

Chapter 13

Employing Local Tourism Councils to Improve Protected Area Tourism Development and Governance in the Aysén Region of Chile



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Abstract This chapter presents a recent regional project developed to improve tourism governance in and around the protected areas (PAs) administered by the National System of State Natural Protected Areas (SNASPE) within the Aysén Region of Chile. The project focused on the design of a participatory multi-scale governance and management system that would enable local communities to work with SNASPE PAs and improve tourism services for visitors, both within PAs and within the surrounding communities. As part of the project, a proposal for the creation of Local Tourism Councils (LTC) was developed. In this chapter, we discuss the validation of the proposed local governance model through a pilot implementation of the LTC concept, within the Cerro Castillo National Park (CCNP) and two of its primary gateway communities: Cerro Castillo Village and Puerto Ingeniero Ibáñez. Early outcomes for the CCNP and its gateway communities seem to support the potential for the LTC model. We present a series of enabling factors observed during the project that may inform the creation of other LTCs in other areas. Achieving this outcome would help stimulate local economies and improve the potential for tourism development to be compatible with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Keywords Patagonia · Nature-based tourism · Collaborative governance · Protected areas · Gateway communities

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13.1 Introduction

The Aysén Region is located in the southernmost tip of Chile, between 43°38' and 49°16' south latitude, in the heart of Chilean Patagonia. It is one of the largest and least populated regions of Chile, with a territory of 108,494 km² and a population density of just one person per square kilometer (DNA Expertus, 2016). The natural landscapes of the region are valued for their scenic beauty, their uniqueness, and for their perceived pristineness (DNA Expertus, 2016). Currently, approximately 50% of the region's territory is under protection within the National System of State Natural Protected Areas (SNASPE). Regional SNASPE protected areas (PAs) currently include seven National Parks, eight National Reserves and two Natural Monuments, which together cover approximately 51,620 km².

Natural PAs are particularly attractive for nature enjoyment and recreation, helping to satisfy a number of human needs. For example, recreational and touristic use of PAs has been shown to foster and strengthen connections with nature, and in many cases, levels of support for conservation (Figueira, 2011; Gale & Ednie, 2019). Nevertheless, recreation and tourism use produce impacts for PAs and can negatively affect their objectives related to ecosystem and biodiversity conservation (Hummel et al., 2019), especially when use is improperly managed or controlled. Prior to COVID-19, global tourism trends showed a substantial increase in demand for nature tourism, which manifested in Aysén through an increase in the number of tourists seeking nature, adventure, and extreme sports. Visits to SNASPE PAs grew during this timeframe, averaging a 7% increase per year between 2010 and 2019 (Szmulewicz & Aedo, 2020). This increase in visitation has been even more drastic in the Aysén Region, which saw a 28.7% increase per year between 2012 and 2018 (Pacheco & Boldt, 2020).

Aysén's SNASPE PAs are managed by the Chilean National Forestry Corporation (CONAF), a private legal entity, which reports to the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture. CONAF's responsibilities include regulating and defining appropriate use in these areas, in balance with the principles of conservation and nature protection. Historically, CONAF's management approach has not included participatory governance strategies; however, increasing social and economic interest in SNASPE PAs and their management has fostered increasing recognition and support for these types of approaches. For example, from 2016 to 2018, CONAF implemented a 3-year initiative within Aysén to improve visitor experiences and build management capacity. Gale et al. (2018) observed that,

Rather than viewing the protected areas as islands connected to the center by better infrastructure and roads, the project placed emphasis on better integrating them within their own local areas, and the implementation of adaptive models for maintaining conservation priorities through the growth and increasing recreation experience demands. (p. 26)

Tourism stakeholders have also noted the need for better coordination and a shared governance structure for SNASPE PAs. For example, analysis conducted by the region's strategic nature-based tourism development program, PER Turismo Aysén, determined that the lack of a coordinated system of governance for the different

actors linked to nature-based tourism in the region represented a weakness for sustainable tourism growth (DNA Expertus, 2016). Furthermore, Aedo (2020) noted that, based on their proximity, all of the towns and cities of the Aysén Region can be associated with at least one SNASPE PA. For these reasons, a regional gateway communities' approach to nature-based recreation and tourism management has been gaining interest and support within the Aysén region. The gateway strategy would concentrate on tourism services within these communities (lodging, food services, guides, etc.), rather than within the PAs themselves (Aedo, 2020).

This chapter presents the lessons learned from a recent 2-year regional project that was developed to improve the governance of tourism development in and around Aysén SNASPE PAs. The project was financed by CORFO, the Chilean economic development agency, through funding designed to enhance regional economic competitiveness. The objective of this project was to design a participatory multi-scale governance system that would enable local communities to work with PAs and improve tourism services for visitors, both within PAs and their surrounding communities. This would be achieved by facilitating direct dialogue between SNASPE PA administration, other public sector institutions, the private sector, academic institutions, and the social and commercial organizations of the Aysén Region's PA gateway communities. Improving these linkages, it was believed, would help stimulate local economies and improve the potential for tourism development to be compatible with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The project consisted of four main stages: (1) a review of participatory governance best practices, (2) an analysis of the existing governance structure in the region of Aysén, (3) the development of a participatory governance proposal for PAs and their gateway communities in Aysén, and (4) a pilot implementation of the proposed system within one area of the region. The following sections will share highlights for the first three phases as well as an in-depth review of phase four. Our aim is to provide insights about how local community participatory mechanisms can be integrated into multilevel governance systems in order to improve conservation area planning and support locally sustainable tourism.

13.2 Project Phases

13.2.1 Phase 1: Participatory Governance Best Practices

The first stage of the project focused on a review of participatory governance theory and best practice. The concept of governance originated from strategic alliances between the public and private sectors (i.e., Mayntz, 2005), a conceptualization that is very present in Chile as evidenced by the tourism governance of Chilean destinations (Pacheco et al., 2015). In recent years, the concept of governance has branched to include new approaches designed to address changing societal needs and demands, including participatory, collaborative, adaptive, polycentric, public, and multilevel governance (Casady et al., 2020; Cejudo et al., 2018; Christensen et al.,

2020; Cunill-Grau & Leyton, 2016; Pacheco & Henríquez, 2018; Vella et al., 2015). Differences between these styles of governance often center around principles of corporate governance, including the processes, rules, and practices for directing and controlling a system or institution. Traditionally, *top-down* hierarchical governance processes were employed by governments and private entities (Lovrić et al., 2018; Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Maestre-Andrés et al., 2018), in contrast to the *bottom-up* governance approaches employed by communities (Pacheco & Henríquez, 2018). Bottom-up approaches emphasize coordination between actors at the local, regional, and national scales through multilevel and polycentric governance platforms that are focused and designed to address the environment and sustainable management of nature (Vella et al., 2015; Matson et al., 2016; Urquiza et al., 2019).

Although a close relationship is maintained between governance and management, collaborative governance systems separate the two in order to allow actors to move beyond the simple technical aspects of PA management and address more complex social issues like local community acceptance and participation in decision-making. Borrini-Feyerabend and Hill (2019) highlight the differences between the two concepts, specifying that management pertains to the actions completed to achieve proposed objectives, while governance encompasses the decision-making process itself and who participates in forming the objectives and their associated strategies. In short, governance defines who is responsible for making decisions on financing, monitoring, and evaluating management, among other duties.

The governance of public PAs begins with the process and decisions related to their creation and delineation, or the way in which they are to be managed. These processes can occur through a number of different frameworks or approaches, ranging from exclusive government or privately driven processes to those driven by communities. Traditionally, PA management has largely been the responsibility of national governments or private actors and entrepreneurs, who govern these PAs without participation from the local and/or Indigenous communities that live within or nearby these areas (Brenner, 2019; Lovrić et al., 2018; Major et al., 2018; Mardones, 2018; Maretti et al., 2019; Niedziałkowski et al., 2018). As with the rest of the world (i.e., national parks in Africa or Asia), participatory mechanisms in Chilean and Latin American PAs remain scarce (Koy et al., 2019; Chang & Watanabe, 2019).

Nevertheless, through the synergies and shared challenges facing conservation and nature-based tourism, new participatory mechanisms have emerged that make it possible for communities to co-manage these territories to various degrees (Tseng et al., 2019; Bello et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2017; Pacheco, 2014; Pacheco & Szmulewicz, 2013). Best-practice governance frameworks are increasingly being designed to share decision-making authority between the public entities responsible for the PA's administration and other actors present in the territory where the PA is located (Pacheco & Boldt, 2020; Rovira et al., 2020; Worboys & Trzyna, 2019). These new forms of PA governance make up an emerging and inclusive conservation paradigm that is unique to the twenty-first century, promoting participation, transparency, pluralism, and other democratic features and practices that strengthen nature conservation measures (Brenner & De la Vega, 2014; Sanz & Torres, 2006; Stoll-Kleemann et al., 2010). Community participation is a key component in these

governance models, which require that local communities have the authority to influence decision-making in a binding way. For example, new public governance approaches, like the *Whole of Government Approach* and the *Joint Government Approach*, have infused the idea of integrating more actors in the deliberation and decision-making processes of public institutions. In general, these approaches focus mainly on addressing discoordination within the public sector by incorporating the private sector when necessary (Christensen et al., 2020).

This greater coordination among actors through governance systems is not yet prevalent in Chile, where governance approaches still focus on forms of *New Public Management* that place greater emphasis on strategic alliances between public and private institutions. Public participation is also an important component of Chile's new public management and governance and has gradually infused a critical look at Chilean institutionalism (Casady et al., 2020; Howlett et al., 2017). Through these emerging processes for political organization, public and private actors, as well as local Chilean communities, are adapting to new structures in which binding mechanisms of participation are central to the governance process. While these approaches have not been implemented in the SNASPE PAs of Aysén, current trends suggest that their incorporation would be both timely and possible. Thus, it seems possible that binding participation mechanisms could also be incorporated within the governance and administration of Chilean PAs and related public policy.

The review of participatory governance theory and best practice undertaken in this initial stage of the project provided guiding principles for the remaining three stages. Within the context of this project, governance was conceptualized as a collective process of deliberation in which a diverse set of actors generate agreements and make decisions. This same group of actors subsequently control the implementation of these agreements and actions through accountability and compliance mechanisms (Casady et al., 2020; Cejudo, 2011; Cejudo et al., 2018; Cunill-Grau & Leyton, 2016; Christensen et al., 2020; Howlett et al., 2017; Osborne, 2010; Rhodes, 2015). The project sought to inform governance systems in PA gateway communities that face sustainability and management challenges by improving local organization and tapping into the knowledge and practices of these gateway communities (Ostrom, 2000; Pacheco, 2018). Furthermore, the project recognized participatory governance as being directly linked to multilevel and polycentric governance through the integration of civil society in the planning processes of conservation areas and associated public policies.

13.2.2 Phase 2: Analysis of the Governance Process in the Region of Aysén

Informed by the guiding principles outlined above, the second phase of the project evaluated current governance practices within Aysén SNASPE PAs. This was accomplished through a series of meetings with regional tourism and SNASPE PA authorities, in which a conceptual map was developed to help understand the current

structure and relations between nature-based tourism and PA stakeholders, and document the dynamics and challenges associated with nature-based tourism governance in and around SNASPE PAs within the Aysén Region (Fig. 13.1).

Participants identified that, at the time of the project, the core of PA governance rested with the SNASPE, which was administered by CONAF. SNASPE governance comprised of a *Consejo Consultivo* (Advisory Council) for each PA. Most regional PA Advisory Councils were long-standing organizations, composed mainly of local ranchers, educational stakeholders, and tourism concessionaires, working within the PAs. They did not necessarily link the PAs with a broad range of PA stakeholders or with actors who were concerned with tourism development issues within the surrounding localities. Furthermore, while the basic function of the PA Advisory Council was to participate in PA planning, management, and administration, their input was considered “advice” rather than a branch of PA governance with genuine authority.

In parallel to SNASPE PA governance, a formal system of tourism governance existed, represented by the left-hand column in Fig. 13.1. Tourism governance was composed of the governmental agencies in charge of the tourism sector. The regional representative for the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture, which currently oversees CONAF, participated in this governance system, though coordination with CONAF and/or PA administrators was intermittent. The formal tourism governance system included local-level representatives of the region’s three officially designated Zones of Tourist Interest (ZOIT) and representatives of the Municipal, commune-level tourism workgroup.

Finally, participants identified a number of local tourism stakeholders and service providers within the communities directly related to the SNASPE PAs. At the time of the stakeholder mapping process, these stakeholders and providers had limited interaction with and/or voice within PA administration and policy creation. Regional tourism authorities, speaking on behalf of local tourism stakeholders and service providers, expressed frustration with the current governance process, expressing a need for new mechanisms to address issues affecting tourism experience development and management associated with the PAs. The tourism sector did not feel represented within PA Advisory Councils. While they acknowledged that CONAF had realized some participatory processes within local communities—especially during management and visitor use planning processes—many perceived these processes to be more consultative or informative, rather than binding (Pacheco & Boldt, 2020).

The best-practice principles summarized in the first phase of the project carry important implications for improving the PA nature-based tourism governance structures outlined by these conceptual mapping exercises. Numerous researchers have described the problems that arise within exclusionary PA governance systems (or that only involve consultative or informative forms of stakeholder participation) including deteriorating trust between different stakeholder groups and an erosion in the legitimacy of PA planning and administration (Davies et al., 2018; Gale & Ednie, 2019; Kohl & McCool, 2016; Soliku & Schraml, 2018). Studies specific to Aysén examining stakeholder perceptions and conflict in and around PAs cite a

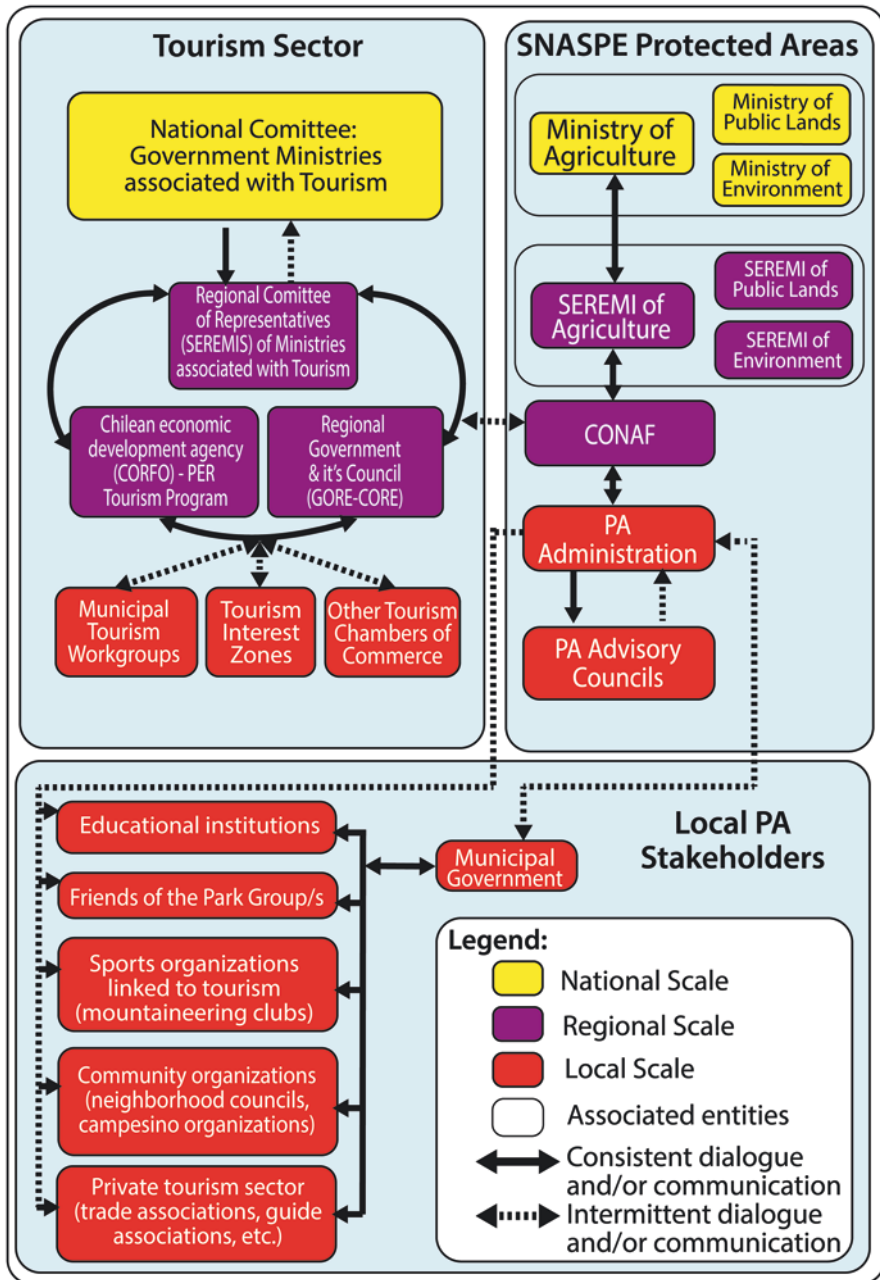


Fig. 13.1 Current structure of actors and their relations with respect to nature-based tourism and SNASPE PAs in Aysén

range of challenges, including low levels of transparency, coordination, and meaningful participation in PA planning, policy, and governance (Blair et al., 2019; Borrie et al., 2020; Jones, 2012; Louder & Bosak, 2019; Tecklin & Sepúlveda, 2014). For example, Gale and Ednie (2019) identified a range of value profiles for PA public use stakeholders in the Aysén Region that manifested in their preferences toward PA administration and management decisions. Their study advocated for greater recognition of these differences and a more intentional approach to building trust through inclusive governance, dialogue, and empowerment.

13.2.3 Phase 3: Participatory Governance Model Proposal

Building on the concepts and findings of the first two phases of the project, Phase 3 focused on the evolution of a local scale, nature-based tourism/PA governance system that would improve coordination and interaction between Aysén SNASPE PAs and tourism stakeholders in surrounding communities (Fig. 13.2). Goals of the proposed system included increased acceptance of conservation measures within gateway communities (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2014), and improved interconnectivity with existing and proposed governance systems across multiple scales (local, regional, national).

In Aysén, relationships between local tourism stakeholders and SNASPE PA administrators were minimal when the project began. In a number of situations, PA management and local tourism development operated in entirely separate spheres. CONAF focused on its responsibility associated with SNASPE PA administration, while local communities focused on tourism development, with coordination over specific policies for regulation and/or promotion between the two entities almost non-existent. Thus, the project focused on building relationships between SNASPE PAs and their gateway communities, emphasizing the participation of tourism stakeholders in these communities within PA planning and management decisions, through the creation of Local Tourism Councils (LTC).

The LTC concept was designed to incorporate public and private stakeholders that have a direct relationship with tourism management in Aysén's SNASPE PAs and gateway communities. Generally, the objectives for forming a LTC included: (1) establishing a collaborative relationship between gateway community tourism stakeholders and PA administration, and (2) the development of a shared decision-making platform for tourism development, management, and monitoring of the PA and surrounding area. Nevertheless, LTCs would be created as separate legal organizations, each with their own declared purposes, specific objectives, operational plans, and bylaws that may vary depending on the specific needs and situations of each PA/gateway community group. LTC members could include PA Advisory Councils and/or *Friends Groups*, private tourism sector organizations (trade associations, guide associations), sports organizations linked to tourism (mountaineering clubs), local schools and educational institutions, territorial organizations (neighborhood

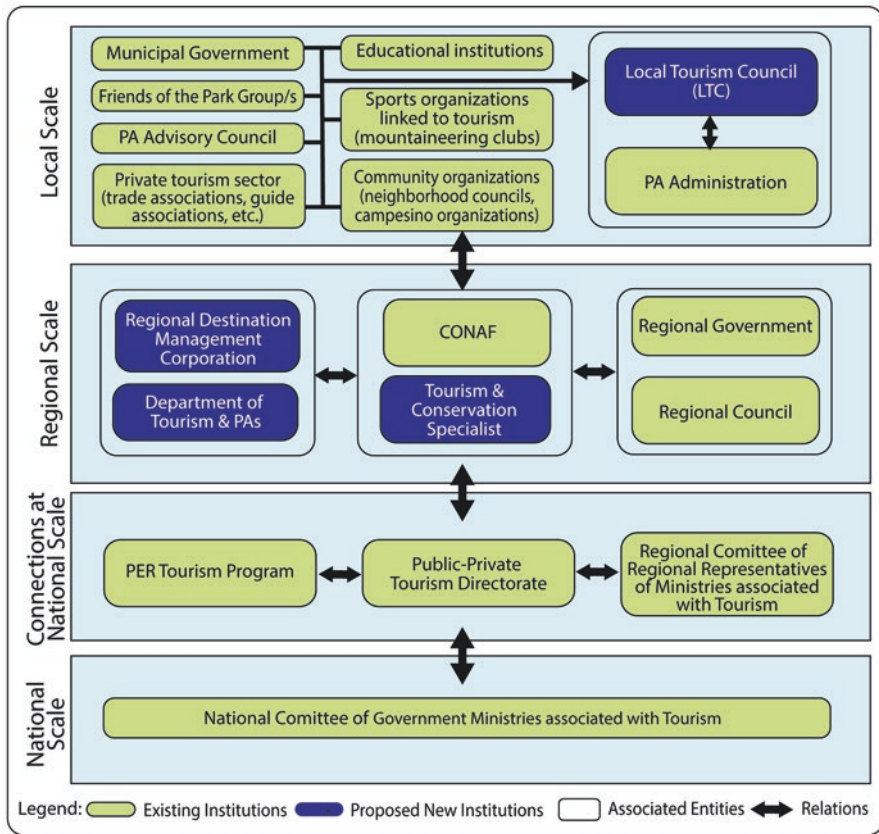


Fig. 13.2 Proposed structure at regional scale

councils, campesino organizations), Municipal commune-level governments, public service representatives, and potentially, SNASPE PA administrators.

In addition to the design of LTCs, the project also developed a set of recommendations to further strengthen public-private coordination and linkages for tourism in and around Aysén PAs at a regional scale. These included a proposal to create a new public-private regional corporation that would serve as a destination management organization (DMO) for the Aysén Region. The proposed DMO would involve the regional government and the regional council, public agencies in charge of tourism, CONAF, representatives of tourism associations, and NGOs. This regional corporation would include a regional tourism and conservation specialist from CONAF and a specialized tourism and PAs department. It would be responsible for setting general nature-based tourism guidelines and specific guidelines for tourism within regional SNASPE PAs, as well as act as a liaison between the nature-based tourism sector and regional/national authorities.

13.2.4 Phase 4: Pilot Participatory Governance Model Implementation Approach

The fourth phase of the project sought to validate and refine the proposed local governance model through a pilot implementation of the LTC concept within the Aysén Region. To select the most appropriate SNASPE PA—gateway community pairing for the LTC pilot, the project team conducted workshops with relevant public and private regional tourism stakeholders to define the selection criteria for the pilot location. These stakeholders agreed that the selected SNASPE PA should have an existing Public Use Plan in place and receive more than 2500 visitors per year. They also desired a SNASPE PA whose gateway communities had an established relationship with tourism, including gateway community services, existence of concessionaires, prioritization for tourism, priority for public investment, tourism tradition, existing forms of local governance, and tourism planning instruments.

Based on the criteria provided from these workshops, it was determined that Cerro Castillo National Park (CCNP) was an appropriate SNASPE PA to pilot the program (Fig. 13.3). It was decided that the pilot program would include the Park and two of its primary gateway communities, Cerro Castillo Village and Puerto Ingeniero Ibáñez. These villages were part of the Río Ibáñez Commune Municipality and served as the main access point to CCNP, providing tourism services and support such as food and lodging.

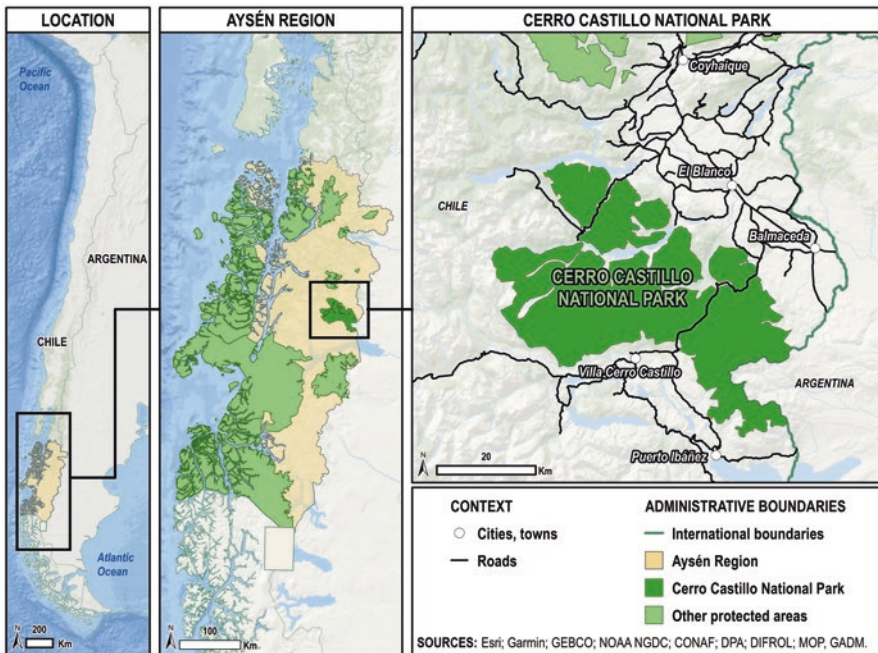


Fig. 13.3 Cerro Castillo National Park within the Aysén regional context of the National System of State Natural Protected Areas

Pilot implementation began with a series of trust-building meetings with two of the key stakeholders: CONAF and the commune-level government (Municipality of Río Ibáñez). These meetings focused on developing a better understanding of each entity's priorities and challenges, on finding common ground around tourism and protected area management issues, and on identifying key tourism stakeholders within the territory. Following these meetings, local tourism stakeholders were convened to discuss the local tourism context, tourism-park relations, and the feasibility of implementing a LTC, which was formally established on July 10, 2019, as the "Cerro Castillo National Park Local Tourism Development Corporation." Its primary objective was to promote the sustainable tourism development of CCNP and its surrounding communities improving coordination between CONAF, local organizations, and the commune government, among others. The CCNP LTC included members of the pre-existing "Local Council" of CCNP and representatives of 16 member organizations: *Cerro Castillo Andean Social and Campesino Sports Club*, *Aysén Climbing Club*, *Coyhaique Chamber of Tourism*, *Villa Cerro Castillo Neighborhood Council No. 3*, *The Roses of Villa Cerro Castillo Senior Citizens Club*, *Entre Cerros de Castillo Committee of Young Farmers*, *El Bosque Trade Association*, *Friends of the Cerro Castillo National Reserve Group*, *Farmer's Committee of Entre Cerros of Castillo*, *El Bosque Association of Friends of the Cerro Castillo National Reserve*, *the Farmer's Committee of Upper North Río Ibáñez Rivera Norte*, *the Bicentennial Cerro Castillo Rural High School*, *the Patagonia Aysén Regional Guides Association*, *the Andean Patagonian Mountaineering Club*, and *the Association of Mountain Ski Guides of Patagonia*.

From September 2018 to June 2019, an additional seven meetings and two workshops were held with the LTC members to finalize the LTC structure, including the types of members it included, its operating regulations, and the scope of LTC functions and commitments, which focused on tourism destination planning and management and the development of quality tourist offerings with a strong local identity. These workshops also provided the forum for creation of the LTC's operational management plan (Inostroza & Rovira, 2020).

LTC members were provided with an array of tools and information, including the guidelines of the CCNP Public Use Plan, recent academic research and literature, and other local tourism planning instruments (e.g., Tourism Development Plan for Villa Cerro Castillo; Management Plan for the Chelenko Zone of Tourist Interest [ZOIT]). A tourism supply and demand inventory was developed during this phase of the project to further inform planning efforts (Rovira et al., 2020). Informed by these inputs, stakeholder analysis identified facilitating and limiting factors associated with the local tourism system, tourism-park relations, and priorities for future LTC work. They determined that tourism's potential was growing exponentially in and around the CCNP as a result of improved regional and local access, increased national promotion of CCNP, and a recent decision to increase the park's protection category from national reserve to national park (Blair et al., 2019; Gale et al., 2018). Despite these promising developments, there were also a number of factors that

were limiting local tourism, including low service quality, lack of technical preparation, and a scarcity of innovative tourism products within the gateway community of Villa Cerro Castillo (Inostroza & Rovira, 2020).

An operational management plan was assembled to address these points, and then, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. What was initially a huge setback for tourism and the LTC project, turned out to be a major argument for the need of the LTC concept. The COVID-19 pandemic required the tourism sector to pivot with agility in order to survive. During 2020 and 2021, the CCNP LTC implemented several projects to assist the tourism community in response to COVID-19, facilitating a much faster recovery than most other gateway communities of the Aysén Region. For example, the CCNP LTC prioritized the improvement of public health and safety conditions for CCNP circuits and procured funding to implement their plans from the Chilean Development Corporation (CORFO), an institution that supports projects of economic relevance for the country. This project enabled LTC members to improve safety protocols and infrastructure within CCNP tourism routes. Tactics included the design of a website (www.rutacerrocastillo.cl) with information about the CCNP and its surrounding area, including COVID-19 protocols and public health information to help prospective visitors safely plan their trips. The project also facilitated the design of an information kiosk, tourist signage, and the construction of four sanitary station prototypes inside the CCNP.

Another CCNP LTC project, financed by Chile's Technical Cooperation Service (SERCOTEC) within the Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism, enabled the purchase of sanitation equipment and materials for local tourism microentrepreneurs and the LTC offices. It provided training on sanitary protocols for tourism entrepreneurs, facilitated development of linkage actions with the CCNP related to tourism sector recovery, and funded the development of a CCNP LTC logo and press kit. As COVID-19 recovery has continued during 2022, the CCNP LTC has maintained its efforts with new actions that bode well for future impact, including the hiring of a council manager and the establishment of regular meetings.

Thus far, outcomes of the CCNP pilot project appear to support the proposed LTC governance format. The pilot program has shown it has the capacity to improve local public-private coordination between PA administrators, Municipal Governments, and local tourism stakeholders in PA gateway communities in the Aysén Region of Chile. Tourism stakeholders and local authorities within the CCNP gateway communities supported the creation of the LTC and agreed that the LTC system would contribute to local development for the inhabitants surrounding CCNP. Furthermore, both CCNP administrators and members of the regional CONAF PA management team actively participated in the LTC formation process, expressing their confidence about the potential for increased community involvement to yield better relations and coordination between the CCNP and its gateway communities. Importantly, creation of the CCNP LTC verified the legal feasibility and compatibility of this type of organization within the existing institutional framework of Aysén. And finally, the sustained interest and participation of tourism stakeholders, local authorities, and CONAF, suggests potential for this approach to persist over time.

The following section outlines some of the key lessons learned during the LTC pilot program that enable successful collaborative local governance of tourism in and around SNASPE PAs.

13.3 Lessons Learned

13.3.1 Lesson 1: Shared Commitment to Collaborative Governance

Shared understanding of the importance of collaborative governance for local tourism within and around the CCNP was an enabling factor for the success of the CCNP LTC pilot initiative. CONAF's CCNP Public Use Plan (2017) prioritized communication with local stakeholders during its design and implementation, calling for the development of a collaborative governance model that would include local entities and achieve a greater integration with other territorial management initiatives and groups (Chilean National Forestry Corporation, 2017; Gale et al., 2018). CONAF's formal acknowledgment of its commitment to work with local tourism stakeholders and authorities to create and manage public use inside the park and to support sustainable tourism development of the surrounding area set the tone for advances within the pilot LTC territory. As a result, there was a willingness on the part of LTC participants to align aspects of their mission and objectives with the CCNP Public Use Plan and other tourism planning instruments for the territory surrounding the park, including the Tourism Development Plan of Villa Cerro Castillo and similar Municipal tourism development plans (Inostroza & Rovira, 2020). This alignment of goals has continued through the CCNP LTC training, technical assistance, and promotion initiatives developed during 2020 and 2021, and it has been reinforced through the coordinated management that has occurred with different stakeholders—particularly CONAF and the Municipality of Río Ibáñez—who have both repeatedly expressed the importance of the local community—CCNP relationship through their words and actions.

13.3.2 Lesson 2: Obtaining Legal Status for the Local Tourism Council

Another enabling factor for the success of the CCNP LTC was the ability of the council to obtain a legal status within Chile. This was critical for the proposal because it recognized the council as a legitimate authority on tourism within the territory, giving the LTC the capacity to coordinate with other tourism and territorial actors and manage public and private resources through formal competitive projects (grants). Obtaining this legal status was largely because of the council's creation

under the auspices of the Municipality of Río Ibáñez, whose active involvement and sponsorship from the beginning of the process provided the CCNP LTC with legal backing and political support for its plans and actions. Although this legal authority did not extend to actions within SNASPE PA (e.g., CCNP), the Municipality's support facilitated coordination with CONAF and improved the potential of the LTC to influence and/or form binding agreements for PA planning and management decisions.

13.3.3 Lesson 3: Structure of the Organization

The organizational structure employed for the CCNP LTC was a third enabling factor for the success observed to date; specifically, the decision to employ a technical resource person who serves as the corporation's manager. This person is in charge of managing resources, formulating projects, and coordinating with different stakeholders. Having this resource has enabled the LTC to maintain proactivity within the territory and enhance communications and articulation between stakeholders, the LTC, and the rest of the existing tourism governance structure. The CCNP LTC structure aligns well with the existing tourism governance system, strengthening local capacity and coordination. In turn, this enhances articulation between the local commune-level government (Municipality), the regional government (regional branch of the National Tourism Service, SERNATUR), and the national government (Chilean Subsecretary of Tourism) that has the potential to lead to concrete local outcomes with regional/national support. For example, recognition of the potential for strengthening tourism at the local level has resulted in support throughout the tourism governance system around the implementation of a new "Tourism Hosts" program that links the concept of host community with the concept of gateway community, through an alliance with the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH).

13.3.4 Lesson 4: Collaboration with Other Civil Society Actors

It is important to highlight other collaborations that have evolved between the CCNP LTC and civil society actors as another enabling factor that has contributed to early successes. Both the Patagonia Aysén Foundation and the Balloon Latam Foundation have offered support for the Council's initiatives to increase the social capital of this territory and contribute to the continuous improvement of the services offered and the quality of the visitors' experience. All of this will likely generate better conditions for local economic development.

As mentioned above, there is an agreement between the Municipality and the Chilean Subsecretary of Tourism that has enabled the development of a tourism training and advisory program called "Tourism Hosts." This program, which has been developed in part by members of the Patagonia Campus of the Universidad

Austral de Chile, has provided small businesses and start-ups with training and advice on tourism matters and raised local community awareness about the tourism and development opportunities that exist due to their proximity to the CCNP. The Municipality and the UACH have also implemented joint collaboration agreements to support conservation and tourism initiatives, connected with the university administered Austral Patagonia Program (<https://programaaustralpatagonia.cl/>), which is funded through grants from the PEW Foundation. This program leads the development of the gateway community strategy in Patagonia, whose purpose is to increase the links between PAs and surrounding local towns. The program helps communities identify themselves as *gateways* in order to gain access to the economic benefits associated with local tourism services, and the ecological benefits associated with reducing pressure on the PA by transferring tourism services to local communities (e.g., camping areas, hotels, retail outlets), rather than locating them within the PA itself. Currently, the Austral Patagonia Program is supporting two important initiatives as part of this agreement: development of the gateway community's strategy, and the declaration of a Protected National Asset for the Río Ibáñez Commune.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the regional components of the project's proposal have not moved forward. These components proposed mechanisms to improve coordination among regional institutions for tourism development in the Aysén Region; specifically, the formation of a Regional Destination Management Corporation with a Tourism and PA Department, that would coordinate with CONAF, SERNATUR, the Regional Government, and its Council. While all of these entities have expressed support for this proposal, and agreement about the need for a regional coordination body to manage everything related to tourism in the Region, the creation of such an entity would involve overcoming significant legal, political, and funding challenges. Nevertheless, recent changes in the legislation governing regional governments augur more favorable conditions for the creation of bodies such as the one proposed in the coming years. This seems logical in a region that is committed to nature tourism as one of the most important activities for the regional and local economy, and which has more than 50,000 km² under state protection.

13.3.5 Lesson 5: The Importance of Grassroots Support

Finally, the most relevant enabling factor for the CCNP LTC has undoubtedly been the support of grassroots territorial organizations, whose participation lends credibility and ownership to the LTC process. Communication and cooperation between the organizations and their trust in the Municipal Commune government have been instrumental to early successes. Nevertheless, it is important to note that during the period of the pilot, the CCNP LTC board was chaired by the commune's mayor. Inostroza and Rovira (2020) noted that the formal leadership of the mayor in this initial stage was positive, given the important role played by the commune

Municipality throughout the process. However, they warned that continued leadership over a prolonged period could lead to negative impacts for the sustainability of the Council, as it could lead to risk of a co-optation of local interests by the political authority in office. The authors recommend continued participation and commitment from the commune-level government but suggest that, in the future, the CCNP LTC chair position be maintained by a neutral party. This would demonstrate maturity of the corporation and the empowerment of local leaders.

13.4 Closing Reflections

The project presented within this chapter was implemented to advance toward a fully functioning, participatory, multi-scale, governance, and management system for tourism in and around the SNASPE PAs of the Aysén Region of Chile. It focused on the design and pilot testing of a new governance structure that encouraged direct dialogue between public sector institutions, the private sector, academia, and the social and commercial organizations of the Aysén Region's SNASPE PA gateway communities. Such a structure would enable local communities to work with PAs and improve tourism services for visitors, both within SNASE PAs and their surrounding communities. This was founded on the belief that achieving this outcome would help stimulate local economies and improve the potential for tourism development to be compatible with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Early outcomes for the CCNP and its gateway communities seem to support the potential for the LTC model of local shared governance. The pilot program achieved a number of positive results during the past few years through the efforts and enabling factors discussed in earlier sections. However, perhaps the most important impact of the project extends beyond the pilot implementation and exposes the potential for creating LTCs in other areas of the Aysén Region and Chilean Patagonia. The analysis conducted during the early phases of the project indicated a growing sentiment that the current advisory councils of SNASPE PAs are not an effective method for managing and governing tourism within PAs and their gateway communities. The advisory councils do not have a legal authority and are comprised of a diversity of actors with different interests (not all of them tourism-related) and broad territorial coverage. In contrast, the LTC approach offers a formal, locally focused institution centered around tourism development, management, and sustainability that has demonstrated positive, tangible results. The legal formation is relatively simple, as petitions and decisions about LTC legality can be decided at the local Municipality (commune level), and this avoids the greater bureaucracy and complications that accompany regional, or national organizations. With the support of the local municipal mayor and PA administrator (CONAF), there is a good chance that the LTC will be successful in its formation and petition for legal recognition. Furthermore, our project analysis indicated high levels of interest in participatory local governance among local tourism stakeholders, who expressed interest in being

part of the decision-making process regarding tourism development in their territory and commitment to collaborate on developing effective shared governance mechanisms.

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