

Recensioni

Teresa Vicente Rabanaque, Sara Sierra Ferrero, Ángela Calero Valverde, Beatriz Santamarina Campos (eds.), *Antropología pública de la conservación. Gestión y gobernanza en áreas protegidas*, València, Universitat de València, 2022.

Domenico Branca, Università di Sassari
ORCID: 0000-0002-4346-3334; dbranca@uniss.it

Antropología pública de la conservación. Gestión y gobernanza en áreas protegidas (Public Anthropology of Conservation. Management and Governance in Protected Areas), edited by Teresa Vicente Rabanaque, Sara Sierra Ferrero, Ángela Calero Valverde, and Beatriz Santamarina, argues for the need to adopt a public perspective in conservation anthropology to contribute to better management and governance of protected areas (PAs) and impact social transformation. Starting from a “critical, collaborative and engaged perspective” (p. 14), the authors consider public anthropology as the production of knowledge and practices that are not only academic but also politically oriented towards the well-being of society. This book brings together the preliminary results of a research project on the genealogy of PAs in Spain which, through a diachronic and comparative look at Andalusia, Catalonia, and Valencia, investigates the conservationist policies after the Spanish transition to democracy that began in 1975. The aim, then, is to provide an overview of the current situation of PAs in Spain to generate tools that “allow [...] new management and governance models to be generated” (p. 10). It also includes some of the papers presented at the 2021 online international conference “Anthropology of Conservation,” including chapters on Cuba, and Portugal and a round table attended by seven park managers.

The book is divided into five blocks with a total of 19 chapters. Part I, consisting of two chapters, is a theoretical and methodological introduction to the study of conservation anthropology. In Chapter 1, Beatriz Santamarina introduces the goals and limitations of the research – particularly due to the pandemic – and then devotes a section to one of the themes that run throughout the volume: the active role of anthropology in the governance and management of natural parks (NP). Further analytical tools are provided in Chapter 2 by Martínez *et al.* in a thought-provoking piece proposing a “working guide” for the ethnographic approach to the study of management, noting the lack of contributions specifically address to this topic. Their goal, then, is to develop “a theoretical and methodological approach to PAs management from

the perspective of planned intervention processes” in order to “lay the groundwork for an annotated working guide to a conservation ethnography” (p. 45), considering four areas: conservation actions, interventions related to heritage use, relationships with local populations, and those related to intra- and inter-institutional dimensions.

Part II is an example of some NPs in Andalusia, Catalonia, and Valencia. In Chapter 3, Estrada examines the Montseny Biosphere Reserve Natural Park in Catalonia, not far from the Barcelona urban area. This area is significant for its socio-environmental value, its importance to the history of conservation in Catalonia, and its identity value to the local population. The Alt Pirineu Natural Park (PNAP) is studied in Chapter 4 by Beltran which shows the conservation measures, public use, relationships with local communities, and processes of heritagisation in the PNAP. In chapter 5, Campo examines the Montgó Natural Park (PNMG), in which the mountain massif of the same name, separating the towns of Dénia and Xàbia, plays an important symbolic and identity role. It is precisely the uncontrolled urban growth that has led to the declaration and protection of the PNMG. Many PAs and NPs could in fact be defined as a kind of (peri)urban green infrastructure, as in the case of Chapter 6 written by Acàmer and Brito about the Sierra Calderona Natural Park, a park that suffers greatly from tourist pressure. Coca turns his attention in Chapter 7 to the Alcornocales Natural Park in Andalusia, a socio-ecosystemically complex space consisting of a cork oak forest whose human use is dedicated to hunting and, above all, cork production, and which is also characterised by a complex history marked by *latifundia*. In Chapter 8, Sierra describes another complex area, the Strait of Gibraltar Natural Park, characterised by its socio-ecological heterogeneity: its location between Europe and Africa, its biodiversity, the presence of drug trafficking, the internment centre for foreigners, a strong military presence, and recreational use, especially for sports.

Part III is devoted to various types of comparisons, both at the State and the regional levels. This part begins with Chapter 9 by Campo *et al.*, who analyze the different conservation policies of Andalusia, Catalonia, and Valencia, comparing the models of planning and management of nature in the three autonomous communities. Nowadays, nature is not only planned and managed but also sold, as Ruiz and Santamarina show in Chapter 10. The authors examine the production of a “guaranteed nature” through the creation of brands in the NPs of Andalusia, Catalonia, and Valencia, showing the differences and continuities between the three models and the role of nature in territorial strategies. These three cases are also the focus of Chapter 11, in which Vicente *et al.* examine the discourse of the Spanish press on NPs, highlighting their representation as territories in confrontation due to tourist, urban and industrial pressures.

The theme of conflict is also the basis of Chapter 12 by Gil, who examines three PAs in Catalonia and the conflicts that arise from conservation policies and the different actors involved, in addition to proposing a model for better management of PAs. In Chapter 13, Doyon analyses some NPs in the Alt Empordà *comarca* of Catalonia, using the environmental history of the area to show the emergence of the NPs, the initial rejection by small local producers, and the subsequent change in the perception of the NPs themselves.

Part IV is an overview of NPs both in Spain and in other contexts. In Chapter 14, Múgica provides an overview of PAs in Europe and Spain, emphasizing the importance of social participation at all stages, from planning to managing. This participation is also highlighted in the following chapter 15 by Castaño-Quintero *et al.* who propose a model to improve public participation in the management of Biosphere Reserves and other figures. In this sense, the case of Viñales National Park, Cuba, is a good example analyzed in Chapter 16 by Martínez Maqueira *et al.*, who show the positive results achieved in this park, both in terms of conservation and improvement of agricultural production and tourism in Viñales. In Chapter 17, Amoedo ethnographically describes a conflict between farmers and park managers in the Peneda-Gerês National Park in Portugal. In his paper, the author points out that the conflict is since “the park does not take into account the particular and collective construction processes of the farmers’ habitats, their territoriality [...] and way of life” (p. 295). This block ends with García’s chapter 18, which deals with an increasingly important and sensitive issue that is the subject of polarization and controversy, but also of opportunity, namely the relationship between agroecology and PAs.

Part V concludes the book and consists of Chapter 19, which reflects the round table held during the International Conference “Anthropology of Conservation” in 2021. In this chapter, seven Spanish national park managers and technicians discuss the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities for the future of national parks based on their daily experiences.

In summary, despite the constraints on research caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, *Anthropología pública de la conservación* shows, on the one hand, the vitality of this field within the framework of anthropology in Spain and, on the other, it advocates a public commitment of the discipline to conservation issues. The chapters provide ethnographic, theoretical, methodological, and practical knowledge to the understanding of PAs in Spain. Although they contain partial results, they are inspiring pieces that will certainly be of interest not only to anthropologists but also to collaborators and colleagues from related disciplines who are interested in the transdisciplinary topic of conservation and ultimately want to go beyond an ontological vision that considers nature and culture as distinct planets.