

BETWEEN THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY AND THE FERTILE CRESCENT

The Jordan River and its Valley - Cultural Significance

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Abstract

Cultural Landscapes, Identities, and Communities

landscape as a part of trans-national, regional, national or local identity
cultural landscapes and cultural diversity
sustainable communities and cultural landscapes
migration within or across cultural landscapes
place as intersection of different identities

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This cross-disciplinary project is being initiated by the Friends of the Earth Middle East - FoEME – a regional Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian NGO that deals with trans-boundary environmental issues as building blocks towards PEACE.

The experts' team worked laterally searching for the shared cultural heritage, hydrology, and biodiversity. Nader Khateeb, evaluating the hydrological aspects of the river basin, is based in Bethlehem and has been involved for over twenty years in water management. Khaled Nassar, as Director-General of the Jordan Society for Sustainable Development is a biologist and undertook the reporting of the biodiversity of the Valley. Michael Turner holds the UNESCO Chair on Urban Design and Conservation Studies at the Bezalel Academy, developed a narrative to weave the cultural elements together.

1 Story of the River and its People

Between the Great Rift Valley and the Fertile Crescent – from the nature of the heights of Kenya and Ethiopia to the culture of Babylon of Nineveh and Ashur, the Jordan Valley is at the critical pivot of time and place. As part of the 7,200 kilometre Great Rift Valley it is unique in that it is the lowest place on Earth being also the one of the narrowest parts of the GRV. This global geo-morphological structure has been the generator of the movement of birds and animals, migratory routes that in the hominid period created the ‘out-of-Africa’ movement.

The Lower Jordan Valley is a microcosm of continental plates and rifts, primordial lakes and rivers. Its position at the northernmost part of the GRV is also the cross-roads for the development of human activity from Africa to Asia and Europe. Here, where the Great Rift Valley merges into the Fertile Crescent, the hunter-gatherers develop into the early farmers and first urban dwellers. Hieroglyphics, the inception of the written word and culture, defined the historical roots, and the ‘out of Africa’ movement assumed new dimensions through the empires of Axum and Meroe to the south and of Assyria and Persia to the north. The significance is the drama between nature and culture and in its symbiosis through the cultural landscapes. The evolving human activities of the Jordan Valley over the ages ensure that it is truly a window into the history, both natural and cultural, of the world. History and geography overlap in the comprehension of the Valley alternating between sites and cultural landscapes.

Whereas periods of history are not neatly partitioned, as this is usually done in hindsight by historiographers, it is convenient to divide the time-scale of the Valley into six periods:

- the pre-historical sites representing the emerging changes from hunter-gatherers to early farmers with the domestication of wild grains and animals;
- the early urban settlements and the Biblical period;
- the Greco-roman period with the parallel Nabataean influences;
- the Christian and Byzantine periods;
- the early Arab period with the Crusader hiatus;
- the later Arab period including the Ottoman Empire.

The narrative unfolds in the evolving patterns of the valley. It must surely start with the life source of the river in providing fresh water in an arid zone, it being of such significance that it assumes spiritual allegories. Mythological references of the people living in the valley merge from one culture into the other. The sun-drenched area lush vegetation came to be associated with the Gates of the Garden of Eden.

The pre-historic sites of 'Ubeidiya and the later settlements of Jericho, Sha'ar Hagolan and Tell al-Far'a represent evolutionary milestones. While there is little to see at the older sites, the remains are a remarkable evidence for human origins. The *ab-origine* site of 'Ubeidiyah is the highlight of the Jordan Valley. To understand the meaning of 1,500,000 years BP, if one can consider a century being 1mm then this period would be represented by 15 metres; this surely provides a sense of humility. There are still traces of the shores of these primordial lakes within the Rift, allowing us to perceive the evolving landscape. Around all these sites are some of the first known areas of the cultivation of wild wheat.

Jericho, as one of the oldest cities in the world is the link to the new urban settlement of the farming societies. The city spans the pre-history and the biblical periods.

The period of the Old and New Testaments are full of references to the sites in the Valley and the magic of the Jordan River. But the mountain peaks of the biblical period provide the comprehension and awe of the Valley. It was looked at from above and afar; Abraham surveying the Rift and appraising the Valley, Moses overlooking the Promised Land from Mount Nebo and at later periods the transfer of messages and calendars from the peaks of Mount Scopus to Mount Sartaba and on to Mesopotamia.

However, during the Greco-Roman period the reality of being part of a frontier zone created alliances that were encouraged by the central government in Rome. The Decapolis, while challenged as to its real significance, appears in the writings of the New Testament and is mentioned by Pliny the Elder. Excepting for Damascus, they represent a contiguous and coherent territorial authority on both sides of the Jordan. The four city-states of Scythopolis to the west and Hippos, Gadara and Pella to the east were those that touched the Jordan River Valley.

Byzantium in the Valley was a triumph for Queen Helena in her travels and the identification of the events of Jesus and the Apostles. She initiates her Holy Land pilgrimage by identifying sites of the baptism by the Jordan River. These sites and those associated with the revelations of the Testament became the main thread of the narrative and places of pilgrimage around which the churches and monasteries were developed. During this period the arts and crafts of Byzantium generated the indigenous desert monasteries and brought the many icons and mosaics that were to become the central form of expression of their architecture. Here the monasteries of Dir Quarantel above Jericho and Saint George in Wadi Qelt are unique.

The many stunning mosaics at Madaba, and the famous map at the Church of St. George, have given us the clues for the geo-history of the region while this form of decoration was quickly adopted and adapted in the early Moslem period by the Umayyad Caliphs and with success at the Hisham Palace at Jericho. The Early Moslem period saw the first buildings of this dynasty together with the identification of sites associated with the prophet Mohammed and the journeys of the companions, with their subsequent shrines in the Valley as at Abu Ubeida.

The Crusader hiatus during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries generated a new imported architecture with the large scale building of the Medieval Castles of the Near East. Here battles were fought that changed the events of history. It was a staccato blood-thirsty period during which the Crusader castle of Belvoir was built in record time on the west bank with the Arab response on the east at Ajloun leaving new majestic evidence to the valley. Salah-a-din was proud to announce that he could transfer messages from Damascus to Egypt in less than 24 hours via the peak at Ajloun.

The Ottoman rule governed this area as a back-water and little development took place till the nineteenth century. The conquest of Napoleon at Acre in 1799 brought about the first serious mapping of the region and with the photographic innovation of

Talbot in 1840 and the subsequent Kodak camera from Eastman, the biblical images became a reality. These images were part of the nostalgia of the modern-day pilgrimages succinctly written by the many travelers including Mark Twain who brought the word to the American public in his book *Innocents Abroad*.

During the whole period, the geo-climatic conditions were a generator for innovative changes and expressions of creativity. This was seen in technologies, including building, with mosaics, pottery and frescos, and farming, including the domestication of new crops and their ancillary installations. The modern movement in its time also brought about a reuse and misuse of the river, with agriculture, water and energy all making their demands. In the 1920's the first hydro-electric plant of the Near East was built at Naharayim signaling a new era of the taming of the River.

2 Significance and Value

Thus, starting from pre-history moving from nature to culture and from the hunter-gatherers to the early farmers and urban settlement, it became truly the cradles of civilizations and religions. The sum total of the natural, cultural and intangible values of the site is its significance. It can be perceived as the shared cultural landscape of the Jordan Valley.

The crossing of rivers has always had special meaning. The routes and civilizations that have crossed and walked the valley have termed a phrase to Cross the Jordan predating that of the Rubicon. The intermittent drying of the Jordan River to allow crossings is part of the characteristics of the meandering river. The many khans and customs houses criss-cross the valley as it changes meaning from one period to the next. Water, the life source, is the continuum, the strand that connects people, place and period. The curing of Naaman, the poetry of the Psalms, the baptismal sites and the hot springs at Hamat Gader all point to the energies and magic that is attributed to the river. The river as a divider or integrator is part of the narrative of the Valley. It changed from friend to foe, and back again, over thousands of years.

3 Strategies and Mechanisms

The water basin of the Jordan Valley includes six modern entities: Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Palestinian Authority and Egypt around the terminal lake of the Dead Sea. This highlights the need for using existing and accepted international mechanisms for the conservation of cultural heritage and as the basis for the criteria in their evaluation.

..... UNESCO for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and the common welfare of mankind

from the Constitution of UNESCO

The conventions and programmes developed by UNESCO and UNEP provide the umbrella basis for the multi-national dialogue needed. While each site might not be of outstanding universal value, the categories and values that have progressed over the past decades can be used not only in their universal but also in their regional and

district contexts. In this format it might be possible to develop an overall strategy integrating not only the tangible and intangible but also the culture and nature into a single comprehensive approach.

During the project the following frameworks were identified:

- World Heritage Convention
- Man and Biosphere Programme
- Intangible Heritage Convention
- Declaration on Cultural Diversity
- Peace Parks
- Ramsar Sites
- Important Bird Areas

The common denominators and language of these frameworks allow for their integration into a single proposed concept and management plan. By adopting them, it also allows for each of the governments to immediately share a methodology which at the first stage is national, later developing into a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

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The Appendix details the texts from each of these programmes.

4 Responsible Authorities and Stakeholders

While all the frameworks provide and emphasis the need for participation, the quote from Article 5 of the World Heritage Convention exemplifies the approach that should

adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes.

It can also be seen, and should be emphasized, that the involvement of the local community and the other stakeholders can be the guarantee for success. On a wider level the experiences of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the existing Jordan Valley Authority can be the basis for expanding the management. We have shown that by using accepted terms and formats of the professional guidelines, an enriched structure can be prepared benefiting all the stakeholders.

It was also perceived as important for the local management and economic base to define district groupings to generate local coalitions and identities, based on the themes provided by history thereby allowing *living together in the valley*.

5 The Concept

While the cross-disciplinary team developed the concept, each component was detailed and refined in the light of the discussions. The cultural component presents the concept of crossing by identifying the sites that are of significance by the epochs of history and their grouping in the Jordan valley. The narrative was then incorporated in the initiative of Crossing the Jordan.

The definitions of Cultural Landscape have developed since 1925 with the geography of Carl Sauer. Enhancements over the years include contributions from many other geographers, historians and architects alike. J B Jackson has given the definitions of the vernacular landscape.

‘A landscape is beautiful when it has been or can be the scene of a significant experience in self-awareness and eventual self-knowledge’

- Landscape is a symbolic expression of human identity
- Landscapes may be studied as social contexts for human life
- Landscapes are organic and ever-changing.

But it was the 1992 decision of the World Heritage Committee that gave it international Cultural Landscape legitimacy and in celebrating its first decade has brought about a dramatic change in how we observe our environment. As of today, almost fifty sites on the World Heritage List can be defined as a cultural landscape.

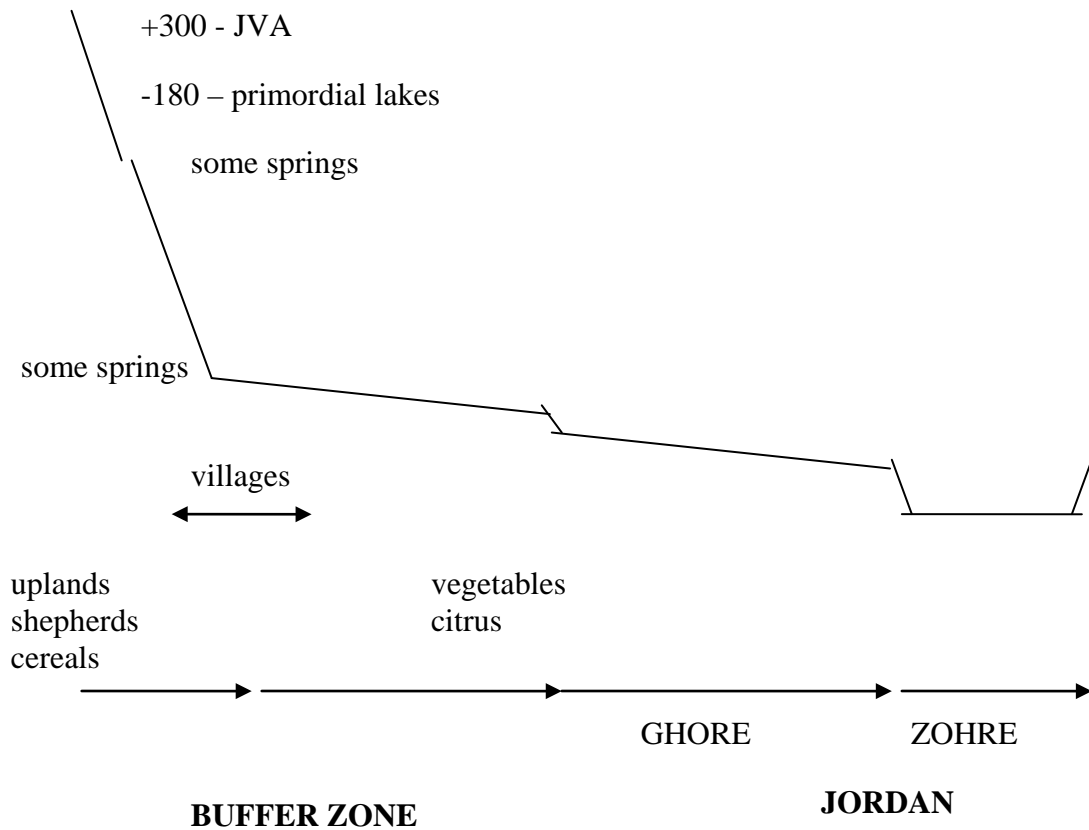
The six periods of history previously identified, became the basis for correlation while the format of the MAB programme identifying core, buffer and transition zones allowed for a hierarchy linking culture and nature. Each of the sites was identified as a core zone or site for inscription with their connections to the places of nature defined the buffer zones as cultural landscapes. The main foci are identified below.

	Israel	Jordan	Palestine
1 Pre-history;	'Ubeidiya– Shaar Hagolan	Teleilat al Ghassul	Tel-el-Sultan
2 Bible	Bet Shean; Gilboa	Tel Deir Alla; Mount Nebo	Gilgal Sartaba Jericho
3 Greco-Roman	Scythopolis;	Pella, Gadara	
4 Early Christian and Byzantine	Bet Alpha		Deir Hijle Deir Qarantal
5 Early Muslim and Crusader	Belvoir	Tel al Mazar; Abu-Ubaida, Ajloun	Hisham Palace
6 Later Muslim and Ottoman		Umm Qais	

At each edge of the Rift extend cultural sites into the hinterland – the Emek Yisrael and the historic sites and battles at Megiddo, Wadi Qelt and the desert monasteries of Byzantium and the sites of Madaba and Philadelphia by Wadi Kafrein. The peaks of the Gilboa, Sartaba and Mount Nebo provide the sense of place overlooking the Valley.

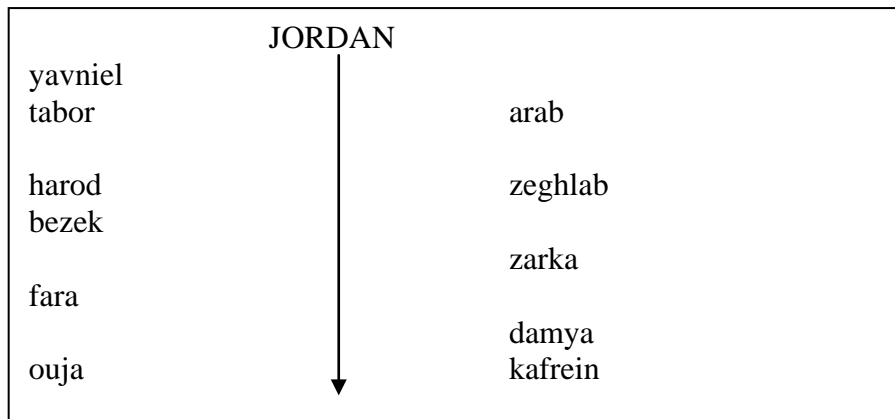
Whereas the sites are grouped by geography and history, the key to the narrative is the section of the Valley. It provides the essence of the cultural landscape.

It was also important for the local management and economic base to define district groupings to generate local coalitions and identities, together with the themes provided by history allowing for the *living together in the valley*.



The villages developed at the edge of the plain connecting to the springs in the geological layers of the Rift. These levels also related to the primordial lakes of Lissan and 'Ubeidiya which were, at later known periods, at -180 metres below sea level. The upper reaches of the Rift is defined at +300 metres above sea level being the visual and geo-morphological edge. In the uplands above these villages were the grazing areas and cereal cultivation while the vegetables and citrus were planted in the upper reaches of the plain close to the villages. Sophisticated water systems developed over the centuries allowed for their irrigation. The Ghore and Zohre overlap at the depression of the Jordan River itself.

This pattern with local indigenous changes is part of the undulating cultural landscape of the valley. But the natural differences between northern wet and arid southern areas of the Jordan Valley show their drama by highlighting the differing landscapes. They are defined and graded by the five main segment reflected in the east and west tributaries of the Jordan.



The cultural itineraries can be the structure whereby these sites can be linked. These might include the prehistoric routes from the Great Rift Valley to the Fertile Crescent, the Biblical Routes, the Roman frontiers and limes, the journeys of Jesus and the Apostles and the pilgrims' route of the 'friends of Mohammed'.

The battles of this region include the early conquests of the Persians and the Assyrians and the later treks of Salah-a-din. The present-day conflicts and competitions of the region need to be resolved with the shared cultural significance of the Jordan Valley.

But at the heart is the River Jordan. For the present, we have to discuss - is it the possible core area of a Biosphere, and a wetland of importance, with minimal human presence, or is it a potential as a water supply and recreation? The current paradox of its pristine state is due to its no-access national border.

6 The Proposal and Implementation

The conflicts and competitions of the region need to be resolved within the shared cultural significance of the Jordan Valley. The proposal for the identification of a cultural landscape is seen to be a catalyst for cultural and eco-tourism, environmental rehabilitation and sustainable agriculture and peace building process of the communities in the Valley.

The experts developed the objectives in the fields of environmental rehabilitation, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism and culture.

The proposal for the management of a cultural landscape will take into account a series of events and actions. These will include a campaign to plan for sustainable cultural events, the rehabilitation of tourism based on the functions in the Valley with guest-houses and spas. In addition itineraries will identify the wadis, biking and hiking trails along the valley, concerts and a bird-watching centre.

The experts developed the objectives that were adopted by Friends of the Earth Middle East:

- Develop a master plan for integrated development of the Jordan Rift Valley
- Improve quality of water for rehabilitation of the River
- Restore interaction between all inhabitants living on it's banks
- Encourage infrastructure for environmentally friendly innovation in tourism and agriculture

Eco-Tourism

Prepare a master plan for restoration of ancient Roman baths, and development of health and spa tourism facilities

Prepare a master plan for nature reserves, hiking paths, bike trails and bird watching areas

Assist local residents to improve or establish new local guesthouses near potential tourism sites.

Environmental Rehabilitation

Launch a regional study to identify pollution sources

Initiate a campaign to rehabilitate the River and its wadis

Prohibit wastewater discharge

Prepare a master plan

Sustainable Agriculture

Develop a training program to promote organic, indigenous and sustainable agriculture

Prepare a business plan on a Jordan Valley organic produce logo, organize fairs and sales of local organic products in Europe and the U.S.

Culture

Promote cultural events – concerts in old Roman amphitheaters in Beit She'an, Qais, Jericho, Pella

Prepare a business plan for a regional museum with educational activities

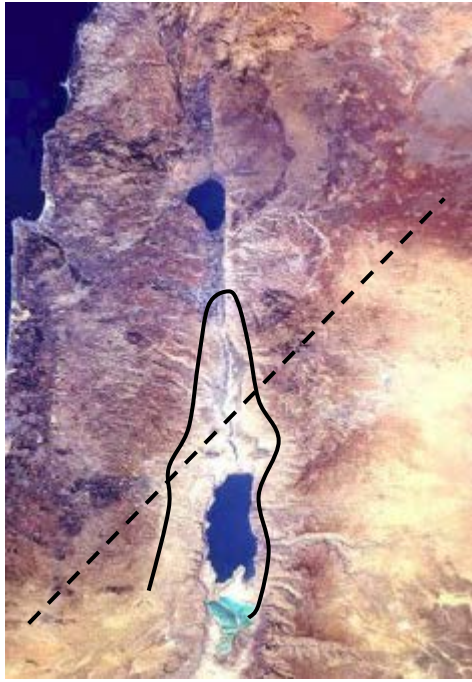
Improve and promote baptism sites

Promote pilgrimage to shrines of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammed.

‘If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, Then how canst thou contend with the horses? And though in a land of peace thou art secure, Yet how wilt thou do in the thickets of the Jordan?’

Jeremiah 12.5

– ויפגע במקום to touch a place.



The satellite image of the Jordan Valley shows the drama of the region identifying the northern wet and southern arid areas



lower reaches of the Jordan



crossing the Jordan



belvoir



ajiloun

APPENDIX - UNESCO PROGRAMMES

World Heritage

The Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972, known commonly as the World Heritage Convention, identifies *monuments, groups of buildings and sites*. The sites of the Jordan Valley can be seen as defined in Article 1 of the Convention as

'the works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view'.

Paragraph 36 of the Operational Guidelines to the Convention that were amended in 1992 defines the Cultural Landscapes as the '*combined works of nature and of man*'

They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. They should be selected on the basis both of their outstanding universal value and of their representativity in terms of a clearly defined geo-cultural region and also for their capacity to illustrate the essential and distinct cultural elements of such regions.

There are six criteria for the inscription of cultural sites:

- i. represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or
- ii. exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; or
- iii. bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; or
- iv. be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; or
- v. be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; or
- vi. be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural);

The Jordan River Valley might relate to criteria (iii), (iv),(v) and (vi) not only through individual sites but through the cultural landscapes of the valley.

Man and Biosphere

The Biosphere Reserves are an elective mechanism forming a world network. They are defined as

areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use..... Biosphere reserves serve in some ways as 'living laboratories' for testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water and biodiversity. Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfil three basic functions, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing:

- conservation ... - to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation;
- development ... - to foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable;
- logistic ... - to provide support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

Once again the format of providing an integrative approach involving the local communities is high on the agenda. The MAB format identifies core areas, buffer and transition zones, which could form the basis for the comprehensive proposal for the Jordan River Valley. These zones are defined as:

The core area needs to be legally established and give long-term protection to the landscapes, ecosystems and species it contains. It should be sufficiently large to meet these conservation objectives. As nature is rarely uniform and as historical land-use constraints exist in many parts of the world, there may be several core areas in a single biosphere reserve to ensure a representative coverage of the mosaic of ecological systems. Normally, the core area is not subject to human activity, except research and monitoring and, as the case may be, to traditional extractive uses by local communities.

A buffer zone (or zones) which is clearly delineated and which surrounds or is contiguous to the core area. Activities are organized here so that they do not hinder the conservation objectives of the core area but rather help to protect it, hence the idea of "buffering". It can be an area for experimental research, for example to discover ways to manage natural vegetation, croplands, forests, fisheries, to enhance high quality production while conserving natural processes and biodiversity, including soil resources, to the maximum extent possible. In a similar manner, experiments can be carried out in the buffer zone to explore how to rehabilitate degraded areas. It may accommodate education, training, tourism and recreation facilities. In buffer zones, emphasis is on sustainable use of the natural resources for the benefit of local communities.

An outer transition area, or area of co-operation extending outwards, which may contain a variety of agricultural activities, human settlements and other uses. It is here that the local communities, conservation agencies, scientists, civil associations, cultural groups, private enterprises and other stakeholders must agree to work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources for the benefit of the people who live there. Given the role that biosphere reserves should play in promoting the sustainable management of the natural resources of the region in which they lie, the transition area is of great economic and social significance for regional development.

The core areas might be the cultural nodes and natural forms of the Jordan River the Ghore and Zohre together with the tributaries, while the landscape will provide the backcloth and buffer zone.

Intangible Heritage

This new Convention approved in November 2003 brings together many aspects of the intangible as defined in Article 1.

The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.

The Jordan River Valley presents the Cultural Spaces recognizable by communities and groups as their cultural heritage. The challenge that this Convention offers is to deal with its constant recreation whether through tradition of baptism or pilgrimages to the Holy Sites and shrines.

Cultural Diversity

The UNESCO Declaration on cultural diversity is another layer of attitudes reflecting the importance of shared cultural values

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Peace Parks

Peace Parks have developed over the years and are becoming an important tool in the visual comprehension of peace in troubled areas. The process has been developed by IUCN - The World Conservation Union and WCPA- World Commission on Protected Areas. The first evaluation and guidelines were formulated at an International Symposium on Parks for Peace at Bormio, Stelvio National Park, Italy - in May 1998. The vision was defined at differing levels as parallel top-down and bottom-up process:

Someone at some level must have a vision that transboundary cooperation between protected areas is needed or very desirable because of the benefits which more than compensate for the problems encountered in trying to have collaboration across a border. It behoves WCPA in any "Parks for Peace"

1 The term *protected area* (PA) is used both in the sense of the IUCN definition and its categories (I - VI), but also to include Dedicated Conservation Areas where biodiversity conservation and sustainable use objectives prevail, but the area may not be legally established. initiative to make these benefits very visible, so that individual protected area field staff, managers and directors, agency heads, ministers, politicians, NGOs and the general public may become enthused, and work to achieve transboundary cooperation. Benefits may be in such areas as:

- Promoting international friendly working relations which may extend eventually to other areas including enhancing regional cooperation;
- Better safeguarding and maintenance of biodiversity since ecosystem boundaries do not stop at borders, either on land or sea, or rivers;
- Better research;
- Better control of cross-border problems such as fire, pests, poaching, marine pollution;

In addition to the accepted definitions of biodiversity and sustainability, yet again the involvement of the local communities is paramount. The guidelines are specific in this activity:

1. Know and understand how the existing socio-economic dynamic can affect or support the development of a transboundary protected area initiative.
2. Involve local communities living in the border area in educational and environmental awareness activities promoted by protected areas.
3. Facilitate and promote actions that contribute to transboundary management such as cultural activities, joint festivals across the borders, common open markets, etc.
4. Promote the participation of local communities in planning and management of TBPA's.
5. Involve local communities living in border areas in economic activities such as tourism, local industries, transport, infrastructure development, and the like.

Ramsar

The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world". A broad definition of the types of wetlands is covered in its mission, including swamps and marshes, lakes and rivers, wet grasslands and peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, mangroves and coral reefs, and human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

- *Wetlands* provide fundamental ecological services and are regulators of water regimes and sources of biodiversity at all levels - species, genetic and ecosystem.
- *Wetlands* are windows on interactions between cultural and biological diversity.
- *Wetlands* constitute a resource of great economic, scientific and recreational value for the global community. Progressive encroachment on, and loss of, *wetlands* cause serious and sometimes irreparable damage to provision of ecosystem services.
- *Wetlands* should be restored and rehabilitated, whenever possible.
- *Wetlands* should be conserved by ensuring their wise use.

The River Jordan and Rhore area could be classified as an Inland Wetland (M)
Permanent rivers/streams/creeks; includes waterfalls.

In the *New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands* there are general guidelines dealing with the dialogue with stakeholders and the dynamics of an evolving process.

7. Wetlands are dynamic areas, open to influence from natural and human factors. In order to maintain their biological diversity and productivity (i.e., their 'ecological character' as defined by the Convention and to permit the wise use of their resources by people, an overall agreement is essential between the various managers, owners, occupiers and other stakeholders. The management planning process provides the mechanism to achieve this agreement.

9. The management plan is part of a dynamic and continuing management planning process. The plan should be kept under review and adjusted to take into account the monitoring process, changing priorities, and emerging issues.

But the most critical part of the Ramsar Convention deals with the attitudes towards the cultural values of the sites. Their recommendations are outlined below:

106. Landscape and wilderness qualities are often overlooked in management plans when they apply to protected areas. For sites where habitat management and maintenance is important, and there are few human-made structures, the management of the habitat will usually also cover most landscape issues. For most natural protected areas, landscape management will be concerned with minimising, or removing, the influence of people where this is regarded as visually damaging.

107. In the case of sites where there are significant anthropogenic artefacts with historical, cultural or religious values, these should also be safeguarded through the management planning process. Such features could be included in a plan's section on landscape, but their protection and maintenance is probably best achieved by regarding them as features of interest, and dealing with them as any other feature.

108. An indicative list of cultural features of wetlands is provided in Box 2.

BOX 2. Indicative list of cultural features of wetlands for evaluation for wetland management planning

(derived from the *Cultural aspects of wetlands* (Ramsar COP8 DOC.15))

Palaeontological and archaeological records
Historic buildings and artefacts
Cultural landscapes
Traditional production and agro-ecosystems e.g. ricefields, salinas, exploited estuaries
Collective water and land management practices
Self-management practices, including customary rights and tenure
Traditional techniques for exploiting wetland resources
Oral traditions
Traditional knowledge
Religious aspects, beliefs and mythology
"The arts" - music, song, dance, painting, literature and cinema

Important Bird Areas

The Ramsar Convention gives first priority to the wetlands as a home for waterfowl, thus coordinating with identified Important Bird Areas. These areas are selected in several categories and include:

1: Sites regularly holding significant numbers of an endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species. (US Endangered Species Act, or BirdLife International list).

2: Sites regularly holding endemic species, or species with restricted ranges. (species with range <50,000 sq km)

3: Sites regularly holding an assemblage of species restricted to a biome or a unique/threatened natural community type.

4: Sites where birds concentrate in significant numbers when breeding, in winter, or during migration.

a) The site regularly holds greater than 1% of the population of a congregatory species (global, continental, national).