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# DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN UPPER SOČA VALLEY

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## IMPLEMENTATIONS ABOUT SKILLED YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES IN NATURE PROTECTED AREAS.

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Summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> youth exchange workshops about demographic trends in case study of Triglav national Park  
(TNP) (not linguistically reviewed yet)



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Triglav national Park (TNP) is the only national Park in Slovenia. It is a part of broader Alpine region (Figure1) but according to international estimates (Alpine convention, 2016) and researches at risk due to negative demographic trends over the past 50 years. TNP is a National park with a high share of the elderly population, a low employment rate and people with a lower level of education as in general in Slovenia. The population growth in ten years is negative and the natural balance is strongly negative; the high share of elderly population presumably plays an important role in defining the demographic situation of this area. The local economy is mainly based on small-scale agriculture activities and tourism. 95% of homestays have between one and two employees (UMAR, 2016).

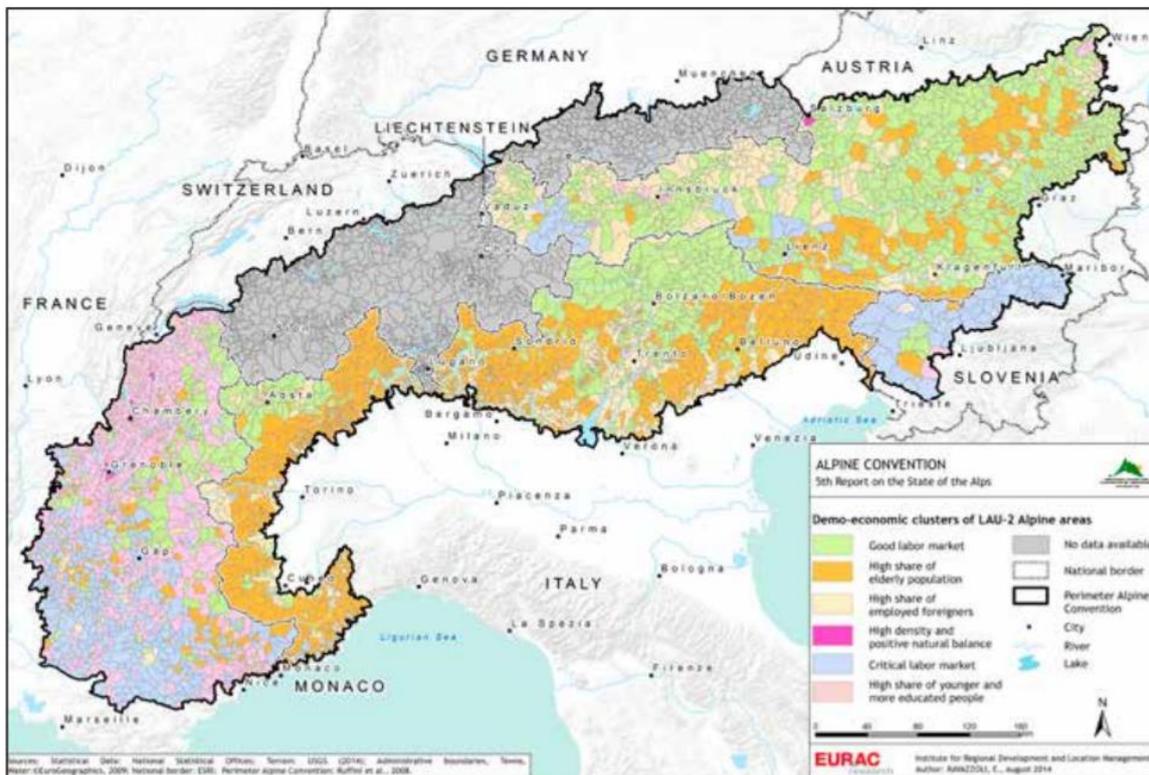


FIGURE 1. DEMO-ECONOMIC CLUSTERS OF LAU-2 ALPINE AREAS (DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN ALPS, 2017).

### 1.1 AIMS OF THE WORKSHOP

This workshop explores whether the creation of Triglav NP has had a positive or negative impact on regional human development. The answer to this question was sought in two ways. First, the park's impact on regional development was measured using selected quantitative indicators (the local communities within Triglav NP were compared to municipalities outside Triglav NP). Data were obtained from the research papers. In addition the perception of the local population using half-open interview as a tool was used. The residents' perception of their area's development often differs from the actual state



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of affairs, but it is the key to understanding their relationship towards the nature protected area. The survey focused on the relationship with the development planes and the inclusion of locals in the protected area development. The survey was carried out in May 2018, during the 1<sup>st</sup> Youth exchange of the Erasmus+ project titled “Never Lose Your Soul”.

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### 1.1.2 THE WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

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The workshop objectives are:

1. Creating strengthened evidence base on Youth skilled emigration in Upper Soča Valley for policymaking on local level by better understanding the causes and developmental impacts of youth migration in nature conservation areas.
2. Carrying out complex capacity building of Youth by improving institutional capacities of statistical offices and municipalities to identify and measure the underused human capital of young skilled emigrants, to formulate interventions, strategies and policies to unlock development potentials and to change the pedagogical approach to teaching about the human activities in nature conservation areas.
3. Fostering transnational cooperation in order to facilitate the exchange of statistical data, good policy practices and field experience, by creating a transferable framework for efficient and institutionalized transnational cooperation (between the project partners).

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### 1.1.3 THE WORKSHOP AIMS

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The workshops aims are:

1. To find out the key trends of Youth skills emigrants in local communities of Upper Soča valley in the last 20 years and to determine the per cent of youth emigrants in age of 15-19 years.
2. To find out what the economic backgrounds of youth skilled emigrants from nature protected areas are.
3. To find out the number of re-integrating returning young emigrants in the last 20 years.
4. To find out what are the main reasons for brain drain are and whether they are the cause or consequence of poverty.
5. To find out what is the educational and occupational structure of the labour force in the nature protected areas like and what are future needs of the areas.
6. To find out the correlation between changes in the emigration prospects and the human capital investments in nature protected areas.
7. To know more about biodiversity, conservation and human ecological footprint in the TNP.
8. To set off transnational indicators on migration policy of skilled youth in nature protected areas. Testing the set of indicators on the national and transnational levels.
9. To identify and measure the underused human capital of the young skilled emigrants.
10. To formulate interventions, strategies, and policies to unlock development potentials.



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11. To create a transferable pedagogical approach for efficient transnational cooperation.
12. To make the local strategies on how to minimize young skilled emigration.
13. To create local pilots for better service in nature protected areas.
14. To facilitate the exchange of statistical data, good policy practices and field experience.
15. To launch a transnational methodology of one-stop-shop unit.
16. To fight against racism and xenophobia, inequalities, and social discrimination through activities that enable sharing the knowledge, skills, equipment, require interpersonal cooperation and promote the exchange of good practices and innovations.

Triglav NP is divided between two regions: the Goriška (Nova Gorica) and Gorenjska (Upper Carniola). The former includes the Upper Soča Valley and the municipalities of Tolmin, Kobarid and Bovec, and the latter includes the headwaters of the Sava River and the municipalities of Bohinj, Bled, Gorje, Jesenice and Kranjska Gora. The two parts of the NP differ in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. Due to limited ability for field work this research was focused only in Upper Soča valley.

## 1.2 INNOVATIVE CHARACTER OF THE RESEARCH

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Even though the regional development is perceived as a comprehensive development of a territorially bounded area (Triglav NP), including social, economic and spatial aspects of development we were focused on human development, more narrow on young talented people and their future (jobs) perspectives. We understand sustainable development as territorially unlimited, while its main focus is on long term social, economic and environmental durability that will allow comparable development possibilities for future generations. In contrast to traditional concepts, which largely restricted human activity in protected areas, new approaches aim at the consistent integration of conservation and development functions. Field work in the protected areas was a great challenge for all participants. All activities were arranged in a way to offer space for interaction of participants, sharing of ideas, and allowed participants to undertake their own research designs, investigations and analyses, including (self)reflections on competences acquired during the activities.

## 2 TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK AS A STUDY CASE

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### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARK

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Triglav NP is located in the Julian Alps, in the north-western part of the country (Figure 2 - dark green part). The Julian Alps are part of the Southern Limestone Alps, the highest point is Mt Triglav (2864 m). In the past, the park area had been used for ironworking, Alpine dairy farming, and forestry. Iron had been extracted in various places on karst plateaux from prehistoric times up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Berginc et al. 1987). These activities were also connected with the human impact on the area, which in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was joined by the impact of tourism and recreation: mountain lodges,



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holiday homes, ski resorts and a network of main roads (Rejec Brancelj & Smrekar 2000). First protection initiatives started in the early 20th century (Skoberne 2015).

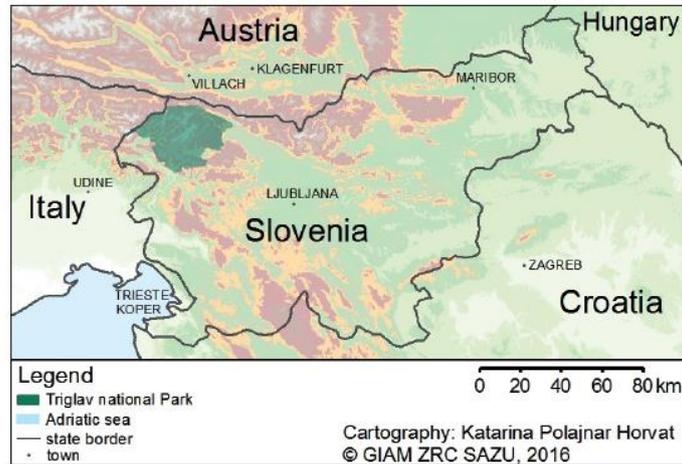


FIGURE 2. TRIGLAV NP LIES IN NORTH-WESTERN SLOVENIA (SAZU, 2016)

In 1924 a protected zone, referred to as the Alpine Protection Park, was established in the central part of today's Triglav NP (Figure 3 red part).

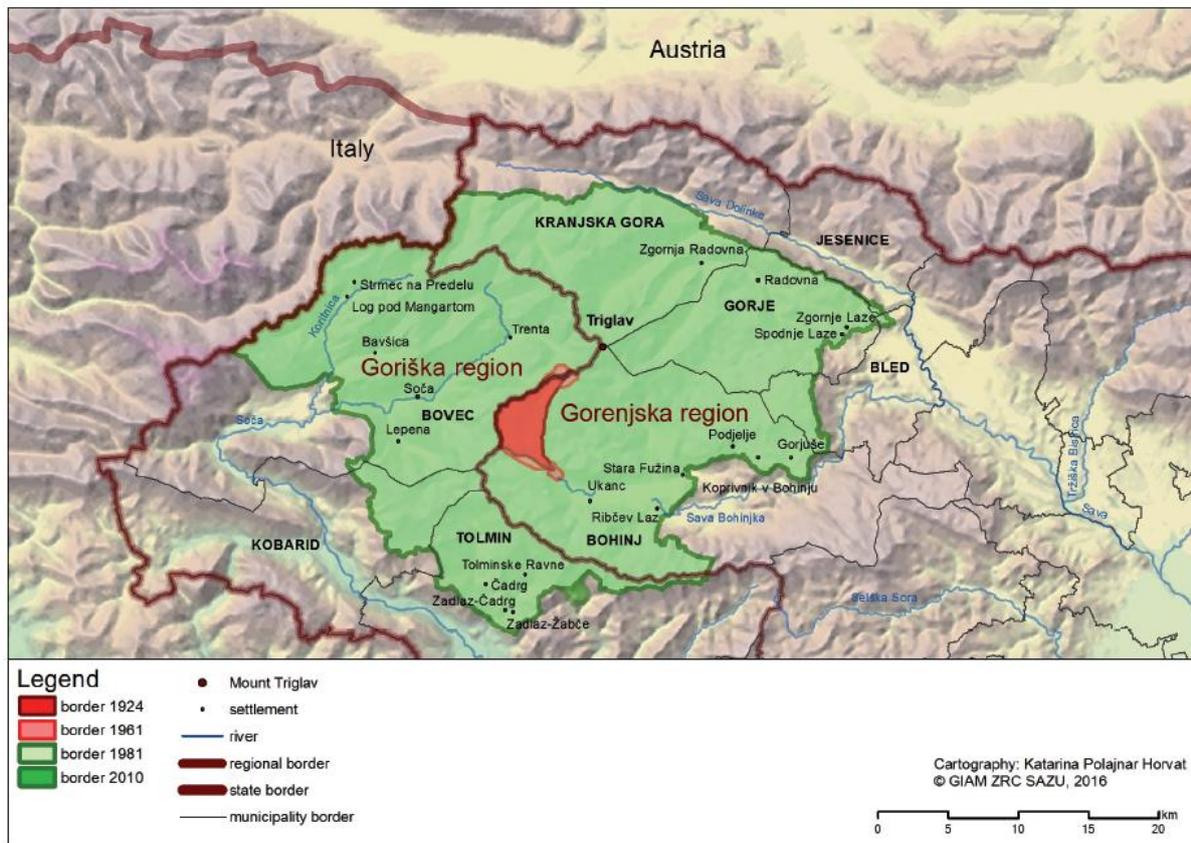


FIGURE 3. EXPANSION OF THE PROTECTED AREA FROM 1924 TO 2010.

The landowner received compensation for lost pasture rental and all activities except for hunting and tourism visits were prohibited. The local residents, who had lost their traditional grazing rights, were not included in the negotiations on the protected status of this region (Skoberne 2015). The process thus started with a conflict between conservationists and locals, which has largely remained an issue until today.

Even before the expiry of the lease agreement, the Natural History Society prepared a proposal in 1940 for expanding the protected area. A similar proposal was presented in 1959 by the Institute for Protection of Monuments of Slovenia. In 1961 a law designating Triglav NP was adopted, but the park covered only the territory of the pre-war Alpine Protection Park, with a few minor modifications of its boundaries. Soon after, various proposals were presented to expand the park, which was intended to include a major part of the Julian Alps (Peterlin 1975). A debate organized in the early 1970s included politicians, experts and government companies, but excluded the private landowners and residents. One of its objectives was *“to ensure to the resident population a modern living standard ..., opportunities for suitable employment and education, and improvement of the communal infrastructure and provision”* (Jeršič 1975, 36). It was in line with the concept of polycentrism at that time (Drozg 2005). Based on several years of expert and political discussions, the assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia established Triglav NP in 1981 on approximately the same area as it has today. After the



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reestablishment of multi-party democracy in 1991, it became ever more evident that under the new circumstances the law was only conditionally applicable because it disagreed with the new spatial planning legislation. In order to avoid inevitable conflict as a result of the privatization of the state-owned property in the park, legislation was adopted in 1994: the Act on Transforming the Ownership of Companies (with state capital) involved in tourism activities and whose real estate is located within Triglav NP. The relevant companies had to transfer their real estate within Triglav NP free of charge to the Triglav NP Development Promotion Fund (an incorporated company) through a contract. The revenue that the fund would obtain from managing its property would be earmarked for conservation, natural and cultural heritage protection, and ecological rehabilitation of Triglav NP, promoting sustainable management of farmland and forests, facilitating development and promoting the park. The establishment of the fund was well conceived and could have generated income for the municipalities and their residents within the park, but unfortunately the fund was managed in a way that was neither in accordance nor in agreement with the act. It went bankrupt because of poor management (Družba za spodbujanje razvoja Triglavskega narodnega parka 2016). After the year 2000, pressures to change the law on Triglav NP became stronger. The park's operation was the cause of dissatisfaction for both locals (Barbič 1994; del Negro 2009; Bajuk Senčar 2014) and conservationists. The latter established the Coalition of Non-Government Organizations for the Preservation of Triglav NP, which also held several meetings (Komac 2003). In 2010, after long discussions, a new Triglav NP Act was adopted specifying new protection arrangements and areas, and new development orientations regarding the manner of allocating incentives and funds to the park's local communities and residents. Today the park covers 83 982 ha, 76.1% of which is core area. 54% of the land is privately owned, 24% is owned by local communities and only 22% is state-owned.

## 2.2 IDENTITY CARD OF THE TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK

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National Park with international status: NATURA 2000, the Biosphere Reserve of the Julian Alps (UNESCO - MAB), the Council of Europe Diploma, the Alparc network of protected areas in the Alps, the Cross-border ecological region of the Julian Alps and the cross-border pilot region for ecological connectivity under the Alpine Convention (together with the park Julijsko predgorje and Rezija ).  
Number of protected and narrower protected areas: 46 narrower protected areas, 43 natural monuments, 3 nature reserves, and 1071 natural values (of which 743 caves).

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK'S MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS

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A comparison between the municipalities in the Soča Valley and Upper Carniola shows that the Upper Carniolan municipalities are better developed; however, the development trends in these municipalities are falling, whereas in the Soča Valley they are rising. It can be concluded that regional differences between the two parts of the park are diminishing. The area of the park along the Soča River is



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characterized by poor age structure and a loss of population. In 2017 only 12,1% of the whole population represented Youths between 0-14 years.

There are 37 settlements within the borders of the national park, of which 21 are entirely located in the national park. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: SURS), 2420 inhabitants lived in the national park in January 2014. Of all registered residents, around 80% of them live in the national park. The demographic analysis of data from 2012 showed extremely unfavourable demographic trends:

- 21.9% (463 inhabitants) are over 65 years and only 13.6% (288 inhabitants) are under the age of 15. The index of aging in settlements within the national park is 160,76 and is far above the Slovenian average (118). There are settlements with ageing index under 300 (Bavšica, Log pod Mangartom, Ribčev Laz, Kal – Koritnica, Lepena, Zadlaz – Žabče, Tolminske Ravne)
- Active population aged between 25-45 years is estimated between 500 and 600.
- Among 918 households, 40% (371) are of single-family households.
- Two settlements (Bavšica and Tolminske Ravne) are endangered, as there are no more children under the age of 15 in them.
- The educational structure of the population of the National Park, aged 15 and over, is significantly worse both from the average educational structure in Slovenia, as well as in most of the local park communities.
- The last generation of children in the age group from 0 to 4 years is slightly larger than the previous two generations (Upper Laze in the municipality of Gorje and Studor in Bohinj).
- 149 economic operators include 48 companies, 96 sole traders and 5 cooperatives. Micro-enterprises with 1 to 2 employees are predominant. Business subjects with more than 3 employees are only 14. These are sectors with lower added value, which is also reflected in salaries which are 5-20% lower than the Slovenian average.
- Out of the 231 farms (222 family farms) in 2011, there were 54 registered as a stay farms with tourist activities.
- According to the Employment Service of Slovenia, in June 2011, there were 291 unemployed people in 37 settlements in the national park. The labour migration index (78.9) shows that there are fewer jobs available than the working population is. More than half of the working population is driving to work in another municipality.

The availability, accessibility and quality of public services are essential in order to preserve the population of the National Park. Since settlements in the National Park have been continuously losing supply and service functions in the last ten years, the situation is becoming critical especially in the areas of childcare (only one kindergarten - Soča), elementary and secondary education (branch schools are closed, too few programs and interest activities), lifelong learning (there are no programs), care for the elderly, the sick and the disabled people (high prices of services), emergency medical and rescue assistance (accessibility), public transport (almost none), everyday care for residents (closing shops and abolishing other services).



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## 2.2. 1 THE MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT COEFFICIENT

The municipal development coefficient was used to show the development of municipalities. The methodology for calculating this coefficient is determined in an ordinance issued by the Slovenian government and represents the ratio between the arithmetic mean of standardized indicator values in the municipality and the arithmetic mean of standardized indicator values in the country, in which the coefficient of the average development of municipalities in the country equals 1.00. The coefficient is calculated based on three groups of indicators:

1. the municipality's development,
2. its economic vulnerability and
3. development potentials.

The first group includes: corporate gross value added per employee, income tax base per resident and number of jobs per number of employed persons in the municipality.

The second group consists of ageing index, registered unemployment rate and employment rate within the municipality.

The third group includes supply of goods and public utility services, presence of cultural infrastructure, share of Natura 2000 sites and settlement.

As a rule, the development coefficient is calculated every two years based on the data from previous years. Only some demographic data are available at this level; the ageing index is one. A demographic analysis was conducted based on the 1981 census (when the park was founded) and the 2011 census. It included 22 settlements from five municipalities in which the majority or all residents live within Triglav NP. Three of eight municipalities only include unpopulated areas within the park.

TABLE 1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS (NAČRT UPRTAVLJANJA TNP, 2016-2025)

|            | sex (%) |       | Age     | Education (%)     |                     |                 |
|------------|---------|-------|---------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|            | men     | women | average | primary completed | secondary completed | tertiary degree |
| population | 50      | 50    | 44,1    | 32,9              | 52,9                | 14,2            |
| sample     | 59      | 41    | 52,5    | 13,4              | 77,6                | 9,0             |



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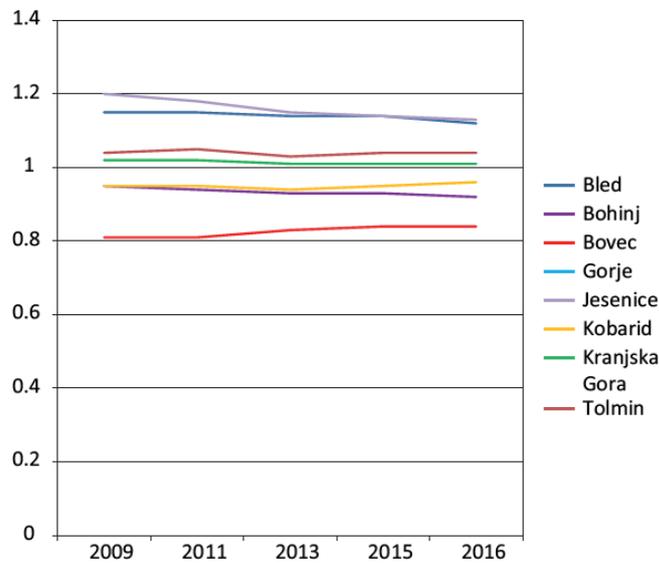


FIGURE 4. DEVELOPMENT COEFFICIENTS OF MUNICIPALITIES WITHIN TRIGLAV NP.

### 3 RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PARK AND ITS DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS

The 2007 survey showed that the residents of Triglav NP (Goriška region) mostly agreed with the area being protected (92%), especially because this makes it possible to preserve the pristine natural environment and prevent any changes to it. However, the attitude was different towards the protection arrangements. More than half of the respondents (52%) thought they were too strict or unrealistic and only just over a third (35%) thought they were suitable. People in the Soča Valley were more concerned with the overly strict rules of the protection arrangements (71%) than in the area of the park along the Sava River (41%). Complaints were primarily related to the numerous restrictive factors that prevented any modifications to the physical space, hindered business activity and required time-consuming bureaucratic procedures. The majority of respondents in both parts of the park believed it would make sense to use public funds, especially those secured from the government as the park's founder, for operating and maintaining the protected area. At the same time the majority (62%) believed these funds were insufficient; this was expressed more strongly in the Soča Valley (71%) than in the Sava Valley (57%). Just under a third of respondents (31%) were included in the development of Triglav NP in one way or another. This had mainly to do with their participation in associations, but partly also with their activities in tourism, agriculture and the park's management. At the beginning of 2015, Triglav NP employed a staff of 56, (Načrt upravljanja Triglavskega narodnega parka 2016–2025, 2016). Jobs in the park service are relatively more important in the Soča Valley than in the Sava Valley. In the village of Trenta in the Upper Soča Valley, for instance, jobs in the Triglav NP information centre are the only ones apart from seasonal employment in tourism and agriculture. Even towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>



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century, at least part of the local population reflected on how the 1981 Triglav NP Act mainly imposed restrictions on the park residents while not providing them with any benefits (Gabrovec et al, 2015). In the Soča Valley there have been various opinions on whether the park represented an opportunity or an obstacle ever since the park was created in 1981. Until the early 1990s, some locals even regarded the park and its management as “*a tool of violence in the hands of the ruling class,*” whereas later on the relationship with the locals is said to have improved and become “*more partner-like,*” considering that, according to the director at that time, the locals should “*gain something from living in the park*” (Smukavec 2011, 2). At the formal level, local participation is ensured in that the municipalities have their representatives in Triglav NP’s council and the park representative is on the expert council of the Soča Valley Development Centre, which consists of seven members. This opens up possibilities for life in Triglav NP and also represents an opportunity (Simonič 2014). The analysis of views on comments on the supplemented draft Triglav NP Act presented during its public unveiling and public presentations (Stališča do pripomb na dopolnjen predlog zakona o Triglavskem narodnem parku 2004) shows that, in addition to legal aspects (44% of statements), **the population in the Soča Valley was primarily concerned about economic aspects, whereas fewer statements were related to the population (5%), nature, and infrastructure (3% each).** A relatively large number of statements were connected with space (Figure 5). With regard to legal topics, the most frequent statements used were those referring to legislation (18.1%), the measures that should be included in legislation or be implemented (11.5%), and their evaluation (4.2%). The most frequent statements used in relation to economic topics were those referring to development (5.8%) and agriculture (4.9%). Hunting was also an important topic (4.5% of words used). Other topics mentioned included finance (1.9%), forestry (0.9%), trade and industry (0.5%), exploiting natural resources (0.4%) and the energy industry (0.3%). It is interesting that tourism was not a particularly important topic (1.8%) and it can be concluded that it was also not challenging. In terms of space, statements that were most frequently mentioned in the material were those related to limiting the park’s size because during that time there were frequent discussions on the possible inclusion or exclusion of settlements into or from Triglav NP (13.9%). Of the statements related to residents, locals (3.7%) and the quality of life in the park (0.6%) were mentioned most frequently. **It is interesting that, despite the generally known park orientation towards conservation, expressions related to nature were not particularly frequent.** Natural resources (without forests), primarily in terms of their exploitation, were only mentioned in 1.2% of the cases, nature protection and natural disasters were referred to in 0.9% of cases and plant species in 0.4%.



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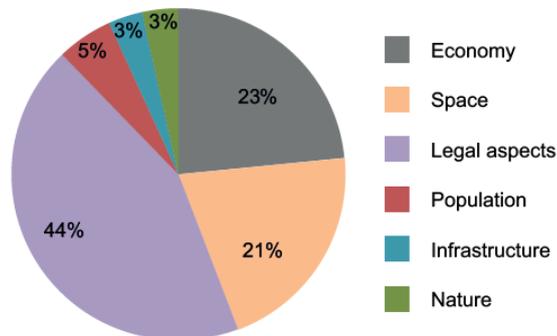


FIGURE 5. BREAKDOWN OF STATEMENTS BY TOPIC IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE DRAFT TRIGLAV NP ACT.

The rest of the research presents summaries from interviews with locals in the Upper Trenta valley.

### 3.1 ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS (THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL COOPERATIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRENTA VALLEY)

An interview was carried out to gain information on the topic how to keep people (particularly the youth) in the environmental sensitive areas in our case that was the Soča valley. We interviewed the 55 year old Mr. Edvin Kravanja who is a member of the local cooperative working group Trenta. We have figured out some very effective practices that can slow down negative demographic trends and their origins.

It was figured out that the crucial financial contribute to the management of the area is the ministry of the environment. It contributes 80 % of all financial assets and other financial means. In this area the particularly active sector of this ministry is the directorate for natural preservation. Another crucial part in the management is both the ministry of education and of economy. They provide indirect means that contribute to the functioning of the park primarily by taking part in the counsel of the cooperative, by promoting and marketing the region as well as with other means.

From bottom –up the local cooperative is managing this area. It has proven to be even more important than the government from up to bottom. The cooperation has built many buildings including local homes and shops and the hydroelectric power plant. Politics on the national level have rather been rudimentary to the working of the counsel. It was five years without a director, but then when the counsel finally came up with a candidate, political influences chose another candidate instead. It is worth mentioning that the people who regularly work in the TNP do not have any real influence in the counsel. This area is crucial for Slovenia because it generates 20% of the revenue in the tourism sector of the national economy.



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This economically important region has however a very poor demographic image. In the national park there are only 2200 inhabitants mostly living in Bohinj while the whole surface of the park is at whopping 840 km<sup>2</sup>. The Trenta valley has only 90 inhabitants. These are very old. The average age according to Mr. Kravanja is between 55 and 60 years. A lot of the people emigrated. Interesting enough the youth nowadays practically do not live here as the majority of them are residing at universities or any other places. On the other hand social and health care for older people is quite well organised, even with an ambulant at the main Trenta info building, yet there is an absence of close-by emergency services. The past source of work came primarily from agriculture, which has however almost completely decayed until now. The landscape of region used to be different. In the past (50 years ago) there were far less forestation parts and way more farms.

The modern source of work comes primarily from tourism, but also from hunting and to a small degree still farming, although there is only one major farmer in the area. Work also ensures the survival of the culture, which allows the annual Senjem to happen. Climaparc and the local cooperative ensure the ongoing working of the local community; they have even plans to reconstruct buildings and build restaurants etc. They also use less money for heating and are highly economical. One of the less successful projects includes the loud motorcycle events, which have a daunting effect on tourism, because many leave due to the noise. Overall the valley seems to be experiencing revival. Most of the positive activities in fact come from the local people, and not from the government.

In conclusion, we have seen some interesting and effective practices, which show positive results in an area critically hit with depopulation and deagrarianisation. These practices can revive the local economy and save the culture, which is fundamental to attract or keep young people in the area. Success comes from the bottom and not from the above.

### 3.1 OLDER ONES PERCEIVES THE PLACE OF UPPER TRENTA AS A LESS PROSPER PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

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We carried out an interview with the oldest residents in Trenta. The interviewees were 86 years old man, Tone Hosner, and his wife, 78 years women. They lived in Trenta through the Second World War, Italian occupation, during the ex-Yugoslavia and in are currently living in the independent Slovenia. The goal of the interview was to find the differences of the different periods of their lives in Trenta.

We started off with asking about the future management plan of sustainable development in Trenta to which they could only tell us there isn't one that they are aware of. We continued with questions more related to their early life, work and life of the Trenta valley. After the war the valley was intended as a hunting area for President Tito, who visited Trenta with company on various occasions. The economy in the past was based on forestry, dairy farms. Today, they say, without tourism there wouldn't be life in Trenta. When the conversation continued on, we learned that there used to be three factories in Bovec: lace, wood and the only one left – metal. They also said that with the cooperative they gained electricity and a shop which is essential for them, especially in the winter time.



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A major contribution to the conversation was the questions around the importance and the ruin of alpine dairy farms. During the Italian occupation the export of cheese and curd cheese was organized, but after the Yugoslovian government take over and nationalisation of the dairy farms in 1948 the export was dependent on every manufacturer individually, furthermore the dairy farms were at lack of organisation ruined. Mr. Hosner himself as a child worked in the dairy farms, for him it was hard work because of the steep hills.

We continued the conversation to the process of making traditional cheese.<sup>1</sup> In Trenta, there used to live about 300 people after the Second World War. There were about five children per family. Children could go to two different primary schools in the area. In schools there were about 30 children per class and lack of teachers. Today things look much different. There are no more schools, the population is around 90 people. There are just about three young families and the average age is 50 – 60 years. The can have holly masses only every last Monday in a month. However, they do have a doctor for medical care. The youth has very little job opportunities. Work for them can be possible mainly just in the summer due to tourism.

During the interview we have noticed that the economy and development in Trenta mainly slowed down. There can be no clear predictions on how the circumstances will likely develop. This is all contingent on the lack of government planning for the area and investments, so that the youth perceives the place as a prosper table place to live and work.

### 3.2 WE NEED THINKING OUT OF THE BOX IF WE WANT NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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We carried out an interview with three girl volunteers aged sixteen to seventeen on their practice. They come from a school in Šempeter pri Novi Gorici working in the National park for five weeks. The girls chose the park, because they thought it was their best choice. Their work park in the first place includes monitoring, making surveillances on hikers and tourists. The questions include, tourists knowing that they are located in TNP, if they know what path they are taking (Soča or Alpe Adria trail), where did they start and where are they going to end their hike, where they are from and why did the come here. Most of the tourists in this time of the year come from Austria, Germany, Sweden, France and Israel. In most cases the tourists got the information from the internet and were in most cases interested in hiking in the Alps.

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<sup>1</sup> It's very important to use a copper cauldron in which the cheese is boiled. From eight liters of sheep milk you can make a kilo of cheese and the same goes for twelve liters of goat milk. You leave the cheese for three quarters of an hour and then you use 'trnač' to crush the cheesy milk. Then you reheat the substance up to 48 – 50 degrees Celsius. And then you put the substance in the brine for 48 hours. After that you leave it for two months, turning it regularly. The black mould which appears during this process is actually good for preserving the cheese and is only removed before cutting it.

Later we talked about the eating habits in the past and today. In the past they mostly ate potatoes, cabbage and turnip. Today, the meals are much more diverse. When they walked to Krajnska gora for about 24 kilometres to trade cheese for corn flour, they could eat cornmeal mush/polenta.



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The girls think that the valley is profitable with its eco farming and tourism, but it is not enough to fulfill the needs of the locals. Ministry of tourism provides funds and advertising, but it is not enough. In Trenta valley you can only get some basic information in the info centre from tourist guides, but there are no people specifically educated in the fields regarding Trenta valley. There are only a few a few job opportunities for younger people, if they are highly educated and they want to work in their field. There just some jobs for tourist guides and waiters.

The suggestions the volunteers gave us for the improvement of the valley are more and better signs on the paths, more events and better advertising.

Suggestions for education, development and employment were establishing a school specialised in certain areas, opportunities for filmmakers, astronomy camps and construction of an observatory, camps for musicians, writers, painters, yoga seminars, medical facilities for recovery and plastic surgery.

The most successful project in this area was in their opinion the creation of TNP.

They were not able to answer all the questions, because they are inexperienced, too young and they are not familiar with the current situation.

### 3.3 WE SHOULD MAKE YOUNG EDUCATED PEOPLE FEEL MORE CONNECTED WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IF WE WANT THEM TO STAY IN THE AREA

We had an interview with Mitja, a 24 year old representative of young people in Trenta. He is employed in the Info centre of Trenta together with 7 other people (head of the info centre, tourist guides, secretary, receptionist, housekeeper and cleaning ladies). He said that the local community is responsible for the local management plan. On the regional level there is a municipality of Bovec. The problem here is that not many young people participate in the council and the representatives of Trenta valley are not necessarily included. The region is a part of Triglav National Park which also has a plan for development. Mitja thinks that the people who live here should contribute to the management plan by giving suggestions to the government. He told us that there is a good collaboration between ministry for environment, education and economy and Triglav National Park. Ministries provide money for different projects such as further protection of nature, educational programs and tourism. This is the only national park in Slovenia and the government tries to take care of it. A lot of school groups come to visit as well as journalists who help in promoting this area. As a representative of young people he would like to have a sports centre in Trenta where they could play sports such as football and basketball throughout the whole year. He mentioned that there is not much interest in research work in this area so there is no need for any new laboratories or better equipment in the existing one. He estimated that there are about 90 people currently living in Trenta valley and about 200 in Soča valley. There are also a lot of summer houses that people use only during the holidays. He noticed that the population is much lower than it



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used to be and it is still slowly decreasing, especially with the young people moving out of the region. Consequently the average age of people who live here is said to be over 50 years. Care for older people is not very well organised, in fact the nearest hospital is in Jesenice or Bovec and the old people usually get the most help from their own families, relatives and neighbours. In his opinion the valley does provide very few opportunities for young educated people. They do not have many chances to get permanent job, except in a field of tourism. Beside tourism he sees opportunities also in agriculture and public services. From his point of view we could make young people stay here only with some new chances for a permanent job. As a successful project he mentioned a cooperative association “Zadruga Trenta” and the local people are very supportive of it.

We came to the conclusion that the young people with innovative ideas and plans are mostly leaving the region while the people who are satisfied with the current situation or do not have any interest in changing anything stay in the area. In our opinion we should make young educated people feel more connected with the local community if we want them to stay in the area. The reason behind that is that if you feel connected to a certain group of people (in our case, the local community), you would feel the need to contribute and change something for the common good.

### 3.4 THE LIFESTYLE SHOULD NOT BE SOLD TO THE TOURISTS BUT RATHER TO YOUNG PERSPECTIVE FAMILIES

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We conducted an interview with a 49 year old Bovec priest, who has been serving the local community for the last 16 years. We followed the standard questionnaire tailoring the questions according to the interviewee's answers. The objective of the interview was to acquire more information about the sustainability of the Trenta valley from the priest's perspective.

From his point of view the plans of sustainable development are not put into action as expected, their impact on local society is not visible. Not only is there a need for the change of mentality, the key would be an economical plan which would thrive in the environment of Trenta valley. He suggested reviving traditional economic branches such as the Alpine dairy farming and livestock breeding. The lifestyle should not be sold to the tourists who visit mostly during the summer months, but rather to young perspective families, to whom building licenses are hardly ever awarded. The remaining newly renovated houses are predominantly vacant and not fulfilling their purpose, which further diminishes the possible improvement. The solution would be a model, which was firstly used by a mayor in Prekmurje, who bought empty properties and sold them to young families for less money. This contributed to the improvement of the demographical picture in the long term.

With the majority of the population being over 60 years old, the biggest problem is the ageing of it, meaning the future demographical picture is in question. While the older generation should be provided with proper care, focusing on the younger one proves to be the most efficient in the given situation.



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When discussing the region of Trenta and Triglav National Park, its impact on the country's economy should not be overlooked. Although it covers only 4% of the Slovene national territory, it contributes to 30% of tourism income with only about 2400 inhabitants. While too many resources are invested to the Kanin ski resort, other economical branches are lacking any governmental support and should thus be strengthened. One of the most promising ones is the use of renewable wood biomass for heating, a plan which is already being implemented.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

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Based on the research presented it was concluded:

1. A key factor for successful regional development of a protected area is trust between those promoting protection, or the managers, on the one hand, and the local population and landowners, on the other.
2. The Soča Valley is economically less developed in Triglav NP. In this sparsely populated part of the park that is difficult to access, jobs in the public institute that manages the park are extremely important for the locals, who have also largely managed to exploit various development incentives. The calculated development indices also point to the positive impact of the park in the Soča Valley.
3. Since one of the national goals is to preserve the population and to ensure an adequate quality of life for the inhabitants of the National Park by the development of social, cultural and economic activities, and reducing the existing and preventing additional burdens on the environment, additional / innovative economic activities are necessary.
4. National authorities should allow more investigation activities in the National Park, the park that would bring added value. School's syllabus for primary and secondary should involve more topics connected with nature protected areas and life opportunities in this areas.
5. Economic activities that should be supported to a greater extent and must include:
  1. organic farming, the development of supplementary activities on farms, the cultivation of indigenous species of crops and the cultivation of autochthonous breeds of domestic animals, the improvement of processing of agricultural products and forestry products;
  2. activities that further contribute to strengthening the ecological and social functions of the forest in the national park;
  3. promoting the activities of home and art crafts and the method of construction related to the building tradition in the National Park;
  4. developing a national park brand(s); geographical origin;



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5. supporting the higher standard development of social activities, in particular education, health and social care;
6. maintaining and creating jobs and by promoting a public-private partnership;
7. promoting activities that contribute to the maintenance and conservation of the national park of typical landscapes (pastures, horticulture);
8. promoting sustainable mobility (mountaineering, cycling) and sustainable use of energy (wind, solar, geothermal energy);
9. development of park infrastructure and support for projects for presenting and interpreting the National Park, raising awareness and education of the public and the people of the national park;
10. promoting craft, cultural and environmentally sound economic activities and social services that contribute to preserving the settlement and supplying the population of the national park.

6. Local stakeholders must define the main challenges in the area: accessibility of the valley, heavy traffic volume, reuse of vacant buildings, commercial zones and abandoned buildings and pastures.

7. The following three core fields must be analysed to assess the specific situation of the area:

- Location profile: accessibility; economy; labour market; human resources; image.
- Inter-municipal cooperation: intensity of existing cooperation; stakeholders' attitudes and expectations political and legal framework.
- Management of commercial land use: availability and use of land; spatial framework conditions; land prices.

To measure demographic and labour market trends we set eight demographic and labour market indicators (Chapter 4.1)

#### 4.1 INDICATORS FOR YOUTH SKILLED EMIGRATION IN NATURE CONSERVATION AREAS.

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The chosen indicators are:

1. the municipal development coefficient,
2. crude birth rate,
3. population growth rate,
4. working-age total resident population,
5. employment rate,
6. unemployment rate,
7. new employment opportunities for young talented people (according to the conclusion 5),



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8. the number of new initiatives for young talented people (according to conclusion form 1- 5).

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