

**Nautical Stairway. Balance for The Conclusion of a Long-Standing
Megaproject in the Sea of Cortez, México**
**Escalera Náutica. Balance para la conclusión de un megaproyecto de larga data
en el Mar de Cortés, Mexico**

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ABSTRACT

The Nautical Stairway constitutes a network of nautical scales with basic services and infrastructure for towable boats. The project would contribute to the regional development of the Gulf of California. This article analyzes the context of the megaproject as a tourism policy. The bibliography was compiled through search engines, books, technical and government reports. Three versions of the same project were found (1960-2017): Maritime Tourist Stairway, Nautical Stairway, and Sea of Cortez. Justifications, objectives, strategies, and scale distribution of the different versions of the project were compared. A timeline of institutional planning was carried out, as well as events associated with sectoral sexennial policies. The first version had 20 scales for nautical tourism. The second version, transformed into tourism policy, considered 24 scales, land, and air infrastructure to promote real estate development and golf courses. The last version, a 28 scales coastal tourism megaproject, failed, mainly due to pressure from tourism and environmental policies.

Keywords: 1. megaproject, 2. nautical scales, 3. tourist policy, 4. Sea of Cortez, 5. Mexico.

RESUMEN

La Escalera Náutica consiste en una red de escalas náuticas con servicios básicos e infraestructura para embarcaciones remolcables. El proyecto contribuiría al desarrollo regional del Golfo de California. Este artículo analiza el contexto del megaproyecto como política turística. Se recopiló bibliografía a través de motores de búsqueda, libros, reportes técnicos y de gobierno. Se encontraron tres versiones del mismo proyecto (1960-2017): Escalera Turístico Marítima, Escalera Náutica y Mar de Cortés. Se compararon justificaciones, los objetivos, las estrategias y la distribución de las escalas en las diferentes versiones del proyecto. Se realizó una línea de tiempo con la planeación institucional, así como con sucesos asociados a políticas sectoriales sexenales. La primera versión tenía 20 escalas para el turismo náutico. La segunda versión, transformada en política turística, consideraba 24 escalas, infraestructura terrestre y aérea para promover desarrollo inmobiliario y campos de golf. La última versión, un megaproyecto turístico costero con 28 escalas, fracasó, principalmente por presiones de políticas turísticas y ambientales.

Palabras clave: 1. megaproyecto, 2. escalas náuticas, 3. política turística, 4. Mar de Cortés, 5. México.

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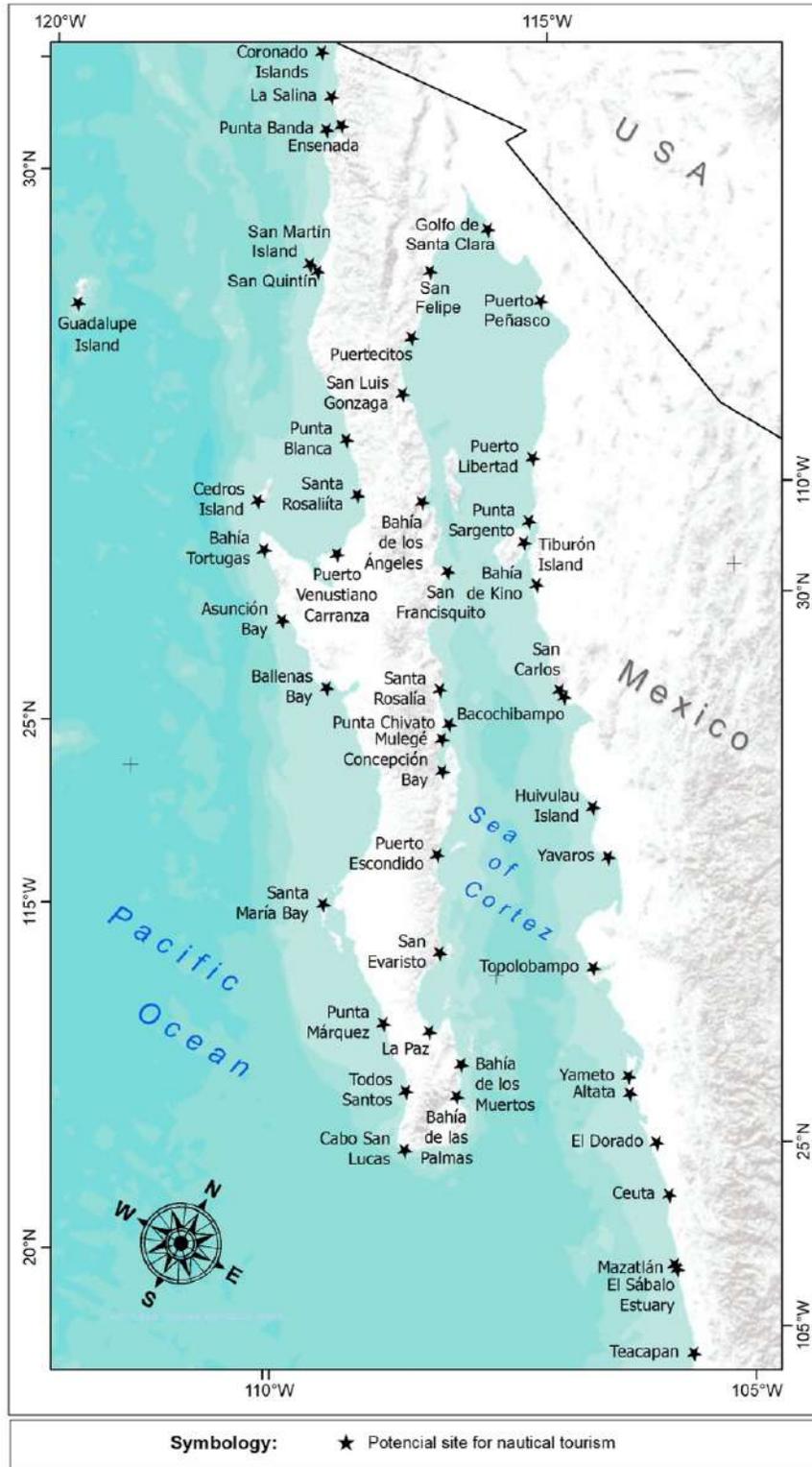
INTRODUCTION

The *Nautical Ladder of the Sea of Cortez* (EN) project, promoted nationally and internationally, was developed between 2000 and 2006. However, the idea of the project was born long before it came to be known as the EN. Its purpose was to trigger the growth of regional tourism with a network of 24 nautical stops at a distance of 200 km each, around the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) and the Pacific Ocean bordering the Baja California peninsula (map 1). It would provide basic services and land and air infrastructure for the internment of towable boats. The project also sought to improve the quality of life of nearby communities and to promote rational use and conservation of natural resources (FONATUR, 2001).

In the midst of economic, institutional, and planning problems, the project failed and was able to complete only one of the four planned phases (Vega, 2010). Some civic organizations demanded compliance with environmental regulations (Guido, Ochoa, Cantú, Castillo, Vargas, Armenta, & Ortiz, 2006), and there was intense media criticism with notes under titles such as “The failure of *Nautical Ladder* and other businesses” (Restrepo, 2008), among others. Only nine of the project’s stops were completed, seven of them operating under the name of Marinas FONATUR (FONATUR, 2018b), while the Puerto Escondido marina was sold to the Hamann Company (BCS Noticias, 2016), and the Topolobampo stop is inactive (API, 2018). In 2016, Baja California attempted to reactivate the Santa Rosaliíta stop (Madrigal, 2016), presenting the Environmental Impact Statement (MIA) for the completion of works (Hernández, 2016).

Initially, the EN project had a forward-looking vision that highlighted three aspects: 1) a tourism policy linking the government and private initiative, 2) a regional policy with local implications on land and sea, and 3) an instrument for planning and executing operations paid with federal economic resources, with indispensable coordination, support contributions of state and local governments. Besides being a tourism policy, EN can be characterized as a megaproject, primarily due to its many complex economic and socio-environmental implications. Despite the repercussions on the coastal municipalities of northwestern Mexico involved in the project, its different consequences have not been fully evaluated.

Map 1. Initial proposal of 1981 with 50 potential sites for nautical tourism.



Source: Turgocal (1981). Base map: ESRI, USGS, NOAA.

This article attests that EN is one among the many failed megaprojects in Mexico and Latin America (Domínguez, 2015), and the analysis of its historical evolution allows for the visualization of economic influence, national and international politics, public administration, and mobilizations of society. Our analysis helps to understand the context and characteristics of the EN project, providing inputs for other studies that analyze the complexity and integration of elements in a broader field of action, to understand the conditions favoring its transcendence and the direction that some localities took when it first appeared, although it did not materialize as such.

Tourism Policy

Tourism is perceived as a critical activity to achieve socio-economic development (UNWTO, 2016; UN, 2017). However, there are uncontrollable aspects, and its evolution can be affected by different influences (Almeida & Chahine, 2016; Garay & Cànoves, 2011). Different authors have approached tourism policy (TP), and its definition varies indiscriminately, up to the point that some definitions oppose others (Enríquez, Osorio, Castillo, & Arellano, 2012). To conceptualize it, this study uses Velasco's (2014, p. 293) proposal, which defines tourism policy as "the set of governmental actions aimed at achieving objectives associated with phenomena and relationships resulting from a process of occasional citizen attraction and residence in a given territory." Besides designing these policies, different instruments, including comprehensive evaluations, must be implemented in order to bring about change in society (Velasco, 2014). Edgell and Swanson (in Lohmann and Panosso Netto, 2017) consider that TP, together with strategic planning, is vital for prosperity, sustainable management, and quality of life.

In the international context, the TP has historically experienced difficulties leading different actions in the right direction. The actions in the history of TP are so clearly marked out that three stages stand out (Enríquez *et al.*, 2012): pre-Fordism (elite tourism), Fordism (mass tourism), and post-Fordism (diversified tourism). These stages are characterized by the supply and demand regimes of the activity and by the regulatory models of tourism (Garay & Cànoves, 2011). They also may be characterized by the institutional approach to key variables such as context, decisions, impacts, and policy implementation needs (Almeida & Chahine, 2016) (Table 1).

In the international arena, different countries have adapted their TP objectives as the demand for tourism activities in each territory has evolved (Almeida & Chahine, 2016; Enríquez *et al.*, 2012; Garay & Cànoves, 2011). Therefore, it is a priority to bring the private and public sectors together to ensure competitiveness and promote goals associated with the sustainability of environmental, social, and economic processes (Reyes, 2014). Enríquez *et al.* (2012) propose a new stage in the current direction of the touristic sector, the so-called New Tourism Policy, in which decisions are more complex, there is a decrease in the role of the state, and globalization controls decision-making about tourism. Additionally, the state

begins to consider the opinion of society, and policies are directed towards ordering the physical space and the adequate use of resources.

Table 1. Stages and characteristics of the evolution of international tourism policy

	Prefordist (elite)	Fordist (massive)	Postfordist (diversified)
Garay & Cánoves (2011)	Increasing supply and demand restricted to the wealthiest. Growth of companies. Development of transportation. Emergence of institutions and new legislation.	Tourism regulation model for mass production and consumption. New accumulation regime. Takeoff of the tourism economy and reactivation of the local economy. Government as promoter more than regulator. Residential real estate development.	Tourist offer for specific markets. Consolidation of transportation and communications infrastructure. Tourism development and second home and retirement industries. Impact of ICTs on consumption patterns. Decreased flight costs. Rebirth of cruises and trains.
Enríquez <i>et al.</i> (2012)		Growing supply without planning. Demand for standardized products at low cost. Demand-creating policy. Sun and beach destinations. Government as tourism manager. Promotion of the multiplier effect of tourism revenues. Production of services and touristic promotion. Development of local societies.	Heterogeneous tourism, not massive. Focus on supply. Tourism policies that drive sustainable development. Creation of specialized niches. Incorporation of the touristic product. Segmented market. Difficulty in creating tourism policies. There is no clear regulatory authority. Loss of regionalism.
Almeida & Chahine (2016)	Poor infrastructure and poor quality. Lack of interest in the tourism sector. Extensive touristic administration. Indicative planning. Creation of supply. Imbalance in the location of supply. Slow increase in demand.	Inefficient planning. Increased income. Administration and inefficient sector. Investment in the real estate sector. New public agencies. Greater openness to international investment. Indicative planning of minor importance. Regional imbalance in supply.	Tourism as an axis of economic development. Strong increase in demand. Medium- and long-term planning. Economic freedom. Bets on the residential-real estate sector. State participation in investment funds. International investments. Environmental impacts.

Source: Modified by Reyes (2014) based on Garay and Cánoves (2011); Enríquez *et al.* (2012) and Almeida and Chahine (2016).

Nautical Tourism

A megaproject works by articulating the country's economic structure in terms of infrastructure development (Abedrapo, 2011), since it modifies the geographical space at different scales, politically, socioeconomically, and environmentally. But the meaning of space is dominated by the Cartesian vision mentioned by Ibarra and Talledos (2016), in which territories are projected by economic and political power to reproduce capital for the sake of the development of capitalism.

Abedrapo (2011) acknowledges that there are two faces of political economy that allow for the emergence and development of megaprojects: on the one hand, they result from social needs and available options, always coherent with public policies and institutional management capacity (according to the magnitude and complexity of the project), as well as interactions with direct and mediated actors. On the other hand, they can be a consequence of political weakness when facing pressure from interest groups. Flyvbjerg (2007) characterizes megaprojects as highly risky because, while they are being developed, they often increase in scope or ambition, and the budget, among other aspects, becomes inadequate, causing excessive costs or a lack of benefits.

In Latin America, megaprojects have found space to develop due to the lack of existing physical and urban infrastructure. This situation leads to negotiations between multiple actors aimed at satisfying economic growth, while at the same time seeking to meet the criteria of social and environmental justice, aspects that up to now have been opposed (Domínguez, 2015). In Mexico, megaprojects have been justified as a social necessity, when in reality, they have created spaces for capital development, such as leisure and entertainment mega projects for the upper-middle class and the rich (Ibarra, 2016).

Coastal tourism megaprojects began in 1970 with the Comprehensive Planned Centers (CIP). During this period, tourism began an economic and political boom (Talledos, 2016). The National Fund for Tourism Promotion (FONATUR) undertook to propose or implement the incumbent president's ideas to promote, manage, develop, and continue these projects until they materialized (Vega, 2010). In some cases, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank (WB) were important in CIP financing (World Bank, 1977).

Cancún, which emerged as a project in 1969 and developed in 1974, was born in this way. Almost consecutively, Huatulco, in Oaxaca, was created; and then Loreto and Puerto Escondido, in Baja California Sur, and Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, in Guerrero (Talledos, 2016). The initial version of the Maritime Tourist Ladder dates from 1981. Most of these large projects were developed or consolidated over the next two decades, and a new wave of FONATUR projects was born. The new projects were: Litibú, in Nayarit; Playa Espíritu, in Sinaloa; Costa Lora, in Tamaulipas (Vega, 2010), and a second version of the EN, which was recovered as an idea by the 1994-2000 administration, but was developed as a presidential government project from 2000 to 2006.

The Mexican coasts have been the target of major tourism projects. Cancún was the first of the five touristic destinations in the country that were the basis of public policy to promote tourism (Espinosa-Coria, 2013). Another example in the Northwest region is the project in Punta Colonet (2008), where a multi-modal port (González, Pombo, Méndez, Espejel, & Leyva, 2011) was built but failed (Sandoval, 2012). Or the Cabo Cortés mega touristic complex in Cabo Pulmo, Baja California Sur, a private investment project that was never implemented despite considerable insistence (Anderson, 2015).

The northwest coast of Mexico is vast, un-urbanized, and close to the United States' potential market (USA). It offers developers and the Mexican government the ideal conditions to promote a magnificent touristic development (Ramírez, 2018). However, these same characteristics also promise enormous possibilities for the conservation of their exceptional nature (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2009).

The World Tourism Organization and Sustainable Tourism

Tourism projects are usually established in attractive, paradisiacal, and underdeveloped places, and although they comply with local environmental regulations, they trigger unpredictable changes. Some of the socio-environmental impacts generated are: 1) disorderly land use change, 2) unnecessary infrastructure development, 3) long-term loss of cultural identity, 4) unequal human settlement expansion, 4) fragmentation of natural habitats, and 5) loss of biodiversity (Blázquez Sánchez, 2012). The latter is especially true if impoverished rural and indigenous areas whose subsistence depends directly on biodiversity and the environmental services provided by ecosystems are affected (OECD, 2012).

To fight against environmental deterioration, the tourism sector developed a sustainable tourism approach:

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee long-term sustainability. The guidelines and practices of sustainable tourism management apply to all forms of tourism in its different segments and all types of destinations (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p. 11).

This vision, promoted by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), recognizes tourism as the largest development force, since it considers the sector as being planned and managed. It includes the 12 objectives of sustainable tourism: economic viability, local prosperity, quality of employment, social equity, visitor compliance, local control, community well-being, cultural wealth, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency, and environmental purity. The goal is to promote sustainable social and cultural growth by minimizing negative social, cultural, and environmental impacts through a guide to identify and implement sustainable tourism interventions (UNWTO, 2013).

Additionally, some models argue that tourism is a socio-economic phenomenon (Oviedo, Rivas, & Trujillo, 2009) and a complex system with spatial expression, in which multiple elements are interrelated (Segrado, González, Arroyo & Palafox, 2010). Both approaches make it possible to understand EN as an expression of the tourism sector, as well as a tourism policy that evolved in the interests of “regional development” “directed” toward sustainable development.

Therefore, this article means to show the evolution of the project before its implementation, analyzing the development of EN by its definition, spatial location, scope, goals, and its economic, political, socio-economic, and environmental contexts. This article intends to be an input for future research in different areas leading to the estimation of the impact on localities in the region.

METHODOLOGY

Digital bibliography was obtained from Google search engines, Google Scholar, Cimarrón UABC catalog, Metasearcher UABC, and from the following databases: EBSCO Host, Science Direct Freedom Collection, Web of Science (WoS), metasearch engine by Conricyt and El Colef; and from institutional pages such as the Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR), the National Fund for Tourism Promotion (FONATUR), the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), the National Population Council (CONAPO), and the Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF), among others. The keywords are: nautical ladder, nautical stops, nautical stairway, Maritime Stairs, Sea of Cortez. Reference to technical reports printed by regional academic libraries is also made.

Materials on the EN comes from newspapers and documents such as theses and technical reports from government institutions and environmental organizations. Academic documents (books and research articles) are scarce, and those referring to the EN project do so briefly, except for a few exceptions, such as the Master Plan for Singular Nautical Stops (Quijano & Reed, 2006). Three versions of the same project were found when reviewing the different documents: *Maritime Tourist Stairs*, *Nautical Ladder of the Sea of Cortez*, and *Sea of Cortez*, so these projects were reviewed separately. The analysis of the contents of each of the projects produced a synthesis defining questions about the following: the similarity between the versions, number, location, and name of the stops, objectives, proposed actions, and actions carried out. The national and sector policies corresponding to each of the three versions were also documented.

In order to understand the similarities between the three versions of the project, the objectives of each one were partially evaluated (Tyler, 1950), and keywords were identified and selected from the core elements of the documents grouped into: a) objectives, b) justification, and c) strategies or actions, and these data were later contrasted.

In order to characterize the nautical stops in the different versions of the project, a database was created with the following information: 1) general information: name,

municipality, state; 2) project data: version, stop status (existing, new, to complement); 3) complementary data: stops included in the regional Environmental Impact Manifest, planning studies, and other environmental policies; and 4) social data (SEDESOL, 2013a): closest municipality, social backwardness, and marginalization.

In order to know and display the geographical location of nautical stops, they were located in Google Earth Pro 7.3.2.5491 (64-bit). The names of places were verified using the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the Localities Catalog (SEDESOL, 2013b), and a GIS was also created in ArcMap 10.2.

Four socio-economic indicators (income, liabilities, cost of living, and goods and services purchased with income by the poor) were selected to show the set of economic and social circumstances in Mexico (Figure 1). The main characteristics of economic and administrative planning models are described in this table: the Mexican and USA presidential administrations (because the project is focused on foreign tourism, especially on the west coast), and public policy focused on the tourism and environmental sectors (such as environmental management).

- a) *Real GDP growth rate (Gross Domestic Product)*. - Key macroeconomic indicator; shows that growth is used to support policy and decision-making (CNI-SNIEG, 2018).
- b) *Inflation rate*. - Key economic indicator measuring the continuous and generalized increase in the price of goods and services sold compared with prices in the previous period (CNI-SNIEG, 2018).
- c) *Total external debt*. - International key indicator included in economic and financial data in the external sector category; data are submitted to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the special data dissemination standard (IMF, 2018). This analysis used the percentage of total external debt adjusted as a percentage of GDP to improve data comparison.
- d) *Well-being line (LBE)*. - It determines poverty thresholds and is calculated by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), which uses income and the value of the food and non-food basket, which is determined by the response to the consumption of food and other goods and services, to differentiate whether people have sufficient income to cover basic needs (DOF, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Why choose the Sea of Cortez region to locate the EN project? According to the Coordinating Committee for the Development of Tourism in the Gulf of California (TURGOCAL, 1981) and the National Fund for Tourism Promotion (FONATUR, 1999, 2006), this region was chosen due to its natural vocation for nautical tourism and a potential market. However, Kissman (2012) and EDAW (2002) suggest an overestimated market, whereas *Los Angeles Times*, unlike national government projections, mentions that many US boaters consider that the Pacific Ocean is difficult to navigate, and few vessels dare into it (Kraul & Weiss, 2003).

The analyzed texts (Centro de Planeación SC, 2003; FONATUR, 1999, 2001, 2006, and Vega Campos, 2010) gave no reference to FONATUR'S selection criteria to define the region as a potential market, the coastal states involved, or the number of participating stops. Perhaps this region was chosen due to the idea of a peninsula in need of coastal development or the individual will of the governors. In the *Sea of Cortez* version, nautical stops were added to places that already had developed tourism activities (Nuevo Vallarta, Nayarit, and Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco), indicating an indefinite regional boundary, given that the Gulf of California, by geography and oceanography, has different boundaries, that may or may not include the Jalisco and Nayarit coasts (Escofet, 2004; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2009), and denoting what Flyvbjerg (2007) means by the increase in ambition and scope of megaprojects.

Comparative analysis of the three versions of the megaproject

To understand how something as complex as the EN came to be, the three versions are compared (tables 2, 3, and maps 2 to 4). The *Maritime Tourist Stairs* (1981) represented a simple idea of connectivity for nautical tourism that never materialized (TURGOAL, 1981). Subsequently, FONATUR took up the idea and, presenting it as *Nautical Ladder of the Sea of Cortez Region* (1999), pushed it, managing to receive budget authorization by the end of the Ernesto Zedillo administration (FONATUR, 1999, 2006). With the change of president and political party, FONATUR presented the project as *Nautical ladder of the Sea of Cortez* (2001) to the Vicente Fox administration. EN was authorized as a strategic government project from 2000 to 2006, and it was widely promoted at the national and international levels (FONATUR, 2006).

The project was modified conceptually and structurally during its implementation and became the project *Sea of Cortez* (2004).⁵ Besides the nautical stops, this project considered strengthening the development of the region by establishing ecotourism routes and circuits on land and sea (FONATUR, 2006). This version also included the improvement of already existing touristic cities, some of them buoyant, such as Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, which has a real estate business (Valiente, Cariño, Corona, & Narchi, 2016) and is in keeping with the functions of FONATUR, the agency that plans and develops sustainable investments in the Mexican tourism sector and is a “strategic instrument for investment development” (FONATUR, 2018a, s / n).

Only two of the 12 arguments for the justification appear in the three versions (Table 2). These arguments are the following: natural tourist and recreational fishing attractions, and the lack of infrastructure and nautical services. Initially, the problem was a reduced nautical sector. However, in the Mar de Cortés version, it became very broad, nonspecific, and applicable anywhere (issues such as anarchic occupation of the territory, tourism as an

⁵ Refer to “*Libro Blanco Proyecto Mar de Cortés*,” for full details of the actions and goals set by FONATUR during the period 2001-2003 (FONATUR, 2006).

instrument of economic reconversion, and deterioration of ecosystems and the environmentally fragile regions) (FONATUR 2006, pp. 31-32).

Table 2. Comparison of the three versions of the Escalera Náutica project

Elements		Sea Ladder 1981	Nautical Ladder 1999	Sea of Cortez 2004	
Justification	Natural touristic attractions and recreational fishing	x	x	x	
	Lack of infrastructure and nautical services	x	x	x	
	Border region with potential market	x	x		
	High potential for nautical tourism		x	x	
	Key factor for regional development		x		
	Lack of information and uncertainty in procedures		x		
	Lack of support for nautical tourism projects		x		
	Varied cultural heritage			x	
	Decreased economic competitiveness			x	
	Anarchic occupation of territory			x	
	Economic reconversion instrument			x	
	Deterioration of ecosystems, an environmentally fragile region.			x	
Objectives	Increasing the growth of arrivals of US yachts	x	x		
	To improve the quality of life of host communities	x	x		
	To integrate the tourism-port network (nautical tourism from the United States)	x			
	Generate necessary income in ports of arrival	x			
	Attracting high-income tourism		x		
	Rational utilization and conservation of natural resources		x		
	Better life opportunities (communities, indigenous peoples)			x	
	Tourism as guardian of ecological balance			x	
	Tourism as the central axis of economic reconversion			x	
	<i>1. Building the Nautical Staircase (# stops):</i>	23	20 ¹	24 ²	28
	To incorporate existing ports		7 ¹	5 ²	4
	Complementing facilities		6 ¹	7 ²	9
To build new sheltered ports		7 ¹	12 ²	9	
Mobile facilities				6	
Main strategies and actions	<i>2. Road infrastructure improvement:</i>		661 km ¹ 729 km ²	288 km	
	To improve roads		193 km ¹ 441 km ²		
	To enlarge, pave accesses		256 km ¹ 154 km ²	154km	
	To improve route/Landbridge		212 km ¹ 134 km ²	134km	

Note¹= Data from the 1999 Nautical Ladder.

Note²= Data from the 2001 Nautical Staircase.

Source: FONATUR (1999, 2001, 2006) y TURGOAL (1981).

Additionally, the original objectives of connectivity and nautical tourism became even more ambitious, getting more complex in order to meet the social and environmental demands of sustainable tourism (the post-Fordist stage), and so they lost coherence (Table 2). For instance, the objectives of the last project are no longer sectoral; they are alien to their original purpose (conceptually only) to “provide better life opportunities for indigenous communities and peoples, or to use tourism as a guardian of ecological balance.” (FONATUR, 2006, p. 2). The main strategy, consisting in the development of infrastructure for nautical tourism, increased from one action to six, the number of stopovers of road kilometers changed, and mobile stops were added.

The secondary strategies shown in Table 3 show the transformation of the basic marine infrastructure project into a regional development megaproject. On the one hand, a nautical (sector) central axis is evident in the three versions, which coincides in some respects (nautical facilities, services, import procedures, and concession to the private sector) and keeps similarities in others (safety, charges, and administrative structure for imports and advice for investors or licensees). On the other hand, strategies differ in their incorporation of urban, cultural, and social aspects (environmental sanitation and urban image, and the strengthening of cultural values and identity in communities) (FONATUR, 2006, p.9). This is called “greenwash” or painting companies with green (Weaver, 2009).

Table 3 also shows that the first version would provide services to tourists with important social impacts (tourism protection system, technical and legal advice, maintenance, supervision and surveillance, permit assistance, and passenger transportation services). These services were lost in the following versions. However, other planning strategies belonging to the municipalities were added, for instance, the promotion of actions for social development and the creation of local development agencies, the reorganization of urban tourism, and financing of urban improvement and operation, maintenance, and commercialization of the works (FONATUR, 2006).

Table 3. Secondary strategies of the three Nautical Ladder Projects

<i>Strategies / Actions</i>	Sea Ladder 1981	Nautical Ladder 1999	Sea of Cortez 2004
To carry out required projects, plans, programs, and studies	x	x	x
Managing, promoting, and operating nautical facilities and modules	x	x	x
Fuel supply services	x	x	x
Easier procedures for the admission of tourists, boats, and equipment	x	x	x
Tendering services and facilities to the private sector	x	x	x
Providing and managing basic services	x	x	x
To promote uniformity in services provided in marinas and ports	x		x
Obtaining land for construction of project works	x		x

Giving support to investors and dealers in promotion	x	x
Safety conditions on access roads (sea and land)		x ²
Ecotourism and cultural circuits of sea and land		x ¹
To integrate existing airport network		x
Creation of a tourist protection system (Ángeles Azules)	x	
Technical and legal advice for studies and projects	x	
Technical and legal support for the creation, development, and operation of tourism development centers	x	
Technical maintenance of berthing and launching of boats and supervision of proper use of facilities	x	
Assisting tourists to obtain hunting and fishing licenses	x	
To participate in rate setting	x	
Providing and managing passenger transportation services to docking areas and urban areas	x	
Modernization of bilingual terrestrial signaling		x
To review taxes and structure for import charges		x
Promoting the project: national and international businessmen		x
Advice and financing to improve facilities, build marinas, and provide nautical touristic services		x
To review tax issues affecting private investment		x
Institutional support for managing project authorization		x
Shuttle service by land bridge		x
Planning and signaling of routes and circuits for tourists		x
Integration and operation of the stop network by Singlar		x
Inclusion of locations in Agenda XXI. Training of service providers. Financing of tourism companies		x
Tourism product planning and development: tour operators		x
Promotion of actions for social development and creation of local development agencies		x
Urban tourist rearrangement. Acquisition and urbanization of territorial reserves		x
Financing management of urban improvement, operation, maintenance, and commercialization of works		x
Basic infrastructure: environmental sanitation and urban image		x
Strengthening cultural value and identity in communities		x

Note¹= Data from the 1999 Nautical Ladder.

Note²= Data from the 2001 Nautical Staircase.

Source: FONATUR (1999, 2001, 2006) and TURGOAL (1981).

Changes in the number of stops and sites were highlighted (maps 2 to 4). In 1981, 74 possible sites were identified geographically, although 50 were originally proposed. The choice was based on studies such as topographic surveys, maritime surveys, pre-feasibility studies, land tenure, and ground and air tourist routes, among others. This selection of stops and sites is in line with the economic criteria proposed in the first two versions, and the inclusion of social and environmental elements in the latest version does not follow from it.

In 1981 50 sites were proposed. The 1999 version kept 90 percent of those, while the 2001 version kept 79.2 percent and the 2004 version, 67.9 percent. Each project added “new” sites, ending with 62 possible nautical stops. Only 14.5 percent (San Felipe, Baja California; Santa Rosalía, Puerto Escondido, and La Paz, Baja California Sur; Mazatlán, and Topolobampo, Sinaloa; Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, and San Blas, Nayarit) were finished. Two of these already existed, and in seven, the existing infrastructure was complemented.

An interesting case of nautical stops happened in Altata, Sinaloa, where FONATUR did not carry out any construction works, but a stop was built by private investors (Industria y Análisis Ambientales del Noroeste, SC, 2004). This marina had nothing to do with the government’s nautical megaproject since it developed a residential area with low environmental impact (Ornelas, 2018). This is a clear example of the projects that clung to the promotion of the megaproject, adding an “environmental” strategy.

According to Centro de Planeación S.C. (2003), the EN used three determinant selection criteria to select stops: a) refueling distance of smaller vessels, b) existing maritime infrastructure, and c) the presence of protected natural areas (PNAs). These criteria, more technical than touristic (now with the environmentalist vision incorporated), tried not to include land within ANPs. However, when it became inevitable not to include stops located in the ANPs, the former were defined as “mobile scales”, probably to reassure environmentalists.

Another confusing strategy by FONATUR was the inaccurate physical location of the sites. No site data were found in their technical reports, and the maps presented by them were very general, with place names referring to towns, municipalities, or nearby beaches. In the three versions, the same stop can appear under different names.

An example of this can be found in two studies that also failed to specify the locations because FONATUR never indicated them. These studies were: Bases for the Ecological Management of the Escalera Náutica Region (INE, 2002) and the Ecological Management of the Mar de Cortés Region: Micro regional windows (INE, 2003). In that study, each window showed the main bays or lagoons as the “most likely location” of the stop. Its precise location only appears in the Regional MIA (Centro de Planeación S.C., 2003).

The lack of precision appeared to be caused by the blurry legal situation of several stops that did not have property titles or agreements with the municipality, sometimes modified or breached by the state (Centro de Planeación SC, 2003; FONATUR, 2006). Sometimes, the vagueness was due to controversies about the environmental value of the sites; when the location was imprecise, the sites avoided environmental pressure. For example, the Coastal Northwest Sustainability Alliance (ALCOSTA)⁶ pointed out that most of the sites had no prior tourism vocation and were in important PNAs (Guido *et al.*, 2006).

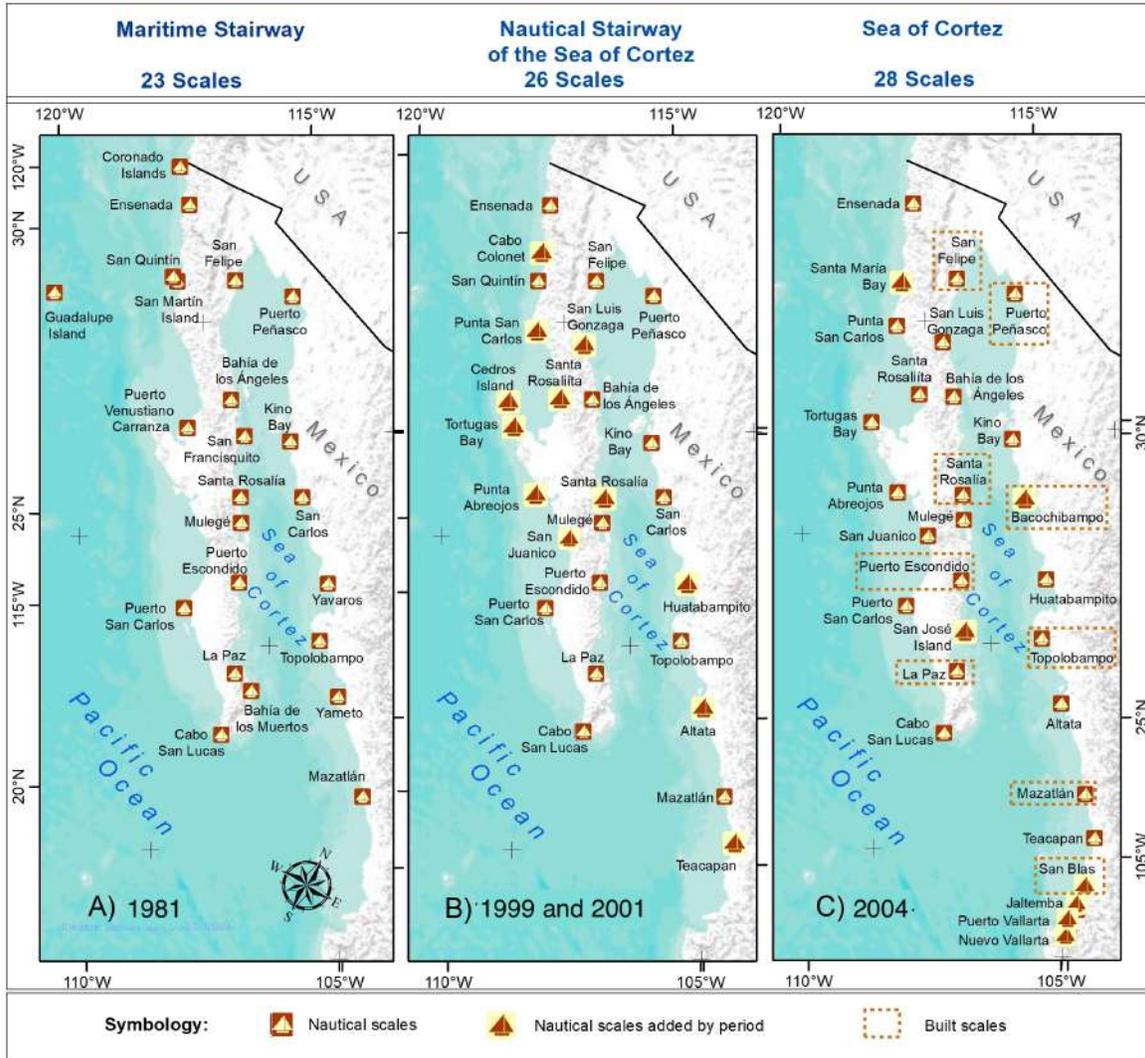
⁶ The Alliance for the Sustainability of the Northwest Mexican Coast (ALCOSTA, for its acronym in Spanish) is a coalition of 21 civil conservation organizations in Baja California,

It is rather strange that a project worth millions was proposed without having some land for sure. In the Mar de Cortés version, 53.6 percent of the stops were new; of these, 66.7% were located in places lacking the infrastructure to support nautical tourism or social activities. These places (villages, fishing camps, or isolated settlements) would start from nothing, which would involve large initial investments. Maybe for this reason, most of the installed stops already existed or were improved, and they were in already developed urban areas.

According to the Inegi 2010 census (SEDESOL, 2013a), 35.7 percent of the locations near a nautical stop were rural, 89.3 percent had very poor social conditions, and 64.3 percent were highly or very highly impoverished (SEDESOL, 2013a). The data show locations lacking vocation for nautical development, but rather meant nature conservation, given that 35.7 of the stops were located within an ANP (CONANP, 2012), and 57.1 percent in priority sea regions (Arriaga-Cabrera, Vásquez-Domínguez, González-Cano, Jiménez-Rosenberg, Muñoz-López, and Aguilar-Sierra, 1998).

The different versions of the project (maps 2 to 4) show a higher proportion of stops in the Sea of Cortez. In the Pacific, in the *Escalera Marítima* version (1981), several stops concentrated near the US border, including the islands, evidencing the border vision of the project and, at the time, a non-existent environmental policy to protect the Pacific islands, that now have become national protected areas. In the Mar de Cortés (2004) version, the criterion of distance for navigation prevailed, and a notorious spatial change took place by concentrating stops in Sinaloa and Nayarit, a state that joined the project in 2002, This version ends in Jaltamba, a bay located between the states of Nayarit and Jalisco.

Maps 2, 3, and 4. Comparison of maps of temporal and spatial evolution of proposed nautical stops



Source: FONATUR (1999, 2001, 2006), TURGOAL (1981). Base map: ESRI, USGS, NOAA.

Evolution: from onset to failure

From the first documented idea to its implementation as a project, EN evolved along with tourism planning in Mexico. Although in this country the planning of tourism took its very first steps with President Adolfo López Mateos (Magaña-Carrillo, 2009), this first planning effort was taken up by the Gustavo Díaz's administration. His administration was the first to present the idea, then called *Mar de Cortés Circuit*, with points of interest in Sonora, Sinaloa, and the Baja California Peninsula, as a part of the Gulf of California Tourism Development Plan of 1968 (Manzo, 1979).

It was not until 1978 that the *Maritime Tourist Stairs* were formulated in a technical document published in 1981 (figure 1). The project was included in the National Tourism Plan (DOF, 1980) and was complemented by the National Urban Development Plan, which prioritized the construction of roads and airports for connectivity in the region, the promotion of North American tourism, and the development of centers for tourism (SARH, Comisión Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano y SPP, 1978). This project matches the beginning of a period (1980-1986) in which an attempt was made to correct the imbalance between tourism supply and demand (CESOP, 2006), as well as a period of economic crisis and of change in the economic development model (1985) The loss of touristic competitiveness (1985-1994) with the development of the Caribbean and the south of the USA was another trait of that period (CESOP, 2006). Therefore, alternatives to develop the tourism sector were sought.

The *Mar de Cortés Circuit* and all versions of the EN needed open and available policies, but above all, an economy that favored bi-nationality. Border projects are complex because “the border area itself is a great laboratory of relations between the two countries” (Valenciano & Ganster, 1992, p. 9), and these are circumstantial to administrations. Medellín (2004) states that the actions of governments, as well as the observation and analysis of the political regime, make it possible to understand the public policies generated; therefore, the proposal of the *Mar de Cortés Circuit* and the inclusion of *Maritime Stairs* in the public agenda and the execution of the EN project coincide with Democratic administrations in the US, which favor relations with Mexico (LBJ Presidential Library, 2018; Pastor, 1986; Valverde Loya, 1998).

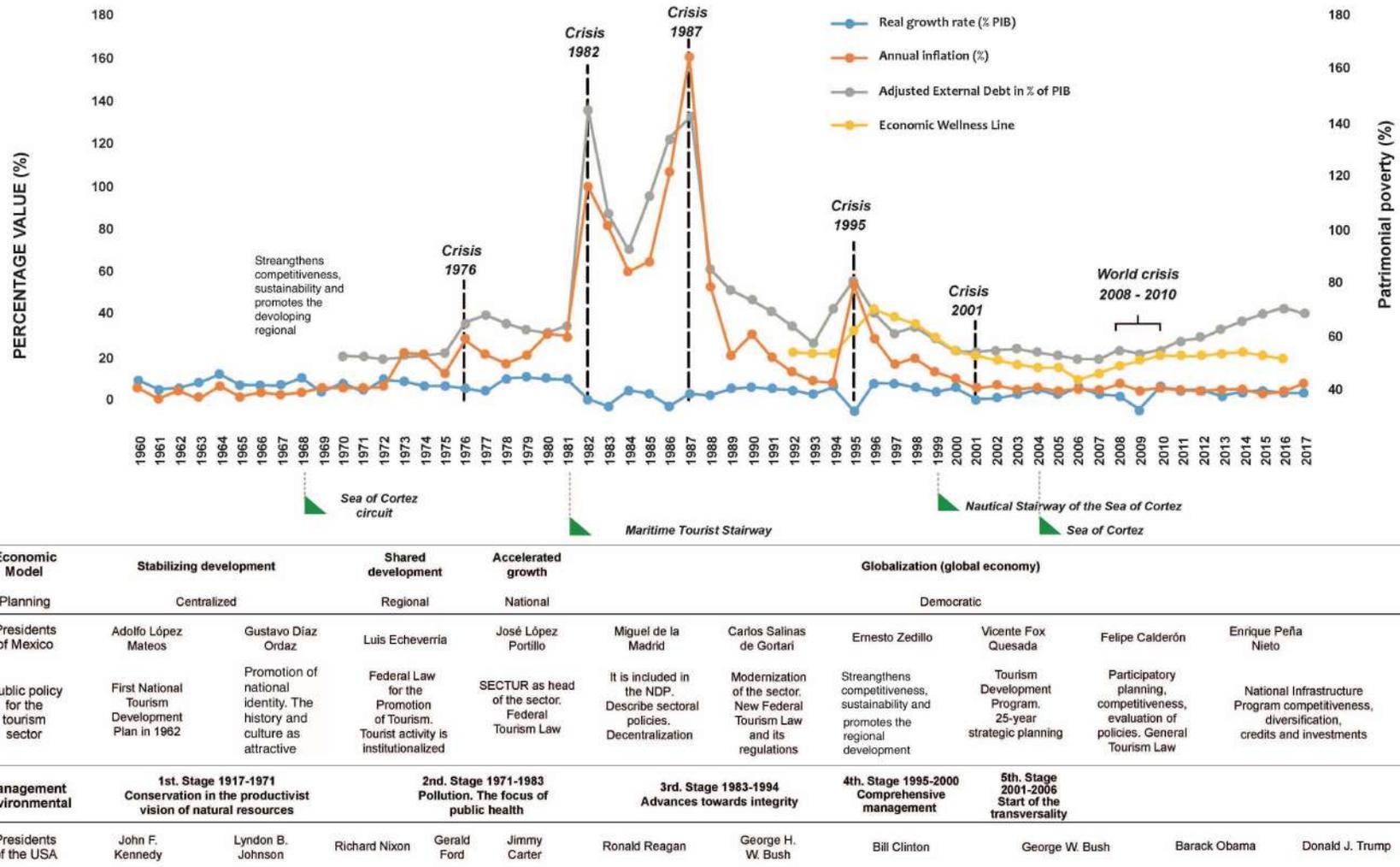
During the incubation period of the EN (1981-1998), commercial and economic relationships were undermined by the tuna embargo (Portilla, 2008). On the other hand, in the 1990s, the binational policy focused on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and when Bill Clinton (from the Democratic Party) took office in 1993, trade was prioritized among countries and “democratic solidarity and prosperity by means of commercial integration” were promoted (Valverde Loya, 1998, p. 238). Later, Clinton supported Ernesto Zedillo during the 1995 crisis and in his electoral and political reforms aimed at increasing democracy in the country (Valentín, 2012). In terms of border tourism, the need to identify new attractions and improve services was visualized (Valenciano &

Ganster, 1992). The NAFTA being signed and ratified, good binational relations prepared the ground for EN.

Public administration instruments in the tourism sector

The federal public administration was particularly relevant in the evolution of EN. According to Ramírez Navarro and Ramírez Navarro (2013), the operative part of the state drives the country's development, and its administrative framework includes instruments such as sector division, administrative reforms, inter-secretarial commissions, administrative units, and development plans. Although the EN was included in the public agenda as part of the public policy cycle, both instrument-based planning and the state-owned unit that promoted it (FONATUR), the administrative reforms carried out during the different versions, as well as the sector plans derived from the National Development Plan, were part of its administrative process.

Figure 1. Socio-economic indicators and political context associated with the Escalera Náutica megaproject (1960 to 2017)



Note: Macroeconomic indicators (real GDP growth rate base 2013, inflation rate base 2010), and economic crises are shown at the top. The presidents of Mexico and the United States, and the different historical stages of the issues that defined the direction of Mexico, appear in chronological order below.

Source: Modified by Aguirre (2017), CONEVAL (2015), Pardo and Cejudo (2016), FONATUR (2006), García Moctezuma (2010), Guillén, (2013), Magaña-Carrillo (2009), Manzo (1979), Oviedo, Rivas and Trujillo (2009) and SEMARNAT (2006).

The most important influence on the changes to the original project came from the administrative reform that focused on planning (figure 1). For instance, the creation of the Coordinating Committee for the Development of Tourism in the Gulf of California (TURGOCAL) was the result of reforms associated with regional planning. This agency presented the *Escalera Turístico Marítima* (1981) in collaboration with state governments, federal government secretariats, and in coordination with the Coplade (Committees for Development Planning for the Northwest Region) (TURGOCAL, 1981). COPLADE is an element in the national planning stage. However, the subsequent version known as *Sea of Cortez* (2004) sought to be a more comprehensive plan with a long-term vision, whose objectives were more ambitious and therefore required more investment, characteristics that correspond to the stage of democratic planning.

The continuous transformation of public administration aims at improving the organization of the country, adapting itself to the national environment and to the international policies of each administrative period. Currently, reality is far from having obtained the desired results; there are contradictions and unforeseen short-term and long-term effects (Pardo & Cejudo, 2016), or the results comply only with the letter of the law (García Moctezuma, 2010). For instance, Pardo and Cejudo (2016) explain that the well-intentioned creation of the COPLADES failed to work, and they weakened over time,⁷ due to the lack of strong coordination mechanisms, which together with the 1976 crisis, did not allow for the development of the project. Long-term planning did not work for this project either. Even though it was part of democratic planning in 1982, in megaproject planning the six-year vision stood until 2000, more because of the dimensions and regulatory complexity of these projects (García Moctezuma, 2010; Pardo y Cejudo, 2016) than for the sake of long-term permanence.

Division in sectors, which allows for the programming of activities and costs in order to achieve the purported objectives and goals, has been equally important as a limitation for projects such as EN. The complexity of tourism megaprojects, especially of the Mar de Cortés version, was inconsistent with sustainable development, as it was planned and developed with a partial vision, which made it difficult to foresee the impacts and externalities that would result.

Another important point in terms of planning in the different versions of EN is the limited involvement of municipalities. According to the law (DOF, 2018, Art. 2), planning is made to strengthen the federal pact and the autonomy of county governments. For the same reasons, decentralization is promoted (DOF, 2018). The Municipal Development Planning Committees (COPLADEM), which could have been the local coordination body, did not take part in the EN project. Environmental groups mobilized to ensure compliance with

⁷ The prevalence of COPLADEM continues in force. However, except for their participation in the Maritime Stair, no other document consulted shows this Committee, which by law arranges and coordinates between federal, state, and municipal government.

environmental regulations at the local level (Guido *et al.*, 2006). Even today, these groups have better results with sustainable development as a political argument.

Tourism policies in the Mexican northwest coastal zone

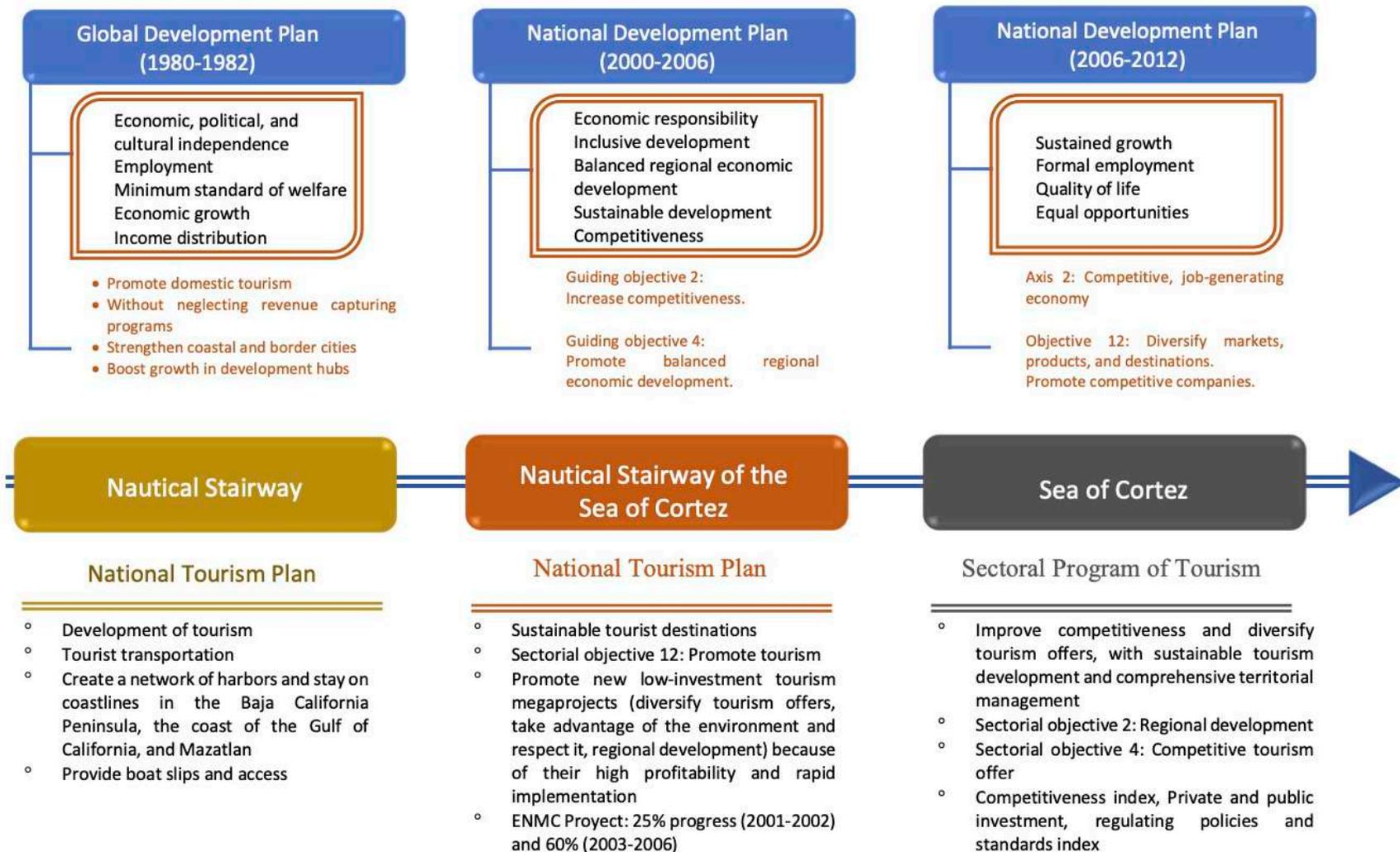
Historically, regional planning and tourism projects were justified through issues of comprehensive development (Manzo, 1979), social development (DOF, 1980), and regional development (DOF, 1996, 2002, 2008). Thus, since the 1970s, the government conceived tourism as the most promising sector for the social and economic development of the Baja California peninsula (World Bank, 1977). However, in cases such as EN, its relevance and scope as a megaproject turned it into a policy in its own right (Abedrapo, 2011). The regional project did not attempt to face a major social problem, but was the result of a regulatory need, with FONATUR as the administrative agent (in regard to real estate) and SECTUR as a public authority.

As government agencies, FONATUR and SECTUR redefined the public problem, together with a comparative need (Meny & Thoenig, 1992), in which an international social phenomenon such as tourism was envisioned as the trigger for economic growth in Mexico (Clancy, 2001), which would allow the development of an entire region respective to the rest of the country. The obsession of these two agencies to develop this region may be closely related with Medellín (2004, p.20), who speaks of “territorial control as a real referent of political power” rather than regional development.

As a development policy, EN is closely associated with the national and sector policies of three six-year administrations, that first included it in the public agenda, then implemented it, and finally cancelled the project (diagram 1). During these three administrations, from 1981 to 1998 a political incubation period took place. In 1999, the issue was again picked up, after making a public consultation focused on the need for competitive diversification, reconversion, and regional development focused on local investment and human capital capacities (DOF, 2002). However, the public consultation only justified its inclusion in the 2000-2006 public agenda.

Besides including the megaproject in the tourism sector programs (DOF, 1980, 1996, 2002, 2008), two communications and transportation sector programs (SCS, 2001, 2007) defined actions, strategies, goals, and so on. However, there is a lag in policies. The policy behind the EN project largely matched the characteristics of projects from the Fordist or mass tourism stage (Table 1), but its evolution sought to harmonize with elements of the post-Fordist or diversified and sustainable tourism stage. As a consequence, we observed that, though justifications and objectives changed, strategies did not (Table 2).

Diagram 1. Political Components in the Development of Nautical Stairway Through National Planning with Objectives



Source: DOF (1980, 2002, 2008), Presidency of the Republic (2001, 2007), SPP (1980).

In some cases, strategies to develop EN at the state and municipal levels were also included, for example, the Baja California Sur Port Development Master Program (API-BCS, 2007) and the Baja California State Development Plan (1996-2001), which promoted the construction of nautical sports infrastructure (COPLADE, 1998). However, in spite of the post-Fordist logic of the tourism sector program, which proposes competitiveness, diversified tourism, and regional development, during the 2006-2012 administration, the megaproject was not part of national planning. The program for the communications and transportation sectors also failed to include nautical tourism or areas such as small boat navigation.

Summing up, the project lapsed. Despite this, the government of the state of Baja California attempted to revive the project in Santa Rosalíita (Hernández Karim, 2016). In contrast, Baja California Sur focused on mass tourism development (Fordist) in the Los Cabos-San José del Cabo corridor, where EN fueled the change in activity (Ganster, Arizpe, & Ivanova, 2012; GeoAdaptative -IMPLAN Los Cabos, 2016). In both cases, there were no diversified and sustainable (post-Fordist) tourism projects.

Environmental policies and environmental regulations in northwestern Mexico

As a tourism policy, the EN project was also a turning point in the country's environmental policy due to the planning instruments it motivated.

The former Secretariat of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fishing (Semarnap) (1997) -now the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat)- developed the first regional environmental regulatory framework (table 4) for the project, which included a section of coastline consisting of a band from the mean sea level up to 200 km inland and into the sea. Two other ecological arrangements were carried out in 2001-2003. The second one contained micro-regional windows: micro-regional (500 km²) and local (100 km²). Though this regulatory framework was not approved, in 2004, the federal government and the governments of neighboring states signed a collaboration agreement to implement two regional planning processes: of the maritime regulations and norms about the sea-and-land zones around the Gulf of California.

Gutiérrez, Pedroza, Solares, Arriaga, and Díaz de León (2008) point out that the regional planning processes comprising the sea and the coast were administratively separated, leaving the marine ordinance as a federal faculty, lacking direct intervention from the states. These authors added that this division allowed for formality and the possibility of retaking efforts.

In line with the 2001 Framework Convention and its ratification due to changes in state governments and the modification of the project to Mar de Cortés, in 2004 (FONATUR, 2006), the Secretariat of Environmental Protection of Baja California (SPA) provided the base for creating the general guidelines for urban development in Santa Rosalíita, as well as urban development guidelines for the urban-touristic corridor *Bahía de los Ángeles*, in the municipality of Ensenada (Gobierno Municipal de Ensenada, 2007). On the other hand, the

Program for Environmental Protection Puertecitos-Paralelo 28 (POEBC, 2007) was approved to give certainty to Vicente Fox's presidential project.

The first Marine Ecological Management System (OEM) in Mexico was the OEM of the Mar de Cortés, that marked the beginning of an institutional policy for coastal zones in the country and the importance of Comprehensive Coastal Zone Management (Rosete Vergés, Enríquez Hernández, Córdova, & Vázquez, 2006). In terms of environmental assessment, this regulation was the first in Mexico to include environmental management. The process was opened for consultation and public discussion (Quijano & Reed, 2006). Although the EN project promoted the creation of such novel environmental policy instruments, the marinas, ports, and touristic cities are not entirely environmentally sound, since their scope is limited when they are implemented (Bravo *et al.*, 2007) and, together with the environmental impact assessment, authorities have failed to halt the impact of tourism projects (Uribe, 2009).

The social and economic impacts of the EN project deserve separate studies under the logic of regional development or other points of view, in order to analyze the local impact of the projects at the specified stops, or even the impact of stops that were planned but not executed.

Table 4. Studies on marine and coastal ecological ordering carried out as a result of the Escalera Náutica project, its faults as a planning instrument, and its historical stage

	Ecological management regulation (EO)	Faults (Gutiérrez <i>et al.</i> , 2008)	Stage (Rosete <i>et al.</i> , 2006)
1997-2000	OE Marino for the Mar de Cortés Region	It did not go through the socialization stage and failed to materialize into a government program.	Incorporation of new approaches with comprehensive planning to resolve conflicts arising from production activities and appropriation of resources in the coastal zone.
2001-2003	OE of the Cortes Sea Region and the Pacific coast. Biophysical Aspects and Integration	Participatory planning workshops were socialized, regional programs could not be realized because both projects were launched at the same time and federal government agencies failed to coordinate with each other. The regulation was seen as a means to support and boost the Nautical Stairway and failed to specify the regional support base for its development.	Significant push to the OE in coastal and sea areas. Development of new tools to support decision-making and reconciled interests between sectors and incorporate the consensus reached in the proposal.
	OE of the Mar de Cortés Region: Micro-regional windows		
2005-2006	OE Gulf of California marine.	Dividing the regulations in sea and land planning permitted the resumption of previous efforts, but it separated the regional process in the interests of maintaining a direct and active participation of the state government in issues concerning land, but without direct faculties on sea matters.	It was instituted based on the LGEEPA regulation on EO, which establishes the adequate mechanisms for a multisector consensus. Additionally, it incorporates the vision and purposes of Comprehensive Coastal Zone Management (IMCI).
	OE Sea and Land		

Source: DOF (2006), Gutiérrez *et al.* (2008), INE (2002, 2003), and Rosete *et al.* (2006).

FINAL REMARKS

This article analyzes the way in which a simple governmental project for building nautical infrastructure became a tourism sector policy. It also describes its evolution along with the conditions and pressures of each historical stage of tourism, the emergence of environmental issues, and the socio-economic context with each administration that backed the project.

The EN, as a regional project (with all nautical stops) or by building individual nautical stops, remains a possibility for tourism development, given that: 1) the region is ideal for tourism, 2) until the previous administration (2012-2018), the search for connectivity for regional development continued (SEDATU, 2014), and 3) the possibility of its realization increased because collective coastal properties were transferred to large private investors (Danemann & Ezcurra, 2008). However, the discussion about its pertinence is still valid, making it necessary to compare it with other failed tourism megaprojects (Dominguez, 2015), especially in nautical, cruise, and sun and beach tourism.

Besides, the possibilities of EN should be updated under the light of global and national tourism and environmental policies. This policy should be based on the objectives of sustainable tourism proposed by the UNWTO, as well as in the guidelines issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), whose environmental perspectives for 2050 Mexico has adhered to. These objectives and guidelines should be applied to new projects or redirect existing ones, as mentioned by Enríquez *et al.* (2012). A new EN project ought to be in line with a New Tourism Policy, where decision-making is more complex, the role of the State decreases, and globalization takes control of decisions.

The possibility of retaking touristic projects such as the EN, or of creating new ones, is very high for an arid region of vast territorial extension, whose scenic beauty and biodiversity have no equal. Hence the importance of considering this case study as a reference, because the complexity of the project represents a watershed in terms of tourism policy and planning, as well as in environmental management and environmental organization.

Three administrations insisted on resuming EN when the political and socio-economic conditions were propitious and adequate for emerging policies. The incubation time of this policy was associated with: 1) economic crises and bilateral relations, 2) a period of ripening of laws and sector policies (Mota, 2009), and 3) the evolution of institutions responsible for developing tourism and environmental policies.

EN also suffered from deficiencies in the federal public administration, the result of decisions made at another historical moment, and due to external factors that affected project planning. Additionally, the division of the federal government in sectors made comprehensive decision-making more difficult and, therefore, it hampered an onset based on sustainability. An unfavorable aspect for EN was poor coordination between the three levels of government and the private sector (García Moctezuma, 2010). The latter was due to the lack of local representation in the public administration, since Copladem did not work (citizen mobilization was carried out by environmental organizations).

Other instruments would have to be rescued if the EN project were to be revived. For instance, an intersecretarial commission, although specialized in functions, also includes different authorities and individuals, including higher levels (DOF, 2019; Ramírez Navarro & Ramírez Navarro, 2013). This commission could include experts and representatives of civil society and be created specifically to address the controversy surrounding megaprojects (Abedrapo, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2007).

The EN is exemplary in its maturation as a policy, because it incorporated the environment into a project whose initial structure corresponded more with a post-Fordist tourism policy. In other words, the project was modified to have a more “sustainable” version, even if that only meant a greenwashing. At the start of Vicente Fox’s administration, strong pressure from environmental citizen organizations triggered environmental management studies and the regional MIA. Another important element of pressure to use environmental policy instruments appeared as a response to international agreements, such as the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000).

With a proactive vision, infrastructure works are relevant for governments, and the transcendence of megaprojects could be higher, as Abedrapo (2011, p. 7) states: “Public works dress governments and megaprojects consecrate them”. However, EN made mistakes commonly found in megaprojects (Abedrapo, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2007; Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius, & Rothengatter, 2003). Among the errors detected, it can be mentioned that EN arose from a normative and comparative need, with technical studies that politically justified the planning of an existing and previously approved project, as well as inadequate institutional management, which caused delays and increased costs for the execution of the project, resulting in perhaps irremediable failure.

Connectivity is a key point in infrastructure works because it allows to cover all the territory and for territorial gaps to be filled under the argument of regional development, and even national security (Luzardo, 2002). However, Medellín (2004) states that to speak of territoriality of the state is to speak of political power. The reiterated urgency to control more territory, especially in Mexico, which the author characterized as a partial territoriality associated with a political regime where obedience is weak. Therefore, in Mexico, and possibly in Latin America, an EN-type megaproject, justified for connectivity in an underdeveloped area, would be associated with power and economy rather than with social and environmental issues, an issue that, along with the role of the state and the relationship with the development of capitalism, is addressed by Dominguez (2015) and Ibarra and Talledos (2016).

External pressure on post-Fordist tourism and environmental policies transformed the original economic purpose of the EN tourism project into a supposedly “sustainable” objective, but in fact, it ended up achieving none of them. Possibly, it would have been better to build something new and measured. If, as the SECTUR insisted in 2016, “it will continue to be built and it will continue to move forward” (Martínez, 2016, s / n), it would be necessary

to learn from the mistakes and redesign it according to the objectives of the new government (2019-2024). If so, the challenge will be to propose a sustainable tourism strategy adapted to the New Tourism Policy, in which the role of the state in decision making is smaller, globalization takes control of decisions about tourism, and participation and policies are directed towards organizing the physical space and the adequate use of resources (Enríquez *et al.*, 2012).

This article can serve as an input for complementary analyses based on the social and environmental impact of megaprojects, as well as highlighting the negative impacts in both the localities where the stops were developed and where they were not built. As a case study in tourism policy, EN is a source of future research due to the externalities it generated by speculation in housing developments for tourists, as well as for its political and socio-environmental impact, both at the local and regional levels.⁸

Translation: Miguel Ángel Ríos

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