



# CONSTRAINTS FACING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARK IN UPPER AKKAR DONNIEH- 2008



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## FOREWORD

While initiating a pioneer approach in Akkar and Donniyeh highlands to set the path towards the establishment of a Natural National Park, Mada had faced several challenges related to the inherent nature of the project (the project is located in a rural area distant from Mada headquarter), constraints related to the area itself such as unsustainable practices and the global national framework where protected areas are usually managed by strict rules and regulations. The concept of a natural national park (NNP) is an attempt to define, with local stakeholders, a common project including development, conservation and sustainable use of existing resources and build on strengths and weaknesses of the area.



The methodological approach based on data analysis, studies, researches, extensive consultation and information exchange with concerned parties allowed Mada to define the potentials of the area and the major constraints facing the creation of the Natural National Park (NNP) in Akkar and Donnieh highlands. The villages included in the NPP, and due to their geographical positioning, have made up a series of practices deemed necessary to the survival of local communities. Some of these practices might slow or even hinder a participatory process to the creation of a Protected Area. The essential objective of this document will be displaying the stakeholders' different perceptions about the land use within the NNP area.

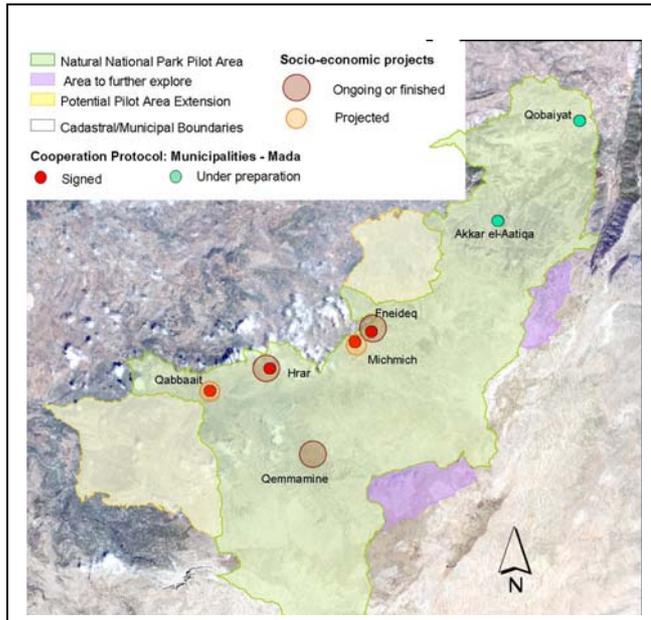
This document is also conceived to inform donors, protected area managers and local communities undertaking a similar conservation approach integrated to sustainable rural development. Ultimately, the report will highlight existing constraints to the process

towards the NNP and will propose sustainable solutions and suggestions to overcome those constraints and lead to effective implementation of the process towards an adequate protection and a flourishing sustainable development.

## PILOT AREA

The NNP pilot area falls within the heart of a National Park designed by the National Master plan for the Lebanese Territory (SDATL, 2004). The current pilot area covers approximately 220 km<sup>2</sup> in Akkar and Donnieh districts regrouping Qobayat, Akkar El-Attika, Fnaideq, Michmich with intention to extend to Hrar, Qabbaait, Assaymoun, Qarne, Jayroun Qemmamine and Mrebbine i.e .

Since 2004, Mada launched a set of activities covering biodiversity assessments, socio-economics, ecotourism, agricultural, education, awareness and capacity building sessions. Mada also produced a vegetation map and initiated a preliminary zoning map of the pilot area (Newsletter, 2007).



In order to ensure sustainability for such activities, Mada have already signed protocols of cooperation with the municipalities of Fnaideq, Hrar, Mishmish, and Qabait as an opening to the elaboration of the *charte du parc*. In December 2008, the rhones Alpes region (France), organized a visit to France inviting Mada with representatives of different governmental agencies (Ministry of Environment, Agriculture, Directorate General for Urban Planning DGUP, and the Council for Development and Reconstruction



CDR), representatives of local municipalities, municipality federations (El Joume, Jord el-Kitaa, Qobayat) and Akroum mayor. This visit defined the current extent of the pilot area (over Fnaideq, Akkar el Atika, Qobayat municipalities) and resulted in the creation of two Park committees: a Technical Park Committee (TPC) with technical persons mandated from those municipalities and a Steering Committee gathering the head of municipalities. The TPC has an advisory role, the SC has a decision role and Mada is in charge of the coordination towards the park.

## TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NNP



In line with the suggestion of the SDATL, Mada has been working on setting the path towards the creation of a Natural National Park in Akkar-Donnieh through promoting and conducting activities ultimately aiming at reaching an agreement with local stakeholders and decision makers on a common vision for their territory. Therefore, all initiatives and activities (achieved and ongoing) result from extensive consultation and information exchange with concerned parties (refer to Newsletter (Mada, 2007)).

Previous studies on the pilot area like the flora assessment (Sattout, 2007) and the avifauna assessment (SPNL, 2007) confirmed the high ecological value of the area. In parallel, a draft law for the designation of the Qamouaa forest as a Natural Reserve had been prepared by the Ministry of Environment, approved by the Council of Ministers (decision n. 35, 11.10.06) and was transmitted to the parliament for voting. The Directorate General for Urban Planning (DGUP) has declared the Qamouaa region as area under study in order to preserve the area's intrinsic value. The DGUP's decision was valid until end of February 2008 and is currently being reconsidered.

The region disposes of a high natural potential and therefore of a high potential for ecotourism. However, the region is the least developed region of Lebanon with the lowest living standards. It suffers from poverty and difficult socio-economic conditions (Mada, "Forgotten Akkar", 2008). It is nearly a virgin region from the research point of view and it is also an unknown region to the majority of the Lebanese population. Despite its outstanding richness, the various threats on the area and governmental will to effectively undertake protection action on the site, to date no official legal protection exists and conservation can only be sustained by the power of local will and motivation.

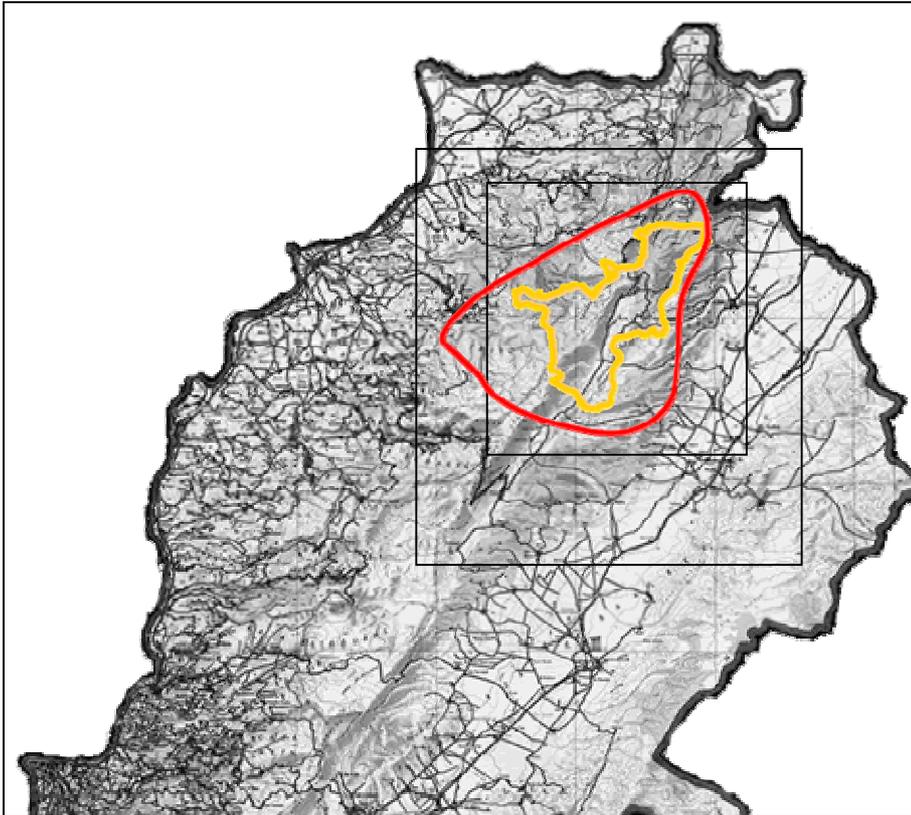


Figure 1: The Natural National park location as per the SDATL (red boundaries) and the location of the pilot area (yellow limits)

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Respecting the values and guiding principles of Mada and recognizing the right of landownership by locals, the present document is based on field visits, data collection through meetings and interviews with concerned stakeholders complemented by extensive bibliographic data collection and synthetic analysis. Moreover, Mada coordinated with concerned governmental agencies (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Cadastral department of Tripoli, Directorate General of Urban Planning) as well as key persons involved in the NPP (M. Nizar Saghieh and M. Abdallah Zakhia), Mada library and Mada team, CNRS – Remote Sensing and other independent experts and civil persons concerned by the NPP. Collected data included legal texts, ministerial decisions, references, maps, studies, researches and field surveys. A list of these documents is provided in the references section.

From early march until August 2008, Mada organized field visits with identified stakeholders in Qobayat, Akkar El Atika, Fnaideq and Michmich serving three main objectives:

Acknowledging the main constraints and factors of the NPP region

- 1) Going through the perception of the locals on the management of their territory
- 2) Validating accuracy and correcting existing data and maps, and building a photo database on particular features on the site.



## CONSTRAINTS

Traditional values and practices of the local communities were reliable to ensure the sustainability of life in the region. During the last decades, the region is being affected by the implementation and the use of imported values and practices aiming to improve the lifestyle of the local communities. Some of these imported features were adapted by locals without taking into consideration the overall impact of this adoption. Therefore, these practices considerably alter the natural and social environments which in turn represent a constraint to the feasibility process towards the NNP and sometimes even hold it back.

This document will go through the different constraints to the Park project that will require to be thoroughly modified to enable sustainable perspectives. Once aware of these constraints, determination, conscious will and coordination between the different parties concerned by the NPP, will ensure protection, conservation and sustainable development in the future National Park.

## LEGAL PROTECTION WEAKNESSES

The legal framework governing Protected Areas in Lebanon was conceived to guaranty the sustainability of the ecosystems and cultural heritage features. But, the actual practices aren't always in line with existing legal texts and protection decisions. Several decisions emanating from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Council of Ministers and the Higher Council for Urbanism have concerned different parts of the study area. The Qamoua area has been acknowledged by several decisions as a core zone for conservation. [Table 1](#) presents an exhaustive list of available decisions that were retrieved either from governmental or municipal archives. [Figure 2](#) displays the estimated geographical limits concerned by those decisions.



**Table 1: List of available decisions concerning protection over the pilot area**

Authorities	Legal text	Targeted zone	Content
Ministry of Environment	Decision 19/1 issued in 11-03-2002	Qamouaa	Qamouaa forests protection and initiation of the process for the declaration of a protected area
	Decision 14/1 issued in 06.10.1995	Karm el Chbatt	All governmental lots are subject to natural reserves regulations
Ministry of Agriculture	Decision 11/1 issued in 17.01.1997	Mghrebine-Wadi Janham	Law 558 issued in 24.07.1996 that protects the Cedars, pines and junipers forests.
	Decision 1/591 issued in 30.12.1996	Bisbina - Akkar	The ministry is undertaking liberation and limitation of the forests in line with the law 588
	Decision n1/588 issued in 30.12.1996	Qamouaa	Protection of the forest by law 558 issued in 24.07 1996.
	Decision n.1/589 issued in 1996	Karm el Chbatt	Protection of the forest by law 558 issued in 24.07 1996.
	Decision n.11/1 issued in 17.01.1997	Mghrebine-Wadi Janham	Protection of the forest by law 558 issued in 24.07 1996.
	Decision n. 1/165 issued in 1991	Qamouaa	National Hima
Higher Council of Urbanism	Decision issued in 22.02.2006	Qamouaa	Declaration of the Qamouaa as an area under study
Ministry of Tourism	Decision n. 198/1993	Qamouaa	
Council of Ministries	Decision n.35 issued first of October 2006	Qamouaa	Creation of a natural reserve once the land survey is completed
Mayors (makhatirs) request	Letter to the Ministry of Environment issued in 2002	Limits - North: Wadi Janham; South West: Brissa, naba Sukar; South East: Mazraat Jourd Mghrebine and West: Donniah village	Creation of a natural reserve over 10.000.000 m2 of governmental lots

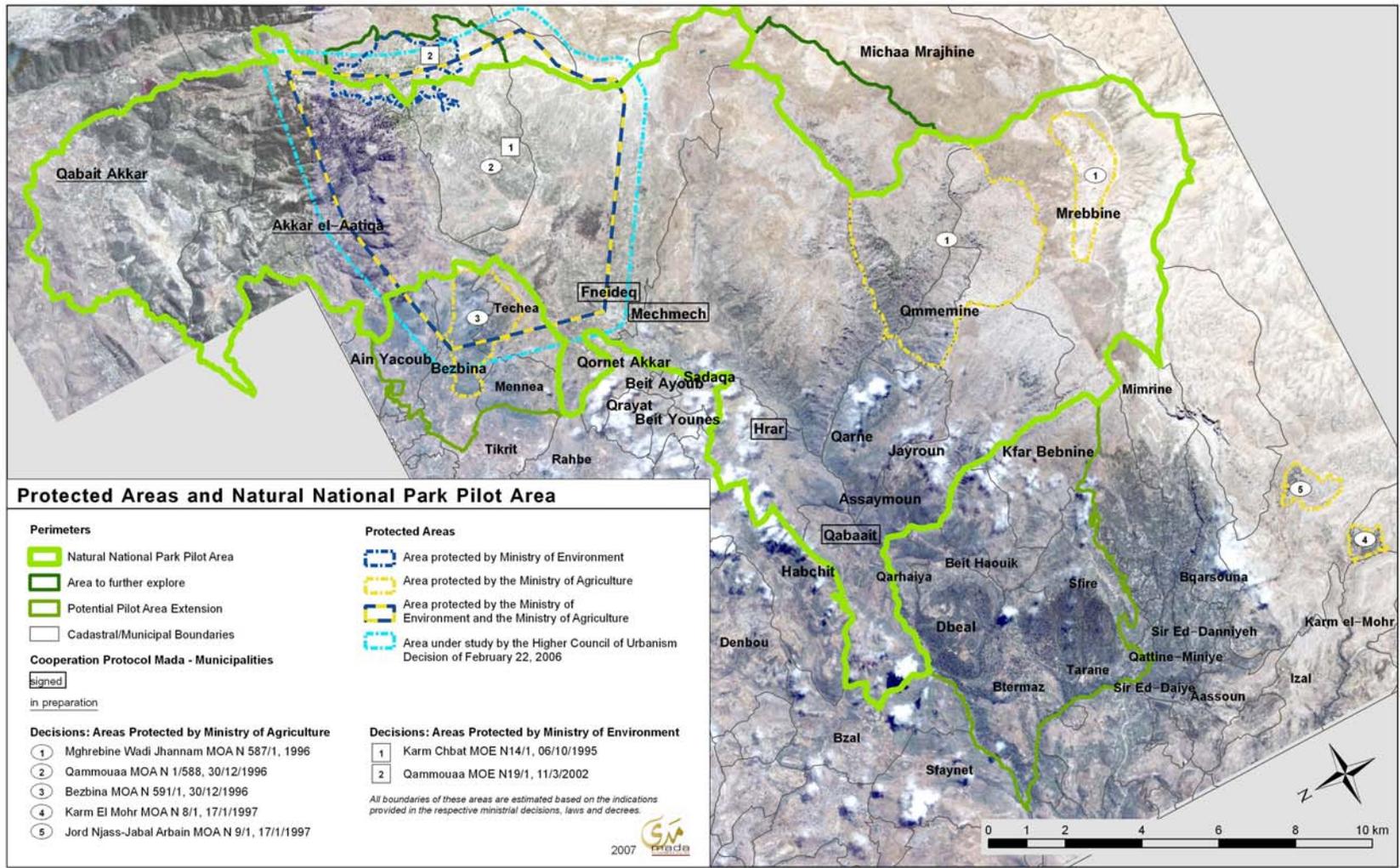


Figure 2: Protected Areas

Figure 2 above displays the areas under protection concerned by each decision and highlights the overlapping between the target areas.

However, none of these texts include a map or exact geographic landmarks enabling accurate delineation of the protected areas perimeters. Although each of these texts mentioned the need for the rural development department in the Ministry of Agriculture to 1) publish the decision in the official newspaper, 2) inform all concerned institutions and 3) initiate the process of effective delineation, as core elements of the decision, none of these actions have been executed in the area. The effective onsite situation reflects the absence of endorsement of those tasks.

On the other hand, the absence of protection, land survey delineation and the absence of a management body onsite, responsible for imposing the respect of those decisions have resulted in a fuzzy situation where claims and violations are noted daily. Little or no action is undertaken against them.

The SDATL have already suggested a National Park over Akkar, Donnieh and Hermel (as shown in figure 1 but the SDATL is not yet backed up by any legal text and consequently no effective protection currently exists in the region. In order to prevent such miss cooperation between organisms concerned by conservation and development projects, the Ministry of Environment, as the tutelage body for Protected Areas in Lebanon, has prepared a



draft General Framework Law for Protected Areas (GFLPA). The GFLPA accounts for the need to develop different categories of protected areas benefiting from different levels and types of protection over the various zones defined onsite.

The GFLPA has been prepared, reviewed and commented by the concerned ministries and parties. To date, this draft GFLPA is on hold in the MOE for the past 2 years. Once this GFLPA is voted, designation of nature reserves or any other type of protected areas will be subject to a decision emanating from the Council of Ministers (without requiring time wasting complicated procedures).

In line with the preparation of the GFLPA, the Ministry of Environment has dedicated a special draft law for Qamouaa. This draft law is on hold in the Council of Ministers since 2006 and is expected to be voted as soon as the Council of Ministers resumes activities.



In parallel, a draft decree defining protected areas categories adapted from IUCN categories has been prepared by the MOE. This draft decree accounts for the need to define a category of a National Park. However, the National Park category as described in the draft decree does not include villages and roads, but is restricted to a core zone for strict protection and a sustainable use zone where light activities such as eco tourism and agriculture could be envisaged. The National Park as designed by the SDATL and the Natural National Park as conceived by

Mada extend over an inhabited territory that includes areas with great protection and conservation potential and areas dedicated for agro-pastoral activities are prospected. The urban extension in NPP is still under study therefore the urban extension is currently random and almost out of control.

The process towards the implementation of the NPP will soon face a major challenge related to its official designation as protected area by the Lebanese Government. This is especially the case when the Arabic translation of the NNP will be considered as the National Park category (*mehmiyya wataniyyat*) does not include villages and livelihood within the park limits, whereas the Protected Landscape category (*manzar mahmi*) includes villages and areas with special focus for protection.

As the NPP pilot zone extends over four municipalities and around 10 other villages, amendments and modifications to the draft decree of Protected Areas Categories and their designation should be envisaged to reconcile between the approach initiated by Mada, the local authorities and the legal adequacy.

## LANDOWNERSHIP AND LAND SURVEY

Effective protection can be sustained only through the contribution and effective participation of locals, which necessarily undermines recognizing the rights of the local communities concerning the land use over the territory. The cadastre and territory delineation in the NPP is ongoing and the existing temporary cadastre does not clearly distinguish between private, municipal and governmental properties. This fact renders the protection, conservation and sustainable development initiatives more complicated and difficult to achieve.



For example, Qamouaa was suggested by Mada as one of the NPP core conservation zone with regards to its high potential in terms of biodiversity, eco-tourism and agriculture. The absence of official cadastre and unclear definition of landownership is delaying the implementation of a management plan that will bring profit from ecotourism practices to local communities. For more details about the unclear landownership in Qamouaa refer to the fact finding report ([Mada, Village profile, 2008](#)). Another example showing the impact of unclear landownership is another conflict zone located between Qobayat and Beit Jaafar. To accelerate the territorial management process, and in the absence of any official land use document, municipalities have initiated with Mada a voluntary preliminary definition of future land use illustrated in the [vocation map](#). This process has started in 2007 by displaying a common agreement on the future land use over the NPP area. In Qobayat, only a preliminary cadastre exists. However, even if a list of governmental parcels exists with governmental agencies, no exact delineation is available and parcels can hardly be located nor on maps nor on field.

In Akkar el Atika, all inhabited and agricultural lots were delineated but not the highlands (*jord*). In Fnaideq and Mishmish, no cadastre exists and landownership is declared by the mayor enactment in the presence of two witnesses. This complex situation represents one of the major challenges to the effective implementation of the Natural National Park.

## ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

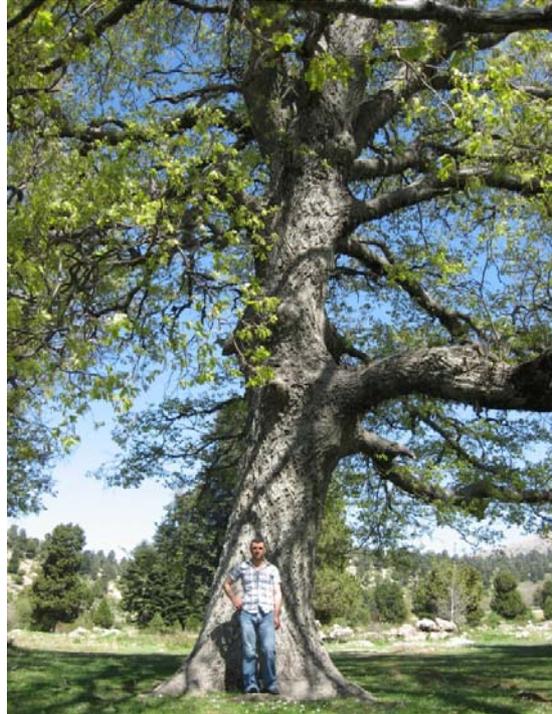
The number of Protected Areas (PAs) in Lebanon has been increasing since the establishment of the Ministry of Environment (MOE) in 1993. In 1996, three PAs were established. Today, there are more than 10 PAs dispersed all over the country. The Ministry of Environment is today the tutelage body for Protected Areas but stakeholders involved in protected areas management also include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, the Ministry of Municipalities and Rural Affairs, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions as well as local communities. This large set of stakeholders and complexity in governance of PAs is lengthening the procedures and slowing reaction time. To date, and despite several efforts, all protected areas still depend largely on public funds to support both their conservation costs as well as the infrastructure maintenance costs.

In an attempt to anticipate management solutions for the NPP, and inspired by the French Regional Parks management guidelines, Mada has worked with concerned municipalities to form two committees; A technical committee (TPC) composed of local experts mandated each by his municipality for technical responsibilities and suggestions. The role of those committees is to accompany the process towards the NP implementation. To date, those committees concern only the municipalities directly neighboring Qamouaa namely, Fnaideq, Akkar el Atika and Qobayat. The steering committee formed by the elected head of the municipalities and municipality federations. This committee is concerned by decision making. These committees shall expand to include additional municipalities, upon agreement on the *charte du parc*.



Both committees and Mada will discuss future management of the NPP and shall reach an agreement on the best option for management. The future NPP management should be at the interface between community management and mixed management models. These models should include the Government (Ministries of Environment, finance and Interior) as financial supporters for the management. Models will also include municipalities, NGO and local groups whom will be in charge of diverse activities management activities and also in charge of financing the costs of such activities.

Securing financial sustainability for conservation management has always represented a challenge to conservationists as the dilemma between ecology and economy is much older than the very recent attempt for reconciliation with the emergence of sustainable development concepts. The World Commission for Protected Areas (WCPA) has highlighted this controversy in a review document on Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas: [A global review of challenges and options \(IUCN, 2006\)](#). Globally, the different mechanisms aiming at achieving sustainable financing for environmental development, protection and conservation, especially in the field of protected areas, can either be at the macro-level mechanisms, executed on a national scale and necessitate government action, or be site-level mechanisms, which can be executed by the protected areas and environmentalists at site level (MOE, Financing Protected Areas, 2006).



As the role of NGOs is becoming increasingly important, proper protected areas management cannot be achieved without vital support of the government and serious long-term commitment from its part. Conservation finances go beyond the classical fundraising approach and necessitate ensuring a rather predictable, stable and reliable source of financing that would make environmental conservation, protection and development affordable and sustainable on the long-run. Consequently, access to International funds or to National financial support should necessarily come after the official designation of the site as a PA is achieved. Under this framework, the pilot area, being in the process of declaration of protection and benefiting to date of no official designation is burdened by additional difficulties of access to funds.

Aiming to attract international funds to the NPP, Mada has succeeded in networking with various actors and International donors to fund the activities undertaken in the region since 2004 (SDC, Ford, ARCS, RSCN, Save the children, Handicap International, Heinrich Boell...). In addition, Mada has coordinated with various actors to undertake projects and activities. In particular:

- The Ministry of Culture provided support to local municipalities for the creation of public libraries in the region (2007).
- The French Cultural Center in Tripoli organized a concert (April 2007), gathering 300 children in Hrar.
- The International NGO, Save the Children, supported a series of summer activities for children in Akkar el-Attika (2005).

## CONSTRAINTS FACING THE ESTABLISHMENT of the NATIONAL PARK IN AKKAR AND DONNIEH HIGHLANDS

- The French NGO Corail and the Rhone Alpes Region (France) organized a colloquium in May 2006 on 'Development and Natural Resources Valuation in partnership with Saint Joseph University in Tripoli and Mada bringing together 14 municipalities as well as local and national stakeholders.
- UNDP-ART Gold organized a meeting in Halba in partnership with Mada, bringing together local municipalities concerned with the National Park thematic (Nov 2007).
- The Rhone Alpes Region (France) has invited a Lebanese delegation (Dec 2007) composed of representatives of different governmental agencies (Ministry of Environment, Agriculture, Public Works, and the CDR), representatives of local municipalities and municipality federations (El Joume, Jord el-Kita, Qobayat), and the mayor of Akroum, as well as Mada. The visit included site visits to Natural Parks (national and regional parks) and discussions with French stakeholders. This visit was to initiate a cooperation between the Rhone Alpes Region and the local municipalities in view of the creation of a Natural National Park in Akkar.
- UNDP-ARTGOLD has invited the NPP committees and Mada to visit Regional Parks in Italy.



Mada is still on the search for additional financial support for the region. But the need for a governmental endorsement and encouraging support (through support letters, Memorandum of understanding etc.) is necessary to ensure the implementation of Mada's vision.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Although any new construction requires an agreement from the municipality and sometimes the DGUP, the urban extension of the NP villages is increasingly conquering the forests neighboring the village. Therefore, an urban development strategy should be initiated in the very near future. In addition to the random extension of the constructed area, many of the constructions lack an appropriate sewage evacuation system. The problem is that some of these constructions are contaminating by their sewage water sources located beneath them causing the spread of diseases, abdominal infections and other digestive malfunction.

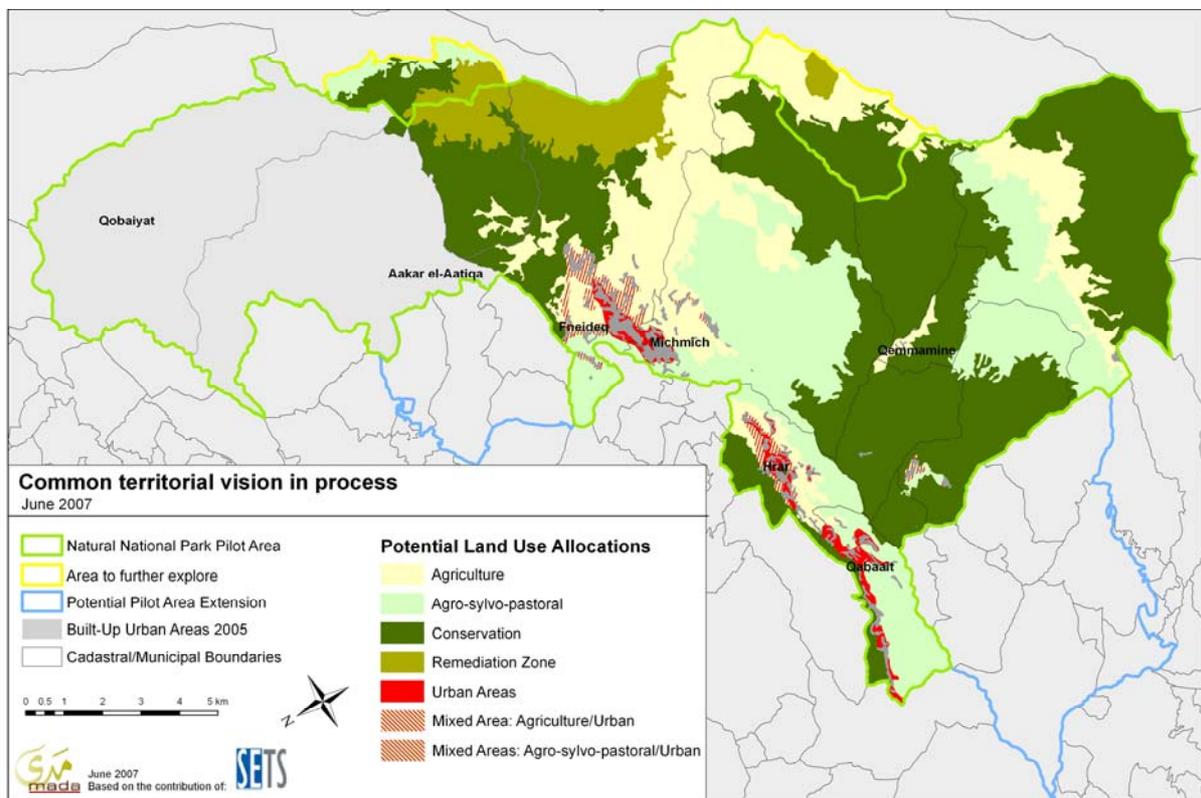


Figure 3: Common territorial vision in Process

In all the NPP villages, waste is not sorted, reused, reduced or recycled. It is being dumped in the Srar dump site, in small local dump sites near the villages, in the forests, in the quarry (Fnaideq) and finally in the river (Michmich). Local initiatives to put an end to such activities always end up by failing. In A.A a sorting plant was implemented with donations and collaboration of the YMCA but the plant was shut down due to administrative complications. Qobaiyat municipality is studying the implementation of a sorting plant. Coming up with a waste management plan that will cover all the region is crucial to put an end to soil pollution and water sources contamination.

## AGRICULTURE

The NPP territory is a well known for its famous agricultural products like the goat meat from Michmich and the apples from El Haffe in Akkar el Atika. The main production is mainly trees (apple, pear...) and summer crops (cereals, vegetables). Some local products are well known products and have become with time “reference products” for the whole Akkar or even for North Lebanon. As one of the most spread activities in the area of study, agriculture represents a major constraint to the establishment of the NNP as farmers could either be considered as an important money generating resource for the area or represent obstacles to proper management of the NNP.



Poverty and financial limitations of the farmers is leading them to get loans in order to buy clones, seedlings or fruit trees and seeds, phytosanitary products, fertilizers and afford production expenses. This investment is facing difficulties to become at least cost effective especially that since the July 2006 war, the region have been witnessing political instabilities especially in the area where selling markets are located (Tripoli).

Outdated techniques and traditional equipments considerably reduce the efficiency of the invested labor and limit the quality of the end products. Moreover, the adopted practices and lack of effective equipment increase production costs which render the production unable to meet local and regional market competition. For example, in Akkar el Atika, the cooperative of bee hive keepers is unable to increase its honey production because of its incapacity to acquire a wax boards for the bee hives.

Local farmers and cooperative managers lack proper marketing strategies and methods. Agriculture in the area holds strong potentials in terms of processed products that could find profitable market shares as *Moune*, but these potentials are not being properly exploited due to the lack of marketing knowhow. For example: the cooperative of Fnaideq has the ability to create a variety of processed outputs such as *kechek*, compote of peach, apricot, cherry and pear; grape lemon, hot sauce, tomato paste with spices, dry jam of fig, apple jam, apple jam mixed with walnut and almond, rose water, citrus syrup, rose syrup, flower water, pickles various etc... However the Fnaideq cooperative only produces *amar el diin el khokh* in large quantities and the rest of the production is limited to small quantities directly produced upon demand. The problem seems mainly related to the absence of a marketing strategy and the lack of promotion for the other products.

Nearly 40% of the total agricultural lands are abandoned in the NPP area. Interviews with farmers revealed four key reasons behind the abandonment of the agricultural land: a) Production is not cost effective; b) Lack of workforce; c) Lack of infrastructure and equipment and d) Cash availability.

## DISCREET DEFORESTATION THROUGH UNSUSTAINABLE LOGGING AND GRAZING ACTIVITIES

Mediterranean forests have witnessed interactive presence of human development since the Neolithic era. These forests have consequently developed an adapted resilience in terms of flora and fauna diversity. Nevertheless, increasing human pressure on natural ecosystems (deforestation, logging and land use modification) is considerably altering the ecosystem dynamics and progressively resulting in dominance of severely perturbed landscapes over the Lebanese territory. The remaining spots of well balanced ecosystems are therefore be-



coming in a way, increasingly precious for conservation purposes



and in the other way, increasingly in demand for their potential to provide free wood fuel. This has resulted in increased logging in the forests for various purposes either vandalism or to provide wood fuel for heating especially that the fossil fuel (*mazout*) is becoming unaffordable for locals.

Logging can be spotted all over the NPP area. Certain areas were subject to excessive wood harvesting during the past decades like the drastic events of tree cutting in Qamoua, Al Qelleh, Michmich, Beit Jafar and the Qobayat Jord. But in general, trees are being cut at breast height reproducing traditional forest management techniques, which allows natural sprouting and sustainable tree growth dynamics.

In Qobayat, logging has been reported to be closely related to fires events recorded since 2005. In fact, following the frequent fires that affected the region in the past 3 years, the municipality was allowing people to cut the burnt trees. This led to a situation where tree logging went a bit out of hand. In the same period, the prices of fossil fuel (*mazout*) increased considerably which acted as an incentive to justify tree cutting in the forests.

With regards to tree cutting, locals choose the trees to be cut in order to respect ecosystem sustainability. As a result, there is no noted zone cutting in Qobayat on the landscapes. But rather imprints of scattered cuttings can be observed.



In Fnaideq and Mishmish, the poverty of the region and the level of illiteracy resulted in a considerable impact on the ecosystems in terms of forest regeneration and wood fuel collection. The *Quercus cerris* forest also known as the turkey oak forest present a rare case of oak forest with near to bare under story. The only species existing in the under story of *Querris cerris* forest is the *Juniperus oxycedrus* bushes. Whereas, elsewhere in Lebanon, *Quercus cerris* forests have a dense understory

(such as in Mazraïit Kfar Debiyen for example). This situation is due to the fact that kids spot the young trees as soon as they develop wood stem to remove them for wood fuel use.

In Akkar el Atika, logging is heavily reported on secondary and tertiary roads that go across the forests over the village. This trend has considerably increased in the past years especially that the price of fossil fuel (*mazout*) is becoming very expensive. Post fire spots are particularly targeted creating an incentive for induced fires as a mean to justify tree cutting.



In an overall perspective of designing a common vision for the territory (NPP approach), integrating wood fuel collection should be envisaged if a sustainable and feasible management plan is designed. In this perspective it is important to introduce back in local practices, organized tree cutting and clearing as a sustainable management method for forests.

Grazing activities aren't homogeneous in all the villages within the NPP area. Grazing practices are not concentrated on limited patches of herbaceous spots but are rather evenly distributed following availability of palatable plants. As most of the endemic flora of Lebanon is located in the understoreys (El-Haber, 1988; Abi-Saleh, 1996; Semaan, 1998), their existence can be directly affected by grazing practices.



The agricultural sector agriculture in Fnaideq and Mishmish is considered as the local communities' major income by supplying the very poor and marginalized area. Cultivation in abandoned parcels represented over the years a very effective mean to claim property over lands with no cadastre. Consequently, this has resulted in an eminent need to justify the need to use the land as an effective mean to allege ownership.

Some of the landscapes are marked by overgrazing features leading in some areas to certain vegetation dynamics that outcome with the development of a bushy understory which sometimes leads to loss of biodiversity and/or fire events.

As grazing is considered a well adapted tool for biodiversity management in Mediterranean ecosystems and since pastures are common components of Mediterranean landscapes, there is an urgent need to adopt integrated grazing scheme managed through the overall area. Such a management scheme should orient grazing practices towards integration of sustainable practices to avoid progressive degradation of ecosystems and counter desertification. This scheme should be based on proper definition of grazing paths throughout the NPP area that accounts for the carrying capacity of the ecosystems and the richness of the understory in terms of palatable plants etc... The adoption of such a management scheme for the National Natural Park could lead not only to enhanced forest regeneration, biodiversity protection, forest fire reduction, but also to the protection of the characteristic landscapes of the area combining agro- sylvo-pastoralism.

## TOURISM

Most of the Lebanese people just know the region by name. They have never been there and have no idea of the beauty it beholds. Akkar and Jouneh highlands are rich in natural and cultural heritages. Tourists visiting the region are attracted by breath taking natural feature, historical and religious genuine monuments. These centers of attraction lack roads leading to them, infrastructure in line with the tourists needs, advertising and management. Roads, if available, are not properly preserved, lack safety measures and orientation signs. The region is also deprived from hotels or other lodging infrastructure. Therefore, tourists are rather interested in a one day visit than spending few days while visiting the region. This inconvenience is not helping the promotion of because visitors will not have enough time to discover the various centers of attraction.



The actual political and landownership conflicts between different communities within the NPP territory is driving away tourist to other more safe destinations. Some of the locals did not yet recognize the benefits of dialog and conflict resolution. Such situations are dramatically slowing the NNP implementation process. By doing so, they are delaying the agreement on a final land use map and *charte du parc*.

It is worth to mention that tourist visiting Qamouaa region for recreation and picnics do not remove their leftovers causing pollution, smells and increase forest fires.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Once established, the NPP will give priority to quality and harmonization between agricultural and touristic activities. NPP will have to define the land survey leading to the final zoning of the region through cooperation between local municipalities. In order to reach these objectives and after displaying the strengths, weaknesses and constraints facing the implementation of the NPP, Mada is willing to discuss comments, interpretations and suggestions concerning the following issues:

- Targeting agriculture as a high potential resource for the NNP while developing an analytical approach regarding the agricultural constraints in the NNP area. Considering the support of agricultural practices through creating the NP label for local products and improving product access to national and international markets. Bringing additional agricultural awareness, trainings, market approach and producing a farmer's almanac etc... -
- Providing a better technical support for the municipalities (capacity building, knowledge sharing and technical intervention) by creating the conditions for catching institutional investments to improve the basic infrastructures by finding solutions for a better infrastructure, a better access to agricultural markets and new job opportunities.
- Reconsidering the legal texts claiming protection while ensuring effective onsite protection by defining new management strategies and identifying guidelines, orientations and limits. Regulating and redefining the allowed practices concerning hunting, farming, wood fuel collection, charcoal production and grazing. Standard managerial policies and procedures and clarification of the committee's responsibilities are crucial for the conservation of ecological integrity and protection against human induced violations. Promoting the area (books, pictures, posters, documentaries) and highlighting the cultural heritage in order to enforce the tourist attraction of the region
- Reviewing the draft decree of Protected Areas categories to include a specific category well adapted to Natural parks including livelihood and urban areas, and acknowledging for the need for protection and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Increasing the effectiveness of commercial activities and reconsidering the role of women in economic activity by supporting local know how with a potential of added value. Expanding partnerships to new actors (cooperatives, CBO's, etc...). Engaging political figures and lobbying to attract donors and investors.

Finally, none of this work would be possible without an optimal coordination between locals, their representatives and all concerned governmental departments.

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