



THE CONSERVATION AREA AND THE REGISTERED LANDSCAPE

Lecture 5. 'Protected areas' in the IUCN categories

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The variety of protection

The term “protected area” is therefore shorthand for a sometimes bewildering array of land and water designations, of which some of the best known are national park, nature reserve, wilderness area, wildlife management area and landscape protected area but can also include such approaches as community conserved areas.

More importantly, the term embraces a wide range of different management approaches, from highly protected sites where few if any people are allowed to enter, through parks where the emphasis is on conservation but visitors are welcome, to much less restrictive approaches where conservation is integrated into the traditional (and sometimes not so traditional) human lifestyles or even takes place alongside limited sustainable resource extraction.

Some protected areas ban activities like food collecting, hunting or extraction of natural resources while for others it is an accepted and even a necessary part of management. The approaches taken in terrestrial, inland water and marine protected areas may also differ significantly and these differences are spelled out later in the guidelines.

Describing different approaches

In an attempt to make sense of and to describe the different approaches, IUCN has agreed a definition of what a protected area is and is not, and then identified six different protected area categories, based on management objectives, one of which is subdivided into two parts. Although the categories were originally intended mainly for the reasonably modest aim of helping to collate data and information on protected areas, they have grown over time into a more complex tool.

Today the categories both encapsulate IUCN's philosophy of protected areas and also help to provide a framework in which various protection strategies can be combined together, along with supportive management systems outside protected areas, into a coherent approach to conserving nature.

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) categories are now used for purposes as diverse as planning, setting regulations, and negotiating land and water uses.

History of the IUCN protected area categories

As protected areas in the modern sense were set up in one country after another during the twentieth century, each nation developed its own approach to their management and there were initially no common standards or terminology. One result is that many different terms are used at the national level to describe protected areas and there are also a variety of international protected area systems created under global conventions (e.g., World Heritage sites) and regional agreements (e.g., Natura 2000 sites in Europe).

The first effort to clarify terminology was made in 1933, at the International Conference for the Protection of Fauna and Flora, in London. This set out four protected area categories: national park; strict nature reserve; fauna and flora reserve; and reserve with prohibition for hunting and collecting. In 1942, the Western Hemisphere Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation also incorporated four types: national park; national reserve; nature monument; and strict wilderness reserve (Holdgate 1999).

In 1962, IUCN's newly formed Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA), now the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), prepared a World List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, for the First World Conference on National Parks in Seattle, with a paper on nomenclature by C. Frank Brockman (1962).

In 1966, IUCN produced a second version of what became a regular publication now known as the UN List of Protected Areas, using a simple classification system: national parks, scientific reserves and natural monuments. The 1972 Second World Parks Conference called on IUCN to "define the various purposes for which protected areas are set aside; and develop suitable standards and nomenclature for such areas" (Elliott 1974).

Categorization system for protected areas

This was the background to the CNPPA decision to develop a categories system for protected areas. A working group report (IUCN 1978) argued that a categorization system should:

- show how national parks can be complemented by other types of protected area;
- help nations to develop management categories to reflect their needs;
- help IUCN to assemble and analyse data on protected areas;
- remove ambiguities and inconsistencies;
- ensure that “regardless of nomenclature used by nations ... a conservation area can be recognised and categorised by the objectives for which it is in fact managed”.

Ten categories were proposed at first.

IUCN Guidelines 1994

However, limitations in the system soon became apparent. It did not contain a definition of a protected area; several terms were used to describe the entire suite of ten categories; a single protected area could be in more than one category; and the system lacked a marine dimension.

Revision and proposals for new categories In 1984 CNPPA established a task force to update the categories.

In 1994, the IUCN General Assembly meeting in Buenos Aires approved the new system. Guidelines were published by IUCN and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre later that year (IUCN 1994).

First definition of a “**protected area**” – an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means and six new categories appeared.

Six categories of protected areas

Areas managed mainly for:

I Strict protection [Ia) Strict nature reserve and Ib) Wilderness area]

II Ecosystem conservation and protection (i.e., National park)

III Conservation of natural features (i.e., Natural monument)

IV Conservation through active management (i.e., Habitat/species management area)

V Landscape/seascape conservation and recreation (i.e., Protected landscape/seascape)

VI Sustainable use of natural resources (i.e., Managed resource protected area)

In 1994 guidelines are based on key principles: the basis of categorization is by primary management objective; assignment to a category is not a commentary on management effectiveness; the categories system is international; national names for protected areas may vary; all categories are important; and a gradation of human intervention is implied.

New definition 2007

A protected area is: **“A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”**.

Some explanation of protected area definition:

- clearly defined geographical space (includes land, inland water, marine and coastal areas or a combination of two or more of these);
- recognised (implies that protection can include a range of governance types declared by people);
- managed (“managed” can include a decision to leave the area untouched);
- long-term conservation (protected areas should be managed in perpetuity and not as a short-term or temporary management strategy);

Natural and cultural landscapes/seascape

Use the terms as follows:

Natural or unmodified areas are those that still retain a complete or almost complete complement of species native to the area, within a more-or-less naturally functioning ecosystem.

Cultural areas have undergone more substantial changes by, for example, settled agriculture, intensive permanent grazing and forest management that have altered the composition or structure of the forest. Species composition and ecosystem functioning are likely to have been substantially altered.

Cultural landscapes can however still contain a rich array of species and in some cases these may have become reliant on cultural management.

Use of terms such as “natural” and “un-modified” does not seek to hide or deny the long-term stewardship of indigenous and traditional peoples where this exists; indeed many areas remain valuable to biodiversity precisely because of this form of management.

Definition of a protected area system

IUCN emphasises that protected areas should not be seen as isolated entities, but part of broader conservation landscapes, including both protected area systems and wider ecosystem approaches to conservation that are implemented across the landscape or seascape.

IUCN has suggested that the long-term success of in-situ conservation requires that the global system of protected areas comprise a representative sample of each of the world's different ecosystems. IUCN WCPA characterizes a protected area system as having five linked elements:

- representativeness, comprehensiveness and balance;
- adequacy: integrity, sufficiency of spatial extent and arrangement of contributing units, together with effective management;
- coherence and complementarity: positive contribution of each protected area towards the whole set of conservation
- consistency: application of management objectives, policies and classifications under comparable conditions in standard ways;
- cost effectiveness, efficiency and equity: appropriate balance between the costs and benefits, and appropriate equity in their distribution; includes efficiency: the minimum number and area of protected areas needed to achieve system objectives.



Ecosystem approaches

The ecosystem approach is a broader framework for planning and developing conservation and land/water use management in an integrated manner. In this context, protected areas fit as one important tool – perhaps the most important tool – in such an approach.

The CBD defines the ecosystem approach as: “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way ... ” (CBD 2004).

Roztocze National Park, Poland, photo © K.Palubska

All protected areas should aim to:

- **Conserve the composition, structure, function and evolutionary potential of biodiversity;**
- **Contribute to regional conservation strategies (as core reserves, buffer zones, corridors, steppingstones for migratory species etc.);**
- **Maintain diversity of landscape or habitat and of associated species and ecosystems;**
- **Be of sufficient size to ensure the integrity and longterm maintenance of the specified conservation targets or be capable of being increased to achieve this end;**
- **Maintain the values for which it was assigned in perpetuity;**
- **Be operating under the guidance of a management plan, and a monitoring and evaluation programme that supports adaptive management;**
- **Possess a clear and equitable governance system.**

All protected areas should also aim where appropriate to:

- Conserve significant landscape features, geomorphology and geology;
- Provide regulatory ecosystem services, including buffering against the impacts of climate change;
- Conserve natural and scenic areas of national and international significance for cultural, spiritual and scientific purposes;
- Deliver benefits to resident and local communities consistent with the other objectives of management;
- Deliver recreational benefits consistent with the other objectives of management;
- Facilitate low-impact scientific research activities and ecological monitoring related to and consistent with the values of the protected area;
- Use adaptive management strategies to improve management effectiveness and governance quality over time;
- Help to provide educational opportunities (including about management approaches);
- Help to develop public support for protection.

Six categories of protected areas

Category Ia: Strict nature reserve

- Ia) Strict nature reserve

Category Ia are strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.

Primary objective: To conserve regionally, nationally or globally outstanding ecosystems, species (occurrences or aggregations) and/or geodiversity features: these attributes will have been formed mostly or entirely by non-human forces and will be degraded or destroyed when subjected to all but very light human impact.

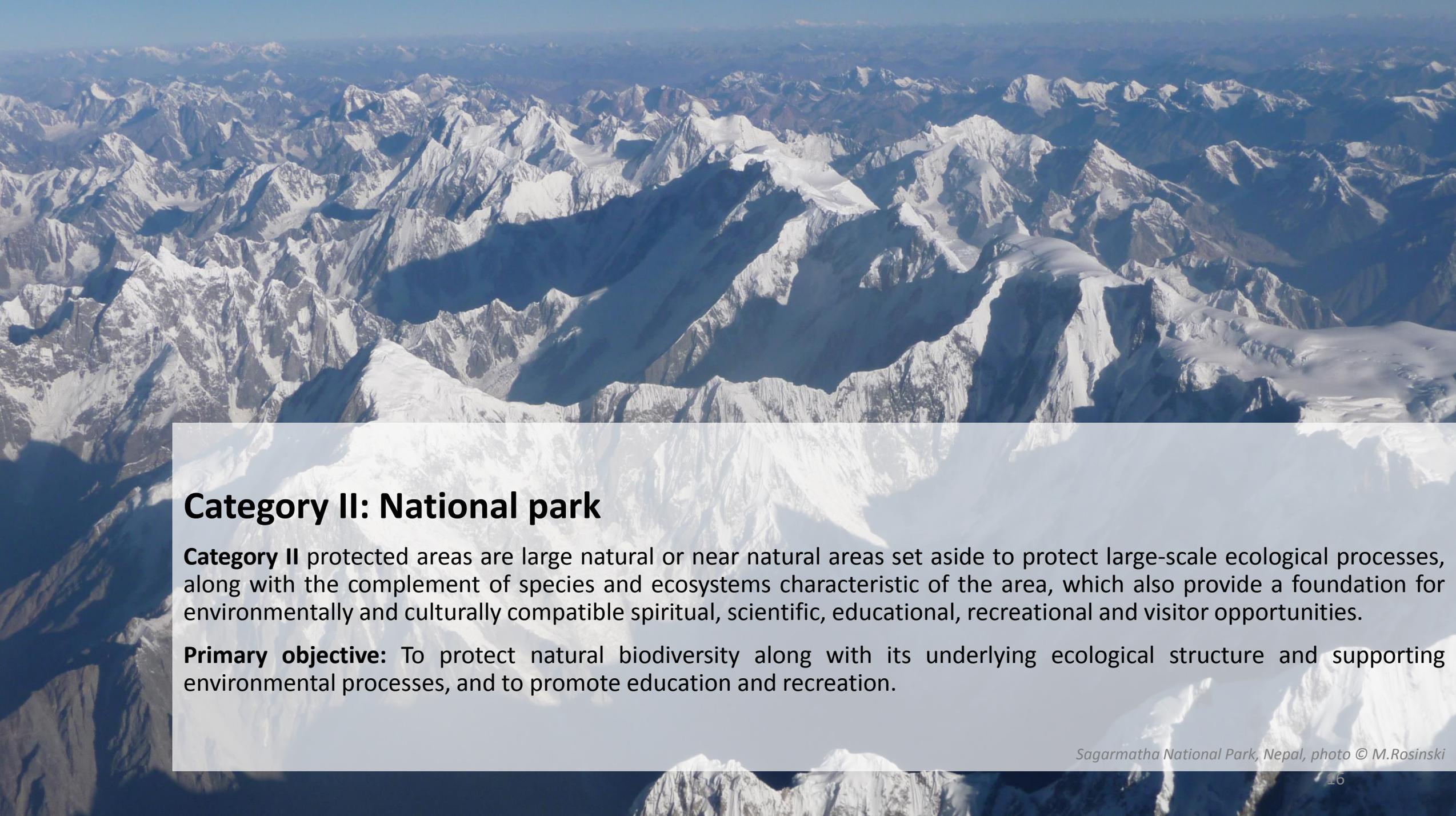
Six categories of protected areas

Category Ia: Strict nature reserve

- Ib) Wilderness area

Category Ib protected areas are usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.

Primary objective: To protect the long-term ecological integrity of natural areas that are undisturbed by significant human activity, free of modern infrastructure and where natural forces and processes predominate, so that current and future generations have the opportunity to experience such areas.



Category II: National park

Category II protected areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

Primary objective: To protect natural biodiversity along with its underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes, and to promote education and recreation.

Six categories of protected areas

Category III: Natural monument or feature

Category III protected areas are set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small protected areas and often have high visitor value.

Primary objective: to protect specific outstanding natural features and their associated biodiversity and habitats.

Other objectives:

- To provide biodiversity protection in landscapes or seascapes that have otherwise undergone major changes;
- To protect specific natural sites with spiritual and/or cultural values where these also have biodiversity values;
- To conserve traditional spiritual and cultural values of the site.

Six categories of protected areas

Category IV: Habitat/species management area

Category IV protected areas aim to protect particular species or habitats and management reflects this priority. Many category IV protected areas will need regular, active interventions to address the requirements of particular species or to maintain habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.

Primary objective: To maintain, conserve and restore species and habitats.

Other objectives:

- To protect vegetation patterns or other biological features through traditional management approaches;
- To protect fragments of habitats as components of landscape or seascape-scale conservation strategies;
- To develop public education and appreciation of the species and/or habitats concerned;
- To provide a means by which the urban residents may obtain regular contact with nature.

Six categories of protected areas

Category V: Protected landscape/ seascape

A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

Primary objective: To protect and sustain important landscapes/seascapes and the associated nature conservation and other values created by interactions with humans through traditional management practices.

Other objectives:

- To maintain a balanced interaction of nature and culture through the protection of landscape and/or seascape and associated traditional management approaches, societies, cultures and spiritual values;
- To contribute to broad-scale conservation by maintaining species associated with cultural landscapes and/or
- by providing conservation opportunities in heavily used landscapes;
- To provide opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socio-economic activity through recreation and tourism;
- To provide natural products and environmental services;
- To provide a framework to underpin active involvement by the community in the management of valued landscapes or seascapes and the natural and cultural heritage that they contain;
- To encourage the conservation of agrobiodiversity and aquatic biodiversity;
- To act as models of sustainability so that lessons can be learnt for wider application.

Six categories of protected areas

Category VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

Category VI protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

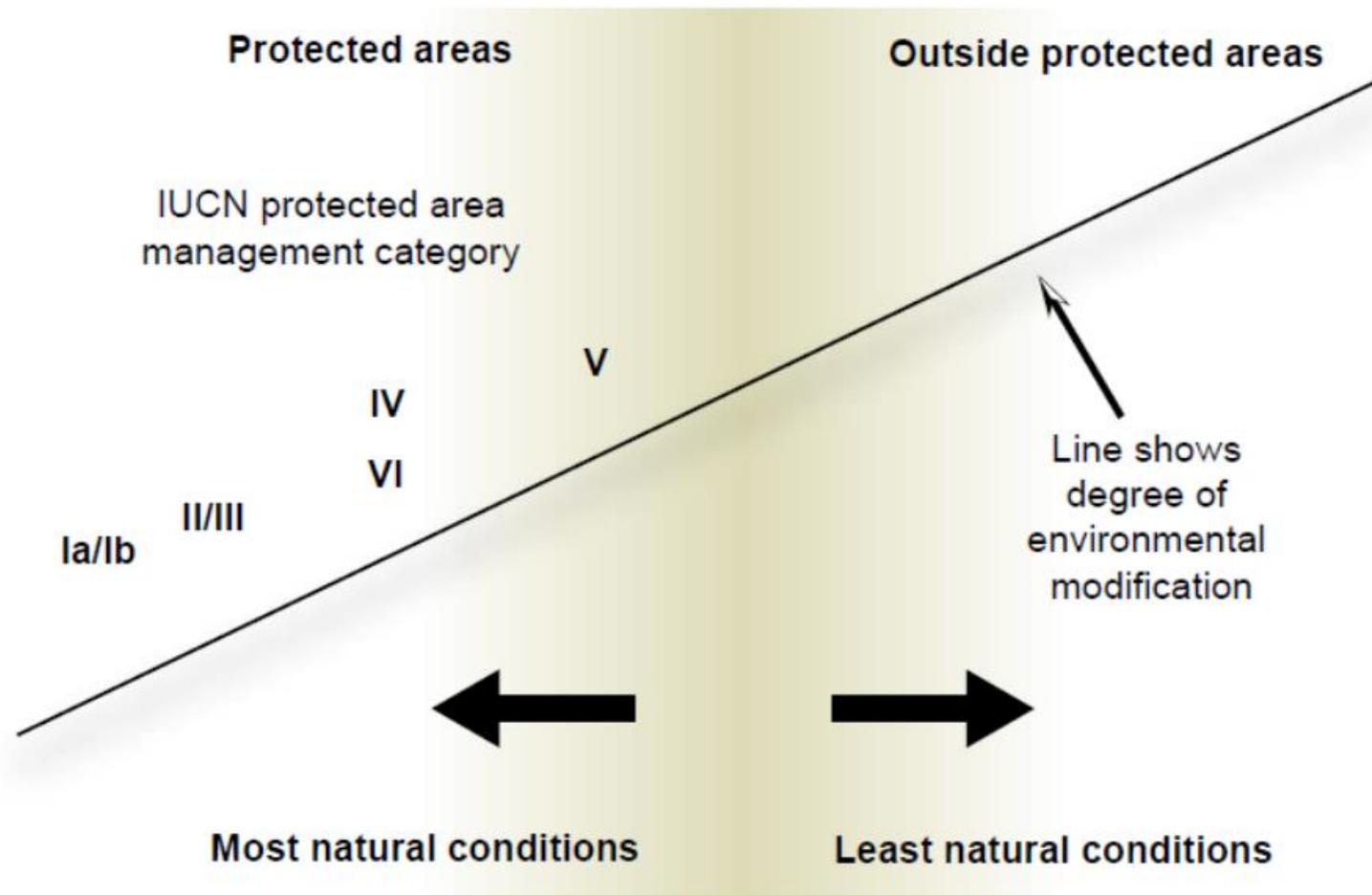
Primary objective: to protect natural ecosystems and use natural resources sustainably, when conservation and sustainable use can be mutually beneficial.

Other objectives:

- To promote sustainable use of natural resources, considering ecological, economic and social dimensions;
- To promote social and economic benefits to local communities where relevant; (...)
- To integrate other cultural approaches, belief systems and world-views within a range of social and economic approaches to nature conservation;
- To facilitate recreation and appropriate small-scale tourism.

Six categories of protected areas

Figure 1. Naturalness and IUCN protected area categories



In: Dudley N. (ed.), 2008. Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories, IUCN, p.35

Six categories of protected areas

Can a protected area contain more than one category?

- distinct protected areas nested within larger protected areas can have their own category
- different zones in larger protected areas can have their own category, if the zones are described and fixed in law
- different protected areas making up a transboundary protected area may have different categories.

How do other international protection designations relate to IUCN protected areas and categories?

- Most other international protection designations are not necessarily protected areas as recognised by IUCN, although in practice many are protected areas
- World Heritage sites, Ramsar sites and Natura 2000 sites can have any or no IUCN category
- Biosphere reserves should have a highly protected core (category I–IV) and a sustainable management zone around (category V/VI or not a fully protected area)

Working out the relationship between these sites and IUCN protected areas is complicated. For some of the above (e.g., **Natural World Heritage sites**) most listed sites are also protected areas. Some countries view such designations as automatically protected areas, while others do not. The general tendency seems to be that assigning full protected area status to these designations is often the best way of ensuring the long-term conservation of the site's values.

Using the IUCN protected area categories as a tool for conservation planning

Historically the protected area management categories have been used by management agencies to classify, with varying degrees of accuracy, the purpose of a given protected area once this has been determined through conservation planning.

IUCN recommends that protected area management categories also be used to help in the design of protected area systems with varying management purposes (and governance types) to meet the needs of biodiversity across the landscape or seascape.

As governments are called upon to identify and fill gaps in their protected area systems, planners should apply the full suite of protected area management categories when identifying, designating, and launching management of new protected areas.

Indigenous peoples' territories and protected areas

Especially in regions such as Latin America, North America, Oceania, Africa, Asia and the Arctic, many formally designated protected areas are at the same time the ancestral lands and waters of indigenous peoples, cultures and communities.

IUCN has long adopted and promoted protected area policies that respect the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, and has developed tools and approaches to facilitate their recognition and implementation.

Consistent with its policies, IUCN applies the following principles of good governance as they relate to protected areas overlapping with indigenous peoples' traditional lands, waters and resources:

- Protected areas established on indigenous lands, territories and resources should respect the rights of traditional owners, custodians, or users to such lands, territories and resources;
- Protected area management should also respect indigenous peoples' institutions and customary laws;
- Therefore protected areas should recognise indigenous owners or custodians as holders of the statutory powers in their areas, and therefore respect and strengthen indigenous peoples' exercising of authority and control of such areas.

Sacred natural sites

Sacred sites (including sacred natural sites and landscapes) that fit into national and international definitions of protected areas can potentially be recognised as legitimate components of protected area systems and can be attributed to any of the six IUCN protected area categories.

Many protected areas contain sites of importance to one, and sometimes more than one faith or spiritual value systems, including both sacred natural sites and built monuments such as monasteries, temples, shrines and pilgrimage trails.

Even in systems of protected areas in the most secularized countries of Europe, which were established using only ecological criteria, it is estimated that between 20–35 percent include significant cultural or spiritual values. There are countries and territories where all nature is sacred and protected areas can form smaller entities as part of larger sacred landscapes.

Sacred sites are currently not effectively reflected in protected area designations and management plans, and existing policy and legal frameworks do not adequately support sacred (natural) sites.

Evaluation of Cultural Landscapes by IUCN

IUCN has an interest in many properties of cultural value, especially those nominated as cultural landscapes. For that reason, it will on occasion participate in joint field inspections to nominated cultural landscapes with ICOMOS. IUCN's evaluation of such nominations is guided by an internal paper, "The Assessment of Natural Values in cultural landscapes", available on the IUCN web site at www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wheritage/culturallandscape.htm

In accordance with the natural qualities of certain cultural landscapes identified in Annex 3, paragraph 9, IUCN's evaluation is concerned with the following factors:

- (i) Conservation of natural and semi-natural systems, and of wild species of fauna and flora
- (ii) Conservation of biodiversity within farming systems;
- (iii) Sustainable land use;
- (iv) Enhancement of scenic beauty;
- (v) Ex-situ collections;
- (vi) Outstanding examples of humanity's inter-relationship with nature;
- (vii) Historically significant discoveries

The following table sets each of the above list in the context of the categories of cultural landscapes, thereby indicating where each consideration is most likely to occur:

Cultural Landscape type (see also Annex 3)	Natural considerations most likely to be relevant (see paragraph 16 above)						
Designed landscape						(v)	
Organically evolving landscape – continuous	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)			
Organically evolving landscape – fossil	(i)					(vi)	
Associative landscape							(vii)

Table 1. in: The Protected Landscape Approach..., 2005, Appendix 5, s.267

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