

## What the Past Can Do for the Future

### Towards the Inclusion of Social and Cultural Values in Sustainable Forest Management

*Based on texts by Mauro Agnoletti (IUFRO WP 6.07.00), Eirini Saratsi and Charles Watkins (both IUFRO RG 6.07.04)*

Cultural values related to forests and forestry are often based on long historical experience and deep insights into the dynamics of forest ecosystems. Considering the future scenarios presented by environmental change and especially by global warming, the conservation of traditional woodlands and forest management practices, as well as their associated landscape-level adaptations to difficult environmental conditions, should be given priority attention.

This fact was emphasized by the participants of the conference on "Woodland Cultures in Time and Space: Tales from the past, messages for the future". The theme of the conference was effectively interpreted by the diverse papers presented at the event, which not only covered broad historical and geographical areas but also demonstrated very effectively their relevance to future woodland management. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference was also expressed by papers covering five broad areas: Conflicting cultures in forest management; cultural wooded landscapes; landscape change and planning; environmental history and evolution of forest ecosystems, woodlands as places of meaning.

The key conclusions of the conference were that there are several fields of conflicts, different functions and interpretations of wooded landscapes, thus, our understanding about the past and our targets for future conservation should be guided by cultural but also by temporal dimensions. Moreover, the incorporation of cultural values in forest management is essential as these can help to improve diversification and therefore competitiveness of often marginal rural economies, improve the ecological status and appearance of the countryside, and eventually contribute to a higher quality of life for local communities.

These conclusions are in line with the "Guidelines for the Implementation of Social and Cultural Values in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)" that will be presented at



*The conference attracted the Greek media and was covered by regional and national newspapers and television. The picture shows Prof. C Watkins interviewed by the Greek media on Mount Paiko.  
( Photo by Robert Fish)*

the 5th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) in Poland in early November 2007. The guidelines have been elaborated by the IUFRO Research Group 6.07.00 "Forest and Woodland History" and shall serve as a scientific basis for the pan-European implementation of "Vienna Resolution 3" that was adopted in 2003 and constitutes a decisive step toward the inclusion of social and cultural values in sustainable forest management. The guidelines are composed of strategies and actions that should be implemented by National Forest Programmes and Rural Development Plans and are targeted at three main areas: Management/Conservation; Planning; and Valorization.

The IUFRO conference on "Woodland Cultures in Time and Space" took place from 3-7 September 2007 in Thessaloniki, Greece, and was organized by IUFRO Working Party [6.07.04](#) "Ecological History". It attracted some 150 delegates from 24 countries. At the conference, Professor Mauro Agnoletti, coordinator of IUFRO RG [6.07.00](#) presented the "Guidelines for the Implementation of Social and Cultural Values in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)" to be published as IUFRO Occasional Paper 19. The proceedings of the Thessaloniki conference will be published in 2008. For more information, contact Eirini Saratsi (E.Saratsi(at)exeter.ac.uk), Charles Watkins (charles.watkins(at)nottingham.ac.uk), and Mauro Agnoletti (mauro.agnoletti(at)unifi.it). [Meeting report](#).

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