

Transboundary Protected Areas as a Vehicle for Peaceful Co-Operation

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Abstract

Transboundary protected areas TBPA's as well as Peace Parks as defined by IUCN have attracted worldwide interest not only because of the publications of a number of significant papers describing successes but also through the recent declaration of new TBPA's particularly in Southern Africa.

The many benefits concerning biodiversity, promotion of international peaceful co-operation, economic improvement to people living in or near the areas, as well as more effective control of fires and poaching and recognition of the many services are described. There are presently 169 TBPA's located in 113 countries.

It is argued that Peace Parks should not be exclusively restricted to TBPA's since it would not allow island countries (e.g. Australia, Madagascar, Cuba, Philippines, etc.) to participate –at least on land surfaces. Hence Peace Parks or other categories of protected areas may be promoted in areas where there is or was a history of present or past conflicts not necessarily situated at the boundaries with other countries. A number of suggestions towards a worldwide Peace Parks programme is proposed.

The future of TBPA's looks bright and the increased dimension towards a culture of peace could attract international and local funding organizations to participate.

Introduction

The subject of Transboundary Protected Areas (TBPAs) as well as Peace Parks (or "Parks for Peace") has recently attracted much attention. Besides the pioneer efforts of IUCN, notably the outstanding publication by Sandwith *et al* (2001), there are other interested organizations such as WWF, Conservation International, UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP, etc. and of course the UN founded University for Peace. As an example the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) with headquarters in Yokohama Japan and devoted to "the conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests", has recently issued its entire monthly journal (published in English, French and Spanish), to Transboundary Conservation Areas (*Tropical Forest Update, 2003*). It actually makes the point that ITTO is contributing substantially by funding TBPA's related projects in South East Asia. ITTO has also strengthened efforts undertaken by Peru and Ecuador to create the "Sierra del Condor (Mountain Range) Corridor", a transboundary protected area where a bloody war was fought only about 10 years ago, and where IUCN's President, Mrs. Yolanda Kakabadze played a prominent role when she was Minister of the Environment in her native country, Ecuador. The creation of Peace Parks following conflicts was also discussed at an

international conference held in Utrecht, Netherlands on the subject of “Nature and war: biodiversity conservation during conflicts” (*Budowski, 2000*). A more recent Yale University initiative publication (*Fladeland et al, 2003*) produced seventeen papers on transboundary protected areas.

Standing out among the countries who recently have done most to create TBPA’s with neighbouring countries is undoubtedly the Republic of South Africa, and in particular its Peace Parks Foundation (2002). Their efforts probably triggered other initiatives south of the Sahara (*van der Linde et al, 2001*).

But Transboundary Protected Areas have, of course, a much longer history, particularly in Europe (*Brunner, 1999*) and along the US-Canadian Border. Some of these efforts were described in international meetings (*Westing, 1993*) and our own gathering in Durban will undoubtedly add to our knowledge and continue to provide useful guidance for action.

One significant factor that has helped to focus interest in TBPA’s is the possibility that it can promote peace and cooperation; hence the labeling of “Peace Parks” became very attractive.

The IUCN definitions of TBPA’s and Peace Parks (*Sandwith et al. 2001*)

- **Transboundary Protected Area (TBPA):**

An area of land and/or sea that straddles one or more boundaries between states, sub-national units such as provinces and regions, autonomous areas and/or areas beyond the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction, whose constituent parts are especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed co-operatively through legal or other effective means.

- **Parks for Peace (also sometimes called Peace Parks):**

Parks for Peace are transboundary areas that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and co-operation.

The many benefits of TBPA’s to society

- Promoting international co-operation at different levels and in different subject matters while allowing many joint activities.
- Enhancing environmental protection across ecosystems, often including a significant higher number of ecosystems when compared to what pertained to each country.
- Facilitating more effective exchange of information and research.

- Bringing economic benefits to local and national economies. The production of a steady supply of high quality water in mountain environments is a prime example as shown in a recent Central American high level meeting held in Guatemala (*Cambio ambiental...*, 2002) on sharing transboundary mountain resources, in order to build a peace program. There is no doubt that conflicts over water shortages will increase in the future, taking into account that international basins cover 45.3% of the land surface of the earth (Wolf, 2002).
- Ensuring better cross-border control of problems such as illegal exploitation of timber trees and pests, poaching, pollution and smuggling. To this may be added the promotion of peace and the possibility of enhancing the visit by tourists (ecotourists), providing them with a larger territory while an added attraction will include the interpretation of past conflicts in the areas as part of their journey.

Globally, the growth in the number of TBPA's in the last ten years was accelerated. Only for the 1989-1999 decade, the number of areas that qualified has increased substantially. In 1993 the inventory indicated the presence of 70 TBPA's in 65 different countries. In 2001 the number had grown to 169 TBPA's located in 113 different countries.

A fundamental question on the definition of Peace Parks

Should Peace Parks be restricted to only Transboundary Protected Areas?

If so, it eliminates the possibility of creating Peace Parks for island countries –at least for terrestrial areas– like in the case of Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, Philippines, Iceland, Cuba, Jamaica even Antarctica (depending on what border issues are recognised), etc., while limiting the possibility of many other countries with only one or very few or small (in size) borders with neighboring countries such as the case of UK, Indonesia to cite only a few.

Moreover many countries can show past conflict scenarios with high biodiversity in their territories, not only at the borders, many of which are now protected areas or deserve to become such.

Hence I have been proposing that Peace Parks may be part of a category of protected areas where there was a significant past or present conflictive scenario.

There are many promising areas in the world that qualify for peace parks without being located on the borders of two or more countries, because they were well-known scenarios of past conflicts (some recent, others long time ago or both). For Latin America, possible areas are the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (N. Colombia) as well as the Pre-Cambrian Macarena mountains in Southeast Colombia, parts of Chiapas, Mexico, areas in Cuba, Nicaragua, and in the Amazonian basin are prime examples. The latter may include lands where past –and present– conflicts between native communities and recently arrived settlers have been –and often still are– prevalent particularly in Africa. I have myself proposed a list of 20 potential Peace Parks for Central America, most of them TBPA's (*Budowski, 2003*).

A prime example of an ongoing non-transboundary project in Central Guatemala was triggered by Rigoberta Menchú, the 1992 Nobel Peace laureate, in a magnificent central mountain cloud forest, in the Quiché of Guatemala, an area where many Mayan Indians were killed in the civil war less than two decades ago. Mrs. Menchú aspires not only to preserve this magnificent forest and create what she calls “an ecological reserve for peace”, but also wants an interpretation and meeting center for reconciliation to be established.

Added possibilities for interpretation, education and a good feeling of pride and achievement are all tangible benefits when a formerly conflicting area becomes a demonstration that peaceful relations can be achieved. The establishment of TBPA’s for conflict prevention and confidence building has also been proposed particularly for South East Asia (*Westing, 1998*). Besides the peace ingredient, it contributes to the protection of biodiversity and the flow of genes when the area becomes part of a biological corridor, particularly in fragmented or patchy areas of remaining forests.

Joint management between groups with different interests, for instance cultural (historical) and biological, provides added values that should be advantageous to tourism and a provider of jobs. Recently a whole issue of the prestigious journal “Mountain Research and Development” was devoted to tourism in mountain areas with natural and cultural attractions.

Strong arguments towards the creation of Peace Parks for new protected areas will be strengthened by adding the peace component as a justification. It is legally less complicated and does not involve sovereignty. It also helps to harmonize legal aspects. It may trigger the interest of many organizations when conservation of biodiversity is not the main goal but the promotion of peace is. The University for Peace is one example (*Council of the University for Peace, 2002*); it intends to offer short intensive courses on Peace Parks.

Finally there is a distinct possibility to attract other donors or otherwise stakeholders, particularly interested in the promotion of peace. This became evident in a recent international meeting in Salta, Argentine in April 2000 on biological corridors where 5 potential peace parks were proposed as part of the corridor strategy.

Suggestions for a Peace Parks Program

- Inventory of existing or proposed peace parks. Part of this has been done by IUCN but if Peace Parks are “redefined” this may produce new favorable developments.
- The adoption of criteria to qualify as a peace park. The main work has been done but details have to be solved.
- Ways of obtaining the greatest added value when the peace parks are designed and managed. This aspect requires extensive consultation and agreements with populations living close or within the projected peace park.

- Attracting other interested stakeholders including local populations and funding agencies, to participate in the creation and management of Peace Parks.
- Design of a system of annual rewards for the most successful peace parks established.
- The production of curricula, education and teaching materials where biodiversity conservation is combined with the promotion of a culture of peace.

Expected results

- An increase in the number of Peace Parks and a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation, including biological corridors.
- Added dimensions for visitor's centers and for guides in charge of interpretation.
- Better possibilities to involve greater cooperation between Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations, including a welcome participation of potential donors. There is for instance a significant initiative between two private organizations in Bolivia and Paraguay to merge two areas of 4500 ha and 4000 ha respectively in the dry Chaco area where a well remembered destructive war was fought in the 1930's (Acevedo, 2003).
- Propitious scenarios for education, research, ecological and cultural tourism and the promotion of peace.

In conclusion the future of TBPA's and Peace Parks looks bright but the dimension of peace should be given a greater predominance. True, many TBPA have a conflictive past, not only war but also illegal migrations, smuggling, poaching animals and plants, to cite only a few justifications. Nevertheless, the relation between TBPA's and Peace Parks should be clarified. While there is of course a close relation, it is argued that the latter should not automatically be part of TBPA's. Of course the majority of Peace Parks will remain transboundary but many Peace Parks will provide an opportunity for island countries and others with only small joint borders, to create new protected areas or add the peace dimension to existing ones.

Finally the Peace dimension would also allow many potential donors where the promotion of peace is the main objective to participate in the worldwide efforts to create new protected areas and strengthening existing ones, and contributing to a "culture of peace" in addition to biological, social and economic benefits. IUCN and its biodiversity *raison d'être* will greatly benefit from such arrival of new partners.

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