



Ignacio Palomo

Fernando Román

Elisa Oteros

Fact Sheet

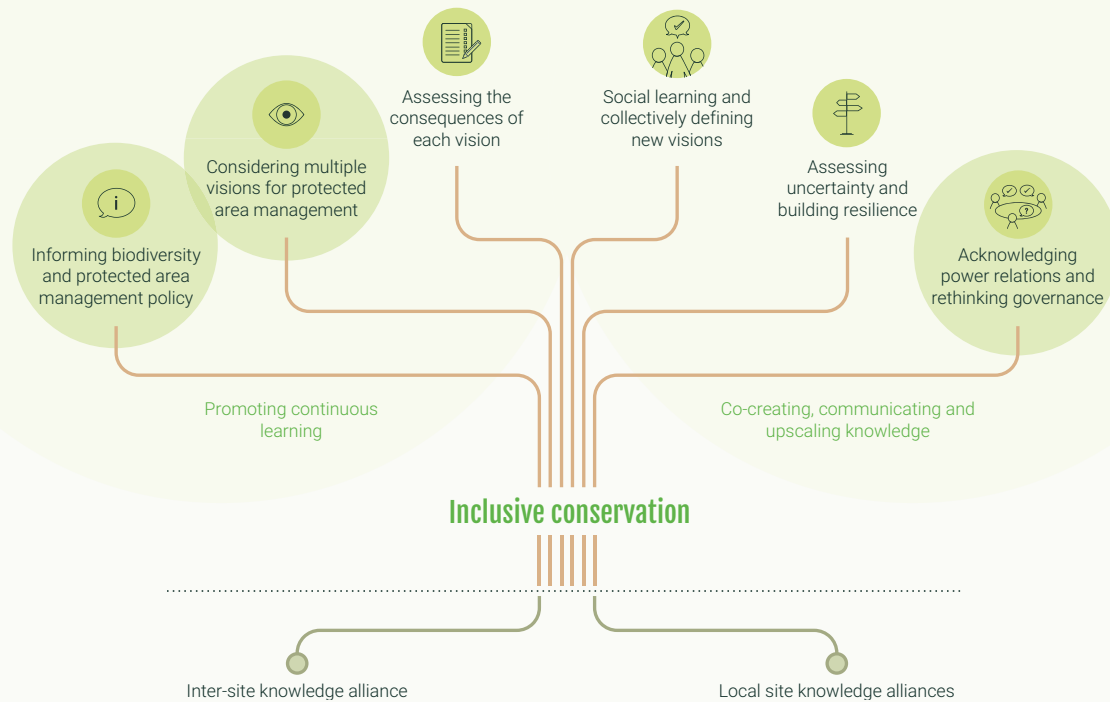
ENVISION: promoting inclusive conservation in protected areas

Moving from theory to practice: Development of tools for socially inclusive governance in Sierra de Guadarrama National Park (Spain)



Our inclusive approach to conservation

Transforming visions into integrated protected area management strategies; improving biodiversity and human well-being



What is inclusive conservation?

Inclusive conservation is an approach for considering and balancing different visions for protected area management which is thought to help achieve socially relevant, economically productive, and environmentally sustainable outcomes while enhancing the conservation status of protected areas.

The approach considers multiple visions for protected area management, assessing the consequences of each vision, collectively defining new visions through social learning, assessing uncertainty and building resilience, acknowledging power relations and rethinking governance, while informing biodiversity and protected area management policy.

The ENVISION project team seeks to develop a set of tools to help decision-makers to: 1. Identify, compare and balance stakeholders' visions for protected areas management, and 2. Foster social engagement and collaboration for achieving better conservation outcomes.

This will be tested at the case study area in Spain – the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park. This area presents an interesting case study in governance due to its complex boundaries and intersecting governing competences and multiple and sometimes competing land uses.

The ENVISION project aims to develop and test an inclusive conservation approach and to take part in critical discussions with policy-makers in the context of the global and regional biodiversity conservation frameworks. Project highlights are available on the PANORAMA – Solutions for a Healthy Planet platform, demonstrating key elements of advancing the inclusive conservation approach in each of four study areas.





The European Union is showing leadership on the road to Kunming

During the past months, the EU has made a number of important steps towards biodiversity conservation. Following the launch of the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 by the European Commission in spring 2020, the Council of the European Union endorsed its protection and restoration targets¹. On this occasion, the EU Commissioner for Environment and Oceans highlighted how a strong message from the Council is crucial to implement the Strategy in Member States, and demonstrate the EU's leadership in biodiversity conservation. The European Parliament supported the Strategy and suggested other important key points for improvement, such as the adoption of a Restoration Plan that includes a restoration target of 30% of degraded habitats.

On the financing front for biodiversity, important developments have been made: in July 2020, the European Council reached a political agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF – the overall EU budget) for 2021 to 2027 as well as a specific recovery instrument – Next Generation EU (NGEU) – to address the effects of the coronavirus crisis. The agreement followed the European Parliament's proposed terms for the next long-term EU budget. The European leaders agreed to earmark 30% of the full budget package for climate² -more than the initial 25% proposed by the European Commission. Later that year, the agreement with the European Parliament ensured the implementation of improved climate and biodiversity tracking methodologies to guarantee that at least 30% of the total amount of the MFF and NGEU will support climate objectives. This new deal includes the approval of 7.5% of annual spending to be dedicated to biodiversity objectives from 2024³, and 10% from 2026 onwards.

There have also been some important developments in the international side: on 11 January 2021, the One Planet summit was held in Paris, in collaboration with the UN and the World Bank. This summit was entirely dedicated to biodiversity and set concrete initiatives in motion to protect terrestrial and marine ecosystems.



France and Costa Rica launched the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People⁴, which aims to create the conditions for the adoption of an ambitious environmental target by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), to be held in October 2021. More than 50 states took part in this coalition, supporting the plan to create a protected area network covering 30% of global lands and oceans.

The biodiversity discussion also reached the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. During this event, Ursula von der Leyen stressed the need for concrete efforts to protect biodiversity⁵. The President of the European Commission highlighted the link between ecological challenges and the importance of the European Green Deal, and she also emphasized the need for a Paris-style agreement on biodiversity with ambitious legally binding targets to tackle current and future environmental and societal challenges.

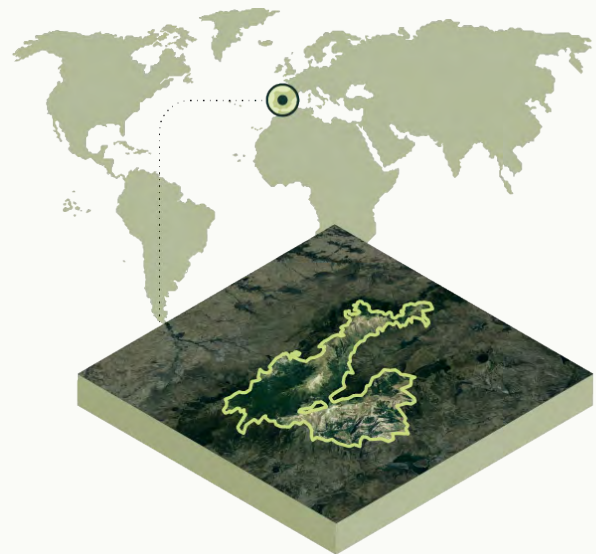
Encouraging news also comes from the other side of the ocean. The United States are making a decisive change of course concerning the protection of biodiversity: the new administration has set a 30x30 goal, committing to protect 30% of America's land and coastline by 2030⁶. This ambitious target is fully in line with the Zero Draft Proposal of the Global Biodiversity Framework under the CBD to be agreed on at CBD COP15, 11 to 24 October 2021, in Kunming, China⁷. In the preceding month, September 2021, the IUCN World Conservation Congress will be held. After a year of delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global momentum is growing for the adoption of an effective and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Once the framework is adopted, implementation will be a key part of discussions going forward. An inclusive conservation approach will provide key considerations for achieving the global biodiversity framework and enhancing stakeholder ownership of biodiversity targets.





The Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, Spanish case study

The Sierra de Guadarrama National Park is located in the Central Mountain System of the Iberian Peninsula. It was established in 2013, becoming Spain's newest national park. This National Park covers 34,000 hectares across the regions of Madrid (64% of the territory) and Castilla y León. The main ecosystems include formations and reliefs of mountains and high mountains (Peñalara is the highest at 2428 masl), glacial cirques, unique granite rock formations, alpine lakes, grasslands and pastures, and pine forests. This mountainous area serves as a refuge for biodiversity, housing autochthonous and diverse plant and animal species. Several protected areas surround the National Park with different protection regimes, including two UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves and two regional parks.



Region:	· West and South Europe		
Ecosystems:	· Mountain ecosystems · Glacier ecosystems · Unique granite rock formations	· High-mountain wetlands (lakes and ponds) · Alpine grasslands and pastures	· Pine forests (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>) and Pyrenean oaks (<i>Quercus pyrenaica</i>) · Juniper groves · Spanish broom thickets
Governance type:	· Led by two regional Governments: the autonomous Communities of Madrid and Castilla y León.		
Challenges:	· Land and forests degradation · Habitat loss · Conflicting uses/cumulative impacts of mass tourism · Loss of traditional uses and knowledge	· Demographic changes · Climate change impacts including drought · Changes to the hydrological regime · Risk of fire	· Vegetation range shifts and changes in phenology · Invasive species and overabundance of species



The Sierra de Guadarrama National Park is managed by two regional administrations (Madrid and Castilla y León), who share the legal authority in conservation decisions. The National Park counts on a Board, in which local municipalities and relevant stakeholder groups are meant to be represented, as the main and stable participatory body.

Traditionally, the predominant land uses, which played a key role in biodiversity conservation, included livestock farming and pinewood timber logging. Sierra de Guadarrama's natural features have attracted scientists, artists, intellectuals, kings and nobles, for centuries, resulting in a wealth of studies, literature, and historical and cultural heritage in the area. Over the past few decades, this area has changed through a bidirectional process of land intensification and rural abandonment. A key feature of the National Park is its proximity (less than 100km) to Madrid's large metropolitan area (over 6.5 M inhabitants) and the mid-sized city of Segovia (around 50,000 inhabitants) in Castilla y León, which has made that the park has almost 3 million visitors per year. Whereas park visitors are mainly interested in recreation and sports activities, local stakeholders are engaged in diverse activities such as extensive livestock farming, environmental conservation, education and research. In addition to the multiple and competing uses, climate change constitutes a critical challenge in the area, impacting on water and snow availability as well as species range shifts.





Inclusive conservation in action – Processes and (anticipated) impacts

The Sierra de Guadarrama National Park's conservation authorities, in their endeavor to achieve conservation targets, are exposed to a variety of perspectives, knowledge, and values from a wide range of state and non-state actors. The National Park's authority in the area is intertwined with the different scales of decision-making of multiple state administrations. To compound this complexity, the Sierra de Guadarrama is the second most visited national park in Spain, and there are a great variety of local stakeholders engaged in diverse activities such as outdoor sports, extensive livestock farming, and environmental conservation, education and research. The multiple and sometimes competing uses and values create social tensions around how the park should be governed.

This makes the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park an ideal case study to understand how stakeholders' participation in conservation decision-making is shaped, and what tools can help identify pluralities in visions and balance them to achieve positive conservation outcomes.

This is where the ENVISION project and its inclusive conservation approach can contribute to tailor analytical frameworks and methodological tools. Researchers within the ENVISION team are conducting research to provide practical guidance to understand, navigate and consider different visions, preferences, tensions, responsibilities and power relations between stakeholders, in order to move towards better social engagement in conservation decision-making.



Our methodological approach includes the combination of a wide variety of research methods and means of data collection:

1. Policy documents review (e.g., legal norms, participatory processes, management plans) and newspaper library research;
2. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of institutions, collectives and individuals with a stake in the governance of the National Park;
3. Face-to-face and online surveys to both residents and local stakeholders, including participatory mapping;
4. Oral histories and historical datasets reviews;
5. Virtual workshops focused on deliberative processes with multiple stakeholders and decision-makers (e.g., participatory scenario planning).

Part of our research in the Sierra de Guadarrama, is developing a decision-making toolbox aimed at decision-makers for enhancing inclusive approaches to conservation. The toolbox is based on the approaches developed in ENVISION's research, and aims to:

1. Gather context-based stakeholder/local/traditional knowledge;
2. Elucidate visions and future scenarios for park management;
3. Address power dynamics and inequalities for promoting stakeholders' participation and engagement in collective action;
4. Strengthen the science-policy interface for evolving towards more socially inclusive conservation.

To ensure the set of tools respond to management needs and challenges, these have been tested in the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park and subsequently improved and adapted according to feedback received from decision-makers and experts in protected areas management. This facilitates its applicability into the management cycle to craft participatory mechanisms and management actions in an inclusive manner. The toolbox will be available at the PANORAMA solutions website to guide other practitioners and protected areas specialists around the world.





A toolbox for socially inclusive decision-making

The toolbox developed by the ENVISION team includes a set of tools that support the creation of socially inclusive policies and management actions. The toolbox comprises:

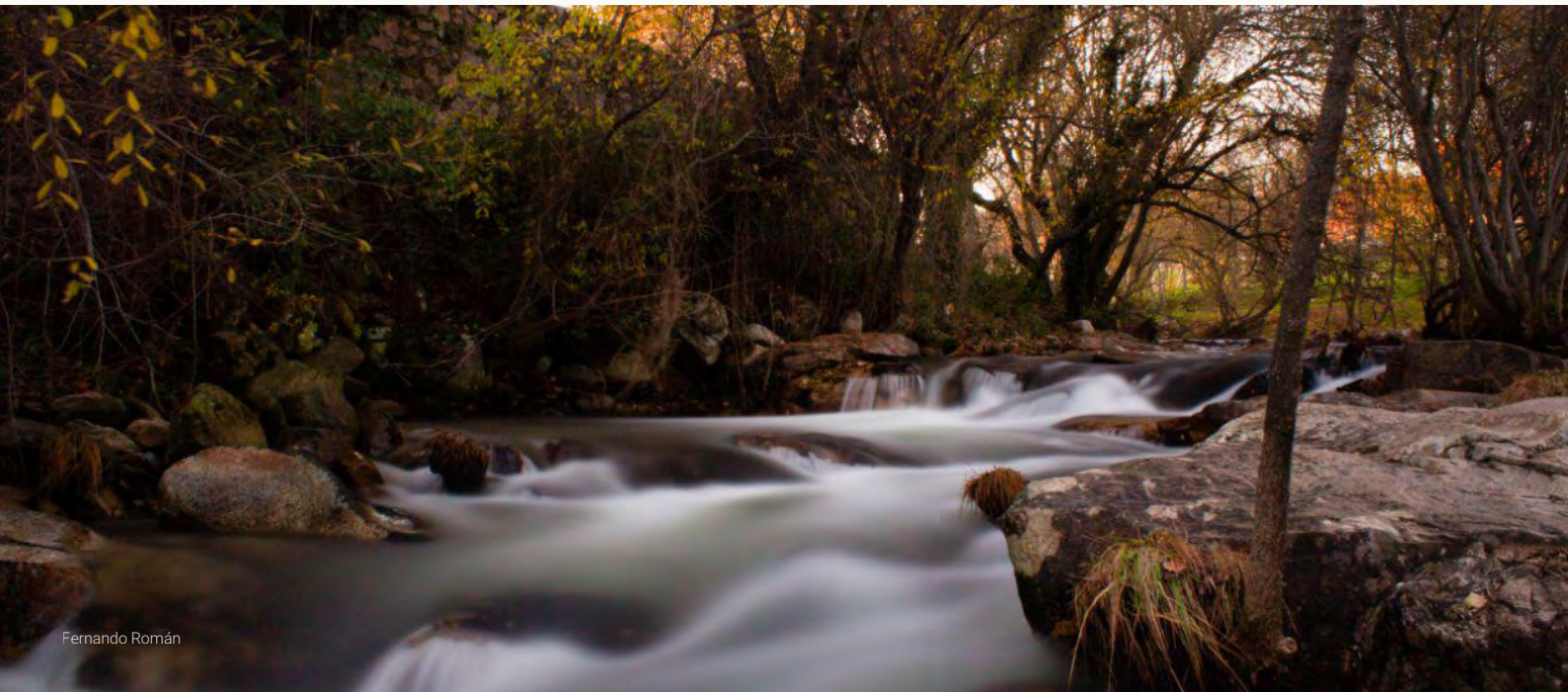
- A set of methods to collect context-based knowledge from multiple local stakeholders' perspectives, knowledge, and values and support the facilitation of place-based processes that can foster inclusive conservation. These methods include semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders, face-to-face surveys to residents, including participatory mapping tools, online surveys to local stakeholders, oral histories and historical datasets reviews, and deliberative processes using cognitive and emotional maps.
- Methodological approaches to identify visions and build future scenarios for protected areas management that can be used in both face-to-face and remote events. Examples of these approaches are visualization/graphical tools embedded in interviews or workshops (i.e., 'Streamline') and participatory scenario planning exercises.
- Tools to address power dynamics and inequalities for promoting stakeholder participation and engage in collective action. These tools refer to an analytical matrix to characterize protected areas' governance arrangements in terms of stakeholders' responsibility and power distribution, certain theatre-based facilitation techniques that can be applied in virtual and in-person workshops and a graphical tool (a boundary object) specifically designed to catalyze collective action in protected areas.

Streamline is an open-source⁸ cartoon visualization tool that is flexible, cost-effective, user-friendly and adaptable to different contexts, including online and virtual formats, interview or workshop settings. It has been applied in different contexts across Europe for envisioning land use planning and developing different scenarios for protected areas. In the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, Streamline illustrations have been used to augment semi-structured interviews, with individuals expressing their values, ranking preferences for management actions, and sharing their knowledge of changes in the landscape.



- Activities to create understanding and trust between researchers and decision-makers, with the aim that scientific knowledge can reach conceptual and instrumental impacts on the policy domain.

Examples of these activities are the organization of regular meetings and webinars to inform about the project advances and research findings, dissemination of reports in local language to communicate outcomes from the research activities before article publications, formulation of regular newsletters in local languages and development of workshops with decision-makers to analyze the applicability/usability of research tools and outcomes within their respective institutions.



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Partners



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For more information

Isabel Ruiz Mallén, Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow,
IN3 - Internet Interdisciplinary Institute, Universitat
Oberta de Catalunya.

✉ iruiz_mallen@uoc.edu

🖱 inclusive-conservation.org

🐦 [@Envision2050](https://twitter.com/Envision2050)



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