Ecotourism, sea turtles, and livelihoods: adaptation and resistance to development and conservation in Mexico and Brazil

David Ivan Rezende Fleischer

University at Albany, State University of New York, d.ivanfleischer@gmail.com

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ECOTOURISM, SEA TURTLES, AND LIVELIHOODS:
ADAPTATION AND RESISTANCE TO DEVELOPMENT AND
CONSERVATION IN MEXICO AND BRAZIL.

by

David Ivan Rezende Fleischer

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts & Science
Department of Anthropology
2009
Abstract

This dissertation’s objective is to understand how two communities, Praia do Forte, in Brazil and Mazunte, in Mexico engage in development and conservation practices through work, protest and discourses. Development is represented here by ecotourism and conservation by sea turtle projects and environmental regulations. Sea turtle conservation projects in both locations represent the strong external intervention of the federal government and of the scientific community on traditional livelihoods. This dissertation analyzes both conservation project and ecotourism development using a comparative perspective via onsite ethnography.

Using a comparative method, the dissertation discusses the transversal topic of ecotourism development and wildlife conservation. The research focused on communities that had exploitive economies that were forcibly converted into conservation-based economies by ecotourism and sea turtle environmental project.

Some propositions are advanced in order to frame and direct the research. The first examines the changes environmental and tourism policies implicated in local livelihoods. The second focuses on the new social and political structures that emerged with this new economic context of ecotourism or nature tourism development. The third concerns the economic, social and political strategies developed by the community to contend with these changes in their livelihoods. The fourth suggests that difficulties and conflicts that exist between environmental conservation projects, ecotourism and local
Communities have to be interpreted by looking at issues of power and discourse. Conservationists, developers and communities have different understandings of ecotourism and wildlife conservation.

Ecotourism in the northern coast of Bahia, Brazil, where the community of Praia do Forte is located has been stimulated by different vectors: international investments through medium size and large size hotels, government incentives through specific tourism funding programs; and the conservation sea turtles project TAMAR. The development of ecotourism in the Costa Chica of Oaxaca, where Mazunte is located, started after the ban on sea turtle hunting in 1990. The federal government invested in basic infrastructure for tourism and for the establishment of the sea turtle conservation project CMT. This project, sea turtles and alternative development patterns have been the major vectors stimulating ecotourism in this area.
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I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents Kenneth and Norma Fleischer, who always believed in the potentials of their four grandchildren and always encouraged us to follow our interests and dreams.

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### List of Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANP</td>
<td>Áreas Naturales Protegidas (Natural Protected Areas of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>Area de Proteção Ambiental (Environmentally Protected Area, in Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNDES</td>
<td>Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (National Bank for Social and Economic Development of Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAHIATURSA</td>
<td>Empresa de Turismo da Bahia (Bahia’s State Agency for the promotion of tourism in the state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFE</td>
<td>Comisión Federal de Electricidad (National Electricity Commission of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMT</td>
<td>Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga (Mexican Sea Turtle Center, conservation project of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONANP</td>
<td>Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (National Commission on Natural Protected areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMBRATUR</td>
<td>Empresa Brasileira de Turismo (National Agency for the Promotion and financing of Tourism in Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EZLN</td>
<td>Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (National Zapatista Liberation Army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td><em>Fundação Garcia D’Ávila</em> (Garcia D’Ávila Foundation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONATUR</td>
<td><em>Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo</em> (National Agency for the Promotion and financing of Tourism in Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FURG</td>
<td><em>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande</em> (Federal University of Rio Grande)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBAMA</td>
<td><em>Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis</em> (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBDF</td>
<td><em>Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal</em> (Brazilian Institute for Forestry Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBGE</td>
<td><em>Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística</em> (Brazilian Institute of Geographic and Statistics Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBJ</td>
<td><em>Instituto Baleia Jubarte</em> (Humpback Whale Conservation Project of Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICMBIO</td>
<td><em>Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade</em> (Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation, Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INEGI</td>
<td><em>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía</em> (National Institute of Geographic and Statistics Research of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INP</td>
<td><em>Instituto Nacional de Pesca</em> (National Fishery Institute of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMA</td>
<td><em>Ministério do Meio Ambiente</em> (National Department of Environment of Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETROBRAS</td>
<td>Brazilian Public Petroleum Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIOSA</td>
<td><em>Productos Pesqueros Oaxaca Sociedad Anonima</em> (Fishing Products of Oaxaca, Incorporated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNTM</td>
<td><em>Programa Nacional de Investigación, Conservación, y Fomento de Tortugas Marinas</em> (National Program for the Protection and Research of Sea Turtles, in Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODERS</td>
<td><em>Programa de Desarrollo Regional Sostenible</em> (Regional Sustainable Development Program, administered by CONANP, Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODETUR</td>
<td><em>Programa de Desenvolvimento do Turismo</em> (National Tourism Development Program in Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFEPA</td>
<td><em>Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente</em> (Federal Agency for Environmental Protection of Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIMA</td>
<td><em>Relatório de Impacto sobre o Meio Ambiente</em> (Environmental Impact Statement, in Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAP</td>
<td><em>Secretaria Especial de Aquicultura e Pesca</em> (Special Federal Agency of Aquiculture and Fishing of Brazil)</td>
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SEMARNAT  
*Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales* (National Department of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico)

SCT  
*Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes* (National Agency for Communications and Transportation)

SINAP  
*Sistema Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas* (National System of Natural Protected Áreas of México)

SNUC  
*Sistema Nacional de Unidades de Conservación* (National System for the control of Protected Áreas in Brazil)

TAMAR  
*Projeto Tartarugas Marinhas* (Sea Turtle Conservation Project of Brazil)

UNDP  
United Nations Development Program

ZEE  
*Zoneamento Ecológico Econômico* (Ecologic and Economic Zoning, in Brazil)

The acronyms and abbreviations have been concentrated here to facilitate the reading as many of these are repeated several times throughout the text.
Introduction

This dissertation is the result of a PhD research conducted in two different places: Mazunte, Mexico and Praia do Forte, Brazil. The project originated from some questions and doubts I had about how conservation projects related to ecotourism development. I had done research on ecotourism during my Master’s Degree, focusing on how ecotourism developed in a town where mining was the main activity. After that, I went to work with environmental conservation projects at a Brazilian NGO and later within the Brazilian Federal Government.

In both the NGO and the Government, there was a certain concern about how development projects related to conservation projects. This topic lacked consensus within the Brazilian Government. Working with the Government’s environmental agenda I noticed that government agencies had difficulties in developing projects that could benefit local communities economically and at the same time help improve environmental conservation standards. It was a hard task because these government agencies had theoretical difficulties to effectively approach these issues.

Drawing from this difficulty in the government, I decided to formulate a Project that would look into that situation: how conservation and development relate to each other and to the places/people where they were being implemented. In other words, how this combination affected the daily lives of small communities. I sought out to find good examples of this combination and the possibility to compare two different places within
Latin America. I decided for a comparative approach to increase the probability of finding interesting data on how this combination worked out and on how the communities dealt with these different approaches (conservation and development). Focusing on government projects, either of ecotourism or of environmental conservation, was the best way to analyze how federal government interventions happened at local level. Federalist countries, like Brazil and Mexico, where there are three levels of official government (federal, state and municipal), intervention projected directly from the federal level to the local level, without going through the state and municipal levels, are generally very straightforward and imperative. Not only that, but with high levels of governance in localities, the issues of power negotiations and the social conflicts between stakeholders becomes more intense. Change and adaptation become more evident as struggles increase. Federal governments do not have the direct contact with communities, as municipalities or states do, and public policies thought at federal level can become hard to implement locally.

Wildlife conservation projects turned out to be some of the best example of conservation initiatives due to their tourist appeal. Successful wildlife conservation projects were those capable of drawing a continuous flow of visitors, establishing rapport, and effectively disseminating a conservation discourse. Controversially, the most renowned conservation projects in Latin America have been those of Federal Governments and international NGOs such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Conservation International, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The most renowned wildlife projects in Latin America are those of Whales and Sea Turtles because: (1) these animals inhabit the popular imagination as peaceful and harmonious animals, frequently
represented in children literature as the “wise turtle” or the “intelligent whale”; (2) they are animals in ways of extinction and thus very threatened by humans, motivating tourists who are concerned with the recovery of these species in visiting projects that working to revert this extinction pattern; and (3) because most tourism in Latin America happens along the coastline, where good sunny weather and warm waters invites visitors from cold places to relax and vacation. Beaches are still the preferred vacationing destination to most travelers. They want to relax at a nice calm beach with warm temperatures, clear waters, and sufficient services to make them feel comfortable.

I chose sea turtles over whales because sea turtle projects are stationed at the beach, offer a direct interaction between tourists and turtles all year around, as well as a direct contact, and exchange with local communities. Whale projects are more oriented towards scientific research and highly paid tourism. In these projects, the engagement between humans and animals is less constant, happening only at sea, during boat rides. These boat rides are only offered during the season when animals are around. The contact and exchange with whales happens very slightly. Another reason sea turtles were preferred over whales is the interference these animals have in the local economy. In Latin America, sea turtles – in comparison to whales – have played a far more important role in the subsistence and commercial strategies of local communities.

Since my experience was mostly in Brazil, I decided to start from that country and then find another Latin American country that would be comparable. The most successful wildlife conservation project in Brazil is TAMAR, a Federal Government Sea Turtle Conservation Project. It is well-known to national and international public and has 23 research stations along the Brazilian coast, some of which became important tourism
destinations within the national tourism scenario. I chose the town of Praia do Forte, in the state of Bahia, because it was the first research station of TAMAR to open to the public and because it is the only town with a TAMAR research base that has tourism all-year-round and a locally-developed ecotourism project, conducted by a local NGO.

Once I narrowed down the Brazilian research site, I began to search for a similar case elsewhere in Latin America. Part of the focus was on how governments intervened in local communities through conservation and tourism projects, hence I had to find a country which had a similar government structure to Brazil – at least in the tourism and environmental agendas – with a town that also had a wildlife conservation project run by a Federal Government. That is when I decided to research Mexico and the town of Mazunte, in the state of Oaxaca. Mazunte is the site of the Mexican Turtle Center, a Federal Government Conservation Project also focused on sea turtles and with a strong appeal to the tourism public. Mazunte fitted perfectly as a comparative site because it had similar size and same vocation to tourism and conservation as Praia do Forte. Mazunte also had in the past some initiatives to incorporate ecotourism locally: one was a community-based project and the other a NGO developed project. None worked out as planned, but left strong side effects on how the community perceived itself and how it promoted itself to the tourism market.

**Bahia**

Praia do Forte is a town of about 3000 residents, located 56km north of the city of Salvador. There are no exact dates of the first settlement of Praia do Forte, as it was until
the late 1960s, a plantation farm. All residents were plantation workers who did fishing on the side. Sea turtles and sea turtle eggs were part of this parallel subsistence activity. Besides that, the families grew small gardens. The farm owner had set aside a part of the farm for the workers to live. They did not have to pay rent but had some expenses with groceries, provided by the landowner.

Recently, the digging to build the foundations of a shopping strip in Praia do Forte unveiled some old foundations of what local historians believe could have been a slave’s ward. This appears to be well-founded possibility as the farm existed since the late 1600s, and most of the local residents are afro-Brazilians descendents. Unfortunately, no historical records of that time are available to prove these speculations.

The town was isolated from the state capital, Salvador, until the late 1970s. It did not have connecting roads. All travel had to be done through the sea, taking many hours, if not days. Today Praia do Forte is part of a travel route within the state of Bahia, now with a main highway making the connection to Salvador. In 2001 the whole town was paved with stone blocks and the federal government funded a sewage system with sewage treatment plant was completed in that same year. The town today has all the necessary amenities to tourists, such as Internet, landlines and cell phone service, ATMs, police station, medical clinic as well as Laundromat, real estate agencies, tourism agencies, supermarkets, shops, hotels and restaurants. Credit cards are accepted everywhere and a comfortable bus line connect the town with Salvador and other nearby towns on an hourly basis.
The picture below is a snapshot of Main Street today and all the shops available to tourists. It was transformed in 2001 into a pedestrian boulevard. The amount of traffic was overwhelming to the size of the street. The municipality decided that it would be more comfortable for residents and tourists to have the main commercial area vehicle-free. The back streets are still open to traffic.

![Main Street, a pedestrian street.](Image1)

Figure I: a view of Main Street, a pedestrian street. Photograph by author.

In 1972, the farm was sold to an industrialist of Sao Paulo, called Klaus Peters. This businessperson, of German descent, kept part of the coconut production, but his interests were in the tourism potentials of Praia do Forte. The town is cut on one side by a mangrove that funnels into a small creek that flows in the ocean. The coastal line is long stretching about 14km. The northern part of the coastline is a long straight stretch of beach that ends at the Imbassai River. It ends at a promenade, where there is a lighthouse.
South of the lighthouse, there is a sharp entrance that forms a natural bay used by fishermen to anchor their fishing vessels. South of the bay, the coastline strengthens out again. The creek that runs out of the mangrove is in this south section. This section of the beach ends at the Pirajuba River. The whole coast of Praia do Forte is protected by wide coral gardens of multiple colors. These corals form some natural pools during the low tide, a section tourists love to spend the day snorkeling to spot colorful fish, corals, shellfish and other small crustaceans.

The picture below shows the *Piscina do Lorde*, a natural pool in the coral reef and mostly used by tourists. The pools are protected by the coral reef and the waters are calm and warm. The area is very safe for children, who enjoy seeing so many colorful fish swimming together with them.

![Figure II: The Natural Coral Reef pools. Tourists spend the day there. Locals sell beer, sodas and some snacks. Photograph by author.](image)
The beaches do not have any restaurants or other types of businesses. These activities were banned in the last town zoning because of regulations set by TAMAR to safeguard sea turtle nests. All shops, restaurants and small hotels are located in the main street of town, which is a little ways removed from the beach.

Below is another section of Main Street, with nice shade. This street leads to the Project TAMAR and to the beaches and local port.

![Figure III: Continuation of Main Street. Note how fancy stores align on the left side. Photograph by author.](image)

The local exuberant nature and the proximity to Salvador – a city with over three million inhabitants (IBGE 2005) – contributed to Klaus Peters’ decision that Praia do Forte was the best place to establish a nice vacation resort. In 1970, Peters owned a good portion of Varig’s capital. Varig was the biggest Brazilian airline until 2000, when it went bankrupt. In 1978, the Resort was completed. It is still the most luxurious
accommodation in town with daily rates ranging between US$500 and US$1000. The rooms are very big, with all included amenities. The decoration of the resort includes panels by famous national and international artists. This resort gave new job opportunities to the locals.

Klaus Peters decided to train locals in hotel service rather than hiring outsiders. He created an NGO to train locals in housekeeping and tourism services. He also decided that the town of Praia do Forte would make for a nice tourist attraction. Being the owner of it all, he gave local residents the rights to use the lots around their houses, but did not give them title to their lots. This was to prevent locals from selling out and letting speculators take control of the place. He gave the conditions for locals to revamp their places, giving out repair materials such as paint, wood, cement, bricks and roof tiles. The
majority of local residents saw this as a goodhearted action. It worked very well to popularize Klaus Peters among locals, and to legitimize his further actions of expanding urban space. In the early 1990s, he started selling his land out to land development. Today Praia do Forte is surrounded by wealthy condominiums.

Amidst this tourism development, TAMAR Project was established in town in 1981. A year earlier, a team of oceanographers conducted a survey of the whole coast of Brazil to define the most important nesting beaches. Praia do Forte was one of those places. In 1981, the Federal Government created a national ban on sea turtles hunting and nest poaching, and created the TAMAR Project. The project would have the function of policing the coast against poachers, work with communities to end their consumption of sea turtle and eggs, and conduct research and monitoring of this species. Praia do Forte, in state of Bahia, and Pirambu, in the state of Sergipe, were the first operation bases for TAMAR. The establishment in Praia do Forte, in Bahia had the support of Klaus Peters. He thought that having conservation projects around would enhance the value of the place and make it more attractive to tourists searching for eco-friendly places. He gave the financial support to TAMAR to build its first research stations. As Suassuna (2001) stated in her dissertation, Praia do Forte developed under the auspices of Klaus Peters. It was a privatized development, done inside a private land, and following all the personal interests of the owner.


**Oaxaca**

Mazunte is a town of about 1000 inhabitants. It is located 40km from Huatulco and 60km from Puerto Escondido two major tourism destinations in Mexico with over 20000 inhabitants each. San Agustinillo, another town with about 1000 inhabitants, abuts Mazunte. They are separated by a hill that protrudes into the ocean. Access is through the road that runs inland behind it. These towns used to be one only town until mid 1990s when a political fight over budget officially separated them, however they continue united culturally, politically and electorally. This connection between the two towns forced my research to be conducted in both places. The topography of Mazunte and San Agustinillo is broken up by hills, cliffs and mountains. Different beaches form the coastline, each separated by hills and cliffs. Every beach has its own characteristics, offering specific services and amenities. The can be connected by walking trails around the hills or by the dirt roads that connect from the inside.

The Towns of Mazunte and San Agustinillo are rustic if compared to Praia do Forte. Only the main road that cuts through the two towns is paved (picture below). Most other streets that yield off the main road are unpaved. There are very few paved streets, where pavement was paid by some small hotel, posada or restaurant. The towns are part of the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca, which does not have sufficient budget to invest in paving the remaining streets that are hard-packed sand and dirt roads. Some residents say this gives the place a rustic feeling. As will be discussed in later chapters, the ideal of rustiness is something the tourists care for. The locals prefer more urbanized and developed scenario, but have adapted to cater to tourists’ interests and desires.
Mazunte and San Agustinillo are accessed only by this main road, a vicinity road that splits off from Mexico Route 200, a highway that runs north-south along the Mexican Pacific coast (it is the Mexican part of the Transamericana Highway). The vicinity road connects Mazunte and San Agustinillo to the neighboring town of Ventanilla. The three towns compose what could be called an ecological-economic-ecotourism corridor, which will be discussed in more details in Chapter 03.

![Main Street Mazunte](image)

Figure V: a view of the main road, a. k. a. Main Street Mazunte. Photograph by author.

The main road was paved in 1994 after the Federal Government sought to layout basic infrastructure in these towns to make them more accessible to tourism. The pavement of the main road was a demand of locals. They contended at the time – 1994 – that if the town were to be transformed into a tourist destination, they had to have a better
access in and out of town. Before the pavement of the road, the two towns could only be accessed by large trucks or 4x4 vehicles.

Mazunte and San Agustinillo together, account for 13km of coastline, which runs west to east, in the southern coast of Mexico. Mazunte has four beaches. In the west is Mermejita, a more isolated beach, preferred by “hippies”. (See Kottak 1999 for the description of qualities that make a hippie). These visitors enjoy the peace and quiet to set their tents and camp there. The next beach is Punta Cometa, part of a promenade rock that projects into the sea. It is declared the southern most point in the Mexican territory. More to the east is Rinconcito, a small beach where most fishermen stop their motorboats. The last beach east is Playa Principal where the main palapas, local palm
tree covered huts that operate as restaurants, bars, and camping sites. The next beach east is San Agustinillo, which is a beach with three little bays, the smaller one used by fishermen to stop their boats and the other two larger ones used by tourists. This is the beach where all small hotels and restaurants are located. There are body board classes at San Agustinillo and boat rides to spot sea turtles that leave this beach. The last beach to the east is Playa Blanca, were there is no constructions at all. It is a secluded beach isolated by a high rock. An easy climb around the rock leads you to that beach.

The official town of Mazunte, which until 1997 included San Agustinillo, only came into existence in 1950, when the first inhabitants arrived. A young couple settled with the task of taking care of the land, an area of about 100 hectares. The head of the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca told them to take care of the place and not allow...
any intruders. Before that, Mazunte has no recorded history. There are some speculations about what had taken place locally. Punta Cometa, the promenade, has ruins of a fortified wall, made with the piling of stones found locally. The wall is over 100 meters long, and surrounds the top of Punta Cometa. The wall is one meter thick and has some small windows that could have been used as lookout points.

Speculations of Mexican historians include the version that Punta Cometa was a hideout for runaway slaves, who were lost after a Spanish shipwreck that actually occurred off the Oaxacan in the late 1600s. The other version tells about sea pirates that used Punta Cometa as their hideout. They would attack the ships using their advantageous position at the top of the fortified rock. Local residents have another

Figure VIII: This is another beach in San Agustinillo, called Playa Blanca. It is cut off from the main section of town by hills. There are no nearby houses making this more isolated and reserved. Couples and tourists that want to stay away from the crowd prefer this beach. Photograph by author.
version claiming is the ruins of an early Zapotec settlement. There is no sufficient archaeological evidence to prove these theories.

In 1960, a dirt road was opened to Mazunte and San Agustinillo to give access to a new business, the sea turtle slaughterhouse. This was established in Mazunte after studies conducted by the INP, a Federal Government Agency, which detected in the area the high potential for the exploration of sea turtles. The waters at Mazunte and San Agustinillo have been the main feeding areas for sea turtles and the neighboring beaches of Ventanilla and Escobilla the main nesting grounds for sea turtles in Mexico.

The sea turtle slaughterhouse, also called Rastro, was owned by PIOSA, a private company with a Spanish owner who hired workers locally and in other Mexican states. This is when the towns of Mazunte and San Agustinillo were officially established. Most of PIOSA employees lived in Mazunte and worked in San Agustinillo building their homes away from the beach. PIOSA had a slaughterhouse in San Agustinillo would process different sea turtle projects for the larger Mexican and international markets. The slaughterhouse washed a large amount of blood into the sea, creating a horrible stench. Mazunte was across the hill where the stench did not reach, justifying the residence preference of locals at that time. After PIOSA was closed and the stench from the beach disappeared, residents started moving into San Agustinillo. Locals did not use the beaches in both places. The blood and stench attracted predators such as sharks, impeding bathers to use the sea. The sea was a work place, the source of the main subsistence and economic resource. At the time, it was not seen as for swimming or recreation.
There was a ban (also called locally as *La Veda*) on sea turtle activity in 1990. In 1992, the Federal Government began to build the Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga (CMT), which would become the Mexican government’s sea turtle conservation project. The government also concluded the pavement of the main road and conducted a long cleaning process removing sea turtle carcasses, demolishing the PIOSA slaughterhouse and destroying all remaining equipment used at PIOSA. This renovated the image of the beaches and restored the environmental quality to make it usable by tourists.

The histories of Mazunte/San Agustinillo and Praia do Forte are quite distinct from each other. The first two towns had an economy based on the slaughtering of sea turtles while the second had an economy based on fishing and coconut plantation. Today, they share common trends: ecotourism, ecological awareness, conservation projects, sea turtles, beautiful beaches with warm clear waters, and a good selection of restaurants and accommodations. They are part of the international “sun and sea” tourism. This dissertation will discuss part of the past of each place to explain how they became tourism destination and analyze in a comparative way the contemporary social scenario of each destination, its relation to tourism and conservation.

This research plans to focus on how both development and conservation stimulate innovation in local economic strategies. Local communities can develop adaptation strategies to contend with changes in the social, economic and political arena. These strategies can involve issues such as negotiation of power among local stakeholders; production of new cultural icons (sea turtles and other representative wildlife) emerging from the nature tourism or ecotourism experience and; development of new forms of social representation. Another important issue in the specific cases of Mazunte and Praia
do Forte is the “human-animal relation”. The local ecotourism experience uses this appeal to attract visitors and stimulate environmental consciousness on the need to protect endangered species. Therefore, the research hypotheses are: 1) Environmental and tourism policies forces changes in local communities’ livelihoods. 2) Interventions (development and conservation, and possibly comunitarism) change traditional concepts of identity. 3) New power structures emerge with this new economic context of ecotourism or nature tourism development. 4) Local communities develop strategies (economic, social and political) to contend with change in their livelihoods. And 5) Wildlife conservation projects and government promotion of nature tourism modifies local perceptions of specific animals and plants.

The dissertation is divided into 10 chapters. Chapter 01 is a review of the theoretical bases used to construct this research. Chapter 02 will explain the research methods and techniques used in the field and for the analysis of the data. Chapter 03 is an analysis of the regional tourism development in Mazunte and Praia do Forte and how each relate to the neighboring towns. Chapter 04 is a historical account of how hunting was converted into conserving. Chapter 05 discusses the work of the two conservation projects TAMAR and CMT. Chapter 06 is an analysis of how tourism was developed. Chapter 07 discusses the social organization of the destinations and how the economy and politics influenced these changes. Chapter 08 describes the existing conflicts in both destinations between the stakeholders. Chapters 09 and 10 are the concluding chapters where the discussion wraps up and answers the research questions. What influences ecotourism had on local livelihoods? What commitments these communities had put into ecotourism? Were these initiatives practical options to curb development near and around
conservation projects? What adaptive strategies local communities developed to contend with changes in the social, economic and political arena? What strategies the different stakeholders use to promote ecotourism and stimulate environmental consciousness?
Chapter 1: The Theoretical Construction

1.1 Introduction

The theoretical background I based this research on kept valid during the months of fieldwork. It did help in understanding complex situations but still was not sufficient to cover all grounds. The field research required, besides the theories originated in tourism studies, global studies and political ecology, other theories from ecological anthropology and political anthropology. The two communities have some essential characteristics: (1) strong distinction between insiders and outsiders; (2) strong distinctions between those who run the conservation projects and those who do not; (3) land use and resource use are usually generators of strong discussion; (4) cultural influences from tourists and outsiders accelerate changes in social organization; (5) subsistence patterns and livelihoods have gone through a rapid shift; (6) use of local natural resources changed drastically and; (7) ecotourism had strong capacity in modifying social organization. Conservation is not necessarily the only focus of these towns. Ecotourism has become an important economic activity and closely tied to conservation.

This chapter will expose the theoretical framework of this thesis attaining to how it helped define the object of study and how it helped in the operational aspects of the fieldwork. This research is about environmental conservation and environmentally oriented tourism, and how the two modify local livelihoods. Tourism for the most part, has been interpreted and researched mainly as an economic development trend. Brazil and Mexico have found in tourism a sure way to profit, increase their economic and
political networks and increase their foreign exchange. These countries have, in a certain way, followed this trend with international stimuli through grants and investments from international organizations and because these countries have become places of interest to the international traveler, always searching for “authentic” new places to visit.

As Lanfant and Graburn (1995) state, Latin American countries found in tourism the best opportunity to spread their economic and political influence to underdeveloped nations, where tourism benefits from local conditions as wilderness, underemployment and less capital flow (1995: 95-96). Discussing ecotourism projects is a sine qua non of discussing economic development projects. The chapter will begin by discussing this relation between ecotourism and economic development, then move on to the local-global theories that do help understand the cultural influences received by the two communities studied. After that, we’ll discuss the contributions of Political Ecology, the differences between animal tourism and nature tourism as both Mazunte and Praia do Forte have important animals that attract visitors, and natural resources that complement the local attractiveness. To conclude, the chapter will discuss the issue of traditional ecological knowledge, as this became particularly important to understand the relations between the people that work in the conservation projects and the rest of town.

1.2 Ecotourism and Conservation

Ecotourism and economic development usually point to a convergence when discussing issues of sustainable development. Conventional tourism, the type of tourism that has been around for decades and is represented by big resorts, cruise lines, and grand destinations, is very much tied with economic development. Cancun, in Mexico, is a
great example. All the development of the area was aimed at capitalizing the natural resources for tourist consumption. The investment put little effort in considering environmental, social or cultural issues\textsuperscript{1}. Clancy (1998), in his article about development theory and its ties to tourism demonstrates clearly that in the case of conventional tourism, economic development was all that gave continuous momentum to tourism development. In Mexico, the tourism industry became the alternative solution to reduce the foreign debt of the country.

An alternative form of tourism, perhaps ecotourism, would have to diverge somewhat from economic development. De Kadt describes alternative tourism as one that “does not damage the environment, consists of smaller developments organized by villages or communities, and non-exploitative of local people” (1994: 50). Hong, on his article about Malaysia shows the urge of first-world travelers to experience the well-preserved natural environments of third world countries. Since they have destroyed all the natural setting back home, they go on searching for other places (1985:12).

According to De Kadt, conventional tourism tends to disregards the local environment (1994: 53) Ecotourism is promoted as the response to environmental demands that have been set aside by the commercially oriented conventional tourism. The conventional tourism development causes “change in local attitudes and behavior, pressure on people, loss of resources, pollution” (Butler, 1995: 33). Conventional tourism

\textsuperscript{1} I refer to “issues” here as risks or dangers. Environmental, social and cultural aspects are important to the development of tourism. Cancun was developed on the premises that culture and natural resources are rich and exclusive in that part of Mexico. The tourism industry knows that these aspects are important. Nonetheless, the planning of tourism does not take into account the problems that can derive from developing mega projects. Urbanization, construction of huge resorts and golf courses and relocation of local population affects the land, water supplies, fauna and flora, to list some. Therefore, these are the issues not considered by the tourism industry.
responds to government’s interest in regional economic development, increase in the number of destinations (options for tourists) and boosts country’s gross domestic product (GDP). Ecotourism also has economic objectives and changes local community. In most cases, it tends to follow more sensible pathways, but there are examples of misleading results (Honey 1999).

Ecotourism can be considered a product of demand for authenticity. Authentic places are considered nowadays the places with less external interference (e.g. wilderness). New destinations are opened in more remote places with fewer infrastructures and attract visitors concerned with the well-being of environments, its fauna and flora, and its local residents. If well planned, ecotourism can offers most of the economic benefits of conventional tourism plus the environmental concern. Economic development and ecotourism converge through the benefits ecotourism can provide: “generation of employment, stimulation of local economy, and the creation and improvement of infrastructures and recreational facilities for local use (Alderman, 1994:276).

Places with well-preserved natural settings, exuberant flora and fauna, or at least particular scenarios, and small-scale beach resorts are more prone to becoming ecotourism destinations. As Honey puts it, “most beach resorts make no claims of being involved with ecotourism” (1999: 137). However, with the increased demand of international travelers for ecologically-sound places has stimulated beach resorts to transform their identity into ecotourism. Tour agencies begin to advertise these beaches as ecotourism destinations, although some of them have little attractions that indicate a vocation to ecotourism. The two beach destinations of Mazunte and Praia do Forte have
been able to capitalize on ecotourism.

Usually communities attract investments by making concessions to business (e.g. tax breaks, freedom from some local regulations on environment) in a climate where business roams the globe choosing where to invest. Tourists can also roam the globe choosing where they want to vacation and communities will work ways of attracting them. Governments have been the major players in attracting foreign investors, however, most governments in Latin America have had little concern with local stakeholders.

Ecotourism benefits when governments and local population develop an approving attitude towards ecotourism. However, as will be exposed in the last chapters, it is difficult to reach a compromise between the local population, the government and foreign investors. “Tourism development, economic development, and environmental issues lead to controversies and an ongoing struggle between government, developers, associations of hoteliers, NGOs, foreign aid organization and local population” (Groen 2002: 51).

In Brazil and Mexico, the participation of governments in ecotourism projects is small but this tendency is changing. In Brazil, ecotourism became a public policy in 2006 with plans to implement projects in different places where designed. In Mexico, there is an initiative for the development of centers for conservation culture, which would promote ecotourism and conservation. These are responses to international demands of environmental and climate change conventions, as well as of ecotourists and the tourism industry. They are in fact adaptations that try to compromise both demands not necessarily compatible. Governments have learned with ecotourism: it costs less, demands less
infrastructure and has had very good acceptance. Groen (2002) points to the limited capacity of ecotourism destinations in these countries to receive more tourists. This is a serious issue that involves scale and saturation (see chapter 06 on more details). The environmental side limits resource management initiatives of the government and local stakeholders. The economic side refers to the lack of interest from foreign investors in places not economically sustainable for the developers (Groen 2002: 59).

Monte Verde, Costa Rica has a very well protected forested area, the Monte Verde Cloud Forrest that, for many years was known as a sanctuary for quetzal birds. Bird watchers came from many different places to observe closely this exuberant bird. The tourism entrepreneurs found the perfect icons in quetzals to promote the area for tourism and to stimulate the protection of the forest. “Quetzals are invested with nostalgia, representing real, imagined, or desired natural social histories, as well as economic, environmental, and cultural features” (Vivanco 2001: 81). Actually, the tourism industry in Monte Verde incorporated a real element to represent their ideal of a nice preserved place. Quetzals make the spectacle in Monte Verde Cloud Forest. They also work as indicators of environmental quality and ecotourism sustainability. More birds, less impact, less birds, more impact. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte; sea turtles have been working as environmental indicators as well. They are very sensitive to environmental changes, at sea and on shore. Nonetheless, these two locations use them as tourist attraction.

Animals have been part of the conventional tourism experience since the establishment of zoos and safari tours in Africa in the 1960s. More recently, animals were added to the ecotourism experience. Different settings attract visitors by the presence of
specific species. That is the case of the Monarch butterflies in Michoacán, Mexico; of the Quetzal birds in the Cloud Forest Reserve, Costa Rica; of buffalos at the Yellowstone National Park, United States. Animals are good attractions for this purpose, especially species not commonly found in zoos (the case here with turtles).

Studies on animal tourism and on human-animal relationship are very important to understand how tourism experience relates to sea turtles. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, sea turtles are cultural symbols, tourism attraction, commercial icons and environmental conservation flagships. Mazunte has the Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga (CMT) and Praia do Forte has the Projeto Tartaruga Marinha (TAMAR). These projects have scientific research directed to protecting sea turtles and educating the communities and tourists about on the importance of protecting sea turtles. Sea turtle conservation projects in both locations represent a strong intervention from the federal government at local level, an intervention of scientific approach to traditional practices, an intervention of foreign values, logic and discourses.

Visitors are attracted to these two destinations for their peculiar beauty, the high level of environmental conservation and the presence of sea turtles. Not every beach in Mexico or in Brazil has sea turtles. This animal usually chooses particular beaches to lay their eggs and particular areas along the coast to feed.

“The success of the destination in attracting and sustaining such demand depends on the quality of the experience offered to the tourists. This depends, among other factors, on the environmental quality of the destination” (Avila-Foucat and Eugenio-Martin, 2007: 2).
Throughout history, humans have changed, adapted and modified their perceptions of and their relation to specific animals with which they share the same ecosystem. This dynamism of perception and relation has to do with changes in subsistence modes, from hunter-gatherers, to pastoralists and herders, to industrial society. The more or less a society depends on animals to survive will define the cultural constructs humans create of each species. This has been the case with sea turtles in the two communities studied.

Subsistence modes and economic arrangements linked to ecological adaptations of ecotourism can help to understand the relationship between local communities and the hunting of sea turtles. Turtles were, in both communities, a central element in the subsistence of local families. The economic organization of the two communities depended on this resource. In the case of Mazunte, it was the main source of income and the main source of food, whereas in Praia do Forte, sea turtles were important mainly as source of food. The coconut plantation was the main source of income. Beside the economic and political structures that compose the local choices of natural resources used, we need to understand what motivates communities’ choices.

It is important to understand that the relation that humans have with sea turtles in these two locales are of production. Based on the classic typologies of systems of production, we can identify hunting as one mode of production. In this case, the relation is of predator and prey. As Tapper puts it,

“Hunters live in complementary relations with other animals species in their environment, not particularly close to any of them, but with an extensive
knowledge of the habits of all species. Objectively they are predators, but hunters’ relations with their prey are often culturally constructed as one of reciprocal exchange and co-operation in the mutual production of each other’s existence” (Tapper 1994: 52).

Ecotourism or nature tourism, which includes animal watching tourism, has been promoted as being more concerned with sustainable development. Environmental conservation projects, usually coordinated by governments, non-profit organizations and/or local communities (López 1995, Jervis and Freire 1995, Bastidas et al. 1995) have worked on a track opposite to economic development (Honey, 1999) and have found in these types of tourism a potential link between conservation and local sustainable development. Natural resources (fauna and flora) are the main attraction for ecotourism or nature tourism and the viability of these activities partly rely on initiatives of preservation of these resources (Butler, 2000).

The rapid growth of ecotourism and the search for authentic places has increased the threat to natural resources. The introduction of ecotourism activities in environmentally sensitive areas needs to consider the maintenance of natural resources and the use of these resources as attractions, otherwise ecotourism can lead to degradation or instability to the local ecosystem. Tourists are also inclined to search for places with environmental quality. Not only the interest in wildlife is at stake but also the conditions of the environment that composes their natural habitat. Avila-Foucat and Eugenio-Martin explain:
“From an ecological point of view, environmental quality is referred to as the capacity of ecosystems in supporting disturbances. For instance, water quality and/or air quality are common indicators of environmental quality” (2007: 5).

1.3 Livelihoods

Observing the relationship between local livelihoods and conservation projects can offer a good understanding of the interrelation between development and conservation; between conservation and “sustainable development”, a constructed ideology and a strategy for producing a better pattern of development, less harmful to environment (Escobar, 1995).

Stronza in her literature review of tourism states that “though anthropologists have delved into the factors that motivate tourists to travel, they have trained less attention on examining the conditions under which people in host destinations become involved in tourism” (2001: 266). Ecotourism would supposedly challenge the problems originated with conventional tourism by promoting destinations that embrace the idea of sustainable development, which includes community participation and natural resource management.

The idea of ecotourism is actually perceived as the translation of the term “sustainable development” applied to tourism (see Schlüter 2002 and Holder 1996). With the idea of environmental stewardship and environmental partnership, most economic development initiatives are starting to embrace ecology and environment as part of their
agenda. The business sector is interested in including environmental impact assessment or at least a demonstrated concern with the environment because it shows concern and pro-action on their part (Poncelet, 2001). Evidence of a proactive stance shows how economic development embraces the ecological discourse, but in most cases, it is a marketing strategy.

In Stonich’s (2000) research, it is clear that the ecotourism and even the economic development in the Bay Islands embrace ecological discourse. The creation of the Bay Island Marine Reserve received funding from USAID on the premises that it would promote environmental conservation, sustainable use of marine resources and promote awareness of importance of the reserve for visitors (2000:165). The economic development was in the hands of main stakeholders represented here by national elites from mainland Honduras and they rejected the ecological discourse and acted aggressively towards the same resources the Reserve was trying to protect. With big fleet companies, they are depleting the fish stock and dredging the coastline for marinas and big hotels (2000:143).

In the northeast of Brazil, in the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government offered fiscal incentives to develop the region in order to integrate it to the national industrial scenario, dominated and defined by the south and southeast regions. These incentives came in form of industrial and tourism investments. Suassuna (2001) analyses the intervention of Projeto TAMAR in the town of Praia do Forte, Brazil looking back at the latest years of 1980s. She argues that Projeto TAMAR was the first to incorporate development and environment. Although specifically a conservation project, it has as one important role: the achievement of community sustainability. As it limited fishing, the
Project started paying minimum wages to the fishermen and later stimulating them to participate in the project and in tourism. The project had a strong environmental education component with objectives of “creating an environmental and ecological consciousness in the local population. (2001: 102).

The economic aspect of ecotourism is more evident when environmental and social aspects are at risk. Local economy grows with ecotourism stimuli, however environmental degradation tends to be a recurring side effect. Ecotourism became an alternative to the conventional tourism because it proposed a shift in the understanding of tourism development. Embracing the ecological discourse of sustainable development, ecotourism development became one popular type of project among NGOs and CBOs simply because it demanded fewer investments than conventional tourism, less infra-structure and therefore could be promoted and executed by local communities, who could prosper from it. There are examples of these initiatives, some even sponsored by the World Bank and UNDP.

Community-based conservation projects are the type of projects where you find most bottom-up initiatives and the coordination and execution of the project relies in the hands of locals. Ecotourism that is developed using this framework in fact should have a good participation (at different levels) of local population. Langholz (1996) analyzes the economic, ecological and social impacts of ecotourism in independently owned nature reserves. On the economic side, “ecotourism provides a source of livelihood for numerous individuals and many reserves depend entirely on ecotourism revenues in order to survive” (1996:63). The social effects are that these reserves are “operated by local community groups or non-governmental organizations with potential to build community,
they are non-profit organizations, [...] owned and operated at family-level” (1996:64). This offers better chances in protecting existing land tenure and local resources. There is also the issue of community integration, which is very strong in these types of reserves. Langholz (1996) also acknowledges the ecological benefits of these reserves, stating that ecotourism helped keep the place operational and protected from degradation. The use of these reserves is also an example of how ecotourism development can embrace ecological discourse. Having the land in private hands makes a big difference: the owners control it in their own interest, especially if we consider that most examples are constituted as non-profit organization.

Much of the literature on development focuses its effort on the vertical structures of the modes of production and implementation of public policies. This means that researchers are mostly interested in the actions of governments, large corporate entrepreneurs and international organizations. Some development theory scholars are concerned with the environmental problem in development discourse. To this end, they draw attention to the top of the power structure in environmental discourse, where the actions of the political core of the global environmental agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the Global Environmental Facility and non-governmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International are (see Escobar, 1995: 192-211). This approach is valid and necessary but more attention to the bottom of the power structure should be sought as well.

Research on community-based development projects concentrates effort on understanding the bottom-up approach. The problem is that very few examples of research on ecotourism community-based projects exist. There are some projects being
developed with few relevant researches about it. Ethnographic research on community-based ecotourism can fulfill this gap in knowledge.

Most research is done on the results and consequences of tourism. Small attention is paid to the language in use (the discourse models). It is clear that most projects that claim to be ecotourism development will, one way or another, embrace the ecological discourse set forward by the international environmental community. International donors (UN, World Bank) and environmental organizations such as Conservation International (CI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have defined ecological discourses. The tourism industry needs to incorporate this into its own discourse. In order to understand how ecotourism develops and how it shares common ground with environmental projects, or how it combines efforts with economic development it becomes necessary to understand the discourse practices, and the language that mediate the relation between ecotourism, environmental conservation and economic development.

Research on the role of local communities is more evident. Since ecotourism is usually developed in the community and involves the community, it is necessary to identify roles of locals in this type of tourism. It does not mean that sufficient research has been done to explain all ways that communities participate. Most anthropological research on ecotourism tends to emphasize the negative aspects of the implementation of tourism. Therefore, most literature reviewed criticizes the impacts and forgets to point out how these projects might be integrating communities. No anthropological research on ecotourism looks at the process of mobilizing or engaging community stakeholders in discussions related to ecotourism development. Focusing on this process, especially when
looking at a multiparty scenario, can reveal significant data about the role of local communities in ecotourism development.

There is little work on this aspect when it comes to tourism studies. Research on convergences and divergences could look into legislation, public policy making, stakeholder mobilization and tourism planning, for instance. The anthropological literature on development and globalization can help guide this analysis. More ethnographic data about ecotourism needs to address this issue. Ecotourism has two important components: sustainable development and environmental awareness. The combination of these two components has to be fine-tuned to produce the correct effect, that is, low environmental impact and good economic, social and political standards.

Anthropology is still timid when it comes to ecotourism research and related topics. The bulk of literature on ecotourism policy comes from the fields of Tourism Management and Environmental Sciences. Conventional Tourism has been studied mostly by the disciplines of Geography, Management (Business Administration), Economics and, Tourism and Hospitality. The lack of ethnographic research on ecotourism explain, to a certain extent, the difficulties in understanding the inner logic of community participation, the intricacies of development related to ecotourism and the use and appropriation of discourses by different social actors involved in ecotourism.
1.4 Globalization and Ecotourism

Tsing (2000) presents an interesting discussion of globalization and the construction of theoretical background in anthropology to deal with it. She discusses the relations between global and local and the need to redefine “global” and “local” as definite places. As she states:

“The globalist thinkers imagine the local as the stopping point of global circulations. It [the local] is the place where global flows are consumed, incorporated, and resisted, the place where global flows fragment and are transformed into something bound and particular. But if flow itself always involves making terrain, there can be no territorial distinctions between the "global" transcending of place and the "local" making of places (2000: 338).

This interconnectedness between global and local challenges discussions previously made in the field of World systems (Sklair 1991) that certain core places dictate the flows of information, capital, goods, services and people. Long (2000) argues that:

“Global conditions – whether economic, political, cultural, or environmental – are, as it were, ‘relocalized’ within national, regional and local frameworks of knowledge and organization which, in turn, are constantly being reworked in interaction with the wider context” (2000: 188).

To understand global issues, we need to dive into the “local knowledge” (Geertz 1983) and understand how it relates to global situations and how it attains global significance. It becomes necessary to understand how local initiatives are organized and how their
system of values and realities operates at both local and external or global levels. As Long (2000) states, this relation between global and local operates at different levels (local, regional, national) and at multiple scales; “this process […] spans diverse local patterns of organization and management of resources” (2000: 189); involves economic, political and cultural scenarios; and interferes with activities of government, non-government and international organizations. This relation between global and local includes “issues concerning livelihoods, organizational capacities and discourses, intervention measures, and ideology” (2000: 189).

Long’s argument leads to Appadurai’s (1996) discussion of global flows and Sassen’s (2000) discussion of global cities and the concreteness of corporate headquarters. Tourism sites are odd examples regarding the global-local relation. I would say that the two arguments (global flows and global cities) could be found together, perhaps via cosmopolitanism. A small village that receives a considerable number of tourists can at the same be time localized by maintaining strong cultural traditions, ancient religious ceremonies and specific economic activities, and in the middle of all have new economic and cultural activities, new religious beliefs accommodated by locals, which coexist with previous ones. These new events can be tied to global flows of capital, people, information and technology.

Sassen (2000) has argued that the local is part of the global system. She uses the example of an office headquarters of a transnational corporation. It is staffed with different workers and occupies a specific building in a specific town. The people, the office, are part of what makes up the “social thickness of the global” (2000: 217). That is, the legal, economic, financial, social, cultural, geographic, political base on which every
global process relies. She focuses on the global city and the corporations that comprise it. Her intent is to criticize the assumptions that the global does not have this real local thickness. For her, the global needs the local because capital needs fixity. In fact, all transnational corporations have a local for financial resources, or political and economic backup. Stock markets constitute a locality of transnational corporations, and they are in specific places: Tokyo, New York, Frankfurt, and London. And all these, corporations and stock markets are made with people that are place-bound. Sassen’s theory of globalization is related to the city, to the local and the small details that compose it: work, traffic and commuting, neighborhoods, suburbia, migration, social and economic diverse classes, social relations, local markets and commercial networks.

The linkage between implications of conservation and ecotourism development in a small fishing community and key global-local theories in anthropology is closer than one could think. According to Tsing (2005), global projects only take this amplitude when there is friction between different actors necessary to make it happen (2005: 11-13). Via friction, according to Tsing, local can become global. Thus, a small town where ecotourism is incipient can expand (its ecotourism activity) if there is enough friction to make it go forward. For example, local environmental project and ecotourism developers establish tense situations that take momentum and develop. This development can be either constructive or destructive.

“Conservation inspires collaboration among scientists, business, forest dwellers, state regulators, the public, and nonhumans. Through the friction of such collaborations, global conservation projects – like other forms of traveling knowledge – gain their shape” (Tsing 2005: 13).
Global projects, or global models and scales, can be ambiguous, as Tsing (2005) exposes in her discussion of “global climate change”. Geographers and other scientists became concerned with alterations of the environment on an extra-local basis and ended up creating models that encompass the whole globe, an idea of global nature as a unit of analysis. In models of climate change, “the global scale is privileged above all others. […] Local conditions can be predicted from the global model but never defy it. Its globality is all embracing” (2005: 102). Therefore, locality represents almost nothing when it comes to discuss climate change. Nevertheless, as Tsing explains, the intention was actually to create an international environmental consciousness that could facilitate an international and national cooperating towards the environment, creating standards for conservation.


Thus, the consolidation of a global scale depends on the recognition of localities as pieces of the greater puzzle. We can correlate this to ecotourism: the creation of ecotourism destinations is usually linked to a larger global tourism market and to an international environmental agenda. The same happens with the establishment of sea turtle projects, which are responses to conservation treaties and agreements that focus on recovery of specific species and the maintenance of the health of oceanic life on a planetary dimension.
1.5 Power, Politics and Local-Global Context

Theories of power and politics help understand the local-global context in the two communities of Mazunte and Praia do Forte. I have elected three theoretical frameworks as the basis for this research: (1) anthropology of tourism; (2) political ecology (and political economy) and ecological anthropology; and (3) anthropology of development. The difficulty relies on how to articulate these frameworks in one research. The two localities establish links between local and global through (1) ecotourism development, working an external, national and transnational economic logic into the community; (2) environmental projects, reproducing international interests in the protection of endangered species; and (3) labor relations, when the community is forced to switch from an extractive-oriented economic activity to a conservation-oriented economic activity. This list goes on represents the most evident issues of power structure and politics of the local-global relation.

Anthropology of Tourism and some of its main representatives (Walsh 2005, Stronza 2005, Cheong and Miller 2000, Burns 2004, Bruner 1995) would be the source from where to draw theories of politics and power to understand issues of global versus local. Anthropology of Tourism is still in process of consolidating a theoretical background. Drawing from so many different topics, tourism is a very broad field. The theories in tourism about authenticity, ethnic conflicts and diversity, cultural change, patrimony and historical heritage, environmental issues, economic development, policy making, are some of a myriad of topics to discuss. Case studies of tourism and environment, ecotourism and development, community-based tourism and community
development via tourism or ecotourism are contributions used to consolidate my research background, but other theoretical backgrounds are needed as well to strengthen the claim of the proposed research.

The process of acculturation that happens in tourism sites is a good example of how tourism studies can contribute to understanding power relations in the local-global context. The cultural contact between hosts and visitors happens by continuously borrowing aspects from one another’s culture. As Nuñez points out,

“The nature of the contact situation, the distinctive profiles of the contact personnel, different levels of socio-cultural integration, numerical differences in the populations, and other variables typically result in asymmetrical borrowing” (1989:266).

This quote itself demonstrates how the interaction between hosts and guests can be unequal. This inequality is related to power structures, where tourists and locals do not stand at the same level socially, politically neither economically. Efforts to assimilate the other’s culture are also unequal. Locals make a lot of effort to learn the language of tourists, while the tourists have small interest in learning local languages and dialects. This reflects to a certain extent imperialism and domination, where host communities in a growing effort condescend to international interests (Nuñez 1989). To condescend is actually a form to gain more rapport with the visitors and pass a good image of receptiveness and hospitality. Thus, tourism theory can be central to understanding the power relations between the visitors and their host in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte; between the environmental projects and the local community and between the tourists
and the environmental projects. The power relations within tourism are laid out in the leisure-work dichotomy: while one is serving, the other is being served; while one is working, the other is “leisurering”. Nash (1989) has brought up this dichotomy as central to understanding the relations between hosts and guests and it is very useful to my analysis on the conflicts between local and global contexts.

One of the objectives of this PhD research is to understand the local-global context of small tourism communities. Therefore, a closer look at power structures is needed. With communities inserted into the international tourism agenda, flows of power are two-sided, where tourists, representing an external global forces, and locals imposing ideologies, desires and political, economic and cultural standards (Cheong and Miller 2000: 373). Besides tourists and the community, other social actors are participating in this power structure: local and national government and international agencies, transnational NGOs, etc.

Tourism, per se, has a complex power structure. Thus, we need to include Foucault in the analysis of these structures. Foucault was mostly interested in how power was present in distinct, sometimes ubiquitous ways in most institutions and how power structures were central to their operation, efficacy and legitimacy. For Foucault, “power is ‘always already there’, one is never ‘outside’ it, there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system to gambol it” (Foucault 1980: 141). As Cheong and Miller (2000) state, in tourism, power is also present in ubiquitous forms for two reasons:

“First, power relationships in tourism are commonly masked in everyday discourse (...) and; second, the very complexity of a global tourism ‘industry’
(…) interferes with an appreciation of power relationships. (…) Instances of power relationships are located in the seemingly nonpolitical [tourism] business” (2000: 378).

This complexity of a global tourism involves the participation of more agents in the process, such as transnational corporations, foreign visitors, investors and foreign NGOs. This means different hierarchical structures operating at the same time. NGOs will relate differently to local residents than will hoteliers or investors. Tourists will react differently with locals than they would with an NGO from their home country.

The relation between local and global is a result of modernity and the undermining of peripheral discourses and cultures. Systems of power are in the core of this relation. “Any reference to the global or the modernity must identify systems of power where access to resources and risks is unequally distributed” (Hornborg 2005: 198).

With ecotourism, political and economic tactics used by locals need to contend with external forces of development and of conservation. Community-based projects can be an interesting case to illustrate this point. Foucat (2002) presents an interesting scenario of a community-based project in Ventanilla, Oaxaca, a town close by to Mazunte, where locals, to contend with international pressure on conservation of endangered species (in this case crocodiles and mammals) engaged in conservation activity, via a cooperative ecotourism project. The project not only trained locals to work with ecotourism. It also stimulated ecological practices in agriculture and introduced some health improvements. Despite the fact that most strategies used in the project are
foreign, the locals found in it an efficient immediate solution to lack of work and limited resource-economy. What the author argues is that in the specific case of Ventanilla, a coastal town, composed mostly by Zapotec Indian descendents that migrated from the hills of Oaxaca, this touristic arrangement was welcomed because there was no previous income from fishing. According to the author, the example was successful in ameliorating poverty standards and the use of natural resources. It was an economic tactic used to contend with lack of governmental support in the area. In Mexico, Oaxaca is a state known for its poverty and neglect from federal investments, which facilitates the introduction of community-based initiatives (Kowaleski 2003).

Political and economic tactics used by local communities to contend with national and international forces do not appear clearly in the anthropology literature on tourism, development and conservation. Development bibliography focuses on how international agencies and national governments implement their policies locally and impinge or encroach on local communities. This approach is very important but often lacks the local’s perspective. When it includes the local’s perspective, it focuses on opinions and understanding of the cultural changes they are being subjected to, not on tactics used to contend with these changes. Perhaps this absence is explained by the fact that tactics are more part of the tacit knowledge of one culture, therefore not easily accessible and evident (Scott 1990). Such development ethnographies are more concerned with criticizing the lack of cultural sensitivity that development programs have. Anthropologists have trouble finding a mid-way where analysis of tactics will not be appropriated by the ones in power:
“Anthropologists working in politically oppressive contexts have long recognized that the ethnographic accounts they produce may provide those who wield power with maps by which they may perpetuate systems of domination” (Brosius 2001: 165).

The outcome of local tactics depends on the “ability [of local groups] to strategize, both among themselves and in coalition with others. Their struggles to convey a set of compelling moral/political imperatives to local, national, transnational audiences are cultural productions that are met by a series of competing productions” (Brosius 2001: 165).

Therefore, tactics can be effective if cultural productions speak out in a compelling way. Still, Brosius makes an interesting point: the appropriation of indigenous discourses by larger mainstream society has the ultimate effect of inhibiting tactical efforts of local, indigenous communities (1999: 39-42). According to Brosius, the state utilizes different strategies to make territory, population and bureaucracy more legible. Conservation projects in Mazunte and Praia do Forte work as state representatives at local level. Much of their work, despite being scientifically oriented, has a good doses of government bureaucracy and helps central governments convey better strategies to implement conservation and development projects, as will be better explained in chapters 09 and 10.

As Scott (1998) noted, within agriculture and forestry, all are “calculated to make the terrain, its products, and its workforce more legible – and hence manipulative – from above and from the center” (1998: 2). We could consider that environmental conservation
and ecotourism development follow the same concept. Biologists at sea turtle projects utilize scientific research methods to convey their conservation activities (chapter 05 will explain this better). NGOs and government agencies that promote ecotourism generally create specific patterns to make implementation of new economic and cultural practices viable (chapters 06 will discuss this). Everything planned from above tends to organize the structures below. Brosius explains that, “legibility is achieved through a series of state simplifications designed to reduce the opacity of the local” (1999: 51). Chapters 07 through 10 will describe in more details how the Brazilian and the Mexican states, through their conservation projects devised forms of better understanding the localities where there are inserted.

The relationship between locals, conservation projects, ecotourism personnel, and tourists is where the power structures will appear. The direct contact between these social actors puts in evidence their responsibilities within the social context and their influence in policy process. Therefore, my analysis will also pay attention to the structural power. Wolf (1999) defines this well:

“By structural power, I mean the power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows” (1999: 5).

It relates to Foucault as well because he was also looking into the structural power within government and institutions. Wolf (1999) is interested in looking at how ideas and the use of ideology “renders the world understandable and manageable” (1999: 6). For Wolf,
ideas and use of ideology have relations to power in a way that “ideas are monopolized by power groups and rendered self-enclosed and self-referential” (1999:7). Since my research includes the analysis of discourses and the use of them by different groups to claim authority over utilization of resources or impose their logic on the other group, this application of Wolf fits quite well. For instance, ecotourism brokers can use development ideas to promote their business, while the conservationists can monopolize the environmental discourse in favor of their activity, disclaiming the eco-friendly initiatives promoted by the ecotourism brokers.

Considering the environmental side of the research, I would consider that political ecology (Stevens 2005, Paulson 2005, Hornborg 2005, Tsing 2000) is a useful theoretical framework to understand the global-local context. Political ecology has an interesting focus on scale. Researching agricultural systems, land use or territorial management, scale is needed to understand impacts, structures and power systems related to modes of production. My research includes a close observation to practical identities of fishermen (turtle hunters to be more precise) and former fishermen, as well as new productive activities that replaces these. Paulson argues: “studies of political and economic globalization through flows of capital and information […] ignore local contexts” (2005:8). The local is critical to global studies, especially if looking at powerful environmental discourses. Mazunte and Praia do Forte with their environmentally oriented activities (ecotourism and conservation) can contribute to this discussion. Besides, ecotourism activity is related (to a more or lesser degree) to land degradation, land tenure and use of natural resources.
Earlier political ecologists were concerned with links between land tenure and environmental changes, without concerns of linking this to the diverse arenas that affect landscapes (see Biersack 1999). Today, political ecology is also concerned with how knowledge, discourses and practices operate in the context of these processes (see Wolf 1999, Kottak 1999). In fact, these authors coined the term as a theoretical response to the environmental movement that was gaining force around the world. In this context, political ecology became the theoretical ground to work issues that combined political economy with ecology. As Rocheleau (1999) explained, political ecology “focus on the social relations of power and the formation and functioning of ecologies and landscapes” (1999: 22).

Political Ecology can subside the analysis of subsistence modes and economic arrangements linked to ecological adaptations of ecotourism can help understand the rationality of the global-local dichotomy. Political ecology offers a simplified language for the interpretation of natural and social environments (Rubenstein 2004). However, Political Ecology tends to focus on creating binary relations of opposition:

“A poststructuralist political ecology would analyze not only the larger political and economic forces that shape local interests, but the production of desire as well. This production is, I suggest, simultaneously material and discursive” (Rubenstein 2004:2).

Also, “post-structuralism provides theoretical leverage to move beyond the core’s view of the world without falling into either modernism’s fetishism of order or postmodernism’s celebratory abandonment of order” (2004:16).
In places like Mazunte and Praia do Forte, where external forces are reordering the social structure, it becomes important to pay a closer look at how these forces act as well as the local response to these changes.

This research has drawn important theories from other disciplinary sciences such as geography, sociology and development studies. Political Ecology has “advanced an interdisciplinary approach to complex human-environment interactions, especially those related to economic development in the Third World” (Stonich 1999: 24). Political ecology framework is effective to understand the interaction between political and environmental forces and the ways these “affect social and environmental changes through the action of various social actors operating at different scales (levels of analysis)” (1999: 24).

Ecological anthropology tends to focus attention on resource use, management and conservation of these resources. Adaptation to natural environments, via cultural milieu is also part of the ecological anthropology analysis. For ecotourism, this concern with resource use becomes central, as the development of this particular economic activity occurs in combination with management of natural resources and natural attributes of a selected area. Since Mazunte and Praia do Forte have wildlife preserves, conservation projects and fishery management practices, resource use becomes central. Bennett, with his description of socio-natural systems has made this interesting comment on the relation of local to global with respect to resource use:

“In an expanding world system, with power becoming increasingly centralized in large organizations, and with resources everywhere falling into
the hands of organizations extraneous to the localities that possess them, it becomes increasingly difficult to permit local determination of resource use and conservation” (Bennett 2001: 14).

Bennett’s remarks are pessimistic (and he states that) about resource uses but it is very straightforward. Conservation practices are implemented by external organizations. The politics behind conservation are tied to international agendas that governments have agreed upon. Local communities are excluded from these discussions and decisions.

When the sea turtle projects were introduced as governmental actions towards conservation, areas were excluded from local control and restrictions were imposed. With ecotourism, it becomes a similar trend. Foreigners are dictating what should be an attraction, what is worthy of conservation and what territory is restricted. “The local system is no longer the exclusive property of its former owners and developers; they must now confront to the values and practices of the larger market, company, or state” (Bennett 2002: 15).

Bennett believes that this scenario is a two-way process, where both global and local spheres are responsible for depletion of natural resources: “Local people are certainly the victims of the larger world system, they are also culprits in the sense that their own aspirations can lead to environmental abuse” (Bennett 2002: 15). This approach can be biased to cultural specificities of local communities. Mazunte and Praia do Forte are examples where the local culture of fishing turtles just was not compatible with the global pressure towards conservation of these species. In conversation with locals in Mazunte during fieldwork, I was told that the fishermen had a very complex system of
conservation of sea turtle eggs and that they protected a significant amount of nests because they knew that, on the contrary, they would in fact deplete the resource. Again, their practices confronted with the values and practices of the larger ecotourism development, the state regulations and international lenders’ expectations.

A research on the relations between conservation and development, and on how local systems contend with regional, national and international forces, the concept of anticipation and human adaptability (Bennett 2002 key concepts in ecological anthropology), can suit quite well the purposes of understanding the local-global context of sea turtle ecotourism. With major shifts in the local economy, from exploitative fishing then to conservation practices, and then to “conservation development” (also know as ecotourism), there is a great deal of adaptation, especially for the locals, who went through this process of change: the learning of new practices, the forceful abandonment of prior actions, and the incorporation of new ideologies and value systems. Only through ethnographic fieldwork, it will be possible to infer if this adaptation to new realities was well adaptive or maladaptive.

Ecological anthropology and, more recently, environmental anthropology have changed their approach, “blending theory and analysis with political awareness and policy concerns” and recent studies “focus on new units of analysis – national and international, in addition to the local and regional” (Kottak 1999: 25). This greater inclusiveness is related to issues of an increased flow of information, technology, people and capital (Appadurai 1996) plus an acknowledgment that local ecosystems are not isolated, as earlier cultural ecologists believed (Kottak 1999). Ecological anthropology is more attentive to environmentalism, developmentalism, and the clashes between them.
Kottak’s analysis of development projects in Brazil and Madagascar has noted the problems of imposing foreign ideas on local communities, from both sides:

“A clash of cultures related to environmental change may occur when development threatens indigenous peoples and their environments. [...] Some outsiders expect local people to give up their customary economic and cultural activities without clear substitutes, alternatives, or incentives” (1999: 26-27).

In both situations (environmentalism and developmentalism), the power and influence of local and international interests are not leveled. Biodiversity conservation, ecotourism development, ecological awareness and resource management, all try to “impose a global ecological morality without due attention to cultural variation and autonomy” (Kottak 1999: 26). There is much imposition via politics of conservation and development and an ecological anthropology approach could be useful. Kottak (1999) offers a hands-on perspective to ecological anthropology: he works with applied anthropology and has a pragmatic position. Bennett (2002) is more concerned with keeping a critical position: all initiatives (scientific, governmental and civil society) have their problems.

Adding to the political ecology and ecological anthropology framework, theories of globalization and development can be useful in understanding how these economic and environmental discourses are implanted in the communities, how local communities consume these foreign ideologies while producing their own, how local culture is impacted by external forces driven by economic development (ecotourism). Development theories (Escobar 1999, Crewe and Harrison 1998, Arce and Long 2000) have constructed their strength by analyzing the structures of power that sustain bureaucratic
systems of government and international organizations. International organizations do not define environmental conservation and economic development. However, they do influence decisions of nation-states and local communities via economic allocations and political agreements. Nation-states also have influence on local communities, especially if they are federalist nations such as Mexico and Brazil where the federal government has supremacy over any political or economic decision all the way down to the municipal level.

Development theories are crucial to understanding the issues of governmentality (Foucault 1991 and Scott 1998), and to interpret the environmental, political and economic discourse used to justify (or counter justify) conservation and development initiatives. Ecotourism is a development strategy used by governments and local communities to circumvent different problems such as the limited access to natural resources; the necessities to save specific species or natural landscapes and; to produce alternative forms of economic sustainability. Development theories are very much tied to political and economic spheres of government, and in this research project are crucial to understand the role that national and local governments play in defining projects that will be executed, and also discourses that will be utilized. The macro-micro relations, in this research identified as the relation between federal government and local community, can be better understood by studying the legal and political processes that are part of the development agenda of these governments and the international community.

Anthropology of development (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Arce and Long 2000, Escobar 1995) focuses on ways by which economic development (e.g. tourism and ecotourism industry) relates to deregulation and liberalization of local and national
economies; to the international pressure for more strict environmental laws and for sustainable examples of development (Mowforth and Munt, 2003) and; to management of public policies for conservation and development (Little 2001, McNeely et al. 1994) and tourism (Wilkinson 1997, Mason 2003). I will be looking at development ideas (regarding social, political and economic realms) versus real world situations of inequality and power structures (Cohen and Dannhaeuser 2002). Back to the local-global theories, “concerns about globalization/localization processes have become major issues in development work, at least in theoretical level, as world trade relations have been liberated” (Cohen and Dannhaeuser 2002: xvii).

Long’s article on the local and global transformations presents two methodological approaches that can be used to better comprehend the relation between local and global as well as power structures within this dichotomy. One is an actor-oriented approach, which would focus on issues that are directly linked to actions taken or induced by actors such as “policy-makers, researchers, intervening private or public agents, and locals residents” (2000: 190). This allows for a closer look on the conflicts that build up between these distinct actors, which are always present in tourism situations, as well as resolution and moderation between actors. The other approach is the social arena and social domain approach. Conflicts between the social actors happen within these arenas along with “contestations over values and resources” (2000: 191). The anthropology of development offers interesting tools for the analysis of power structures and politics because it focuses closely on social conflicts that usually derive from use and management of resources and values. Natural resources must be preserved for economic and conservation values.
An important contribution of development theories to the study of the combined activity of ecotourism and conservation projects is in the understanding of governmental rationality, evident in the environmental, political and economic discourses used to legitimize (or delegitimize) development and conservation initiatives (Foucault 1991). Governmental rationality is represented by the “institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Foucault 1991: 102). This ‘governmentality’ is the form through which the government becomes the only legitimate source of power. However, in Mazunte and Praia do Forte, besides governmentality (through the conservation projects) there are other forms of governmentality through local and regional constituted communal associations and NGOs.

Power structures need special attention in studies of ecotourism and conservation. Economic development, stimulated by ecotourism, is not always uniform. Ecotourism in the states of Oaxaca, Mexico, and Bahia, Brazil have local initiatives (see Foucat 2002, Suassuna 2001), stimulated by small private sector investors. This reality does not inhibit concentration of wealth among entrepreneurs and the exclusion of certain social groups. Mazunte and Praia do Forte have another problem: the prohibition of a former economic activity – hunting turtles – that forced the community to shift to new modes of production. Anthropology of development can offer important contribution to this discussion of power structures in relation to ideologies and modes of production (Escobar 1999, Cohen and Dannhaeuser 2002). This theoretical framework was built on analyzing power structures that support bureaucratic apparatus of government and international organizations. It can, though, be used to analyze local structures as well. Criticisms of
these models state that international organizations are not the ones that create environmental conservation and economic development models. Local grassroots organizations also contribute in this process (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Arce and Long 2000). Still, these international organizations have great influence in public policies and over government and local community decisions, through financial aid of projects and pardoning of international debt (Walsh 2005).

In sum, all theories discussed above can contribute to the analysis of power and politics in the local-global context. The attempt to unite all three major theoretical foci might appear somewhat schizophrenic, but it is important to reiterate that tourism studies, or theories of tourism does not have supportive theoretical background that aims to elucidate the interaction between environment and development. Thus, external support from development theories and environmental theories become necessary.

1.6 Traditional Ecological Knowledge

One important issue that came up during research is the use of traditional knowledge of fishermen who formerly hunted sea turtles by the conservation projects. This dissertation deals with scientific interventions of conservation projects that forced local communities to change their livelihoods. This change, as will be seen ahead, was abrupt and detrimental to the local population. Family incomes were jeopardized by the ban on sea turtle hunting. This dire economic scenario forced conservation projects to adopt alternative measures. One of these measures was to hire local fishermen,
unemployed by the ban on sea turtle hunt, to work in cooperation with the conservation project.

Fishermen were hired to help monitor beaches, transport eggs to incubation areas, and help with the handling and monitoring of baby sea turtles. What strikes me as interesting in this new arrangement was that biologists and technicians of the conservation project started incorporating fishermen’s traditional knowledge into conservation activities. This was more evident in Praia do Forte than Mazunte. In Brazil, sea turtle conservation started with little knowledge of field research and loosely developed monitoring and analysis tools to work with sea turtle conservation.

Much of the scientific knowledge and management skills were developed along these 27 years that the Project has been in place. In Mexico, the situation was somewhat different, since before the total ban, the federal government already had an operative monitoring and analysis program by the INP that worked in assisting fishermen who hunted sea turtles. This program, which started in 1968, had biologists working around the country to help maintain sustainable practices in the sea turtle trade. Thus, the Program produced decades of scientific knowledge on sea turtle subsequently used by CMT.

In Brazil, TAMAR developed field research on sea turtles with the help of local communities. Because of the lack of specific knowledge on sea turtles, scientists depended on the accumulated knowledge of local fishermen. This was particularly evident in activities such as searching for nests at the beach, distinguishing between
different species by looking at the eggs, calculation the age of nests, and searching for places in the sea where adult sea turtles tend to stay.

Searching and identifying nests turned out to be the most difficult activity for biologists working in the Project. Local residents, especially fishermen knew to find the nests at a glance. Living there for decades and relying on eggs as a complement to daily subsistence helped them develop an acute aptitude to finding nests. As one biologist put it,

“They find the nests by the tracks turtles leave on the sand. But when the tide is high or the wind is strong, the tracks disappear. But this is not a problem for them. They can still find it by the smell. They are the only ones to detect the nests by the smell. And some older tartarugueiros can even identify the different types of sea turtles just by the smell of the nest.” (Interview in 27/September/2007 with Luciano, biologist of TAMAR in Praia do Forte, Coordinator of fieldwork).

This acute sense of smell is one that the biologists could not learn from fishermen. It is interesting to note the demand of biologists for this particular knowledge. However, it is not just a traditional knowledge, it is actually a traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) because fishermen know all details about sea turtles, including reproduction cycles, nesting seasons, hatching periods and hunting strategies. Moreover, this knowledge is common among fishermen from Mazunte and of Praia do Forte. It was once a main aspect of their subsistence. As Huntington puts it: “TEK has an empirical basis and is used to understand and predict environmental events upon which the livelihood or even survival of the individual depends” (Huntington 2000: 1270).
Using Huntington’s definition, TEK is “the knowledge and insights acquired through extensive observation of an area or a species. This may include knowledge passed down in an oral tradition, or shared among users of a resource” (2000: 1270). This definition fits the purpose of this research perfectly because the knowledge of sea turtles is in fact acquired through observation and passed down through oral tradition. It was and still is shared among users.

TEK has particular relevance in this dissertation because it strongly contrasts with the scientific ecological knowledge (here identified as SEK) developed and reproduced by the marine biologists and oceanographers that staff the sea turtle conservation projects. The main stakeholders in both towns are scientists and fishermen. They are important to both conservation and ecotourism activities. During interviews, it became clear the importance that fishermen had in the consolidation of conservation projects.

The importance of including this definition and discussing it here has to do with the scientific approach of the research. The research is also an ethnography of science. Biologists and oceanographers were interviewed on their perspective of the situation. Their perspective was counter-analyzed along with the perspective of the fishermen. Issues such as ownership of information and authority and authenticity were always present in the discourse of the conservation project personnel and of the fishermen. Contrasting TEK and SEK is important to understand the logic behind the conservation projects and the options of public policy adopted in these towns for transitioning to ecotourism as conservation practice. There are two opposite positions on the outcomes of development in these towns, and TEK and SEK are a good point of departure to explain these.
The research on conservation projects and the observation of scientific activities conducted by project personnel require an Anthropology of Science perspective (Latour 1987). It is important to understand the stakes for both scientists and fishermen. Their logics are different and interesting enough, whether it is ecotourism, whether it is conservation, objectives differ. The reason to use an epistemological approach with biologists is because they tend to be closed to external evaluation and observation. Perhaps the constant criticism of local residents has placed them in defensive mode.

As will be discussed in further chapters, TEK is an important identity marker for the local residents that used to subside on sea turtles and a marker of origin and maintenance of roots. A real Mazunteño or a real Fortense is the one who knows about sea turtles, the one who has the traditional ecological knowledge of this resource. There has been recently a valorization of traditional knowledge. Locals have realized that having TEK about sea turtles enhances their status. Formerly there was a divide in the community between those who helped the conservation projects and those who did not. The ones who helped were seen as betrayers of the community, who sold out to the foreign scientists.

Conservation in Mazunte and Praia do Forte only worked because the projects hired the largest number possible of fishermen to help monitor the beaches. They all were former poachers, but the project claims they were “converted” into conservationists. Others saw this conversion as the betrayal of tradition, of their roots. Nevertheless, people needed to make a living and the salaries paid by the projects were good and steady. Today, the ones who resisted and continued working for the projects have status in the community. In fact, the money they steadily earned in the last decades as

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conservation helpers allowed them to buy their own houses and some even have purchased a second property where they run some type of business such as a convenience store or a small bar. Tourism helped to contribute to this status. Visitors were always intrigued by their TEK, their expertise in finding nests. In addition, the tartarugueiros and tortugueros have learned that tourists enjoy the fact that they are helping protect the environment instead of exploiting it, an interesting issue that will be discussed in further chapters.
Chapter 2: On Methodology of Research

2.1 The Fieldwork

Tourist destinations are interesting places to conduct research. People who live in these destinations have very peculiar forms of social interaction with foreigners, especially if tourism is the main local economic activity. It seems like local residents develop a certain volatility with social relationships. This situation makes establishing rapport a little more difficult. It took me over two weeks to get into track with interviews and data collection. People are extremely friendly, but it takes a while to build confidence needed to talk about their problems and dilemmas. This is true to any kind of research, but Mazunte and Praia do Forte had this particularity in common.

Arriving first at Praia do Forte in May 2007, I was impressed with the changes of the last 5 years. I first visited Praia do Forte during a vacation trip in 2003. On May 5, 2007, I returned to start my dissertation fieldwork. The town had tourists, concentrated in the main drag that cuts the town in half. Entering Praia do Forte, I was somewhat amused by all the recent development. There were many hotels, lodges and condominiums on the rise, being built at a fast pace. None of this was there when I first visited Praia do Forte in 2003. Development took off fast and was changing the scenery of the town entrance.

I had booked a room at a local hostel for the first week until I was able to find some other place to settle. As soon as I arrived, I left my stuff at the hostel. Later, I went on my first incursion through town, trying to take close notice of all details that made
Praia do Forte a tourist hotspot. Souvenir stores, restaurants, shops and small hotels abounded everywhere. Some building structures were starting to design the silhouette of a future condominium on the beachfront. Even the area around the TAMAR Project was starting to show signs that things would change. TAMAR also had gone through some renovations, and now features new tanks with more adult turtles, sharks and local fish, and an expanded gift shop where more types of products were available to purchase. TAMAR is a reference point in town as the main tourist attraction. It is also the reference for wildlife conservation.

I had contacted the Director of TAMAR, Guy Marcovaldi, beforehand. Weeks before I sent him my project and explained my interest on conducting research in Praia do Forte. He was very receptive and presented me to the entire Project Team. Everyone welcomed me and said they were available anytime. In reality, the biologists at the TAMAR Project made it difficult for me to access information. This happened because they decided for themselves that my research would be more interesting if it had been done in the town of Pirambu, located in the Brazilian state of Sergipe where TAMAR also has a research base. They said that the TAMAR base in Praia do Forte had already received too much attention (such as Sociological PhD dissertation of Suassuna 2001) and too many researchers and that it would be best if I conducted my research in Pirambu, where TAMAR had not been subject to any outside research.

That decision of TAMAR made me curious about Pirambu. Since I did not know this other town, I decided to visit and figure out if that other place would suit the purposes of this research. Pirambu was about 200km north of Praia do Forte. I spent two days at Pirambu and decided that the research could not be conducted over there because
tourism was seasonal. The town survived from other activities such as oyster farming and fishing. Tourism season was limited to the summer vacation period, between the months of December and January. During the other months, local residents that did not have permanent jobs at fishing or oyster farming took on jobs in Aracaju, Sergipe’s state capital, about 30km away. Praia do Forte had an all-year tourism activity and the TAMAR base was a significant reference point in the local tourism economy and was a more suitable site.

I returned to Praia do Forte and continued my research, this time focusing only on the locals. Locals were very receptive to the research, especially because they found in the interviews a good form to express their resentment towards TAMAR. A few days later, the biologists from TAMAR decided to receive me and to cooperate with the research. After verifying the other potential research site, I was able to explain why it was not suitable. Despite TAMAR’s attempt to redirect my research to places where they found more convenient, this initial situation of resistance worked as a groundbreaker. After that, rapport with the technical staff improved considerably.

The difficulties I had in Praia do Forte were counterbalanced in Mazunte, Mexico. Since the CMT in Mazunte had never received any kind of social science research (TAMAR was focus of a sociology thesis in the late 1990s), they were interested and willing to help as much as possible. They were also interested in knowing more about TAMAR, as they considered it one of the most successful sea turtle conservation initiatives. I travelled to Mazunte from Mexico City in December 2007. It was a long 17-hour bus ride from Mexico City because there were no more plane tickets left at that
time. I arrived in Pochutla, the final bus stop. From Pochutla I still had to get a taxi to Mazunte.

The infrastructure in Mazunte remained the same from 2006 when I first visited the town. I went there in 2006 to investigate the viability of conducting a comparative research with Praia do Forte. The streets in Mazunte were still a mixture of sand and dirt. The town is mostly rustic and simple if compared to Praia do Forte. The taxi driver drove right up to the lodge where I was going to stay. I had previously booked a room at this lodge over the phone. It was the only place available at the time. The town was completely booked because of the holidays between Christmas and New Years. I was readily accommodated in a nice lodge, owned by a couple from Queretaro, Luis and Mireya. She worked at the CMT as an environmental educator. I established contact with her via Oscar, who works at CONANP in Mexico City.

In both Praia do Forte and Mazunte; I decided that the best form of contacting either conservation projects was through the federal environmental office to which they were linked. CMT is linked to CONANP and TAMAR was linked to IBAMA and now is ICMBIO. This strategy was used to obtain at the highest level, permission to conduct research at the conservation projects in these towns. I arrived in both Praia do Forte and Mazunte with the introduction letters in hand and all the personal contacts necessary. In Praia do Forte; despite this precaution, I received local resistance from TAMAR. In Mazunte, it opened pathways and established good connections.

Mazunte is a small place, even when compared to Praia do Forte. It is more isolated due to accessibility, and perhaps this is one reason it may have been more
receptive. There are different students conducting their research there, mostly on tourism studies, as the Universidad del Mar, located only 20km away, has recently created a BA in Tourism and Hotel Management. Students have conducted mostly statistical and management research. Students of Universidad Metropolitana de Mexico, located in Mexico City, are doing some ethnographies of fishermen and fishery.

Despite the small scale, there are some nice small hotels, nice restaurants, gift shops and convenience stores. It has all the necessary needs for a tourist, but still lacks some services that can be found in Praia do Forte, such as ATM machines, standard phone lines or the possibility of paying with credit card. It was simple, but that how most local residents wanted to stay it and that is how they publicized it to prospective tourists.

The first day I went out for a long walk around town. I had been in Mazunte for the first time in 2005, two years earlier. As in Praia do Forte, much had changed, there were many new houses and accommodations, a few more restaurants and more people walking around the streets and more tourists at the beach than before. The next day I went to CMT and introduced myself. Everyone was expecting me and provided the conditions to conduct my research. Everyone had read my research proposal and had comments and suggestions on how I might best collect the data. There was not the hostility encountered in Praia do Forte.

Here I discovered the first difficulties of conducting a comparative research. There is a high chance that you become biased by the first location of your comparison and transfer anxieties and frustrations to your second location. I arrived in Mazunte with concerns about the receptivity towards my research. I was afraid that I would encounter
the same resistance I had in Praia do Forte. There was resistance of course, but less than Praia do Forte. Mazunte was used to seeing foreigners conducting research in and around town, like Praia do Forte. The problem of comparison is that you try to find all similarities that link one place to the other, and this can blind you to the particularities. However, I noticed after a week in Mazunte that particularities become the centerpiece of the observation. Once you overcome the initial adaptation phase and the obvious comparisons, you dive into the local culture and start finding very interesting data that confers the “authenticity” of that place.

Ecotourism destinations have tremendous similarities and sun, sea and surf (SSS) tourism has even more similarities. SSS tourism destinations are uniform around the world. Mazunte and Praia do Forte are SSS tourism destinations. However, the particularities count points in attracting visitors who might choose other destinations. Praia do Forte has nice restaurants, very clean beaches, and the Project TAMAR. Mazunte has clean beaches, clear waters, special boat rides to spot sea turtles, trendy restaurants and lodging, alternative forms of construction, special cultural festivals and the CMT. The characteristics, which distinguish these towns from other SSS destinations, will be further explained in Chapter 03 when I analyze regional ecotourism and conservation context.

Comparative research can generate expectations between residents of different places. Mazunteños had learned that there was a town in Brazil very similar to their own. They were intrigued to know if TAMAR had better facilities, if it was better integrated the community, if the beaches were nicer, etc. Mazunte has two big festivals every year: one of dance and the other of food. They are big events and draw many national and
international tourists as well as visitors from other towns (in 2008 they received over 2000 visitors during a local dance festival).

Once Mazunteños learned that Praia do Forte also had dance and food festivals, they were amused. They thought Mazunte and Praia do Forte were twin towns, that for some extraordinary reason these two places had connection, perhaps spiritual and esoteric ties. This could be true, but the most evident reason is that the two towns shared information from a single source: international tourism and globalization. Tour guides, travel agencies, tourists, multinational corporations, international conservation communities, scientific communities, surfers and adventure tourists, governments, transnational residents, outside entrepreneurs, all contributed to the sharing of information and latest trends. Still, cultural differences, set by national and regional cultures, traditional beliefs and practices, local resources and regional political, social and economic networks, language and religion strengthen particular patterns and behaviors that make for the particularities, the singularities of either Mazunte or Praia do Forte.

My fieldwork in Praia do Forte had to be interrupted because I got dengue there. The lack of local medical treatment forced me to return to Brasília, where my parents live, to get medical treatment there. Dengue is a fever transmitted by the mosquito *Aedes Aegypti*, and can cause anything from minor fever to serious hemorrhage, depending on the type of virus. I only got the fever, but since it debilitates your immune system and can cause damages to your liver, the treatment requires absolute rest and hydration. I stayed a whole month in Brasília and when blood tests proved that the fever was over, I returned to Praia do Forte.
Praia do Forte has a public health clinic, but the doctors that work there are very reluctant to diagnose dengue. Since the initial symptoms are very much the same of a cold or minor flu, that is how they diagnose people. The reason they might do this is related to the bad publicity dengue can cause. Dengue is a public health problem in most tropical countries and the only way to fight it is eliminating any still water reservoirs. In most cases (90% of cases), dengue only progresses to a strong fever (the other cases it can progress to a hemorrhage and cause death). Still, it is a disease that tourist destination want off their records. It is unpopular, and among foreign tourists, it is unknown and classified as another tropical disease that can kill you. In other words, it is very bad publicity. Therefore, local doctors prefer to put public health at risk than actually diagnosing the disease and forcing public sanitary and health agencies to take action. Brazil’s health system requires the detailed documentation of these tropical diseases, asking patients to indicate where they were infected. So, the effort of doctors in Praia do Forte becomes useless once national health agencies publicize the numbers of infections and the places of infections.

Nevertheless, the fever actually had an influence in the turnout of my research. Once I returned to Praia, everyone including the biologists at TAMAR, were very receptive. Everyone was concerned with my health and well-being. The ones who had always refused to be interviewed and to give any sort of information were very much willing to cooperate with the research. Dengue fever became a form of establishing good rapport with locals. The days that followed, I conducted more interviews and collected more data than I was able to the entire previous two months I had spent in the field.
Now everyone was interested in the research, perhaps because they took time to understand what it was about and why I was there. They finally understood that this research could actually benefit them. It could contribute to public policy changes and to the implementation of new initiatives that would benefit locals, e.g. more tourism investments and more focus of TAMAR to their problems. All the resistance to talk to me was dropped.

A similar situation happened in Mazunte when I got from local food poisoning. In fact, this problem affects most of Mexico, but one that the local, state-level and national governments work hard to reduce. Local residents never had any problem but foreigners suffered. This is an issue that public officials in Mazunte worked hard to change. They are constantly doing public campaigns and continuously checking on restaurants, hotels and food stands to see if they are following sanitary measures. My sickness from food poison forced me to stay put at my lodge for over a week, but it did not change my rapport with the community.

All these episodes of sickness and resistance in some way were very important for me to establish rapport and, later on, to make good friends. Tourism towns have this particular problem of local residents resisting to talk and share their knowledge of local culture, conflicts and adaptations. Locals are used to dealing with tourists, who establish loose social ties, without commitment. Locals learn to react the same way and to only have confidence in their neighbors. It takes longer to establish rapport, but once you establish it, they become good friends. This was true with both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. With tourists, rapport is very different.
The most difficult part of data-collection was in fact getting the hold of tourists. Regardless of their nationality or place of origin, or period of vacation, most tourists were very reluctant to be interviewed or share comments on what they thought of Mazunte or of Praia do Forte. They were on vacation and did not want to be bothered. After making a series of modifications to the questionnaires, I decided that the best form of collecting data was through free-conversation, using only some topics to guide the conversation. Presenting yourself as a tourist was another form of establishing rapport and being able to engage in a conversation that would in fact contain comments, opinions and criticisms about ecotourism, local services, receptivity, the conservation projects, the beaches, the iconography of the destination, the authenticity of the place, etc. Still, I was able to find in Mazunte and Praia do Forte some tourists who were interested in my research (after I explained it to them) and truly willing to respond to my questions. Participating in some tours also permitted me to observe their interest in local attractions, their engagement levels, their interaction with tour guides and impressions after the trip.

2.2 The Research Method and Design

The main research method used was onsite ethnography, which proved efficient in understanding and analyzing questions pertaining to everyday activities, such as negotiation of power, interaction between social actors, negotiation of conflict and effectiveness of discourses. Some specific methods used in the onsite ethnography were crucial to the outcomes of the project: direct and participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, surveys, archival research and photographic record.
Direct and participant observation is a common method in anthropology that requires the researcher to live in loco, to better understand the everyday activities, the layout of social life and the interactions between all social actors. In this research, this methodology was important to understand (1) the forms of interaction between conservation project personnel, local communities and visitors; (2) the discourse and rhetoric used by each social actor to refer to other groups, including ideologies and beliefs; and (3) the modus operandi of ecotourism and conservation in these locations. I was able to observe and participate in local activities such as guided tours, observe subsistence strategies of native and foreign residents, observe and participate in daily conservation activities conducted by the Sea Turtle Project and by local volunteers, and observe the strategies used by local residents to contend with ecotourism development and sea turtle conservation.

Direct observation allowed me to understand the daily routines in both communities, the perspective of different social group on ecotourism and conservation practices; their interpretations of the combination of both; and what are the problems (social, economic, political) of this scenario. Studies of ecotourism require a close observation of activities such as the reception of tourists, local rapport with tourists, and distinct forms of interaction. My observations also allowed me to take close notice of work invested in ecotourism and in the Sea Turtle Projects. Participant observation was useful to understand the ways that local livelihood is being affected by ecotourism and conservation policies and how identities have changed in recent years.

Combined with participant observation the research counted heavily on Unstructured and Semi-structured Interviews. This method was used to question all
stakeholders on what has changed since the introduction of these sea turtle projects and ecotourism or nature tourism. I used this research tool to question local communities on the changes in their daily lives and changes to their modes of subsistence. To the project personnel I questioned about what were the difficulties in implementing the project, what was participation of the community in this process and what is the current relationship between project personnel and the local communities. It was a useful tool to identify the difficulties faced by the Projects’ personnel in managing resources such as turtle eggs and hatchery grounds amidst tourists and local residents. This information helped better understand the complexity of the social arena and the potential risks to the project’s sustainability. Visitors were also included because I found important to know their perspective on the sea turtle project’s work, and on the communities’ participation in ecotourism. The responses offered a good map of the different discourses in use.

In sum, I interviewed 150 people in Mazunte. I used structured and/or unstructured questionnaires for 55 and I used semi-directive and open-ended interviews for the other 95. Besides that, I observed a series of events in Mazunte, including local and national holidays, all of which contributed directly or indirectly to better understanding the local dynamics of receiving tourists, the social organization of tourism and conservation activity. In Praia do Forte I interviewed 105 people, of which 57 I used structured and unstructured questionnaires and 48 I used semi-directive and open-ended interviews. As in Mazunte, the months spent in Praia do Forte allowed me to observe different social events, parties and parades, and some local and state holidays that greatly helped understand the social organization and dynamics of the local tourism and conservation activity.
The research also relied on archival research. I also used official documents available to the public, such as census data and other registry data. Some of these documents proved useful for information on the history of land tenure, land use pattern, statistics on the number of visitors, estimated annual revenues from visitors, monies reverted to the communities as public and private investment, and decisions-making concerning conservation and development. The archival research was done mostly in the cities of Oaxaca (Oaxaca state capital) and Salvador (Bahia state capital) and at the federal capitals Brasilia, Brazil and Mexico City, Mexico.

Photographic Record was widely used to record images and videos of Mazunte and Praia do Forte, documenting the environment, tourist attractions, public meetings and reunions, festivals and parades, public events and tourism. Tourism is always a visual experience, and natural settings, wildlife, waterways, plants; rock formations are all important aspects of ecotourism experience. Photography has been one of the main ways tourists capture their experience. Through the lens of cameras, tourists register what they consider most interesting and what should be taken home as a memory of a nice journey. Some places become object of continuous picture taking and some local people become objects to the camera lenses of tourists. A record of the images that tourists are taking home can tell a lot about what they expected from the destination, what they actually encountered once there, and what they decided to record and take home.

This research was designed to take 12 months: six months in Mazunte, Mexico and six months in Praia do Forte, Brazil. Despite having similarities that contribute to the comparison, Praia do Forte is far more developed and has already lost considerable ecotourism characteristics. The time allotted to both sites was sufficient to ethnograph
community activities, observe the relationship between locals, environmental project and foreigners involved in the tourism business, as well as observe the influx of tourists, and collect a relevant sample of interviews, testimonies and informal conversations.

Both towns have complex scenarios that involve distinct stakeholders and different activities, conditions that increase the reasons for a comparative approach. Despite local cultural differences and differences in national bureaucratic and government structure, similar stakeholders are present in each town and their involvement and level of influence are much the same. Mazunte and Praia do Forte were excellent sites to investigate the interaction between conservation and ecotourism and the possibilities of social conflicts between these different stakeholders.

In the field, I identified different groups in both Praia do Forte and Mazunte that needed to be interviewed: (1) Local Residents, represented specifically by residents that have lived in these towns for a long period of time, especially since tourism became a major economic activity (last 10 years) and were somewhat impacted by either the conservation initiative or by these types of tourism development. (2) Tourism personnel, included people involved with ecotourism or nature tourism, such as employees and employers of hostels, hotels, nature tourism guided tours and ecotourism attractions. (3) Conservation Project Personnel, represented by specialists intimately involved in the sea turtle conservation projects. It included personnel that work specifically in the sea turtle projects and temporary workers and interns that come to conduct scientific experiments and remain in these towns for a short period. (4) Government Officials in Environmental Departments and Agencies with direct participation in the conservation project, located in the federal capitals of Mexico City and Brasilia. These informants provided data on the
public policy side of the research, which was important to understand the influences of national environmental policies on the local communities. (5) Governmental Officials in Tourism Agencies also located at the federal capitals, with direct participation in government-sponsored programs that promote ecotourism or nature tourism at these two destinations. These agencies regulate the tourism business and train locals in the development of nature tourism and ecotourism. These informants provided data on the public policy side of the research, which is important to understand the influences of national tourism policies on the local communities. (6) NGOs, CBOs, the organized civil society, which has become more present in nature tourism or ecotourism destinations, working with both development and conservation initiatives. These situations include issues of social, economic and environmental sustainability and ecologically-correct management. Hence, the active participation of NGOs and CBOs in training local communities, orient business owners and develop guidelines towards sustainable practices was very significant. Alongside these stakeholders, there was another group composed of (7) Tourists: visitors, national and international, that travel to these two towns and were interested in either ecotourism or nature tourism experience. I made as many guided trips as possible in order to follow tourists around and understand what were they interested in seeing and their perceptions of the attractions they experienced. The tourists were stakeholders when their participation was greater than just of a visitor. In the case of Praia do Forte, many tourists have purchased property or invested locally, becoming part of the local network and having influence in local decisions. In Praia do Forte I interviewed homeowners that were once tourists to understand their integrations and involvement in local politics and economy. This was done in Mazunte as well.
A multi-actor approach (of all stakeholders, to be described in Chapters 07 and 08) became important to understand the dynamics of social interactions that occurs at the local and extra-local level. It is a complex scenario, in which distinct social actors have distinct positions of negotiation. With nature tourism or ecotourism and of conservation initiatives, an array of social interactions come into play, with the potential for factionalism and conflict, but also with interesting forms of negotiation and group alliances. These forms of negotiation can better unveil power structures, participation or exclusion, as well as the modus operandi of the conservation and nature tourism activities. The multi-actor approach was important to analyze the different discourses (evident and inaudible) used and the convergence and divergence of different ideologies (conservationism, developmentalism, communitarism, and others).

2.3 Comparative Methodology

The choice of Praia do Forte and Mazunte was not random. A number of criteria were used to help define two comparable places. The first important criterion was that the two places needed to be in Latin America and in countries with a federalist political system. Since this was a research focused on ecotourism and environmental conservation, I chose countries with similar environmental legislation and with good infrastructure (policy and programs) for ecotourism. Since I had begun research on ecotourism in Brazil during my Master’s Degree, I decided to compare Brazil with another Latin American country. The other country that had very similar legislation, political system and policies and programs for ecotourism was Mexico. Mexico is the number one Latin American
country in regular tourism activity. Brazil still has a very limited regular tourism industry. However, when it comes to ecotourism in small coastal communities, both countries fall within the same range.

An environmental conservation project that had expression in the ecotourism industry was equally important. It should be well known for its work and have a federal government ownership. Mexico has many federal conservation projects; many of them are opened to tourism. Brazil has less, but still a good sample opened to visitation. Sea Turtle Conservation Projects represented the best example. They were always in tourist destinations, opened to the public, made a very positive image on tourists and, most of the time, were associated with sustainable development and ecotourism promotion.

Brazil and Mexico have several sites with sea turtle conservation. To narrow this down to two places, I had to follow other criteria: (1) federal government ownership; (2) be in a small town which went through changes after these projects settled in; (3) have some local initiative, which facilitated ecotourism development; and (4) be a current important destination within the national (and even international) ecotourism route. In Brazil I opted for conducting my research in Praia do Forte because it was the only town with an ecotourism development plan set out. In Mexico, the choice was also limited to one: Mazunte, the location of the CMT, at the time the only federal sea turtle conservation project (there were many others around the country run by private parties and states). It was also a town know for having made the first attempt to establish a community-based ecotourism plan that included building codes and zoning.
The broader objectives of the research demanded a comparative approach. There were to discover how local communities dealt with conservation and development, and how environmental conservation related to ecotourism development. The choice of sea turtle projects was not a random one. Sea turtles have an important tourism value and are considered the specie in most need of protection. Sea turtles are at the very center of two powerful discourses and initiatives: development and conservation, and ecotourism and environmental projects.

Comparative research in Anthropology is not something new, it has been common since the popularity of the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), an ethnological movement that begun in the 1940s. HRAF has the objective of collecting the widest information on the most diverse cultures in the world and systematizing this information in a massive databank. This dissertation does not have the intention of being a HRAF, but of finding common ground on how ecotourism and conservation are working together changes in small communities. The literature on ecotourism (See, for example, Cohen 2001, Duvall 2002, Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004, Green 2002, Rosa 2001, Deforges 2000, Vivanco 2004) has shown how Latin American countries have been following similar paths in their development of ecotourism. Besides, all countries that belong to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles follow the same rules, procedures and scientific objectives in the conservation of this sea reptile. This research will try to demonstrate how at least Brazil and Mexico show very interesting similar patterns in the development of ecotourism and in the conservation of sea turtles.
The comparative methodology was borrowed from other social sciences such as Political Science and Sociology (Chilcote 1994, Laitin 2002). In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the same research questions were used, but very different answers were obtained. The same hypotheses were applied, and were answered in different ways. How enriching can this be to anthropology? From a cultural perspective, a comparative research can demonstrate how very distinct forms of cultural response can effectively deal with the very same social problems.

However, the comparative research in this case has another configuration: the field sites were different in size and complexity. One was bigger that the other, with greater population, closer proximity to a bigger urban center and ahead in the process of urban development. The other was following the same pathway but still behind because it opened to tourism in a later moment. Comparing two places offered better data to understand how two events can cause similar reactions in distinct cultural settings and different attitudes to the same social phenomenon. In this case: sea turtle conservation, local ecotourism development, federal government intervention, foreign influence, international investments and local resistance to all this.

This research has a macro and microanalysis of social organization and the rupture and adaptation surrounding ecotourism development and environmental conservation. At the macro level the focus was on national policies that promote and regulate tourism and national environmental regulations on wildlife conservation. At the micro level (or local level), the focus was on how these policies become reality and what adaptations local communities make to conform to these policies that do not usually coincide with their local knowledge and logic.
To understand how two communities, Praia do Forte, in Brazil and Mazunte, in Mexico engage in (a) development (represented here by nature tourism or ecotourism) and (b) conservation practices (represented here by sea turtle projects, environmental regulations and protective measures), a comparative approach was necessary. Sea turtle conservation projects in both locations represent a strong external intervention of the federal government and of the scientific community on traditional practices, values, logic and discourses.

These towns have conservation projects and significant ecotourism or nature tourism activities. In both Mexico and Brazil, federal laws regulate accessibility to wildlife sites, management of wildlife, and control of ecosystems in areas with endangered species. Conservation projects act with dominance in restricting access to specific areas, imposing specific management strategies and promoting sustainable practices such as ecotourism or nature tourism. These types of tourism represent another intervention, sometimes in consonance with conservation initiatives, other times in contradiction. Sea turtle projects and ecotourism or nature tourism are usually found together in a single destination. This is the case of Mazunte and Praia do Forte and many other towns in Brazil, Mexico and other Latin American Countries. In Mexico, CONANP monitors about of the 33 coastal communities where turtles come to nest. Twenty of these communities have tourism activities. In Brazil, TAMAR monitors 23 communities, 17 of which have tourism.

The main objective of both TAMAR and CMT is to protect sea turtle. Mazunte was once an important center of commercialization of sea turtle produce. Praia do Forte had a history of local consumption of sea turtle eggs. Both locations became ecotourism
or nature tourism destinations in late 1990s and have today considerable amount of accommodations, restaurants and entertainment. Praia do Forte is about an hour away from Salvador, the state capital with population of 2.5 million (IBGE 2000). Mazunte is between the cities of Huatulco, with population of 28,000, Puerto Escondido, with population of 18,000, and San Pedro Pochutla (which includes the town of Puerto Angel) with 36,000 (INEGI 2000). Mazunte was once the main site in Mexico for the exploration and commercialization of sea turtle produce. It had the biggest slaughterhouse and shipped the produce to several cities in Mexico and abroad. Praia do Forte had traditional fishing as its main economic activity. Once sea turtle hunting was banned, specific policies were established to helped these communities find another economic alternative that would guarantee the success of conservation initiatives.

This research used a comparative methodology that involved two community case studies. The focus on these two towns offered a close look into processes of negotiation between different actors to contend with changes in livelihoods, to the local environment and to the economic, political and cultural aspects of local identities. The core of the comparison was the process of change led by ecotourism, nature tourism, animal watching tourism and conservation. The comparative method facilitated the systematization of data, especially regarding similarities and differences. It is most indicated for analysis of qualitative data that includes systems of classification. The current global scenario of interconnectedness between cultures justifies the use of comparative method because it helps unveil effects of national and international forces acting at local level. According to Skocpol and Somers (1980), the comparative method is more efficient in comprehending social, political, economic and cultural
transformations at the time of research. That is why this research focused on the two
towns as well as the federal capitals from where most of the public policies for natural
resource management, conservation initiatives and tourism planning derive.

The comparative approach was important to understand the connection between
ecotourism and conservation. As will be demonstrated in further chapters, sea turtle
projects have the particularity of directly or indirectly promoting ecotourism or nature
tourism within local communities as an alternative economic activity to substitute sea
turtle hunting. Mazunte and Praia do Forte demonstrate this scenario very well. The
results of this comparative approach will be explained in the next chapters.
Chapter 3: Ecological-Economic Ecotourism Corridor

3.1 Introduction

To discuss Praia do Forte and Mazunte, it becomes necessary to contextualize each town within a larger social, political, economic and cultural sphere. Each destination is part of a geographical region that confers it with value and meaning. This larger region is also the relational universe: the place where local residents have transit, where local businesses such as restaurants and hotels get their groceries and other required goods, and where all legal and bureaucratic activities (such as town hall duties, taxes and fines) are set.

The idea if regional contexts and inter-relational networks between small communities must be understood within the focus of tourism studies, environmental anthropology and anthropology of globalization. Within anthropology of tourism studies, there are few studies on networks between towns or small communities (Caalders 1997 and 2000, Camagni 1999, Fadeeva 2004). There are other studies on community-based tourism networks (Mumphree 2005, Kamsma and Bras 2000, Criado et al. 2003), which are focused mostly on rural tourism development, and mainly on groups of partners, whether NGOs, CBOs or even government agencies that are working collaborative projects to enhance the viability of community-based ecotourism.

Small towns, when engaging in ecotourism markets, become more vulnerable to external market variations. If towns are geographically within a short distance, increasing
competition between them may occur. As Caalders puts it, “[when] the tourist market is
growing, competition among destinations is also increasing. More remote areas have to
compete not only with each other, but also with cities and the cities [surroundings]”
(2000: 185). Therefore, a crucial issue to ecotourism development is the ways in which
small communities associate one with another in order to improve their capital gains and
their social organization and therefore have a long-run sustainable ecotourism project.

Every locality has an established network in the proximity of regionally
composed neighboring towns and cities. Praia do Forte and Mazunte are not exceptions.
Social relations, political alliances, economic exchanges, and cultural sharing compose
this inter-town network. Environmental conservation and ecotourism development are
other important characteristics to these established networks of Praia do Forte and
Mazunte.

There is a direct relation between this process of community networking or
regional association and a necessary adaptation of local economies to globalization.
Ecotourism has been one of the main development policies used by governments to
transform local communities into an essential part of the tourism portfolio of a country.
Before, tourism development was directly linked to large destinations, planned by
government (e.g. Cancun) or developed on the premise of historical heritage (e.g. Oaxaca
City and Salvador). Today, governments want to expand the tourism portfolio by
integrating as many communities as possible into national tourism. By linking localities
with the globalized tourism market, governments are in fact intensifying a “worldwide
social relation which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are
shaped by events occurring many miles away” (Giddens, 1990: 64). Small communities
are more connected to international markets than ever before. Ecotourism “creates transnational economic, political and social networks that link the smallest places with the most extensive spaces on the globe” (Hutchins 2007: 76).

Mazunte and Praia do Forte are not different; they are intertwined with a series of international discourses such as environmentality and sustainable development. To better explain the importance of these regional networks, I draw from a particular terminology derived from environmental conservation policies to explain why these networks are relevant to understand the localities within a globalization scenario.

Ecologic Corridors (MMA 2007) are corridors with the function of creating links and establishing connectivity between protected areas (e.g. National Parks, Biological Reserves, Wildlife Preserves); promoting an extensive conservation of biodiversity in forested areas between different protected areas; and thus reducing the risk of both biodiversity loss and isolation of species. The term was created to identify areas that worked as connection corridors between different protected areas and to promote specific conservation programs and initiatives that would strengthen the potential of these areas to protect biodiversity, preventing fragmentation of patches of forest by integrated territorial management. It is a management tool used on regional scale to contribute to sustainable development (Ganem 2005; Heinisch et al. 2007).

Ecological Corridors became a federal government conservation project in Brazil. It has the objective of testing and approaching different conditions to implement this conservationist concept in different pilot areas: the Central Corridor of the Atlantic Rainforest and in the Central Corridor of the Amazon Rainforest. Neither Praia do Forte
nor Mazunte are part of any formal ecological corridor. However, both localities, and the neighboring towns share important ecological traits that could be understood as ecological corridors. These corridors would be in Oaxaca by the natural disposition of Mazunte and its neighboring communities of San Agustinillo, Ventanilla and Escobilla; and in Bahia by the natural disposition of Praia do Forte and its neighboring communities of Imbassai and Arembepe. Alongside the ecological value of these corridors, there is an economic importance offered by ecotourism.

In the Ecological Corridor Project in Brazil, ecotourism has become one of the tested approaches used to solving management problems related to protected areas and the corridors in between. According to Project Documents, ecotourism has demonstrated its effectiveness as a tool for generating incomes to communities in the corridors, maintaining low environmental impact and strengthening cultural identities and traditional values of small communities. Besides, ecotourism has been used effectively in environmental education and interpretation of nature because it integrates locals as tour guides to visitors. As guides, locals are required to learn about the ecosystem that surrounds them and how their livelihood is directly linked to local and regional conservation efforts (MMA 2007).

The approach of the Ecological Corridor Project is different from that of TAMAR, CMT and other government or third sector agencies involved in the development of ecotourism in either Praia do Forte or Mazunte. First, locals are not involved in ecotourism as guides or promoters. The in fact have incomes related to ecotourism, but indirectly. Still, for conservation purposes, the 3ECs are effective,
especially for TAMAR and CMT. It helps integrate the different beaches that compose the conservation network of each sea turtle project.

The important ecological and economic linkage between these towns makes of them Ecological Economic Ecotourism Corridors (3EC). The 3EC would then be a section, or geographic region composed of different ecotourism communities that have significant ecological and economic importance and are linked by economic, political and cultural ties. In both corridors, the communities are aligned along the coast and have one highway that connects them. Comparably, they are ecologically important for two major reasons: these communities are all nesting or feeding areas for sea turtles and all have important coastline vegetation in good preservation condition. Ecotourism is the main economic activity in every community of the network, justifying the economic quality of the corridor.

From an environmental standpoint, these towns are very important to the sea turtle conservation projects. Politically, uniting them makes conservation more effective to TAMAR and CMT. Economically, ecotourism development that stretches beyond the town limits and includes neighboring towns makes it more reliable, because it increases the options of attractions to ecotourists and strengthens the ability of these communities to compete in the global ecotourism market.

Local communities benefit from this connectivity through conservation and sustainable use projects. Ecotourism destinations require a sustainable approach to resource use and development (Brown 2002). To maintain sustainable development patterns, and permit that ecotourism activities continue to subsist, these communities are
forced to restrict urban expansion, limit somewhat the number of ecotourists they receive and maintain environmental quality standards. These requirements reduce revenues in comparison with conventional tourism (See Mowforth and Munt 2003, and Sandoval 2006). The connectivity provided by the corridor increases the economic viability of these communities because ecotourists have more options to leisure and localities have guaranteed more observation sites, without additional environmental impact. This happens because the ecotourism flow is spread among more than one community rather than being concentrated in only one place. As analyzed, when planning their vacations, tourists prefer regions with more than one tourism destination (Decrop 2006), especially if these destinations are small and with limited attractions. This is true in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Most ecotourists I interviewed did not limit their vacation to only one place. While visiting Praia do Forte, ecotourists also visited Imbassaí and Arembepe. The ones in Mazunte also visited San Agustinillo and Ventanilla.

Laurie (30), William (35) and Otto (35) are ecotourists from the USA. Laurie is married to William and Otto is William’s brother. They came to Mazunte after a friend suggested the place to them. Laurie said:

“When we arrived in Mazunte, we were amazed by this little paradise. The town was gorgeous and the rustic infra-structure really makes you disconnect, I mean, we live in Minneapolis and a small place like this helps you rest from problems such as traffic, noise and work. […] After three days here, we were starting to get bored. Good thing the hotel told us of different places we could visit. We had already been alternating between Mazunte and San Agustinillo, since our hotel is located between the two places, and at walking distance of the two beaches [Mazunte and San
Agustinillo], but we wanted to see more. Therefore, we got all the information about Ventanilla and went to spend a day there. The tour around the mangrove was great. Tomorrow we already planned a visit Escobilla. We learned that they have a trail walk around their mangrove and a tour at the beach to observe sea turtle nesting. We will spend the night there.” (Interview in 07/March/2008)

Svensen (25) and Christie (26) were ecotourists from Holland. They were vacationing in Brazil for the first time and decided to get to know Bahia. They had planned to stay at Praia do Forte for over a week. Svensen said:

“We love it here. I read about Praia do Forte in a brochure the travel agency gave me. We booked a room here at a nice little hotel. The best part is the natural pools in the coral gardens, the calm beach and all the activities we can do in town. The restaurants have good food and music. We have visited all beaches in Praia do Forte and around. After the 6th day in Praia do Forte, we wanted to visit other places. We rented a car here and started driving all along the Linha Verde [the name of the highway that connects the beach towns along the north of Bahia]. We spent a whole day in Imbassai, two days in Arembepe and tomorrow we are going to visit Mangue Seco [further north, about 80km, already at the boarder with Sergipe]. The best thing here is the easy access to all these places. Our trip has been worthwhile for all the beautiful places we have visited.” (Interview on 05/October/2007)

The 3EC is useful to collectively identifying destinations that work with similar public; offer similar or same natural attractions and; are linked by cultural and environmental issues. The 3EC is an economic strategy to increment gains with visitors and reduce losses to environmental conservation. It functions as a network to strengthen the visibility of these places. Small towns let alone, are successful in attracting more
visitors if they have some thing special that puts them in evidence and if they have sufficient activities to keep their visitors entertained. The problem here relates to authenticity and the construction of tourist sights (Rojek 1997).

Usually, ecotourism destinations are remote places, and many times in distant countries. These sites construct their attractiveness or sights on the extraordinary elements that will distance travelers from their ordinary everyday life. Tourist consumption is based on a set of representations, culturally constructed. Travelers visit ecotourism sites attracted by the representational image they created from studying guidebooks, watching TV programs and other media that clues them to the desired site. Rojek calls this “indexing”, which works like a file searching for information learned elsewhere. Ecotourists travel to destinations to search for the imagined sight. “All tourists sights rely on distinctions which demarcate them as extraordinary places. The demarcation process is reinforced by representational codes” (Rojek 1997: 70).

Tourists are interested in the extraordinary and “authentic” places. According to West and Carrier (2004), the “authentic” ecotourism experience relates to the frontier, the exotic place with exotic animals, people and nature. Praia do Forte and Mazunte have tried to construct their ecotourism destination based on the authenticity of local flora and fauna (e.g. sea turtles and whales), and the cultural distinctiveness of the local people. To achieve this grandeur quality, these towns have had to group with neighboring towns. Communities have to rely on neighboring communities to boost their attractiveness and increase the myriad of authentic sightseeing and of the possibility of indexing extraordinary experiences. Economic viability of small ecotourism destinations affects mostly the local residents. They are the ones who depend more on the revenues brought
by ecotourists. The smallest variation in the flow of ecotourists tends to affect mostly locals. Businesses have their own strategies to maintain profits and not to suffer as much, but also benefit from the network established between towns. The neologism of a 3EC is based on that premise: how locals subsist in a new economic system based on ecotourism.

Praia do Forte and Mazunte (together with San Agustínillo) have sufficient qualities to work as magnets for ecotourists. Their attractiveness is based on three pillars: natural environment, wildlife conservation and community organization. Good beaches, conservation projects, beautiful scenario, trendy urban layout, local awareness of ecology and a somewhat cosmopolitan flair are important qualities that distinguish these towns. Why then the network of communities? Why set an economic, ecologic ecotourism corridor? This chapter will explain why. Efforts towards environmental conservation and sustainable development are harder to be expended by one single community. Political ecology research has concluded that a more effective scale is usually regional, not local (Paulson and Gezon 2005). This happens because of three basic issues: (1) wildlife conservation requires extensive areas used as habitat, that usually surpasses local town limits; (2) ecotourism development usually requires larger landscape to offer considerable attractiveness to visitors and (3) landscape preservation must be understood from a regional perspective, that includes larger ecosystems.

The basis of ecotourism in the region of Mazunte and of Praia do Forte is the scenery, well-preserved vegetation, wildlife management, and adventure sports at sea and inland. However, managing all these ecotourism activities and maintaining a minimal
environmental performance standard is what strangles the communities. Establishing networks with other towns helps to resolve this.

“Nature-based tourism is particularly sensitive to other activities in the area. These may cause positive or negative externalities. Positive externalities can arise from the construction of infrastructures for other activities, such as better transportation facilities, but can also cause negative impacts on the quality of the environment, such as pollution” (Avila-Foucat and Eugenio-Martin, 2007:4).

Special considerations towards environmental conservation had to be made in both the 3ECs. Sea turtles are important ecotourism promoters at the 3EC of Mazunte and at the 3EC of Praia do Forte. The towns that make up for the 3ECs have sea turtle conservation activities, some have research stations, others have visitors’ center, and all have people monitoring beaches. There are some necessary environmental quality standards in order to maintain beaches as nesting grounds for turtles (Goodall and Stabler 2000). Beaches have to have minimal artificial lighting, buildings have keep a distance from the beach, vegetation at the beach needs to be preserved. The quality of the water needs to remain a constant, so inland development needs to be planned and rivers need to be cleared from sewage or other forms of pollution. One small community cannot maintain these standards alone. That is one major reason why the 3ECs are needed. Acting alone one community will not have sufficient effectiveness in sustainable development.

The focus here is on towns that are located close to one another, follow the same environmental quality standards and have operative sea turtle monitoring and research
activities. Sea turtles are responsible for the establishment of a linking identity between these towns who are integrated by the continuous activities conducted by CMT and TAMAR. Protecting turtles and allowing ecotourists to have an experience watching these animals is today one of the most important concerns to these communities. These initiatives also help distinguish them from other beach destinations in both Mexico and Brazil. Natural attractions such as beaches, clear water, wildlife and protected landscape are important considerations for tourist planning (Decrop 2007). The presence of sea turtles and the environmental restrictions set to protect them have helped these places maintain good environmental quality and attract ecotourists. The 3ECs are ecotourism corridors with ecological and economic purposes.

Mazunte and Praia do Forte are the centerpieces of these Corridors. They were the first established ecotourism destinations and the precursors of a regional leverage orientation towards ecotourism development. Mazunte is part of the Corridor that aggregates the towns of Escobilla, Ventanilla and San Agustinillo – all four towns have beaches monitored by the CMT. Praia do Forte is part of the Corridor that includes the towns of Arembepe and Imbassai. TAMAR monitors all three towns. The term 3EC was developed after observing how close the connections are between the listed towns in Mexico and Brazil, whether for their vocation to sea turtle conservation or for ecotourism.
3.2 The 3EC of Mazunte

Mazunte, San Agustinillo and Ventanilla are part of a Travel Route called “Riviera Oaxaqueña”. The state of Oaxaca has its coast divided into four sections, from north to south: there is (1) the north coast of Puerto Escondido, (2) the Riviera Oaxaqueña, (3) the bays of Huatulco and (4) the Gulf of Tehuantepec. The three first sections are tourist destinations. The Gulf of Tehuantepec is more isolated, with most of its communities located inland, and with its beaches separated from these communities by extensive saline flats. The Riviera Oaxaqueña started with the town of Puerto Ángel, an important vacation spot of the 1950s and 1960s. It was the first beach destination of Oaxaca and an important seaport for seafood and other products that came from other parts of Mexico. Today it is a forgotten fishing village, albeit its important role in supplying different municipalities with fish and seafood. Puerto Ángel pushed the development of the communities of Zipolite, San Agustinillo, Mazunte and Ventanilla. Once these later communities abandoned sea turtle hunting, ecotourism began to develop. Puerto Angel is a bay with high hills enclosing it. There is only limited swimming area and the amount of fish traded locally impregnates the town with a stale smell of fish. These aspects contributed to the promotion of Zipolite, San Agustinillo and Mazunte, which attracted more ecotourists for the nicer landscape and good clean beaches. Zipolite originated as a hippie town, and still maintains this title. The town is well known by international travelers as a liberal haven in Mexico.

The towns of Mazunte, San Agustinillo, Ventanilla and Escobilla have a strong collective identity, linked to the sea turtle industry in Oaxaca since the 1950s. The
coastline that links these towns was the area used for sea turtle exploration. Escobilla is further away and the main nesting ground of Mexico. It supplied over 70% of the sea turtles processed at the slaughterhouse in San Agustinillo, according to CMT technical staff. The four towns of San Agustinillo, Mazunte, Ventanilla and Escobilla maintain strong ties since the time sea turtles were their main economic resource. Today the four towns rely on ecotourism. Each town developed its own ecotourism scheme. All have community-based ecotourism projects, with some differences in the social actors and the outcomes. Mazunte and San Agustinillo prospered first because these two towns received the most attention of public authorities right after the ban on sea turtle hunting. Ventanilla did not benefit directly from government help after the ban, but the community developed an organized tour around a local well-preserved mangrove. Escobilla did not benefit from ecotourism until very recently, when a local CBO developed a guided ecotourism trail around a local mangrove and a small portion of the nesting beach.

Ventanilla, Mazunte and San Agustinillo are located one after the other in the North-South direction. The three towns are accessed by the Carretera de Mazunte, a vicinal highway that exits from the Carretera del Pacifico Sur (MX-200). Escobilla is further away, about 50km distant towards the north, accessed directly by the MX-200, a highway follows Oaxaca’s coastline. Escobilla is set apart from the other three towns, but its identity rests on its connection with ecotourism, the presence of CMT and its history as a center for turtles hunting. Viewed from the sea, these towns form a contiguous coastal line, with many beaches divided by rocks and hills. The topography of the Oaxacan coast is very irregular and marked by hills, mountains and cliffs that bisect the coastline forming individual beaches.
Figure 3.9: Map of the 3EC of Mazunte. The yellow markers indicate the communities. Notice how Escobilla is detached, but it has an advanced research base of CMT. The headquarters of CMT is located in Mazunte. Source: Google Earth 2009
Escobilla is part of the municipality of San Pedro Colotepec. Ventanilla, Mazunte and San Agustinillo are part of the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca. Escobilla is the largest in territory, but the smallest in number of visitors. It has the most important beach for sea turtle conservation purposes, with the highest rate of nesting of all of Mexico and second of the world, the first behind the beach of Tortuguero in Costa Rica (UABJO 2007). When it comes to nesting season, this beach receives over 10000 female sea turtles every night, a phenomenon called *Arribada*. Escobilla has just started ecotourism activity with guided tours to its main beach. Since 1967, the beach was declares a Sea Turtle Sanctuary.

In 1986, the Federal Decree No. 2479 established that Playa de Escobilla, along with other 12 beaches, become a Reserved Area for the protection, conservation and repopulation of threatened sea turtle species\(^2\). This Decree established that the National Fishing Institute would control sea turtle fishing outside the beach, and prohibit any type of fishing during the nesting season. In 2002, a legal agreement of the Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales declared all these Reserved Areas as Wildlife Sanctuaries. According to the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection\(^3\), Wildlife Sanctuaries are considered a type of ANP located in zones with considerable flora and fauna and the existence of species with restricted population and in danger of extinction. In sanctuaries, only research, environmental education and recreation activities compatible with the natural characteristics of the area are allowed.

\(^2\) Zonas de reserva y sitios de refugio para la protección, conservación, repoblación, desarrollo y control, de las diversas especies de tortuga marina.

\(^3\) Ley General del Equilibrio Ecológico y la Protección al Ambiente.
Figure 3.10: a view of the CMT research station in Escobilla. Note that on the left there is an armed truck. The National Army uses half of the building as their base, to monitor the beach. CMT uses the right side of the building. Photograph by author.

Figure 3.11: CMT staff plan the activity for the nesting season. A biologist has to work day and night monitoring the beach to count how many nests were made. Photograph by author.
Once declared a Wildlife Sanctuary, Playa de Escobilla was closed to the public and the National Army began to encamp there to guarantee the adequate protection to sea turtles and their nests. Only biologists and personnel from the CMT have free access to the beach in order to monitor the reproduction cycle of sea turtles. Neither the local residents are allowed access to the beach. Escobilla has a CMT research station, located in the same building used by the Army. The station is staffed with biologists that monitor the beaches for nests and baby turtles. The exclusion of locals from these protected areas is still a reference to the conservationist’ discourse that local populations are not capable of modifying the use of natural resources and thus have to be excluded from the areas where they once exploited these resources.

The conscription of reserved areas or wildlife sanctuaries is directly linked to conservation. As Orlove and Brush explain:

“Conservation policy includes efforts on three levels. The first targets individual species, often by limiting of preventing hunting and harvesting. The second focuses on the protection of the habitat in which the population of endangered species live. The third manages entire assemblies of ecosystems” (1996: 331).

In the case of Escobilla, sea turtles are the endangered species, there nesting grounds at Playa Escobilla is the protected habitat and the complex of nesting beaches and feeding areas along the coast of Oaxaca (that include Ventanilla, Mazunte and San Agustinillo), managed by CMT is the assembly of ecosystems necessary to the survival of this species.
Recently a local cooperative, composed of some local residents of Escobilla started offering special tours to the beach to observe sea turtles nesting. This is done with small groups of ecotourists accompanied by a trained local tour guide and under the close supervision of the CMT. Some members of the community were trained by CMT to work as tour guides and each guide can accompany a group of no more than eight people at a time. The group can remain at the beach up to 20 minutes; they cannot swim and cannot take pictures with flash. These restrictions were a demand of CMT to safeguard the nests from being trampled and to protect turtles that are nesting.

Figure 3.12: Locals at Escobilla show the mangrove to visitors. After the mangrove is the nesting beach of Escobilla. Photograph by author.

The majority of people in Escobilla continue to steal sea turtle eggs. The permission to receive ecotourists is an alternative that CMT found to overcome the problem of unauthorized visits to the beach and the potential harm to nests. The tour
starts at the cooperative’s restaurant, located on the highway. There is a walking tour around the local mangrove on a guided trail that leads to the beach. The cooperative was trained to teach visitors about the richness of local fauna, at both the mangrove and the beach.

Ventanilla is the next destination. It is a secluded beach with only one entrance and a very large mangrove surrounding the village. To access the beach, the community decided to charge a small conservation fee, which is used to keep the local beach clean. Ecotourists also have the option of paying for a guided boat ride around the mangrove to see local fauna and flora. The mangrove was devastated by Hurricane Dennis in 1996 but is now fully recovered and reforested. The community recovered and replanted the entire mangrove with international funds (Foucat 2004). Today, the mangrove displays luscious vegetation, very clean waters and a wide variety of fauna, such as birds, alligators and lizards. The beach of Ventanilla has some fenced areas used for sea turtle hatcheries. The beach is very tranquil and the community offers bungalow accommodations, all constructed with wood from the trees destroyed by hurricane Dennis. The village offers good meals at collectively owned restaurants, but the mangrove is what draws the attention of ecotourists. An island sits in the middle of the dark root-colored waters and is a stop during the tour. The community has some mangrove plant nurseries and hatcheries of alligators there. They have also set up a restaurant to serve food and fresh coconut water to visitors.

Ventanilla has an important mangrove, however it does not have any legal protection of an ANP. All protection is done by the local community that has learned the importance of preserving the mangrove for economic gains with ecotourism. Ventanilla is
an interesting example of community embracing the ecological cause. Within the 3EC it offers the most environmentally sensible ecotourism experience. The appropriation of sustainable development models and conservation techniques reflects the involvement level of local residents of Ventanilla with the international environmental agenda of ecosystem management and wildlife conservation. Locals have acknowledged the importance conservation and ecotourism has to economic sustainability. Most international ecotourists that visit these places do so relying on constructed ideas of what conservation and ecotourism should be. Therefore, a locality that is able to communicate with these visitors in a way to materialize the constructed ideas will be more successful in attracting visitors. This is what Ventanilla has been doing by responding directly to a globalized idea of sustainable development.

Figure 3.13: Ecotourists enjoy a canoe ride around the mangrove in Ventanilla to observe birds, alligators, turtles and local vegetation. Photograph by author.
Mazunte is the next village. It has the largest population and the largest urbanized area within the 3EC. It has four different beaches – Playa Principal, Rinconcito, Punta Cometa and Playa Mermejita – each one is an inlet surrounded by rock formations. This physical characteristic offers ecotourists calm clear waters. Mazunte concentrates most lodging and restaurants of the 3EC. It also receives the largest number of ecotourists year round. It is a destination preferred by the younger travelers and backpackers. Between Rinconcito and Mermejita, is Punta Cometa, a promontory with its own secluded beach, indicated as being the southern most point in the Mexican territory and imbued with mystical and esoteric values. This resonance attracts the hippies and other travelers seeking some sort of religiosiy and esoteric experience. Mazunte is the location of the CMT and its visitors’ center. The CMT in Mazunte is responsible for all the research and monitoring of nesting beaches in Oaxaca. Mazunte benefits from the CMT visitors’ center because it attracts ecotourists to the town, including a considerable number from larger destinations, such as Huatulco and Puerto Escondido.

San Agustinillo is the next town and it, too, has three beaches. It was part of Mazunte until the late 1990s. San Agustinillo is also, like Mazunte, a hot spot for sun and sea tourism. San Agustinillo has three inlets separated by long rocks that stretch out into the sea. The town is where most of the fishermen live and work (among the three). It is small, squeezed between steep hills and the ocean. The road cuts right through at the bottom of the hill, limiting urban development. However, locals have taken advantage of the limited space and built more sophisticated lodges and restaurants. In fact, San Agustinillo is, among the four towns, the one that offers the most comfortable options and amenities to ecotourists. Mazunte has nice lodging and dining, but its preference
among younger ecotourists, especially the partying ones, has limited its appeal to attract the older ecotourists with more money, like San Agustinillo does.

The four towns are distinct from each other but have a strong history that links them: sea turtle consumptive use in the past and non-consumptive use nowadays. Sea turtles were hunted all along the 3EC coastline and taken to San Agustinillo, where the slaughterhouse was located. The slaughterhouse hired workers from all four towns. With the ban on sea turtle consumptive use, all four towns suffered a strong economic impact and shifted to ecotourism.

Figure 3.14: Arial view of Mazunte and San Agustinillo. Mazunte beaches are the two on each side of the peninsula, which is Punta Cometa. San Agustinillo is the little inlet and the long one at the left side. Note how the urban density is concentrate at lower lands, just at the beach. Photograph by author.

Mazunte, Ventanilla and San Agustinillo are today part of a cultural travel route in southern Mexico. Interesting enough, most visitors come to this southern region of
Mexico to visit towns and cities that have historical value. This route includes the cities of Oaxaca and San Cristobal de las Casas and the historical sites of Monte Albán, Mitla and Palenque. Most active tourists that decide to travel this particular route are young backpackers from Europe. They are interested in the history of the City of Oaxaca, a well preserved colonial city and the center stage for historical revolutions and wars between indigenous groups and the Spanish conquerors; in the royal city of Monte Albán and the well preserved Mitla, two important archaeological sites of Zapotec culture; in the quaint colonial town of San Cristobal de las Casas, where Mayan culture mixes with Spanish colonial urbanization, occupied by the EZLN in 1994 (see Figueiredo 2006); and Palenque, an important Mayan culture archaeological site in the state of Chiapas, a popular destination. Tourists are interested in the history and spectacle of the indigenous resistance to Spanish colonialism. The EZLN travelled through much of Chiapas and Oaxaca, and their insurgent movement increased the tourist interest in the region.

Then, why is Mazunte part of this? It is not a historical site, and the EZLN did not pass even close to this beach destination. The answer comes from the ecotourists. Most of them travel around Oaxaca and Chiapas for over a month. The two states are big and traveling between destinations of the historical/revolutionary circuit takes time. Therefore, travelers opt to have a short stop in Mazunte to rest, relax and recover the necessary energies to continue their journey. They choose Mazunte because it is the most rustic of the Oaxaca and Chiapas beach destinations. Rustic relates more to a revolutionary travel than fancy or comfortable. Travelers said that Mazunte was an alternative travel package offered at most hostels in Oaxaca and the simplicity of town did not make them feel guilty for having detoured from their historical and cultural
“pilgrimage” to take a dive at the ocean and eat fresh fish for a few days. The ecotourists who visits Mazunte usually also visits San Agustinillo and Ventanilla, the three less than a mile apart from each other.

Mazunte an Urbanization and Regulation Code created to protect preserved local characteristics and to establish zoning, building codes, percentage of allowed land use and regulations about visual aspects in town. Local residents created this code with the objective of preserving the particular characteristics, which identified Mazunte as an ecotourism site. These characteristics included rustic and sensible urbanization, ecological constructions with thatched roofs, brick walls, one pavement, and trees around. The town has been pressured by business interests to permit building expansion, constructing more levels, paving open spaces for parking, cutting down trees, etc. Mazunte, and the other three towns of the 3EC have fragile ecosystems. Due to limited annual rainfall and the mostly rocky soil, vegetation is limited and susceptible to degradation by human. The area some similarities to a savanna, with trees take long periods to fully grow, scarce water resources and limited wildlife, and some endangered species, especially reptiles.

Concerned with this threat, residents decided to establish rules that would reduce impacts on the local environment. The Code is the only one known to all of the coastal towns of Oaxaca. Even though it is a good example, compliance to the code is loose. The local authorities have limited capacity to check all constructions and many locals defy their authority. More so, the Code focuses too much on anthropization, regulation of construction and urbanization standards; and too little on development planning and the natural environment - what should be central to preservation.
San Agustinillo just approved (in December 2007) a local regulation that prohibits the construction of large businesses. The objective is to block the advancement of medium and large hotels into town. The town is concerned with the rapid urbanization process that is taking over the Oaxacan coast, between the cities of Puerto Escondido, north of the 3EC, and Huatulco, south of the 3EC. There is a National Development Plan for the region that includes a larger highway and some medium size resorts. These towns in the 3EC are concerned with this and afraid that big corporations might take over. The area that I defined as the 3EC has become a political alliance to keep large-scale development at bay. Strengthening ecotourism and community-based development, makes it difficult for external agents to subvert towns and create larger destinations. This is what happened with Huatulco. Small towns were removed to build the planned tourism facilities. Brenner (2005) discussed how after 12 years the Federal Government still has problems to mitigate social impacts of a destination considered an example of sustainable development.

3.3 The 3EC of Praia do Forte

Praia do Forte is part of a travel route called “Costa dos Coqueiros” (or “Coconut Coast” in English). This derived from the predominant vegetation of the coast: coconut trees. This travel route designates all the northern coastline of the state of Bahia, starting at the state capital, Salvador and northward to the border with the Brazilian state of Sergipe. This travel route includes several destinations, among which are Arembepe, part
of the municipality of Camaçari, and Praia do Forte and Imbassai, both part of the municipality of Mata de São João.

Arembepe, Praia do Forte and Imbassai are located one after the other traveling northward on the Linha Verde state highway that runs from Salvador to the border with Sergipe. These three towns form an almost straight line along the coast and are protected by a long coral reef and coral gardens. The towns were established where the coral gardens have gaps that allow ships to reach the coast. Each town has it small port where small fishing boat and schooners can sail and dock. Larger boats cannot make their way through these narrow and shallow passages in the coral reefs and gardens. This section of the coastline has three medium size rivers – the Capivara, Pojuca and Imbassai – that flow into the sea. The Pojuca River it the largest of the three and marks the division between the municipalities of Camaçari and Mata de São João.

Arembepe is the oldest town of the three and is the largest in population and size. The town is a small fishing village dating about 150 years that became popular with hippies in the late 1960s after celebrities such as Janis Joplin and Mick Jaeger showed up during one vacation. The first official hippie village of Brazil was established here (see Kottak 1999). Today, only the coast of Arembepe is preserved from development. The inland part of town has given way to disorder. Large-size homes and tiny shacks cramp the small spaces between the various lakes that surround the town, and the coast. Arembepe received the title of the “most famous hippie destination in Brazil” according to Bahia’s tourism portal.
Figure 3.15: Map of the 3EC of Praia do Forte. Yellow markers indicate the towns. Note how close the three towns are from the city of Salvador, at the lower left corner. Source: Google Earth 2009.
Hippies established a hippie village on the coast, and the particular architecture chosen to build their houses distinguished them from the rest of town. The hippie village today is an ecotourism attraction and has references to where Janis Joplin vacationed. The beaches at Arembepe are important nesting grounds for sea turtles and this prompted TAMAR to establish a research station here. Arembepe receives a considerable number of ecotourists every year and along with the research station, TAMAR has a small visitors’ center. The fishermen at Arembepe also used to hunt sea turtles and collect eggs for subsistence, like the ones of Praia do Forte (see http://www. bahia.com.br).

Figure 3.16: Aerial view of Arembepe. Note the coral reefs that protect the town. The urban development is condensed, leaving great areas of wilderness inland. The less developed part of the coast, to the right is where TAMAR monitors the beach and protects sea turtle nests. Source: Google Earth 2009.

While a fishing town, Arembepe today depends mostly on ecotourism. The interest of hippies continues. Backpackers make their pilgrimage to Arembepe and local
bars, restaurants and lodging gain with that. Different from the ones back in the 1960s, when Kottak first ethnographed their interaction with locals, today’s hippies have money and agree to pay for a room and for food. Arembepe is the “alternative” or “hippie” destination within the 3EC. Being closer to Salvador, and the first town to be reached on the highway, ecotourists learn about Praia do Forte and Imbassai.

Praia do Forte is the most international destination. With the title of “the Brazilian Polynesia” (www.bahia.com.br), Praia do Forte has very nice beaches with beautiful coral gardens, as well as trendy restaurants and lodging. It is the most recognized ecotourism destination. Dating from before 1940s, Praia do Forte was a coconut farm that became a tiny fishing village in the late 1960s until it was transformed into an ecotourism

Figure 3.17: Areal view of Praia do Forte. Note the beach line and the dense coral reefs that protrude into the ocean. The main entrance that leads to the yellow pin marker is the main port entrance used by small sail and fishing boats to dock. Note at the very center how densely packed is the urban area and how the expanding areas are less dense.

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destination in the 1980s. Praia do Forte is smaller than Arembepe but receives today more ecotourists and more revenues from these visitors than the other two towns. The town of Praia do Forte is very quaint. The town is very neat and every business is trendy. This difference is due to the type of ecotourists Praia do Forte receives today. Most are wealthy national or European ecotourists. In addition, Praia do Forte is the main nesting ground of sea turtles in all Brazil. It is the location of TAMAR’s national headquarters and where the project has its biggest visitors’ center.

Figure 3.18: An aerial view of the town of Imbassai. Note how the river creates a peninsula. Ecotourists concentrate near the delta, where most of the ecotourism infrastructure is. Photograph by author.

Imbassai is the small of the three, having received its first small hostel about six to seven years ago. Imbassai has a river with the same name that cuts through town on its way to the ocean. At its delta, there is a sharp curve making it parallel to the ocean and creating a narrow strip of white sand between the river and the ocean. The destination’s
attraction is this strip of sand that has fresh refreshing water on one side and salt warm seawater on the other. Small and improvised beach stalls offer drinks and appetizers to ecotourists. Imbassai is the most rustic of the three towns. Its few streets are all unpaved and there is only the minimal infrastructure to provide comfort to visitors. The town has a small TAMAR research station that monitors few kilometers of beaches.

There are some particular characteristics that create and justify the link between these towns: (1) Projeto TAMAR has research stations at the three of them; (2) the beaches at these three destinations are constantly monitored by biologists; (3) fishermen are also regarding the safety of sea turtles; (4) the three destinations are small with similarities in the type of ecotourists they receive and the tourism they promote and; (5) the three are located one after the other, from the south to north and are accessed by the same highway. Ecotourism sets the modus operandi of all three towns.

Praia do Forte and Imbassai (municipality of Mata de São João) are part of an APA. According to the Brazilian environmental legislation on Protected Areas – SNUC – this is one type of sustainable use protected area. It is an extensive area that usually includes human occupation, and has significant biological, aesthetic, and cultural aspects that justify protection to assure life quality to local populations, sustainable use of natural resources and preservation of important local biodiversity. The APA has private and public land and is governed by ZEE code. The ZEE defines areas that need to be protected and other areas that can have economic development and urban expansion. Every APA has a managing council with designated member of the civil society, government, environmental agencies and sometimes industries. This council has the responsibility of assuring the compliance to the ZEE is being followed. Every activity in
the APA, whether it is industrial, agricultural, tourism, conservation, urban expansion, must follow the regulations established by the ZEE. The ZEE is done right after the APA is declared. An APA is a legal instrument that gives additional safeguards against disorderly urban occupation or economic activities.

The municipality of Mata de São João is part of the APA do Litoral Norte. This APA was designated by the state of Bahia through propagation of State Law No. 1046, of March 17th, 1992. It has an extension of 142,000ha and was created with the intention of preserving the remaining patches of Atlantic Rain Forest⁴, which includes mangroves, estuaries, coastal vegetation, sand dunes and lagoons. Besides that, the whole coastline, and part of the coral reefs became a concern and were included in the APA as a way to curb the fast urbanization of the area with the development of ecotourism. Arembepe, in the municipality of Camaçari, is not part of the APA, which explains why the level of urbanization in this town is higher than the other two.

The town of Praia do Forte is the most preserved and ecologic of the 3EC because of (1) the regulations imposed by the ZEE of the APA; (2) the continuous work of environmental education conducted by TAMAR and IBJ; (3) waste management program in effect; (4) sewage system with treatment plant and; (5) the existence of an Ecotourism Development Plan, devised by FGD – explained in more details in Chapter 06. Imbassai and Arembepe have a significant level of preservation due to the work of TAMAR and

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⁴ The Atlantic Rainforest is a specific biome in Brazil. It used to cover an area of about 1,3 million km². Since most of the development of Brazil occurred along the coast, today only 7% of this extension is preserved.
because the local authorities in these towns are concerned about the environment, knowing that it is the basis of their ecotourism activity.

Ecotourism is a prerogative to the promotion of local sustainable development at the 3EC. The discourse that ecotourism is based on ecological and sustainable practices, has been absorbed by locals after biologists from TAMAR and FGD worked strongly on the idea that environmental conservation could bring good economic return to the community. This is where sea turtles became linked with economic gains. Protecting sea turtles attracts more ecotourists, and in return, more money is injected into the community. According to Campbell (2002), conservationists can use traditional narratives to reiterate the importance of ecotourism for conservation to gain the support of the community. This strategy worked in Praia do Forte and Imbassai. The 3EC multiplies ecotourism and conservation by gaining support of more communities and increasing the viability of both sea turtle conservation effort and the economic advancement of local ecotourism.

3.4 The three Es

The 3ECs work as town networks. These networks have the presence of (1) human capital that is mobile within the network and creates a sense of linked identity, or even a collective identity to the proximity or region; (2) the exchange or linkage between firms and social agents of different localities (e.g. tour agents, small businesses, transportation companies, conservation projects); (3) integrated policies aimed at achieving the necessary preconditions of balanced development (TAMAR in Praia do
Forte and CMT in Mazunte) and; (4) linkages of local firms, local identities and discourses to external markets. Tour agents and even local town government have to have an integrated approach to ecotourism promotion and development. For Bahia, TAMAR, the state tourism agency BAHIATURSA and some local tourism agents are central to the integrated promotion of Arembepe, Praia do Forte and Imbassai. In Oaxaca, CMT, the NGO Ecosolar and other local agents are responsible for the integrated promotion of San Agustinillo, Mazunte, Ventanilla and Escobilla.

Ecotourism destinations to be considered sustainable and thus adjusted to ecotourism development need to be guided by the principals listed by James (2003):

“(1) The environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset, its enjoyment by future generations and its long-term survival must not be prejudiced by short-term considerations; (2) tourism should be recognized as a positive activity with the potential of benefit the community and the place as well as the visitor; (3) the relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that the environment is sustainable in the long term, ecotourists must not be allowed to damage the resource, prejudice its future enjoyment or bring unacceptable impacts; (4) tourism activity and development should respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited; (5) harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community; (6) adaptation to potential changes should not be at the expense of any of these principals; and (7) the tourism industry, local authorities and environmental agencies all have a duty
to respect the above principles and to work together to achieve their practical realization” (2003: 192).

We will see in further chapters that the two corridors discussed here are working towards the incorporation of all these principals. The achievement of the totality of these principals is not an easy task, but must be understood as a local response to global interests. The 3ECs are an adaptive strategy used by these towns to cope with ecotourism development. In order to follow the principles outlined by James, these small towns developed a development strategy based on networking and cooperation. The process of globalization of these destinations have introduced these principals via travelers, researchers, conservationists, NGOs and media. The communities do not have a handbook on how to incorporate these principals. This is the interesting part of globalization: the internalization of these external principals occurs concomitantly with the process of consolidation of these localities within the ecotourism market.

The theorization on the 3EC is a design created to better understand the way the two case studies – Mazunte and Praia do Forte – establish networks and relate to their neighboring towns. The definition of the Corridors took on three dimensions: ecology, economy and ecotourism. The ecology link is made through the network of the Conservation projects – CMT and TAMAR. Moreover, in the case of Praia do Forte, the APA Litoral Norte also contributes to the standardization of environmental regulations. The economy link is made through the transit of visitors, capital, goods and services, and ecological discourses between these towns. Locals also establish this link as some live in one town and work in the other. The ecotourism link is composed of ideas, discourses and initiatives of each town. This type of tourism has become the modus operandi of
local economy. In all towns, sea turtle conservation projects are at the center stage of the ecotourism consumption. “Local nature is reordered as global commodity, and local meanings are reinterpreted to better align with consumers’ desires” (Hutchins 2007: 76).

The different premises directly relate to the *scapes* described by Appadurai (2002) as *ethnoscape, financescape* and *ideoscape* make the networks, or the corridors. I decided to use the term “corridor” because it relates better to the in-line geographical disposition of the towns in each 3EC. They are aligned one after the other and have one main connecting route. This route in the two 3ECs is a main highway that works as pathway for the flow of these *scapes*. Chapters 07 through 10 will discuss in more detail each of these *scapes*. The main objective here was to contextualize Mazunte and Praia do Forte within a broader political, economic, ideological and environmental arena.

The development of ecological corridors relates directly to processes of globalization. From the environmental conservation viewpoint, ecological corridors reflect international political and academic agendas that unify efforts on global environmental problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, increase in the degradation of ecosystems, and increase in the contamination of marine and terrestrial ecosystems (Oyama and Castillo 2006). However, the 3ECs discussed here are not deliberate government policies responding to these agendas. It is mostly a local and regional effort to sustainable development.

Local communities are in tune with internationalized discourses about which pathway to development will allow them more economic benefits and less landscape destruction. Residents of San Agustinillo, Mazunte, Ventanilla, Escobilla, Arembepe,
Praia do Forte and Imbassai are aware of what ecotourism really represents and what is necessary to continue with this type of tourism in the long term. A learning and adaptation process will be discussed in more details in the following chapters. In each of these towns, and at the regional level of 3ECs, the social organization is diverse and complex, and each social actor or stakeholder internalizes ideologies and discourses differently. Chapters 07 and 08 will discuss this more thoroughly.

From an economic viewpoint, ecotourism corridors could be understood as a neologism for community networking over trade relations. Small towns, despite their isolation, have constant contact and relation with neighboring towns, especially if these other towns are nearby and have similar or same economic activity. This is true with complex industrial and technological regions that organize around one economic activity such as computer components, automotive parts and agricultural goods. These regions develop cross-section networks, which are:

“Those organizations that, in aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 65).

This situation can be transposed to the case of ecotourism destinations when related to sustainable development. These destinations have to have disposition to offer conserved natural landscapes and exotic wildlife meanwhile infrastructure.

In the 3ECs of Mazunte, Ventanilla and Escobilla offer the guided tours and the exotic wildlife interaction sought by travelers while Mazunte and San Agustinillo are best
in offering dining and accommodations as well as daytime entertainment and nightlife attractions. San Agustinillo and Mazunte also offers boat rides to watch sea turtles and the release of baby sea turtle for the amusement of ecotourists. There is the CMT that completes the visit with scientific knowledge and environmental education.

In the 3EC of Praia do Forte, Imbassai offers a rustic experience and relaxed atmosphere to ecotourists at its peninsula-like beach with cool fresh water on one side and warm seawater on the other. Arembepe offers the exotic and quaint hippie flair that some travelers want to see, combined with a (considered authentic) hippie village established in the late 1960s that still stands and still reproduces some of the original lifestyle of the time. Praia do Forte offers different style and comfort level dining and accommodation plus the daytime and nightlife entertainment for times when the travelers are not at the beach. It also has all the ecotour and adventure sports that some ecotourists search for when traveling. Praia do Forte and Arembepe have TAMAR, which complements the visit with conservation and environmental education. In addition, visitors can go home with typical souvenirs and merchandise of TAMAR and its iconic sea turtles. Therefore, from an economic and environmental standpoint, in each 3EC, towns complement each other in number and types of attractions offered to tourists, without going overboard with activities and events already offered by neighboring towns.
Chapter 4: From hunting to conservation

4.1 Introduction

Sea turtles have been part of the local diet of several coastal communities for centuries. These animals can weigh over 300kg and offer different subsistence products to local families. Fishermen have hunted sea turtles for their meat, oil, skin, shell, bones and eggs. Each of these products has served a specific purpose: meat for food, skin and shell for handicrafts and clothing, oil for cooking and medicinal purposes, bones for cement and calcium supplement, eggs for food and medicinal purposes. The usage of each of these products has varied according to place, local customs, religious beliefs and accessibility to other resources.

According to evolutionary data, sea turtles are animals date back to the Late Jurassic period, about 208 to 144 million years ago (http://www.seaworld.org). From a biological standpoint, these animals are considered primitive due to their anatomical constitution. According to Paulo, biologist responsible for Field Research at TAMAR:

“Sea turtles have very precarious circulation system, respiratory system, and their reproduction cycle increases their vulnerability to predators. Even though these animals are considered primitive and inadequate, they have been able to survive different geological eras and reach modern times with little evolution. They are an example of good adaptive strategy. No evolution was necessary to survive adversities.” (Interview in 29/May/2007)
Only very recent, in the last 100 years, that turtles began to face a bigger threat: human predation. This animal has a high reproduction rate (Marquez 1985) and despite the continuous depredation of its nests by other predators (including humans), the species has been able to maintain its population at a steady rate until 1970. There were two different stages of exploitation:

“The first period (1966-68) was effort expansion and pressure on catch in which catch was likely superior to the growth of the population. The latter period is associated with a harvest decline (1969-71)” (Trinidad and Wilson 2000: 8).

By then, consumption by humans had reached such high levels that some sea turtle species became threatened by extinction. The marine turtle species loggerhead (Caretta caretta), green (Chelonia mydas), leatherback (Dermochelys coriacea), hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata) and olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) were included in the “Red Listing” organized by IUCN of species endangered of extinction. The list identifies all endangered species around the world alerting governments and civil society that measure need to be taken if they want to prevent the extinction of the animals listed.

Sea turtles are very tame animals; they do not react or attack their predators. The only protection these animals have is their hard shell and their ability to swim fast. When they come out of the water to nest, they become even more vulnerable. Their locomotion ability out of the water is very limited. When it is time to nest, sea turtles swim to nesting beaches, crawl out of the water and start digging their nests in the sand. According to Paulo, responsible for TAMAR’s field research at Praia do Forte, once they have dug a
large hole and started laying their eggs, they enter a trance mode and are unresponsive to any external interference. All these characteristics contribute to the predation of sea turtles.

In the communities of Praia do Forte, Brazil and Mazunte, Mexico; sea turtles once were important subsistence resources. Local fishermen developed specific hunting skills to facilitate the capture of sea turtles and the collection of their eggs. Children learned at young age how to find and identify a turtle nest at the beach, how to remove eggs without damaging them and how to catch a turtle in the water. Locals learned to follow turtle tracks on the beach that would lead to the nests. They learned that turtles only nested at night and that they were unresponsive during the process of laying eggs. A group of fishermen would gather to go after the turtles at night. When they found one, they would turn them over with their shells facing down so they cannot escape. Fishermen would collect eggs, slaughter the turtle on spot, and take home meat, leather, shell and bones.

Some products extracted from turtles had high value to local communities. Sea turtle liver oil was considered an important healing medicine for health problems such as pneumonia, rheumatism, arthritis, allergies, dysfunctional intestines, muscle pain, and other common ills. The turtles’ eggs were also highly valued for the energy and protein they offered. Children had in the egg a most substantial source of protein. Preparations varied from place to place depending on what other ingredients were used to cook and serve sea turtle meat. Paul Louis, an old fisherman at Praia do Forte, said:
“The preferred way to eat sea turtle meat was barbecued. We would cut the beeps, salt them and set them over the fire. It was a happening when we had sea turtle barbecued. Every one loved it.” (Interview in 23/June/2007).

Porfiria, from Mazunte, the oldest local resident described over 20 different recipes used to prepare sea turtles.

“I would prepare sea turtles in various ways. I made soup of meat and vegetables […] It turned out delicious. The breast we would grill over the fire, and once it was done we would eat it with chili sauce, onions and garlic.” (Interview in 29/January/2008).

In the two communities, sea turtle meat, eggs and oil in different times served as an important part of the local diet.

Hunting strategies, motivation and purpose presented differences between Mazunte and Praia do Forte. In the latter, the consumption was for subsistence reasons, while in Mazunte it was oriented towards a large market. In Mazunte, community consumed meat, oil and eggs, but most of what they hunted was sold elsewhere. It was the main local business. Residents of Praia do Forte did not commercialize sea turtle produce, but other places did, such as Pirambu, in the state of Sergipe. Despite the differences, sea turtles were highly valued in both communities. Still, it is interesting how this animal became an important symbol. From being hunted animal, sea turtles became something to protect and care for. The modification in the way these communities interacted with the animal was not easy and fast. It required adaptation, it caused
resistance, and it created resentment. The modification of perception happened with the continuous conservation campaign promoted by TAMAR in Brazil and CMT in Mexico.

These projects based their activities on environmental education, scientific research and conservation practices. The communities of Mazunte and Praia do Forte became the center of international attention regarding sea turtles and locals later benefitted from this new scenario based on conservation. In both places, the implementation of sea turtle projects brought changes to the local social dynamics. Fishermen could no longer hunt sea turtles or poach nests for eggs and were forced to substitute hunting turtles for fishing shrimp, lobster and clams, or for other economic activity like tourism.

Fishermen at Praia do Forte were used to catching shrimp, lobster and squid, but in Mazunte they were not. In both places, boats and fishing nets had to be substituted or adapted in order not to harm turtles during fishing drives. All these changes happened in a relative sort period. In Brazil, the transition occurred between 1980 and about 1999. In Mexico, the transition proceeded at a faster pace, from 1990 to 2000. The conservation projects faced challenges as well. In different occasions, they were forced to pitch in with help, capacity-building, fishing material, boats and even commercialization strategies.

This chapter is a historical account of this transition from hunting to conservation, focusing on what was the basis of the local economy in the past and what necessary changes were made to allow for transition in local livelihoods. It describes the history of each location and explains why the transition turned out to be harder for Mazunte than for Praia do Forte.
4.2 Historical accounts of Mazunte

Mexico allowed controlled sea turtle hunting until 1994. In the 1970s, the federal government created a program to monitor this activity. Biologists and other specialists would conduct research and collect statistics on the growth of sea turtle population and consumption by the fishing industry. The government would set restrictions during nesting periods and every new decade, would adjust the quota of sea turtles that could be hunted, based on the variation of the turtle population (Secretaria de Pesca 1990).

“Since 1960, the protection, conservation and research efforts of the Fishery authorities increased, in response to development of the industry. The Federal Government also acted to protect marine turtle species from overexploitation and poaching. In 1962 it formed the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Biológico-Pesqueras” (Trinidad and Wilson 2000: 3).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, sea turtle population was progressively declining, and hunting was becoming unviable (Marquez et al. 1989). Table below shows the number of hunted turtles versus the number of eggs deposited in the coast of Oaxaca. We can observe how the beginning 1980s, the number of hunted turtles continually declined. In 1990, the government had to declare a limited ban on sea turtle hunting within Mexico. Sea turtles have a very specific symbolic value in Mexico. They were for over forty years a strong economic resource, reliable and consumed around the country. Markets around the country would buy sea turtle products. The ones in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec demanded the largest amounts of eggs, meat and liver oil because of the
traditional rituals that used these products. I had been, for centuries, part of the basic indigenous diet.

Table 4.1: Number of individual turtles captured versus the number of eggs accounted for in the nesting sites, in the state of Oaxaca. Source: Peñaflorres Salazar 2006: 6.

Historical accounts show that the Zapotec have been consuming sea turtle eggs since before the arrival of the Spanish. The culture of collecting sea turtle eggs at the beach is today depicted in one of the regional dances performed during the Guelaguetza, a traditional dance festival in the city of Oaxaca. The dance of the Tehuantepec region of Oaxaca shows a young couple at the beach with baskets collecting eggs, which for them represented fertility of the land and fertility of women. (UABJO 2007: 8-12).
However, the Zapotec tradition is not what motivated the sea turtle consumption in Mazunte and neighboring towns. The activity in Mazunte was commercial, everyone working there originated elsewhere, and many were not indigenous. The physiognomy of most was indigenous, but they all migrated from urban center in Colima, Michoacán or even Oaxaca. No one spoke any of the more than 100 indigenous languages existing in the state of Oaxaca. Besides, Mazunte and San Agustinillo were only founded in around 1955.

Until the 1970, demand for sea turtle leather remained steady, overall in the international markets. The turtle leather became a substitute for crocodile skin, once that went into decline.
“In the 1960’s industrial exploitation in the Pacific began. From 1955 to 1963, the average capture was 810 tons. For the 1964-65 period, it went to 2050 tons. Marine turtle leather replaced crocodile hide, in response to a growth in international demand during the early 1960’s, especially for the leather of the olive ridley turtle and for the shell of the hawksbill sea turtle. In 1966, the Pacific fishery took 97% of the national catch” (Trinidad and Wilson 2000: 7).

Mazunte had the biggest slaughterhouse of sea turtle produce. The animals were taken to the slaughterhouse, and skilled workers removed and separated meat, liver, oil, bones, skin, shell and eggs. Each of these products had a particular market. The activity paid high wages to workers at that time.

Cultural aspects have highly influenced the consumption of sea turtles. The idea that sea turtle eggs have aphrodisiac power has been widely spread around the country and contributed to the extended market for this product. Still today, large markets such as the Tepito Market in Mexico City demand considerable amounts of eggs. This particular market is the center of counterfeit products, a type of black market for different products, such as wild animals, sea turtle eggs and sea turtle liver oil. Government campaign to revert this has been aggressive, including advertisement focusing on masculinity that tries to demystify the related value of eggs and virility.

“The skin of sea turtles were used in the production of shoes, belts, purses and wallets, the use of the shell of the Tortuga Carey has supported a considerable number of crafters that elaborated jewelry as well as frames for lenses, and handicrafts. Also the belief that the oil of turtles is a good medicine for
problems of bronchitis and asthma has stimulated its use in traditional medicine” (Viadiu Llarraza 2006: 52).

Figure 4.20: Aggressive campaign launched in Mexico by PROFEPA to inhibit the consumption of sea turtle eggs. Appeals to masculinity were the main publicity strategy. The effect was limited as egg trafficking continues. Photograph by author of poster on wall.

The conversion of sea turtles from an economic commodity to a protected species was not a simple task. The dependency on sea turtle consumption was greater in the region of Mazunte and San Agustinillo. The whole coastline of the state of Oaxaca has
always been an area of high concentration of sea turtles. Hunting turtles along the coast was an easy task, and in the early 1950, it became a profitable economic activity. Many workers moved to the coast to work for a fishing cooperative that was dedicated to hunting sea turtles.

In 1955, the first residents arrived in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. Before this date, there is not recorded history. The first residents say the area was not colonized. Until 1960, only two families lived in the area and subsided on cattle and farming. They introduced corn, rice and beans crops. Sea turtle eggs and meat were also part of the diet. Sea turtle meat, fish and cattle beef supplied local sources of protein. Corn, rice, zucchini, peppers and sesame seeds completed the diet. In 1960 the area along the coast started being colonized by other families who came to subsist on fishing and farming. With fishing activity, sea turtles became incorporated into the subsistence base. Five years later, a foreign businessman opened up the sea turtle slaughterhouse, hiring most local fishermen and other workers from different parts of Mexico. Sea turtles had become the main economic resource of Mazunte.

Porfiria came with her husband to colonize the area. She is the oldest resident of Mazunte and the only one today who can tell the story of it’s founding. She said that the landowner divided the area by the small creek that used to run through town. Initially, two workers came, Porfiria’s husband and another guy. Her husband took on the south side of the creek, site of the CMT, which extends further south San Agustinillo. The other worker took the north side extending to the hills that divides Mazunte and Ventanilla.
“The landlord told them to settle there and live there. He wanted them to stay and take care of the land. He told them ‘Stay there, cut down part of the forest and plant whatever you want, corn, zucchini’. […] But the people from Tonameca did not want the two men here. They were arrested. I was able to release my husband and then I moved back here with him. But less than a year later a person was hired to kill my husband. He was shot in the arm and chest. He died within 24 hours. I ended up alone here, with my children. So we had to tend the land ourselves and would survive with the few seeds that farmers, who lived a long way off [on the other side of the hill, where other settled already existed], would give us. So I would sell part of the crop to earn money. But the municipal government came later and started dividing the land. First they took a large area for people to build their houses and for the school. So I got all my children, nephews and nieces, as well as godchildren to occupy as much land as possible. That way it would become more difficult to take it away. That way the town was a colony of my family.” (Interview in 29/January/2008)

This was at the very beginning. Later on came the sea turtle business and all the workers. This was in 1960. As Porfiria tells:

“They came from Puerto Escondido, from Santa Cruz, from Hidalgo, from Xacalapa, Pochutla, from all places to work with the sea turtle business. The workers set up a fishing cooperative and sold the catch of turtles to this Spanish man. Then I started to work as cook. There was no place to eat here so I started making food to sell to the workers.” (Interview in 29/January/2008)
It was with the establishment of the sea turtle trade that San Agustinillo and Mazunte prospered. The two towns base their identity on the slaughterhouse. Everything that came later was related to the sea turtle trade: businesses, restaurants and even some lodging flourished because of the turtle trade. These businesses would serve the workers of the slaughterhouse (see Barkin and Klooster 1994).

From 1960 until 1990, the town changed little. The settlement of both Mazunte and San Agustinillo concentrated mostly in inland areas. Small houses, mostly of the workers and their families made up for the urban space. The two towns became districts within the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca. D. Porfiria said that by then taxes were already collected despite the lack of public services to the area.

The years of 1992 to 1994 marked the biggest transformations in these two towns. The year of 1992 was when the Federal Government shut down the Sea Turtle Slaughterhouse. The closure forced the layoff of every worker. Many returned to their hometowns in other municipalities and even other states. However, most of the workers remained. They wanted to stay and wanted the government to find alternative employment for them. This is when the government decided to establish the CMT in Mazunte. Planners at the time promised that CMT would absorb most of the local work force and would attract tourism, creating more jobs in the future.

The CMT took over a year to be built. During that period, electricity was installed, the main street was paved, and a new highway was built linking Mazunte and San Agustinillo to Puerto Ángel. The latter town would become the new tourist entry point. Many workers of the slaughterhouse worked in the construction of the CMT, but,
after it was built, only a few got jobs. CMT was effective in promoting tourism and the town grew steadily until today. More recently, in the past six to seven years, the town grew still more with the arrival of foreigners. They came from Mexico City and abroad to settle in Mazunte and San Agustinillo to build houses and open new businesses.

4.3 Historical accounts of Praia do Forte

Brazil started its protection program in 1981. When TAMAR began its conservation activities at Praia do Forte and other sites, Brazil already had specific legislation that granted full protection to sea turtles and deemed any act against these animals as federal crime. Different than Mexico, Brazil never had a federal program aimed at monitoring sea turtle consumptive use industry. The country did not have slaughterhouses like Mexico – not officially and organized as Mexico did. Biologists in Brazil never worked together with fishermen to help with hunting. There, biologists’ work with sea turtles started with the mission of converting these fishermen from hunters to conservationists.

Praia do Forte was established in the late 1500s as a military settlement to protect the region for the Monarchy of Portugal. Later it became a plantation farm. Between 1563 and 1609, the landowner Garcia D’Ávila built the Casa da Torre, a fortified construction used as his residence and as an observation platform to monitor most of the northern coast of Bahia against possible invasions, especially from the French and Dutch. Brazil at that time was still very vulnerable and occupations like this in Praia do Forte helped legitimize the ownership of the new territory. Garcia D’Ávila came to Brazil on
an expedition commanded by Tomé de Souza, who had orders of the King of Portugal to settle and protect the lands of the state of Bahia. Tomé de Souza donated the land where today is Praia do Forte to D’Ávila so he could settle and protect the northern section of the coast of Bahia. He began sugar cane plantation and cattle raising. The D’Ávila family controlled the territory for seven generations (see Grando 2006).

The land occupation throughout the area was slow and dispersed due to the large size of the properties. These properties, such as the Praia do Forte Farm were a great limitation to the creation of new settlements. Still today, much of the region outside the town of Praia do Forte is made of large properties and very few urban settlements (Sobrinho 1998 and Spinola 1996). The town of Praia do Forte was first established as a settlement for the Farm’s workers. Praia do Forte was in the middle of the farm with little access to other places, becoming isolated from other towns and from Salvador.

The Farm was then purchased in 1922 by Coronel Otacílio Nunes de Souza from one of the D’Ávila descendants. The new owner started a coconut plantation located predominantly in the 50-kilometer stretch that sits just behind the sand dunes. Other crops were planted mostly inland at some distance from the sea. The town of Praia do Forte continued to be the housing settlement of the Farm’s workers, now dedicated to the coconut plantation. Workers of the other two crops moved inland to another settlement, which today is the town of Açú da Torre, located on the other side of the Coconut Highway, but within the municipality of Mata de São João.
There is definitely some evidence that these workers were slaves, but definite historical proof is lacking\(^5\). However, considering that the locality dates back from the 1500s and had its economy based on heavy manual labor, it is very likely that slaves took care of the hard work.

Local workers that lived in Praia do Forte needed other sources of food, as little land was available to harvest – most of it was taken by coconut fields. The sea became the main source of food for this population. Since it was sea turtle nesting beach this animal was easily included in the local diet. It became one of the local sources of protein together fish. In later years, the landowner Nunes allowed locals to raise pigs and chicken. Sea turtles and fish were complemented with rice, manioc and some vegetables, planted in small gardens.

Nunes died in 1939. There was an economic downturn in the coconut business at the same time and the inherited property underwent dispute between Nunes’ children. Without consensus, they sold the farm in 1971 to a businessman from São Paulo, Klaus Peters. This businessman puts forward a plan to transform Praia do Forte in an ecotourism destination, a process that lasted for over a decade (CONDER 1999). Peters gave land title (with a conservation easement\(^6\)) to the workers who lived in the settlement of Praia do Forte, which slowly began to develop into a small town. By then, local residents were working in the farm, fishing or working in the construction of the large

\(^5\) In 2007, the university of Bahia initiated an archaeological excavation in Praia do Forte, as part of the environment impact study requirements to build a shopping strip along the beach. Archaeologist found some building structures underground that could have been used as slave quarter, but the study is still inconclusive.

\(^6\) The easement prohibited the sale of the land. The owner could built, plant or conserve.
resort that Peters was building. Subsistence on sea turtles continued until the arrival of TAMAR project.

Klaus Peters initiated an ambitious project to transform the Farm into an ecotourism destination. In order to do this, he demarcated areas with forest patches, transforming them into private reserves, built a large resort, dammed the Açu creek to use its waters at the resort, established regulations to curb urban expansion and defined modification to the fishermen’s houses. Water from the Açu creek, which ran through town and was used as source of fish and place of bathing, became unsuitable for consumption due to the introduction of exotic fish species and the excess amount of organic material from submerged vegetation. Today it is used as a recreation spot for kayaking. All this was possible because environmental regulations in Brazil were very loose until 1989 when the federal government created specific environmental laws to prevent such impacts. The land tenure of Praia do Forte is still an issue, and mixed private and public interests put the town in the control of local politicians and entrepreneurs. Local residents at Praia do Forte have mixed feelings about all the transformations. Some praise Peters for all the modifications and progress brought to town; others complain that they were never consulted and that the changes implemented were bad.

It was then in mid-1970s that new residents started to arrive. D. Rosa was one of those residents.

“I first came in 1975. My husband had a boat and it broke down right here. It took a while to be fixed. He had to return to Salvador to get the missing part and bring it back. He told me how beautiful this place was and that I had to see it. We came and I
was amazed, I really love it here. The boat got fixed but we decided to bring the children as well. They loved it. After that, we started coming more and more often. We became friends with the locals. It was very pretty here, there were no stores, no commerce; only those simple fishermen houses. The houses were made with a straw roof, some with tiled roof, a mixture, but everything very simple. [...] But, in that time, you could not rent a house to stay. It was not like today. You had to talk to the owner of the Farm [Klaus Peters]. So I went to talk to the owner and say that I really wanted a home to stay with my family. By then, my husband was helping the fishermen fix their boat, so he was well known of locals. So, he [Peters] arranged a home for me and my family to stay. So we stayed in one of the houses where today is the Projeto TAMAR.” (Interview in 18/June/2007)

The houses D. Rosa refers to belonged to the Coast Guard. Praia do Forte has always had a lighthouse, and before the lighthouse was automated, there used to be employees living there to take care of the lighthouse. Today the lighthouse is located inside TAMAR’s visitors’ Center. Later, when TAMAR established itself in town, Peters gave them a concession to work out of the lighthouse maintenance buildings, exactly where D. Rosa once lived.

“So we stayed in those houses. During the weekends, we would receive several friends who came to stay with us. Later, they put a small ferry to cross the Pojuca River that could take two cars at a time. It was then that people started to come. That is when Praia do Forte received its first tourists. There was no highway back then. The road was paved only until the town of Arembepe. After that, it became a dirt road that ended at the Pojuca river. […] By then, we started receiving more and more friends. And we would make large pans of feijoada [typical Brazilian dish
make with black beans and pork] for many friends. It was a lot of food. Some tourists would see all the people in our house and would ask if it was a restaurant and if we could serve them some appetizers. The first time I did it for free. Then I told my husband that I would start to sell some appetizers and make a bit of money out of it. There was also the manager of the grocery store [which was part of the farm]. He and his wife were our good friends and used to have a small restaurant where they sold some meals to visitors. But they left and she decided to sell me part of what they had to run the restaurant like tables, chairs, and an electric generator for us to run a freezer and there was no electricity here. I said the little ferry was a good improvement. Tourists started to come after that.” (Interview in 18/June/2007)

The flow of tourists was steady until 1985 when the first major urban improvements transformed Praia do Forte, making it more urban, more comfortable, and more accessible. The bridge over the Pojuca river had been built and the paved highway from Salvador now ended at the entrance of town.

4.4 Outcomes

Particular histories lead to particular outcomes. Mazunte and Praia do Forte have very distinct historical backgrounds. The distinct backgrounds have had a strong, if not decisive, influence on how each town adapted to livelihood shift from hunting to conserving wildlife. This section a comparative discussion of how each locality dealt with change. The comparison helps understand why things turned out to be how they are.
The transition from hunting to conservation represented to fishermen a forced abandonment of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Fishermen in both localities, Mazunte and Praia do Forte, relied on TEK for the sea turtle hunting practices – finding sea turtles at sea and finding fresh nests at local beaches. As we will see ahead, fishermen usually brag about their advanced knowledge about sea turtles, and how scientists know nothing about these animals.

The knowledge developed throughout the years sustained the activity and accounted for progressive improvement of local hunting strategies. When the ban was established, fishermen lost the power related to TEK because they were prohibited from using it. According to Hunn:

“TEK is acquired via direct personal experience, is transmitted within a community, and is validated by its relevance to the daily struggle to wrest a livelihood from one’s land” (Hunn 1999: 24).

Fishermen in both localities had learned to catch turtles and find nests by themselves. This knowledge was transmitted from father to son. In Mexico, the TEK about sea turtles was a valuable economic skill. Fishermen were hired in Mazunte if they had that particular TEK. In Praia do Forte, this knowledge was less economically oriented. Locals had learned to consume sea turtles for subsistence purpose. The prohibition of sea turtle consumption meant the prohibition of TEK in both localities.
4.4.1 Abrupt in Mazunte

Both localities, San Agustinillo and Mazunte, had a consumptive use of sea turtle that was converted into a non-consumptive use. Mazunte had an organized program to monitor the activity with the presence of state-hired biologists. The PNTM was created by INP to help protect sea turtles and to work together with fishermen towards a sustainable use of this resource. The PNTM was created to establish some regulations to make the catch more efficient to fishermen and less harmful to the continuity of the species. The PNTM was a wildlife management program aimed at communities that exploited this resource. INP coordinated the PNTM because it was the agency responsible for monitoring and managing sea fauna. INP is a federal government agency focused on working with fishermen and fishing fleets to increase their efficiency and reduce threats to the environment. Manelik, former Director of CMT summarizes this transition:

“Before, everything was concentrated at the Secretaria de Pesca. Sea turtles were just another fishing resource. Exploitation was done before following the Ley de Pesca. The focus of the PNTM changes completely after the Ley General de Vida Silvestre, decreed in 2000. These two specific laws divide the use (aprovechamiento) in to two parts: sea turtles could be exploited in one period, and could not be exploited in another period. Sea turtles can still be exploited today, but there are specific rules for that. The exploration is of the type ‘non-extractive’ [as for research, tourism visitation, etc. This occurs frequently in beaches controlled by hotels and other private parties]. It only needs an authorization from SEMARNAT.” (Interview in 10/January/2008)
As Manelik explained, the same PNTM, later became responsible for protecting sea turtles and forbidding any consumptive use of this species. The program continued under the control of INP following the new Ley General de Vida Silvestre (National Wildlife Law). Later it was transferred to the control of SEMARNAT and today is under the control of CONANP, which is an independent agency inside SEMARNAT’s bureaucracy. It is evident the change in status of the PNTM: from a extractive economy-based program to a non-extractive conservation based program.

Changing a program’s focus is not an easy task. Adapting it to a new reality and forcing all parties involved to switch from one paradigm to another is not easy. In addition to the abrupt shift in the program’s objective and focus, Mazunte, San Agustinillo, and all of Mexico suffered from another important issue: the cultural aspect of sea turtle consumption.

Fishermen have established identity markers based on how much one knows about sea turtles. The older fishermen, the ones over 50 years of age are all former employees of the PIOSA slaughterhouse. The sea turtle trade taught them a lot about the animal, their life cycle, their biology and the economic value of each product extracted. In fact, the economic value of sea turtles prevailed and all knowledge was directed to that purpose. From fishermen’s recollections and CMT’s historical reports, Mazunteños and Agustinenses could be considered skilled workers with good sense of the resource they processed. I have to draw a parallel here with the indigenous knowledge of Zapotec from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. While the latest group has a particular knowledge of sea turtles, based on religious and subsistence purposes, the first has a knowledge that was learned from practice, from an industrial activity.
A similar parallel could be set by cattle ranchers in the United States and pastoralist groups in Africa. The human-animal relationship and the perception of the animal as a natural resource is very different. The Nuer establish several symbolic and subsistence uses of cattle. They created political systems where husbandry is defined by cattle and, religion where cattle is used in sacrifices and represents spirits (Evans-Pritchard 1940 an 1956). On the other hand, ranchers in the US have a strict economic relation with cattle, using them basically as source of income and subsistence.

The distinction between traditional Zapotecs groups at the Isthmus and former sea turtle hunters in Mazunte and San Agustinillo is similar. Zapotec have a very intricate relation with sea turtles, establishing magical powers to liver oil and eggs, and using these as powerful amulets and symbolical elements in communal rituals. Beside the religiosity, sea turtles are also used as subsistence. Former workers of PIOSA are more similar to the cattle ranchers from the US. They have a strict economic relation to sea turtles. Besides, biologists from INP, who gave some orientations on how to maintain population stocks by protecting nests, directly assisted fishermen in 3EC of Mazunte. TEK and SEK were somewhat intertwined in the 3EC of Mazunte.

However, we cannot forget that the communities within the 3EC subsisted from sea turtles, having some cultural aspects linked to sea turtles. Cultural aspects related to the consumption of sea turtles were reproduced locally. Some residents with indigenous backgrounds imported some traditional knowledge about this natural resource. Sea turtle liver oil is a well-known and widely diffused medicine for the curing of problems related to the lung, liver, heart and bladder. It was used as healing ointment:
“The eggs were always the main dish at the community’s fiestas. Today in some fiestas, one or two go out to hunt down a turtle. They do it secretly and we serve it as chicken. It still happens. The oil still has some demand. There are travelers that still seek it. They know that it was a good medicine for most sickness. I remember when I was a child, my mother would rub some oil on our cuts and wounds. It would heal very fast. I think it heals faster than the band-aid healing medicine we have today.” (Interview on 14/January/2008, with Tita, a restaurant owner in Mazunte).

Porfiria, the oldest resident in Mazunte used to work as a cook for the workers at the sea turtle slaughterhouse. She said that sea turtles were always part of the menu. She described about nine different dishes she used to cook that used meat, eggs or other organs of sea turtles. The CMT still face difficulty in changing local cultural habits. Cualtemoc, responsible for the Field Research at CMT explained that PROFEPA, the environmental police is very strict about the stealing and trafficking of eggs. He thinks that the communities have learned but outsiders, especially the ones from urban centers, still find interest in the eggs. Mireya, responsible for the environmental education at CMT said that they have been creating concern about sea turtles and the harm of egg consumption among children. Conversion of habits is still ongoing.

There is a considerable difference in the effort to convert traditional values in Mazunte and in the Isthmus. Since Mazunte and San Agustinillo are not nesting beaches, it was easier to shift locals’ interests and economic activity to ecotourism than in communities in the Isthmus, where major nesting grounds have always provided good conditions for locals to steal eggs. It is not without a reason that CMT focuses most of its environmental education work in that area. Chapter 05 will discuss this in more detail.
Stopping the traffic of eggs has proven to be harder than converting traditional habits. CMT and PROFEPA have serious problems to curb this situation. Oaxaca’s coastal highway, Federal Route 200 is an important drug route.

“The level of organization of poachers may far exceed that of law enforcement. Distribution channels of black market turtle eggs covers the principal nesting beaches, local communities and routes, sometimes operating in co-operation with official agents and public bus drivers. When army check points are established, drivers communicate this information by radio contacts” (Trinidad and Wilson 2000: 10).

The Federal Narcotics Agency of Mexico has constant blockades along this highway to inspect every suspicious vehicle. Agents state that sea turtle eggs are trafficked using the drug trafficking system. Federal Army is constantly stationed at important nesting beaches such as Escobilla, Barra de la Cruz and Morro Ayuta. All these locations have CMT research stations. These stations monitor the beaches with the help of the Army. The station also monitors the execution of social programs with the local communities.

The CMT has problems with tourists and tour guides. Since Mazunte and San Agustinillo are not nesting beaches, there is no problem related to the interaction of tourists with nests and baby turtles as there is in Praia do Forte. Mazunte and San Agustinillo are feeding areas for turtles. The adult individuals come close to the shore to feed at the coral gardens. Tour guides take advantage of the presence of turtles and take tourists to see them. Mireya, from CMT said that the biggest problem is that the guides do not follow safety norms when approaching turtles and they often harass them during
the ride. I went on a boat ride and could evidence a guide jumping in the water to grab a turtle and bring it close to the boat so tourists could touch it and swim with it.

![Figure 4.21](image)

Figure 4.21: The guide, in the middle holds the turtle he just caught and tries to calm it. The tourists aside him are anxious to touch the animal. The flaps can hurt. That is why the guide holds it by the shell. Photograph by author.

The conversion from hunting to conservation did happen in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. Locals do not subsist on sea turtles anymore. Today, these communities survive on tourism. The next chapters will discuss how this transition found resistance among locals. It was not smooth and progressive. Resentment and protest were constant and the battle ground between the CMT and locals continued for many years. Today, there is conflict, of other type. Economic, political, social and even cultural contingencies exist and arise between different stakeholders in distinct forms. Chapter 07 will discuss this in more detail.
4.4.2 Tranquil in Praia do Forte

In Praia do Forte the reality was different. The consumptive use of sea turtles was an activity organized by the community and without any external monitoring. There were no biologists and the federal government had no specific program focused on sea turtles. This species was not considered an endangered species until 1980. The effort to protect sea turtles came from a group of marine biologists and oceanographers at FURG, a federal university in the far south of Brazil. Undergraduate students and their professors made field trips to several beaches along the Brazilian coast. In 1979, during a trip to the archipelago of Atol das Rocas, they found the first trace at the beach of what could be sea turtle tracks. Until then there was no scientific evidence that sea turtles came to the shores of Brazil. One night during the trip, they witnessed the killing of several sea turtles by local fishermen. That was when they realized that some action was needed. The group mobilized IBDF, the environmental agency at the time, to take action. The group was able to set up a two-year expedition to research the entire Brazilian coast to map sea turtle occurrences. TAMAR was created as a government conservation program after this expedition and the first base was established in Praia do Forte (Fundação Pró-TAMAR 2000: 13-23).

Praia do Forte was one important nesting ground for sea turtles, and the expedition crew learned that locals had the custom of consuming eggs and slaughtering turtles. The expedition crew became the founder of TAMAR. Therefore, Praia do Forte, had its periods of consumptive and non-consumptive use. Differently from Mazunte,
Praia do Forte had government presence only after the prohibition, during the non-consumptive use period. Mexico had an extensive knowhow of how to protect sea turtles at the time Brazil was creating its first legislation to protect this species. The National Program to protect sea turtles, called TAMAR, started from zero on protecting turtles. The program always had this vocation and TAMAR has always been under the control of a government environmental agency. The agency changed name from IBDF to IBAMA to ICMBIO, but the objectives remain the same.

TAMAR had less difficulty in changing the habits of local communities towards the consumption of sea turtles and their eggs. Differently than Mexico, where eggs are known nationwide for their supposed aphrodisiac power, in Brazil this same cultural value was less disseminated. Still, TAMAR uses much of the same values present in Mexico in their environmental education lessons to the public. There is the need to pass the idea that the community was backward and that today they have learned the value of conservation and protection of sea turtles.

In Brazil, local communities consumed sea turtles as a subsistence resource. There are very scanty accounts by either IBDF or SEAP on the level of commercialization of sea turtle in coastal communities of Brazil. The commercialization of jewelry and liver oil were more common in this country. This is what the marine biologists discovered during the first research expedition on sea turtles. Surveying local communities on whether the local beaches had sea turtles, they found many decorative objects, jewelry and other home artifacts made from sea turtles. Before TAMAR even began its conservation activity, the Federal Police and IBDF made massive apprehensions
of these products found during the Expedition and closed down three small factories specialized in sea turtle artifacts (Fundação Pró-TAMAR 2000: 27-32).

TAMAR had a similar effort to CMT in converting a consumptive use into a non-consumptive use pattern. However, there is an interesting difference here in their relative effectiveness. While in Mexico all products from sea turtles were consumed and commercialized nationwide, and a strong indigenous background and urban consumption fad sustained the demand for these products, in Brazil only the shell had some commercial value, being sold to the few factories that produced artifacts. Other products were for subsistence, and consumed locally.

In Brazil subsistence patterns were well imbedded into local culture. The transition to non-consumptive use was not necessarily easier than in Mexico. Since the consumption did not over-extend the limits of the communities where sea turtles were caught, TAMAR could then focus more directly on these communities, working on alternatives livelihoods. In Mexico CMT and PROFEPA still have to fight large-scale trafficking schemes to take eggs from the coast of Oaxaca to the rest of Mexico.

In Brazil there is no problem with the trafficking of eggs. Different than in Mexico where this product is still highly valued in urban markets for their alleged aphrodisiac value, in Brazil, this cultural value was exclusive to few communities and today limited to the elderly. Children are already used to consuming other foods, like chicken eggs and have become fond of turtles, especially the baby turtles that they watch, with awe, crawling on the beach towards the sea. In Brazil, TAMAR did not need the
help of the army. Work with paid local fishermen was sufficient to monitor the beaches. Monitoring these beaches put TEK and SEK into direct relation.

The conversion from hunters to conservationists in Praia do Forte relied on the valuing of fishermen’s TEK towards sea turtles. TAMAR hired some local fishermen to help the project monitor the beaches in search for new nests. Since hinting turtles in Praia do Forte was a subsistence strategy, locals had developed an effective knowledge to find nests. Praia do Forte is a major nesting ground – over 2000 nests between July and December – while Mazunte and San Agustinillo may have sporadic nesting throughout the year – maximum of five nests per year. Local fishermen in Praia do Forte always bragged about their acute knowledge of sea turtles. Mr. Nesio, an old retired fishermen at Praia do Forte explained how he found nests and caught turtles:

“I caught a lot of turtles. Praia do Forte had a lot of turtles and I knew exactly where the nests were, from where the turtle came and to where the turtle went, just by looking at the tracks on the sand. I knew even the day that they would come back counting from the first day they arrived at the beach. This was a science and I knew it all pretty well. We would easily find the nests because as soon as they were covered up, the area would fill up with flies. Then we would dig on the spot and usually find about 100 to 200 eggs. Many people in town liked the eggs. I did not like them. They smelled too bad. It was too strong of a stench. But I liked the meat. When I saw the tracks of the turtles on the sand, I would hurry and try to find her [the female turtle] before she reached the water. I would turn her and leave her there. She could not escape. The next day I would return with a group of friends to kill and remove the meat. We would use the meat but the best part was really the liver oil. The oil had excellent medicinal power. It was used in wounds to keep the flies away. The wounds
would heal fast. It was a valuable good. Another way to catch turtles was at the sea. We would watch over the coral gardens. When the turtle came to eat the plants at the bottom of the garden, their tail would stick up out of the water. We would near our boats and just wait for her to come to the surface and breath. That when we would tie a rope around her neck. The rope was already tied to a coconut tree on shore. The turtles are strong swimmers that is why we tied the rope.” (Interview in 22/June/2007)

In chapter 5, where I expose the structure of CMT and TAMAR and the strategies applied to conservation of sea turtles, I talk more about how these projects incorporated TEK into SEK. These projects integrated the tartarugueiros and tortugueros to their staffs as a way of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation, and reducing predation.

Figure 4.22: Tourists at Praia do Forte, in front of the Iberostar Resort Hotel. Notice how close tourists are from the nests, marked in red circles. The circles show white poles. These are the marking poles set up by TAMAR after the nests are found, identified and registered by GPS. Photograph by author.
The conversion from hunting to conservation in Praia do Forte was more tranquil than in Mazunte because it was a longer process. The prohibition in Praia do Forte has a lesser impact on local market as it had in Mazunte. Locals do not subsist on sea turtles anymore. Today, the town’s economy is tourism and fishing. There is still resentment among older residents that witnessed the transition. As in Mazunte, there is still conflict, of other types. The next chapters will discuss how this transition found resistance among locals. Economic, political, social and even cultural factors contribute to disagreements between different stakeholders.

Today, TAMAR faces more problems with tourism. In the past, the problem was that the local community stole eggs and hunted turtles. Today the problem is related to the tourists. They trample the nests and destroy them before the eggs hatch. Chapter 06 will discuss the problems caused by tourism in more details.

### 4.5 Larger Markets

Local attitudes about sea turtle consumption changed and use of shells for luxury goods ended. This transition represented a big change to these local economies and affected subsistence patterns. However, the same time, both communities became more integrated into the larger national and global economies, transforming community practices.

In Mazunte, the transition from hunting to conservation had a strong impact in local market. The whole town was left without a job. Mazunte was forced to adapt to the
new federal government regulation concerning sea turtles. However, the larger Mexican market for sea turtle eggs was less affected. Despite the closure of hunting sites, markets in larger cities still demand eggs, which now are supplied by illegal routes. Locals at Mazunte and San Agustinillo were left out of the sea turtle business, but were integrated into new businesses: ecotourism and conservation.

In Brazil, the transition meant a stronger impact in the larger market than really in the local market of Praia do Forte. The isolation of Praia do Forte from external markets never allowed them to establish consistent trade routes to raw materials such as shells. This happened in other sites like Pirambu, in the state of Sergipe. Pirambu is about 300km north of Praia do Forte. There, local jewelry factories were affected by the ban. The local subsistence consumption of turtle meat in Praia do Forte was unrelated to the demand for shells in other parts of the country.

In Pirambu, TAMAR had to co-fund the conversion of that local industry. The project co-funded the establishment of small silk-screen factories that would produce tee shirts and other merchandize for TAMAR in Praia do Forte. It also gave direct support to harvesting of clams. Pirambu was integrated into a larger market with the export of these manufactured products. Praia do Forte was integrated into the larger market through ecotourism and conservation.

The shift away from subsistence economy (before prohibition of hunting) to self-sufficiency economy (ecotourism) represented a break in the history of these towns. The events that happened before the prohibition and the ones that succeeded afterwards had different objectives and were pushed by different factors. Zoning and conservation
enforcements on Praia do Forte, or punish and control in Mazunte did not exist before the prohibition. Local livelihood strategies changed as well. Hunting turtles required specific skills and knowledge, both developed in the course of decades. Working with ecotourism and conservation required the development of new skills and knowledge. In Mazunte locals had to readily learn how to become good hosts. In Praia do forte more time was made available between the start of conservation and the development of ecotourism.
Chapter 5: On the conservation projects

5.1 Structure of projects

In both Brazil and Mexico, federal laws regulate access to and management of wildlife and fauna, as well as control over the use of ecosystem resources. Regulations also dictate the expropriation of private land and the relocation of communities living near or inside areas declared to be important for biodiversity protection. The two research sites discussed in this dissertation fit these categories: they have important biodiversity, have endangered species (sea turtles) and are areas where some kind of government restriction was imposed to protect these species.

Mazunte is the site for the CMT, coordinated by the CONANP, that conducts scientific research on sea turtle hatcheries, reproduction techniques and recuperation of specific species with severely reduced population: Tortuga Golfina (Lepidochelys olivacea), Tortuga Laúd, (Dermochelys coriacea), and Tortuga Prieta (Chelonia mydas). Praia do Forte is the main site for TAMAR, is coordinated by the ICMBIO and sponsored by the PETROBRAS. TAMAR also conducts scientific research and conservation of five different sea turtle species with severely reduced population. In Bahia, specifically, TAMAR focuses on the species that nest on this state’s beaches: Tartaruga Cabeçuda (Caretta caretta), Tartaruga de Pente (Eretmochelys imbricata), and Tartaruga Oliva (Lepidochelys olivacea).
Conservation projects such as the CMT and TAMAR had to create some access restrictions to specific areas imposing specific management strategies in these areas. They also had to guarantee the conservation of sea turtles’ nests and feeding areas and promote in the affected communities some alternative sustainable practices. In the cases of Mazunte and Praia do Forte, ecotourism and nature tourism represented the alternative. Although tourism is not the main topic in this chapter, it is important to note the relation here.

Both the CMT and TAMAR were able to succeed with their conservation initiatives by offering another economic activity in place of sea turtle harvesting. If the transition from an economy based on natural resource exploitation to an economy based on service providing and ecotourism did not happen, the two projects would not have been able to develop their conservation activities. These activities would not have been viable if the community continued to exploit sea turtles. Ecotourism represented a distinct external intervention, which turned out to be in consonance with conservation initiatives, but in contradiction with the community livelihoods. Chapter 06 will focus on how ecotourism developed in these two places.

Praia do Forte did not become famous with ecotourists for its great sea turtle nesting beaches. Natural characteristics such as coral reefs, warm weather year around, nice beaches, peace and quiet, and the existence of an ecological resort completed in early 1980 comprised the reasons ecotourists flocked to this destination. Turtles became popular later, after TAMAR was well-established and had converted a small lot inside its biological research station into a well-organized visitors’ center.
Figure 5.23: A view of TAMAR visitors’ center. In the middle, some turtles in the tank and resting outside. A walking bridge overpasses the tank for tourists to observe turtles more closely. Outside the tanks sits some replicas of sea turtles made with fiberglass. They allow visitors to closely observe details of these animals. Photograph by author.

TAMAR built tanks for some sea turtles for visitors to see. In the beginning, ecotourists were curious about the work done by TAMAR and wanted to learn more. However, back then the project did not have an infrastructure to receive visitors. It only had some tanks for sick turtles – randomly found at the beaches – and incubation areas for nests relocated from local beaches. The increasing interest of visitors in the conservation effort pushed TAMAR to open a visitors’ center. The project saw in these visitors the potential to broaden its environmental education component to work with ecotourists. Before, it focused only on the community. TAMAR hired marketing and merchandize specialists to help with environmental education as well as to promote the
image of the Project as a landmark of environmental conservation. Today, the visitors’ center is reference in guided and oriented wildlife tours.

In Mazunte, turtles were the main reason this town became famous. Before tourism arrived, the town was known as a site of hunting, slaughtering, skinning and deboning sea turtles. Before the ban, environmentalists were constantly lobbying at the federal government for the closure of the slaughterhouse and the implementation of a permanent ban on sea turtle hunting. This pressure from environmentalists started in mid 1980s, and ended in 1990 with the federal government sea turtle ban in Mexico. By 1994, tourism had arrived in Mazunte, and became consolidated after the CMT visitors’ center opened to the public. In Mazunte turtles were the main attraction together with the nice beaches and well preserved natural landscape. The CMT was built as an aquarium with
large tanks where visitors could see turtles and local fish species. As in TAMAR, the CMT invested strongly in environmental education as the underpinning to the viability of the conservation project.

Figure 5.25: A view from inside of the CMT aquarium. Each tank has a different species of sea turtles. There are also some local species of fish. Hanging from above is a fishing net with an exclusionary system to allow turtles to escape unharmed. The nets are used to fish shrimp and huatinango, a local fish. Photograph by author.

In both conservation projects, work on wildlife conservation, advanced scientific research and environmental education depends on the ecotourism structure. TAMAR and CMT can reach out and advocate for their effort in the conservation of sea turtles to ecotourists. Locals are an important link in this process as well, but the focus is different. TAMAR and CMT have an easy dialogue with ecotourists. The majority of visitors share the same views of the projects’ technical staffs. Visitors to TAMAR and CMT are mostly
urban educated middle class, who are well aware of the importance of protecting sea
turtles and conserving the environment.

Figure 5.26: Outside the CMT aquarium there are large tanks where larger sea turtles can swim. Tourists enjoy the spectacle. Photograph by author.

The projects have a more difficult dialogue with the community because there is still resistance to conservation and a generalized resentment towards CMT and TAMAR. Although Mazunte and Praia do Forte are far from each other, located in very distinct places and part of so distinct cultures, the reactions of the communities to the sea turtle projects are very similar. The main reason relies in the fact that TAMAR and CMT are outside interventions that never overcame local cultural barriers of education, employment and livelihood shifts. Both TAMAR and CMT draw their technical staff of scientists from outside of town, mainly from large urban settings such as Mexico City, Queretaro and Guadalajara, in Mexico, and Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre,
in Brazil. This situation is understandable, as locals did not have the proper formal education that would allow them to work in these projects. This is the discourse used by the Projects personnel, but for these communities. The lack of commitment of these Projects to the demands of the communities is a greater issue.

In Mazunte, the ban on sea turtle hunting and the closure PIOSA\(^7\) slaughterhouse meant that most local men became unemployed. The Mexican Federal Government promised that the construction of the CMT would resolve the local unemployment. In Praia do Forte the ban did not affect locals because they did not depend economically on this resource. The ban affected local fishing because of stricter restrictions forced the incorporation of new technologies, such as the special nets with sea turtle excluding devices. These problems will be better discussed in section 5.2

TAMAR and the CMT offer high quality experience to ecotourists at their visitors’ centers. Both projects have extensive information on turtles and different options to observe them. All seven species of sea turtles that exist around the world are part of the IUCN list. The leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), called *Tortuga Laúd* in Mexico and *Tartaruga de Couro* in Brazil, is the most threatened specie and receives priority attention of national governments and NGOs in the countries where they are present. In Brazil, the nesting grounds for the Tartaruga de Couro is mainly the coastline of the state of Espírito Santo (the next state south of Bahia). TAMAR has a research station in that state at the Biological Reserve of Comboios. In Mexico, the main nesting

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\(^7\) PIOSA was a privately owned company. The owner was Spanish. PIOSA was passed on to the hands of local fishermen cooperatives in the late 1980s. with the ban, PIOSA and all fishing cooperatives lost the concession to hunt sea turtles.
grounds are located in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michocán. In Oaxaca, CMT is responsible for monitoring the occurrence of nest and for collecting all nests from the beaches to be removed to fences incubation areas. In other states of Mexico, CONANP is responsible for the monitoring and removal of nests.

All countries in the Americas that have sea turtles and are committed to protecting them are signatories of international treaties such as the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. This convention was ratified in 1996 by nine different countries – Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Peru, United States, Ecuador, Honduras and Netherlands, representing its continental and insular territories in Latin America and the Caribbean. Signatory countries have the responsibility of promoting the protection and conservation of sea turtles and of following specific rules established by this convention. Today, in most countries around the world, it is a crime to hunt sea turtles, to steal their nests for eggs, and to commercialize any product of sea turtle origin. Other countries besides Mexico and Brazil began conservation programs to protect these endangered species and to prohibit hunting of any of the species. Each country established its own specific rules to protect these animals. The regulations and programs have to follow international treaties regarding sea turtles.

5.2 Government structure for environmental projects

My comparison between Brazil and Mexico is particularly fruitful because of the similarities in the environmental legislation and the government agencies that operate conservation projects in both countries. In Mexico, CONANP is the government agency
responsible for federal conservation projects such as the CMT. CONANP is an independent agency within SEMARNAT, the Federal Government’s Department that works the national environmental agenda. In Brazil, the ICMBIO is the Brazilian government agency responsible for federal conservation projects, like the Project TAMAR. The ICMBIO is an independent agency within the MMA, the Federal Government’s Department that works the national environmental agenda.

Chart 5.1: The organization charts above illustrate the different levels of the Environmental Agenda within the Executive Branch of Brazil and Mexico. It shows the flow of power within the environmental agenda and the hierarchy sits above the sea turtle conservation projects.

The autonomy of ICMBIO to MMA and of CONANP to SEMARNAT is related to governance, budget and planning. These agencies have control over the different projects and programs they execute, and have autonomy over the way they spend their annual budget. Neither MMA nor SEMARNAT have authority to overrule the activities or budget of these agencies. Every move in this direction has to be approved by the
National Congress. ICMBIO and CONANP have authority over only over their own projects and programs. State and municipal conservation projects and programs are outside their governance. States and municipalities have authority over their own environmental projects and programs. Only federal government projects are present in the towns of Mazunte and Praia do Forte. The municipalities of Santa Maria Tonameca, where Mazunte is located, and Mata de São João, where Praia do Forte is located do not have any municipal level environmental projects at the moment.

In 2007, there were some changes in the Brazilian environmental agency. Before these changes the environmental agency responsible for the federal conservation projects was the IBAMA. TAMAR was under the supervision of IBAMA until August of 2007, when it passed to the newly created ICMBIO. IBAMA was responsible not only for conservation projects and programs but for the studying and licensing of development projects, and environmental policing activities. In Brazil, every development project that can cause a potential environmental problem (e.g. hydroelectric dams, power lines, highways, large buildings, factories, etc.) needs an environmental impact statement (RIMA) to certify it will not cause damage, and if it will, requirements needed to be met to mitigate these damages. Therefore, IBAMA was responsible for both licensing and conservation. The Federal Government decided that splitting these activities in two separate agencies would improve their efficiency. Thus ICMBIO was created to work specifically with conservation, and IBAMA was left with the licensing and environmental police activities. ICMBIO is responsible for its conservation activities and for the governance over national protected areas, such as national parks, biological reserves and
other types of protected areas. IBAMA and ICMBIO are independent agencies within the MMA. With this divide, ICMBIO became more similar to CONANP.

In Mexico, CONANP is mainly responsible for the governance over national protected areas (ANPs) and all activities that happen inside these protected areas, such as environmental education, conservation projects, ecotourism and recreation. The environmental police actions in Mexico are under the responsibility of the PROFEPA. CONANP and PROFEPA are independent agencies of SEMARNAT. SEMARNAT is directly responsible for the studying and licensing of development projects. SEMARNAT does not have a specific detached licensing agency like in Brazil.

SEMARNAT in Mexico and MMA in Brazil are at the same government hierarchical level as shown in chart 5.1. Both are executive branch agencies within the federal governments and report directly to each nation’s president. SEMARNAT and the MMA have the responsibility of implementing each country’s national environmental policy and executing everything pertaining to each county’s national environmental agenda. Sea turtle conservation is part of the environmental agenda of both these countries. The protection of this species was included in the national agendas after both countries ratified the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles.

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles is the only international treaty dedicated exclusively to sea turtles, setting standards for the conservation of these endangered animals and their habitats. Because individual sea turtles migrate and disperse over vast
distances, they are resources shared by the peoples of many nations. Hence, the Inter-American Convention has been vigorously supported by many members of the international community of sea turtle biologists and conservationists, particularly specialists from Latin America. And its stated objective is to promote the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and of the habitats on which they depend, based on the best available scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the Parties. 

Distinct conditions and situations marked the implementation and execution of TAMAR and CMT. It is necessary to contextualize each sea turtle conservation project separately and explain how these projects were inserted into each community. The ban on sea turtle hunting happened at different times in each country. Brazil created laws to protect this endangered species in 1981 while Mexico established the total ban on hunting in 1994.

Once projects invested on ecotourists as reproducers of specific conservation rhetoric, they gained the support of perfect allies. Ecotourists strongly influence what the community thinks, what the community will offer as service, and mostly, what posture the community should have regarding conservation. When ecotourists start to demand the protection of sea turtles, the safeguarding of local beaches, the possibility of seeing more sea turtles, the community will usually respond positively. These host communities are concerned with pleasing their guests. The interaction with ecotourists represents to locals

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8 Source: http://www.seaturtle.org/iac/intro.shtml
the possibility of cultural acquisition of new values. Ecotourists are replicating new reconfigured symbolic values concerning turtles, and the communities are learning that these new values can also be legitimate. It does not mean that everyone stopped hunting sea turtles or searching for eggs; it means that they are willing to rethink their attitudes, possibly because they – the hosts – want to look good. Host communities want to transmit to their guests that they are capable of changing and are not “culturally backwards”.

The idea of backwardness of the local community is one reproduced by the conservation projects. Both CMT and TAMAR have imbedded in their rhetoric the idea that stealing eggs, hunting turtles, eating sea turtle meat, or using its oil as medicine is antiquated, old fashion and primitive. Of course, the projects highlight the ecological discourse of sea turtle population depletion, threats of extinction, but they argue that this alone does not have much effect in changing the ways of the communities. It turns out that the projects become aggressive, doctrinarian and authoritarian. The communities react and resists to this discourse. In both localities, fishermen still admit that, whenever possible, they go and catch a turtle to eat. Eggs are still easily obtained in Mazunte. Surrounding communities still rob nests with no remorse because they are too inaccessible to benefit from ecotourism and therefore do not abide by these prohibiting to rules or regulations.
5.2.1 Projeto TAMAR

The years preceding the establishment of TAMAR as a conservation project, the Federal Government had some general regulations to the protection of wildlife, but nothing specific for sea turtles. There was no study whatsoever on sea turtles in Brazil at that time. There was the belief that sea turtles did come to Brazil to nest or feed. Oceanography students from FURG produced an extensive photographic record and a detailed report on the occurrence of sea turtles along the coast of Brazilian and on the exploitation of this species in some coastal communities. The students used these documents to request funding at IBDF, the environmental agency of the time, for a scientific prospection along the Brazilian coast to identify where sea turtles nested, where they feed and any other relevant information on the species. This prospection and the report produced thereafter fundament the creation of Projeto TAMAR. Part of the work done by this expedition included the identification of areas considered priority to the conservation of sea turtles. TAMAR began its operations in 1981 with the establishment of two research field stations, one at Praia do Forte, Bahia and the other at Pirambu, Sergipe. (Fundação Pró-TAMAR, 2000: 27-30).

TAMAR is today administered by ICMBIO in partnership with the Pro-TAMAR Foundation, an NGO created by the directors of TAMAR to facilitate fundraising for the project outside government. Government restrictions prohibit federal projects from receiving donations from private parties. TAMAR has developed a structure that monitors 1000 kilometers of beaches, using 23 research stations in eight Brazilian states. TAMAR claims “ninety per cent of the people involved in this work are members of the
communities where the bases are established”.\footnote{Form TAMAR Website http://www.tamar.org.br} The stations are established in strategic coastal areas where sea turtles come to nest and/or feed. Each station has an operation structure proportional to the demand of each locality. Some Stations operate all year long while others are seasonal, operating only during the nesting seasons.

All field stations are coordinated by five regional offices located in the coastal towns of Ubatuba, in the state of Sao Paulo; Regência, in the state of Espirito Santo; Praia do Forte, in the state of Bahia; and Pirambu, in the state of Sergipe. Each station coordinates a group of other smaller stations. Another regional office is located in the National Marine Park of Fernando de Noronha, an archipelago off the coast of Brazil. This station coordinates work done around the archipelago of Fernando de Noronha. Praia do Forte is the National Coordination Headquarter, overseeing and coordinating the national conservation strategies in every field station. Praia do Forte and Arembepe are the strategic stations, as these places have the largest nesting areas on the Brazilian mainland.

TAMAR is coordinated mainly by marine biologists, oceanographers, ecologists and veterinarians. These scientists are responsible for coordinating the field research and the visitors’ centers. In every town, TAMAR is present, higher echelons within the project are composed of outsiders. Every scientist graduated from a major university located in one of Brazil’s large cities such as Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. Local residents of Praia do Forte also work in TAMAR but since the majority (over 95% of locals) do not have a university degree they work in the lower
echelons of the project, such as maintenance, fieldwork support, drivers and, in some cases, bureaucratic work. The framework of TAMAR has created disparities between the ones with scientific knowledge over the ones without. The scientists coordinate all the conservation work, environmental education and tourist reception.

TAMAR’s personnel is hired through two different avenues: one is through the federal government and the other is through the Pro-TAMAR Foundation. The ones hired by the federal government are federal employees of the ICMBIO and receive the salaries and benefits set for the public servant position of Environmental Analyst. However, TAMAR has very few federal employees. In Praia do Forte it is restricted to only one person: the Director of TAMAR. All other personnel of TAMAR in Praia do Forte are hired through the Foundation, receiving smaller salaries and fewer benefits than the director. In Brazil, all federal jobs at managerial levels, such as Project director require a Public Exam. These exams are rarely held in Brazil and IBAMA, the agency previously responsible for TAMAR did not designate any new position for TAMAR in Praia do Forte since 1981. The Foundation has been the alternative to this government regulation concerning new positions. The Foundation has the legal status of an NGO and it follows the private sector labor regulations.

TAMAR has a superstructure to work with local communities where it operates. In communities that have more vocation for tourism than others, TAMAR has a visitors’ center, offers activities to ecotourists and sells souvenirs. In communities that do not have tourism, the project set up small factories that produce handcrafts like tee shirts, key chains, magnets with sea turtle motifs to be sold in the communities where TAMAR has visitors’ centers and a gift shops. This is the case of towns like Pirambu, in Sergipe and
Praia do Forte, in Bahia. Pirambu only has tourism two months of the year while Praia do Forte has tourism all-year around. Both localities have a TAMAR research field station. In Pirambu, to help improve the local community’s income, TAMAR established a small manufacturing unit, where locals work printing tee shirts with sea turtle motifs and producing small woven handicrafts of sea turtles. Everything produced in Pirambu goes to TAMAR’s gift shop in Praia do Forte, where it is sold by locals (hired as salespersons by TAMAR) to ecotourists. The revenues circulate in a large network of towns, some of which are producers and other consumers of sea turtle merchandise. An interesting system increases earnings of local families in every town where TAMAR operates.

5.2.2 Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga

In 1965, the Secretaría de Pesca initiated the PNTM, a specific program to monitor sea turtle hunting and to protect nestlings at specific beaches where these animals were captured. Mexico had a very peculiar legislation regarding sea turtles. Sea turtles have always been more abundant in Mexico than any other country in the world. The country has six endemic sea turtle species out of the seven species existing in the world and has one particular event, called *arribada*, which is the massive arrival of thousands of sea turtles at once to nest in specific beaches. In one night, one single beach can receive over ten thousand turtles.

The PNTM was first developed to promote economic sustainability to the sea turtle hunting business. The Secretaría de Pesca was responsible for conducting a control of sea turtle population and defining regulations and restrictions to the activity, as it does
today with the fishing industry of Mexico. This Program was developed because in the 1960s the demand for sea turtle skin in international markets increased tremendously after it became the choice substitute for crocodile skin. Due to this sudden increase in demand, the federal government had to decree protective measures such as limitations of exploitation. Hunting quotas were established each year based on scientific data collected every year by INP personnel working directly at the hunting sites (Secretaría de Pesca, 1990: 3).

The government decreed that only fishing cooperatives could exploit sea turtle resources, that these cooperatives had to follow strict capture quotas, that sea turtle capture was prohibited during the nesting seasons and that the species Laúd (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and Lora (*Lepidochelys kempii*) were banned from hunting activity. These measures were placed to create population stability, allowing eggs to hatch and new individuals to achieve adulthood before being captured. (Secretaría de Pesca, 1990: 4-5).

The PNTM had the objectives of recovering the population of sea turtles and providing protection for *Laúd* and *Lora* species, optimizing the hunting strategies of sea turtles, and the introduction of mechanisms that would exclude sea turtles from the shrimp capture nets, as well as programs for the protection of natural habitats and social awareness. This Program became the basis for the creation of the CMT and the subsequent conservation initiative carried out by CMT.

In Mexico sea turtle conservation was a long and gradual process. It started with a two-year ban on the hunting of all species in 1971 to allow species to recover their
population. Then in 1972, the Secretaría de Pesca established a regulation that allowed only fishing cooperatives to exploit sea turtles. In 1973, the Federal Government decreed a complete ban on sea turtle exploitation in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. In 1986, all nesting beaches were converted into biological reserves or wildlife sanctuaries to protect sea turtle nests and hunting was permitted only out in the sea, along the coast of Oaxaca state. In the same year a National Fishing Law was declared imposing a series of regulations and requirements on fishing fleets to protect sea turtles. Mechanisms such as sea turtle exclusion systems had to be present on all shrimp and sardine nets. In 1988, the Federal Government declared the General Law on Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection, the first step towards the complete and permanent ban on sea turtle exploitation declared in 1990. (Secretaría de Pesca, 1990: 8).

The CMT officially started in 1994, when the main aquarium, water tanks, research equipment and offices were complete. It had already opened to the public as a visitors’ center while biologists continued to work on the conservation of sea turtles. Differently than TAMAR, the CMT has always been concentrated in Mazunte and on the nesting beaches of the state of Oaxaca. It never had any activity outside this state until 2008, when CONANP decided that the CMT would be converted into the National Headquarter of the PNTM and become responsible for all of the 33 research field stations spread around the country. This is still in ways of being implemented.

As in TAMAR, CMT is run mainly by marine biologists, oceanographers, ecologists and veterinarians. Scientists are in command of all the activities that happen inside the CMT and its visitors’ center, as well as at the research field camps located in Escobilla (30km West), Barra de la Cruz (74km East) and Morro Ayuta (100km East).
Until 2008, these stations were the only stations under the supervision of CMT. These camps are the main nesting grounds for sea turtles of all Mexico, which is why CMT became responsible for them since the beginning of operations. Community activities were developed in these three camps along with Mazunte and San Agustinillo.

Outsider scientists occupy all higher echelons of the CMT. All have graduated from universities in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Queretaro, State of Mexico, or Veracruz. All moved to Mazunte specifically to work with sea turtle conservation. Some local residents of Mazunte and San Agustinillo work in CMT in the lower echelons because they do not have a university degree. Recently two of them graduated from the Universidad del Mar, located in Puerto Angel, an university created in 1990 with programs in Marine Biology and Tourism Management. Still none of them were able to ascend from their operation position to a managerial one because of the lack of new positions. As in TAMAR, locals of Mazunte and San Agustinillo work mainly in CMT’s areas of operations, maintenance, fieldwork support, driving, and bureaucratic work.

The framework of CMT has also created inequalities between those who have scientific knowledge and those who do not, but with a difference. While in TAMAR most personnel is hired by the Foundation, in CMT, all are hired as federal employees and share the same benefits and salary scales as other federal employees of CONANP around Mexico. CONANP has a scale of salaries that is commensurate with each employee’s experience and education. CONANP offers more guarantees and benefits than would a Mexican private employer.
5.3 Tortugueros, Tartarugueiros and Sea Turtle Projects

Chapter 06 will discuss the development of ecotourism more thoroughly. In this section, I will discuss briefly how the federal governments implemented conservation projects in communities. Troeng and Drews (2004) discuss the distinction between the "consumptive use" and "non-consumptive use" of sea turtles. Consumptive use is related to the use of sea turtles for meat, shell, eggs, bone and leather. Non-consumptive use is:

"Mainly the use of marine turtles as a tourism attraction, either on land when turtles come to nest or bask, or in-water. The production and sale of items with marine turtle motifs associated with conservation projects, and the provision of board and lodging services to scientists and volunteers is another form of non-consumptive use" (Troeng and Drews 2004: 18).

The two research sites discussed here – Mazunte/San Agustinillo and Praia do Forte – could be classified in these two categories during different periods. Sea turtle consumptive use was present in Mazunte until 1990 and Praia do Forte until 1981. After these dates, non-consumptive use became primary for both places. The transition from one mode to another was made possible by inserted interventions of both tourism and conservation. The Mexican and Brazilian federal governments intervened strongly in this transition. This was the moment when government intervention was mostly felt.

In Mazunte conservation was imposed by the Environmental Police – PROFEPA, Marines, aggressive campaigns in TV, radio and schools, and community development Projects. The problem in Mazunte was the displacement of fishermen from their jobs. New activities had to be developed and tourism was the option chosen. CMT could not
have succeeded without a range of government agencies acting in concert to forcefully change subsistence and commercial patterns. It is also true that the three beaches directly monitored by CMT have the Marines present all year long in two of them – Barra de la Cruz and Escobilla. Morro Ayuta has the Army only during the nesting season. Stealing eggs is still the main problem in the Pacific coast of Oaxaca. Most eggs from these nesting beaches are transferred to incubation areas inside the CMT to be protected from robbers. This scenario has changed little since 1994. Some community members are hired to help the CMT at the research stations. These workers, called *tortugueros*, help transfer eggs to fenced incubation areas and guard these places against robbers. Tortugueros had to be paid well in order not to continue collecting the eggs.

The tortugueros in Mazunte and San Agustinillo were fishermen that used to work at PIOSA. These individuals were hired because of their TEK regarding sea turtles. In these two towns, CMT hired about five individuals that work inside the project. They assist veterinarians with the live animals in display and with the baby turtles that hatch at the incubation area inside CMT. Besides these five former fishermen, CMT has in the communities of Morro Ayuta, Barra de la Cruz and Escobilla, hired tortugueros that live in the remote field stations and monitor the beaches for new nests. They are all local residents and former poachers. These tortugueros are very good at finding nests. These three communities are predominantly indigenous and poaching eggs at the beach has always been part of the local subsistence strategy. Escobilla is predominantly Zapotec, Morro Ayuta is Chontal and Barra de la Cruz is mixed. The folkloric dance that shows a couple collecting eggs at the beach (Figure 4.1) is a representation of a Chontal ritual dance.
In Oaxaca, the term tortuguero related to the people that had an acute understanding of sea turtles and had excellent skills to find nests. The tortugueros were the ones that would lead poaching drives along the beach. They would find the nests and the group that followed would dig them up and remove the eggs. The tortugueros were also the ones who knew how to slaughter a turtle. There is a specific way to remove the leather and the meat to minimize wasting the best cuts and only the tortugueros knew how to do that. Children would learn to poach eggs at early age.

TAMAR had an easier time getting establishment in Praia do Forte, as sea turtle consumptive use was on a smaller scale. The local community survived on other resources. Still the consumption of eggs was a treat to the survival of the species. TAMAR converted the community to conservation with employment. The ones who used to steal eggs were hired to take care of nests from predators, including humans. Good salaries were paid to lure them away from collecting and selling sea turtle eggs. Through work and engagement, these former poachers, now called tartarugueiros, would monitor beaches during the night to find new nests and inform TAMAR biologists the next day. Biologists would then go to the location of the nests and transfer the eggs to the incubation area. Tartarugueiros still monitor beaches for new nests. Today nests remain where they are; there is no need to transfer them to incubation areas inside TAMAR field station. Some change in consciousness has occurred in the past 27 years of TAMAR.
Similar to Oaxaca, in Bahia, the term tartarugueiro was used to identify the men that had best knowledge of turtles, an acute sense for finding nests and the knowledge of how to slaughter a turtle. However, there was a division of tasks. Older and stronger men were responsible for the slaughtering while the teenagers and children were the ones that searched for nests and collected the eggs. The knowledge of finding nests and of slaughtering a turtle were passed on through generations. Because of the work that TAMAR did in schools and with fishermen, this transference of knowledge between generations stopped. Today the children are enchanted by the baby sea turtles and reproduce the conservationist discourse they learn from TAMAR.
Some tartarugueiros work inside TAMAR with maintenance and assisting biologists with the live species in display. Today, most of the tartarugueiros hired by TAMAR at Praia do Forte are still fishermen. Their work as tartarugueiro does not interfere with fishing. Since most turtles come to nest over night, these men do their rounds in the early morning, before dawn. After they report to TAMAR the number and location of nests, they go off to fish or to their other job. In the past, besides fishing, these men would hunt turtles and poach eggs for subsistence. TAMAR handpicked the fishermen that were known as the best tartarugueiro. The objective of the project was to “convert” these individuals from exploiters of sea turtles to conservationists. It took sometime however through payment, these men easily shifted sides.

It is very different from Mazunte where locals actually earned money with turtles. In Praia do Forte, turtles were food while in Mazunte they were the main source of income. It is easy to understand why in the Mexican case it was harder to “convert” livelihoods. CMT was never able to cover the earnings of PIOSA workers. They earned much more than what the project pays today the tortugueros in Escobilla, Barra de la Cruz and Morro Ayuta. That is why ecotourism as an alternative source of income became so important in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. In Praia do Forte, local livelihoods did not revolve around sea turtles. There were other food sources and earnings came from fishing and agriculture. Local income was low and TAMAR was able to cover the earnings of tortugueros. Some even stopped fishing and dedicated all their time to helping TAMAR. Some of these later became employees of TAMAR.

TAMAR and CMT had to pay fishermen to help with conservation in the first years. Fishermen in Praia do Forte and Mazunte refused to work on a voluntary unpaid
condition. The claim in Mazunte was that CMT forced them to end a subsistence activity that was profitable, with fast economic return. With ecotourism, these former fishermen have to invest money and time in their businesses, do continuous capacity building to keep competitive, and deal with ecotourists. CMT believes it was best for fishermen because now they are self-employed and can earn more on their own terms than what they earned working for PIOSA. The claim in Praia do Forte was different. Fishermen believe that TAMAR created restrictions and imposed regulation on fishing. For the community, TAMAR took their liberty of fishing on their own terms and did not give much in exchange for their effort they took in accepting all these changes.

The initiative of paying fishermen and their families to help with conservation is mostly assistentialist. If the project cuts the pay, the fishermen automatically stop helping. In Morro Ayuta, some locals who were paid helpers of CMT continued to steal eggs or allow other to do so. The project has been forced to substitute workers for these reasons. The community considers anyone that works at the research base a traitor. In Praia do Forte some fishermen still poach eggs and kill turtles. So say it is to defy TAMAR’s authority.

In Oaxaca, stealing eggs continues because they still can earn some with that practice. There is still a strong illegal market for sea turtle eggs and smugglers are still willing to pay high prices for the product. Families that were forced out of the sea turtle extractive business can make ends meet selling eggs. They do not have a problem with this act as they blame their current condition of the conservation projects themselves. This explains why these same projects were not effective in converting all locals to the importance of protecting turtles.
Oaxacan and Bahiano cultures in relation to sea turtles are diametrical. In Oaxaca, the indigenous Zapotec rituals include sea turtle eggs. Cualtemoc, the biologist who works in the Sea Turtle Program since 1973, told me some about the rituals that occurred before the total ban on sea turtle hunting.

“In weddings, it is very common that the newlyweds receive a large basket full of sea turtle eggs. The eggs are a Zapotec symbol of fertility. The newlyweds are expected to have children soon after they get married and it is believed that the eggs will help with this. In other religious rituals, Zapotecs dance imitating sea turtles. It has a purification reason and is believed to help yield good harvesting. However, the indigenous consumption of eggs has never really been a problem. In fact, PROFEPA is more lenient if they catch an indigenous person collecting eggs at the beach. The biggest problem really is the large-scale urban consumption of eggs. It is in large urban centers where turtle eggs are considered aphrodisiac. It is a consumption based on vanity. It is not necessity, but pleasure. Therefore, this is the consumption mostly attacked by the CMT and PROFEPA. And the trafficking of sea turtle eggs is mainly for this consumption.” (Interview in 16/January/2008)

In fact, while I was conducting my fieldwork, days later to this interview, PROFEPa arrested six fishermen and a small fishing boat. They were caught with 16 sea turtles on board. Mexican environmental laws consider this action, as well as stealing eggs, to be a federal crime. Criminals are incarcerated and stay in jail until final judgment. There is a bail option, but it is prohibitively expensive. In Brazil, the law is similar, but very recently, it was changed to prohibit any option of bailout. Everyone has to be tried and, if convicted, has to serve the sentence in jail.
CMT has to work on two fronts: working with indigenous groups to try to adapt their culture in developing alternatives to the use of sea turtle eggs and to combat the trafficking of eggs to large urban centers. The problem is that consumption patterns are strongly imbedded in the local indigenous and the urban Mexican culture. It has not been easy for CMT to change this scenario. That is why since the creation of CMT in 1994, the federal government has been obliged to make use of armed repression. The biggest challenge to CMT is actually to find alternative sources of income for the communities impacted by the ban on sea turtle consumption patterns. Mazunte and San Agustinillo, as well as Ventanilla, had a favorable scenario for the development of tourism. Other communities such as Escobilla, Morro Ayuta and Barra de la Cruz were located in less favorable places. These places have beautiful beaches that would enchant any tourist, but they are just too far out of the way. Highways do not come close, access is limited by sand dunes, and extensive salt flats that remain flooded during six months of the year.

In Bahia, consumptive use of sea turtles and its eggs were not as culturally imbedded as in Mexico. Communities consumed the eggs and slaughtered some sea turtles as part of their diet. It represented less than 50% of a month’s diet. Fish and pork were the main sources of protein. Paulo Lara is a biologist of TAMAR, responsible for the field research along the beaches of Praia do Forte. He said that:

“The community [Praia do Forte] in fact consumed sea turtle eggs and meat, but this was 20 years ago and the knowledge of how to slaughter a turtle was lost. The older fishermen know how to do it, but the younger ones, the ones under 30 years of age, do not.” (Interview in 29/May/2007)

I asked him if the community believed in the turtle eggs aphrodisiac value. He said that:
“Yes local residents believed this, but this idea is of the older generation and it was not passed down to the younger generations.” (Interview in 29/May/2007)

TAMAR was efficient in converting this consumptive pattern into a non-consumptive pattern because tourism and economic development improved the community’s earnings and access to more sources of food. Silva Luis, a fishermen said that:

“Even with the restrictions imposed by TAMAR, some people still consume sea turtle meat, but this is less common because there are other options of meat such as chicken, beef and fish. We eat turtles when we feel like it. We do well with the food that we easily catch or buy at the market.” (Interview in 23/June/2007)

TAMAR had to work most directly with communities using environmental education. It was not necessary to use a police force to protect nests. TAMAR constructed the basis of their environmental education working closely with local children. Schools have been the main place for TAMAR to conduct demonstrative activities on the importance of sea turtles and their habitat. In addition, TAMAR reached out to help the community of Praia do Forte constructing a kindergarten. The Pro-TAMAR Foundation got the financial support of PETROBRAS to built and maintain that for local children. The older ones, from ages six to twelve were incorporated into a tour guide training program of TAMAR on how to become tour guides. They learn all about the process of protecting sea turtles, from the nests to adulthood, and all the activities conducted by TAMAR. The program is interesting because it rewards children who do well at school. While they are in the training program their families receive food donations, some money for school supplies and other necessary materials the children
need. At the end of the training these kids earn certificates and this has been valued in the local and regional tourism market. Some of these kids are now adults with good jobs in the tourism industry as tour guides and touring operators. A few have been able to open their own business.

Perhaps the approach used by TAMAR worked well in the communities where the project has visitors’ centers because these places, despite being forced to change their ways, communities felt some sense of empowerment. Transformation was easier considering that sea turtle consumption was not as strongly imbedded in the local culture as in Mexico. CMT has similar programs in Oaxaca. Through grants offered by the Federal Government CMT helped communities such as Río Seco and Escobilla. In Escobilla they helped the community develop marked trails and trained locals to act as tour guides. The community developed a visitors’ program where tourists can come and watch sea turtles nest. Tour guides and tourists need to follow a series of rules both, but the spectacle is worth it. They have received a good number of tourists, but still fewer than they expected. The community created a cooperative, built a nice restaurant along the highway where they serve very good meals and built nice cabins where the tourists can spend the night. In Río Seco, which neighbors Morro Ayuta, CMT helped the community conduct an ecotourism assessment plan. The community wanted to work with tourism, but the isolation from highways and tourism destinations made it economically unviable. The problem that CMT experiences is due to complex state bureaucracy not adjusted to the needs of small isolated communities. Since it only has a government side to it (there is no NGO part), the project has very limited outreach.
Twenty seven years have passed since TAMAR started working in Praia do Forte, and 14 years since CMT stated working in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. The two projects are directed by agencies that represent federal policy in environmental matters. Both communities today have mixed feelings about the projects, but it is interesting to note that in both places, for both projects, today, after the local economies of these places settled on ecotourism, most local residents admit that these projects increase the attractiveness of their towns in the tourism industry. TAMAR and CMT are important tourism attractions and the regulations and restrictions benefit tourism. In the next chapter, I will discuss this in more detail.

Why are the conservation realities in Praia do Forte and Mazunte/San Agustinillo so different? Why did Mexico require the marines and extensive police action to protect sea turtles while Brazil was able to achieve this level of protection with little effort? Here we reach an interesting point in the comparison between the two sites. The difference is mainly cultural, more specifically pertaining to the traditional and symbolic realms of what sea turtles represent to Oaxacans and Bahianos.

Other reasons contribute to the difficulty in combining conservation with sustainable livelihoods relates to the division that exists between conservation biologists and the local community. These projects have always set a distance from the community. In part, this happened because the scientific ecological knowledge (SEK), base of all activities of conservation biology does not acknowledge or recognize TEK. Both TAMAR and CMT have incorporated some TEK into their activities. TAMAR developed strategies of searching and finding nests with the tartarugueiros. These strategies were incorporated and became scientific. The two types of knowledge are incommensurable.
“In contrast to traditional knowledge, which is assumed to be qualitative, intuitive, holistic, and oral, science is seen as quantitative, analytical, reductionist and literate” (Nadasdy 1999: 2).

Nadasdy puts it quite well. This divide between western scientific knowledge and local ecological, intuitive knowledge is what has made it difficult to remove barriers between these projects and the local communities. Fishermen in Mazunte never accepted the claims of the federal government that justified the Veda\textsuperscript{10}: population depletion, extinction endangerment, and environmental disequilibrium. Local fishermen claim that everything was under control and that they were taking care of the population of turtles.

It is true that today, in the pacific coast of Mexico turtles are no longer in danger and that research conducted by CMT has shown a saturation of nests in beaches like Escobilla. The amount of nests is so high there that the sand is saturated with organic material (egg shells, rotten eggs that did not develop). This is starting to interfere in the maturation of newer nests. Locals in Mazunte, San Agustinillo and Escobilla, the most affected by the Veda, claim that there are too many turtles out there and that it would be no harm to allow them to catch a few every year.

Unfortunately, CMT and TAMAR have to be understood as government responses to extra-local conservation demands of governments that abide to international environmental agendas. SEK in Bahia and in Oaxaca are answering directly to international demands. TAMAR and CMT are concerned with turtles and the data sets

\textsuperscript{10} “La Veda” is the actual Spanish term used by fishermen to refer to the government prohibition on hunting turtles. The direct translation is ‘ban’.
that these animals can offer them. The data sets will allow these projects to define if their approach has been efficient and if not, what needs to be changed in order to achieve that. On the other hand, sea turtle hunters are concerned with turtles as a natural resource, a way of life mostly in the case of Mazunte. This local perspective cannot be accommodated by the scientific and institutional structure of conservation projects.
Chapter 6: On the Ecotourism Development Scenario

6.1 Introduction – Broader context of sea turtle tourism.

With the expansion of ecotourism and of the ecotourists’ interest in novel destinations, residents (local entrepreneurs, small business owners, and even conservation project personnel) started searching for new options that would interest visitors. Wildlife became an important and efficient way to attract visitors. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, community members learned how to capitalize on this.

Ecotourism focused on the appreciation of wildlife has been classified as a “non-consumptive use of wildlife” (see Wilson and Tisdell 2001, Troeng and Drews 2004), which opposes hunting and poaching, classified as “consumptive use of wildlife”. According to Wilson and Tisdell 2001, ecotourism based on non-consumptive use of wildlife has demonstrated a phenomenal growth and a great potential to increase conservation strategies for endangered species. It can also increase the probability of faster and more solid economic gain to local communities. This conclusion draws from the analysis of opportunity costs involved in both situations: consumptive and non-consumptive use. According to these authors, the non-consumptive use ecotourism generates an experience to the tourists and not only a product, as traditional tourism would. This experience, if well managed by ecotourism operators and promoted properly by governments can generate more benefits to a community than the consumptive use of sea turtles (Op. Cit. 2001: 2-6). Studies of non-consumptive wildlife tourism have shown a dramatic increase in the number of ecotourists interested in this type of vacation and in
the money spent pursuing this interest (see Filion et al. 1983, and Duffus and Dearden 1990).

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the number of visitors have demonstrated this increase. TAMAR today receives between 1,000 to 2,000 visitors a day. The annual number for the year 2006 was of 500,000. According to TAMAR, these figures have had an average increase of 10% every year. Some programs, such as “Adopt a Sea Turtle” have contributed to that. According to the CMT, numbers of visitors in 2006 averaged 60,000 while the estimates for 2007 were of 80,000, an increase of 33.4%. CMT is smaller and in a less favorable location than TAMAR and has not received any major renovations since its inauguration in 1994. For the year of 2008, there was a major plan of renovation. After this renovation, CMT expects that the number of visitors surpass 200,000 a year, which would represent an increase of 150%.

All this increased interest in sea turtles, and other wildlife as spectacles has to do with the changing trend in ecotourism that occurred during the last 18 years. It relates to the change in the perception of nature, and the valorization of nature. The growing perception that the degradation of wildlife habitats has increased and that the recovery of natural habitat and repopulation of endangered species is not as easy and simple, has led tourism industry to shift its paradigm to a more conscious-bound approach. Ecotourism benefitted from this: more and more travelers have searched for places where they can encounter this experience with nature. As Sandoval 2006 puts it, the tourism industry had to remodel what he calls the “fordist tourism”, a tourism characterized by the massive production of touring packages, very standardized, and not allowing much modification, as in the Ford Model Ts. You could choose any color of Model T as long as it was black!
Today, not only people are searching for distinct travelling experiences, they are also looking for individualized experience. Some characteristics of this remodeled ecotourism are: individualized traveling; no reservations needed; more than one destination in one trip; flexibility of dates; new experiences (wildlife, adventure sports).

Sea Turtle tourism is present in many countries of Latin America, the Caribbean Islands, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Sea Turtles concentrate mostly in tropical waters with little occurrence in temperate and cold waters. In Latin America, the main spots to sight sea turtles are Tortuguero Beach, in Costa Rica; Praia do Forte and the Fernando de Noronha Archipelago, in Brazil; and along Oaxacan Coast, in Mexico. These particular places have high nesting rates and are feeding areas for sea turtles. Ecotourists are able to see sea turtles swimming and nesting at a near beach.

This new ecotourism trend raises some important questions: Why do sea turtles matter so much to ecotourists? Why is there a special appreciation for this animal? Ecotourists are interested in exotic animals not found in their own hometown. Mazunte, for example, receives mostly foreign tourists, all from countries located in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere where sea turtles are not endemic species.

I interviewed a few tourists in Mazunte for this matter. I questioned them on what they thought of sea turtles and if this was the main reason that brought them to Mazunte. The results were unexpected. From a group of 22 tourists interviewed on this topic, 15 had never seen previously a real sea turtle. Eighteen of 22 came to Mazunte attracted by the fact that there were many sea turtles around. Only two out of twenty-two did not know Mazunte had sea turtles. I asked all of them what they thought of sea turtles. The
responses were varied. Brittany a student of 20 year of age, from Montreal, Canada said sea turtles amazed her. She had seen them on Discovery Channel documentaries and was happy to be able to learn more about them at the CMT. What she liked the most was swimming with them in the ocean. Paul, 21, a student at University of Oklahoma, at Norman, Oklahoma said: “It is quite a different creature. The turtles are very tame, they are nice and swim peacefully.” The answers do not really give specific reasons why tourists are interested in sea turtles. Some children told me that they are beautiful little creatures and very cute when running towards the sea. They were referring to the baby sea turtles they watched crawling on the sand during a release event promoted by CMT. Carlos, from Barcelona, Spain said he loved Mazunte and the fact it had sea turtles. He was not aware that the town had the CMT and boat rides to watch sea turtles. “I loved the experience of swimming with the sea turtles. They are so docile. I think it is great that the community stopped killing these animals and started caring for them.” (31/January/2008)

In Praia do Forte, foreign tourists were very interested in the importance of protecting the species. They were amazed with the information they learned at TAMAR’s visitors’ center: that an adult sea turtle usually travels back and forth between the coasts of Africa and South America at least once a year and that each female turtle lays about 100 to 120 eggs each time. But they expressed concern about other facts such as the low success rate of baby sea turtles to reach adulthood: for every 1,000 baby sea turtles born, only two or three reach adulthood. TAMAR displays the various reasons for these figures: the destruction and stealing of nests, the action of natural predators – including men – and the irresponsible fishing practices – use of nets without exclusion devices.
I also interviewed a few tourists in Praia do Forte about the sea turtles. From a group of 29 ecotourists, I got some interesting results. Twenty-five ecotourists declared that they came to Praia do Forte because of two main reasons: (1) the beautiful beaches and good infra-structure, and (2) the possibility of seeing real turtles coming out of the water to nest or to see baby sea turtles being released into the sea. Only two tourists out of 29 said they did not know Praia do Forte had sea turtles. Most respondents were ecotourists from Germany and England. They told me that when deciding where to vacation, their travel agent offered them the option of Praia do Forte, advertising about the unique experience of seeing sea turtles. As to what these tourists thought of sea turtles, the answers were varied. One couple from Leeds, England told me: “Sea turtles are amazing animals. They swim so smoothly and have very interesting patterns and colors” (17/June/2007). I met two other British ecotourists at a local hostel I stayed. Lindsey and Mary were on a school summer vacation and travelling to different places inside Brazil. They told me they decided to come to Praia do Forte specifically because of sea turtles. They said that: “Sea turtles are very cute, especially the baby ones. We just did not have the chance of going on one of those night walks along the beach to see some turtles come to the beach and nest. Maybe next time. I think that will be an exiting experience.” (26/September/2007) This period of the year they were in Praia do Forte was just the beginning of the nesting season, which runs from mid-October to the end of March.

Non-consumptive use of wildlife is one of the main reasons ecotourism has flourished in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Other reasons are the landscape and scenario. Beautiful beaches, nice weather and sufficient infrastructure complete the
necessary requirements to include these towns in the international ecotourism route. Therefore, ecotourism became the main subsistence alternative to sea turtle hunting in these towns. Initially, TAMAR and CMT were working to help fishermen find new income source while they focused on protecting sea turtles. Now fishermen and their families have different non-consumptive livelihood alternatives.

To achieve this stage of non-consumptive use of wildlife, some important measures had to be established: beaches had to be constantly monitored; development along the coastal line had to be curbed and controlled; and communities had to learn the importance of protecting coral reefs, sand dunes and native vegetation. All these changes came concurrent with the development of ecotourism. This is an interesting trend, which expresses itself differently in each town.

6.2 Ecotourism project in Praia do Forte

Tourism started in Praia do Forte in the late 1980s. The construction of Linha Verde Highway helped promote coastal destinations in northern Bahia, such as Praia do Forte. Tourists came to town attracted by the rustic infrastructure, small houses, humble lodgings and beautiful untouched beaches. Being an extensive coconut farm, urban development was delayed from advancing over to the beaches of Praia do Forte and environmental restrictions limited the development from happening right at the beach. Ecotourists today still find well-preserved beaches, with clear waters and natural pools at the coral reefs. Back then in the 1980s the town had no restaurants or hotels, nor
electricity or phone lines. The few tourists could rely on an old lady who would cook simple homemade food and a family that would rent out a few rooms at their home.

In the late 1980s, Praia do Forte was a well-organized community with well-preserved landscape and a conservation project. TAMAR had no visitors’ center. Until the mid 1980s, the project had only two tanks for baby sea turtles, kept there until it was time to release them to the sea. Tourism grew slowly until 1999 when the town received grants from the Federal Government, World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to improve infrastructure and become a tourism destination.

The two pictures below illustrate how the town has changed drastically from a small rural settlement to an urbanized, trendy and somewhat sophisticated town. The development was slow in the first 20 years.

Figure 6.28: A view of the Main Street in 1975. Source: Projeto TAMAR 2005
After 1995, the town had more services to offer tourists, and the main street was already paved. It was only in 2001 that all streets were paved and the town received a public sewage system.

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 6.29**: The same view of Main Street in 2007. Photograph by Author

The development of Praia do Forte was stimulated by different factors. I identified three major vectors of development in Praia do Forte. **First is the landscape**: the beaches, coral reefs and vegetation make a perfect composition for a beach destination and this landscape offers activities to all ages and all groups of ecotourists, from families to couples to independent travelers. The beach is calm during the day and has natural pools for kids to swim and adults to snorkel. At the end of the coral reef (about 200 to 400 meters out), starts the open sea with good waves for surfing. Even today, with more urban development and more condominiums surrounding the town, the place is still very
attractive. Building codes limit the heights of buildings, the distance from the beach and have prohibit any construction on the beach. All this maintains the natural characteristics of the local beaches.

Second is the proneness to Conservation: the town, with a sea turtle conservation project and, more recently, a humpback whale conservation project, has developed a vocation for conservation. The majority of local residents agree with the idea of environmental conservation, ecological consciousness and sustainable development, which the modus operandi of the town. Praia do Forte has a special waste management system with recycling in effect; there is a public sewage system with a modern treatment plant; there are special environmental education programs in the local public school and pre-school; and every business in town is auto-promoted as being “green”. All activities offered to ecotourists are nature-based. These visitors can enjoy kayaking, wind surfing, whale watching, observe sea turtles, hiking at the beaches and the nature trails set out in the local jungle.

Third is the private capital invested in conservation and development: the town was once a farm. Klaus Peters, the businessman who purchased it in 1972, decided to invest in tourism and urban development. He sold part of the land for the development of condominiums and another part he built a sophisticated ecological resort. He devised an elaborate ecotourism development plan, one designed by a team of architects, ecologists, environmentalists, biologists and urban planners (See FGD 2005). Peters founded the NGO FGD to develop and implement the Ecotourism Plan.
Ecotourism in Praia do Forte was promoted by FGD, run by ecologists and supported by funds from the Ecoresort. FGD conducted a land survey of the municipality to see what areas could be preserved; what other areas could be recovered and reforested; and what areas could be used for ecotourism activities. Based on this assessment study, FGD elaborated and proposed an ecotourism plan to be implemented locally. This plan included urban remodeling; environmental education programs with the local community and ecotourists; establishment of building codes to be followed by all local residents and businesses and; the consolidation of nature trails, nature tours and natural attractions to offer tourists the ecotourism experience. It also included mechanisms to facilitate the establishment of new environmental conservation projects in Praia do Forte (See FGD 2005).

Much of the Plan was put into effect. Other directives were not because development was faster in subverting parts of this plan. Peters donated land to TAMAR to build its research station. He did the same recently by donating land to IBJ, an NGO dedicated to the protection and research of humpback whales and to IBAMA to set a bird sanctuary. The IBJ built its visitors’ center and part of their operation’s center in the donated land. IBAMA is still building its bird sanctuary. This inclination to helping conservation projects has an objective: make Praia do Forte a recognized center for wildlife conservation. According to Naima, a biologist responsible for conservation initiatives of FGD:

“It was FGD that supported the establishment of TAMAR and IBJ in Praia do Forte. More recently it supported the establishment of the Bird Sanctuary. Praia do Forte was a locality with a great potential to attract tourists. To have these projects here
became an interesting way to attract more tourists to the locality. It is a good destination to attract both tourists and research. FGD helps with that by donating land and subsidized TAMAR on building sea turtle tanks and administration buildings, and IBJ on building its visitors’ center. But these projects are here because the animals they protect are natural to the locality. It was not a random situation. The Bird sanctuary though is a different case. The Bird IBAMA wants to protect is the Blue Macaw and this species is not natural of Praia do Forte. The only reason to establish here is that FGD donated land to set up the sanctuary. The sanctuary will only be a quarantine center for recovered birds¹¹ and a visitors’ center” (Interview in 27/June/2007)

Tourism was prior to conservation in Praia do Forte. Tourists started to arrive about two to three years before TAMAR established a research site in town. Only a few tourists would come, as the town was isolated by a poorly constructed access road. Ecotourism, specifically, was posterior to the sea turtle conservation project. Ecotourism, as a recognized type of tourism only started in the mid-1990s (Honey 1999, Smith and Eadington 1995). Praia do Forte started promoting this type of tourism by the end of the 1990s when FGD had completed its Ecotourism Development Plan. By then, visitors were already in search of nature trails and nature tours around this destination, and tour agencies had been established in town and were starting to offer these activities. TAMAR was included in these activities. These tour agencies offer guided tours to see sea turtles at TAMAR’s visitors’ center.

¹¹ Wildlife trafficking of Blue Macaws is a serious problem in Brazil. IBAMA is the federal agency responsible for recovering these birds from criminals. Most recovered birds are harmed, hurt and injured and need a place to recover. After weeks of recovery, IBAMA releases them again into the wild.
In Brazil, ecotourism became a federal government priority for regional development by the year 2007. The federal government established lines of credit to small towns to develop ecotourism projects. The option for ecotourism relates to the lower investment costs and faster implementation rates if compared to conventional tourism. Since Praia do Forte received funding from the Federal and State government in 2000 and 2001, it did not benefit from this later stimulus plan. Nonetheless, the establishment of a government priority to ecotourism creates a favorable scenario for this type of tourism. Towns and local governments have more reasons to invest in ecotourism and the ecotourists will have more options for vacationing in eco-friendly destinations. 

The destinations that already offer or at least advertise having ecotourism (such as Praia do Forte) became even more popular.

Interviewing tourist about what aspects or qualities made Praia do Forte interesting to them, the number one response was the scenario and natural beauty, and the second response was the presence of sea turtles and of the conservation project. The town is small, with natural geographical barriers that limit further expansion. On one side, there is a lake, which ends in a wetland. This wetland narrows into a small river that flows to the sea. On the other side, there is a big resort that extends from the beach to the highway. Thus the community has only one entrance, offering security and seclusion to its residents and tourists. Rarely beaches get crowded and the crime rate is close to zero. Ecotourists feel safe at all times. Everything that happens in town is noticeable to everyone, increasing social control as well as levels of security.

In the last 10 years, tourism development in Praia do Forte has surged. Investments by foreign hoteliers and the Brazilian government have made this destination
a big hit. The group Ibero Hotels has built a 2000-room complex at one end of the coastal lined, doubling the number of accommodations in town. The federal government, through PRODETUR, invested in the completion the urbanization plan. It also put up signs and tourist information, increased security with more police, improved the bus lines to and from the city of Salvador, resurfaced the main access road to town and installed public lighting around town. PRODETUR offered a line of credit to local entrepreneurs to upgrade their businesses (lodges, inns and restaurants).

The economic investments in Praia do Forte helped the town receive more visitors, but the natural resources still are the main attraction of Praia do Forte to ecotourists. Together with gorgeous beaches, the municipality has nature trails, lakes for kayaking, historical heritage sites, well-preserved rain forest, and abundant fauna. Restaurants offer high cuisine recipes, hotels offer different types and styles of accommodations, and the local government has been promoting special events. In the year of 2007, Praia do Forte had a Gastronomic Festival, a Jazz Festival, a Folklore Dance Festival, and the traditional Saint John’s Parade, a saint celebrated in most parts of Brazil.

Of course, sea turtles are the main attraction in town. TAMAR is the most visited place in town. Occupying about 10,000 square meters, the project offers its visitors direct contact with three species of sea turtles – *Tartaruga Cabecuda* (*Caretta caretta*), *Tartaruga de Pente* (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and *Tartaruga Oliva* (*Lepidochelys olivacea*); with baby turtles; sea turtles’ nests, and other animals such as white sharks, stingrays and blowfish. TAMAR, as the biggest fauna conservation project in Brazil, is today the biggest magnet of Praia do Forte. They receive about one million visitors a
year, sell more than three hundred thousand merchandize items a year and are able to save over three thousand nests a year from egg stealing and depredation.

TAMAR is the second biggest employer in Praia do Forte; the Ibero Hotel group is the first. Until 1990, TAMAR dedicated most of its efforts to conservation. When Praia do Forte became a tourism destination, the project had to redirect its focus and start working with tourists. By 1996, TAMAR had established a nice visitors’ center and was using environmental education to teach visitors on the importance of protecting turtles.

TAMAR used to promote a paid event releasing baby turtles on the beach for tourists, but the Project decided to end this because of crowd control problems. Everyone wanted to reach out for a baby turtle and would trample the area where they were to be released. TAMAR also promoted a different program called “Turtles-by-night”. This program took small groups of tourists at night to observe sea turtles nest on the local beaches. These animals are usually very suspicious of any threat when they come out of the water. If they see any light or movement, they will turn around and go back to the ocean. Once they have dug their nest and have started to lay their eggs, these animals seem to enter a trance mode. Nothing will perturb them. The project would guide a small group of ecotourists to see this phenomenon. Participants had to follow a series of rules: no flash photograph was allowed, everyone had to avoid excessive noise, and everyone had to keep a distance from turtles and their nests. The guides would monitor tourists to follow these rules. While ecotourists were watching the turtles lay their eggs, the guide would lecture on biological and behavioral characteristics of sea turtles. It was a very educational program, but the number of participants increased to unsustainable levels and
TAMAR decided to cancel the program. Today, one hotel offers this activity to its own guests. They have hotel personnel trained by TAMAR to conduct the tour.

For hotels, sea turtles have high market value as a tourist attraction. In Praia do Forte, the Ecoresort offers ecotourism programs to its guests. Among the programs, two are related to sea turtles. One is to visit the TAMAR Project. A guide from the hotel takes the guests to TAMAR’s visitors’ center, either by foot along the beach or on a shuttle bus through town. The guide was trained by TAMAR and can give any information about the turtles, the conservation and protection of these animals, and why it is important to continue protecting these animals. The second activity is the Turtle-by-night. Discontinued by TAMAR in 2005, the Ecoresort now offers the same program. The hotel hired a biologist authorized by TAMAR to take a small group of ecotourists to see turtles nesting. The hotel took on the extra expense of having a qualified personnel integrating their staff because they wanted to continue offering a service demanded by ecotourists. Ecoresort is the only hotel to offer the Turtle-by-night program in Praia do Forte. Very few beach locations in Brazil will offer the opportunity to spot sea turtles nesting at night. “Marine turtles used non-consumptively as an ecotourism attraction are not easy to substitute at a given site” (Troëng and Drews, 2004: 13). Tourists will have some difficulty to find a site like Praia do Forte. This is the main nesting ground in all of Brazil.

Iberostar Hotel has learned how to profit with the presence of TAMAR inside the hotel property. The hotel organizes groups of tourists twice a day to visit the TAMAR base, watch movies and learn more about sea turtle conservation. This program was a condition that TAMAR imposed the hotel as environmental compensation to the impact
caused by the placement of the hotel in front of the major nesting area of all of Bahia. Recently, the hotel has learned how to publicize this for its own benefit. For the hotel’s guests the activity is all about fun, especially for the kids who get to learn more details about sea turtles and other regional fauna. Interviews of three groups that attended the venue at different moments found that all enjoyed the lecture about turtles and praised TAMAR’s effort as well as Iberostar’s effort. Even though the hotel was forced to set a remote base of the conservation project inside its property, they now have learned what good publicity the base represents.

The other hotels offer their guests discounts to visit Project TAMAR. All local businesses are aware of their interdependency with TAMAR. One depends on the other to continue in business. The project needs the visitors to complement revenues and expand the conservation effort. Hotels depend on TAMAR and on the environmental quality of Praia do Forte to continue receiving ecotourists. Despite all this interest of the hotels in sea turtles, they are not necessarily interested in helping with the conservation initiative. They want the publicity it can give them. At the time when social capital and demand for Corporate Social Responsibility (See Henderson 2007) is high, hotels want to look good and they want to demonstrate to their guests that they are concerned, although they rarely contribute financially to the project. All they do is take tourists there. The Iberostar Hotel, located right in front of the main nesting beach for sea turtles, has always been reluctant to cooperate with TAMAR’s effort in protecting the nests from being trampled or damaged. TAMAR forced them to built a remote base and hire three biologists, who became responsible for that base.
6.3 Regulations and restrictions in Mazunte

Mazunte had a different trajectory. Tourism only started in Mazunte about 1993. Before this date, the town was isolated from visitors because of poorly constructed roads and of the stench produced by the sea turtle slaughterhouse, called by locals as the Rastro. The slaughterhouse was only shutdown in 1990 and it took about four years for the beaches to be completely clean and appropriate for swimming.

The slaughterhouse would wash all the wastewater – blood and tripe – to the sea. The decomposing organic material caused a terrible smell at the beach and the seawater was usually stained with blood attracting sharks and other carnivorous fish. This situation kept everybody from swimming. No one used the beached either. Everyone lived at some distance. Development occurred inland, removed from the shoreline. Residents wanted to stay away from the stench and waste produced by the Rastro.

Mazunte and San Agustinillo were not tourist towns when the CMT was built in Mazunte after the end of the Rastro. The slaughterhouse was torn down and replaced by a middle school, covering anything further remains of the Rastro. To proceed with the radical transformation from a consumptive use of sea turtle to a non-consumptive use, every characteristic that recalled the previous situation had to be erased and a new image had to be built. That was one of the main reasons why CMT was established in Mazunte. The federal government wanted to make the towns of Mazunte and San Agustinillo an example of conservation and a nature-friendly place.

On the other hand, this transformation process created a rupture within the local community. The closure of the slaughterhouse caused a general unemployment and
government had to find a solution to that problem. The federal government invested in two sectors: (1) revamping the local fishing industry so that local fishermen could fish tuna, *huatinango* and shrimp (all permitted species) and (2) creating the basis for ecotourism development in both Mazunte and San Agustinillo. Besides the beaches clean-up, minimal urban infrastructure (electricity and public lighting, piped water, access roads and local government buildings) was laid out and the CMT with its sea turtle museum was built. By 1999, Mazunte was a well-known ecotourism destination and its beaches were already being promoted as one of the most beautiful, clean and preserved of the state of Oaxaca.

The case of Mazunte is more peculiar than that of Praia do Forte. In Mazunte, ecotourism was posterior to conservation. The sea turtle conservation project was established first and ecotourism developed afterwards. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, ecotourism was stimulated by the government and indirectly supported by the CMT. With the development of local tourism, most locals began to work with tourism offering lodging and dining to visitors. Ecotourism was thought to be the best viable option to shift from an extractive industry to a conservation-oriented one. Hunting, stealing (eggs) and predatory fishing could not continue after the establishment of the CMT and introduction of environmental regulations. How could biologists work on preservation, if the community continued with predatory activities? To resolve this dilemma, the government, with the help of CMT and non-governmental organizations funded by international foundations (such as the German foreign aid and the Austrian Embassy in Mexico City), started ecotourism capacity-building projects in Mazunte. Many workshops on hostelry, housekeeping, food preparation, notions of hygiene, hosting and
guest relations, and minimal administration skills were offered to locals. The objective was to train the community with the necessary operational tools to run their own business (lodging, dining and tour guide services). The NGO Ecosolar, founded by some environmentalists from Mexico City led these capacity-building programs. Together with the training program in tourism and hostelry, Ecosolar implemented other projects of sustainable constructions and ecological production of cosmetics. The NGO opened a local cosmetics factory with funding from The Body Shop. It also built a brick factory where locals would make adoblocks\textsuperscript{12}.

Before 1994, these towns were basically known for the big sea turtle slaughterhouse. Tourism in the region was restricted to the town of Zipolite, located about 10km east of San Agustinillo. Zipolite became a hippie community back in the 1960s. At that time, every traveler that was searching for an alternative destination in Mexico would go to Zipolite. There, travelers would find nudist beaches, drugs, rock and roll and hippie culture. To reach Zipolite, travelers had to go through Puerto Angel. The paved road ended in Zipolite. Access to San Agustinillo and Mazunte was made through Zipolite, but only 4x4 vehicles and large trucks could make their way to these towns. Hippies would never go to Mazunte or San Agustinillo because of the slaughtering of sea turtles. One local fisherman told the story of some hippies that came to San Agustinillo to try to stop the slaughtering of the animals. The local fishermen received them with knives and guns and told them to never return. The hippies came only once.

\textsuperscript{12} Adoblocks are adobe blocks made with a mixture of mud and cement. They are also called “superblocks”. These construction blocks are very resistant and the manufacturing is inexpensive. The use of mud as the basis for the block requires very little amounts of cement and eliminates the need for sand or other materials. Mud is easily extracted from inland places in the municipality. The only necessary equipment is a machine that mixes the ingredients with water and compresses the mixture into block shapes. These are set to dry under the sun and once completely dry, are ready to be used.
“One day, I was at the Rastro working and some crazy hippies arrived on a 4x4 pickup and started yelling at us, calling us criminals, murderers of sea turtles. We stopped what we were doing and with our sharp knives in hand, we warned then that if they continued with the provocations, we would fight. These stupid hippies from Zipolite thought they could change our ways. We were just making a living and everything was legal. When they figured we outnumbered them, they took off fast. It was funny, but we felt offended.” (Interview in 10/March/2008 with Ciliano, a fisherman in San Agustinillo)

Today, Mazunte continues to receive investments, now from small private entrepreneurs, most of whom are foreigners, who come to build lodges, restaurants, bars, cabins and other commercial venues to serve tourists. These businesspeople are slowly transforming Mazunte into a well-known destination. They have opened restaurants that serve international cuisine; lodges and inns that offer differentiated service; and organized services that offer alternative guided tours around the municipality and beaches. Chapter 07 will discuss the social conflicts that exist between locals, foreigners and tourists.

Despite the stimulus that Mazunte received from the Federal Government and from the non-profit sector to develop tourism and abandon consumptive use patterns, the process of going from a consumptive use to a non consumptive use economy was abrupt. The transformations in Mazunte and San Agustinillo were fast and created discontent among local residents. With ecotourism came restrictions. Businesses located at the beach had now to comply with federal regulations that control development along the coastline. In Mexico, the entire coastline and the track of land from the highest tide line
to 100 meters inland is considered federal land. Any type of business inside this zone needs a special permit to operate, which needs to be re-validated every year and a fee must be paid to the federal government. Tour operators working with boat rides for ecotourists need to have a special diver’s license to conduct these boats, and a special operator’s permit to offer tour services. The region, since the ban on sea turtle consumption pattern, began to have a continuous state and federal government presence.

Making Mazunte and San Agustinillo legal (in terms of having laws and having to follow these laws) was a major shift from the previous absence of the State. Aside from this transformation, the social organization was what suffered most changes. Mazunte and San Agustinillo were agrarian communities: families used to subsist on sea turtle, cattle and farming. Tourism brought the urban service-oriented economy and particular customs that confronted local ones: young tourists introduced drugs such as marijuana and hashish; toplessness and nudity became a common practice at the beaches; different foods started to be demanded; sexual liberation was promoted. Everything reproduced the different living styles introduced by tourists that decided to stay and become residents. Ideals of sustainable development, construction with alternative materials, international foods and music were mixed with local traditions.

With tourism, everyone had to adapt to the new demands of these visitors. Guesthouses had to improve their standards, locals had to learn how to cook different foods, and mostly, they had to learn to accept the differences brought by these visitors. In most tourism destinations, locals have had to adapt to the coming visitors rather than the other way around (See Van Schaardenburgh 2002, and De Bont and Janssen 2002). Tourists are less inclined to adapt to local customs. They want to see local customs and
learn about them without having to adapt to these customs. Ecotourists are less inclined to accept or adapt to local customs because their focus is more on the environment and less on the local culture. The local culture is an added value to their trip, not the main focus (Foucat 2002).

Mazunte and San Agustinillo also benefitted from all the restrictions and regulations imposed. The town started to have more planned development, concentrated within a small sector of the municipality, with sensible constructions, limited urbanization and low population density. The mountainous topography controlled the pressure of urbanization, leaving most of housing and businesses in lower lands and protecting most of the higher elevations with original vegetation. Building designs were adapted to the topography and planned to value natural views and use simple rustic materials. This peculiarity of Mazunte has made it popular among tourists searching for simple, rustic style destinations. In the year 2000, Mazunte approved an “Ecotourism and urban territorial organization plan”. This recent plan has the objective of organizing the town; setting priorities for specific public works; defining building codes to maintain the rustic characteristics of the region; curbing the construction of big hotels and other large-scale businesses; setting regulations on beachfront constructions and how these beaches should be maintained.
As in Praia do Forte, the main attraction in Mazunte and San Agustinillo is the sea turtle conservation project. The CMT covers an area of about 100,000 square meters. Besides the turtles’ tanks and aquariums, the CMT offers sample of native flora, and a multi-use space for meetings, workshops and capacity-building activities. In contrast to TAMAR, the CMT does not sell any kind of merchandise due to restrictions set by federal laws. CMT is a federal government project and Mexican laws regarding government conservation projects prohibit commercial activities such as selling products and souvenirs. Locals take advantage of this restriction by selling all sorts of sea turtles merchandise as well as items promoting Mazunte at vending stands just outside the CMT entrance.
Ecotourism really picked on when CMT first opened its door in 1994. Hotels in Huatulco began to send buses full of tourists to visit the project. This is still a common phenomenon in Mazunte. Everyday at least two buses full of tourists from Huatulco arrive at the CMT for a tour about sea turtles. In contrast to TAMAR, the CMT always boasted a visitors’ center. Its focus has always been on environmental education and on raising awareness about the importance of protecting turtles.

The CMT constantly promotes releases of baby sea turtles at local beaches. They secure an area of the beach with wooden stakes and a line to hold back the public. All baby turtles born in the previous three weeks are taken in big boxes to this secured area, usually set right in front of the project. CMT personnel gently remove each baby turtle from the box and release it to the sea. The turtles follow their instinct and run towards the
waves. This event is public and has the objective of integrating ecotourists, the local community and the project in the common activity of releasing hundreds of individual turtles. It celebrates the success of CMT in revamping this species population.

These events generally occur late in the afternoon, when the sun is almost setting. Most tourists are at the beach and rush over to see the spectacle. The tiny little creatures rushing to the water fascinate children and adults. It is a moment of awe. This is a high moment for CMT. Armed with a loud speaker, they reproduce their discourse highlighting the importance of this conservation initiative to save harmless animals and the need for funding and donations. Their rhetoric includes criticism directed at former subsistence activities of fishermen still portrayed as the biggest threat to turtles.
Ecotourists have the option donating to CMT during the release. Before, the donation allowed them to pass the line barrier, reach out for one baby turtle and help set it on the beach for it to run away to the water. This act gave tourists the impression that they were part of that event and were contributing to the effort of saving turtles. Recently the project prohibited has tourists from touching the baby turtles since their skin is too sensitive to hand lotions, body lotions, sunscreens, bug repellents and other products used by tourists. CMT research proved that these chemicals would go into their eyes and nose provoking irritation and possible suffocation.

Mazunte and San Agustinillo are considered feeding area for sea turtles. Very few turtles actually come out to nest at either Mazunte of San Agustinillo beaches. Therefore, sea turtles are always in the water and can only be seen after a short boat ride out into the sea, around further coral gardens. Some former fishermen today offer boat rides for ecotourists to watch sea turtles. Each boat takes up to ten tourists out to the sea so they can watch and perhaps swim with a turtle. The non-consumptive use of sea turtles became a good alternative to those laid off by the closure of the slaughterhouse.

In Mazunte all hotels benefit from the presence of CMT and the sea turtles. The hotels located in Huatulco are the ones that profit the most with sea turtles. Even though they are far from the feeding or nesting areas, they manage to offer two programs to their guests: one is a bus tour to the CMT and the other is the release of sea turtles in Huatulco at the beachfront right outside the hotel complex. The construction of the CMT in Mazunte generated much conflict at the time. Hotels in Huatulco wanted to have the conservation project built there. Hotels in Puerto Escondido, another tourism destination northwest of Mazunte wanted it as well. Mazunte had priority because of the large social
and economic impact caused by of the *Veda* and because of the cultural attitude towards sea turtle consumption, something that, in the government’s perspective, needed urgently to be changed.

Mazunte was chosen as the location of CMT, but to reach a political agreement between the federal government and large hotel corporations in Huatulco, CMT had to agree to conduct frequent releases of baby turtles in the beaches of Huatulco. Hotels in Huatulco agreed to a partnership contract with the CMT, which was responsible for promoting sea turtle releases in Huatulco. During the hatching season, when the tanks at the project get filled with newly born sea turtles, CMT personnel transport over 500 baby turtles two or three days a week to Huatulco to release them there. The hotels sell this program to their guests, who can then help a baby turtle march towards the ocean. Each person that pays is allowed to get a turtle from the box and set them on the sand. Afterwards, everyone that paid receives from the hotels a certificate indicating their collaboration in the conservation effort of sea turtles.

“We [of CMT] release baby turtles at the Baía de Chalué [located in Huatulco] because the local hotels had asked for this years ago. Every year, the number of hotels increases at this particular Baía and the number of tourists also increases. Ten years ago, this Baía only had one small *palapa*. Today these hotels had out adoption certificates to the tourists that help release baby turtles. Because of this, we [from CMT] have to allow the tourists to handle the baby turtles because the handling is what gives them the certificate. [CMT tried to impede the tourists from handling the baby turtles because of the harm from chemical products tourists use and the rough handling of kids. The hotels forbade that claiming that tourists purchase the right to...
handle the baby turtles before the release event and a possible prohibition would force hotels to refund them]. The CMT is not eligible to any of the revenues from the event because it is a government project and law forbids CMT from profiting in such events. Since tourists pay for the Certificate, it cannot carry the name of CMT or of CONANP. We are thinking of cancelling these venues in the future, but the resistance from the hotels will be a sure battle.” (Interview in 19/January/2007 with Mireya, Coordinator of Environmental Education at CMT)

This is a very aggressive marketing appeal and it has caused problems for CMT. Recently the project has decided that they will not allow tourists to touch the baby turtles anymore because of the harm posed by the rough handling by some children and the potential damage caused by the chemical residues from sunscreens, body oils and other products used by tourists. The hotels could not care less and continued with the program. The hotels rely on these different activities to attract tourists to the region. CMT had to cooperate because they knew that going against the hotels’ interests could represent the end of a nice partnership: hotels take tourists to the CMT and help promote the conservation effort of this project.

6.4 Ecotourism and Conservation

What about the sea turtles? With the transformation of Mazunte and Praia do Forte into ecotourist destinations, the conservation projects also had to find ways to adapt. In later years, with maturation and experience working with ecotourism, these projects started taking more advantage of ecotourism by promoting sea turtles as the main
attraction of town. Initially the main attraction in these two places were the beaches, the sun, and nice weather. These projects were able to transform sea turtles into a special attraction adding authenticity to these destinations. TAMAR did this more effectively because of aggressive propaganda and merchandize used to promote sea turtles. Today, Mazunte and Praia do Forte have important internationally recognized conservation projects and a popular animal. The local communities have also invested in the good image of sea turtles. Every business in town has something related to turtles, whether it is the store sign, the name of a special dish at a restaurant, the name of a company or business, and the motif of souvenirs.

For biologists and conservationists that work in TAMAR or in CMT, sea turtles are valued protected ecotourism attractions because: (1) they are effective in drawing tourists to the projects’ visitors’ centers; (2) they are good promoters of the conservation work done by these scientists; (3) they are useful to establish good public relations with donors and government officials and; (4) they are useful for environmental education making scientific work and conservation better understood to the general public.

Biologists argue that the number one priority is the protection and safeguarding of sea turtles, and all other activities are complementary. They also admit that the conservation initiative needs to be advertised, made public, become recognized and legitimized by the public opinion so they can continue with their effective work.

Ecotourism in Mazunte and Praia do Forte have strong conservation measures set by local and federal regulations. These measures, regulations and delimitating rules have two main functions. One is to protect these places from becoming big, from going overboard with development and mischaracterizing what made them famous: the
rusticity, simple lifestyle, clean and tranquil beaches, and wildlife. The second function is to protect wildlife. Sea turtles are the main attraction at both places and they are very sensitive to habitat change.

Local residents have reordered their interpretation towards sea turtles. This value has shifted from an economic dependency to conservation and ecotourism collaboration. Sea turtles projects collaborate with ecotourism; they are part of the ecotourism experience. Turtles enchant visitors that come to these locations, increase the flow of capital within town and job creation, improve life conditions and change attitudes towards them. Today in both localities, the cases of sea turtle nests being poached or of adult animals being captured are rare. Local communities now understand the importance these animals have to local economy and the importance of keeping them alive. Despite the different cultural backgrounds between the people of Mazunte and the people of Praia do Forte, the interpretation is the same: sea turtles attract tourists and bring money to the local community. Most fishermen during interviews stated that today sea turtles are more valuable alive than dead.

“Today the turtles are a tourism attraction. We still earn money with sea turtles, but in a different way. Today most fishermen take tourists to see turtles. The tourists really enjoy that.” (Interview in 18/January/2008 with Porfirio, fisherman of San Agustinillo who used to work at the Rastro but today runs a tour boat service to take tourists to see turtles.)

“Sea turtles are the icon of Praia do Forte. Praia do Forte is all about sea turtles. That is how the tourists know the village. When you think about sea turtles, you think about Praia do Forte. It became an automatic thing. And I have to admit that turtles
have brought us better living conditions. Tourists are interested in them, and we live better with the money tourists bring.” (Interview on 23/June/2007 with Roberto Luis, a fisherman at Praia do Forte who used to fish sea turtles for consumption. He has a fish store and sells his catch to most hotels).

Ecotourism had an important role in modifying the symbolic value of sea turtles. The conservation projects were able to modify some of the values that communities attributed to sea turtles, but ecotourists and their interest in sea turtles had an even greater impact on how locals understand and value these animal. The influence of tourists was greater than that of the biologists. Nonetheless, TAMAR and CMT had a central role in promoting Praia do Forte and Mazunte respectively. The municipalities did little to promote tourism. Juana Maria, former Regidora de Turismo of Santa Maria Tonameca, the municipality where Mazunte is located, said that:

“The municipality did not incentive any program to develop tourism at the coast, only the state and federal governments. The lower lands [coast towns] of Tonameca is what maintains economically the higher lands [inland communities]. Most revenues come from the lower lands. The lower lands have the capacity to develop even more but since the decision is made here in Santa Maria [the municipality headquarter], in the higher lands, they revert most revenues to the communities located here. I supported the events of the Equinox, Jazz Festival and Dance Festival with part of the budget of the Regidoria. But infrastructure such as better sanitary conditions at restaurants and lodging, could only be done with federal resources. […] The problem is that Tonameca never had a tourism planning strategy. There are no priority areas and no concern with ecology, even though this is what has attracted visitors to this region. […] The biggest issue is that decision-makers here at Santa
Maria do not want to help the *prestadores de servicios* [everyone who offers some type of service from accommodation to dining to tour guiding] because most of the *prestadores* are outsiders. We know that everyone at the coast is not a native. The municipality started here in Santa Maria. It is shameful that the town hall ignores the coast.” (Interview on 25/February/2008).

Joana Maria left the position of *Regidora* after the Mayor decided to transform the *Regidoria* into a *Direcstoría*. The difference is that in a *Regidoria*, the decision is up to the people, while in a *Direcstoría*, the decision is in the hand of the Mayor and his cabinet. Joana Maria did most of her work during the time the population could decide. Since the coast is the most populous region of the municipality, their interest prevailed. Now, prevails the interest of the Mayor. He is a plantation owner living in Santa Maria who wants to prioritize his area.

In Mata de São João, the municipality of Praia do Forte, the municipality headquarter is also inland at the town of Mata de São João. Praia do Forte is one of the most populous towns in the municipality and was ignored by the municipality until very recently. The last mayor decided to give priority to Praia do Forte, after more than two decades of total neglect. Today the municipality invests in promoting Praia do Forte with events such as the Gastronomy Festival, the Jazz Festival and the São João Festivities. The municipality only decided to focus more attention to Praia do Forte after the town had already been fully urbanized and had full infrastructure and all necessary amenities for tourists. Rafaella is the Tourism Secretary of Mata de São João. Today her office is in Praia do Forte. As she stated:
The *Secretaria* never before worked together with TAMAR. Only now that we are establishing partnerships with the Project. Direct contact with the hotels and lodges is only being established now. [...] Today we are concerned with capacity-building. We are trying to bring to Praia do Forte special courses on hospitality and management. [...] The community of Praia do Forte is a good replicator of good models of tourism development. The municipality has been working to stimulate this capacity even further.” (Interview on 01/July/2007)

Therefore, the Municipal Tourism Secretary is starting to work now. All previous initiatives to implement ecotourism in Praia do Forte relied on other sources of investments, such as state and federal government and private initiative.

As we can notice, the two destinations are today following different directions. While Mazunte was ostracized by the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca, Praia do Forte became the center of attention of the municipality of Mata de São João. The outcome is evident. Praia do Forte is becomes more popular every year receiving more tourists and more revenues. Mazunte and San Agustinillo have had to struggle more to attract tourists. Community associations and other types of organized social participation became the alternative to surpass the negligence of the municipality headquarter. In Praia do Forte the greater “omnipresence” of the municipality has created discontent among some residents. They disagree with the urbanization process and the rapid gentrification of town.

It is very interesting how conservation is tied to tourism in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. For instance, TAMAR uses the revenues from visitors to pay the tartarugueiros. The project is now on the course to achieve what they have been calling
“auto-sustainability”. TAMAR has been so successful in selling merchandize and receiving tourists at its visitors’ centers that the revenues will allow the project to be self-sustainable in a couple of years. Today, the project still relies on funding from PETROBRAS and from government budget of ICMBIO.

CMT is not so well off. The project does not sell merchandize and the number of visitors is barely enough to pay some salaries inside the visitors’ center. However, CONANP has secured a considerable budget to CMT starting in 2008 with the objective of expanding the visitors’ center and the project’s outreach. Still, the project depends on tourists. Without them, there would be no reason for having a sea turtle museum and all the information displayed inside the CMT.

Both TAMAR and CMT are well aware that ecotourism is the replication platform for their conservation initiatives. TAMAR and CMT level the language used inside the visitors’ centers by the type of visitors they receive. TAMAR develops its line of merchandize based on the taste and style of the visitors they receive in Praia do Forte. They have even hired a fashion designer to organize annual collections. TAMAR actually became a strong brand name in Brazil.

The rapport between these conservation projects and the tourists, especially the ones that visit the projects and purchase merchandize in TAMAR, has always been positive. The problem seems to build at a more macro level between these projects and the tourism industry, and between the projects and holiday tourists. The tourism industry as a larger development scheme has caused different threats to sea turtle conservation projects.
In Praia do Forte, for example, the construction of the Iberostar Hotel became a nightmare for TAMAR. The hotel that extends over 1km of beaches was places right in front of the largest and most expressive nesting area of the whole state of Bahia. Negotiations prior to the construction of the hotel failed to move the hotel further inland to minimize the impact of lights and transit of tourists at the beach during the night. All TAMAR was able to do was push the main building some 200 meters from this nesting area. The hotel is not exactly in front of the nesting but very near.

In Mazunte and all of the 3EC, this still is not the problem. CMT has problems with the hotels in Huatulco that demand the release of baby turtles on site. The transportation of baby turtles from CMT to Huatulco, a distance of 45km can be detrimental to the turtles. The handling of baby turtles by tourists in Huatulco can cause other problems to these animals.

The problems that CMT and TAMAR face are political, and extends beyond the power and influence these projects have to impose environmental regulations regarding sea turtles. Government agendas towards tourism development tend to ignore or side stage environmental concerns. Tourism brings more revenues to the government and will be priority over conservation.

The local problems with tourists are related to large national holidays. Projects receive a large amount of tourists during holidays but the larger number of tourists around town can represent harm to nests and habitat. In Praia do Forte, it is during holidays that most nests are trampled by tourists. In Mazunte, the concern is mostly with the interaction of visitors and adult turtles at sea during the boat trips. Biologists at CMT
and at TAMAR get concerned in moments like this but can do little about it. Since these projects do a continuous work of self-publicity, overreaction can be detrimental to the projects. Biologists working in conservation have to be very diplomatic when criticizing tourism and tourists. Projects depend on the business of tourists.

The next chapters will discuss the multiplicity of these political issues and how Mazunte and San Agustinillo, and Praia do Forte have dealt with it.
Chapter 7: On social organization

7.1 Introduction

Urban anthropology studies have shown a good concern with issues of global flows and globalization related to the city. Some urban trends studied recently – like music (see Saada-Ophir 2006), migration (see Appadurai 2000, Schiller 2005), food consumption and social relations (see Liechty 2005), political conflict and citizenship (see Lukose 2005) – demonstrate the link between locality and globalization. These authors have shown some important aspects present in most urban research: the progressive process of market liberalization and deregulation of political, economic, and social norms and values, the delegitimization of citizenship and individual rights, the increased social and economic inequality and animosity between social groups and; the radical transformation of local cultural values by global flows of information, people, technology and capital.

Appadurai (1996) addressed the issue of globalization from another perspective: by looking at the disjuncture between economy, culture and politics. This disjuncture is related to distinct global flows of people, media, technology, capital and ideologies, what he calls ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, fiancescape and ideoscape, respectively (1996: 33). The ethnoscape is the “landscape of people who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups of individuals” (1996:33). He argues that these people influence changes in national politics as well as the stability of communities, and other networks. The
technoscape relates to the fast pace in which technology flows and how every country is in some way linked by it. “Many countries are now the roots of multinational enterprise […] providing different components of new technological configurations” (1996: 34). Appadurai also argues that the distribution of technologies is not homogeneous across the globe and that it involves political relations, flows of capital and labor. This disjuncture within the global system causes local disparities of wealth and technology advancement (to list a few). Financescape, much related to technoscape is the distribution of global capital via currency markets, stock exchange markets, and commodity speculation (1996: 34). Mediascape refers to the “distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information […] and to the images of the world created by the media” (1996: 35). Ideoscape “has to do with ideologies of states and the counter ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it” (1996: 36). Basically, globalization can lead to increased social and economic stratification, while minimally appearing to allow people more connections.

For a tourism site like Mazunte and Praia do Forte, all these –scapes are present in a very evident way. Tourism sites have a high flow of people, represented mostly by tourists and migrant workers (or guest workers) (Levy and Lerch 1991). They create disjuncture a between local and global, or between localities – a result of the considerably greater wealth of tourists compared with local residents (Walsh 2005), cultural knowledge difference between tourists and locals (Paniagua 2002) and distinct ideas (or ideologies) that come into contact through their interaction.

Appadurai also discussed the production of locality. His definition of locality is linked to that of neighborhood. While for him locality is “primary relational and
contextual rather than as scalar or spatial” (1996: 178), neighborhoods are the “actual existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized” (1996: 179). What is interesting in these definitions is that locality is understood in phenomenological term, something that is constructed mentally and not an actual place. The actual place is the neighborhood. Using this definition transforms locality into a volatile category, one that varies according to the strength of the neighborhood: “The context-generative dimension of neighborhoods is an important matter because it provides the […] theoretical angle on the relationship between local and global realities” (1996: 184).

Locality then will have variable forms of relationship to external networks, depending on how consolidated the community is and how well established is the network. We can consider that tourism localities are fluctuating localities because their “neighborhoodness” can, at times not be as strong and concise as necessary to realize (make exist) the locality. This definition is very important to understand Mazunte and Praia do Forte. While both towns are spatially well defined, creating a cohesive understanding of locality, they have internal divisions marked by social and geographical characteristics. It is interesting to notice that San Agustinillo and Ventanilla do not have these sharply defined distinctions of Mazunte or Praia do Forte. Many small towns are usually homogeneous and closely knit, as one single neighborhood. Mazunte and Praia do Forte can be defined as a neighborhood split into two halves, one mostly occupied by locals (former residents) and the other by the foreigners (newer recent residents).

Elias’ (1994) important work on the tense relations between an established group and a group of outsiders in a small town of England is very useful to this analysis. Using
Elias, we can draw important conclusions on how local social groups define themselves in opposition to other social groups. This distinction can interfere in the forms of socialization within the locality. In both Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the local population is divided in two groups: the former residents, the ones who have lived there since the foundation. These can be considered part of the established group. Outsiders, the newer residents who recently arrived (in the last 10 to 15 years), have in the eyes of the established group, subverted the social order of town. In Elias’ example, the established group was composed of well-educated, high middle-class residents and the outsiders’ group was mainly lower working class. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the established are the lower working classes and the outsiders are the wealthy and well-educated higher end middle-class. The same conflicts developed by Elias are present in my study sites, but the situation and position of each group makes these conflicts unique, or at least very particular to small ecotourism sites.

This chapter focuses on the social organization and social dynamics that create the spatial divisions evident in both towns. The spatial division is an important aspect to understand how social groups define their own boundaries.

7.2 Spatial divisions in Mazunte and San Agustinillo

The division of space in Mazunte occurred after the construction of the highway and the arrival of the outsiders. The highway runs across town, following the coastline. It splits the town into halves; one half faces the coastline while the other faces inland. This physical division has led to a particular social division of town: the inland is occupied
mostly by the former residents, the ones who worked in the sea turtle business and the ones who have lived there ever since. The coastline is the most touristy part of town. This part of town is mostly occupied by the foreigners that moved into town after the sea turtle business ceased.

Ecotourism in Mazunte is directly related to the sea, the beach and the nature trails that crisscross the hills on the shoreline. Most attractions in town are on this coastal fringe, between the highway and the sea. Most hostels, small hotels, restaurants and bars are located in this part of town. Almost all outsiders work as service providers for the ecotourism business. Service providers are the ones that offer any kind of service directed to tourists, whether lodging, dining, entertaining or tour guiding. The inland residents engage mostly in agricultural and masonry activities. Few of them work as lodging and
dining service providers. The services offered inland are simple with no luxuries. In fact, camping is the most commonly offered lodging and requires minimal infrastructure. The beach is a space in and of itself, detached from the rest of town. It is the place for tourists. At the beach where all the palapas\textsuperscript{13} are located it is another distinct scenario. Blended in with sand, coconut trees and the exuberant ocean view, the palapas (Figure 7.32) are the place to be when on vacation. All services are provided to keep the tourist comfortable. From the highway towards the coast, streets are simple, lacking pavement, but there is more urbanization in the form of buildings, services, attractions and visual and sound pollution.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{beach.jpg}
\caption{Closer is the Playa Principal de Mazunte and farther at the foot of the hill is Playa Rinconcito. A smaller hill divides both beaches. Photograph by author.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{13} Palapas are typical constructions in the coastal area of Oaxaca. It consists of an open building supported by wood pillars and a thatched roof covering it. It was created originally by fishermen to keep protected from the sun while skinning and boning fish and other catches. In Oaxaca it became a common construction for bars and restaurants at the beach. It is simple and blends in the local landscape. The ones in Mazunte are used as bars and restaurants. Some offer camping spots and places to hang a hammock.
Most locals do not often use the beach. Local children and adolescents are frequently at the beach, especially after school hours. Adults over 30 who have lived in Mazunte before the tourism era are not adept users of the beach or sea. When sea turtle hunting was permitted, no one used the beach because of the smell, the blood tainted waters and the threat posed by white sharks. Many born in this time grew up without the habit of swimming in the sea or playing at the beach. Social life in Mazunte was located inland, in the forest area under the trees, and along the creek. It was a countryside community rather than a maritime one. This explains why tourists spend most of their time at the beach and why the older residents prefer the inland portion of town.

Figure 7.35: View of a road leading to inland Mazunte. No roads are paved in this part of town and homes are ranch style with garden, orchid and animals around. Photograph by author.

The local residents that opposed the development process secluded themselves inland, far from the coastline, the tourists, and all the agitation that took over Mazunte in
the last decade and a half. From the highway inland, the homes become simple and the landscape becomes more rural, with some crops, orchids, gravel pits, and fenced animals (Figure 7.34). This area of town reproduces many aspects of countryside towns of Oaxaca. Some women use *huipils*, a traditional indigenous dress, and most men tend their land and animals. Although simple, houses are large and widely spaced. Streets are unpaved and most homes dump their wash water into the street.

Looking into the town’s layout, the spatial division of Mazunte is complex. On the coastal side of the highway, some new streets were built more recently. These streets are residence to most outsiders. The whole section of town facing Playa Mermejita was occupied by outsiders or newcomers, whether Mexican nationals or foreigners. Many established lodging or dining businesses. The part of the coastal side facing the Playa Principal is more heterogeneous with outsiders and locals comingling. Residents here own dining, lodging, grocery stores or entertainment establishments for tourists.

Punta Cometa (Figure 7.35), is a peninsula that sticks out into the sea between Playa Principal and Playa Mermejita and marks the southern most point in Mexico. Punta Cometa is preserved as a community sanctuary and no urbanization, housing or even camping is allowed in this part of town. Punta Cometa has one small beach, deserted and surrounded by hills. About five different walking trails lead to the beach and to the tip of the peninsula, which is the best spot to observe the sunset. Every afternoon, ecotourists walk to Punta Cometa to observe the sun sink into the ocean. The place became a mystical and esoteric spot after new age groups began pilgrimages to the place. Today, they perform rituals during the spring equinox. Punta Cometa is a nature sanctuary inside Mazunte and within the spatial division of town; contributing to the ecotourism flair of
Mazunte. Guides bring tourists here to hike and to observe the different natural landscape.

Global flows are consumed at the local level (Tsing 2000). Ecotourism and conservation were responsible for the introduction of different cultural and ideological aspects into Mazunte. Foreigners, outsiders and tourists brought new religious creeds and practices. People that migrate bring with them their cultural ways, religions, habits, beliefs and social practices. The reverberation of these new religious practices has to do with the type of tourist that visits Mazunte. Most ecotourists are young and from large urban centers. The possibility of experiencing a different religiosity in a different cultural context is rewarding for them. These events demonstrate how the global flows of ideas transcends the local and the local recreates social (and physical) spaces to accommodate these novelties.

Figure 7.36: A view of Punta Cometa. Tourists start to arrive to observe the sunset. Photograph by author.
The map below explains the expansion of Mazunte and how each social space was constructed. I divided the social spaces according to type of economic activity and the composition of its residents. Although the composition in each space is somewhat diverse, there is a predominance of specific social groups in each space. The areas marked as A are the local beaches. This is the place where the palapas are and where the tourists spend most of their time. The palapas are marked in the map with small BB. In the afternoon, most locals will go to Playa Principal to line fish. A few other that have fishing boats prepare every afternoon to go out on fishing drives\textsuperscript{14}. As explained, the relation of elders to the sea was always economic and not of leisure.

B and C areas are the oldest parts of town. A small creek used to run through town towards the ocean and this was the first site used by the earlier settlers in 1956. Spaces B and C compose a valley, with flat terrain. This creek was diverted years ago to feed the town’s reservoir. With the construction of the highway, spaces B and C were divided. With the arrival of tourism, space B concentrates most of the services to tourism and the first outsiders settled there. The social changed brought by ecotourism stimulated some to move inland, occupying more of space C. Today C areas concentrate the ranches and small properties of the established, the first residents. Figure 7.34 illustrated how this space is more rural and simple.

\textsuperscript{14} Fishing drives are long trips that fishermen do every night out into the sea, beyond the continental slope. They take kilometer long fishing nets that are laid out in a radius of about 30 to 40 square kilometers. They wait overnight for fish to gather under the net. In the early morning they start to roll back the net onto the boat with the catch. This strategy was applied in order to catch a sizable amount of fish. Otherwise, the trips would not paid for themselves and fishermen would not profit sufficiently to continue in business. This same type of fishing is conducted in Praia do Forte, however, local boats are larger and fishermen stay longer periods at sea, about two to three days.
Figure 7.37: Spatial Division of Mazunte according to social and economic organization
The CMT is at the east side of B area. The Project, since the beginning was the first major interaction place between established and outsiders, as the staff was all of people from Mexico City and other major Mexican cities.

The **D areas** are the newer expansions of town. Space D has a different topography, with higher elevations and more rugged terrain. Since most of this part is composed by step hills, occupation was scattered until mid 1990s. The first residents were outsiders that came and built homes, lodging and other home businesses. Today residents are still predominantly outsiders. The **E areas** are mostly uninhabited with fairly well preserved natural vegetation. There is a community natural reserve at the Punta Cometa peninsula (Figure 7.35). No one lives there; no houses can be constructed in the area. Punta Cometa is the most important ecotourism space in Mazunte. Many trails take visitors around the woods and to the tip of the peninsula to observe nature and the sunset. The other E areas are used for hiking, walking and some mountain biking.

San Agustinillo is smaller and squeezed between the hillside and the ocean. The highway cuts through at the bottom of the hill, leaving little space for the town to grow. Local residents of San Agustinillo are more keen to development and revenues. They want the big bucks of tourism and therefore are more receptive to foreigners in comparison to Mazunte. This different stand toward tourism has transformed San Agustinillo into a more homogeneous town, where locals blend with outsiders within the same living space.

Within the ecotourism corridor, San Agustinillo is the most urbanized setting, where tourists will find the best accommodations and infrastructure. It is the place for the
yuppie ecotourists that want a warm bath and a nice air-conditioned room at the end of the day. Ventanilla is the other extreme in the ecotourism corridor. Local community development project set standards for construction and urbanization, creating a pattern of thatched roofs and net design. There are strict restrictions on outside businesses in Ventanilla, which has limited the availability of lodging and dining. Therefore, many tourists stay in San Agustinillo and Mazunte and go spend the day in Ventanilla. With its organized urbanization and the special tours offered to their own mangrove, Ventanilla established itself as the main ecotourism place in the corridor, adding more value to the ecological aspect of the region.

7.3 Spatial division in Praia do Forte

In Praia do Forte, the spatial division is more subtle, but not hard to map. The town grew outward from the main street. The former population remained in the center of town while the foreigners and newcomers occupied the surrounding housing condominiums that have been built since 1980. Praia do Forte is very peculiar in this sense. It was a farm that was mapped, zoned and planned into a ecotourism development site. Consequently, most of the spatial division is somewhat artificially defined. The spatial division is visible and explains much of the social dynamics of town.

In contrast to Mazunte, where residents opposed to ecotourism development secluded themselves inland in Praia do Forte, the ones opposing the new economic structure live right in the middle of town. Their strategy to distance themselves from the
process was through the creation of small ghettos in the core of town, located in small alleyways (Figure 7.37), where most houses are still in the hands of locals.

The main streets of Praia do Forte are taken over by expensive boutiques, shops, bars, restaurants, bistros, small hotels, lodges, inns, as well as other services such as grocery store, pharmacy and travel agencies. Most tourists stay on these streets and do not visit the alleyways. They are not dangerous, merely simple and lacking anything to draw a tourist. Tourists are unaware of this part of town. Praia do Forte presents itself nowadays as a trendy place with all necessary infrastructure and comfort to make a short visit pleasant. Moreover, the local government invests to keep that good image, which has attracted many tourists, national and foreign.

Figure 7.38: A view of an alleyway in Praia do Forte. These alleyways were paved in the end of 2008. Note how close the houses are from each other. Accelerated development and the small size of the lots contributed to the cramped space. Local would build extra rooms wall-to-wall with the previous constructions. Photograph by author.
The town of Praia do Forte is divided into the village and the privately owned housing development that surrounds it. This housing development was build by Klaus Peters, and is composed of wide streets and luxurious homes. The originally planned condominiums are open to pedestrian access. Since most of these condominiums end at the beach, access could not be limited. The newer condominiums located inland are fancier, more expensive and closed off to unannounced visitors. They are fenced and have security guards. Mazunte does not have anything similar. The only place one can find enclosed condominiums is in Huatulco, 40km south.

The beach in Praia do Forte is one of the main attractions together with Main Street, the TAMAR Project and the wilderness (used for ecotourism sports and rides). Although the beach is the main attraction, it is isolated from town by some beachfront condominiums. Regulations regarding nesting beaches in Brazil prohibit any business at the beach. There is an exception in Praia do Forte for the few *barracas*15 (which is the Portuguese word for vending stalls) located in front of the docking area.

The six *barracas* (Figure 7.38) located there are only allowed to operate from dawn to dusk. No nighttime activity is allowed because it is the time when sea turtles come to nest, and any noise, light or other unnatural activity (from wildlife’s perspective) can make them turn around and go back to sea, without laying their eggs. The beach is considered the place of tourists. Although local residents use the beach, tourists are the ones who use this space the most. Since no type of business is allowed at the beach,

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15 The *barracas* are the Brazilian version of a palapa. However, in Praia do Forte they are built with brick wall and covered with a thatched roof. They only serve as restaurants and do not offer any camping option or places to hang hammocks. They only serve during the day and remain closed at night.
locals who are working somewhere inland are not around during business hours. Only a few beach vendors roam up and down the coastline selling popsicles, sodas, snacks and handicrafts.

Figure 7.39: View of the barracas at Praia do Forte. These six barracas are the only ones allowed by the municipal government. They will be removed when the construction of a small strip mall behind them is finished. Tourists prefer the barracas, for their convenience. In busier days, waiters will set up tables and chairs with umbrellas right at the beach. Photograph by author.

The other space is the wilderness, the outer area surrounding the town and the condominiums. This part is property of FGD. They established some rules for the use of this area by tour operators. Hiking, trail walks, bike rides, quad-bike\textsuperscript{16} rides and canoeing are the activities available for ecotourists. It is amusing that quad-bikes (Figure 7.39) became part of the offered activities, as these vehicles produce noise and pollution. However, adventure tourism is not always connected to ecology. These tourists are

\textsuperscript{16} Also called all-terrain vehicles (ATV).
wealthy and want explore the local wilderness without having to workout. In fact, this wilderness is another area where ecotourists dominate. Locals do not indulge in paid activities. The area around town was declared a natural reserve by FGD when the ecotourism development plan for Praia do Forte was initiated. This area was created to curb housing development. Ecotourists can get a real feel of the dense tropical forest that covers the area. Several native plant species and some native wildlife are present for sightseeing.

Farther away from town is an enclosed reserve called Sapiranga. It is also maintained by FGD, but access is limited. There is an entry fee of R$6.00 (about US$2.50) and visitors have to accompany the tour guides at all times. Sapiranga has lakes and nature trails. Some locals that live next to the reserve work as paid guides. Sapiranga is an important local ecotourism attraction. Many of the rides offered by the local tour agencies include a visit to the Reserve.

The creation of reserves, whether private or public, fits two main purposes: protect the area from further development and contribute to the conservation of a local ecosystem and all the included biodiversity. In fact, these preserved areas are the materialization of the environmentalist movement inside the locality. They are disciplining spaces for the consumption of ecotourists. Caser (2007) states that “the unprecedented movement of ex-urbanites and tourists in search for secluded places, namely away from big cities to rural communities, is changing the face of the countryside.” (2007:202). He was referring to the need of urban design in small communities to sustain rapid changes they face. Small communities like Praia do Forte and Mazunte face the same threats. In Praia do Forte, the NGO FGD decided to act
against the threat posited by urbanites purchasing land locally. For ecotourism, the disciplining of spaces is a guarantee to the continuation of natural attractions.

Praia do Forte is surrounded by water, as described in previous chapters. This geographical barrier has limited the expansion of town, inflated the price of local housing and driven some lower echelon workers to live outside of town, on the other side of the main highway Linha Verde. These other towns are not considered in this work, but some of their residents were interviewed. Some are former Praia do Forte residents that moved out to these towns to reduce living expenses. Most of those who moved, rented their place out in Praia do Forte.

Figure 7.40: One of many trails around Ecotourism Space, used by groups of ecotourists on ATVs. The frequency of ATV rides has created marked trails. Fortunately, guides do not allow ecotourists to ride off these tracks. Photograph by author.
The map below lays out the spatial division of Praia do Forte. The division considers economic and social aspects. Ecotourism contributed to organization of the physical space and how each of these spaces is used and occupied. However, in Praia do Forte, the NGO FGD had an important influence in the definition of these spaces, as will be described ahead. In contrast to Mazunte, most physical spaces in Praia do Forte are somewhat heterogeneous. Besides the condominiums that are extraordinarily expensive, all other areas of town have locals, outsiders and foreigners living together.

The A areas are the beaches and today they are predominantly used by outsiders and tourists. Established fishermen go out on fishing drives and have a direct relation to the sea. Their families remain on land and run family businesses. Many fishermen have a restaurant, a small hotel or a shop on the side. As in Mazunte, the relation of locals to the sea is economic-driven rather than leisure-bound. The barracas at the beach are marked in the map with BB. All barracas are owned by locals, making this section of the beach the only place where locals are in control. Today there are only six barracas left at the beach.

The B area is the first settlement. This is where the village is contained. Main street cuts the B space in the middle. This is the heart of town, where it all started. Today it is the place of nice restaurants, shops, bars and some small fancy hotels. It is the most expensive space to rent in town. Tourists do spend a lot of time in Main Street. Besides Main Street there are other streets parallel to Main and alleyways that crisscross all these streets.
Figure 7.41: Spatial division of Praia do Forte according to social and economic organization
The alleyways became the ghettos for locals that still want to live in town but cannot afford to stay on Main Street. In reality, they can remain at Main Street. With speculation over commercial space to rent, most locals have opted to lease their original homes on Main Street and build a small house or shack in the backyard. Renting became a profitable way to stay in town and not suffer with the rapid gentrification process that is taking over town. The B area is densely occupied. Most lots do not have any backyards left and commercial buildings on Main Street directly adjoin houses located behind them.

The C areas are the next expansion space. This space is mostly of condominiums; the first to be planned and built in Praia do Forte. Houses have nice yards and streets are wider making C areas more spread out and green. Most homes are summer homes and are closed most of the year. Closed properties always have a hired caretaker. When the owners are home, there is always someone working as house cleaner or gardener. Therefore, these condominiums have become a good job market for locals. The condominiums in C area were first built in the late 1980s. There are still some empty lots in these condominiums.

The D area is the newer expansion space of Praia do Forte. All of it is occupied by condominiums as well. Some of these condominiums were built in the late 1990s and the area continued to develop throughout the 2000s. There is still some space to expand in D area. The condominiums built in this space are larger than the ones in area C, the lots are bigger and the ones completed are fancier and more sophisticated.
The Ecoresort shown in the map is the one built by Klaus Peters. The resort was built from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. It is still the largest plot of land under one owner. The Ecoresort is one of the largest local employers together with TAMAR. The conservation project occupies an area that used to be used by the navy. It was leased to TAMAR to conduct its conservation operations. The area of the project is right in front of the local port. This facilitates their work as they can leave boats right in front.

The E areas are the ecotourism spaces in Praia do Forte. As one can see, a lake has limited the expansion of Praia do Forte. This lake, called Timeantube, is artificial; it was dammed by Klaus Peters to serve the purpose of landscaping and for kayaking. One side of the lake borders the access road to Praia do Forte. The other sides of the lake border a well-preserved native forest. This forest has trails for ecotourism activity as shown in Figure 7.8. The local NGO FGD manages all this wilderness area. Across the highway is the Sapiranga Reserve, another ecotourism space.

The spatial division of Praia do Forte was the result of planned urban design. The NGO FGD was responsible for that. We could consider that the control of Klaus Peters’ NGO over the definition of spaces and the way these spaces would be used, represents the continuation of his patriarchal control of the town. Since Peters’ purchased the Praia do Forte Farm he had a strong control over town. However, looking back in history (Chapters 04 through 06), we note that the older residents had always been under the control of a patriarchal figure. Local politics shifted from one patriarchal landowner to the next. It started with Garcia D’Ávila, moved on to its inheritors, then to Otacilio Nunes in the early 1940s and then to Klaus Peters. The difference between these patriarchal figures is the local economic organization.
Praia do Forte started as an agrarian economy based on coconut plantation and fishing, and shifted to an urban capitalist economy based on ecotourism. Locals in Praia do Forte were not stakeholders in Peters’ development plan. With the development of town and the incorporation of new stakeholders into the local social arena, these older residents have learned to gain autonomy. Locals have developed forms of social representation, like the fishermen’s associations, the parochial association, and even the Conselho Tutelar (which in the US would be the Parenting Association) that work to keep social institutions functioning.

However, it was through economic emancipation that these older residents really gained autonomy and political power. They did so by renting out their places to foreigners and moving to calmer places. By earning a large income with rents and living well in the countryside of the municipality, these locals have gained status and automatically increased their political participation in the local policy process. As legitimate landowners in other places of the municipality and “landlords” in Praia do Forte (through their rented homes), they have a stake in the decision process.

7.4 Structure of groups and relations

This section comparatively examines the social organization of Mazunte and Praia do Forte. The towns have similar social groups involved in ecotourism and conservation. Fieldwork demonstrated that sea turtle conservation projects tend to draw similar stakeholders. Sea turtle projects require similar professionals and work similar strategies. Mazunte and Praia do Forte have similarities in their social organization also because of
the type of tourism that was developed locally and the social actors involved. In both towns fishermen dominate within the established group, with the tendency to lead discussion of local policies. Within the outside group, national entrepreneurs (Brazilians and Mexicans) lead the discussions. We will see ahead that other stakeholders are the ones that distinguish the social organization of each town.

Mazunte has two main social groups, that parallel Elias’s categories: established and outsiders. The established group is composed of the older families that have lived in town since the start of the sea turtle business in the late 1950s. Most men worked directly or indirectly in the turtle trade. Today they are business owners, fishermen or farmers. Most elders still engage in fishing and a few of the younger ones find interest in this activity. Most of the younger generations have more interest in tourism service provision. The established group is composed of Mexican nationals from different states of Mexico. The older ones never progressed above middle school. The younger ones have higher levels of education, and most of the ones under 20 were born in Mazunte or San Agustinillo. The younger generations are now inheriting the businesses of the older ones. Most established families have some sort of business or rent space for outsiders to run their business.

The outsiders are the ones who arrived after 1992, when tourism was just beginning. Most of them are under the age of 50 and have children under the age of 20. The outsiders are in fact the first tourists to arrive and the first of them to settle. Almost all have university degrees and have moved from larger urban centers in Mexico, such as Mexico City, Guadalajara, Queretaro and Puebla. Almost all of them came to the coast with the plan of establishing a small business and living a simple and more tranquil life.
They are urban middle class with enough savings to start a new life locally. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, they became entrepreneurs who invested in tourism and related services.

In Praia do Forte the social groups are also composed of established residents and outsiders. The established group is composed of families that lived in town before TAMAR arrived in 1981. The older ones do not have schooling above high school. The group of established also includes relatives that moved to town in later years. This group traditionally engaged in fishing and farming, and most of them were employed at the coconut plantation. Today fishing is still the major identifier of this group, perhaps because most of the elders still take part in this economic activity. Younger generations are predominantly working with tourism. Only four men under 30 work directly with fishing. However, fishing alone does not guarantee a comfortable subsistence. Income for these families is complemented by rentals. Many families rent their homes to outsiders who run their own businesses.

The outsiders are the ones that moved to Praia do Forte after 1981. This outsider group is more heterogeneous than the one in Mazunte because it is not composed only of middle class. There are workers that came attracted by the jobs in construction and services. The housing development in the condominium around town and the building of small hotels, restaurants and other businesses brought many construction workers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and others to town. These workers are a fluctuating population that comes and goes according to the availability of work. The ones that procured jobs in the service market have become permanent residents.
Aside from this fluctuating population of construction workers, the outsiders are middle class entrepreneurs who came from large urban centers in Brazil such as Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. As in Mazunte, all came to the coast with the plan of starting a new lifestyle. This characteristic of urban middle class willing to migrate to smaller towns in search for better life quality became very frequent in both Brazil and Mexico during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Improvement of national economy in both countries, easier access to loans and credit, better travel conditions and increase in the potentiality of local tourism markets were the main stimuli to these middle class immigrants.

Outsiders in both localities include foreigners as well. Mazunte has North Americans, French, English and Italian nationals living in town. They run local restaurants, lodges and other specialized services. At Praia do Forte, most foreigners are Italian, Swiss and German nationals. They run local restaurants and hotels. The origin of these foreigners relates to the tourism networks that exist between these towns and the international market. With this I mean that each town has, with the development of ecotourism, established connections with specific touring groups. Tour agencies, local entrepreneurs and even ecotourists that have visited these towns in the past, contribute to the promotion and establishment of these links.

In Praia do Forte, the most foreign residents are from Germany and Switzerland because of the connections previously established by Klaus Peters and tour agencies in these countries. He was from German descent and had good connection with some travel agencies in that country. He used these connections to promote his Ecoresort. This first
connection promoted not only the resort but the town as well. Today, Praia do Forte is a destination listed in most guidebooks about Brazil.

Mazunte became known through the foreign hippies that lived in Zipolite, 20km east. Most of them were from the United States and Canada. Mazunte in not well promoted in guidebooks as Praia do Forte. It is often listed in ecotourism guidebooks such as Moon Handbook\textsuperscript{17}. CMT is listed in the ecotourism guidebook “La Guía Verde”\textsuperscript{18}. The destination is still known mostly by young backpack tourists. The first foreign visitors to settle were Americans and French Canadians. It is interesting to notice the life histories of these foreign residents. The reasons to move to Mazunte are personal and individualized. Each person had a different reason, however, one main reason linked them all: they wanted to live a simple life, distant from large urban centers, and in direct contact with nature.

In both Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the technical staffs of the environmental projects are also composed of outsiders. All are from out of town, and have graduated from different universities around the country. Established residents occupy the lower levels in the organizational structure of the projects. They work in cleaning, general services, maintenance, driving, or as tortugueros and tartarugueiros.

The established (or insiders) and outsiders are the two major social groups in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Ecotourism and conservation in both towns have reorganized the social structure and contributed to changes in the forms of social

\textsuperscript{17} Moon Handbook Oaxaca. By Bruce Whipperman. Avalon Books.
\textsuperscript{18} La Guía Verde Mexico, Guatemala y Belice. Michelin Ediciones de Viaje.
engagement of social actors. Before both communities lived under specific and inflexible governing structures: patriarchal in Praia do Forte and private company ruling in Mazunte. With ecotourism, locals became stakeholders with interests and responsibilities. They became participants in new policy processes such as implementation of ecotourism development and conservation projects, organization of urban layout, and transition between livelihoods. Now relating directly to the federal government, the state government, NGOs and other organizations, local residents became:

“Citizens capable of formulating their own needs and engaging in the setting of priorities and the implementation of projects, whether community development schemes, health and housing or microcredit enterprises” (Molyneux 2008: 783).

Using the approach of analyzing the process of participation in policy decision process of ecotourism development and environmental conservation, we find a myriad of stakeholders. This wider universe of stakeholders helps us understand power structures within these towns and describe both a community as an actor and the divisions and rivalries within the community in the engagement with local ecotourism. When describing the stakeholders for the Mexican study case, it is necessary to include San Agustinillo, as residents in San Agustinillo have always participated in decisions regarding Mazunte and vice versa.

In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, the stakeholders are (a) the former workers of sea turtle trade that today work as fishermen or boat tour guides; (b) established families that live inland and have businesses not related to tourism, or indirectly related; (c)
outsiders from other parts of Mexico, who have moved to San Agustinillo or Mazunte to work with tourism or directly related activities; (d) foreigners who have acquired Mexican citizenship and now run tourism related businesses in Mazunte; (e) the \textit{Associación de prestadores de servicio} (service providers), who can be established or outsiders and are part of a local Service Provider association; (f) the \textit{Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga}, as a government entity has important decision power regarding development over areas considered crucial to the biological cycle of turtles (e.g. beaches, coral reefs, sand dunes, dune vegetation, etc.); (g) locals that are members of the \textit{Associación de Comuneros}. The association responsible for ruling on any issue related to the collective land of \textit{bienes comunales}. (h) The municipal government, through the \textit{Agente de Policia Municipal}, a local administrator, elected by the residents of Mazunte and San Agustinillo; (i) business owners (established group) that have run small shops, convenience stores, bars, lodges and other businesses; (j) the teachers at the local school, who are members of the Teachers Union of the state of Oaxaca. This union is one of the most militant unions in the country, and responsible for the beginning of the riots in Oaxaca City in 2006. And (k) the NGOs Ecosolar, Bioplaneta and Serra Negra, that have in different moments initiated projects and programs of capacity-building for tourism, ecological projects of waste management and recycling, as well as the maintenance of the cosmetics factory.

In Praia do Forte, the stakeholders are (a) the fishermen, who have been politically active since the arrival of TAMAR, and have been working to maintain good working conditions (which include incentives from the government, more technical
support of TAMAR and SEAP\(^{19}\); (b) locals (established group) that run some kind of business, directly or indirectly related to tourism; (c) local association of business owners, who includes outsiders and insiders, of all types of businesses; (c) the TAMAR Project, as a government entity, which is responsible in the local sphere of government for representing the federal government and for applying the environmental law. It has authority to rule on any matter that regards environment, especially regarding sea turtles habitats. (d) Municipal government, through its Secretary of Land Development and Secretary of Tourism, responsible respectively for the regulations regarding tourism development and for making local comply with building codes; (e) outsiders, who are business owners and residents, nationals and foreigners with Brazilian citizenship; (f) the festivities’ committee, composed in its majority by women, who are all Catholic and who handle the organization of all local events. This group has important influence over annual budget, especially for religious festivities. (g) The NGO FGD which is responsible for the Sapiranga Reserve and all other protected wilderness in Praia do Forte. Having created the Ecotourism Development Plan, it has important position in safeguarding some environmental standards to the locality. (h) The Praia do Forte Ecoresort and the Praia do Forte Real Estate Company. Both were Klaus Peter’s businesses and have strong influence on how land development is planned out in town; the Praia do Forte Real Estate has been the only seller of lots in condominiums (the areas C and D in the map). And (i) IBJ, an NGO supported by PETROBRAS and FGD, which organizes important environmental activities with local schools, conducts studies of whales and regulates the tour boat operation to ensure whale watching safety.

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\(^{19}\) SEAP is the federal government agency responsible for regulating the fishing industry. It stands for Secretaria Especial de Aquicultura e Pesca (Special Secretariat for Aquiculture and Fishing).
The multi-stakeholder reality of Mazunte and Praia do Forte indicate that each of these individuals and groups are affected somehow by problems originated from ecotourism development and environmental conservation, and therefore deemed to have some right in contributing with their perspectives and authority to solving these problems. Different agendas and different discourses often clash at social arenas where these problems are discussed. Nonetheless, there are overlaps of individual membership to different groups. This does not mean that members move from one group to another, but that identities can overlap single groups. For example, technical staff members of sea turtle conservation projects (important stakeholders in both towns) also pertain to the outsider group. Fishermen in Praia do Forte are also locals and some are part of the festivities’ committee. In Mazunte, some fishermen are also members of the Asociación de Comuneros.

Stakeholders in both localities are defined within a temporal space. Before ecotourism and conservation, the local social organization of Mazunte and Praia do Forte did not include stakeholders. These localities did not have an open forum to debate local policy process. Residents of Mazunte and Praia do Forte were not stakeholders until the change in legal status, organization of local production and the implantation of research projects forced them to adapt to a new situation.

All stakeholders including NGOs, outsiders and foreigners, service providers, businesses, festive committees and conservation projects did not exist before this change in legal status. They only became part of the social network after environmental conservation and ecotourism development were included in the political, economic and social spaces. The situation demonstrates how the shift from subsistence to self-
sufficiency created a new ground for local politics and governance. It exemplifies how changes in the economic system affected the entire political structure that acts at local level. New stakeholders mean that the towns have new forms of governance, with more participatory decision-making. It also means that social events that happen locally affect a wider range of individuals.

For instance, in Mazunte before the *Veda*, all families participated in the only economic activity that existed locally. Decisions were easy because interests were shared. With the shift to self-sufficiency economy (ecotourism), interests became dispersed making it harder for the community to reach a compromise on distinct issues. This is not different in Praia do Forte. Before TAMAR and ecotourism, locals concentrated their work on the coconut plantation and fishing. Despite having two subsistence activities, locals shared interests. However, what made it easier to achieve a compromise was the fact that they all lived under a patriarchal regime. The landowner was the one who finally decided about collective issues. Chapter 09 will discuss in more details the process of community engagement and the reach of consensus in the two localities.

Mazunte has frequent community assembly meetings to discuss budgetary plans and public works and services. These meeting happen when there is a demand and are excellent arenas to observe and analyze the tense social relation between stakeholders along with their discourses. The analysis here is based on the direct observation of these meetings. The discussion of monthly budget and allocation of revenues to public work is the most controversial topic. Inland residents want revenues applied to paving the streets that lead to their homes. Coastal residents want the streets that lead to the beach paved, as well as the construction of a boardwalk across a creek that will help the transit of
pedestrians along the beach. We can observe here the distinct interests and concerns of each group.

In March 14th 2008, I attended one of these meetings where the community was discussing what to do with money that the municipality of Santa Maria Tonameca had allocated. The group of Prestadores de Servicio promptly asked the money to be directed to the pavement of the streets that lead to beach, improving the image and infrastructure of Mazunte. The same group also wanted the construction of a boardwalk behind the palapas with landscaping, to inhibit the deposit of waste in that location by the owners of the palapas and make it easier for tourists and locals to walk from one street to another. Then the teachers contested saying the area was school property and that the boardwalk could not be built there and that money should be used to improve school buildings. The established families that lived inland were the next to voice their concern. Their claim was that no investments are made to their part of town (area C) and that the ones at the coast (area B) were always the preferred beneficiaries. The outsiders contested the use of the money for street pavement and said that waste collection and beach clean up was more important, and that paving the streets would change the characteristics of town.

When the discussion moves to the direction of was should be done and what not, we can understand the different claims. Outsiders in their totality are against the urbanization of Mazunte, while the established are all in favor. Outsiders want nature as part of town, the established want urbanization, especially paved streets. Outsiders represent the social and environmental movements that have sprouted in urban middle-class neighborhoods and are, as Castells (2004) explains, “often defensive and reactive, focusing on the strictest conservation of their space and immediate environment” (2004: 15).
66). Outsiders have transported these ideas to Mazunte, where they definitely clash with local interests. The same happens in Praia do Forte.

Praia do Forte does not have assembly community meetings, however there are meetings organized by the local business association and also of the fishermen’s association, which serve as good social arenas for the debate on community issues. I attended a meeting held by the fishermen’s association on May 29th 2007. The reason of the meeting was to welcome the new president of the Association, elected weeks before. Although the event was more festive, there was a part in the beginning for the dissemination of important information. The meeting was attended mostly by fishermen, and for this one, TAMAR had sent one of its technical staff members to greet the new president and demonstrate its interest in cooperating with the association. The project was taking advantage of the moment to try to correct its faulty attitude towards fishermen. Fishermen complain that TAMAR had been too absent from any discussion regarding fishing regulations and support to the fishermen.

On other occasions, such as interviews, it became clear that fishermen were not against tourism, as all benefited from it by selling their catch and by having better living standard, however, they complained a lot about TAMAR and the limitations on fishing in designated areas. TAMAR had been less concerned with the fishermen and more with the local government. The municipal government has been promoting Praia do Forte in a wrong way by bringing music, food and dance festivals that crowd the town to unsustainable limits. Additionally, the government (state and federal) has been very weak in preventing large projects of hotels and condominiums from moving into Praia do Forte. What concerned TAMAR was that the denser urbanization would put at risk the
nesting areas at the beach. FGD usually pairs up with TAMAR in this discussion against the municipal government. The complexity of the social, political, economic and cultural conflicts will be discussed in more detail in chapter 08.

7.5 Social dynamics

Mazunte and Praia do Forte have demonstrated quite a dynamic history with considerable changes in a relative short period. The ability of both communities to react to inner and outer changes and deal with regulation mechanisms are varied. First, it is important to understand that these two towns have their histories split into two different moments. The before moment is the subsistence based economy of sea turtle hunting in Mazunte and fishing and crop harvesting, plus sea turtle egg consumption, in Praia do Forte. The after moment is the conservation and ecotourism based economy where service sector predominates and subsistence is substituted by urban-oriented activities in both localities.

This split in time created two distinct and operative form of enacting community and community values in both communities. In Mazunte, there is the historical period of emancipated locality, where life was ruled by work with sea turtles and subsistence relied on this and farming. Families had sizable properties (although not legally owned), men earned decent wages and life was simple. Then there is the historical period strongly marked by regulations towards nature and actions, and the change of social, economic and cultural life. It was marked by the ban on sea turtle hunting and the settlement of CMT. Work for locals (previously employed at the sea turtle business) had to find a new
course in a different activity, nature had rules safeguarding it, and government initiated their control over taxes, land, water and other services. Tourists and outsiders invaded town and transformed the peace and quiet place into a rowdy and dynamic place.

Praia do Forte was very similar. There was the historical period of work, leisure and tranquility, marked by the jobs at the coconut farm and fishing. Families spent time tending small gardens and children searched for sea turtle eggs at the beach. Eggs were an important supplementary protein source. Life was simple, and since it was a plantation, no one had the concerns with paying taxes following civil duties; that was the responsibility of the landowner. Then came the historical period of regulation, urbanization, expansion of community and commoditization of natural attractions. This period is marked by the arrival of TAMAR, the construction of the Ecoresort and the demarcation of open land to create condominiums. Work changed gradually, as restrictions to stealing sea turtle egg did not affect harvesting and fishing jobs. Land development and urbanization affected harvesting jobs because it altered subsistence methods used by families. Then tourists started to arrive attracting services to town, contributing to the social, cultural and economic changes that affected town.

The established group in both localities in the previous historical moment had a direct contact with the natural world. This medium of a natural world represented the totality of the group where limits of everyday life coincided with the limits of their subsistence activities. The sea turtle business, the coconut harvesting, the garden tending, the egg collection and the hunting of varied animals were of one single meaning, not thought separately, they were all agro-pastoral activities. There was a geographic continuity between the sea, the beach, farmland, backyard gardens and the wilderness
(where both communities found wild animals to hunt). Nature and culture were bound into a “societal organism”. (Descola and Palsson 1996).

When the localities shifted to an urban-oriented service-sector economy with ecotourism, this natural world medium and the geographical continuum set by the subsistence economy were broken. When the sea and beach become recreational areas, and the farms and gardens are transformed into homes, businesses or even ecotourism leisure spots, the nature and culture bond in different forms. The activities now are thought as separate. In fact, aside from fishing, all other agro-pastoral activities have become an insignificant part of the local economy of Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Everyone prefers to buy their food at local and regional markets rather than growing it.

The new historical period included Mazunte and Praia do Forte in the global networked economy of tourism. Mazunte and Praia do Forte, once tourism arrived (as well as conservation regulations) there was an “intensification of global interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange” (Rosaldo and Inda 2002: 2). These localities became connected through a global economy and started sharing their own differences, now as commodities. These communities started to experience the “cultural flow of capital, people, commodities, images and ideologies” (2002: 2).

Entering the globalized world means that the locality is extended: these communities now, representing the local have extended their social relations to more distant social practices and events (Giddens 1990). With tourism, destinations the relations are extended to foreign individuals. The sharing of social and cultural identities
and ideologies between tourists and local residents broadens the social spectrum of the community: social life is no longer limited to what happens in town but is influenced by these new ideas.

For Harvey (1990), the world is experiencing an acceleration of economic and social processes, compressing time and distance. (1990: 218-222). With Internet, widely available air flights, mobile phones and immediate information via TV and radio, accessibility to more remote places increased. Therefore, tourism communities can stay connected regardless, based on the social exchange with tourists and even experience the time-space compression just with the intensification of these exchanges. According to Harvey (1990), the compression in time and space is actually a greater phenomenon that just the increase in transportation and communications, it is related to a complex political and economic readjustment of world markets. Every corner of the world is integrated into the “postmodern” capitalist system of rapid production for rapid turnovers (1990: 284-307).

“The polarity of local-versus-global identity is now equally evident all over the world. This polarity is generated by the systems of national and international integration that require centralization, mobility and specialized supralocal interest groups” (Hornborg, 2005: 206)

Thus, from all the transformations that the two localities have gone through, we can consider that they became tourist borderzones (Bruner 2005), places where local and global meet, coexist and interact. The local residents meet the tourists for the time they are present and incorporate much of what they learned from this exchange into their
routine after the visitors leave. There is much of a performative characteristic here; the borderzone is the place where the community meets the global, represented here by tourists and all the baggage they bring.
Chapter 8: On conflicts (social, political, economic and cultural)

8.1 Multiplicity of conflicts in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte

Ecotourism development and environmental conservation brought changes to the small towns of Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Over the last 20 years, a series of contentious situations have arisen. Social, political, economic and cultural clashes have occurred between different stakeholders. Here, I will focus on the main conflicts that stood out during fieldwork.

In essence, in both towns interaction between local and global forces have become apparent. During fieldwork, it became clear that Mazunte and Praia do Forte are linked to the global economy through ecotourism. Despite the marginality of Mazunte to the Mexican tourism scenario, it was able to emerge in the last decade as a internationally recognized ecotourism destination. Today it has considerable flows of people from different places (most tourists come from Unites States, Canada, Spain, England, Italy, Japan, France, Israel, Belgium, Australia and Germany), of commodities from different places of origins (foods, vehicles, technology goods, building material), of media (despite the remoteness, everyone has dish networks) and, of ideologies (conservationism and sustainable development included).

Praia do Forte has always been more integrated, perhaps because of its particular history with the landowner defining the pathway to international ecotourism. The flows
of people (more tourists from more places), commodities (luxuries and delicatessen products for sale, higher consumer goods, as well as basic everyday necessities can be found locally), media (some channels broadcast locally) and ideologies are even more intense and occur at a faster rate than Mazunte.

Fishermen in Praia do Forte and Mazunte took chances on how much they could exploit of the sea turtle resource base. In other words, how many individual turtles they could hunt in Mazunte and how many eggs they could remove from nests in Praia do Forte. Fishermen of both places never were traditional hunters. In Mazunte, fishermen came to work on the sea turtle trade. It was a specialized job and one needed experience to be hired. In Praia do Forte fishermen focused their effort on fishing for lobsters, stingray, shrimp and other local fish. Fishing has long been a subsistence strategy before TAMAR arrived. Stealing eggs was an activity the community did on the side. It was not primary to subsistence but had some importance in local diet.

Locals in both towns simply took advantage of the abundance of sea turtle resource. Coincidentally, Praia do Forte and Mazunte have been the main nesting and feeding sites for sea turtles in Brazil and Mexico, respectively. Thus locals claim that there was never a shortage of animals or eggs. One could argue that these communities were blessed with the abundance of such resource, and fishermen in both places developed an acute knowledge of sea turtle behavior.

The relation between conservation and ecotourism in Praia do Forte creates intricate relations between the local community, conservationists, businesses and tourists. In the last chapter I listed the different stakeholders involved in ecotourism development
and environmental conservation in Mazunte and Praia do Forte. In this chapter I will
detail how these groups interact, the demands at stake for each group and the grounds for
conflict resolution. Conflicts throw power structures into relief and allows us to get a
better glimpse of the local-global relationship.

The two towns are divided by conflict, as are most small towns. There are
moments of happiness and discontent, which are directly related to the conflicting
relations and the group affiliations. According to Simmel, the ulterior objective of a
conflict is usually to resolve diverging dualisms and achieve a unity within the group.
The urban space is, according to Simmel, a typical place to find conflicting relations:

“The whole inner organization of urban interaction is based on an extremely
complex hierarchy of sympathies, indifferences, and aversions of both the
most short-lived and the most enduring kind. And in this complex, the sphere
of indifference is relatively limited” (Simmel, 1964: 20).

For Simmel, individuals living in urban spaces are in constant contact with diverse
stimuli, which can reach a point of saturation and create antipathy. For Simmel, antipathy
is a protective measure is a strategies individuals have to protect themselves and be able
to cope with distancing and aversion, which are part of the social interaction in urban
spaces. In small towns like Mazunte and Praia do forte, the association and affiliation of
one individual to specific groups helps achieve this protective measure. Locals
(established) and outsiders have their group affiliations and networks.

In Mazunte, the main conflicts regarding ecotourism development and
environmental conservation happen between (1) the CMT and the fishermen (established
group); (2) established and outsiders (foreigners and Mexican nationals); (3) established and tourists; (4) CMT and tourists; (5) established and NGOs (local and national). Below I will describe some of the struggles in each of these conflict situations. In Praia do Forte, the main conflicts happen between (1) TAMAR and the fishermen (established group); (2) locals and outsiders (Brazilian nationals and foreigners); (3) locals and tourists; (4) TAMAR and tourists; (5) locals (established) and NGOs (local and national). Below I will expose some of the struggles in each of these conflict situations.

8.1.1 Sea Turtle Projects and Locals

Conservation created a dependency of locals on government monies and social programs. Because of federal wildlife protection efforts Mazunte and San Agustinillo are subjects to close governmental supervision. PROFEPA, CONANP, and the National Army made this part of the community’s daily life. With this permanent government presence a series of regulatory restrictions were imposed. And these impositions – which include, for example, limitations on constructions at the beach, limitations on lighting, restrictions on fishing, requirements of permits to fish and to schedule boat rides – demanded adjustments from the community.

Permit costs were high and limitations and restrictions increased the costs of services offered to tourists. Wildlife conservation imposed a series of restrictions. Now dependency was on collective and collaborative work and on government funds. Despite the fact that the CMT was not directly responsible for these regulations, the local
community blamed the CMT because it has been associated with everything related to conservation.

The conservation project provoked a rupture in cultural habits, particularly in subsistence patterns and food consumption. Previously, the community survived on sea turtles and corn crops. Later sea turtle were excluded as a source of protein from their diet and beef, chicken and pork became the replacements. CMT asserted that sea turtles were at risk and this was the only way to reestablish the biological balance of the species. Cualtemoc, a senior biologist at CMT (interviewed on 08 of January of 2008), explained that Mazunte was chosen as the location of CMT because this town and San Agustinillo were the ones mostly affected by the Veda. Still, locals claim this was not enough. They wanted CMT to have offered more support to the communities. This claim has to do with employment. The fishermen believed they would all be hired by CMT. The technical characteristics of the conservation work conducted by CMT required a university degree. This became an automatic barrier to hiring locals. Cualtemoc explained that despite the social rupture, tourism helped resolve employment problems. As he stated, “most of the locals became self-employed, earning their own money while beforehand they had had to work for a boss and rely on salaries.” (08/January/2008).

The community was forced to internalize and reproduce the conservation rhetoric used by CMT to be more “amicable” to ecotourists. This was, in fact, a response to ecotourists’ demands. The profile of tourists that visit these towns is that of eco-friendly, concerned with the protection of sea turtles and the ecosystem. Local residents had to adapt to this profile. In the eyes of ecotourists, town residents are attached to sea turtles, while in truth locals are very resentful of the total prohibition on sea turtle hunting and
egg collection. It does not necessary mean they prefer to continue hunting, or disregard ecotourism. What upsets locals was the abrupt shift that forced change in livelihood. This is still the major reason of resentment. Locals wanted to have had more say in the choices of non-consumptive use of sea turtle.

The political interests of TAMAR are not always in tune with that of the community. Many locals claim that TAMAR is not an ally of the community any more. It has distanced itself and stopped answering the demands of the community. This is noticed in the discourse of the elder residents, most of whom were fishermen. Milton, a retired fisherman (interviewed in 09 of June of 2007), told me that in the past, TAMAR used to take the sick to the hospital, which was far away. It also donated building materials to locals, school material to children and even bought medicine for some who had no ability to pay.

TAMAR personnel claim that the project never turned its back on the community. They claim that its assistance is less noted nowadays because the relational universe increased. The town today has five times more inhabitants than 29 years ago. TAMAR explains that nowadays the town has many other social actors and that the government now supplies local residents with all their basic needs. With ecotourism, the municipal government of Mata de São João concentrated most of its efforts in the town of Praia do Forte where most municipal revenues originate. TAMAR used to fulfill some local demands that should have been fulfilled by the municipal government. The community got used to asking TAMAR for help. Locals continue to ask TAMAR to help them with financial, health and employment problems. Luciano, responsible for the field research of TAMAR in Praia do Forte (interviewed in 09 on July of 2007), explained that the project
would always help locals resolve their problems but today things are easier and the community can rely on the municipal government.

The communities continue to expect assistance from TAMAR and CMT. TAMAR expects the community to be a spontaneous partner in the conservation initiative. The problem can be linked to the type of work performed by the technical staff of these conservation projects. Sea turtle conservation work tends to distance and sometimes isolate biologists and oceanographers from the community. They spend a lot of time in the sea, in the lab, and at the beaches during very early hours collecting data on the specie. The ones working with the public at the visitors’ center are too busy to give attention to the community as well. All this contributes in the long term to distance the relationship between the project’s staff and the community.

The installation of the TAMAR project in 1981 modified the net of social relations in Praia do Forte. Initially, TAMAR was well received by the community for being something new in the routine of the village and for hiring some people within the community. TAMAR valued the community’s traditional knowledge regarding sea turtles. According to Campbell (2007) the promotion of action of conservation not only takes care of the biological or ecological necessities of some species, but also of the political interests of some specific groups. For TAMAR, the conservation of the species of turtles that nested in Praia do Forte was as important as the level of acceptance and recognition of the community for the work of the project’s biologists. For the natives, it was important that the project allowed a certain participation of the community that lacked economic alternatives.
Fishing was the activity most impacted by the presence of the conservation projects. TAMAR and CMT focus on the sea and direct part of their activity to the monitoring of traditional fishing techniques that can cause risks to turtles and to the physical environment used by this species. Both projects perform itinerant work with fishermen. They explain which hooks enable fishing without inadvertently catching turtles; they guide fishermen on better places to place the *raieira* net (used to catch stingrays) and not incidentally capture sea turtles. All these orientations are based on scientific knowledge and are considered by locals an imposition to their traditional knowledge.

The local fishermen of Mazunte and Praia do Forte must follow these recommendations. However, they defend that before these recommendations, fishing was easier and the catch was better. They defend that traditional fishing did not kill as many sea turtles as the projects claimed it did. Another argument that fishermen use frequently is that with the increase in the population of turtles due to the success of the TAMAR, the incidental captures of turtles became more frequent. The fishermen thus stopped reporting incidental captures for the fear of rebuke by the Projects and of new imposing rules on fishing.

For conservationists, it is difficult to associate conservation work with community economic viability. TAMAR and CMT have tried to promote ecotourism as a more sustainable alternative to these fishermen and their families, but it is not an easy transition. There is a conceptual rupture between service rendering (ecotourism) and manual labor (fishing and hunting). In Praia do Forte, Fishermen’s children are already working directly or indirectly with ecotourism, but for TAMAR the ecological benefits of
the ecotourism are not so evident. As Stronza (2001) states, the conservationists tend to have an ambivalent position. They are at the same time optimistic and pessimistic in relation to the capacity of ecotourism in generating economic benefits to communities and to protecting the environment. In Praia do Forte this is evident.

The tartarugueiros, who hold the most important traditional knowledge in Praia do Forte, and the tortugueros, who detain part of the traditional knowledge at beaches monitored by CMT are more sensible to the suggestions of the projects. They started to value conservation work once they became part of the conservation project staff. These individuals cover daily different stretches of beach with the concern finding nests protecting them. They became allies to the projects. In Praia do Forte; scientists from TAMAR have always valued the knowledge of tartarugueiros. All the fieldwork designed for TAMAR’s base at Praia do Forte was based on the knowledge of the tartarugueiros. As TAMAR values this knowledge and uses it, the tartarugueiros also started to value the work done by the scientists and to value the scientific knowledge produced by TAMAR. The same thing happened with CMT and the tortugueros.

The right that local populations have on the use of natural resources is a constant debate in conservation forums. (See Agrawal and Ostrom 2001 and Agrawal 2003). In these towns, sea turtles and their eggs represented a secondary natural resource to the community. In Praia do Forte, the appearance of turtles at local beaches and the nesting periods did not coincide with the period of food scarcity, thus limiting the reliability of the community on this food source. Food was scarcer in the winter (of May the July) and the nesting period occurred during the summer (of September the March). The consumption of eggs was considered a local delicatessen, an alternative but not essential
food. Despite not being used as a primary food source, the stealing of eggs that occurred during nesting seasons was enough to compromise the reproductive sustainability of the species. In Mazunte, because of the monitoring of sea turtle hunting by INP, which started in the 1950s, locals also claimed that the use of sea turtles was done at a scale considered sustainable. Still, conservationists’ discourse claims that the community had a harmful attitude towards this species. These discourses are constantly used to validate the activity of the TAMAR and CMT.

**8.1.2 Locals and Outsiders**

Ecotourism development initiated a process of community disassociation. Before ecotourism, every family participated in the same type of business, there was more cohesion, everyone earned the same, and communal objectives were consensual. In Mazunte, there were different jobs one could have in the sea turtle trade: capturing the turtle at sea, removing the skin, removing bones, removing meat, extracting the oil, extracting the eggs, separating the pieces of shell, grinding the bones into powder (basis for soil fertilizer and calcium supplement for cattle). The slaughterhouse followed a fordist model, where each individual performed one of these tasks, following a sequence. Some performed more than one task. Wages were calculated by the number of sea turtles slaughtered. Wages were considered high, as local costs of living were low. No one paid rent or electricity, telephone service or property tax.

With the end of the sea turtle slaughterhouse and the introduction of ecotourism, families started to develop their own businesses. The new economic activity required
changes in communal forms of association. Before, conditions required that families worked together: wives cooked for the community and tended gardens, men planted some staples and worked at the slaughterhouse. With ecotourism, this communal association ceased. Each family had to work on its own, and began to compete with each other for the money of ecotourists. Some got better off, wealthier than others, because the market competition favored some in advantage of others. This caused resentment and disassociation. The same happened in Praia do Forte, although instead of working in a sea turtle slaughterhouse, locals worked on harvesting coconuts.

Ecotourism caused this disassociation but created a bigger dependency on collective and collaborative work. To receive tourists, Mazunte and San Agustinillo had to undergo a series of adaptations and changes, and this could only be done if everyone pitched in some effort. Tequios (traditional form of voluntary work, very common in indigenous communities if the state of Oaxaca) became the option to build infrastructure and create opportunities that would allow these towns to persist and prosper with tourism. As Cohen puts it:

“Tequios is based on the ideal that citizens should support their village. […] It is an equitable form of communal investment that guarantees legitimate membership in the community in return for labor” (1999: 114).

Tequios have always been present in both Mazunte and San Agustinillo, but the competition that ecotourism created, changed some of this tradition. People today are more individualist and less impelled to voluntary work as tequio, Still, locals had to spend time in tequio if they wanted to offer good services to the tourists: at the same time
that families grew apart in their businesses, they were forced to work together for the good of the town, and their economic survival.

For the outsiders, ecotourism is understood as the best conservation alternative. Outsiders believe that the local environment is attractive to ecotourists and therefore, firmly advocate for its protection. They believe ecotourism is a viable activity if developed following sensible approach to natural resources. They stand by this rhetoric all the time and it is this what puts them in direct conflict with locals. Ecotourism is wrapped with new ideas, technologies and initiatives, which cost more and require more investments. This is not an impediment to outsiders – which have more capital –, but for locals it can mean reaching a dead end to their plans.

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, outsiders have always been against sea turtle consumptive use. They want turtles to be protected at all costs. They think that sea turtle hunting is a primitive, grotesque and unnecessary activity. They sympathize with the difficulties the community went through during the transition from consumptive to non-consumptive use patterns, but claim the transition is over and that locals should start looking to the future.

Outsiders became stakeholders after they were able to insert themselves into the local economy. In the process of ecotourism development, outsiders slowly engaged in local events and activities. As outside entrepreneurs, they cooperated at first in order to get a foothold into the town. Slowly, they began to create empathy with locals. This was possible through the attraction of tourists into town. As more money started to flow into town and local economy gained momentum, these outsiders started having their voices
heard. Once they gained confidence on the part of locals, they started to act more on their own interest. This was when outsiders started to advocate more actively in favor of environmental conservation and ecotourism development.

Specifically in Mazunte, where local economy is small and has potential to grow, outsiders work ways to try to exclude new entrepreneurs from coming into town. They act as gatekeepers to further development by defending the preservation of areas not yet modified by urbanization. However, outsiders are not powerful enough to exclude new entrepreneurs because they do not own or have usufruct rights to the remaining land. The established group is the main proprietor of this remaining land. They are the ones who sell land to foreigners. Locals and outsiders really battle about the uncontrolled sale of land (transference of usufruct rights).

In Praia do Forte this situation is different because the remaining land was already purchased by outsiders. The remaining land has already been zoned and split into lots by Klaus Peters’ real estate company. The remaining area that is not developed is under the control of FGD, such as the Sapiranga Reserve and the wilderness area used by ecotourists. The situation is very contrastive between Mazunte and Praia do Forte.

In Praia do Forte, the conflict between locals and outsiders is not as combative as in Mazunte. Locals have always welcomed outsiders in Praia do Forte. Klaus Peters and the others that came and established some business were well received. These businesses helped employ many locals, contributing to the economic development.

In Praia do Forte, both fishing and the coconut harvesting were decaying industries in 1970, when Klaus Peters arrived. Coconut harvesting did not paid well and
fishing was mostly for subsistence. Geographical isolation limited the town’s capacity for commercializing the catch to other communities. The only real money that families earned was from the coconut farm. Ecotourism development became a good way out of this marginal situation. It was very different than Mazunte in this sense. While in the Mexican case, local families were living well with the income from sea turtles, the families of Praia do Forte were living a basic subsistence live.

Of course, there are some contentious situations between locals and outsiders in Praia do Forte. With outsiders moving in and establishing new businesses, locals ended up as employees in these new businesses. Some of them however have reached the condition of business owner. Locals’ adaptation to ecotourism followed a curious pattern of mimicking what outsiders did. This is clear with the stores that locals and outsiders opened on Main Street. Back in the 1980s, the construction style and decoration of stores used expensive materials such as tiled roofs, ceramic covered walls, re-enforced concrete structure and tempered glass sliding doors. TV programs publicized the style through its soup operas, commercials and other programs. Locals decided to follow that style.

Concurrently, outsiders settled for a different style, more rustic and applying simple local materials such as thatched roofs, unfinished walls, wood structure and wooden doors. In fact, outsiders were using local characteristics of a simple finishing village to ornate their stores. The result was a preference of ecotourists for the simple rustic stores, because these reproduced the exotic coastal fishing village flair. Locals set for the urban modern pattern because it represented what they did not have and wanted to achieve. After a while locals were forced to convert their businesses and settle for the same rustic look that made outsider stores successful. This mimicking process
demonstrated clearly that outsiders are the ones who set the tone for business. Locals just follow along and adapt because they do not want to be left out in the new economy. It is an adaptive strategy where outsiders are the role models and locals are willingly to learn. Natives had to revert their businesses from sophistication to rusticity to please tourists.

8.1.3 Locals and Tourists

Once ecotourism begins at these beaches, the human-animal relation of fishermen and sea turtles is impacted by the introduction of new cultural aspects and undergoes modification. The first cultural aspect introduced is the different attitude that tourists have towards sea turtles. Most ecotourists that arrive in either Mazunte or Praia do Forte, are from urban settings. They live apart from the wildlife, but have interests in visiting the great outdoors where they can get in direct contact with the local fauna and flora. As ecotourists, these individuals are interested in observing wildlife in their natural habitat. They want to see how turtles live, where they live, how they swim, etc. They want to interact with live species. Tourists value sea turtles alive, as part of the ecosystem, whereas fishermen value sea turtles for the food and income they can generate.

The second cultural aspect refers to the attitude towards nature. While locals understand nature as the basis for their subsistence, ecotourists understand it as an attraction, something that needs to be protected. Ecotourists are interested in experiencing protected and little modified environments. Locals want to have in nature the possibility of extracting necessary goods such as firewood, building materials, game meat, fish, sea turtles, eggs.
The communities believe that ecotourism has a significant economic power. They know they can earn money with it; it is just the radical conservationist discourse that they do not digest. Locals believe preservation should be less radical. Still, when convenient they incorporate the conservationist rhetoric. This happens as an adjustment to the eco-friendly profile of ecotourists, who are always in the search for places where local landscape is well preserved. The community is concerned about how this environment will help them earn a living.

Mazunte and Praia do Forte are nonetheless tourist borderzones (Bruner 2005). As Bruner states that “touristic borderzones are fluid, they may shift over time, and almost by definition there are no immigrant tourists, but rather a recurring wave of temporary travelers, an ever-changing moving population” (Bruner 2005: 192). Therefore, ecotourists are always coming and going, visiting these towns and leaving after the visit is over. However, as Bruner puts it, the tourist is a permanent category. Locals are the permanent population who has to interact with these ecotourists. That means they will have to adapt to this fluctuant population of ecotourists. In both towns, locals work as handicraft vendors, waiters, tour guides, cooks, boat drivers, etc. Although the local economic adjustment has settled locals into these positions, they are in a sense acting out roles that were not so usual to them before. We must understand that Mazunte and Praia do Forte are not traditional indigenous cultural settings where locals are expected to perform indigenous roles. Locals are performing roles that are not their own traditional roles, linked to subsistence patterns.

Ecotourism destinations are different from cultural and ethnic tourist destinations. Praia do Forte constructed its image mainly on the authenticity of the local culture, their
distinct social costumes and their capacities to act out folkloric dances and rituals. Mazunte based its image on the composition of authentic landscape, genuine attractiveness, services rendered, local weather, location and accessibility, local conservation initiatives, and when possible, the existence of interesting and exotic wildlife (sea turtles, whales, alligators, birds, etc.). For ecotourists, the setting comes first and the locals come last, although in reality it is not exactly like that. Ecotourism destinations are composed of both, landscape and the local communities. This is where conflicts begin.

There is obviously a culture clash between ecotourists and fishermen in these towns. The first group wants to observe the fauna and the second depends on it to survive. This generates a transformation of functional identity, related to work and economic activity. With tourism, fishermen added new identities, but never stopped being fishermen. They take pride into that identity marker because it represents a lost past. In both towns, fishermen are nostalgic. They always claim that the past was better and always complain that present time things got out of hand. This attitude towards time and social change contrasts with newer generations. The children of fishermen, especially the ones that reached adulthood when local economy changed, do not care much about the past. They started adulthood in a new economy with different available possibilities. They lived hard times and did not want to repeat that. Ecotourism and all the local business serving tourists was a better option and more profitable. The fishermen’s children are now hotel managers, housekeepers, restaurant cooks, managers, salesperson, tour guides, maintenance personnel, or other urban-oriented service-sector professions.
In Mazunte, basic traditions were also affected. For example, before the Veda, food preparation before was all based on sea turtles. The women in community had over 50 different recipes for preparing sea turtles. New recipes and forms of preparation were introduced with ecotourism. Visitors demanded menus that the community was forced to incorporate: Thai dishes, fancy fish dishes, French recipes, Italian cuisine, fast food and junk food (industrialized snacks) as well. Regional culinary of Oaxaca was also incorporated adding tamales, tlayudas, chili rellenos, tostadas and chincharones to the local menus. Most families used to grow corn, rice, beans, chilies and other vegetables inland. Being forced into a service economy, these locals did not have the time to tend their lands and progressively turned to buying these staples at local and regional markets. Mazunte is not self-sufficient anymore.

In Mazunte, costs of living were higher because of fees, taxes and utilities. In addition, more money began to flow into town with tourists and higher income standards were set by these outsiders (tourists and newcomers). These newcomers moved into town and brought new services, with higher quality standards and higher prices. Most of these establishments improved the service infrastructure of both Mazunte and San Agustinillo, marking up prices.

However, prices of goods and services in Mazunte are comparable to other small coastal tourism towns around the country. Accommodations run from PMX$88 (about US$8 in January 2008 exchange rate) for a camping spot or a place to tie your hammock up to PMX$1,300 (US$120) for a upscale suite that includes breakfast and dinner and other amenities such as Jacuzzi, spa, and massage. Standard accommodations are in the PMX$300-500 (US$27-45) price range. A meal in Mazunte sells for about PMX$60
Some fancier restaurants will serve a complete meal with entrée, main course, dessert and drinks for PMX$130 (about US$12). Prices of local accommodations are well underpriced if compared with Huatulco and Puerto Escondido. In these destinations, accommodations start at PMX$660 (US$60) and can reach PMX$5,000 (US$500).

Locals increased the prices of services offered to ecotourists following the logic of supply and demand: if the ecotourists had the disposition of paying more, locals could charge more. Of course, the competition was not fair to locals, as the quality standards of services provided by locals were lower when compared with the ones offered by the outsiders. The most evident inflation was on the price of land. The price of small plots of land in Mazunte and San Agustinillo increase five times (5x) since 1994. Back then locals would sell the usufruct right to a plot of land of 2000m2 for about PMX$44,000 (the equivalent to US$4,000 in January 2008 exchange rate). In 2008, a same size lot could be found for about PMX$231,000 (US$21,000).

The greater problem was really related to increased costs of operation. The higher value of land, taxes and permits was also a hard hit on locals. They do not profit as much as outsiders to withstand the costs of maintaining a business. Throughout the years, many locals have sold their businesses and, sometimes even part of their lands to pay recurring debts. They usually sell to outsiders contributing to more foreigners moving in and taking over these towns’ economies.

As an adaptive strategies to overcome the difficulties brought by ecotourism and environmental restrictions, the community learned simple alternatives to adapt to tourist’s needs and demands, all of low cost. Regional foods, street vendors, boat tours to see
turtles, trekking through the forest and setting up camp sites, budget hotels and hostels. Most of these worked out fine. What actually allows these businesses to resist the foreign capital is the profile of tourists that come into town. Most are young and not too worried with luxury and comfort. This is only appealing to this category of tourists. Other tourists concerned with comfort and safety stay in hotels with better infrastructure.

Local residents insist on sea turtle hunting. They still want to have the return to extractive activity. They believe there can be a compromise between conservation and sea turtle consumptive use. They believe it is possible to have both if in a sustainable way. In fact, before the ban, there was a wildlife management program controlled by the federal government, but its efficiency was questioned for many years. This is one main cause why it did not move forward. Local residents were used to earning a living with little effort. The sea turtle slaughterhouse paid well for a manual labor the community was well acquainted with.

Thus, the community does not cooperate with CMT conservation efforts mainly because they do not feel empowerment or receive any benefits. They are unanimous in saying that CMT only defends the interests of its own federal employees and the tourists. For locals, CMT is not concerned about the community. When it was being built, there was a great expectation about it, but when locals learned that they would not be working there, their perception changed radically.

In Praia do Forte the culture clash between locals and tourists is less noticeable because the transformation process occurred during a longer period. While Mazunte was transformed into a tourist destination in the period of three to four years (from 1992 to
1996), Praia do Forte took about 10 to 12 years (from 1982 to 1994). Adaptations happened slowly. In the last six to seven years, transformations occurred at a more aggressive rate, but the community was more adjusted to change than was Mazunte.

Traditions in Praia do Forte also suffered changes. However, since every small locality in Brazil shares the national culture via television broadcasting, locals worked better strategies to adapt. Locals maintain today the same festivities – Saint Peter, the protector of fishermen, Saint John, and the Town’s anniversary parade – they had before TAMAR and tourism. These festivities are performed in the same way they used to be. However, the festivities rely on the tradition kept by the elders, which is not passed to the newer generations. The young ones do enjoy the dances, food, performances and holidays that come with the festivities, but do not care for organizing these events. They have not been entrusted with the obligation of carrying on with the symbolic value of festivities.

Other traditions were affected more. Beside the tradition of egg collection, which for conservation reasons had to be suspended, there were other traditions related to subsistence and daily life. Every family used to tend small gardens and raised pigs behind their homes. With urbanization and tourism, pigs were banned from the backyards, and with price speculation on rentals, the backyards were transformed into extensions to the original houses. Today, less than 5% of the original homes have backyards. From a universe of about 100 lots, only five or six of them still maintain the original backyards. Women used to go wash clothes in the creek. Children would follow along to bath and play. With tourism, these activities, which were an important aggregating factor among women, had do end.
The cost of living at Praia do Forte increased in a rate higher than larger cities such as Salvador. Urbanization and the creation of the condominiums raised the local costs of living. These new areas were eventually occupied by high middle class Brazilians and wealthy Europeans. The constant inflow of foreign tourists and wealthy weekenders from the city of Salvador contributed to the boom of Praia do Forte. Without the environmental regulations that were set for the destination, the town would have grown larger and would have lost part of its ecotourism attractiveness. The high-end tourism that flocked into town created a serious process of gentrification.

Comparing to Mazunte, the inflation in Praia do Forte went well beyond other tourist towns of the same size, but still averages lower than larger cities like Salvador. In Praia do Forte the price of accommodation runs from R$30 (about US$15 at exchange rate of June 2007) at local hostels to R$1,000 (US$500) at the Ecoresort. The average stands at R$50 (US$25) per night with breakfast included. In Salvador, the average price for a hotel is about R$150 (US$75).

Land prices have increased in Praia do Forte, but in a very organized way. The condominiums around Praia do Forte, all Peters’ properties were sold in stages and prices increased at the same rate as infrastructure was laid out. In 2007, a lot of 1000m2 was sold for about R$1,000,000 (US$500.000), but the condominiums were always expensive. Peters set the price because he was aiming at higher economic classes. A better example of price surge is related to rents charged for a commercial space at Main Street. In 2007, a store with 600m2 could be rented for about R$6,000 (US$3000, about US$5 per square meter). Back in 2000, locals told me that a store of the same size could be rented for less than R$1,200 (US$600 a month, five times (5x) cheaper).
8.1.4 Sea Turtle Projects and Ecotourists

The relationship between conservation projects and ecotourists is ambiguous. There are two major arenas where projects and tourists interact: one is inside the visitors’ center and the other is outside, along the beaches. Inside the projects’ visitors’ centers, the relation between project personnel and ecotourists is very amicable. Visitors are an important component in the environmental education promoted by these projects therefore; cordiality rules the forms of relation. In fact, the projects have developed a discourse which they emphasize the contribution of external partners, like the visitors themselves, to the success and continuation of the conservation effort. They extol visitors to help spread the word about how important it is to save sea turtles, their nests and their habitat. In doing so, the projects include the discourse about how bad the communities are to sea turtles, exposing all the actions like stealing eggs, catching adult turtles at sea and land, and producing jewelry and cosmetics. Most communities abandoned these practices but the discourse emphasizes the important work these projects do.

Besides, these visitors’ centers could not survive without tourists. TAMAR, for example, maintains its visitors’ center only with entry fees and merchandise. Profits from visitors’ purchases sustain most of TAMAR’s research, monitoring and environmental education. CMT operates differently. Being strictly a government project, it cannot profit. All monies received from entry fees must be reverted to the maintenance of the visitors’ center. CMT is not allowed by CONANP to sell merchandise. TAMAR was able to do
that only because it has the Pró-TAMAR NGO side that operates the commercial part of the conservation initiative.

Outside the limits of the visitors’ centers the relation between conservationists and tourists changes drastically. Almost all conflict between the two happens outside the visitors’ centers, more specifically along the beaches. In Praia do Forte, which has sea turtle nests all along its 14km of beaches, tourists have become a real threat. The high number of tourists moving around the beaches increases the possibility of destruction of nests. Trampling is the main source of problems. Tourist sit on top, play sports, ride horses and bikes over the nests. The sand is very soft and any heavy load crushes the eggs. The marking poles set by TAMAR have not been sufficient to stop this.

CMT does not have this problem in Mazunte or San Agustinillo as these towns rarely have nests. Nesting beaches, due to their high concentration of nests per square meter, were declared off-limits to visitors back in 1990. Since then, these specific beaches, like Escobilla, Morro Ayuta and Barra de la Cruz have remained deserted.

However, CMT has problems with ecotourism that occurs in the sea. Mazunte and San Agustinillo are feeding areas for sea turtles, which means the animals are swimming around near the beach. Locals offer boat rides so ecotourists can see and swim with these animals. The problem here resides in the fetching and holding sea turtles so ecotourists can touch them. CMT personnel have warned locals that this cannot be done, but locals will naturally resist these recommendations if it is to please tourists and earn a few extra tourist dollars. CMT visitors’ center has included information about this in the effort of convincing ecotourists not to take part in that.
The other problem relates to waste disposal. Ecotourists are not informed about the proper disposal of waste and these towns are negligent about promoting their own waste management systems. Both towns have recycling bins and selective garbage collection. Ecotourists do not find waste bins and tend to leave their garbage at the beach. Turtles can easily mistake waste (especially plastic objects) for food, accidentally ingesting them and potentially dying from it. CMT and TAMAR conduct continuous environmental education programs towards waste disposal. However, these projects do not have the necessary legal power to fine tourists on that matter.

8.1.5 Locals and the NGOs

NGOs in Mazunte became part of the social network only after the Veda. The most influential NGO to set foot in area of the 3EC was Ecosolar, an NGO composed of ecologists from Mexico City. Ecosolar’s influence in the area started a few years before the Veda. The president of Ecosolar, Hector Marchelli, was one major lobbyist in Congress to prohibit sea turtle killing back in the early 1990s. He was part of the environmentalist movement to save endangered species. He also advocated for the establishment of CMT in Mazunte to help convert local economy from consumptive use to non-consumptive use. Hector Marchelli devised his plan to move in with Ecosolar and its ecotourism program. Ecosolar took advantage of the situation. After the Veda it became necessary to offer training and capacity-building for ecotourism.

Ecotourism required locals to learn new trades, new activities, and new skills. The government initially invested on local training via the CMT. Some workshops were held
using CMT’s infrastructure. However, most training was performed by Ecosolar, a Mexican NGO that worked in different communities with social project. In Mazunte, Ecosolar created a capacity-building program to teach locals how serve tourists. Locals were taught how to make a bed, how to prepare meals, what hygienic measures they needed to follow, how to engage in conversation, basic phrases in English, etc. Today, the community has all the needed knowledge for ecotourism. Not everyone participated in these capacity-building courses. The ones that participated have had more success in the ecotourism business.

Ecosolar got funding from the Austrian Embassy and from The Body Shop Inc. to develop its ecotourism project. The Body Shop Inc. sponsored the creation of the Cosmetics Factory, a small community project that produced cosmetics using native plant species combined with some basic essences donated by this British cosmetics company. The Cosmetics Factory employs over 20 local women who produce different products aimed at the ecotourists.

Improved local economy did not mean more economic independence. Businesses let alone were not sufficient to attract tourists. Other local features such as the sea turtle museum at the CMT, the beaches and some ecotourism tours completed the Mazunte and San Agustinillo package. The local businesses grew dependent on the CMT for it attracts other tourists that would not come to Mazunte spontaneously.

In Mazunte, The NGO Ecosolar moved into town with the idea of stimulating ecotourism development with alternative sustainable strategies. They invested heavily on training. Only half of the community maintained the activities and knowhow learned.
Foreign residents have always been on the side of Ecosolar because the NGO made real improvements to life condition in town and because they sympathize in ideologies. They are all from big urban centers, where notions of conservation, ecology and safe-environment are well established and automatically replicated.

Foreigners believe that Ecosolar was trying to bring new ideas, new concepts into Mazunte and San Agustinillo. Locals do not believe that. They believe that the NGO was trying to trick them. In fact, the case of Ecosolar can be considered the most contentious situation in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. The projects created by the NGO split the town in half. These projects were what later forced the permanent political schism between Mazunte and San Agustinillo. This happened because Ecosolar had, since the beginning invested more effort in Mazunte. The NGO claimed that the residents of San Agustinillo were more concerned with economic development played out as urbanization. The NGO did not want that, it wanted to invest in a sustainable ecotourism development based on comunitarism. Mazunteños accepted that but the ones in San Agustinillo did not.

Ecosolar was the organization that came to establish ecotourism through different development programs. For the community, NGO Ecosolar knew nothing about what the community needed and tried to incorporate new ideas, logic and practices. This caused a serious schism. Native residents believe that Ecosolar just wanted to subvert the local political and social structure, destabilizing local leaders to allow foreigners to move in control. There were constant conflicts between the NGO staff and locals. After four years of work, this conflicting situation led to the exiting of Ecosolar from Mazunte. They became persona non grata in town.
Discourses of conservation, economic development, and traditional livelihoods life are contradictory because they operate from different loci. Environmental conservation discourses derive from the urban environmentalist philosophy, concerned with the conservation of endangered species and threatened ecosystems. This discourse (conservation and development) clashes with the local discourses (of the communities) interested in safeguarding traditional livelihoods. Hence, there is a confrontation between traditional knowledge, here represented by fishing and sea turtle hunting, and the foreign discourses that impose the conservationist logic of ecotourism, and a set of ideologies (preservation, sustainable development).

In Praia do Forte, NGO became part of the social network after TAMAR moved in. In the mid-1990s, NGOs of all kind started operating in Brazil. It was the flourishing of the third sector, responding to new demands not covered by government or the private sector. In Praia do Forte, Klaus Peters created the first NGO. He created the FGD with the objective of hiring ecologists that could help with the development and implementation of an ecotourism plan. FGD also offered capacity-building programs for locals, training them in hostelry and other jobs. FGD is still very strong in Praia do Forte, perhaps because it is supported by the patriarchal figure of Klaus Peters. Some ecologists and former workers of TAMAR and FGD founded IBJ, the other local NGO.

FGD was funded by Klaus Peters industries, located in Sao Paulo. In Brazil, NGOs have a legal constitution that facilitates the administration of social programs. NGOs are exempt from paying taxes. Donations to NGOs are also tax exempt. Today, Peters’ real estate company funds FGD with profits from the sale of land. The NGO has a few employees, mostly ecologists and biologists.
Interests of the NGO IBJ, which is the other conservation project in Praia do Forte, also contrast with that of the community. IBJ’s main objectives are the research and protection of humpback whales, large sea mammals that live far from the coast and can be seen only by a boat ride. For the community, IBJ’s activities are innocuous mostly because their work is mostly directed to the tourists and to the tour operators. Tourists can take advantage of the talks and presentations offered by the IBJ and of the boat rides, offered by the tour operators under the direct supervision of IBJ. A ride costs usually about R$100 per person, at the time of fieldwork, the equivalent to US$66. This price is excluding to most local residents (established). Local families have an income of about R$1000 per month.

IBJ is funded by PETROBRAS. The revenue with tourists is not sufficient to fund the research activity done by this NGO. PETROBRAS has had in the last 20 an aggressive green marketing. Investing in environmental projects like IBJ and TAMAR enhances de image of the petroleum company. In Brazil, there are fiscal benefits to companies that donate resources to social and environmental initiatives. PETROBRAS benefits from this by funding environmental education and marine biology research.

To the community, the IBJ represents well the form in which local ecotourism development followed, excluding the community by social and economic term. Even the language used by IBJ during the talks, presentations and boat rides are far beyond the lexical domain of locals, as they are leveled by the education degrees of tourists. Most tourists that take part in IBJ events and tours are foreigners with university degree or postgraduate degree.
IBJ also works with community. It offers environmental education to children at local schools and sponsors the International Environment Day, observed in Brazil on May 5th of every calendar year. During this day, IBJ promotes a special program with children of primary and middle school. They take them on trips to the Sapiranga Reserve, the Garcia D’Ávila Castle and promote games and fun activities in the town square. The environment is the leading theme. These environmental education activities have an important stake for IBJ as it further guarantee the sustainability of the conservation efforts promoted by this NGO. By protecting the water, coral reefs, vegetation and environmental quality, you are maintaining the necessary habitat conditions for whales and sea turtles to continue to visit the community’s seas and beaches respectively. It becomes easier to continue with conservation work in communities where everyone is conscious about the importance of protecting the environment.

The point of contention is that conservation is good for the projects but not necessarily for the communities’ immediate claims. Protect the wildlife and the landscape is very important, but still there are other problems that require more attention: the local health clinic does has a doctor on duty only once a week, education levels and performance are very low in comparison with national standards, alcoholism and drug consumption has risen in the last five years, especially among teenagers.

FGD, the oldest local NGO of Praia do Forte used to have a closer relation to the community in the past with its environmental education projects and ecotourism professional training program. The projects and programs continue in other more needy nearby communities. In Praia do Forte, they were suspended years ago when it was thought that the community grew too much and that locals were already well integrated.
into the ecotourism market. Since then, the work of FGD in Praia do Forte is not noticed as before. In Praia do Forte they continue maintaining the Garcia D’Ávila Castle and the Sapiranga Reserve as well as an annual event of beach clean up. The community connects FDG with the Garcia D’Ávila Castle, as some locals are employed there.

8.2 Forms of Contending and Changes in local Power Structures

Conflict situations are important moments for stakeholders to discuss the real problems, the real contentious events and decide what is best for the collectivity. Very seldom will a group feel satisfied with the resolution of a conflicting situation. A perfect resolution would be utopia. However, when we take a closer look at the situations listed in the previous sections we can notice that in both towns locals (established) compose the social group mostly affected by all changes introduced and that their actions are very subtle, their discourse is harsh but their actions are mind. Their actions are hard to notice and the intentions are diffused, which means locals are mostly resisting, struggling against these changes. As Scott defines,

“Class resistance includes any acts by members of a subordinate class that are intended either to mitigate or deny claims made on that class by superordinate classes or to advance its own claims vis-à-vis those superordinate classes. […] It focuses on intentions rather than consequences” (1985: 290).

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, local fishermen resist to the superordinate classes, which in both cases is the federal government. Scott focused on poor peasants struggling against
rich peasants. In the towns of this research, there are no superordinate and subordinate classes, but there are superimposed (environmental) rules and individuals (of CMT and TAMAR) designated to make those rules function. Various acts would qualify as resistance: the ignoring of rules and regulations (locals still collect eggs and catch turtles secretly), the creation of new ones (fetching turtles for tourists to touch), badmouthing conservation project personnel to tourists, not complying with fishing regulations or partially complying.

Resistance has changed along the years. In the beginning, CMT and TAMAR had to recover every nest from the beach and relocate to the incubation areas created inside the Projects’ visitors’ center. There has been some accounts of robbery inside these fenced areas in both projects. At the beaches of Morro Ayuta and Barra de la Cruz, locals still do that. They also threaten any local that accepts the job as guard and janitor at the remote bases CMT has established in these towns.

Resistance in Praia do Forte is of other sort and relates to fishermen’s TEK that was forgotten by TAMAR. Aside from the tartarugueiros that work with TAMAR, other fishermen claim the Project abandoned them. These men used to help the Project in the beginning and today the project forgot about them. This resentment contributed to the resistance in complying with norms or giving a hand in the conservation effort conducted by this project today.

It is resistance because the intention of all these acts will always fail to achieve the desired result of subverting conservation and reverting back to the previous sea turtle consumptive use based economy. There are other acts indirectly related which are
resistance: (1) in Mazunte, locals are selling land to foreigners, tumbling large trees, modifying preserved patches of forest; and (2) in Praia do Forte, locals continue hunting wildlife in the forests, renting spaces for more businesses, and not reporting turtles incidentally caught in their nets. Many acts are unintentional and related to other issues such as economic necessity, however, locals are aware that in doing so, they are inflicting the social actors responsible for all these changes: conservationists, outsiders and tourists. They are also discharacterizing local landscape (so valued to tourists), contributing to urban density (creating more pressure on local resources) and affecting ecotourism attractiveness.

These forms of resistance are not planned. They happen randomly and are usually bone by one or a few individuals. These events, with “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990) are told in later moments as boasts of pride in conducting some subversive act against the social order, against the hegemonic ideological power of conservationism and developmentalism.

Locals in Mazunte have also developed forms of resistance to outsiders. The reason behind this resistance is to counteract the new ideological frameset brought by these new residents. As mentioned, outsiders move into town reproducing the same discourse of CMT that environmental conservation and sustainable development should be the driving forces of this town. The resistance locals have is understandable, given that they are tired of being “subordinated” by external ideals, ideologies, beliefs and values.

Forms of resistance against outsiders are different than those used against CMT. Some are subtle, others are outspoken, verbalized direct confrontation. The main weapon
used by the established group to contend with outsiders’ novelties is their “guidebook” to social norms. In Oaxaca, most small towns like Mazunte abide to what they call “usos y costumbres”, which is a collective informal code of conduct that every local resident must follow to keep social order and social cohesion and, maintain tradition.

The usos y costumbres has been an efficient form of contending with change at a rate that is comfortable to locals, without abrupt modifications. This code of conduct is ineffective against superimposed government regulations, like the establishment of CMT and all the environmental restrictions, however, it is very effective against individualized impositions, like that of outsiders. It is also used against the external NGOs like Ecosolar. One outsider, an Argentinean moved into town and opened a nightclub, which would work until very late at night and play very loud music. Locals were able to reduce the hours of the club and make the owner play the music at a lower volume. Tequio is another tradition that usos y costumbres has been able to maintain; otherwise, it would have disappeared as well.

Another example has been the voting system. Mazunte always had an open ballot voting. There was no secret voting, each person would have to publicly announce at the towns assembly who he voted, and the results were marked down on the blackboard. This finally changed in 2006, but the battle between outsiders and established lasted over a decade. Some traditions such as maintaining the assembly meetings are positive. It works as a social arena where everyone stakes his or her claim and it is discussed collectively. Praia do Forte does not have a similar system to the Oaxacan usos y costumbres. Problems of social order are usually solved by the municipal government. Locals in this town are more receptive to outsiders and have not created forms of resistance.
Praia do Forte has other forms of social representation, like the Fishermen’s Associations, the Parochial Association, and the *Conselho Tutelar* (which in the US would be the Parenting Association) that work to keep social institutions functioning. The *Conselho Tutelar* is effective in controlling changes that will disturb and cause deviance in the community’s children and adolescents. Working with the local school, businesses and even with TAMAR, the *Conselho Tutelar* has been able to control problems related to drug and alcohol consumption among youngsters, however. The Parochial Association and the Fishermen’s Association are efficient in maintaining local traditions. However, in contrast to Mazunte, the social heterogeneity of Praia do Forte works against the efforts of these associations. No local code or norm is capable of disciplining all individuals. In addition, Praia do Forte was governed by private regulations set by the landlord. When ecotourism and conservation substitute the previous agrarian system, these rules were substituted by municipal and state laws. These laws are far more general in guiding social behavior than the *usos y costumbres* system.

In Praia do Forte, locals have a particular resistance to the weekend vacationer, represented by the wealthy families from Salvador. These families rent or own homes inside the condominiums that surround Praia do Forte. They usually rely on services and goods, such as local catch and groceries, all purchased locally. Locals, especially fishermen sell to them at a higher price despite the price difference being subtle. Services rendered by locals to this group are also done at a higher price and many times with lower quality.

These very subtle resistance strategies are a response to a social class conflict that exists in Bahia. This goes beyond the local social networks and social conflict of Praia do
Forte. Social relations in the northeast of Brazil are still influenced by the colonial past, with its oligarchies and servitude. Elites from Salvador are at the top of the social, political and economic Baiano hierarchy. They detain most political positions in the state level politics and concentrate over 80% of wealth in a group that is no larger than 5% of the state’s population. In Praia do Forte, they own the most luxurious condominiums and sharply contrast with the economic level of local residents (insiders and outsiders). Resistance to this group is a natural weapon of the weak (Scott 1985).

With all these contentious situations brought by ecotourism development and environmental conservation, it was striking that locals do not have resistance strategies against ecotourists. Despite the fact that these individuals are also agents of change, locals have learned that with this group, they ought not to develop combative strategies because they are nowadays what keep local economy rolling. Of course there are conflicting points of view, ideologies and values, as expressed in the last section of this chapter, but local did not find it necessary to develop resisting strategies. This is very different of other tourism destinations, especially the cultural and historical sites, like Oaxaca City in Mexico or Antigua in Guatemala.

In historical sites like these, there are many distinct social groups in constant clash, and some groups in these larger setting do not rely on tourism as much as local populations of tiny town, and hence develop ways to contend. In Antigua, there are more than one established group, Ladinos (of European descent) and Mayas, who take different approaches to tourism and different advantages. Ladinos benefit economically with tourism and Mayas are excluded from this economic advancement. However, Mayas are the ones expected to perform traditional roles for tourists, are the exotic embellishments
that make Antigua culturally distinguishing. Mayas know of they important social position within the tourist market, but are not rewarded for their services, justifying all means of resistance to tourism and many times to tourists them selves (Little 2004).

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, locals do not present themselves as belonging to any ethnic group. Mazunteños are migrants from different states of Mexico; some have indigenous physiognomies but do not share any cultural identity to any of the hundreds of ethnic groups present in the state of Oaxaca; others are mestizos. Fortenses are also culturally diverse. Some claim to be descendents of slaves; others migrated from different places of Bahia; others are mestiços. This diverse background contributed to the establishment of new local identities, linked to Mazunte and Praia do Forte.

Interesting enough, ecotourists tend to behave differently than cultural tourists. The first are very condescending with local culture as their major interest and concern is the natural environment and what it can offer them in terms of attractiveness, outdoor activities, and enchantment. The second are very demanding of cultural authenticity, being less condescending with locals that refuse to perform their ethnic and cultural roles. Ecotourists demand ecological and environmental authenticity while cultural tourists demand cultural and ethnic authenticity. Hence, the locals in Mazunte and Praia do Forte are less demanded, which contributes to their good relation with ecotourists.

Concurrent with local resistance, interesting new scenario of negotiations of power appeared in these towns after ecotourism and conservation settled as the hegemonic ideologies. This scenario is directly linked to environmental stewardship and economic partnership. The government is the biggest player in these communities. Local
power structures have been recreated by the national governments, through their respective conservation projects. Locals have lost control of what used to be of their total domain: livelihoods and natural resources.

Struggles are local and, in many forms, are in opposition to outside forces such as (1) working an external, national and transnational economic logic into the community; (2), reproducing international interests in protecting an endangered species; and (3) forcing the community to switch from an extractive–oriented economic activity to a conservation-oriented economic activity. This list represents the most evident issues of power structure and politics of the local-global relation.

Political struggles initiated when outsiders start to arrive. Mostly middle class from large urban settings and with university degrees, outsiders arrived with distinct ideologies that clash with local ones. There were also clashes of customs, values, beliefs and knowledge. There is a great resentment of locals with government, the conservation projects and the outsiders because: (1) they stole their jobs as sea turtle hunters, and slash and burn agriculturalists; (2) they fooled them promising work, money (indemnities and salaries) and new opportunities that turned out different that originally planned; (3) they made locals poorer than before; and (4) they stole their past, their history.

However, life conditions have improved in these towns. Children are healthier, there is schooling for all ages (although the quality is questionable), and housing is better and safer. Still, the community has the feeling of disempowerment with ecotourism and the conservation projects. With these new initiatives of conservation and development, the members of the community lost their protagonist role. They have less control over
they town and are governed by external rules. To add more discontent, these towns have been internationalized. Foreign visitors (national and international tourists) purchased land and built homes and businesses. With more capital to invest, they come in to the local market at a more competitive position. Foreigners tend to offer the best lodging dining and tour services because of they financial advantage.

Sources of authority, prestige and influence in these towns originate from political elements of environmentalism (conservation, ecotourism, sustainable development). Hence, the resolution of conflict may be solved by “resolving the ecological tensions on which power rests” (Haenn 2005: 25). This means that the stakeholders need to reach a point of consensus over development patterns, conservation needs and social demands. This consensus point is hard to reach because the interests of each group widely diverge. This contentious situation in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte are very well summarized by Haenn when she states that:

“In any given conservation setting, few people may be interested in actual environmental protection, while many people may use the idea of protection to further other aims. Conservation then becomes omnipresent, in the way people talk and relate to one another, but absent in practice” (2005: 25).

Power relations in Mazunte and Praia do Forte are at the center of conflict. Every conflict between each of the social actors, every claim of each stakeholder is wielded and negotiated. As Hornborg states, “power presents itself as a social relation built on an asymmetrical distribution of resources and risks” (2001:1). Local resources, based on fishing and sea turtles; and the risks (social, cultural, political and economic) posited by
ecotourism, affected locals, outsiders, conservation projects, NGOs and other stakeholders differently. I would consider that the established group has been the most affected stakeholder because it had to go through all the social process of change. Nonetheless, the new stakeholders that entered the social arena also struggle to take a stand in a situation where development and conservation are still very fragile.

The next chapter will discuss the different forms of consensus and engagement of stakeholders in conservation and ecotourism.
Chapter 9: Community Engagement through work, protest & discourse

9.1 Consensus

When I proposed to research how ecotourism and conservation coincided and diverged, and how this affected directly involved communities, I first idealized a research mostly focused on government policies and adaptations to local reality. The research and its findings changed the focus to the community and the ways local stakeholders participate in these new introduced policies (environmental conservation and sustainable development). The focus was on how the communities of Mazunte and Praia do Forte, as well as its neighboring towns engaged with these policies through different mediums. Work, protest and discourse were these mediums. They represent, at large, the whole process of livelihood adaptation and collective resistance to the social, cultural, economic and political changes these localities went through in the past two decades.

The last chapter, I focused on the conflict between major stakeholders. In this chapter, I will focus on the engagement of these stakeholders in development and conservation. A focus on engagement means a focus on the forms of alliances, on the construction of consensus, on ways of converging different opinions and interests. The objective of analysis is to point to the common ground where every social actor, every stakeholder feels their intents and objectives are being met (rather partially or totally).
The reach for consensus has been a new approach of conservationists to the previous problem of community disengagement in conservation initiatives and problems of increased threats to the environment. These threats in the case of Mazunte and Praia do Forte come as part of the development package: urban expansion, road pavement, building of hotels and commercial centers, electrification and public illumination of areas near the beach, increase in the consumption of potable water, and the increase in the flows of ecotourists. As Haenn states, the process of consensus has to include “the need to carefully handle cultural information, an explicit rendering of political positions, and a discussion of personal and institutional change” (2005: 189).

However, in Mazunte and Praia do Forte, a consensus will only be met if stakeholders converge on both the development and conservation agendas. Haenn focused specifically on the conservation agenda because that was the most contentious point at the Campeche research site she focused. In the case of my research sites, conservation and development are two important forces that impose change and adjustment to the community. Sure enough sea turtle conservation is an extremely important issue, one that contrasts Mazunte and Praia do Forte from other similar ecotourism sites in both countries, and one that requires sensible adjustments of these communities. Restrictive regulations are not easy to be met, and conservation initiatives can be a struggle as well. However, in these two localities, ecotourism has to be understood together with conservation. At the same time environmental regulations were imposed, ecotourism was thought as the sensible economic option that could resonate conservationism and operate in non-conflictive ways with the sea turtle projects.
More so, conservation and development in Mazunte and Praia do Forte have changed livelihoods. Different than other situations where conservation or development projects were established alongside local productive systems, in these towns, the two were substitutes, imposed substitutes to previous economic activities. Haenn (2005) explains the link between campesino livelihood and conservation projects in Campeche. Research sites as this one in Campeche, outside environmental projects were implemented in ways that did not to upset local subsistence patterns. It was necessary to reach a consensus between campesinos and conservationists so that both activities could work well without one interfering in the other. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, sea turtle conservation projects could only be effective if local communities changed their livelihoods. In the Mexican case, locals had to abandon their main sea turtle economic activity. In Praia do Forte, locals had to abandon some activities considered harmful to sea turtles. This generated a great deal of resistance and conflict, as described in the previous chapter.

Unfortunately, to the discontent of the communities of Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the conservation projects and all the imposed regulations were there to stay and resistance activities would not be able to undermine the projects or their activities. After 17 years in Mazunte and 29 years in Praia do Forte, the community, the conservation projects, the government and NGOs had to find consensus and solve conflicts. To reach consensus, there is a long process of negotiation where interests of different stakeholders must be addressed. Contradiction is common to this process but the work to resolve these contradictions must be voluntary. As noticed in Chapter 07, a consensus is not easy. The process of negotiation is slow and complex. The major barrier to a consensus between
locals and conservationists relates to the different epistemologies at stake. Conservationists are trained to work with animals and the environment necessary to sustain the life of these animals. They work with people because it is necessary, but usually this link is not as automatic to biologists, oceanographers, ecologists, zoologists, and veterinarians. Their focus is on the sea turtles. Communities, on the other hand, have a direct and symbiotic relation to nature. Animals, plants and other resources were always linked to their livelihood and necessary to their subsistence. Conservation represents a rupture with this nature-culture relation. Addressing this issue effectively has been the main challenge to conservationists.

Consensus has to do with community participation. Projects like CMT and TAMAR need community participation in order to be successful and continue viable. Every project, whether development or conservation oriented, when imposed locally requires some level of local participation. Most projects today work towards achieving community sanction, try to explain what the community should expect from them and try to include the community in the project’s design. This is easily done when the project is formulated at the local level, following community’s feedback and presenting every detail of the proposed plan. When a project is developed at a higher level (higher than the local, e.g. federal level) and distant from the community (inside bureaucratic government structures) these participatory requirements are hard to be met. This is exactly what happened with CMT and TAMAR.

TAMAR was developed in Brasília, the national capital of Brazil, by the federal environmental agency IBDF. The project was formulated based on the scientific survey done by the oceanographers Guy and Maria Angela Marcovaldi. They visited the
communities and learned about the ground situation of sea turtle consumption. The creation of TAMAR and the establishment of a nation prohibition of sea turtle consumption were based on scientific data. When the Project TAMAR was designed, the community did not have a say in it. This explains some of the alienation TAMAR has today in the community and the Project’s ignorance of some social, economic, and political problems that affects the community.

CMT was not that different, it was designed in Mexico City by INP. The Project was formulated based on the 30-some years of biological research conducted by INP in Oaxaca. INP constantly monitored the catch of sea turtles and the reproduction rate of the species, including the number of baby turtles that actually reached adulthood. The ban on sea turtle consumption use and the establishment of a project that would work in protecting this species were also based on scientific data.

Researchers and scientists defined the ways the project would work and the places where it would focus most of its conservation initiative, without any consultation with the local community. The communities of Mazunte and San Agustinillo had a say on where the CMT headquarters would be. They wanted it to be built in town and were able to get that. The government gave in on that because of the commitment it made to help the two communities overcome problems caused by the Veda. However, aside from the fact of Mazunte becoming the place of CMT, locals did not have any other participation in the project’s implementation or in the development of conservation activities.

Therefore, both projects, CMT and TAMAR were federal government imposed initiatives, and the communities had to accept it. The same situation happened with
ecotourism. The Brazilian and Mexican federal governments’ decision to stimulate ecotourism development in these towns was based on the need to provide sustainability to their newly implemented sea turtle conservation projects. Both TAMAR and CMT disclaim any relation to ecotourism development. The conservationists that work in these projects claim it was a coincidence and that conservation would naturally draw sustainable tourism practices to these towns. It is true that conservation does tend to attract nature-based tourism or ecotourism, but it was more than a coincidence. There were deliberate investments made by the federal government at earlier stages. In Mazunte, in 1992, the pavement of the main access road, the installation of electricity and the cleanup of the beaches had this intent. They were paid by federal government infrastructure agencies (e.g. CFE and SCT), not related to the Mexican environmental agencies. In Praia do Forte, these investments became evident with the completion of the bridge over the Pojuca River and the pavement of the main highway up to Praia do Forte, in 1986. The installation of electricity happened in the same year. These three infrastructure projects were financed by the state of Bahia. The Ecoresort, although being a private party initiative, received some investment of the federal government development agencies (e.g. BNDES and EMBRATUR). All these projects were unrelated to the Brazilian environmental agencies.

The tables below map the diverging and converging ideas between different stakeholders in each town, Mazunte (Table 9.2) and Praia do Forte (Table 9.3). Depending on particular interests, stakeholders will join forces to objectively achieve that shared interest or will battle against each other for the debacle of a conflicting and sometimes diametric interest.
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<tr>
<th>DIVERGING IDEAS</th>
<th>CONVERGING IDEAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>CMT and Fishermen on Environmental regulations</td>
<td>Outsiders and Foreigners on Sustainable development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inland Families and Prestadores de Servicio on Tourism</td>
<td>Inland Families and Agencia Municipal on maintenance of Usos y Costumbres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of the Associación de Comuneros against Outsiders and Fishermen on land usage and sale</td>
<td>Prestadores de Servicio and Agencia Municipal on Revenues brought by tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fishermen against outsiders and foreigners buying out town</td>
<td>NGOs and CMT on environmental conservation and sustainable development</td>
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<td>Lifeguards and Inland residents on money spent on public safety</td>
<td>NGOs and Outsiders on local Ecological Projects</td>
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<td>NGOs against Fishermen and Inland residents on ecological projects</td>
<td>Fishermen and Inland Residents on Ecotourism and Conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher and CMT on Environmental Education</td>
<td>Outsiders and Foreigners on Urbanization</td>
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<td>CMT and business owners on non-compliance of regulations</td>
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Table 9.2: Mazunte
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<th>DIVERGING IDEAS</th>
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<td>TAMAR and Fishermen on Environmental regulations</td>
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<td>Fishermen and Municipal Government on Development</td>
<td>Business Association and Locals on development</td>
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<td>NGOs and Municipal Government on Development</td>
<td>Municipal Government and Association of Business Owners on Building Regulations</td>
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<td>TAMAR and Praia do forte Real Estate on land use</td>
<td>Fishermen, Locals and business Association on Revenues brought by tourism</td>
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<td>NGOs and TAMAR on Ecotourism</td>
<td>NGOs and Outsiders on local Ecological Projects</td>
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<td>TAMAR and NGO FGD on beach cleanup</td>
<td>Fishermen and Locals on against TAMAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs and locals on ecological projects</td>
<td>Teacher and IBJ on Environmental Education</td>
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<td>Outsiders and Foreigners on Urbanization</td>
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Table 9.3: Praia do Forte
Consensus can be reached in a scenario of government-imposed projects, forced modification of livelihoods and introduction of new epistemologies (environmentalism, sustainable development, ecotourism). However, consensus can be reached only if the heterogeneity of the “local community” is respected, which means consensus varies according to each stakeholder. The local community as a whole accepts environmental conservation and ecotourism development. However, if we look closer, we will see that each stakeholder defends its own understanding of and interest in development and conservation, and tries to contend and conform to that situation on its own basis. Issues of work and discourse are very relevant to understanding why ecotourism and conservation create such a conundrum at small places like Mazunte and Praia do Forte.

Levels of consensus tend to vary among stakeholders. Tables 9.2 and 9.3 illustrate the converging points and the diverging points between each stakeholder regarding conservation and development in each town. We can observe that Mazunte has more points of contention that Praia do Forte. In both cases, fishermen and the sea turtle conservation projects are at the diverging side of the spectrum. There is a strong resistance of fishermen to accept anything that the sea turtle projects propose. Points of contention are generally towards regulatory legislation, land use and structural changes brought by ecotourism. In Mazunte, ecotourism brought changes to the organization of town, with more urbanization, more social activity at all hours, and mostly changes in local culture. In Praia do Forte, it brought a sharper distinction between economic levels, exclusion of locals from some areas that became the domain of ecotourism activities.
“It is through actors’ interactions and ‘translations’ of experience that institutions and the complexities of practice take shape. Embodied in these processes are the ways in which different actors’ perceptions, views, desires and values are framed and defended, or challenged and contested” (Arce 2000: 32).

Ecotourism is a strong vector of new ideologies that entered the local social network and were disseminated among different actors. Many of these ideologies can be conflicting and cause divergence between stakeholders. Ideologies flow into these towns mainly with ecotourists, migrant workers and even state propaganda promoted via media and the sea turtle projects. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, prohibition of sea turtle hunting is imbedded with an idea of the biodiversity importance and extinction threats posed to specific species. It is also an ideology of conservationism, one that extols environmental projects with conservation initiatives and derogates consumptive use activities towards sea turtles.

Technoscapes and financescapes are also present. Technoscapes can relate to ecotourism in terms of technology in construction (adobe bricks, recycled plastic tiles, energy efficient designs) and in ecological initiatives (sewage, water conservation, alternative energy, efficient ovens, etc). This seems simple, but it can represent a disjuncture between localities and the global as the objective behind these practices do not find resonance in the local community. Locals do not care for technologies that seem to set them back in time and distance them from the myriad of comfort and novelty presented by modernity and development. Regarding the financial aspect, inflows of capital are high for the size of these two towns, considering the local income, which is
lower if compared to that of outsiders (see Stronza 2005 and Walsh 2005). Local families in Praia do Forte earn about R$1000 (US$600 back in 2007 exchange rate) a month and in Mazunte, families earned about PMX$8000 (about US$730 in early 2008 exchange rate) a month. The base monthly salary for the technical staff of TAMAR and CMT is at least three times that value (R$3000 in TAMAR and PMX$28000 in CMT). The average earnings of foreigners, considering the lowest prices charged at restaurants and lodging owned by outsiders (and foreigners), the family income surges to about R$5000 per month in Praia do Forte and about PMX$33000 per month in Mazunte. Outflows of capital are usually directed towards the foreign developers in town. Looking at disjuncture is one way of understanding the local-global theories that are being discussed in anthropology (see Keune and Vugts 2002).

9.2 Engagement

Environmental and ecotourism projects usually convey local communities into green internalization and legalization. Green internalization refers to the incorporation of cultural elements related to environmentalism into the social structure. This would be the incorporation of conservation ideologies: need to protect biodiversity, need to protect natural environment, need to pursue sustainable development, need to follow sensible solutions to ecotourism, population growth, waste management, water consumption, etc. Levels of internalization are different between Mazunte and Praia do Forte. The first, due to more resistance, internalizes only some of these cultural elements. Praia do Forte,
because of the longer experience with ecotourism and conservation (almost twice as long as Mazunte), internalizes almost all.

Green legalization refers to the legal and political adjustments imposed to these places. Both Mazunte and Praia do Forte are now places with a full set of legal norms that dictate every part of social life, from the organization of festivities to the construction of homes. Everything has to follow defined environmental regulations set to curb “erroneous development”. Legalization is a perfect example of governmentality. The series of codes, norms and legal procedures present in these towns have become efficient ways for the federal government to keep a “hard hand on environmental conservation. According to Foucault, governmentality is among other things:

“The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculation and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of political and economic knowledge, and as its essential technical means apparetnuses of security” (1991: 102).

Through governmentality these projects work ways of transforming groups into environmental subjects, who will rationalize on environmental costs and benefits. These groups are usually resource-based groups, such as fishermen and sea turtle hunters. It becomes more common in places where the projects are based in the community but not necessarily depend on the community to operate. CMT and TAMAR have their own operating systems. They rely basically on the communities’ commitment not to hunt, but have necessary tactics to contend with the lack of commitment.
Mazunte and Praia do Forte are localities with Foucauldian governmentality based on regulatory legalization. This means these places have strict relationship with the state, via the sea turtle projects, and have to contend with the reality of rules, norms, codes and policies that now govern their everyday life. I draw from Agrawal’s definition on environmentality, which is:

“A union of environment and Foucauldian governmentality, […] an approach to studying environmental politics that takes seriously the conceptual building blocks of power/knowledge, institutions, subjectivities” (2005: 8).

Why does it become important to use Foucault to discuss engagement of local communities in conservation and development? Because the engagement of locals usually happens through changes in power structures, the acquisition or negotiation of specific knowledge and the recognition or rejection of scientific methodology.

There are many tactics uses by the local communities to contend with national and international forces. Communities try to resolve conflict using political and economic tactics. Locals in resource-based communities like Mazunte and Praia do Forte could be considered environmental subjects, a term that Agrawal explains as being “people who have come to think and act in new ways in relation to the environmental domain being governed” (2005: 7). Locals become environmental subjects when engaged in the new environmentality.

With ecotourism, tactics to contend with national and international forces are not always effective. Some initiatives to counter act do not go beyond the word of mouth. The point of conflict here is in fact a global versus local. Conservation projects are
usually based on an ideology of protection that takes for granted the interests of western powers to protect areas that they believe are unsafe in the hands of local communities. These projects do not usually take into consideration that local communities could have had sustainable techniques for resource consumption. Local communities, as a way to contend with these forces, consume these resources in unsustainable ways just to create divergence and show their protest. In this case, protest is political, and is aimed at the exclusion of locals from the power structures of conservation. Governmentality, through CMT and TAMAR can be incongruent as it expects locals to become environmental subjects, but continuously cut them out from the inner structures of projects.

With Ecotourism, political and economic tactics used by locals to contend with this external force was by fully engaging in it. They embrace the idea that ecotourism, despite it being ideologically opposite to their beliefs. In Ventanilla, neighboring town to Mazunte and part of the 3EC, locals, to contend with international pressure on conservation of endangered species (in this case crocodiles and mammals) engaged in conservation activity, via a cooperative ecotourism project. The project trained locals to work with ecotourism, stimulated ecological practices in agriculture and introduced some health improvements. Despite the fact that most strategies used in Ventanilla were foreign, locals found in it the only immediate solution to lack of work and limited resource-economy. The example was successful in meliorating living standards and the use of natural resources. It was an economic tactic used to contend with lack of governmental support in the area. Oaxaca state is known for its poverty and neglect from federal investments (see: Kowaleski 2003).
In Mazunte, there was reluctance in accepting such cooperative model. Locals were used to working collectively, but earnings and effort were individualized. A fisherman was paid by his effort in processing a turtle. If he helped his colleague, he would not share his colleague’s earnings. Therefore, individualism was already part of the local production system. Conservation and ecotourism represented a rupture in this economic structure. To work effectively, ecotourism needed to be embraced by the collectivity. Everyone needed to pitch in and help, especially in the beginning when the foundational structure of ecotourism needed to be laid out. Local tactics depends on the

“Ability [of local groups] to strategize, both among themselves and in coalition with others [...] Their struggles to convey a set of compelling moral/political imperatives to local, national, or transnational audiences are cultural productions that are met by a series of competing productions” (Brosius 2001: 165).

Tactics can be efficient if cultural productions by these environmental subjects are compelling in some way. Appropriation of local discourses by larger mainstream society has the ultimate effect of inhibiting tactical efforts of local, communities (Brosius 2001). The state uses different strategies to make its territory, population and bureaucracy more legible. As noted by Scott, most state interventions in the agricultural and environmental fields “all seemed calculated to make the terrain, its products, and its workforce more legible—and hence manipulable—from above and from the center” (Scott 1998: 2). Strategies developed by states usually counteract tactics being developed (or already in use) by local communities.
The two study cases, Mazunte and Praia do Forte are places with a large number of stakeholders. The social organization of these towns is socially, culturally and politically diverse, not to mention economically as well. Within these towns, there are different levels of engagement of each stakeholder to ecotourism development and environmental conservation. If we consider the social organization of these places in terms of social actors, which would add ecotourists to the social network, we could trace easily each actor’s response, or engagement to these different ideas. Table 9.4 illustrates how each stakeholder and social actor responds to either ecotourism or conservation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sea Turtle Projects</th>
<th>Ecotourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological NGOs</td>
<td>Ecotour Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Government</td>
<td>Real Estate Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4: Conservation vs. Development

Table 9.4 sets ecotourism development and environmental conservation as progressive and converging ideas. In fact, the two were meant – at least in theory – to work perfectly together. The closer to conservation and more distant from development demonstrates a tendency to conservationism and a greater resistance to alternative sustainable economy. The sea turtle projects stand here. Their stance is on conservation;
ecotourism is just a necessary consequence. Fishermen are more for the development and less for conservation. The explanation is due to two major factors: (1) ecotourism, although divergent to their traditional livelihood, offers immediate economic gains, and (2) the sea turtle projects never incorporated them as they expected and there is not potential economic gain helping these projects. Ecotourists could be positioned at the most progressive position of the table, where their engagement with ecotourism is paired with that of conservation. They believe both are mutually important, and cannot be separated. The farther progression (more ecotourism development and more environmental conservation) means that that social actor is more inclined to believe in sustainable development as he or she accredits both values equally well. In the contrary direction, less faith the social actor will have in either conservation or development, and less faith in sustainable development.

Table 9.4 also illustrates the divergence of values among the social actors. The farther apart one actor is from the other, the more divergent they are from each other. This is very clear between fishermen and the sea turtle projects, fishermen and the outsiders. Each town engaged in ecotourism development and environmental conservation in particular ways. Despite the fact that the comparative stance of this research tries to find analogous and similar patterns between Mazunte and Praia do Forte, some characteristics make the experience different in each place.

In Praia do Forte, fishermen, their families and other established families contend with ecotourism development and environmental conservation through work. Ecotourism and environmental restrictions have made fishing more expensive and living costs higher. This forced fishermen and other native residents to take up additional jobs. Before the
prohibition, locals were able to live comfortably well with only one income. They fished, weaved, cooked, harvested coconuts and tended gardens. After the prohibition, every fisherman has an extra job, been forced to work in the service sector spun by the ecotourism activity. They work as guides, watchmen, mechanics, bartenders, restaurant owners, hotelkeepers, and construction worker. Their wives, who used to tend gardens, weave and take care of the household, now also needs to complement the family income with another activity.

In fact, most gardens do not even exist anymore due to the urbanization of the town’s central core. The complementary income helps to substitute the food once grown at home for food bought in the market. Another activity that used to be delegated to women was that of fixing up fishing nets. As wavers, they had the necessary skills to sow the nets back into shape to be used the next day by their husbands. Today, there is no more time for that activity. Men either do it or they buy new ones when the old ones tear. Women today work as cleaners, hairdressers, handcraft vendors, food stand vendors, waitresses, and salesperson. It is the same manual activity done in the household, now multiplied by two as a demand of the ecotourism service sector. Despite the changes in gender roles outside the household, inside, it remains the same as before, with women taking on the same functions as before and men waiting to be served.

Praia do Forte has tourism throughout the year. In previous years, tourism would concentrate during summer vacations (months of December through February, Semana Santa (Easter week) and winter vacations (month of July). According to locals, tourism has surged in the last four years, and starting 2005, tourist flow was non-stop the 12 months of the year. In the other months considered low season (April through June and
August through November), there is a drop in occupancy rate. In high season it reached
100% in the low season it drops to 50%. Still, better than previous years (before 2004),
when occupancy rate, according to the local business owner association, occupancy rate
would bare 15%, forcing some lodge owners to shutdown for a few months.

The village of Praia do Forte has grown tremendously and continues to grow. It
was before a fishermen village. Most native residents have argued that the village’s main
identity was linked to fishing. That was the ethos of the place. Now they argue that
fishing does not characterize the village anymore, but tourism and ecotourism. The
village is a tourist area and the rural area and beaches are ecotourism areas.

Protest is also used to contend with TAMAR’s intrusion in daily life as well as the
Project’s avoidance to help or dialogue with locals. Protest is more common among
fishermen, who consider themselves mostly affected by the regulatory state of Praia do
Forte. Fishing lost much of its economic sustainability with the prohibition of nets,
special regulations and licenses to fish lobster. Most regulations make traditional fishing
not viable because old technologies cannot adapt to new strict regulations, to new
requirements. To fish lobster, the only technology permitted is one that uses trap boxes
set afar for the shore in deep water. The local fishermen are not familiar with this
technology. It is common to other fishing regions of Brazil, but not in the state of Bahia.
Lobster fishing here is done with line fishing, at shallow waters and fishing net.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Stakeholder groups</th>
<th>Interests and livelihood links</th>
<th>Degree of influence over decisions of Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Stakeholders – directly impacted by conservation Projects actions</td>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>Consumptive use of resources, direct livelihood link to environment of concern to projects.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established families</td>
<td>Consumptive use of resources, indirect livelihood link to environment of concern to projects, inland resource consumption</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Personnel</td>
<td>Direct management role, conservation action, indirect livelihood link</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecotourists</td>
<td>Non-consumptive use of resources, few livelihood links</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boat tour operators</td>
<td>Non-consumptive use of resources, direct livelihood link to environment of concern to projects.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary stakeholders – indirectly impacted by conservation projects actions</td>
<td>Outsiders and foreigners</td>
<td>Non-consumptive use of resources, few livelihood links, very adaptive to change in course of actions of projects</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal governments</td>
<td>Few livelihood links and few uses of resources, most non-related inland resources</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental planners and personnel from other government departments</td>
<td>Indirect management role</td>
<td>Medium to high, depending on government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prestadores de Servicio (Mazunte)</td>
<td>Indirect use or resources, few livelihood links</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Owners</td>
<td>Few livelihood links and few uses of resources</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Indirect link, chief interest in conserving biodiversity</td>
<td>Low and limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author, adapted from Brown (2002)
However, recently in 2007, both techniques are now prohibited by law. Fishermen also argue that the depletion of fisheries by other large-scale commercial fishing boats has reduced the source of fish forcing them to sail further, making the catch more expensive.

The table above (Table 9.5) demonstrates the level of influence main stakeholders have over conservation project’s decisions and the type of interests and linkage they have with these projects and the resources being protected. We can notice how the primary stakeholders, aside the project personnel, have low and limited influence over the decision process over conservation. However, they are the ones with mostly linked livelihoods to the resources that the projects try to protect. The secondary stakeholders, aside environmental planners and personnel, also have low to limited influence over the project’s decision. These stakeholders have very little influence on the resources and their livelihoods are even less linked to these resources.

In Mazunte, fishermen, their families and other established families also contend with ecotourism development and environmental conservation through work. The economic situation in Mazunte was harsher than that of Praia do Forte. Only a few men were able to keep fishing. Most others were forced out of the fishing industry and into the ecotourism service sector. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, before the *Veda*, fishermen were organized in fishing cooperatives. Only the cooperatives had the state concessions for sea turtle consumptive use. Individual fishermen could obtain such concession on their own, only firms – like cooperatives – could legally apply for a concession. In addition, there was a long list of minimum requirements to obtain a concession, which automatically excluded individuals. With the ban, these cooperatives were granted money
to buy new boats, motors and fishing gear to be able to shift into the new proposed activity: to fish white sharks, *huatinango* and lobster.

Other fishermen that were not part of cooperatives used to work specifically at the slaughterhouse. They did not hunt turtles. These individuals were excluded from any government economic support after the *Veda*. Some of them turned to ecotourism opening small businesses; others organized new cooperatives to buy passenger boats to take ecotourists out to sea and swim with sea turtles. Different that Ventanilla that engaged in conservation practices, *Mazunteños* and *Agustinenses* engaged in direct economic activities aiming at large profits. Fishermen in these towns have always been driven by the economic gains offered by subsistence. What kept them working in the sea turtle trade were the high wages. With ecotourism, it could not be different. Perhaps this particular characteristic of local fisher is what made CMT and NGO initiatives fail, because they did not address well the economic return of sustainable practices.

After the ban, the community did not have a better alternative. There were some options elected by the government such as promotion of aquaculture or oyster culture, but this never came true. The construction of the CMT visitors’ center and research headquarters employed over 100 people from the communities of Mazunte and San Agustinillo for only one year. After that, only three continued working at CMT. All others either migrated out of the region, or engaged in the ecotourism service sector.

Women also suffered with the change in local livelihood. Before the *Veda*, women were responsible for the household. Some worked as cooks for the sea turtle slaughterhouse employees. After the ban, the ones that worked for the slaughterhouse as
cooks started selling homemade snacks for tourists at the beach. The women that once cared only for the household now had to complement the family income working as housekeepers, maids, cleaners at local lodging, or cooks and waitresses in local restaurants. Ecotourism brought emancipation to local women. Many became business owners. In fact, most of the ones who became business owners participated in Ecosolar tourism and hotelier training courses. The skills they learned in those courses served them well in setting up small restaurants and lodging. With better service they easily gained the preference of ecotourists. Their success however was at the price of losing support in the community and even suffering reprimands from husbands and other men in town. These women are today, among the local established group the most successful business owners. Their businesses are the next better ones after the outsider’s businesses.

Locals’ engagement with conservation was through protest. Stealing eggs is still common, although less frequent than before. Occasionally locals will hunt a turtle to eat. They do it during the night and prepare it far from the eyes of CMT and PROFEPA. This also happens in Praia do Forte. Fishermen slaughter and barbecue the animal in places away from TAMAR and ICMBIO. Locals do not help CMT monitor the beaches. With the community’s help, less waste would go into the ocean and harm turtles. Other actions, such as proper sewage handling and the preservation of beach vegetation would help CMT maintain local environmental quality. This is done in Ventanilla, but not in Mazunte or San Agustinillo. Until today CMT has a hard time protecting turtles. They still cannot leave eggs at the beaches because the community will poach them. In Escobilla, after 15 years, the Marines still encamps there, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to protect sea turtles and their nests, and there are still cases of egg stealing.
The communities of Mazunte, San Agustinillo and Ventanilla have engaged in ecotourism/tourism through work and discourse. Everyone today works directly or indirectly with tourism. Similar to Praia do Forte, work has taken on a substantial part of locals’ daily lives. Almost everyone in town either owns a business that operates over 12 hours per day, or takes on two different jobs. This situation was intensified after outsiders introduced more competitive business.

Still, locals do well during the peak weeks of tourism. In Mexico, the peak weeks are between Christmas and New Years, Semana Santa (Easter week), and summer school vacation (weeks of July). During the period of my fieldwork, from December 2007 through April 2008, Mazunte experienced its first prolonged tourism activity. Months of January and February (between New Year’s week and Easter week) are usually very slow in business, but this time, the town remained active. According to a survey I conducted with most lodging owners (14 of a total of 20), the occupancy rate remained above 70%. In previous years, the occupancy rate did not go above 30% in the same period.

9.3 The Results

In Mazunte, ecotourism solved their problems. This statement proves itself in the discourses of the locals, the outsiders and the conservationists. They claim that if it was not for ecotourism, theses small towns in 3EC of Mazunte would have been appropriated by wealthy Mexican entrepreneurs who would have built a series of hotels along the coast and completely excluded the community from gaining any economic, political and social benefit from this. It would have become another Cancun, another Huatulco. The situation
that was set for these communities after the establishment of CMT in the region, of ecological projects by Ecosolar in Mazunte, of community-based initiatives like the one in Ventanilla, allowed for the protagonismo of locals. It gave local communities the chance to decide what could be done, what they wanted to achieve and how. It is noted that the decision-making process was not only in the communities’ hands; the different stakeholders had important influence and decision power in the process. Nonetheless, the 3EC of Mazunte stands out as unique in ways that it was effective in keeping out big development projects and in maintaining the control of local economy, politics and social structure in the hands of locals. Within Mexico, this case scenario is very rare.

In Praia do Forte, ecotourism also solved the community’s economic problems. In a similar way to Mazunte, Praia do Forte was able to maintain some independence of large corporations and keep the local economy in the hands of locals. The difference is in the participation and weight that each stakeholder has in the decision-making process. Klaus Peters (represented by the Praia do Forte Real Estate and the Ecoresort), FGD and TAMAR, as stakeholders, had too much influence and power when deciding public policies to be implemented locally. The community in many moments became a smaller player in this situation. They were weak because of their fragile tenure situation of now owning their lots, and having to abide to some regulations and restrictions set by Peters.

Local communities of Praia do Forte and Imbassaí were able to achieve an economic independence, all due to ecotourism. Visitors’ demand for services opened local market niches that were taken by local entrepreneurs and outsiders as well. In Mazunte, locals maintained and improved their political power within the municipality whereas in Praia do Forte, locals continued politically subordinate to the municipality of
Mata de Sao João. The difference resides on economic and political expectations each municipality has with tourism development.

Mata de Sao Joao found in tourism the way out of financial crisis. The municipality is mainly rural, with some natural reservations and mostly small rural properties. Farmers within the municipality do not generate sufficient revenues to keep local budget in the blue, but tourism can. That is when Praia do Forte became the center of attention to the municipal headquarters. More control over taxes and services has improved the municipal budget. In Mazunte, on the contrary, the municipality resists tourism. It is also rural, but most farmers are large landowners and their political interest in focused on cattle raising and monocultures. Tourism is not taken seriously so they disregard what happens at the coast. Thus, Mazunte, San Agustinillo and Ventanilla decide on their own how to run their businesses. Many investments in public works have come out of the pockets of local residents. The political power locals have in Mazunte is greater than Praia do Forte, however, this power is informal and even illegitimate. In the decision-making process, locals have the same power as other stakeholders.

A focus on the conditions under which local communities are engaging in ecotourism brings us to the situated problem of both these towns. The promotion of ecotourism by the government, NGOs and entrepreneurs was embellished with good intentions and predictions. All promoted the good side of ecotourism and how it would bring prosperity to these towns. Indeed it brought much prosperity. If one considers that the minimum salaries in these towns are above the state average in the case of Mazunte and above national average in Praia do Forte, there is significant accomplish in the local
economy. However, livelihood conditions of the first established residents changed significantly demanding considerable efforts to readjust to the new economic situation.

Ecotourism had brought different amenities to Praia do Forte. Today they have all basic public services such as sewage system, electricity, running potable water, landlines and cell phone lines, banking service, internet, health service, schooling and social service programs. A town of this size to have accomplished this much is notorious, and all was made possible because of ecotourism development. Mazunte also received amenities such as electricity, landlines, running potable water, cell phone service, basic health service and schooling. There is no sewage system, but half of the houses in town have ecological toilets. In a state like Oaxaca, considered the second poorest state in Mexico, Mazunte for its size and marginal situation within the tourism destinations of Mexico, on relative term, achieved even more that its counterpart in Brazil. Local residents do live in much better conditions than many neighboring towns in the west section of Oaxaca, all due to ecotourism and the money that is spent locally.

Ecotourism did solve economic and social well-being problems of the past, contributed to a more comfortable living condition to all. However, ecotourism brought other problems such as petty thefts, prostitution, alcoholism, domestic violence against women, environmental impacts, and more important, forced-changes to local costumes.

“When it comes to implementing concrete policies at the local level, contradictions often occur between the objectives of nature conservation and those of preserving the physical and social integrity of the human groups within the concerned territories” (Raynaut et al. 2007: 23).
Both towns rely today on service sector. Agriculture and fishing are still economic activities, although they represent today a small portion of the local economy in both towns. Mazunte and Praia do Forte import most of their food and other products from other places in Mexico and Brazil respectively.

Despite this very complex scenario of conflicts, protests, and ideological battles, conservation stands strong. Sea turtle projects have been able to progressively increase their power over the areas they consider strategic to the conservation of sea turtles. The beaches, coral reefs and the monitoring work continues despite all odds. In Mexico, CONANP has increased the budget of CMT to hire more specialists, renovate the visitors’ center and increase the few community projects it coordinates in isolated communities of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In addition, CMT now has more power and governmentality over sea turtle conservation.

The PNTM, created in 1960 now has been reviewed to definitely establish CMT as the national headquarters to this program. This new political position elevated CMT from a regional and marginalized role in the Mexican environmental agenda to a national position. This will help in the establishment of a national network of sea turtle nesting grounds and a more effective control over the species’ recovery. It will in fact make CMT more similar TAMAR in the sense that one place will concentrate all policies and planning regarding sea turtles. For Mazunte, this means that it will become more integrated into the national environmental and political scenario, with more governance from Mexico City and environmental control.
In Brazil, TAMAR has had since the 1980s very influential position in the national political agenda regarding sea turtles and environmental conservation of coral reef beach ecosystems. From Praia do Forte TAMAR controls over 23 research bases and monitors over 1,000km of beaches. Despite the local resistance, TAMAR’s headquarters had been able to continue with its conservation work uninterrupted. More recently, with the arrival of large hotel corporations to the coast of the state of Bahia, TAMAR became to face another challenge, greater than any posed by communities or small to medium businesses. Federal and state governments, interested first in the economic development and later in environmental conservation, back these very large corporations. The stakeholders in this battle are different, more powerful and influential. TAMAR is actually a small player in this political arena. It is a new challenge, one that could represent some losses in conservation efforts of the last 29 years.

Sea turtles as part of the tourism experience only started years after the conservation projects were established and visitors began to arrive based on the condition of seeing live turtles in their natural habitat. Today, turtles became valued ecotourism attractions lending their image to the promotion of Praia do Forte and Mazunte. Road signs, business signs, advertisement and events have sea turtles. They are anthropomorphized in many business signs. In Praia do Forte, for instance, you will in the Laundromat sign a turtle washing clothes; in the sign for the photo development store a sea turtle holding a camera and taking pictures; a large wooded carved turtle pointing to signs that direct visitors to specific attractions; or portrayed laying on a hammock on a sign for a local inn. In Mazunte, you will find signs portraying turtles serving pizza, drinking beer, or added to names of businesses, such as “Posada Tortuguitas”. 
“The cultural meanings of marine turtles can be quite diverse, even within a small region. For example; the ethnic diversity and cultural change on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica have historically generated meanings that include the marine turtle as deity, food, merchandise, medicine, aphrodisiac, scientific object, protected animal, managed animal, tourist attraction, and object of art” (Troëng and Drews, 2004: 10).

“Since the 1980s, non-consumptive recreational use of wildlife resources has attracted large numbers of visitors. (…) The growth has stemmed from development of the tourism industry and the desire for tourists to see wildlife in their natural state. Rapidly dwindling wildlife species and their natural habitats have stimulated development of this trade. NCWOR tourism marks a clear shift from the traditional consumptive uses of wildlife resources” (Wilson and Tisdell, 2001: 280).

Sea turtles have always been popular animals. They are different, big, tame and calm, intriguing for some, curious to others. TAMAR and CMT have played an important role in promoting these animals. Their rhetoric relies on two main pillars: (1) the vulnerability of sea turtles against their human predators and (2) the aggressiveness of fishermen and their uncontrollable desire to hunt sea turtles. Fishermen have been portrayed as the main threat to sea turtles from the beginning of TAMAR and CMT. Every banner, every informative panel in the visitors’ centers displays this message.

“Non-consumptive uses that generate economic revenue capitalize on other dispositions that make marine turtles attractive to tourists and scientists, such
as the naturalistic, ecologist-scientific and aesthetic values” (Troëng and Drews, 2004: 9).

These types of conservation projects rely on activities of observation and contemplation of sea turtles. The aim is to get tourists engaged with conservation. This would help create more consciousness of the need to protect the specie. It is a type of tourism based on non-consumptive use of natural resources:

“Non-consumptive use refers mainly to the use of marine turtles as a tourism attraction, either on land when turtles come to nest or bask, or in-water. The production and sale of items with marine turtle motifs associated with conservation projects, and the provision of board and lodging services to scientists and volunteers is another form of non- consumptive use. Non-consumptive use of marine turtles is a relatively recent phenomenon” (Troëng and Drews, 2004: 18).

As Wilson and Tisdell point out, “tourism can adversely affect wildlife as a result of human disturbances, infrastructural development and pollution arising from such tourism” (2001: 286). Anthropic actions can be very detrimental to these animals: the more human presence you have, with construction, tourists at the beaches and less natural vegetation; the less sea turtles you will have around. Ecotourism in the two places, which also includes animal-watching tourism, is directly linked to conservation. Moreover, conservation depends on the more sensible tourist, the less developed beach towns and the more conscientious residents. One cannot survive without the other.
Chapter 10: Development with conservation: possible? True?

10.1 Introduction

Research on ecotourism development and its combination with environmental conservation has mainly focused on protected areas. “Protected areas were set up to conserve biodiversity through the protection of the habitat in which undomesticated plant and animal species live” (Orlove and Brush 996: 330). Studies of national parks, wildlife refuges and biological reserves have been at the center stage of the anthropological analysis of ecotourism (Burch 1983, Bruner 1987, Smith and Eadington). Some case studies in Africa (Buckley 2003, Langholz 1996, Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994) have focused on the impacts of ecotourism activity in the lives of traditional groups relocated after the establishment of national parks. These groups before survived on the local natural resources and now were prohibited of doing so. These studies usually focus on the exclusion of local community by ecotourism, and not their participation (see Kinker 2002; Costa 2002; Honey 1999; Prado 2003; Langholz 1996; Wells 1994).

A wide literature on this topic was produced in the last 20 years (see Stronza 2001, for a glance). Protected areas follow particular conservation policies, set by countries in accordance to international environmental treaties and conventions (Ramsar Convention on wetlands, The Convention on Biological Diversity, the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).
“Conservation policy includes efforts on three levels. The first targets individual species, often limiting or preventing hunting and harvesting. The second focuses on the protection of the habitat in which the populations of endangered species live. The third manages entire assemblies of ecosystems” (Orlove and Brush 996: 331).

IUCN established different types of protected areas. Every country, including Brazil and Mexico, have set their environmental policy to include all these types into their national protected area legislation: the SNUC in Brazil and the SINAP in Mexico. The IUCN main categories are listed in Table 10.6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IUCN Category Number</th>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Management Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Scientific Reserve / Strict Nature Reserve</td>
<td>To protect nature and maintain natural processes in an undisturbed state to permit scientific study, environmental monitoring, education and the maintenance of genetic resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>National Park</td>
<td>To protect natural and scenic areas of national or international significance for scientific research, education and recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>National Monument / Natural Landscape</td>
<td>To protect and preserve nationally significant natural features because of their special interest or unique characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Managed Natural Reserve / Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>To protect nationally significant species, groups of species, biotic communities or physical features of the environment where these require human manipulation for their perpetuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Protected Landscape</td>
<td>To maintain nationally significant natural landscape that are characteristic of the harmonious interaction of man and the land while providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI Resource Reserve

To protect natural resources for future use and to prevent or contain development activities that could affect the resource pending the establishment of further management objectives.

VII Natural Biotic area / Anthropological Reserve

To allow the way of life of societies living in harmony with the environment to continue undisturbed by modern technology.

VIII Multiple-Use Management Area / Managed Resource Area

To provide for the sustained production of water, timber, wildlife, pasture and outdoor recreation.


Most research on ecotourism’s relation to conservation concentrates in category number II – National Parks (Langholz 1996, McNeely 1988, Walsh 2005, Wallace and Diamante 2005). The basis for ecotourism has been on areas where protection levels are high and biodiversity is intact, awaiting the tourist gaze. Mazunte and Praia do Forte are not National Parks. The towns of Mazunte and San Agustinillo are not included in any protected area category. Escobilla however is a Wildlife Sanctuary (Category IV) due to the importance this beach has to the reproduction of sea turtles, and the high threats posited to this species by poachers. The difficulty to establish ecotourism tours to Escobilla is exactly the legal impediments that a Wildlife Sanctuary imposes on visitation and recreation. That is why CMT had do establish time limits for ecotourists to remain at the beach with their guide, and selected areas where they could circulate.

Praia do Forte is inside a Protected Landscape (Category V), called the APA of the Litoral Norte, described in chapter 03. The establishment of this protected landscape category had much to do with sea turtles and the required natural habitat for their life cycle – beaches for nesting and coral reefs for feeding. However, the APA category is
very light in terms of protection. Despite the restrictive regulations set by the ZEE code, individuals and businesses find easy ways to circumvent the code, threatening the APA with land degradation and biodiversity predation.

Therefore, the focus of this research has been on areas without effective protective measures, and very permissive to ecotourism development. What this means is greater challenges to sea turtle projects in achieving their conservation objectives on one end and more flexibility and opportunities for ecotourism development on the other hand. The arguments laid out in the other chapters point to this situation. CMT and TAMAR adopted specific conservation strategies to contend with this lack of specific and stricter protective policies.

Why then did these conservation projects indirectly stimulate ecotourism, if this economic activity could become a new threat to the projects’ conservation objectives? The answer is not simple. The technical staffs of TAMAR and CMT claim that ecotourism was the best possible substitute to local livelihoods. Despite the economic surge usually promoted by ecotourism, the ideology that sustains this type of tourism somehow prevents the activities related to it from generating greater biodiversity and habitat losses. Ecotourists have some ideological stands towards nature conservation. These travelers are environmental conscious and concerned with details at the places they visit, such as waste management, recycling programs, level of development and levels of environmental conservation. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, despite all, offer these desired details. Besides, ecotourists are keener to accepting rustic, basic facilities and infrastructure.
The real problem with ecotourism development is not the type of visitors a destination receives by the scale of the business. Every small town has a carrying capacity and when this is exceeded, then the benefits of ecotourism become negative impacts. During fieldwork in both destinations, there were times when the towns had excessive visitors and problems related to this. In Mazunte, during Semana Santa, the number of visitors tend to saturate the town’s capacity. In March 2008 Semana Santa, occupancy rate went beyond 100%, forcing visitors to set camps at the beaches. In Praia do Forte, the first week of January 2009; the town also reached its top capacity. There were water shortages, restaurants ran out of food and TAMAR reported losses of nests located at the beach due to trampling by tourists.

In contrast, national parks do a better job at controlling the flow of tourists and sticking to its carrying capacity. Since parks are enclosed and usually have entrance fees, it is easier to monitor and control every visitor it gets. Anthropologists that have studied ecotourism in national parks (op. cit.) focus on direct effects of ecotourists on environmental degradation inside the park or on economic disadvantage to local surrounding communities. The degradation inside parks is very limited and easy to control whereas the economic loss to local communities is a harder issue to be resolved because local communities are excluded from the ecotourism experience. Once national parks are declared and demarcated, a process of land expropriation begins and anyone living inside the park is forced to leave. This is how it works in both Brazil and Mexico.

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, local communities and ecotourism experience are directly connected. The two communities were not cut off from the land, as no expropriation process occurred. It is a complex scenario where conservation is done at the
same time and in the same space as development. Ecotourism becomes part of the two situations: development and conservation. My fieldwork made it clear that ecotourism is someway or another the connecting link between development and conservation, and has the effective function of controlling the advancement of each of these forces. It curbs (land, urban, economic) development by the strings. Since ecotourists want rustic and less development, local businesses have to control their expansion in order to stay attractive to these visitors. With conservation, ecotourism helps it keep its course, and not interfere in the local economy. It is simple: if economic development is controlled and doesn’t threat natural resources, conservation doesn’t need to overreach and interfere in local economic, keeping to its wildlife protection activities.

A perfect combination such as this one is very fragile and any excessive action of each side causes a reaction of the other side. From the previous chapters, we can observe that the conservation projects have had to interfere constantly in local politics to demand better policies and community actions towards “bad development”. The project’s intervention in fact caused an overreaction of locals against these projects, tending to support development.

Ecotourism sets the mode for conservation and development. Graburn (1989) offers a good classification of nature tourism and its relation to cultural tourism. Environmental tourism was the first classification and related tourism to the “raw” nature, where the traveler was by his/herself in the wilderness, without any other person around. The lesser people around, the more unspoiled was his/her experience. This type of tourism is the one fitted to national parks. The raw experience could be lived in full inside parks where no one lived. However, there are also the tourists that want an
experience with the people of the forest, or with people whose livelihood is based on nature and its resources. Simple rural or forest communities fit this description (1989: 31). This type of tourism develops outside national parks, in small communities like Mazunte and Praia do Forte.

Although the idea of a tourism guided to nature was what made it first flourish 50 years ago, only recently that it embraced an ecological discourse, which culminated with the closure of some economic development projects that were not in tune with some of the new regulations set forth by the state. (Schlüter 2002: 185). The acknowledgment that environmental conservation is a powerful tool to be used to promote national tourism markets abroad. The whole government machine can be mobilized to work in the development and promotion of ecotourism destinations (see Groen 2002, Van Der Duim and Philipsen 2002).

Back in 1992 when Ecosolar was developing a community-based ecotourism project in Mazunte, nature-based was the type of tourism the NGO had in mind. The same with Praia do Forte until the late 1980s, when the few tourists that came into town, had to stay in rooms rented out by locals, in the their own houses. The experience of ecotourists in both places had much to do with the close relation to the local livelihoods. Fishing, harvesting and living a simple life was the attractiveness to these early visitors. Much has changed in these two places. Development meant urbanization, considerable increase in the number of houses and businesses, and the layout of a complex infrastructure to support all this. Mazunte and Praia do Forte still have some of the rurality around town, and this is where ecotourists can still feel that flair of wilderness. Today, these towns offer urban and rural spaces.
Throughout the dissertation I demonstrated the different ways that conservation and development, represented respectively by sea turtle projects and ecotourism were introduced into the communities, influenced changes and modifications, and the ways different stakeholders have dealt with all these changes. However, can development and conservation work together, complementing one another? This is the focus of this chapter.

10.2 Development with Conservation in Mazunte

Mazunte is a good example of what we could call alternative development model. This town fits all requisites of alternative tourism development (see De Kadt 1992). In comparison with conventional tourism, the town has adopted less harmful approaches to the environment, with more ecologically-sound constructions and the avoidance of large-scale tourism development. It consists of smaller developers, mainly locals or small entrepreneurs from Mexico City, other urban centers of Mexico and abroad. Most attractions are set inside the village and organized by villagers. There are no outside tour operators or businesses for these attractions.

However, one attraction is excluded from this situation: CMT. There are bus tours from Huatulco organized by the large hotel corporations located in that FONATUR destination. These tours focus exclusively on CMT and bring tourists from their hotels in Huatulco to the sea turtle project and back to their hotels. This makes an exception, which in previous chapters was exposed as one large contentious situation between the project and the locals. Nonetheless, CMT is made of local residents. Despite most of
them having originated from other places within Mexico, they are today local residents, and they run the project. One could then say that it is an attraction set and organized by villagers, however there are external factors, such as the environmental education programs that are formulated at CONANP, located in Mexico City. Brochures, advertisement and even the instructive panels inside the visitors’ center have to undergo the scrutiny of CONANP staff in Mexico City. There is limited autonomy on what local workers of CMT can do.

Another characteristic that makes Mazunte alternative is the distribution of ecotourism benefits. Despite the fact that outsiders and foreigners earn more, overall, Mazunte and San Agustinillo have better income distribution than most other tourism destinations in the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca. In these towns, as well as in Ventanilla, locals are far more integrated into the ecotourism economy than in Huatulco or Puerto Escondido, where income discrepancies are large between lower echelon workers and managerial positions. The reason that economic benefits flow better in the #EC of Mazunte is due to the absence of large-scale organizations. Since all businesses are family owned and only hire locally, they have better success in keeping income generated by ecotourism circulating locally. Large-scale organizations usually export part of their capital gains to outside markets. Little remains to circulate among local residents.

Overall, the main reason Mazunte could be considered an alternative model to tourism development is the relative “respect for the cultural realities experienced by tourists” (De Kadt 1992: 51) in their daily encounters with locals. Holden defines alternative tourism as: “The process which promotes a just form of travel between
members of different communities. It seeks to achieve mutual understanding, solidarity and equality amongst participants” (Holden 1984:15).

This is central to the question of development and conservation in Mazunte. Despite all odds, the town has been able to maintain, since the beginning of ecotourism, a local culture, a certain level of environmental conservation and a distributive economic development. The cultural aspect is striking to me. Even though only 60 years have passed since Mazunte was founded, locals have been successful in creating a community identity and a shared foundation history. Fishing is the main identity to which these towns are known and sea turtles are their main attraction. Locals learned about the desire of tourists and rapidly incorporated sea turtles into their discourse and identity. Now everyone loves these animals and consider them the totemic symbol of the town, especially Mazunte, taking advantage of the presence of CMT.

Sea turtles and ecotourism changed local identity in Mazunte and San Agustinillo. This shift was directly linked to work and profession. The change happened together with the change in profession. Locals went from extractive workers to ecotourism service workers. This represented a shift from a rural working role to an urban oriented role. Ecotourism and conservation brought modifications to local culture, but locals emerged from this by recreating their identity as a group. Nonetheless, local identity in this region has always been hybrid. Since before ecotourism, the sea turtle trade hired many workers, from different places around Mexico. Some former sea turtle trade workers were detached indigenous individuals that abandoned their traditions to work at the coast, or non-indigenous that had had prior experience with sea turtles. Therefore, the identity of
Mazunte and San Agustinillo was formed by a large cultural diversity. What linked these individuals has their profession as sea turtle hunters.

10.3 Development with Conservation in Praia do Forte

Praia do Forte could also be considered an example of alternative development, but to a lesser degree than Mazunte. Although it has adopted a less harmful approach to environment in comparison to other destination in the state of Bahia, it does not have ecologically-sound constructions and has not effectively avoided large-scale tourist development. The town originated as an ecotourism destination with the inauguration of the Praia do Forte Ecoresort, a large size resort built by an outside businessman, Klaus Peters. Despite the fact that Peters hired mostly locals and trained them to work in the hotel business, most profit left town, being remitted to Sao Paulo, where the headquarters to his business is located.

More recently, in 2002, the Spanish group Ibero Hotels built the Praia do Forte Iberostar hotel, a large-size hotel with the capacity to accommodate over 2000 tourists. This development pattern is controversial as Praia do Forte has a well-designed Ecotourism Development Plan, created by FGD to curb urban development and set environmental standards to this destination. Aside that, the town is part of an environmental protected area (APA), which despite the regulations and codes, allows the construction of large size hotels in designated areas. The Ecoresort was built before any of these environmental regulations existed and the Iberostar hotel was built in land designated to such development.
In comparison to Mazunte, Praia do Forte was not able to curb these large-scale developments because the town was all private land, and its owner, Klaus Peters defined the use of each portion of the area. Mazunte was effective in curbing these developments because the whole area is under the category of bienes comunales, a land tenure that grants residents the use rights but not the property rights. No one has the title to the land and sale can only happen if the Asociación de Comuneros decides favorably in an assembly meeting. The Asociación is composed of elders, and decisions rarely tend to allow sale. Local circumvent this restriction by passing on the usage right to another resident. That is how outsiders and foreigners could establish locally and built their homes and businesses. Under a bienes comunales land tenure system, one only owns the improvements (constructions, plantations, farm infrastructure) he/she does, but not the land. In order to allow large size development projects to move in these towns, the only legal option is expropriation by the state. This is what happened in Huatulco. The federal government expropriated the whole area, displacing locals and selling the land to developers.

In Praia do Forte, the property was private and Peters defined the areas that could be sold to large-size development. However, he also defined areas that could not be sold, such as the center of town. Locals could not sell their homes, only rent out. As a community, the locals in Praia do Forte have little autonomy over the town spaces. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, everything regarding these towns is decided through assembly meetings. This is not possible in Praia do Forte. Locals can assemble and convene on particular issues, but it all comes to what the zoning code, the municipal
government and Klaus Peters wants. There is much less autonomy for community action in Praia do Forte than in Mazunte.

As for the attractions, all are set inside the town but few are organized by the villagers. Outsiders control all the tour operating businesses in town. Locals are limited to owning restaurants and lodging. Despite this, Praia do Forte has a better income distribution than other towns along the northern coast of Bahia. Ecotourism has generated economic prosperity to locals. However, because outsiders control the tour operations, they tend to concentrate more income. In addition, the large condominiums that surround Praia do Forte are highly excluding, especially for the prohibiting prices of land.

TAMAR is an attraction set inside town and organized by local residents. Despite most of them being from other parts of Brazil, they are today local residents and strongly connected to town. Different than CMT, TAMAR is in fact organized locally and designed locally, without any supervision of environmental agency in Brasilia. TAMAR has autonomy over the way they organize their visitors’ centers, the style of their merchandize, and the working on their brochures and informative panels. Nonetheless, TAMAR caters to the ecotourists and, as in Mazunte, receives bus tours from other towns, organized by hotels in these other towns. The main problem with these tours organized outside town is their low integration to the local economy. Ecotourists that ride these tours do not have the time or the opportunity (during the tour) to walk around town and spend money at local businesses. They go from the bus to the sea turtle project and then back to the bus.
What makes Praia do Forte an alternative model of tourism development is the well protected and promoted cultural identity. The town has a strong identity linked to fishing and farming. Locals have always been very religious, most of them catholic. Local identity relates to religion as well. The calendar year has some religious festivities, celebrated with great devotion, and maintaining traditional aspects from before the arrival of ecotourism. Thus, the alternative development has to be understood in opposition to other models developed in the state of Bahia, such as Costa do Sauípe, a large resort destination about 40km north of Praia do Forte. Costa do Sauípe is composed of a large complex of luxurious all-inclusive hotels, with privatized beaches.

As in Mazunte, sea turtles and ecotourism marked the identity of locals in Praia do Forte. However, different than Mazunte, locals in Praia do Forte did not have to go soul-searching for a revitalized identity to cope with changed brought by ecotourism. They have always identified themselves as a fishermen’s village. Of course they incorporated sea turtles to the identity of town, as a response to the interest and consumption of ecotourists. Sea turtles became the cultural icon of Praia do Forte. In fact, because of the influence TAMAR has in the regional and national media, sea turtles dominated the local scene, becoming far greater iconic images than in Mazunte. Behaviors regarding the environment were transformed by ecotourism. Locals learned to conserve, but do not care much for doing so. Tourists, especially from Salvador do not care and are not educated to do so. They come to Praia do Forte for the status of sophisticated and trendy place, not for its ecological orientation.

The biophysical environment is important to understand the social and economic struggles that occur in Mazunte and Praia do Forte. Ecotourism has been promoted and
sustained by this environment. “Unless the environment is safe-guarded, ecotourism is in danger of being a self-destructive process, destroying the very resources upon which it is based” (Cater 1995: 22). TAMAR and CMT have been able to progress with their work because of the sustained environmental quality and natural conditions of the marine and coastal biophysical environment. There is a very strong connection and interaction of social groups such as fishermen, ecotourism industry and conservation project with this environment.

The dynamics of this environment interferes in actions of these actors. Modifications in fisheries and fish resources will implicate fishing activity; changes in use of beaches and amount of tourists at local beaches, or boat touring around the local waterways will interfere in the work of conservation projects; and change in weather patterns or preservation level of nature trails and natural reserves will interfere in the ecotourism activity.

TAMAR and CMT work basically with marine ecosystems. Their concern is with the sea and its biophysical environment. What happens inland is less regarded. However, CMT does not only work with marine ecosystems. In the past years, it maintained some special community environmental programs inland. CMT had other fauna and flora projects, and environmental education with communities far from the sea. They maintained these programs because CMT was the only regional representation of CONANP, thus becoming responsible for coordinating social-environmental programs like the PRODERS; a program oriented toward environmental stewardship in communities where some endangered species needed special care. CMT worked with some communities on the reproduction of land turtles, also endangered. PRODERS pays
allowances to participants and finances all the necessary infrastructure and training. PRODERS’ projects have been discontinued because the current director does not want them. He only wants people helping with the protection of beaches, without learning the importance of this.

10.4 Conservation and Development

Anthropological literature about development (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Arce and Long 2000, Escobar 1995) focuses on the ways that economic development (such as ecotourism or nature tourism) relates to: (1) deregulation and liberalization of local and national economics; (2) international pressure for rigorous environmental legislation (Mowforth and Munt, 2003) and; (3) the development of environmental and tourism policies (see Little 2001, McNeely, Harrison and Dingwall 1994, Wilkinson 1997, Mason 2003). Ecotourism places local communities – such as Mazunte and Praia do Forte – in the international tourism scenario, linking their economies directly to other countries. Data from the local business association of Praia do Forte on the percentage of tourists that the town receives, show that approximately 17% are foreigners (SEBRAE 2004). However, lodging and restaurants claim that over 50% of their business is dedicated to foreigners. Their participation in the local economy reaches about 40% of the local economy. In Mazunte, the participation of foreign tourists in local expenditure goes over 50% given the fact that, aside the national holidays, all other period of the calendar year, tourists represent over 70% of occupancy rate (CEUA, n/d).
Not only numbers demonstrate this engagement of local economy in the global scenario. The types of businesses and services in these towns reflect the close relation to foreign interests and capital. Local restaurants have particular recipes from American, European and Asian cuisines. Lodging offers the same comforts found in expensive hotels of New York and London, such as Jacuzzi; specialized masseuse sessions; therapeutic sessions of shiatsu and yoga; oriented lectures about environment, self-help, etc. All this is a response to particular demands of tourists.

Ecotourism, as a development trend, must be understood as part of neoliberal capitalism rationale, which means the deregulation of markets and the integration of any size economy into the global market, making them more dependent on foreign capital. For Brown, ecotourism could be considered a new form of conservation, which she describes as:

“New conservation is a manifestation of neo-liberal ideology, moving away from preservation of biodiversity through protectionism to conservation through use, to the extent that much of the rhetoric of new conservation sees the market as the salvation of biodiversity” (2002: 7).

Setting conservation into a market rational facilitated the introduction of economic activities that would take advantage local biodiversity in non-consumptive ways. What prevails is conservation of species combined with economic development. Ecotourism has been the ideal approach of neoliberal government policies (as in Brazil and Mexico) to fully integrate small towns into external markets without any extra budget spending.
Tourism (all types) is always treated as a form of economic development. Most countries have found in tourism a sure way to profit, increase their network and increase their foreign capital exchange. This is especially true when one considers that most countries are in a post-industrial stage of development, when service sector becomes the main employer and industrial and primary (agriculture) sectors become second. The developing countries have, in a certain way, followed this trend, because of international stimuli through grants and investments from international organizations, or because these countries have become places of interest to the international traveler, always searching for “authentic” new places to visit.

When contextualizing ecotourism within this greater scenario of global economy, neoliberal politics and environmental ideology, it becomes clear why Mazunte and Praia do Forte tracked a more commercial approach to tourism, and why the resistance of established families to the changes in their livelihoods was so persistent and resentful. Neoliberal approaches do not take into account local grassroots experiences. Paulson argues: “studies of political and economic globalization through flows of capital and information […] ignore local contexts” (2005: 8). The local is critical to global studies, especially if looking at powerful environmental discourses. Bookbinder et al (1998) define the necessary conditions for the successful integration of biodiversity conservation and economic development:

“Two conditions […] must be met: (1) the identification of economic incentives that provide immediate benefits to local people and (2) the identification of economic incentives that are appropriate in space and time to the scale of threats to biodiversity. The extent to which these economic
incentives are derived from conservation activities rather than from direct financial compensation (e.g., paying a farmer for domestic cattle killed by tigers) is even more desirable for sustainability. One strategy that has been embraced as an ideal mechanism for attaining both economic and ecological success is ecotourism. To succeed on both of these levels, an appreciable amount of revenue must return to local communities to foster stewardship and to change local practices so that biologically valuable habitats, populations, and ecological processes are conserved” (1998: 1400).

In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, the local community did indeed get appropriate return of ecotourism revenue. However, the changes to local practices did not happen in such an automatic way. Economic benefits on their own are not enough to make people change their ideas about what livelihoods they can pursue. Nonetheless, the transition happened but economic benefit kept the community united.

Different articles published about the MTC project demonstrate the positive results of the conservation initiative (Perez and Padilla 1995; Marquez, Peñaflores and Vasconcelos 1996), as well as difficulties in fighting illegal traffic of sea turtle, and poaching of nests (see Steiner et al. 1994). The situation is somewhat similar at Praia do Forte. Despite the conservation effort of the TAMAR, it has had an important objective of fomenting economic sustainability of the community (Suassuna 2001: 102).

Conservation and development can be considered ideologies as well as constructed discourses. The incorporation of these discourses and ideologies into these coastal towns influenced the changes in the local economic activities. It also stimulated
tensions between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge; between local and foreign values. Conservation ideologies were supported by state legislation and specific public policies, also with the support of the organized civil society. Development ideology, represented by ecotourism has also a helping hand of both the state and civil society. The situation is similar in Mexico and Brazil.

Discourses of conservation, economic development and traditional livelihoods are contradictory because they operate from different loci. Discourses of local, national and global levels are present and effectively influencing the social arena of Mazunte and of Praia do Forte. In both Brazil and Mexico, Economic development and ecotourism discourses tend to originate in the federal government, with support of international agencies (GEF, UNDP, World bank) interested in the inclusion of small communities in the global capital flux through sustainable development initiatives. Environmental conservation discourses also originate in federal governments, signatories of international treaties and agendas (i.e. Kyoto Protocol, Agenda 21) for the conservation of endangered species and the preservation of threatened ecosystems. Conservation and development discourses clash with local discourses, originated in the community, and based on traditional livelihoods. There is conflict between local traditional knowledge and foreign discourses (federal and global).

Contradicting discourses do not appear frequently in the anthropological literature about ecotourism, but have been recurrent literature on conservation and development (Brosius 1999, and Arce and Long 2000). In ecotourism destinations, the relationship between local community and foreigners and government usually occurs in unequal situations. The community can be placed in a position of subservience in relation to
ecotourism entrepreneurs, making for unequal capital share. Communities also produce their own discourse that collide with external ones. They also consume foreign ideologies at the same time that they produce their own.

Research on development and environmental conservation do not deal directly with the problem of how communities incorporate new environmental discourses either (Brosius et al. 2005; Cohen and Dannhauser 2002; Carrier 2004; Stonich 2000; Pearce and Butler 2001). Development, on one side, represented by the ecotourism activity and other commercial establishments; and conservation, on the other side, represented by TAMAR Project and MTC Project, have not only substituted the traditional turtle hunting, but have also introduced new social dynamics that are polarized between environmental conservation and economic development.

The ecological discourse is always present in Ecotourism development. This is actually part of the propaganda utilized by ecotourism in the tourism market: an alternative type of tourism engaged with environmental issues, concerned with sustainability and with preservation of natural settings. This is what makes ecotourism distinguishable from conventional tourism. Ecotourism has on natural resources its main attraction. As Alderman (1994) puts it, ecotourism “must lead to economic development while not adversely affecting the natural resources on which it depends” (1994: 275). It is expected that ecotourism embraces an ecological discourse. Some case studies show that ecotourism development works towards creating a positive image to destinations. This image usually relies on conservation practices and the advocacy of sustainable development.
Ecotourism forces the abandonment of the former primary sector activities, whether for its conversion into natural preservation areas, or because the owner sees the exploration of ecotourism as a more lucrative one. Farmers either sell their properties to become campgrounds or develop it to transform it into a rural ecotourism destination. Some keep a small part of their live stock and maintain small vegetable gardens, incorporating this into the package of ecotourism, that includes homemade cooking with fresh ingredients, served in a rural setting, where there is still open green spaces and sometimes even waterfalls and a considerable area of preserved forest. The tourism development of these properties, however, can result in ecological problems without any prior planning.

Ecotourism has stimulated different projects, especially in the environmental area. Most projects are directed to sustainable development, which incorporates local communities into projects that will enforce the conservation of natural resources while promoting economic development. Ecotourism has been selected among other community development projects as the most sustainable one for its low impacts on land and its great adaptability to regional realities. Ecotourism can be implemented in most rural municipalities, demanding small initial investments.

However, ecotourism has generated a heated debate over what is sustainability, ecological protection and community inclusiveness. Much of this debate started with environmentalists in early 1990s when debating over the concepts of protected areas. As results from the World Summit of 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations and all its State-Members agreed to the “Rio Declaration on Environment and Development”, in which Nation-States agree to promote sustainable development, a form of social
integration that considers the environment as fully integrated with human beings and necessary for their well being. All development projects had to conform to standards of environmental preservation.

The first measures taken were the creation of National Parks, Wildlife Preserves and Biological Research Reserves. These measures proved somewhat ineffective in regions like the Amazon Rainforest, where indigenous and extractive communities have lived for decades or centuries in very symbiotic relation with natural resources and now were being denied access to their land. Little (2001) shows how this situation aggravated conflicts between local communities and the government, while it stimulated the advance of miners and lumbering companies that illicitly took over the areas that were transformed into preservation ones. Local communities defended their access to land on the premise that they have helped stop the advance of these aggressive activities and helped protect the forest with their ecological practices.

Environmentalists took sides. Conservationists, following the approach to the environment based upon an essentially anthropocentric view of nature where it is essentially viewed a resource that is to be used rationally by man, stood on side of the local communities advocating their successful use of land. Preservationists, following the approach that takes its point of departure as the inherent value of the environment, being something sublime, and typically described as “a creation of God as a gift to man” took side with the government advocating that nature is fragile and any human intervention is harmful, no matter how ecological the practices utilized are. The latter group believed in the creation of biospheres where scientists would have ultimate access and researches would be conducted to the advancement of forest and wildlife preservation.
Conservationists understood that the maintenance of these “people of the forest” was very effective in policing the land from speculators and aggressive industries (mining and lumbering) while allowing a low-impact economy based on subsistence, something that has sustained these families for years.

The aim of preservationists is to maintain the landscape for the benefit of people and to provide spiritual sanctuaries for individuals, for example, through the creation of national parks and restricted natural reserves. Theses areas are called *preservationist territories* and have distinct fauna and flora. “The creation of protected areas (…) seeks to preserve ecosystems on all the continents, with each protected area representing a fractal part of this fragmented worldwide network” (Little, 2001: 135) of social actors (preservationists). On the other hand, the aim of conservationists is the economic benefits you can extract from nature in a sustainable manner. The conservationist approach is essentially uninterested in the intrinsic qualities of the environment but rather in the potential of the environment to serve human purposes. This approach is usually the basis of small development projects in rural areas. These areas are usually called *sustainable use territories* and are “based on the low-impact, long-term extraction of renewable resources for direct use or sale. In many cases these territories coalesce around the maintenance of existing traditional use systems, through their constant improvement” (Little, 2001:157).

Ecotourism develops in these sustainable use territories. Still, as Amanda Stronza (2001) has put it, “Conservationists are both optimistic and skeptical that ecotourism may help protect nature while meeting the economic needs of local residents” (2001: 275). Ecotourism does have a lower impact, if compared to big resorts and international
destinations, such as the ones FONATUR develops along the coastal line of Mexico, but it needs to be controlled, regulating the number of visitors, on the activities they do at the site, and the area (extension) it occupies. A good example of sustainable ecotourism is being applied in Brazil with the development of Private Reserve of Natural Patrimony (RPPN), a legal device that designates rural private properties to becoming natural reserves. The owner files a petition to consider the property a RPPN and has to prove the property has sufficient preserve area. Once approved by the federal environmental agency, the property has an easement over 100% of the land and the owner receives support from the federal environmental agency in managing the reserve.

Conservation was never embraced by the community as a development strategy; in neither Mazunte nor Praia do Forte. Perhaps because it never offered any potential economic incentive that could provide benefits neither in the short term nor in the long term. Conservation in Mazunte and Praia do Forte happened with the implementation of federal regulations created to guarantee the protection of areas with original vegetation, prohibited the hunting of wildlife and regulated land use, especially in beach areas, which in both countries are federal zones. Conservation in both towns arrived as a complete government package, which included (1) state presence, (2) regulatory laws, (3) permanent monitoring and inspection, (4) subsistence rules and codes, (5) environmental restrictions, and (6) legal punishment and correction.

Development models thought for these communities were based on the premises of sustainable development that would guarantee the well-functioning of the conservation projects permitting the continuity of their activities and objectives. As Raynaut et al (2007) state, “since its origins, the idea of sustainable development has been closely
associated with the idea of conservation” (2007: 23). Ecotourism was not thought as the first initiative. It was more of a coincidence between the political and cultural tendencies of the time and the interest of distinct social groups in developing this. At Praia do Forte, ecotourism only became a full-fledged economic activity 10 years after TAMAR established a base in town, in 1980. In Mazunte, it took about one year for ecotourism to become a full-fledged economic activity, one year after CMT was established in 1994.

Table 10.7: Links between livelihoods and conservation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumed linkage between livelihoods and conservation</th>
<th>Prescribed conservation strategy</th>
<th>Features/problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No linkage</td>
<td>Strict protected areas – no consumptive use</td>
<td>Difficult to enforce because of conflicts with local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic substitution – buffer zones, biosphere reserves</td>
<td>Poaching, impoverishment Difficult to enforce due to complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect linkage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Biophysical dimensions poorly understood Local people not empowered to resist external threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct linkage – livelihoods drive conservation</td>
<td>Incentives for conservation – wildlife and non-timber forest products harvesting, ecotourism</td>
<td>May provide incentives for further exploitation of biodiversity Require profound changes in property rights, laws, institutions Inequalities amongst communities Economic and ecological viability questionable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Brown (2002), with adaptations.

Table 10.7 shows the different kind of linkage that can exist between livelihoods and conservation, exactly the focus of this chapter. In reality, this division is less straightforward, but is a good tool to better understand the situation in Mazunte and Praia do Forte.
In Mazunte, we have a mixture of no linkage and direct linkage. The town of Escobilla, part of the 3EC of Mazunte, is a good example of a no linkage situation. The beach was isolated from the community becoming a strict protected area with non-consumptive use. Local livelihood had to shift, but without economic incentives, impoverished locals tended to poach eggs. Whereas in Mazunte and San Agustinillo, there were economic incentives for conservation made through the stimulation of ecotourism.

In Praia do Forte, we have a mixture of indirect linkage and direct linkage. The towns of Praia do Forte and Imbassaí (part of the 3EC of Praia do Forte) were zoned to become protected areas, with buffers zones and restrictive use zones. The reason was to protect the natural habitat of sea turtles and other species in the region. Together with that, ecotourism was stimulated as the economically viable option to locals, who were mostly unemployed. As Brown explains:

“An approach based on indirect linkages between conservation and development prescribes conservation strategies focused on developing alternative sources of income or livelihood as a means of substituting for biodiversity resources. […] Recognizing direct linkages recommends that developing dependent relationships between biodiversity and surrounding people so that stake-holders benefit directly from biodiversity will provide incentives for conservation. […] Livelihoods thus drive conservation rather than simply being compatible” (Brown 2002: 7).
Ecotourism was chosen as the economic alternative to hunting because in the early 1990s, it was believed that this type of tourism was the best-suited format to be developed in small towns where environmental conservation was at stake. It was considered an activity that could achieve two objectives at the same time: stimulate environmental protection and generate better economic conditions to the communities.

Sea turtle conservation projects can enforce conservation initiatives by pairing up with ecotourism or nature tourism initiatives. On the other hand, ecotourism and nature tourism can also stimulate the development of an array of services, from accommodations to restaurants and guided tours, to cater to the visitors. Conservation and development initiatives are then at the center of the relationship between local and external forces. These forces may be well adjusted, or they may create conflict and unequal power structures where local and extra-local actors interact. Conflicts are more common in tourism communities, especially those where traditional practices were transformed for conservation and development purposes.

“The villagers now rely on sea turtles as a living resource because they are a major tourist attraction and generate income, so they help protect their nests and beaches” (Vieitas et al. 1999: 128).

From this scenario, we could conclude that sea turtles are for ecotourists. The conservation projects have set up visitors’ centers oriented to the ecotourist consumption. The type of language used, the topics discussed and the layout are for the ecotourist, mostly from urban areas, with university degree and a good understanding of conservation. TAMAR has done a recent survey with tourists asking their opinion about
the project’s visitors’ center. Based on the responses, they are currently making several adaptations on their informative panels to cater to the interest of these visitors. CMT is also going through a large renovation. Based on what tourists want and on what bureaucrats from Mexico City think a good conservation project should be; the CMT is under the process of becoming a big aquarium, with larger and more comfortable facilities, including a food court. These renovations and adaptation do not contribute to more revenues to local residents, or improvements in their lives. Perhaps more income from tourists spending might occur, but this could only be foreseen in the very long term.

The projects have grown to a size that has excluded the local community from actively participating in them. It is not that the local community is prohibited from accessing the projects. Actually, both projects – CMT and TAMAR – have since the beginning granted full access to local residents. They never had to pay admission fees. The exclusion is through employment barriers related to education requirements, language used to communicate with visitors, education requirements to participate in activities, and the natural distancing between the conservation biologist’s work and the communities’ everyday lives. Locals in both localities feel that the projects became too elitist, luxurious, and out of context. They stopped being the simple, scientific conservation project once known to the community. Now they are display projects for successful initiatives and seek good publicity to attract more ecotourists.

However, ecotourists have become, more recently the biggest threat to sea turtles in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte. The threat is related to scale. Both towns have been growing, not necessarily population wise, but in the number of accommodations and the frequency of events promoted in these towns. Ecotourists now come in large numbers,
attracted by the increased options of accommodations, good food and music, and beautiful beaches. Everyone wants to spend their holidays at these destinations. The impact is visible: ecotourists in Praia do Forte trample nests and litter the beaches with materials that can cause the death of adult sea turtles such as plastic and paper. The large number of tourists using the local beaches in Mazunte leaves little space for the release of baby turtles. Ecotourists have the habit of camping and making campfires on beaches where turtles come to nest. The fire and the noise scare turtles away. However, Projects rely on ecotourists and try not to complain about the impact they bring to sea turtles, as stated in publications produced by TAMAR:

“Despite the fact that the beach is 14 km long, most tourists remain within a 2km stretch, near the village. Resorts and houses have been constructed in such a way as to minimize their impact on turtles; for instance, beachfront illumination has been minimized and nearby lights have been screened (…). In effect, there is little conflict between the needs of the turtles and the needs of the tourists” (Vieitas et al 1999: 129).

Local residents have also internalized the discourse that ecotourists are important and present no problems. Local economies are tied directly or indirectly to tourism. Therefore, everyone welcomes ecotourists all-year long. There is no sector in local economy that is not tied to tourism, including fishing. All local catch supplies the local market. Fish is sold to grocery stores, restaurants, hotels and homes.

As for the turtles, local residents have learned that ecotourists prize them and want to see them in their natural habitat. Since the projects no longer offer activities to
ecotourists outside their visitors’ centers, local residents have developed services to help ecotourists achieve this wish. In Mazunte and Praia do Forte, fishermen have at least one boat that can be used to take ecotourists on boat trips, as explained in chapter 06. Ecotourism and conservation have been effective in promoting the protection and safeguarding of sea turtles. The effectiveness in helping out locals shift from one livelihood to another is still limited and reduced. There is much work to do in both towns to alleviate the effects of rapid economic development on local livelihoods.
Conclusion

International comparative research can be an insightful form of ethnography when one discovers how connected small distant and culturally distinct localities are. The comparative ethnography conducted in Mazunte and Praia do Forte led to a series of discoveries about how conservation and development correlate and influence changes in community organization.

The two towns have very distinct pasts, one under continuous patriarchal control and the other under a specific exploitive economy. The economic activities of these communities have long been linked to global processes, such as serf labor and markets for extractive and agricultural products. Mazunte before the Veda would constantly receive inward migration creating some community differentiation with respect to employment at the PIOSA. The transition to the present development patterns and conservation initiatives have converged the two localities into similar kinds of destinations. Mazunte and Praia do Forte are today part of a global system of shared ideologies, politics and cultural trends. The promotion of ecotourism in these towns directly relates to sustainable development and environmental awareness. These ideologies make their way to the local level by the connection established between development and environmental issues. Escobar (1995) explains that:

“The resignification of nature as environment; the reinscription of the Earth into capital via the gaze of science; the reinterpretation of poverty as effect of destroyed environments; and the new lease on management and planning as
arbiters between people and nature, all of these are effects of the discursive construction of sustainable development (1995: 202).

Conservation follows conscripted simplification and rutinization process systems, with specified instructions and same objectives. Scientific knowledge follows standardized processes to be legible at a extra-local level. Methodology of data collection and monitoring of sea turtles, the techniques to protect and relocate nests are the same for any conservation project. What is interesting is that SEK transposes the barriers of the conservation projects to frame local communities within scientific parameters, making the community more legible to scientific approach and to state control as well (Scott 1998). The problem of SEK is that it does not make any effort to become more palatable to the local knowledge, to local residents. This impenetrable scientific network (Latour 1987) is the reason why the conflict and divergence of interests between biologists and fishermen remains unsolvable.

Despite different cultural aspects of Oaxaca and Bahia, the sea turtle projects CMT and TAMAR follow one modus operandi, based on accumulated experience and knowledge of over 30 years of scientific research. The accumulated knowledge of different projects is shared through different scientific forums. TAMAR and CMT work on one objective: protecting sea turtles and revamping the species population to remove it from the IUCN endangered species list. This objective is also the result of international agreements between governments. These projects encompass the globe on an extra-local basis. The objectives are thought from far above having limited connection to the locality. (Tsing 2005).
CMT and TAMAR have relied on the support of the communities to effectively work their conservation activities. In Praia do Forte, it started with the (paid) help of *tartarugueiros*. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo, CMT relied on the cooperation of the former workers of PIOSA. In both towns, the work required community cooperation and engagement. This was achieved using different approaches and strategies such as the work towards consensus and common understanding. CMT and TAMAR knew that without negotiation, it would be hard to gain a foothold in the community. Conservation was not necessarily negotiable, as the work done by the biologists followed specific scientific methods. However, other activities of environmental education and technical assistance to fishermen had to be adapted to the local needs. On some fronts, such as the kindergarten funded by TAMAR in Praia do Forte and the work of CMT with the cooperative in Escobilla and Ventanilla in protecting mangroves and nesting beaches, conservation projects and the community worked well together. Nonetheless, both CMT and TAMAR are effective in protecting sea turtles, despite some odds. Even with stealing of eggs in Oaxaca or trampling of nests in Praia do Forte, these projects have achieved high success rates in recovering the population of endangered species of sea turtles.

TAMAR and CMT had to hire specialists in environmental education and social work to help establish this direct interface with the communities. These staff members served to bridge the gap between the ideological framings of conservationists and local communities. However, from my fieldwork I observed that this is still a work in progress and is essential to solve the underlining g causes of conflicts and reach consensus. This work is new to environmental agencies (CONANP and ICMBIO), accustomed to
working environmental education only inside national parks with park users. Working with local communities, who are fixed residents is very different reality.

In Brazil or in Mexico, conservation and ecotourism are not planned and implemented as integrated transversal public policies. Each usually takes advantage of the situation laid out by the other adopting a type of symbiosis, which means conservation and ecotourism tend to work together in close relation benefiting both sides. Nonetheless, the most interesting finding were the different strategies that TAMAR and CMT used in trying to engage ecotourists in conservation. The most interesting program was promoted by CMT in the early 2000s, in which tourists would spend over a month in a nesting helping CMT staff find nests of Laàùd turtles and relocate them to the incubation areas. Tourists would pay to help, instead of doing voluntary work. The activities of donating money in exchange to hold a baby turtle and set it loose in the beach has the same intent: engaging tourists in conservation.

Ecotourism in both towns developed differently, but were led by similar forces: NGO sponsored projects, external investments, consolidation of tourism networks and regional travelling routes, and the attractiveness of the sea turtle projects. “

As state support for conservation dwindled late in the 1990s, NGOs became central to environmental management and ecotourism became central to their management strategies” (West and Carrier 2004: 491)

It was at this time that Ecosolar worked its way into Mazunte and FGD developed its ecotourism project for Praia do Forte. It coincided that ecotourism had turned into the latest trend in tourism development at that time.
It as at the center of the debate about new forms to improve tourism: more participation of locals, more concern with local environment, less economic disparity between hosts and guests. The research found that ecotourism can be effective in promoting environmental awareness, but it is far from being effective in managing areas that have wildlife conservation.

Mexican and Brazilian federal governments did not directly promote ecotourism in these towns. They supported it indirectly laying out the basic necessary infrastructure to make it roll. Support for tourism was made through the conservation projects, which participated in the initial discussions of alternatives to local livelihood shift. However, until very recently (2007 in Brazil and 2008 in Mexico), neither government had a specific development plan in these towns. NGOs led the process in a more direct way through sponsored projects and programs. However, the “omnipresence” of government through CMT and TAMAR made locals believe all of it was the fault of the government. Since the government did end consumptive use of sea turtles, they had to be, in the eyes of locals, the protagonists of all the economic, political social and cultural changes these towns when through.

The combination of conservation with development is possible. Mazunte and Praia do Forte have demonstrated that. However, in both countries, governments’ bureaucracy in the environment sector still lack the proper and necessary legal, theoretical and methodological mechanisms to effectively convey ecotourism development, environmental education and wildlife conservation. These three initiatives exist in Praia do Forte and Mazunte, yet each of these is developed separately. Ecotourism is developed by NGOs and local businesses. Environmental education is
developed by the conservation projects and NGOs, and wildlife conservation is exclusive to CMT and TAMAR (and IBJ). Usually two are developed together: ecotourism and environmental education by FGD and Ecosolar (in the past) and wildlife conservation and environmental education (CMT, TAMAR and IBJ).

CMT and TAMAR are still in the learning process of how to combine their demands with that of the community. The demand of tourists inside the visitors’ centers has been met. After many years, these projects have been able to adjust their language and their exhibitions to the interest of visitors. Regarding the community, CMT’s fault has been the narrowed focus on the other communities where the project has research stations (Escobilla, Morro Ayuta and Barra de la Cruz). In doing so, CMT has neglected attention to Mazunte and San Agustinillo. The project has effectively helped these latter communities by drawing in ecotourists, however CMT has remained distant from the everyday social life of these two places.

The work of TAMAR progressed in the opposite direction. In Praia do Forte it started out by working closely with the community, and once it gained the local support, it began slowly to distance itself (perhaps unintentionally) from the community and focus more on scientific research and on tourists. In the last five years, the objective of the project has been the achievement of “auto-sustainability”, when the project will no longer have to depend on the current funding money provided by PETROBRAS. The drive towards auto-sustainability” has alienated the project from community socialization because working together with the community became secondary.
The types of property and land tenure in both localities positively influenced the effectiveness of conservation initiatives of CMT and TAMAR. With only one private owner, Praia do Forte benefitted from the organized land development that took into consideration the importance of protecting beaches and nesting grounds. Ecotourism was planned out so that development would not interfere with the work of TAMAR. The system of bienes comunales in the 3EC of Mazunte was effective in controlling the development of ecotourism, leaving large-scale entrepreneurs out of town and protecting local beaches from excessive development. These systems of land tenure and property ownership helped control the impacts on land. Federal government regulations in both countries determine beaches to be federal areas, controlling the impact on the beach ecosystem.

The establishment of regional networks, the 3ECs of Mazunte and Praia do Forte factored out as a good form for the communities to actively participate in the ecotourism development without loosing control over communal property (in the case of Mazunte) and community engagement (in the case of Praia do Forte). Also, urban planning in these towns have demonstrated the creativity of the community (as whole) in defining the use and function of specific spaces within town.

Ecotourism development also distinguished these towns from each other. Initially, before fieldwork, I believed that the comparison between the two towns would help explain the common trend in the development of ecotourism. Since Praia do Forte was more developed than Mazunte, I believed that the first could in someway forecast the future of ecotourism in the second. It turned out not to be the case. The two destinations have their own idiosyncrasies that define the local development patterns. Despite all the
similarities that string the towns together, Mazunte will not become Praia do Forte in the future. It is through ecotourism that the two destinations expose their idiosyncrasies, their particular cultural backgrounds of *mexicanidad*, of *brasilianidade*, of Oaxacan culture and Bahiano culture.

Locals (established group) have been successful in constructing a culture identity that distinguishes their town within regional networks (the 3EC, for example) and within international tourism markets. These towns have “authenticity”, which is expressed by the local iconography of sea turtles, the landscape, the distinct services offered, hospitality manners and other experiences. This form of ecotourism authenticity, is diametrically opposed to that presented by West and Carrier (2004), who framed authenticity in ecotourism in the idea of “nature and the frontier” and the exotic native community.

Small towns that survive on ecotourism have an interesting ability to incorporate new external ideas and transform them into something different, original and attractive. Mazunte and Praia do Forte have done that effectively, though it demanded adaptation and adjustment. These towns have undergone radical transformations with wildlife conservation and ecotourism development, backed by international environmental agenda and neoliberal politics, respectively. Ecotourism has emerged in the last decade as the exemplary neoliberal policy that aims in connecting small isolated communities to international markets, facilitating the entrance of foreign capital and goods, undermining local production and subjecting local residents to foreign dependency. Mexico and Brazil adopted these policies in the course of the 1990-decade. Several indigenous communities in Mexico and rural communities in Brazil were subjugated to foreign markets, losing
control over their local crops and become depended on corporate produced staples or government subsidies.

In this market downward spiral, Mazunte and Praia do Forte have emerged positively with innovative and integrative approaches to the potential encroachment of land development, to commoditization of ecotourism and to the environmental legalization of wildlife conservation. In this scenario of imposing external exclusionary, oppressive and detrimental forces, these localities have created democratic forums of discussion and alternative community associations to curb large-scale development. In addition, locals have been empowered by self-employment and these towns have been emancipated from state and municipal economic control through tourism revenues. They are still controlled politically through green legalization (Agrawal 2005).

This research has demonstrated the capacity localities have to adapt to external interventions. Responding the research questions, local livelihoods have adjusted to ecotourism. Former fishermen in Mazunte and their families have learned to be hosts of ecotourists. They learned new hospitality and management skills and some have been able to maintain fishing as part of their activities. In Praia do Forte fishermen and their families have also adjusted to ecotourism. It was easier for locals in this town to adjust for they had more time and better economic conditions through renting property and selling fish. The local market in Praia do Forte is better developed, with more money circulating than Mazunte.

Local residents had to dedicate a great deal of effort into ecotourism, especially considering that this economic activity was imposed by NGOs and indirectly by the
conservation projects. Today, these towns are committed to ecotourism. They have acquiesced to the economic benefits ecotourism brings them, which is greater than the sea turtle trade in Mazunte and the coconut harvesting in Praia do Forte. Nonetheless, ecotourism required hard work and dedication to become operative. Resistance evolved exactly during this period of implementation of ecotourism. In Mazunte, locals did not believe it. In Praia do Forte they did, as any new event was considered better than the previous patriarchal system they lived in.

The major problem in developing ecotourism has to do with the different concepts locals and tourists have of the environment. “Landscapes that ecotourists are eager to enjoy may be quite different from those that the host populations cherish” (Olwig 2004: 492). Mazunteños and Fortenses have learned along the years to cherish and value the same aspects considered important to tourists: sea turtles, beaches and the local ecosystem. In addition, these residents (hosts) have demonstrated creative ways to attract tourists to these towns. These towns developed an extensive iconography using sea turtles. The animal has become almost a totemic figure for now central is has became in the promotion of these towns. Mazunte and Praia do Forte are promoted by travel agencies as on of the feature destinations to spot sea turtles and learn more about them.

In Mazunte, ecotourism turned out a practical option to curb development near and around CMT. The community has been efficient in converging most political issues that regard controlling local development, especially related to urban expansion, despite all the existing conflicts between stakeholders. However, the continuous tension between stakeholders can undermine this collective achievement at anytime. I would argue that this is already happening as the towns of Mazunte and San Agustinillo grow slowly.
Every year a new business, home and even street is opened up somewhere new in town. These changes follow a slow pace because most are funded by remittances from Mexicans abroad sent local families. Perhaps, this slow input of cash is what holds the pace of development. What lacks in Mazunte is environmental partnership, an arena where different unequal discourses have a chance to be discussed and perhaps legitimized (Poncelet 2001).

In Praia do Forte, ecotourism worked to a limited extent in curbing development. In contrast with Mazunte, locals have control of certain portions of town, and despite they position as stakeholders, the municipality and Peters’ real estate company have greater control over the other adjacent areas. TAMAR is a strong stakeholder but has been undermined by state and federal governments in the decision process over large hotels to be established locally. Iberostar was considered the greatest lost battle for TAMAR. The project was forced to work on mitigating the increasing impacts caused by this hotel and its guests. Having nests at local beaches working towards keeping these nests intact from destruction by tourists has been the greatest challenge for TAMAR. CMT also has than challenge, but with local indigenous communities. In Mazunte and San Agustinillo the seldom occurrences of nests facilities their work locally.

To conclude, the research has demonstrated that ecotourism and conservation can be brought together if there is an active involvement of all stakeholders in the process. Mazunte demonstrated that cutting out the established group from conservation only caused rupture and conflict with CMT. Praia do Forte demonstrated that conservation projects cannot decide alone what community activity or what local group will receive they should. The small size of these localities facilitates the development of resentment
and resistance. The advantage in these communities is the presence of open forums of discussion. However, these forums need to have more legitimacy among all stakeholders.

It has also demonstrated that keeping local businesses in the hands of local families (whether established or outsiders) increases the possibility of success of ecotourism and reduced the potential negative impacts on conservation initiatives. Incomes remain local and economic development reaches more individuals and families. Conservation itself has been imposing limits to the development of large-scale businesses in these towns. Large corporations tend to flee areas where they will be tied to several legal restrictions. Unfortunately, when greater interests of a country stand out, these restrictions can be alleviated. That is what happened in Praia do Forte with Iberostar. San Agustinillo, on the other hand has anticipated itself to the potential coastal development that can take the community on assault. They created a community regulation that bars large-scale businesses from moving in. It is similar to a conservation easement.

The future of ecotourism and conservation in both Mazunte and Praia do Forte depend mostly on the capabilities of local stakeholders to even out divergences and conflict and converge on effective local policies. If stakeholders work on policies that favor long-term economic viability and facilitate the conservation work of TAMAR and CMT, these towns will increase their success in drawing tourists and setting positive examples to ecotourism policy makers.
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