

# The Galapagos Islands – A Conflict of Interests

– A case study of how conservation, tourism and local interests meet, and how that affect the islands and the residents

*Louise Arbin*





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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to examine how conservation, a growing tourism industry, and local interests meet at the Galapagos islands, Ecuador, and how that affects the islands and the people living or working there. This study is a result of a case study conducted at the Galapagos islands, mainly the island of Santa Cruz (which is the most populated island and the “economic capital”, as well as the island that has gone through the most rapid change in relation to growing tourism industry and development), done over the course of six weeks.

The Galapagos Islands, situated 1000 kilometers from the Ecuadorian coast, has for a long time been very isolated, which has resulted in a rather “un-touched” nature and wildlife, which is unique for the islands. The Galapagos Islands gained a lot of attention worldwide after Charles Darwin visited and based his evolutionary theory on the discoveries made there. This led to scientists all over the world wanted to preserve and study this unique place, therefore 97% of the area was turned into a national park conservation. Environmentalists and conservationists were thrilled over this, and a research station was established on one of the more populated islands, Santa Cruz. This however, was not without problems for the local population, who became more restricted and had to live in relation to the conservation rules and agenda.

Due to the unique nature and wildlife at Galapagos, a tourism industry developed over the years, and has grown very rapidly during the past few decades. This meant a lot of new opportunities for the local population, who could expand their livelihood opportunities and enter into the tourism industry. The increasing tourism also drew people from mainland Ecuador to relocate to the islands for jobs. This drastically changed the islands economy, as well as the socio-ecological relations.

This has resulted in the current situation at Galapagos today, which is a conflict of interest between the conservation agenda wanting to conserve the nature and wildlife and keep it “un-touched”, the tourism that is now the backbone of the local economy, and the local people who has to live in relation to both the conservation regulation as well as the rapidly increasing tourism and development of the islands.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The Galapagos Islands are famous for their unique environment and wildlife and attracts people from all over the world wanting to experience it. The nature of Galapagos is considered by many to be pristine, and tourists travel there to see the special flora and fauna and animals Charles Darwin based his evolution theory upon.

Because of conservation efforts over the past 60 years, the nature and animals at Galapagos are still diverse and unique. 97 % of the islands is a protected area, managed by the Galapagos National Park (GNP) (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). The other 3% however, is inhabited by permanent residents, living on the islands of Santa Cruz, San Cristobal, Floreana, and Isabela. The local population living in towns and communities on these islands are often criticized by conservationists who believes that development, extraction of resources, cultivation of non-native crops and building of infrastructure (that is part of the local resident's livelihood) is bad for Galapagos. (Mathis, Rose, 2016).

Since the establishment of the reserve, tourism has grown rapidly, drastically affecting the socio-ecological landscape. The tourism has contributed to a rapid development of the Galapagos islands, most of all the island of Santa Cruz, resulting in migration and fast population growth, as well as contributing to a shift towards a market-based economy, changing the livelihoods for many of the local residents.

This has led to a complex situation at Galapagos, where different interests are competing over access to the natural resources under the conservation regulations. This has greatly affected all who reside at Galapagos in various ways, with different outcomes.

## 1.1 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

### Objective

The aim of this thesis is to explore how different actors relate to conservation, economic growth and changes of development and modernity on the island Santa Cruz, Galapagos, if and how the perspectives of these actors are formed by belonging to different social fields, and how all fields and actors are affected by the dominating governing framework of conservation.

### Research Questions

- *How has the establishment of the Galapagos reserve changed the socio-ecological landscapes and strengthened the conservation agenda at Galapagos?*

- *How is conservation manifested and exercised and what are its effects on actors who belong to different social fields?*
- *How does different social groups and actors relate to conservation and tourism?*

## 2 THEORIES

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### 2.1 POLITICAL ECOLOGY

When establishing the Galapagos National Park (GNP) and turning 97% of the area into a reserve for conservation purposes, there was a shift in power, giving both international conservation organization as well as the Ecuadorian state more power and control over the area. This led to establishment of several institutions at Galapagos, furthering the states indirect control. As tourism grew and brought in a lot of money to the GNP and the state, it also contributed to changing the local economy towards a market economy. These factors have led to a drastic change in the socio-ecological landscaped at Galapagos, creating a complex structure with many different actors with different interests and agencies, in different social fields. To better understand the interconnected and conflicting structures, I will draw on the theoretical framework of political ecology, to examine the power-relations, as well as who has access or control over the natural resources and why at Galapagos, and what that means for different actors.

Political ecology explores relations between political, economic and social arenas, highlighting how the environment is embedded within an economic and political context. This broad field combines social sciences with a focus on ecology with political economy (Peet and Watts 1996, p. 6), which is useful for studying the economic, political and social aspects of conservation, environmental conflict, environmental identities and social movements (Robbins, 2004, p. 14). Political ecology attempts to examine the relations between, and conceptions of, nature, capitalism and politics. It is a field that classifies nature as an area imbued with politics, where different actors with uneven economic, political and social power compete over access to, and control over, natural resources (Mathis & Rose, 2016). Political ecologists point out that the concept and practice of conservation, including the rules and regulations connected to conservation, affect the socioecological landscape, since the construction of a conservation area affects distinct groups differently,

economically, politically and socially. It is common that actors, such as the state, or rather specific branches of the state, may exercise much more control and power at the expense of other smaller groups, such as people living within or adjacent to conservation areas (Mathis, Rose, 2016).

When creating a conservation area, such as the Galapagos National Park, it also creates new power relations and gives specific actors power to decide over practices and discourses in the reserve, which often negatively affects the local populations power. (Mathis, Rose, 2016). At Galapagos establishing the reserve and the marine reserve has limited what locals can and cannot do within or nearby a conservation area, where focus is on conserving the nature and where human presence is considered to be a threat to that (Mathis, Rose, 2016). Conservation and nature reserves can therefore be used as a tool to get more political control. However, it can also be used as a tool for economic development, if it puts the conservation area on the capitalist market as a commodity to sell to tourist, which can also be seen at Galapagos where the imagined pristine nature is advertised to attract people from all over the world who want to experience it (Mathis, Rose, 2016). The economic drive from the tourism industry has greatly contributed to changing both the social, ecological and economical development on the Galapagos islands.

## **2.2 GOVERNMENTALITY**

In order to understand how the Galapagos Islands are managed, and how the conservation is carried out and implemented, I will use the concept of power and governmentality.

At Galapagos, different ideas and agendas regarding the conservation is very present. Although not everyone has equal opportunity to exercise their agenda. I therefore found it interesting to use Foucault's concept of power as a tool to examine power and power relations.

According to Foucault, every interaction between people is always permeated by power. Power is not something absolute that someone has, but rather something that is practiced (Foucault, 1991). Power is, according to Foucault, practiced within relations and between people or groups. It could be the power relation between a boss and an employee, a teacher and a student, as well as refer to power relations within a society; between workers and those with capital, politicians and those who vote, and producers and consumers (Foucault, 1991). Or for example in the case of Galapagos, power relations between conservationists and the local populations, the tourist industry and the Galapagos National Park.



Foucault also states that people are part of not one, but many different relations where power is practiced, it could be within the society, one's profession, family, and personal relations. Since power according to Foucault exists within relations, and relations are changeable, power too is not constant but can change (Foucault, 1991).

In the case of Galapagos, power is constantly practiced, between people, groups, and institutions. Who has power, and why, is important to consider when attempting to understand the current situation at Galapagos, where different wills and agencies are competing over access to the natural resources and assets at the remote islands that became famous for its nature and wildlife.

Foucault's notion of governmentality seeks to explore and analyze how power and power-relations operate. Governmentality sees power not only as a legal power exercising violence or punishment, but as a "conduct of conducts" (Dean, 2007). The conduct of conduct is a way of describing governmentality and refers to how governance shape peoples' actions and conduct through different means (Foucault, 1991). Governmentality and governance are in this sense not equal to the state and its political organization, but rather governmentality focus on analyzing the discourses of the conduct of conducts (Bergman, 2014). The focus lie in *how* the discourse is carried out and acted upon, and what consequences it has, and *who* is behind the discourse and how power is manifested (Bergman, 2014). This offers an approach to analyze how authorities, or actors with power, govern others according to what they wish to happen.

Governance is can also be seen as a way of regulating individuals' freedom through framing people's capacity to act or conduct themselves in certain ways (Rose, 1999).

Mitchell Dean (1999) identifies four dimensions through which government, or regimes (as he refers to them) can be analyzed. The first Dean (1999) calls *forms of visibility* which analyses what is brought into light, and what is being hid in the shadows, visibility creates a picture of who is to be governed and how relations of power are manifested, and how different actors are connected (Dean, 1999). The second dimension is *technical means of government*, which refers to the means, mechanisms and techniques used to establish authority and power (Dean, 1999). The third dimension, *forms of knowledge*, analyses government in relation to knowledge, what knowledge, expertise or rationalities are use and how do they shape the "truth" (Dean, 1999). Lastly, the *formation of identities*, refers to the forms of identities the government is attempting to form, both individual and collective. The formation of collective identities can include what type of conduct is considered desirable or

not allowed. Identities formed on an individual level can be how people come to identify with certain groups, which will affect their behavior and conduct (Dean, 1999).

An analysis of governance explains and analysis how governance is carried out, and what it is based on, how it is attempting to shape peoples' actions and why. Governmentality analyses actions, policies and management plans to see why a certain policy is considered important to implement and how it is done (Johansson & Lövgren, 2007).

According to Bacchi (2009) governmentality analyses how policies affect the way things are to be managed, but also how individuals sees themselves, and what effects different policies have on peoples' everyday life.

In the case of Galapagos conservation is a form of governmentality that affects all who live or work there. International organizations and the state make great efforts to implement laws and policies to preserve the nature. For the people on Galapagos, this is something everyone must relate to in one way or another. Through different means the conservation agenda is carried out, in order to regulate both what is allowed through laws and regulations, as well as attempting to guide people's behavior and mindset towards an environmental and conservational approach.

## **2.3 SOCIAL FIELDS**

The present situation at Galapagos consists of a complex structure of different actors with different interests and agencies, all very much affected by the conservation agenda enforced by the state and formal institutions, as well as economic drivers as of tourism. The attitude towards conservation and tourism however, varies between different actors and groups, much related to how they are affected by conservation and tourism, and how their agency and stand in relation to it. Although clearly not all people have the exact same experience, interest or wills, there are groups or social fields at Galapagos that have very similar opinions towards conservation and tourism, and could therefore be seen as different social fields.

Bourdieu's theory of social fields is based on the idea that social space on all levels is relational, and within the global space there are sub-spaces, dedicated to a certain kind of activity, and each subspace, or social field, is a relational space of its own. (Hilgers, Mangez, 2015). Bourdieu's theory of fields describes and analyzes how distinct social arenas, so called social fields, emerge in nation states and how specific institutions, norms, values, strategies and practices evolve in these arenas. These arenas are characterized by intense material, social and symbolic competitions between actors (Bourdieu 1992, 2003). A social field,

according to Bourdieu, is a relatively independent domain of activity, that is responding “to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among the agents.” (Hilgers, Mangez, 2015:5).

Every social field has its own set of rules, for example the political field needs to have a close relationship people from other fields, because political agents get their legitimacy from the citizens (Hilgers, Mangez, 2015:5). For example, the scientific field, according to Bourdieu, is recognized by internal competition between agents, that is so specialized that only people within that field can value the work of their competition (Hilgers, Mangez, *ibid.*). Social fields often overlap each other, and specific fields are more hegemonic and influential than others.

The basic idea, and why I think the theory of social fields can be useful in the case of Galapagos, is that the society is made up of different agents acting within the construct of specific social fields, which can affect how different actors perceive and reflect on different activities or ideas. It can also mean that people within the same, or similar, social fields might have similar ideas about such as tourism or conservation, while people in other social fields might experiencing it differently.

At Galapagos there is a distinction between people who are conservationists and work towards preserving the unique nature and wildlife, people who work within the tourism industry and who are dependent on the steady flow of tourist to sustain their livelihood, and local people who may fall into one of these categories but mostly seem to end up somewhere in between wanting to maintain the nature as well as being able to have a sustainable livelihood and not be to restricted by the conservation regulations. Although all these groups consist of many different people and whose opinions varies on some questions, there is a common idea within these groups liking the people within them together, and so creating different social fields.

### **3 METHOD**

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This thesis is largely based on interviews, participatory observations and observations, conducted at the island Santa Cruz at Galapagos, Ecuador.

The reason for choosing to do the study at this island is that it is, in spite of not being the capital island, the most populated island and the one that has experienced the most rapid change and is also considered the economic center of Galapagos. Therefore, Santa Cruz

makes a good place to study how the conservation efforts meet economic development and a continuously growing tourist industry. At Santa Cruz you can also find both the base of major institutions, such as the Galapagos National Park and the Charles Darwin Research Station, as well as local farmers and residents residing in the biodiverse highlands, along with a fast-growing town greatly influenced by businesses and tourism.

I spent 6 weeks at Galapagos, conducting interviews, doing participatory observations and observations.

### **3.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND OBSERVATIONS**

Participant observation was a big part in this thesis, because interacting with people gives an opportunity to learn more about the people, the place, different stake holders, how people interact, and relate to things. Participant observation also makes it possible to describe everyday life and experiences that can lead to new understandings of practices, ways of seeing things, and of different activities in groups or situations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

The first 2 weeks after I arrived at Santa Cruz I stayed with a family in the highlands on their farm, where I performed daily farm activities with the family, had meals with them, and joined them in different activities on and off the farm, while all the time talking to them and their friends, relatives and other people I encountered, about their thoughts, opinions and lives here on the island. This not only led to me meeting a lot of new people, and allowed me to join meetings and discussions, but helped me experience and learn about their lives.

After the two weeks at the farm in the highlands I moved down to the city Puerto Ayura, where I continued to have contact and spend time with my host family, but also met more people and locals to whom I talked to, spent time with and interviewed. I met many through contacts of the host family, using a sort of “snowball sampling technique” (Noy, 2008), and I met several informants by talking to people in the town.

When staying on Santa Cruz, I also found it interesting, and informative to do observations, to observe how people act and interact, as well as observe how the rapid changes in economic growth and tourism has affected not only the people but the towns and structures of the island. By simply walking around and looking at the many tourists’ shops, vendors, tour operators and yachts, do get a sense of just how much the tourism industry affect Galapagos. Also observing the life and wildlife in the highlands give you an insight in the various aspects of conservation efforts, local agricultural based livelihoods, and the impact of tourists on popular wildlife spotting sites. Also seeing park rangers walking around, or guarding

entrances to reserved areas implies the constant presence of institutional conservation efforts, meeting tourists and locals.

### **3.2 INTERVIEWS**

During my 6 weeks at Santa Cruz I conducted in total 25 interviews, during different lengths and in different settings, and with people from a variety of ages (between 22-70 years old), gender (13 male, 12 female), and backgrounds, residing at Santa Cruz.

When possible, I recorded the interviews as well as taking notes, but on some occasions only notetaking was possible (for example when interviewing a nature guide on a boat with a very loud engine, or a bar keeper in a noisy bar).

The interviews were mostly semi-structured, partly structured so that we wouldn't get too far from the subject, but at the same time quite open so informants could elaborate their answers and discuss things they thought important. Interviews that are less structured opens up for the informant to use their own terminology and are not as affected by the interviewers' opinions and words (Bernard, 2011).

The in-depth interviews and informal conversations I found revealed a lot about people's attitudes towards both conservation, development of the Island, tourism, and how they experience life at Galapagos. This led to a deeper understanding of how these factors affects their lives here, and how different ideologies and agencies guides not only their opinions but their decisions.

### **3.3 REFLEXIVITY**

However, despite being warmly welcomed into the family at the farm, and forming strong friendships with several people at Santa Cruz, it is important to remember that I was still an outsider to the local culture. Not only did I stand out physically, but have a different cultural background and speak a different language. The local language is Spanish, in which my skills are limited, fortunately most people I encountered spoke English as well. This made it easier for me, as most of the time I did not need a translator, while some interviews were just in English, others were a mixture of English and Spanish, which worked well both for me and the informant who sometimes experienced that it was easier to express certain points in Spanish.

But all this of course affect how I was viewed, and how people chose to interact with me. Since I very much looked like a tourist or "gringa", I think it in some cases was limiting, but might have also helped me get access to certain stakeholder for interviews. When talking to

the local population however, I think it was a great benefit that I met some of my informants through my friend at the farm (who has grown up at Santa Cruz and knows a lot of the local residents), as they seemed more at ease and talked more freely after an introduction from her. I must also add that the interviews and observations was done during a very limited time and in limited numbers. It is therefore not possible to make too broad general conclusions, because there is not enough data over enough time. The data I collected is not of a quantitative kind, but rather qualitative, attempting to get a deeper insight in people's lives and opinions, with representatives from different ages, gender, groups and occupations, to get an insight in how people at Santa Cruz experience the famous Galapagos and the challenges it is facing.

## **4 ESTABLISHING THE GALAPAGOS NATIONAL PARK**

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### **4.1 THE ISLANDS OF GALAPAGOS**

The Galapagos consists of islands and volcanic rock structures and are located in the Pacific Ocean approximately 1000 kilometers from mainland Ecuador. The unique nature and wildlife at Galapagos have evolved much due to the isolated location, that for long experienced little influence from the rest of the world. (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). The Galapagos islands consists of 61 volcanic islands and rocks, with thirteen main island; Baltra, Espanola, Fernandina, Floreana, Genovesa, Isabela, Marchena, Pinta, Pinzón, San Cristobal, Santa Cruz, Santa Fe, and Santiago.<sup>1</sup> Today only a few of the islands are inhabited, Isabella is the biggest island but have a small population, the capital is located on San Cristobal islands, but the most populated island is Santa Cruz, and it is also said to be the economic capital at Galapagos.

Since the discovery of Galapagos, the islands have had different visitors with different social and economic interests, that all had an impact on the island's development and nature and wildlife.<sup>2</sup> The first person to officially discover the Galapagos Islands, was the Bishop of Panama, Frey Tomas de Berlanga, who drifted there on his ship in 1535. Since then there has been different people coming to Galapagos for different purposes. Pirates used them as a place to take refuge after raids (and also discovered that the large tortoises could survive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.galapagosislands.com/nature/geography/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.galapagos.org/about\\_galapagos/about-galapagos/history/human-discovery/](https://www.galapagos.org/about_galapagos/about-galapagos/history/human-discovery/)

almost one year without food, which according to the pirates made them perfect to bring as food on their ships)<sup>3</sup>

In the 1800's trade became more common in and between South America and Europe, this led to whaling ships coming to the islands hunting sperm whales, fur seals, and elephant tortoises, nearly leading to their extinction.<sup>4</sup> But the most famous visitor, who really put Galapagos on the map, was Charles Darwin, who landed at the islands at 1845. After his voyage on the HMS Beagle, and observations at the islands he laid the foundation for the Evolution theory.<sup>5</sup>

The first permanent colonialization of Galapagos began around the 1860, first as a penal colony for political prisoners, but soon also for settlers from Ecuador (Mathis, Rose, 2016). In the beginning of the twentieth century the colonialization of Galapagos continued, and people from Norway and Germany also moved there to try their luck as fishermen or farmers.

## **4.2 ESTABLISHING THE GALAPAGOS NATIONAL PARK**

As more people started to move to Galapagos, the human presence and the invasive species brought to the islands started to impact the environment. Scientists started to become concerned for the unique nature that had once inspired Darwin's evolution theory, so in the 1950s the Galapagos national park and the Charles Darwin Foundation were created in order to preserve the nature and wildlife (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). At the same time global media started to spread the picture of Galapagos and its one of a kind flora and fauna, and the importance of conserving it (Mathis, Rose, 2016). The ideology of conservation started to get stronger at the same time as tourism industry started to grow.

The establishment of the national park meant that the state became very much involved in the management of the islands, and increased its power and control of the islands, but also that other formal institutions gained power over the conservation and over the Galapagos Islands at large. Not only Ecuadorian institutions were involved, but also global organizations, such as WWF. So the management of the natural resources on Galapagos was now an international interest, guided by global conservation ideologies. This proved very helpful for the environment and ecosystems on Galapagos, and the preservation of the unique nature was greatly improving.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.galapagosislands.com/nature/geography/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.galapagosislands.com/nature/geography/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.galapagosislands.com/nature/geography/>

For the local population however, this decreased their ability to make decisions about their livelihoods, and since they were not a part of the dominating conservation ideology, but rather a threat to the non-human nature scientist wanted to save, they had to adjust.

These changes also started to affect the local population, who was now living by a conservation area, which for them meant new rules and regulations to live by. For many this meant that they could no longer access natural resources to support their livelihood, especially fishermen became very restricted as they were no longer allowed to fish as they pleased. Farmers were limited as well by the new laws and regulations, in what they were now allowed to do, cultivate, and what animals they could have. All people at Galapagos were affected one way or the other by the conservation regulations.

Also the presence of the state, institutions such as GNP, Charles Darwin Station (CDS) and global conservation organizations started to affect the political landscape at the islands. This meant a change in status for the nature and animals that were fast becoming the focus for the government and global community. And animals that was earlier considered possible sources of food, had now became icons, like the large tortoise (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013).

As the global interest started to grow for the unique nature and wildlife at Galapagos, so did the opportunity to profit from it. The Ecuadorian government that had supported the conservation of Galapagos, was becoming interested in the tourism as well. Keeping up the conservation of the reserve was costly, and tourism to the islands could be a boost for the economy. Therefore, the government started to support tourism to the islands, as well as conservation efforts.

### **4.3 TOURISM, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONSERVATION**

In the 1970s tourism started to increase a lot on Galapagos, more cruise ships came to the islands, and the towns in Galapagos started to offer land-based tourism as well. At the same time, the economy in mainland Ecuador crashed because of falling oil prices and tensions between neighboring countries. This led to a migration from mainland Ecuador to the Galapagos islands, for better work within the tourism sector (Mathis, Rose, 2016).

For the local population at Galapagos this meant opportunities to work in a more profitable sector than farming, which meant some people started to engage in the tourism industry alongside or instead of fishing and farming. However, they faced a lot of competition from the people migrating from the mainland, who sometimes had more education or experience with service related professions. Another occurrence was that entrepreneurs on the mainland



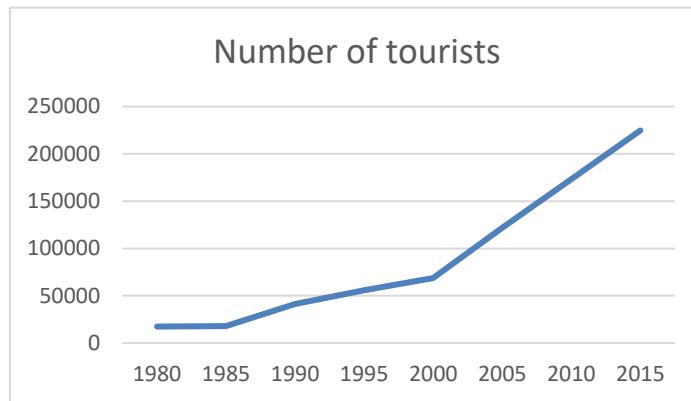
or abroad saw the growing tourism at Galapagos as a business opportunity and started to make investments and gaining more control and power within the Galapagos economy. The money the tourists spent boosted the local economy, which sped up the modernization process, expanding the infrastructure, and establishments for the tourist industry. The people who was able to take part in this economic development gained more money and influence. Unfortunately for the local population, the investments and well-paid jobs were rapidly mostly taken over by people from mainland Ecuador or foreign investors (this has recently been addressed, so foreign investors can no longer invest without a local resident from Galapagos).

When the marine reserve was established in the 1980's, there emerged a number of conflicts between the GNP and conservationists on one side, and local fishermen on the other, who now had to follow very strict fishing rules and many could no longer support themselves on fishing and lost their livelihoods. But a large part of the marine environment was saved, which environmentalists all over the world saw as a very positive development. Tourists, especially the ones interested in snorkeling and diving, also liked the new reserve, and touring agencies offering snorkeling and diving started to emerge (Mathis, Rose, 2016).

#### **4.4 MORE PEOPLE, MONEY, DEVELOPMENT AND PROBLEMS**

The increasing number of tourists to Galapagos continues to contribute to economic development and development of infrastructure on the islands, leading to rapid development and population growth, which drastically have affected the islands. The many tourists who have travelled to Galapagos has led to a rapid economic growth, which contributes to more migration, infrastructure, bigger towns, and businesses. It also affects the unique environment and fragile ecosystems (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015). Because of this, the population in 1980 had increased to 15 000 people, which started to negatively affect the natural resources, not only on land but the surrounding ocean as well. To manage the increasing negative affect from exploiting the natural resources, a marine nature reserve was established around the islands in 1986. But the problem with increasing population and human activity on Galapagos continues; today the population is approximately 25 000 permanent residents, with a few thousand more categorized as temporary or irregular (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015).

From the 1980 the tourism to Galapagos has increased tremendously, from approximately 17,445 tourists going to Galapagos in 1980, to 224,745 in 2015 (Rosenberg, 2014, and Izurieta, 2017).



While tourism brings a lot of things that can be good (job opportunities, economic growth and development) it is difficult to balance the rising amount of people and the preservation of nature and wildlife, which is one of the things making the Galapagos so special in the first

place.

One of the biggest threats to the unique environment of Galapagos is invasive species, invasive species affect the fragile ecosystems and greatly affects the nature and animals. The risk of invasive species increases with the large number of people going to the Galapagos. Not only does the people themselves pose a threat by bringing non-native species, but with more people on Galapagos there are more imports which is always a big risk. Tourism has been the factor contributing most to population growth, the past 15 years gross income generated by tourism has increased by an average of 14% each year (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015). Today tourism at Galapagos makes up \$418M annually, of which an estimated \$63M enters the local economy (equal to 51% of the Galapagos economy) (Galapagos.org).

With the increasing tourism, the infrastructure and means of transportation has increased a lot. There are more airports, more flights, more cargo ships, and more fuel brought to the islands. This increases the risk of damaging the nature, especially through things like oil spills and increased risk of invasive species, which is one of the biggest threats to the present ecosystems and nature at Galapagos (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). But the new infrastructure also contributes to making access easier for people living at Galapagos, which is contributing to development, but also makes it easier for more people to go there. (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). But not everyone agrees on what the best solution is, while the government, national park and conservationists wants as few people as possible on Galapagos in order to conserve its unique environment, people living on Galapagos depending on tourism for their livelihood does not all agree.

#### **4.5 AN INTERCONNECTED DEPENDENCY**

But conservation, tourism and development are very closely connected and interdependent; increasing tourism and population growth increases the demand for more infrastructure, resources, water and food, which has a big impact on the environment, but increasing tourism also means more money which is good both for the local economy, development projects, and means more money for the scientific research and conservation work. But development and conservation efforts does not always go together (Mathis, Rose, 2016).

And even though tourism has a big impact on the environment, the tourists would not go the Galapagos if it was not for the well-preserved nature and wildlife, so it is also in economic interests to conserve the nature, or tourism would decrease. The local population is also very dependent on tourism for their livelihood, to different extent, but are also pushed by different institutions and agents to be sustainable and conserve the environment, and some experience that it is always the environment and not the people that is in focus. So there is an ongoing struggle how to manage conservations, with the increasing tourism, economic interests, and rapid development on the islands, along with the different wills of the local population that often does not get prioritized due to the other competing interest of actors with more power.

### **5 MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

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The conservation efforts at Galapagos are globally recognized, and the preservation of the unique nature and wildlife is by many considered extremely important. Galapagos is facing many difficulties in maintaining the unique environment, invasive species being one of the biggest problems, and if nothing is done soon, the “one of a kind” ecosystem might be destroyed. The Ecuadorian government along with global organizations is therefore trying to cope with the rapid changes and protect the environment.

Every visitor to the Galapagos will discover that conservation is considered important and is very present at Galapagos. No matter where you are or what you are doing on the islands, you are reminded of it in one way or another. It becomes even clearer when examining how the Galapagos is managed, where conservation is the main goal for the islands.

#### **5.1 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

Ever since Darwin visited the Galapagos Islands, global organizations and researcher have been both interested in the archipelago, as well as involved in the protection and conservation of it. It was due to much international pressure, and with the help from international conservation promoting organizations (such as WWF) that the establishment of the reserve and the Galapagos National Park came about. International organizations remain invested and engaged in the conservation work today, through funding conservation efforts, being present at the islands, as well as monitoring conservation.

## **5.2 THE STATE**

The Galapagos Islands however, formally belongs to the state of Ecuador, setting the laws and regulations for the islands, although influenced by the international community and the conservation agenda. The archipelago is presently managed according to the *Organic Law for the Special Regimen for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of Galapagos* (LOREG), also known as the Special Law for Galapagos. The Special Law for Galapagos was established and became part of Ecuador's constitution in 1998. The law consists of a framework of rules and regulations for many aspects and areas of Galapagos, including; regional planning, inspection and quarantine measures, how fisheries should be managed, migration and living regulations, tourism, agriculture and waste management (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). The special law is in some ways limiting for the people living or working at Galapagos (in regards of what they can import, where people are allowed to live, what type of animals they can have) but it also offers some benefits or rights to residents (such as subsidies, right to some fishing, access to tourism). (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013).

The Special Law of 1998, that was created in 1998 and consists of 73 points that aims to further conservation at Galapagos. The overall ambition with the Special Law is to preserve the islands and nearby marine area for present and future generations, as well as developing local settlements and use legal measurements to build a harmonic relationship with the residents of Galapagos (Neira, 2016). The Special Law for Galapagos has been approved, but some regulations and rules haven't been developed yet, and therefore many sections of the law has not been implemented or enforced. One of the biggest issues is that the law dealing with the control of invasive species and environmental impact is not well regulated, even if efforts have been made to better this (Tapper, 2006).

For the state to be able to govern the Galapagos Islands and enforce laws and regulations, there are several institutions at Galapagos working to enforce and promote the conservation regulations.

### 5.3 INSTITUTIONS

There are several institutions in place at Galapagos to regulate different aspects of the Islands and the reserve. Many of which have power or influence over decision making processes at Galapagos, which affects the governance and conservation attempts (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). The most significant institutions are;

- The *Consejo de Gobierno* de Galapagos (Governing Council of Galapagos), that is responsible for the general management of the populated areas at Galapagos. The president of Ecuador appoints a Governor who is then in charge of the Governing Council, that then is responsible for managing administration, planning, and resources, as well as planning activities for conservation.
- *The Galapagos National Park* (GNP) is the biggest institution on the Galapagos, and are responsible for the management of the reserve (on land and marine reserve). The director of GNP is also responsible to report to the Minister of the Environment.
- At Santa Cruz, San Cristobal and Isabella (the three most populated islands) there are also *Municipal Government*, that consists of a city council and an elected mayor.
- Another important institution is the *Ecuadorian Agency for Quality Assurance* (Agrocalidad), that manages the Quarantine and Inspection Services (SICGAL) at Galapagos and is a service of the Ministry of Agriculture that is responsible for the biosecurity issues and control of invasive species entering the archipelago.
- The *Ecuadorian Navy* is also an important institution at work at Galapagos, aiding in guarding and controlling the Galapagos Marine Reserve, making sure the laws and restrictions of the reserve are being followed, including restrictions regarding fishing.
- Moreover, the *Ministries of Tourism and Agriculture*, along with several local NGOs also take part in management decisions and conservation at Galapagos. (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013).

All the institutions at Galapagos (apart from some local NGOs) are governed by, or stand in relation to, the state of Ecuador, and are established at Galapagos to regulate and enforce the rules and regulations set by the state, to govern conservation.

## **5.4 MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS**

Even though the management of Galapagos is governed from the top, by the state of Ecuador, many of the institutions at Galapagos have decision-making power and can influence the management of the archipelago. This have however, meant that the management of Galapagos due to the many different actors involved, is not always functioning in a sustainable manner. the World Heritage Center and the IUCN concluded that the present management and governance does not have adequate regional planning, nor sustainable tourism development, and also lack transparency and accountability. (Galapagos Conservancy, 2015; Galapagos National Park, 2013). And according to UNESCO (2018), the governance of Galapagos is problematic, and the legal framework of the Special Law is not functioning well and implementation of it is lacking, although slightly improving. Another management problem is that the director of the GNP changes a lot. Even during my brief six weeks stay at Galapagos, the director changed.

One of the biggest management related issues is claimed to be the not sufficiently regulated number of tourists entering the Galapagos islands. There has been attempts to regulate tourisms, both through setting a limit to how many can enter to the Galapagos, although not implemented, and an entrance fee that all must pay. The entrance fee however has not been raised for approximately 20 years, and there is an ongoing debate on whether it should be a higher fee. The attempts to regulate tourism, could also be seen as going in line with that of conservation being challenged by, and stand in relation to, economic interests. The conservation agenda is nevertheless very present at Galapagos, and while some people act accordingly and work to preserve the environment, there are also many local residents who does not agree with the conservation agenda and the laws and regulations set to accomplish it.

## **6 HOW DOES DIFFERENT ACTORS RELATE TO CONSERVATION AND TOURISM?**

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Due to the many different actors and agencies at Galapagos, belonging to distinct but overlapping social fields (cf. Bourdieu 1992), there are many different opinions and perspectives on what life is like on Galapagos, and how the islands should be managed.

Depending on what social field people at Galapagos mainly are active within, their views and actions towards conservation, tourism and economic development seem to differ. For example, people who consider themselves conservationists all expressed the importance of minimizing human effects on the environment, and the importance of preserving the environment, while business owners on the other hand expressed concern about the GNP and conservation that might affect their livelihoods badly. Depending on the social field people belonged to, the perception of the ongoing changes on Galapagos varied. Everyone living on Galapagos, however, must to some extent relate to the constant presence of the conservation agenda.

## 6.1 FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

Most formal institutions at Galapagos work to preserve the nature and wildlife, and therefore in a way belong to social fields, which norms and values show only small variances. However, the overarching focus on maintenance of the ecological system of the islands may be shared by a number of interrelated fields, but there are distinctions between various sub-fields.

The institutions on Galapagos are greatly influenced by, or established to, preserving the nature and wildlife the archipelago is so famous for. Most of the formal institutions works for conserving the environment and take many measures to do so. Since the nature is generally considered to be the one thing making Galapagos so special, both by global organizations and local, it is considered very important to conserve.

The Galapagos National Park (GNP), which is the biggest institution at Galapagos, was established to conserve and protect the nature at Galapagos and to manage the reserve. They work to enforce the laws and regulations set to preserve the wildlife and prevent disturbances. The current director (at the time of the interview) of the GNP, a middle-aged man who deeply cared for the nature and wildlife at Galapagos, explained that;

*“We are protecting the marine reserve, the national park, and the entire island. (...) We protect the species that are here now, recovery program of restauration, keep balance between plants and animals. (...) We protect specific species, like the giant tortoises for example, we protect the nests, we are protecting mammals, and plants and insects. Invasive species are the biggest challenge.”*

He also explained to me that the environment is the most important thing on the islands, and also should be so for people working in the tourism industry. Because it is the unique nature

and wildlife that makes tourists come to Galapagos, so it should really be in everyone's interest to conserve the environment.

*“Conservation, it is the base, not only for the national park, but for everyone. Conservation at Galapagos is very important. Every activity, every person should be thinking in line with conservation. It's not only a problem for Galapagos anymore, but a problem for the whole society.”*

The director of the Galapagos national park also told me about all the problems the national park is facing with keeping a balance between plants and animals, and especially with keeping the invasive species under control. Because of this, it is according to him very important to work on tourism management. Both with the tourists that are in Galapagos, but also manage the number of people entering. The Director of the GNP told me that;

*“tourism is a problem. It is a big problem. Every tourist here, every person here, is consuming a lot of water, services, energy... (...) and the pollution from tourism is very high. And it is a problem. People coming here, there is a big risk of invasive species, which is a problem”*

The director of the national park also told me that even though he truly believes in the conservation, and believes that all people at Galapagos should care about the environment, not everyone is pleased with the conservation and the GNP and that it can be difficult to enforce the conservation regulations;

*“It is hard, because there is a lot of history here with people fighting against conservation. The perception of a lot of people here is that the national park is the enemy. The national park as the number one enemy of the people. It is because we are an institution of revelation, we are an institution to put order and sanctions, people do not like that. But it is necessary.”*

The main concern of the Galapagos National Park is to manage the nature and marine reserve, and to work on the conservation of the nature and wildlife; therefore it is no surprise that when I talked to people working for the GNP, either nature guides, or people working by the entrances or exits by the nature park, they were all telling me the importance of conservation and sustainable thinking for Galapagos. A person working at the entrance to the nature reserve at Tortuga Bay at Santa Cruz, monitoring everyone who enters and exits the national park area and informing them about the rules within the reserve, told me that:

*“It is very important to protect the environment at Galapagos. It is very unique. The nature here at Santa Cruz, and the animals, are one of a kind. So we must protect it.”*



In order to work with conservation of different species of plants and animals, and control invasive species, the GNP work closely with the *Charles Darwin (Research) Station* (CDS). A researcher at the station told me that;

*“For everything we do here, we have to have permission from the national park, since we work in the national park.”*

The main goal for the CDS is to do research on the animals and nature at Galapagos and to conserve it. The results from the research can then be used by the GNP to further work on the conservation.

The Charles Darwin Research Station is located in Puerto Ayura at the end of Charles Darwin Avenue (it is not hard to notice that Charles Darwin is very famous here, I was also staying at the Darwin Hostel), it is a cluster of buildings, some functioning as a museum or displays the ongoing research, while others are for the scientists and volunteers at the station. There is also a library (the only one at Galapagos) where you can find research done on Galapagos, everything from books, to articles, to thesis. Walking around the center, you can get a brief historical background of Charles Darwin and Galapagos (you can also pose with a statue of Darwin, which most visitors seemed to be doing) and get an overview of the work done at the station, and some of the challenges the conservation of Galapagos is facing. A researcher at the DRS, a young woman originally from USA, who first came to the Galapagos Islands to volunteer for the research station for several months, and later came to do research and work as a researcher, told me about the importance of research at Galapagos, and also how important it is with the conservation for the islands.

*“Conservation work at Galapagos is highly important. It is a very remote set of islands, subtropical, and it was untouched for such a long long long, time. And then humans came and started to make an impact. So now there is a high tourism rate, more local people, and they are affecting the natural conditions here. And now they are putting this big pressure on animals, creatures, plants, to adapt quickly or die. And also pollution and more, I think that conservation is highly important for this place.”*

To her, the unique wildlife at Galapagos is something that needs to be preserved. Such a remote place that for so long was not affected by humans, is special in so many ways. It is where Darwin came up with his evolution theory, and in some bird species the survival of the fittest is still very visible today, proving Darwin's theory in real life at Galapagos. The researcher told me that if the environment at Galapagos is to be preserved, this large amount

of people cannot be there. The best way to preserve the nature and wildlife, according to her would be if there were no people living at Galapagos and no tourism either, but only a small number of researchers doing research and managing the invasive species and the other effects of human presence there. But since people are living there, and tourism is continuing to increase, that she is not sure if that would at all be a possible option, and not an easy thing to achieve. But in the long run it is according to her what would be best for conserving Galapagos.

*“I think the best option would be that people no longer lived here, putting so much pressure on the native habitat, and the only way to do that really is, like if you modeled the US national parks, where they said that the last generation living there now can live there until the die, and then, that’s it. But I don’t know if that could ever happen here.”*

She also stated that the Galapagos differ from most national parks, because people have only been living here for approximately 200 years, so it might be easier to make changes there than in places where people have been established longer, developing specific livelihoods and cultures. Of course, it would still not be easy, and it would be very hard for people living there to move, and also difficult to stop tourism, but would it not be worse in the long run to ruin the special nature and wildlife at Galapagos forever?

Since the CDS was established to support the conservation work at Galapagos, it is not surprising that researchers and people working there are very positive about conservation efforts and consider it to be very important. For many of the researchers, that is the main reason for them being there.

Other institutions sharing the concern for the environment are *UNESCO* who put Galapagos on the list of World heritage in danger, *WWF*; who has been working in Galapagos to conserve the nature and animals for many years (but closed their office at the islands a few years ago) and *Non Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) involved in preserving the nature at Galapagos.

The *WWF* states that protecting the environment and wildlife is very important to the organization and are concerned about all things threatening it. *WWF* therefore supports the GNP to improve the control and surveillance at Galapagos (World Wildlife Fond, 2018). The *WWF* also sees an increased number of visitors and rapid human development as a major threat, since it increases the amount of imported goods, fossil fuels, more and poorly managed waste, more or new invasive species, migration from the mainland, and more

infrastructure (World Wildlife Fond, 2018). The global organizations promoting conservation at Galapagos share the idea that the unique nature and environment there must be protected and preserved.

## **6.2 BUSINESSES AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

But not everyone agrees that only the conservation should be in focus. One issue is that some locals feel that nature and conservation is always in focus in Galapagos, and the quest for making Galapagos as sustainable as possible, sometimes means that the people are not prioritized, especially by formal institutions, such as the GNP, and global organizations. Since the environment at Galapagos is very unique, it is getting most of the attention. If a species is in danger of extinction, it gets a lot of media attention all over the world and specifically in Galapagos, like the turtle Lonesome George who was the last of his kind and who past away a few years ago. But you rarely read or hear about issues the local people are experiencing, such as lacking medical staff at the hospital, shortage of water or droughts, or problems with the shipping of food from the mainland (that recently been quite an issue). Or the migration laws that are limiting people from moving to the islands, and has resulted in difficulties receiving good teachers and doctors, especially people who can stay a longer period of time. This omission of a politics directed at the local population makes some local people feeling that the state and the global community only cares about conservation, and not about the people at Galapagos. Therefore, some of the locals do not want to engage much in the conservation efforts. (from interviews) A hostel owner, a middle-aged man who runs a hostel right by the Charles Darwin Avenue, and whose grandparents moved to Galapagos from Norway in the 1930s' and has since continued to live there for generations, told me that;

*“Conservation can be good, but the conservation here is radical. Only conservation, and people out. That is their philosophy. Only animals, and they don't want to protect people.”*

Another reason is also that not everyone is interested in, or passionate about conservation. People who come to Galapagos only for work, or who are not planning on moving there permanently, are sometimes not as concerned about the pressing issues of protecting the nature. It is hard for many to leave behind the comforts and entertainment possibilities they are used to from home, and many think tourism (that leads to such developments) in the Galapagos is therefore a good thing, and it also boost the economy. A young man from the mainland Ecuador, who came to Galapagos to work at a hotel told me that;

*“I think tourism here is good, it is good that people come here. (...) I wish there was more to do here, I miss going to the cinema or doing different things, you know? Here there is very little to do. More shops would also be nice.”*

But the most common reason however, for people thinking tourism is a good thing is that people who are living at Galapagos often depend on tourism for their livelihoods, and a decrease in tourism at the islands would be very problematic for many. A hostel owner expressed to me that he feels that tourism is not actually a problem if you only manage it well;

*“The conservationist say that ‘no, we don’t need more tourists here’, but the problem isn’t how many, it is how you can manage it. If people here agrees with the regulations, we can have more tourists! But in order an ordered way, for example here, it is a bit unordered. But if in an ordered way, we can have more.”*

People from all kinds of occupations at Galapagos usually rely on tourism to some extent. So even if most people think that nature conservation is a good thing, not everyone is willing to make sacrifices to achieve it. (from interviews)

As you walk around in Puerto Ayura, it is clear that tourism has affected the city a lot. Everywhere (especially the streets closest to the docks) you see businesses that depend on the tourists arriving to Galapagos. The streets are filled with people trying to sell you tours, or souvenirs, or wanting you to eat at their restaurant or staying at their hostels. Most businesses here would not exist if it wasn’t for the tourism, and many people rely on the steady stream of tourism daily coming to Santa Cruz.

A young woman, originally from the mainland Ecuador, but who has been living at Galapagos for many years now, working at a travel agency in Puerto Ayura told me that she believes tourism in Galapagos is a very good thing, and that it would even be good with more tourists at Galapagos. She told me that;

*“The tourists coming to Galapagos are very good. It is good for businesses, and for economy. (...) But nature here is also important, conservation is good because tourist come to experience nature, they want to see the animals here.”*

Another person who also believes that tourism is a good thing for Galapagos is a young woman from Europe who came to Galapagos to work as a translator for nature guides. She

told me that the nature at Galapagos and the animals, is what brings people to Galapagos, and for that reason it is important to conserve it.

*“Most tourist who come here are only want to see the unique animals, such as the big turtles and the blue footed boobies.”*

Because of this she also considers conserving the nature is important, she herself also like the nature there and think it should be protected to some extent. She also expressed that;

*“I think tourists are good for the people here, tourism is good for development, creating jobs, and is good for the economy.”*

She also believes that the tourism is presently controlled by the national park in a good way, so it works well as it is now!

Another person who expressed his opinions about how the GNP controls tourism was a hostel owner who grew up at Santa Cruz and who very much depends on the tourists coming and staying at his hostel. He told me that already the GNP is making it difficult to run a hostel due to stricter regulations for hostels that now need to be sustainable and follow new rules and regulations decided by the National Park. He also expressed his concern that the GNP wants to decrease the amount of tourists coming, perhaps by making it more expensive.

*“If they make it more expensive to come here, it will bring a different type of tourist, they maybe want to go on expensive cruises and stay at luxury hotels. It is better if tourist come here and are in town.”*

If that were to happen, that would be devastating to smaller hostels and businesses, since they might not be able to provide the luxury and service the bigger and more expensive facilities can. Another person urging that tourism is not bad, was a restaurant owner who moved from Europe over twenty years ago to open his own restaurant, told me that;

*“Tourism is not a problem, it is all about how it is done! Conservation is important, but as long as tourism is done well, and things like, garbage is handled, and things like plastic is used very little, it is not a problem.”*

Both restaurant and hostel owners alike expressed that the real issue was not the high number of tourists, but how it is managed. They also expressed that the GNP did not seem to care about the people, only the nature and animals. They concluded that if handled well, tourism and development of Galapagos is a good thing.

### **6.3 LOCALS AND FARMERS**

Many of the locals and farmer on the islands who I met are concerned about the environment, but also want to be able to have a good quality of life there. Many are therefore trying to find a balance between these goals. My main informant, with whom I was living with for a bit over two weeks, at her parents' farm in the highlands of Santa Cruz, and then for a couple of nights in her apartment in Puerto Ayura, is trying hard to find such a good balance. She grew up on Santa Cruz and loves Galapagos very much. She loves the nature and animals and spends as much time outdoors as she can. She told me about how much has changed in Santa Cruz and Puerto Ayura since she was a child, the city has expanded a lot, new houses, roads and buildings has appeared very fast, and areas where there used to be lots of seals and other animals are now abandoned by the animals and occupied by buildings or shops. One day when we walked along Charles Darwin Avenue to a coffee shop called OMG Coffee she stopped and pointed;

*“Here there used to be no buildings, just nature, and many animals, now it’s just buildings everywhere, and no animals anymore.”*

It is hard to imagine the area in Puerto Ayura closest to the docks as anything other than a city. As you walk the Charles Darwin Avenue every inch of the concrete street is occupied by tour agencies, restaurants, hotels, and shops selling merchandise the “Galapagos” logo on every item. Tourists are spotted everywhere, backpackers with their backpacks on trying to find cheap places to stay and eat, large groups of (usually American or German) tourists walking behind a guide complaining about the hot weather, and nature enthusiasts in full khaki colored gear covered from head to foot carrying large cameras and equipment ready to document every bit of the Galapagos nature, and then of course the yacht people who occasionally cruise through town when docked in the harbor. If it wasn’t for the many Galapagos items seen everywhere, it could look like any touristy town anywhere in the world. The fact that you are in a place with unique nature is not really apparent in Puerto Ayura,

with the exception for a few places in town where you can still spot some exotic birds, some seals sunbathing by the dock, and the occasional iguana laying around in the sun.

My main informant tells me that she wants to preserve the nature at Galapagos, but not everyone is interested in doing so. The most precious to her however, is her coffee plants. On her parents' farm, she has a part of land that is hers, where she started to plant coffee a few years ago. She goes to the farm every day to take care of her coffee. She hopes that coffee at Galapagos can be a way of taking care of the nature and natural resources, and also making a living.

I worked by her side on the farm for two weeks, at a much slower pace, and I am impressed by her dedication. Besides her own coffee plantation, she is also a coordinator for other farmers on Galapagos growing coffee, and they recently built a common place for drying and roasting the beans. She believes that it is good that other people in Santa Cruz wants to grow coffee, its good if they can help each other.

She wants to be able to focus on her coffee full time, but for now, just as for most farmers at Santa Cruz, simply being a farmer is not enough to support a living. She is therefore also working at the local university. Her family that has a bigger farm than her and grow more things than just coffee, still need another income as well. Her father or her cousin therefore also drives a taxi, something that is quite common in Santa Cruz. Puerto Ayura is filled with white Toyota pickup trucks circulating as taxies. And since the busses often are quite unreliable, a taxi is usually not a bad option, although more expensive than the public transportation.

Other farmers told me about similar problems with maintaining a livelihood only through farming. There are a lot of obstacles, but many also believe that there are possibilities as well. A farmer told me about some of the problems he experiences;

*“tourists don’t want to buy from here, they want to bring goods from mainland, they say the quality is better on the mainland and the price also.(...) It is difficult. But we are working, and we are survivors! I want to show, to me and to the people, we can produce here, with very high quality, and with environment sustainability”.*

Not only is it difficult to be a farmer because it is difficult to grow things, but at Galapagos it is also difficult to sell, because there is a preference for imported goods. Selling the products is usually done through middle-hands, not leaving much money to the farmers. However, a relatively new initiative is a farmer's market every Saturday, where farmers can

sell their product without the involvement of any middle-hands. Another issue is that since most of the area of Galapagos is a nature reserve, there is only a certain part of Santa Cruz where people are allowed to live and cultivate, so when more people moved to Galapagos it drove up the price of land quite a bit. There are also many restrictions about the type of pesticides and fertilizers you are allowed to use, to protect the environment. But the environmentally friendly products are quite expensive, and the more organic they are, the dearer they are. Small scale farmers in particular are very dependent on pesticides, due to the invasive species and different pests; the farmers usually do not have the manpower to remove weeds without the use of pesticides.

Another big issue is access to water. It can be very hard to come by at times in Santa Cruz. Many of the farmers told me about a drought they had in 2016, that hit most of them very bad. Many crops died, and so did much of the livestock, because there was not any rain or water for months. For a small-scale farmer, it is hard to be resilient to shocks like that. Even if some, especially the larger farms, now are taking action to be able to deal with it better if it were to happen again.

According to researchers at Charles Darwin Station, droughts and other environmental changes are likely to recur more often in the future, due to global warming. Droughts are also a big threat to the ecosystems at Galapagos, and the effects of them are still hard to predict. I met with a farmer who truly believes that local farming is the solution for Galapagos, to learn about her perspective. She has worked at the Charles Darwin Station 11 years, for a time as the director. She has also worked 12 years for WWF. She is a true environmentalist and the unique nature at Galapagos is very close to her heart. She has for quite some time believed that local farming is the best solution for Galapagos, and has therefore worked with farmers to promote this. Recently she also decided to start her own project; she bought an abandoned farm to clear it from invasive species. Abandoned farms are a problem for the environment at Galapagos. She tries to promote sustainability through her farming, because the nature is very important to her, but she also realizes the importance of recognizing that the Galapagos has changed, and that it is important to adapt to the new circumstances and accept that the people living at Galapagos are now part of the islands, and yet try and protect the environment.

*“I wish that we could see that this place is extremely unique. (...) But the isolation that made it so unique is not there anymore. When I came here in 1995 there was not that many flights a day, not many flights a week. Right now some days, we have 7 flights a day. So the*



*isolation is not there anymore. And people here need things, so we keep bringing things. So the probability of having new invasive species here, is threatening the ecosystem of Galapagos. But I think the biggest invasive species are us humans. But we are here to stay right? I think we can solve this in a responsible and environmentally friendly way, I really think so.”*

She is, in spite of being relatively new as a full-time farmer, a firm believer in farming as the way forward for Galapagos. However, she also recognizes that many people are depending on tourism as a livelihood, and despite her background with the WWF and Charles Darwin Station, she does not consider that tourism is necessarily bad for the islands.

*“Tourists are not the problem, the problem is the whole thing that comes with tourism operations. But on the other hand if you think about it, here everyone lives on tourism. Conservationist and tour operators. You name it, everyone. So it has had a positive affect too, because the government has paid attention to the place because it brings tourists into the country. And it brings people here because they want to see the special place. They are not looking for sun and beaches, they are looking for what Galapagos is. And as long as people here realizes that that is why this is so special, we will make it work, I really think. (...) I am a conservationist by heart, I have worked with conservation my whole life, but you have to make it work for humans, and humans needs money. So, there are a lot of very responsible tourist operators, that know that if they act locally, and buy locally and buy from responsible fisheries (and such), they are also helping themselves. And I think that is the key.”*

There are, however, other local people who also tries to combine making a livelihood and at the same time preserve the environment. I interviewed a young couple who recently opened a restaurant a block from Charles Darwin Avenue, where the concept is sustainability. They work hard to use only locally grown products, and to use as much of the products as possible. They try working together with local farmers to get them involved in sustainability as well.

*“We try to work with only local products and producers. Most restaurants here get everything from the mainland, I mean fruits, vegetables... but we have local farms, and we can find everything here, almost everything. (...) It’s a challenge. Now we are trying to*

*encourage the farmers to grow more for us. So we try to have a seasonal menu. So we have to be creative of what we have. And we try to use everything. We have to care about this island. This is how we can support the island.”*

So even if many local people depend on the tourism industry, there are also many who still think the conservation of the islands is important, and who also try to manage and find a middle way to be able to have a livelihood to support them, but who also make conservation efforts.

The interviews conducted at Galapagos showed many various views and attitudes towards the current situation at Galapagos, and many different opinions regarding conservation and tourism at the island. Although the interviews only represent a small number of the inhabitants, all with various views and experience, some common themes emerged, seemingly, at least to some extent, depending on the people's background and livelihood, or the social field they fit into.

## **7 DISCUSSION**

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The Galapagos has long been struggling with how to manage the islands and the natural resources. Balancing conservation with economic development, tourism and the local population creates a conflict of interests that is very present at Santa Cruz, the tension between economic growth and economic development and conservation of nature and biodiversity. The actors described in this thesis are positioned along a socio-economic scale of this tension. It must be emphasized, however, that the present motor of economic growth is also totally dependent on the imagination of Galapagos as an environmental Eden on Earth.

### **7.1 POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF GALAPAGOS**

The current situation at Galapagos, and the need for people to adjust to conservation is a result of actors, such as the state, who has the power to enforce their agenda, while the local population may not. This is due to the uneven power-relations present at the Galapagos islands, based on who has the power to make their discourse and agenda dominating other discourses. As mentioned earlier, the establishment of the reserve at Galapagos drastically changed the power-relations between different groups, and the socio-ecological landscape. When establishing the reserve, the power over the area shifted to both international organizations that had had the power of the discourse of the need of environmental and

biodiversity production to put pressure on the Ecuadorian state to create the reserve, as well as furthering the state's power and control over the area.

At Galapagos, international environmentalist organizations and the state are powerful agents with a lot of influence over both agenda, laws, and decision-making processes, and at the archipelago they make great efforts to both make laws and implement laws and policies for conservation. Political ecologists point out that the concept and practice of conservation, including the rules and regulations connected to conservation, affect the socioecological landscape since the construction of a conservation area affects distinct groups differently; economically, politically and socially. It is common that actors, such as the state, or rather specific branches of the state or institutions, may exercise much more control and power, at the expense of other smaller groups, such as people living within or adjacent to conservation areas (Mathis, Rose, 2016). This is very much true in the case of Galapagos, where in establishing the reserve, the state gained a dominating control and power over the 97% of the area turned into a reserve, as well as over the remaining 3% where people are living, leaving little choice to the local population.

Conservation is the main agenda for both international organization and the state at Galapagos, which is evident through the reserve and the laws set by the state to protect the area. However, when tourism gradually increases, bringing economic growth, it became part of the picture as well. Since the state, that still has the most power to regulate and control the Galapagos, was also interested in economic gain as well as conservation, especially since managing the conservation of the reserve was costly, tourism was allowed to continue to grow, along with the money it brought to the local economy. Tourism thereby became part in how things came to be managed and changed at Galapagos. The tourism grew faster than anyone had expected and has the last few decades been the biggest driver of change, contributing greatly to migration and demographic change, rapid development of the islands infrastructure, and becoming the biggest part of the local economy, which for many locals meant a change in livelihood opportunities as many was forced into the tourism industry. The now very established tourism industry that is the biggest part of the economy at Galapagos, both through the money people spend on their travel and on the islands, as well as through the entrance fee to the Galapagos National Park (GNP), has therefore become a powerful factor influencing both the social, political, economic, and ecological landscape.

In political ecology focus lies on understanding the interactions between local people, ecosystems and global political economies, with a focus on power and knowledge. In the case of Galapagos where both global movements affect the perception of nature, political agency governs the conservation conception, and where at the same time the tourism industry stands as the main economic source as well as the biggest driver of change, the understanding of the interconnectedness between these, become highly relevant.

The global influence and pressure from international organizations are pushing Galapagos further towards conservation, even more so since the expanding tourism are causing severe damages to the fragile ecosystems at Galapagos. This is something that the Ecuadorian state have embraced and tried to implement through laws and regulations, enforced through the GNP. However, the Ecuadorian state is also interested in the income the tourism industry generates, making the nature at Galapagos a commodity in the capitalist market that clashes with the conservation agenda. The changes in nature-society relations at Galapagos is partly due to the broader market based political ecological system (Mathis & Rose, 2016). The Galapagos nature has been commodified through the capitalist system, as a package that could be sold to tourists wanting to experience true nature and wildlife. This further complicates the balance between conservation, tourism and development. The tourist industry is not problematized enough in Ecuador, because it brings in money both to the state, GNP, and scientists, and locals. (Mathis & Rose, 2016). Many of the local people living at Galapagos expressed that they want to preserve the environment, but they also want the community's needs to be met as well as being able to make a living (Mathis & Rose, 2016). The interactions and power relations at Galapagos are greatly affected by both the conservation, that through the state and the GNP guides what people at Galapagos can or cannot do within the limits of the reserve, as well as economic interests, pushing people towards a service related economy as a response to the needs of the tourism. In conservation areas, such as most of the Galapagos, there is often an economic shift when the community production changes to accommodate the service and tourism industry (Vaccaro et al., 2013). The tourists come to see the "untouched" non-human nature and wildlife, but to do that they need services (roads, boats, docks) and people to drive the boats and inform about the nature, tourists also spend money to do these things at Galapagos, which furthers the development (Mathis & Rose, 2016). Some of the local residents at Galapagos feel that they have been pushed into a service economy for an international market, instead of being able to support themselves by using the natural resources at Galapagos.

Within this political and economic context, however, is the environment, and the competing over access to it, either as a commodity to be sold to tourist wanting to experience the unique wildlife, as an ecosystem in need of conservation, or as a resource to be used (fishing for example). The uneven power structures at Galapagos, does not enable everyone to get equal access to the natural resources or to act as they wish. The state, and the GNP, exercises power and are enforcing rules of conservation, forcing the local people to adapt. The other powerful influence of economic growth is the tourism industry, driving change to meet its needs, and it is often prioritized over the needs of the locals who have less influence to affect the rapid development taking place.

The development of infrastructure on Galapagos that mainly serves the tourism and conservation, is reflected in the uneven relations between nature society relations (Mathis & Rose, 2016). It seems that infrastructural needs and development for tourists, are prioritized over the needs of the locals. (Nash, 1996). This is reflected in the relative lack of investment in education and healthcare on the islands. This also becomes evident when problems that are important for the locals such as access to water, is not as prioritized as providing services that the tourists want, like access to wi-fi for tourists (Brewington, 2013). Conservation efforts are invested in saving animals and endangered species that attract tourists and is encouraged by the conservationists, yet the local healthcare for people is not sufficient, and locals often have to travel to the mainland for bigger medical issues. (Mathis & Rose, 2016). The flora and fauna at Galapagos are prioritized over the local population because the non-human nature is an easily consumable commodity. This uneven distribution of power and influence between the locals, conservation and tourism industry has made many locals critical of the GNP and conservation, which in its turn has a growing part of the population of the islands ignore some of the conservation regulations. (Mathis & Rose, 2016).

The uneven power-relations is also reflected in how people get access to natural resources and how they are distributed (Fisher et al 2013), and through this perspective it makes it possible to see who have access to what and why. In the case of Galapagos, the establishment of the reserve and the furthering of the laws in relation to the conservation, meant that the local population lost a lot of access to the natural resources, while the state (and GNP) gained both access and influence over it.

The tourism however, is a threat to the conservation. The economic growth it generates has so far prevented the state from putting a limit on it, but it is however regulated while on Galapagos. Although, the migration and population growth it has resulted in, and the

infrastructural development, along with the introduction of more invasive species, has had negative effects on the ecosystems and for the conservation attempts.

The GNP is aware of the affect's tourism have on the environment, and is attempting to find a solution. Who this solution will benefit is not yet clear, but seeming as the Ecuadorian state favors conservation, and it has power to enforce change, it is likely that either that or economic drivers lie behind any future changes, and not the local populations wishes (if they do not reflect those goals).

These aspects all affect the people at Galapagos, and their lives and livelihoods, as well as their ability to act in certain ways. People at Galapagos have limited power to influence the decision-making and current conservation movement. The global organizations, scientists, along with the Ecuadorian state and institutions at Galapagos all favor conservation, and so implements this through laws and regulations, further strengthening their power and influence over the archipelago.

## **7.2 A CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The balance between conservation, tourism and development affect different actors at Galapagos differently. Depending on who you are, what you do, as well as your ideas regarding the management of the islands (if you are a conservationist, someone working within the tourism industry, or a local resident trying to make a living and finding a balance) the management of the islands will affect you differently. The many actors involved at Galapagos with different agendas and ideas makes up a complex balance and a conflict of interest among stakeholders.

The many different actors with different agencies and opinions about how the archipelago should be managed, creates tensions and conflict over management, development and conservation. People within different social fields will experience the ongoing struggle to manage conservation, tourism and economic development at Galapagos differently, because different actors will perceive visions of what the islands' future ought to be in different ways, and their distinct visions and practices will lead to a number of unintended outcomes.

The global organizations with a lot of influence prompting for conservation of the environment of Galapagos, will have conservation as their main agenda, and processes and aspects that are threats to the conservation is therefore not something they will encourage. The Ecuadorian state is influenced by the global community, particularly the conservation movement, and will therefore be in favor of conservation efforts, attempting to implement laws to achieve conservation, such as the so called Special Law of 1998. The state, however,

is also interested in economic gain, and is therefore, unlike the global conservation organizations, not completely against tourism and economic development on Galapagos. Tourists, however, will only go there, and continue to make the economy grow, if they can experience the pristine nature, so it is also in the economic interest for the state to preserve the environment for the tourism.

The GNP that was established at Galapagos to do the conservation work, of course considers the conservation of the islands important, and work towards implementing the laws and regulations, and tries to influence people's conduct by doing so. The GNP is well aware of all the problems related to the large number of tourists; more people, more use of natural resources, more imports and more invasive species. Processes that have a negative impact on the nature and wildlife. However, the GNP is also getting most of their funding through the entrance fee that tourists pay when entering the Islands.

The researchers at Charles Darwin (Research) Station (CDS) are there for one reason, and that is to investigate and do research on the animals and nature on Galapagos. The CDS are very much in favor of conserving the environment. Since many researchers came there only to do research and because they have a passion for the environment, it is not strange that they are against anything that will threaten to destroy this unique environment. Their research is also what global organizations use to further their cause. The GNP also uses its research, however, as it makes the environmental issues very visible, and attempts to inform people about the need for conservation, thus hoping to make a change in people's behavior towards conservation.

The people who, on the other hand, is depending on the tourist industry for their income and livelihood, do not necessarily have the same interest or passion for preserving the environment. Since they depend on tourism, the steady flow of new visitors is more of a concern. While some people want to take the environment into consideration as well, others are there just for work and then the economic development is what matters the most. The local population at Galapagos who are not only working in tourism industries are, however, often interested in both the conservation of the unique environment, and in being able to have a sustainable livelihood. Nature and animals are important to many, but many also want development of roads, hospitals and schools. The farmers want to be able to survive on farming, and not being too limited by rules and regulations set for conservation purposes; but they also wish to be able to sell their goods which at the moment is hard since the imports are usually cheaper in the supermarkets. Many also depend to some extent on the tourism as an extra income.

The different opinions and conflicts over how Galapagos should be managed and how and how the natural resources should be used, is very much related to how people are affected by it. Conservationists and institutions working to uphold conservation rules have everything to gain if conservation is furthered. It is in line both with their beliefs about the importance of preserving the nature and wildlife, as well as it goes in line with the rules and regulations at Galapagos. Tourism and economic development on the islands are not as important because to them, it only hinders the conservation work. To some extent this also means that the local residents at Galapagos is also posing a threat to the environment, and many believe that the fewer people at Galapagos, the better (at least for the environment).

However, many people living on the Galapagos Islands do not share this perspective. This group feels resentments towards the GNP and conservation because not only does it mainly focus on conservation and not the local population and their needs, but it limits their livelihood opportunities, pushing more people into the tourism industry (that is one of the biggest challenges for conservation). The attempts and suggestions from conservationists to continue the conservation often poses big risks for the local population of losing even more options or income opportunities, for example if the entrance fee is to be raised to the GNP. In many ways, the conservation seems to stand in opposite to the wills and needs of the local population, even if that is beginning to change. Regardless however, if you are for or against the conservation agenda on Galapagos, everyone has to relate to it.

The conservationists will and power to preserve the nature however, constantly stands in relation to the wills of the local population and that of the tourism industry. According to Foucault (1991), power is not something absolute that someone has, but is an integral part of social interactions between people or groups; between workers and those with capital, producers and consumers, or the relation between conservationists, the local population, and the tourist industry at Galapagos. At Galapagos the power relation between people, groups and institutions are not fixed, but constantly practiced and reinforced. It is in the actions and practices that power and influence continue to exist and shape the lives of the people living at Galapagos. It is through different actions and means that the Ecuadorian state and the GNP keeps enforcing the environmentalist agenda, and so governing people's behavior and options towards conservation.

### **7.3 GOVERNMENTALITY OF GALAPAGOS**

In the case of Galapagos conservation is a form of governmentality that affects all who live or work there. By using governmentality as a tool to analyze conservation at Galapagos, I



intend to examine both how actors operating at a higher political level govern, and how that affects the governance of the people at Galapagos in various ways.

As mentioned before, the reserve at Galapagos was first established in the 1950s, due to its unique nature that became internationally known, and engaged scientist and global organizations such as UNESCO and WWF pushing for the need to conserve it. For the state of Ecuador, this meant a big pressure to adjust to the global community conservation agenda for the Galapagos Islands. This led to the Ecuadorian state establishing the reserve, and setting up rules and regulations for conservation purposes that states what is allowed and not. The Ecuadorian state then established institutions at Galapagos, to govern and enforce the conservation laws.

The *Consejo de Gobierno de Galapagos* (Governing Council of Galapagos), was created to oversee the general management of the populated areas at Galapagos, and where the Ecuadorian state is quite involved in the governing as the president of Ecuador appoints a Governor who is then in charge of the Governing Council. The Galapagos National Park (GNP) was also established, as the biggest institution at Galapagos, and are responsible for the management of the reserve that makes up 97% of the area (on land and marine reserve). The director of GNP has to report to the Minister of the Environment, and is therefore governed by the state, with the mission to enforce the rules and conservation policies at Galapagos. There are also other institutions at Galapagos reporting back to higher political organs in Ecuador, the *Municipal Government*, the *Ecuadorian Agency for Quality Assurance* (Agrocalidad) that manages the Quarantine and Inspection Services (SICGAL) at Galapagos, the *Ecuadorian Navy*, the *Ministries of Tourism and Agriculture*, along with several local NGOs that are involved in the management of Galapagos but all are under the Ecuadorian states governance. However, the biggest institution that also seem to have the biggest impact and power is the Galapagos National Park.

Being the biggest and most influential institution at Galapagos, Galapagos National Park (GNP) can exercise a lot of power to maintain the rules, but also have the power to govern or influence decision-making at Galapagos, ensuring it follows the conservation ideal, when for example making new policies or management plans, which also furthering the GNPs control and management of how the Galapagos reserve is governed. Hence, the GNP also have a big influence over how the future will take form for Galapagos, through decisions and management plans. The GNP is however, still governed by Ecuadorian state. This is evident through that the Ecuadorian state still makes up the laws that the GNP must follow and

enforce. The state also regulates for example how much funding and support the GNP will receive, as well as influencing whom will have power at the institutions by regulation who is director, or otherwise in charge at Galapagos. That the state is the main governing power at Galapagos, although often acting through local institutions, can also be seen since in spite that tourism is the biggest threat to the ecosystems and environment at Galapagos and therefore not in line with the conservation agenda enforced by the GNP, the large number of tourists that greatly contributes to the economy, are still allowed to continue to come to Galapagos. Another reason for not taking harder actions towards reducing tourism to Galapagos could be the concern for social tension and turmoil since the reduction of tourism would have severe consequences for many local people who would lose at least part of their livelihoods. A similar situation occurred when the marine reserve was established, against many local's wishes, leading to conflicts that erupted when many fishermen lost their right to fish due to the marine reserve. Nevertheless, conservation is still the main agenda enforced by the state through laws at Galapagos. While the state might be the main governing actor, regulating the institutions at Galapagos, they very much rely on the Galapagos National Park to enforce the laws and further conservation at the islands. The GNP is the institution that is very present at Galapagos, and also the regulating actor that has direct contact with the people at the archipelago, and can therefore regulate, influence, and discipline people's behavior, and so shaping human conduct.

The GNP seem to strive enforce rules and encouraging, or discouraging, certain behavior in more ways than one. For example, in regard to enforcing the conservation agenda on the locals, the GNP has control of the farms in the highlands, making sure no illegal pesticides are used, and that people do not own more vehicles than they have permission to (this however, according to my main informant, is subject for a lot of corruption). The restaurants, hostels and hotels in Puerto Ayura are also inspected to control that they are up to date and follow the newest set of rules and regulation for what they call a 'sustainable development'. This is not popular among most restaurant and hostel owner who might have to do a lot of changes to adjust to the newest rules, which can be costly.

Another way the GNP exercise governance is to make conservation, and the regulation of such, very visible. The physical structure and appearance of Galapagos makes it very clear that it is a reserve and that conservation is considered important. As you enter Galapagos, you have to go through security checking you and your luggage for invasive species, as well as paying an entrance fee to the park, and everywhere are signs with instructions of what is

not allowed to bring, and not allowed to do. Everywhere at Galapagos the presence of GNP employees is very visible, at every entrance or exit into the reserve, by the docks, or walking around the town and in the reserve. Also, signs stating the rules and reminding people of what is not allowed, are seen everywhere. If breaking any of the regulations, and getting caught doing so, will result in fines, as a way of threat or punishment to regulate behavior. Making conservation rules and the GNP visible, is a way to visualize authority and promote conduct according to conservation and govern people's behavior.

The GNP not only govern the locals and tourists through enforcing conservation rules, but it also guides what research is done and where. In order to do any research at Galapagos, you must obtain permission from the park, and it is up to them if you will be allowed to conduct research, where, and for how long. This goes for both independent researchers as well as for the Charles Darwin Research Station. It is again very visible when visiting the Charles Darwin Research Station, that displays a museum part where you can read about the conservation being done, and the importance of it for the unique archipelago.

The role of the GNP is crucial for the conservation agency at Galapagos. They not only control that rules are being followed but keep informing about the importance of the conservation work they are doing. Besides the information on signs, and at the Charles Darwin Research Station, people visiting the reserved parts of the island where keeping or breeding giant tortoises, visitors are again informed and reminded of the importance of conservation for the survival of these animals. Furthermore, all guides and naturalist guides at Galapagos have to work for the GNP and undergo their training, so they can inform all tourists or people going on tours and excursions, about the nature and the need for its preservation. Controlling both what research is being done, and in so part of the information available, the GNP has a big influence in governing other agents and stakeholder. The GNP is present at many levels at Galapagos, both on higher political levels reporting to the Ecuadorian state, and providing research to global organizations, as well as regulating peoples conduct at the islands through visibility. Not everyone however, are happy with the GNP. Many of the locals feel that the GNP restrict them too much, and many therefore feel resentment to them and to conservation.

Even though the GNP manage conservation on many levels at Galapagos, tourism is still an issue that is only partly governed. What the tourists are allowed to do, where they can go,

and what information they get is quite regulated by the GNP, however, there is currently not a functioning management of how many tourists can visit the islands (although there are some restrictions on how many boats and cruises can come daily), which has led to a very large (and increasing) number of tourists arriving. The large quantity is wearing down the environment and putting much pressure on the natural resources. This poses a big problem, that the GNP is currently attempting to find a solution to, making many locals wary of the consequences it might have for them. Because whether or not you agree with the conservation and GNP at Galapagos, it is something that affect all the people on Galapagos in one way or another.

#### **7.4 PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES**

That conservation of the Galapagos biodiversity is the major objective for both the state and the NGOs on the islands is clear. The conservation agenda is very clear when visiting the islands, but the present day Galapagos also shows signs of a political and economic landscape that has been restructured, and now exists in the interface of conservation, tourism, and development (Mathis & Rose, 2016), and these aspects are constantly interacting (with some tension), even if they all have to relate to and operate under the conservation laws.

The rapidly growing tourism that aims to offer the conserved nature at Galapagos as a commodity, under the rules of the conservation area, has contributed to making the borders between tourism, conservation, and development more overlapping. And although it could be argued that tourism does not have to be a problem but can co-exist with conservation, it can bring about big, and sometimes unforeseen, changes both to the social and ecological landscape, as well as strengthening already existing power relations (Mathis & Rose, 2016). These changes have made the local residents at Galapagos experience that they are not a priority, and the needs of tourists or conservation are met rather than the needs of the locals. The tourism is one of the biggest challenges for the conservation efforts at Galapagos, due to its large and unsustainable impact on the fragile ecosystems at the islands. If the tourism continues the way it is now, the nature and wildlife making Galapagos unique, might be damaged forever.

The interconnectedness between the present-day conservation, tourism and economic and infrastructural development at Galapagos however, makes it difficult to solve. The many different interests of global organizations, the state, conservationists, tourists, businesses and locals, makes it a complex situation. International organizations are still advocating for preservation of the islands' unique flora and fauna, and the Ecuadorian state also work in

favor for conservation, although economic interests might also play a part. But if the current pressure on the ecosystems on Galapagos by human activities shall be mitigated or even stopped, the current management of tourism have to change, which would have many implications for most of the local residents, as well as other stakeholders, relying on tourism as an income to support their livelihoods. This would again mean that the wills and needs of the locals are not prioritized, but that they would have to adjust more than at present to the environmentalist agenda. To address this, an option would be to include locals' in decision making processes and give them a bigger say in issues that concerns them. This would probably benefit the locals' livelihood opportunities, but not necessarily the conservation of the environment.

Many locals, however, engage in the work to achieve conservation, through investing in local sustainable agriculture, or restaurants making an effort to lessen the impacts on the environment. All these initiatives are great in a conservation point of view, and very much needed, but do not solve the problem of the great impact the many tourists have. So unless the tourism is regulated too, it is not enough to prevent the environment from suffering. And even if there are locals who favors conservation, not everyone does, so there would still be a conflict of interests.

The growing pressure on the NGP to act to save the environment on Galapagos however, is increasing, as the ecosystems are affected too much to persist much longer under the present number of tourists and people. But regardless of how the Ecuadorian state and the GNP will act and what they will do, it will have big consequences, be it for the environment, the economy, the locals, or all of them. It is hard to see that any changes made will affect only one area, although it might benefit one, and complicate another.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

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The establishment of the reserve at Galapagos drastically changed the power-relations at the archipelago, shifting influence and power away from the local residents to international organizations and the Ecuadorian state, which gained control over the area through creating the reserve and establishing new rules and regulations for the area.

Since the establishment of the reserve, the state has attempted to implement rules in line with the conservation agenda, through local institutions such as the Galapagos National Park, that is using different means to encourage and enforce the rules, by trying to regulate peoples conduct.

The conservation attempts however, was dampened by the huge increase in tourism from the 1970, that drastically affected the social, political, economic, and ecological landscape, contributing to migration and population growth, rapid development, and a shift towards a market economy, largely affecting local people's livelihood opportunities and lives.

This has resulted in a complex situation at Galapagos, where many different actors and wills are competing over the access to natural resources but are also very much interact. Due to the uneven power-relations however, not everyone has the same possibilities to act. And while different economic forces and powerful actors have the capability to guide development, those with little political and economic power becomes less of a priority, which in the case of Galapagos are the locals.

The tourism and economic growth at Galapagos still have to adapt to the overarching conservation agenda however, as do all who reside there. So with the increasing pressure from environmentalists and conservationists, it will be interesting to see how the Ecuadorian state and the GNP will act, and how this will affect all those residing at Galapagos in various ways.

## 9 APPENDIX

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*Figure 1: Entrance to Charles Darwin Research Station. Photograph taken by Louise Arbin*



*Figure 2: A Local food market. Photograph taken by Louise Arbin*



*Figure 3: Charles Darwin Avenue, Puerto Ayura, Santa Cruz. Photograph taken by Louise Arbin*





*Figure 4. Two seals lounging at the docks in Puerto Ayura, next to a sign informing about the GNPs rules. Photograph taken by Louise Arbin*



*Figure 5. A tortoise chilling at a farm after successfully eating some pineapples from the plantation. Photograph taken by Louise Arbin*





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