

Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons

Annex SI.1. Early Developments in Nature Conservation in Slovenia

Peter Skoberne

The first signs of intentional nature conservation ideas in the current territory of Slovenia appeared at the end of the nineteenth century. Leopold Hufnagel, the forest manager of count Auersperg's forests in the Kočevje area, deliberately defined some reserves in the forest management plan (1892) where no human activities were foreseen. The reason for this decision was that some parcels 'should be conserved as virgin forest'.

As in other alpine parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*) was protected in Goriška (1896), Carniola and Styria (1889).

Inspired by an ordinance of the Government of Vienna in 1903 seismologist Albin Belar prepared an inventory of natural monuments of Carniola (1906). He invited three experts to help him, one of which was botanist Alfons Paulin (1853–1942). For Belar's inventory he prepared a manuscript about botanical natural monuments in Carniola, his definition and understanding of which were based on the interpretation of Hugo von Conwentz (1904). The resulting inventory included the proposals for protected areas (Skoberne, 2011).

In 1908, Belar started a motion to protect the Dolina Triglavskih jezer (alpine valley with glacial lakes in the Julian Alps), but unfortunate circumstances, including the First World War, prevented designation (Skoberne, 2018). Nevertheless, this was the first step towards what was later to become Triglav National Park

After the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, a dynamic political process towards establishment of an independent state of Slovenia started and ended in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In January 1920, a group of naturalists organised in a Section for Nature Conservation (Odsek za varstvo prirode in prirodnih spomenikov) of the Museum Society for Slovenia (Muzejsko društvo za Slovenijo) presented to the Government a national nature conservation action plan, named *Memorandum* (Spomenica) (Beuk, 1920). They pointed out the need to establish protected areas, protect rare and threatened species, protect caves and cave wildlife and popularise nature conservation. They also appended practical concrete proposals for each demand. Unfortunately, they did not request a dedicated nature conservation authority, legislation and finances.

As the political situation was very tense, nature conservation was not high on the political agenda. However, in February 1922 due to the activity of a high official forester Anton Šivic (1879–1963) a regional decree on the protection of some rare plants, animals and caves was adopted and a few days later confirmed by King Aleksander.

Another implemented proposal from the *Memorandum* was the establishment of a protected area in the Dolina Triglavskih jezer in 1924. As there was no appropriate legislation, it was carried out on contractual basis for a period of 20 years.

On 6 January 1929, King Alexander Karadjordjević abolished the Constitution, dissolved the Parliament and introduced a personal dictatorship. The name of the country was changed to the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia', and what is now most of Slovenia became a province within it (Dravska banovina). Members of the Section for Nature Conservation drafted a nature conservation act in 1930, but with no result. Nothing remarkable then happened until 1939, when the Yugoslav Government ordered that consultative bodies should be established in each province (*banovina*). In January 1940, the Committee for nature conservation of Dravska banovina was established, but its work was suspended by the Second World War.

As some administrative structures were in place during occupation, it was possible to establish a consultative body for nature conservation in 1944.

Immediately after liberation in 1945, acts for the conservation of cultural and natural monuments were adopted, but at a very general level. An Institute for cultural heritage was established in autumn 1945, one year later a department for nature conservation was created and entrusted to the Natural History Museum. In 1948, the first law on the conservation of cultural monuments and natural landmarks¹ was adopted (Piskernik, 1964).

The key person in that period was Angela Piskernik (1886–1967) supported by Anton Šivic. Despite very limited resources and a weak legal basis they succeeded in designating some protected areas, among them the renewed protection of Dolina Triglavskih jezer in 1961 under a new name: Triglavski narodni park (Triglav National Park). New decrees on protected fauna and flora were adopted as well.

International cooperation started with IUCN in 1954 and with CIPRA (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps) since its start in 1952 by personal involvement of Angela Piskernik. Environmental movements also mobilised civil society in the field of nature conservation. Although the nature conservation administration was weak, it was supported by the public and succeeded in preventing the construction of a dam on the Soča river (1964–1966), and later on the Cerknisko and Planinsko polje (1983–1985).

At the Institute for Conservation of Cultural Monuments (Zavod za spomeniško varstvo), the nature conservation department was developing methodologies and systematically cataloguing natural features. Its small team of experts were very well connected with scientists and NGOs. An important part of their outreach was establishing connections with planning authorities, which fed important data for nature conservation into the planning process. In 1976, an Inventory of Outstanding Natural Heritage in Slovenia was published (Peterlin, 1976). As it included a rational, valuation, conservation measures and topographic location for each feature it became an indispensable tool for planners.

In 1981, the Institute for Conservation of Cultural Monuments was renamed as the Institute for Natural and Cultural Heritage (Zavod SRS za varstvo naravne in kulturne dediščine) in accordance with the new Natural and Cultural Heritage Act. The Act was very broad and heterogeneous, and lacked specific instruments for conservation. It reflected the political situation with decentralisation delegating powers to the communes (64 local entities in 1980). The main benefit was the obligation to organise authorities at a regional level. Like the existing network of seven regional offices for cultural heritage, gradually units for nature conservation were established within those offices.

At the same time, there was reorganisation of the governance structure. Whereas the Institute for Conservation of Cultural Monuments was a consultative body of the government, directly reporting to it, the Institute for Natural and Cultural Heritage was placed under the competence of the Ministry of Culture.

After a decade of discussions, Triglav National Park was finally enlarged (from 2 000 ha to 83 807 ha) in 1981 and a management authority was established.

During this period, Yugoslavia signed and ratified the World Heritage and the Ramsar Conventions. In 1986, the first World Heritage Site in Slovenia was inscribed (Škocjanske jame). Slovenia also participated in the technical drafting of the Alpine Convention and first protocols, but was not eligible to give any political commitment.

References

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¹ Zakon o varstvu kulturnih spomenikov in prirodnih znamenitosti, Ur. l. LRS, 23/48

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