

Assessing land management in transfrontier areas

F. Papadimitriou

School of Geography, University of Oxford

Oxford OX1 3TB, United Kingdom

Περίληψη

Κατά την διάρκεια των τελευταίων ετών, η Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή δίνει όλο και περισσότερη σημασία στην διασυνοριακή περιφερειακή ανάπτυξη στις χώρες μέλη της. Η εκτίμηση των πρακτικών διαχείρισης γης σε μια διασυνοριακή περιοχή παρουσιάζει μεθοδολογικές δυσκολίες, κυρίως ως προς το ότι πρέπει να ληφθούν υπόψη διαφορετικοί τύποι χρήσεων γης, που αντικατοπτρίζουν διαφορετικές κοινωνικοοικονομικές και πολιτικές συνθήκες. Σε αυτή τη μελέτη θεωρείται ότι οι αλληλεπιδράσεις μεταξύ των διαφορετικών τύπων χρήσεως γης είναι σημαντικές για την εκτίμηση τόσο των δυνατοτήτων για ορθολογική διαχείριση γης, όσο και για των φυσικών και ανθρωπογενών κινδύνων που απειλούν το τοπίο.

Abstract

Transfrontier regional development has received much attention and funding by the Commission of the European Communities over the last years. Assessing land management in a transfrontier area, however, presents new methodological difficulties to the assessor, in that he has to take into consideration varying (even diverging) types of land utilization and land management, reflecting different socioeconomic and political conditions. In this paper, the interactions between various land utilization types are considered to be important in the understanding of the opportunities for land use management, as well as for the assessment of the threats to the landscape. Most of the opinions expressed herein are derived from the author's own work experience in Southern European countries.

Introduction

The problem addressed to by this study is that of assessing land management in transfrontier areas in view of creating a regional or rural development project for two countries. Some occasions, where the problem is encountered in Europe are the cases of Spain-Portugal, Spain-France, Italy-Slovenia, Italy-France, Germany-France-Switzerland, Hungary-Slovakia.

There is virtually no literature concerning issues of transfrontier land management. Although river management and water management practices are often internationalised to a remarkable degree, the land management in transfrontier areas is not so much advanced, partially because land forms part of a country's territory more than waters do.

General difficulties in transfrontier land management

These are well known and they comprise difficulties arising from different mentalities, different language, different culture, different political systems, different technologies.

Apart from these, several local or unexpected transfrontier oddities may occur, thus further complicating the overall assessment.

Examples of some such oddities are the following:

1. New frontiers within old frontiers:

14.200 km of new frontiers in Europe since 1990, that is an increase by 54% in the continent's total frontier lines.

2. Transfrontier fears:

The river Minia, between Douro and Minho (in Portugal) was considered to be the limit of the Kingdom of the Dead. Hence, Titus-Livius wrote that the Roman soldiers, being afraid of this, refused to cross from Galicia (Spain) to Portugal.

3. Unexpected political significances of frontiers:

Many say that the most ancient institution of the European Communities was the «Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine», that was created right after the First World War. Not many people could ever suspect then that this institution would become the preamble of the European Communities.

4. Transfrontier ironies:

The edges of Mississippi river have been defined as the administrative border between the states of Mississippi and the states of Arkansas and

Louisiana. The ever-changing river meanders have put hundreds of square kilometers under administrative fuzziness.

Difficulties in transfrontier land management

Special difficulties related to transfrontier land management are often encountered, such as the following:

1. Different land utilization types
(e.g. Spain: "dehesa" and "montado", Portugal: "montado" and "bal-dio")
2. Different perceptions of and attitudes towards using the geographical space
(e.g. Austria: high fragmentation of rural holdings, Czech Republic: socialist collectivist large geometrically arranged parcels)
3. Different regional and local priorities in the use of land
(e.g. the "Nagymaros dams" Hungary: priority to environment, Slovakia: priority to energy).
4. Shifting commercial activities
(e.g. Swiss companies close to the frontier install their agencies beyond the frontier in Germany to take advantage of cheaper labour).

Example solutions and successes with respect to land management

The management of land resources in Europe becomes ever wealthier in examples of solutions and successes with respect to bi- or tri- lateral land management. Some examples are the following:

1. France - Italy
Cooperation protocol "Cooperation transfrontaliere de proximite» 22-4-91 between the communes of Ventimillia and Menton, also comprising an annex for common land planning.
2. France - Spain
Environment, tourism, agriculture, forestry, rural development, improvement of herds, coordination of pastoral land uses, cooperation in joint exploitation of forests along the transfrontier area.
3. Spain - Portugal
Effective cooperations in agriculture and rural development, water resources management and resulting hydroelectricity, development of surface water potential.
4. Italy - Slovenia

Environmental protection and joint environmental management.

5. France - Germany - Switzerland

Coordination of land uses, so as to achieve environment -friendly land management.

Conclusions

There are certain extra difficulties in the process of assessing land management in transfrontier areas, but there are also examples of novel solutions to old problems. Certain problems can be overcome by expert consultations (such as those related to agronomic aspects and to misnomers), while other problems (shifting or bilateral commercial and financial cooperations or competitions) can be a real obstacle and need to be treated with much attention.