

Introduction

The lack of partnership between different sectors leads to unsystematic and unfocused communication of information to stakeholders (organisations or individuals) about the available options and tools. The study aimed to identify opportunities for cross-sectoral partnerships in protected areas (the Nemunas Delta and the Curonian Lagoon) and to identify the benefits of partnerships in terms of conserving ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide. Activities are restricted in protected areas. Environmentalists agree that in some cases there is an overuse, so measures are needed to guarantee a harmonious friendship between man and nature. Therefore, this study therefore seeks to present the most vulnerable part of the Lithuanian coastal zone to climate change - the coastal zone, which includes the Curonian Spit and the coastal area around the sea. With an emphasis on the representation of different perspectives (assessing the potential for partnership in the conservation of ecosystem services), the empirical study involved representatives from different sectors (public, private and NGOs).

Methodology

Research setting. The elderships chosen for the research are the ones that are located in the zone within about 10 km of the coast in the Nemunas delta and the Curonian Lagoon and that are within or bordering with the area of the Nemunas Delta Regional Park. Most of the territory of Šilutė District are in the lowlands of the Lithuanian seaside. The lowest location is the Rusnė island (which is, in places, even below the sea level). Every spring and often in autumn, Nemunas floods large areas of Šilutė District (about 400 km²), cutting off transportation (Figure 1).

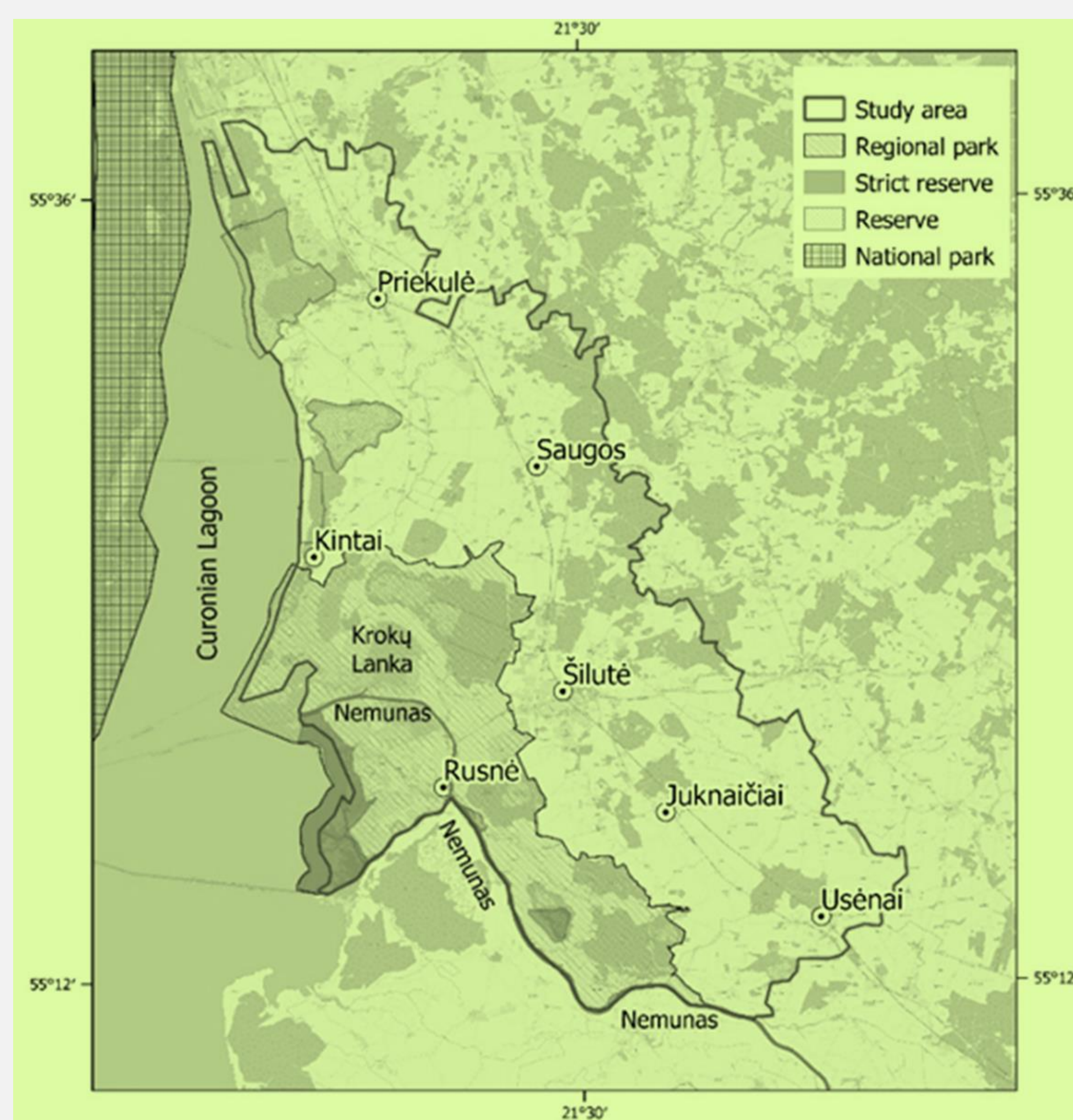


Figure 1. Study area on the map of Lithuania (distribution map made by D. Gozdowski)

Methodology

Methods.

In order to solve the existing problems of the lack of partnership the stages of research are presented in Figure 2.

Stage and Period of the Study	Research Methods
Stage 1	Document analysis. Given the object of the research (ES), the aims and objectives of the research, this method is considered to be the most important method of data collection (acquisition). Sources of collected data: national, EU and international legislation, scientific books and journals, press publications; official statistics (information provided by the Department of Statistics, municipalities, elderships, departments of protected areas); official government publications; documents of private, state, professional, and other non-governmental organisations. In the introductory construction of the research instruments, the analysis of primary and secondary information sources was performed, and methodological tools were developed
Stage 2	Standardized direct survey. In order to assess the existing problems of ecosystem protection and services provided by them, a survey of respondents (farmers, entrepreneurs, eldership employees) was conducted and their opinions on ecosystem conservation and possible related problem areas were examined, and the peculiarities of ES regulation and implementation were revealed. The advantages and disadvantages of social conditions (related to ongoing or potential ES) were investigated using questionnaires. The surveys provide insights into the management of ES.
Stage 3	Comparative analysis. The comparative analysis has allowed the researchers to reveal the differences and similarities not only in the practice of the phenomena (e.g., ecosystem (biodiversity) conservation) in Lithuania, but also in the examples of "good practice" in various countries.
Stage 4	Consumer choice experiments. ES consumers (farmers, entrepreneurs) had to choose potential (in their view) policy alternatives related to the preservation of ecosystems until 2030.
Stage 5	Contingent valuation method and Consumer choice experiments. The contingent valuation method was based on a survey of the users of ES in regard to their priorities for ecosystem services.
Stage 6	Interview. The aim of this method was to obtain detailed data that could be analysed as an NGO's position on partnership.

Figure 2. Stages of research

Results

Research results illustrate that partnerships can be constrained by a number of potential problems, such as lack of clear and compatible objectives, inadequate resource inputs, influences from other service areas and differences between partners.

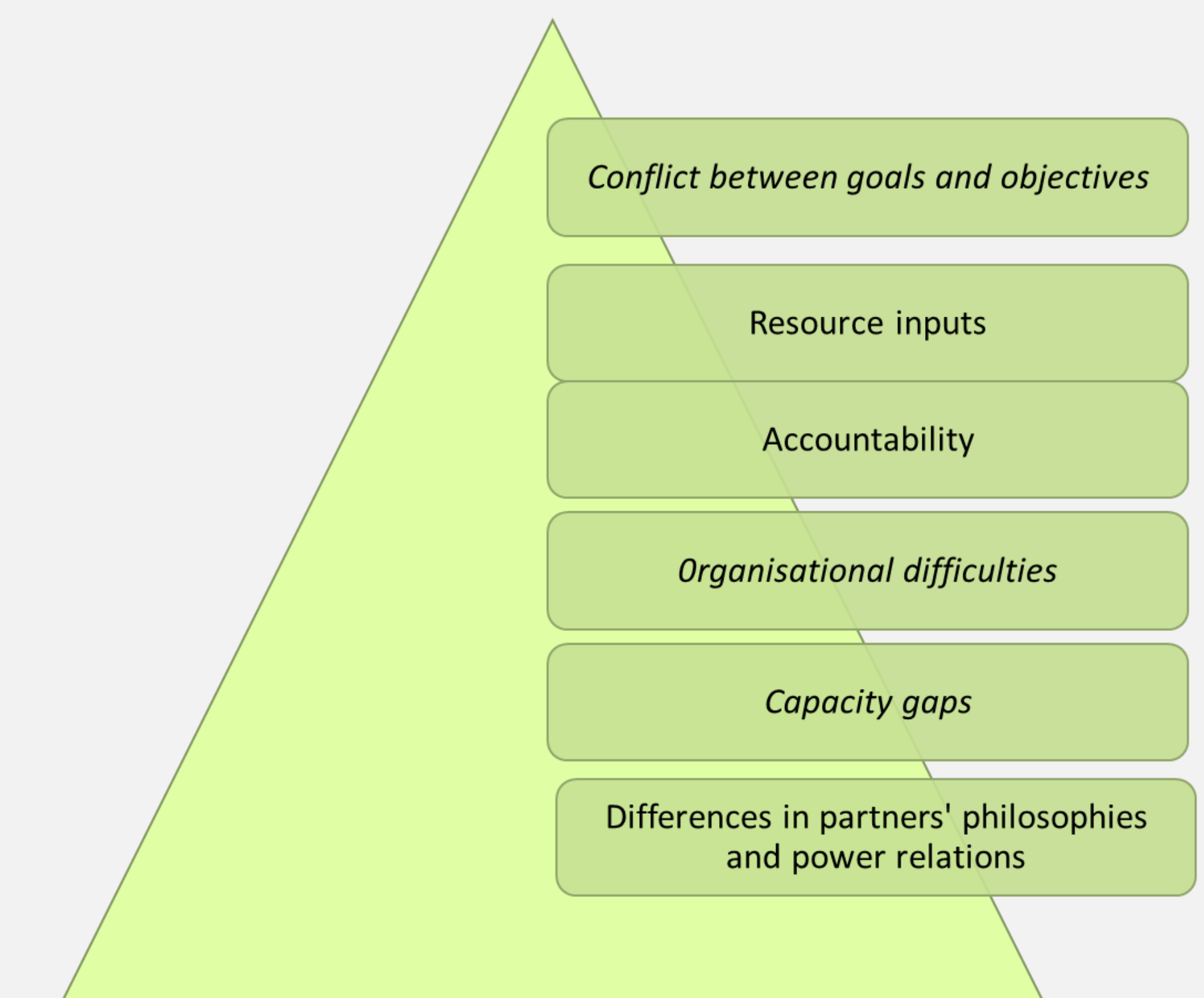


Figure 3. Groups of possible partnership obstacles

These obstacles can be grouped as follows: conflict between goals and objectives (many of the actors in the partnership agree on basic abstract objectives, but the more detailed objectives are quite specific and difficult to reconcile); resource inputs (some variation in resource inputs in terms of time for staff meetings and discussions, in decision-making, in the delay factor, in decision-making on consultation of the partners, etc); and the cost of resources); accountability (neither partner feels fully responsible for certain actions); organisational difficulties (the complexity of coordinating programmes and approaches); capacity gaps, gaps in capacity development (where stakeholders do not have sufficient professional, organisational or financial capacity to partner); differences in partners' philosophies and power relations.

Main conclusions

With an emphasis on the representation of different perspectives (assessing the potential for partnership in the conservation of ecosystem services), the empirical study involved representatives from different sectors (public, private and NGOs). The public sector was represented by elders and municipality staff, the private sector by farmers and entrepreneurs, and the NGOs by representatives of rural communities. The theoretical and practical results of the study were used to identify the potential for partnerships in the existing area and to propose perspectives for assessing their use according to the opinions of the respondents, the region's ecosystems and changes in services, and the implementation of environmental policies.