Harmonic tourism methodology

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2 HARMONIC TOURISM METHODOLOGY

A proposal for tourism planning in rural communities

Yanelli Daniela Palmas Castrejón, Alberto Amore and Rocío del Carmen Serrano-Barquín

2.1 Introduction

Tourism nowadays represents one of the most important and fastest-growing economic sectors worldwide (UNWTO, 2019a), with developing countries showing a significant upward trend both in terms of travel and revenues (UNWTO, 2011; WTTC, 2018; Yeoman, 2012). Estimates from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for the year 2018 suggested that tourism accounted for nearly USD$145 trillion in revenues (UNWTO, 2019a), with around 10% of jobs worldwide being connected to travel and tourism (UNWTO, 2019b). In the coming years, the direct economic contribution of tourism to the world’s GDP is expected to grow around 3.9% annually (WTTC, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). Overall, tourism is a globalizing phenomenon that encompasses urban as well as rural communities and provides a wide range of skilled and unskilled job opportunities. The geographical reach and the economic diversification of tourism relies heavily upon the use of and access to natural and socio-cultural resources. The latter need to be efficiently managed in order to enhance benefits whilst mitigating negative impacts (Hall & Lew, 2009). Ideally, well-planned tourism development projects should encompass income generation, job creation, regional development, urban revitalization, resource management, cultural identity and protection of endangered flora and fauna through a holistic approach (CNET, 2019). However, the complexity of tourism planning comes with the identification of shortcomings, including the negative externalities of tourism on the natural environment (Acerenza, 2006; Jimenez, 1986) and the socio-cultural impacts it has on a host community (Monterrubio Cordero, 2011, 2018).

More recently, global institutions like the World Bank, the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UNWTO have promoted tourism as a flywheel for poverty reduction in remote and least-developed contexts (UN, 2017; UNESCO, 2010; UNWTO, 2017; World Bank, 2019). Tourism development well suits the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030. According to the UNWTO (2017, p. 27), “tourism is a key sector for achieving the SDGs and can be a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious agenda”. In particular, sound tourism development policies in rural areas and communities
can foster “inclusive and sustainable economic growth” (SDG #8) (UN, 2019a, n.p.), reduce poverty and inequalities (SDGs #1 and #10) and promote climate action (SDG #13) (UN, 2019b). To achieve these goals, tourism planners should reconsider the “potential for partnerships that recognise local development strategies, develop community capabilities and build sustainable outcomes based on a locally led agenda” (Hughes & Scheyvens, 2018, p. 532). The vision for 2030 is to “implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (UNWTO, 2017, p. 10).

The inclusion of socio-ecological features within the framework of the SDGs can have important positive impacts for sound tourism planning. In particular, it can help support communities in vulnerable contexts, enhance their proactive participation in knowledge creation and reduce their exposure to natural hazards and climate change in the Anthropocene (Hall, Baird, James & Ram, 2016; Saarinen, 2019). Risk reduction of natural hazards and community-driven sustainable development are key to the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015). The framework stresses the role national and local authorities should play in defining and implementing integrated actions to reduce vulnerability and, in turn, enhance resilience (UNISDR, 2015).

Tourism easily fits the purpose of resilience building, particularly in remote rural regions prone to short- and long-term environmental vulnerabilities (Lew, 2014). Under such an emerging paradigm, market-driven tourism growth strategies targeting traditional forms of mass tourism are put into question and replaced with ‘alternative’ modes of development that enable socially and economically marginalized local stakeholders to be at the forefront of community-driven resilient practices of natural and cultural resource management (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). However, many of these initiatives are stand-alone and short-lived cases at the micro-level (Hall, Dayal, et al., 2016), with the majority of tourism development projects conceiving development from a Western-minded perspective with little-to-no acknowledgment of Indigenous communities (Moscardo, 2011a, 2011b; Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

In practice, much remains to be done. To date, most tourism development projects do not consider the complexity of societies and the interrelations between ecological, political and socio-cultural dimensions. In this context, this chapter introduces and applies the Harmonic Tourism Methodology (HTM) (Palmas, Serrano-Barquín & Gutierrez, 2017) as a way to include the aforementioned dimensions in the study and to implement the community-driven and resilient practices of holistic tourism planning. The underpinnings of this methodology are that tourism destinations are complex systems consisting of interdependent and inter-definable elements (Serrano-Barquín, 2008) and that the correlation between vernacular and rational knowledge enables inclusive and proactive modes of destination governance and decision-making among relevant tourism stakeholders and the local community.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first provides the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the HTM, with an emphasis on the notions of vulnerability and resilience within the tourism planning discourse. The second section introduces the HTM and its features, with a focus on the findings from rural contexts in Mexico and Colombia where it was applied. Finally, the conclusions section provides a summary of the content addressed in the chapter and outlines a range of key recommendations for practitioners to consider in relation to the HTM in resilient and inclusive destination planning.

### 2.2 Vulnerability and resilience in tourism planning: a complex systems approach

Complexity is the essence that allows science to push aside simplistic, reductionist and mechanistic thinking, and enhance knowledge creation in a dialectic, recursive and hologrammatic
Harmonic tourism methodology

way (Morin, 2005). Tourism as a research subject is rather complex to be streamlined under predefined disciplinary boundaries, with scholars advocating for transdisciplinary and post-disciplinary forms of knowledge creation (Coles, Hall & Duval, 2016) that acknowledge the complexities of tourism and its multiple overlapping perspectives. Complex Systems Theory conceives planning as “self-organizing, with diverse agents, many interactions and non-linear dynamics” (Innes & Booher, 2018, p. 34) that ultimately culminate in adaptive practices of decision-making “that reflect the diversity of the environment” (Innes & Booher, 2018, p. 34). The Theory of Complex Systems has been applied in the field of tourism (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005; Mill & Morrison, 1985; Rivas, 2009; Serrano-Barquín, 2008; Serrano-Barquín, Ramírez, Campos & Melgarejo, 2010) and challenges the notion of cause-effect linear systems that dominate mainstream tourism policy-making and destination management (Clarke & Godfrey, 2002; Ejarque, 2003; Mason, 2015). Arguably, the inclusion of Complex Systems Theory can be defined as a problem-centred knowledge (or Mode 2) in the tourism knowledge system (Tribe, 2004; Tribe & Liburd, 2016) as it stretches beyond the domain of business and management studies.

In ecology and environmental studies, Complex Systems Theory can help explain the impact of triggering events and environmental jolts (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2013) in relation to socio-environmental systems. In particular, the alterations of one specific trigger can propagate in multiple ways and forms that, particularly in context of high vulnerability, can lead to episodes of drastic adaptation and reorganization at the landscape, network, actor and personal levels (García, 2006; Geels, 2005; Gössling, Scott, Hall, Ceron, & Dubois, 2012). According to García (2006), Complex Systems Theory enables the appraisal of the relationship between nature and anthropic activities through a multiscalar perspective (local to global) that considers embedded historical and structural constraints and their relevance in the framing of conceptual, epistemological and ontological realities. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the items and concepts central to complex system thinking in relation to community-based development. The shift towards reflexive thinking and research positionality addressed in the table underpins the third and fourth stage of qualitative tourism research (Riley & Love, 2000).

Alongside Complex Systems Theory, two further insights rooted in ecology have recently been introduced into tourism policy and planning. The first is the notion of vulnerability, here defined as “the susceptibility of a system to disturbances determined by exposure to perturbations, sensitivity to perturbations and the capacity to adapt” (Nelson, Adger & Brown, 2007, p. 11). Vulnerability represents an important paradigm in the analysis of human-environment systems within the framework of sustainability and global environmental change science (Turner et al., 2003). According to Berkes (2007), the study of vulnerability is necessary for three reasons. First, it allows for a holistic approach in the assessment of risks that can undermine natural and social environments. Second, it helps explain the ability of systems to face, absorb and adapt to risks. Third, it allows a glimpse into the future to explore policy options as well as how to cope with uncertainty and change. In a similar fashion, studies on the vulnerability of tourism destinations predominantly focus on contexts recently affected by natural disasters (e.g., Calgaro, Lloyd & Dominey-Howes, 2014) and their exposure to short- and long-term triggers like climate change, earthquakes and weather-related hazards. Research on destination vulnerability embodies notions from the Complex Systems Theory (Calgaro, 2010; Njoroge, 2014; Orchiston, 2012), yet it is rather limited as Calgaro (2010, p. 6) observes:

Much of the published work focuses on a few select factors and, in doing so, fails to capture the complexity of vulnerability and its contextualised manifestation in a given
place. But there is a more fundamental problem with current research on destination vulnerability: there are few theoretical parameters for furthering our knowledge and guiding more comprehensive assessments.

The second insight is the concept of resilience. Studies on tourism and resilience are very recent and are gaining momentum (Hall, Prayag & Amore, 2017). To date we can identify different definitions of resilience that are relevant to destination policy and planning. While Lew (2014) recalls the concept of ecological resilience deployed by Holling (1973), Larsen, Calgaro and Thomalla (2011) adopt the definition of social resilience introduced by Pelling (2003) and link it to the “conception of governance as a negotiated and contested normative process” (Larsen et al., 2011, p. 489). Becken (2013), instead, develops a conceptual framework of destination resilience that encompasses the different perspectives of relevant tourism stakeholders, while Adie (2019) stresses the importance of the individual’s response and resilience to disaster in destination contexts. It might be argued that scholars are currently some distance from an agreed definition of destination resilience (Hall et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that such definitions vary depending on the focus of the study and the type of disaster/crisis affecting the destination. This point is further illustrated by Lew (2014), which conceives destination resilience as the ability of hospitality entrepreneurs and host communities to absorb a given disturbance caused by either slow changes or sudden shocks.

Recent advancements in the conceptualization of destination resilience tend to provide a multi-faceted notion that links to the different dimensions identified in the literature and the concepts of vulnerability and risk reduction (Amore, Prayag & Hall, 2018; Hall et al., 2017). On the one hand, destination resilience acknowledges “how, even though one element of a destination may be affected by change or disaster, other parts may be able to respond and even thrive under new conditions” (Hall et al., 2017, p. 107). On the other hand, Luthe and Wyss (2014, p. 161) conclude that “change processes and their interrelations have become

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Person as individual and her/his capacity for reflection and openness during data collection and analysis. Ability to be empathic and reflexive in interacting with communities and to be willing to learn from them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observables</td>
<td>Refers to the data that come from the experience of the researcher, they can have two variables of an objective reality (tangible and material existence) and a subjective reality (intangible existence).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdefinability</td>
<td>Emphasis on the non-independency of observed elements and their relevance as constitutive parts of complex systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependency</td>
<td>Emphasis is on the connectedness between elements and their environment, from these connections there is a need to provide solutions that allow the reorganization of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits</td>
<td>The limits are not a barrier for the system to relate to its environment. All of them have the same importance, outside the complex system. It is necessary to delimit the complex system to carry out the investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>Components of the complex system have the characteristics of being interdefinable. The elements help the structure of the system, so they may be necessary to analyze the complex system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more complex in a globalized, accelerated world, placing tourism under pressure to respond and adapt to various factors”. Ultimately, destination resilience and vulnerability reduction can be best understood through a multilevel perspective that frames landscape, regimes, niches and actors as integrated elements in the destination system (Amore et al., 2018). The interrelation between actor and structure underpins the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) on “how human agency simultaneously creates and responds to the objectified socio-ecological order” (Larsen et al., 2011, p. 482).

Complex Systems Theory and the notions of destination vulnerability and destination resilience are strongly linked to the sustainability paradigm (Hall et al., 2017; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011; Xu, Marinova & Guo, 2015). Resilience thinking and the proactive role of communities in reducing socio-ecosystem vulnerabilities are key to pursuing the long-term sustainability of destinations (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). At the same time, sustainability management in tourism planning and destination resilience-building should be conceived as two sides of the same coin in order to achieve societal development and thus reduce vulnerabilities (Hall et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2015). As Hall et al. (2017, p. 151) further explain:

Resilience therefore contributes to thinking about sustainability as well as providing a basis for decision-making for sustainability, but it does not replace the concept. Instead, the concept of resilience potentially reinforces the need for better understanding of systems and the interconnections between the different dimensions or ‘pillars’ of sustainability and the central role that the environment and natural capital plays.

Building on Amore et al. (2018), Dredge and Jenkins (2011), Hall (2008) and Hall et al. (2017), we can identify six key attributes of sustainability relevant to vulnerability and resilience in tourism policy and planning. Emphasis is put on the capacity of stakeholders to be able to change, adapt and implement policies that reflect the specific socio-political and socio-cultural underpinnings of local communities at large. Ultimately, a networked community approach is key in the reframing the governance of destinations towards more participatory and deliberative metagovernance archetypes (Amore & Hall, 2016). Inclusive stakeholder networking is crucial to ensure the participation and ownership of the wider community in tourism planning and policy-making (Hall, 2011), particularly in the management of conservation and pro-poor tourism initiatives in less-developed countries (Nantongo, Byaruhanga & Mugisha, 2007; Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaeghe, 2011).

Community-based tourism (CBT) represents a viable approach that can help reframe current tourism policy and planning discourses towards sustainability, resilience building and vulnerability reduction. The concept of CBT was first introduced in the 1980s (Murphy, 1985) to define tourism services directly activated and operated by communities to the benefit and diversification of rural economies (Piéet et al., 2012). CBT practices allow Indigenous communities in rural regions to collectively manage their resources and associated tourism services (ACS, 2019; Montoya, 2013), enhance their tourist appeal and generate sustainable practices for economic, social and environmental sustainable development (Azevedo, 2007; Kiss, 2004; Palomino, Gasca Zamora & López Pardo, 2016). The importance of CBT within the framework of resilience is acknowledged in the literature. As Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011, p. 664) observed in the study of Agua Blanca, Ecuador, a communitarian approach to tourism planning:

Encourages resilience since it helps members of the community to live with change and uncertainty in mind, nurture the diversity of the socio-ecosystem, combine different
types of knowledge and create opportunities for self-organization on the basis of equity in the access and distribution of resources.

The nexus between complex socio-ecological systems, resilience and vulnerability, a sustainable development paradigm and the key role of Indigenous communities calls for a redefinition of tourism policy and planning that blends academically rigorous rational knowledge with vernacular knowledge, the latter of which is defined as the transmission of popular knowledge from generation to generation. On the one hand, the rationalization common to planning professionals and academics facilitates “the planning and management of a hospitality network for development regulated via bottom-up consensus” (Costa, 2013, p. 2). On the other hand, traditions and folklore are priceless attributes common to rural communities that need to be preserved and enhanced to sustain socio-ecological balance in the face of short- and long-term environmental triggers (Petrini, 2013).

### 2.3 Harmonic Tourism Methodology (HTM) as a basis for project planning

The HTM arises from the notion of harmonic tourism proposed by Serrano-Barquín (2008). She conceives tourism as the linchpin that connects the principles of sustainability, the environmentally intuitive-rational use of natural and cultural resources and their complementarity within complex systems. Nature is the basis of life and it is the essential condition for any social activity, including tourism, to exist (Serrano-Barquín, 2008). A series of steps are needed for tourism to actually constitute the harmonic denominator for the implementation of development practices that respect both nature and society (Serrano-Barquín et al., 2010). The HTM provides the ultimate method to empirically apply the principles of harmonic tourism in destination contexts. A first application of the HTM was made in the community of San Pedro Tultepec de Quiroga (Mexico) (Palmas, 2015) and, more recently, in the communities of Acatzingo, San Juan Atzingo and Malinalco (Mexico) and Santa Fe de Antioquia (Colombia). Building from the evidence collected in these five different contexts, Figure 2.1 illustrates in detail the steps of the HTM.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the first step is the identification of the problems for the communities. It is during this phase that the HTM enables one to define those socio-ecological vulnerabilities that need to be solved or mitigated. This can help in both defining new community-based projects and reframing current projects. In the cases of Malinalco and Santa Fe de Antioquia, there were emerging vulnerabilities among local residents as result of a top-down tourism development approach. These included impacts on public services, a surge in temporary and low-paid jobs and an increase in land values.

Conversely, the communities in San Pedro Tultepec de Quiroga Acatzingo and San Juan Atzingo had to cope with high levels of pollution in the wetland, with no support or poor community-based tourism planning approach from government. In San Pedro Tultepec de Quiroga the communities sought to desiccate the wetland to quickly reverse economic decline. Other environmental vulnerabilities were observed in San Juan Atzingo, with biodiversity loss and increased deforestation and their relevant consequences, particularly among Indigenous groups. Finally, in both San Juan Atzingo and Acatzingo, immigration and lack of equal opportunities were observed among other major socio-demographic vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities further undermined the unique mix of cultural and natural resources in the region.

The second step of the HTM is the characterization of the complex system. It is at this stage that the methodology distinguishes between two subsystems: on the one hand, the biotic elements that characterize the local natural environment and, on the other hand, the anthropic
elements that ascribe to the social, economic, political and technological dimensions of communities. The audits in Malinalco and Santa Fe de Antioquia showed similarities with regards to complex system characterization. These included historic settlement and development, local microclimate, flora and fauna and the welcoming nature of the local communities. Ultimately, these features were all considered in the framing of each of the two sites.

In the case of San Pedro Tultepec, the local complex system was framed from longitudinal and spatial perspectives. From a longitudinal perspective, emphasis was put on the desiccation of the area resulting from the water supply project for Mexico City between the 1940s and the 1970s. From a land-use perspective, the wetland is a protected natural site under the Ramsar Convention. The community living in the area is a combination of biotic and anthropic features that are reflected in the local gastronomy, music, popular culture, beliefs and arts and crafts.

A rich mix of cultural and natural resources characterizes the complex destination systems of San Juan Atzingo and the Tlahuica Indigenous community. The latter has a long tradition in the area, dating back to pre-Hispanic domination, with customs and traditions carried for generations. Unlike other communities in San Juan Atzingo, the Tlahuica community identity
is strongly tied to the complex biotic and anthropic features of the area. Indigenous advocacy groups have been established to preserve the vulnerable ecological system and, in turn, protect culture and traditions from being forever lost. The Tlahuica community retains unique terrain, ecological rural housing, forming a differential harmonic agro-ecosystem, framed by a unique site appreciation, in which pre-Hispanic remains and simple food traditions are preserved.

The third step of the HTM foresees the diagnosis of the complex system. The auditing of biotic and anthropic features foresees the use of predefined taxonomies as illustrated in Table 2.2. The use of predefined categories and attributes under two main subsystems helps in framing the necessary information to better understand complex and non-linear systems. In particular, this table facilitates the integration of information from two distinct skills. On the one hand, evidence of the vernacular knowledge that the researcher, as an embedded actor, gathers during fieldwork, engagement with the community. On the other hand, the role of the community as a custodian of traditions and folklore for generations is scrutinized and assessed with the support of rational evidence, which helps in interpreting the symbiotic relationship between communities and the local ecosystem.

In this step is the knowledge blending stage, during which the researcher analyses and interprets the evidence from previous steps. This analytical phase is rooted in qualitative research inquiry and case study methodology for data triangulation and reliability purposes. Case study approaches in investigating CBT are ideal in the analysis of bottom-up tourism planning projects (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007, 2011). As Dredge and Jenkins (2011, p. 3) observe, “for many researchers and practitioners, active involvement in tourism planning and policy processes will contribute very nuanced insights into the social worlds in which tourism planning and policy happens”. Ultimately, case studies contribute to the development of reflective and context-dependent fluid knowledge (Dredge & Jenkins, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In the case of Malinalco, the evidence collected shows how natural and cultural resources have been overexploited in the name of tourism growth. However, there are signs of destination resilience, with the community carrying adaptive management processes to mitigate existing vulnerabilities. Initiatives such as the introduction of alien flora, plants and agricultural products like agave and mezcalas part of ecological adaptation were observed in the case of Malinalco. Moreover, the local community has engaged in adaptive approaches to reflect the demands of tourists seeking a closer connection with nature.

Similarly, the community of Santa Fe de Antioquia was particularly exposed to demand-driven tourism growth, with implications in terms of authenticity, local identity and social cohesion. In addition, increased land value in the area led to a steady process of community displacement. The evidence collected in Santa Fe de Antioquia denotes a high level of disaffection among the local community, with several cases of economic adaptation to meet the instances of the tourist demand. In terms of liveability and quality of life, services in the area have become more expensive due to tourist inflation. Moreover, the lack of a skilled workforce in the area opens to jobs for migrants and voluntary seasonal populations.

Focussing on San Pedro Tultepec de Quiroga, the area shows a high degree of contamination in the wetlands and episodes of illegal hunting involving tourists from the United States. Conversely, the Tlahuica Indigenous community in San Juan Atzingo is facing extinction, with only 28.35% of the population living in the area and 10.54% of the inhabitants speaking the Tlahuica language. Initiatives towards community-led economic development have sought to valorise biotic, social and cultural capital through tourism. Ultimately, the analysis carried out in San Juan Atzingo enabled us to assess the potential of tourism projects and their impact in the quality of life of Indigenous communities. More importantly, it enabled a younger generation to regain interest in and knowledge of disappearing traditions and skills.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subsystem</th>
<th>Systemic elements</th>
<th>Systemic sub-element</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Rational evidence</th>
<th>Vernacular evidence</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biophysical</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Geological substrata relief</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Answer is given through questions that are related to each attribute by products of investigation and scientific support.</td>
<td>The same questions are applied to the community, also can use daily field.</td>
<td>It is generated from the interrelation of the national and vernacular evidence.</td>
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*Source: Palmas et al. (2017).*
Evidence from Acatzingo shows the potential of agritourism produce and products. These improve and differentiate local destination marketing, with backyard agriculture further enhancing the appeal of destinations while benefiting the local community. Cultivation translates as an element of both community and destination resilience. On the one hand, agritourism in Acatzingo acts as a counter solution to the interference of cultures from outside the community. On the other hand, it mitigates the vulnerabilities associated with endangered environment and community well-being.

The fifth stage of the HTM consists of objective settings, strategy design and implementation (Figure 2.2). Building from a blend of vernacular and traditional knowledge, the community and the researcher identify the issues undermining the socio-ecological landscape. Subsequently, strategies are outlined to allow the recovery and preservation of natural and cultural resources of the community.

Evidence from Acatzingo, San Juan Atzingo and San Pedro Tultepec de Quiroga confirmed the need for these destinations to address ecological vulnerabilities through recovery and preservation. More importantly, the HTM enabled the identification of new tourism development possibilities. In particular, in San Pedro Tultepec, the methodology identified the wetland as the most important resource for the community. Emphasis is put on disseminating information about tangible and intangible services offered by the lagoon to the community in order to promote ecological awareness and associated benefits. The recommendation is to promote the collaborative work carried out by landowners to the wider community and seek stronger support from government institutions. Moreover, community education towards tourism is recommended, with tourism being seen as a complementary activity to support the local economy and the wider regional development strategy (Palmas, Serrano-Barquín, & Gutiérrez, 2018).

In the case of San Juan Acatzingo, culture represents the strongest element of the HTM. The nexus between the Tlahuica and the natural resources enhances the valorisation of the forest and its importance for the liveability of the Indigenous community. Recommendations
Harmonic tourism methodology

are for the development of projects aiming at strengthening the existing harmony between biotic, socio-cultural, and institutional subsystems. Conversely, the area of Acatzingo shows the importance of traditional food like the hedgehog squash. This represents a potential in relation to natural, cultural and economic subsystems.

The final step of the HTM is the implementation of projects in the communities. This is the ultimate outcome of the community-based approach central to the methodology, with the inclusion of vernacular knowledge and local empowerment going hand in hand with rational knowledge and the role of the researcher as a facilitator. In the cases of Malinalco and Santa Fe, research was carried and reported to the corresponding authorities in order to apply an alternative tourism policy paradigm. The shifts from market to the local community are meant in these cases to strengthen local identity and social cohesion.

Focussing on San Pedro Tultepec, a new tourism project was proposed to the community: a tour boat on the wetlands. The tour foresees activities aimed at wetland clearance from waste and litter. The itinerary further showcases the mix of flora and fauna living in the wetland ecosystem. It ends with a session where local artisans produce and sell tule crafts, with traditional food and products from the wetland. Conversely, in the case of San Juan Atzingo, the focus is on the preservation of ancestral knowledge within the Indigenous Tlahuica community, through a cohesive and collaborative approach between different stakeholders. More holistic projects are encouraged, with institutions proactively supporting actions that promote micro-tourism and protect the vulnerable ecosystem. Finally, the community of Acatzingo is encouraged to deliver projects combining vernacular and rational knowledge. Agritourism has the potential to differentiate the rural economy, with the hedgehog squash representing an opportunity to promote the area for niche food tourism.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter presented the HTM and its application to the drafting and implementation of tourism planning practices rooted in a community-based approach and within the frames of sustainability, vulnerability and resilience. It is suggested that harmonic practices of tourism planning can be built when the methodology is community-driven and when it empowers proactive local participation. The HTM represents a step forward towards participatory and deliberative archetypes of metagovernance encompassing the vernacular traditions, morals, habits and values of the local community. The methodology reflects the post-disciplinary nature of tourism knowledge, with the latter stemming from a different range of disciplines, such as anthropology, history ecology, environmental sciences, sociology, business studies, political studies and human geography. It is this flipped approach in knowledge creation that leads to new thoughts and addresses the empirical realm beyond what Sayer (1999) defines disciplinary parochialism.

The integration between vernacular knowledge and rational knowledge can be data-intensive, especially in the prospect of longitudinal research. It is nonetheless necessary to gather as much evidence as possible during the auditing process in order to deliver an effective diagnosis and, in turn, design adequate solutions. This is particularly important in contexts subject to short- and long-term vulnerabilities that are tied to climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental hazards. The transition from vulnerable towards resilient communities requires time and cannot be achieved without the proactive participation of the community itself. Their capacity to become resilient encompasses several dimensions and levels connected to each other and is far from linear. Rather, they are a further reflection of destinations as complex systems.

The HTM and the evidence from the observed case studies suggest that enhanced practices in CBT planning can reduce existing systemic vulnerabilities and enhance the resilience
of destinations. From a socio-ecological perspective, the recovery of natural and anthropic features of rural communities can be seen as a valuable practice of resilience building. From a sustainable development point of view, instead, communities proactively participate and contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural resources for future generations.

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Harmonic tourism methodology


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Harmonic tourism methodology


