

1st Mediterranean Plant Conservation Week
“Building a regional network to conserve plants and cultural diversity”
Ulcinj (Montenegro) - 24-29 October 2016



Implementation of plant conservation
planning at sub-national and local levels



Emilio Laguna
Generalitat Valenciana's Wildlife Service
CIEF (Centre for Forestry Research and Experimentation)

Introduction

Conservation planning for wild plants can be developed through plans for species conservation (i.e.. recovery plans, re-introduction programmes, etc.), or as a form of sites management planning -when the main object for a site protection is the conservation of one or a few plant species.

Plant conservation planning often is oppressed by the legal framework, which establish roles and powers, both for agents (governments, NGOs, research centres) and territorial levels.

Often endangered species need to be protected to avoid their extinction or population decline, but the legal protection can reduce the possibility that people aiming plant conservation could develop their initiatives (requiring lots of bureaucratic papers, reducing the options to scientific works, etc.).



Plant conservation planning

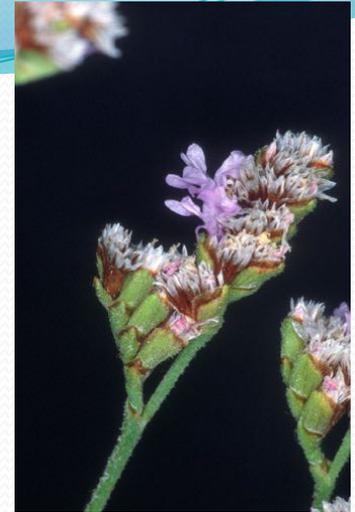
To be enough effective, recovery and conservation plans should be approved into a legal framework (i.e. in Spain must be passed by Decrees or other regulatory rules, published in the official gazettes) or engaging with the responsible governmental units their acceptance.

In most countries, conservation planning of protected species depends on the national governments, which can not decentralize or transfer its competences to sub-national (regional, local levels), due to global policy rules. However most endangered species only live on a small site, on one or a few municipalities in a region.

However, plants and plans must be ‘for the people, but with the people’. And this should include the active participation of sub-national levels in conservation planning tasks.



Garidella nigellastrum, a vanishing species growing in traditional cereal crops



Limonium dufourii, a example of absolute endemic species of Valencia (Spain) only growing in a region



Preliminary works to draft the recovery plan of the absolute Valencian endemic *Limonium perplexum*, a species which only lives in a unique locality, over ca. 40 sq m. of a sea cliff terrace.

Plant conservation planning as a need/duty?

Conservation planning is not strictly necessary to perform a good conservation policy, but it is strongly recommended, due that:

- allows to arrange priorities and conservation actions in a better way.
- can act as a good reason to justify enough public budget for conservation.
- often allows to link plant conservation with other sectorial plans.

Anyway, some countries/regions having a good policy on plant conservation, do not base it upon recovery plans or other related forms of plant conservation plans:

- i.e. France, which have very few plans/programmes, but go on with a coordinated policy developed by their CBN (Conservatoires Botaniques Nationaux) dealing with hundreds of species.
- i.e. The Valencian Community (Spain) where only 3 recovery plans for species are passed, but whose combination of horizontal measures for plant conservation (Plant Micro-Reserves network, Germplasm Bank of Valencian Wild Flora, measures for plant conservation in Natura 2000 management plans), gives satisfactory enough protection for more than 390 endangered species.



Census of *Silene hifacensis* (Habitats Directive Annex II-IV) in the Plant Micro-Reserve Cap d'Or (Teulada, Alicante, Valencian Community) as a part of regular actions of its recovery plan

A basic rule

Due that lots of relevant facets for conservation depends on local level (i.e. close interferences between plant conservation and rights or farmers), conservation planning should involve public consultations and participation of local specialists in the draft phase. If possible, the draft of a conservation plan should be explained to local people before its approval.

We can say (as a general rule) that the lower the territorial level of public participation (i.e. local), the better the conservation planning made.



Helianthemum caput-felis, a species protected by EU's Habitat Directive, living in coastal sites of SW Europe and NW Africa

Models

We could say that each Mediterranean country has a particular division of responsibilities for conservation planning at territorial level. Here we will indicate here only some cases from the Mediterranean, but giving examples on options to 'how to share the responsibility/leadership' in plant conservation.

We must differentiate between the empowered entity or organism for conservation planning (often corresponding to governmental bodies), and the leadership entity drafting it (it can correspond to NGOs and research centres).

Additionally, we should indicate that conservation planning should not be only a technical/scientific task, but a shared exercise where plant officers, conservation NGOs and local agents can agree and improve the solutions to save an endangered species. The common people, if possible, should be reflected in the authorship of the planning draft. Anyway, plans for species with a large distribution into a country should have at least some national conservation strategy, which could be developed at sub-national level through a more accurate/developed conservation plan.

Planning should not be done exactly by a top-down approach, or a bottom-up, but by a weighted mix of both. This use to be difficult!!!

The role of citizens through associations



National legislations give different level of leadership in nature conservation for NGOs.

Centralization is not exactly meaning lack of leadership for NGOs (for instance, laws in France empower a lot the role of NGOs in nature conservation, although the policy in plant conservation was theoretically centralized).

Some EU's financial instruments such as LIFE give more opportunities to NGOs. However, the bulk of main funding (i.e. through structural funds) must mainly go to governments and enterprises, and often can not finance actions of NGOs.



Volunteer activities of restoration ecology and recovery of endangered species planned and organized by the conservationist NGO Acció Ecologista-AGRÓ in Almenara (Castellon, Valencian Community, Spain)

Some quick examples: Portugal

National policy in plant conservation is very centralized, except for some peripheral, autonomous regions (Madeira, Açores), but allowing that lower-range governments and NGOs could propose plant conservation measures if they can fund the further development. Research centres and the Sociedade Portuguesa de Botânica (SPB) has often claimed for more leadership for NGOs at national or region/province levels, asking for more public funding for those activities. Amongst other, remarkable cases could be:

- LIFE has funded some projects enclosing plant conservation planning for species or IPAs to be made by NGOs and research centres, i.e. for *Asphodelus bento-rainhae*, coordinated by ADESGAR, NGO devoted to sustainable rural development in Serra da Gardunha Mts.
- Some municipalities such as Funchal (Madeira) have developed local projects for plant conservation with universities, i.e. a local network of plant micro-reserves and conservation planning for several species.



Habitat and inflorescence of *Muschia arborea*, an endemic species to Madeira, whose conservation has been planned through Plant Micro-Reserves by the University of Madeira and the City Council of Funchal



Workshop of the SPB on habitats/species conservation planning and projects, Coimbra 2011

France

Although it deals with a classic centralized country, and national Ministry of Environment is very active in plant conservation. their laws and traditions often give a significant leadership to NGOs and local associations, city councils, etc. to take decisions and actions related to nature conservation. The main entities empowered to made all activities in plant conservation are the network of CBN (Conservatoires Botaniques Nationaux, each one working for several regions).

Several NGOs have developed small conservation planning projects thanks to the EU's LIFE grants.

However, there is no tradition to draft conservation/recovery plans for each species, but for a bulk of related functionally and/or living on a same site, including some groups unfortunately forgotten in other countries (i.e. archaeophytes and other species living in cereal crops). Often the plans are drafted at national level with part



Image taken from the website on the conservation programme for 'messicole' species, displayed by the Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels (CEN) Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
http://www.cen-paca.org/images/3_programmes/messicoles/bandeau2.jpg

Italy

There is a large tradition of leadership of NGOs to manage some kinds of protected sites through agreements with the national authorities (i.e. WWF-Italy), but conservation planning for species is still few developed. Some local initiatives have reached international relevance thanks to LIFE projects and/or tireless conservationists, i.e. the proposals for the conservation of *Calendula maritima* in Trapani, Sicily, promoted since the Nature Reserve Saline di Trapani.

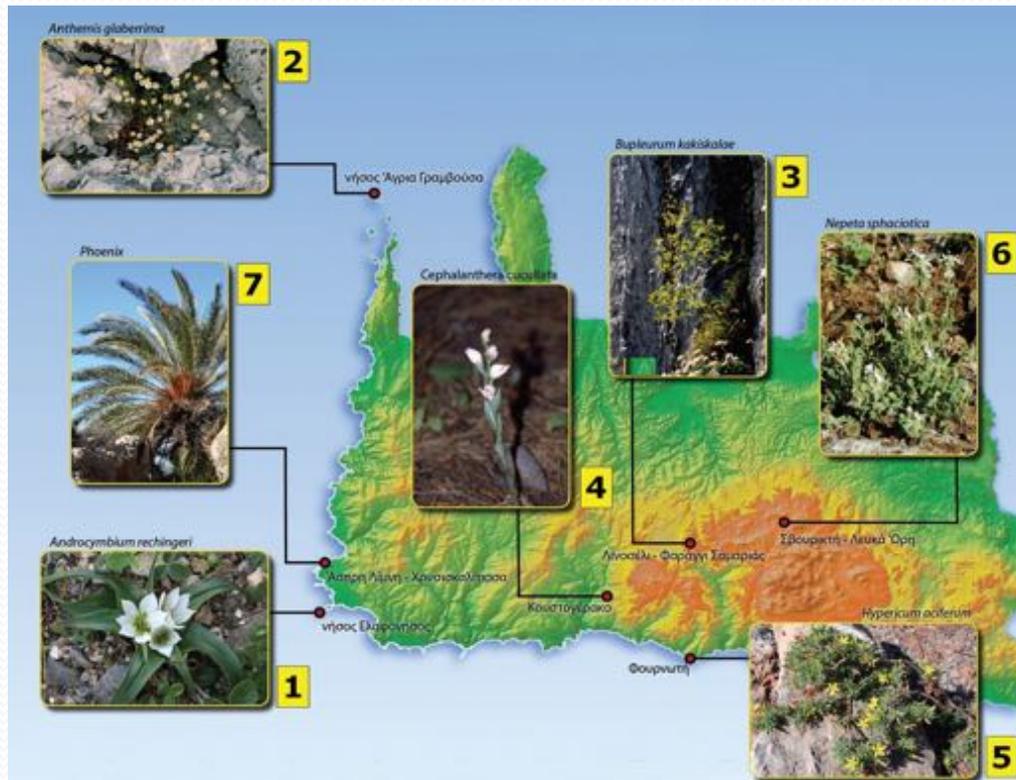
On the other hand, but still not yielding complete conservation plans, there is increasing good-quality scientific literature on plant conservation, and join efforts of NGOs an research centres to develop projects on site protection and management, agreed with City Councils and regional/national governments. (i.e., in Sardinia



Coastal grasslands co-dominated by *Calendula maritima* in NW Sicily.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Angelo Troia.

Greece/Cyprus

In Greece and Cyprus the national departments of Environment are empowered to make plant conservation planning, but in practice the leadership to draft them is often shared with universities and some local NGOs. LIFE projects Cretaplant (<http://cretaplant.biol.uoa.gr/>) and PlantNet-CY (<http://www.plantnet.org.cy/>) have good examples of conservation planning for species and micro-reserves.



Captions from KADIS C, THANOS C & LAGUNA E. (eds.) 2013. *Plant micro-reserves: From theory to practice. Experiences gained from EU LIFE and other related projects.* LIFE PlantNet-CY Beneficiaries.. Athens

Spain

You can find all kind of combinations, due to the governments of the 17 autonomous communities (=regions) are the responsible to draft and approve the conservation plans for species and sites, instead of the national authority, and models amongst the regions are fully different. Some local entities, such as island councils in Balearic Islands (i.e. Menorca) have drafted and proposed the approval of conservation plans to their regional governments, after establishing participative consultations to local people, scientists, affected farmers, etc.

Several NGOs and a major part of scientists and plant officers planning species conservation in Spain join the SEBiCoP (Spanish Society on Plant Conservation Biology), which offers abundant published information on the drafts, approved documents and actions developed for the recovery plans of endangered species.



Thanks for your attention

