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PARK-PEOPLE INTERACTION IN MOUNTAINOUS GEORGIA: THE CASE OF KAZBEGI NATIONAL PARK

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Abstract

This paper traces the case of Kazbegi National Park expansion and seeks to explore factors that shape or prevent trust-building between the park representatives and stakeholders. The research employed a qualitative methodology, using participatory mapping within discussions to allow the interview partners to link spatial information with extension areas. Comprehensive geographical coverage and participants' maximal variation ensured the representativeness of the data collected. Overall, the article reviews various case studies and summarizes the similarities and differences in building trust during the expansion of protected areas in the Caucasus and other regions.

Keywords: protected areas, trust, management, participatory mapping, local participation, Kazbegi National Park

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INTERAKCIJA MED PARKOM IN LJUDMI V GORATI GRUZIJI: PRIMER NARODNEGA PARKA KAZBEGI

Izvleček

Prispevek predstavlja širitev Narodnega parka Kazbegi in poskuša raziskati dejavnike, ki oblikujejo ali zavirajo vzpostavljanje zaupanja med predstavniki parka in deležniki. Raziskava je uporabila kvalitativno metodologijo. Z uporabo sodelovalnega kartiranja je omogočila intervjuvancem povezati prostorsko informacijo z območji širitve. Celovito geografsko pokritje in kar največja raznolikost intervjuvancev sta omogočila reprezentativnost zbranih podatkov. V splošnem prispevek predstavlja različne primere in povzema podobnosti in razlike pri vzpostavljanju zaupanja v času širitve zavarovanih območij na Kavkazu in drugih območjih.

Ključne besede: zavarovana območja, zaupanje, upravljanje, sodelovalno kartiranje, lokalna participacija, Narodni park Kazbegi

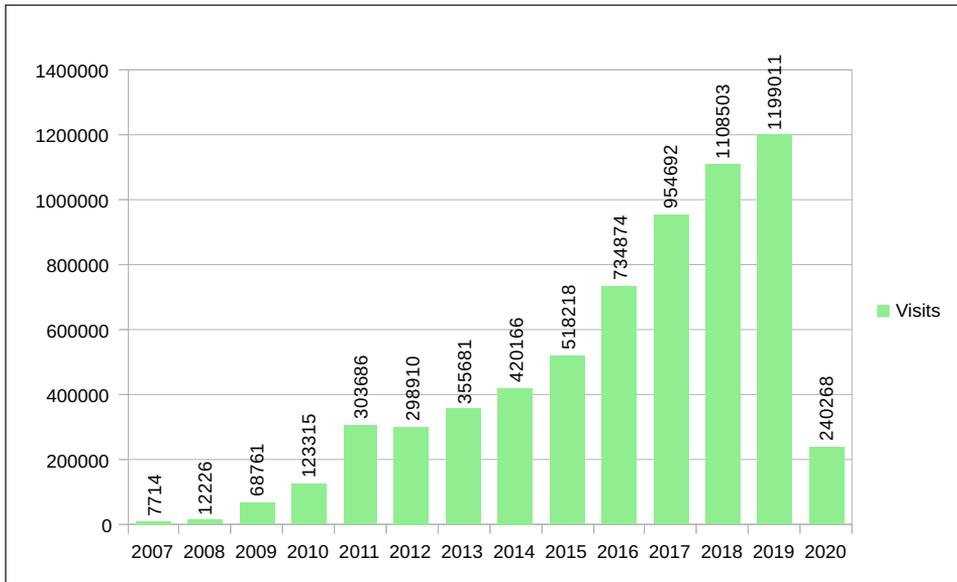
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1 INTRODUCTION

Outwardly, substantial progress is being made in developing conservation areas worldwide, with many of them expanding every year (Juffe-Bignoli et al., 2017). Georgia, with its biodiversity-rich mountainous areas, abundant species, and magnificent elegance, is a part of this mushrooming dynamic. Over the previous ten years, there has been an increase in protected areas (PAs), renovation/construction of tourism facilities, and a steady increase in domestic and foreign tourists. According to the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) statistics, the number of tourists visiting PAs rose progressively from 2007 until the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020. According to statistics, the number of visits to conservation areas surpassed 500 thousand in 2015 and one million in 2018 (see Figure 1).

Georgian PAs' structural growth has been reflected in the continuous extension and construction of new conservation areas. The PA coverage increased by 91,833 hectares (1.3%) since 2011, which in 2018 amounted to 597,556 hectares (8.57% of the total area of Georgia). Notably, the PAs reached a new high in 2020, increasing by 122,374 hectares to a total of 793,351 hectares accounting for 11.38% of Georgia's overall landmass. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature standards, Georgia has 93 protected areas divided into five categories: 14 state reserves, 13 national parks, 40 natural monuments, 23 sanctuaries, and 3 protected landscapes (Agency of Protected Areas, 2019). Three new PAs were created in 2020,

Figure 1: Number of visits in protected areas (Georgia) 2007–2020.



Source: Agency of Protected Areas.

and one was extended with the prospects to establish several additional new PAs for the coming years (Agency of Protected Areas, 2020; 2021).

Along with increased PA development initiatives, community engagement and the shift from traditional livelihoods to new alternatives are evolving. Specifically, the establishment of a PA is accompanied by prohibitions and regulations aimed at ecosystem protection, which are broadly consistent with the IUCN principles. Through its concept and rules, the PA establishes a new reality in the area (Paige, Igoe, Brockington, 2006). In this respect, local residents must adjust their daily social and economic activities to new regulations. Many scholars have argued that there have been apparent tensions between indigenous communities and PA officials since the establishment of PAs (e.g., Nepal, 1997; Puntser et al., 2017). Some researchers took a step further in their studies by defining the socio-demographic traits of the locals, which have a substantial effect on the distinction of household benefit compositions in and around PAs (Adiyia et al., 2017; Müller-Böker, Kollmair, 2000). Several writers contended that a better knowledge of park–people interactions is necessary to promote resilient development (De Pourcq et al., 2017; Puntser et al., 2017). Building trust between the PA administration and stakeholders, particularly residents living near PAs, is critical. According to Nastran and Pirnat (2012), public interest in park development reflects

the public's faith in the government regarding conservation aims and management strategies. To achieve all intended goals, these considerations need a thorough scientific understanding (e.g., nature preservation, economic development of the region).

As previously noted, Georgia underwent a rapid expansion of PAs and their coverage in a brief period; therefore, this fact questions the extent to which sound engagement and interest in the functioning of the national park is formed. The presented case-study-based article explores whether there is trust between the park management and stakeholders in Kazbegi National Park (KNP).

Based on the baseline study for Kazbegi National Park (Bakuradze et al., 2016), it is planned to expand the park area from 8,686.6 to 70,553 hectares. The case of KNP is crucial because the additional areas that will be granted national park status and landowners that will be functionally related to the delimited areas will have to adapt to the “new reality”. It is vital in this process to highlight current developments in the socioeconomic status of local households and the long-term viability of these solutions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of complicated relations and disagreements between the local population and PA administration during the foundation or expansion of PAs has been widely aired in the academic literature. In some cases, locals resist declaring a nearby territory as a PA, which instigates a conflict between them and representatives of PAs (Nepal, 1997; Puntsher et al., 2017). Many studies (e.g., Stern, 2008b; Puntsher et al., 2017; De Pourcq et al., 2017) have brought to the fore the issue of building effective interaction between PAs' representatives and local people, as this is a prerequisite for parks to achieve their objectives. In developing this point, Stern (2004) outlined that “trust for park managers is the most consistent factor associated with how local residents respond to national parks”. The study findings of Turner et al. (2016) underlined trust as a key implication and prerequisite for effective management, which, if high, may ensure sound collaboration between different actors. Many authors have pointed to the importance of trust (De Koning et al., 2017), among which the study by Stern (2008b) revealed that a lack of trust towards PA representatives, caused by the poor communication with neighboring populations, was the most consistent predictor of active opposition towards the establishment of parks. Among other factors, assessments of the benefits and disadvantages of park presence, including interactions with rangers, were commonly assumed to be of primary importance in park–people relationships. According to some authors (De Pourcq et al., 2017; Nepal, 1997; Puntsher et al., 2017), proper communication between the mentioned actors creates a solid foundation for achieving the maximum benefits possible and, overall, sustainable development. Based on the research findings by Turner et al. (2016), building high levels of trust in PA administration demonstrates the particular importance of determining

the perceived legitimacy of park management resolutions according to stakeholders. Furthermore, some authors (Goldman, 2011; De Pourcq et al., 2015) have argued that building trust between parks and people by achieving more effective participation by local groups in national park administration NPA management is an essential condition. As the findings suggest, the latter plays a crucial role in preventing or mitigating conflicts, which can be seen as a daunting task, but far from impossible.

In Georgia, recently implemented studies (Gaprindashvili, 2018; Gloveli, 2017) shared findings regarding the participation of local stakeholders in the decision-making process in the expansion of national parks. Since the local population is actively using exactly those resources (e.g., pasture, firewood) in the area, which may be granted PA status, failing to provide them with information and excluding their involvement in the process creates negative attitudes towards the PA administration (Gaprindashvili, 2018). Such actions significantly hinder the achievement of conservation goals and park objectives and undermine the sound communication between responsible institutions and stakeholders, the restoration of which requires further resources (Gloveli, 2017). In this regard, Stern (2008a) argued that the authorities should ensure the availability of adequate alternatives to resource exploitation within national parks. Moreover, based on the study by Davenport et al. (2007), six primary factors have been identified as the reasons for embracing distrust, confusion, and skepticism towards PA administration; these factors are as follows: i) unclear communication; ii) limited community engagement; iii) limited community power; iv) historical resentment; v) conflicting values, and vi) slow progress. Based on the findings, all these factors fall under one common reason – the opinion and participation of the population were not at the PA administration's epicenter. While people called for better communication, the authorities limited locals' engagement, which led to constraints to building trust. Based on the reviewed literature, various approaches are used to address trustworthiness, including the initiative implemented in Zimbabwe for creating a collaborative arena for local communities and PA representatives. The participatory modelling approach has been integrated to build credibility between PAs and local people, which ensured their collaboration to produce effective management plans (Perrotton et al., 2017). Yet, while there are several approaches to deepening trust between managers and local communities, building trust remains a challenging issue (Sarkki et al., 2015).

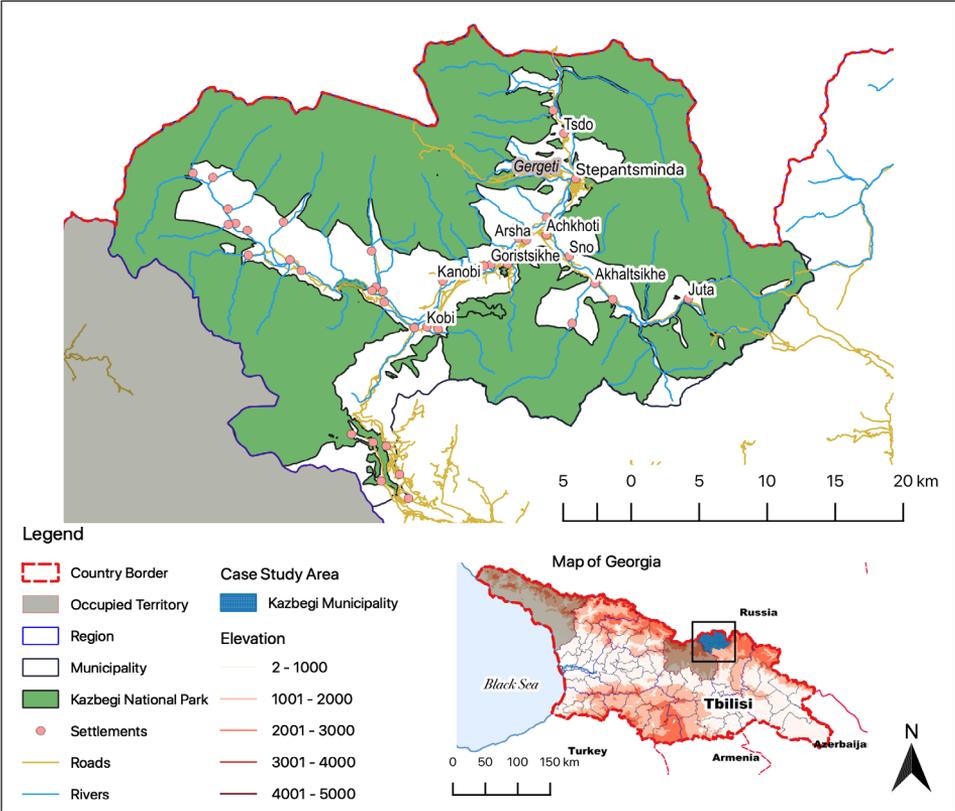
Remarkably, due to its profound socioeconomic alterations and rapid expansion of tourism, including in the park, the case study area, Kazbegi municipality, has been the focus of various types of research (Tskvitinidze, 2020; Gugushvili et al., 2017). KNP's biodiversity monitoring and conservation programs have also been evaluated (Dietrich, 2018); however, the local community's attitudes towards park management and, currently, park expansion have not been explored.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study context

This paper is based on a case study carried out in the Kazbegi municipality in Georgia’s north-eastern region of Mtskheta-Mtianeti. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (2014), its population is 3.800 people, and it is one of Georgia’s most visited highland tourist destinations, associated with picturesque surrounding mountains and natural beauty. The extension process of Kazbegi National Park influenced the research area’s selection to explore issues of trust between park administration and stakeholders in KNP. The borough of Stepantsminda and several villages in four communities (Kobi, Goristsikhe, Sioni, and Sno) located near KNP, with no inhabitants on Park land, were used to study how local residents felt about the park enlargement.

Figure 2: Map of Kazbegi Municipality, Georgia.



Source: Own illustration.

3.2 Data collection

The case study took place in 2019 and employed a qualitative research method, namely participatory mapping within in-depth interviews and group-based discussions (Narayanasamy, 2009). As the research aimed to integrate perspectives on the topic from a wide range of stakeholders, purposive sampling was used to ensure participants' maximal variation (Patton, 2015). As a result, participatory mapping covered the local population, selected through their geographical location (adjacent to KNP) and field of economic activity. The mapping also covered other stakeholders selected using a similar approach and considering the following traits: i) local development group members; ii) protected area administration representatives; iii) local initiative group representatives. Ultimately, twenty people took part in the interviews and group discussions through a participatory mapping tool.

During the fieldwork process, the utilization of the participatory mapping approach enabled the participants to bring forward their geospatial understanding of the studied area through physical maps. The pre-printed maps included the territory of the whole municipality and various sections to allow participants to mark preferences, specific locations, and other features related to a given topic on relatively small-sized plots. Such a research tool mostly allowed the local communities to articulate and communicate spatial knowledge about PA expansion areas. Furthermore, the research process gave participants the freedom to shape the discussion on a studied topic with minimal intervention from researchers. The interview guideline focused mainly on respondents' overall opinions regarding the national park, their understanding of and engagement in KNP management, and the park's role in tourism development.

The use of maps made discussions and interviews with stakeholders easier in the sense that local, traditional geographical names (which were not known to the interviewers) were marked on the map and indicated the geographical locations to which the participants referred. Eventually, the interview partners combined knowledge with each other's input and formed a complete picture for the researchers with the help of the maps.

3.3 Data analysis

The collected data within the case study was processed through different methodological tools. Qualitative data, transcribed from audio into text files, were analysed based on a seven-step thematic analysis method with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA). The open coding led to distinguishing five main subcodes related to trust between PA administration and stakeholders: (i) unanswered questions and vague information, ii) more financial benefit than conservation, iii) past frustrating experiences, iv) river banks, and v) KNP as a tourism actor. Qualitative Geographic Information System (QGIS) software was used to reference, analyse, and illustrate spatial data collected through participatory mapping.

3.4 Research ethics

The research implementation did not include obtaining ethical approval from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Tbilisi State University; however, the scientific committee approved its implementation based on the positive evaluation of the proposal, including, among several other components, its research ethics. The fieldwork framework included explanations to interview partners about the research project, discussion procedures, voluntariness, confidentiality, and the importance of their participation. After obtaining verbal consent from the respondents, they were informed that an interview had to be audio-taped, transcribed, and anonymized for accurate data analysis. Furthermore, they were made aware that the tapes would be destroyed after the data analysis.

4 RESULTS

4.1 KNP in the eyes of locals: Clear questions and blurry answers

According to the analysis of the narratives, at the local level, the KNP administration actively carries out various activities to make the community aware of planned activities. Among them, the establishment of the KNP Friends Association and the Regional Advisory Board was referred to as the main activity. The PAs' representatives consider the Advisory Board, which includes actors from all communities in the municipality, to be a facilitator between them and the local population. Its direct function is to inform the local people about the news and current processes occurring in KNP.

Despite these efforts, respondents raised the issue that they do not possess detailed information about the advantages of KNP and, importantly, its enlargement. In this study, residents' unanswered questions, such as *“What is the main mission of expansion of the National Parks?”*, *“What are the protected areas protecting?”* and *“Are they protecting the national park area from local people?”* (field interview, stakeholder, 2019) were unfolding a significant information gap that existed in reality. Local participants highlighted that their overall low information level about the future development of KNP was exacerbated by the fact that they were not officially informed about the park's changing borders. Furthermore, the locals are not precisely aware of the general purpose of national park growth, and the emerging questions, such as *“What was the purpose of this project in general?”* and *“What kind of restrictions would the population have?”* (field interview, stakeholder, 2019), remain unanswered.

Given that the population uses pastures for sheep and cattle grazing in these areas, they have many questions and attached fears regarding the possible withdrawal of some of those fields for KNP expansion. These concerns are in apparent contradiction with the positive expectations of the park administration regarding the natural benefits for the local population (and beyond) created by the national park enlargement.

A Tushetian [a representative of Tusheti district/area] tells us that both places where I stand are protected areas, and if the sheep flees away from me to those areas, then I am full with fines ... they [Tusheti national park administration] did things on the traditional pastures so that the sheep could not move a little ... they divided [the park] into different restriction zones.

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

4.2 KNP expansion of 70,000 hectares: Is a larger park more for conservation or financial benefit?

The responding participants pointed out that people affiliated with the APA, including supportive NGOs, mostly talk during meetings with the population about the financial benefits of the municipality and the region in general due to the expansion of the national park. In this process, the reasons why the park's enlargement will be beneficial in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity deserve brief attention. The interview partners insightfully mentioned that both the state and the agency are mainly focused on tourism development. Environmental protection, which is the primary function of the national park, is often left in the background for some reason. The respondent associated with KNP outlined that most projects and activities focus on tourism rather than the environment. The latter became quite noticeable to the public, which raises additional questions and scepticism about the agency's intentions. Based on the interviews, the official meetings exacerbated the KNP representatives' lack of credibility among the locals. The officials mostly talked about the grants and funding available for the locals rather than nature protection issues.

That is the biggest problem when people come and give [money]. Why? Why are you obliged to help me, and why am I obliged [to help you]? Why should you offer it [money] to me if there is no interest in it for you? Then the person starts asking questions to himself and looking for answers.

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

At the outset of the expansion process of the KNP border, several social projects and local initiatives were supported by donor organizations. According to the local participants, they expected to experience more activities for strengthening nature conservation and achieving sustainable development. The discussions divulged that the population had numerous suspicions about the actual financial support of the donors. In particular, mistrust arose when the donors provided financial assistance to locals in various economic areas without monitoring their further implementation.

In essence, this has further heightened suspicions among the population that the park's enlargement by the APA does not only serve nature conservation; there are

other interests. Perhaps the most unexpected finding is that these facts reinforced stakeholders' feeling that funders were offering unconventional financial support in exchange for receiving something unspoken from stakeholders. Such an approach created unreliable attitudes towards the KNP administration.

Why do they allocate such an amount of money to our region; do they want something from us?

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

4.3 KNP and local resentment: Your Park and my land?

Respondents pointed out that the first serious rift between the population and the KNP administration arose when the municipality's large forest (Elias Forest), part of which is also covered by KNP, was auctioned and leased for 49 years to a commercial entity without the participation of local stakeholders. Historically, it is a unique, artificially cultivated forest built a few decades ago and transferred to a PA to preserve it. Therefore, the fact that the same agency that had to maintain it alienated it for commercial purposes has led to significant mistrust among the population towards the national park representatives. It is noteworthy that the citizens' protest has resulted in the temporary stoppage of the alienation process by the agency.

Based on the collected information, despite the past frustrating experience, a significant gap is still observed in local community participation in KNP management. The latter has been exacerbated since the expansion of the park area was initiated without the participation of local residents.

Whoever is writing those laws for us without leaving his/her office [i.e., not visiting the spot], and tells me something that he has no idea about ... and I, Mokheve [a resident of Khevi district/area] have to live with these laws... do you understand? They tell me this, and even do not come here [to the municipality].

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

Due to insufficient cooperation, locals consider themselves outsiders in the decision-making process and in elaborating new ideas. After the Elias Forest case, the locals mostly perceive the administration's allocation of large land areas to the national park as a suspicious idea. This is mainly seen when KNP is leasing out the land (e.g., land tenancy for businesses), which is entirely outside of conservation purposes, and the intention seems to favour entities other than the locals.

4.4 Public facts and private intentions: What may we miss in nature conservation?

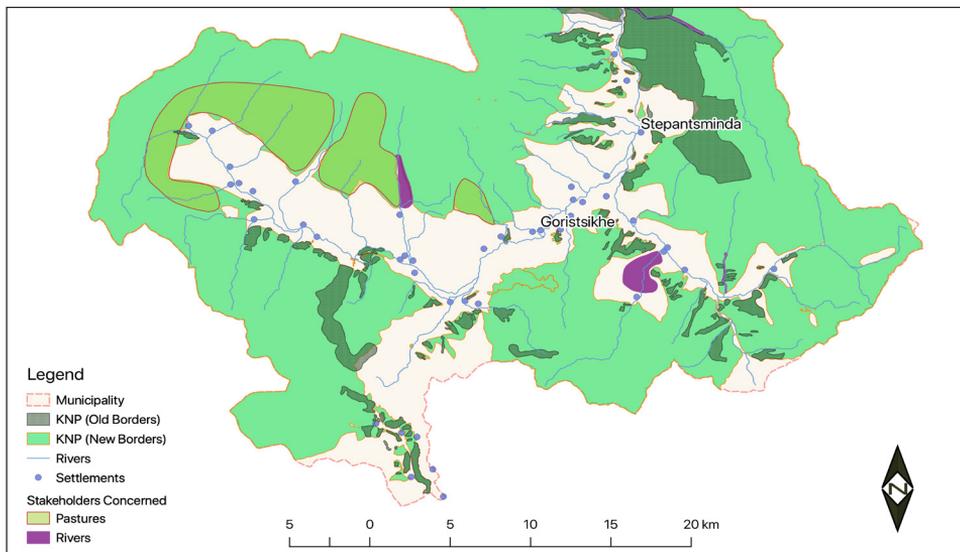
The national park's expansion plan intensified existing suspicions. In particular, the respondents emphasized that different places, primarily areas located along the rivers (see Figure 2 – purple polygons), are omitted according to the plan. During the participatory mapping, participants marked places along the river valleys. Such areas are scattered within the municipality and are outlined by most of the stakeholders.

It [expansion of KNP] was blocked for two years. People interested in rivers and quarries, some energy “Mafiosi” were blocking this project, which is why these lands are cut out now.

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

The participants have assumptions about why rivers and river banks are reserved; most likely, these land plots are intended for economic use, including the construction of hydroelectric power plants and gravel-quarrying businesses. All these assumptions brought further misunderstanding and ambiguity to this development plan. Residents once again faced the fact that they could not get a clear answer as to why the mentioned areas are not part of the national park, and if not explicitly included, what the reason for this is, and how they are planned to be used.

Figure 3: Cut out rivers and riverbanks around expanded KNP borders.



Source: Participatory mapping.

4.5 KNP and tourism: From conservation to commercialization?

Respondents pointed out that initiatives or actions by KNP often go beyond the ecosystem protector's goal, which significantly undermines local residents' trust in KNP's intentions. In particular, they emphasized the support of the development of commercial activities. Among them, stakeholders noted that tourism is one area in which they are actively lobbying. Based on the respondents' narratives, it is unclear why the KNP institution is so motivated to be involved in tourism.

When we talk about their [APA] goals and visions, they [APA] talk about the development of tourism. I do not understand what the Agency of Protected Areas has to do with developing tourism in the country with their function and duties.

(field interview, stakeholder, 2019)

In this sense, locals see KNP as a rival in the tourism business. In their opinion, KNP possesses many more resources and has better opportunities to prevail over the locals who operate tourism businesses and become a powerful and unchallenged tourist service provider in the municipality.

5 DISCUSSION

Ramphal (1993, p. 56), in his foreword to the IUCN's fourth World Parks Congress report on the principle and importance of local support for PA development, stated that "quite simply, if local people do not support protected areas, then protected areas cannot last". Therefore, one of the most significant forms of opposition can be the lack of local support, occurring on various grounds. Our findings are following the recent study by Michel and Wallner (2020), indicating that during the acceptance process of new PAs, among other factors, trust between people and the park representatives is a core issue. The research outcome mirrors the results of Böker and Kollmair (2000), who, based on the study in Nepal, reported that the local communities usually have a high level of acceptance at the beginning of conservation projects, and mainly, the critical voices become louder due to a lack of transparency and misinformation in the process. In contrast to the study mentioned above, this paper presents reasons that trigger scepticism towards the administration, such as cutting off lands along rivers from the National Park Expansion Plan, which underlines the pursuit of private interests that are not in line with local perspectives.

The study has confirmed the findings of Stern (2008b), who argued that the more limited the interaction is between PAs and local communities, the more gaps remain for disseminating misinformation, which ultimately hinders the formation of trust. Following many other studies (Marcus, 2016; Treffny, Beilin, 2011; Turner et al., 2016), this study has found that trust between stakeholders and PA administration is a critical issue and reveals the factors that hinder trust-building. The present study

confirms the writings of Davenport et al. (2007) on circumstances that prevent the formation of trust and contributes additional evidence suggesting past resentment between locals and PA administration as a factor in future mistrust and speculation. Furthermore, our research results accurately echo Michel and Backhaus' (2019) view that the weak involvement of locals in the functioning of PAs makes them feel alienated from their land and deepens their distrust of the intentions of decision-makers. However, excessive reliance on finances is a novelty that has not previously been described as a focus of the PA administration.

6 CONCLUSION

The presented study is the most recent documentation of trust between PA administration and stakeholders during the KNP expansion. This study investigated the factors that influence or discourage a solid belief between the park administration and key actors, such as local inhabitants.

In general, stakeholders are likely to be under-informed and lack sufficiently detailed information about KNP's projected enlargement process. More specifically, the administration's responses regarding the exposed principles are vague and lack context, preventing the actions from being accessible to stakeholders. These factors result in significant distrust and suspicion, creating the impression that the process is implicit.

Based on the in-depth interviews, we can conclude that one of the most pressing questions concerns plots left outside the national park following enlargement, which has yet to be resolved. The study found that this ambiguous issue significantly prevents trust-building between local residents and the APA. The current outcomes highlight the importance of resolving this vague issue instead of leaving it an open question.

The perceptions of interviewed partners disclose that they do not take positively the context in which the representatives of the PAs talk about the expansion of the national park. In particular, a considerable focus on expected economic benefits gives the impression that the outcome of this process is negligible in terms of nature conservation.

One of the main conclusions drawn is that the KNP administration is regarded as a competitor in tourism development by the local population, given its resources and interest. The latter significantly impinged upon the trustworthiness of the APA. To avoid reinforcing the existing views and help eliminate the mistrust between the actors, the KNP administration should ensure the local population's involvement in the developing tourism activities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that trust-building between PA administration and stakeholders is mainly contingent upon how the interaction and timely engagement of stakeholders in the national park functioning is managed.

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INTERAKCIJA MED PARKOM IN LJUDMI V GORATI GRUZIJI: PRIMER NARODNEGA PARKA KAZBEGI

Povzetek

Prispevek obravnava zaupanje med upravo zavarovanih območij in deležniki v času širitve Narodnega parka Kazbegi. Temelji na raziskavi, opravljeni v občini Kazbegi v severovzhodni gruzijski regiji Mtskheta-Mtianeti. Po podatkih državnega statističnega urada Gruzije (2014) ima 3.800 prebivalcev in je ena najbolj obiskanih gorskih turističnih destinacij v Gruziji. Kot obravnavano območje je bilo izbrano okrožje Stepantsminda oz. več vasi, ki se nahajajo v bližini Narodnega parka Kazbegi. Raziskava je potekala leta 2019 in je uporabila kvalitativno raziskovalno metodo, in sicer sodelovalno kartiranje in intervjuje. Uporabljeno je bilo namensko vzorčenje, da je bila tako dosežena kar največja raznolikost vzorca. Sodelovalo je 20 udeležencev. Raziskava se je osredotočila na dejavnike, ki vplivajo na zaupanje med upravo parka in ključnimi akterji, kot so lokalni prebivalci.

Ugotovitve kažejo, da so na splošno deležniki premalo obveščeni in nimajo dovolj podrobnih informacij o načrtovanem procesu širitve Narodnega parka Kazbegi. Odgovori uprave so nejasni in brez ustreznega konteksta, kar onemogoča, da bi bili ukrepi razumljivi deležnikom, zato se med njimi pojavlja precejšnje nezaupanje. Na podlagi poglobljenih intervjujev je mogoče sklepati, da se eno najbolj perečih vprašanj nanaša na zemljišča, ki so po širitvi ostala zunaj narodnega parka. Raziskava je pokazala, da to dvoumno vprašanje v pomembni meri preprečuje vzpostavitev zaupanja med lokalnimi prebivalci in Agencijo za zavarovana območja. Rezultati poudarjajo potrebo po razjasnitvi s tem povezanih dilem.

Percepcije intervjuvancev razkrivajo, da nimajo pozitivnega odnosa do konteksta, znotraj katerega predstavniki zavarovanih območij govorijo o širitvi narodnega parka. Zlasti precejšnja osredotočenost na pričakovane gospodarske koristi daje vtis, da je vidik ohranjanja narave manj pomemben. Lokalno prebivalstvo vidi v upravi Narodnega parka Kazbegi konkurenta v razvoju turizma. Slednje je močno vplivalo na verodostojnost Agencije za zavarovana območja. Da bi se izognili utrjevanju obstoječih pogledov in pomagali odpraviti nezaupanje med akterji, bi morala uprava Narodnega parka Kazbegi zagotoviti vključevanje lokalnega prebivalstva v razvoj turistične dejavnosti.

Te ugotovitve nakazujejo, da je vzpostavljanje zaupanja med upravo zavarovanih območij in zainteresiranimi stranmi v glavnem odvisno od kakovostne interakcije in pravočasne vključitve deležnikov v delovanje narodnega parka.