

## **NATURE PROTECTION POLICY AND PROTECTED AREAS: THE CASE OF NATIONAL PARKS**

**Elias BERIATOS<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Thessaly, Department of Planning and Regional Development  
Pedion Areos, 38334 Volos, Greece  
E-mail: [beriatos@prd.uth.gr](mailto:beriatos@prd.uth.gr)

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

In Greece, nature protection as an integrated and cohesive policy has a relatively recent history. The last five years, many efforts have been made to formulate such a policy and to elaborate a national action plan in the field of nature conservation and protection. In this respect the role of protected areas becomes very important not only for the natural environment but also for local sustainable development. This paper refers to the past and the existing situation of the network of protected areas in Greece giving special emphasis on the main problems and causes of malfunction and inefficiency characterizing this network.

At first there is a critical examination of the recent developments regarding the completion of the institutional framework and especially the scientific, technical and administrative procedures required for the establishment of the appropriate managing authorities/organizations of the most important sensitive natural areas. Secondly, the paper investigates the role of the main institutional and organizational components as well as the socio-political parameters, which influenced these developments. It follows a brief evaluation of the on going projects concerning various kinds of protected areas (eg wetlands, national parks etc). Finally, there is an attempt to elaborate the guidelines (guiding principles) and priorities not only for the establishment but also for the assurance of a continuous and appropriate operation of these areas, as well as the respective managing authorities, in the framework of the national environmental policy and the policy for regional development.

**Key words:** Nature protection, Protected areas, National parks, Managing authorities