrokeshire, partnership work in Wales functions quite well

Person H
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

It's not just visual, we live in it, we don't just look at it

Concept is often misunderstood

- Sea sports
- Disappearing road (climate change)
- Historic elements: field patterns, monuments.. = cultural aspects
- Campsite packed with people in summer
- Iconic elements: St David's Head
- Sky & clouds

All of that changes over time

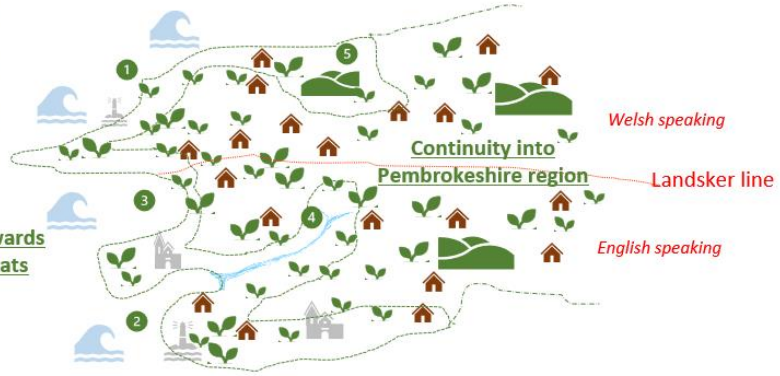
'Pictures don't do it justice,'nothing prepares you for it'

Five distinctive landscapes:

1. Northern Coastline
2. Southern Coastline
3. St Brides Bay
4. Estuary
5. Preseli Hills

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

- Geology
- Visual
- Cultural



PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

To conserve the National Park

Natural environment + Socio-economic elements

'We don't want pristine landscape with nobody able to live in it!'

Conserve the landscape (not just environmental) = **an area that can flourish**

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

'Landscape' is often **misunderstood** and treated **in parts** instead of as a whole

It is **not specifically mentioned in key legislation** (Environment Act, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Welsh Environment Act)

Many other concepts are 'behind' the landscape, but it is all rather complex

In practice we tend to use the landscape in **small scale/short term** assessments rather than long-term and landscape-wide impact

e.g. wind turbine application rejected based on impact on landscape now, without consideration for what will happen to the landscape because of Climate Change (i.e. not using wind turbines)

Culture

Our work is **engagement and persuasion, support**

- We don't own land, we can only influence
- The level of engagement is as wide as we make it
- We have a **responsibility to influence and engage with others**, it's a natural part of our work

'It's the right thing to do'

Any view of Tenby (a small harbour town in the South of the Park): 'a microcosm of everything in one location', a very personal connection, a bond with the place, something intoxicating

Person I
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

Predominantly a visual aesthetic

As humans we are mostly visually-led

It's **subjective, emotive**, flows over human boundaries...

Other aspects / benefits flow from that

Something that is experienced, both individually and collectively

Can generate **tension**

e.g. one desiring tranquillity, others a big bike ride...

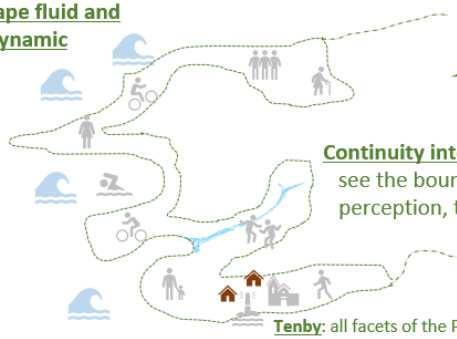
'An intoxicating blend of things'

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

Endless to characterise every landscape →

*'It's not about how many different bits of landscape you have, but rather about **how many different experiences you can have in one location**'*

Water makes the landscape fluid and dynamic



Continuity into Pembrokeshire region, people don't see the boundary but they might have a different perception, the **Park is this special place, an idea**

Tenby: all facets of the Park in one location (beaches, cliffs, island, heritage...)

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Represent **freedom** and **escape**

Where **economic exploitation stops**

Somewhat 'pristine'

Where I can be somebody else

People do things in Parks which they wouldn't do back home, like an **adventure**

Purpose of the Park is to get people to carry that back home: be healthier, care for the environment, appreciate nature, etc.

Nature gives equally to everybody, no one can rob you of the experience

Restorative power of nature (of which landscape is a component)

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

Maximising the range of socio-economic outcomes, make the Park **accessible**

'special qualities' of landscapes, **universal** = **tool** to have a conversation, elicit an emotional response

'exploiting' the landscape for economic and social outcomes

Should be more driven to **integrate underrepresented groups**, a fundamental ethical issue

Culture

Collective ownership: We are **a conduit to make things happen**, we only have a role if people who live here and visit care

Moving **collective goals forward** with **nature as a cornerstone**

Everything we do **must work for local communities**

Ignite passion so people care, **act through joint agreement**

The **conversation is powerful**, we don't need to define landscapes, to label the Park, **we are just part of a process** of looking after a special place

‘A place where your horizons are only limited by the curvature of the earth’

A peninsula on the end of a peninsula in the very far corner of the country. Arriving in Pembrokeshire from inland it may seem like a pleasant but perhaps unremarkable rural, pastoral landscape of undulating agricultural fields. It’s only when you reach the edge of the land that the magic happens; at the dynamic meeting point of the land and the sea, where the drama of the stormy Atlantic meets the incredibly varied rocky coastline in a spectacular way.
The sense of wildness, an untouched place where you are at the mercy of nature, wind, weather, waves and tides. No other protected landscape where you move so quickly from developed to wild – you can literally walk off the pavement in Tenby onto the shore and be amongst a wild landscape surrounded by some of the most protected species and habitats in Europe.

Person J
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

Belongs to everyone

Our landscape only exists because of **the sea**, the rest is pleasant but not remarkable (pastoral, rural landscape)

Dynamic meeting point of land and sea, complex geology = **spectacular**

- **Remote**: at the end of a peninsula
- Small but feels huge

Wilderness: humans can’t influence the wind, the waves and the tides

- Some of the most **protected species and habitats** in Europe
- People **feel** it is wild

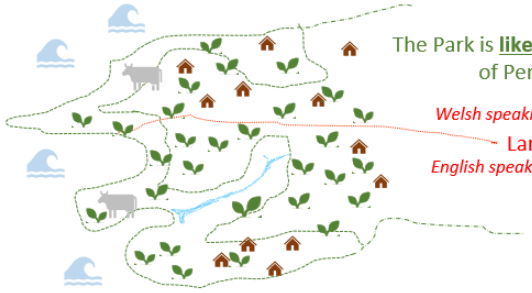
‘It’s only when you reach the edge that the magic happens’

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

Geology and **culture** create different landscapes, very varied

‘A series of landscapes that make it a whole’ → In practice, divided up in landscape character areas (separate development plans)

The **sea** and the **view from the cliffs** are part of the **landscape experience** although they are outside of the park



The Park is **like a necklace around the edge** of Pembrokeshire county

Welsh speaking

Landsker line: cultural distinction

English speaking

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Park exists to **ensure we use this special place wisely**, that we **don’t destroy it** with unrecoverable changes

It is there **so we don’t lose what is precious** to economic exploitation

Challenge = interface of industry / development vs. protection of landscape

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

Risk of getting into the detail, but the **landscape portrays all the different factors** = **we can explain the whole picture**

Landscape = geology + nature + cultural heritage + how people use(d) the land…

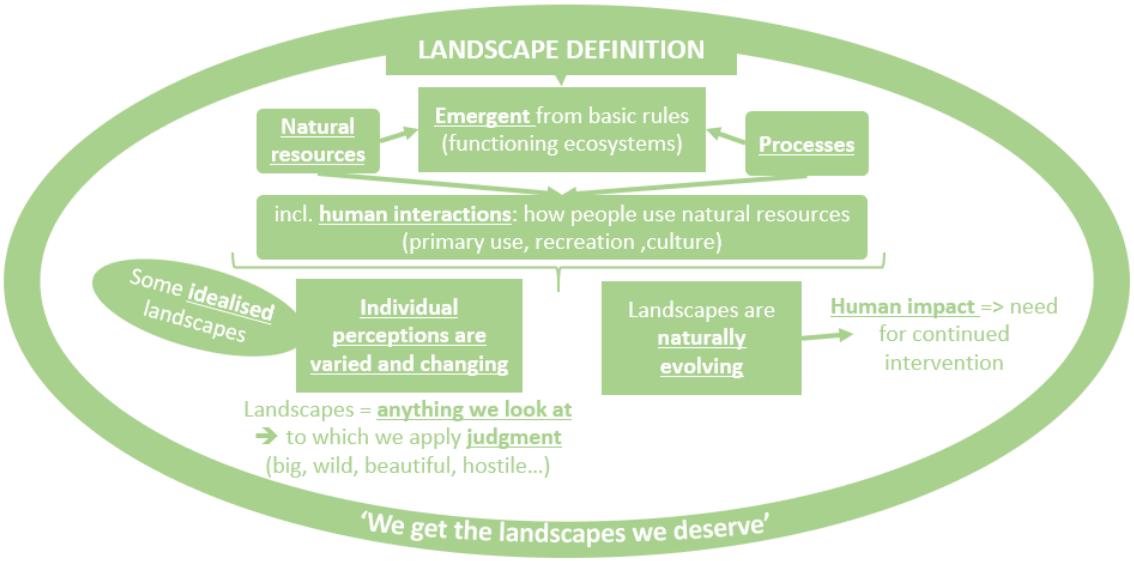
- **Explain how the jigsaw works**, to all sorts of audience
- **Not an easy concept for people**, we also talk about interdependence (e.g. following a stream)

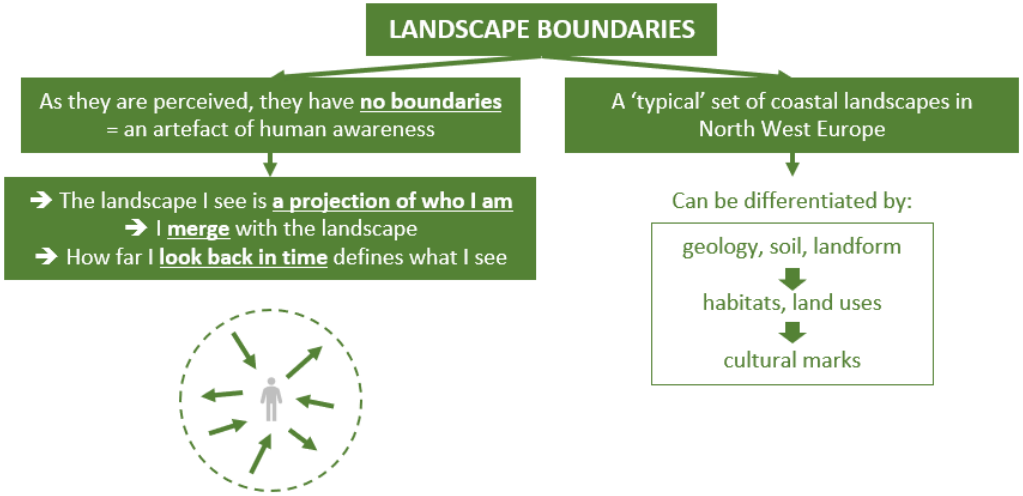
Culture

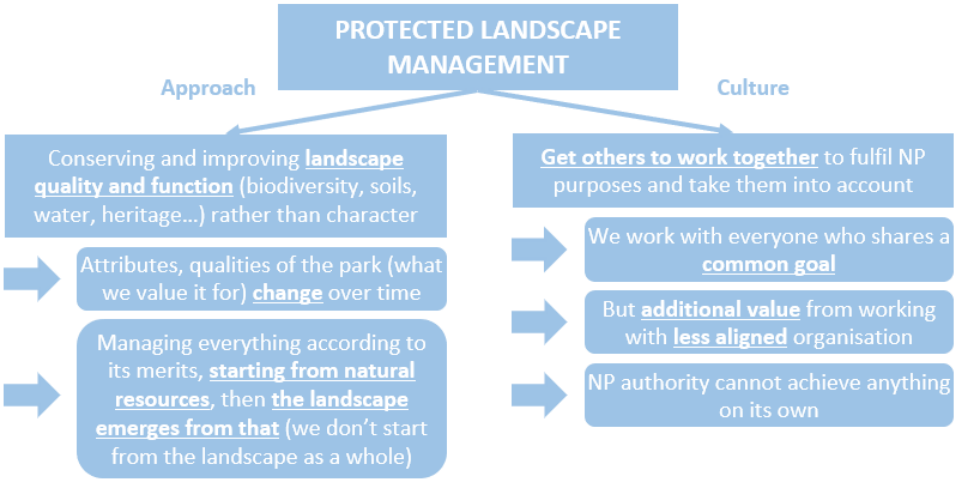
We are the **administrators** and **custodians** of this special place

- To persuade, encourage, **foster a sense of partnership**
- **We work with everybody!** Everyone has a role to play
- **We don’t own the land**, so we rely on everyone else
- We need **others to relay** our messages, to be **ambassadors**

Person K
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park







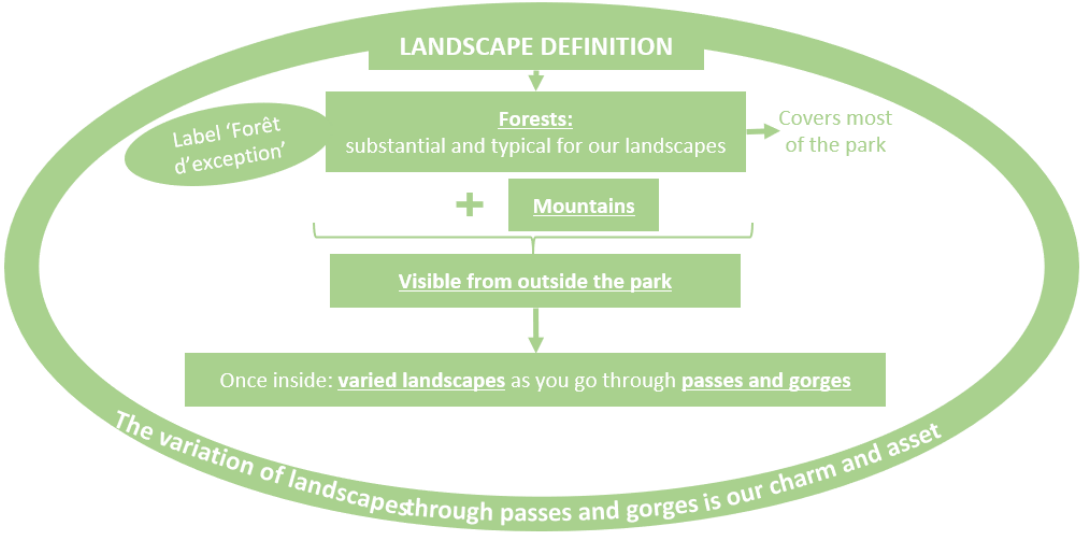
Text from Person K describing 'their' landscape:

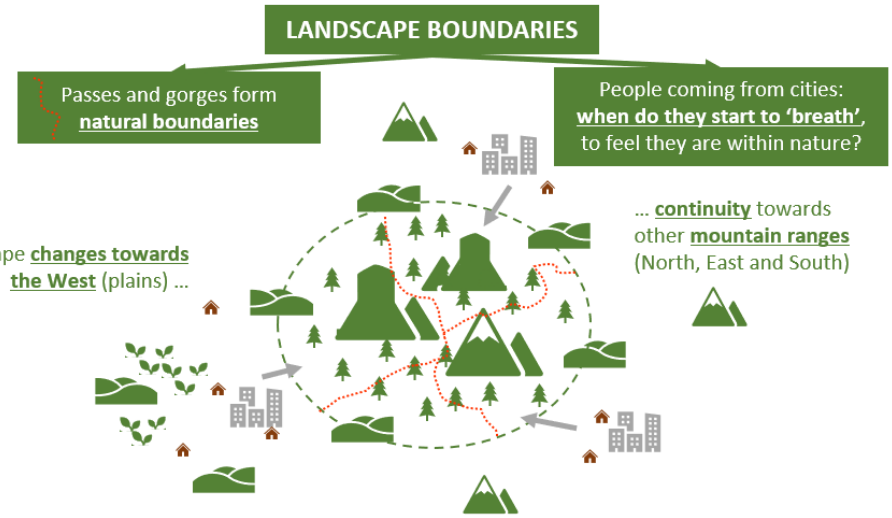
There are lots of photos I could choose to send, but no one photo would be sufficient. So here are some words instead…!

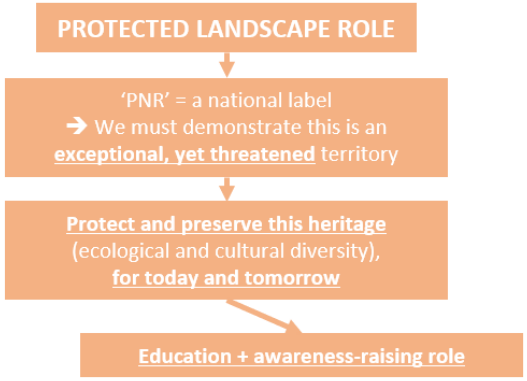
- I guess I see landscape as emergent, from natural resources and processes, including human interactions. People's perceptions of the landscape are varied and individuals' views also change. There is possibly also an idealised landscape in mind, from some past or future, when people are looking at a vista.
- Park management in an IUCN Cat 5 landscape like this one would aim to reduce adverse human influences on the natural environment, while enabling people to enjoy and understand it. This might often involve working with people's perceptions, including staff's (what is a natural environment anyway?), However for me the outcome of management is not necessarily about preserving landscape character, but about conserving and improving landscape quality and function, in terms of the state of biodiversity, soils, water, heritage etc (incidentally, mapping is really helping us here). A consequence of this is that the attributes of a protected area may be changing from those for which it was designated.
- By managing in this way, people can derive enjoyment and well-being from the Park's intrinsic qualities in "perpetuity", even as these qualities change. These can also be measured, although of course people's expectations change, which changes the reported experience.

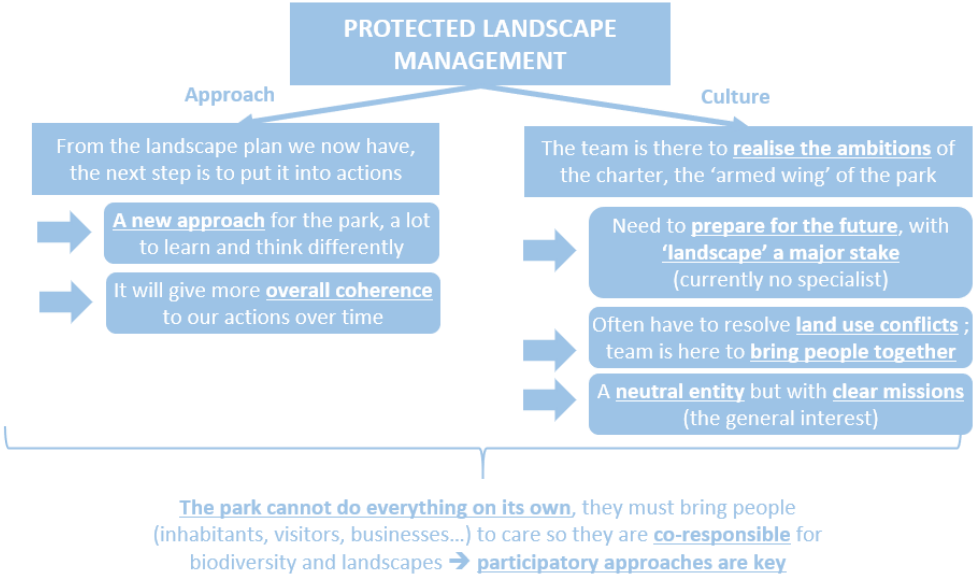
A colleague once said to me, "We get the landscapes we deserve" and I think I begin to understand!

Person L
Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse









Person M
Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

'Personal' landscape...

'Archetype' of the Chartreuse
- Pine forests
- Chaotic relief
- Peaks & passes
- Snow (part of the year)

Atypical
- Rather open view

'Emblematic' landscapes, which people notice...
- Villages, hamlets
- Expanding forests
- Historic sites (monastery)
- Mountain pastures

... and that's not everything, there are other landscapes in the Chartreuse

Landscapes are perceived seen and felt. They are a gift.

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

Hills (Western side):
→ **Softer** relief
→ **'Calmer'** nature, with humans & agriculture

Heart of the Parc:
→ **Chaotic** relief
→ **Wilder** nature

Varied landscapes within these

No sharp boundary to the West, continuing with hilly landscapes

More abrupt limit on other sides, the mountain range stops, then plains are not really part of the landscape

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Preserve a specific **place** for its **rural and mountainous characteristics**

- Against **pressure** from neighbouring **cities**, exacerbated by **climate change**
- Guide the **evolution of traditional activities** (agriculture, forestry) while **minimising impacts on landscapes**

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

For now **lacking competencies to innovate and be creative** in terms of landscapes

- Focus on **maintaining what is**
- **Aspiration to propose new forms** which can **integrate** within the landscape

Landscape as **tool** to apprehend **evolution of our territory** and **impact of the charter**

- **Difficult** in practice, creates **confusion**, requires a lot of explanation
- Landscape is **fluid and perceived** ≠ technocratic ambition of **units and objectives** (an exercise for the sake of it?)

Culture

Bring **technical competencies** to elected representatives: biodiversity, agriculture, forestry...

- **Raising awareness**

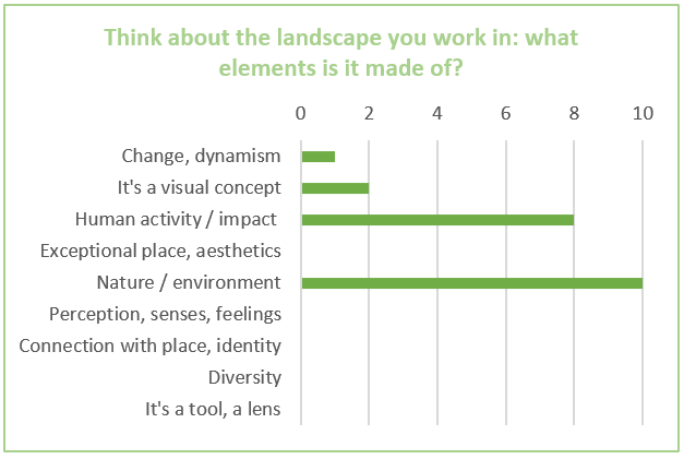
+

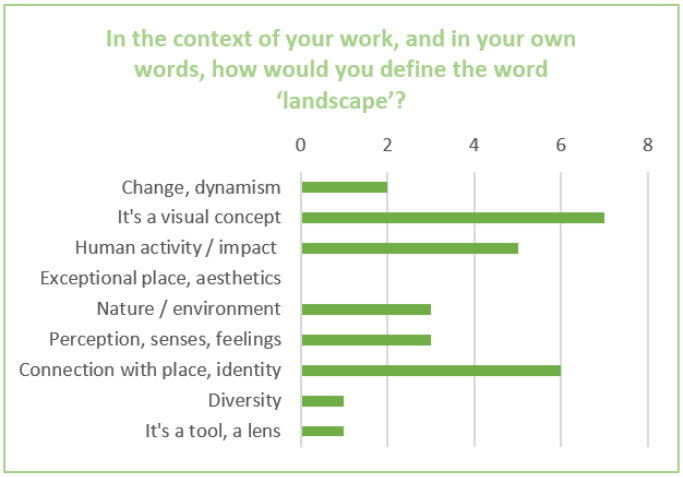
Bring **unity**, be a **link**, be **responsible for coherence** across the Parc

Practical implementation comes from the various stakeholders, we are here to gather them, **make them go forward together**

Number of answers: 10

Online survey – theme occurrence
Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse





Group interview (2 people)
Herford County

LANDSCAPE DEFINITION

Humans have been living here for over 6000 years, **shaping the landscapes**

Positive / Negative → **Human impact** → Past / Present

Natural change process, yet ongoing impact required **to maintain** a certain landscape…
= 'protecting something that is on the move'

Urban hotspots · Agriculture · Rivers & streams · Dense road network · Woodlands · Meadows · Soft hills, creeks

'Landscape change is what makes our work exciting'

LANDSCAPE BOUNDARIES

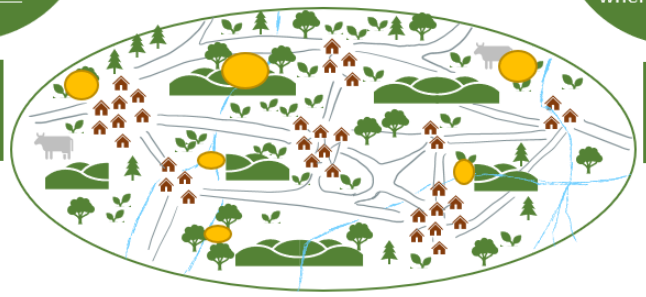
One main landscape, but **many different landscapes within, at different scales**…

Boundaries of nature reserves are where regulations apply, **we need them to do the work**

→ **Landscapes don't stop at boundaries, but our influence does…**

It's a matter of perspective: plants and animals might see hard borders where we don't…

→ **Boundaries are artificial**, not necessarily right for nature…



= nature reserves dotted throughout the landscape
(Naturschutzgebiete and Landschaftschutzgebiete)

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE ROLE

Our role is to **protect the landscape and nature as a whole**

In practice we have to **concentrate our efforts where we have influence** = nature reserves

- **Necessity** to work outside of these boundaries for **connectivity**
- Focus on **hotspots** of plants and animals

but there are valuable areas which don't fall under our protection

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Approach

Landscape management is **managing change**

- **Maintain** in **evolution**
- **Educate** on **landscape history**, to not lose this precious **understanding**
- **Manage pressures** from recreation, human presence

Culture

Managing people in partnership is key to achieving our goals

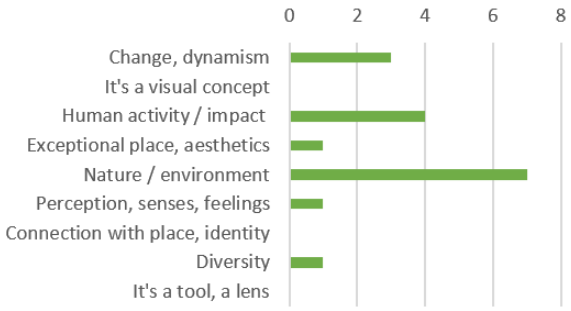
- **Connect** interests, resolve conflicts, **find ways to work together**
- **Accept diverging interests** allows us to find common ground

The influence of **politics** is often neglected, but it has a **strong impact on our work**: **we don't decide** on future direction, nature conservation remains **a side issue** and **lacking support is often a barrier**

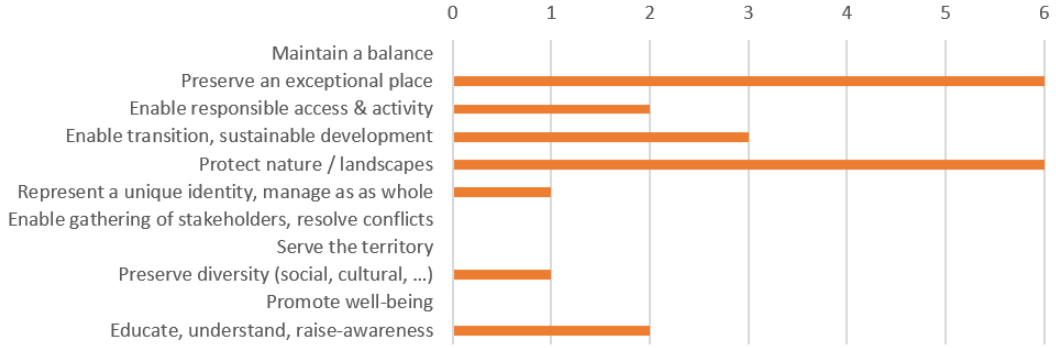
Number of answers: 7

Online survey – theme occurrence
Dorset AONB

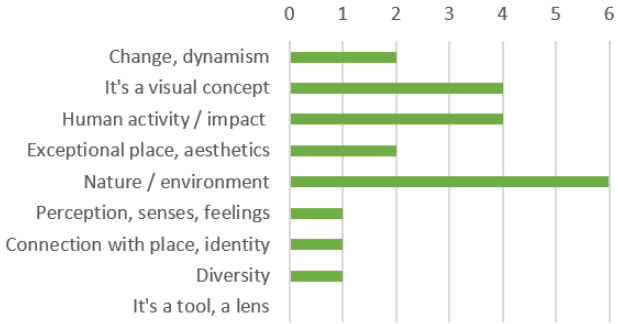
Think about the landscape you work in: what elements is it made of?



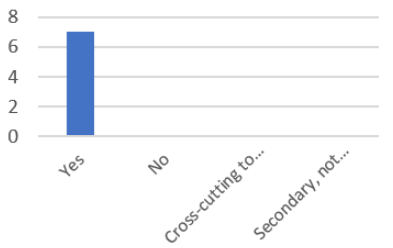
In your own words, what do you think the purpose of a protected area is?



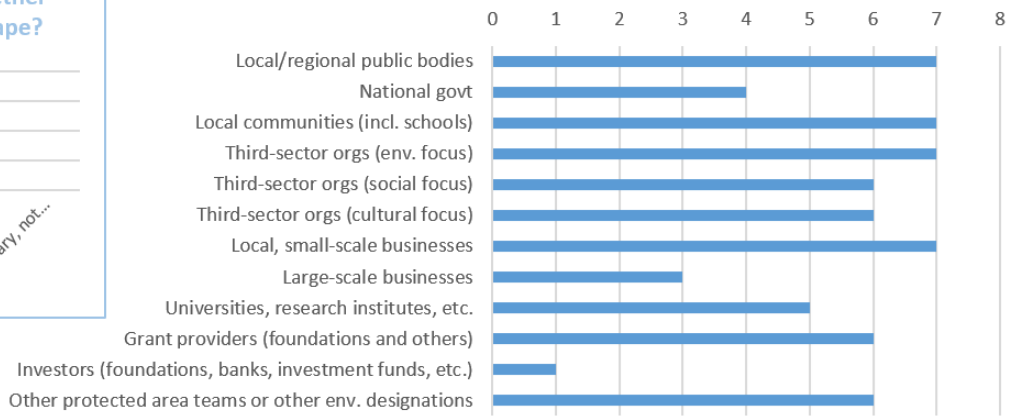
In the context of your work, and in your own words, how would you define the word 'landscape'?



Does your protected area management team exist to bring stakeholders together to manage that landscape?

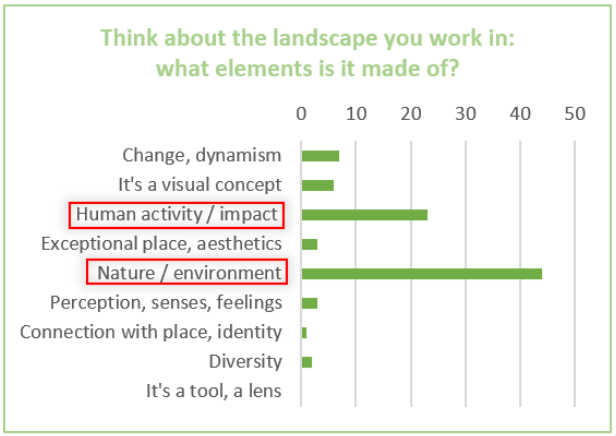


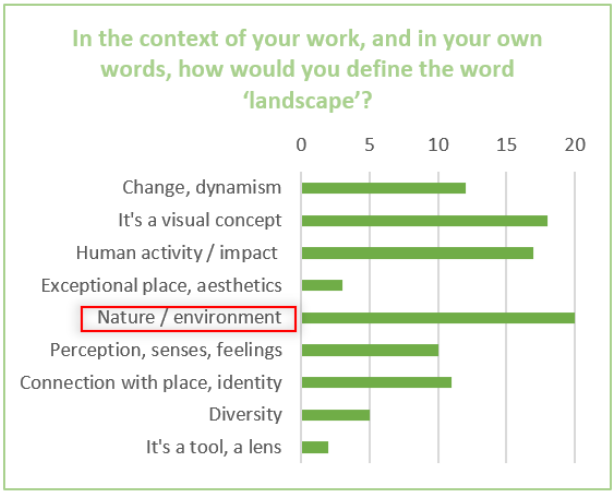
What type of stakeholders do you work with to manage that landscape?

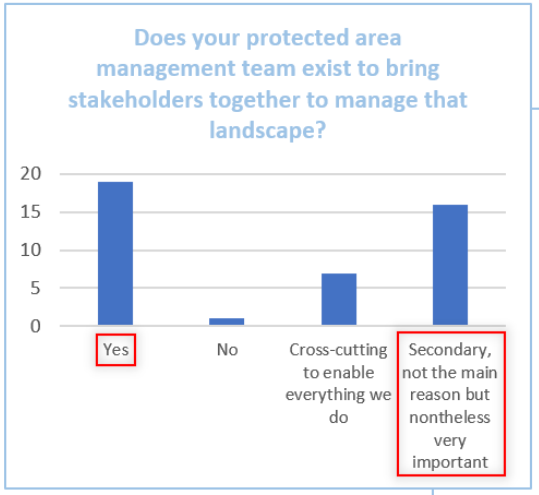


Online survey – theme occurrence
Overall results

Number of answers: 44







Appendix 2 – Individual Perception Model Analysis (key themes)

Key themes from the 15 individual perception models and their occurrence

		Person A	Person B	Person C	Person D	Person E	Group interview (4)	Person F	Person G	Person H	Person I	Person J	Person K	Person L	Person M	Group interview (2 people)	
																	15
WHAT (Landscape Definition)	Change, dynamism	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	11
	It's a visual concept	x		x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x		10
	Human activity / impact	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	12
	Exceptional place, aesthetics	x		x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x			9
	Nature / environment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	14
	Perception, senses, feelings		x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x		10
	Connection with place, identity	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x		x		11
	Diversity			x	x		x			x				x	x	x	7
	It's a tool, a lens			x			x										2
WHERE (Landscape Boundaries)	Natural/geological boundaries (gorge, coast…)	x	x						x	x		x	x	x	x		8
	Perceived boundaries			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
	Landscape continuity		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	12
	Landscape variation, clear limits	x												x	x		3
	Diversity, mosaic	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x			x	x	11
	Ecological boundaries (for flora & fauna)												x			x	2
	Practical boundaries to structure action	x										x				x	3
	Historical / cultural boundaries			x		x	x	x		x		x	x				7
	A coherent whole		x	x		x	x					x					5
	Connections with other places (global)				x		x										2
WHY (Protected Landscape Role)	Maintain a balance	x		x			x			x							4
	Preserve an exceptional place	x			x							x		x	x		5
	Enable responsible access & activity	x	x	x		x			x	x		x	x		x		9
	Enable transition, sustainable development	x	x	x	x		x			x		x	x		x		9
	Protect nature / landscapes	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
	Represent a unique identity, manage as a whole		x					x			x					x	4
	Enable gathering of stakeholders, resolve conflicts			x	x				x								3
	Serve the territory			x	x												2
	Preserve diversity (social, cultural, …)				x				x					x			3
	Promote well-being						x	x			x		x				4
	Educate, understand, raise-awareness					x			x		x		x	x			5
HOW (Protected Landscape Management)	Landscape as a new / different approach, aspiration to innovate			x										x	x		3
	Landscape as a way to give overall coherence, to convey meaning			x	x							x		x			4
	Landscape as a tool (or lens) for conversation and/or evaluation	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x			x		9
	Landscape management as change management				x	x		x					x			x	5
	Landscape as a key consideration			x		x			x								3
	Managing separate elements from which landscapes emerge						x			x			x				3
	'Using' the landscape for economic and social outcomes										x						1
	Bring people together, resolve conflicts, be a neutral entity	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
	Serve the park (mission), represent it, carry a vision forward, ignite passion			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		12
	Team doesn't act on its own, partnership is key	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
	Bring technical competencies, raise awareness, educate				x	x	x	x		x	x				x	x	8
	Ensure rules are applied, that sites are cared for							x									1

highlighted if occurrence >10 (i.e. 2/3)