



Europe Sinjajevina –a mountainous hole in a sea of protection: Montenegro

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► To cite this version:

Pablo Domínguez. Europe Sinjajevina –a mountainous hole in a sea of protection: Montenegro. Journal Mountain update , 2020, 107, p.12. hal-03080374

HAL Id: hal-03080374

<https://hal.science/hal-03080374>

Submitted on 17 Dec 2020

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Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE

September 2020 # 107

*Wilderness is the
wild Earth. It is a large tract
of natural country,
essentially unmarked by
modern impacts ...*

It is where we all began.

Bob Brown 2015

Great Ravine, Tasmania—Australia photo: Martin Hawes

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A note from the editor

Welcome everyone to the 107th edition of the Mountain UPDATE. Strangely enough this issue seems to be full of mountain stories involving the first, biggest, smallest, oldest, most famous, most courageous, lightest, darkest...the list goes on and on.

So happy reading—I hope you find something that piques your interest! As per the previous issue I have not included meetings and events as so many have been cancelled.

Stay safe and well...September 2020

Europe

Sinjajevina – a mountainous hole in a sea of protection / Montenegro

From **Pablo Dominguez** Environmental Anthropology Senior Researcher at GEODE, CNRS (France) – Associate Researcher at LASEG/AHCISP, UAB (Spain) - ICCA Consortium honorary member - on behalf of the Save Sinjajevina civic initiative.

The **Sinjajevina-Durmitor massif** mountain range in Montenegro is a traditional pastoral territory that is being transformed in its south eastern part, into a military training ground.

Geographically the area is unique: it is a high limestone plateau of over 1,000 km², between 1600 to 2200 meters above sea level. It is the second-largest mountain pasture in Europe and hosts a [unique biodiversity](#). Sinjajevina covers 600 km² in the south eastern part of the massif. Its natural and cultural values are widely recognized: it is at the heart of the UNESCO protected Tara Biosphere Reserve and is bordered by 2 World Heritage Sites.

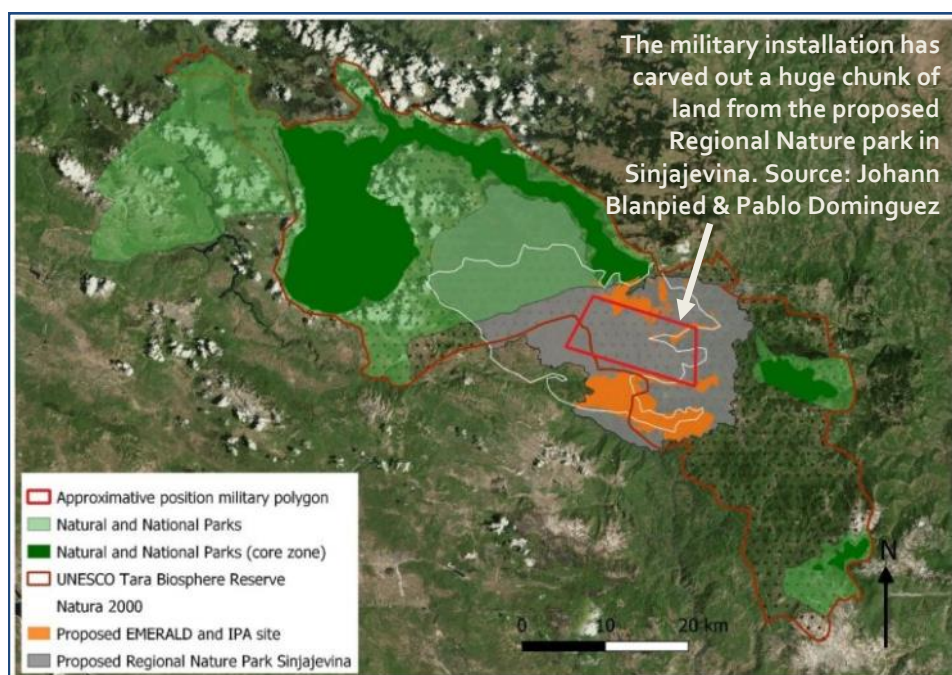
The pastures are in many cases still collectively governed by different communities (*katun*) through assemblies of users (*zbor*), effectively making Sinjajevina a cluster of pastoral *commons* or [community-conserved areas](#). Over 22,000 people live in Sinjajevina's lower lands today, and its highland pastures are used by more than 250 pastoralist families from eight different Montenegrin tribes.

In 2018, an extensive study (funded predominantly by the EU at close to €300.000) was presented publicly. Its recommendation was that Sinjajevina be declared a Regional Park for the protection of culture and nature, as well as for the enhancement of local economies.

Instead of the creation of the park by 2020 as expected, in 2019 the Montenegrin Government officially inaugurated a military training ground in the very heart of Sinjajevina. Here Montenegrin, American, Austrian, Slovenian, Italian and North Macedonian troops engaged in [the first international NATO military training](#), when civilians and shepherds were still present with their flocks on the highlands, some of which were reported to have been lost in the chaos of the shooting and military maneuvers. Additionally the Government has started to plant fast-growth conifers to reduce the pastures. They have already planted 3,000 trees and promised 100,000 more.

Sinjajevina's rich bio-cultural diversity is not only a product of nature.

It is a symbiosis between ecology and society, the co-production – and heritage – of local pastoralist communities' governance and management over millennia.



Pastoralists, local community members & Montenegrin citizens supporting the Save Sinjajevina civic initiative August 2020
Aleksandar Milatovic

For more information: [sinjajevina](#) or [saving a critical pastureland](#) or contact *Pablo Dominguez* eco.anthropologies3@gmail.com