

10 The rise and fall of sub-national island jurisdictions: the cases of the Galápagos Islands and San Andrés y providencia

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ISLAND TRAJECTORIES

Starting with Iceland in 1944, the emergence of many small sovereign island states has generated interest in the economic and political viability and vulnerability of small jurisdictions. This seemingly irresistible march to sovereignty proceeded for several decades after the Second World War, before waning considerably in recent years. Instead, many island jurisdictions today choose to operate as relatively autonomous units within a larger ‘federal’ framework encompassing larger states. Hence, recent island scholarship has taken a natural turn towards sub-national or non-sovereign jurisdictional powers and arrangements.

Globalization too has ironically appeared to create perverse incentives for both political fragmentation and economic integration. One side of this dynamic has led to a ‘revolution in localism’ (Bartmann, 2000: p. 52) unleashed in response to these simultaneous pressures. Three important trends facilitated this transition: (1) the advance of the principle of *subsidiarity* (which suggests that decisions are best made at the lowest appropriate level where these can be functional), combined with the championing of sustainable community-based decision-making (Wondolleck, 1985; Davos, 1998, van Hecke, 2003); (2) the proliferation of *information and communication technologies (ICT)* which facilitate social and economic networks that would otherwise be hard or impossible to establish; and (3) the coming into force of *international laws, designations and agreements*, agreed to by nation-states (and their regional units) which can therefore be used to the advantage of sub-national regions or groupings.

In the context of islands, these three developments reinforce trends to decentralization of decision-making towards local governance, and to collaboration among islands seeking to influence policy or engage in cultural, social or economic exchange. ICT increasingly allows the social structures of islands – which transcend their physical boundaries (Pitt, 1985; Veronicos, 1987) – to be both strengthened and deepened, permitting access to a wider audience and to niche markets. As a result, SNIJs may now be better able to exploit international agreements entered into by the parent country, to use these for their own advantage, or even in certain circumstances, to circumvent them.

CASE STUDIES

The case studies selected for this comparative study of sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJs), the Galápagos Islands and San Andrés and Old Providence

(SAOP), are in many respects typical of islands around the world. Their respective economies, for example, are dominated by the primary and tertiary sector activities of fishing and tourism.

Both islands experienced periods of rapid population growth and economic development. In SAOP this started in the 1950s while, in the Galápagos, rapid development started in the 1980s. In both island groups, the development process led directly to a re-evaluation of, and change in, their SNIJ status. The trend worked, however, in two opposite directions for our case studies. Development in SAOP led to a contraction in its local autonomy, as the parent state increased its influence on the islands, whereas in the Galápagos politically aware local groups, supported by a local and international scientific lobby, were able to exploit the island's international status to expand and strengthen its autonomy. This chapter explores the development process on each of these island territories and seeks to explain why each island has arrived at such different destinations and jurisdictional outcomes. The analysis will show that, despite the contemporary political climate favouring greater localism, effective autonomy and resource management may be held back by internal island conflicts.

CASE STUDY 1: THE GALÁPAGOS

The islands of the Galápagos lie some 1,000 km to the west of mainland Ecuador. Reaching an altitude of 1,700 m, the islands comprise the top of a volcanic outcrop rising from the ocean floor at a depth of 3,000 m. The archipelago is spread over 45,600 km² of sea, with a land area of 800 hectares. There are 13 larger islands and over 100 smaller islands and outcrops. The mixing of cold water from the south and warm equatorial waters makes the marine environment highly productive. Isolation resulted in limited colonization by animals and plants, permitting then a unique evolutionary path. This unique ecosystem drew pioneers like Charles Darwin to its shores, just as surely as it now draws a lucrative eco-tourism industry.

Serious exploitation of the islands' resources first occurred in the nineteenth century with US and British whalers. In addition to whales, large numbers of tortoise were taken for food. The first animal introductions (rats and goats) occurred around this time. The introductions of new plants and animals continue to pose a major threat to indigenous flora and fauna.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were failed attempts to establish settlements based on the exploitation of giant tortoise for tortoise oil, most notably by 2,000 Norwegians in 1929. Later the islands were used as a US military base during the Second World War, and as a penal colony on the island of Isabela between 1946 and 1959.

The Galápagos is of course most famous because of its association with Charles Darwin (1809–82). It was partly as a consequence of Darwin's observations in the Galápagos that he developed his theory of evolution through natural selection. Darwin's theory irrevocably changed the discipline of biology and is now almost universally accepted within the scientific and wider community. But Darwin's impact goes far beyond that of narrow science. Darwin's ideas directly challenged the conventional teaching of the monotheistic religions that claimed the earth was created, by God, for the overriding purposes of humankind. In Darwin's world,

however, humankind was no longer separated from the natural world but was, in fact, an integral part of it. Without Darwin's vision, we would not have had the modern understanding and science of ecology. Possibly more importantly, Darwin's ideas helped change humankind's perception of itself and set in train a process whereby now much of humankind accepts a moral responsibility towards the earth and the environment. The evolution of environmental ethics builds on Darwin's view of the place of humans as integral parts of the natural world.

For our purposes, however, the islands of the Galápagos archipelago have grown in status and stature, hand in hand with the rising reputation of Darwin. They occupy a place of importance not only in the history of science, but also in the popular imagination and culture of the wider global community. As we shall see, this niche of intellectual and political capital has provided an important resource for asserting claims for the autonomy and jurisdictional entitlements of the islands against mainland Ecuador, particularly in relation to resource management and protection of the island's environmental heritage.

Population, migration and employment

Emerging economic opportunities particularly in tourism on the islands have been a powerful draw for immigrants from mainland Ecuador. The population has increased steadily, from just 1,346 in 1950, to 15,311 in 1998 (Erikson and Ospina, 1998; Borja, 2000; INEC, 1998). Based on the 1990–98 growth rate, the estimated population in 2001 was 21,000.

Ecuador is one of the poorest countries in South America with a GDP per capita of around US\$2,000. In 1994, 35% of the population was living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2005). Per capita GDP is a good proxy for incomes, but of course tells us nothing about the distribution of that income. There are no official estimates of GDP in the Galápagos. However, a crude estimate, based only on tourism and fishing receipts, suggests a minimum GDP of around US\$3,600 per head (based on year 2000 data) (Kerr, 2005). Moreover, the islands perform better than the mainland on key quality-of-life indicators (such as literacy, sanitation or infant mortality) (INEC, 1998; World Bank, 2005). The relative prosperity and better quality of life in the islands are an important attraction for potential migrants from the mainland.

Governance

The islands became part of the Republic of Ecuador in 1832. The Galápagos National Park was established in 1959. A marine protected area was declared in 1986, extending to 15 miles offshore. This was extended to 40 miles in 1998, as the Galápagos Marine Reserve (GMR). The Special Law for the Conservation and Sustainable use of the Province of the Galápagos (SLG), which established the GMR, was declared in March 1998. The SLG and the governance of the GMR are particularly important because they regulate access to the islands' key economic resources.

The SLG has delivered a heightened level of autonomy to the islands. This includes a restriction on immigration; the protection and confinement of fishing to locals using artisanal methods only, and restrictions on the number of tourist operators. Enforcement of the rules within the GMR is the responsibility of the Galápagos

National Park Service (GNPS). The SLG established two levels of decision-making bodies to manage the GMR: (1) an Authority for Inter-Institutional Management (AIM); and (2) a Participatory Management Board (PMB). AIM is the ultimate authority with responsibility for developing a management plan for the GMR. AIM members include four national government ministries (Tourism, Environment, Commerce and Fisheries and Defence) and three Galápagos-based groups (fishers, environmental group and tourism sector). Where necessary the AIM makes decisions by majority voting, thereby ensuring that in the event of conflict, the interests of mainlanders can outvote those of the Galápagos islanders. The PMB is formed by five local groups (Local Chamber of Tourism, fishers, the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS), the GNPS and nature guides). The PMB makes its recommendations to the AIM by consensus, providing stakeholder input into the establishment of each fishing season's catch quota and the regulation of tourist vessels. When consensus has been reached by the PMB, their proposals have generally been accepted by the AIM. However, when the PMB cannot reach consensus, AIM can take unilateral decisions, albeit within the general principles of the SLG, based on majority voting. As noted above, national rather than local bodies enjoy majority membership on the AIM. Under these circumstances, a failure to achieve consensus within the PMB can result in decisions made at the AIM that are driven essentially by off-island interests.

Although the PMB is a consensus-based decision-making body, there are serious tensions within its membership. The fishers, for example, have openly questioned the legitimacy of the CDRS within the PMB. The CDRS, essentially an international organization committed to the conservation of the islands, provides scientific and technical advice for conservation and pest eradication. Its scientific and conservation mandate may sit uneasily alongside the interests and preoccupations of fishers. Hence, consensus in the PMB is difficult to achieve, particularly where the 'best outcome' doesn't necessarily tally with the interests of an individual group, or where local and national interests and solutions collide in the nationally dominated AIM.

Fishers in particular have occasionally resorted to direct action in an effort to influence the AIM rather than rely on consensus decision-making. In this case promoting the objectives of the individual group, by any means, may take priority over wider social goals. This is even more of a risk in a relatively recently settled archipelago like the Galápagos, where social ties between socioeconomic groups are weaker than on islands with established communities, customs and social norms. In this respect, the Galápagos might be likened to a 'frontier society', with each social group only interested in securing its own claims on natural resources. These deficiencies in social capital can carry very serious consequences for island jurisdictions, and make their own contribution to failures in resourcefulness and consequently to lost opportunities.

The same challenge confronts the island-Ecuador dynamic since the SLG works in some respects against the interest of some mainland stakeholders – for example by excluding mainland fishers and controlling immigration. As a result, the SLG is certainly not universally embraced by the entire Ecuadorian political establishment. Mainland fishing interests have, for example, lobbied government and argued against the extension of the GMR, together with the Ministries of Defence and the Navy. In this kind of contest between local and national actors, it is clear that the locals draw upon the international status of the Galapagos and of international networks to

counter national mainland interests and pressures that might otherwise prevail. Hence, these local–international actors and networks, building on Darwin’s islands as the common intellectual property of humankind, cry out for protection, and have begun to establish a jurisdictional niche for natural resource protection of the islands and of their residents. In 1978, the Galápagos became one of the first locations to be conferred UN World Heritage status under the UN Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). This status was extended in 2001 to include the marine reserve.

It is unlikely that the SLG, with its protections for the islands, would have existed had not the UN conferred World Heritage Status upon the Galápagos. After such a designation, any failure to protect the Galápagos would have received international condemnation. The SLG was passed in 1998 during a period of political and economic instability. Ecuador knew that it could ill afford to find itself out of favour with the world community, the UN, and such institutions as the World Bank. Hence, the SLG, though enacted into Ecuadorian domestic law, derives its real power from the sustained international interest in the Galápagos. The global status and appeal of the islands serve as anchor and leverage for local powers that would not have otherwise been devolved and granted by Ecuador. Moreover, without Darwin and the islands’ global status, the islands would likely have remained a largely uninhabited, isolated, nature-rich archipelago just waiting to be consumed by the world’s apparently insatiable appetite for sea food and resources.

Tourism

With this exalted status, the Galápagos could draw upon an assured niche in the international tourism market. Numbers of tourists, for example, increased threefold from 1985 to 1999. This achievement was assisted by improved communications, and heightened international awareness of the archipelago’s ecological uniqueness, and growing interest in environment-based tourism. An important factor in this process has been a recent period of sustained economic growth, and the emergence of an increasingly wealthy and tourism-prone elite, in the US and Europe. In 1999, 66,000 tourists visited the islands, 82% of whom were non-Ecuadorian (GNPS, 2003). Galápagos tourism is oriented around island-based cruise vessels. Tourists live onboard, travelling from island to island. The activities of tourists are tightly controlled by officers of the GNPS, who accompany cruise vessels.

A questionnaire survey of 448 tourists who visited the Galápagos between January and March 2001 suggests that the largest group of visitors comes from the USA (44%), followed by Europe (32%) (Kerr, 2002). US visitors tended to be older, with most in the 56–65 age group. US visitors spent significantly more on their holidays than non-US visitors. There are two other illuminating results. Firstly, the majority of visitors (93%) were on their first trip to the Galápagos. There is a very low level of returnees. Secondly, most visitors (60%) had previous experience of nature-based tourism. Respondents had already visited a variety of global destinations on nature-based holidays (such as Costa Rica, Namibia, Kenya and Antarctica). Based on expenditure evidence gathered by the survey, annual tourism expenditure was estimated to be in the region of US\$71.5 million (excluding external travel costs). Over 90% of this expenditure was attributed to European and US visitors.

Fisheries

The fishery in the Galápagos is split into three segments. There is the traditional fishery, open all year round, for fin-fish, which are dried, salted and sold to the Ecuadorian market. In 1999 this accounted for approximately 86 tonnes of dried fish with a value of US\$0.3 million. The second component is a lobster fishery which grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s when refrigeration and air transport allowed the product to reach US markets. This is a dive fishery, with fishers typically using homemade surface supply equipment. Two or more divers will share a single air supply when underwater. In 1999, 55.4 tons of lobster was exported with an approximate value of US\$1.0 million. This fishery is controlled by AIM and the GNPS with a quota, minimum landing size, and a four-month season. A permit is required to land and then export lobster. This makes illegal export difficult and provides the authorities with reliable catch data. The third and last segment is a dive fishery for sea cucumber (locally known as pepino). The pepino is processed before being exported to the Far East, where it is used as a medicine and a cosmetics ingredient. This is highly lucrative, with divers earning about US\$1 for each pepino. Once dried, pepino are easy to transport and smuggle illegally (unlike lobster, which must be refrigerated). Prior to 1999, pepino fishing was prohibited in the GMR; however, there was an extensive illegal fishery. In 1999 the fishery opened, with a two-month season. It is estimated that in excess of 4.5 million pepino can be harvested in a season, with a local value in excess of US\$3 million (year 2000 values). The retail value in the Far East is in the region of US\$6–9 million.

The fishery sector in the Galápagos is artisanal, but not traditional. The ability to export product to external markets has allowed the sector to develop. Fishing incomes are determined by international markets in luxury fishery products (lobster and sea cucumber). Prices are maintained by demand from high-income economies (Singapore, Hong Kong and the USA) and a shortage of supply caused by unsustainable exploitation in other parts of the world (the Caribbean for lobster and the Far East for sea cucumber).

External and internal threats

It is widely recognized that the economies of many SNIJs are dependent on international markets, and hence are vulnerable to changes in external market conditions. The Galápagos is no exception from other islands in this regard. Its main exports are luxury products and services (lobster, pepino and tourism), targeted at wealthy countries. One would expect these markets to exhibit strong income elasticity of demand. Any serious economic downturn in the USA, Europe or the Far East would have a major impact on these markets. Added to this, there are other *external* threats:

- A change in international law in the trade of endangered species could have a major impact on pepino fisheries.
- A change in fashion for ecotourism in the USA or EU, or competition from new fashionable alternatives to the Galápagos could affect tourism numbers.
- Serious civil instability in mainland South America would have an impact on the number of US tourists (who are by nature reluctant international travellers, especially post-9/11).

The Galápagos islanders can do little to influence the above exogenous variables. However, there are also *internal* threats to the islands' economy. These include:

- over-fishing, causing a stock collapse;
- an increase in tourist numbers, destroying the exclusive quality of the holiday experience;
- ecological disturbance from tourist numbers, introduced species, pollution, waste disposal and land enclosure.

There is potential to address many of these issues at the level of the island itself using the vehicle of the SLG, though success will not necessarily come easily. Tourism can prove impervious to negative local feedback (McEachern and Towle, 1974; Carlsen, 1999). Moreover, it is difficult to control tourist numbers when outside interests own the infrastructure. If an exclusive resort begins to lose its status and tourism expenditure starts to fall, then the obvious way to maintain incomes is to increase the number of lower-paying tourists, thereby adding pressure on the environment. Fishery resources are valuable. Many SNIJs do not have control over their waters. National governments may regard the lease of fishing rights to third countries as a useful source of income. Controlling migration may be seen as an infringement of civil liberties by those wishing to migrate to an island or recent immigrants who want their family to join them.

In the Galápagos, the SLG provides autonomy to address many resource management issues. However, ensuring local control of resources requires consensus between the main socioeconomic groups. The development of the Galápagos has witnessed the emergence of three socioeconomic elites. There is a scientific/regulatory community with interests in the environment and conservation; a local fishing community; and a community of tourism operators and related interests. The scientific/regulatory community is global, well educated, and supported by a wider international network of conservation interests. The tourism community is politically well connected in Ecuador: after all, the Galápagos is the principal draw for tourists coming to Ecuador and an important source of foreign revenue. The fishing community is largely uneducated but it is unionized and prepared to take coordinated direct action to secure its goals. While the scientific/regulatory community was the main instigator of the process that led to the adoption of the SLG, each of the groups had a vested interest. Fishers saw the SLG as a way of excluding mainland boats from the lucrative fishery. Similarly, local tourist operators saw the SLG as a means of restricting new entrants, maintaining the natural environment, and raising the international cachet of the Galápagos.

Thus, the SLG served the purposes of each of the islands' elites. While each group has an egoistic interest in protecting the islands' resources, the objectives of the three groups regularly conflict. Fishers are happy to see mainland boats excluded but make regular demands for increased lobster and pepino quota. These protests have occasionally become violent, and have included the tragic massacre of giant tortoises (Larson, 2001). Fishers are mistrustful of the motives of fishery scientists and conservationists, a pattern seen the world over (Kerr *et al.*, 2006). Pepino and shark's fin are regularly taken illegally. In the Galápagos, it is the enforcement, rather than the creation, of laws that present the greatest challenge (Baldacchino, 2006, p. 193).

It also remains to be seen what will happen if there is a fall in tourism income, and operators make demands to increase tourist numbers. Despite these problems, the SLG does provide the mechanism to find island-based solutions to issues of resource management, and the Galápagos is without doubt in a better position than if the Special Law of 1998 had not been enacted.

CASE STUDY 2: SAN ANDRÉS AND OLD PROVIDENCE

Unlike the leverage provided by the undoubted iconic status of the Galápagos Islands on the international stage, fate has conferred no such strategic advantage upon the Colombian archipelago of San Andrés and Old Providence (SAOP). This archipelago, with its current economy also built on fisheries and tourism and surrounded by one of the largest coral reefs in the world, received no Darwin and no high international profile. Instead, SAOP suffered the more customary fate of a Caribbean island in the European age of empire whose political economy was dictated by outside forces. It became a classic farm and plantation outpost, finding its economy and system of governance conforming to that model (Warrington and Milne, 2007).

There are no definitive accounts of the 'discovery' of the islands. San Andrés first appeared on Spanish maps in 1527. The archipelago of San Andrés and Old Providence (SAOP), located in the western Caribbean Sea, approximately 770 km from the Colombian mainland and 240 km from Nicaragua, saw its first colonizers with the English Puritans who settled on the 18 km² island of Old Providence in 1629. There followed a train of subsequent colonizers from England, Spain, Argentina, Chile and France. The island of San Andrés, with an area of around 27 km², had by 1806 become a cotton plantation island, relying upon imported labour (Rosberg, 1975).

San Andrés has a spine of low hills, with a high point of 90 m. Natural vegetation is almost entirely absent, having been replaced by coconut plantations, farmland and urban development. This contrasts with Old Providence which has a rugged landscape reaching a height of 350 m. The low-lying land has been converted into farmland, while large parts of the interior remain covered by natural or semi-natural woodland. Two barrier reefs, with a series of atolls and smaller reefs, surround the island. The Old Providence reef is over 32 km long, the second largest in the Caribbean. The total marine area associated with the archipelago is approximately 300,000 km², representing nearly 10% of the Caribbean Sea (Coralina, 2000).

In 1822 the conference at Villa del Santa Rosa brought the islands officially under the control of the mainland and they have remained Colombian ever since. However, the English-speaking, Protestant islanders remained culturally distinct from mainland Colombia, and were essentially left as self-governing communities until well into the twentieth century.

The Baptist faith was brought to the islands in 1847. It has remained the religion most closely associated with the native islanders. The abolition of slavery in 1853 led to the introduction of sharecropping and a change in the main export crop to coconut. Fishing and crops supplemented incomes and diet. Exports of coconut oil to the USA began in 1855 and this remained the chief export for more than a hundred years. The 1930s, however, saw a major downturn in the fortunes of the coconut

industry, with cheap alternatives to coconut oil, and recession in the USA depressed demand. Added to this, the plantations on the island were decimated by coconut blight. The predominantly black, English-speaking, Baptist population languishing upon this isolated and declining outpost of European empire shared strong cultural similarities with other Caribbean islands (e.g. the West Indies, Cayman and Jamaica) but relatively few cultural and economic similarities with the Latin parent state of Colombia to which they were tied. Such was the cruel and contrasting fate of this archipelago.

Free-port status

After the Second World War, following the cessation of the Colombian civil war (*La Violencia*), and partly in response to representations by islanders, the national government took a closer interest in SAOP. In 1953, San Andrés was declared a free-port. This marked the start of a period of radical socioeconomic change.

Free-port status might at first be thought to have been intended to encourage *entrepôt* trade and to set the islands upon a different and self-reliant foundation of political economy. The trade aspects of the San Andrés free-port, however, failed to materialize (and may never have figured genuinely in the government's intentions). In retrospect, it appears that the free-port designation of San Andrés was driven more by the internal economic and political interests on the mainland, providing as it did an outlet for wealthy Colombians to go on holiday and to buy luxury goods unavailable on the mainland, while generating tax revenue for the central government. This 'Colombianizing' of the Caribbean islands promoted angry nationalism in the wake of *La Violencia*.

The free-port allowed 'commercial tourism' to flourish. Mainland Colombians visited the island to purchase electrical goods, jewellery, watches, tobacco, perfume and exclusive alcoholic drinks. To take advantage of the free-port status, visitors were required to spend at least four nights on the island. This stimulated the development of shops, hotels, restaurants and night clubs. The emerging infrastructure helped stimulate further demand. In San Andrés, tourism became the mainstay of the economy, while Old Providence remained largely dependent on agriculture and fishing. The development of the free-port also led to an influx of migrants from mainland Colombia.

The demography of the islands, in terms of numbers and ethnic origin, underwent significant transformation over the latter half of the twentieth century. The population of San Andrés was just over 14,000 in 1964. The population rose rapidly as the free-port developed, mostly fuelled by migration of Hispanic Colombians from the mainland. Migrant Colombians arrived to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the free-port. During this time, incentives were given to mainlanders to settle on the islands. These included free passage, parcels of land, commercial licences, guaranteed jobs and business and home loans at low interest rates. In addition to mainland Colombians, small numbers of other nationals (mainly Lebanese and Syrians) settled on the islands and their descendants still play an important role in the island's retail sector.

The exact size of the population is a politically sensitive subject and difficult to establish. Even official estimates vary widely. Official data published in 2003 suggested that the population of San Andrés comprises approximately 73,000 (Mow

et al., 2007) even though the latest census data, that exclude illegal migrants, suggest that the population in 2005 was 55,426 (DANE, 2007).

Under the 1991 Constitution (Article 310), immigrants are required to hold residency cards, and illegal immigrants deliberately avoid the census. Illegal residents may number over 30,000, with no less than 33 shanty areas in San Andrés (Coralina, 2001). Continuing illegal immigration may be due partly to economic and partly to security concerns on the mainland. Population growth on Old Providence has been less dramatic with 2,318 inhabitants in 1964, up to 4,147 in 2005 (DANE, 2007).

Population growth has been, and continues to be, a key issue for the sustainable development of the islands and the cultural survival of its native community. Population growth results in various impacts, including:

- pressure on freshwater resources (such as increased demands on supply, and contamination from sewage);
- potential for disease and loss of environmental quality from poor sanitation, high volumes of waste production and inadequate waste disposal;
- over-exploitation of terrestrial and marine resources, leading to degradation of ecosystems, destruction of biodiversity, increasing poverty and loss of food security;
- continual pressure on land resources for urban development;
- loss of cultural identity of native islanders;
- ethnic tensions from inequity where specific groups dominate or are perceived to be unfairly economically advantaged;
- economic strain on local public service providers and infrastructure;
- urban development, shanty towns and sanitation problems, undermining the factors that make the islands an attractive tourist destination.

The rise in population has created tensions between different ethnic and social groups. On the one hand, native islanders – the Raizales – feel that over many years their culture and traditional rights have been taken over by Latin immigrants. On the other, tension also arises between established Latin residents and the new impoverished immigrants fleeing to the island in order to escape poverty and insecurity on the mainland (Mow *et al.*, 2007).

Prior to the 1950s, the islands were largely self-governing. This arose from a lack of interest on the part of mainland Colombia, then ravaged by civil war, rather than because of any expression of independence by the islanders. The islands were simply left to themselves and islanders got on with the business of survival. Both economic and cultural life on the island with its distinct black, English-speaking, Protestant Creole culture was largely separate from that of Colombia.

When mainland Colombia started to exert increasing control over all economic, social and cultural aspects of life in the 1950s, following civil war in Colombia, national politicians wanted to create a single unified state with one culture, one religion and one language. Consequently, the Creole culture and particularly the English language were suppressed. Catholicism was vigorously promoted on the islands. Public schools became Catholic and all Protestant schools were closed. Islanders had to convert to Catholicism to hold any public-sector jobs. In the late 1950s, Spanish was enforced as the language of the archipelago. Spanish-speaking teachers, predominantly Spanish monks and nuns, were unable to communicate

effectively with the English-speaking native students, who were forbidden to speak English on school grounds. As a result, many children from that generation became illiterate in their native English language and also failed to develop adequate language skills in Spanish, the only legally recognized language in Colombia until 1991. All official business and legal transactions were conducted in Spanish. Thus, it was practically impossible for the native islanders to hold positions of authority or responsibility in business or public life.

Overview of economic activity

The establishment of the free-port in 1953 transformed the socioeconomy of San Andrés from one dependent on agriculture and fishing to one driven by tourism and commerce. In 1953, there were only four major commercial enterprises and some small home-based shops, and no hotels or restaurants. By 1962, there were 276 shops and 31 hotels (Toro, 1963). By 1997, the number of shops on the island had expanded to 2,077, with over 200 hotels, restaurants and bars catering for tourists (Diaz, 2000). Most of this development took place in the 1970s and 1980s.

The free-port created a sea-change in the socioeconomy of San Andrés. For almost a century prior to 1953, the economy had been based on the export of coconut oil, with incomes supplemented by agricultural fishing. The opportunities created by the free-port were in international trade, commerce and tourism. In the absence of any positive discrimination and training, there were few real prospects for islanders taking a leading role in this development. The disadvantaged position of islanders was compounded by discriminatory economic incentives, prejudice against non-Spanish speakers and racism.

Tourism in San Andrés

San Andrés currently attracts in excess of 350,000 tourists every year. However, there are few similarities between tourism in San Andrés and in most other Caribbean islands. Significantly, there are very few foreign tourists in San Andrés. In 1999, less than 5% of tourists were non-Colombian (Diaz *et al.*, 2000). A questionnaire survey of 240 tourists on the island of San Andrés in June–July 2000 and December–February 2000–1 revealed that over 60% of these Colombian visitors come from three mainland cities: Cali (27%), Bogotá (25%), and Medellín (19%) (Kerr, 2002). San Andrés is essentially a domestic tourist resort for the mainland state. This contrasts with tourism in most Caribbean islands, which is heavily geared towards North American and European visitors. For Colombians, San Andrés fulfils fairly conventional holiday needs. The main reason for visiting the islands is sun and sand (the Caribbean natural environment), and 76% of visitors stay with family or friends. San Andrés attracts repeat visits – 68% of Colombian visitors had visited before (many several times), and 95% said they would consider returning again. The small number of international tourists surveyed (30) indicated that value for money was the main attraction. San Andrés provides a small number of foreign visitors with an inexpensive Caribbean holiday.

The nature of tourism in San Andrés has changed significantly over the years. The initial model was ‘commercial tourism’ with wealthy Colombians visiting the islands

to purchase luxury goods. Shopping is now a low priority for Colombian visitors and not a priority for foreign visitors. The tourist infrastructure grew in the 1970s and 1980s based on relatively small numbers of high-spending tourists. However, since the Colombian economy was liberalized, there is now no need for Colombians to travel to purchase goods, and other holiday destinations are available to wealthy Colombians. San Andrés now attracts middle-income Colombian families. As the 'exclusivity' of the resort has waned, the numbers of tourists have increased. High tourist numbers and over-population result in serious waste management problems. Raw sewage seeps into the sea, ground water is being polluted and there is a serious solid-waste disposal problem. When asked about problems on the island, both Colombians and non-Colombians repeatedly raised litter, sanitation, sewage and lack of toilets as significant problems.

There is a desperate need for investment in sewage and waste management facilities. The tourism industry on the island would like to attract higher-spending tourists and compete with other Caribbean destinations. However, poor infrastructure makes this difficult. Furthermore, overseas visitors, in particular North American visitors, are discouraged from visiting the island because of the poor security situation in Colombia. The islands are safe, but all connecting flights to San Andrés are via the Colombian mainland.

Fisheries

The fish and shellfish resources of the San Andrés archipelago are exploited by three groups of fishers: artisanal fishers on both Old Providence and San Andrés; legal industrial fishing, landing catch in both San Andrés and directly to the mainland; and illegal industrial fishing. The National Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INPA) sets the quota for both artisanal and industrial fishers. The quota is heavily skewed towards the industrial fishery. In 2000, the industrial fishery received a quota of 197 tons, while artisanal fishers were awarded a quota of 3 tons (weight of lobster tail). It is widely accepted that this quota is exceeded by all fishers, with additional catches by illegal boats landing lobster in Central America.

Artisanal fishers tend to fish from launches which are generally 3–4 m long. They exploit a combination of fin-fish, lobster and conch. Lobster forms a greater proportion of the catch in Old Providence than in San Andrés. Fin-fish are generally caught using hand lines. Conch and lobster are gathered by free-diving without the aid of surface demand or scuba equipment. Free-diving limits the sea area available for exploitation by artisanal fishers. The artisanal fishers are almost exclusively native islanders (*raizales*). The fin-fish catch is sold locally. Lobster and conch are sold to local restaurants or to dealers. Lobster is exported to the USA (Miami or New York) via mainland Colombia. Fishing is particularly important on Old Providence, with 25% of households on the island reliant on fishing.

The industrial fishery exploits resources throughout the archipelago. It focuses on lobster, and to a lesser extent conch, using both traps and divers. Many industrial vessels are foreign-registered, obtaining fishing permits directly from Colombian authorities in Bogotá. Vessels may carry in excess of 20 divers, a large proportion of whom are native Central American. Twenty divers per boat is the legal limit set by INPA. However, there are regular reports of numbers in excess of this. An onboard compressor will supply air to several divers via a single pipe. As many as 600 people

may be involved in this fishery. Industrial and artisanal fishers exploit the same stock and are therefore in competition.

A small number of boats land catch at a fish factory in San Andrés, but most of the catch is landed directly to the mainland before being exported to the US. Few, if any, islanders work on industrial vessels. The fish processing plant provides part-time employment for 25–30 people. Other minor benefits include the provision of services and supplies to the vessels themselves.

Autonomy: acquired by default, lost by design?

Prior to 1954, the islands of SAOP enjoyed significant autonomy. This was not a result of bilateral arrangements or protective legislation. Autonomy was essentially by default and purely a function of a lack of interest on the part of a parent state in the throes of civil war. A native population with a different language, religion, ethnic background and culture from that of mainland Colombia increased this sense of independence. The islands forged trade links with North America, resources were locally owned and controlled, and incomes were supplemented by small-scale agriculture and fisheries (Mow *et al.*, 2007). Yet it is dangerous to romanticize the past, for, like many other island economies, the economic situation in SAOP was precarious. The post-war collapse in the market for coconut oil, plus a coconut blight, brought real poverty to the islands. Initially, many islanders welcomed the increased Colombian involvement and investment that took place in the 1950s.

Post-1954, there was a dramatic loss of autonomy. Cultural autonomy was undermined with the imposition of Catholicism, and the use of Spanish in schools and official transactions. Economic autonomy was lost as outside interests bought property and controlled commercial activity. Political autonomy was lost as Colombians dominated the islands' administration. Control over marine resources was lost as the mainland administration limited the activities of artisanal fishers and leased lucrative fishing rights to outside industrial vessels.

The process of Colombianization created a new political class on the islands of SOAP. Mainland Colombians controlled all significant commercial activity and all positions of power in the islands' administration. These new groups were subservient to mainland interests and had neither cultural connection with nor empathy for the native population. The interests of this new business and political elite were best served by close links with the mainland and not by island autonomy. At first, many islanders welcomed development. Able to sell land to developers and find employment, many islanders felt increasingly wealthy. For a time, increasing incomes obscured the reality that only a fraction of the wealth generated on the island trickled down to islanders.

Fifty years later, San Andrés is now possibly the most densely populated island in the Caribbean, with significant environmental, housing, sanitation, and waste management problems. There is a crumbling tourist infrastructure unable to compete with other Caribbean islands. An industrial fishery exploits lucrative marine resources, with no significant economic benefit to the islands themselves.

Colombia is, however, not impervious to change. In 1991, it introduced a radical new constitution. The new constitution obliged the state to protect the diversity and integrity of the environment, recognize the right of people to participate in decision-making, and recognize all ethnic groups and their languages. The new constitution

created 34 regional autonomous corporations (CARs) responsible for managing natural resources. Special rights were given to SAOP, allowing the introduction of population control measures. The CAR for SAOP is known as Coralina. In 2000, the archipelago was recognized as a UN Biosphere Reserve and the Seaflower Marine Protected Area was designated by national decree in 2005. Coralina has taken considerable steps towards developing a management regime for the reserve which involves all stakeholders. Encouragingly, a consensus has emerged across all the islands' ethnic groups concerning the need to protect the environment and marine resources.

The success of these measures will, to a large extent, be dependent on national institutions recognizing the legitimacy of this process. This requires a major psychological shift on their part. So far, national agencies have been reluctant to recognize local institutions and have not been prepared to share decision-making with islanders, particularly on the issue of fisheries management. Population control is an important issue but very difficult to address. While migration controls may prevent more refugees from mainland Colombia entering the islands, they cannot easily address the existing chronic over-population. Any positive measures to reduce population will be difficult and politically sensitive.

CONCLUSION

In some respects, SAOP and the Galápagos Islands were both 'discovered' by their parent states after years of neglect. The Galápagos were once considered to be little more than an inhospitable volcanic outcrop, with high ecological but low economic value. The advent of cheaper air travel and high-value nature tourism has transformed the islands into the wealthiest department in Ecuador. With this wealth came population growth, over-exploitation of marine resources, and the introduction of alien species. However, UN World Heritage Status, a high global profile, and an international climate supportive of subsidiarity have allowed the Galápagos Islands to gain considerable control over their internal resources.

The story in contemporary SAOP is very different. This archipelago went from benign neglect prior to the 1950s to repression and thorough consolidation with the Colombian mainland in political, cultural, and economic terms. Consequently all aspects of the islands' administration and resource management have been brought under central state control. The economy saw a rapid expansion and then decline of the tourism sector, with chronic over-population, severe environmental health problems, resource degradation, and the marginalization of native islanders and their culture. While a new constitution provides a glimmer of hope for an element of autonomy to SAOP and for international environmental protection under a UN Biosphere Reserve, successful resistance to a national administration with a strong political culture of centralized control is unlikely. SAOP's system of governance so far conforms to that of a classic fief, having never successfully managed the transition from dependence upon an earlier plantation economy, and hence found itself almost wholly subject to alien and outside control and manipulation (Warrington and Milne, 2007).

The lessons here are clear. The level of autonomy that SNIJs can aspire to is, often and to a large extent, determined by factors external to the island jurisdiction. The modern development of the Galápagos occurred within the context of a wider process

of globalization, which has clearly facilitated the development of SNIJ status. At the start of the twenty-first century, with an increasingly globalized economy, the political *zeitgeist* is very much in favour of sub-national arrangements. Furthermore, the process of globalization has itself enhanced the international status of the Galápagos. Darwin's contributions to science are now widely accepted and have fundamentally changed how humanity perceives itself and its relationship with the natural world. As the status of Darwin increased, so did the profile of the Galápagos rise. Yet it is important to note that the political resource now enjoyed by the Galápagos is purely a function of chance. If Darwin had taken his father's advice and not accepted his position on the HMS *Beagle*, then the Galápagos would possibly be no more than a disadvantaged volcanic outcrop with its considerable marine resources being over-exploited by outside interests.

The development of San Andrés, on the other hand, happened at a time when the interests of the parent state demanded tighter control and this resulted in a dramatic loss of island autonomy. In the 1950s, there was international support for a small number of former Caribbean island colonies in their quest for independence. However, beyond this decolonization, there was little interest in autonomy for regions, or islands, within national states. Consequently, the anonymous SAOP archipelago enjoyed no external defence against the penetration of mainland interests, resulting in the complete loss of control over its own resources. Some external recognition has belatedly come in the form of a Biosphere designation. However, without the kind of celebrity status enjoyed by the Galápagos, resistance to Colombian authorities and to industrial fishing interests that threaten the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve brings no chorus of international condemnation. By contrast, the response by the international media to the recent minor *Jessica* oil spill in the Galápagos shows how uneven are the stakes between these two archipelagos.

With external factors so much a matter of chance, and with relative comparative advantages so temporary, the onus falls upon islanders to seize opportunities while they are still available. Yet even here, the role of internal factors cannot be overlooked, and history may not have dealt islands an equally benign legacy. SNIJ arrangements can only be developed if local elites and communities can function effectively and consensually in response to local needs. When development came to San Andrés in the 1950s, a new ruling economic and political class was effectively transplanted from the mainland. This group was strongly subservient to mainland interests and had no interest in developing local jurisdictional autonomy. By contrast, in the Galápagos, each of the key island groups had a vested interest in enhancing SNIJ status: principally, to exclude outside interests from gaining access to the island resources.

There are other lessons here. In addition to the requirement of a united local elite, intent on maximizing its SNIJ status, there must also be sufficient political and fiscal clout to manage this process. In the Galápagos, while each group saw an advantage in the development of SNIJ status, they have had difficulties in reaching agreement on the internal allocation of resources and on building stakeholder consensus. As a result, conflict remains endemic and the island remains weakened in its capacity to manage change in external circumstances. If, for example, the current 'fashion' for nature tourism amongst wealthy Europeans and Americans comes to an end, what will be the response in the Galápagos? Any fall in tourism incomes would inevitably lead to calls for increased numbers and a move towards a mass tourism model with increased numbers and increased environmental pressure.

The Galápagos and San Andrés were once backwaters, but are now exposed to the full force of economic development. In 1954, San Andrés was declared a free-port and the development that followed took place exclusively on that island. The island of Old Providence remains largely undeveloped. While San Andrés' population increased 1,600%, the population of Old Providence has barely doubled. On Old Providence the majority of the population is native and the local culture is vibrant. Most families rely on agriculture, and fishing. The island is covered by semi-natural forest, fringed by white beaches and palm trees, and surrounded by one of the largest coral reefs in the world. Old Providence is to western eyes the very epitome of the Caribbean island ideal. While San Andrés developed, the world ignored Old Providence. The Caribbean tourism boom has avoided Old Providence.

Conscious of what has happened on its sister island of San Andrés, Old Providence is wary of major tourism development and losing control to outside interests. It might be thought that perhaps Old Providence now has the chance to develop its potential without the environmental destruction, exploitation and cultural subjugation suffered by San Andrés; yet, without its own strong political resources and institutions, that outcome remains unlikely. Neither Old Providence nor San Andrés is as yet a fully fledged or genuine SNIJ, nor has either of the two been permitted to become so by their mainland masters. Unlike the Galápagos Islands, this Caribbean archipelago cannot muster sufficient leverage to win much beyond the barest rudiments of local institutions and jurisdiction. Without these, there can be no real protection from outside interests nor effective environmental management.

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