



Differing perceptions and tensions among tourists and locals concerning a national park region in Norway

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ABSTRACT

In the context of national park management, landscape conservation, and tourism development in a mountain region in Norway, the aim of the research is to analyse how tourists, residents, and local stakeholders experience and practise their participation in the landscapes. A mixed methods approach was used, which included focus group meetings, semi-structured interviews, an on-site survey, and two Internet surveys to gain in-depth knowledge of tourists' and locals' relations to and evaluations of the landscape in the studied national park region, which comprised the park itself and eight protected landscape areas. The results revealed that many of the tourists visiting the national park considered the area it covered was a wilderness, while locals considered the area's authenticity was closely connected to cultural traditions and a long-lasting interconnectedness between people and landscape. As both locals and tourists shared a desire to maintain the wildlife and landscape characteristics of the national park, authenticity may serve as a common denominator for emphasizing local development, outdoor activities, and meeting points outside the boundary of the park. The authors conclude that involving tourists in a knowledge process that provides insights into the past and present livelihoods of communities and the use of the natural resources could help to enhance tourists' experiences, but without compromising local understandings of authenticity.

1. Introduction

Today, the 40 national parks on mainland Norway mainly consist of sublime and remote mountain areas situated far from villages, roads, and other infrastructures. These landscapes constitute magnificent sceneries of great significance for Norwegian national identity and nature romanticism, which in turn has formed the basis of ideas concerning nature conservation (Falnes 1968). In the eyes of many foreign tourists, Norway and the Nordic region represent *the last of the wild* in a European context (Mehmetoglu 2007; Puhakka and Saarinen 2013; Øian et al., 2018). Simultaneously, while the nature within these landscapes is labelled wilderness by conservationists and tourism industries (Rybråten 2013; Saarinen 2019), residents of local communities may find that the social and cultural aspects of the landscapes with which they themselves strongly identify are disregarded by others (Øian 2013; Hovik and Hongslo 2017; Hidle 2019). Similarly, while national park landscapes possess a long history of subsistence harvesting and grazing by domestic animals, the conservation authorities' justification for protecting these areas mainly refers to their nature-related qualities and

degrees of wilderness (Daugstad et al., 2014). By contrast, the cultural aspects of these landscapes are rarely considered (Rybråten 2013; Saarinen 2019), resulting in a potential mismatch in the values connected with the landscapes that are represented by tourists and locals, respectively.

Our case study, the Forollhogna National Park region, comprises the park itself and eight protected landscape areas in seven surrounding municipalities surrounding the park, in central Norway. The park is considered a wilderness area by the conservation authorities and until recently it has not been branded as an area for tourism and visitors (Gundersen et al., 2017). However, in 2020 a visitor strategy was developed for the park in a process that involved all relevant local stakeholders (Miljødirektoratet n.d.). The strategy is unique in the national context, as it emphasizes experiences and activities in the villages and areas in the municipalities outside the park, rather than facilitating an increase in visitors within the park itself. The national branding slogan for national parks in Norway, 'Welcome in', has in Forollhogna National Park been replaced by a small, but striking change, 'Welcome out'. In other words, residents in the seven municipalities surrounding

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the national park do not want tourists to hike in the park. However, under the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1957, in Norway there is a principle of common access rights to all uncultivated land, irrespective of, for example, ownership, protection status, and residency (Klima-og miljødepartementet, 1957), and at national level there is a strong political goal to brand the national parks to attract more tourists, for the local economy and for public health and quality of life (Haukeland et al., 2010; Miljødirektoratet n.d.). In this context, our study aimed to identify the underlying reasons for why such a position was reached in Forollhogna National Park. We address the tensions that arose from the establishment and further management of Forollhogna National Park, as exemplified through value creation initiatives in the villages surrounding the park.

How can the same landscape be understood as ordinary by some and as magnificent and exotic by others? The aim of our case study of Forollhogna National Park region is to analyse how visitors, residents, and local stakeholders experience and practise their participation in the landscapes, which can be perceived as wilderness by outsiders and as cultural landscape by insiders. We do not aim to stereotype, for example by treating the rural population as uniform and united. Significant social, economic, and political differences do not automatically mean that unifying collective identities are formed and maintained (Hidle et al., 2006). Furthermore, the way a common rural identity is made relevant will vary according to different contexts (Daugstad et al., 2006a). For example, some individuals and groups will take initiatives more easily than others and will have a greater impact in terms of representing the local stakeholders (Øian 2013). For this reason, some groups will often feel more at home with the symbolic expressions and content of what is emphasized as unifying for the rural community than others (Rybråten 2013; Hidle 2019).

We used a mix-methods approach to study different target groups that used and perceived the same landscape differently, and to describe and analyse common features and peculiarities at different scale and in different settings. Our interest lies with the notion of authenticity as a common concept that theoretically and empirically is an important theme, as the quality of tourist experiences and the use of cultural landscape for local stakeholders is important to sustain practices, social networks, and relationships that would otherwise be impossible to maintain (Daugstad et al., 2006a; Moore et al., 2021). We address the findings through three analytical and interconnected themes related to authenticity in the Forollhogna National Park region: (1) *Diverging landscape experiences* – with the aim to analyse overall quantitative differences between the visitors' and local residents' use and experiences of the same landscape; (2) *Making a rural living by the national park* – with the aim to investigate further the nature-culture dichotomy; and (3) *Maintaining authenticity* – with the aim to analyse future perspectives. The two latter themes are exemplified by qualitative interviews held with informants who were running small tourism businesses.

2. Background

2.1. The notion of wilderness

In a global perspective, wilderness areas are often perceived and given the status as the last remnants of virgin nature, untouched by civilization and development (Nash 1974). In most cases, this is misleading because most remote areas have been exploited and explored for a long time. This means that the notion of wilderness refers rather to a cultural and political idea. The idea of 'wilderness' in terms of 'untouched nature' is grounded in the nature-culture divide that still permeates environmental management. In Europe, this dualistic split between nature and culture can be traced back to Judeo-Christian tradition and Cartesian thinking about separating body and mind, whereby 'nature' came to be thought of as the opposite of 'culture' (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). In making nature 'the other' of humanity, humans would be conceived both as nature's conquerors and its keepers

(Uggla 2010). Dahlberg (2015) argues that relying on static categories of wilderness or untouched nature can lead to misunderstandings and potential conflicts between different stakeholders in a landscape, such as between tourists and locals. Most national parks in Norway are very remote natural areas without settlements, roads, and other kinds of heavy infrastructure, and by definition they usually fit with the IUCN's protected area category Ib – wilderness area, rather than category II – national park (Gundersen et al., 2015).

2.2. Turning national parks into tourist destinations

Norway's conservation policy has long been controversial (Daugstad et al., 2006b; Haukeland et al., 2011; Overvåg et al., 2016; Hovik and Hongslo 2017), and in recent decades the top-down management approach with a one-sided focus on securing biodiversity has been increasingly criticized (Zachrisson 2008; Haukeland 2011; Fedreheim and Blanco 2017). In 2010 the Government turned towards a partial decentralization of park policies, as regional park boards were granted responsibility for park management, while the decision-making authority regarding protection rules remained with the Government (Fauchald and Gulbrandsen 2012; Lundberg et al., 2021). In comparison with other countries, such as New Zealand, the legislative frameworks in Norway are still very much centred on biocentric values, while provision for outdoor recreation in the country's national parks has largely accommodated relatively low-scale visitation in non-commercial settings (Higham et al., 2016). Today, there is a growing trend of granting local communities and stakeholders both influence and the right to participation in park management and decision-making (Hovik and Hongslo 2017), thus acknowledging both the interest and knowledge of local populations, as well as encouraging and institutionalizing their local participation (Reed 2008; Fedreheim and Blanco 2017). The hitherto dominating unilateral protection perspective is in process of being transformed into multiple uses of both the material and aesthetic resources of the landscapes in Norway (Haukeland et al., 2010; Vinge and Flø 2015). The purpose of this paradigm shift is to release the national parks for recreational use and tourism in order to create new opportunities for local socio-economic development and jobs (Haukeland et al., 2010; Higham et al., 2016). The touristic attractiveness of natural areas is increasingly valued for offering potential income to local peripheral communities struggling with economic restructuring (Fredman and Tyrväinen 2010; Saarinen 2016), and it seems that tourists appreciate natural or cultural elements in the landscape that are either threatened or that they are familiar with (Wall-Reinius 2012; Vinge and Flø 2015). In line with the general tendency of commercializing nature experiences (Castree 2008; Margaryan 2018) and productizing nature experiences (Fredman and Tyrväinen 2010; Duffy 2015), scholars have gradually begun to focus on how tourism should be seen in relation to wider social-political and sociotechnical structures (e.g. Williams 2013; Bramwell et al., 2017; Øian et al., 2018). However, this can only happen within a framework where the existing values concerning nature in the protected area are preserved.

2.3. Authenticity as a frame for the study

Rapid growth in nature-based tourism represents potential threats to the protection values in national parks, and both tourism and conservation may marginalize local traditional livelihoods that are based on the use of natural resources on small farms (Daugstad et al., 2006a; Hidle 2019; Saarinen, 2016). Nature is increasingly commodified by turning intrinsic or local use values into exchange values for the purposes of non-local touristic consumption (Hidle et al., 2006; Duffy 2015; Saarinen 2019). As in several other countries, Norwegian protection policy is frequently protested against by local stakeholders who experience it as redefining widely used mountain landscapes as wilderness, as disregarding centuries of human activities and use, and as devaluing local knowledge and competence (Daugstad et al., 2006b; Haukeland

et al., 2011; Rybråten 2013). In this line of conflict, authenticity becomes a central concept, yet we see a large gap in the meaning and validity of the term (e.g. Daugstad et al., 2006a; Moore et al., 2021). In contrast to a general tourism perception of authentic nature as wilderness for experiences of solitude (Mehmetoglu 2007), locals connect authenticity to the long-standing stewardship of the areas through agricultural and subsistence use (Daugstad et al., 2006b, 2014). We simply use the concept of authenticity as an empirical basis for representing a nature-culture dualism that is embedded in Western thinking (Uggla 2010). In this paper, we address these different approaches to landscape authenticity by focusing on the present and practical engagement (e.g. practices, traditions, rituals) of tourists and local users of Forollhogna National Park and its surrounding villages. Tourism is considered an opportunity for developing synergies between the communities bordering the park and the surrounding cultural landscapes (summer farms) to increase their value creation (Daugstad et al., 2014; Hidle 2019). However, the question is how this can be done in ways that correspond with local values connected to the natural and cultural landscape, food production, subsistence activities, local knowledge, and authenticity.

Our point of departure for investigating this question is the current development of local, small-scale tourism businesses in the Forollhogna National Park region, which have been established primarily by farmer families. By exploring the constraints and opportunities for developing local tourism that is considered sustainable ecologically, socially, and economically, we provide new knowledge about the values and aims involved in current farm-related tourism development in a national park

region, and we address the authenticity debates involved in promoting local food products, experiences, and participation in traditional agricultural activities, and outdoor activities in or nearby a protected area where there is a high level of local commitment to take care of the local community.

2.4. Case study

The setting for the study is Forollhogna National Park (established in 2001) and eight protected landscape areas in the eastern part of Central Norway, a mountain region of 2000 km² surrounded by sparsely populated areas with small villages dominated by summer farms and alpine agriculture (Fig. 1). There is an increasing focus on nature-based tourism in the region, with the mining heritage of the town Røros as the main driver of the tourism (Guttormsen and Fageraas 2011). Tourism has been seen as a new development opportunity in the Forollhogna National Park region, since the decline in agriculture has left few alternatives and depopulation has been a long-term trend. In the case study region, vast areas of low productive forests and mountain landscapes have been of great importance to the villages throughout history (Fig. 2), and are still used for gathering edible berries and plants, hunting and fishing, and livestock pasture, as well as for various forms of outdoor recreation. In contrast to many similar national parks elsewhere in Norway, Forollhogna National Park is characterized by a very low level of recreational facilities and services, and in 2017 the park had the lowest volume of visitors, and the lowest levels of tourists, such as foreign and first-time visitors (Gundersen et al., 2017). The eastern

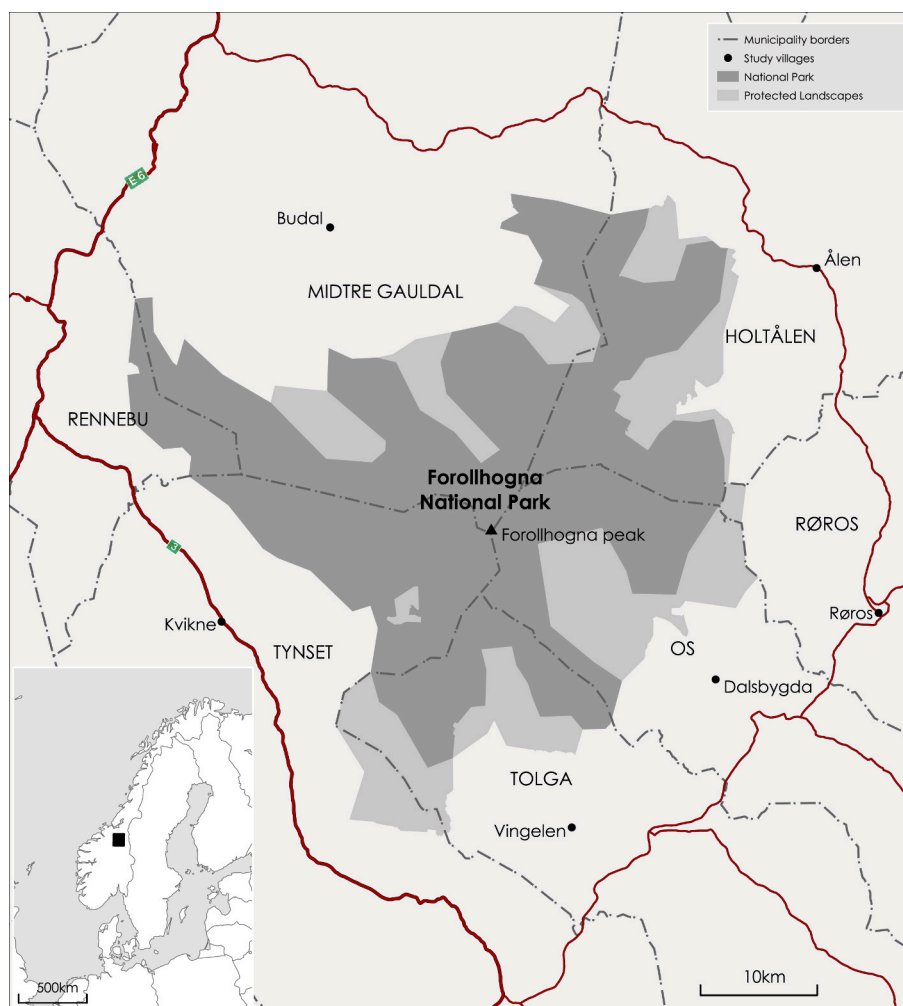


Fig. 1. Map of the Forollhogna National Park region.



Fig. 2. Cabin by a fishing lake in the Forollhogna National Park. Photo: V. Gundersen.

stretch of the pilgrim route between Oslo and Trondheim is the only marked path through the mountain region of Norway. By preventing large-scale marketing, facilitation, and further business development in the Forollhogna National Park, negative impacts on the conservation values have been avoided (e.g. impacts on wild reindeer) and the authenticity of local use traditions in the area has been preserved (Miljødirektoratet n.d.).

The main value creation in the local communities bordering the park has an agricultural basis (Daugstad et al., 2014). The region is also known for its rather rich outfield pastures and a large number of summer dairy farms are still in operation and to an extent that is unique on a national scale (Bele et al., 2017). Several of the summer farms produce and sell cheese and other milk-based products, and some even have a small summer café and/or provide accommodation. The local focus on organic and locally produced and processed food products is increasing, and includes meat products, dairy products, home-baked goods and home-brewed beer. Most tourism entrepreneurs in the region, of which the majority are women (Gundersen et al., 2017), operate on a small basis and are vulnerable in terms of their finances, associated business activities, personal circumstances, and seasonal variation (Daugstad et al., 2014). Still, their primary focus is on small-scale business control and not on increasing the size of their business and revenue from it. Storytelling, local belonging, and agricultural affiliation, quality, and

authenticity are key terms highlighted both internally and externally in the understanding and presentation of the region (Gundersen et al., 2017).

3. Material and methods

We used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of how tourists and residents in the Forollhogna National Park region experienced the national park and the surrounding areas (including the eight protected landscape areas) along three themes (Table 1). The target population in our study was all visitors to Forollhogna National Park and residents in the seven municipalities (Rennebu, Midtre Gauldal, Tolga, Holtålen, Os, Tynset, and Røros) that border the park. However, due to sampling methods and the scope of the study, the target populations varied between the different surveys (see Table 1 for details). Fieldwork was undertaken by the authors in the period 2012–2017. We followed a predefined procedure for the data collection, starting with focus group meetings with stakeholders and users in the five main villages representing the five of the seven municipalities (Rennebu Municipality and Røros Municipality were excluded due to their very limited area, comprising only 4% of the national park). We recruited informants to the five focus group meetings through an open invitation in various media (newspaper, local web

Table 1

Material and methods used in the study.

Sampling frame (methods and material)	Geographical scope	Target population	Number of informants	Response rate
Document studies	Forollhogna National Park	NA ^a	NA	NA
Focus group meetings	All seven municipalities that extend into Forollhogna National Park region**	All residents of the seven municipalities	n = 155, in 5 focus group meetings	NA
Qualitative semi-structured interviews	All seven municipalities that extend into Forollhogna National Park region	All local tourism entrepreneurs in the seven municipalities	n = 17 representing 13 entrepreneurs	NA
On-site survey	Forollhogna National Park	Self-registration checkpoints, all main entrances (n = 26)	n = 806	13.5% (calculated from n = 26 automatic counters, by Eco-Counter)
Internet survey of tourists visiting the national park	Forollhogna National Park	email addresses (n = 283) collected from all 26 main entrances	n = 212	75%
Internet survey of local residents	All seven municipalities that extend into Forollhogna National Park region	All residents of the seven municipalities	n = 625	NA

^a NA – not applicable; **the seven municipalities are Røros, Holtålen, Midtre-Gauldal, Rennebu, Tynset, Os, and Tolga.

pages). The informants were among the target population of residents and second-home owners in the municipalities. The theme of the meetings was ‘Natural and cultural heritage as a resource for village and value creation’, with the aim to gain a deeper understanding of converging and deviating interests among the informants as a basis for developing a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview guidelines. The informants in the focus groups took part in open-structured discussion around three pre-defined themes, and they answered a short questionnaire on attitudes to management actions in and around the national park. Children, youths, and young parents were underrepresented among the focus group informants, while persons over 50 years were overrepresented. Such bias is common in focus groups with open invitations to address themes related to recreation and conservation (Skjeggedal et al., 2020).

Interview data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews with 17 people who represented different small businesses in the five villages surrounding the national park. We started by contacting relevant local organizations and thereafter further recruitment was made by snowball sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994) in order to contact key informants. An interview guide formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 30 min and 1.5 h. Thematically, the interviews were centred on the three themes (outlined in section 1) and addressed the informants’ background, current business activities, thoughts about future opportunities and eventual challenges, experiences with the national park establishment, cooperation, and thoughts about regional marketing. In addition, the informants were encouraged to include other evaluations and views in the conversation. Authenticity was not a pre-defined theme in the focus group meetings or in the interviews. We took notes during the interviews and wrote a comprehensive summary of each interview later the same day. Data collection was conducted in accordance with the Norwegian Data Protection Authority’s standards, and the informants gave their approval for interview material and quotes to be included in this paper.

The quantitative data were collected from an on-site survey and Internet surveys. The purpose of the on-site survey was to measure the actual use of the national park and was based on standard methodology in Norway (Gundersen et al., 2017). It involved collecting completed questionnaire cards placed at self-registration checkpoints at 26 main entrances to the park ($n = 806$ respondents). At the same time, we installed automatic counters (made by Eco-Counter) at all checkpoints to measure visitor volumes and the response rate (13.5%) for the survey, and the installed counters were managed to ensure accuracy in the counting (Andersen et al., 2014). The questionnaire card filled out by visitors (one visitor in the case a group of visitors) included demographic parameters, preferences for and use of infrastructure, characteristics of the visitors’ trip, accommodation, attitudes to management actions, and knowledge about the area they were visiting. Each checkpoint was inspected five or six times during July, August, and September in 2016. We also collected emails from the on-site survey questionnaire ($n = 283$) and sent the respondents a link to a comprehensive follow-up Internet survey (Table 1). We tested for non-response bias in our on-site surveys (Wilberg 2012), and some minor biases were identified mainly in accordance with similar international studies of non-response surveys (e.g. Fredman et al., 2009; Hindsley et al., 2011), as foreign visitors and highly educated people interested in nature conservation were to some extent overrepresented. Similarly, Internet surveys often overrepresent people who hold strong attitudes or are highly motivated to participate (Schonlau and Couper 2017). When we compared our survey data with key data from the target population, and for the on-site survey we did not identify significant differences in trip characteristics, preferences, and attitudes (Gundersen et al., 2017), while for the Internet survey we identified that people with higher education, elderly people, and men were significantly overrepresented. Despite some biases, we concluded that the survey samples were fairly representative of the target population.

In the quantitative surveys, we analysed differences between locals

and tourists by using chi-square tests. To identify where differences occurred between three response options to statements about their views on Forollhogna National Park as a wilderness area (ranging from (1) not at all, to (3) yes, the entire area), we followed the recommendation by Shelby and Vaske (2008) and used chi-square tests following the same principle as for post-hoc tests in analysis of variance, and we analysed all possible combinations of the three response options (1–2, 2–3, and 1–3). The same method was applied to the statement about the probability of visiting the area if Forollhogna not was a national park. Questions regarding whether locals and tourists opposed or favoured the management actions were interpreted from responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 3, despite the fact that the three-level scale did not perfectly fit the criteria of normal distribution. However, the normality assumption can be relaxed in large samples if the standard deviation in two sample groups is equal (Shelby and Vaske 2008). Therefore, we used Levelene’s test for normality to check whether the assumption of equal standard deviation (σ) in the two groups was met ($\sigma_{\text{locals}} = \sigma_{\text{tourists}}$). In cases when the assumption was not met, we reported Levelene’s test statistics for *equal variance not assumed*.

4. Results and discussion of three themes

4.1. Diverging landscape experiences

An important goal in the mountain communities in Norway today is to attract more tourists, which means that tourists are welcome to experience the landscapes in accordance with the right of common access (Haukeland et al., 2010). A similar understanding was identified in the interviews, in which the informants expressed that they welcomed further tourism business development. However, an important premise was emphasized, namely that any such development must not harm the local communities and the environment. In this respect, significant differences between local residents and visiting tourists were identified for almost all the factors measured in the surveys (Table 2).

Almost all respondents were familiar with Forollhogna’s status as a national park, and most of them would have used the park in the same way irrespective of its the protection status. However, with regard to considerations of the protected area as either positive or negative, tourists were significantly more positive about the establishment of the national park. This seems to have been linked to their perceptions of the national park landscape, as a large number considered the entire area was wilderness (Table 2). The area was visited by locals throughout all seasons, while tourists mainly visited during summer (Gundersen et al., 2017). Regarding reasons for visiting the area and for the activities carried out, locals most often referred to activities related to traditional use, agriculture (e.g. herding) and subsistence harvesting, and they emphasize connections between the landscape and their identity. Fishing, hunting small and big game, herding, skiing, maintaining historical buildings, and nature surveillance were among the most important activities listed by the locals. Furthermore, the statement ‘the area has a special meaning for me’ was selected by locals as representing their most important reason for visiting the area. The findings indicate strong relations between the local people and the landscape, thus referring to the high value attributed to the area’s identity locally (Daugstad et al., 2014).

Several questions in the surveys were designed to address potential management actions for balancing recreational facilities and services with safeguarding the values related to Forollhogna National Park’s status as protected (Table 3). Generally, locals were much more negative towards the development of recreational facilities, such as increases in the numbers of paths, erection of signs, provision of information and brochures, as well as the construction of boardwalks, shelters, and bridges along the paths. The locals were also more negative than tourists towards infrastructure regulations such as the removal or relocation of trails. The findings relating to locals are in line with those from other national park studies (Gundersen et al., 2015, 2019). Activities that are

Table 2

User profile derived from the Internet survey of tourists to Forollhogna National Park (n = 212) and from the Internet survey of local residents (n = 625). See Table 1 for details relating to the samples. Independent samples t-test and chi-square tests were conducted to compare the tourists' responses in the two surveys.

	Locals	Tourists	Test statistics
Gender			
Female	27%	46%	$X^2 = 16.99, p < 0.001$
Male	73%	54%	
Age (mean years)	50	51	NS ^a
Did you know that Forollhogna is designated as a national park before you came to the area? (yes)	98%	94%	$X^2 = 5.00, p = 0.025$
Do you consider the designation of Forollhogna as a national park to be positive or negative? (Likert scale 1–5, where 5 = most positive)	3.1	4.3	$t_{1,455} = -10.65, p < 0.001$
Would you have visited Forollhogna if the area hadn't been designated as a national park?			
(1) Yes, I would have visited the area in the same way	91%	97%	1-2: $X^2 = 8.41, p = 0.004$
(2) Yes, I would have visited the area more	8%	1%	2-3: $X^2 = 5.57, p = 0.018$
(3) No, I would not have visited the area at all	1%	2%	3-1: $X^2 = 0.22, p = 0.64$
Do you consider Forollhogna to be a wilderness area?			
(1) No, not at all	14%	6%	1-2: $X^2 = 2.53, p = 0.112$
(2) Yes, but only parts of the area	59%	52%	2-3: $X^2 = 7.27, p = 0.007$
(3) Yes, the entire area	27%	42%	3-1: $X^2 = 9.62, p = 0.002$
How important were the following reasons for visiting Forollhogna? (Likert scale 1–5, where 5 = very important)			
– Stunning landscape	4.21	4.44	$t_{1,466} = -3.34, p < 0.001$
– Easily traversed terrain	3.99	3.87	NS
– A wide range of hiking alternatives	4.00	4.04	NS
– A wide range of fishing alternatives	3.67	2.95	$t_{1,455} = -6.78, p < 0.001$
– The opportunity for watching birds and animals	3.96	3.83	NS
– Small cabins open to the public	3.48	2.91	$t_{1,457} = 5.04, p < 0.001$
– Because the area is designated as a national park	2.12	3.08	$t_{1,455} = -8.18, p < 0.001$
– The area has a special meaning to me	4.33	3.95	$t_{1,464} = 34.04, p < 0.001$
– The trails in the area are well marked	2.37	3.12	$t_{1,455} = -6.48, p < 0.001$
– By coincidence	2.22	2.12	NS
– Recommended by others	1.99	2.59	$t_{1,448} = -5.30, p < 0.001$
– My family owns a second home near Forollhogna	3.47	3.48	NS
– Short distance from home	3.87	2.69	$t_{1,461} = 10.67, p < 0.001$
Which outdoor activities did you participate in during your visit(s) to Forollhogna?			
To find trip attraction points	9.5%	6.0%	NS
Hiking to summits	31%	47%	$X^2 = 13.04, p < 0.001$
Other hiking/walking	77%	73%	NS
Fishing	51%	28%	$X^2 = 22.84, p < 0.001$
Cycling	15%	9%	NS
Skiing	52%	23%	$X^2 = 37.43, p < 0.001$
Big game hunting	35%	8%	$X^2 = 44.61, p < 0.001$

Table 2 (continued)

	Locals	Tourists	Test statistics
Small game hunting	26%	5%	$X^2 = 34.30, p < 0.001$
Camping	4%	7%	NS
Other activities, which?	26%	9%	$X^2 = 20.13, p < 0.001$
N	305	173	

^a NS – no significant differences.

more commercialized, such as the issue of permits to use helicopters or planes to reach the peaks, permits to arrange sport arrangements within the protected area, and commercial guided tours, were significantly more preferred by the tourists than by the locals. Regarding the Internet surveys' questions about preferences for recreational facilities and social settings, the tourists showed significantly higher preferences than the locals in their responses to four of the eight questions (Table 3), in which three of the statements concerned marked trails and accommodation, and one concerned meeting other recreationists on the trip. It was clear that the locals preferred fewer recreational facilities and fewer meetings with other hikers on their trips compared with the tourists. As the locals knew the area well, they were not in need of more infrastructure for carrying out their activities, and therefore they were much more vulnerable to area restrictions (Gundersen et al., 2015). We also found that further infrastructure development attracted more visitors to the protected area, an expansion which the locals did not support (Vistad and Vorkinn 2012).

4.2. Making a living after national park establishment

Nature conservation often leads to enhanced conflicts between stakeholders, which is commonly explained by centralization of power in the processes (Skjeggedal et al., 2020; Lundberg et al., 2021). However, such conflicts may also be understood in terms of who dictates power of representation related to narratives and imagery (e.g. Øian 2013; Dahlberg 2015; Wall-Reinius et al., 2019). In our study, informants in the focus group meetings and in the individual interviews referred to the great scepticism and distrust locally that had existed prior to the establishment of Forollhogna National Park. However, some emphasized that despite worries prior to the establishment of the national park (Skjeggedal 2008), the consequences were not as negative as initially feared. Other informants foregrounded how the national park was established without taking local knowledge and local considerations into account, causing an increase in tourism that had moved beyond the local desirable level, but at the same time many of the informants had experienced opposition from the conservation authorities with regard to local initiatives for arrangements, soft recreational infrastructure, and permits to engage in traditional activities.

Data from the 26 automatic counters documented a 34% increase in the number of hikers in the period 2012–2017, primarily along the most popular route to the largest peak (7000 hikers in 2017). Furthermore, a comparison of numbers from all counters revealed that the route was walked by 56% of all visitors to the park. However, as there has been an increasing trend in tourist volumes in Norwegian national parks in general (e.g. Gundersen et al., 2019), it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of the establishment of Forollhogna National Park and general outdoor recreation trends. Nevertheless, most informants referred to observations of an increasing number of hikers to the Forollhogna peak (1332 m a.s.l.), and they considered that the attraction of this main peak was due to the establishment of the national park (Gundersen et al., 2017). Torstein, at the Gaula Nature Centre, stated:

We noticed it very much when Forollhogna became a national park. That brand in itself caused an increased influx of tourists. What we are a little worried about locally is that we are not able to create

Table 3

Locals' and tourists' evaluations of statements about management actions relating to Forollhogna National Park. Based on data from the Internet survey of tourists who visited the park (n = 212) and from the Internet survey of local residents (n = 625). See Table 1 for details relating to the samples. Independent samples t-test and chi-square tests were conducted to compare the tourists responses in the two surveys.

	Locals	Tourists	Test statistics
As an outdoor recreationist, do you oppose or favour the management actions stated below? (Likert scale 1–3, where 1 = most favoured)			
– More signs showing distances to destination	2.07	1.79	t _{1,452} = 3.40, p < 0.001
– Information boards at sites of special interest along the trails	2.19	1.71	t _{1,453} = 5.86, p < 0.001
– Brochures about the natural environment and attractions in the area, available at the huts in the area	2.38	1.40	t _{341.23} = 14.87, p < 0.001 ^a
– Marking of more trails	2.00	1.75	t _{1,452} = 2.49, p < 0.013
– Better marking of trails	2.00	1.75	t _{1,449} = 3.08, p < 0.002
– Emergency shelters along the trails	2.13	1.57	t _{1,451} = 7.43, p < 0.001
– Boardwalks are provided in wet marshes	2.22	1.56	t _{1,451} = 8.08, p < 0.001
– Provide firewood on simple camp sites	2.04	1.99	NS ^a
– Designation of simple camp sites along marked trails	1.88	1.89	NS
– Relocation of some marked trails to protect vulnerable environments	2.29	1.32	t _{383.07} = 15.94, p < 0.001 ^a
– Removal of some trails in order to leave larger areas without any facilities	2.06	1.84	t _{1,453} = 3.06, p < 0.002
– More bridges across streams that are difficult to cross	2.26	1.59	t _{326.2} = -24.27, p < 0.001 ^a
– Permit access by helicopter/plane to areas or peaks that are difficult to reach	2.79	1.43	t _{406.4} = 2.49, p < 0.013
– Permit sport arrangements inside the protected area	2.51	1.73	t _{349.25} = -10.53, p < 0.001 ^a
– Guided tours (commercial – with a fee)	2.09	1.75	t _{314.60} = -4.63, p < 0.013 ^a
Imagine that you are going on a trip for several hours in forests or mountain areas in the summer. Imagine that the area is just the way you prefer it to be – the 'ideal area' for a trip into nature. Would the following items detract or add to your experience of the 'ideal' trip? (Likert scale 1–7, where 7 = most preferred)			
There are simple campsites with toilets, firewood, stone-ringed firepits and bins	3.52	3.88	t _{1,457} = -1.88, p < 0.066 (NS)
you can dispose litter in bins along the way	3.68	3.98	NS
There are marked trails in the area	3.90	5.10	t _{1,457} = -6.93, p < 0.001
trailheads and crossroads are well signposted	4.28	5.28	t _{1,457} = -5.79, p < 0.001
There are huts/lodges where food is served and where you can stay overnight in made beds	3.12	3.60	t _{1,452} = -2.94, p < 0.003
you meet a lot of other outdoor recreationists during the trip	3.06	3.68	t _{1,457} = -4.07, p < 0.001
walk for miles without seeing any others	5.05	5.10	NS
N	305	173	

^a NS – no significant differences.

businesses in line with the increased traffic. However, we do notice increased wear and tear, and more people.¹

If protection of a national park, such as Forollhogna, attracts many new visitors to vulnerable areas (e.g. where there are wild reindeer), the conservation authorities have to find a solution through visitor management (Haukeland et al., 2010, 2013). However, in the case of Forollhogna National Park, which has very little recreational infrastructure, it is difficult to redirect people to less vulnerable areas by using indirect means (Gundersen et al., 2015), and our results revealed that direct means such as legal restrictions were highly controversial among the locals (Haukeland 2011).

Our informants pointed out the difficulty of avoiding pressure on the national park's highest peak while the name of the peak remained the same as the name of the national park. The two main trails leading to the Forollhogna peak, from the south and the north respectively, forms barriers to the seasonal migration of wild reindeer. Consequently, the wild reindeer herds only make use of the areas to the west of that axis during summer, despite the large areas of suitable habitat in the eastern part (Gundersen et al., 2017). Many of the informants shared their thoughts on the negative effects of increased visitation which had caused damage to vegetation and disturbance to wildlife. As stated by Per Martin, a farmer, 'it clearly shows that there has been wear and tear in Forollhogna now, after it became a national park. We also notice it clearly on the reindeer. They stay much more towards the west now'.

The current national park strategy of protecting the existing natural values while simultaneously developing attractions to increase visitor numbers significantly (Wall-Reinius and Fredman 2007), represents an irony that is difficult to accept locally. While most local informants referred to a negative attitude to the establishment of the national park, supporting similar findings made by Skjeggedal (2008), some were still positive towards the potential consequences for the villages' identity and pride connected to the increased attractiveness of their neighbouring landscapes. For example, the village of Vingelen was given the status as a national park village by the national park authorities, which resulted in new branding opportunities and the possibility to build a visitor centre, which also served as a social meeting point locally. Ingrid, the general manager of a local guesthouse shared her thoughts on the new status of the village as follows:

In the process of becoming a national park village, and in the aftermath, a lot of positive things have happened. To achieve this status, demands were made, among other things to facilitate accommodation in the village and to have an information centre. So, then we built Bunåva café. It has become a very important place. It is run on a voluntary basis most of the year, except during summer when a person is employed there. Bunåva is especially important for the villagers, but it is also important for tourists. The process of becoming a national park village further brought with it a local awareness of what the village stands for.

Furthermore, on the positive side, local informants referred to the creation of more jobs related to the management and service functions of the national park, jobs that were considered particularly important locally (Hidle 2019). On the negative side, several informants had found that the national park entailed severe restrictions on any further development within its boundary, which meant it was challenging to maintain traditional grazing, summer farming, and hunting and fishing as a continued basis for sustaining the communities. Many informants considered that the national park regulations represented a lack of respect for how the area had been managed for centuries without the influence of national protection authorities (Daugstad et al., 2014). According to one informant, 'It is because the locals have managed the

¹ All quotations included in this article is translated into English from their original Norwegian wording by the authors.

area so well for so many years that it became worthy of protection.' Bente runs a small summer farm where she serves homemade meals and sell her own cheese and sour cream to tourists. During our interview, she explained how she experienced the national park status as questioning local peoples' intentions when initiating activities or applying for support or permission: 'I think it is a little hurtful.' She recalled an incident when the local sports club had sent an application to the national park board, asking for permission to connect two existing ski trails for a one-day local ski arrangement. While the application was approved by the municipality, it was rejected by the national park board on the grounds that the activity would disturb the wild reindeer:

But there are rarely reindeer in this area during winter. Then the reason for refusal becomes silly in people's opinions. Then it feels like they don't really know the conditions, in practice, like knowing that the reindeer are actually not there at this very moment. That they don't believe in the villagers who have managed these areas for so long. [...] It is important that people living here are proud of the park and wish to protect it, and then it is important that we who live here work together.

Similar evaluations are reported by [Daugstad et al. \(2014\)](#), who identify how local farmers in the villages surrounding Forollhogna National Park held the opinion that 'wild nature' should be given priority and that 'managed nature' in the form of transhumance was overlooked in the management of the protected area.

4.3. Maintaining the authenticity

The Forollhogna National Park region includes very few elements of tourism infrastructure and commercialization in its sparsely populated landscape, which is dominated by old farms, open agricultural land, grazing fields, forests, and mountains ([Daugstad et al., 2014](#); [Gundersen et al., 2017](#)). In this context, most of the local informants explicitly expressed the importance of ensuring that socio-economic development should go hand in hand with maintaining authenticity, a finding that supports those of previous studies ([Daugstad et al., 2006a](#); [Wall-Reinius 2009](#); [Moore et al., 2021](#)). According to many of the local informants, maintaining authenticity had been contrasted with the development of mass tourist attractions in nearby Røros, a World Heritage Site ([Gut-tormsen and Fageraas 2011](#)). Most of the local informants were living on old farms that had been in their family for generations, and they placed emphasis on maintaining social and cultural traditions, as well as the cultural landscapes and their relations to the mountains surrounding their homes ([Daugstad et al., 2014](#)). Simultaneously, many locals considered it necessary to seize arising opportunities to ensure a decent living. Ingrid, the third-generation owner of Vingelsgaard Guesthouse in Vingelen, where accommodation and food service were recently expanded to include conference and meeting facilities, stated:

We realized that we could both make a living from the farm if we only put a little effort into it. We are interested in local food. We produce our own lambs. [...] Our philosophy is to be able to cope, as a family, but we don't want to grow. We don't want to employ more people. Then we want to tell stories about the village and offer authenticity.

This focus on authenticity recurred in most of our interviews and was further presented as the most promising point of departure for further tourist development. Many of the small entrepreneurs in the area, who have been in their business for a long time, explained how they had identified their niche and established a good balance between the effort they put into the company and the returns. For many of those entrepreneurs, an increase in the number of tourists was not necessarily something they aimed for or a measure of further success. Anne Berit, a farmer at Rønningen Farm, spend all her summers on the summer farm in the mountains, where tourists are served homemade porridge, sour cream, and different baked goods every Sunday. All products, including

coffee, are prepared on a wood-burning stove. According to Anne Berit, expansion is out of the question:

I only have two hands, and we only have a small, old farmhouse from the 1600s. So, we do not want mass tourism. I want personal contact with my guests, and the guests expect the same. They like to learn about our living, and I convey [the information to them]. I think that's my niche. [...] Some have asked whether we don't want to offer accommodation as well, but then we could do nothing else. My job is to keep the summer farming activities going, and I must get them done. We do not run as a business, but since we are at the summer farm anyway, we have a small offer on Sundays.

With the exception of the informants who represented large-scale tourism entrepreneurs in Røros, the rural informants were clear about their attitudes towards large-scale tourism development in the area. Their clear preference was for small-scale tourism development connected to social, cultural, and natural authenticity, linked to the long traditions of agriculture and summer farming in the outfield landscapes. According to our informants, large-scale second home developments, hotel establishments, and mass tourism investments were a poor fit with the preferred form of development. The latter contrasts with the situation in many other rural areas in Norway, and in the Nordic countries in general, where large-scale tourism developments, including second home expansions, often are uncritically accepted as the only solution to improve local economy ([Overvåg 2010](#); [Wall-Reinius et al., 2019](#)). This is an important paradox for the residents: they wanted further development to maintain the population level in the villages and avoid shrinking population levels, but that had to be done on their own premises and by preserving their traditional way living and authenticity. However, our informants, did not wish for a significant increase in tourism and second home development in the areas adjacent to the national park, as they were fearful of the potential long-term consequences for local cultural and natural values. An important concern regarding the area's natural values is linked to sustaining the territory occupied by the wild reindeer. Since the national park was established in 2001 local users and stakeholders have been concerned about the increased tourist traffic that disturbs their traditional use, the wild reindeer, and the ecosystem. The solution to this challenge has been to not develop any new recreational infrastructure within the national park, but instead attract people to the fringe zone by developing hiking routes and round trips ([Gundersen et al., 2017](#)). In this regard, the main aim of the national park visitor strategy is as follows:

Unilateral focus on the national park, the wild reindeer and the Forollhogna peak is not desirable in the promotion of the area. It is also not desirable to have a unilateral focus on 'Welcome in' the national park, but we want to say welcome to the surrounding landscapes where the national park is part of the qualities of the area as a whole. The national park should not be promoted as a 'wilderness', but rather as a 'landscape' where mountains and mountain valleys, nature and culture meet, with traces of long-term use of the land resources. (Miljødirektoratet n.d.; our translation)

The fringe zone outside the national park, protected landscape areas or outfields, comprises less vulnerable natural areas, and these areas are located closer to service functions for local development such as accommodation, shops, and different guided tours. A commonly held view among our informants was that the situation was a win-win for nature and local development, as long as the number of visitors was within acceptable limits for farming ([Daugstad and Kirchengast 2013](#)). The informants' strongest argument was that also tourists appreciated values connected to authenticity in the cultural landscape and in the villages ([Hinch 2004](#); [Wall-Reinius et al., 2019](#); [Mei et al., 2020](#)), and these values were held similarly by both the residents and the tourists ([Table 2](#)). The informants envisaged a kind of development or practice that impacted their home places as little as possible, while at same time-maintained possibilities in their daily lives and for their well-being

(Daugstad and Kirchengast 2013). Human presence and practices are very important elements in defining landscapes, both in positive (cultural) and negative (impact) matters (Haukeland et al., 2013), as also illustrated by the informants' descriptions of what was important for their well-being. For some, the main aim of their company was to maintain authenticity. Identity with the community in which they lived was very important for many of the informants, and was fundamental for success in small companies. Several of the local business practitioners pointed out the importance of cooperation within individual villages, between the villages, and between the villages and Røros as a regional centre. As calimed by Anne Berit at the Rønningen Farm: 'One must see the whole area together. You can't talk about Os and Røros. We can't do things alone, we have to work together.'

4.4. Discussion of the themes

Our mixed methods approach revealed how many of the tourists who visited Forollhogna National Park considered the area as a wilderness, and clear differences were found between residents and tourists in their reported reasons for visiting the area. The surveys further revealed how tourists connected authenticity with what appeared to them to be untouched nature. This value gap between locals and tourists poses a challenge in developing strategies for further tourism development within the boundaries of the national park that will not subvert local landscape affiliations (Haukeland et al., 2010, 2011). Simultaneously, as locals considered that authenticity was closely connected to cultural traditions and a long-lasting interconnectedness between people and landscape (Daugstad et al., 2006a), and preferred tourism development to take place in villages and valleys surrounding the park (Lundberg et al., 2021), opportunities for establishing a more common ground arise. As both locals and tourists shared a desire to maintain the wildlife and landscape characteristics of the national park (Haukeland et al., 2011, 2013; Gundersen et al., 2015), that desire may serve as a common denominator for emphasizing activity and meeting points outside the park's boundary. In this regard, small local companies could offer tourists insights into current strategies for making a living and living well in the mountain region of Central Norway in accordance with local values and the use of natural resources (Hidle 2019).

Our findings have shown how people locally connected authenticity to a close, traditional and user-oriented connection to the landscape, which included the recruitment of someone to take over responsibility for management for future generations (Daugstad et al., 2014). When a landscape has changed, decayed, or disappeared, and biological, cultural-historical, and aesthetic values are threatened, restoration often take place on the basis of an idea of how the landscape appear in an authentic state (Vinge and Flø 2015). In this connection, the original landscape is often linked to a period in which the majority of the population subsisted on livestock-based agriculture with varied and intensive use of the landscape resources. It can be argued that such a landscape can only spring from an agricultural society that belongs to the past and thus any attempt to return to the same society would be artificial (Moore et al., 2021). Therefore, for some, such a restoration is envisaged as a re-creation of a landscape of subsistence harvesting and poverty, which is neither possible nor desirable (Vinge and Flø 2015). The same arguments were made by some of our informants. Some argued that landscape protection was an 'idyllicization' of a time that no longer existed, and that such an attempt could put obstacles in the way of a necessary development built on modernized and dynamic agriculture in larger and more market-oriented units (Bele et al., 2017). This was an understanding of the landscape as a product of the basis of life that is always created. It could be argued that landscaping that has a basic business idea aimed at, for example, the development of tourism investments is both necessary and justifiable, but only under certain conditions that important biological, historical, and aesthetic qualities are safeguarded.

Instead of focusing on *scenic views* and visits to mountain areas, many

of our informants expressed that local entrepreneurs could focus on giving tourists more *insights*. By this they meant enabling tourists to gain insights into the identity of the communities with healthy agriculture and especially the vital summer farm tradition, the cultural history, and the scenic living landscape in the valleys (Daugstad et al., 2014; Mei et al., 2020). The mining history in the vicinity of Røros is an important part of this identity too, and one that directly links the agricultural villages to the mining village where there has been a very long tradition of local food and product supply (Guttormsen and Fageraas 2011). Additionally, these are the stories of local food and food production that could be told in the valleys and villages around Forollhogna National Park. Increased focus on sustainable tourism, local food, activity vacations, and genuine experiences make it possible to see the potential for further investment in small-scale business activities in the villages, to the extent this is desirable from a local point of view. At the same time, and as some of our informants reminded us, it may be important to remember that some of the tourists who are drawn to the area via the World Heritage Site of Røros come from relatively urban places and have limited experience of outdoor activities. What can be regarded as very simple and unspectacular nature-based offerings locally can still have great appeal among such tourists. This can be activities such as attending bonfire with food, snowshoeing, short skiing trips, short walks in the snow, or other activities that give tourists a unique experience related to clean, quiet, and relatively untouched nature. Several informants were involved in tourists' acquisition of knowledge, for example about local food production, natural and cultural history, southern Sami history, or animal and plant life, which could help to increase the tourists' experiences of the Forollhogna National Park region, without compromising local understandings of authenticity.

Partly based on how the various study participants perceived the landscape, of which the properties and farming were a part, there were differences in terms of the opportunities and limitations they saw in the landscape. Furthermore, the variations were related to notions of what constitutes an authentic landscape and to what extent someone primarily links their business to an understanding of the landscape from a retrospective or future-oriented perspective. The latter would probably be affected in part by the type of farming in question, and not least to what extent there are prospects for continued farming and maintaining the cultural landscape in the future. While the direct landscape effects of traditional farming are very positive, the farming must also be seen in the light of structural conditions, under which Norwegian district agriculture is gradually being reduced (Vinge and Flø 2015). The result of cooperation between small businesses might be a landscape that would contribute to strengthening the residents' common identity, while at the same time more people would be given opportunities to transform both agriculture and the farms themselves. Our informants were concerned about the future and the further development of farming practices, and they warned about a collapse of vulnerable small communities based on agriculture. The main reason was that the farmers were old, and no one was willing to take over the farms. The problem of depopulation of remote rural communities has become more and more prevalent in Norway, and therefore maintaining the authenticity in the longer term will largely depend on the recruitment situation.

5. Conclusions

In focusing attention on peoples' constraints and opportunities for living in the countryside close to Forollhogna National Park, we have explored conflicts, tensions, paradoxes, trust, ironies, and knowledge negotiations, but also how new practices and research can provide new opportunities, considering new trends in the use of the protected areas of Norway and Europe for sustainable tourism and local development. In the context of national park management, conservation, and tourism development in the case study region, we conclude that authenticity cannot be ignored. As both tourists and residents shared a desire to maintain the wildlife and landscape characteristics of the national park,

authenticity may serve as a common denominator for emphasizing local development, nature-based tourism activities, and meeting points outside the park's boundary. Our results indicate that by providing tourists with insights into community livelihoods and the local use of natural resources in both the past and the present, this will increase the meaning and validity of authenticity among the stakeholders. Such a conclusion stands in contrast to the national branding strategy for national parks in Norway, which focuses on scenic views, spectacular attractions, and wilderness experiences. Involving tourists in a knowledge process, for example related to local food production, natural and cultural history, southern Sami history, or the national park's animal and plant life, could help to increase visitors' experience of the larger national park region, without compromising local understandings of authenticity. Our results also indicate that there is still a lot of optimism in rural Norway and that residents want to preserve values related to nature, cultural traditions, and authenticity, but this will not happen with the existing biocentric conservation policy that is characterized by top-down governance. Therefore, stakeholders in local communities and the tourism industry need to be increasingly involved in dynamic management strategies based on involvement and establishment of common arenas for negotiations.

Author statement

V.G. – Vegard Gundersen. S.R. – Stine Rybråten. V.G. and S.R. conceived the idea, designed the study and both authors took part in the data collection using different quantitative and qualitative methods to secure transdisciplinary research process. V.G. wrote the first draft, and S.R. commented on and approved further drafts.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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