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1. The White mountains range (Lefka Ori) in West Crete.

2. The Messara plain, Heraklion Prefecture, in South Crete.

3. The "Klados" gorge in West Crete.

4. Map of NATURA 2000 sites in Crete that consist of Special Protection Areas for Birds and Sites of Community Importance for Habitats.

5. The Dikti mountains range in East Crete.



53° IFLA WORLD CONGRESS

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



IFLA 2016

Landscape services of Natura 2000 areas in Crete: A survey on local stakeholders' perceptions.

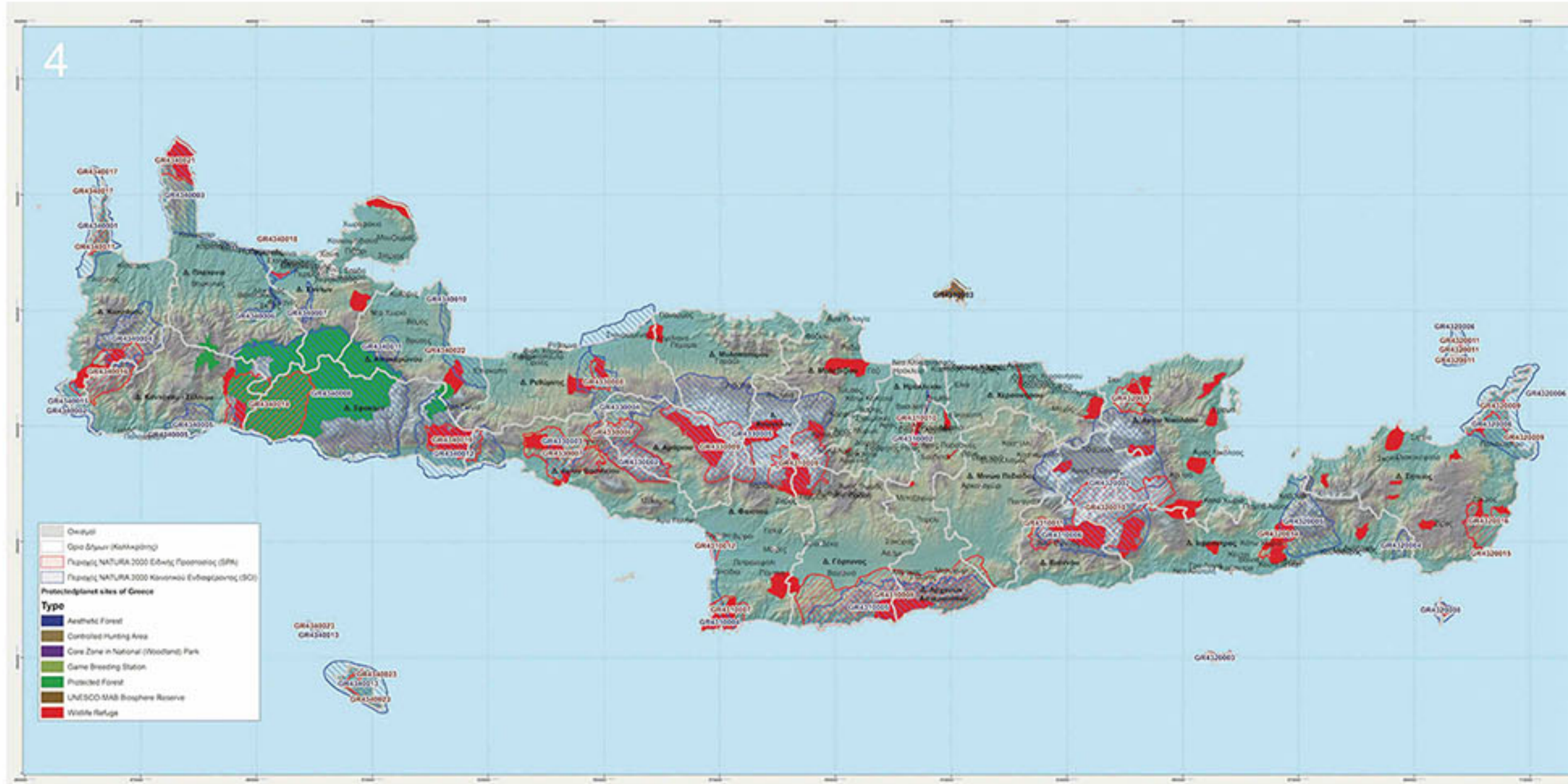
Island of Crete, Greece. June 2015

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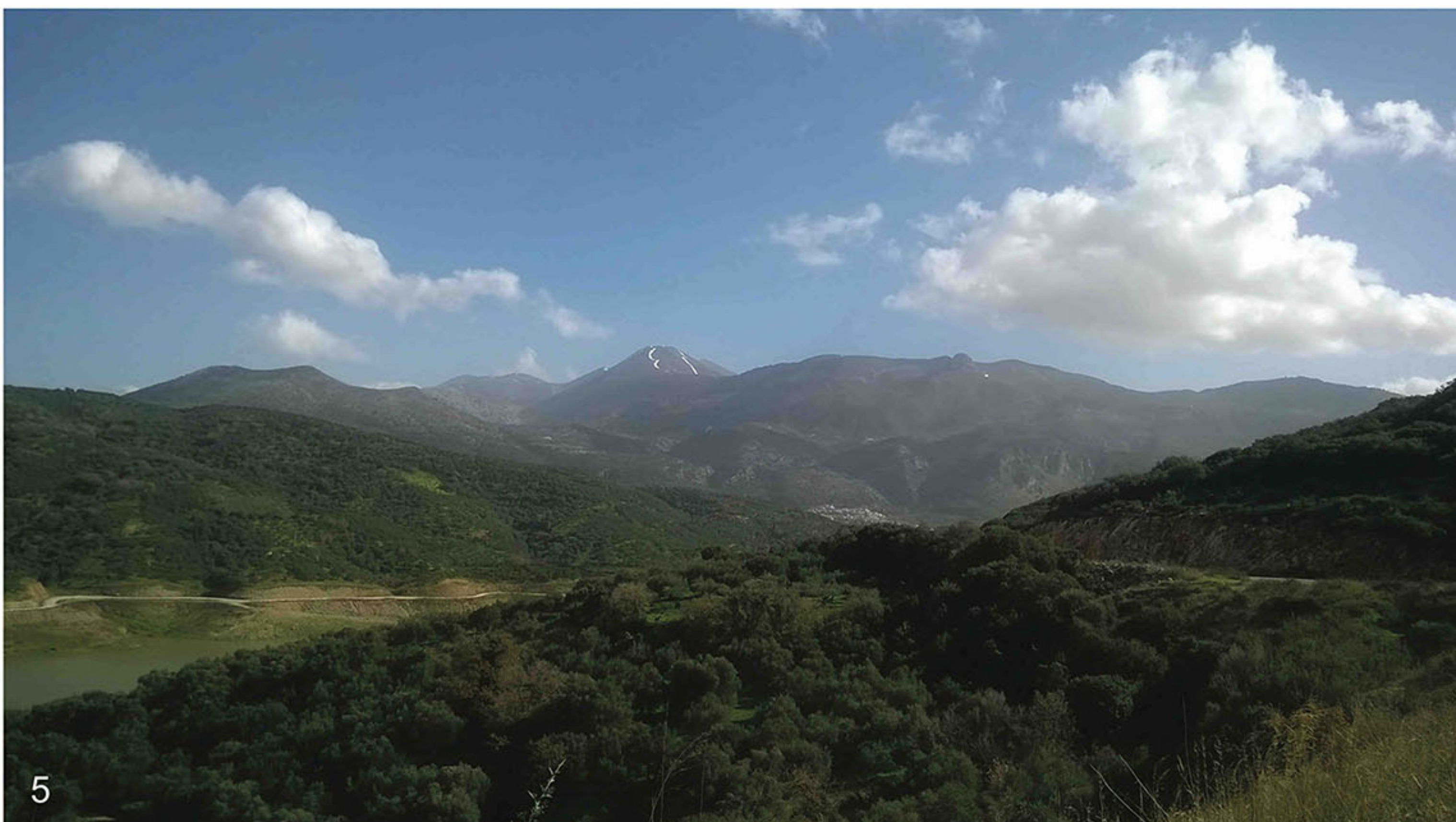
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Ecosystem services (E.S.) constitute the contributions of the natural environment to human well-being. As landscape plays an important role in the environmental field, there is a growing body of literature to better integrate the notion of ecosystem services in landscape planning, management and decision-making.

However, despite growing knowledge of ES, and heightened awareness of their political and socio-economic relevance, mainstreaming and implementing ES in landscape planning and decision-making are in their infancy. In particular in Greece, the island of Crete has 53 NATURA 2000 sites that consist of natural, rural and urban landscapes. Although most of these sites are subject to specialized management plans as well as mandatory conservation measures for landscape protection, actual implementation of an ES concept in landscape decision-making still remains limited. The lack of a land-use planning strategy along with, mainly, the uncontrolled building of enormous tourist complexes altered the natural landscape of Crete and resulted in putting great environmental pressure on all NATURA 2000 sites such as the destruction of coastal habitats, the degradation of mountainous landscapes and the resultant loss of biodiversity. Architects and engineers working in the private sector in landscape planning and real estate business are considered as part of this stressful situation, while the rural population of Crete sees its interests as being threatened by the establishment of the NATURA 2000 network.

In this regard, a survey was conducted in order to gain insight on the views and perceptions of landscape planners and stakeholders in the NATURA 2000 areas in Crete regarding the ecosystem services concept, the NATURA 2000 network as well as barriers and limitations on the transition to a green economy based on landscape sustainability. Stakeholders consist of architects and engineers, rural population, public environmental and spatial planning officers and tourism professionals in Crete. Results indicate that participants recognize the environmental benefits of the NATURA 2000 network but seem overall reluctant to acknowledge the economic and social benefits that could come from the network in parallel with the protection of the natural environment. More specifically, 44% of the rural population believes that large scale investments, which are publicly perceived as developmental opportunities, decreased in their area since it was included in the NATURA 2000 network; 31% of architects & engineers declare no knowledge of the critical space for nature in Crete, as it is defined by the NATURA 2000 sites; 47% of tourism professionals' believe that protected landscapes, a result of the establishment of the network, do not influence visitation levels. This survey also illustrated that 80% of the public environmental and spatial planning officers do not consider themselves properly informed about environmental management and landscape planning in NATURA 2000 areas. The results show that capacity building is still required within the planning community in order to convey better understanding of the ES concept and its implications on land-use management, along with communication efforts that aim at addressing the information needs and requirements of rural population and tourism professionals in Crete, in order to motivate local stakeholders to fully take into account the benefits of landscape services of ecosystems of the NATURA 2000 areas in spatial planning in Crete.



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