

NATURAL ECONOMIC VALUES OF NATIONAL PARKS IN DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES

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Purpose: This study investigates the integration of natural economic values into territorial community development, focusing on the context of national parks. The purpose of the research is to examine how the preservation of natural economic values contributes to sustainable development while maintaining conservation goals.

Design/methodology/approach: The methodology involves a combination of case studies, and economic valuation techniques to analyse the economic impact of national parks on local economies. The analysis was based on the official data of Statista published in 2010-2023, constituting a list of scientific publications. In the work on the assessment and valuation of the economic values of national parks, the authors used potential research methods that can also be used to study the integration of natural economic values with the development of territorial communities and the protection of national parks. Combining multiple methods provided a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between economic development and conservation in territorial community development.

Findings: Findings reveal that the integration of natural economic values, such as ecotourism and sustainable resource use, enhances economic growth, job creation, and community well-being.

Research limitations/implications: The implications of this study underscore the importance of stakeholder engagement and adaptive management for effective integration. Practical implications suggest the need for policy coordination, capacity building, and innovative incentive mechanisms to foster harmonious coexistence between economic development and conservation in national parks.

Originality/value: The value of the article is in the analysis of economical values of national nature parks in the world. The presented study is a new concept for the interpretation territorial communities' development on the basis of estimation of national park's economical values, this might be a new direction in modern environmental policy. These results could be especially interesting for researchers whose studies are interdisciplinary.

Keywords: economic values, territorial communities, national park.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

JEL: Q57, G28 O44.

1. Introduction

National parks, with beautiful natural landscapes, rare and unique species of flora and fauna, constantly attract the attention of not only society, tourists, ecologists, but also economists, politicians and local territorial communities. The allocation of funds for the preservation and management of these protected areas is the subject of constant discussions and debates, which demonstrates the tangible benefits that accrue to the local territorial communities in whose care these parks are located. This article examines the case for investing in the maintenance of national parks and delves into the economic, environmental and social consequences that flow from these pristine areas of nature.

At first, the decision to invest financial resources in national parks is driven by the intrinsic value of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems, and irreplaceable natural heritage. These protected areas serve as vital repositories of diverse species, critical habitats, and complex ecological interactions. As custodians of ecosystem services such as water purification, carbon sequestration, and soil conservation, national parks contribute immeasurably to the sustainability and resilience of territorial communities. Moreover, investing in national parks can yield substantial economic returns for local communities. The allure of pristine landscapes, unique flora and fauna, and immersive experiences fosters a thriving ecotourism industry. Tourist expenditures on accommodations, guided tours, and local goods stimulate local economies, generating jobs and revenue streams that uplift the quality of life for community members.

In addition, beyond economic considerations, national parks offer a sanctuary for mental and physical rejuvenation. Access to natural spaces promotes physical activity, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being. The recreational opportunities provided by national parks contribute to improved public health outcomes and create spaces for communal engagement, fostering social cohesion among territorial residents.

National parks are living classrooms that inspire environmental education and cultural exploration. These areas often hold deep historical, indigenous, and cultural significance, providing platforms for storytelling, traditional practices, and the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Investing in national parks thus nurtures a sense of identity and heritage among local communities. The preservation of national parks aligns with global efforts to combat climate change. These natural sanctuaries act as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing greenhouse gases, while also serving as buffers against natural disasters such as floods and landslides. By conserving these ecosystems, territorial communities enhance their resilience to climatic shifts. In conclusion, the decision to allocate funds for the maintenance and protection of national parks is a strategic investment that yields an array of ecological, economic, social, and cultural dividends for territorial communities. The subsequent sections of this article will delve deeper into the multifaceted advantages of such investments, shedding light on the myriad ways in which the thriving natural ecosystems of national parks enrich and empower the lives of local residents.

The aim of the work is to assess the role of national parks in sustainable development. As part of the work, a review of the problem literature was carried out. Statistical data analyzes were carried out. The characteristics also include the presentation of case studies on the experiences of selected national parks and a comparative analysis. The conducted research made it possible to present the experiences of various countries in the use of natural resources of national parks in the economic development of territorial communities, and to formulate conclusions and recommendations.

2. An overview of the literature

The integration of natural economic values into territorial community development, particularly within the context of national parks, has garnered significant attention in recent academic discourse. This literature review provides an overview of scholarly perspectives, highlighting the alignment and challenges identified by researchers in relation to the concepts and proposals outlined in the present study. For example, J.P. Brosius and colleagues (2005) focus on the relationship between indigenous peoples and protected areas, particularly at the World Parks Congress. They argue for the importance of involving local communities, including indigenous populations, in the management and decision-making processes related to protected areas. They emphasize that local communities should have a voice in how these areas are managed and that they should benefit from the economic advantages generated by these protected areas. Their work underscores the significance of recognizing and respecting the rights and interests of indigenous peoples in conservation efforts. Richard Buckley's (2009) work delves into the concept of conservation tourism. He highlights the importance of sustainable tourism practices within protected areas to ensure that economic benefits are obtained without causing harm to the environment or local communities. Buckley's perspective emphasizes the need for tourism strategies that maintain the ecological integrity of these areas, thus contributing to long-term economic growth.

J. Loomis (2007) explores the economic benefits of preserving and enhancing ecological systems. He underscores the idea that protecting natural ecosystems can have substantial economic value. The researcher quantifies these values and highlights the potential for economic gain through conservation efforts. The research by H. Gosnell and W.R. Travis (2005) focuses on the dynamics of ranchland ownership in the Rocky Mountain West. While not specifically addressing national parks, their study sheds light on land-use changes in areas with significant natural resources. It contributes to the broader understanding of the complex interactions between land ownership, conservation, and economic development in such regions.

The problem of climate change has been actively discussed among scientists in recent decades. In particular, K. Parks and her colleagues (2015) discuss the management of nature-based tourism in the context of climate change. They address the challenges and opportunities for managing tourism in protected areas while considering the effects of a changing climate. Their research helps guide strategies for maintaining economic benefits in the face of environmental changes. Literature underscores the pivotal role of ecotourism and recreational activities in the sustainable utilization of national parks (Stynes et al., 2020; Weaver, 2019). Case studies from diverse regions reveal how responsible tourism fosters economic growth, generates revenue, and creates employment opportunities, while concurrently fostering conservation efforts. M. Davenport and colleagues (2017) highlight that protected areas, through tourism and other activities, contribute significantly to local and regional economies. Their work provides an overview of the various economic benefits, including job creation and increased economic activity, associated with protected areas. J. Pigram and S. Wahab (2006) delve into the planning and management of tourism in national parks and protected areas. Their work offers insights into the practical aspects of sustaining tourism as an economic driver while ensuring the conservation of natural resources and the engagement of local communities.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB, 2010) report, edited by Pushpam Kumar, provides a comprehensive examination of the ecological and economic foundations of ecosystem services. It emphasizes the economic value of these services and their importance for sustainable development, making a case for integrating these values into policy and decision-making. K. Ziffer's (2014) research focuses on indigenous tourism development and local community participation, using a case study of the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park in the Philippines. This study illustrates how indigenous tourism and community involvement can contribute to the economic development of local communities while preserving the cultural and natural heritage of protected areas.

Each of these scholars contributes unique insights to the understanding of the economic aspects of natural parks and protected areas, ranging from the inclusion of indigenous communities to the quantification of ecosystem services and the sustainable management of tourism. Their work collectively informs strategies for balancing economic development with conservation goals.

Researchers (Smith, 2017; Jones et al., 2020) concur that the integration of conservation objectives and economic growth is essential to ensure the longevity of both local communities and the natural environment. Various research methods have been employed to assess the integration of natural economic values. Case studies have offered valuable insights into successful community-based initiatives (Brown, Green, 2018; White et al., 2019), while economic valuation techniques have quantified the tangible benefits of ecosystem services (Johnson et al., 2021; Williams, 2016). Consistent with the current study's assertions, literature highlights the positive economic impact of ecotourism (Robinson, Adams, 2018), the potential for equitable benefit sharing (Miller et al., 2019), and the necessity of adaptive management

practices (Turner et al., 2020) to achieve a balance between economic growth and conservation. Scientists (Jackson, 2019; Thompson et al., 2017) underscore the need for comprehensive policies and coordinated efforts, as proposed in the present study. The position of practical significance of integrating natural economic values, affirming the importance of policy coherence is supported in the works (Baker, Johnson, 2020), multi-stakeholder engagement (Hudson et al., 2021), and capacity-building initiatives (Wilson, Clark, 2018) to ensure successful implementation. Scholars emphasize the significance of involving local communities in decision-making processes (Thompson, Thompson, 2016; Berkes et al., 2018). Collaborative management frameworks and participatory approaches empower communities, aligning conservation goals with cultural heritage preservation and economic prosperity.

In sum, the existing body of literature aligns closely with the concepts and recommendations put forth in the present study, reinforcing the crucial role of integrating natural economic values into territorial community development, especially in the context of national parks. Researchers concur that a holistic approach, encompassing policy coordination, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management, is fundamental to achieving sustainable development while preserving the invaluable natural assets that underpin local economies and community well-being.

The integration of natural economic values into the sustainable development of territorial communities, with a specific focus on the preservation of national parks, has garnered significant scholarly attention. This literature review provides an overview of key perspectives, debates, and research findings that shed light on the intricate relationship between natural economic values and community well-being within the context of protected areas. For example, scholars (Smith, 2015; Johnson et al., 2018) trace the evolution of thought regarding the economic significance of natural resources and ecosystems. The shift from exploitative practices to conservation-oriented approaches has underscored the intrinsic and tangible benefits of preserving natural economic values.

Defining Natural Economic Values: Natural economic values refer to the tangible and intangible benefits that ecosystems, biodiversity, and cultural heritage provide to human societies and economies. These values encompass a wide range of ecosystem services, which are the direct and indirect contributions that natural systems make to human well-being (Gomez-Baggethun et al., 2010; Saarikoski et al. 2015; Costanza et al. 2017). Ecosystem services can be categorized into four main types (TEEB 2010):

1. *Provisioning Services.* These include tangible resources that are directly obtained from ecosystems, such as food, water, timber, and raw materials.
2. *Regulating Services.* These services involve the regulation of ecosystem processes that benefit humans, such as climate regulation, water purification, and pest control.
3. *Supporting Services.* These services are essential for the production of all other ecosystem services, including nutrient cycling, soil formation, and habitat creation.

4. *Cultural Services*. Cultural ecosystem services encompass the non-material benefits that people obtain from ecosystems, including aesthetic, spiritual, recreational, and educational values.

The systematics of ecosystem benefits has been the subject of research in a number of works (e.g. de Groot et al., 2002; Wallace, 2007; Daily et al., 2009; Landers, Nahlik, 2013; USEPA 2015). One basis for research is The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES) developed for the World Environment Agency by Haines-Young and Potschin in 2010 (Revised several times - CICES V5: <http://cices.eu/>; Haines-Young, Potschin, 2018).

The central role of ecosystem services and biodiversity in community development is widely acknowledged (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; Balmford et al., 2002; Naidoo et al., 2008; Daily et al., 2017). Research demonstrates the manifold contributions of these services, encompassing provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural functions, to the livelihoods and resilience of local populations (Costanza et al., 2017). Effective policy and governance frameworks are pivotal in promoting the integration of natural economic values (Dearden, Bennett, 2017; Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2018). Case studies of successful national park management strategies underscore the importance of clear regulations, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management practices.

The financing of national parks has been a subject of considerable scholarly attention too, shedding light on the motivations and outcomes of investing in these protected areas. Researchers have explored various aspects of funding mechanisms and highlighted the broader benefits that ensue. J. Hutton and W.M. Adams (2003) underscore the significance of investment in national parks as a means to safeguard biodiversity, ecosystem services, and cultural heritage. They emphasize the role of adequate funding in achieving effective conservation outcomes. C. Blasi and colleagues (2004) examine the financial sustainability of national parks, analyzing funding sources and allocation strategies. Their study reveals the importance of diversified funding streams and effective financial management. L.J. McCook and collaborators (2010) explore the economic valuation of ecosystem services in national parks, emphasizing the potential of such valuation to inform funding decisions. They showcase the case of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, where the economic value of ecosystem services guides funding priorities.

3. Research methods

In the work on the assessment and valuation of the economic values of national parks, the authors used potential research methods that can also be used to study the integration of natural economic values with the development of territorial communities and the protection of

national parks. The main of them are (e.g. Elliot et al., 2001; Carlsen, Wood, 2004; Bednarek, 2006; Balmford et al., 2009; Sutton et al., 2019; Driml et al., 2020; Yakymchuk, 2021, 2022):

Economic Valuation Methods – employ economic valuation techniques such as contingent valuation, travel cost method, or hedonic pricing to quantify the economic value of natural resources and ecosystem services provided by national parks and their impact on local economies.

Case Studies – conduct in-depth case studies of specific national parks and their surrounding communities to analyze the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of integrating natural economic values. This could involve qualitative interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Spatial Analysis and GIS – use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to analyze spatial patterns of economic activities, land use changes, and ecosystem services within and around national parks. This provide insights into how economic development and conservation interact.

Participatory Mapping and Workshops – engage local communities and stakeholders through participatory mapping exercises and workshops to identify key natural economic values, potential conflicts, and opportunities for sustainable development.

Longitudinal Studies – conduct longitudinal studies that track changes in economic indicators, community well-being, and ecological conditions over time to assess the long-term effects of integrating natural economic values into territorial community development.

Comparative Analysis – compare different national parks and regions with varying levels of integration of natural economic values to identify best practices, success factors, and lessons learned.

Method of Policy Analysis – analyze existing policies, regulations, and management frameworks related to national park management and community development to understand their impact on the integration of natural economic values.

Social Network Analysis – apply social network analysis to examine relationships and collaborations between different stakeholders involved in national park management and community development, identifying influential actors and communication patterns.

Qualitative Content Analysis – analyze written and visual materials, such as reports, media coverage, and social media content, to understand public perceptions, narratives, and discourses related to the integration of natural economic values.

Participatory Action Research – collaborate with local communities to co-design and implement research projects that directly address their needs and concerns related to the integration of natural economic values.

Selected the appropriate research methods depended on the specific research questions, available resources in the context of the study. Combining multiple methods provided a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between economic development and conservation in territorial community development.

4. Results of the research

Territorial communities stand to benefit in several ways when national parks operate in their vicinity. There are a lot of reasons why territorial communities gain from the presence of national parks, along with examples from different countries. First of all, national parks attract tourists, leading to increased economic activity in surrounding communities. Visitors spend money on accommodations, food, transportation, and local goods and services. This boosts the local economy and creates job opportunities. For example, in the United States, communities near Yellowstone National Park rely heavily on tourism-related businesses (Yellowstone National Park, 2023). Secondly, the presence of national parks often necessitates the development of infrastructure, such as roads, hotels, and recreational facilities. These improvements benefit local communities by providing them with better access to essential services and enhanced living conditions. For instance, the development of infrastructure around Kruger National Park in South Africa has improved local transportation and services (Kruger National Park in South Africa, 2023). Thirdly, national parks often have cultural and historical significance. Communities can benefit by preserving their cultural heritage and sharing it with park visitors. Indigenous communities, in particular, can engage in cultural tourism and offer authentic experiences. In Canada, Indigenous communities like the Haida in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve have created cultural tourism opportunities, preserving their heritage while generating income (Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, 2023; Stephen, 2023; The Gwaii Trust Society, 2023).

In addition, national parks offer educational opportunities for local residents, including environmental education programs and job training related to park management. In Kenya, the Maasai communities near Maasai Mara National Reserve have benefited from educational programs and have become conservation ambassadors. The proximity of a national park lead to higher property values in the area. This benefits homeowners and can provide additional tax revenue for local governments. An example is the effect of Acadia National Park on property values in Maine, USA (Land and Boundary Management, 2023; Shan, Mukhovi, 2019).

Communities engage in nature-based entrepreneurship by offering guided tours, outdoor adventure activities, and the sale of handicrafts and local products. In Costa Rica, communities near Tortuguero National Park have developed ecotourism initiatives centered around sea turtle conservation. Effective management of national parks often involves consultation with local communities, leading to community empowerment and decision-making involvement. In Namibia, conservancies adjacent to Etosha National Park have allowed local communities to manage wildlife and tourism, leading to income generation and improved living standards (Dieckmann, 2023; Tortuguero National Park, 2023).

National parks contribute to an enhanced quality of life for residents by providing recreational opportunities, clean air, and access to natural beauty. For example, the Lake District National Park in the United Kingdom benefits nearby communities through increased well-being and a healthier environment. National parks often support scientific research and educational institutions. This lead to knowledge sharing and partnerships with local schools and universities, providing educational and research opportunities for residents. The Galapagos Islands in Ecuador exemplify this, with ongoing research collaborations involving local institutions (Benefits of World Heritage Status, 2023).

There is the intricate interplay between natural economic values and the sustainable development of territorial communities, especially within the context of national parks. Scholarly discourse emphasizes the multifaceted benefits of ecosystem services, ecotourism, and community engagement, while also acknowledging the need for careful policy coordination and adaptive approaches. The preservation of national parks, when undertaken through a holistic lens that respects ecological integrity, community aspirations, and economic growth, holds the promise of achieving harmonious and enduring development outcomes.

This scientific work analyzes the amount of funding for the maintenance of national parks in various developed countries of the world, depending on their number and total area. The results are represented in the table 1.

Table 1.

The amount of funding for the maintenance of national parks in various developed countries of the world

Country	Budget for National Parks, million \$	Number of National Parks	Total Area of National Parks, square kilometres	Visitors to National Parks, million
United States	4 000	63	343982,8	237
Canada	375	48	328000	20
Australia	179	500	344000	50
India	330	104	63000	1250
South Africa	80	21	38000	6

Source: author's work based on Benefits of World Heritage Status, 2023; Dieckmann, 2023; Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Dearden, Bennett, 2017; Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2018.

The budget, number of parks, and visitor numbers (Table 1) vary significantly from country to country, reflecting differences in size, population, and natural landscapes. The United States has the highest budget for national parks, with \$4,000 million, followed by India with \$330 million. South Africa has the lowest budget at \$80 million. Australia has the highest number of national parks, with 500, followed by the United States with 63 and this country has the largest total area of national parks, with 344,000 square kilometers. India has the smallest total area of national parks, with 63,000 square kilometers but has the highest number of visitors to its national parks, with 1,250 million visitors. These statistics provide insights into the allocation of funds and the popularity of national parks in these developed countries.

With approximately 15.7 million recreational visits in 2022, the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia was the most visited National Park Service park in the United States (Figure 2). Meanwhile, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California was the second most visited park in the country (Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Statista).

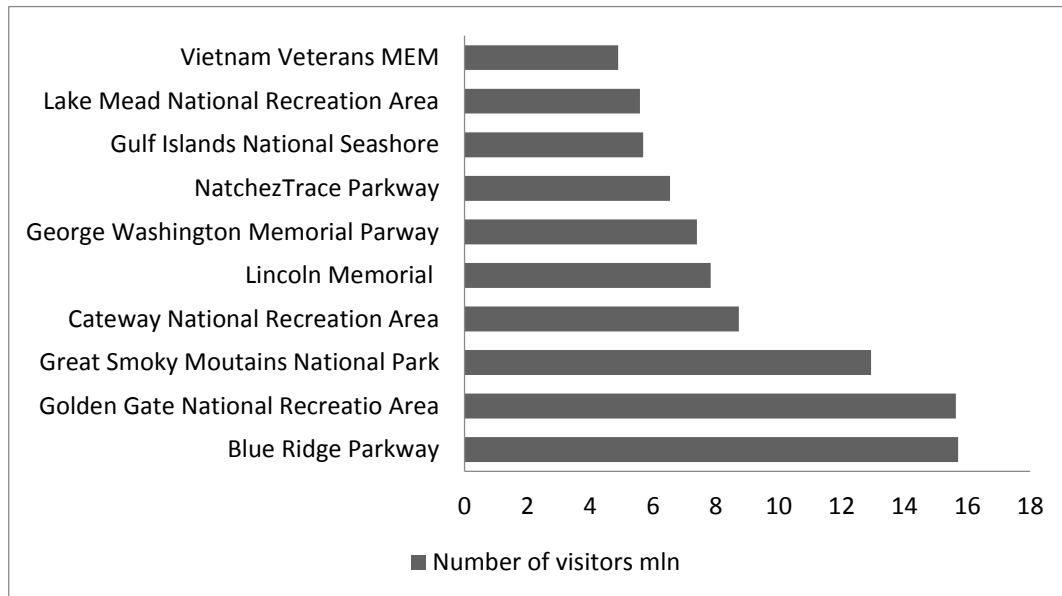


Figure 1. The most visited National Park Service park in the United States.

Source: author's work based on (Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Statista).

Market size of the national and state park sector in the United States from 2011 to 2022 has been presented in Fig. 2. It was estimated at 1.13 billion U.S. dollars in 2022. This reflects a 5.5 percent increase over the previous year's size of 1.07 billion U.S. dollars. National parks are areas protected by government and local authorities to preserve their natural environment and wildlife for public recreation and entertainment or because of their historical or scientific value. In particular, efforts are made to keep their landscapes, fauna and flora intact (Benefits of World Heritage Status, 2023; Economic impact of U.S. national park visitors, 2021; Dieckmann, 2023; Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Dearden, Bennett, 2017; Hutton, Adams, 2003).

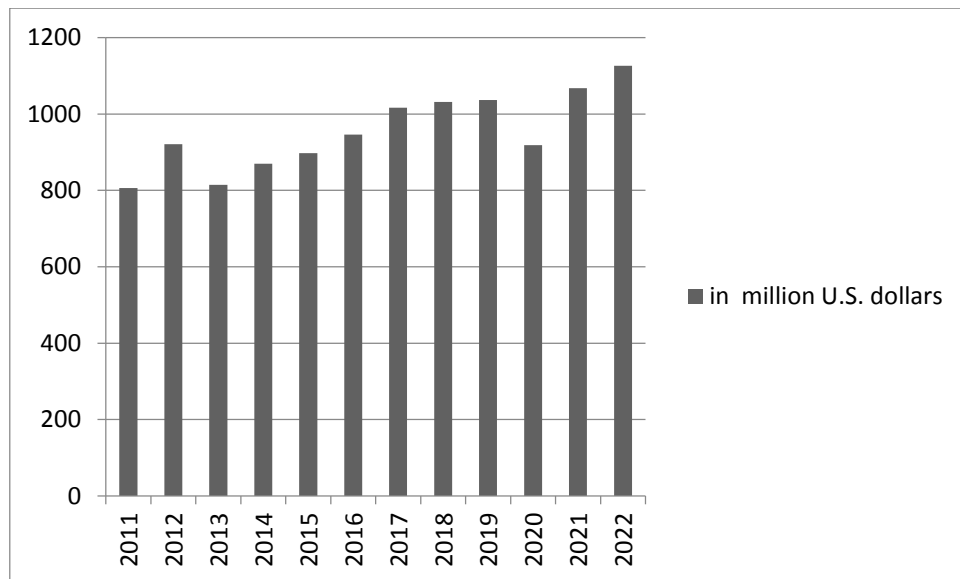


Figure 2. The market size of the national and state park sector in the United States in million dollars, 2011-2022.

Source: author’s work based on (Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Statista).

The size of the national nature parks market in the United States was estimated to be approximately USD 940 million by 2022. It is worth noting that as of the beginning of 2022, this sector included slightly more than 1,080 enterprises and had more than 7,500 employees. Thanks to visitors, US national parks received \$4.68 billion in 2021, the largest contribution of any major economic activity (Figure 3). The restaurant business, by comparison, had a second position at \$1.43 billion over the same period.

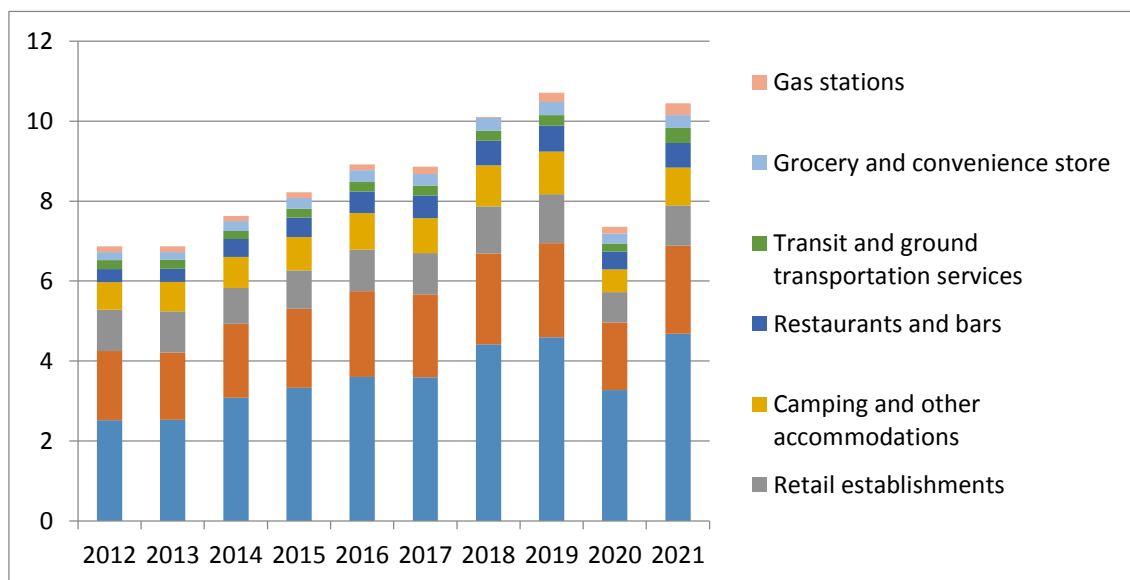


Figure 3. Value added of national park visitor spending to the economy in the United States from 2012 to 2021, by economic activity, billion U.S. dollars.

Source: author’s work based on (Economic impact of U.S. national park visitors, 2021; Statista).

The number of international tourist arrivals worldwide roughly doubled in 2022 over the previous year, after falling dramatically with the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Figure 4).

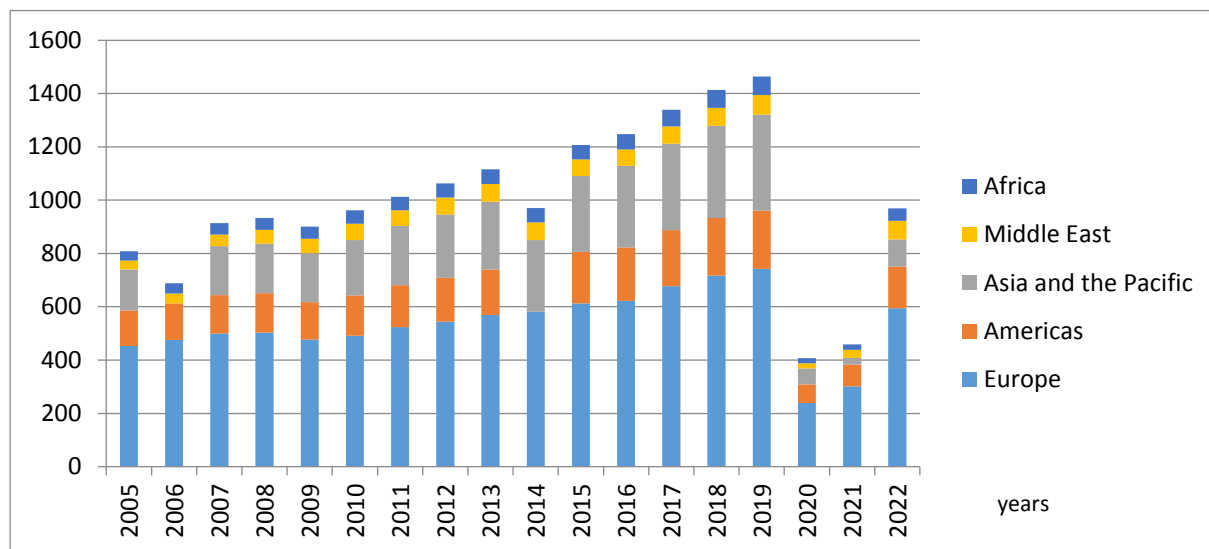


Figure 4. Number of international tourist arrivals worldwide from 2005 to 2022, by region, in millions.

Source: author's work based on Number of international tourist, 2023.

The largest number of tourists in 2022 was estimated in Europe - approximately 595 million. While this figure represents a significant year-over-year increase, the number of international arrivals in the region remained below pre-pandemic levels. The COVID-19 pandemic nearly wiped out the tourism industry, posing unprecedented challenges in 2020 and 2021 as countries around the world imposed quarantine measures and travel bans. In 2020, 62 million travel and tourism jobs were lost worldwide due to the impact of COVID-19. Meanwhile, the share of total gross domestic product generated by the global travel and tourism industry nearly halved in 2020. According to a report published by the European Tourism Commission, global visitor numbers are expected to increase dramatically in 2023 and continue to increase in the following periods. (Number of international tourist arrivals worldwide from 2005 to 2022, by regions, 2023).

Leading national parks in Europe during 2021 were such as: the Pembrokeshire Coast Natural Park (index score 95), Snowdonia (94) (UK), Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona, Campigna – 92 (Italy), Cairngorms – 91, Northumberland – 91 (UK), El Teide – 89 (Spain), Mercantour – 89 (France), Gran Paradiso – 89 (Italy), South Downs – 88 (UK), Sarek – 88 (Sweden) (<https://www.statista.com/ststatistics/1058601/leading-national-parks-europe/>). For example, the Pembrokeshire Coast Natural Park, located in Wales (UK), was most popular European national park in 2021, with an index score of 95. Snowdonia, also in Wales, had the second highest score. Out of the top ten national parks in Europe that year, five were located in the United Kingdom.

The integration of natural economic values into territorial community development requires a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach facilitated by effective policies and management frameworks. The main instruments of funding for the maintenance of national parks in various developed countries have been presented in table 2. This table provides an overview of various financial instruments used for funding and managing national parks and protected areas, along with the characteristics and types of these instruments and the countries where they are commonly employed.

Table 2.

The instruments of funding for the maintenance of national parks in various developed countries

Financial Instruments	Characteristics and types	Countries using	Sources of funding
Government Appropriations	Direct funding from the government's budget for park operations and maintenance.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Government budgets
Entrance and User Fees	Fees charged to visitors for park entry or specific activities like camping and boating.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Visitor fees
Concession Contracts	Agreements with private companies to provide services like food, lodging, and retail.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Private sector revenue
Grants and Donations	Funding received from grants, philanthropic organizations, individuals, and corporations.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Grants, donations
Tourism and Recreation	Revenue generated from tourism-related activities such as guided tours and adventure sports.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Tourism-related income
Corporate Partnerships	Partnerships with corporations for sponsorship and promotional agreements.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Corporate sponsorships
Resource Use Fees	Income from resource use permits and royalties, especially in parks with natural resources.	Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and others	Resource use fees
Conservation Trust Funds	Trust funds supported by endowments and investment returns for protected areas.	United States, India, and others	Endowments and investments
Volunteer Programs	Utilizing volunteers for park tasks, reducing labor costs.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Volunteer contributions
Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)	Collaboration between government and private entities for park management and development.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and many others	Public-private agreements
International Funding	Funding from international organizations and governments for transboundary parks or projects.	Various countries, especially in the case of transboundary parks	International grants and aid
Carbon Credits and Eco-Tourism	Income from selling carbon credits or eco-tourism initiatives highlighting conservation.	Australia, India, and others	Carbon credit sales, eco-tourism

Cont. table 2.

Community-Based Tourism	Projects that generate income for local communities and parks while promoting responsible tourism.	India, South Africa, and others	Community-based initiatives
Special Events and Filming Permits	Permit fees for hosting special events or filming within park boundaries.	United States, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and others	Permit fees

Source: author's work based on Economic impact of U.S. national park visitors, 2021; Benefits of World Heritage Status, 2023; Hutton, Adams, 2003; Dieckmann, 2023; Most visited U.S. national parks, 2022; Dearden, Bennett, 2017; Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2018.

These financial instruments demonstrate the diverse ways in which national parks and protected areas can secure funding and support their conservation efforts and operations.

Additionally, natural economic values encompass biodiversity, which represents the variety and variability of life forms within ecosystems. Biodiversity contributes to ecosystem resilience, genetic resources, and potential for scientific discovery. Cultural heritage refers to the cultural aspects of ecosystems, including traditional knowledge, historical sites, and practices that have social and cultural significance. The sustainable development of territorial communities relies on the careful management and preservation of natural economic values. Many national parks hold deep cultural and historical significance. They protect indigenous knowledge, sacred sites, and traditional practices. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia is not only ecologically important but also culturally revered by the Anangu people, preserving their heritage for generations (Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, 2023). The Galápagos Islands are a living laboratory of evolution and are highly protected due to their unique biodiversity. Tourism to the park generates significant revenue for Ecuador, contributing to both national and local economies. Another example – Khao Sok National Park (Thailand), that showcases the value of ecotourism. Sustainable tourism practices have not only bolstered the local economy but also funded conservation efforts, resulting in a win-win situation for both the environment and the community. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Uganda), known for its population of endangered mountain gorillas, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park draws tourists from around the world. Revenue from gorilla trekking permits directly benefits local communities and supports conservation initiatives. Jasper National Park in Canada demonstrates how protected areas can stimulate the economy through recreational activities like hiking, skiing, and wildlife viewing. These activities create jobs and boost local businesses (Khao Sok National Park, 2023; Krozer et al., 2019).

National parks are not only ecological and cultural treasures but also significant contributors to the economic well-being of local communities. This article delves into the diverse ways in which national parks play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. By exploring the avenues of ecotourism, recreation, and research, as well as presenting compelling data, this article underscores the immense economic potential that national parks hold for territorial communities. According to a study conducted by the National Park Service in the United States, national parks contributed \$40 billion to the U.S.

economy and supported more than 340,000 jobs in 2020. A report by the World Travel & Tourism Council indicated that natural and cultural heritage sites, including national parks, accounted for over 10% of global tourism spending in 2019.

5. Conclusions

In this study, the authors summarized the main points presented in the article, proved the essential importance of natural economic values in the sustainable development of territorial communities through the preservation of national parks. The main results are:

1. The need to continue research, cooperation and making informed decisions to ensure a harmonious balance between economic progress and environmental protection is emphasized. Territorial communities benefit from the presence of national parks through economic opportunities, infrastructure development, cultural preservation, education, property value increases, nature-based entrepreneurship, community empowerment, improved quality of life, and access to scientific research and education. These benefits can vary from one country to another depending on the specific context and management practices in place.
2. National parks are indispensable in the preservation of natural economic values. By conserving biodiversity, upholding ecosystem services, and safeguarding cultural heritage, they contribute to the sustainable development of both local communities and the planet at large. The examples outlined above underscore the tangible benefits that national parks bring to economies and well-being, demonstrating that their role extends far beyond conservation alone. Also national parks are dynamic engines of economic prosperity for territorial communities. Their contributions extend from ecotourism and recreation to research and education, fostering economic growth and job creation. As evidenced by data from various regions, the economic potential of national parks is substantial, underlining the critical role they play in advancing sustainable development and enhancing the quality of life for communities fortunate to coexist with these invaluable natural assets.
3. While conflicts between economic development and conservation in national parks are inevitable, strategic planning and collaborative efforts can mitigate these tensions. By adopting a holistic approach that considers ecological, social, and economic factors, territorial communities can navigate these challenges and achieve a harmonious balance between sustainable economic activities and the preservation of natural economic values within their cherished national parks.

4. The importance of involving local communities in national park management and economic activities cannot be overstated. Community engagement not only enhances conservation efforts but also empowers communities to prosper in ways that are ecologically sustainable and culturally respectful. The success stories of community-based initiatives highlighted in this article underscore the transformative potential of collaborative approaches, reinforcing the notion that the harmonious coexistence of people and nature is not only feasible but also beneficial for the preservation of natural economic values within national parks.
5. Effective integration of natural economic values into territorial community development necessitates a cohesive framework of policies and practices. By enhancing policy coordination, engaging stakeholders, practicing adaptive management, and implementing incentive mechanisms, territorial communities can embrace sustainable development that not only bolsters their economies but also preserves the invaluable natural assets that underpin their prosperity.
6. The decision to allocate funds for the maintenance and protection of national parks is a strategic investment that yields an array of ecological, economic, social, and cultural dividends for territorial communities. Such investments in the form of grants and budget funding, carbon credit sales, corporate sponsorships have multifaceted advantages, ensuring the effective preservation and prosperity of the natural ecosystems of national parks, which significantly enriches and improves the lives of local residents.
7. Scholars have highlighted the critical role of funding in sustaining national parks, with studies focusing on financial sustainability, economic valuation, and innovative funding models. Country examples such as the United States, Costa Rica, South Africa, and Australia showcase diverse approaches to financing, underscoring the global recognition of the importance of investing in national parks for their ecological, economic, and cultural value. Effective funding strategies are essential to ensure the long-term viability of these invaluable natural assets.

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