

The combination of nature protection and neighborhood development: possibility of the model on the Kola peninsular

The possibility of application of a new Western paradigm as to the specially protected natural territories in the Extreme North of Russia is discussed in the article. It implies the combination of nature protection and neighborhood development. The author writes in brief about the new paradigm and the system of specially protected natural territories in the Murmansk Oblast. There are such problems of specially protected natural territories in the region as conflict of interest between different stakeholders, lack of support from the authorities and weak tourism infrastructure and competence in this sphere. However, the enthusiasm on the subject of local national parks and nature parks and a growing number of tourists allow us to suppose that the role of specially protected natural territories in the neighborhood development will be more significant in future.

Nature protection, new paradigm for specially protected natural territories, neighborhood development, ecological tourism.



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There are a lot of specially protected natural territories in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. They were created under the common strategy of natural resources preservation of this territory. There are about one thousand of specially protected natural territories covering over 180 km² only in Russian and Norwegian parts of the Barents Region [1]. It has ever been the custom to think that specially protected natural territories are created to the prejudice of local economic development. However, the trend to integrate the needs of

neighborhood development into the environmental policy has increased on a world scale in recent years. There are various models of integrated control and use of specially protected natural territories. For example, there is a model which is based on the right of every person to have access to such territories. It is implemented in the Nordic countries. Moreover, European models suggest different forms of interested parties' participation in the creation and management of specially protected natural territories [2].

The combination of nature protection aims and promotion to sustainable use of natural resources is the basis of various Western models of management and usage of specially protected natural territories. In Russia the creation and management of specially protected natural territories are characterized by the Soviet era politics based on the restricted access to the protected areas.

There were some indications that Russia would follow the lead of Western countries in public resources management after the collapse of the Soviet Union [3]. However, there were serious obstacles in the practical implementation of this direction. Various researches showed that there were difficulties when they tried to implement the elements of unified management in the post-Soviet context [4,5]. In this regard the key question is the possibility of principle to use the Western model of creation and management of specially protected natural territories in modern Russia. The article deals with this issue based on the analysis of local economic development and its relations with specially protected natural territories by way of example of three districts in the Murmansk Oblast which have the protected areas. The first example is the Lapland Biosphere Nature Reserve. It is a typical specially protected natural territory with strict protection regime which was established during the Soviet period. Currently the line of conformity with the original purpose (the Reserve has a status of Biosphere Reserve) matches the integration policy with local community. The second example is creating of Khibiny National Park. It is the best example of combination of different groups' interests. The third example is the State Natural Reserve of Kutsa. It is a local reserve which is situated in the Kandalaksha Region of the Murmansk Oblast. There are no conflicts of interests at the local level here and there are initiatives to transform the reserve into a natural park within the existing strategy of tourism development.

A new paradigm for specially protected natural territories – combination of nature protection and stable use of resources

The total number of specially protected natural territories in the world is more than 120 000 units. They cover near 14% of the Earth's surface. Despite the diversity of specially protected natural territories, the most widespread of them are national parks. The first national parks were initiated by the United States. For example, Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872. The classic model of specially protected natural territories is based on nature protection; it doesn't concentrate on the neighborhood development. The vertical structure of protected territories management oriented to the nature protection "from people" has been dominating for many years. Sometimes specially protected natural territories were created mainly for tourists but at the same time they limited the capacity of local communities.

However, the new paradigm was developing during last thirty years. It contained the propositions which were opposite to some ideas of the classical model. Social and economic objectives were moved to the center of protected area management and local population began to be regarded as the category which would benefit from its proximity to specially protected natural territories.

The most important changes in the management of specially protected natural territories have been occurring since the mid-1990s. Significant changes in the protected areas policy were noted between the IVth and Vth World Congress on National Parks which took place in 1992 and 2003, respectively. Also so-called "Seville Strategy" of UNESCO which was adopted in 1995 contributed to integration of environmental goals and sustainable development. It influenced over the world policy of protected areas management. One of the global surveys was oriented to the numerical score of the overall trend to increase the numbers of participants and control modes of specially protected natural territories [7].

The vast majority of respondents (83%) indicated that the number of various interested parties and the degree of their participation in the process of decision-making on the problems of specially protected natural territories have increased over the last decade. Moreover, there was a growing interest in the participation of local communities in the management of their own specially protected natural territories. In 1992 about 40% of respondents pointed out the lack of local communities' influence over the decision-making on the problems of specially protected natural territories. The results of the subsequent polls showed that such opinions were practically absent (2% of respondents in 2002). Another similar trend was the convergence of the interests of environmental protection and such economic sectors as mining, oil and gas sector and tourist industry. Some observers regard these changes as the changing role of specially protected natural territories because they operate as a tool of social planning and income generation.

The World Congress on National Parks approved a series of recommendations in 2003. One of the main among them was Recommendation №12 "Tourism as a vehicle for Conservation and Support of Protected Areas". It was noted during the congress that tourism and recreation sector can provide benefits for specially protected natural territories. And one of the recommendations concerned the necessity to ensure tourism's contribution to local economic development and poverty reduction (Recommendation 1c) [8]. Positive aspects of tourism development in the protected areas are widely covered in many publications and political documents [2, 9]. The whole point is that the new paradigm of nature protection support neighborhood development as an integral part of biological diversity conservation. It seemed "unthinkable" a few years ago. However, it's interesting question if these ideas can be realized in Russia and if the basic provisions of Russian protected areas system meet a new paradigm and integration goals of neighborhood development in environmental issues.

Specially protected natural territories of the Murmansk Oblast and neighborhood development

The Murmansk Oblast is located on the Kola Peninsula in the northwestern part of Russia. It borders on Norway and Finland in the west. The important characteristic of this region is a high level of urbanization: 92% of people live in the urban settlements.

The regional economy is based mainly on the use of huge reserves of natural resources, especially minerals. The region produces almost 100 percent of Russia's apatite concentrate, 43% of nickel, 14% of refined copper and 12% of iron-ore concentrate. Another important resource is fish. The regional share in the total Russian production of fishery products is 14% [10].

Nowadays there are 60 specially protected natural territories covering about 1300 thousand hectares in the Murmansk Oblast. They account for about 8% of the oblast's territory. There are three nature reserves among them. They are the Kandalaksha State Nature Reserve (it has an area of 70.5 thousand hectares), the Lapland Biosphere Nature Reserve (it has an area of 278.4 thousand hectares) and the State natural reserve "Pasvik" (it has an area of 14.73 thousand hectares). There are also eight state nature reserves covering about 619.07 thousand hectares. They include three federal natural reserves, five regional wildlife preserves and 51 natural monuments. There are no national parks and nature parks in the region.

The production activities of large industrial companies which were exploiting mineral raw materials for many years had a negative effect on the surrounding areas. At the same time the specially protected natural territories which are being considered in this article are located in close proximity to some of the industrial giants. The territory of the Lapland Nature Reserve is surrounded by several industrial sites, but production activities of OJSC "Severonikel Enterprise" and OJSC "Kola Mining" and

“Smelting Company” (Monchegorsk) had the most negative impact on the reserve. They plan to create Khibiny National Park in the heart of the mining area where they mine apatite-nepheline ores in Kirovsk. And the preserve “Kutsa” is located in Kandalaksha Region where the largest enterprise is OJSC “Kandalaksha Aluminum Plant”.

Thus, the Murmansk Oblast is characterized by a high level of industrial development on the one hand, and the region remains attractive natural potential on the other hand.

This northern territory is famous for its native zones where tundra, forest tundra and taiga change each other. There are more than 130 000 lakes and rivers here. The region has rich flora and fauna. So, it attracts an increasing number of tourists.

Examples of various specially protected natural territories of the Murmansk Oblast

The Lapland Nature Reserve was established in 1930. It is one of the largest specially protected natural territories in Europe. It covers the area of 278.4 hectares. The reserve is located in the western part of the Murmansk Oblast in the Monchegorsk Region. The reserve was created to preserve the geographical landscape in its natural inviolability and to save the population of wild reindeer.

According to the system of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Lapland Reserve belongs to the category 1, which means the most stringent environmental regime in the protected area and the prohibition of all forms of economic activity.

In the 1990s it was difficult for the reserves to perform their main functions of nature protection and science education because of the economic crisis and reducing of financing from the federal budget. This situation forced the natural reserves to find other sources of financing. To date, the sources of financing has been improved: for example, the share of financial resources to support the activities of the Lapland Nature Reserve is about 80%.

Another sources include OJSC “Severonikel Enterprise” which annually provides the environmental monitoring of reserves’ territory and the industrial area of the company with finance. In addition, the enterprise sponsors a new activity of the reserve – facilitation in tourism.

The Lapland Nature Reserve was included in the global network of Biosphere Reserves in 1985. This fact can be considered as the first step towards the realization of some ideas of a “new paradigm” for specially protected natural territories. Biosphere Reserves network is a part of the UNESCO program “Man and Biosphere”. The central element of this concept is consolidation of biodiversity preservation and the needs of local communities. Thereupon, the Lapland Nature Reserve has created the necessary prerequisites for the development of tourism. Tourism isn’t a type of commercial activity here because natural reserves are not allowed to be engaged in business but it is an element of ecological education. Tourist services in the nature reserve are developed also within the scope of international cooperation with Norway and Finland, as well as with local businesses. In whole it should be noted that the Lapland Nature Reserve is an example of cooperation of the specially protected natural territory and the local community.

The regional preserve “Kutsa” is an example of another type of specially protected natural territory in the Murmansk Oblast. It was established in 1994. The main goal of the preserve was to keep the protected area in its natural state, to conserve the habitats of rare and endangered plant and animal species, to maintain ecological balance and to conduct researches and nature-conservative measures. The initiative to establish the reserve came from the local Council which enlisted support of the regional authorities and the federal authorities of forest management as a result of nine-year preparation process. Huge tracts of old-growth forests in that area became one of the determining factors to establish the preserve.

Besides the purposes of nature protection the local authorities proceeded from the current economic situation in the region and rising unemployment. They staked on the development of tourism because they dealt with the border territories. Currently, the necessary tourist infrastructure is improving for this purpose. In addition, there are plans to expand the preserve and change its status to a natural park in order to promote tourism.

However, the local potential employees are incompetent in the tourism industry. It is necessary to use the external resources to train skilled employees and to support local travel agencies. However, there is an enthusiasm for the development of tourism in the preserve.

A good example of a new trend in the sphere of specially protected natural territories in the Murmansk Oblast is the creation of Khibiny National Park. The main reason for this initiative is that the unique nature of Khibini mountains is traditionally a local recreation centre. It also attracts tourists from other regions of Russia and foreigners. There are no official statistics about the number of persons visiting this area but according to some estimates about 60 000 tourists go to Khibiny every year [10]. However, the popularity of Khibiny nature has its downside: because only a small amount of local travel companies are engaged in organized tours, most of tourists here are free-wheeling holidaymakers. They don't care of environmental conditions after their visits. On the other hand, exploitation of the new deposits of apatite and nepheline ores can damage the unique landscapes of Khibiny. In this situation the initiators of Khibiny National Park (local environmental organizations and institutions of the Kola Science Centre) consider the establishment of specially protected natural territory in this area as the only way to preserve its natural value.

However, the preparatory process for the creation of the national park in Khibiny has been lasting for many years but the final decision hasn't been adopted yet.

Owing to lack of interest in the creation of the park by the federal authorities, which must finance it according to the law as a federal specially protected natural territory, it was decided to create firstly Natural Park Khibiny (regional federal specially protected natural territory) as the more realistic project at this time.

The attitude of interested parties to the creation of the park in Khibiny is different at the local level. Local tourist agencies regard it as a positive step towards the development of in-coming tourism in the region. On the other hand, some of them are afraid of exclusion of the small local tourist companies out of business because large tourist companies from Moscow and St. Petersburg would be interested in the development of tourism in this region.

The attitude to the development of specially protected natural territories by large industrial enterprises is also important in this situation. As opposed to the examples of cooperation among enterprises and specially protected natural territories (as in the case of the Lapland Reserve) or indifferent attitude to the preserves with mild environmental regimes, the creation of a natural park in Khibiny has caused completely different reaction. OJSC "Apatite", whose production activities don't directly touch the protected area, takes a positive view of the park creation in Khibiny. At the same time its business rival OJSC "North-Western Phosphorous Company" is going to defend its right to develop the fields one of which is located in the vicinity of the prospective park.

The company is licensed to work, so the only way to stop its industrial activity here is withdrawal of this license. But it seems unlikely. We can suppose that in consideration of conflict of interests they would prefer business because it is very important for social and economic status of two cities – Kirovsk and Apatity. It is also confirmed by the opinion of the local population because a lot of people work at the regional mining enterprises. As a matter of principle, people haven't anything against

the park but at the same time they put their economic interests above any other considerations. At the same time defenders of nature are troubled about Khibiny area. If mining is developed in the region, unique natural area of Khibiny would be destroyed and this recreational resource would lose its value.

Nature protection for neighborhood development: is it a model for the Extreme North of Russia?

Has a new paradigm of specially protected natural territories which means the strengthening of neighborhood development and nature protection turned into the dominant model on an international scale? However, how are these ideas implemented in the Russian context? What role do specially protected natural territories play in the development of new economic activities? Do they contribute to the neighborhood development in the regions of the Extreme North of Russia?

It is interesting to note that in whole the state power in Russia is interested in the Western idea of combination of nature protection and various types of economic activity at the local level. The adopted federal and regional target programs for tourism development confirm it. These programs stress the importance of the development of tourism industry including specially protected natural territories. In practice, however, the predominant forms of specially protected natural territories are nature reserves and any economic activities including commercial tourism are prohibited in these areas. The only form of tourism which is allowed in nature reserves is so-called "educational tourism" that focuses on the educational

aspects of this activity. The Lapland Nature Reserve develops such kind of tourism in the Murmansk Oblast. It offers cultural and educational tours for organized groups, primarily for pupils. Creation of nature museums and ecological trails in the reserves makes them more accessible to the public, although the overall number of visitors is still small. About 5000 people usually visit the nature reserves in the Murmansk Oblast (*table*) [11].

The discussion about the possibility of development of ecological tourism in the reserves has been carried on for a long time. The proponents of such opportunity argue their position by the fact that carefully controlled tourism on the specially protected natural territories will enhance the value of reserves for general public and authorities and reduce the possibility of pressure from the alternative activities that could be carried out in the protected areas. Most of the reserves also have demonstrated their desire to develop ecological tourism [12]. Opponents of tourism development on the specially protected natural territories stand for preservation and restoration of the unique ecosystem in the reserves in accordance with the original purpose of their creation [13].

The process of national parks establishment in Russia is very slow. There is also a lack of awareness of the real benefits of specially protected natural territories with a view to tourism development [14]. National Park Khibiny which is planned to be created in the Murmansk Oblast shows that the role of national parks is perceived by the community as a means to regulate and promote the recreational and tourist activities on the commercial basis.

The development of ecological and cultural tourism in the State Nature Reserves of the Murmansk Oblast

Indicator	2002	2003	2006	2007
Museums	3	3	5	5
The number of visitors	1757	3470	3739	4877
Foreigners	22	80	99	232
Visit-centers	-	1	3	3
The number of visitors	-	540	3779	4706
Foreigners	-	23	124	232
Ecological trails and routes	2	15	17	18

On the other hand, there are significant obstacles to combine nature reserve, sustainable use of resources and neighborhood development. First of all, the large industrial enterprises which have been operating in the area since the Soviet era dominate in decision-making. They don't give an opportunity to smaller firms and environmental organizations to influence over the results. Park Khibiny clearly shows this correlation of forces because environmental plans of this area are at variance with the interests of the mining industry.

In addition, slow progress of the process and lack of interest from the federal government have contributed to the situation as it was decided to create a natural park instead of the national park which had been originally planned. The bureaucratic procedures related to licensing and rental of land for tourism activities are also the problems. Though, the local travel companies continue to pin their hopes for business development with the creation of National Park Khibiny.

The situation with the preserve "Kutsa" in the Kandalaksha Region of the Murmansk Oblast is a little more optimistic because the projects of tourism development don't conflict with other economic interests. In addition, there are plans to change the status of the reserve and turn it into a natural park although both legislative regulation and financial standing of the regional natural parks are not as favorable as the federal national parks. Local initiators of the natural park also plan to create the necessary infrastructure and train of the staff to develop ecological tourism in the area.

This problem is especially urgent because the Murmansk Oblast hasn't organized hiking trails and routes and there is a lack of tourists' accommodation and shortage of qualified personnel and training programs here.

The small businesses which have 5 or 6 persons in staff operate in the Murmansk Oblast. The total number of employees in tourism business in the region is comparable to the total staff of three reserves on the territory of the Murmansk Oblast.

Thus, there are a lot of serious obstacles and restraints on increasing of travel agencies and tourist traffic although there are positive steps towards the development of tourism as a promising new type of economic activity. In addition, today the role of specially protected natural territories in contributing to this area of neighborhood development can be described as modest.

The issue of establishing of national or natural parks remains open in the region. The role of nature reserves in point of local economic development will be very limited in any case due to their strict nature conservation regime. Proponents of the traditional role of reserves, obviously, also have their own weighty arguments when they criticize a new paradigm and "social approach" to environmental issues [15]. On the other hand, local initiatives to create new parks, growing trend of tourism development on the Kola Peninsula, the prospects for international cooperation, and the federal and regional authorities' approval upon the development of ecological tourism that can contribute to neighborhood development in near-term outlook.

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