

# BIOSPHERE RESERVES AND WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN ARGENTINA

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## INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO's Ecological Sciences and Biodiversity Section chief, Thomas Schaaf, natural world heritage sites conserve natural ecosystems for which they have been inscribed;<sup>1</sup> while biosphere reserves also do environmental restoration and rehabilitation activities of degraded environments. Biosphere reserves are mainly concerned with managing change in ecosystems linked to human activity in order to promote sustainable development.<sup>2</sup>

The designation World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve were launched at beginning of the '70s, but the legal framework, as well as the political and cultural connotations, has changed since then at international, regional and local level.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes a World Heritage site has also become or been incorporated into a Biosphere Reserve or Ramsar site. This is the case of Laguna de los Pozuelos in Argentina. Many biosphere reserves and natural world heritage sites (inscribed for natural heritage values) are protected by national parks laws.

In Argentina, as in other South American countries, there is no separate local legislation for biosphere reserves and for world heritage sites. Despite this, we divide this work into two main parts: Biosphere Reserves (I) and World Heritage (II).

## I. THE BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN ARGENTINA

The establishment of biosphere reserves<sup>4</sup> is not covered by a specific convention, but is part of an international scientific programme, the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Management of natural world heritage takes sustainable development into account, trying to ensure that the uses are compatible with the outstanding universal values for which the sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List.

<sup>2</sup> V. CAVANDER, L. "When World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserves merge", *Forum UNESCO Universidad y Patrimonio FUUH's Newsletter*, p. 8 (<http://universityandheritage.net>); and in *The UNESCO Courier*, August 2009 ([http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=45952&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=45952&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)).

<sup>3</sup> TAMBURELLI, G. "UNESCO Designations, an overview of current legal issues", Workshop on: European Protected Areas and UNESCO Designations, 2010, p. 2. (<http://www.euoparc.org/library/conference-presentat/europarc-2010-pres/>).

<sup>4</sup> The concept of the biosphere reserve incorporates the health of ecosystem management. At its initiation, MAB was the first international effort to address the concept of sustainable development. V. BROWN, J. D. "The integration of Man and the Biosphere", *The Georgetown Int'l Law Review*, Vol. 14, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, Man and the Biosphere Programme, *World Network of Biosphere Reserves*. V. <http://www.unesco.org/mab/>

According to MAB, a biosphere reserves is a voluntary, cooperative conservation reserve, created to protect de biological and cultural diversity of a region while promoting economic development.<sup>6</sup>

The MAB Program was created as an international framework for the national implementation of individual biosphere reserves. The ultimate goal of the Program is the creation of a world network of biosphere reserves.<sup>7</sup>

Argentina established 13 *Biosphere reserves* recognized under MAB Programme<sup>8</sup> to promote sustainable development. Those are sites of excellence -under national sovereign jurisdiction- when practices to manage nature and human activities have been compromised and must be tested and demonstrated. The state shares their experiences and ideas nationally, regionally and internationally within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). Argentina is the South American country with the largest number of reserves.<sup>9</sup>

The first biosphere reserve in Argentina was the San Guillermo in San Juan Province (1980), covering a million acres where vicuña and guanaco were the main reasons for conservation. The latest were (2007) the Pereyra Iraola Park of 10,248 hectares in Buenos Aires Province, and the Andean-Patagonian area covering 2,266,942 hectares in Neuquen, Río Negro and Chubut Provinces.

The biosphere reserves in Argentina are: 1 San Guillermo [1980, San Juan, 990,000 hectares<sup>10</sup>]; 2 Laguna Blanca [1982, Catamarca, 973,270 hectares<sup>11</sup>]; 3 Costero del Sur [1984, Buenos Aires, 25,000 hectares<sup>12</sup>]; 4 Ñacuñán [1986, Mendoza, 12,300 hectares<sup>13</sup>]; 5 Laguna de Pozuelos [1990, Jujuy, 400,000 hectares<sup>14</sup>]; 6 Yabotí [1995, Misiones, 253,775 hectares<sup>15</sup>]; 7 Parque Atlántico Mar Chiquita [1996, Buenos Aires, 26,488 hectares<sup>16</sup>]; 8 Delta del Paraná [2000, Buenos Aires, 88,624 hectares<sup>17</sup>]; 9

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<sup>6</sup> *Sevilla Strategy for Biosphere Reserves* (www.unesco.org).

<sup>7</sup> BROWN, J. D. "The integration of Man (...)"m *Op. Cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> There are at present (January 2011) in all the world 564 sites in 109 countries.

<sup>9</sup> For example, *Bolivia* has 3 (Pilón-Lajas [1977], Ulla Ulla [1977]; and Beni [1986]; *Brasil* has 6 (Mata Atlántica [1993], Cerrado [1993], Pantanal [2000], Caatinga [2001], Central Amazon [2001], and Espinhaço Range [2005]; *Chile* has 9 (Fray Jorge [1977], Juan Fernández [1977], Torres del Paine [1978], Laguna San Rafael [1979], Lauca [1981], Araucarias [1983], La Campana-Peñuelas [1984], Cabo de Hornos [2005], Bosques Templados Lluviosos de los Andes [2007]; *Paraguay* has 2: Bosque Mbaracayú [2000], El Chaco [2005]; *Uruguay* has 1: Bañados del Este [1976].

<sup>10</sup> In 1998, its core area was declared a National Park. It has established a cooperation agreement between the Government of San Juan, the National Parks Administration (APN) and the Environmental Foundation of San Juan (FAS) as part of a provincial conservation strategy.

<sup>11</sup> The area is predominantly private with 600 inhabitants. The reserve is under the Ministry of Production of Catamarca.

<sup>12</sup> This reserve stretches along the coast of Rio de la Plata. The administration of the area is bipartite, between the municipalities of Magdalena and Punta Indio..

<sup>13</sup> The entire population of the reserve consists of approximately 100 people and is concentrated in the town of Ñacuñán, located in the transition area. No residents are in the core and buffer zones.

<sup>14</sup> It is a mixed area of mountains and highlands inhabited by 3,500 people (the highest density of the Puna Argentina) dedicated to breeding sheep and llamas. More than 50% is private property. It is administered by the Corporation for the Development of Pozuelos (CODEPO), a multisectoral entity (producers, provincial government and university created by provincial law, with technical support from Regional Ecology Program of the Institute of High Altitude Biology (National University of Jujuy).

<sup>15</sup> The Reserve includes the Provincial Park and the Reserve Moconá Esmeralda, both of Provincial state domain.

<sup>16</sup> The Reserve is administrated by the municipality of Mar Chiquita.

Riacho Teuquito [2000, Formosa, 81,000 hectares<sup>18</sup>]; 10 Laguna Oca del Río Paraguay [2001, Formosa, 10,000 hectares<sup>19</sup>]; 11 Las Yungas [2002, Salta and Jujuy, 1,350,000 hectares<sup>20</sup>]; 12 Andino Norpatagónica [2007, Neuquen, Rio Negro and Chubut, 2,266,942 hectares<sup>21</sup>]; 13 Pereyra Iraola [2007, Buenos Aires, 10,248 hectares<sup>22</sup>].<sup>23</sup>

We must not forget that Ramsar sites contribute to similar objectives to those of biosphere reserves (and natural world heritage sites).<sup>24</sup> The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands<sup>25</sup> through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world." The "wise use" of wetlands is defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development." "Wise use" therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind.<sup>26</sup>

The preservation of protected areas as world heritage or biosphere reserve involves a set of objectives. On many occasions, the most appropriate measures to achieve these complex objectives are not altering the status of the site.

## National Level

Argentina has ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1994, the Convention on Wetlands in 1992, and is party to the UNESCO-MAB, however, like other countries

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<sup>17</sup> Is a delta (channels of the estuary of the Rio de la Plata). It is administrated by the municipality of San Fernando.

<sup>18</sup> It is an area of tropical dry forests. Its surface is appropriate to meet the three functions of the Reserve, however is considered an extension to an area of 100,000 hectares.

<sup>19</sup> It is a wetland located near Formosa, on the right bank of the river Paraguay. The core area is uninhabited.

<sup>20</sup> Yungas are forests and subtropical forests of the mountains, between 300 and 5,000 meters. The reserve is trans-provincial (Salta, Jujuy) and is divided into 23 communes. It has around 506,000 inhabitants (including the City "portal" of the reserve, San Salvador de Jujuy). The reserve is inhabited by various indigenous peoples (Kolla, Guaraní and Ocloyas) that preserve their customs.

<sup>21</sup> The reserve is trans-provincial (Neuquen, Rio Negro, Chubut), and mostly occupies the area of national parks. It is under national and provincial jurisdiction.

<sup>22</sup> Biosphere Reserve is maintained by the Ministry of Land Affairs in the province of Buenos Aires, and is located in the largest conurbation in the country, between the cities of Buenos Aires and La Plata.

<sup>23</sup> V. maps and references in website of the Secretary of Environment and Development ([www.ambiente.gov.ar](http://www.ambiente.gov.ar)).

<sup>24</sup> The RAMSAR sites in Argentina are: Río Pilcomayo [1992], Laguna Blanca [1992], Laguna de los Pozuelos [1992], Reserva Costa Atlántica de Tierra del Fuego [1995]; Laguna de Llanquanelo [1995], Bahía de Samborombón [1997], Lagunas de Guanacache, Desaguadero y del Bebedero [1999], Lagunas de Vilama [2000], Jaukanigás [2001], Lagunas y Esteros del Iberá [2002], Bañados del Río Dulce y Laguna de Mar Chiquita [2002], Reserva Provincial Laguna Brava [2003], Humedales Chaco [2004], Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur [2005], Parque Provincial El Tromen [2006], Reserva Natural Otamendi [2008], Humedal Laguna Melincué [2008], Lagunas Altoandinas y Puneñas de Catamarca [2009], Glaciar Vinciguerra y turberas asociadas [2009]. V. maps and references in the website of the Secretary of Environment and Development ([www.ambiente.gov.ar](http://www.ambiente.gov.ar)).

<sup>25</sup> The Convention uses a broad definition of the types of wetlands covered in its mission, including lakes and rivers, swamps and marshes, 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, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters (*Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* [1971 with amendments]).

<sup>26</sup> V. [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-january-2011/main/ramsar/1%5E24901\\_4000\\_0\\_\\_](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-january-2011/main/ramsar/1%5E24901_4000_0__)

of MERCOSUR, has not adopted comprehensive national legal regime to protect these areas of rich biological diversity. Is applicable to them, if appropriate, the general legal systems of protected areas and national parks.

In Argentina biosphere reserves have no legal status as such, despite the Madrid Action Plan recommends that biosphere reserves benefit from an enhanced legal regime and that states be encouraged to include biosphere reserves in their own legislation.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, number of national rules apply to them, *i.a.*, following:

-Art. 41 of the National Constitution provides that corresponds to the Nation promulgate rules containing minimum environmental protection, and the provinces those necessary to reinforce them, without altering their local jurisdictions.

-Art. 124 of the National Constitution in its last paragraph states that corresponds to the provinces the original ownership of natural resources within their territories. It should take into account that the provinces exercise control over resources located in their territory.

-*General Environmental Law 25675 (2002)* states:

*Article 1: This law determines the minimum standard to achieve sustainable and appropriate management of the environment, preservation and protection of biodiversity and sustainable development implementation.*

*Article 2: The national environmental policy must meet the following objectives:*

- a) To ensure the preservation, conservation, restoration and improvement of the quality of environmental resources, both natural and cultural, in the conduct of the various human activities (...);*
- d) To promote the rational and sustainable use of natural resources;*
- e) To maintain the balance and dynamics of ecological systems;*
- f) To ensure the conservation of biological diversity;*
- g) To prevent the harmful or hazardous to human activities generate about the environment to enable ecological sustainability, economic and social development (...);*
- j) Establish a federal system of inter-jurisdictional coordination for the implementation of environmental policies at national and regional level (...).*

-National Law 25688 – *Minimum Standards for Environmental Management of the Waters (2003)* establishes:

*ARTICLE 1° - This law establishes minimum standards for the for the preservation of waters, its improvement and rational use.*

-National Law 26331 - *Minimum Standards for Environmental Protection of Native Forests (2008)* provides:

*ARTICLE 1.- This law determines the minimum environmental protection for the enrichment, restoration, conservation, sustainable use and management of native forests and environmental services they provide to society (...).*

-National Law 26639 - *Minimum Standards for Preservation of Glaciers and Periglacial Environment (2010)* states:

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<sup>27</sup> TAMBURELLI, G. “UNESCO Designations (...)”, *Op. Cit.*, p. 33.

*Article 1.- Purpose. This law determines the minimum standards to protect glaciers and periglacial environment in order to preserve them as strategic reserves of water for human consumption, for agriculture and as suppliers of water to recharge basins; for protection of biodiversity as a source of scientific and tourist attraction. Glaciers are public property.*

-National Law 22351 - *National Parks, Reserves and National Monuments*<sup>28</sup>. (1980) states:

*Article 1.- For the purposes of this law may be declared National Park Reserve or National Monument, areas of the territory of the Republic for its extraordinary beauty and wealth of flora and fauna or because of particular scientific interest, should be protected and preserved for scientific research, education and enjoyment of present and future generations (...). In each case the declaration shall be made by law.*

*Article 2.- The existing public lands in national parks and natural monuments, are of national public domain (...).*

*Article 4.- National Parks will preserve areas in their natural state (...), which will be held without other alterations necessary to ensure its control, the visitor's attention and those corresponding to national defense measures adopted to meet national security needs (...).*

-National Decree 2148 - *Strict Nature Reserve* (1990) states:

*The biological diversity of a country is its richness of life, shaped by thousands of species of plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the intricate ecosystems they help to constitute the living environment (...).*

*(...) (F)or this reason it is imperative to create the category of strict nature reserves, which minimizes direct human interference as possible in areas that are designated under that name (...).*

*Article 4.- Are prohibited in strict nature reserves all activities that alter its natural characteristics, which threaten their biodiversity or diminish that in any way affect the elements of flora, fauna or geology, with the exception of those are necessary to manage and control them.*

In Argentina the Coordination Unit MAB-UNESCO (UCPMAB) performs tasks of the MAB's Programme. This Unit is the technical area of Argentine MAB Committee, whose President is National Secretary of Environment and Development (SAyDS in Spanish).

The UCPMAB organizes national meetings of the National Network of Biosphere Reserves, workshops for the periodic review of the objectives of the Biosphere Reserves national and international meetings, such as the Red IberoMAB and workshops. Supports the management of reserves, exchange of experiences and personal and technical publications, involved in the assessment of compliance with objectives and advises on and promotes the generation of new reserves. Diffuse and preselect the MAB

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<sup>28</sup> There are in Argentina 38 National Parks (NP), Reserves (R) and National Monuments (NM): NM Ballena Franca Austral; NP Baritú; NM Bosques Petrificados; NP Calilegua, NP Campo de los Alisos, NP Los Condores, NP Chaco, R Colonia Benítez, NP Copo, NP El Leoncito, NP El palmar, NP El Rey, R Formosa, NM Huemul, NP Iguazú, NP Lago Puelo, NP Laguna Blanca (Neuquén), NM Laguna de los Pozuelos, NP Lanín, NP Lihué Calel, NP Los Alerces, NP Los Arrayanes, NP Los Glaciares, NP Mburucuyá, NP Monte León, NP Nahuel Huapi, R Otamendi, NP Predelta, NP Perito Moreno, NP Quebrada del Condorito, NP Río Pilcomayo, R San Antonio, NP San Guillermo, NP Sierra de las Quijadas, NP Talampaya, NP Tierra del Fuego, NM Taruca o Venado Andino, NM Yaguararé.

Young Scientists Research Fellowships. The responsibility of the MAB-UNESCO falls in the Working Group on Conservation of Biodiversity.

The MAB National Committee, is a body “responsible for the activities making up the national contribution of a country to the international Programme on Man and the Biosphere in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, capacity building and information sharing, and in particular in promoting the biosphere reserve concept, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and its constituent regional networks.”<sup>29</sup>

In Argentina, Resolution 386/98 of the Secretariat for Natural Resources and Sustainable Development specified the functioning and mandate of the Coordination Unit within the Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development (UCPMAB). In spite of modest financial resources, the allocation of working time to dedicated staff is a strength, which enables this Committee to carry out a wide range of successful activities. These include for example regular meetings of representatives of the country’s biosphere reserves (currently eleven), sub-regional thematic workshops on coastal biosphere reserves in cooperation with neighboring Brazil and Uruguay and, more recently, a workshop on the periodic review of biosphere reserves. In addition, in 2001, Argentina hosted a major meeting of a regional network. Through its National Committee, Argentina has strongly contributed to the continuous evolution of the Programme.<sup>30</sup>

According to MAB Programme, to carry out the conservation and complementary use of natural resources, biosphere reserves are organized spatially and functionally by dividing it into three interrelated areas: core, buffer and transition. In practice, this zoning is applied in different ways to accommodate geographical conditions and local limitations.

The core area is protected by law and should ensure long term protection of the landscape, ecosystems and species it contains. It must ensure the objectives of conservation. Typically, the core area is not subject to human activities, except for research and monitoring.

According to the system, the buffer zones, whose boundaries are well defined, surround the core area or are next to it. The activities here are organized to ensure its protection. In it, it’s possible conduct experimental research to find ways to manage natural vegetation, croplands, forests or fisheries, to improve production while conserving natural processes and biodiversity including soil, to the fullest extent possible. Similarly, in the buffer zone can perform experiments on the rehabilitation of degraded areas. Can provide support for education activities, tourism and recreation.

The transition zone is the area outside the reserve, it can locate human settlements, develop agricultural activities, livestock, forestry and wildlife utilization. Here local people, conservation organizations, scientists, civil associations, cultural groups, private companies and other stakeholders should work together on tasks of management and sustainable resource development in the area for the benefit of its inhabitants.

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<sup>29</sup> Guidelines for Establishing National MAB Committees ([www.unesco.org/mab/docs/Guidelines.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/mab/docs/Guidelines.pdf) ).

<sup>30</sup> V. [www.medioambiente.gov.ar/](http://www.medioambiente.gov.ar/)

As we stated, several Biosphere Reserves simultaneously are protected areas under other systems (such as national parks or nature reserves) or are included in other internationally recognized sites (such as World Heritage sites or Ramsar Wetlands).

The core areas of Biosphere Reserves are usually public lands, but also can be private or belong to NGOs. In many cases, the buffer zone is public or private property, and this is the usual case in the transition zone.

The establishment of a Biosphere Reserve does not introduce changes in the jurisdiction or possession of land.

Biosphere Reserves (under the Seville Strategy and the Madrid Plan of Action) have a new global role: not just to achieve a balanced relationship with the environment for people who live in or around them, but also explore how to meet the basic needs of human society as a whole, showing the way towards a more sustainable global future.

Recently Argentina has submitted to the United Nations Program for Development the Project ARG 05/015 UNDP "Development of a Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in Biosphere Reserves and Ramsar Sites".

There have been criticisms to system of biosphere reserves arguing: a) improper influence on land management decisions involving federal lands, and b) lack of congressional participation in the designation process.

### **Subregional Level**

Already in the early stages of the MAB program there was an intensive dialogue between colleagues working on biosphere reserves on behalf of ministries, administrations, development agencies and non-governmental organizations. A total of over 40 interviews were conducted during missions to Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay, at various international meetings in the region, and, whenever possible, during field visits to biosphere reserves.<sup>31</sup>

Argentina is carrying out cooperative relations at the *sub-regional level* to the development of the WNBRs, contributing and promoting the exchange of information and experience between biosphere reserves in different countries, especially with the countries of MERCOSUR.<sup>32</sup>

Transboundary Biosphere Reserves (TBRs) works as an official recognition at the international level and by a United Nations institution of a political will to co-operate in the conservation and sustainable use, through common management, of a shared

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<sup>31</sup> DANIELE, C. - ACERBI, M. - CARENZO S. *La implementación de Reservas de Biosfera: La experiencia latinoamericana (Argentina)*, UNESCO Biosphere Programme United Nations, South-South Cooperation Programme Working Papers N° 25, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Regional integration processes appear to be an excellent opportunity for cooperation to ensure minimum conditions for preservation and good management.

ecosystem.<sup>33</sup> It also represents a commitment of two or more countries to apply together the Seville Strategy and Madrid Plan of Action for biosphere reserves and its objective.

Chile has prepared and submitted a new proposal for a biosphere reserve in the trans-Andean Patagonian area, which in future could result in a transboundary biosphere reserve.

## II. WORLD HERITAGE IN ARGENTINA

World Heritage Convention (1972), ratified by 187 countries (January 2011), accepted by Argentina in 1974, is an international instrument that provides for a technical process through which governments can propose national protected areas for official international recognition. World Heritage sites are also formally recognized by large mining and oil companies and by the largest banks of the World as places that should not be touched, for the benefit of future generations.<sup>34</sup> The complete World Heritage List recognizes 890 properties of “outstanding universal value,” including 704 cultural, 180 natural and 27 mixed properties in 151 States Parties (at January 2011).

According to the Convention (1972) the fundamental purpose of the instrument is:

*Article 1. For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "cultural heritage":*

- monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*
- groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*
- sites: 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 point of view.*

*Article 2. For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "natural heritage":*

- natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;*
- geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;*
- natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.*

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<sup>33</sup> For example, the Chaco region extends into Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and to a lesser extent Brazil.

<sup>34</sup> PATRY, M. “Future perspectives”, en GUERRERO, E. - SQUERRA, S. (Eds.) *Protected Areas and Development in Latin America. From Santa Marta 1997 to Bariloche 2007 and Perspectives for a New Decade*, Fundación Natura, IUCN Colombian Committee and Parques Nacionales Naturales Colombia, 2009, p. 47 and subsequent (www.iucn.org).



These natural and cultural sites symbolize the consciousness of States and peoples of the significance of these places and reflect their attachment to collective ownership and to the transmission of this heritage to future generations.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that, at present, the selection criteria are: “i. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; ii. to 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; iii. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; iv. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; v. to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; vi. to 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 preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria); vii. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; viii. to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; ix. to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; x. to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.”<sup>36</sup>

In many cases, the selection of goods and cultural evidence is performed by dominant social and political groups, according to general criteria, and values, but restrictive or exclusive. Moreover, when the historical process manifests the presence of a national state with a nationalist historical project, then the selection of goods and evidence of cultural heritage is given in conformity with the 'national interest' of that State which do not always coincide with the nation's reality. This is the case of American States, which are multi-ethnic nations with different cultural heritages, some of which have been historically marginalized, neglected or rejected by the dominant cultural notion underlying the nation state.<sup>37</sup> Every object can become historical testimony without having at its source that destination. And all human element can take, deliberately and in retrospect, a rote role. Hence the variety of objects that fill today's "memory market".

Ramos said: “The relationship between memory and identity is historical; and the record of that relationship can be traced through various forms of commemoration... Commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual

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<sup>35</sup>V. [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.phpURL\\_ID=34323&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.phpURL_ID=34323&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>36</sup> V. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria>

<sup>37</sup> FLORESCANO, E. “El patrimonio cultural y la política de la cultura”, en FLORESCANO, E., (comp.) *El patrimonio cultural de México*, México, FCE, 1993, p. 9.

when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation.”<sup>38</sup> In this regard, Gillis expressed: “The relationship between memory and identity is historical; and the record of that relationship can be traced through various forms of commemoration (...).”<sup>39</sup>

Monuments<sup>40</sup> and sites in Argentine are: 1. Los Glaciares [1981, Santa Cruz, 7,178 square kilometres]; 2. Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis [1983, Misiones and Rio Grande-Brazil, cultural heritage<sup>41</sup>]; 3. Iguazu<sup>42</sup> National Park [1984, Misiones, 49,200 hectares]; 4. Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas [1999, Santa Cruz, cultural heritage<sup>43</sup>]; 5. Península Valdés [1999, Santa Cruz, 3625 square kilometers<sup>44</sup>]; 6. Ischigualasto / Talampaya Natural Parks [2000, La Rioja and San Juan, 275,369 hectares<sup>45</sup>]; 7. Jesuit Block and Estancias of Córdoba [2000, Córdoba, cultural heritage<sup>46</sup>]; 8. Quebrada de Humahuaca [2003, Jujuy, 172,116 hectares<sup>47</sup>].<sup>48</sup>

Argentina has a relatively important number of monuments and sites in comparison with other states in South America.<sup>49</sup> Most of the sites in Argentina are natural monuments unlike other South American countries, *vg.*, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> RAMOS, L. *Sueños patrimoniales: Chile reinventa su historia ante la UNESCO*, Nota 18. V. <http://humanidades.uprrp.edu/romanitas/espanol/volumen3/ramos.html>

<sup>39</sup> GILLIS, J. R. (ed.) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p.5 cit by RAMOS, L. (V. Note 6).

<sup>40</sup> The essence of the monument is its anthropological role.

<sup>41</sup> Transnational heritage, remain of five Jesuit missions, built in the land of the Guaranis during the 17th and 18th centuries.

<sup>42</sup> Iguazu is an indigenous (Tupi-Guarani) name, meaning Great Waters.

<sup>43</sup> It is famous for the paintings of hands, made by the indigenous inhabitants some 9,000 years ago.

<sup>44</sup> The only human settlement of the peninsula is Puerto Piramides with 500 inhabitants.

<sup>45</sup> Transprovincial natural heritage. These two contiguous parks extend in the desert region on the western border of the Sierra Pampeanas of central Argentina, contain the most complete continental fossil record known from the Triassic Period (245-208 million years ago).

<sup>46</sup> The Jesuit Block in Córdoba, is heart of the former Jesuit Province of Paraguay, and contains the core buildings of the Jesuit system: the university, the church, the residence of the Society of Jesus, the college, and five estancias of over 150 years in the 17th and 18th centuries.

<sup>47</sup> The valley has been used over the past 10,000 years as a crucial passage for the transport of people and ideas from the high Andean lands to the plains.

<sup>48</sup> V. maps and references in the website of the UNESCO ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

<sup>49</sup> For example, *Bolivia* has 6 places: City of Potosí, Jesuit Missions of the Chiquitos, Historic City of Sucre, Fuerte de Samaipata, Noel Kempff Mercado National Park, Tiwanaku: Spiritual and Political Centre of the Tiwanaku Culture; *Brazil* has 18: Historic Town of Ouro Preto, Historic Centre of the Town of Olinda, Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis: San Ignacio Mini, Santa Ana, Nuestra Señora de Loreto and Santa Maria Mayor (Argentina), Ruins of Sao Miguel das Missoes (Brazil), Historic Centre of Salvador de Bahia, Sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Congonhas, Iguaçú National Park, Brasilia, Serra da Capivara National Park, Historic Centre of São Luís, Atlantic Forest South-East Reserves, Discovery Coast Atlantic Forest Reserves, Historic Centre of the Town of Diamantina, Central Amazon Conservation Complex, Pantanal Conservation Area, Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves, Cerrado Protected Areas: Chapada dos Veadeiros and Emas National Parks, Historic Centre of the Town of Goiás, São Francisco Square in the Town of São Cristóvão; *Chile* has 5: Rapa Nui National Park, Churches of Chiloé, Historic Quarter of the Seaport City of Valparaíso, Humberstone and Santa Laura Saltpeter Works, Sewell Mining Town; *Paraguay* has only 1: Jesuit Missions of La Santísima Trinidad de Paraná and Jesús de Tavarangue; *Uruguay* has also only 1: Historic Quarter of the City of Colonia del Sacramento.

<sup>50</sup> V. Note 10.

Every six years, the States Parties are invited to submit to the World Heritage Committee a periodic report on the application of the World Heritage Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on its territories.<sup>51</sup>

### **National Level**

As we stated above, there are no particular national standards that regulate the world heritage sites in Argentina, but MABs Programme, the National General Environmental Law, the Law of Native Forests and National Parks Act (if applicable)<sup>52</sup> apply to them.

In general, similar to biosphere reserves, there was little political opposition to environmental protection among people of different areas because the inhabitants have received promises of financial aid.

### **Regional Level**

Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru share a common cultural heritage of outstanding value: the *Qhapaq Ñan*, or Main Andean Road ((network of roads over 23,000 km in length connected various production, administrative and ceremonial centres constructed over more than 2,000 years of pre-Inca Andean culture). For the past three years the World Heritage Centre has been assisting these countries in a pioneering project: the preparation of a single nomination for the inclusion of Qhapaq Ñan in the World Heritage List entailing an original and innovative regional cooperation process.<sup>53</sup>

Some projects, as the Pro-Amazonia Project, Iguazu Project for example, are directed to strengthen both local and national research capacities for sustainable development. Through this and other networks MAB contributes the testing and application of research results from one country to another, which is particularly important for South-South cooperation in the environment, aspect of the utmost importance for developing countries.<sup>54</sup>

### **Final Remarks**

Argentina has made considerable efforts over the years to participate in international conferences and programs in which the country is part, however is observable that there are weaknesses in the application of international commitments. There are serious deprecations<sup>55</sup> in protected areas due to lack of controls and weak enforcement capacity

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<sup>51</sup> V. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/committeerules/>

<sup>52</sup> The “Latin American Congress on National Parks and Other Protected Areas” has become a meeting in which all government and non-government stakeholders interested in the subject get together. The two first Congresses were held in 1997 (Santa Marta, Colombia) and 2007 (Bariloche, Argentina) and the third one is expected to be held about 2017.

<sup>53</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/qhapaqnan/>

<sup>54</sup> DROSTE, B. von “UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme: Two Decades of Sustainable Development”, 2 *Colo. J. Int’l Envtl. L & Pol’y*, 1991, p. 259 and subsequents.

<sup>55</sup> Vg.: shearing of vicuña, poaching, accumulation of waste, uncontrolled vehicle traffic, highways drawn within protected areas, oil spills, military maneuvers, unauthorized diversions of waters, marketing of fossil elements, forest fires and clearings, tourism and housing ventures not in accordance with the

of the government. There is lack of government will in constituting a technically competent and politically impartial *fora*, especially in preservation of forests and waters.

Declared sites in the complex international commitments on Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage, and Wetlands are representative of the biodiversity of Argentine ecosystems.

The Madrid Action Plan builds on the Seville Strategy and agreed at the 3rd World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (Madrid 2008) guides the Argentinean labor on biosphere reserves, although the difficulties already mentioned.

It urges strengthening the institutional capacity of the agents and institutions related to the management and administration of protected areas. On the other hand, it is indispensable increase the informed participation of the local stakeholders of civil society, in particular, indigenous peoples.

It is also necessary to promote joint work and sharing of scientific information among the MERCOSUR member-countries as a mean of promoting state responsibility and scientific knowledge in favor of the environment and of natural resources management. It would be useful the common support of studies to create sites of exceptional environmental value for the countries parties in MERCOSUR.

It would be very useful to get new partnerships and build innovative strategies of income generation in order to attain a sustainable financing of protected areas.<sup>56</sup>

Only the integrated action of the work undertaken under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Desertification, Wetlands Protection, World Heritage and MAB's Programme, coupled with a real and effective will of the Argentine authorities in those complex international commitments, can optimize international objectives for the biosphere reserves and world heritage sites.

As places that seek to reconcile conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through partnerships between people and nature, they are ideal to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to sustainable development from local to international scales.<sup>57</sup>

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condition of the area, often accompanied by corruption of government officials without required studies or environmental impact assessment, without taking into consideration the public will, etc.

<sup>56</sup> GUERRERO, E. - SGUERRA, S. (Eds.) *Protected Areas and Development in Latin America (...)*, *Op. cit.* V. also TILMAN, J. "New Prospects for the MAB Programme and Biosphere Reserves. Lessons learned from Latin America and the Caribbean", UNESCO Biosphere Programme United Nations, South-South Cooperation Programme Working Papers, N° 35, 2005, p. 279 and subsequent.

<sup>57</sup>V. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/>