

DIMENSIÓN SOCIAL DEL TURISMO

DAVID ARÁMBURO LIZÁRRAGA

Doctor en Gestión del Turismo por la Universidad Autónoma de Occidente
Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa
México
[david.aramburo@uas.edu.mx]



MANAGEMENT OF COMMON GOODS FOR COMMUNITY- BASED TOURISM IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AREA OF CONCORDIA, SINALOA, MEXICO

GESTIÓN DE BIENES COMUNES PARA EL TURISMO COMUNITARIO EN LA ZONA MONTAÑOSA DE CONCORDIA, SINALOA, MÉXICO

Abstract

The study analyzes the management of commons for community-based tourism in the mountainous area of Concordia, Sinaloa, Mexico. Through a qualitative ethnomethodological approach, four agrarian cores (two ejidos and two agrarian communities) were examined using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, qualitative tourism inventory, and participatory social cartography. This methodological triangulation identified significant natural, cultural, and historical heritage with tourism potential, while also revealing important structural limitations. The fragility of collective action mechanisms, fragmentation of community social capital, weakening of social cohesion, and limited self-management capacity condition sustainable development. Additionally, the influence of criminal groups affects traditional organizational dynamics. Despite these challenges, there is a positive perception of tourism among inhabitants, based on its potential to generate complementary economic benefits, constituting a foundation for future interventions.

Keywords: common goods, community-based tourism, collective action, ejidos, agrarian communities

Resumen

El estudio analiza la gestión de bienes comunes para el turismo comunitario en la zona serrana de Concordia, ubicada en Sinaloa (México). Mediante un enfoque etnometodológico cualitativo, se examinaron cuatro núcleos agrarios: dos ejidos y dos

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comunidades agrarias, empleando entrevistas semiestructuradas, grupos focales, inventario turístico cualitativo y cartografía social participativa. Esta triangulación metodológica permitió identificar un significativo patrimonio natural, cultural e histórico con potencial turístico, aunque también evidenció importantes limitaciones estructurales. La fragilidad en los mecanismos de acción colectiva, la fragmentación del capital social comunitario, el debilitamiento de la cohesión social y la limitada capacidad de autogestión condicionan el desarrollo sostenible. Adicionalmente, la influencia de grupos delictivos afecta las dinámicas organizativas tradicionales. A pesar de estos desafíos, existe una valoración positiva del turismo entre los habitantes, fundamentada en su potencial para generar beneficios económicos complementarios, de manera que constituye una base para futuras intervenciones.

Palabras clave: bienes comunes, turismo comunitario, acción colectiva, ejidos, comunidades agrarias

1. Introduction

Community-based tourism has emerged as a strategic response to the abandonment of rural areas caused by neoliberal policies that have prioritized urban development models and mass tourism. This tourism modality is based on creating products focused exclusively on local participation, arising as an alternative to the negative impacts of traditional tourism (López-Guzmán & Sánchez, 2009). The management of common goods constitutes a central element for the effective development of community-based tourism initiatives, especially in territories with social land tenure such as ejidos and agrarian communities.

Ejidos and agrarian communities are collective forms of land tenure in Mexico. The recognition of these agrarian cores emerged from the agrarian reform in 1934, whose objective was centered on the conservation of territory from a communal perspective, guided by the motto “the land belongs to those who work it,” with the community being the owner (Martínez & Cielo, 2017). According to Morett-Sánchez and Cosío-Ruiz (2017), the difference between ejidos and agrarian communities lies in the fact that the latter, according to law, cannot be used individually, and land proportions cannot be sold or transferred, while ejidos, particularly since the 1992 reform, have greater flexibility for the use and transfer of their lands.

The development of community-based tourism in Mexico faces structural challenges that transcend local organizational limitations, inserting itself into a broader context of sociopolitical and economic transformations. The presence of organized crime in rural territories has reconfigured local power dynamics, particularly affecting ejidos and agrarian communities that constitute approximately 60% of the national territory (Morett-Sánchez & Cosío-Ruiz, 2017). In the state of Sinaloa, the influence of criminal groups linked to drug trafficking has altered traditional community governance structures, limiting the autonomy of agrarian organizations and conditioning the use of natural resources with tourism potential. Simultaneously, federal public policies have shown a contradictory orientation; while programs such as Pueblos Mágicos have privileged destinations with consolidated infrastructure, specific initiatives for rural community tourism, such as the

Alternative Tourism Program in Indigenous Zones (PTAZI), have had limited scope and budgetary discontinuity (López-Guzmán & Sánchez, 2009).

The selected units of analysis, although sharing territorial characteristics and social land tenure, present particularities that enrich the comparative analysis. The ejido El Palmito is distinguished by its Protected Natural Area status and more than a decade of experience in ecotourism, contrasting with La Petaca, whose tourism potential remains underutilized despite having basic infrastructure. Meanwhile, the agrarian community of Copala, with its recognition as a Señorial Town and proximity to Mazatlán, faces the challenge of revitalizing a tourist flow that once received up to 12 buses daily in past decades, while San Miguel del Carrizal represents a case of emerging tourism centered on mountain activities. This diversity of contexts and trajectories allows examining how factors such as previous experience, institutional recognition, connectivity, and demographic structure affect the capacity for collective management of common goods for tourism purposes.

In the specific case of the mountainous area of Concordia, Sinaloa, Mexico, ejidos and agrarian communities possess significant tourism potential based on their natural, cultural, and historical resources. However, the materialization of this potential faces multiple challenges related to collective action, social cohesion, community social capital, and self-management processes. Arintoko et al. (2020) characterize community-based tourism as an activity based on the observation and support of the local way of life, whose value lies in encouraging the preservation of cultural, natural, and social aspects, emphasizing that management, control, and supervision processes must be carried out exclusively by local inhabitants.

This research analyzes the relationship between common goods and community-based tourism as an alternative for local development in four strategically selected agrarian cores (two ejidos: El Palmito and La Petaca; two agrarian communities: Copala and San Miguel del Carrizal). These were chosen considering their background related to tourism activity, their potential to rethink tourism as an alternative for community well-being, their accessibility via the Mazatlán-Durango highway, and their previous experience in collective work with common goods.

According to Ruiz-Ballesteros (2017a), the effective development of community-based tourism requires five key elements: collective action with democratic participation, leadership capacity, level of external intervention, sense of territorial belonging, and forms of insertion of local actors in tourism activity. These factors are determinant for understanding the social dynamics that facilitate or hinder the implementation of tourism initiatives from a community approach.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Community-Based Tourism Under the Social Land Tenure Scheme

The analytical convergence between Ostrom's (2000) theory of common goods and community-based tourism approaches constitutes the epistemological foundation of this research, establishing that effective management of collective resources transcends simple

material availability to insert itself into complex socio-institutional configurations. Tourism common goods in ejidos and agrarian communities are not limited to landscapes or biodiversity but encompass what Mattei (2013) denominates “relational systems of access and use” where tangible dimensions (territory, infrastructure, natural resources) and intangible ones (ancestral knowledge, cultural practices, reciprocity networks) converge. This conceptualization allows overcoming the traditional economic vision that reduces tourism to mercantile transactions, to understand it as a process of social activation of resources that requires what Ostrom identifies as “operational rules” sustained by robust local institutions.

Besides, community-based tourism has emerged as a strategic response to the abandonment of rural areas caused by neoliberal policies. According to López-Guzmán and Sánchez (2009), tourism services managed by the local population are integrated through the community, linking with sectors such as education, health, and the environment.

Curcija et al. (2019) argue that this tourism modality favors the creation of job opportunities with equitably distributed benefits, highlighting the importance of the planning process for establishing successful agreements and objectives. Arintoko et al. (2020) affirm that, although economic gain is part of the activity, community-based tourism primarily seeks to generate social and natural preservation benefits, with an equitable distribution due to the diversity of actors involved. On the other hand, Juliana et al. (2021) propose eleven fundamental principles of community-based tourism, including recognition of community property, local involvement at all stages, promotion of identity and belonging, improvement of quality of life, cultural conservation, environmental preservation, intercultural development, dignification of local cultures, equitable distribution of profits, contribution to community development, and emphasis on everyday authenticity.

Furthermore, Mayaka et al. (2019) identify two theoretical positions regarding the emergence of community-based tourism. The first, with a neoliberal approach, emphasizes the adoption of communities to expand the tourism industry through large organizations that do not fully address local needs. The second represents the ideal type of tourism initiation in communities, focusing on community development valuing cultural, environmental, and social aspects beyond the economic. Díaz and Zielinski (2022) delve into the second position, arguing that the emergence of community-based tourism is based on community empowerment, determined by its social capital. This capacity is reflected in monitoring and control of impacts; carrying capacity studies; implementation of strategies for controlled use of resources; and establishment of community funds.

Adding to the above, Mayaka et al. (2019) establish three essential dimensions for effective implementation: community participation in all processes; control and power in relations with external agents; and results oriented toward social justice, welfare, and quality of life. Although Moscardo (2011) points out that theoretically the levels of community participation have not been established, the predominant theoretical position maintains a bottom-up approach based on the needs identified by the local actors themselves.

On the other hand, Curcija et al. (2019) argue that community-based tourism does not always generate benefits, facing challenges that hinder its successful implementation.

Simpson (2008) points out that numerous communities experience negative impacts such as environmental pollution and unequal distribution of economic resources, as well as conflicts of interest and power relations that directly affect tourism management. Likewise, García and Ullán (2019) warn about conflicts of interest and unequal distribution of benefits, which frequently generate negative impacts on the community social fabric. De la Torre (2010) indicates that programs to encourage community-based tourism frequently do not generate the expected impact, producing zero income with complete dependence on external support. This author identifies as the main limitation the simplified perception of community, which ignores the complexity of relationships between residents with divergent interests.

Furthermore, Maldonado (2005) warns about negative impacts on territorial and identity loss, fragmenting social cohesion, while Kieffer (2018) points out the implementation of projects disconnected from local needs and capabilities, delaying community development. Fernández (2011) identifies counterproductive practices: deficiencies in social capital, presence of power groups, and non-inclusive tourism policies, as well as limiting factors such as paternalistic mentality, perception of participation as a waste of time, and insecurity about necessary knowledge.

The effective development of community-based tourism requires balanced social capital, collective action, social cohesion, and self-management. Fernández (2011) identifies collective action as the main element to achieve local development through community-based tourism. Ruiz-Ballesteros (2017b) directly relates the degree of collective action with implementation success or failure, reflected in local cooperation and decision-making. In this sense, Pramanik et al. (2019) emphasize that collective action is indispensable for its involvement in leadership commitment, encouraging trust and involvement. Regarding social cohesion, López and López (2021) describe it as a manifestation of shared norms and values, where territorial attachment generates optimal spaces for community-based tourism implementation. Berger-Schmitt (2000) warns that the absence of cohesion negatively affects collective action, impacting the practice of community-based tourism. Meanwhile, López and López (2021) identify necessary social cohesion indicators: shared beliefs and ideals, similar objectives, common future expectations, feeling of belonging, and voluntary territorial permanence.

2.2 Management of Common Goods for Community-Based Tourism

The approach to common goods constitutes an ideal analytical tool for studying tourism activity, as Ruiz-Ballesteros (2017b) points out, considering that this sector requires various resources under different modalities of property and access. Common-use resources are not exclusive to tourism but are shared with other productive sectors specific to each territory.

Briassoulis (2002) characterizes tourism common goods as multivariable, encompassing tangible and intangible resources indispensable for the visitor experience. This diversity adds complexity to tourism activity, considering that these goods are used by diverse groups with interests and cultures that frequently differ from those of the receiving populations. Healy (2006), for his part, warns that tourism can threaten common goods due to the concentration of visitors seeking to enjoy a limited territorial space. This author identifies

two fundamental problems: the impossibility of excluding tourists from enjoying these resources, leading to their depletion; and the scarce investment for their sustainable use, due to resource diversions among the actors involved.

From the perspective of the “tragedy of the commons,” Álvarez-García et al. (2018) identify natural landscapes and built infrastructures as the main tourism resources. However, in many destinations, these resources present common-use characteristics, facing limitations to regulate their massive use. González-Domínguez et al. (2017) maintain that tourism activity is particularly susceptible to this “tragedy” due to deficiencies in planning and management.

Ostrom’s work (2000) empirically counters the “tragedy of the commons,” demonstrating individuals’ capacity to organize and work collectively in the sustainable management of common resources. According to Ramis (2013), Ostrom’s novelty lies in evidencing collective systems such as ejidos or agrarian communities that, through self-management and governance, develop control mechanisms for the adequate use of common goods.

Nevertheless, Mattei (2013) argues that common goods should not be approached from economistic perspectives, as they are unsustainable in the long term. This author proposes that common goods should be universally accessible, focusing studies on their preservation rather than their exploitation. Given the above, Stone and Stone (2020) describe the development of community-based tourism from common goods under a participatory approach where the community proposes initiatives to manage common resources. Boggs (2000) maintains that this model implies a redistribution of power from governmental institutions to rural communities. Bojórquez-Vargas et al. (2018) argue that the consolidation of community-based tourism will depend on the capacity of local actors to create institutions that promote democratic participation.

However, Dolezal (2011) warns that this vision is romanticized, overlooking the complexity of conflicts of interest and power relations present in community reality. To avoid negative impacts, Juliana et al. (2021) propose three essential strategies: voluntarily involve all members through democratic decision-making; ensure that benefits are received exclusively by local actors; and provide adequate training.

Calderón (2014) points out that rural communities involved in tourism under the use of common goods require decision-making spaces that generate trust and local participation, where collective action should strengthen interpersonal ties that facilitate the achievement of common objectives.

The integration of social dimensions with common goods theory reveals that tourism resources in ejidos and agrarian communities function as what Ostrom (2000) characterizes as “complex adaptive systems,” where the sustainability of resource management depends not only on their physical characteristics but on the social institutional fabric that governs their access and use. This connection is particularly evident in the tourism context, where common goods transcend their material dimension to become what Briasoulis (2002) identifies as “socially constructed resources” whose tourism value emerges from the intersection between their intrinsic characteristics and the community’s capacity

to collectively organize their management. The erosion of social capital and social cohesion directly translates into what can be conceptualized as “institutional degradation of commons,” where the loss of trust networks and shared identity weakens the operational rules that Ostrom identifies as essential for sustainable resource management.

Conversely, the strengthening of collective action not only improves resource management efficiency but transforms common goods into what Stone and Stone (2020) denominate “community assets,” where tourism development becomes a mechanism for reinforcing social bonds and territorial identity rather than simply an economic extraction activity. This theoretical understanding explains why community-based tourism initiatives in Mexican rural contexts cannot be analyzed solely from supply and demand perspectives but require examining the social institutional configurations that determine whether common tourism goods function as sources of community cohesion or fragmentation.

Social capital, social cohesion, and collective action configure the structural conditions that enable or limit the materialization of these institutional arrangements, establishing a dialectical relationship where social capital provides the relational resources (trust, networks, reciprocity norms) necessary for collective action, while social cohesion generates the identity and value base that sustains cooperation over time (López & López, 2021). This conceptual distinction is fundamental for understanding why communities with similar tourism resources present differentiated self-management capacities: social capital operates as relational infrastructure that facilitates the coordination of actions, while social cohesion determines the orientation of these actions toward shared objectives versus fragmented interests. In the specific context of Mexican rural communities, where the presence of external actors (organized crime, government programs, tourism operators) introduces elements of additional complexity, these concepts acquire analytical relevance to explain the processes of “erosion” or “strengthening” of local self-organization capacities.

3. Methodology

This research is based on the qualitative tradition, specifically from the ethnomethodological perspective, which according to Firth and Cadavid (2010) delves into the “social structures of daily activities.” This approach allows analyzing everyday life and interaction relationships between individuals that enable the functioning of the social system. Caballero (1991) identifies two realities addressed through this methodology: reality as an interactive activity, built from interactions and reciprocity; and the fragility of realities, based on interactions susceptible to fragmentation in various contexts. Ethnomethodology, following Garfinkel (1996), constitutes an ideal tool for studying everyday life, allowing the identification of meanings and interactions that explain social phenomena.

The study is developed in the municipality of Concordia, Sinaloa, focusing on two ejidos (El Palmito and La Petaca) and two agrarian communities (Copala and San Miguel del Carrizal). These agrarian cores were strategically selected considering their background related to tourism activity, potential to rethink tourism as an alternative for community well-being, accessibility via the Mazatlán-Durango highway, and previous experience in collective work with common goods.

The development of fieldwork was carried out in a context characterized by the presence of organized crime groups that have altered traditional social dynamics in the mountainous region of Concordia. This situation required the implementation of specific security and community approach protocols that included: prior coordination with ejidal and communal authorities to guarantee safe access to territories; programming visits during daytime hours and on days of lesser activity of external groups; and the establishment of constant communication mechanisms with local contacts who served as cultural mediators and security guarantors. Additionally, a “gradual immersion” strategy was adopted that involved multiple reconnaissance visits before implementing data collection instruments, allowing trust to be generated with local actors and understanding the specific dynamics of each territory. The risk context also influenced the final selection of participants, as some potential informants chose not to participate due to security concerns, while others conditioned their participation on absolute anonymity of their testimonies. These conditions required constant methodological adjustments and the implementation of additional confidentiality and data protection measures that transcended standard ethical protocols of social research.

The sampling design implements a homogeneous approach, considering that the subjects of study share similar characteristics, contexts, and profiles. As Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018) point out, this type of sampling is suitable for research that seeks to evidence processes, relationships, and episodes of specific social groups. The main units of analysis are the ejidatarios and comuneros, defined according to the National Agrarian Law as holders of ejido rights accredited by certificates; the comuneros, who according to Morett-Sánchez and Cosío-Ruiz (2017) possess equal parts of the rights over the social tenure of land; and the local population not possessing titles but indirectly involved in tourism activity.

For data collection, four complementary instruments were implemented: semi-structured interviews, designed with two sections (common goods management, community-based tourism); focus groups, configured with 6-10 participants in each agrarian nucleus; qualitative tourism inventory, based on the methodology of Santana (2019) and Martínez et al. (2010); and social cartography, implemented as a complementary participatory technique following the approaches of Castro (2016) and Carrera-Villacrés et al. (2021), with the specific objective of analyzing the tourism potential of each of the settlements based on their local inhabitants, through the identification, spatial location, and collective evaluation of territorial resources from the endogenous perspective of community actors. In total, 41 interviews were conducted, and four focus groups were formed with a total of 27 participants among the four communities studied.

The focus groups were developed following the methodology proposed by Donaduzzi et al. (2015), configured with 6 to 10 participants in each agrarian nucleus, reaching a total of 27 participants distributed as follows: El Palmito (7 participants), La Petaca (6 participants), Copala (6 participants) and San Miguel del Carrizal (8 participants). The composition of each group sought to represent the diversity of local actors, including ejidal and communal authorities (presidents, secretaries, treasurers), ejidatarios and comuneros with different degrees of participation in collective activities, local population not ejidatarios but linked to the tourism sector (mainly merchants), and representatives of different age and gender groups to guarantee diverse perspectives.

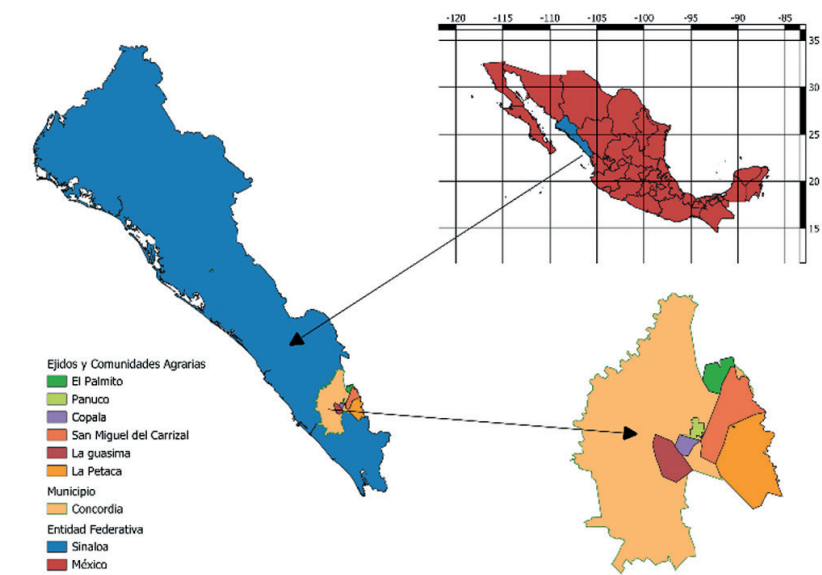
In addition, the focus groups were developed in neutral community spaces (ejidal houses, schools, community centers) that facilitated free and spontaneous participation of attendees, implementing participatory dynamics that included structured discussions on the central themes of the research, exercises for prioritizing problems and opportunities, and activities for collective construction of future scenarios for community tourism development.

3.1 Context and Study Area

The municipality of Concordia, Sinaloa, established in 1565, borders Durango to the north and Mazatlán and Rosario to the south. With an area of 2167.3 km², its territory is characterized by being covered 90% by the Sierra Madre Occidental, which provides extraordinary scenic landscapes and a pleasantly warm climate.

In the mountainous region, there are various ejidos and agrarian communities (see Figure 1) that have developed limited tourism activity. The Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR, 2020) granted the municipality the distinction of “Señorial Town” for its colonial architecture and historic center, although its tourism potential remains underdeveloped, receiving mainly visitors in transit or from Mazatlán.

Figure 1. Distribution of ejidos and agrarian communities in the study area



Note. Own construction based on the National Agrarian System (RAN, 2022).

The ejido El Palmito, located at 1911 meters above sea level, constitutes one of the most populated localities of the municipality (INEGI, 2020) and was declared a Reserve of the Chara Pinta in 2006 by CONANP. This protected status attracts national and international tourism interested in bird watching (more than 100 species), hiking, accommodation in

community cabins, and scientific research. Additionally, its regional gastronomy represents another important attraction for visitors.

The ejido La Petaca is located at an elevation of the Sierra Madre Occidental, at 1900 meters above sea level. According to Magallanes (2021), this community seeks to diversify its tourism offer through activities such as zipline, extreme hiking, cabin accommodation, and calla lily commercialization. Although traditionally its economy was based on livestock and timber commercialization, its geographical and landscape characteristics offer favorable conditions for tourism development.

The agrarian community of Copala comprises the localities of Copala and Chupaderos. The Secretariat of Tourism of Sinaloa (2021) documents that Copala, founded in 1565 thanks to its gold deposits, received in 2016 the denomination of Señorial Town¹. Among its main attractions are the Church of San José (a baroque construction with more than four centuries of antiquity), rock paintings, historical vestiges, and guided tours of ancient mines. Its proximity to Mazatlán gives it competitive advantages, currently receiving visitors from tourist cruises.

Finally, the agrarian community of San Miguel del Carrizal integrates nine localities, highlighting Potrerillos and La Capilla del Taxte for their tourism infrastructure, particularly cabins for accommodation. The region mainly attracts weekend visitors interested in mountain biking.

4. Results

4.1 Management of Common Goods for Community-Based Tourism

4.1.1 Collective Action for the Management of Common Goods

The analysis of collective action in the mountainous area of the municipality of Concordia reveals a scenario characterized by a marked fragility in the mechanisms of cooperation, trust, conflict resolution, and establishment of community norms. These elements constitute the basis for sustainable management of common goods and, consequently, for the development of community-based tourism as a complementary economic alternative.

Cooperation, a fundamental pillar of collective action, manifests in a limited and sporadic manner in the communities studied, predominantly in situations of emergency or immediate need. As expressed by a merchant from El Palmito:

When there is, let's say, someone who has an accident or someone who is known to be ill, who doesn't have the means, or if someone passes away, who is also of scarce resources,

1 This is a specific category from the state of Sinaloa, different from the federal Pueblos Mágicos program. The distinction between Pueblos Señoriales and Pueblos Mágicos is that they are recognitions at the state and federal levels, respectively. To obtain this distinction, some of the main requirements include having a Historic Center, a minimum of 15 colonial-style houses, at least two main cobblestone or stone-paved streets, and a colonial-style arch at the entrance (SECTUR, 2024).

people bring them things, take them, or if they are hospitalized, they also take up collections, make raffles. (Merchant 1, ejido El Palmito, January 24, 2024)

However, this specific cooperation does not transcend towards initiatives that require sustained efforts over time.

In the communities of the mountainous area, an individualistic vision prevails that hinders the collective action necessary for the sustainable management of their resources. This individualism is manifested in expressions such as that of a merchant who affirms that “in the community here we lack a lot of union...we are not united at all...each one sees their own interests.”

Generalized distrust constitutes another determining factor that hinders collective action. This distrust manifests both among the inhabitants themselves and towards external actors and governmental institutions. Nevertheless, the mechanisms for conflict resolution present significant variations. Although in some localities there are formal structures such as ejidal assemblies, in other cases, there is a fragmentation of these spaces due to the influence of groups outside the traditional community dynamic. The presence of organized crime has distorted these mechanisms, significantly weakening the capacity for self-management and autonomy of the communities.

Regarding collective objectives, a mostly individualistic and short-term vision prevails. As mentioned by a comunero from San Miguel del Carrizal, “that has been one of the problems, that most of the comuneros want to see the money immediately.” This perspective considerably hinders the establishment of common goals in the medium and long term.

As for the norms and rules for the management of common goods, it is observed that, although there are formal regulatory frameworks, especially for forestry activity, their effective implementation is questionable. An ejidatario from El Palmito relates:

I'll tell you the reality of things, the mafia. Not even the ejidatarios, the ejidatarios might as well be him who commands here. He buys from the ejidatarios, ok, and he pays them for the wood, he works it, and well, they're going to get their profit for him, not for the town. (Ejidatario 4, February 21, 2024)

The control exercised by organized crime groups over economic activities profoundly distorts the autonomous normative capacity of the communities. As an ejidatario from La Petaca points out, “They simply don't let anyone sell gasoline, they sell the gasoline, they sell the beer, they throw the parties, they sell the cigarettes, they want everything for themselves.”

4.1.2 Social Cohesion for the Management of Common Goods

Social cohesion in the communities of the mountainous area of Concordia shows a complex panorama, where elements of union and fragmentation coexist that directly impact the capacity to collectively manage their common goods for tourism purposes.

The sense of belonging emerges as the most solid component of social cohesion. The inhabitants express a strong territorial root and pride in their natural and cultural resources. In El Palmito, an ejidataria describes: “The forests we have, that we have mountains. Yes. Pines, the trees we have season, that there are peaches...Apples, quince, a lot of guava. And all that attracts attention. And that it’s a quiet town too.”

However, group loyalty manifests in a limited and conditional manner. Although there are expressions of solidarity in emergency situations, everyday cooperation is scarce. Solidarity ties seem to be stronger at the family and small group level than at the broader community scale.

On the other hand, equity represents another critical component that shows severe deficiencies. Significant inequities are identified in areas such as the distribution of economic benefits, access to job opportunities, and participation in decision-making. Family dynamics play a fundamental role in the configuration of social cohesion, especially in contexts of adversity. In San Miguel del Carrizal, a comunero recounted how family ties were strengthened during episodes of violence: “They wanted to kill all the people, and my children made themselves take up arms there too with the people to defend, let’s go, they don’t want to kill us, well, they didn’t kill them.”

Nevertheless, limited economic opportunities represent another factor that weakens social cohesion by causing migration and community fragmentation. As the ejidal president of El Palmito points out: “What happens is that here the ejido doesn’t give all the people work, that’s why they leave. What is needed is another activity, another job. That’s why people tend to migrate or go elsewhere.”

4.1.3 Community Social Capital for the Management of Common Goods

Community social capital in the mountainous area of Concordia presents a weakened configuration that significantly limits the capacity of communities to effectively manage their common goods for tourism purposes.

Democratic participation shows important restrictions. Although there are formal mechanisms such as ejidal assemblies, effective participation is limited to specific groups. In El Palmito, an ejidataria is clear in stating that “No, just the ejidatarios” can participate in these decision-making spaces.

Networks and connections with external actors, fundamental for accessing resources and opportunities, are extremely limited, especially in the tourism field. A merchant from El Palmito expresses this disconnection:

Let’s say, each government has its secretary of Tourism. And well, here for tourism we have, well, the cabins and that, but likewise, there isn’t much support. No, because in fact, we don’t even know who the secretary of Tourism is here from Concordia.

Internal social networks, a fundamental pillar of community social capital, present significant fragmentations. In Copala, there is evidence of a lack of cohesion and communication

between different sectors of the community. Reciprocal actions show unequal patterns among the communities studied. While in some localities, collaborative practices are detected, in other communities such as Copala, reciprocity is practically absent. A comunero openly admits: “No, well, I think that at the moment none, well, I don’t do anything for the common good.”

Community leadership, a key piece for mobilizing social capital, shows serious deficiencies in terms of effectiveness and legitimacy. In Copala, a comunero mentions: “There is a syndic, yes, there is a syndic, well, then it’s useless. Because, let’s say, the one who is here now, the people put him there.” Institutional trust is severely eroded by previous experiences of non-compliance and perception of ineffectiveness. The testimonies reveal a recurrent pattern of unfulfilled governmental promises that has generated profound skepticism in the communities.

On the other hand, the presence and influence of organized crime groups constitute an additional factor that severely deteriorates community social capital. These groups distort decision-making processes, generate climates of insecurity, and weaken local institutions. An ejidatario from La Petaca describes this situation: “They simply don’t let anyone sell gasoline, they sell the gasoline, they sell the beer, they throw the parties, they sell the cigarettes, they want everything for themselves.”

The influence of these groups has generated forced displacements that have significantly fragmented the social fabric. As an ejidatario mentions: “Many people, because of all that, we left from here when it happened that they came to fight one and another of those criminals, we all left.”

4.2 The Potential of Community-Based Tourism in the Mountainous Area of Concordia

4.2.1 Self-Management for Community-Based Tourism

Self-management for community-based tourism in the mountainous area of Concordia presents a scenario characterized by multiple challenges that limit the possibilities of endogenous and participatory tourism development. Although there are incipient initiatives, they face significant structural obstacles.

The level of community empowerment for decision-making in tourism matters is notably limited. Although in some localities like El Palmito there is formally “a directive board specifically in charge of the tourism theme and the management of eco-tourism cabins,” its real capacity to implement autonomous strategies is restricted by multiple factors. Among these stands out the excessive dependence on governmental entities, as evidenced in testimonies that recurrently mention the need for “help from the government” and for “the tourism manager to help them.”

Community participation in tourism initiatives shows patterns of exclusion and centralization. In Copala, a merchant clearly points out this problem: “If we are not comuneros, those of us who are not comuneros do not participate.” Meanwhile, the distribution of

benefits derived from the scarce existing tourism initiatives reveals significant inequities that weaken the sense of collective appropriation.

Training and development of specific skills for tourism management constitutes another critical area with serious deficiencies. The testimonies coincide in pointing out the absence of systematic training programs oriented to tourism. Furthermore, the influence of external groups, particularly from organized crime, constitutes an additional factor that severely restricts community autonomy for tourism management. An ejidatario from La Petaca expresses this reality: “If there were any, let’s say, source of tourism work, they would also want some part because what they are looking for is money without working.”

The predominant temporal perspective among the inhabitants represents another challenge for tourism self-management. A short-term vision prevails that prioritizes immediate benefits over long-term development projects. A comunero from San Miguel del Carrizal expresses it clearly: “That has been one of the problems that most of the comuneros want to see the money immediately.”

The lack of constancy and perseverance constitutes an additional manifestation of this temporal orientation. Despite these multiple challenges, there are some incipient manifestations of self-management that could constitute the basis for the development of community-based tourism. In various communities, some local actors have taken individual initiatives to take advantage of resources with tourism potential.

4.2.2 Tourism Potentialities for Community-Based Tourism

The mountainous area of the municipality of Concordia presents a variety of natural, cultural, and historical resources that constitute a solid basis for the development of community-based tourism, as revealed by the social cartography carried out.

Natural resources emerge as the main tourism asset of the region. In El Palmito, the cartographic exercise identified elements such as waterfalls and trails, which suggest a strong potential for ecotourism and nature tourism activities. In San Miguel del Carrizal, the presence of “rivers, forests, and mountainous areas indicates a strong inclination toward ecotourism and outdoor activities.” While in La Petaca, the identified viewpoints “represent points of high tourism potential that transcend mere scenic appreciation,” with possibilities for contemplative and astronomical tourism. In Copala, “the presence of caves... suggests the possibility of developing speleotourism or underground exploration tourism.”

The mountainous topography, characteristic of the Sierra Madre Occidental that covers 90% of the municipal territory, provides ideal scenarios for activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and landscape observation. The potential for adventure tourism constitutes another promising segment. In La Petaca, “the presence of areas for the practice of climbing demonstrates a significant potential for adventure tourism.” The Cerro de La Petaca, identified as “one of the highest in the region,” could become a differentiating attraction.

Biodiversity, particularly avifauna, represents a specific asset with high potential. In El Palmito, bird watching not only indicates the presence of rich biodiversity in the region

but also suggests that the community already recognizes this activity as a potential tourism attraction. The Chara Pinta Reserve, mentioned by several informants, constitutes a tourism resource of specialized interest that already attracts national and international visitors.

On the other hand, cultural and historical heritage complements the potential tourism offer. In Copala, “the presence of a cathedral... was identified, which demonstrates the existence of significant architectural and historical heritage,” which could serve as a “central axis to develop cultural or religious tourism routes.” Likewise, historical mining activity represents a distinctive resource for educational tours about geology, local economic history, and industrial processes.

The historical richness of towns like Copala, founded in 1565 “due to its rich gold deposits,” provides a deep temporal context that could be used to develop tourism narratives about the historical evolution of the region. The recognition of Copala as a “Señorial Town” by SECTUR in 2016 evidences the institutionally recognized heritage value.

Gastronomy emerges as another promising component for tourism development. Local culinary traditions, linked to the crops and characteristic products of the mountains, constitute a differentiating resource that could be integrated with other tourism modalities. The diversity of local ingredients mentioned by the informants suggests possibilities for the development of gastronomic routes.

The existing tourism infrastructure, although limited, includes usable elements. Cabins were identified in different communities, albeit with variable states of conservation. The existence of these facilities constitutes an advantage to initiate tourism activity without the need for initial investments as high as if starting from scratch.

Connectivity and accessibility favor regional tourism development. The proximity to the Mazatlán-Durango highway provides a significant logistical advantage. The strategic location of the mountainous area, relatively close to Mazatlán, offers possibilities to develop complementary products that diversify the regional offer. The arrival of “visitors from the tourist cruises that arrive at the city of Mazatlán” to communities such as Copala demonstrates that this proximity is already generating tourism flows, although limited.

4.2.3 Local Perception for the Implementation of Community-Based Tourism

The perception of the inhabitants of the mountainous area of Concordia towards the implementation of community-based tourism reveals a complex panorama where positive attitudes coexist with significant limitations that condition its effective development.

A generally favorable assessment of tourism activity prevails, primarily based on its potential economic benefits. In El Palmito, an ejidataria clearly expresses this perspective: “Yes, of course, sir, when they come, there is consumption, there is work.” This positive perception is reinforced with other testimonies such as that of the ejidatario from the same community who affirms that the community sees tourism as “good, well, as an extra income.”

This positive assessment is based on concrete experiences where local actors have evidenced the tangible benefits that tourism activity can generate. The identification of tourism as an employment generator is recurrent in the testimonies, recognizing that when visitors arrive, value chains are activated that benefit various sectors of the community.

However, this positive perception is framed in a context of passivity and lack of community initiative. In Copala, a passive and disinterested attitude is evidenced where the community has no expectations and doesn't care if tourists arrive or not, there are no preparations or collective concern about it. The contrast between the positive assessment of tourism and the lack of proactive action for its development constitutes a significant paradox. Although the potential benefits of the activity are recognized, a passive waiting attitude towards external initiatives prevails, as a comunero from Copala expresses: "For me, let them come daily," without this desire translating into concrete actions.

The vision of the distribution of benefits derived from tourism shows divergent perspectives. While some actors recognize its potential to generate collective benefits, others maintain skepticism regarding the equity in the distribution of these benefits. Moreover, awareness of the current limitations for tourism development is widely spread among the inhabitants. Deficiencies are recognized in critical areas such as promotion, infrastructure, and training. Tourism promotion emerges as a weakness recognized by local actors. A merchant from El Palmito is emphatic in pointing out that "it lacks publicity to begin with. Publicity, that would be a great part that would help us a lot to have tourists."

Expectations about the role of external actors, particularly the government, reveal certain dependence that could hinder tourism self-management. The "help from the government" and the role of the "tourism manager" are repeatedly mentioned as necessary elements for tourism promotion and development. Additionally, constancy and perseverance are identified as significant challenges for sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, nostalgia for past times with greater tourism influx emerges as an additional element in local perception. In Copala, the comuneros vividly remember that before it was common to see the massive arrival of ten or twelve buses daily with national tourists, or a lot of people from Oaxaca who came selling.

The perception of the type of visitors and their spending patterns shows differentiated analyses according to their origin. The attitude towards visitors is predominantly hospitable, which constitutes a significant cultural asset for tourism development.

In synthesis, the local perception towards tourism in the mountainous area of Concordia reveals a generally positive assessment of its potential, based on the recognition of concrete economic benefits. However, this favorable perception is counteracted by a predominantly passive attitude, expectations of external support, concerns about equity in the distribution of benefits, and awareness of significant limitations in areas such as promotion, infrastructure, and training.

5. Conclusions

The comprehensive analysis of the management of common goods and their relationship with community-based tourism in the mountainous area of Concordia reveals a complex panorama with important structural challenges. Despite the tourism potential identified in the four communities studied, there are significant limitations that condition the viability of implementing this tourism modality as a sustainable economic alternative.

The management of common goods presents critical weaknesses in all communities, albeit with variations in their intensity. Collective action is severely limited by the predominant individualism, generalized distrust, and the absence of effective mechanisms for building consensus. Even in El Palmito, where organizational advances are observed, cooperation tends to be sporadic without being sustained for long-term projects that require continued efforts.

Community social capital demonstrates a significant deterioration in all the localities analyzed. Trust and reciprocity networks are fragmented, traditional leaderships have lost legitimacy, and links with external institutions are weak or marked by previous negative experiences. This erosion hinders the construction of collective projects and limits the capacity to effectively manage potential tourism resources.

Social cohesion shows concerning patterns of fragmentation. Although there is a certain sense of territorial belonging and pride in local resources, relations of solidarity and reciprocity have been considerably weakened. Inequity in the distribution of benefits and opportunities has generated internal tensions that hinder the construction of shared visions about community-based tourism development.

As for tourism potential, all communities possess valuable natural and cultural resources that could sustain differentiated products. However, the capacity for tourism self-management is limited in all cases, with significant deficiencies in basic infrastructure, human capital training, and organizational structures for tourism management. Promotion and commercialization are weak, and the benefits generated by current activities tend to concentrate in reduced groups.

The findings of this research reveal a fundamental contradiction that must be addressed and adapted in the theory of the commons, despite the undeniable natural, cultural, and historical wealth of the mountainous region of Concordia, current social and institutional conditions render the development of genuine community tourism initiatives unfeasible in the short and medium term. Empirical evidence demonstrates that the fragmentation of social capital, the erosion of community cohesion, the weakness of collective action mechanisms, and the disruptive influence of organized crime have generated a context where tourism resources, regardless of their intrinsic value, cannot be collectively managed in a sustainable manner. This reality contradicts the optimistic perspectives that frequently characterize the literature on community tourism, which tend to assume that the availability of natural and cultural resources constitutes, per se, a sufficient foundation for the development of this tourism modality. The testimonies collected evidence that positive perceptions toward tourism do not translate into effective organizational capacity, and

that the appreciation of local resources coexists with the collective inability to articulate sustained projects that transcend immediate individual interests.

The presence of organized crime represents a structural factor that transcends traditional organizational limitations, constituting an obstacle that cannot be overcome through conventional technical or financial interventions. The cases studied demonstrate that communities such as Copala, despite having official institutional recognition and proximity to consolidated tourism markets, present levels of social disarticulation that prevent the materialization of effective collective projects. Similarly, territories with previous experience in tourism activities such as El Palmito face significant limitations in scaling and sustaining their initiatives due to the fragility of their institutional arrangements due to the presence of organized crime.

This research suggests that, rather than promoting community tourism as a viable alternative for rural development, it is necessary to recognize that its effective implementation requires social and institutional conditions that currently do not exist in these territories, and that their construction would demand long-term social transformation processes that transcend the specific scope of the tourism sector.

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