



## CHAPTER 29

# CONCLUSION

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Convention on  
Biological Diversity

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## TITLE PAGE PHOTO

**Cascading waterfalls over natural travertine ramparts and associated boardwalks and visitors, Plitvice Lakes National Park World Heritage Property, Croatia. The park is famous for its superlative limestone karst scenery, its 20 lakes; cliff-lined valley scenery, travertine waterfalls, and its associated natural fauna and flora. It is a well-managed and popular tourist destination, and receives about 1.2 million visitors per annum.**

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

This book has demonstrated that protected areas make a significant contribution to the conservation of the Earth's biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage. They help to maintain ecological processes and functions that are essential for the health and wellbeing of ecosystems and people, and they mitigate the impacts of climate change. They are an intergenerational investment. At a time when human impacts on Earth are rapidly increasing and as pressures on the world's species and ecosystems intensify, protected areas are subject to ever more threats and demands for unsustainable use—and they are becoming increasingly important.

Although protected areas are now a significant presence in almost all parts of the globe, more reservations are needed, particularly in marine environments, if the Earth's natural and cultural heritage is to be conserved. In addition to their extent, the effectiveness of protected areas in achieving their objectives is a key consideration. It is clear that designation is not sufficient on its own to guarantee that they are effective in conserving natural and cultural heritage values. Even as protected area coverage has increased, biodiversity loss has been steadily rising, despite the fact that wildlife populations in protected areas are doing better than the global average. This is a sobering reminder that much needs to be done to: (a) make protected areas more effective; and (b) spread conservation practices across various other kinds of land and water uses including recognising other effective area-based conservation measures.

The diverse social, cultural, economic, political and environmental contexts in which protected areas are embedded demand complex choices about appropriate forms of governance and suitable management approaches. Ethical integrity and effectiveness in achieving outcomes are two essential guides for such choices. As laid out in a number of chapters in this book, diversifying the system of protected areas in each country to include government-managed, indigenous people's and local community conserved, privately protected, and co-governed areas has great potential to increase and make more effective conservation coverage. There is a need to ensure that protected areas are governed according to principles of legitimacy, equity, participation, transparency and respect for local rights. Each protected area also needs mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation that test whether outcomes are in accordance with management objectives, and provide a foundation for learning and improvement.

There is much to be done on diversification of governance types, and on good governance principles; on synergistic use of various forms of knowledge including local/traditional and scientific; on recognising various world

views and modes by which conservation is achieved; and on expanding these beyond protected areas into the landscape and seascape in general such that conservation is not restricted to islands while the rest of the Earth is heading towards ecological decline.

Protected areas are highly dynamic, requiring seven-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day operations that address a wide range of historical, contemporary and emergent threats. At a global level, the most pressing and pervasive of these is climate change and there is a need for governance and management to respond by either supporting social–ecological resilience or negotiating system transformation with minimum loss of value. Constant change and complexity are the norm. There is no panacea; no one size fits all. Again, diverse governance forms and management approaches, supported by diverse forms of knowledge, need to be deployed, tested and refined, or discarded, through ongoing learning and adaptation or transformation.

This book and its predecessors highlight increasing global recognition of the need for professionalism in protected area governance and management and the fostering of skilled community conservation practitioners, the latter commonly building on holistic ways of life in which conservation is an inherent characteristic. The International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas has been acutely aware of the need to invest in this and subsequent generations of protected area governors and managers – the book is a response to this need. Book chapters have provided information that will assist capacity development of people in field and operational management as well as those in senior and executive positions across all categories of protected areas. This information is part of a long-term investment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in the ethical and effective governance and management of protected areas around the world.

As with any text, this book captures moments in the continuing evolution of protected area management and governance and its guiding philosophies. It is about a 21st-century approach, but has shown how this approach is framed and informed by temporal change on two fronts. On the one hand are the biocultural traditions, knowledge, practices and world views of indigenous peoples and local communities who are driving social change. Key themes in this change are adoption of ecologically sustainable development principles, respect for social justice and rights, recognition of biocultural knowledge and traditions, and alleviation of poverty. These themes were eloquently articulated at the 2003 World Parks Congress in Durban and included in the



**Mount Belukha (4,506 metres) and the Brothers of Tronov Glacier, Golden Mountains of Altai World Heritage Property, Altai Republic, Russia. The mountain and its glacier are the headwaters of the Katun River, a tributary to the mighty Ob River that flows all the way to the Arctic Ocean. Mount Beluka is a protected area, it is of special spiritual and cultural importance to many peoples and it is an important destination for visitors.**

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas. On the other hand are the great advances in science and technology that are enabling sophisticated systems for capturing data on the biophysical environment and monitoring environmental and behavioural change, which in turn inform effective management responses.

Compared with a similar book written, say 25 years ago, now, protected areas have become more numerous, exist in more diverse forms and have become more multi-functional. They have also become increasingly important for protecting natural and cultural systems in the face of cumulative development and industrial-scale resource extraction. Increasingly they are seen as critical for equitable human wellbeing. They exist at a time of geopolitical and climatic uncertainties and unpredictable waxing and waning in citizen support. This book has teased out these challenges and shown ways of dealing with them.

Finally, this book is not only about *how* to manage and govern protected areas through human capacity building; it also has persuasive arguments as to *why* protected areas are critical. Inevitably the *how* will change over time but we are optimistic that investments in the *why* will be enduring commitments by peoples, communities and nations of Earth.

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