



**Preparation of Destination Management Organization (DMO)
Development Model for the Republic of Armenia**

Ref. Number: DMO-01

ASSIGNMENT 3

TASK 5

Preparation of 4 Site Management Plans

SMP3: Garni Symphony of Stones

Deadline: 15.11.2022

ARS Progetti SPA

in association with ARPA Environmental Foundation



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Project Title: Preparation of Destination Management Organization (DMO) Development Model for the Republic of Armenia

Client: Armenian Territorial Development Fund; Tourism Committee of RA

Document Title: TASK 5 Preparation of 4 Site Management Plans

SMP3: Garni Symphony of Stones

Document Publication History:

Date	Author	Co-Authors	Version	Remark
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Distribution:

Version	Name	Location	No. Copies
1		Rome	1 soft copy



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
CC	Carrying Capacity
CNCO	Community Non-Commercial Organization
DIY	Do it yourself
DM	Destination Management
DMO	Destination Management Organization
EPA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EI	Education Institution
EU	European Union
GB	Governmental Body
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IO	International organization
KFSR	KFSR
KP	Kotayk Province
LEID	Local Economy and Infrastructure Development (project)
LG	Local Guide
MES	Ministry of Emergency Situations
MoC	MoC
MoE	MoE
MoEnv	MoEnv
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NM	Natural Monument
PAs	Protected Areas
RA	Republic of Armenia
SE	Stakeholder Engagement
SI	Stakeholder Involvement
SNCO	State Non-Commercial Organization
SOS	Symphony of Stones
STMP	Site Tourism Management Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TC	TC
TDS	Tourism Development Strategy
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSPs	Tourism Service Providers
TMP	Tourism Management Plan
TO	Tour Operator
VP	Visitor Profile
VS	Vision Statement
WB	World Bank



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1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.1. Purpose

The study is intended to define the Site Tourism Management Plan (STMP) for the Symphony of Stones nature monument in Garni community, which is known for a number of important sites and landmarks in and around the community, such as KFSR (KFSR) in the vicinity of the village, multiple cultural and natural heritage sites, and will be upgraded under the project to better host diverse tourism experiences.

1.2. Specific objective

According to agreements reached after the Inception Report Presentation, STMP is to be intended as a **Tourism Management Plan** that will supplement existing management tools with tourism development activities and procedures in order to increase the site's touristic attractiveness through specifying management, operation and other related functionalities.

1.3. Contents

According to TORs, the STMP is based on the specific nature of the site and addresses the following issues:

- Definition of the carrying capacity of site and subsequent flow management techniques.
- Identification of the key and secondary roles and responsibilities of the site owner.
- Specification of the public and/or private management scheme, including operation and maintenance guidance.
- Specification of human resource needs and key required capacities and skills per the functionality.
- Formulation of a sustainable business plan ensuring operational and maintenance.
- Provision of guidance on visitor rights and responsibilities on the site.
- Provision of tools to contribute to the sustainable and responsible use of the site and adjacent natural environment.
- Description of restrictions on economic activity on the site and potential services beyond the buffer zones of the site.
- Provision of guidance on safety and security for the site.
- Definition of a mechanism for collecting visitor flow statistics.
- Definition of communication tools to ensure proper awareness of all above requirements and regimes (if applicable) to the stakeholders and public at large.

1.4. Stakeholder involvement

The STMP ensured identification of Key Stakeholders (i.e. owners and implementers of the STMP) soon from the beginning of the project and tightly cooperation with them for enforcing the plan's sustainability.

A workshop was organized by the Consultancy firm, on October 18th 2022 in Garni, in coordination with Client and key stakeholders, to present and summarize the findings and reach agreements based on consultative approach.



2. SITE IDENTIFICATION

2.1. Site Description

The Symphony of Stones or “Basalt Organ” is a natural geological monument¹, of national significance, and is located in the Azat river gorge. The monument was formed in the Quaternary age and consists of symmetric hexagonal-pentahedral columnar basalts of up to 50 meters in height. The continuation of the Symphony of Stones is another natural monument named “Anonymous Cave” (locally called “Cave of Swallows”), which has a similar stone formation and is considered mainly by the site visitors as a part of the Symphony of Stones. “Anonymous Cave” was formed as a result of the mass falling of the various sized basalt columns. The water, soaking into the cracks and gradually widening them, led to the decay in the inner parts of the hexagonal-pentagonal columns and the formation of the specific relief.

According to the Law on the Specially Protected Nature Areas of the Republic of Armenia, Natural Monuments are exceptional natural objects with specific scientific or historical-cultural importance (corresponding to the IUCN category III). The areas of the monuments are managed by the Garni community and protection of the sites is carried out by the **Garni community** and the **KFSR Non-Commercial Organization (SNCO)**.

The SNCO manages the KFSR, established in 1958 and is well-known for its unique natural ecosystems and rich biodiversity. The territory of the Garni community and surroundings are also known for their historical-cultural sites, such as the fortress complex with the 1st-century AD Garni Temple or the “Sun Temple” (dedicated to the Pagan Sun God Mihr (Armenian pantheon) /Mithra (Roman Zoroastrian Pantheon²) and a number of other constructions / parts of the fortress, Surb Astvatsatsin Church of Garni (12th century), Mashtots Hayrapet Church of Garni (12th century), Havuts Tar Monastery (10-13th centuries), a ruined 4th-century single-aisle church, a ruined Tuxh Manuk Shrine, Saint Sargis Shrine, a Queen Katranide Shrine (together with the oldest dated cross-stone of Armenia – Queen Katranide’s cross-stone), Saint Stepanos church in Aghjots Vank monastery (13th century), the Kaqavaberd Fortress (4-10th centuries), etc.

2.2. Site Boundaries

2.2.1. Core area

On 18th of August 2017, N 274-N by the decree of the Minister of Nature Protection, the passports of the “Symphony of Stones” and “Anonymous Cave” were approved. The “Symphony of Stones” natural monument is located within the administrative boundary of the Garni community, Kotayk Province, about 1 km north-east of Garni village, in Azat river gorge, on the right bank of Azat river, at the altitude of 1270-1375 meters above sea level (Fig 1). The core area is 0.9499 hectares and the length of the boundaries is 550 meters (Fig. 2). The tourism impact area is predominantly restricted to the newly renovated road (Fig. 3), where the major touristic flow is arranged.

The “Anonymous Cave” natural monument is located within the administrative border of the Garni community, Kotayk Province, about 1 km north-east of the Garni village road, in the Azat river gorge, to the right bank of the Azat river, at the altitude of 1278-1380 meters above sea level (Fig. 1). The core area is 0.8589 hectares and the length of the boundaries is 685.5 meters (Fig. 2). The tourism impact area is predominantly restricted to the newly renovated road (Fig. 3), where the major touristic flow is arranged.

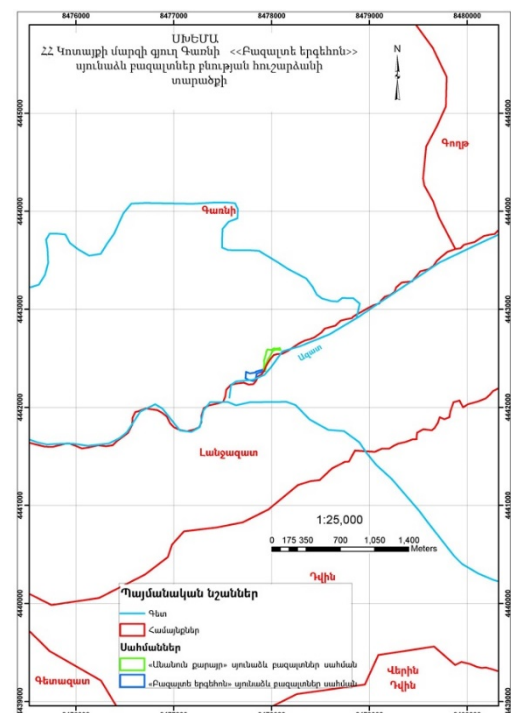


Figure 1: The location and coordinates of the “Symphony of Stones” and “Anonymous Cave” natural monuments

¹ <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=115615>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraism>



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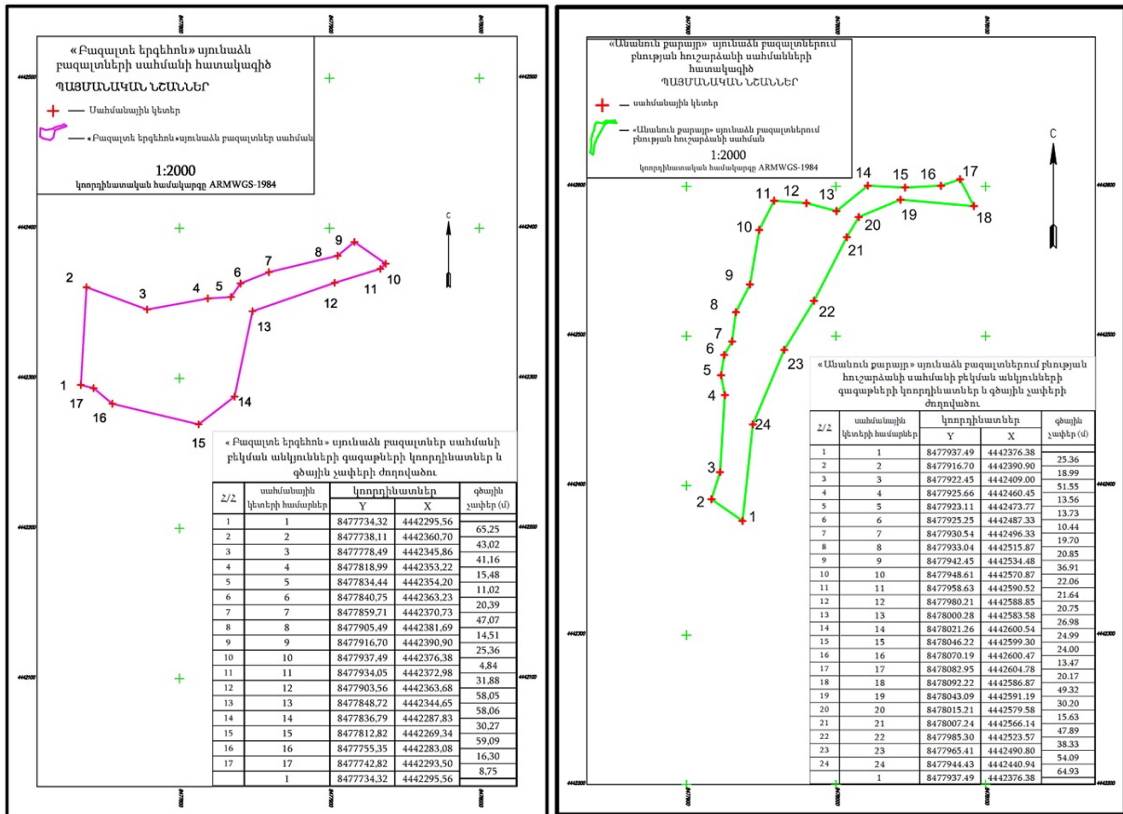


Figure 2: The plans of the “Symphony of Stones” (left) and “Anonymous Cave” (right) natural monuments

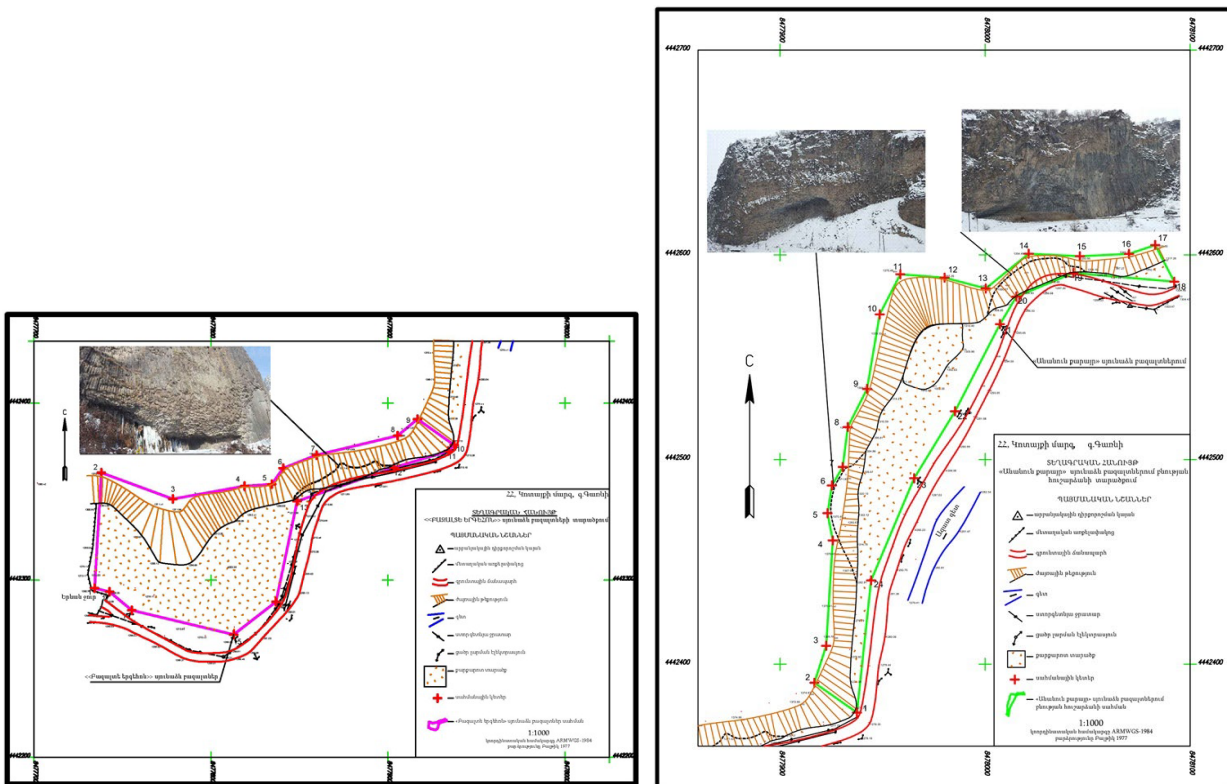


Figure 3: The detailed maps of the “Symphony of Stones” (left) and “Anonymous Cave” (right) natural monuments



2.3. Key Stakeholders identification

The two dominant key stakeholders in the actual management of the Symphony of Stones site are **Garni village** and **KFSR**.

The protection of the site is conducted together by the community and the State Reserve, while the operation is conducted only by the community. In addition, there are also a number of secondary stakeholders and organizations from different fields, who are involved in various tourist activities in Garni area and KFSR and likely to be involved in further processes and activities connected to Symphony of Stones STMP development and implementation.

Stakeholders of Symphony of Stones and surrounding areas can be aggregated in the following categories: 1. Protected Area; 2. Other Governmental bodies; 3. International organization; 4. Other NGO/Funds; 5. Education / Science institution; 6. Residents, 7. Businesses, service providers; 8. Tourists; 9. Other. Their mapping and classification is reported at § 5.3.

The study showed that they have different levels of involvement in tourism in the area depending on several factors. There are 3 main communities in the vicinity of the monuments – **Garni, Goght and Geghard villages**, which have the biggest amount of tourism service providers in the area, which however are still few according to the potential of the site.

- ▶ The main types of tourism service providers around Symphony of Stones and surroundings are **Guesthouses/B&Bs/Hotels** (Garni village can host up to 120 individuals a day if needed, according to the municipality representatives, and the number is growing), which in most of the cases offer food and catering services, and quite rarely (but with tendency of growth) also camping at their properties.
- ▶ The number of local companies and agencies that create and market various tourism packages is very low: **most packages are created in organizations based and operating in Yerevan**, and the amount of those which also cooperate with Protected Areas, including KFSR, is even lower.



Figure 4: Consultants' experts meeting with stakeholder. Garni, 18th October, 2022

3. TOURISM ASSETS AND DEMAND

3.1. Tourism Supply in the impact area

3.1.1. Tourism attractors and activities, and their improvements

There are a number of significant tourism attractors and activities in the vicinity of the Symphony of stones monument (including the monument area itself as one of the main attractions), which can be categorized under the following list of attractions and activities:

1. Natural
2. Historical-cultural
3. Special types

3.1.1.1. Top Natural attractions

1. Symphony of Stones - "Basalt Organ" and "Unknown Cave" (or unofficially – "Swallow Cave"),
2. KFSR starting right by the Symphony of Stones,
3. The geological formations in Garni Gorge (the extension of the road towards the Azati Reservoir, along the river Azat, also officially the "Temple of The Sun" trail on HikeArmenia),



4. The geological formations and natural caves in Garni Gorge (the extension of the road towards the Geghard Monastery, along the river Azat),
5. Azat river,
6. Azati reservoir³,
7. Upper plateau areas from Geghard village towards Geghama Mountains.



Figure 5: Top Natural Attractions

3.1.1.2. Top Historical-cultural attractions

1. The fortress complex with the 1st-century AD Garni Temple or the "Sun Temple" (dedicated to the Pagan Sun God Mihr (Armenian pantheon) /Mithra (Roman Zoroastrian Pantheon)⁴ and a number of other constructions / parts of the fortress, such as the Roman bath with a partly preserved mosaic floor with a Greek inscription, a royal summer palace, other "paraphernalia of the Greco-Roman world", the seventh century church of St. Sion and other objects (e.g., medieval khachkars, Urartian cuneiform inscribed dragon stone, etc.).
2. 11th century medieval bridge over Azat River on the way to Symphony of Stones,
3. Surb Astvatsatsin Church of Garni (12th century),
4. Mashtots Hayrapet Church of Garni (12th century),
5. Havuts Tar Monastery (10-13th centuries),
6. a ruined 4th-century single-aisle church,
7. a ruined Tuxh Manuk Shrine, Saint Sargis Shrine,
8. a Queen Katranide Shrine (together with the oldest dated cross-stone of Armenia – Queen Katranide's cross-stone),
9. Saint Stepanos church in Aghjots Vank monastery (13th century),
10. the Kaqavaberd Fortress (4-10th centuries),
11. Aghjots rural settlement
12. Sagraberdd rural settlement⁵
13. Baberd (previously Bayburd) rural settlement
14. Mets Glan (previously Mets Gilanlar) rural settlement
15. Verin Vanstan (previously Imirzek) rural settlement
16. Mankuk Monastery
17. Tapi Berd (Gevorg Marzpetuni fortress, 10-th century)
18. Spitak Monastery (previously Aghkilisa)
19. Pokr Shen (Avanik) rural settlement
20. Urts / Jermanis (previously Qyolanlu) rural settlement
21. Berdatak (previously Kaladibi) rural settlement
22. Vishapakars / Vishap stones in and around KFSR
23. Petroglyphs on the slopes of Geghama Ridge
24. Caves of the KFSR such as Vagrenavor Cave⁶
25. Gyughadzor (previously Gyolazor) rural settlement
26. Jghin/Jghan (previously Karakoyun or Gyojghen) rural settlement

³ It is not a natural lake by origin but fully blending into the natural landscape and one of the most picturesque landscapes of Armenia, recently becoming more and more touristic.

⁴ [Mithra](#)

⁵ [Sagraberdd rural settlement](#)

⁶ [Vagrenavor Cave](#)



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Figure 6: Top Cultural Attractions

3.1.1.3. Top Special type of attractions

1. Air-based tourism of the following types:
 - a. Hot air-balloon trips⁷,
 - b. Armenian Helicopters⁸,
 - c. Paragliding⁹,
2. Combined tourist experiences to (or including) KFSR, such as:
 - a. Hiking
 - b. Jeeping
 - c. Birdwatching
 - d. Camping (outside the Reserve)
3. Water-based tourism activities of the following types:
 - a. Sup-boarding on Azati Reservoir,
 - b. Swimming in Azati reservoir
 - c. Swimming in Azat river



Figure 7: Special Tyoe of Attractions

3.1.1.4. Evaluation of the existing tourist attractions

Currently there is a constantly growing pressure over the main tourist attractions, with not yet visible efforts to create some balance and to manage the sites. Here are the most affected sites:

1. Garni Temple
2. Symphony of Stones (both monuments)

⁷ <https://skyball.am/en>

⁸ <https://www.armheli.com/>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/GlideAdventures/>

3. Geghard Monastery

Such are the main tourist attractions that represent the area, after which it is good to mention the KFSR which, due to its special protection regime, might not be facing over-tourism issues in the coming years.

► Anyway, reports of various Tour Operators and individual guides stress the importance of more transparency in the working style of KFSR team, as there have been cases when some potential partnerships did not work, while other established ones got the privilege of regular entry (as well as bringing very big groups in).

Sometimes people want to cross the 11th century bridge that starts by the edge of the road, towards KFSR path, on the Azat river. Visitors who know that it connects to KFSR, logically want to use the shortcut and go to KFSR, but unfortunately it is not possible without a permission of KFSR.

► Technically, should the KFSR open an opportunity to access the Reserve from this place, it would be possible to simplify the process by organizing the payment via already existing payment terminal by the barrier of Symphony of Stones. This might be one of the possible collaborations between the KFSR and Garni municipality.

3.1.1.5. Recommended improvements

As for the potential of this area, there are several missing types of activities which would work, including development of alternative tourism activities, such as:

- Environmental education, nature interpretation, birdwatching.
- Natural, historical and archaeological sightseeing.
- Cultural / shepherd lifestyle tourism, horseback riding, agro-tourism.
- Yoga tours, pilgrimages, photo-“hunting”, Art-tours, etc.
- Preparation (master classes) of local food and crafts, relaxation, nature discovery.

Specific guiding services on demand, Authentic souvenir creation and sales on site, 4X4/Jeeping/Offroad tours, Horseback riding tours, Mountain Biking tours, Mixed outdoor adventure experiences are detailed at § 6.5.2.



Figure 8: Special Type of Attractions

3.1.2. Tourism facilities and services, and their improvements

3.1.2.1. Services at the site

Here after are mentioned some of the key issues related to tourism facilities and services at the site:

- There is **no chance for online personal booking** of services by tourists, and the only way to access different services is either on-site (often having to communicate with locals who do not speak foreign languages) or via tour-operators and agents.

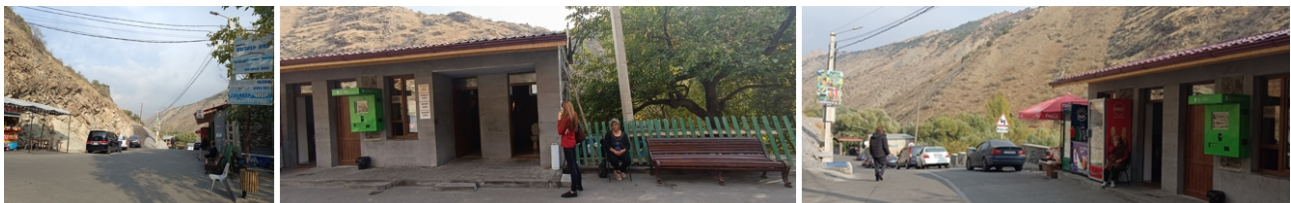


Figure 9: Reception area

- There are two ticket sellers with switches by the barrier / parking area, and during the peak days or hours they can possibly work together, but it will cost double, that is why it hasn't been discussed seriously yet.

The municipality plans to have another ticket selling booth on the other side of the monument (western edge).¹⁰



Figure 10: Examples of ticket selling booths

- **There is no local guide** (but there is also no demand according to the representative of the municipality).
- **There are no bike rentals in the area, no horse-rentals.**
- **The shopping and other services are at the moment limited** to very fragmented little attempts with minimal planning and understanding of the theme of the site, which leaves a lot of space for improvement.



Figure 11: Entrance and visitor services at the Symphony of Stones

- **Public safety is not addressed anyhow** judging by on site research, because there are no sufficient number of signs (only 1 on site) warning about the possibility of stone falls and pointing out where are the most risky spots.
- **There is only 1 small toilet facility with 2 cabins (1 for men, 1 for women) managed poorly and not as clean as expected by visitors.** This can be a major discomfort especially during peak days and hours, with big visitor groups coming one after another. At the same time this is a good opportunity for some locals to extend their businesses and open more toilet facilities by the barrier / parking area.
- As for the waste disposal – the **number of existing waste-bins is not sufficient** especially because of their size, as well as the unclarity of how frequently they are being emptied. It would be very useful to install a number of different (but with proper structure and design, with closing leads) waste-bins for **waste-separation** (at least for paper/plastic/metal/glass/mixed options), optimum size, with regular service, on 5 main locations: 1. By the barreer, 2. By the first parking to the east, 3. By the 3rd parking to the east, 4. By “Unknown Cave” part of the monument, 5. By the “Basalt organ” part of the monument.
- **Rangers and guards do not have enough equipment.** They should be equipped with walkie-talkies for convenience and safety reasons, because some of the local operators have no reception or low-quality reception inside the gorge, while both for risk prevention and management there is a need for uncut connection between the workers of the site management team.

¹⁰ Every 10 out of 400-500 daily visitors entrance are by the villagers who have their private properties in the gorge, but they are not paying anything and not being tracked.



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3.1.2.2. Services offered in the surrounding area

- The locals doing business in the Symphony of Stones area (total 5-6 people) are:
 - Giving a horse for rent
 - Selling food, juices, water, snacks
 - Operating a locally made car-train
 - Managing the 2 toilets
- There are about 10 – 15 main restaurants in the village.
- Total number of guesthouses together in Garni Goght Geghard is around 40.
- There are less than 30 properties in the mentioned cluster (Garni-Goght-Geghard altogether) listed on Booking.com and AirBNB, which is a very low number for such a famous touristic area. This creates a great potential for many new businesses to enter the market.
- There is a tourism information center in Garni, which is funded by the TC. They don't collect much data about visitors, but only the very basic ones.
- There is a local giving a horse for rent, inside the monument area, but it works more for the locals than for the foreigners. It is not clear why. It costs around 1000 AMD for a 10 min. ride.

► **Any of the restaurants, homestays and other businesses** around the Garni Temple and in the village, as well as in neighboring Goght and Geghard villages, **offer good quality food, catering services and overnight stay**. Although they are not so unique, however **some of them stand out due to exceptional views of the Garni Temple and the Azat River Gorge**.

3.1.3. Infrastructure analysis

Internal transportation Internal transportation (from the barrier to the western edge of the monument and back) is organized with a **locally made DIY car-train**, which is made by a small team of locals, and operated by them as well, to make a living.

However, it has **questionable safety-security standards**, it is **kitchy and doesn't anyhow fit the local context**, especially if it's interior and exterior are compared to similar types of car-trains in other countries.

Moreover, **it is not ecological**, as it works on fuel. As agreed by the municipality, it would be necessary to replace it, by a new one in the form of an electric bus.



Figure 12: Tourist train in Symphony of Stone

There is a further problem, as **no control of access is in place**.

- With uncontrolled permit of every local or non-local entrepreneur who comes with best intentions, the **site risks to become overloaded with not only useful, but also useless excess infrastructures and services which will harm the site and its overall image in the eyes of visitors and tour operators**.
- **It is important to have a strict limit on the amount of transportation vehicles which can operate on site on regular basis, at the same time or with switches**.

3.1.3.1. Public utilities

Various problems can be highlighted with regard to public utilities:

- There is **no drinking water**, although there was earlier, with very tasty local drinking water running. It has always been a great ingredient of visiting the Symphony of Stones. As it is a pity that it has been shut down, it would be useful to reopen it as soon as.
- The **electric cables and water pipes** that are used inside the monument area are brought from the village and at the moment are not properly installed and hidden from the eye, which **creates a bad messy impression for the visitors**.



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- Sewage infrastructure of the toilet by the barrier is well hidden, but the **quality of toilets needs to be improved** (and it is important to check if the toilet water flows into a local septic tank or just goes into the river beneath). The toilet sewage water gets collected in a septic tank and is removed when full (according to the representative of the municipality), so the sewage water doesn't go to the river
- The municipality declares the intention to buy a **snow cleaning machine** in near future (for the next season).

3.1.3.2. Planned improvements

There is no previously approved and used plan for this site management.

The main programs for the improvement of site infrastructures were by the World Bank. The "Symphony of Stones" site, along with many other cultural heritage sites in Armenia - including Khor Virap, the Haghpat and Sanahin monasteries, Zorats Qarer (Karahunj), the Mozrov Cave, Geghardavank, the Garni Preserve - were slated for improvement under the 2015 World Bank US\$68.75 million Local Economy and Infrastructure Development Project (LEIDP).¹¹

3.2. Tourism Demand

3.2.1. Visitor flows

The analysis of tourist arrivals show the following pattern at the site and in the impact area:

- The demand for the Symphony of Stones is reported to be increasingly growing¹².
- The approximate number of visitors now in January 2023 is around 200 people per day, but during the high season in some days there were about 1,000 per day. The average is 400-500 people per day.
- During the **low season** (November-April) there are approximately 300 visitors per day (minimum 200, paying 200 AMD per person) / 2,100 per week / 8,400 per month / 50,400 per season.
- During the **high season** (May –October) there are approximately 400-500 visitors per day (minimum 300, paying 200 AMD per person) / 2,800 per week / 11,200 per month / 67,200 per season.
- The total amount of visitors is therefore **117,600 per year**
- The high season is between May and October, and the low season – between November and April. Since the year 2022 was the first one after the renovation and they started selling tickets only on June 27th, there is only visitor data available for 2022, from the mentioned dates.
- Majority of the visitors are visiting for a short-day trip, but there are also others who stay for a few days, up to a week and more.
- The Garni municipality is expecting to have up to 200,000 people in total this year.

3.2.2. Profile of visitors

The analysis of key characteristics of visitors to the site and the impact area show that:

- The site attracts a **variety of visitor segments**, and some represent ecotourism / adventure tourism segments, but there is not much information about this.
- Main visitors are from **Russia, India, Philippines, Iran**. Next are the ones from Georgia, China (but much less after Covid-19 period), Arabian countries, Ukraine, and then from Europe (very little but much less after Covid-19 period), and the USA¹³.
Since there has not been any structured effort by the Garni Municipality team to collect visitor data at the Symphony of Stones, it is hard to give a demographic segmentation, but according to the municipality representative the **visitors are very diverse**, from little children up to quite old visitors.
- About **90 percent of the visitors come mainly to see the Pagan Temple of Garni, together with the Symphony of Stones and Geghard Monastery**, but in rare cases they might be coming just to see the Symphony of Stones¹⁴.

With regard to the length of stay, during the high season they say it is pretty rare when the visitors stay just one night, more **often they stay a week and more, particularly the Russians**.

¹¹ <https://hetq.am/en/article/86101>

¹² Although recorded data were not provided, the municipality representative mentioned during the meeting in Garni, that in the recent years they noticed growth, and after fixing the road the demand is really booming

¹³ Source: Garni municipality

¹⁴ There was one reported case on 2022 about someone coming directly from the airport



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3.2.3. Visitor behavior

- ▶ **Most travel experiences fit within a day, combining quick visits to Garni Temple (and Symphony of Stones) and Geghard Monastery.**

Less frequently visitors stay over a day, as they prefer to overnight stay in Yerevan (**mainly due to lack of desired quality of stay on site**). This is usually connected to either visiting the KFSR with a day-long trips, or visiting the Geghama Mountain Ridge further on (or vice versa, returning back from).

The ones who stay overnight, usually **prefer to stay in Garni** (or Goght and Geghard sometimes) during the high season, with the village capable to accommodate up to around 200 guests at a time (although the official number is around 120 beds in all the 3 villages altogether).

However, along with the development of long-distance hiking infrastructures in Armenia (Transcaucasian Trail, Barev Trails, WWF eco-corridor, etc) there are new tendencies of spending more time nearby KFSR and trying to get as much out of the experience, as possible. This adds more visitation time to Symphony of Stones and creates bigger flexibility in choosing better times during the day for much better enjoyment avoiding over-tourism episodes.

Majority of the visitors would expect to have **authentic local experiences** such as having a lunch break at a local restaurant with traditional cuisine, drinking local drinks, interacting with locals. Trying out the local drinking water by the entrance might also be an important part of the visit should the water made available by building a drinking water spring/fountain.

The visitors currently **learn about the site, its values, and the host community, mostly by themselves**, as there is no structured marketing and promotion effort at the moment, besides just one very passive web page created by the Garni Communal Economy SNCO (officially a part of Garni Municipality, and the main legal body managing the monument at the moment). The other visitors might be learning about the Symphony of Stones from the guesthouses they are staying in.

Most are satisfied with the experience, but sometimes the older ones complain about the **distance from the parking area** till the edge of the monument on the western side. For such cases the car-train comes in very handy.

3.2.4. Visitor revenues

As a ticket costs 200 AMD (planned to stay the same during 2023)¹⁵ and the total amount of visitors is 117,600 per year, there is an annual revenue of 23.53 AMD millions, which equals **59,818 USD**¹⁶.

Visitors **do not spend much money by the entrance or inside the monument area**, as they mainly purchase water, juice and ice-cream (altogether up to 1,000-1,200 AMD per person). Moreover, toilet is free as there is uncontrolled payment. Some people sell some local food here, but this is uncontrolled and their sales are not accounted.

For the children under 15 years old the site does not charge any entrance fee.

3.3. Community use of the site

Benefits arisen to the Community from the tourist valorization of the site appear to be still poor and undervalued against potentialities.

- ▶ The residents of Garni (in addition also Goght and Geghard) in general seems to be not aware of all the potential benefits that the Symphony of Stones site can bring to the community if well managed. These include the **provision of new several tourism services and activities** which are mentioned in the next sections of the report.

With regard to current community use of the site, including domestic visitors, the local team is having difficulties because they cannot easily block the access of all the cars, and it always takes energy to negotiate with some, which can sometimes cause conflicts if it needs to block a car entry. Main issue that such visitors bring up is the big distance which they don't want to walk down and up. It however doesn't seem to be always an objective

¹⁵ However, it must be considered the burden of taxes and the printing cost of each ticket is 54 AMD, so this price might be changed at some point.

¹⁶ Or 55,133 EUR, by the currency exchange rate of January 14, 2023



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reason, but just a habitual disobedience and a power-game for especially the independent taxi drivers which are in a hurry. **According to the local team there is at least 1 case every day.**

4. KEY STRATEGIC AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES FROM A TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

4.1. SWOT Analysis

4.1.1. Strengths

- a) Extremely high-level uniqueness of the monument which can attract people from all over the World.
- b) Closeness to other tourism hotspots such as Garni temple, KFSR and Geghard Monastery, which makes it much easier to promote the Symphony of Stones.
- c) Availability of local restaurants and guesthouses in the neighborhood.
- d) Closeness to Yerevan which is the main transportation hub for the area.
- e) Closeness to the Transcaucasian Trail / Geghama Mountains section.
- f) The newly created (LEID project funded by the Government of RA and the World Bank) infrastructures¹⁷.
- g) The growing demand for visiting the place by both local and foreign visitors.
- h) There are a number of signboards about stone falls, which warn the visitors of possible dangers and keep them alert.
- i) Available big parking lots by the monument (upto 40 cars at the parking by the gate, upto 3 medium-size buses at the second parking in about 600 metres from the gate, and upto 9-10 medium-size buses at the 3rd parking in about 50 metres from the second parking).
- j) Possibility to have very diverse and unforgettable experiences in the area without having to cross long distances (within only 30 kms in radius).
- k) Great climate.
- l) Wilderness nearby.
- m) The toilets by the gate have a septic tank and the sewage doesn't flow into the river.

4.1.2. Weaknesses

- a) Difficulties of the local team with some locals who want to enter the monument area by car, particularly the independent taxi drivers.
- b) If the winter is snowy, it is hard to clean the snow (for which we already stated that the municipality is considering to buy a special snow-cleaning machine at some point).
- c) The road is a little too steep and can be difficult for elders to walk all the way till the edge of the monument and back.
- d) The 2 main parking lots are a little too far (600 and 650 metres to the East from the gate), but the car-train can make it easier for the visitors to get to the monument, at least until perhaps another parking is arranged on the western edge of the monument area.
- e) Another parking is needed on the other side of the monument, by its western edge.
- f) Lack of local taxi services that could help to organize more diverse experiences which require bigger distances (regular cars usually cannot access the eastern shore of Azati reservoir and other locations which are accessible only via back-country / dirt-roads).
- g) Stonefalls especially in the spring (happens mostly in March-April, when the snow starts melting, and when the rains start), which involve sometimes stones up to 70-100 cm size each (and even if the stone is smaller than that, it's anyway a serious danger for people., and good to block the end of the Symphony of Stones from the village side, because the rocks fall mainly from there).
- h) The outdoor illumination by led-lights is not sufficient
- i) There is no page on Instagram.
- j) Not enough toilets (at the moment only a small building with 1 male and 1 female toilets). There is a need to at least 2 more cabins.

¹⁷ Within the Local Economy and Infrastructure Development Project, the sub-project "Garni Tourist Circuit", with the following components: Components: 1.1 Rehabilitation of road leading to Garni Stone Symphony, 1.2 Rehabilitation of road leading from the Visitor Center of KFSR to Garni Symphony of Stones Nature Monument. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/804991544596267980/pdf/ESR-Garni-tourist-circuit-FINAL.pdf>



- k) There is no practice of somehow regulating/managing the visitor flow and this creates discomfort in the peak season.
- l) No local guides available for the Symphony of Stones and for surroundings.
- m) Not many interesting additional local services available, neither the local expertise for being able to create and offer such services.

4.1.3. Opportunities

Opportunities for the site derive from:

- a) Growth of adventure travel at the international level.
- b) Growing international interest in Armenia as adventure and nature-based tourism destination.
- c) Possibility to access the monument also from an alternative side (makes it easier to manage the uncontrolled visitor flow in peak periods).
- d) Possibility to access KFSR from the 11th century bridge, as well as to get visitors from the KFSR via that bridge (but this means they have to pay at a terminal in KFSR visitor center before coming).
- n) The possible new taxi services (which would offer off-road taxi experiences) could enter the area once in the morning from the Symphony of Stones side, and spend the whole day on that line until the evening, without having to cross the monument at all).
- e)

4.1.4. Threats

- a) Accelerate the destruction and collection of stones for personal use, vandalism.
- b) Contribute to pollute the area due to mis-behavior of visitors.
- c) Worsen the already poor household waste management in the area and surroundings, threat of increased pollution, pertaining to lack of waste management.
- d) Impact on biodiversity (especially fauna inhabiting the area).
- e) Contribute to unregulated development infrastructure and services in the area and surroundings.
- f) Poor guiding and other tourist services as a result of a lack of professional training.
- g) Lack of sustainable financing.
- h) Lack of law enforcement (for example against those who always try to enter the area with a car).
- i) Lack of enforcement capacities for respect of regulations.
- j) Lack of sufficient numbers of qualified staff.
- k) Lack of any continuous structured research and basic knowledge on ecotourism potential of Garni and other communities nearby.
- l) Lack of professional visitor management.
- m) Lack of eco-friendly green transportation just next to KFSR / within KFSR borders, which regularly results in disturbances of wildlife and affects the general image of the destination as a whole, and the Symphony of Stones in particular.
- n) Probability of dangerous encounters with snakes during their mating season (in case of any accidents, including snake bites by the monument, and challenges connected to the condition of roads inside KFSR in case of combined experiences (on bad roads it is hard to organize rescue services, or there are no roads at all in some areas) .
- o) Difficulties in deciding about the main roles for the management of the site, between Garni community and the DMO (or whatever another structure which will come on stage at some point).
- p) Stone-falls with disastrous consequences because it is a natural unpredictable phenomenon.
- q) In case if there is no proper / responsible site management, local and non-local businesses might over-use the site which will interrupt the site development greatly.

4.2. Critical issues

4.2.1. Management issues

Here are summed up some of the most critical issues arising from the previous analysis:

1. Municipal waste (inability of the existing waste-removal system to adapt to growing amounts of visitors, as well as lack of waste-bins in the most important areas).



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2. Noise and over tourism.
3. Difficulties in planning ahead with KFSR.
4. Lack of toilets in the area (also inside the KFSR).
5. Lack of information signs in the Symphony of Stones area.
6. Lack of high quality and useful services in the Symphony of Stones area (such as local car-train nicely designed to fit the environments and working on renewable energy instead of fuel, local themed souvenirs and other tourist items, reflecting to the monument, tourist maps, etc.).

4.2.2. Involvement of the MoEnv

The protection of the monument is carried out by the KFSR. Considering the status of the area, it is worth to consider that in case a site management plan has to be developed for the Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA), the following procedures should be abided:

- a) the management plan of the specially protected nature area is prepared according to the methodological instructions approved by the MoE;
- b) the content of the management plan is defined by the Law on the Specially Protected Areas of Armenia;
- c) the management plan should be subjected to an Environmental Impact Assessment procedure and in case of international and national level of importance of the protected area (Stone Symphony is SPNA of the national level) approved by the Government;
- d) the site managing organization of the site should be clarified and agreed with the MoEnv prior preparation of the management plan. The procedure, structure and content of the site management plan either action plan should also be discussed and agreed with MoE.

The regulatory scope of Garni temple, Stone Symphony, Geghard monastery and other specifications will be addressed. Special attention will be paid to the issues of liabilities of local authorities and the related state institutions with regard to the management of Stone Symphony. Based on the areal of this touristic site, the environmental aspects and legal restrictions concerning Khosrove state reserve will be considered.

5. STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

5.1. Vision Statement

The vision of this plan is to make “The Symphony of Stones” a best practice in Armenia Nature-Based Travel, by adopting a management model which ensures market success, a sound governance agreed among key stakeholder bringing substantial benefits to the host community, and the preservation of the natural integrity of the site.

Market success is built on offering domestic and international visitors unique experiences in nature, rich biodiversity and high-quality services combining nature and historical-cultural monuments in united well-planned products and experiences.

5.2. Mission

The nature-based Symphony of Stones STMP will bring an improvement of the image of the site and allow for a greater awareness for bigger audiences. The visitor flow to Symphony of Stones will act as a sustainable source of employment and income for the local rural population and a significant source of revenues for the SNCO created to manage the site, as well as for Garni municipality administration, if planned and managed appropriately. The potential for cooperation between Garni Municipality, local entrepreneurs, TC, KFSR, surrounding communities and local businesses, civil society towards win-win-win activities will be accomplished through a participatory and permanent arrangement that enables effective discourse and decision-making.

In the long-run, the legal body managing the Symphony of Stones will offer ecotourism / adventure tourism programs that meet international standards and attract a global audience, but mainly not as a stand-alone site, rather as a very important highlight, as an ingredient in bigger, diverse tour products. It will have a comprehensive sustainable tourism development plan and enough budgetary resources to promote effective

ecotourism planning and management. This will be built over transparency and some type of control over the financial flows and service quality.

TC, as a State body with necessary experience and knowledge, will be the main supervising body that greatly help the local team, especially in the initial stage, by participating to the SNCO in the modes that are described hereafter.

5.3. Values

Values driving the strategy are embedded in well recognized principles at the international level, such as those stated in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas¹⁸, which foresees the following key issues to be addressed:

- Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage from excessive tourism development;
- Improving the quality of the tourism experience;
- Raising public awareness;
- Development of tourism specific to the area;
- Training;
- Protection and support of the quality of life for local residents;
- Promotion of Social and economic development;
- Control of tourist numbers.

5.4. Stakeholder engagement

As stated by the previous mentioned Charter, stakeholder engagement is a pre-requisite for developing a sustainable management model. It requires the following steps:

1. Stakeholder mapping
2. Stakeholder classification
3. Stakeholder communication

5.4.1. Stakeholder mapping

We already identified key stakeholders at § 2.3. In the following table they are reported along with respective expectation.

Stakeholder	Positive expectation	Negative impacts to avoid
KFSR State	Enhancement of local heritage. Conservation of natural resources, with contribution to heritage conservation. Education and interpretation of the site. Provision of visitor information. Channeling of visitor flows. Traffic control.	Overuse with damaging of the natural resources.
MoE, TC	Tourism valorization of the site. Definition of a new management model for Nature-based sites. Tourism valorization of broader itineraries including the site. Appropriate marketing and promotion. Development of tourism specific to the site. Raise of average local income. Collection of fiscal revenues from direct and indirect taxation.	-
Education / Science institution	Market research. Education and interpretation of the site. Training	-
Garni village	Prosecrete in management of the site. Local development. Protection and support of the quality of life of the inhabitants. Increase of the image and attractivity of the village. Support for the local economy. Development of new employment opportunities.	Pollution of environment. Increase of local prices as an effect of tourism inflation.
Other nearby villages (Goght and Geghard)	Support for the local economy. Development of new employment opportunities.	Increase of local prices as an effect of tourism inflation.
Regional DMO	Increase of its portfolio of tourism products. Enlargement of business opportunities by providing promotion and commercialization opportunities to new tourism activities	-

¹⁸ Europarc Federation, 2010. *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.*



Private sector (Businesses, service providers)	Management and integration of visitor facilities, services and activities such as accommodation, catering, F&B sales, tourism experiences, local product sales, etc.	-
International organization	Formulation of a successful action plan	Lack of implementation of envisaged actions.
Tour operators, tourists	Improvement of visitor services	Overcrowding, pollution

Table 1: Stakeholders' expectation with regard to The Symphony of Stones tourism development

5.4.2. Stakeholder classification

For our purposes, we classify such stakeholders according to the power-legitimacy-urgency model¹⁹, where:

- *Power*, according to the type of relationship among social actors, in which on social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not have otherwise done. Its base can be coercive (force/threat), utilitarian (material of financial incentives), normative (symbolic influence)²⁰;
- *Legitimacy*, according to the generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions²¹. Its base is individual, organizational and/or societal;
- *Urgency*, according to the degree to which stakeholders call for immediate attention. Its base is time sensitivity (the degree to which managerial delay in attending to the claim or relationship is unacceptable to the stakeholder and Criticality-the importance of the claim or the relationship to the stakeholder)²².

It is worthwhile to mention that each attribute has a temporary value, which can change over time. Using a Likert scale, we assigned 1 to 5 points to each key stakeholder according to each parameter and reached the classification presented in the next table and figure, assuming, according to this model, that:

- *Latent* stakeholders are those possessing only one of the three attributes²³, and include dormant, discretionary, and demanding stakeholders;
- *Expectant* stakeholders are those possessing two attributes, and include dominant, dependent, and dangerous stakeholders;
- *Definitive stakeholders* are those possessing all three attributes. Finally, individuals or entities possessing none of the attributes are non-stakeholders or potential stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Power	Legitimacy	Urgency	Typology
KFSR	5	5	2	Dominant
MoE, TC	3	3	4	Definitive
Education / Science institution	1	3	1	Discretionary
Garni village	4	4	3	Definitive
Other nearby villages (Goght and Geghard)	1	1	3	Demanding
Regional DMO (forthcoming)	1	2	3	Demanding
Private sector (Businesses, service providers)	1	2	4	Demanding
International organization	3	1	3	Dependent
Tour operators, tourists	4	2	2	Dormant

Table 2: Evaluation of Symphony of Stones' key stakeholders

According to the model, the **TC and Garni village are currently Definitive stakeholders**. According to their role, they are legitimate to intervene on the site, although their source of power and urgency is different:

- The TC holds financial sources to promote the site;
- Garni village is currently involved in the management of the site and provides some key public utilities.

Other stakeholders are more powerful but have less urgent need, particularly the **KFSR Non-Commercial Organization (SNCO)**, that is in charge for the protection of the site; the WB detains finance that can be provided for valorization of the site.

¹⁹ Mitchell, R.K., Agle, B.R. and Wood, D.J., 1997. Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of management review*, 22(4), pp.853-886.

²⁰ Etzioni, A. 1964. *Modern organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

²¹ Suchman, M.C., 1995. Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of management review*, 20(3), pp.571-610.

²² Williamson, O.E., 1975. Markets and hierarchies: analysis and antitrust implications: a study in the economics of internal organization. *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership Historical Research Reference in Entrepreneurship*.

²³ We assumed that possession of one attribute happens when the attributed value is 3 to 5 in the Likert scale



Other local communities, particularly **Goght and Geghard** have expectations from a development of the site as it might bring economic opportunities to their residents and business operators. They however hold no concrete power to support their legitimate expectations. The **(forthcoming) regional DMO** and **private operators** are in a similar condition, with the latter holding more demanding needs as the site can be better valorized so as to generate direct and indirect economic returns by tourist services and activities across broad value chains. We also mentioned **Education / Science institution**, as they would have interests in training and researching, and **tour operators / tourists**, that have the power to include or not the site in their tours according to services provided.

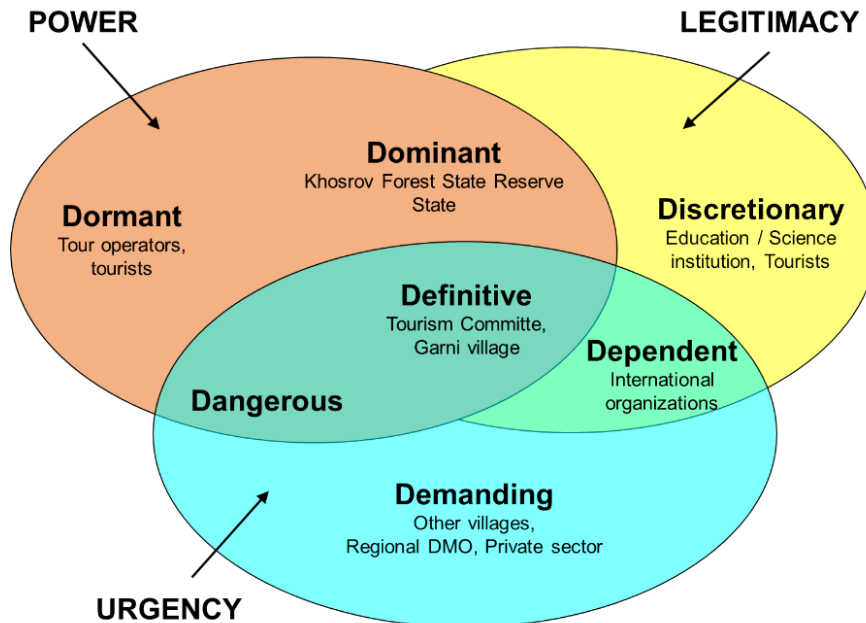


Figure 13: Positioning of The Symphony of Stones key stakeholders

5.4.3. Stakeholder communication

Sustainable tourism requires both community and business buy-in and support, so one of the first steps was to exchange ideas with the full range of stakeholders in the community, as well as the economic and conservation sectors. Therefore, on October 19, 2022 the group of national and international experts from A.R.S. Progetti and ARPA Environmental Foundation had meetings with key national and local stakeholders, and also site visits. Key issues highlighted was used to inform the SWOT analysis.

5.5. Tourism Development Strategy

The key strategic objective of the STMP is the definition of a governance model which satisfies different key stakeholders' expectation, coupled with a management plan able to guarantee an effective running of the site and to pursue a sustainable development of the wider area.

The management plan considers "The Symphony of Stones" as a key tourist attraction, which in order to be market successful needs to provide a well-managed supply, which is positioned, through a key selling proposition (KSP), so serve specific target segments. Meanwhile, it strives to induce positive economic and social impacts throughout the local community will minimizing negative environmental impact through preservation of its irreplaceable resources.

This will be achieved by:

- **Involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area.** The protected area will work closely with local communities for the implementation of its tourism strategy and action plan.
- **Ensuring good communication between the protected area, local people and visitors.** The protected area will foster the promotion of exchange and contact between local residents and visitors. This includes keeping local communities and businesses informed of activities and public events being organized in the protected area and identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts which may arise:



- **Addressing top issues that affect the site:**

1. Absence of one main legal body with a skilled team of professionals, managing the site.
2. Absence of vision for site management and development,
3. Lack of efforts to control the visitor flow;
4. Lack of tourism professionals among the local stakeholders;
5. Lack of State or other funding.

5.5.1.Key Selling Proposition

A easily accessible pearl, at few kilometers from its capital city. One of the many hidden jewels that Armenia offers to all its visitors.

5.5.1.1. For tourists

A well-managed and easily accessible site, surrounded by a fascinating historical context, which offer plenty of experiences for nature-based tourism.

5.5.1.2. For the community

A site that fosters the proudness of the local community and motivates youths and operators to invest time and energy in developing it with best ideas, while stimulating creativity and learning, and offering the opportunity to provide for commercial sale tourism services and activities, as well as locally-made natural products and handmade crafts.

5.5.2.Experiences to be provided

The Symphony of Stones is featured with exceptional features, which might allow to provide various tourism experiences, including²⁴:

- **Educational**, as the site is suitable to offer environmental education, nature interpretation, birdwatching;
- **Escapist**, that is a key reason for residents, that can be supplied with leisure and recreation, in a genuine and safe environment, while enjoying of natural, historical and archaeological sightseeing;
- **Entertainment**, as the location offers the chance to organize high quality nature experience activities such as hiking, horseback riding, birdwatching, wildlife watching, scientific / educational tours, camping, yoga tours, pilgrimages;
- **Esthetic**, which integrates and reinforces the previous experiences, due to the enchanting view that can be offered, particularly of the Garni temple, while providing the chance to experience “photo-“hunting” and art-tours.

➤ The assumption is that the attraction system should include services and infrastructure so as to guarantee satisfactory experiences for each typology, being consistent with the two KSPs mentioned above.

5.5.3.Key market segments

- ✓ One-day travelers from Kotayk Region (251,600) and Yerevan city (1,092,800 people);
- ✓ Domestic and international Nature-based tourists, particularly from Russia, India, Philippines, Iran (current segments) but, in perspective, even from Gulf countries, Europe (UK, Germany, France, Italy) and USA²⁵.

5.5.4.Tourism development elements

In order to function as a tourist attraction, a tourism system must be created at Garni and the nearby villages Goght and Geghard), which is composed by the following elements²⁶:

- Management of the attraction;
- Accommodation;
- Tour services
- Other facilities and services (souvenir, good shops, foodstores, restaurants and bars, etc.);

²⁴ Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H., 1998. *Welcome to the experience economy*.

²⁵ See Assignment 2.1 – Tourism Niche Cultural and Heritage Tourism for details of such perspective markets

²⁶ See, for instance, Pearce, D.G., 1981. *Tourist development*. Longman Group Limited



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- Transport infrastructure;
- Public service and utilities (digital connection; electricity, gas and sewage disposal; waste collection and disposal);
- Visitor information;
- Marketing and promotion.

Although the scope of the present STMP focuses on The Symphony of Stones only, a sound governance and management model cannot ignore the broader previous aspects, as they contribute to the success of the site inside a well-organized destination. This is the reason why some considerations are hereafter reported about each element.

- a) **Management of the attraction.** It is discussed at the following § 6.
- b) **Accommodation.** It is not viable neither advisable to foresee hard accommodation in the boundary of the site, as it is a specific protected area, with natural, historical and cultural landscape. However, as accommodation is usually a major generating source of tourist income²⁷ and since our audit has shown that there are few structures in the Garni-Goght-Geghard cluster, it is clear that there is a great potential for many new businesses to enter the market. Therefore, it seems wise to encourage the introduction of new and sustainable accommodation at the local level, particularly considering solutions mentioned in Assignment 2.2 (Adventure & Nature based), such as:
 - Albergo diffuso, particularly in the villages, which might be personalized according to the Symphony Stones, Garni temple and KFSR theme;
 - Special camping infrastructure, including new models such as glamping, which would fit very well into the local landscape, without spoiling it. Such kind of accommodation might be located in special designed sites, so as to provide a genuine natural and cultural experience, with a special spiritual atmosphere.
- c) **Other facilities and services.** Some facilities and service might be provided in the Symphony of Stones area, while other may be conveniently supplied by the nearby communities. At the site, it should at least guaranteed improvement of information - both physical (another ticket selling booth at the western edge) and virtual/digital; signages (for information and safety purposes); guiding services; more restroom facilities; a souvenir shop; the sale of local artisan and agricultural products; bike and horse rentals.
- d) **Transport infrastructure.** As we already mentioned a car-train should serve not only from the barrier till the lower western edge of the Monument, but from the eastern remotest parking all the way till the western edge, which will help to solve the issue which is often a subject for visitor complains – the fact that the two main parkings are located too far. The revenue of the first season has already proven to be growing and good enough for considering several serious expenses such as a better quality (preferably electric) car or car-train or even two of them, to serve people from parking to the edge of the monument. For instance, it might have a symbolic 100 dram payment, or be subsidized by the ticket sales budget, but will significantly help to reduce negotiations with visitors over letting their cars enter the monument area.
- e) **Electricity, gas and sewage disposal.** Pipelines should be hidden from the tourism view.
- f) **Digital connection,** including for range and guards convenience.
- g) **Waste collection and disposal.** Provision of more and differentiated trash cans.
- h) **Marketing and promotion.** Garni village and surrounding areas with all their touristic attractions are within easy reach from the capital Yerevan in about 40-50 minutes, which makes the area more attractive and easily marketable. Although the main H3 road has damaged parts (from landslide, near Voghjaberd and Geghadir villages) and undergoes regular renovation, it has good quality and serves quite well. Garni – Geghard tourist area has a strong image and is being promoted and marketed by most of the tour operators, but its enrichment with new touristic components with added value will only help to develop the destination and different components of it much better. The area is equally famous for both local and foreign visitors, always in the top places to visit, so it's important to gradually switch the focus from promotion of the area to visitor management. It is furtherly discussed at the following § 6.

²⁷ According to international practice tourism expenditure for accommodation can be up to half of total daily tourism expenditure for overnight tourists



6. GOVERNANCE

6.1. The options

Currently (as of April 2023) the existing management structure of the site is limited to the Garni Municipality team with a few members of the team assigned to several roles and involved in the management of the Symphony of Stones site. The main legal body dealing with the site is called “Department of Symphony of Stones Preservation” which is a part of the “Garni Communal Economy CNCO” (officially a part of Garni Municipality).

The mentioned department has 11 employees, here is the list of them:

#	Title	Quantity of staff workers under particular roles
1.	Responsible for the Department ²⁸	1
2.	Workman / assistant (regularly checking the site for fallen stones and other issues, as well as any hard infrastructure failures and conditions needing to be fixed, as well as helping the cleaner)	1
3.	Cleaner	1
4.	Ticket controller	4
5.	Ticket seller	4
		Total – 11 staff members

This team of people is a part of the bigger team of the Municipality, which is around 40 people in total (according to their official website <https://kotayk-garni.am/Pages/Staff/>). Their salaries are paid from the general CNCO budget, which is formed both from the general budget sources and from the revenues of the Symphony of Stones, combined. The revenues are being supplemented to the CNCO’s bank account on daily basis, by the ticket sellers, directly from the terminal installed at the ticket selling building by the gate of the monument.

The main regular expenses of the community are:

1. Municipal waste management
2. Waste management infrastructure maintenance
3. Street lights maintenance
4. Water network maintenance
5. Ticket printing expenses
6. T-shirt printing expenses (branded T-shirts for Symphony of Stones)
7. Etc.

As Municipality staff mentioned, they are having regular meetings with the community (and the Council), to discuss community life and any issues it might have. During those meetings so far there were no objections to the general strategy and separate activities of the CNCO concerning the preservation, tourism and development of the Symphony of Stones site.

According to them, the current type of the legal body and its functional structure are the best for them in terms of managing the Symphony of Stones site, because, as they have mentioned multiple times, it allows them to be economic by relying on their current human resources, as well as because of the fact they have been already using that structure for a while and are used to it. We presented them our suggestions for a more transparent and equally functional (or in many cases even more functional) legal body, which is Foundation, mentioning a number of important features and advantages of it, such as:

- The Foundation is a more flexible type of organization in terms of decision making and finances, (while in case of CNCO the finances depend on the budget of the municipality, and the general processes are slower because of legal differences in operation)

²⁸ This staff member is not the Community Mayor and not the Director of the SNCO, but a separate employee just to manage the department.



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- Community Foundation (run by the community) can have a board that consists of community members (and / or municipality workers as members who are competent and have the right to approve the annual activity plan, the budget, to create and approve important documents, and to make other decisions) and can be more independent financially, compared to CNCO.
- In case of Foundation the team does not have to write monthly reports about legal and financial activities, or ask for permission from the municipality, for example - before every salary payment for its workers.
- Garni municipality has the very unique advantage of having enough visitor flow during most of the year (compared to many other tourist sites in the country), which can guarantee that the Municipality will always have enough money not only for variety of activities and projects related to site preservation and management, but also for paying the salaries to all the employees of the foundation.
- In cases when there's a sudden need to make some expenses the Foundation as a legal body allows the opportunity to act much quicker than an CNCO could allow.
- The Foundation's board have the right to check all the documentation and financial situation, as well as any other aspects of Foundation's work at any given moment, and to take action if needed.
- There can be a shared bank account (with that of the Municipality), as well as a separate one. The bank accounts can be managed by both legal bodies, which technically allows to have a mutual control over all the expenses if, for example there is an automatic system of approving the expenses and both bodies have the right to approve the expenses of one another.
- In case if the Municipality intends to have the same team working for the Foundation, as the one they have currently in the functioning CNCO, they can easily organize it too.
- Foundation is also more practical for submitting receiving grant projects.
- The relations between a Foundation and its Board are quite similar to the relations of the Municipality and the Community Council, but in case of Foundation the Board has even more tools and power, than in the other case the Council over the Municipality.
- Since there is an advised strategy by the State to manage sites using Foundations, in near future it might mean also easier access to grant projects and bigger chances for approvals, than in cases when sites are not managed by Foundations. For example if there will be funds which have a compulsory requirement for the grants to be implemented by Foundations, then the site and the team which manages it via another type of legal body will either lose the opportunity or have to quickly establish a Foundation and apply with it.
- The Foundation can also act as a DMO, and get subsidies from the Government annually, making it easier to take care of the needed expenses in cases of deficit.
- We also emphasized the importance of sharing some responsibility with other state bodies in cases when there's a dangerous situation, force-majeure of some kind etc, when there might be a need for support, and in that case having involvement of other state bodies in the chosen legal body would create more guarantees.

After discussing many details about different types of legal bodies, but mainly about differences between CNCO and Foundation, we together found out that there is a need to let the Municipality team explore the Foundation structure in order to have a better understanding of its pluses and minuses in the context of management of Symphony of Stones site. Perhaps that can lead the team of the Municipality to switching from CNCO to Foundation in future, but at the current moment the Municipality has strong preference for CNCO.

Here are some of the reasons given by the Garni Municipality staff members in support of their preference for keeping the current governance type:

- In case of switching to Foundation as a governance body, any changes of the previously allocated community budget will have to be presented to the community Council, which will have to approve them. But this is what the Garni Municipality considers not very safe in case if there is any crisis because of human factor (disagreements within the Foundation's team, or between the Foundation and the Municipality, etc).
- Even though we presented the structure and the functions (as well as legally binding features and limitations which automatically guarantee the safety of the organization by giving the board more power) of the Foundation, anyway the Municipality staff currently considers Foundation to be a more



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risky legal body for them (but they agreed that it might be because of the little knowledge and experience they have) .

Although they do not have a tourism specialist at the moment, but they haven't been experiencing an urgent need for one, and during our latest meeting they expressed readiness to hire a tourism specialist (or more than 1 person if needed, depending on the amount of work to be done) within the CNCO, instead of creating a Foundation and hiring more employees, in addition to the tourism specialist.

The Municipality staff also mentioned that they do not have spare physical space in the Municipality building for more workers (for the Foundation), which is another challenge on the way to switching to Foundation.

Although the Municipality has a strong preference for keeping the CNCO governance based on their own working experience, we believe it is also important to suggest at least alternative governance structures and mechanisms, for which we created our brief set of scenarios.

► It is necessary to set up a **dedicated team for Symphony of Stones Site Tourism Management**, to implement careful planning and management with help of the guards (already on duty at the site, with switches), collaboratively with the KFSR rangers.

With this in mind we would highly recommend to consider three options for the governance of the site:

1. At least, **create a new team within the current Garni Communal Economy CNCO with specific tasks connected to the management of the site**. The areas of the monuments continue to be managed by the Garni community and protection of the sites is carried out by the KFSR SNCO but through a more committed structure. The community will continue to be engaged in providing tourism services. An agreement will be signed with the KFSR to clarify respective liabilities. Some tourist services might be outsourced to private operators based on cost-benefits considerations.
2. **Creation of a new legal entity (CNCO) specifically designed to manage the Symphony of Stones site**. In this case a new entity is created – we suggest a **Foundation** - which is a non-profit organization, that has a clear objective – to manage and valorize the site – while the protection activities (and its costs) kept up to the KFSR. This would ensure not only more efficiency in work, but also more responsibility distributed among the members of the team, more evenly. Ideally the team of the local CNCO would be supervised by the TC, and would be in close contact with the Ministry of the Environments and major tourism stakeholders. The team would be reporting to the TC about financial flows and existing services, and would receive all the necessary support from it. The CNCO would manage all the income.

We consider however two sub-options:

- 2.1. **The Foundation is created only by the Garni Local Community.**
- 2.2. **The Foundation is created by the State and participated by the Garni Community.**

In both cases, the Foundation is guaranteed the availability of the asset for a long term (e.g. 50 years), so as to motivate all the partners to a long-term commitment. The participation of the partners is broadly defined by the Statute, while a regulation – approved by the Board of Administration - will set the participation conditions.

► We considered the option of the Foundation (instead of other NGOs) as Foundations are also non-profit organizations. However, **as the founder of the Foundation can be the state or municipal institutions, this allows them to have annual core funding from the state budget.**

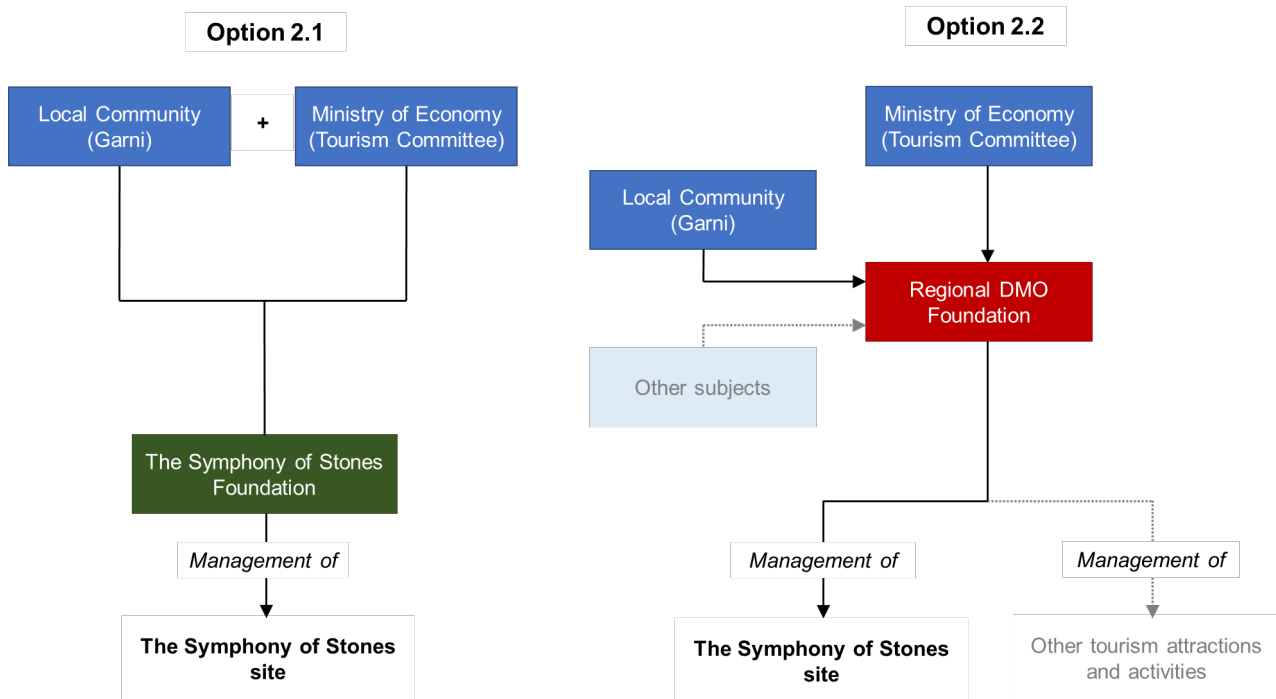


Figure 14: The two sub-options for the new governance structure

Conclusion:

As already mentioned above, with all our arguments against the current governance strategy and legal structure chosen by Garni Municipality, we believe that we have to acknowledge the importance of letting the local Municipality decide upon their preferred way and tools for managing the Symphony of Stones site, because with all our scientific knowledge based on data analyse and practical experience, we understand that the local circumstances and context are equally important and cannot be disregarded.

We respect the fact that the Garni Municipality, in accordance with the Community Council, representing the community, have been managing the Symphony of Stones site altogether with noticeable success so far, and that they currently have strong preferences for the strategy and tools they have been using.

We hope that with time and more experience gathered, as well as influenced by the growing network of partnerships which all can potentially bring new working styles and strategies, the local community together with the Council and the Municipality, will get a chance to explore alternative governance methods and will start implementing some of our suggested approaches and tools in the visible future. We also hope that by keeping the current governance approach the Garni Municipality team will not face any serious challenges and will not be forced to implementing some of the suggested approaches because of any major issues.

6.2. Economic considerations

To compare the three options, we adopted a 3-E model²⁹, where:

- Economy focuses on the use of public money, that is intended to be saved;
- Efficiency focuses on immediate results achieved for the money that is spent, that is for instance, the dimension of tourist services provided or the number of tourists visiting the site;
- Effectiveness measures broader socio-economic and institutional impact, including economic growth in the community area, stakeholder satisfaction, etc.

As we see, the simplest solution (as it is) is the least costly, at least in the short term, as all activities and services are managed by the Local Community, with protection left to the KFSR.

²⁹ UK Comptroller and Auditor General (2001): Measuring the Performance of Departments, London: National Audit Office

The second option foresees the creation of a new structure, which will bring some more costs for its autonomous management. It is supposed to be more efficient than the current management as it will focus on statutory mission which will clearly define its liabilities, while benefiting of some funds from the founder - the Local Government - and possibly receiving further financial help from the State. It is however unlikely that – at least in the short term – such structure might own all the skills necessary to fill the gaps we highlighted in our analysis. In order to protect the *status quo* it might be instead reluctant to introduce the necessary innovations.

The third option is distinguished from the previous as it foresees a direct role for the State in the management of the site. This would allow to strongly engage such key stakeholder and would be much effective particularly should the State represented by the MoE, through the TC. Such a solution would indeed open the possibility to involve the regional DMO, whose liability would include the tourist management of the Symphony of Stones and possibly other sites and activities.

Such option might be also less expensive than the second one, as it might benefit of economy of scope and scale within the broader activities of the Regional DMO.

In the following table we report the merits of the three options according to the benefits provided by each one with regard to the three indicators of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Governance Option	Economy	Efficiency	Effectiveness
As it is	■ ■ ■	■	■
Foundation by Local Community	■	■ ■	■ ■
Foundation by the State and Local Community	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■

Table 3: Comparison of governance options

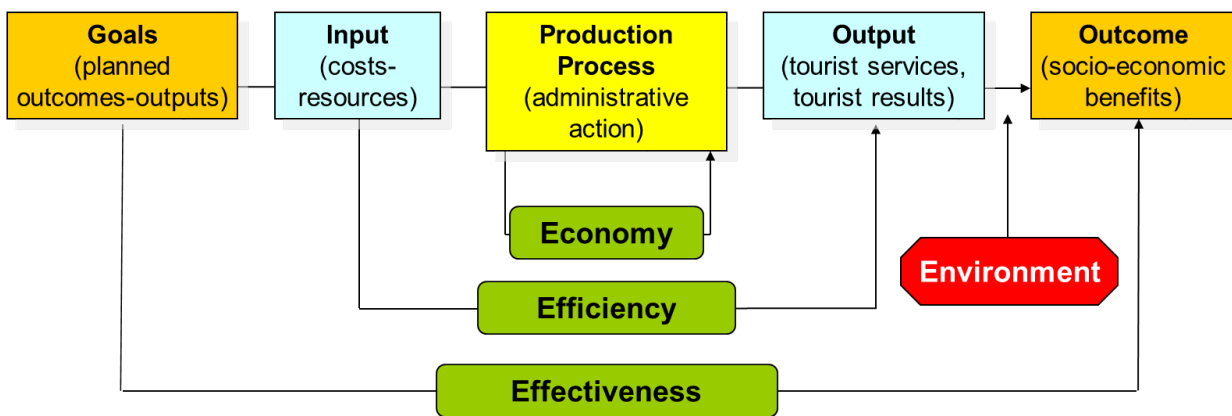


Figure 15: The 3-E concept for assessment of public management performance

6.3. Institutional/legal considerations

Option 1. The governance is left as it is

- ▶ In this case, according to our assumptions, the governance may not be as effective as needed and the revenue flows will not be possible to track in a fully transparent way, which can lead to accountability issues within the team, within the community and with the partners of the team managing the site.
- ▶ This option is problematic also in terms of proper coordination of activities between the community, as the main manager and the KFSR SNCO administration, as the latter does not have legally binding commitment or capability concerning the activities of tourism management. The role of some tourist services is also unclear, especially when it concerns the planning and organization of site management. Finally, it is unclear how will be regulated the relations between the Garni Communal Economy CNCO, as the municipal level organization and the anticipated DMO, as the liable state body for strategic planning of the destination and the site within it.

Option 2. Creation of an CNCO (Foundation) committed to the management of the site (created only by the Garni Local Community)



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- ▶ In this case the above-mentioned issues will be minimized or fully avoided, the team will gain a lot of trust and will be supported by the community with much bigger motivation and potential, but it might be hard to interfere to the decisions locally made (in cases if needed), which can be an obstacle for the management of the site and for the partners.
- ▶ This option has however the same problems concerning the impossibility for the municipal officials working in the CNCO to be paid, except from their fixed salaries received as the employees of the Local Self-Government body. In addition, the management of Garni Stone Symphony requires systemic cooperation with other state bodies, such as the MoC, MoEnv and the Khosrove State Reserve administration, not speaking about the TC. The CNCO established by a Local Self-Government body does not have resources and systemic links with the state bodies (for instance, the internal system of communication between the state bodies, called “Mulberry”) for effective coordination and management of issues related to restrictions on national monuments or specially protected areas Hence, the option is also vulnerable from the legal and institutional point of views.

Option 3. Creation of a CNCO (Foundation) committed to the management of the site (created by the State and participated by the Garni Community)

- ▶ In this case there will be more accountability, more structured organization of activities, as well as more transparency, but this structure of governance might not be supported by the community so strongly, due to less independence in decision making and financial flows. But this will probably be the best and most trusted by the partners’ structure.
 - ▶ The option is the most suitable one for effective coordination and site management. It is the most PPP-friendly option too, as the state established Foundation may involve both private and local self-government actors. Importantly, by this option the TC is playing the coordinating role, as the central DMO of the country and the structural unit of the MoE and with better coordinating opportunities than the local community organization. It is important to bear in mind that the self-government officials involved in the activities of the Foundation can be just the representatives of the Garni community but not the paid employees of the newly established Foundation because of the same reason described above – as administrative officials, they can be paid only from one source, unless they do not left the administrative job and join the Foundation as private employees, for example, being nominated by the Garni Self-Government Body.
 - ▶ The state-established Foundation is preferable from the community-established one in terms of availability of the core funding as well. It allows to be funded by the state budget rather than the community budget, which is more volatile and often are subsidized by the state budget.
- ▶ As a result of both economic and legal issues, **the third option - Creation of a new legal entity (CNCO) specifically designed to manage the Symphony of Stones site (The Foundation is created by the State and participated by the Garni Community) – is the most feasible solution.**

7. SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN (Under Tourism Perspective)

7.1. Recommended extent and forms of tourism

7.1.1. Suggested investments at the site

The main investments should be made in the following directions:

1. Rental services for:
 - a. Hiking / trekking gear
 - b. Camping gear
 - c. Mountain bikes
 - d. Horses
 - e. 4x4 vehicles
2. Shops offering:
 - a. Hiking / trekking gear
 - b. Camping gear
 - c. Mountain bikes / biking gear
 - d. Horseback riding gear
 - e. Other tourism products



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3. Local workshops for:
 - a. Fixing mountain bikes
 - b. Practicing local arts and crafts
 - c. Practicing local food preparation
 - d. Etc.

We consider to have an investment of 800,000 USD to set related facilities and services. Such investments are accounted for in the business plan, as they bring about a yearly depreciation cost.

7.1.2. Suggested investments on other tourism services and infrastructures in the impact area

Investment for tourism services and infrastructures in the impact area include:

1. Ecotourism development
2. Adventure tourism development
3. Rural tourism development

Details about the possible routes in the area to be developed are reported at § 7.5.2. Their implementation requires a further intervention to support them:

4. Creation of local pool of guides via special trainings.

Such intervention can be organized by the TC in collaboration with local training providers such as the Business Support Center³⁰, which is already partnering with the TC in this field or another one. The trainings would ensure that the first important steps are made, while HikeArmenia³¹ might become the first platform where the most motivated and hard working candidates among trainees could register and start practicing their skills.

We do not consider investment for the business plan, as 1-2-3 requires soft activities which are embedded in personnel costs or outsourced to external partners in change of a royalty.

7.2. Restrictions on economic activity on the site and potential services beyond the buffer zone of the site

According to the above-mentioned decree, the following activities on the territory of the Monument are prohibited:

- Hydraulic engineering, construction, excavation, drilling, blasting works;
- Violation of the soil and vegetation cover, habitats of the flora and fauna;
- Geological survey works (with violation of soil cover);
- Exploitation of mineral deposits, placement of mineral processing facilities;
- Sampling;
- Logging of trees and bushes;
- Pollution;
- Violation of the water regime;
- Any activity disrupting the appearance of the natural monument;
- Rock climbing, adventure tourism.

In the same decree it is made reference to the activities that are allowed and that, as a matter of fact, could be an opportunity for the tourism development in the area:

- Recreation of citizens;
- Scientific studies, monitoring (including organization of citizens' recreation and tourism monitoring);
- The organization of cognitive tourism;
- Prevention of phenomena and processes that disturb the balance of ecosystems, as well as measures to restore disturbed ecosystems;
- Organization of tourist and visitor services.

³⁰ <https://bsc.am/en/>

³¹ <https://hikearmenia.org/home>

7.3. Visitor Management

7.3.1. Carrying Capacity

According to Unesco³², the idea of a single number identifying how many visitors a site can accommodate – its “Carrying Capacity” (CC) – is problematic. Recent research has suggested that a better way to think about it is to look at the constraints upon numbers and the variables that are likely to make anything beyond a certain number of visitors unsustainable and socially, ecologically, economically, or culturally damaging.

CC involves the process of identifying how many visitors the site can handle, and how to manage it differently when that number is exceeded. If good data on tourism pressures across time and physical spaces are available, then it is possible to plan a system that kicks in when it needs it is necessary, rather than trying to manage costly, constant interventions that may not be required or can be avoided all together. The number of people a site can accommodate sustainably can be increased if it is managed more effectively with better and more sustainable facilities.

However it is unlikely for CC to be one simple number; it is more likely to be a range variable to different times. For example, in the dry season a site may have acute water resource concerns if more than ‘xx’ visitors are at the resort, but this might not be a problem in the wet season. At different times and in different contexts there will be – without good visitor management – too many visitors in the wrong places. This will result in negative impacts on the heritage, a reduction in the quality of local life, as well as a poorer visitor experience at the destination.

Some heritage is so sensitive to the impacts of visitors that it needs to be more protected and made accessible in other ways than physically experiencing the site. They are therefore working on models of “remote access”, with visitor centres at an appropriate distance from the site, or at an accessible location even further away. Given the emergence of new technologies, a site might also be looking at different ways for people to access, learn about, and experience without actually needing to visit, by using digital devices providing access through AR/VR.

There are several methodologies to calculate Carrying Capacity (CC) for cultural and/or heritage sites with the ultimate scope of informing its operational guidelines³³.

The theoretical model for CC calculation is:

$$\text{Total site surface}/(1\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{opening hours})/2$$

However, by setting additional parameters, the TSMP could become a tool to be updated over time to describe the current situation of the site, its state of conservation and any weaknesses or management problems:

1. Step 1 – Create a site description sheet

This document should entail some general information on the site, as well as its juridical status, environmental data (e.g. seismic risk), information on its management, availability of plans and programmatic documents, number of visitors and their profile (age, gender, nationality etc.), maximum number of visitors/ m² (according to fire regulations), accessibility, number of opening days per year (for fenced CH sites).

2. Step 2 – Create a set of KPIs

The KPI set usually distinguishes among four typologies:

- Functional Carrying Capacity
- Social Carrying Capacity
- Psychological Carrying Capacity
- Infrastructural/ Territorial Carrying Capacity

Functional Carrying Capacity KPIs could inform the definition of visitors’ paths, opening times, adequacy of lighting systems, security and prevention plans. In absence of data, surveys should be carried out on site.

Functional Carrying Capacity

³² UNESCO (2021). [World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit](#)

³³ E. Cimnaghi, G. Mondini, M. Valle: “La Capacità di carico turistica: uno strumento per la gestione del patrimonio culturale” in Quaderni della Valorizzazione NS5 – Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività culturali e del Turismo.

KPI	Description	Confrontation level ³⁴	Value of KPI
Nr. of tourist with respect to the visitable surface	CC= (visitable surface/ total surface)* theoretical CC	1	To be filled out on site
Maximum visitors	Constraint indicated by fire regulation	1	To be filled out on site
Accessibility	Presence of architectural barriers	1	To be filled out on site
Opening times	Site opening days/hours	3	To be filled out on site
Security measures in place	YES/NO	4	To be filled out on site
Heritage Vulnerability factors	To be identified on place during inspections	3	To be filled out on site

Table 4: Functional Carrying Capacity

Social Carrying Capacity KPIs can inform action to de-seasonalize tourism flows, introduce behavior norms at site, prevention policies (e.g. the installation of cameras).

Social Carrying Capacity			
KPI	Description	Confrontation level	Value of KPI
Resident perception on tourism flows at site	In-depth interview with key stakeholders to understand satisfaction level	3	To be filled out on site
Perception of tourists' attitude towards residents	In-depth interview with key stakeholders to understand satisfaction level	3	To be filled out on site
Ratio between nr. of tourists in low seasons and high season	1 (i.e. visitor statistics collected at site)	2	To be filled out on site
Other specific problems at site	(e.g. thefts, vandalism)	4	To be filled out on site

Table 5: Social Carrying Capacity

Psychological Carrying Capacity KPIs can inform actions to enhance site quality and fruition, policies to reduce crowds (e.g. introduction of an online ticket), information on ancillary services and initiatives to make the visit more pleasant.

Psychological Carrying Capacity			
KPI	Description	Confrontation level	Value of KPI
Tourist level of satisfaction regarding presentation of CH (i.e. heritage interpretation)	Ad-hoc studies	3	To be filled out on site
% of tourists who believe the site is overcrowded	Direct observation	3	To be filled out on site
Level of fruition of cultural offer and site comprehension	Direct observation	3	To be filled out on site

Table 6: Psychological Carrying Capacity

Infrastructural/ Territorial Carrying Capacity KPIs can inform TSMP on actions related to the introduction of dedicated transportation means (e.g. direct bus operating on weekends) to reach the site and to take decisions on incrementing signage, toilets, trash bins and other amenities available to tourists.

Infrastructural/ Territorial Carrying Capacity			
KPI	Description	Confrontation level	Value of KPI
Nr. of transports to get to the site	Nr. of ordinary and dedicated transport means available	1	To be filled out on site
Toilets/ nr. of visitors	Determined by the law	1	To be filled out on site
Signage	YES/NO	4	To be filled out on site

³⁴level 1: comparison with normative indications (if any) or quantifiable physical factor; level 2) comparison with best practices in the literature; level 3) site-specific definition of the reference target by means of a direct comparison direct comparison with the managing body; level 4) qualitative indications to be defined in consultation with the managing body



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Spaces dedicated to visitor relax (e.g. benches and pic-nic areas) in TSMP area	Direct observation and/or ad-hoc studies	3	To be filled out on site
Nr. parking lots in TSMP area	Direct observation and/or ad-hoc studies	1	To be filled out on site

Table 7: Infrastructural Carrying Capacity

3. Step 3 – Create a result sheet

The results obtained will be incorporated in a special form, aimed at collecting in a synthetic and organic manner the indications that emerged during the application phases of the model.

The first field to be filled in relates to the identification of the asset being studied.

As part of the analysis of the extrapolated theoretical CC values, it is useful to make a comparison with the flows at the reference site, in order to understand whether there is **overutilization or underutilization of the cultural asset**.

The results sheet conclusions should enclose a section on management guidelines, which must contain indications of a strategic nature to improve the conditions of usability of the site and inform its operational guidelines.

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In case of Symphony of Stones, the issues with CC start with the **narrow passage by the entrance which serves the cars which have to manage to turn to the parking area and back**, so during the peak days / hours this becomes a serious challenge both for visitors and managers of the site.

► To avoid this there could be a **direct contact established** (such as an hotline or an online chat window on the website) with partners / tourism organizations / tour operators and individuals, to warn them about possible traffic jams or too many visitors on site, as well as about other information that can be useful for the visitors beforehand. This can ensure easier management and prevent from possible complications.

To put it all into numbers – if there is X amount of tourists which are in Garni village at the particular moment, the local team could be in touch with Garni Temple, to help to direct the flow of visitors in a sequence that allows both sites to “breathe” without letting any of them to get too crowded.

The other way to avoid over-crowding would be to suggest some groups to hike the way from Garni temple to the Symphony of Stones, and the incentive for such offer would be the fact that it will give the visitors a unique opportunity to see a much bigger extension of the Symphony spreading into the gorge. But this would make more sense if done beforehand, otherwise the time which is needed to get from Garni temple to the Symphony of Stones can be considered as too long.

With the same logic there could be active contact with Geghard monastery which is the 3rd main site for the visitors of this cluster. By staying in touch and managing the sequence of visits the team of the Symphony of Stones would help all the sites greatly.

7.3.2.Flow Management Techniques

Garni village and surrounding areas with all their touristic attractions are within easy reach from the capital Yerevan in about 40-50 minutes, which makes the area attractive and easily marketable. Moreover, Garni – Geghard tourist area has a strong image and is being promoted and marketed by most of the tour operators. Therefore, its enrichment with new touristic components with added value would only help to develop the destination and different components of it much better.

There is any problem with road connection too, as for other natural sites in Armenia, although the main H3 road has damaged parts (from landslide, near Voghjaberd and Geghadir villages) and undergoes regular renovation, as it has good quality and serves quite well.

► Therefore, as the area is becoming increasingly both famous among both local and foreign visitors as well and it is always in the top places to visit, it's wise to **gradually switch the focus from promotion of the area to visitor management**.

As mentioned above, at the moment there is no practice of somehow regulating/managing the visitor flow and this situation creates discomfort in the peak season. Low-tech, low-cost solutions will depend on research



about visitor flows at the site. For instance, as national holidays are likely to be the most densely crowded days, then it is wise to develop a system for those days that:

- Channels visitors across a wider area of the destination
- Restricts access to sensitive areas
- Raises prices for some areas of concern
- Limits them to timed tickets

There are a number of visitor management techniques that do not cost a great deal of money, but require to clearly identify the timing and intensity of the issues, as well as where such special systems need to be implemented.

As the destination is bigger than the site it can be used the wider destination to spread both positive and negative impacts. Visitors are not aware of the boundaries of the site and tend to experience the whole place, so it should be considered to put non-essential activities elsewhere in the destination, rather than in the boundaries of the site.

Some methods to consider include:

- 1) Limit visitor access.** It is the crudest way to protect the site from visitor impacts. It includes blocking the access or severely limiting it. Visitors indeed do not have a “right” to see a site if it simply cannot sustain the impacts of the visitation. If only a set number of people can access the site each hour or day, then this can be made clear through interpretation and presentation.
- 2) Spread visitors spatially and across time to minimize the intensity of negative impacts.** It foresees to ease the pressures by spreading tourism more evenly across the destination, by broadening the visitor offer and experiences, or by encouraging visitors to arrive at less pressured moments in the day, week, month, or year.
 - ▶ New services and experiences envisaged at § 7.5.2 will help to spread visitors throughout Garni Temple, Geghard Monastery and Garni Gorge.
 - ▶ Moreover, it would be wise to introduce special days with invited guides and other service providers who can help to discover the site with an additional value.
- 3) Advance ticketing systems.** Some sites now have ticket-only access. This kind of system enables the management to release only enough tickets for any given day. It therefore allows to offer a high-quality visitor experience and protect the heritage from pressures. Although tourism businesses may fear such measures as being perceived by visitors as a negative control, the effect will be the opposite. Visitors will indeed perceive the site as more special, more authentic, and more unique. Some will become a “once-in-a-lifetime” destinations, with visitors applying for tickets years in advance³⁵.
 - ▶ It should be considered to introduce a functional well-organized payment system for entry at Symphony of Stones, including online payment with 24/7 customer support desk.
- 4) Congestion-related pricing systems.** People often depend on incentives, and in many cases, raising the ticket price for sensitive areas of the site on peak congestion days will cause a reduction in congestion³⁶. Pricing can therefore be a useful way to incentivize visitors to spread more evenly throughout the day or week. By offering much cheaper tickets for quiet periods and more expensive ones for peak periods, it is possible to engineer a more even visitor flow and relieve the extreme peak pressures. These concerns should also be communicated to visitors, as some will prefer to visit at less busy times anyway, especially if it helps to conserve the site.
- 5) Spreading visitors across the site.** The negative effects of tourism tend to be concentrated in specific places within the site at the “must see” locations. It is possible to avoid this by creating narratives and flows that channel visitors through a range of experiences and spaces, slowing their flow and increasing dwell time in non-vulnerable areas. For example, people viewing a sensitive element of the site can spend just a short time there if they are able to learn about it before or afterwards. They do not need all the interpretation in the immediate vicinity. It is also possible to widen the range of “must-see” things through clever interpretation and storytelling. Telling a wider story of the host community and their culture, as well as the value of the site also helps this.
 - ▶ In case of the Symphony of Stones a first step might be adding one more ticket selling booth on the other side of the monument, promote the trail bringing from Garni Temple via gorge
- 6) Offer visitors other experiences, products, and services to lessen the urgency and focus on a small number of “must see” elements.** It is an important objective to increase visitor dwell-time

³⁵ I.e. Altamira in Spain and Puerto-Princesa Underground River Park in the Philippines are two instances where limiting entry has already proved to be very successful.

³⁶ Be careful that some unique experiences are perceived as more desirable if they cost more, and the desired effect could also be lost.



where it does the least damage, and minimize dwell-time where it does the most. It foresees to broaden tourist scope by drawing their attention to lesser-known and less vulnerable areas of the site.

► It should be considered to introduce special offers on site and further along the river (on both directions / east and west) such as:

- cycling in the gorge;
- geology quest;
- paleontology quest;
- photo-trip;
- video-trip;
- picnic-trip.

7) **Design visitor flows so that the local community can secure the benefits.** Some great sites have made visiting a local community to buy products, services, or experiences a key part of the visitor experience. This can often have the added advantage of taking place in a less sensitive location. People do not have to be sold things in the most vulnerable areas – retail can be offered outside the sensitive zones to increase dwell-time there.

► The TC visitor centre in Garni might be used for such a scope

7.3.3. Internal transportation

7.3.3.1. Replacement of locally made DIY car-train

As already mentioned, it is advised to **replace the locally made DIY car-train**, by a new one. Although the locals (including municipality) think this is a nice initiative and they are supporting the local inventor, who created it, by giving it a chance to provide internal transportation services, we believe that with **some improvements** (in terms of vehicle mechanism, safety gear, interior and exterior design) this type of transportation could benefit both the local inventor and the community, as well as the visitors more, by also bettering the site's image.

► It is advised to replace it by an **electric bus** would fit much better against international expectations of "green services" at natural sites.





Figure 16: Examples of tourist train from other sites

7.3.3.2. Introduction of a new ca-train to serve the lower western edge

At the western edge the road is a little too steep and can be difficult for elders to walk all the way till the edge of the monument.

- Here a new parking should be provided. A **car-train should serve not only from the barreer till the lower western edge of the Monument, but from the eastern remotest parking all the way till the western edge**, which will help to solve the issue which is often a subject for visitor complains – the fact that the two main parkings are located too far.

The revenue of the first season has already proven to be growing and good enough for considering several serious expenses such as a better quality (preferably electric) car or car-train or even two of them, to serve people from parking to the edge of the monument.

It might have a symbolic 100-dram payment, or be subsidized by the ticket sales budget, but will significantly help to reduce negotiations with visitors over letting their cars enter the monument area.

7.3.3.3. Limitations of vehicles

It is also important to have a strict limit on the amount of transportation vehicles which can operate on site on regular basis, at the same time or with switches. With uncontrolled permit of every local or non-local entrepreneur who comes with best intentions, the site will quickly become overloaded with not only useful, but also useless excess infrastructures and services which will harm the site and its overall image in the eyes of visitors and tour operators,

7.3.3.4. Alternative local taxi service

There is a need of alternative local taxi services to manage more diverse experiences which require bigger distances, such as operating a taxi service inside the gorge for the cases when the visitors might need transportation on the way from the Garni temple to the Symphony of Stones.

Taxi services might work on Azati reservoir direction as well: they could enter the area once in the morning from the Symphony of Stones side, and spend the whole day on that line until the evening, without having to cross the monument at all.

7.4. Visitor rights and responsibilities

Visitors should be able to experience the site at their own pace, if they so choose, using advised circulation routes should they be implemented.

Respect for the site is an important consideration. Visitors should be encouraged to behave as welcomed guests, respecting the protection rules and conducting themselves in a responsible manner which would generate a renewed welcome, should they return.

A specific **regulation** should be adopted to specify visitor rights and responsibilities, including, for instance, behavioral norms concerning preserving the site, not polluting the area, not damaging the site, not using alcohol and cigarettes at the area. They should be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Also, there should be some guiding signs at the area for keeping the rules.



Such regulation might be part of broader act approved by the TC which would apply to all Armenia natural sites. There are several best practices at the international level that can be used as a reference³⁷.

Moreover, it should be considered to:

- **Give visitors and tourism operators the real-time information they need to make good choices.** Many visitors will already understand its susceptibility to damage or tourism pressures and will intend to act responsibly
- **Communicate congestion or the other negative impacts of tourism to visitors who are queuing or also at strategic points throughout their route.** Many visitors would increase their dwell-time in less sensitive areas of the site – shopping, eating, resting, learning, or simply taking in the ambience of the place – if they realize that pressing on regardless to the “must see” element will create problems. Little things, such as having notices to tell people how long a queue will take to navigate, help enormously³⁸.
- **Develop a system for guides and other actors in tourism to make them aware of issues and solutions.** People create problems, but people can also solve them if they have assistance and the resources to do so. This may be done by communicating to accommodation, guides, taxi drivers, and others in the destination that on certain moments visitors should not be encouraged to rush to the “must see” areas of the site, by also guiding visitors to make different choices. For instance, they can suggest spending more time on a good meal, shopping, resting, seeing something else, etc.

7.5. Adding value through products, experiences and services

7.5.1. Why it is important

Adding value to sustainable and authentic products, services and experiences at the destination is extremely important:

- a) **Some products, services, and experiences are critical.** The “Symphony of Stones” is a “cultural landscape” that is also sustained by a traditional socio-economic system. It is imperative that value is added to the products of such landscapes so the system can be sustained and such values survive.
- b) **Some products, services, and experiences are community welfare critical.** The communities living around the site depend also on a relatively small number of products, services, and experiences to survive and feed their families. Even if their basic economic activities are not related to the site, it is critical for good management that they are able to survive and have a reasonable standard of living. If they experience economic decline are more likely to make choices that can damage the heritage. **“Distinctive”, “authentic”, and or “unique” sells.** People visiting special natural sites have a reasonable desire for products, services, and experiences they cannot get anywhere else. The perception of the quality of a destination can be helped in part by the products, services, or experiences it offers.
- c) **Diversifying the products, services, and experiences is inherently more robust and sustainable.** Many destinations have quite a narrow product range, which increases their fragility to risk. By widening the product portfolio, the risk can be spread for the host community and businesses.

7.5.2. Products, services and experiences that can be developed

High quality nature experience activities such as hiking, horseback riding, birdwatching, wildlife watching, scientific / educational tours, camping, etc. might be conveniently developed at Garni, by also integrating KFSR into tourist routes for various target groups.

It should be considered to introduce the following services:

1. **Guiding services on demand**, for the following directions / routes:
 - a. Garni Temple-Symphony of Stones (via the path bringing to the Gorge)
 - b. Garni Temple-Symphony of Stones (via the path bringing to the Gorge)-Old bridge-KFSR visitor center/Havuts Tar

³⁷ See, for instance, [LAW 15/2018 of 7 June](#) of the Regional Government of Valencia (Spain), on tourism, leisure and hospitality which includes article 16 about Tourist Rights and article 17 about Tourist Obligations

³⁸ Some sites simply write on the ground “From here, this queue will take around 45 minutes. Why not go for coffee or explore X, Y, and Z?”



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- c. Garni Temple-Symphony of Stones (via the path bringing to the Gorge)-Old bridge-KFSR visitor center/Vahagni and Astghik's waterfalls
- d. Garni Temple-Symphony of Stones (via the path bringing to the Gorge)-Geghard Monastery
- e. Garni temple-Symphony of Stones (short car transfer or hiking via village)-Azati Reservoir
- f. Garni temple-Symphony of Stones (short car transfer or hiking via village)- Geghard Monastery

2. Authentic souvenir creation and sales on site:

- a. Themed souvenirs with the subject and appearance of Symphony of Stones rocks
- b. Themed souvenirs with the subject and appearance of Garni temple
- c. Themed souvenirs with the subject and appearance of Geghard Monastery
- d. Themed souvenirs with the subject and appearance of KFSR wildlife (Bezoar Goat, Leopard, Bear, Wolf, Fox, Vultures, Linx, different plants, geological formations, waterfalls etc.)

3. 4X4/Jeeping/Offroad tours on the following routes:

- a. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Artashat route/Banavan
- b. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Symphony of Stones
- c. Garni temple-Geghard Monastery (via H3)-Geghard village-Geghama Mountains (Dragon Stones and Petroglyphs)-Azhdahak mountain

4. Horseback riding tours on the following routes:

- a. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Artashat route/Banavan
- b. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Symphony of Stones
- c. Garni temple-Geghard Monastery (via H3)-Geghard village-Geghama Mountains (Dragon Stones and Petroglyphs)-Azhdahak mountain

5. Mountain Biking tours on the following routes:

- a. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Artashat route/Banavan
- b. Garni temple-Azati reservoir via Symphony of Stones
- c. Garni temple-Geghard Monastery (via H3)-Geghard village-Geghama Mountains (Dragon Stones and Petroglyphs)-Azhdahak mountain

6. Mixed outdoor adventure experiences by combining:

- a. All the above-mentioned types of adventures with each other,
- b. All the above-mentioned types of adventures with each other and:
 - i. Sup-boarding in Azati Reservoir
 - ii. Hiking up the Yeranos Mountain by the Azati Reservoir
 - iii. Camping by the Azati Reservoir
 - iv. Visiting and staying at the Eco-town by the Azati Reservoir (bus-town)
 - v. Staying in Garni, Goght or Geghard, visiting the KFSR every day and returning to the communities for overnight stay

Tours might also include:

- Geological tours to Garni gorge / Azat river gorge;
- Paleontological tours to Garni gorge / Azat river gorge;
- Health and recreation tours to Garni gorge / Azat river gorge;
- Boating in Azati reservoir;
- Combined horseback-riding, Sup-boarding, Mountain biking tours involving the Azati Reservoir;
- Wilderness observation tours inside KFSR, involving camping outside the Reserve;
- Quest tours in KFSR:
 - a. Nature
 - b. Historical-cultural
 - c. Other (Educational)
- Road-cycling tours from Garni Temple to Geghard Monastery via Garni Gorge.



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7.5.3. Sales & Merchandising

The existing retail outlets should be used for selling authentic products. Often opportunities for adding value are lost because for example critical products are not presented. There is a need to create marketplace opportunities for key products.

The promotion, distribution and sale of local crafts and other products should provide a reasonable social and economic return to the host community, while ensuring that their cultural integrity is not degraded. It might be considered the launch of a business incubator in the master class format, which might result in the production of **authentic souvenirs** and artisanal artefacts by micro-enterprises. Such initiatives should be encouraged and find their market channel at the gift shop.

A **local market**, might be considered, providing local population with the chance to sell their products, including agricultural products, arts and crafts, souvenirs, etc. It is recommended that a quality control is implemented so as to ensure the value of the products sold.

The market might:

- stimulate local production of several touristic products that are always in high demand³⁹
 - a) Hiking poles
 - b) Hats (animal-hat-scarf-gloves sets), caps
 - c) Backpacks
 - d) Lunchboxes
 - e) Snowshoes
 - f) Etc.
- stimulate local reselling of several touristic products / gear that are always in high demand;
- stimulate local production of several natural products (dry fruits, homemade jams and other products in jars, combinations of different products in different sets including other souvenirs etc) and handmade crafts (local pottery, clay and wooden souvenirs featuring the famous and non-famous but still exceptional historical-cultural monuments, as well as nature monuments of KFSR, woolen socks, scarfs, hats, gloves from local materials handmade by locals) available for commercial sale if business partnerships can be formed with neighboring communities.

7.5.4. Value Infrastructures

Information should be provided, as already mentioned, by considering different interpretative tools aimed to satisfy the needs of different targets, including children, schools and impaired people. These would include:

- QR codes, that may be used at the site for informative signs;
- VR/AR tools;
- Audio guides.

7.5.5. Branding

Marketing and branding of the site should be done following a three years marketing strategy, coupled with a yearly marketing plan. Branding should include a unique name and image, based on Symphony of Stones KSP, and followed by the implementation of the three years and one year plan which would include:

- Some basic printed information (map and description of the site and of the surrounding area);
- Particularly, a web marketing plan, based on a web page driving to different social communication (FB, Instagram, You Tube channel, Tik Tok, Trip Advisor experience, AirB&B experience, etc.) so as to stimulate viral marketing and SMM. The webpage would have different sections on what to do, where to go, what to see, by presenting all activities and places in pictures, videos, etc.;
- Distribution of info material in hotels and other institutions including tour agencies in Yerevan and Garni;
- Development of partnership with national PAs.

Marketing should promote various themes, in order to reach various target segments according to products and service above mentioned. It would also be helpful to have a touristic brand and logo of Symphony of Stones, designed with the engagement of all stakeholders.

³⁹ There is already a local brand of hiking shoes "Lernetsee" which is gaining the momentum right now <https://www.facebook.com/lernetsee>



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7.5.6. Involvement of entrepreneurs and community

Symphony of Stones management plan should promote measures for the equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism to be shared across the local community, improving the levels of socio-economic development and contributing to poverty alleviation.

A significant proportion of the revenue specifically derived from tourism activities to heritage places should be allotted to the protection, conservation and presentation of Symphony of Stones and support tourism development at nearby sites, such as KFSR. Visitors should also be advised of this revenue allocation, in order to increase expenditure and promote donations.

Moreover:

- It should be encouraged the training and employment of guides and site interpreters from the host community to enhance the skills of local people in the presentation and interpretation of local natural and cultural values;
- Heritage interpretation and education should encourage the involvement of local site interpreters, as as to promote a knowledge and respect for the natural and cultural heritage, encouraging the residents to take a direct interest in the site care and conservation;
- It should be provided education and training opportunities for policy makers, designers, architects, interpreters, conservators and tourism operators.

Hotels, restaurants, and shops should play a vital role in encouraging visitors to buy key products. They may help through:

- By explaining why consumers might want to make purchases of these products, services, and experiences.
- By embedding those products in what they offer guests.
- By helping promoting the area even more using the extreme level of uniqueness of the monument.
- By contributing to raise the awareness about natural environment, historical and cultural sites and the available / potential experiences / services.

In this way, consuming local food or experiencing the local culture becomes something that everyone is encouraged to do, and most visitors understand they will have a better visitor experience if they do have the opportunity to experience a destination in this way.

Moreover, it would help the local community feel privileged by having such a unique village, so to motivate them to invest more time and energy in developing the place with best ideas and most progressive ways.

► Regular meetings with stakeholders to update information and ideas, to co-work should be considered.

7.6. Collection of visitor flow statistics

As it is common for natural sites, collection systems do not allow to provide segmented data, such as number of tourists by origin, age, gender, purchased services. These should be collected by ad hoc research, which can be done by promoting **cooperation with universities and research centers** or by using big-data owned by digital operators.

One of the first things to do for the visitor flow statistics, in the current situation, is to **organize an experimental visitor flow statistics collection cycle** by asking the ticket seller (sellers) to ask a few questions to each visitor while issuing the ticket.

The ticket in this case can consist of two parts, with a serial number and perhaps with a QR code, and on the side which will remain in the possession of the team there can be 4-4 very simple questions to answer.

Here is the list of suggested questions:

1. Dates (to be filled by the seller)
2. Sex (to be filled by the seller based on visual perception)
3. Age
4. Country of origin / nationality
5. Purpose and duration of the visit
6. Next destination in the journey

Depending on the feedback gained during this experimental cycle the questions might be updated.

It would be very useful to implement similar strategy for visitor flow statistics collection on the other 3 tourist hotspots (KFSR, Garni and Geghard) as well, in order to have enough data for a comparative analyse in future, which would serve all the destinations. This and related tasks would be ideal for the regional DMO.

7.7. Communication to stakeholders and public at large



Figure 17: Current state of billboards in the area

The current state of billboards in the area in general and on the monument site in particular is better than before LEID project investment, but it needs further improvements in order to provide more information to the visitors.

► Particularly, **there is an urgent need to add more signboards about the dangerous season and sections of the monument.**

The whole needed infrastructure are mentioned in the following table.

#	Type of of signboard	Contents / location (all of these signs should be at least 2-lingual: Armenian-English)	Coordinates
1.	Welcoming board	With a recognizeable logo, slogan, attractive design and well-visible from the road, by the entrance	40° 7'1.30"N 44°44'36.48"E
2.	Site Map info board	Site map, locations of both monuments, and everything else in the area. Before entering, by the ticket selling kiosk	40° 7'0.98"N 44°44'36.77"E
3.	Information sign	With information about both monuments, their geological characteristics, history, the natural process of coming to existence etc., inside the gate	40° 7'0.67"N 44°44'36.38"E
4.	Warning signs	Similar to what is already installed but with more information about seasonal essence of stone falls (spring, March-April especially), by the gate	40° 7'0.91"N 44°44'36.32"E 40° 6'54.49"N 44°44'28.08"E
5.	Tourism services Information sign	Information about all the tourism services available (at least 2-lingual), by the ticket selling kiosk	40° 7'1.08"N 44°44'37.16"E
6.	Duplicates of all the mentioned	Welcoming board, Site Map, Tourism services Information sign, Warning signs –on the western edge of the muniment, by the location where the second ticket selling kiosk is planned to be installed	40° 6'50.28"N 44°44'21.37"E
7.	Additional signs for the two other tourism hotspots – Garni temple and Geghard Monastery	By Garni temple, at the parking, facing towards Symphony of Stones with an arrow, By Geghard Monastery, at the parking, facing towards Symphony of Stones with an arrow	40° 6'50.46"N 44°43'47.42"E 40° 8'23.35"N 44°49'6.11"E

Table 8: Type of signboards needed at the site

Besides the mentioned infrastructures there is also a need for the following information materials:

1. Printed multilingual brochures about the site
2. Printed tourist maps of the area
3. Printed maps of the tourist routes available in the area – separately / navigateable
4. Touchscreen by the gate to choose desired tourist services online
5. Downloadable digital guidebooks on the websites / social media accounts where the site is mentioned / on the TC online resources

7.8. Risk management (Safety and security)

Risk management refer to two aspects:

- Risks to natural heritage;



- Risks to visitors.

A risk management plan should be devised, with classification of risks from insignificant (risks easily mitigated by normal day to day process) to catastrophic (destruction of the site)⁴⁰.

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant <i>Risk is easily mitigated by normal day to day process</i>	Minor <i>Delays up to 10% of Schedule Additional cost up to 10% of Budget</i>	Moderate <i>Delays up to 30% of Schedule Additional cost up to 30% of Budget</i>	Major <i>Delays up to 50% of Schedule Additional cost up to 50% of Budget</i>	Catastrophic <i>Project abandoned</i>
Certain >90% chance	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely 50% - 90% chance	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Moderate 10% - 50% chance	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
Unlikely 3% - 10% chance	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Rare <3% chance	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High

Figure 18: Classification of risks

According to the passports of the two natural monuments, the following activities on the territory of the Monuments, which can be harmful to the both destination and visitors, are prohibited:

- Hydraulic engineering, construction, excavation, drilling, blasting works
- Violation of the soil and vegetation cover, habitats of the flora and fauna
- Geological survey works (with violation of soil cover)
- Exploitation of mineral deposits, placement of mineral processing facilities
- Sampling
- Logging of trees and bushes
- Pollution
- Violation of the water regime
- Any activity disrupting the appearance of the natural monument
- Rock climbing, adventure tourism.

With regard to **Risks to visitors**, standard safety and security systems should be put in place, providing fenced routes for visiting the sites, bathroom facilities and outdoor seats for the comfort, which would not adversely impact on the significant features or ecological characteristics. Emergency kits should also be kept at the reception.

In addition to the above-mentioned regulation, we propose the following preventive activities:

- The major risk to visitor safety is rock fall. It's strongly recommended to implement risk assessment and install barriers or apply other preventive/mitigation measures.
- Informational signs and boards are important infrastructure, which can inform visitors about the site restrictions and responsibilities. Installation of an informational board (trailhead) near the entrance and regulatory signs every 100 meters is recommended.
- Strengthen the capacity of the administration and security staff on first-aid and emergency procedures. We suggest to implement at least one annual training for the staff, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the RA.
- Calculate the tourism carrying capacity of the site and restrict the number of visitors accordingly.

⁴⁰ With regard to cultural heritage, international standards have been developed. One of them is ISO 31000:2009, Risk Management - Principles and guidelines. See ICCROM (2016). A Guide to Risk Management of Cultural Heritage. Government of Canada, Canadian Conservation Institute

8. MONITORING

8.1. Conservation or environmental benchmarks

At the initial stage environmental baseline data should be collected and respective monitoring and evaluation plans is developed. The following key performance indicators for monitoring of environment are proposed:

- Total quantity of waste generated at the site
- Percentage of waste sorted and recycled
- Number of environmental violations reported by the site security
- Number of fines applied by the Environmental Inspectorate and Mining Body
- Bills of water and electricity at the site (consumption)
- Species diversity and population size of indicator species of (e.g., registered in the Red Book of Armenia and/or IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) plants and animals (monitoring by the specialists is necessary)

In addition, the “Hydrometeorology and Monitoring Center” SNCO, of the MoE has a surface water sampling network for the Azat river. It has an observation point, which collects hydrological data near the Garni community. However, it doesn't provide data about the quality of the Azat River at the location. In case of the possible establishment of a water quality monitoring observation point or systematic sampling near the monument can be used for monitoring surface water quality near the Natural Monument.

8.2. Community benchmarks

The main community benchmarks may be defined as:

- The average wage in tourism sector paid to local people in Garni and nearby communities
- The poverty rate in Garni and nearby communities
- The quality of life in Garni and nearby communities
- The percentage of local young people who receive training in the tourism industry
- The number of local people who run a business related to tourism

8.3. Economic/Tourism benchmarks

The main economic/tourism benchmarks may be:

- Number of domestic tourists visiting the site
- Number of incoming tourists visiting the site
- Number of overnight tourists stays in Garni and nearby communities
- The main purpose of tourist visits
- The profile of tourists
- Seasonality of visits
- Money spent by tourists on food, accommodation, souvenirs, etc.
- Tourism added value in Garni and nearby communities

9. ORGANIZATION

9.1. Management structure

We assume that the management is taken by the Foundation described at § 6.1. It will therefore be created by the State and participated by the Garni Community.

We assume that:

- The Government will provide financial resources to subsidize, if needed, operational costs, including conservation and maintenance of the Site;
- The KFSR SNCO will ensure conservation functions;
- The Local Community will provide some services to the site, including security, waste collection and disposal. Such services will be provided for free or will be figuratively accounted for in the profits and loss account as contribution to operational cost;

- A Board of Administration will be set composed by five people (three from the Government, one each from the KFSR and one from the Local Community⁴¹). The Government will appoint the President of the Board;
- An experienced Director - hired upon a tender on a competitive basis - will be in charge for the management;
- The Foundation will have, besides the Director, a staff covering basic functions including administration, accountancy, tourist services management.
- An Expert Committee, appointed by partners, will provide the Foundation with the advice on the organization of special projects.

9.2. Functional structure

Following the Governance model defined at § 6, we assume a management structure which is held by an Executive Director, that operates through functional departments: Administrative, Marketing, Tourist Service. The Director has a secretary and a driver. Volunteers refer to Tourist Service. Security and Cleaning can respond to internal administration but also be conveniently outsourced.

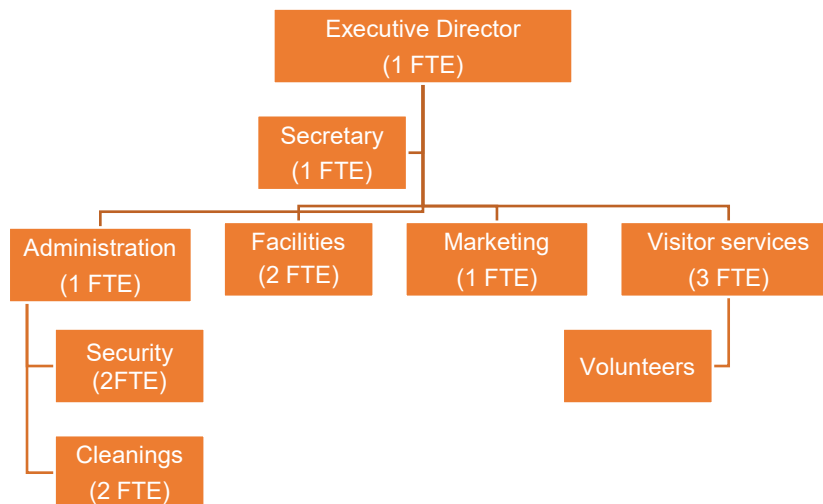


Figure 19: Management Structure

9.3. Human resources

The main idea behind the management of this important site is to make sure it is managed locally, but at the current state of things in the initial stage this might not be possible yet, due to unavailability of highly professional local staff (in tourism, site management, marketing, etc.). This means that the local team would have to allocate a part of the annual budget for outsourcing professional specialists for different tasks / project components of the site management process.

Both paid and unpaid labour would help, and volunteers can at times play crucial role especially in rural communities. Getting foreign volunteers to the community to help with the mentioned tasks would be possible, for instance, via Erasmus plus project of the European Union, while local volunteers could be found from universities and other educational institutions, from relevant fields of study, and with motivation to advance their career.

10. BUSINESS PLAN

10.1. Key assumptions

- A Foundation is created by the State and participated by the Garni Community to be in charge for the management of the site.
 - o It promotes the Symphony of Stones according to the KSP mentioned at § 5.5.1.

⁴¹ Alternatively, it might be considered to have two people appointed from the Local Community and three from the Government, or simply respectively one and two, should the KFSR SNCO not formally participate



- It serves the market segments mentioned at § 5.5.3, to which it provides experiences mentioned at § 5.5.2
- The site is accessible according to an operating schedule that assumes as public operating days: all weekends (Saturday, Sunday), plus all days during three months of summer seasons;
- The site is organized as a “C&H” tourist attraction, providing tourist services including:
 - A parking place whose capacity is 100 cars and 5 buses;
 - 18% of visitors come by buses;
 - A gift shop, selling certified merchandising, provided by a portable wooden caravan (for mobility);
 - A local market area consisting of 4 wooden kiosks conceded to local operators (2 located by the gate, 1 by the parking #2, and 1 by the parking #3)
 - A F&B wooden kiosk, closed to the parking places, with a soft-covered table & seats area with a capacity of 40 people, conceded to a local operator;
 - An E-bike renewable station provided with n. 8 e-bikes (located not far from the gate), conceded to a local operator;
 - Two electric cars operating from the parkings, with a capacity of 6 people each, conceded to a local operator;
 - Lights and audio system for light-shows with high quality sound to be projected on the rocks some times a year (but not too frequently).
- Tourist services and activities operate all-year round;
- Functions and a limited number of Special Events are considered, as outdoor spaces are suitable for community, private (such as wedding ceremonies) and other uses, but with strict rules and balanced visitor-flow, not to disturb the other visitors and the environment, as well as not to spoil the image of the monument);
- Rentals of outdoor facilities are foreseen and encouraged;
- Special events, such as light and music performances performed in a specific area not conflicting with the Symphony of Stones, are considered. Light-shows, wedding photo-sessions and ceremonies have a maximum audience of 150-200 people;
- Accommodation in the area is mainly provided by local communities, adding economic benefits which are not accounted for in the present business plan;
- At the site is however offered sustainable accommodation, consisting of:
 - n. 8 glamping tents, with a capacity of maximum n. 4 people each;
 - n. 4 caravans with a capacity of n. 4 people each (Caravan Park);
- Marketing strategies include – besides visitor’ word of mouth – rack brochures, road signages, partnership and collaborative opportunities with other institutions, website and social media communication.
- All revenue and expense projections are stated in 2023 constant currency. Thus, a specific inflation factor is not included in estimates. All projections are assumed to change at the rate of inflation.

10.2. Attendance Projections

Attendance is projected over 5 years and is break down by the following categories:

- a) International tourists
- b) Domestic tourists
- c) Daily visitors, which we assume that originate from the Kotayk Region but also from Yerevan

In order to foresee the demand, we adopt the following methodology:

- for a) and b) we consider official figures about total tourist arrivals, while for daily visitors, we consider figures from the 2011 Census⁴²;
- we assume a compound average growth rate (CAGR) based on international benchmarks⁴³;
- we apply a yearly penetration rate and obtain the perspected demand;
- we assume that each visitor, from each category, makes only one visit per year⁴⁴.

Under such assumption, we obtain a demand of 218,399 people in the 1st year, reaching 280,866 in the 5th year.

Potential Attendance	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
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⁴² Source: Kotayk population census 2011 <https://armstat.am/file/doc/99482213.pdf>

⁴³ We assume a CAGR of international and domestic arrivals of 4.4% per year, as stated by UNWTO (2011), *Tourism towards 2030. Global Overview*. UNWTO: Madrid

⁴⁴ It is a prudential assumption especially for daily visitors from nearby areas. Many attractions do indeed rely their demand on repetitive visits by residents.

International tourists	550,289	577,803	606,694	637,028	668,880
Domestic tourists	1,112,305	1,167,920	1,226,316	1,287,632	1,352,014
Same-day visitors	1,346,937	1,346,937	1,346,937	1,346,937	1,346,937
Yearly Penetration Rate	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	10.0%	10.8%	11.7%	12.6%	13.6%
Domestic tourists	5.0%	5.2%	5.4%	5.6%	5.8%
Same-day visitors	8.0%	8.2%	8.3%	8.5%	8.7%
Projected Attendance	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	55,029	62,403	70,765	80,247	91,000
Domestic tourists	55,615	59,575	63,817	68,361	73,228
Same-day visitors	107,755	109,910	112,108	114,350	116,637
TOTAL	218,399	231,888	246,690	262,958	280,866

Table 9: Attendance Projections

10.3. Demand for tourism services and activities

We apply a similar methodology for each tourism service at activity offered at the site:

- we consider the projected attendance for each category of visitors;
- we apply a penetration rate, to projected attendance, for each service and activity, obtaining the projected demand. Such penetration rates are based on Consultants' experience in similar projects around the world and on direct personal experience in managing Cultural Heritage sites;
- we assume that such penetration rate remains constant over the 5-year timeframe;
- we do not consider demand for functions and special events, assuming that in the first 5 years revenues would balance operative costs and therefore do not affect the Business Plan.

Service/activity	International tourists	Domestic tourists	Same-day visitors
Parking	80% of visitors arrive by car, 4 passengers per car, 20% of visitors arrive by bus, 30 people per bus		
Certified gift shop	20%	10%	2%
Local market	10%	10%	5%
F&B Kiosks	20%	10%	15%
Electric car	10%	5%	5%
E-bike renting	4%	4%	8%
Glamping tents	4%	2%	0%
Caravans	10%	4%	0%

Table 10: Penetration rate for each tourism service/activity by each demand category

Parking Projected Demand (nr. of car)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	11,006	12,481	14,153	16,049	18,200
Domestic tourists	11,123	11,915	12,763	13,672	14,646
Same-day visitors	21,551	21,982	22,422	22,870	23,327

Table 11: Parking Demand Projections (cars)

Parking Projected Demand (nr. of buses)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	367	416	472	535	607
Domestic tourists	371	397	425	456	488
Same-day visitors	718	733	747	762	778

Table 12: Parking Demand Projections (buses)

Gift Shop Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	11,006	12,481	14,153	16,049	18,200
Domestic tourists	5,562	5,958	6,382	6,836	7,323
Same-day visitors	2,155	2,198	2,242	2,287	2,333

Table 13: Gift Shop Demand Projections

Local Market Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
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International tourists	5,503	6,240	7,076	8,025	9,100
Domestic tourists	5,562	5,958	6,382	6,836	7,323
Same-day visitors	5,388	5,496	5,605	5,718	5,832

Table 14: Gift Shop Demand Projections

E-bike Renting Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	2,201	2,496	2,831	3,210	3,640
Domestic tourists	2,225	2,383	2,553	2,734	2,929
Same-day visitors	8,620	8,793	8,969	9,148	9,331

Table 15: E-bike Renting Demand Projections

Electric car Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	5,503	6,240	7,076	8,025	9,100
Domestic tourists	2,781	2,979	3,191	3,418	3,661
Same-day visitors	5,388	5,496	5,605	5,718	5,832

Table 16: Electric cars use Demand Projections

Glamping Tents Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	2,201	2,496	2,831	3,210	3,640
Domestic tourists	1,112	1,192	1,276	1,367	1,465
Same-day visitors	0	0	0	0	0

Table 17: Glamping Tents Demand Projections

Caravan Area Projected Demand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	5,503	6,240	7,076	8,025	9,100
Domestic tourists	2,225	2,383	2,553	2,734	2,929
Same-day visitors	0	0	0	0	0

Table 18: Caravan Area Demand Projections

10.4. Carrying capacity utilization

Carrying capacity utilization is estimated by comparing yearly capacity against forecasted demand at year 5.

Facility	Capacity (#)	Average duration of use (hours)	# of available hours per day	Daily capacity	Yearly capacity	Demand (Year 5)	CC utilization (Year 5)
Parking (car)	100	2	8	400	146,000	57,577	39.4%
Parking (buses)	5	2	8	20	7,300	1,685	23.1%
E-bike	16	4	8	128	46,720	15,900	34.0%
Electric cars	2	1	8	64	23,360	18,593	79.6%
F&B kiosks	40	0.25	8	320	116,800	43,018	36.8%
Glamping tents	8	24	24	32	11,680	5,105	43.7%
Caravan Park	6	24	24	48	17,520	12,029	68.7%

Table 19: Carrying Capacity Utilization

10.5. Admission fees

We assume the following fees for tourist services and activities. In the case of gift shop and local market, we assume an average expenditure per capita based on Consultants' experience in similar projects.

Service/activity	Fee (USD)	Service/activity	Fee (USD)
Admission (Int & domestic visitors)	0.75	E-bike renting	10
Admission (residents)	0	Electric car	1.5
Parking (car)	1	Glamping tents	20
Parking (bus)	30	Caravans	35
Gift shop	5	Local Market	8
F&B kiosks	12		

Table 20: Fees of Tourist Services and Activities

10.6. Revenues

In order to project revenues, we considered the total yearly turnover of each service/activity, with exception of:

- the local market and the F&B kiosks, whose management is outsourced, with revenues from royalties upon turnover set at 30%;

- E-bike renting and electric car, whose management is outsourced, with revenues from royalties upon turnover set at 50%.

Difference in royalties are motivated by the consideration that investment in E-bike renting and electric car is proportionally higher than that required for kiosks used for the local market and F&B.

Admissions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$41,272	\$46,802	\$53,074	\$60,185	\$68,250
Domestic tourists	\$41,711	\$44,681	\$47,863	\$51,270	\$54,921
Same-day visitors	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 21: Admission Revenues

Parking (cars)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$11,281	\$12,793	\$14,507	\$16,451	\$18,655
Domestic tourists	\$11,401	\$12,213	\$13,082	\$14,014	\$15,012
Same-day visitors	\$22,090	\$22,532	\$22,982	\$23,442	\$23,911

Table 22: Parking Revenues (cars)

Parking (buses)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$9,905	\$11,232	\$12,738	\$14,444	\$16,380
Domestic tourists	\$10,011	\$10,724	\$11,487	\$12,305	\$13,181
Same-day visitors	\$19,396	\$19,784	\$20,179	\$20,583	\$20,995

Table 23: Parking Revenues (buses)

Gift Shop	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$55,029	\$62,403	\$70,765	\$80,247	\$91,000
Domestic tourists	\$27,808	\$29,788	\$31,908	\$34,180	\$36,614
Same-day visitors	\$10,775	\$10,991	\$11,211	\$11,435	\$11,664

Table 24: Gift Shop Revenues

Local Market	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$13,207	\$14,977	\$16,984	\$19,259	\$21,840
Domestic tourists	\$13,348	\$14,298	\$15,316	\$16,407	\$17,575
Same-day visitors	\$12,931	\$13,189	\$13,453	\$13,722	\$13,996

Table 25: Local Market Revenues

F&B kiosks	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$39,621	\$44,930	\$50,951	\$57,778	\$65,520
Domestic tourists	\$20,021	\$21,447	\$22,974	\$24,610	\$26,362
Same-day visitors	\$58,188	\$59,351	\$60,538	\$61,749	\$62,984

Table 26: F&B kiosks Revenues

E-bike Renting	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$11,006	\$12,481	\$14,153	\$16,049	\$18,200
Domestic tourists	\$11,123	\$11,915	\$12,763	\$13,672	\$14,646
Same-day visitors	\$43,102	\$43,964	\$44,843	\$45,740	\$46,655

Table 27: E-bike Renting Revenues

Electric car	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$4,127	\$4,680	\$5,307	\$6,019	\$6,825
Domestic tourists	\$2,086	\$2,234	\$2,393	\$2,564	\$2,746
Same-day visitors	\$4,041	\$4,122	\$4,204	\$4,288	\$4,374

Table 28: E-bike Renting Revenues

Glamping Tents	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$44,023	\$49,922	\$56,612	\$64,198	\$72,800
Domestic tourists	\$22,246	\$23,830	\$25,527	\$27,344	\$29,291
Same-day visitors	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 29: Glamping Tents Revenues

Caravan Area	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
International tourists	\$192,601	\$218,410	\$247,677	\$280,865	\$318,501
Domestic tourists	\$77,861	\$83,405	\$89,344	\$95,705	\$102,519
Same-day visitors	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 30: Caravan Area Revenues

10.7. Investments

Capital costs include approximately 1.0 mln USD to introduce new tourism facilities, including:

- the purchases of electric cars, electric bikes and kiosks for the local market, F&B, gift shop;
 - setting of e-bike renting point with solar charging capacity;
 - improvement of signage;
 - printing of maps, leaflets, etc..
- formulation of a feasibility and implementation study.

10.8. Personnel

We assume that the Foundation has an Executive Director which operates through departments mentioned at previous § 9.2. The following table reports the Departments along with relative personnel.

All Departments are considered to be internally managed, although some of them, particularly security and cleanings might be conveniently outsourced, as it is for other service activities.

It is also assumed to engage volunteers for some activities, while ensuring gender equality.

Department	Personnel
Secretary & Administration	2 FTE
Marketing	1 FTE
Facilities	2 FTE, including a technician and a maintenance worker
Visitor Service	5 FTE, including a supervisors
Security/Custodians	3 FTE
Cleaners	3 FTE

Table 31: Departments and staff

10.9. Expenses

Projected Expenses include the following operating costs categories during the five years of projections:

10.9.1. Depreciation of facilities

It is considered a 5-year life time, with depreciation accounting each year for 20% of investments. It is therefore considered a yearly expense of 200,000 USD.

10.9.2. Salaries, Wages and Benefits

They are estimated on the basis of the organizational structure mentioned at § 9.

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$98,520	\$103,446	\$107,584	\$110,811	\$114,136

Table 32: Expenses for Salaries, Wages and Benefits

10.9.3. Building Occupancy Costs

They include all costs, excluding salaries, associated with building repairs and maintenance, cleaning, utilities, security systems and building insurance. It is estimated at a fixed percentage over total size of facilities (gift shop and local market, camping and caravan area, e-bike renting station), assumed at 1,200 gross sq. mt., at a cost of 20 USD per sq. mt. We considered a CAGR of 1% due accrued obsolescence.

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Building Occupancy Costs	\$24,000	\$24,240	\$24,727	\$25,476	\$26,511

Table 33: Building Occupancy Costs

10.9.4. General and Administrative

These costs include office and related supplies, equipment, mailing, printing, telephone, travel, volunteer perquisites, professional services, dues and subscriptions, credit card fees, and other items that do not fit into the other expense categories. They are assumed at 15% of staffing costs.

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
General and Administrative	\$14,778	\$15,517	\$16,138	\$16,622	\$17,120

Table 34: General and Administrative Expenses

10.9.5. Marketing

As marketing staff has been accounted for in the staffing projections the focus here is on non-staff marketing costs, including advertising and promotion. These costs generally range from 1-5% of the total operating budgets of attractions. Another way marketing expenditures are calculated is on a per visitor basis, which is applied here. A cost of 0.5 USD per visitor is considered.

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Marketing	\$109,200	\$115,944	\$123,345	\$131,479	\$140,433

Table 35: Marketing Expenses

10.9.6. Retail Cost of Goods Sold

It is the cost of the beginning inventory, plus the cost of net purchases (purchases minus purchase discounts and purchase returns and allowance) and freight-in at the certified gift shop. It equals the cost of goods available. We assumed them at 40% of sales revenues.

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Retail Cost of Goods Sold	\$28,084	\$30,954	\$34,165	\$37,759	\$41,783

Table 36: Retail Cost of Goods Sold

10.10. Summary of attendance and financial projections

The following table reports a summary of attendance and financial projections.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Annual Attendance	218,399	231,888	246,690	262,958	280,866

Revenues	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Admission	\$82,983	\$91,483	\$100,936	\$111,456	\$123,171
Parking (cars)	\$44,772	\$47,537	\$50,571	\$53,906	\$57,577
Parking (buses)	\$39,312	\$41,740	\$44,404	\$47,332	\$50,556
Certified Shop	\$93,612	\$103,181	\$113,884	\$125,863	\$139,278
Local Market	\$39,485	\$42,464	\$45,753	\$49,388	\$53,411
F&B kiosks	\$117,830	\$125,728	\$134,463	\$144,137	\$154,866
Electric car	\$10,254	\$11,036	\$11,905	\$12,870	\$13,945
E-bike Renting	\$65,231	\$68,360	\$71,760	\$75,462	\$79,501
Glamping Tents	\$19,881	\$22,126	\$24,642	\$27,463	\$30,627
Caravans	\$81,139	\$90,544	\$101,106	\$112,971	\$126,306
Total Revenue	\$493,478	\$531,529	\$573,676	\$620,414	\$672,306

Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Facilities Depreciation	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Salaries, Wages, Benefits	\$98,520	\$103,446	\$107,584	\$110,811	\$114,136
Building Occupancy	\$24,000	\$24,240	\$24,727	\$25,476	\$26,511
General & Administrative	\$14,778	\$15,517	\$16,138	\$16,622	\$17,120
Marketing	\$109,200	\$115,944	\$123,345	\$131,479	\$140,433
Retail Cost of Goods Sold	\$28,084	\$30,954	\$34,165	\$37,759	\$41,783
Total Expenses	478,581	494,101	509,958	526,147	543,983

Table 37: Summary of Attendance and Financial Projections

FINAL RESULT	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Revenues	\$493,478	\$531,529	\$573,676	\$620,414	\$672,306
Expenses	\$478,581	\$494,101	\$509,959	\$526,147	\$543,983
(Gross) Profit / Loss	\$14,897	\$37,428	\$63,717	\$94,267	\$128,323
Corporate tax	\$2,235	\$5,614	\$9,558	\$14,140	\$19,248
Profit / Loss	\$12,663	\$31,814	\$54,159	\$80,127	\$109,074

Table 38: Final Results

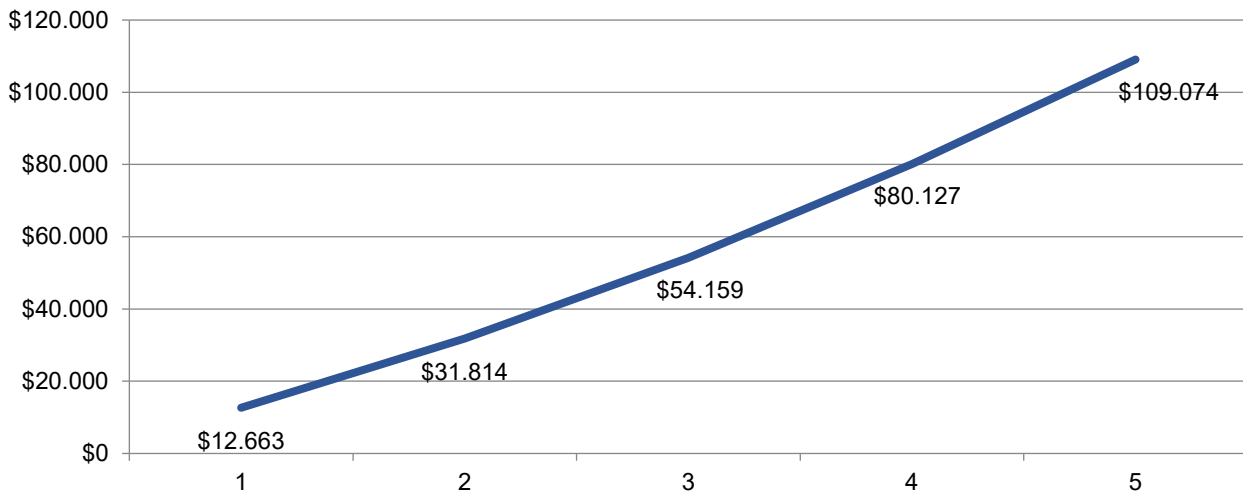


Figure 20: Profit/Loss

11. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The present report formulated an innovative model for the management and valorization of Symphony of Stones site, which might apply to other natural sites, throughout Armenia.

Innovation springs from two aspects, that are:

- (1) the concept of Symphony of Stones as a comprehensive tourist attraction, embedded in a tourist system which involves the whole Garni and nearby villages communities;
- (2) the governance model.

Considering the Symphony of Stones as a tourist attraction implies that it must be both protected for its outstanding values, but also valorized through a system of tourism services and activities so as to cater to the needs of perspective international and domestic tourists.

The site is situated in a pleasant location, close to various relevant sites and landmarks in and around the Garni community, such as KFSR, and multiple cultural / natural heritage sites. It is also very close to Yerevan, from where the access was recently eased by LEID project interventions, making it an ideal destination for daily excursions too.

The management is currently ensured by the local community, but a few rules are in place, let alone those that are effectively respected. Locals use to enter the site without any control, even by car, causing discomfort to tourists. Safety is a serious risky issue, as there are a few signboards about stone falls, with young visitors particularly wandering around and taking pictures in forbidden areas.

Access is however not comfortable for all, as the road is steep and difficult to walk be walked by elders, and parking lots are far from the monument. A locally made DIY car-train helps somehow but, again, it has questionable safety-security standards, while being kitschy and not fitting at all the local context.

In winter snow can hinder the entrance, while in the peak season there is no practice of somehow regulating/managing the visitor flow, thus adding discomfort. Night illumination is not sufficient (whilst the site could benefit a lot from a scenic lighting) and even basic services, such as guides, F&B, merchandising and even toilets are lacking, are not sufficient for the needs of a growing demand or are of poor quality.

The STMP foresees to take a focused care of each highlighted issue, paying much attention not only to visitor management ones, but also considering a new system of tourist services and activities, including the chance to night stay close to the site in a glamping camping or at a caravan park, while enjoying the spectacular view of the gorge and the Garni temple.

The local community is encouraged to contribute to the site valorization by investing time and energy in developing new ideas, particularly youths, while operators are provided with the opportunity to participate in commercial sale of tourism services and activities, as well as of locally-made natural products and handmade crafts, which should be sold in proper organized market areas and a gift shop.



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Outdoor spaces are judged suitable for community, private (such as wedding ceremonies) and other uses, but with strict rules and balanced visitor-flow, not to disturb the other visitors and the environment, as well as not to spoil the image of the monument. Rentals of outdoor facilities are also foreseen and encouraged, while special events, such as light and music performances taken in a specific area not conflicting with the Symphony of Stones, are considered.

The innovative tourism development model clearly requires to set up a dedicated team for its management, which would be ideally require a new legal entity (a Foundation) specifically designed to manage the Symphony of Stones site, which should be created by the state.

This is the most PPP-friendly option, as such Foundation may involve both private and local self-government actors. Importantly, by this option the TC is playing the coordinating role, as the structural unit of the Ministry of Economy –through the forthcoming Regional DMO - and with better coordinating opportunities than the local community organization.

The state-established Foundation is preferable from the community-established one in terms of availability of the core funding as well. It allows to be funded by the state budget rather than the community budget, which is more volatile and often are subsidized by the state budget.

Finally, the STMP is provided with a Business Plan which proves the financial sustainability of the model, once the demand is attracted by proper marketing and communication activities and encouraged to spend its time and money at the site by value services and infrastructure, with conservation and protection activities let at the KFSR.