Governance and Social Sustainability through Tourism in the Protected Natural Area of Cabo Pulmo, Baja California Sur, Mexico

ALEJANDRO PALAFOX-MUÑOZ[1]
Universidad de Quintana Roo
alejandro.palafox.munoz@gmail.com

MARÍA VIRGINIA ARROYO-DELGADO[2]
Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México
marvi678@hotmail.com

Abstract. The literature on social sustainability and governance deals with rural communities. This article analyzes the relationship between these two factors in a protected space in Mexico. The objective of the study was to uncover the factors that promote governance and explore how they influence social sustainability. Six elements that enable the development of Cabo Pulmo were identified. The fieldwork consisted of in-depth interviews with residents. The information gathered allowed the theory to be compared with the empirical results. It was determined that the social cohesion that exists in Cabo Pulmo creates a path for improving the population's standard of living because decisions are taken jointly and take into account the protection of natural resources.

Keywords: governance; social sustainability; tourism; protected natural area; Cabo Pulmo.

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1   Doctor in Environmental Sciences. Full-time professor-researcher at the Department of Social and Managerial Studies, Unidad Académica Cozumel.
2   Master in Sustainable Development of Tourism, Universidad de Quintana Roo. Professor at the Centro Universitario UAEM Texcoco.

Introduction

One of the international environmental policy-making strategies defined to conserve biodiversity and stop processes of deterioration is the creation of natural protected areas (NPAs). In Mexico, on the institutional level, these spaces are considered the best tools for nature conservation and for the environmental services it provides to society (Micheli, 2002).

It is important to note that before the NPAs were established, there were human groups living in the areas they cover and using the resources around them. The creation of a protected space in their territory had a direct impact on these communities, leading to drastic changes. The most important of these was the prohibition of activities related to their daily activities; that is, those linked to sowing, hunting, fishing, gathering, and so forth, in areas such as Sian Ka'an, Quintana Roo, and Cuetzalan, Puebla, for example (Rojas-Correa & Palafox-Muñoz, 2018, 2019; González et al., 2018).

According to López Santillán (2015), the communities affected by natural protected areas were directed to engage in tourist activities, and in so doing lost part of their way of life. The state promoted this approach through the National Strategy of Sustainable Development of Tourism and Recreation in the Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (Conanp, 2007, 2018)—which was implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aligned with the state's economic policies, and by way of the self-management of community resources since there are few activities permitted within the protected spaces. As a result, for several years now the NPAs have had the capacity to receive a consistent and considerable flow of tourists, especially since there is a segment of the market dedicated to alternative tourism oriented toward interaction with nature, to which the NPAs are well suited.

Nevertheless, there are obstacles. These are related fundamentally to restrictions in the compatibility between environmental conservation and the development of communities that live in these protected ecological areas (Olmos & Vázquez, 2009). This leads to an increase in social problems related to the marginalization of those who live in the NPAs, more than half of whom are classified as having very high, high, and medium levels of marginalization across about 93% of localities (Bezaury & Gutiérrez, 2009). These figures are alarming since in theory the NPAs and tourism contribute to economic growth and social sustainability by attempting to reduce levels of inequality and the marginalization of communities.

In this study, social sustainability is understood as the equitable distribution of resources, property rights, and policies that benefit society; that is, an improved quality of life should be achieved for each individual (Real, 2012). Colantonio (2009) assures us that this is a new vision that leads to

an emerging theoretical model aimed at exchanging traditional analyses of "hard" social sustainability—such as housing, employment, or the meeting of other basic needs—with intangible and less quantifiable concepts such as quality of life, sense of identity, or happiness. Thus, the social dimension of sustainability is characterized by promoting the maintenance of a system of values, practices, and symbols of identity, equality, and human wellbeing (Guimarães, 2006).

Achieving social sustainability in tourist localities is not a simple task. One of the biggest obstacles is a lack of understanding of the local community and their interests, motivations, relationship with nature, and actions, and even the conflicts that they can have over the use and management of the resources around them, which can lead to struggles for power in which the interests of capital are imposed. To reproduce the mode of production, the state appropriates territory in order to transform it into a protected space based on two goals: (a) to eliminate the budget for agricultural development in rural areas; and (b) to insert the territory and its inhabitants into the services sector. These measures have been employed since 1990, with implementation of the new rurality (Kay, 2009; Romero, 2012; Palafox-Muñoz & Martínez-Pérezchica, 2015; López Moreno, 2017).

Consequently, the formation of relationships, the participation of different social actors in decision-making, and the definition of objectives and activities to be undertaken is very important (Brenner, 2010). The questions raised about relations of production and community participation have been the object of study in various academic works related to the concept of governance, given that this approach—which complements that of governability—can be a means of achieving social sustainability in tourist communities located in the NPAs and, as a result, of turning these into spaces where conservation is a socially viable exercise.

Governance refers to the process through which decisions are made and whether these are implemented or not, taking into account the different actors involved. Consequently, the concept can be applied to practically any public, private, or social sector (Wagner, 2008). From the perspective of the social sector, governance is considered to be the series of formal and informal arrangements that determine the manner in which decisions are made and actions carried out, and which is characterized by the involvement of citizens in decision-making, implying a structure that is horizontal and not hierarchical (Palomino, Gasca, & López, 2016). In this way, the process of achieving governance deteriorates in societies in which one actor is economically dependent on another; for example, when the community depends on a government subsidy or on an economy based on a single

activity. Keeping this in mind, the goal is to promote and consolidate the governance process as a viable option for social sustainability in communities within NPAs that engage in tourism, and one that also contributes to the environmental and economic spheres (Aguilar, 2010), by taking advantage of communal characteristics, especially social cohesion.

The above discussion expresses the need to investigate the elements that make up governance and that have an influence on the process of achieving sustainability from a social perspective, since, to date, there have been no similar studies in relation to the economic or ecological spheres. Individuals and their relationships with the environmental and economic spheres are immersed in the social realm, and their actions depend on the specific context in which they unfold. Thus, the goal of this article to analyze the governance factors of tourist communities in natural protected areas so as to identify the organizational development of the populations, and thereby achieve an understanding of the social reality of tourist communities in the NPAs.

1. Cabo Pulmo, Baja California Sur

According to Inegi (2017), Cabo Pulmo is approximately 67 kilometers north of the municipality of San José del Cabo. It can be accessed via the La Paz–San José del Cabo section of the Transpeninsular Highway, turning at La Ribera onto a dirt road and following it for ten kilometers. The National Commission for Natural Protected Areas, (CONANP, 2005) notes that the Cabo Pulmo National Park is subject to the very dry and warm climate for which the region is known, with light rain in summer and winter. As of August 2017, there were 69 inhabitants and a total of 20 families.

Cabo Pulmo is not the only NPA in the state of Baja California Sur. There is also the El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, the Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve, the Bahías de Loreto National Park, the Espiritu Santo Archipelago National Park, the Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California, and Cabo San Lucas Flora & Fauna Protected Area (see Map 1).

Cabo Pulmo has an area of 7,111 hectares. One percent of this territory is part of the Federal Terrestrial Maritime Zone (Conanp, 2017). Cabo Pulmo National Park was established in 2000, having been declared a marine park five years earlier. Currently, the NPA is zoned as follows: (a) preservation zone; (b) zone for the sustainable use of natural resources; and (c) public use zone (Arizpe, 2004). In 2008, Cabo Pulmo was declared a Ramsar site for the conservation of wetlands through local and national activities for sustainable development; however, the impact of real estate development puts in doubt these commitments to conservation (Ramsar, 2012, 2015).

Map 1
Protected Natural Areas in Baja California Sur
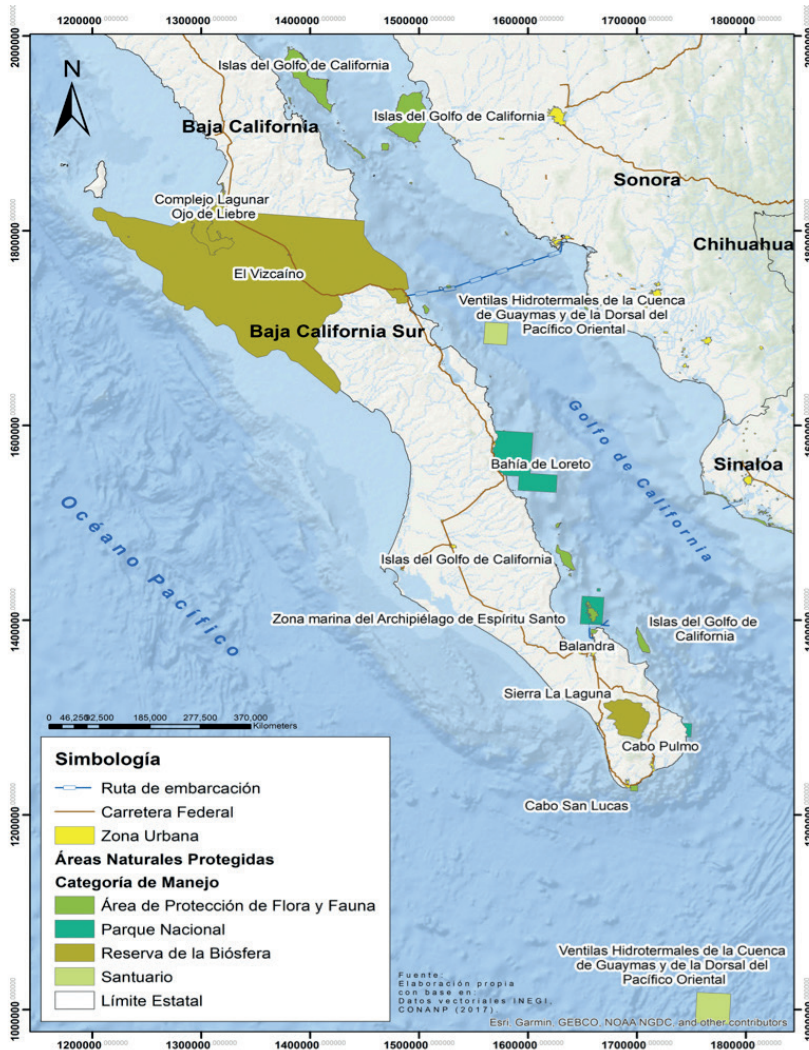
Note: Translation of legend, from top to bottom: ship route; Federal road; urban area; **Natural Protected Areas, categories:** area of protection of flora and fauna; national park; biosphere reserve; sanctuary; state border. Source: Arroyo-Delgado (2018).

In the capitalist mode of production, nature has been converted into a commodity based on its new use value and consequent exchange value. The objectification of natural goods has favored the expansion of tourism around the world. It has become an economic activity worth US$ 8.8 billion (WTTC, 2019a) that accounted for 1,400 million international tourists

arrivals worldwide (OMT, 2019). As a result, this region has also become an important attraction for capital and its expansion. It is threatened by the voracity of the system itself. It has become a terrain disputed by actors who have different visions of nature development (Cariño et al., 2008): those who see it as a raw material and those who have a sustainable relationship with area.

Converting Cabo Pulmo into an NPA was a slow and difficult process given the limitations that a new territorial regime implies. The communities located inside the protected area now faced restrictions on commercial and sport fishing. This led to changes in the way individuals earned their living and to the creation of the first tourist service enterprises. In 2002, a community organization called the Friends for the Conservation of Cabo Pulmo was created. As a result, alternative tourism became a new way for the inhabitants to earn a living. The limitations imposed on the area contributed to the recovery of the reef, but the threat of mass tourism appeared through the expansion of the Integral Planning Center of Los Cabos (Barrera, 2016). These antecedents for the management of common goods illustrate the need for communities to organize to take control of their resources and plan their development through a community structure, in parallel to the interests of capital. It also highlights the need for social research that deals with alternative theories and methodological tools that can help educate current and future tourist communities. These alternatives can be realized through governance, which lies in taking decisions within communities. Theories on governance are currently being developed but include elements whose theoretical and empirical utility remains unproven. Many authors use these theories as a tool to explain changes in public policies; however, in this process of diversification, local and national contexts play a substantial role.

2. The study of governance

Over the years, the study of governance has evolved through the contributions of various authors, whose principal ideas are provided in Table 1.

Table 1[3,4]
Theories of governance

Autor	Definition
WB (1989)	The exercise of political power for the management of the affairs of a nation.
WB (1994)	The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a nation's economic and social development.
Kooiman (1993)	The pattern or structure that develops in a sociopolitical system as the common result of the efforts at interaction of all the actors involved. común de los esfuerzos de interacción de todos los actores involucrados.
Rhodes (1997)	Interorganizational and self-organized networks that do not have public responsibilities.
Le Galés (1998)	The process of coordination by actors, social groups and institutions to achieve collectively-defined goals in environments that are fragmented and characterized by uncertainty.
Hirst (2000)	Association and dialogue among public and private organizations to achieve a consensus regarding a shared agenda and social direction.
Kooiman (2000)	Arrangements by public and private actors, within whose framework they work toward the objective of resolving the problems of society and creating opportunities.
Pierre (2000)	The coordination and cohesion sustained among diverse actors and political institutions, corporate interests, civil society, and transnational organizations.
RAE (2000)	The form or manner of governing whose objective is to achieve long-lasting economic, social, and institutional development, promoting a healthy equilibrium between the state, civil society, and the market economy.
De la Fuente (2002)	A specific form of public-private relationship based on non-hierarchical coordination in order to encounter new opportunities.
Salamon (2002)	Collaborative problem-solving process among various authorized actors.
Kazancigil (2003)	System of coordination between diverse and fragmented social actors and a focus on public policies that privileges consensus-building and negotiation in decision-making in contexts where there are plural and complex actors and interests.
Kooiman (2003)	The totality of interactions in which public and private actors participate in order to address the objective of resolving the problems of society and creating new opportunities, with attention to the institutions where these interactions of governing take place and establishing a normative basis for all such activities.
INAP (2005)	Norms and rules that guide interaction within the framework of networks of interdependent public, private, and social actors to achieve the definition of the general interest in complex and dynamic environments.

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3 All translations from sources in Spanish in this article are by *Apuntes*.
4 Summaries of theories from English-language sources are paraphrased.

Natera (2005)	The conception of governmental action as the administration of networks integrated by a multiplicity of public and private actors that interact in a complex manner.
Peters (2006)	A goal that drives the activity that requires instruments to identify what society wants to accomplish and, later, to examine the means to reach collective goals.
Jiménez (2008)	Forms and processes of horizontal interaction and cooperation between the public sector, the private sector, and social actors.
De la Maza (2009)	The creation of common goals, defined collectively without predetermination by any of the actors involved.
Jorquera (2011)	The relations of formal and informal actors within a new form of doing things that is viable and sustainable, coordinates and communicates among the actors involved, and allows for the improvement of control and transparency of public administration.
Whittingham (2011)	The implementation of political relations between the various actors involved in the process of deciding, executing, and evaluating decisions regarding matters of public interest, a process that can be characterized by an interplay of power in which competence and cooperation coexist as possible rules, and which includes both formal and informal institutions.

Source: Arroyo-Delgado and Palafox-Muñoz (2017).

Both governance and governability are concepts that appeared in international analyses starting in the 1980s. They are different concepts but they are commonly confused and used as synonyms because their definitions are unclear; the difference lies in that fact that governance implies the pursuit of community goals.

The political discourse about governability originated in the so-called "crisis of governability" and its basic theoretical referent was the report on the governability of democracies (Prats, 2001). Thus, governability refers to adaptations and processes, in the framework of the state and public administration, intended to improve the relationship with citizens and the decision-making process (Revesz, 2006). It is also considered as the "degree to which relations among strategic actors are governed by stable and mutually acceptable formulas" (Coppedge, 1994). Thus, these two concepts differ in their meaning.

The organizational structure of governance and governability are opposites. Pierre and Peters (2000) and Krahmann (2003) argue that they are qualitatively different (see Table 2).

Table 2
Governability vs. governance

Dimensions	Governability	Governance
Geographical scope	Subnational National	Subnational National Regional Global Transnational
Functional scope	Various matters	Only one matter
Distribution of resources	Centralized	Dispersed
Interests	Communal	Differentiated
Norms	Sovereignty Hierarchical order and control Redistribution	Limited Sovereignty Autonomy Markets
Decision-making	Hierarchical Consensus Formal equity	Horizontal Negotiation Inequity
Implementation	Centralized by coercive authority	Fragmented Self-applied Voluntary

Source: Krahmann (2003).

On the other hand, Prats (2003) and Aguilar (2007) note that governability is a dependent variable of governance, given that it provides the institutional framework that makes interactions and interchanges among actors possible. Without this condition, there would be no management of society. Thus, governability is a necessary but insufficient agent of management since the state requires social capacities to control society. The governability approach does not change the traditional pattern of managing society, which is structured and dominant (Jiménez, 2008).

On the other hand, the governance approach is post-governmental; that is, it points to the need for a new process of managing society given that, under contemporary conditions of democracy, individuals and social organizations are becoming increasingly autonomous (Aguilar, 2007). Thus, any legislation that interprets governance as a development that is characteristic of neoliberal economies, a viewpoint that began to be expressed in the 1990s, is incorrect because the market economy pressurizes the state into removing communities from their territories to ensure continuity in accumulation.

Governance is a guide for democratic liberties, for equity in decisions, and productive efforts (Dubois, 2002). If participation in society is passive, it leads to an entity without power (Foladori, 2002). Therefore, the community must be incorporated into decision-making: it must assume control over local matters and determine how resources should be used. In this way, there will be a social appropriation of nature and culture, leading to independence from the institutions that try to dispossess the community

of their common goods through advisement and financing, in the sole interest—according to Pretty and Vodouhê (1997)—of wealth and power.

3. Governance and social sustainability

In the academic literature on governance, there are authors who stand out for their political position. These authors consider governance only as a referent for decision-making by the actors involved, when the provisions correspond not to the interests of the entire community but to groups that seek to control the actions the state must take in order to implement governability. On the other hand, within communities it is suggested that governance is inherent to the objectives of social sustainability since it requires that the community's social actors organize to obtain benefits of the collective, constituting a wide range of social actors, rules, and procedures—both formal and informal—that permit a broad dissemination of information, accountability, and participation in the entire decision-making process.

In relation to this, a proposal that has gained acceptance by analysts of public policy is Östrom's (2000) contention that institutional arrangements help to assure conditions for the effective participation of those involved in decision-making, to different degrees and at different levels of interaction, with the goal of creating a situation in which sustainability is assured. Thus, the governance approach includes the idea that the political and the institutional are fundamental for structuring that which is public and for achieving social goals, sustainability among them. For governance to be achieved, certain elements are necessary; these include equilibrium between the state and society, cooperation among actors, consistency in the actions taken, efficiency and effectiveness of public action, horizontality in terms of information and accountability. Without governance, social sustainability cannot enable the decisions that the community requires. This relationship between the community and the state must be in the hands of the collective, which knows the territory, conserves its common goods, and visualizes a future for its community.

One of the elements proposed by Mazabel, Romero, and Hurtado (2010) in relation to governance is linked to the ideals of social sustainability and includes intra- and inter-generational equity, the level of social organization, the management capacity of a community or region, the creation of social networks, social and human capital, and the reaction and organization of society to market structures and their processes of change (see Table 3).

Table 3
Link between governance and social sustainability

Governance	Social sustainability
Equilibrium	Equity
Cooperation	Social and human capital
Coherence	Management capacity
Efficiency	Level of organization
Horizontality	Networks
Accountability	Response and organization

Source: Arroyo-Delgado & Palafox-Muñoz (2017).

Implementing each concept requires the development of consensus and independence among the actors. The social legitimation of governance leads to increased participation and acceptance of actions undertaken in order to achieve social sustainability, given that their objective is to improve the quality of life of the entire community and not only some of its members. Chiappe (2002) notes that equitable distribution of resources and property helps communities become the basis for the development of consumption as well as ecological and economic practices. Porras (2006) points out that governance is a question not only of governing but also of promoting community development since decision-making is not governmental in character because the state is a facilitator rather than a hierarchical executor.

4. Tourism in governance and social sustainability

Developed countries have become the principal source and recipients of international tourism. This has created direct reciprocity between economic growth and tourism. The developed economies were the destination of 54.3% of tourists, and the majority of arrivals were in Europe (OMT, 2019). Tourism's on job creation and on capturing foreign exchange is important to economies; for example, Mexico reports that tourism generates 9.4 million direct jobs, equivalent to 17% of the workforce of the country (WTTC, 2019b). Nevertheless, from the point of view of capital, the term "sustainable development" is only oriented at the reproduction of surplus value, laying bare different realities in the host communities. This has been countered by arguments that tourism is a "tool for social cohesion and sustainable development, if it is entirely managed through the characteristic and fundamental elements of governance" (Mazón & Fuentes, 2007, p. 106). That is, if the economic vision of sustainability continues, society and nature will be commodified for the perpetuation and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

Since tourism is a social as well as an economic activity, its management in communities should have be inclusive, incorporating qualities and abilities for building and sustaining confidence, commitment, and negotiation (Parrado, Löffler & Bovaird, 2005). These elements are characteristics of social capital (Durston, 2000) that lead to the strengthening of the community and favor collective decision-making. Thus, tourism favors the process of governance when it is implemented as an objective of the receiving community, given that extractive economic activities have been limited—either because of the creation of protected spaces or because of the lack of financial support. Velasco (2008) argues that tourism provides a favorable environment for governance since its development requires the cooperation of all actors.

Six elements have been selected from the academic literature on governance: (a) equity; (b) social capital; (c) coherence; (d) efficiency; (e) networks; and (f) accountability. These make it possible to analyze how, through tourist activities, governance contributes to achieving social sustainability in the area studied.

On this basis, equity is the element that is related to equilibrium between the state and society. It brings together the participation of the government and society at large. If only one actor existed, whether political, economic, social or cultural (Cerrillo, 2005), this would unbalance activities, moving them on the path of governability; it is for this reason that governance requires action by the actors in order to achieve the equity of the collective.

Social capital is understood as a collective (or communitarian) attribute of a group that involves both the extension and the intersection of individual relations of reciprocity and mutual trust, such as norms and institutions for cooperation at the heart of a group or a community (Durston, 2000). It is recognized that community participation and involvement in decisions about the future of Cabo Pulmo and its focus on tourism is the best way of achieving the goals set, given that the inhabitants share a common interest vis-a-vis a policy or an action, and the exchange of resources to achieve this shared interest that links a diverse number of actors (Börzel, 1998).

Peters (2003) notes that just as it is important to clearly set out objectives, so too is it necessary that these objectives be consistent and coordinated. This involves another aspect of collaborative work: coherence, in which the objectives of a policy in a specific area are congruent and consistent with the collective. When this is the case, they will correspond to the diverse interests of the actors.

Efficiency refers to achieving the result corresponding to the objectives set by the organization. Efficacy and efficiency are inevitable values of

organizations that bureaucratic models do not guarantee. As Prats (2005) indicates, governance is multifaceted and plural, seeks adaptive efficiency, and requires flexibility, experimentation, and learning by trial and error.

"The modern governance structure is not characterized by hierarchy, but by autonomous actors and networks between organizations" (Rhodes, 1997, p. 53). The creation of networks is characterized by a certain degree of equality in the structure in which participant entities interact. The autonomy of these entities is an important characteristic and includes mutual agreements, rights, and obligations (Kooiman, 2003).

Governance implies a redefinition of accountability mechanisms. Each actor is responsible and, therefore, must be accountable to different actors through mechanisms established for each one, in function of their autonomy. Theorists of governance maintain that traditional mechanisms of accountability have been replaced by different processes of electoral control, such as stakeholder participation and consumers' freedom to choose. Accountability is considered one of the most important elements of the governance model (Peters & Pierre, 2005).

5. Cabo Pulmo: an experience in governance and social sustainability

Before concentrating on tourism, Cabo Pulmo's main economic activity was pearling. However, this extractive activity was based on concessions to private enterprises, which almost eradicated this resource. This led the locality to redirect its basic economic activity to fishing—initially for sharks, which were in high demand and provided considerable income. Commercial fishing became the main economic activity but, again, over-exploitation led to a decline in fish stocks. As a result, local residents began to migrate to San José del Cabo or to the capital of the state in search of employment (Arroyo-Delgado, 2018).

Commercial fishing initially had a positive effect on tourism in Cabo Pulmo, attracting modest numbers of tourists interested in coastal aquatic activities. As a result, the first tourism businesses were established, based on a recognition that tourism provided large economic benefits. After the experience with commercial fishing, it was acknowledged that tourism required an environmental approach that contributed to the protection of nature, which had become the main attraction in this area. For this reason, the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur's proposal for the creation of a Natural Protected Area was welcomed by the population.

> They came in with our generation, I mean, with my brothers and me, and we immediately said yes to asking for a natural protected area. The university was asked and on June 6, 1995,

it was officially decreed and, well, we were fully on board, we were very happy that there was a document that said "authorized by the government," because it was now a marine park. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017a)

This background in decision-making in the community led to the creation of cooperation networks among the inhabitants, including a change to a new economic activity and, at the same time, conservation of the natural wealth of the area.

My uncles, my father, and my older brothers saw the whole process of fishing come under threat. Fish populations were disappearing and all; not because of locals but because of outsiders coming from other states with really aggressive methods of fishing. All this was threatened. So, along with a group of researchers from the local university of Baja California Sur de la Paz, who started coming, they saw that there was great potential. They started to study the reef because many questions were asked. So, they started, and began to talk to local people, with my family, and to tell them: "You know, this has to be protected." And so my family began to take an interest. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017b).

In Cabo Pulmo, two types of organizations were identified: (a) one formed for the creation of the national park, emphasizing issues related to conservation; and (b) a community organization. The residents took part in the Advisory Committee for the Natural Protected Area Management Plan, since at least one member of each family was linked to tourism activities in the area. This way, the community was represented in decision-making.

This communal committee is made up of, obviously, like all committees, a president, a secretary, a treasurer, and two members-at-large. So, this committee was created by the community itself. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017c)

Having gained this experience, a local Development Committee was created responding to the needs of the time, given that—according to the population—Cabo Pulmo is a community forgotten by the state. Therefore, they reached out to civil associations to create cooperation networks to improve the living conditions of the residents of the community.

We created a local development committee and, well, there we were working with NGOs such as Niparajá, Costa Salvaje, Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación, ACCP, which is the local civil association. We were working on different projects to improve the needs of the community since the park also had

> needs, but everything was focused on the park, and, well, the park is a federal zone, and the community also has many needs and there isn't much emphasis on this, on the community itself. So there are many basic needs. So this committee was created to solve, to discuss with the government or with organizations how to improve things like the urban image, provide better access to water, because there is almost no water in the town, arrange for a small health center and things like that: necessities. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017d)

One characteristic of Cabo Pulmo is that the majority of its inhabitants are relatives. This has contributed to a positive enterprise–family relationship. Everyone who entered the tourism sphere faced different challenges, but this participation strengthened economic activity in the area without neglecting the objective of the population: the protected area.

> Well, the majority of the community are in business. The family are all the enterprises, the Castro family, the community, well, it is we ourselves. I think that's good. There is a lot of jealousy in business and so forth, but, I tell you, we never lose [sight of] the objective, which is caring for the park. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017b)

The population is immersed in community organization and participates in decision-making, whether on issues related to the NPA or to the community. This allows them to work together and involve the entire community in interactions with each of the various external agents (academics and organizations). The voice and vote belong to the community; local participation is represented through the advisory committee, and allows them to reach agreements with the state and with the organizations that contribute to the management of the NPA.

> The legal body that we have as a community is the Advisory Council, and its sub-councils. One of these is the program of public use [an instrument for planning, regulating, and managing recreational tourist activities within the Cabo Pulmo National Park]. That is, now, [in] the regulations and agreements that we are making together, the community–CONANP, we agree on all this and we vote on everything, and now we are already going to prepare the draft the management plan to send it out, so that this is included in the new management plan. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017e).

Equity is an important characteristic in decision-making as well as in participation in activities within the community, principally through meetings

of the community committee in which mechanisms of active participation are used, with the majority attending in order to make the decision that benefits the locality the most.

> Everything is decided by votes. Normally we know how many families there are in the community. If there is a representative of every family, we are doing well, because everyone in each family is represented there. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017f)

Community assemblies are run by the local development committee, which discusses issues related to the improvement of living conditions in the town. In these assemblies, the community permits external actors to participate; these actors serve as advisors but do not have the right to vote when decisions are taken.

> I, always, as a biologist, I would think and say "Well, I have been in so many communities." And I realized that what Cabo Pulmo has is, precisely, support; I mean, in addition to the shared objective as a community, it has the support of loads of NGOs, of Greenpeace, of Costa Salvaje, of Pronatura, of Niparajá; it has loads, loads of support from them, and they speak out at a level, I mean, that's more noticeable; that is, on television, radio, and social networks. So it is hard for the government to ignore all this. So, either you listen to the people of Cabo Pulmo or you listen to the people of Cabo Pulmo! So this is a good example that the government cannot do anything that the community will not allow. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017c)

Neither equity nor the creation of networks of cooperation would be so solid were it not for the essential factor that the communities are recognized in the academic sphere as social capital. Cabo Pulmo is characterized by its integration and the social relations between its inhabitants and the outside. As a result, the promotion of initiatives linked to social, economic, and environmental development comes from the collective. This strengthens the bonds of trust and reciprocity mentioned by Durston (2000). Undoubtedly, differences do arise during the decision-making process, but a solution is always found to the issues that result from the competitive environment in the locality, where everyone has interests related to tourism.

> The community is very small and thus competition among enterprises exists because you are providing the same service, but I think that's normal because there is competition everywhere, but, well, there is also this part when if there is any problem, for example, here if something runs aground, or if the boats, or if there was a problem with a car, then, then there is this feeling

> of helping each other, I mean, yes, there is that part too, there is support of a certain sort among the providers of local services, and respect. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017d)

The cooperation is notable among the residents of Cabo Pulmo, and has placed them at the center of national and international attention amid their struggle and resistance in defense of their territory, in opposition to the Cabo Cortés tourism megaproject. This was the catalyst that united the whole community.

> We had no choice. They forced us. They forced us to organize like this and they forced us in the sense that there was already an authorized project, to do, well, a huge development. So we had no choice but to ask for protection, to protect ourselves, because like everyone knows, I think even the little Mexicans that were born yesterday know all about the manipulation by the officials in this country, but we are rebelling. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017f)

> Well, we faced very ugly situations, like threats by projects, and the community is not against any kind of development, but it is against the size of [this] development. So, we have already been in these types situations and, well, the community is very united in this sense, it is very, very, very united when it comes to standing up to these kinds of things. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017h)

These events transcend the identity of the population. This is evident when people touch on the subject of conservation and the protection of the natural park. This is a living space that is appreciated and part of their cosmovision. As a result, new generations, starting with little children, transmit this vision. They are taught conservation and to protect the environment around them.

> In Cabo Pulmo everyone knows that we need to conserve, that this hen that lays the golden eggs, that is, that the park provides a living, it is our source, well, let's say that our economy comes from it. So, apart from this, well, it is something that has to be conserved, meaning we know that the resource is important not only economically, but also, here, in Cabo Pulmo, it is almost a family, that is, if there are others who came here because of the tourism boom or for other reasons, they have stayed here. But for us, it is deeply rooted that we have to conserve the place, for economic reasons but also for sentimental reasons, from this feeling of being rooted or this feeling of…I don't know if I can call it ownership, or maybe affection, because we were born

here, I mean, we have always been here and we have to take care of this. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017d).

The joining together of discourse and actions is one of the characteristics of the residents of Cabo Pulmo. The coherence of the community is manifest in their collective action—a characteristic of small population groups since everyone has a common objective, and everyone works together to achieve it. Actions and formal or informal agreements on environmental questions are fulfilled in their entirety. This is why the residents opted for a low-impact tourism project so that the town's residents would have a promising future, in contrast to what transpires in coastal tourist destinations where the levels of poverty and inequality increase as the destination expands.

> We cannot be hopeful: you have to fight if you want something, because this park is like this because the people are good, we take care of it, but not because of government oversight or because of this or that. No! It is because the people are good, the people around La Ribera, from Los Barriles or from here. The people are good and don't exploit or anything like that. One or two, well, like with everything, but the vast majority are respectful and conserve (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017i)

> There are agreements about everything related to marine issues, in relation to the park, on this there are many agreements. When it comes to the community, we have a recycling system carried out by one of the organizations. Each committee has its own agreement: the one on transportation, the one on the school, the service providers; there are also gentlemen's agreements, not really signed, and all that. So, all these agreements are always carried out because this is something that's good for all of us […] The decisions that have been made up till now are for the common good because, let's suppose that we devoted ourselves only to making money and we allowed more tourism to come in and we allowed mega-developments, what would happen?.... We would screw up the reef. We would have more money, but, well, we would screw up the reef, and the social fabric would be lost; with these types of projects there is movement of people who go to work and live where they build these projects, and the social fabric is lost, crime arrives. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017j)

The community of Cabo Pulmo has worked efficiently on the appropriate use of the economic resources they possess, which includes nature and its sustainable care, and they are sympathetic about the needs related to the demands of tourism and its stakeholders. But they have also learned from

mistakes, collaborating with government bodies on decisions regarding social and ecological issues; that is, the community and the NPA.

> The results have been very good; for example, the community committee was the result of the whole process of opposing the megaprojects. Cabo Pulmo's strategic tourism development plan was created because, when we were campaigning against Cabo Cortés [the tourism megaproject], people told us: "So, if you don't want this, what do you want?" And we ourselves didn't know what we wanted, that's why we carried out this process for two years, if not a little longer, to prepare this strategic plan for tourism development. We have a physical copy, every family has one. Using this plan, we are organizing through working groups for the matter of urban image, for the matter of public services, for the matter of the park. We were like four groups and each group had a subcommittee made up of people from the community, which didn't mean that they were going to resolve everything, but that they would develop it and get the community's agreement. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017j)

Without doubt, the welfare of the community is the primary objective of social sustainability, and governance contributes to collective decision-making. The results of community work are associated with the search for tourism development that is sensitive to the environment, and which has a positive effect on the locality. Nevertheless, one begins to perceive a lack of dynamism setting in within Cabo Pulmo. This may be because the community reached the objectives that it set for itself and reached a comfort zone associated with the economic wellbeing that came with the development of tourism.

> We accomplished a lot. In a short time, we did a lot, a lot, a lot. What can I say, it was five or six years, we did a lot, less, no, about five years and then all of a sudden, we lost steam, and we kind of stayed like that. Yes, it was tiring, because it was a process that lit a fire under us, like…you hurry or else! I mean, [it was] a rapid decision-making process, changing, getting moving, defending, improving your business, I mean, everything in five years, and now we have, like, in these things, calmed down, but I think that yes, yes, it's necessary to do something again. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017k)

Finally, accountability among the members of the community closes the cycle associated with social capital in the locality, and leads to the consolidation of governance and social sustainability. Those responsible

for the projects and initiatives present a report on progress and results for members of the community. These reports not only cover the economic aspects, but also describe collaboration with external agents. Among the latter, the academic sector stands out, having produced technical reports, books, and articles that provide information that contributes to improving the living conditions of the residents of Cabo Pulmo. At the same time, civil associations offer training courses and workshops that strengthen the capabilities of the community committee when it comes to resolving societal problems and overcoming the state's inattention.

> The committee is active when the community says "I am interested in talking about this," for example, water, or "I would like to have a meeting about water," because then the committee reacts or the people there organize to bring the people together and [we're] ready. In this sense, the committee is active, but, otherwise we don't have this monthly meeting. Why? Because we began to see that the people were beginning to drift away. Maybe they got bored, because, well, it was [always] talking about the same thing. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017l)

Accountability falls to the state through CONANP, which manages the economic resources collected via tourism service providers for the use of the NPA. Nevertheless, the community knows nothing about how these funds are used. Consequently, the community's demands are centered on this government body, which does not have transparent mechanisms regarding the use and allocation of the economic resources collected; some is assigned to the Conservation Program for Sustainable Development (PROCODES), but the amount and the applications of these funds are unknown.

> What they don't report to us are numbers, no numbers, and sometimes you even begin to think: "Well, the money isn't mine, it's the government's," but really, it is your money, because it is for the bracelets,[5] and this money, well, they return it to us in the PROCODES. (Arroyo-Delgado, 2017b)

6. Final considerations

Governance is a form of decision-making, and of incorporating the state and other external actors, that is employed to find solutions to complex problems and to benefit the community through control of the management of actions undertaken based on a common objective. In addition to

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5   Translator's note: received as evidence of payment of tourist taxes.

being founded on a work dynamic with a high level of trust, commitment, and negotiation, governance constitutes the social capital that enables joint cooperation to assure the future of those who make up the community, and which thus directly impacts social sustainability. For this reason, it is extremely important to promote governance structures in rural localities to ensure that the state, through its economic policies, does not hamper decision-making in communities all the more, given that its objectives differ from those of the community.

It is especially important to achieve social sustainability in rural communities dedicated to tourism, given that these spaces always defend common goods and seek to avoid the dispossession of their territory; thus, they constantly engage in resistance to the onslaught of capitalism, which to reproduce itself must remain the mode of production. This social sustainability will allow the community to conserve its lifestyle and avoid becoming a victim of the neoliberal economic style promoted by the state, as occurs in other tourism spaces in which the control of activities and financing is mediated by programs such as Pueblos Mágicos, promoted by Mexico's Secretariat of Tourism.

The elements of governance discussed here, and employed to understand the reality of Cabo Pulmo, lead to endeavors aimed at social sustainability through collective action and a communal vision regarding the making of decisions and agreements about the conservation of the Natural Protected Area and the residents of the locality.

Although the state has attempted to favor the interest of capital through the development of tourism megaprojects, the residents found, in academia, an interlocutor and advisor that helped them to create strategies of defense. This led to the creation of family enterprises that not only provide services but are also custodians of ecological diversity. As a result, Cabo Pulmo became the space with the highest concentration of fish in the Gulf of California and an example for marine conservation and community participation.

The experience accumulated by the community has equipped it with the tools it needs to tackle the challenges that rural localities face when they attempt to enter the service sector with low-impact tourism that allows them to conserve their natural patrimony and an organizational structure that helps them to reach consensus for the collective. In this way, adopting tourism as an economic base does not imply that the space has to develop in the same ways as others promoted by the state. Rather, tourism can meet the needs of the community since the common goods that attract tourists also determine the longevity of the activity.

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