

## Article

# Examining the Conflicting Relationship between U.S. National Parks and Host Communities: Understanding a Community's Diverging Perspectives

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**Abstract:** The growing importance of participatory and collaborative approaches in resource management has resulted in an increased emphasis on identifying the complex relationships between natural national parks and neighboring rural communities. Given the limited number of studies dealing with parks beyond rural areas, our exploratory case study examines how conflict stemming from diverse community stakeholders' perspectives and values in regard to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park influences their involvement and attitudes toward park management. Thirty-two interviews were conducted and analyzed using a content-analysis methodology. Guided by the Progress Triangle conflict management framework, each stakeholder's views, interests, and aspirations associated with the missions were organized according to the framework's three dimensions: Substance, procedure, and relationship. The study findings discussed how stakeholders' varying perspectives regarding cultural resources influenced their interactions with urban historical national parks and their attitudes toward park management. Furthermore, how stakeholders can reconcile their differences through a collaborative approach for better park management was discussed.

**Keywords:** park–community relationships; stakeholder perceptions; historical parks; collaboration

## 1. Introduction

National parks in the United States are increasingly recognized as socioeconomic and ecological systems with interdependence, dynamism, and complexity [1]. As a result, the United States National Park Service (NPS) has moved from a traditional management paradigm of “park as island” to one that seeks to consider the views and opinions of its constituencies, including communities located in close proximity [2,3].

Nonetheless, this more inclusive management approach presents challenges, given the potentially complex relationship existing between national parks and people living nearby. Academics are just starting to better understand the intricacies in such a relationship and their effects on park management [4–7]. For the most part, the academic work in this area has focused on the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts that parks have on adjacent communities [8–10]. Further, most of these studies have treated communities as a contextual (e.g., geographical) component of analysis, failing to treat them as a collection of people with different perspectives and aspirations [11,12].

In recent times, the importance of recognizing local stakeholders' diverse interests, concerns, and knowledge regarding national parks has been highlighted by public land managers and community leaders [13]. Given this, understanding meanings and values that local individuals or groups have toward a park has become a departing and essential goal for effective park management [14–16]. Studies along this vein have examined stakeholders' values ascribed to national parks [17,18] and how these contributed to the formation of attitudes toward park management [19,20]. Furthermore, studies within this literature have dealt with how to resolve conflicts stemming from diverging perspectives of community stakeholders [21]. Most of these studies have been conducted in the context of natural national parks and rural communities. Far less research has been conducted in national parks situated in urban settings.

Our study intends to fill this gap in the literature by examining conflicts between stakeholders, stemming from diverging perspectives held in relation to urban historical national parks. As an exploratory case study, we selected the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Since the 1960s and 1970s—the time the park began being managed/controlled by the federal government—there have been conflicts, particularly between Native Americans and the NPS [22]. These conflicts originated around how park authorities interpreted the missions' history and from incompatible expectations of use/management of the missions (e.g., park authorities restricting Native Americans' use of the missions for traditional ceremonies). The authors of this study analyzed these situations by employing the Progress Triangle conflict management framework, useful for identifying complex and potentially contentious historical, cultural, and traditional issues associated with natural/cultural resources [23,24]. This paper aims to examine how community stakeholders' conflicts stemming from diverging views, values, and aspirations in relation to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park influenced their attitudes toward and involvement with park authorities and management. This study seeks to provide a better understanding of complex and conflictual cultural resource management with a focus on urban settings beyond previous studies conducted in natural national parks.

## 2. Literature Review

The few studies conducted on national park–community relationships in the United States primarily show that participatory and collaborative park–community relationships have not been entirely implemented [25]. This is in part because park–community relations are difficult to manage [26,27]. Communities are made up of individuals with multiple values and conflicting interpretations/expectations, so resource managers often encounter challenges [28,29]. In the context of national parks, inclusive and participatory practices are often hindered by competing expectations and differing interests [30].

The resource management literature, therefore, serves as a guide to our study, given that resource management in the US has shifted from a traditional, expert-led, top–down approach to a more inclusive, participatory, and collaborative approach in the last three decades [28,31]. Prior to this shift, resource management focused mostly on decisions made primarily by institutions or formal organizations [32]. Thus, decisions about resource management were commonly made by a few powerful groups. More recently, studies [33–35] have called for the importance of acknowledging marginal stakeholders (e.g., racial minorities, socially disadvantaged groups, and underrepresented individuals or groups) within decision-making processes for resource management. While perspectives of these groups are commonly not in line with the views of influential groups, an inclusive approach highlights the former groups' differing views and concerns about the local resources [36]. Despite the potential for conflict between stakeholder groups [37], the natural resource literature has emphasized the need to incorporate stakeholders' multiple perspectives, including background, cultural history, and meanings, particularly when the resources have cultural meanings or symbolic representations [11]. Such interpretive approaches help to initiate dialogue between stakeholders and provide a framework to formulate potential strategies for complex resource management [23,38,39].

To facilitate dialogue and effective communication, developing relationships between stakeholders has been recognized and highlighted in the resource management literature [40,41]. Positive relationships based on high levels of trust allow and facilitate collaboration with stakeholders, such as sharing of information or knowledge [42,43]. While positive trust between stakeholders generally plays an important role in fostering relationships, Parkins et al. [44] argued that general trust between different groups who shared similar values may contribute less to motivating public engagement in natural resource management. Rather, a combination of trust with some levels of skepticism, rooted in concerns about outcomes and fairness and openness of the process, enables the groups to engage in the management of natural resources [44].

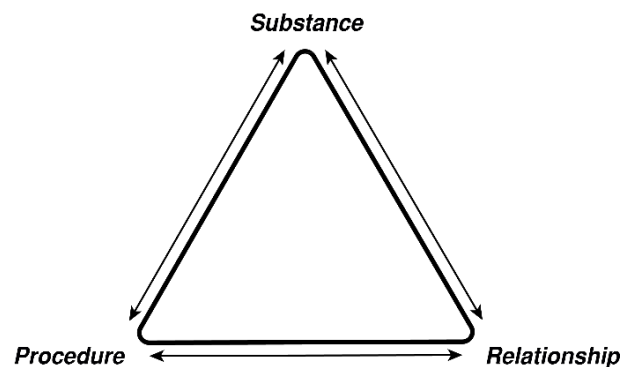
In the context of park–community relationships, community stakeholders’ diverse perspectives of national parks have not been considered in participatory and collaborative approaches. The literature on national parks has mostly focused on the relationships between stakeholders and park personnel. For example, studies of stakeholder relationships have linked sociodemographic variables with positive/negative relationships with park staff, finding that older and less educated people have more conflict with park staff [45,46]. Alternatively, people with higher incomes or those dependent on decisions by park authorities tended to form a more positive relationship with park management [47]. A few previous studies [11] examined stakeholders’ culture and emotional meanings as strategies to understand their attitudes and perceptions, mostly conducted in natural-based areas. However, stakeholders’ history, culture, and traditions attributed to a specific historical place have not been adequately considered as a strategy to deal with conflict management, particularly focusing on the values of minority racial/ethnic groups. Given this shortcoming, the cultural and historical values of resources from heterogeneous groups associated with urban national parks should be incorporated in park management.

Beyond examination of stakeholders’ relationships based on sociodemographic variables, in this study, we offer an examination of how acknowledgements of such cultural/historical divergences embedded in conflicts among parties influence their involvement and relationships between them. Through our analysis, we recognize the importance of acknowledging other cultures and histories across stakeholder groups and the difficulties of facilitating effective communication, particularly in conflict situations associated with cultural/historical resources, to influence involvement. To examine the interrelationships between these dimensions, we guide our analysis through the Progress Triangle conflict management framework.

### 3. Framework for Analysis

To guide its analysis, we used the Progress Triangle conflict management framework (see Figure 1) developed by Daniels and Walker [24]. Stakeholder analysis or collaboration theories, oftentimes used in the context of natural resource management, allow for the identification of key stakeholders and the examination of their attitudes toward management of natural resources [11,48]. However, we found the Progress Triangle framework to be more appropriate for our study objective, which was to better understand how conflicts concerning cultural resource management that stem from diverging stakeholders’ perspectives influenced attitudes toward park management and interactions with the missions. We found the chosen framework to be better suited, given the context of cultural/historical resources in contrast to one of natural resources (e.g., perceptions of and attitudes toward landscape change). Additionally, the framework allowed us to uncover otherwise less palpable dimensions of stakeholders’ perspectives and their interrelations in relation to conflict. These perspectives may be associated with cultural resources, their attitudes toward park management, and interactions with the resources [24]. Thus, it is important to note that here we employ “conflict” as a broad notion that includes covert and overt conflict situations, based on our understanding of stakeholders’ differences of views, values, and interests.

To better understand conflict, the Progress Triangle framework delimits three dimensions of conflict, which include substance, procedure, and relationship (detailed below), all of which are interrelated [24,49]. Such dimensions and their interrelationships are described below.



**Figure 1.** Progress Triangle conflict management framework.

### 3.1. The Substance Dimension

The substance dimension represents the views of each stakeholder regarding natural/cultural resources and acknowledges how each group forms its perceptions and defines its values and interests. The dimension is broadly divided into intrinsic values and instrumental values. The former values appreciate resources for their own sake, such as emotional, symbolic, and spiritual connections with resources [50], whereas the latter values are rather focused on material or consumptive perspectives, such as economic benefits or scientific worth [51]. It emphasizes each stakeholder's background and how their values and interests are formed in terms of natural/cultural resources. Accordingly, this dimension addresses how stakeholders define their understanding and interpretation of natural/cultural resources, including facts, culture, history, jurisdiction, values, and interests [24].

### 3.2. The Procedure Dimension

The procedure dimension connotes how decisions are made and acknowledges the importance of processes (as opposed to endpoints) in resource management strategies [36]. It addresses how information is shared and made accessible and how stakeholders are involved and treated in decision-making processes. This dimension includes rules and regulations, jurisdiction, and authority [24].

### 3.3. The Relationship Dimension

The relationship dimension refers to the attitudes and behaviors stakeholders have toward each other and the interactions and relationships between stakeholder groups. The dimension is concerned with how sufficiently trust and respect are built among stakeholders and how frequently each stakeholder interacts with any others. This dimension concentrates on what types of relationships are formed between stakeholders. The relationship dimension includes trust, respect, power, emotions, communication skills, and frequency of interaction with other stakeholders [52–54].

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Site Selection

The San Antonio Missions National Historical Park was selected as the study site (see Figure 2). This urban/semi-urban park, managed by the NPS in collaboration with the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, consists of four localities, each centered around a colonial church within several neighborhoods. The missions, first built in 1720, helped to form the city of San Antonio and still serve the communities in many ways. They provide an important link to the cultural heritage of people

across Texas and the United States [55]. The missions are also an important tourist destination and economic engine, receiving 1.4 million visitors in 2017 [56]. Additionally, the churches within these parks are active Catholic parishes. Thus, the Missions serve as a place where church parishioners and residents meet, worship, and engage in leisure and festive activities, while also receiving thousands of visitors every year. Because of their complexity as a protected area and community resource, we believe the missions, as a supplier of social, cultural, and economic benefits, provide an exceptional location to understand how varying perspectives of cultural resources by community stakeholders influence their interactions with national parks.

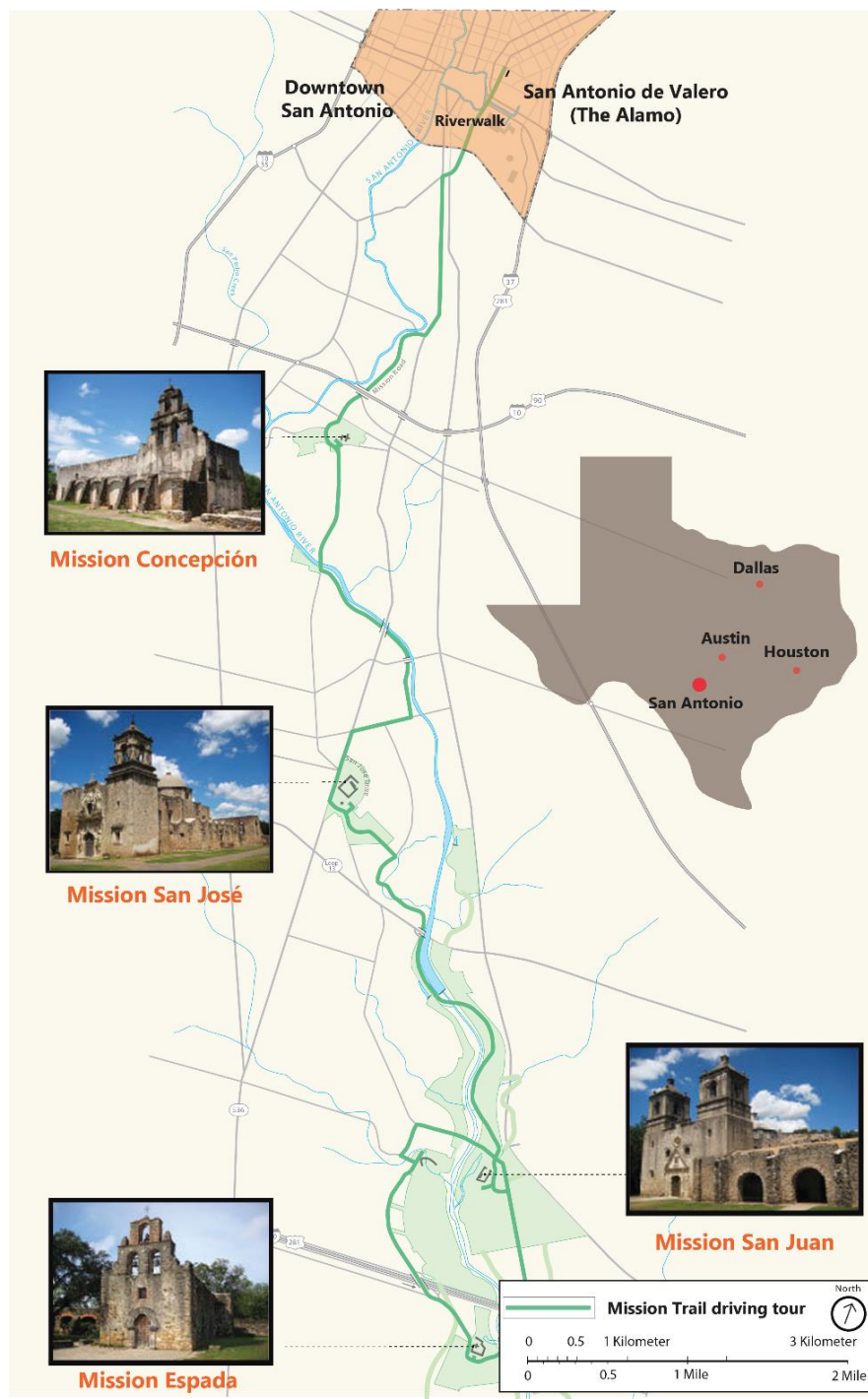


Figure 2. Map of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.



## 4.2. Data Collection

Previous to formally collecting data in the study site, we engaged in two visits (April and June 2013) to the study site. During these visits, informal conversations were conducted with members of the NPS and different government officials that helped us to identify pressing issues affecting park–community relations and related stakeholders. The information enabled us to recognize the symptoms of conflict between stakeholders from the multiplicity of the missions uses (e.g., civic spaces, sacramental spaces, religious spaces, educational spaces). Such information allowed us to draft a series of questions (see Table 1) that were implemented in the formal data collection process conducted between October 2013 and April 2014. During this data collection process, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted to key informants in the community. Key informants were defined as residents known for their knowledge of, involvement in, and attachment to the community as well as the missions. Participants were encouraged to think about informants representing varying representation and experience in order to account for different views. The initial listing of key informants was provided by two managers of one of the four missions that comprise the San Antonio Missions. Following a snowball sampling procedure, participants were asked to provide names and contact information of other key informants in the community [57].

**Table 1.** Interview questions used.

Topic	Questions
Substance	What do the San Antonio Missions mean to you? How would you characterize them? In what way(s) do you use the San Antonio Missions? Think of any type of activity that you perform in or related to the missions and how often you engage in those.
Procedure	Are you actively involved in any effort to improve the San Antonio Missions? If yes, what kind of efforts and with whom?
Relationship	What is your relationship with San Antonio Mission's park management or any group that is related or interested in the San Antonio Missions in this community? Has this relationship(s) changed over time? Where do you see this relationship going in the future? How would you like the future of the San Antonio Missions to be?

For logistical purposes, all interviews were conducted in Mission San Jose, the largest of the four missions. Thirty-two interviews, each lasting between fifteen to sixty minutes, were conducted. Interviewed stakeholders included Native Americans (ten), non-native locals (ten), members of a friends-of-the-park (FoP) group (six), and representatives of the local government and public agencies (six). Although “Native Americans” are locals of the missions, due to their distinct historical and cultural features, Native Americans are broadly defined here as not only locals who are recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but also locals who shared Native identity and/or culture. “Non-native locals” are broadly defined here as people who live near the missions and do not fall into the other stakeholder categories. No one refused the request for an interview.

## 4.3. Research Instrument

The semi-structured interview consisted of nine open-ended questions on topics including view and value, involvement, relationship with the park and other groups, and change over time (Table 1).

## 4.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed following a content analysis methodology [58]. All data were analyzed through the lens of the three dimensions described in the framework presented above (substance, procedure, and relationship). Interview responses were analyzed with a three-stage process [59]. First, interview data were described through a matrix. Columns corresponded to

dimensions, while rows corresponded to each interviewee, indicating that a matrix cell was an answer of each participant for a specific dimension. Then, short themes representing interviewees' responses were added to each matrix cell. After filling each short theme in the matrix, as a second stage, these data were reviewed and grouped into identified subthemes. This led to the identification of six key subthemes (detailed below) from the three dimensions presented in the framework: History and culture, values and interests, formal forms of involvement, informal forms of involvement, attitude toward the park management, and future relationship. The noted short themes in the first stage were reorganized based on the six subthemes (see Table 2 for an example). The last stage of the analysis consisted of interpreting the responses noted in the second stage to identify the stance of each stakeholder. For example, all responses related to history and culture collected from Native American were studied a second time in order to clarify their views about the missions.

**Table 2.** Example of the matrix used for data analysis with actual dimensions and themes.

Respondent	Substance		Procedure		Relationship	
	History and Culture	Values and Interests	Formal Forms of Involvement	Informal Forms of Involvement	Attitude Toward the Park Management	Future Relationship
Respondent 1 (Native American)	Family history (History of our ancestors)	Roots of our family Spiritual connection with our ancestors	Uninterested about World Heritage designation	Fundraising (e.g., Father David's group)	Negative relationship Lack of culture of community They are trying to erase Indian culture	No changes would be made
Respondent n						

Trustworthiness and credibility were achieved through reflexivity and triangulation [60]. Reflexivity was achieved through the inclusion of more than one researcher in the study, as well as by using a reflexive journal. To ensure triangulation, the reporting and discussion of findings were carried out between the primary author and coauthors after all the interviews were described, analyzed, and interpreted [59,61].

## 5. Findings

Findings are organized into three dimensions and further grouped into subthemes (see Table 2). To capture each group's perspectives in each dimension, Table 2 provides a summary of each stakeholder's stance according to each subtheme.

### 5.1. The Substance Dimension

Two themes under the substance dimension emerged from the analysis: History and culture, and values and interests (see Table 3). History and culture reflect how each stakeholder holds symbolic meanings and spiritual connections to the missions. Values and interests describe the benefits that stakeholders received from the missions and how those benefits are related to their interests.

**Table 3.** Key stakeholders' perspectives according to the themes under the procedure dimension.

Stakeholder	History and Culture	Values and Interests
Native Americans	The history of Native Americans	The honoring of their ancestors
Non-native locals	A blend of Spanish, Mexican, and Native American history and culture	The promotion of a sense of community
Members of a friends-of-the-park (FoP) group	Historical monuments that show the past of the city of San Antonio	Educational values for locals and visitors
Representatives of the local government and public agencies	The origins of the city of San Antonio	Economic values for the community

### 5.1.1. History and Culture

For all the Native Americans interviewed, the missions were seen as a part of their personal history and culture. While they considered that the missions held a wealth of historical components, they placed more value on the missions' history associated with their Native American heritage. One Native American noted this importance to his history:

They [missions] were built by the actual tribes that were in the area. And those tribes weren't Hispanic, those tribes weren't Latinos, those were indigenous tribes of this area. The missions are part of our culture and part of our heritage, my heritage, and my ancestors.

The historical view of the group categorized as non-native locals reflected a blend of Spanish, Mexican, and Native American history. They expressed how the missions had been built by Native Americans in the 18th century, led by the Spanish government. As Mexico's influence continued into Texas, the missions became places where the traditions and cultures of Native Americans and of Spain and Mexico blended. Because of this, most residents responded that the San Antonio Missions are living histories that existed in the past, continue into the present, and will exist in the future.

Members of the FoP group viewed the missions as important historical monuments representing the transition from indigenous culture to Spanish society. The missions exemplify the history of Spanish colonization and the establishment of the Catholic faith in 18th-century Texas. Members of the local government had similar views about the missions' history, implying that the city's history started with the establishment of the missions.

Table 3 summarizes the key points of the history and culture and values and interests feedback. While most stakeholders agreed on the historical and cultural significance of the San Antonio Missions, perceptions of the significance varied among stakeholders. While Native Americans regarded the missions as central to their own history, non-native locals expressed a broader understanding that viewed the missions as living histories that connect the past, present, and future of San Antonio. The FoP groups viewed the missions as historical monuments of the past of San Antonio, while the views of history by local government linked the missions to the origins of the city of San Antonio.

### 5.1.2. Value and Interest

For the Native Americans interviewed, they valued the missions as places to honor their ancestors who once lived (and were buried) in the missions. The Native Americans regularly visited their ancestors' graves in the missions as a group, strengthening their identity as Native Americans. This had been a regular, traditional ceremony until it was restricted by park authorities.

Non-native locals valued the promotion of a sense of community to bring community members and visitors together. Regardless of cultural and racial differences, respondents reported that they had built strong ties to the community by attending religious activities and enjoying recreational activities around the missions. They appreciated the racial diversity in their communities, the values of tradition the sites represented, and the unique characteristics and landscape that the missions provided in an urban setting.

Members of the local government valued the missions as an integral part of promoting the economic viability of nearby communities (e.g., landmarks, city's identity). Representatives of the local government noted how the missions have fostered positive change in the community in the form of revitalizing commercial districts, generating local jobs, and creating direct economic benefits to locals.

The FoP group generally felt the missions should be considered important historical preservation sites where visitors and locals learn about the history of the missions. The values of the members of the FoP group were in direct contrast with local government:

They [missions] should not be considered a place of entertainment. They should be considered more of a place like church or something to be revered and respected . . . There is a church on the [mission] grounds, so [they should be thought of] in more of a historical significance and educational level of thinking about these places rather than family entertainment, fun type of locations.



As shown in Table 3, the discrepancies associated with history and culture also reflected the value and interests in the San Antonio Missions. While Native Americans cared about a single group identity associated with the missions, non-native locals placed more emphasis on the missions as community identities to strengthen a broader sense of a community. The FoP group placed more weight on their educational values, whereas local government respondents generally viewed the missions from the perspective of economic values and reflections of the city's identity.

## 5.2. The Procedure Dimension

The procedure dimension focused on participants' involvement in efforts to improve the missions. The improvement efforts among different groups of stakeholders were broadly observed in two ways (see Table 4): Formal forms of involvement (focused on the missions' application for consideration as a World Heritage (WH) site) and informal forms of involvement (focused on fundraising, volunteering, and maintenance).

**Table 4.** Key stakeholders' perspectives according to the themes under the procedure dimension.

Stakeholder	Formal Forms of Involvement	Informal Forms of Involvement
Native Americans	They were the least involved in the World Heritage (WH) project.	Most were involved in improvement of the church cemeteries.
Non-native locals	Only a few locals were engaged in the WH project.	A few were involved in maintenance of mission areas (e.g., cleaning the road, fundraising events).
Members of an FoP group	An official chartered FoP group played a key role in restoration of the four churches in the missions.	Unofficial FoP groups (e.g., San Jose Neighborhood Association) were involved in fundraising events and volunteering activities.
Representatives of the local government and public agencies	Members actively worked with the National Park Service (NPS) for the nomination of WH site.	Volunteer work or fundraising activities were not reported.

### 5.2.1. Formal Forms of Involvement

One major activity during the period of data collection was the missions' nomination as a WH site. In 2015, the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park received the first WH designation in the State of Texas [62]. The park was nominated as a WH site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The WH Committee, consisting of representatives from local government and public agencies (e.g., San Antonio River Authority) and members of a FoP group (e.g., Los Compadres), worked together with the NPS in this effort to highlight the mission's historical and cultural significance worldwide. Designated in 2015, the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park brings additional financial support for promoting cultural and environmental sustainability [63].

The Native American constituents had minimal formal involvement in this effort. After the site was nominated by UNESCO, in fulfillment of the mandate to include the diverse perspectives within a community, only a few representatives of Native Americans (i.e., Bureau of Indian Affairs) became involved in the project. Six Native Americans out of the ten interviewed expressed concerns about the development of the mission area and believed that the WH designation would break their family ties and weaken their cultural identity as Native Americans.

Eight non-native locals out of the ten interviewed considered the WH nomination desirable for the community because of the positive changes made around the mission areas in recent years in pursuit of designation. Despite their stated interest, only a few locals reported involvement in the WH nomination efforts.

By contrast, Los Compadres, an official, chartered FoP group, was highly involved in the WH nomination, playing a key role in the much-needed restoration by working with architects in the four churches and providing park managers with financial and volunteer support.

Staff members from the various government agencies that were interviewed were also actively involved in the WH project, primarily in the diverse restoration efforts undertaken in support of the WH designation. For instance, the San Antonio River Authority managed the execution of the Mission Reach project, which seeks to recreate the historical ambiance of the missions and reconnect them through the river routes.

As shown in Table 4, the WH nomination expanded stakeholders' involvement with the missions and included efforts from the FoP group (i.e., Los Compadres) and government agencies. The Native Americans and non-native locals were less involved in the designation-seeking process.

### 5.2.2. Informal Forms of Involvement

The second procedure theme was identified as informal forms of involvement, such as participating in fundraising, volunteering, and maintenance activities. The Native Americans participated in fundraising events and volunteer work, such as cleaning the cemeteries at the churches. Their maintenance activities were mainly focused on the churches under the supervision of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, not under federal control. One Native American had this to say about their efforts to improve the mission areas:

We deserved thanks for having cleaned this *acequia* (irrigation system) for the last twenty-five years because we haven't been paid for it once. And thankfully that it's not full of snakes that are biting people that are walking along the path.

A few non-native locals were involved in maintenance of the areas around the missions. They engaged in some diverse activities, such as cleaning the road, neighborhood, and fundraising events. However, only a few of those interviewed were involved in these activities.

Several unofficial FoP groups were involved in volunteer activities (e.g., fundraising, educational opportunities) for raising awareness of the rich history of the missions and preserving cultural resources. For example, the Texas Historical Commission held educational activities (e.g., Archaeology Day) for visitors and youth in nearby communities.

Local government staff reported the least amount of volunteer involvement. In their interviews, they focused on the use of federal funding to keep up the overall maintenance of the missions, but reported no volunteering or maintenance activities.

As shown in Table 4, the Native American group reported the most informal forms of involvement in the missions. Non-native locals and FoP groups were not directly involved in any physical maintenance, but participated in fundraising and volunteer activities. Local government representatives reported no informal activities pertaining to the missions.

## 5.3. The Relationship Dimension

The relationship dimension focuses on the attitude toward park authorities as seen through stakeholders' current attitudes toward park management and their future relationship with the NPS (see Table 5). The current attitudes category refers to how each stakeholder perceives the current park management. The future relationship with the NPS describes how each stakeholder anticipates the development of their relationships with park management.

### 5.3.1. Attitude toward Park Management

During the interviews, the Native Americans expressed a clearly negative attitude toward park management. Mistrust of park managers, which was deeply rooted in the history of Native Americans in the area (i.e., removal of their ancestors from burial grounds at the churches in 1966), was the most consistent and prevalent attitude for most of the Native Americans interviewed. They were not comfortable with the way the NPS managed and interpreted or shared the missions' history with visitors. One Native American mentioned that "the relationship has actually been going down as they acquired more land and more power and started to control all the information in the way of preparing the interpretive displays".

**Table 5.** Key stakeholders' perspectives according to the themes under the relationship dimension.

Stakeholder	Attitude Toward the Park Management	Future Relationship
Native Americans	Negative relationship: There was considerable suspicion and mistrust toward federal government.	Same or negative: Pessimistic about their future relationship with the NPS.
Non-native locals	Neutral relationship: Most of them had no interaction with park staff.	No intention to form relationship: Despite their interests about development, no intention to form relationships with park staff was reported.
Members of an FoP group	Supportive relationship: For preservation and restoration of the missions, they supported and respected park management.	Desired a different relationship with the NPS: They believe that collaboration work with the NPS should be continued to preserve cultural heritage rather than to encourage commercial development.
Representatives of the local government and public agencies	Beneficial relationship: Collaboratively worked in union and harmony for the WH nomination by supporting and funding the NPS.	Expected better and stronger relationship: They expected continuous economic development of the missions for the WH designation.

In the case of the non-native locals interviewed, most had no interaction with park staff. A few non-native locals whose interests were aligned with the redevelopment around the mission (e.g., selling property, bringing customers) expressed a positive relationship with them. However, most did not know anyone who was involved in park management and had no interest in becoming acquainted with them.

Most of the people involved in the FoP groups formed a supportive relationship with park managers. For instance, members of Los Compadres closely interacted with park managers and expressed a high level of trust in them while seeking the WH designation by supporting park management in terms of restoring the physical structure of the churches.

Finally, members of the local government and public agencies expressed the most positive attitudes toward park management. The staff of the local government agencies had built a beneficial relationship with the NPS in a variety of projects and, in particular, a collaboration on the WH nomination.

Overall, as shown in Table 5, negative attitudes toward park management were reported only by the Native Americans. The rest of the stakeholders expressed neutral or positive feelings, though the degree of the positive comments differed by each stakeholders' values and interests in relation to the missions.

### 5.3.2. Future Relationship

The Native Americans interviewed did not expect their negative relationship with park management to improve unless their voices were heard. As one Native American noted: "Well, unless somebody could change national parks and change their guidelines or their rules or whatever they have, it's going to stay the same". Most Native Americans had a pessimistic view of their relationship with the NPS. Nevertheless, a few Native Americans expressed hope that the relationship would become better for the community and maintenance of the missions.

The group of non-native locals interviewed did not explicitly express ideas about developing a relationship with park staff unless their interests were aligned with those of the NPS. In these cases, a few locals desired to form a close relationship with the NPS for their personal benefits. However, most of them did not know any of the park staff, nor did they have any interactions with the NPS. Despite their interest in recent developments around the missions (e.g., clean streets, increased recreational activities), these non-native locals did not intend to form a relationship with park staff.

Members of an unofficial FoP group (e.g., President of the Friends of San Pedro Spring Park) expressed desire for a different relationship with park management in future collaborative work

(e.g., restoration of churches). Both FoP groups and NPS staff agreed on the importance of preserving and restoring the missions; however, the FoP groups expected to continue collaborative work with the NPS to preserve the missions, rather than to promote commercial development.

The staff of the local government and public agencies interviewed stated that they believed their future relationships with the NPS would improve and strengthen. The staff from government agencies expected continuous collaborative work with the NPS staff in the effort to seek the designation of the missions as a WH site. All local government staff expected their future relationship with the NPS to be positive.

As described in Table 5, only the Native Americans felt that their current, negative relationship with park management would not improve, while the other stakeholders either desired to build a better and stronger relationship with park staff or did not plan to develop relationships with NPS.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how conflicts stemming from diverse community stakeholders' perspectives, values, and aspirations in regard to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park influence their interaction and attitudes toward park management. Previous literature has shown that the historical and cultural significance attributed to natural/cultural environments, particularly in rural contexts, has major effects on facilitating community members' involvement and contributions to maintaining such places [64,65]. Beyond the contributions of cultural meanings developed in natural areas, our study found that various forms of involvement are developed based on the differing views different people had in regard to the cultural assets found in urban areas' parks. Native Americans and non-native locals, who linked the missions with group identity and community values respectively, developed informal (e.g., fundraising, volunteering) forms of involvement in an effort to better the park. On the other hand, friends' groups and local government representatives, who viewed the missions as important cultural resources for the city of San Antonio, displayed more formal forms of involvement, driven by institutional mandates (e.g., WH designation).

In addition, previous studies have consistently noted that significant factors influencing public involvement in natural resource management activities include trust, respect, and the nature of the interactions with park staff [52,66]. Our findings supported this argument, but revealed additional factors in that cultural backgrounds and differing interpretations of the cultural assets by stakeholders influenced their levels of trust and frequency of interaction, which may impact their relationships with park management.

Viewing these complex variables as interrelated, Daniels and Walker [24], in their Progress Triangle framework, emphasized the importance of facilitating interrelationships between the substance, procedure, and relationship dimensions for achieving collaborative resource management, while mitigating conflicts between stakeholders. The authors of this framework portrayed the three dimensions as interrelated dimensions as a strategy for better resource management in the context of conflict. This framework highlights exploring history and underlying value differences and sharing intangible concerns as a prerequisite for creating a better environment for working together. However, such an inclusive participatory and collaborative management approach was not well implemented in the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. In the case of Native Americans, their past history (e.g., removal of their ancestors from burial grounds at the churches in 1966) and sustained lack of understanding of Native Americans' history by park management were prevalent barriers to effective involvement in collaboration efforts. Such mistrust of park management and disregard for Native American history made Native Americans believe that WH designation would potentially weaken their group identity and their traditions, which made them reluctant to be involved in the designation-seeking process. In the case of non-native locals, with the exception of non-native locals whose interests were closely aligned with that of the NPS (e.g., selling property), their limited common interest with park management did not encourage them to be involved in collaborative efforts. In contrast to the influence of history and culture related to the missions, the positive effects resulting

from the recent local improvement projects around the missions led by park staff generated general trust toward park staff; however, such general trust did not necessarily lead them to be involved in any improvement activities driven by the NPS, consistent with previous findings that uncritical trust without any criticism does not strongly motivate public involvement [44]. In the case of members of an FoP group, they were involved in collaboration efforts with park staff because both groups had common interests of restoring churches; however, park staff's lack of consideration of the value friends group's place on the missions (educational values) may create a barrier for future collaboration in regard to maintaining churches. Thus, altogether, lack of understanding of other stakeholders' historical background and intangible factors (e.g., identity, value, interest) create an environment that was not ideal for facilitating dialogue and motivating engagement, challenging inclusive and effective participatory and collaborative management of the missions. If these differences are successfully explored between stakeholders, conflict situations could be reduced and managed, or at least ground work for future negotiations could be laid [36,67,68]. We believe that if park managers had recognized values, interests, cultural/historical backgrounds with higher levels of respect, they would have built a better relationship with stakeholder groups, thus achieving more participatory and collaborative management in the San Antonio Missions, while mitigating conflicts between stakeholders.

Recognizing the causes of limited stakeholder involvement, the key point for participatory and collaborative approaches is how to improve the environment for better management of the San Antonio Missions, particularly between the two most polarized groups: Native Americans and park staff. To enable Native Americans to engage in collaborative efforts led by park management, it is important for both groups to form a better relationship by identifying the other group's underlying values, histories, and interests related to the missions rather than allowing a conflict relationship to remain. The understanding of differences should not be limited to the two groups, but should be used between all stakeholder groups in order to encourage active involvement for achieving collaborative park management. The interviews revealed places where diverse stakeholders can meet and interact, regardless of their personal or group perceptions. Churches within each mission can be used not only as places that facilitate interactions between stakeholders who share religious perspectives, but also as public spaces where they can engage in collaborative efforts through more enhanced communication (e.g., public meetings or informal contact). We believe that the increased interaction at the churches as public spaces allows more opportunities to understand the other groups more deeply, as well as to reduce the level of mistrust. While frequent interaction alone may not resolve the problems of conflicting relationships or situations, we believe that stakeholders are at least able to recognize, through discourse, the importance of preserving the San Antonio Missions. Additionally, friends groups who were involved in both formal and informal activities can serve as bridges between the two polarized groups. They, as mediators, need to convey the necessities of involving a wide range of perspectives and values attributed to the missions in park management. In addition, it is necessary to persuade Native Americans to engage in post-WH designation management activities collaboratively with the NPS.

In addition to increasing interaction and involvement, another critical point in participatory and collaborative park management is how to coordinate the intensities of each group's values and preferences and how to utilize them as positive management strategies. From our perspective, Native Americans' high levels of ownership and responsibilities of the missions can be usefully implemented in participatory and collaborative management in the San Antonio Missions. For example, from the perspective of the NPS, Native Americans can serve as tour guides or provide volunteer support to train new park rangers, given the limited amount of funding available. More specifically, Native Americans' place-specific knowledge is needed for explaining distinct architectural features or historical buildings where historical records rarely remain. For example, the Rose Window at Mission San José is one of the most iconic and widely recognized images in San Antonio, but relies on the narratives or oral histories of the Native Americans. Hearing stories from descendants of the people who created the missions not only increases its attractiveness to visitors, but also strengthens the authenticity of the



mission narratives. Furthermore, inclusion of Native American perspectives in the management of the missions, beyond the currently “one-sided” interpretation of history by park authorities, would reduce Native Americans’ pessimistic perceptions and build better relationships with park staff, resulting in reduced probabilities of conflict. The benefits of engaging Native Americans in the management of the missions are obvious; however, it is important to note that effective collaboration between the groups happens when each group acknowledges other cultures and values attributed to the missions.

In sum, community stakeholders’ conflicts stemming from different cultural/historical backgrounds and values attributed to the missions influenced their involvement, as well as their perceptions of park management. This study supports the argument that a better understanding of other stakeholders’ historical backgrounds, values, and interests increases the possibility of building a better relationship, while at the same time reducing conflict between them, thus encouraging increased involvement for better participatory and collaborative park management. The acknowledgement of such intangible factors should be at the forefront in urban historical park management, especially when dealing with cultural resource.

## 7. Conclusions

This study examined how community stakeholders’ conflicts stemming from varying perspectives and values regarding the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park influenced their involvement, as well as their attitudes toward park management. For some, the San Antonio Missions were, beyond the physical buildings or places located in their community, their history, culture, heritage, as well as the mission descendants’ individual root and family inheritance. For others, the missions represented the city’s identity as landmarks and functioned as economic engines to encourage business for the city of San Antonio. Different perspectives and values in relation to the missions existed among community stakeholders, and their differing values influenced their involvement types in mission maintenance, as well as their attitudes toward park management. Therefore, the importance of considering the missions’ history, culture, and values should not be ignored in urban historical park management.

The important point this study raises for government agencies and park management is that resource management associated with complex cultural and traditional resources can be effective when the perspectives and values of each stakeholder are identified and reflected in the management of the resources. The framework and the results of this study could be used in facilitating dialogue between stakeholders, understanding their values, negotiating their interests, and sharing management strategies. While such approaches may not provide immediate solutions in park management, harnessing the positive intensities of each stakeholder’s perspectives and identifying common ground can provide a viable means for compromise for the better management of urban parks. This holistic view will further prevent potential conflicts with park management. A participatory and collaborative management approach has not been well implemented to date in the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, but will be essential to the success of future management practices.

This study is limited by involving less diverse stakeholder groups from the community, but rather a few stakeholders relevant to the WH designation project. Future research seeks to target a wider spectrum of community stakeholder groups (e.g., tourists) after post-WH designation in order to better achieve participatory and collaboration park management. Additionally, while the Progress Triangle framework is useful for understanding the different attitudes and perspectives of diverse stakeholders, further methods or tools should be developed to address the identified conflict. In addition, more sophisticated and comprehensive criteria to measure conflict would be useful for applying this framework for future historical park management.

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