

**10 MAI 2010*****Landscape strategies on territorial biodiversity?****By Pierre Donadieu*

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Most researchers in nature conservation agree on the impossibility of saving all living species at risk. Especially since the majority of them are not known. They have however shown that there are two ways to limit the erosion of biodiversity in the planning of territories use, either by focusing on the protection of species, or on the environments where these species live.

To protect endangered species, it is first necessary to select them. It may be the rare species (charismatic or emblematic) that captivate audiences as giant pandas, otters, frogs and butterflies and often lead to media success. It can also be the umbrella species whose ecological requirements encompass those of other species, which are then preserved, and maintain the health of the ecosystem. This is the case of the tiger in India, whose prey are protected. Or keystone species like the wolf or beaver whose disappearance undermines the structure of the food chain.

But protecting species in isolation from each other is not a solution in an eco-system logic where they interact with each other. Therefore it is preferable to preserve their habitats, whether natural, agro-forestry or urban. Protecting within green and water networks only the richest and most threatened, however, seems a less effective strategy than to designate additional sites which are representative of the wealth of a territory. But both methods are limited by the instant and unique knowledge on biodiversity. It often lacks the observational data to put biodiversity in line with the local dynamics of plant and animal populations.

The definition and monitoring of these strategies depend on the public local authorities concerned. For example in the land of Baden-Wurtemberg in Germany, 300 target species were selected by scientists to define "conservation responsibilities" among 1112 municipalities<sup>1</sup>. Mapping tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) help to locate the milieu and to identify the appropriate networks of ecological corridors. It is then, according to German federal law of conservation of nature, to protect and develop both "diversity and regional uniqueness" of the landscape as "cultural landscape".<sup>2</sup>

This double strategy indicates that the protection of species deserves to be founded on their environmental value, and their rarity, both related. It is by putting them in line with a sociopolitical process of territorialization, that these plant and animal species will also participate in the identification and distinction of public municipalities one to each other.

When, in the Alps, the town of F. and its inhabitants appropriate as common heritage 25 species of butterflies and their environments, the neighboring V. looks after the maintenance of populations of vultures and wolves, as far as gentian and edelweiss.

The question is no longer to save millions of animal species, because no one, neither philosopher nor ecologist, can justify it in a meaningful way, no more nor less than to explain why there should be men on the planet<sup>3</sup>. The issue is to install the social processes of territorial living species from the municipalities' level to the national and global levels; and to observe and evaluate the results for local and global common goods.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Joss et al. « Conservation responsibilities » of municipalities for target species. Prioritizing conservation by assigning responsibilities in Baden-Wurtemberg, Germany, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 93 (2009) 218-228.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> R. D. Precht, *Qui suis-je, et si je suis combien, voyage en philosophie ?* Paris, Belfond, 2010, p. 238.