



COmmunity-based Management of  
EnviromenTal challenges in Latin America



## D6.5: “Minutes of the Final Policy Conference”

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# Project information

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- 2. NILU: Norsk Institutt for Luftforskning (Norway)
- 3. JHI: The James Hutton Institute (Great Britain)
- 4. SGM: Sagremarisco-Viveiros de Marisco Lda. (Portugal)
- 5. PUJ: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, School of Environmental and Rural Studies (Colombia)
- 6. UNAM: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexico)
- 7. IADO: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (Argentina)
- 8. AQM: Fundación Aquamarina-CECIM (Argentina)
- 9. CCC: Consejo comunitario de la comunidad negra de la cuenca baja del río Calima (Colombia)
- 10. ERA: Estudios Rurales y Asesoría Campesina Asociación Civil (Mexico)
- 11. CEIUCN: Comité Español de la UICN - Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (Spain)

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## 1 Introduction

COMET-LA (Community-based Management of Environmental Challenges in Latin America) is a project financed by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development. The project's aim is to identify community-based models for sustainable management and governance of natural resources used in different socio-ecological systems within the current context of climate change and increasing competition for use of those resources. Its final results will be posted in January 2015 on the website [www.comet-la.eu](http://www.comet-la.eu).

The COMET-LA project is headed by the University of Córdoba and counts the following participants: the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Civil Association of Rural Studies and Farmer Counselling, the Pontifical Xavieran University (PUJ), the Community Councils of the Black Communities of the Lower Calima River Basin and the High and Middle Dagua, the Argentine Institute of Oceanography (IADO-CONICET), the National University of the South, the Aquamarina-Cecim Foundation, the Norwegian Luftforskning Institute (NILU), the James Hutton Institute of the United Kingdom, the Portuguese company Sagremarisco-Viveiros de Marisco Lda. and the Spanish Committee of the IUCN.

The Policy Conference on "Working Together: policies and community management to meet environmental challenges" brought together international actors from the academic, political, social, business and multilateral world to present results of the COMET-LA project and discuss basic aspects that should be taken into account to improve natural resource governance which are vital for maintaining ecosystem services such as air quality, CO<sub>2</sub> capture, food security, access to potable water and climate regulation.

The conference was held at the Ignacio Chávez Seminar Unit of the National Autonomous University of Mexico last 10-11 November – two days of intense work.



## 2 Conference participants<sup>1</sup> and agenda

The communities participating in the three case studies (Santiago Comaltepec, Mexico; Community Councils of the Black Communities of the Lower Calima River Basin and the High and Middle Dagua, Colombia; and Pehuen Co and Monte Hermoso, Argentina) were amply represented at the conference. Local authorities and inhabitants from the three case study communities made the trip; more representatives came from Mexico and Colombia (seven from each) than from Argentina (three), owing to high travel prices and inflation in the latter country.

It must be highlighted that a feature of all participants from the communities is their major influence in their places of origin, thereby ensuring dissemination of the conference's messages. Municipal and communal authorities from Mexico attended, along with workers from community institutions such as UZACHI and Radio Xeglo, who either live in Comaltepec or are directly linked to the community. From Colombia the Councils' legal representatives were there with members from educational institutions and NGOs such as SENA and Fundapav, as well as the project's young co-researchers. Lastly, from Argentina came the director of the local media outlet *Hola Pehuen!*, along with a municipal authority and a representative of the artisanal fishermen elected by popular vote among participants in the COMET-LA workshops.

All took part in the speaking panels (as can be seen in the conference agenda shown below) and in the discussion sessions and parallel workshop, for which registration was voluntary. The communities could thus use their own voice to present the project's results, as they had contributed to its development, as well as their view about what is needed to achieve better natural resource governance. They also had the opportunity to mutually exchange experience and come into direct contact with multilateral actors, international NGOs, decision-makers and researchers, thus furthering the interchange of local and scientific knowledge.

The attending multilateral actors and NGOs supplied an overview of the experiences, benefits and challenges of community-based natural resource management both in the countries analysed and elsewhere in the world. The participants included representatives from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC), the European project COMBIOSERVE, the Tropenbos Foundation and the Mexican Council for Silviculture.

The participation by national authorities was less than desired. Indeed, one of the conference's concerns was how to more closely associate those stakeholders with a view to achieving better understanding and integration of the benefits from community-based management in public policies. Some significant authorities nevertheless participated, such as Mexico's National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, the Von Humboldt

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<sup>1</sup> The full attendance list can be consulted in Annex I.

Institute (which advises the Colombian Environment Ministry about biodiversity policies) and the Deputy Delegation of the European Commission in Mexico.

Lastly, noteworthy was the participation of research bodies such as the Union of Latin American and Caribbean Universities, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Pontifical Xavieran University, the National University of the South, the Argentine Institute of Oceanography of the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina, and the IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy. All contributed their views and experience of working with communities and the scientific enrichment resulting from this joint action, as more concisely detailed in the section on the project's results.

The agenda of the COMET-LA Policy Conference is shown below:

## 10 de noviembre 2014

- 8:00–9:00. Participant registration.**
- 9:00–10:00. Opening session.**  
*José Narro (Rector UNAM, México)*  
*Rosario Robles (Social Development Secretariat (SEDESOL), Mexico)*  
*Andrew Standley (Ambassador of the EC in Mexico)*  
*José Carlos Gómez Villamandos (Rector UCO, Spain)*  
*María del Mar Delgado (General Project Coordinator)*  
*Roberto Escalante (Coordinator Mexican Team)*
- 10:00–11:00. Opening lecture: The importance of community-based management of environmental challenges in policy-making.**  
*Speaker: José Sarukhán (President of the National Commission for Knowledge and Biodiversity Use - CONABIO, Mexico)*  
*Reply: Brigitte Baptiste (Director of the von Humboldt Institute, Colombia)*
- 11:00–11:30. Coffee break.**
- 11:30–12:00. COMET-LA Project: From a focus on community-based management to a focus of community ownership of the solutions in natural resources management.**  
*María del Mar Delgado (General Project Coordinator)*
- 12:30–13:30. Environmental aspects of community-based management of natural resources. Pros and cons in the XXI century.**  
*Speakers: Israel Hernández (ERA, Mexico, COMET-LA Researcher)*  
*Sebastián Moreno (Legal Representative of the Community Council of Bajo Calima, Colombia)*  
*Isabel Ruiz-Mallen (COMBIOSERVE Representative)*  
*Antonio Ruiz (President of the Regional IUCN Office for Mesoamerica and Caribbean)*  
*Reply: Leticia Merino (President of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC))*
- 13:30–14:00. Economic aspects of community-based management of natural resources. Pros and cons in the XXI century.**  
*Speakers: Lucila Martínez (Leader of the Community Council of Alto y Medio Dagua, Colombia)*  
*Néstor Hernández (Comaltepec Representative, Mexico)*  
*Reply: José Luis Samaniego (CEPAL)*
- 14:00–15:30. Lunch.**

- 15:30–16:30. PARALLEL EVENT 1: Institutional aspect of community-based natural resource management. Pros and cons of the XXI century.**  
*Speakers: Laura Hernández (Comaltepec Representative, Mexico)*  
*Eduardo Flores (Artisanal Fishers Representative, Monte Hermoso, Argentina)*  
*Manuel Riascos (Legal Representative of the Community Council of Alto y Medio Dagua, Colombia)*  
*Salvador Lopez (Municipal Pres. of Comaltepec, Mexico)*  
*Reply: Adriana Vázquez (Researcher, Tropenbos Foundation, Colombia)*  
*César Nava (Institute of Legal Research, UNAM, Mexico)*
- 16:30–17:30. Advances in capacity building.**  
*Speakers: Oscar Hernández (Instructor, National Learning Service, Colombia)*  
*Federico Seleme (Production Director of Monte Hermoso, Argentina)*  
*Pablo Bordino (Director of Aquamarina-CECIM, Argentina)*  
*Francisco Chapela (Researcher COMET-LA, ERA, Mexico)*  
*Reply: Enrique Provencio (Senate of Mexico)*  
*Gloria Abraham (IICA Representative)*
- 17:30–18:30. Needs for effective governance of environmental challenges**  
*Speakers: Roberto Escalante (UNAM, Mexico, COMET-LA researcher)*  
*Cesar Ortiz (PUJ, Colombia, COMET-LA researcher)*  
*Silvia London (UNS-CONICET, Argentina, COMET-LA researcher)*  
*Reply: Sergio Madrid (Mexican Forestry Commission, México)*  
*Liliana Mosquera (Researcher, von Humboldt Institute, Colombia)*
- 15:30–18:30. PARALLEL EVENT 2: Bottom-up influence towards a better natural resources governance to face climate change.**  
*Coordinator: Ana Correa (CeIUCN, Spain, COMET-LA researcher)*
- 18:30–19:30. UNAM: Cultural show.**

## 11 de noviembre 2014

- 9:00–9:30. Presentation of the results of parallel event 2.**  
*Ana Correa (Coordinator, Spanish Committee, IUCN)*
- 9:30–10:30. Central conference: The Mexican experience of community-based management of environmental challenges.**  
*Leticia Merino (President of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC))*
- 10:30–11:00. Coffee break.**
- 11:00–12:30. Research in and for communities: The vision of local communities.**  
*Nayive Mina (Co-researcher of the Community Council of Alto y Medio Dagua, Colombia)*  
*Aladino Mosquera Manyoma (Co-researcher of the Community Council of Calima, Colombia)*  
*Gerardo López (President of the Common Goods of Comaltepec)*  
*Jorge Carballo (Representative of Pehuén-Co, Argentina)*  
*Coordinator: Diana Lucía Maya (PUJ, Colombia, COMET-LA researcher)*
- 12:30–14:00. Research and social responsibility: The vision of research institutions.**  
*Ugo Guarnacci (General Director of Research and Innovation at the European Commission)*  
*Brigitte Baptiste (Director of the von Humboldt Institute, Colombia)*  
*Ileana Villalobos (Coordinating Advisors, Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, Mexico)*  
*Gonzalo Zambrana Ávila (Past Vicepresident for South America of the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy of the IUCN)*  
*José Carlos Gómez Villamandos (Rector UCO, Spain)*  
*Coordinator: Gerardo Perillo (CONICET, Coordinator COMET-LA Argentina)*
- 14:00–15:30. Lunch.**
- 15:30–16:30. And after COMET-LA? COMET-LA's strategy for the future.**  
*Roberto Escalante (UNAM, Coordinator COMET-LA Mexico)*  
*María Adelaida Farah Q. (PUJ, Coordinator COMET-LA Colombia)*  
*Silvia London (UNS-CONICET COMET-LA researcher, Argentina)*  
*María del Mar Delgado (UCO, General Project Coordinator COMET-LA, Spain)*
- 16:30–17:30. Closing session. Thanking the participating communities.**  
*María del Mar Delgado (General Project Coordinator)*  
*Ugo Guarnacci (General Director of Research and Innovation at the European Commission)*  
*Julio Cesar Gonzáles (Leader and Legal Representative of the Community Council of Bajo Calima, Colombia)*  
*Eduardo Flores (Artisanal Fishers Representative, Monte Hermoso, Argentina)*  
*Gerardo López (President of the Common Goods of Comaltepec)*

### **3 Development of the Conference<sup>2</sup>**

The conference's aim was to present the project's results and to debate key aspects deemed essential for improving resource management. Participation was thus organised around two central conferences, a presentation on the project's overall results and various panels which further discussed environmental, economic and institutional factors associated to community-based natural resource management, capacity-building and research, and what is needed for effective governance of environmental challenges. A participative workshop was also held to determine bases for a strategy with political impact in order to improve governance; the possibilities of continuing initiatives begun with the project were also studied. Due to its importance, the latter aspect is detailed in section 4 of these minutes.

#### **3.1 The central conferences**

Two major figures in the study of community management were responsible for the central conferences: José Sarukhán, head of Mexico's National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, and Leticia Merino, head of the International Association for the Study of the Commons. Their presentations focused on key questions that were also observed during the project's development and which imply challenges for achieving effective resource governance. The main ones are indicated below:

- It is necessary to learn to value services that supply ecosystems. This value is not perceived at global level and major losses and fragmentation in ecological systems have therefore resulted. The territory, its ecological function and the people dwelling therein and conserving the resources must be made visible;
- Fragmentation affects not just the territory but also the way of dealing with challenges. An integrated view of territory is needed, in which social actors play a priority role. That is the only way to achieve something lasting in time which future communities can assume;
- Environmental services have to be integrated in economic development, as biodiversity can and should be a mechanism of sustainable development for the population that conserves it;
- Local consumption and local economies must be made stronger to face major environmental challenges. Indeed, in several countries there are examples of how community-based management has been able to better conserve natural resources;
- The right to decide cannot be sold, because decisions should have a local focus. But this doesn't mean communities cannot be competitive;
- There are no models that can be applied in any situation. Governance should adjust to local needs and should involve actors from the territory.

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<sup>2</sup> The speeches and presentations are detailed in Appendix II.



### 3.2 Results of the project

The COMET-LA project examined the socio-ecological systems (SES) of three different case studies: forest management and ground use in Mexico, water management and biodiversity in Colombia, and coastal and marine management in Argentina.

The three case studies vary in both resources and context, though all involve resources of high ecological value and share similar problems, such as scant local negotiating power, deterioration of natural resources or the presence of powerful actors in the territory.

In Colombia the work was carried out with the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima, where there are empowered local actors, with community land ownership, and where there was already an atmosphere of mutual trust because they have worked with the Pontifical Xavieran University for some time. In those territories high pressures from other resource users occur, especially associated to mining and illegal crop cultivation.

The community chosen in Mexico, Santiago Comaltepec, has a strong capital position and possesses community ownership of the land. The community implements a kind of management that recovers the forest. Conservation prevails over development and management of the forest does not imply a source of subsistence and wellbeing for the community, which leads to high migration rates.

Lastly, in Argentina the Bahía Blanca Estuary was chosen. It has great ecological and paleontological value, besides containing Argentina's most important port, with petrochemical and industrial poles. Work was done with artisanal fisherman and local residents and focused on problems associated to fishing, megaprojects and the erosion of coastal dunes due to construction. Unlike the other two cases, the population does not collectively own the resources.

The project work was carried out using a methodology adjusted to the local communities and based on the learning arena.

#### 3.2.1 *Learning Arena*

One of COMET-LA's main accomplishments was the creation of a space for dialogue between the different actors involved in managing natural resources, in each of the case studies as well as between the three cases and at global level. The financing focus of the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme is innovative, as it allowed both local and global organisations to have a voice. Decision-makers, civil society, indigenous communities and those of African origin, academics and social organisations were thus able to work together to determine the characteristics of the case studies' socio-ecological systems, their problems and the actions communities aim to take to ensure a future that is more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Management of environmental challenges is a dynamic process, where the process matters. COMET-LA proposes a new approach to research whereby the local actors play an active role in it. This has enabled social learning using knowledge co-developed among the various participating actors. Tools adapted to local level were therefore developed with the communities. The work was done with trans-disciplinary knowledge and enhanced the empowerment of local actors, with research adjusted to their needs and with the possibility of transferring results. Also, traditional knowledge was validated by evaluating it with scientific knowledge.



One of the keys to the project's success was the involvement of local authorities. We enabled it to be a process recognised by the community, with the actors' consensus, and which dealt with the communities' interests.

This network will remain alive beyond the project. The communities that live from the resources are their first direct managers and play a vital role in their conservation, whereby they must necessarily participate in managing those resources.

Results that worked in other places cannot be transposed, because the problems are local and the solutions should likewise be so. None of the case studies has high sustainability in the three aspects analysed (environmental, economic and social), which implies high vulnerability.

In the conference's three discussion panels the local actors from the case studies specifically considered how those three aspects are perceived in the three COMET-LA communities. Experts from other entities and project collaborators commented on their contributions. The social responsibility of the research was likewise examined, along with how the communities experienced their respective participation and the requirements to achieve effective resource governance. Note that the presentations were given in a technical manner, which demonstrated the stronger capabilities accomplished by the project.

The main messages from those discussions will be described next. The environmental, economic and social aspects are closely related, as shown in the various sessions.

### *3.2.2 Environmental aspects of community management*

The communities play a fundamental role in the environmental aspects, because they determine access to resources and their use. But social and community participation is excluded from the conception of development. The communities know their territories well and in places where community-based management is well implemented resource extraction usually has low impact and favours the conservation of natural resources.

There are communities, like the cases of Mexico and Colombia, which have sustainably managed their territory for centuries, by conviction. This shows that the establishment of a community resource management scheme is a feasible way to preserve resources.



It is necessary to recognise and value the ecosystem services these communities provide and that valuation should serve to improve the population's standard of living. It is therefore necessary to invest more in social and economic aspects, to adapt the community scheme to the current context and strengthen local capacities.

In other communities, like the Argentine case where there is no communal ownership of territory and particularly the artisanal fishermen, they are fighting to obtain measures that protect resources.

Public policies are not conceived for the development of a natural resource governance model with a sustainable focus; what prevails is management to fit overall growth scenarios instead of local ones. It is therefore necessary to make an effort to share successful local experience in public policies and for them to become processes with political impact.

Generational changeover in communities must also be assured. During the project work it was observed that the cultural view of conservation is not always assured and that it is threatened by consumption-based economic models.

Lastly, to improve conservation and community-based management of resources local governance must be strengthened and decision-makers must legitimately recognise the communities so they can defend their rights before national authorities.

### 3.2.3 *Economic aspects of community management*

The project's communities highlight the own use of natural resources as being among the economic advantages of community-based management.



In Colombia's case those resources are sustainably used for self-consumption without commercial purposes. Also, the community has autonomy to restrict their use by outside individuals. But a disadvantage of that management is that there is little effective presence of the state to control and monitor groups which illicitly operate in the territory and use natural resources. For example, in the case of mining, illegal actors enter the territory and extract gold with harmful practices that cause pollution in the river.

In Comaltepec, the benefits obtained from managing the forest are reinvested in infrastructures for the community, which has achieved significant infrastructure development. The state should cover some of those needs (health, education). It has therefore been considered that if the community is saving the state money, the latter should pay for those additional services that cover the communities.

As there is no communal ownership in Argentina, the state is in charge of tax redistribution. A positive example of this is construction of the new Monte Hermoso fishing terminal, a project promoted by the artisanal fishermen which was backed by the state.

Key economic dilemmas associated to management as currently applied were detected in the project.

- The confrontation between conservation and extraction. The communities do not have external sources of work or income, so they depend on extraction of the resources.
- There is no compensation for conservation, which implies a choice between meeting household needs or contributing to the overall wellbeing through conservation.

Natural resource conservation must be linked to the wellbeing of the inhabitants of those territories, so that people can enjoy their environmental benefits. Community-based management provides an intrinsic value which cannot be indicated in monetary terms. But a benefit must necessarily be obtained from it, because the communities supply others with an environmental service for which, at the outset, they do not obtain remuneration.

To compensate them payment for environmental services was created, though that instrument is questioned due to the difficulty of placing an economic value on such contributions and their scant ability to improve the quality of life of populations that conserve.

During the conference a proposal was made to discount that value from taxes paid by the communal companies. This is not a new demand, but it must continually be raised to eventually achieve it.

The communities' challenge is to continue with the community dynamics and to find a mechanism to make them competitive, improving sustainable production practices and strengthening their local economies in a way that improves the population's standard of living.

Also, another challenge is how to resolve conflicts associated to the current scenario regarding standards, values and views about collective property rights, in a scenario where there is a great deal of pressure to privatise common property.

#### *3.2.4 Institutional and social aspects for community-based management*

In the three case studies the community institutions play a vital role in managing resources, because uniting as an institution has been and is important for the communities' accomplishments.



In Argentina, due to the founding of the artisanal fishermen's chamber, achievements included the declaration of special protection areas and the participation of those actors in a regional council where those fishermen have a space to debate with politicians and scientists, with voice and vote.

In Colombia, union as a community enabled recovery of title over territory and participation in drawing up Law 70. Thanks to that legislation and constitutional recognition, entities aiming to intervene in the Community Councils must previously consult the communities.

In Mexico, the power to govern and self-manage territory means the community can invest the benefits of that management in the population's needs. As in Colombia, they are able to decide on projects carried out in their territory. A negative aspect, as mentioned before, is that the government should cover some of those needs and does not live up to its commitments.

The law plays a crucial role in this sense because while policies may exist, it is hard for them to be achieved if there is no legal arm obliging actors to meet their commitments.

During the conference it was highlighted that the communities are often only visible when they react to problems. They are not usually in the public spotlight, generating opinion from the respective place or maintaining a presence in the political space. The respect for culture and traditions is essential to understand community-based management. That's why it is important to help them open their own authentic voice spaces where they can be represented.

An important challenge identified at social and institutional level is the integration of women and young people in decision-making. The project progressed more or less to that end, depending on the case studies.

In Colombia a group of co-researchers was set up, men and women, to support the project's activities. They were trained in COMET-LA's methodology and in community leadership. The interest of those young people in appropriating the territory and contributing to decision-

making was thereby awakened. Women already participated, but not in majority form. A very positive step was taken, though there is still room for work in this area.

In Mexico the need to include more young people and women in community management was detected. This process will be carried out gradually and slowly, because although the need for changes is understood, there is still some reluctance to proceed.

In Argentina's case, young people closely followed COMET-LA's activities and environmental education initiatives are being developed to raise their awareness. As there is no communal ownership of resources, they cannot be included in their management, though they can learn about the importance of conservation.

### 3.3 Lessons from the research

The three years of COMET-LA research resulted in a number of lessons for both local communities and academic institutions. COMET-LA showcased a common interest at both local and global level, and served to enhance individual and collective capacities.

#### 3.3.1 *For the communities*

The research was done with, for and by the communities, with a horizontal focus on transferring knowledge and using the territory's natural conditions as a learning space for the communities.

COMET-LA strengthened local capacities to manage resources and territory. In Colombia's case it served to bring prospects for collective territorial management up to date; the co-researchers learned about teaching and leadership tools enabling them to inform the population and give it capacity to conserve natural resources.



For Comaltepec, one of the researchers' expectations was to thoroughly ascertain the problems impacting local communities, to thereby influence them and seek alternative solutions for the short, middle and long term. When the project was finished, the need to set

up a group of *comuneros* (holders of rights) and academics was considered, so they can work together to conceive proposals that can obtain financing and be approved.

The challenge for research done in the local communities is for it to remain in the communities and become systemised to such a degree that it can be used in the present and the future.

In Argentina, communication among the diverse actors is not always good. The population has an interest in the scientists' work, but appropriate media and dialogue spaces should be fostered. COMET-LA generated a dialogue space that didn't previously exist, bringing together various actors. Due to contact with the project's other two communities the Argentine group learned about other experiences and has been acknowledged and strengthened as a community.

### 3.3.2 *For the researchers*

Working on conservation means working with the scientific community, communities and decision-makers. In COMET-LA this process was very enriching. There are different kinds of valid knowledge, but they must be oriented toward solving problems. When local knowledge is mentioned we should consider it as local scientific knowledge.

Researchers feel it is complicated to work with the communities, but the role they are playing in biodiversity conservation must nevertheless be acknowledged.

COMET-LA considered different aspects: environment, public policies, development, participation, culture... Each of these themes is a complex phenomenon which does not allow a fragmented approach to the respective knowledge. The challenge is to combine sciences to progress toward an interdisciplinary approach. To do this a dialogue of knowledge must be established.

Lastly, it must be stressed that universities have social responsibility. The university has been isolated from society. Science has not transmitted its advances well and there is a need for society to permeate toward the university. Universities should establish a system whereby social projects are proposed and society chooses which of them it wants to develop and then participate in.

The researchers' evaluation paradigm must also be changed. The researchers' contributions to society must be queried, along with their short or long term impact.

## 3.4 **Needs for better governance of environmental challenges**

One of the key goals of this conference was to debate aspects deemed essential for improving natural resource governance identified during the project. Two sessions were devoted to this: a discussion panel and a participative workshop.



In them it was stressed that governance models must be generated which have the following cross components: a focus based on human rights and gender, enhanced participation by the population and respect for the local population's history and cultural identity.

The last aspect is fundamental, because policies are filtered via the communities and their cultures. Understanding biodiversity governance means understanding the cultural diversity of each territory.

It was emphasised that if there is no economic sustainability there cannot be effective governance. The way to achieve development that combines the economic aspect with the conservation of natural capital for future generations should be found. Practical account-rendering mechanisms that the whole community can understand must also be implemented.

Governance is not isolated; it is in a context that includes the government, governability and the institutions that maintain it. It is very important for all leaders of communities to be represented in the different governance structures and for them to be recognised by regional authorities.

Participation should be undertaken at local, regional, national and international levels. It should seek to impact public policies, access to natural resources, decision-making and the generation of new knowledge, producing specific actions and drawing up regulatory and legal inclusion frameworks. If we want legitimate government and governability, we should understand the social rules in order to make formal rules in line with what society needs.

In this process it is necessary to generate shared knowledge, favouring interchanges between science, management and traditional knowledge – pillars of the COMET-LA project. It is also important to carry out and have access to monitoring and evaluation of environmental information, and for it have quality and be available for both decision-makers and stakeholders.

This kind of governance, which generates empowerment, takes time to create trust among actors and generate results. It is hence necessary to bear in mind all actors, to generate interchange spaces and recognise that there are different factors and pathways to achieve results, i.e. to reflect the diversity of the socio-ecological systems.



#### 4 COMET-LA for the future: making the project seed grow

COMET-LA would not have been possible without the acceptance and inclusion of the communities in the project's development. To recognise those communities' major efforts to conserve natural resources and their readiness to work with the academic and social bodies of COMET-LA, several certificates were awarded to the communities at the end of the conference.

The communities and the entities involved in the project underscored that the end of COMET-LA is actually a new beginning, because the seed planted in the case studies and globally must be made to grow.



To do that, the representatives from the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua, Lower Calima, in Colombia, the Chinantec community of Comaltepec in Mexico and the artisanal fishermen of Pehuen Co and Monte Hermoso in Argentina signed a collaboration agreement to continue sharing experience and working together. The Community Councils of Córdoba and Agua Clara in Colombia also joined that agreement; they did not directly take part in COMET-LA but closely followed the project and want to become involved in this network.



As the agreement's first activity, UNAM offered two people from Comaltepec the opportunity to travel to Colombia for a strategic interchange. The university will cover the travel costs; the community itself will choose the people for that visit. Also, members from the other communities have been invited to go to Comaltepec.

#### **4.1 Continuity in Mexico**

UNAM has obtained funds to continue working with Comaltepec, specifically to write the community's economic history and to examine with them the viability of different projects Comaltepec is considering, such as the sawmill and eco-tourism.

#### **4.2 Continuity in Argentina**

The National University of the South and IADO will continue examining the estuary's natural and climate conditions. The project generated major involvement by the local population, which found in COMET-LA the space for interdisciplinary dialogue which the community lacked. For that reason the National University of the South and IADO will seek funds to continue working and interacting with the population.

#### **4.3 Continuity in Colombia**

The Pontifical Xavieran University will present a project to continue accompanying the co-researchers and will renew the agreement with the NGOs Fundapav and Ecobios so that ecology students do fieldwork in the Councils, thereby enabling closer contact between scientific and local knowledge to endure.

The Von Humboldt Institute wants to replicate COMET-LA's methodology in some of its research projects and plans to sign an agreement for that purpose with this institution in coming months.

Lastly, the university and the Norwegian NILU Institute will work together to generate a research project on biodiversity in the Community Councils' area.

#### 4.4 Continuity at global level

The University of Córdoba is negotiating with Spanish entities to replicate the project methodology in Spain and will work to publicise the COMET-LA results, especially the benefits of community-based management and how it can be applied in Europe.



The Spanish Committee of the IUCN shared results from this conference and the recommendations to improve natural resource governance (described in the section on "Results of the Project") at the IUCN World Parks Congress held right after the conference, on 12-19 November in Sydney, Australia. Those contributions will likewise be transferred to the Union's regional forums for Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America, with a view to debating and enriching the proposed political impact strategy with members from the various IUCN regions and to generate common positions ahead of the upcoming World Conservation Congress scheduled for 2016. This strategy to improve participative governance in the 2016-2020 working programme of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) can hence be incorporated.

## 5 Retransmission of the conference

The coordination department of Open University and Distance Learning of the National Autonomous University of Mexico relayed the conference via streaming and produced a final summary video, posted on this [link](#). Two television programmes "La meta del Planeta" (Mexico) and "Hola Pehuen!" (Argentina), along with the Mexican indigenous radio station "Xeglo, la voz de la Sierra Juárez" covered the event live and later produced special programmes (see videos in the "Media and Press" section of the website [www.comet-la.eu](http://www.comet-la.eu)).

The conference was also narrated via the Facebook profiles of the COMET-LA project at [www.facebook.com/proyectocometla](http://www.facebook.com/proyectocometla) and of the Union of Latin American and Caribbean Universities (UDUAL) at [www.facebook.com/UDUALredsocal](http://www.facebook.com/UDUALredsocal).

## 6 Exhibition: COMET-LA viewed by the local populations

An exhibition was held during the event, showing images that won the COMET-LA drawing and photography contests. The aim was for conference participants to get closer to the reality of the three case studies via the hand of their lead players: the inhabitants of Comaltepec, the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima, and the Bahía Blanca Estuary.

Ten illustrative panels were thus exhibited. One showed winning drawings from the three countries, in which children reflected on how they saw their community's future. The nine others, three for each case study, expressed the populations' views about their socio-ecological systems, the environmental problems they perceive and the good practices they carry out in their communities to overcome them. The aim of this contest was for the population to get involved in the different project phases and artistically express their opinions.

Images of the exhibition panels are shown below.





## Annex I. List of participants

Name	Institution	Country
Adriana Vázquez	Fundación Tropenbos Internacional, Colombia	Colombia
Alejandra Cruz Bayer	UNAM, COMET-LA Team, Mexico	Mexico
Alfonso González	GEA, Mexico	Mexico
Alice Newton	Norwegian Institute for Air Research-COMET-LA	Norway
Ana Correa	IUCN, Spanish Committee	Spain
Antonio Ruiz	IUCN, Mesoamerican Regional Committee	Nicaragua
Brigitte Baptiste	Instituto von Humboldt	Colombia
Carlos García Hernández	UZACHI	Mexico
Carlos Zolla	PUIC, UNAM	Mexico
César Nava	Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM	Mexico
César Ortiz	PUJ, COMET-LA Team, Colombia	Colombia
Cintia Piccolo	UNS, COMET-LA Team, Argentina	Argentina
Cristina Sobaler	IUCN, Spanish Committee	Spain
Daniel Cardona	XEGLO Radio "La Voz de la Sierra Juárez", Mexico	Mexico
Diana Maya	PUJ, COMET-LA Team, Colombia	Colombia
Eduardo Flores	Fisherman Monte Hermoso, Argentina	Argentina
Elizabeth Alfonso Rincón	Fundación Social Agroambiental Pacífico Vivo, Colombia	Colombia
Elsa Matilde Escobar	IUCN, Colombian Committee	Colombia
Emilio Cruz	Reforestamos Mexico	Mexico
Enrique Provencio	Senate of the Republic, Mexico	Mexico
Ernesto Herrera	Reforestamos Mexico	Mexico
Estela Morales Campos	Humanities Coordinator, UNAM	Mexico
Federico Seleme	Monte Hermoso Council, Argentina	Argentina
Francisco Chapela	Estudios Rurales y Asesoría, Mexico	Mexico
Gabriel Hernández	SAO, Mexico	Mexico
Gerardo López	Commission for the Commons of Santiago Comaltepec	Mexico
Gerardo Perillo	CONICET, COMET-LA Coordinator, Argentina	Argentina
Gloria Abraham	IICA, Mexico	Mexico
Gonzalo Zambrana Ávila	IUCN, South American Regional Committee	Bolivia
Humberto Soto	CEPAL	Mexico

Name	Institution	Country
Iván Islas	INECC, Mexico	Mexico
Isabel Ruiz-Mallén	COMBIOSERVE	Spain
Israel Hernández	ERA-COMET-LA Team, Mexico-Comaltepec	Mexico
Jorge Carballo	Pehuén-Co, Argentina	Argentina
José Carlos Gómez Villamandos	UCO Rector, Spain	Spain
José Sarukhán Kermez	CONABIO, Mexico	Mexico
Juan Manuel Frausto	Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza	Mexico
Julio César Gonzáles	Bajo Calima Community Council, Colombia	Colombia
Leonardo Berninsone	Aquamarina, Argentina	Argentina
Leticia Merino	Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, UNAM	Mexico
Liliana Mosquera	Instituto von Humboldt	Colombia
Lina Pinzón	PUJ, COMET-LA Team, Colombia	Colombia
Lucila Martínez	Alto y Medio Dagua Community Councils, Colombia	Colombia
Luis Armando Aznar Molina	Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza	Mexico
Luis Bojórquez	Instituto de Ecología, UNAM	Mexico
Luján Bustos	IADO, COMET-LA Team, Argentina	Argentina
Manuel Riascos	Alto y Medio Dagua Community Councils, Colombia	Colombia
Mara Rojas	UNS, COMET-LA Team, Argentina	Argentina
María Adelaida Farah	PUJ, COMET-LA Coordinator, Colombia	Colombia
María del Mar Delgado	UCO, COMET-LA General Coordinator	Spain
María Delfina Luna Krauletz	Universidad de la Sierra Juárez, Mexico	Mexico
Miguel Ángel Soto Ríos	CONAFOR, Mexico	Mexico
Mireya Imaz	PUMA, UNAM	Mexico
Nayive Mina	Alto y Medio Dagua Community Council, Colombia	Colombia
Néstor Hernández	Santiago Comaltepec, Mexico	Mexico
Oscar Hernández	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje, Colombia	Colombia
Paloma Neumann Gómez	Campaña de Bosques Greenpeace-Mexico	Mexico
Roberto Escalante Semerena	UNAM, COMET-LA Coordinator, Mexico	Mexico
Salvador López Krauletz	Municipal Mayor of Santiago Comaltepec, Mexico	Mexico



Name	Institution	Country
Sebastian Moreno	Bajo Calima Community Council, Colombia	Colombia
Sergio Madrid	Consejo Mexicano de la Silvicultura, Mexico	Mexico
Silvia London	UNS, COMET-LA Team, Argentina	Argentina
Stephan Vavrik	Deputy Head of the European Commission Delegation, Mexico	Mexico
Tomás Víctor González Illescas	SEMARNAT, Mexico	Mexico
Yolanda Lara	Estudios Rurales y Asesoría, Mexico	Mexico

# Annex II. Development of the Conference

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The participation and speeches arranged by sessions and discussion panels are detailed below.

## Opening session

### Speakers:

*Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of the COMET-LA project*

*Stephan Vavrik, deputy head of the European Union delegation*

*María del Mar Delgado, general coordinator of the COMET-LA project*

*José Franco, chairman of the Advisory Forum for Science, Technology and Innovation of Mexico*

*Estela Morales Campos, humanities coordinator of the National Autonomous University of Mexico*

*José Carlos Gómez Villamandos, rector of the University of Córdoba*

Ángela María Restrepo, institutional liaison coordinator for the Union of Latin American and Caribbean Universities, was the conference's master of ceremonies, presenting the COMET-LA project and the authorities.



### **Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of the COMET-LA project**

Roberto Escalante greets the authorities and the public, thanking them for their participation. He expresses his sadness over the disappearance and murder of young Mexican students in Iguala, but thinks that initiatives like COMET-LA open space for reflection so that such misfortunes do not happen again.

Opportunities such as COMET-LA help improve the world's standard of living and bolster the important role played by communities in natural resource conservation.

### **Stephan Vavrik, deputy head of the European Union delegation**

Stephan Vavrik thanked the conference for the invitation and provided an overview of work done by the European Commission by means of initiatives such as COMET-LA in Mexico.

The European Union (EU) comprises 28 countries that promote peace and joint priorities such as climate change. An example is such projects, which brought together four European and three Latin American countries to fight against climate change.

The European Union will soon debate various objectives for 2030 in the context of climate change. These include lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20 percent, increasing use of renewable energies and improving technological development.

In this regard, Mexico is making a major effort to reduce emissions through various projects similar to COMET-LA. The most significant results of the Aeroclima project are meant to enhance political awareness, ensure successful mitigation and adjustment measures, and promote green agriculture, sharing experience among Latin American countries. Other EU funds are also addressed to the fight against climate change and to improving the environment. There are projects to get municipalities involved in forest management; that experience can be transferred to other regions of Mexico and later to other Latin American countries.

There are also a further four projects from the Research Division to exchange information and highlight local results. The aim is to take local experiences to the European Union and raise them to international level. The next COP is being prepared in Lima; politicians are being asked to provide comparisons of policies implemented in accordance with local experience.

### **María del Mar Delgado, general coordinator of the COMET-LA project**

She thanks all the team members for their major effort, the rector for his presence, and most especially the communities, which are the ones who have really made the project possible during these three years, generating results that go well beyond the research.

She recalls Aquamarina member Guillermo Fidalgo, who took part in the project but was unable to see it finish; she dedicated the conference to him.

**José Franco, chairman of the Advisory Forum for Science, Technology and Innovation of Mexico**

Humanity is facing major challenges that must be tackled and it is important for different levels of government to focus on those challenges and problems in the immediate future.

The greatest impact will be at the local level. That's why it's very important for administrations to get ahead of those problems and try to mitigate them. Business innovation must be implemented, but above all social innovation, because it is very important to promote knowledge among local entities. That's what the COMET-LA project did; for that reason its participating organisations are congratulated.

**Estela Morales, humanities coordinator of the Autonomous University of Mexico**

She thanks José Sarukhán and the other authorities for attending, particularly representatives from the communities, who helped give the project a new focus.

The importance of social innovation is stressed at the university, sharing knowledge between the academic world and the community based on a multidisciplinary focus. For the university it is a pleasure to host this meeting and be able to share experience about collective work on policies and community-based management. New opportunities are built from dialogue and we hope this can help influence the public policies needed to meet environmental challenges.

**José Carlos Gómez, rector of the Universidad de Córdoba**

He is convinced and thankful regarding the project's success. His first institutional trip outside of Spain was to this conference, to close an EU project in Latin America concerning something as important as governance in the search for local solutions to global problems. He thanks UNAM and the authorities for hosting this event and hopes it will not mark the end point of the project.

**[Opening lecture: the importance of community-based management of environmental challenges in policy-making](#)**

*José Sarukhán, president of the National Commission for Biodiversity Knowledge and Use (CONABIO), Mexico*

*Commentator: Brigitte Baptiste, director of the Von Humboldt Institute, Colombia*

**José Sarukhán, president of the National Commission for Biodiversity Knowledge and Use (CONABIO), Mexico**

The idea of living infinitely in a finite world is absurd. People talk of natural capital, but that term indicates an intention to give monetary value to something whose value is far beyond anything economic.



Between 60 and 70 percent of Mexico's natural capital is community property. Mexico has a policy of establishing national parks which has not taken local populations into account; those populations now have responsibility for caring for resources instead of having to seek local development options. But it is feasible to sustainably manage nature resources and give the population social development options so people can exit from poverty.

Integrated territorial management has advanced a great deal in Mexico since the 1980s, showing that it is possible to use biodiversity as a mechanism for sustainable development of its inhabitants.

The problem is that society does not realise that this natural capital or biodiversity encompasses much more than the 'number of species' and we have not been able to give a real value to this. Globally, we have to learn to value services supplied by ecosystems. CO<sub>2</sub> capture, water and fertile soil production are viewed as givens and this is not right. Such services must be integrated in economic development and included in national accounting; calculation of the country's wealth should not leave out biodiversity loss. This perception must be changed, this lack of perception of the environmental matrix's value for the planet.

As a result we are experiencing huge ecological system losses around the world. A tremendous ecological fragmentation has happened in Mexico and this causes many problems because minimum proportions are required to ensure biodiversity conservation and preservation of ecosystem services.

So the key problem is not just the loss of ecosystems but rather their fragmentation, because fragmented areas are just thematic parks that do not fulfil their ecosystem function.

It is necessary to have an integrated vision of territory. Territorial development can enable more sustainable use of rural territories, improve field production with impacts on small producers' income and boost economic competition with ecological products and services.

Efforts must begin to strengthen local consumption and local economies, to de-globalise the economy so that major environmental challenges can be dealt with. A key instrument for this is local governance, because if there is no good local governance then there are far fewer chances for success in this area.

I can see no way for biodiversity to help adjust to climate change other than through agriculture and the genetic biodiversity of crops and those species' wild parents, whose genetic reservoirs are very interesting in order to face that challenge.

The social actors are the most important factor for integral territorial management. There is no way to have effective governance in a country like Mexico if there is no community-based

social integration. That's the only way to achieve something that lasts and which is taken up by future communities.

For that reason it is important to value traditions and customs, though this doesn't mean that communities can't evolve. The communities must be given tools so they can decide how they want to care for their resources.

For integrated management we require very good knowledge of the natural surroundings. That information has to be accessible and public, ALL OF IT. That's what CONABIO strives for. All information obtained with public resources should be accessible not only for decision-makers but also for any interested individual.

Efforts must be made to help people gain local management skills. They have a great deal of knowledge. Support can thus help them learn how to form social networks or demand a rendering of accounts. Account rendering is essential for good governance. They must be offered help to generate good practices and evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

Community-based resource management brings many benefits and there are cases where community forest management is better than what's done in surrounding protected areas. It is also accompanied by excellent social benefits for communities, such as knowledge of their rights or capacity-building.

Yet there are limitations. Not all communities have the right conditions for this to happen. Communities corrupted by political dealings which have lost the respective ability, along with corruption outside communities, illegal logging and overregulation, make community management difficult.

One of the biggest constraints is the possibility of including new generations in community management. Young people leave because they see no future in the countryside. This is a problem that must be met, encouraging attractive and economically viable community-based management, which is possible.

If efforts are made to conceive and plan community management then the community has to be involved from the start, so that appropriation can occur. The government's term periods (three years) make it hard for processes to be worked out with communities.

### Reflections

Unlike what is happening with climate change, which is understood at global level, the management of natural capital is very local and responds to local interests which must be very well defended. For this reason an understanding of local socioeconomic and ecological conditions is required.

There is no way for owners of resources to defend them if they don't obtain corresponding economic benefits. They can't protect them if they gain no livelihood from that management.

If we aim to move toward sustainability in a country then resources have to be conserved, managed and used.

**Brigitte Baptiste, director of the Von Humboldt Institute of Colombia**

The problem is not on the side of natural sciences but rather on the side of society and culture, because there are people who maintain a very obvious break between the work and the different disciplines.

We do not seem to comprehend the ecological function. People increasingly live in cities; the education and communication done in cities has lost the ability to see what happens away from them in the rest of the territory.

This communication has no critical sense regarding the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge. Students are not experiencing what the territory is and people don't know how the territory functions. At most they understand that their wellbeing depends on factories and not on ecosystems. We have the challenge of enhancing the visibility of territory and of people who remain therein.

The fragmentation of disciplines, territory and policies is reflected in the landscape. The reintegration of the territory and public policies is a challenge.

Globalisation is a good way to understand that we're on one single planet, but it should make all actors relevant.

To assure conservation is not just to preserve biodiversity behind a fence. Protected areas are full of people and if we can get those people to become committed then ecosystem services can be conserved.

Ecological responsibility needs to be discussed more. It's a theme that cuts across sectors which is in the hands of communities, politicians and businesspeople. We need an environmental policy that brings us together, that helps us interrelate.

How can this happen from the local standpoint and how can it shift from local level to public policies? It's a delicate question, because leaders and many people are far removed from what's happening in the countryside. They don't understand the processes of building culture and environment. That's why things always take time. We need a new class of politicians who realise that their role is to facilitate adjustment strategies.

The aim must be to combine environmental, agro-livestock and rural development planning exercise with a new local-based understanding, with a new political model. Conservation is an all-encompassing activity meant to conserve the life around us.

## The COMET-LA project: from a focus on community-based management to a focus on community ownership of the solutions in natural resources management

### **Speaker:**

*María del Mar Delgado, general coordinator of the COMET-LA project*

Natural resources are subject to increasingly more pressure and this generates major environmental challenges. That's why sustainable resources management is an urgent necessity both locally and internationally. The COMET-LA project appears in this context.

Its aim has been to identify sustainable natural resource governance models that can be used in different socio-ecological systems in a context marked by climate change and increasing pressures regarding the use of such resources.

The project, whose total cost is €2,473,699.80, is financed by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission with €1,870,973. The work was carried out jointly by eleven partners from four European countries, three Latin American countries, six research institutes, four social organisations and one company: the University of Córdoba, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Civil Association of Rural Studies and Farmer Counselling, the Pontifical Xavierian University, the Community Councils of the Black Communities of the Lower Calima River Basin and the Upper and Middle Dagua, the Argentine Oceanographic Institute (CONICET), the National University of the South, the Aquamarina-Cecim Foundation, the Norwegian Luftforskning Institute, the James Hutton Institute of the United Kingdom, the Portuguese company Sagremarisco-Viveiros de Marisco Lda. and the Spanish Committee of the IUCN. And we are ready and willing to continue working together.

We determined that the most important environmental challenges were forest, marine, biodiversity and water related, so we sought case studies which had resources of high value and major pressures on the territory.

In Colombia the work was carried out with the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima, where there are empowered local actors, with community land ownership, and where there was already an atmosphere of mutual trust because they have worked with the Pontifical Xavierian University for some time. In those territories high pressures from other resource users occur, especially associated to mining and illegal crop cultivation.

The community chosen in Mexico, Santiago Comaltepec, has a strong capital position and possesses community ownership of the land. The community implements a kind of management that recovers the forest. Conservation prevails over development and management of the forest does not imply a source of subsistence and wellbeing for the community, which leads to high migration rates.



Lastly, in Argentina the Bahía Blanca Estuary was chosen. It has great ecological and paleontological value, besides containing Argentina’s most important port, with petrochemical and industrial poles. Work was done with artisanal fisherman and local residents and focused on problems associated to fishing, megaprojects and the erosion of coastal dunes due to construction. Unlike the other two cases, the population does not collectively own the resources.



*Images from project gatherings and work meetings*

We thus worked on three different case studies, with diverse contexts and very different resources, though all had similar problems such as scant local negotiating power, deterioration of natural resources or the presence of powerful actors in the territory.

Despite this, we were able to work together and share experiences and results by creating a learning arena, a space that brought local and scientific knowledge together.

The project was carried out in three phases. The first characterised the socio-ecological systems and served to learn more about the communities, their resources and ways of participation. We used the Ostrom framework and adapted it to local level, identifying more than 130 variables that define the territory. During the second phase, between 15 and 20 variables were selected for each case to find out how the territory is moving and we looked at which of them were blocking the system and which could be used as levers. Finally, future scenarios were identified. The future can be built, it can be anticipated, so actions were worked out in order to reach the desired scenarios.

## Results:

This financing focus is innovative, because it allowed both local and global organisations to have a voice. Researchers from the EU and Latin America worked together with the communities using trans-disciplinary knowledge, enhancing the empowerment of local actors with research adjusted to their needs and with the possibility of transferring the results.

This network will remain alive beyond the project. The communities that live from the resources are their first direct managers and play a vital role in their conservation, whereby they must necessarily participate in managing those resources.

We nevertheless detected a number of dilemmas associated to management as currently applied.

- Conservation or extraction: there are no external sources of work or income, so they depend on extraction of the resources;
- There is no compensation for conservation, which implies a choice between meeting household needs or contributing to the overall wellbeing through conservation;
- Traditional views of nature clash with economic models based on consumption.

On the other hand, few tools have been adapted for use by local communities, which do not have a voice in decision-making spaces.

Results that worked in other places cannot be transposed, because the problems are local and the solutions should likewise be so. None of the case studies has high sustainability in the three aspects analysed (environmental, economic and social), which implies high vulnerability.

Management of environmental challenges is a dynamic process, where the process matters. COMET-LA proposes a new approach to research whereby local actors play an active role in it. This has enabled social learning using knowledge co-developed among the various participating actors. Tools adapted to local level were therefore developed with the communities.

COMET-LA began with an exogenous process, i.e. designed by researchers. Although there were initial consultations with some of the communities, this did not happen with all of them. Yet one of the keys to the project's success was the involvement of local authorities. We therefore enabled it to be a process recognised by the community, with the actors' consensus, and which dealt with the communities' interests.

In this process we learned that we can work together. We cannot think that local communities are resource predators; we should rather understand that they need to live with conditions for wellbeing. Our method produces useful results; we adapted tools to local level, built community capacities and validated their traditional knowledge by evaluating it with scientific knowledge.

We also learned that effective governance requires local leadership, time to create trust and achieve results, to recognise all actors and generate spaces for people and managers to interact. We must likewise understand that there are multiple causes, different factors and roads to achieve results. The tools we used enabled us to see that diversity of socio-ecological systems. It is also important to manage expectations, for we cannot generate false expectations or be pessimistic. Changes *are* possible, but it is the actors in the territory who are the main architects of those changes.

Local communities play an essential role. Their voice is important and their local knowledge is very valid. They need dialogue and conservation agreements, because local needs are different from global needs, and bridges must be created for communication and joint work with different levels of government. The environmental and social services supplied by those communities must also be acknowledged, their costs and benefits, and sustainable technologies put in place to enable us to enhance the value of natural assets.

Several pending challenges nevertheless remain, such as how to link natural resource conservation to the wellbeing of those territories' inhabitants, so that people can enjoy their environmental benefits and so the institutions that conserve them gain recognition and respect. Another challenge is how to resolve conflicts occurring in the current scenario with respect to standards, values and views about collective property rights, amid a situation where there is huge pressure to privatise commons. We must also deal with how to effectively bring together both local and scientific knowledge, along with local and global needs, and how to ensure that communities can use knowledge obtained in sustainable actions. The aim of this conference is to move forward in all of these aspects.

## Economic aspects of community-based management of natural resources. Pros and cons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

*Israel Hernández, COMET-LA researcher, ERA, Mexico*

*Sebastián Moreno, legal representative of the Lower Calima Community Council, Colombia*

*Isabel Ruíz-Mallen, representative of COMBIOSERVE*

*Antonio Ruíz, chairman of the IUCN Mesoamerican Regional Committee*

*Commentator: Leticia Merino, president of the International Association for the Study of the Commons*



### **Israel Hernández, COMET-LA researcher, ERA, Mexico**

Community-based management of natural resources is the possession of usage rights over a territorial expanse and the natural resources a community or group of people have per agreements established by the same group<sup>3</sup>.

The communities play a vital role in environmental aspects, because they determine access to resources and their use. Community-based management inventories available resources in a forest and determines the duties and responsibilities of the members involved in managing and administering the natural resources.

Pros: resource extraction usually has low impact and if done well favours conservation of the forest resource. It works with communities that are situated in the territory and is based on management arrangements that have been operating for a long time.

Cons: community-based management works in an environmental system that's more complex than agriculture and livestock-raising. Monitoring, reporting and verification have

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<sup>3</sup> Gerez and Purata 2008; Barton and Merino 2004; Negreros-Castillo personal communication 2009; quoted by Valdéz y Negreros.

not until now been systemised to obtain results. Rather, only observation data or the community's perception have been ascertained.

Placing value on ecosystem services should improve the community's standard of living. If Comaltepec still does not have high sustainability, as the project coordinator stated, it's because more work must be done on the social and economic side. For that to happen, women and young people must be included in sectors that are crucial for environmental issues, and family-related production projects must be more integrated in community projects.

The community environmental system should continue to gain strength in this multicultural Mexico, where the indigenous population counts 15 million inhabitants in marginal conditions.

**Sebastián Moreno, legal representative of the Lower Calima Community Council, Colombia**

The black communities of Colombia have lived in the territory for centuries. We formerly earned a living mainly by hunting, fishing, gathering, artisanal mining and selective forest use, generating good use of resources while at the same time conserving the forests.

From 1958 to 1990 the Colombian government granted a concession to Cartón Colombia to log timber for paper. That company left us a horrible legacy, because it destroyed the land and left damaged subsoil behind. The ecosystem deteriorated and the way of using natural resources in the affected areas changed.

But not everything was bad. The situation led the black communities to unite to call for an end to the concession and to recover the property of the collective territories. In 1991 we gained recognition when the Constitution was changed and we contributed to the development of Law 70 of 1993, which recognised us as community councils and restored our ownership of the territory.

The state's framework plan for the economy then went on to establish several policies that ran against our organisation process and our work in favour of conservation, such as expansion of ports, mega-projects, irrational natural resource use and mining, etc.

So we faced the following challenges: to strengthen the councils' governance, consolidate the proposal for community-based management of natural and ethno-cultural resources, gain legitimate recognition before decision-makers and rework some articles of Law 70. We also had to assure continuity of the environmental studies take part in with the support of foundations and universities, while continuing to highlight traditional knowledge, which is something we've done with the COMET-LA project.

**Isabel Ruíz-Mallen, representative of the COMBIOSERVE project**

Nine communities from Mexico, Brazil and Bolivia took part in the COMBIOSERVE project. Its aim was to identify principles and conditions which enable communities that manage their resources to effectively conserve their biodiversity, culture and traditional management practices.

Local knowledge served as basis for the study, which was approached from a co-research perspective. It had four main aspects: monitoring, mapping, study of governance, and study of vulnerability and adaptation to institutional and climate changes in the context of overall change.

The work done by the community researchers stands out. All monitoring and mapping was done from a co-research focus, so the communities could play a key role regarding what they wanted mapped and monitored in their territories. The study on governance and the adaptation was nevertheless done using participative methodologies, in which there was also dialogue, though it didn't come directly from the community researchers. This is a challenge, because the intention was to make everything participative, but a choice had to be made.

During the project's three-year course a group of women became interested in studying orchids so they could later install greenhouses and for that to become a strategy to obtain additional economic incentives. Another group chose to study pests and how agriculture is correspondingly affected by climate changes. More information at [www.combioserve.org/es](http://www.combioserve.org/es).

### **Antonio Ruiz, chairman of the IUCN Mesoamerican Regional Committee**

The results delivered by COMET-LA are important for us.

In the Mesoamerican biological corridor its respective role as a biological, human and multiethnic bridge is not being considered. Public policies are not designed to develop a natural resource governance model with a sustainable focus; in this region legislative changes show that management adjusted to global instead of local growth scenarios is prevailing.

The benefits of participation by indigenous peoples and local and farmer communities are still excluded in favour of capital. Public policies generate a view of development from the government standpoint which is based on extractive activity. Such policies generate mega-projects that disrupt the social fabric, causing indigenous displacement and rising marginalisation. Social and community participation is excluded from the development concept. Prior free and informed consultation is hence a constant demand throughout Mesoamerica. The validity of citizen participation very often originates in the presentation of projects' results and not via their inclusion in decision-making.

The demand for transparency with respect to the direct and indirect benefits is another constant. Regional, national and local governments are not interested in rendering accounts; there is nothing that obliges them to do so. This leads to resistance actions and struggles to set projects firmly on the ground.

In Nicaragua the creation of an ocean-linking canal encompasses all the resources studied by COMET-LA: coastal zone, forests, protected areas and unsafe water use. This mega-project will favour the economic development of China and the installation of Russian naval bases, displacing more than 120,000 people and affecting protected areas. There was no prior consultation; the project was imposed and people who opposed it were silenced. There is a need to investigate new scenarios in the face of this proposal for a rapid growth path and the

environmental and social impact it will have in Mesoamerica, given that resulting social conflicts are foreseen along with more marginalisation.

**Leticia Merino, president of the International Association for the Study of the Commons, opens the round of questions**

What are the challenges facing communities' internal governance and how do they include transfer between generations?

- **Israel Hernández:** Many things have to be adjusted, such as the internal rules, but the community structure has to continue. The process will be slow and transparent, with a lot of discussion about changes, including those indicated by COMET-LA. The community understands that it needs to change, to work more with young people and women, though there is still some reluctance associated to that change. The process will be consensual.
- **Sebastián Moreno:** We count a lot of public participation in the Councils. We are reinforcing work with schools, young people and women, though they are already present. COMET-LA is a great experience which left us capacities instilled in the community to continue working along this line in coming years.
- **Isabel Ruíz Mallen:** In the Bolivian case of the COMBIOSERVE project, the communities are not very organised. The challenge will be to uphold the family arrangement when structures are tending to be globalised. To officialise them can affect their conservation system. A problem is that there are no clear sanctions for bad resource use.
- **Antonio Ruíz:** Transfer of the positions already held by adults is harder. Also, the current generations have a different kind of interests. The market has won a large part of the battle. For example, the children of fishermen who since they were kids had gone out to fish in the lake now only do that if they want to buy a cell-phone; closed season and size don't matter to them.
- **Gonzalo Zambrana,** former vice-chair for South America of the IUCN Commission for Environmental, Economic and Social Policy: The challenge is to strengthen local communities so they can defend their rights before national authorities. Efforts must be made to share that local experience in public policies, to transform it into processes with political impact.
- **Mara Rojas,** researcher from the National University of the South, Argentina: Another challenge is to demonstrate the efficiency of inserting community-based management where resources are not communal and the system is market-oriented, i.e. how to insert the community process in more capitalistic cases.

**Leticia Merino:** We have scientific information about the importance of biodiversity and the imbalance the inter-ocean canal may cause. But the scientific information is not sufficiently in the public eye to influence policy. Based on your experience, what sectors have to be worked with to better publicise these issues?

- **Ana Correa,** technical coordinator of the Spanish Committee of the IUCN: To ensure that policies take this into account is one of our responsibilities. Politicians aren't interested – you just have to look at the budgets to see how much is being invested in natural resources and how much in carrying out harmful policies.
- **Isabel Ruíz-Mallen:** The COMBIOSEERVE project resulted in political recommendations, but that doesn't mean anyone will read them. This is a global concern, as shown by the fact that the EU has just now issued a call for innovative strategies to communicate the results of research projects. The traditional media do not suffice. At more regional scale, with a view to influencing decision-makers, they were invited to the workshops on building future scenarios.

**Alejandra Cruz,** UNAM researcher: What challenges influence the relationship between local communities and scientists?

- **Sebastián Moreno:** The communities now hold ownership of the forests, riverbanks and rivers, so institutions aiming to conduct research in the Councils should count on participation by the communities. COMET-LA is an example of this. The institutions have had to change their role and we now find ourselves seated at the same table, though not always in the same capacity. However, we are making as much progress in capacity-building, with children and young people, as with participation in political processes. At the Community Councils we have the opportunity to be in different corporate bodies with the decision-makers, so that our participation is reflected in the decisions made.
- **Antonio Ruíz:** We must be humble and recognise that social participation was important in the analysis matrix we researchers used, up to the point that we raised it to the category of recommendation. Projects that favour inclusion and citizen participation need to create capacities at local level so that work on initiatives can continue after these projects' actions finish. The sustainable development councils were modified until those national structures were created, where development decisions were made, but they were disbanded because they were associated to political will.
- **Israel Hernández:** Comaltepec lived with the resources, appropriating them to later learn how to manage them. Community-based management in Mexico had to make a lot of mistakes to get where it is today. When COMET-LA arrived it was viewed as a good opportunity to see what had happened and what could happen from now on. We hold that if the communities sit at the same table with politicians then sustainable management can occur.



## Economic aspects of community-based management of natural resources. Pros and cons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

*Lucila Martínez, leader of the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua, Colombia*

*Néstor Hernández, Commission for Commons of Comaltepec, Mexico*

*Federico Seleme, production director of Monte Hermoso, Argentina*

*Commentator: Humberto Soto, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*



### **Lucila Martínez, leader of the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua, Colombia**

The Council is a territory with its own resources, goods and services, whose use is regulated by cultural identity and collective participation. The award of collective ownership of the territory is the basis for the community organisation's development.

The community economy is grounded on use of the forest, craft production, artisanal mining, extraction of material from the river, tourism and staple crops for food security, along with hunting and fishing to supplement the diet.

An advantage of community-based management is that sustainable use of natural resources is done by operation of law, i.e. for no commercial purpose. And the community's autonomy means territorial use by outside individuals can be restricted. The rural community can therefore do work that consciously and in an integrated, participative, organised and coordinated manner allows it to improve its standard of living; it enjoys the freedom to use those resources for family sustenance.

The disadvantages are that there's little effective state presence to control and monitor groups on the fringes of the law which intervene in the territory and in natural resource use. We have a serious problem with unlawful mining, with illegal actors who enter the territory

and extract gold using bad practices that pollute the river. The state does not accompany our efforts to prevent those people from damaging the environment and as a community it's hard for us to deal with that situation. Also, even though we have collective ownership of the land, the state limits the autonomy for control over use of some resources, such as mining, granting mining titles to people or companies outside the Council.

On the other hand, the state's intervention policies regarding illegal crop cultivation in the Councils' territory involve aerial fumigation of territory, which affects family subsistence farming.

Finally, another disadvantage we observed is ignorance and undervaluing of the communities' ancestral knowledge with respect to the position, value and legitimacy placed on scientific knowledge.

Our future challenges are to defend prior consultation as a mechanism for conservation and autonomous management of the territory. This is one of the tools that along with strengthening the local economy will allow us to take a position and defend the community's participation in the face of mega-projects. Other challenges are the declaration of protected areas to preserve natural resources and to identify strategies for assuming risk management in community territory.

### **Néstor Hernández, Commission of Commons of Comaltepec, Mexico**

Comaltepec is a Chinantec community that pertains to the Ixtlan district in Oaxaca's Sierra Norte. In 1953 the community's ownership of communal land was recognised, encompassing 18,366 hectares of land and different kinds of forests where three towns are situated: Santiago Comaltepec, La Esperanza and Soyolapam.

We plant maize, kidney beans, peas, fruit trees and coffee. We have livestock and carry out sustainable forest management. The community has gone through different stages in community-based resource management, running from the use of those resources for self-consumption and subsequent concession by the federal government to a paper company, to recovery and appropriation of our resources, learning and the creation of companies, thereby generating a community forest model.

Based on that sustainable forest use model, the community is undergoing significant development in terms of infrastructure, which it had not had until then. The amount earned has not been large, though that's relative, because we have a balanced forest which sustains the community. The forest's resources have been used to build schools, roads, recreation spaces, urban areas, the municipal building and the community temple; the forest was restored after fires in 1983 and 1998.

While there has been no direct financial distribution to families, they have not had to financially cooperate in the urban infrastructures and public works, health or education. We know that some of those aspects correspond to the government; some initiatives were carried out with a mix of community and state resources, but that's the community's participation. For example, in 2005 a communal bus was acquired, in 2010 a community dining hall was built

and in 2011 the eco-tourism company was founded along with the forest timber industry. All those projects led to jobs for common-holders in Santiago Comaltepec.

There has been support from the state, at least in recent years, regarding capacity-building, some infrastructure and conservation services. But people are worried about what receiving that support means. We say that the forest is ours because we have conserved it through the philosophy, thought and vision of our ancestors. The concern is about how much we are compromising the forest, territory and waters by receiving that support, because in the future they can claim that the conservation wasn't just because of us but rather thanks to those outside resources they injected. Will our obligation then be with the country or with those who put up the money?

The assembly of common-holders is still the top authority. But there are changes that suggest certain modifications so that the community structure can respond to current market demands without marginalising the community aspect. The challenge is to keep up the community dynamics and find a mechanism to make them competitive, to improve the community's living standard.

**Federico Seleme, production director of Monte Hermoso,** shows a video about construction of the Monte Hermoso fishing terminal, which includes a fish processing plant.

It is a joint project of the fishermen's chamber and the municipal government of Monte Hermoso, which aims to enhance the value of artisanal fishing.

In Argentina's case, the state is sovereign and administers natural resources, unlike in the other COMET-LA cases where community bodies are in charge of exploitation. It also redistributes resources, supplying services and infrastructures, which in the Mexican case are assumed by the community. In this regard, the fishing terminal reflects joint efforts by the authorities and fishermen to accomplish the work.

**Humberto Soto, of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)**

ECLAC stressed the importance of projects like COMET-LA. The panel's topic is very relevant because economic experts on such questions do not usually consider the economic aspects of community-based resource management.

From the microeconomic standpoint, community-based natural resource management can amply benefit communities whenever challenges can be identified and appropriate responses planned. But sometimes community-based management has certain costs. Then what incentives are there for communities to manage themselves this way and not another, where they might obtain more economic and wellbeing benefits in the present, though placing future wellbeing at risk? That incentive is to avoid risking the conservation of resources.

Community-based management provides an intrinsic value that cannot be set in monetary terms. Obtaining a benefit from it must nevertheless be considered, because communities benefit others by supplying a service for which they are not, in principle, remunerated.

On the other hand, the state levies taxes to provide certain public services. Some of the management models presented in COMET-LA supply those services. So the question arises of whether the state is therefore saving money and should pay for those additional services that the communities are offering it.

Much of the work being done by community-based management could receive an economic incentive, because when things are well done there should be an incentive. But when things are done badly, sometimes there are incentives to correct them.

Payment for environmental services arose from the idea that if one sector of the population was sustainably managing a forest then it was also generating a public good, freeing the atmosphere of carbon, and that was worthy of being paid for. This system has been criticised because it's hard to value those goods and there have been cases where bad management occurred.

### **Humberto Soto opens the round of questions**

**Roberto Escalante:** We cannot isolate the communities. How can the local economy be defended against outside mega-projects to ensure that the latter don't swallow up the communities' initiatives?

- **Lucila Martínez:** The state should supply services such as schools and health posts, though it's hard for them to willingly agree to that. In the Community Councils we use prior consultation to negotiate infrastructures the community needs with the people responsible for mega-projects. It's the only opportunity to do what the state doesn't do. We aren't paid for taking care of the natural resources.
- **Federico Seleme:** In our case, the state took up the project put forward by the artisanal fishing sector, which has a 10-year concession for use of the new terminal.

**Roberto Escalante** proposes that from Oaxaca a public policy proposal should be put forward, advocating that the value of community services should be discounted from the taxes community enterprises have to pay.

- **Leticia Merino:** the proposal is old; it was already done in the Chamber of Deputies with Doctor Sarukhán, but you have to keep insisting. On the other hand, state ownership of the subsoil is worrisome and implies a threat to the whole American community. For example, Peru is awarding concessions to mining companies and agro-industries.

**María Adelaida Farah**, COMET-LA coordinator in Colombia: To what extent to women and young people participate in management of the resources?

- **Néstor Hernández:** There has been progress in the inclusion of women. Formerly, only the men took part in assemblies. But because many have

emigrated, their wives are now in charge. The presence of women is beginning to be noted.

**Gerardo Perillo**, COMET-LA in Argentina: It's hard for community resources to exist in Argentina. For example, in the case of water, the province owns the water. Even for scientists, when we want to formally research a lake, river or coast, we have to ask the water authorities in each province involved for permission to carry out the study. This makes it very hard for a group from a given activity to own a resource. On the other hand, if a company wants to donate part of its taxes to a research organisation, it can't donate more than 5 percent of the total. If it gives more, then it pays taxes on that donation. The government thereby aims to collect and doesn't allow anyone to direct those taxes to something the state can't manage.

### Institutional aspects of community-based natural resource management. Pros and cons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

*Eduardo Flores, representative of the artisanal fishermen of Monte Hermoso, Argentina*  
*Manuel Riascos, legal representative of the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua, Colombia*  
*Salvador López, mayor of Comaltepec, México*  
*Commentators: Adriana Vázquez, researcher of the Tropenbos Foundation, Colombia, and César Nava, from the Legal Research Institute of UNAM, Mexico*



#### **Eduardo Flores, representative of the artisanal fishermen of Monte Hermoso and Pehuen Co, Argentina**

We fishermen have been fighting to defend fishing resources for a long time. They pushed us aside everywhere because we didn't have fishing rights and the provincial fishing law says very little about artisanal fishing. So we were forced to set ourselves up legally as an organisation. We founded the fishermen's chamber, in which we've worked for 14 years.

With the union we've been able to achieve five protected miles in the El Rincón area and to take part in a regional council where the artisanal fishermen have a place to debate with politicians and scientists, with voice and vote, so that we can say no to projects that harm natural resources in our region and also help work out sustainable management policies.

We proposed the fishing terminal project to the municipality and the state gave us financial support to build it. The terminal will enable us to compile statistics on the catch and enhance the products' value. The state also gains from the terminal, because we'll take those high quality products to schools, hospitals and dining halls, thereby returning products of very good quality to the state at a low price, because we save on intermediaries. As far as we're concerned, relations with the state aren't as bad as in other cases: for a project to go through and for them to support us is very important. We've seen a change and this came from the roots, from the fishermen; we've told the state that we need this tool to develop ourselves and conserve the fishing resource.

We believe there's a lot of coincidence with the other COMET-LA communities, because we work to preserve resources so they can be sustainable and make management plans.

As an organisation we've worked out a management plan and have made headway by using roadblocks and social protests. So now we have an area in El Rincón that's restricted for boats more than 25 metres long, which cannot fish in water less than 50 metres deep. Fishing, which was almost lost, is now recovering. Scientific participation has also been important for these accomplishments, supplying us with information that helps us conceive sustainable resource management policies.

As for the cons, we don't have an artisanal fishing law, though we are working on that and have submitted a project to the Chamber of Deputies. Industrial fishing has meanwhile seen how we're organised and is trying to counter our efforts, but we have community awareness.

**Manuel Riascos, legal representative of the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua, Colombia**

The Community Councils of the Black Communities are specific organisation forms grounded in the Constitution and in Law 70. They hold title to a total of 4,500,000 hectares.

Their fundamental principles are identity, cultural authority, own rights, political participation and decision-making autonomy. Prior consultation is another pillar of the Councils, meaning that actors who want to carry out projects in the territory must consult the community, which can decide whether or not they're implemented. In the Councils we also have a people's worldview, that is, the ability to define who we are, what we want and where we're going.

The Councils' organisation comprises a community assembly which is their top authority, the governing board which is the coordination space, the legal representative, the road assemblies and committees, the justice team and the advisors to the governing board.

The reason the Community Councils are there is to protect and improve the wellbeing of the territory's inhabitants, and to manage and take advantage of environmental goods and services in line with a nature conservation approach.

Our dream is for the black communities to maintain the territories, usage actions and environmental exploitation in a balanced way oriented to the collective wellbeing of current and future generations.

Participation in the COMET-LA project strengthened local capacities to manage natural resources and the territory, and we were able to coordinate academic and research dynamics. We also updated prospects for collective territorial management and appropriated the principles of internal regulation and governance.

As weaknesses we can point to ignorance of the local, cultural and socio-ecological context of the collective territory and the little credibility among parties, which initially led to resistance and mistrust.

### **Salvador López, mayor of Comaltepec, México**

The Comaltepec community is governed by means of communal statutes, which are the main tool for organising the town and its natural resources. The power to govern ourselves and for us to manage the territory is the biggest advantage we now enjoy. We have guidelines for administering the forest and communal enterprises and for investing the benefits derived from that management in what the community needs.

The government should be taking care of some of those needs and that is one of our cons, because the state is not meeting its commitments. It leaves us alone with our problems and we're allowing that. If we don't move, the government doesn't approach to cover our needs, though it does charge taxes without telling us where they'll go.

Another problem is the lack of women's participation. Even in our statutes it's always the male sex doing things, and I think we're making a mistake. We have to change this and progress toward gender fairness so that women can take part with a direct vote.

Payment for authorities who take on positions in the community is another subject of internal debate, because it hasn't been included in the statutes till now; they weren't remunerated. Changes are being made to that end and now they receive token compensation.

Changes in the community are slow and discussed in the assembly. There's a lot of bureaucracy, but we have to stay on the path and keep progressing.

### **Adriana Vázquez, researcher from the Tropenbos Foundation, Colombia**

It's important to stress that communities' visibility is often limited to their reaction to problems and that it isn't there for habitual situations, generating public opinion from the place or maintaining a position in political space. Sometimes we institutions take away that voice and represent them; hence the communities don't have spaces to inform the public about how they're working and contributing to resource conservation. The new

communication tools give us an opportunity in that regard. Now local communities can make sure that society gets used to listening to them and bearing them in mind.

**César Nava, Legal Research Institute of UNAM, Mexico**

It's very important to combine scientific and traditional knowledge and also to ensure they are in harmony with public policies. The law also plays a fundamental role in this because although we have policies it may be hard to make progress on them if we don't have a legal arm that forces actors to meet their commitments.

Regarding the aforementioned problem of the lack of women's participation, Mexico's environmental legislation recognises their role in environmental management, but a lot more should be done to consolidate effective participation. The government has put this issue on a back burner, though many of us have seen how such problems are being resolved at community level.

**César Nava opens the round of questions.**

**Leticia Merino:** For Argentina, what is the relationship between the fishing undertaking and the rest of the population? For Colombia, the councils' structure is very interesting – did you build that structure or was it imposed on you by the government? For Mexico, agrarian law doesn't forbid women's ownership, though usage and customs are something else.

- **Eduardo Flores:** Over the years of struggle we were able to move the people to accompany us in our demands. It took us a lot of time but nowadays they not only support us but are also developing policies to support the fishing sector. They understood our concern about caring for resources. The fishing terminal will monitor resources and fishermen should gain an added value. It's not just a processing plant; it's also accompanied by a bio-manager. It will be Argentina's first ecological plant that turns fishing waste into fertiliser. The fishing communities' struggle has been from the bottom upward and we've been able to work together with scientists.
- **Manuel Riascos:** The only thing imposed in the Community Councils is the name. Each council organises its structure, depending on the size and the governing council.
- **Salvador López:** We need to explicitly include women. When an assembly is held I don't hear the name of a woman, though they do attend, representing their husbands.

**Mar Delgado:** How do very short office terms affect the institutional aspects? Sometimes it's hard to transfer knowledge among authorities. How will this be managed, for example, in the case of knowledge obtained via the COMET-LA project?

- **Salvador López:** Unfortunately, those term lengths are set by systems of internal rules. The correct thing to do is to fulfil the law, which stipulates three-year terms. Unfortunately, we play with the law because there's no salary associated to the positions (currently there's just token compensation)



and no task is completed in such a short time. In COMET-LA's case we should let Israel Hernández transmit that information, because he's from the community and was involved in the project. Such work has been for the community and we'll have to inform it ourselves in an assembly of common-holders.

- **Manuel Riascos:** The time for us to build will never be enough. We, the descendents of Africans, have more than 400 years of invisibility and we are fighting to change that, trying to salvage ancestral knowledge. We did a lot before but we didn't write things down; now we take note of everything. Also, thanks to the COMET-LA project, we've been able to make ourselves visible, not just in Colombia but also around the world. We want to tell scientists and decision-makers not to be afraid of working with the communities, because both resources and opportunities are doubled when you work together.

**Gerardo Perillo:** It's vital for all our projects to transmit what we're doing to the general public and decision-makers. It's important to have media who take an interest in such information. In Argentina we feel there are few and that such topics are not deemed significant in the communication schools.

- **Adriana Vázquez:** The language of the communities and the associated political position is very important when it comes time to communicate. There's a need to help them open their own authentic voice spaces. We can use that voice – the communities and technical personnel. The difference in cultural expressions is important.
- **Salvador López:** In Oaxaca there was a press conference attended by Radio Guelatao, among other media. I think it's up to us to summon journalists to publicise what's happening. More publicity for the work is still pending.
- **Diana Maya, researcher from the Pontifical Xavierian University:** While journalists are bridges for connecting to the public, from the standpoint of science we must ask how scientific learning can be made visible. What's done jointly and comprehensibly should be brought to light.

**Yolanda Lara, ERA researcher:** It seems very interesting, though also difficult, to achieve equal participation of women in public positions, as the Comaltepec mayor mentioned. What concrete steps should be taken to make that effective in Comaltepec?

- **Salvador López:** Efforts are already being made to have women intervene. I don't think it will be so hard for us to reach 50 percent. Women nowadays attend the assembly on behalf of their husbands so they don't have to pay a fine for missing the meeting, but it shouldn't be like that because the government governs men and women, so women should be involved in the cases. I don't see it so far away. We have Laura Hernández, who takes part in the assemblies and holds a position at the school; she may eventually hold municipal positions.

## Advances in capacity-building

*Óscar Hernández, instructor from the National Learning Service, Colombia*

*Federico Seleme, production director of Monte Hermoso, Argentina*

*Leonardo Berninsone, representative of Aquamarina, Argentina*

*Carlos García, Union of Zapotec/Chinantec Forest Production Communities of Oaxaca, Mexico*

*Francisco Chapela, ERA researcher, Mexico*

*Commentator: Gloria Abraham, representative in Mexico of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)*



### **Óscar Hernández, instructor from the National Learning Service (SENA), Colombia**

In this experience we had the opportunity to link training cycles with COMET-LA's academic research.

SENA is immersed in the Government Plan for 2010-2014-2018, whose pillars are more jobs, less poverty and more security in the framework of democratic prosperity. It is a public institution attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and is one of the few institutions able to reach all locations.

We are in charge of fulfilling the state's duty to invest in the social and technical development of Colombian workers, offering and administering integral vocational training so that people can join and develop productive activities that contribute to the country's social, economic and technical development.

We run ten training centres in the Cauca Valley and work in various technical lines: port logistics, fishing, seamanship and biodiversity. We cover biodiversity because 95 percent of the population is rural, which is precisely what makes up the Community Councils and the indigenous population. Given this biodiversity challenge, SENA sought a way to reach those

communities and decided to begin working with the Councils and join them to the COMET-LA process.

We want the strengthening of local knowledge to be done with the administration, so that that capability can be an input for them to ensure that article 6 of Law 70 (to be regulated) is fully consolidated, favouring inclusion and prior consultation. We likewise want to use the territory's natural conditions as a learning arena for the communities.

**Federico Seleme, production director of Monte Hermoso, Argentina**

For the last 12 years the Argentine government has had a management policy line that strengthened the regional economies. We have a strategic agro-food and industrial plan which includes artisanal fishing and national state financing that has tripled the funds earmarked for education.

Locally, we're trying to learn what's still missing. The project helped us discern some things. We are ready to keep working and learning for the people's benefit.

**Leonardo Berninsone, representative of Aquamarina, Argentina**

A community is a group of people who share common elements. COMET-LA showed a common interest at both local and global level and served to build individual and group capacities. At Aquamarina biologists, artisanal fishermen and the local population carry out different projects. We focus on group learning, trying to keep everything on a horizontal level. In that regard, sharing the local population's wisdom was a great learning experience for Aquamarina. Working on conservation means working with the scientific community, with communities and people who make decisions about environmental education, communication and dissemination. We hadn't previously worked with decision-makers so we learned from this.

COMET-LA helped us understand socio-economic aspects, to see other viewpoints, to strengthen ties within the community and foster joint work.

The project was a seedbed. Ties and concepts were sown which must now be nourished. We have to emphasise the role of young people to strengthen the idea of community. Drawing contests and environmental awareness-raising comics were produced to inform them about the project.

**Carlos García, Union of Zapotec/Chinantec Forest Production Communities of Oaxaca (UZACHI), Mexico**

UZACHI was the first union to be certified in Mexico and comprises four communities that appropriated forest resources: La Trinidad, Santiago Xiacui, Calpulalpam de Mendez and Comaltepec.

The communities' local governance enabled a territorial plan for the forests to be set up and to ensure their sustainable use, with the respective benefits reverting to the communities by

capitalising the communal enterprise, maintaining forest pathways, employing common-holders and regenerating the forest.

Over the years UZACHI has been involved in raising awareness at schools, because we believe it is important for communities to know about the resources around them. We also offer a training course for community forest development technical personnel.

Challenges we still face to enhance our position include reinforcing local capacities, becoming a regional organisation, sharing what we know with other experiences from Chinantla and undertaking relations with public institutions, involving both research and communities.

To better adjust the community structure, we have to conceive a social and business development plan which doesn't leave the community out, and also generate management skills for common-holders via ongoing capacity-building and shared experiences.

**Francisco Chapela:** Comaltepec's case is similar to that of the Community Councils, in so far as they have existed for a long time as a community though not in the limelight. Comaltepec and the Councils have shown that if they were ignorant predators they would have used up the resources in 400 years. The regional governments have kept away from these territories, though they are very rich places in terms of resources and biological diversity. By that I mean that we owe a lot to those communities, because that natural wealth has a lot to do with mechanisms they've developed. In the Argentine case, even though the community is more recent, the fishermen also organised to enjoy more economic benefits with less fishing. If they weren't organised they'd do the opposite; they'd get more resources by overfishing. But they're organising, placing limits on themselves via the processing plant.

All this shows that the establishment of a community-based scheme to manage resources is a viable way to conserve resources. What remains are the challenges of adjusting this arrangement to the current context, reproducing that technological capacity in other places and endowing it with cultural continuity by means of education, whether more institutionalised, like in SENA's case, or less, as in the other cases.

**Gloria Abraham, representative in Mexico of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)**

I've learned a lot from the experiences showcased by the project. I believe the case studies are very representative and relevant regarding what exists in Latin America.

One of the characteristic features in the Mexican and Colombian cases is that age-old community organisations work from the territory for conservation.

It seems important to stress that capacity-building for natural resource conservation must be accompanied by the teaching of sustainable production practices, that is, to improve sustainable use of those resources.

Food production is a challenge nowadays and even more so to make it sustainable, avoiding pressure on natural resources. It is vital to consider whether there will be a second study phase to delve into this further.

Another interesting thing I observe is the absence of decision-makers. We should work to establish ties with public policies because if they aren't done with the communities and the public sector then they're just puddles of water. The population in the territories is aware and the link to public policy must be cemented.

### **Gloria Abraham opens the round of questions**

**Mar Delgado:** We invited all the politicians and they all promised they'd come but they didn't. How can we reach out to politicians so that they listen to us?

- **Gloria Abraham:** It would be important to focus on public policy. The most important effort has to be done from the places themselves, because that's where the public policy decision begins.
- **Óscar Hernández:** It's fundamental to move forward on strengthening the territories' governance. That way progress can be made on influencing policies and helping them to develop. The problem resides in how to design projects that reach the communities, because productive operations sometimes don't meet the sustainability requirements. The project had significant results in this regard.
- **Federico Seleme:** Over time we've learned to make politicians understand that this is interesting for them. It's the only way for decision-makers to ensure that those policies last.

## Needs for effective governance of natural resources

*Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of COMET-LA*

*César Ortiz, researcher from the Pontifical Xavierian University, Colombia*

*Silvia London, researcher from the National University of the South-CONICET, Argentina*

*Commentators: Sergio Madrid, Mexican Council for Silviculture, Mexico, and Liliana*

*Mosquera, researcher from the Von Humboldt Institute of Colombia*



### **Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of COMET-LA**

Environmental, social and economic sustainability in Comaltepec requires a more homogeneous approach, because although the environmental aspect is upheld, the economic and social aspects face several challenges.

In certain areas the prevailing belief is that resources can be conserved by philosophy and tradition. But in others sectors other concerns prevail, such as economic ones. If economic sustainability isn't there then effective governance can't exist. The socio-environmental system in Comaltepec is quite rigid, which begs the question: Can tradition be maintained while at the same time cultivating a business-oriented culture, in the sense of innovation? Also, what would that mean in terms of governance's effectiveness?

Finally, effective governance of a socio-environmental system should have a clear policy of including young people so they can share the community philosophy, because it has been seen that this is not always so, which can place Comaltepec's governance system at risk.

**César Ortiz, researcher from the Pontifical Xavierian University, Colombia**

We learned a lot about governance in the COMET-LA years. We learned that governance happens in a complex context and that we have to get closer to it in a more critical manner, because sometimes it's used as a slogan and people think it should only be practiced by the communities. For that reason governments are beginning to distance themselves a bit from that responsibility.

We believe that governance per se is good, that it's a homogenous structure organised alone and that it's stable. But the truth is that governance structures are very complex. In territories such as Calima and Dagua there is not one single structure but rather several and many actors participate in them (with their interests). Bearing all this in mind, it is very important for all leaders of the communities to be represented in the different governance structures.

This means that governance structures are not linear; rather, they're subject to changes. Numerous conflicts are generated regarding the various interests at stake, which must be acknowledged. Governance is not just a topic for communities. We have to recognise and support the micro-structures in which many of those actors participate, such as the social organisations.

Culture is also fundamental, because policies are filtered via the communities and their cultures. Understanding biodiversity and water governance means understanding the cultural diversity of each territory.

It is important to acknowledge the work of the 25 co-researchers who participated throughout the process in Colombia, because the future of these governance structures depends on them.

**Silvia London, researcher from the National University of the South-CONICET, Argentina**

I agree with César Ortiz that governance is not isolated, that it lies in a context that includes the government, governability and the institutions that uphold it.

On the one hand, when people talk of government and governability they think of the legitimacy of public policies. In Argentina we are a young democracy, where policies are not always legitimised by a large part of society. Formal rules are drawn up by lawmakers, while social rules are built up by society and provide the basis for institutions. If we want legitimate government and governability we should learn to understand the social rules so that formal rules can be drawn up according to what society needs.

On the other hand, definitions of governance highlight that it is a healthy balance between civil society, the market and the state. We're adding that development should be sustainable, whereby we should include environmental challenges. This doesn't mean preservation per se, but rather that communities also need to live in that ecosystem, to produce and enjoy a certain degree of wellbeing. We should therefore find the way to achieve development that joins the economic aspect to conservation of the natural capital for future generations.

We should also include participative voting processes, open dialogue and citizen commitment. The learning arena was important in that area. The community has to interact with scientists and the state in an effective dialogue space. That's our challenge.

**Sergio Madrid, Mexican Council for Silviculture, Mexico**

Comaltepec is a community from which a lot can be learned; it has a huge wealth of natural resources, forests and water, and for centuries has developed the Ostrom principles.

A trustful relationship and shared vision is needed to achieve effective governance that resolves environmental challenges. There must be very clear rules for accessing resources and a gradual scale of sanctions for those who fail to comply. Steps must also be taken to implement agreements and to ensure they can function, given that the government sometimes imposes resource access rules so complicated that they're not effective.

It is vital to know if resources are being well employed, so practical accountability mechanisms must be in place and understood by the whole community. Mechanisms are likewise needed to resolve disputes and for self-management to be recognised by regional authorities. If the state doesn't recognise them, it will be hard to tackle environmental challenges.

**Liliana Mosquera, researcher from the Von Humboldt Institute, Colombia**

The importance of integrating the COMET-LA knowledge systems must be stressed, along with the effort countries have made to get such diverse actors to talk to each other. When policies recognise that everyone has a different kind of knowledge then progress can be made on natural resources sustainability. The institutions and universities ensure that the project is deemed important at different levels and all contribute to effective governance.

Here it is important to insist on transferring the project information so that it can reach decision-makers. Transferring that information to decision-makers, especially that resulting from research, is a guiding line of the Von Humboldt Institute.

**Diana Maya**, researcher from the Pontifical Xavierian University: It wasn't easy to analyse the Ostrom system with the communities, especially the governance concepts. There are multiple governance systems and we have to keep publicising and including those governance systems in the socio-ecological systems. The indigenous and black communities aren't the only ones who have rules; identity also exists for the farmers, fishermen and others. This is a learning process and a great challenge we all face in order to keep working.

**Leticia Merino**: Hopefully the local institutions and local governance can be flexible when it comes to the speed of social change. This has to occur at the level of each community and should be accompanied by outside support. An example of this is payment for holding office. People cannot spend three years without earning money in an economic situation like the current one. Some young people emigrate so they don't have to deal with this; they are assets which the community loses.



## Parallel event: Participative workshop on “Bottom-up influence towards better natural resources governance”

*Commentators: Elsa Matilde Escobar, chair of the Colombian National Committee of the IUCN; Antonio Ruiz, chair of the Mesoamerican Committee of the IUCN; and Gonzalo Zambrana, former vice-chair of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.*

*Coordinator: Ana Correa, technical coordinator of the Spanish Committee of the IUCN*

The aim of this workshop was to establish basic lines for a strategy with political impact, proposing as a means the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This strategy, to be accomplished in the middle term, will aim to improve natural resource governance, whereby it will include the recommendations and lessons learned regarding community-based management resulting from the COMET-LA project and its consultation panel.

Hence, the workshop’s goals were to discuss results obtained in the COMET-LA Consultation Panel and to carry out a first brainstorming session to draw up the influence strategy.

**Ana Correa described in her presentation the IUCN and its work in the area of natural resource governance.**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was founded in 1948 and is the world’s biggest environmental network. Its mission is to influence, stimulate and support societies across the planet, with the aim of maintaining nature’s integrity and assuring equitable and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources.

The IUCN counts more than 1,200 members in around 160 countries, among them more than 200 government bodies and 900 national and international NGOs. This network, unique in its area, also includes more than 11,000 scientists and experts and counts 1,100 employees in its 45 offices around the world.

Its 2013-2016 programme establishes three areas: “valuing and conserving nature”, “deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development” and “effective and equitable governance of nature’s use”. The latter area consolidates the IUCN’s work on “relations between people and nature”, rights and responsibilities and economic policy associated to nature. It asserts that the governance of natural resources generates effective, fair, equitable and gender-sensitive conservation, producing tangible benefits for means of subsistence.

**The Consultation Panel’s results are explained as a departure point to begin the debate.**

The consultation panel pointed out the following priority ambits for intervention to improve governance.

- The drawing up of bottom-up development plans and public policies (the public influences decisions and takes part in all policy phases from formulation, production and follow-up through to evaluation);

- Inclusive legal and regulatory system enabling easy access, with the fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination and established monitoring and sanction systems;
- Technical empowerment (capacity-building) and rights concerning how good governance should be carried out;
- Citizen participation (participation of young people, workers, the elderly, women and men in equal measure in decision-making and in natural resource management).

Regarding the so-called cross-cutting axes, the focus based on human rights was stressed, along with the focus on gender, cross application and specific measures for ethnic groups.

Lastly, the consultation panel approved the following key governance principles:

- **Accountability** (mutual rendering of accounts): corresponds to control of the power wielded within the state and society. On the one hand, this implies the obligation for power-holders to explain their decisions and, on the other hand, the duty of control mechanisms to compensate good results and punish the abuse of power;
- **Transparency**: implies that the general public, or at least those directly affected, have access to information about the grounds and criteria for state decision-making, the reasons why decisions were adopted, the provisions envisaged for their implementation and what is known about their eventual effects;
- **Participation**: implies that all population groups can take part in political and social decision-making processes that affect them. This means there are open spaces where opinions can be confronted along with the interests expressed by different groups, and that their opinions are taken seriously when decisions are made;
- **Rule of Law**: this is a system which respects the following four universal principles: the government and its employees and agents, as well as people and private bodies, are responsible before the law; laws are clear, public, stable and fair and are uniformly applied and protect fundamental rights, including the security of people and property; the process whereby laws are enacted, administered and enforced is accessible, fair and efficient; justice is neutral and effective, applied impartially with sufficient resources and reflects the communities served.

The following working arrangement summarises those results, illustrating key governance principles and aspects indicated by the panel.



After a first exchange of opinions, the workshop’s participants split into two groups to discuss and rearrange this scheme and rework the key questions that will ground contributions about governance for the future IUCN global programme for 2016-2020.



### Results from the first group

For the first group the main aim was to ensure participation for natural resource governance. To that end, tools such as monitoring, evaluation, information and network generation are required so that people who have to participate can have the necessary information to do so. Participation is essential in order to impact public policies, in specific actions addressing the territory and regulatory frameworks, and to achieve equitable access to resources. Participation is likewise necessary to influence decision-making and social control; it is vital for it to happen at every scale (local, regional and national) and for it to provide feedback for the processes. If all this occurs then empowerment of populations is achieved.

### Results from the second group

For the second group the centre of governance is the population, with its own culture and identity. To achieve participation and empowerment there must be representation at local, national and regional level, either with forms of formal (like voting) or traditional (like the councils) representation. Culture and identity are important for undertaking dialogue on scientific and local knowledge, which is a basic key for generating information. This information generation should be linked to the respective access, because if that access isn't there then efficient participation does not exist. Participation can thus generate empowerment. And based on empowerment development plans can be created along with an efficient and inclusive legal system. This cycle provides continual feedback.

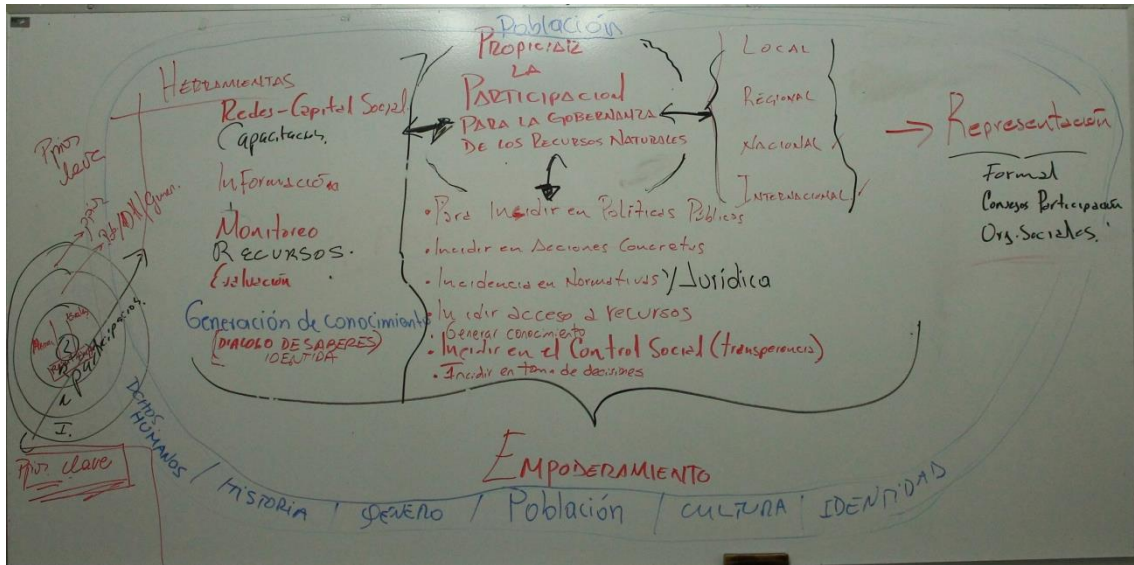
It is important to change the mentality about governance schemes. Governance is usually associated to governability, to the state's rules from the top down, and here it is put forward that governance has to be the reverse, from the bottom up.

### Conclusions: joining forces to achieve a common position

After the group work, the participants combined their positions in a common proposal:

The only way to implement the key principles for governance (accountability, transparency, rule of law and participation) is by ensuring participation for the governance of natural resources.

This participation should count the **following cross-cutting elements**: human rights, history, gender focus, culture, identity and local population. For that participation to be achieved it is necessary for the following **tools** to be applied at all scales (local, regional and national): stronger networks and social capital; generation of capacity-building and useful and accessible information; monitoring and evaluation of information; obtaining of appropriated resources; and generation of knowledge via the knowledge dialogue. The **goal** of participation with these factors is to be able to influence public policies, in concrete actions in the territory and in regulatory frameworks, to make access to resources more equitable, and also to influence decision-making and social control. If all this happens then the empowerment of populations is accomplished.



## Presentation of results from the workshop on “Bottom-up influence toward better natural resources governance to face climate change”

**Speaker:**

*Ana Correa, technical coordinator of the Spanish Committee of the IUCN*

Ana Correa described the IUCN and its work on governance (see details in the parallel event section).

The tasks of the Spanish Committee of the IUCN (CeIUCN) within the COMET-LA project include dissemination of this initiative and up-scaling, i.e. transferring the results to other countries or regions so they can be useful for other entities.

Our challenge is to ensure that the lessons learned from COMET-LA last in time. We therefore designed a roadmap to introduce them in the IUCN’s own cycle, including them in the international agenda.

First of all, we presented three proposals at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the IUCN (Jeju, 2012), which brought into focus the local environmental problems of the three case studies.

We held the 10<sup>th</sup> Biodiversity Forum of the Spanish Committee of the IUCN in 2013, which centred on lessons learned from COMET-LA, enabling us to transfer contributions to the Spanish IUCN members and thus introduce the theme in the European region. We later launched the COMET-LA Consultation Panel as a meeting point between project members, actors and IUCN members, where they can discuss progress in COMET and consider new positions regarding governance.

With the contributions from the Consultation Panel we held the parallel workshop in this conference, where we identified basic aspects to ground a future influence strategy (see workshop conclusions).

This event's results were shared at the IUCN World Parks Congress held on 12-19 November in Sydney, Australia, and at the Union's Regional Forums for Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America, with a view to debating and enriching this proposal with members from the IUCN's various regions and to engender common positions ahead of the next World Conservation Congress, to be held in 2016.

[Central conference: The Mexican experience of community-based management of the commons. Modified to "The commons in Europe in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century"](#)

**Speaker:**

*Leticia Merino, president of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC)*



**Leticia Merino, president of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC)**

There are movements for common property in Latin America as well as in Africa and Europe. On the latter continent, the commons did not completely disappear due to popular action and they are very much on the rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In comparison with other simplifying models, Elinor Ostrom criticised the tragedy of the commons and stressed that just like mistakes are made in the management of common property there are other cases where they have been very successful.

Ostrom criticises that political models were established which are considered panaceas and are applied equally everywhere. For that reason she insists that those involved need tailor-made suits, whereby she advocates analysing multiple variables. She thus proposes a theory of complex self-organisation, whereby individuals seek their own wellbeing in certain circumstances. But she also holds that the market isn't everything, rather that there are many interactions in which individuals have other motives. For instance, property users perceive they will obtain more benefits by designing and applying their own rules, which occasionally means an incentive that goes beyond economic motive. That theory also indicates that when the costs are less than the expected benefits, individuals self-organise, because they would otherwise exhaust the resources.

On the other hand, we don't have useful definitions of governance. We have to move forward on a more operational, consensual and functional definition of governance so that it doesn't become a meaningless word.

The commons comprise all property that is used, protected or built collectively, whose sustainability benefits from collective action and participative government systems. According to Ostrom, government is the making of decisions in which citizens can participate. So the commons are used, protected and built collectively.

Ownership of the commons isn't complete, because it can be lost. In Mexico there are *ejidos* [common farmland parcels] with communal ownership that were granted in concession to outside users. This happens in many other countries. That's why citizens' rights are more important, not just the use of resources but also the respective decision-making.

Also important is the structure of this decision-making and how it is related to national and regional instances. Because genetic diversity is important for taking on environmental challenges, institutional diversity, of forms of government, is necessary to fit each territory. To believe there are universal models is a mistake. We should learn that complexity is not a synonym for chaos and that there are no optimal solutions for any situation. That's why the best possible solution has to be sought, on the understanding that it can vary over time.

I'd like to highlight several lessons learned about governance of the commons:

- It is costly to govern, conserve and maintain relevance and functionality of the commons;
- Collective action, social capital and 'face-to-face' communication are required, rare conditions in contemporary societies. Knowledge should be a publicly accessible good. If no-one knows what's published, then it has no use;
- There's a tendency to consider common property as being public (pertaining to the state). States tend to capture and recapture control rights (and even usage rights) over the commons, especially in 'developing countries with

- authoritarian regimes'. But the states can also provide *constitutional rules* that allow the recognition, protection and/or construction of commons;
- Many commons decline when underused and undervalued. Such property is present in many cultures, though viewed as destructive and archaic, especially from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on. In colonial countries the commons were maintained because the colonial powers could not directly control remote lands and communities. With the onset of liberal policies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were taken over by the state and granted in concession to elites for monocultures and railway lines, etc. And land-grabbing by foreigners in common areas continues today.

### What's happening in Mediterranean Europe?

With the depopulation of many rural areas, rural landscapes were re-evaluated vis-à-vis the environmental services they offer, such as quality of life, biodiversity and food security.

Family farms have not entirely disappeared. In 1970 land ownership reforms were associated to an intention to repopulate the countryside. Countryside without people is unprotected countryside. Generally they are more egalitarian societies where the rural population has more political weight.

For example, in Spain the commons in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were viewed as traditional practices and places with neither rules nor laws, because local rules were different from state rules and from those of other commons. While 'community practices' were supported by tradition, private property was defined by law, idealised as 'sacred' and necessary to ensure 'public happiness'. After 1820 land ownership laws confused communal with municipal lands. An aim of the 1968 law was to repopulate the countryside. Land was turned over to the communities for its protection and recognised as communal woodlands.

In England during the Middle Ages at least 50 percent of grazing land and forests were commons and regulated by landowners and common-holders. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century an effort was made to dedicate common lands to more productive, industrial uses. From 1960 to 2000 various laws reflected the conflict between private landowners and defenders of communal lands. In 2006 it was recognised that the commons have a cultural identity for England. Most of the common lands are private property, albeit subject to 'communal rights' which 'originate in local customs'. They are valued as landscapes, wildlife habitat, sites of archaeological interest and public recreation spaces. More than half of England's common lands have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

In France, the agrarian reform of 1965 considered that the countryside per se had environmental value and generated public goods. An effort was made to improve farmland, revalue uncultivated land and regulate local protection of forest areas. As in Comaltepec, the anti-tragedy of the commons occurred, i.e. the forests are in better conditions than when there was no community management.



Finally, in Italy the population launched protests as a response to plans for extreme privatisation in 2011, calling for access to such fundamental commons as water, education, nature and culture.

In the developing world more than 93 percent of mining, oil and gas concessions are undertaken in lands that are formally communal property. Natural resource concessions cannot be considered economic development when they fail to recognise the local inhabitants' rights. True economic development empowers and enriches all participants. Natural resources cannot be protected by remote control; they require active communities.

**Mar Delgado:** Each site is specific. We can reach common positions but there are no solutions that can be easily transferred as is to other places.

**Francisco Chapela:** In Comaltepec the population has taken time organising itself to manage its resources. Now there's pressure to join market mechanisms such as payment for environmental services. But some things have no price and market mechanisms don't work for everything. COP 20 is almost here – 20 meetings held to see how to tackle climate change. One of the points of dispute is still how to devise a market mechanism to compensate those who help halt deforestation. The communities are already conserving, so why don't we bring deforestation to a halt by governing from the state?

- **Leticia Merino:** There's no single answer. It's not inappropriate for communities to enter in market terms; the question is how they enter the market. What cannot be sold is the right to decide; the decisions should stay local. But this doesn't mean we can't be competitive.

**Diana Maya:** In populations that are homogeneous cooperation is simpler. But what progress is being made in populations that are more heterogeneous?

- **Leticia Merino:** The academic/community relationship is vital for this. The problem isn't so much heterogeneity, because as long as there's face-to-face communication it can be beneficial. The problem is inequity, hierarchic heterogeneity. The more inequality, the more mistrust. To be a community others must be trusted. The more GDP grows, the more inequality appears. Other indices should be used, such as those marking inequality or happiness; as a society we have to learn to conceive and ask for other indicators.

## [Research in and for communities: the vision of local communities](#)

### **Speakers:**

*Nayive Mina, co-researcher of the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua*

*Gerardo López, head of the Commission of Commons of Comaltepec*

*Jorge Carballo, representative of Pehuen Co, Argentina*

*Coordinator: Diana Maya, researcher from the Pontifical Xavierian University*



### **Nayive Mina, co-researcher from the Community Council of Upper and Middle Dagua**

We co-researchers are 25 young leaders from the communities of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima who were trained in SENA to be 'specialists in natural resource preservation'. The coordinator of that institution contacted the Pontifical Xavierian University to have us join the course on "Participative focuses for community-based natural resource management", via which we undertook to characterise the socio-ecological system, prospective planning, future scenario planning and natural resource governance, especially water and biodiversity usage.

We know that men's way of looking at conservation is different from women's. For that reason we worked on the gender perspective and then compared differences between the participating groups.

The research was conducted with, by and for the communities. In AMDA work was done in Zaragoza and La Delfina, while in Calima it was done in El Crucero and La Esperanza. We'd get together before the workshops to plan things. We held the meetings, in which there was a lot of interaction and affinity with the communities because they knew us. Later, we compiled the information and produced the reports. There was always horizontal interaction in knowledge transfers with the Xavierian team.

During the process we learned teaching tools that helped us inform the population and build their capacities regarding natural resource conservation. We learned to hold workshops and speak in public. That motivated us to take part in managing the territory and to be there to see what young people could contribute to the process. It also allowed us to become more familiar with the territory and acquire a sense of belonging, that is, we appropriated the territory. We learned to look to the past, present and future and to prepare ourselves to tackle the territory's future challenges.

Our future expectations are to "guide natural resource use in the communities toward sustainable use" and for "the co-researchers to investigate other areas in Upper and Middle

Dagua and Lower Calima that are appealing as ecological paths.” There are lots of spectacular zones we have to study. We’d also like to have more skills in areas such as leadership for conservation, pollution prevention, ecological disasters and project management.

Finally, we are working with a group of young people. Now they are thinking of other things and aren’t concerned about continuing their studies. I’m supporting them so that we can remain concerned about natural resource conservation and so we can build up capacities. Sometimes outsiders are the ones who benefit from the studies done in the community, but we have to appropriate it, building our capacities, because we young people are important in this process. I’d like all the territory’s young people to contribute tomorrow toward maintaining biodiversity, so the territory can remain the way we have it today.

### **Gerardo López, head of the Commission of Commons of Comaltepec**

For Comaltepec one of the expectations from the research was to become thoroughly familiar with the problems impacting local communities, especially community, social, economic and cultural policies, in order to influence them and seek alternatives for short, medium and long term solutions.

The vision of the communities is to take care of what’s theirs, to use their resources, exploiting them gradually, and to have their own organisation system based on common interests. We believe the research teams have to involve men and women of different ages, with common interests, as an alternative source for knowledge of the community system.

The challenge in the research work done with local communities is to make sure it stays in the communities and is systemised in such a way that it can be used in the present and future. That’s when the research is considered useful, because otherwise we’d merely be studious people who provide information.

In COMET-LA’s case the project was very important for the community. We organised ourselves in working teams to conduct the research and acknowledge its relevance for our uses and customs.

We want to invite you to get to know Comaltepec. We have a great deal of biodiversity of natural resources and we have three kinds of forests – pine, cloud and tropical – as well as three different climates – cold, temperate and tropical. Hopefully university students can visit the community to do all kinds of research, because it is important for us and for our young people to learn about and preserve our natural resources.

### **Jorge Carballo, representative from Pehuen Co, Argentina**

He shows a [video about the TV programme Hola Pehuen! accompanying the COMET-LA project](#).

I feel this project as if it were my own. Pehuen Co has a vast natural heritage; the inhabitants love the place, though it seems like a Tower of Babel: we all want the same, but we all speak a different language. The communication isn’t good, there’s a communication crisis and the

feeling I get after the project is that we have a diagnosis with no treatment. Before leaving Argentina I promised to deliver the results to the mayor and to the Town Council.

This project was very interesting and dealt with problems that affect the Bahía Blanca Estuary such as climate change and the conflict between trawling versus artisanal fishing. We'd like to have a document that enables us to help the COMET-LA seed grow and to raise information about the project to international level.

The lack of news media interest has been mentioned. However, I have verified that the *Hola Pehuen!* audience is very interested in the research the scientists conducted.

A monitoring commission should be set up to see if the project results can be accomplished.

**Jorge Carballo asks Eduardo Flores to comment on what he contributed to the research on artisanal fishermen, thus beginning the debate round.**

- **Eduardo Flores:** When we started the struggle, we artisanal fishermen were four nuts arrayed against industrial fishing. We looked for a mechanism to interact with scientists because they contribute the documentation enabling us to fight for our rights and for conservation of natural resources, given the destructive practices of the large boats. After a long legal process we were able to halt intervention in the El Rincón area until environmental studies are conducted. We want to tell the people that we're there and that the destination of natural resources will be decided by us, the lead players, working with scientists and taking the management plans that have to be done to the politicians.

**Diana Maya:** The case studies are different but they have common elements. We observed that communities that joined the research enjoy a benefit; that we have to value the knowledge those local communities have and that those spaces have allowed generational transfer or put on the table the need to include young people in leadership and knowledge about natural resources. Tools were left behind which each community can use later.

- **Manuel Riascos:** For us it's a big challenge to get young people involved, because the appropriation of processes by young people is a way for the Councils to continue being what they are.
- **Nayive Mina:** The project was a big help to get us young people interested in the challenges facing our communities. We co-researchers were a young group. The Community Council has offered to listen to us and that helps us to want to be in those spaces.
- **Diana Maya:** The drawing contest helped get young people interested in the project.
- **Cintia Piccolo,** researcher from IADO-CONICET: We're going to keep working with the community and we're going to emphasise education. We're trying to get the community to send its kids to study and for them to want to do that. There are no daily connections in Pehuen Co, so the university is going to

provide two scholarships with food as well as food for students from the community.

- **Néstor Hernández:** A lot of young people don't know the community's history. We need to publicise that information among young people.

**Roberto Escalante:** Fortunately, we are willing to continue working together, but resources are needed. If the Comaltepec community agrees, UNAM has the possibility to keep working with Comaltepec in the next four years.

The need to generate a group of common-holders and academics is being considered, so they can work together to think out proposals that can seek financing and be approved. Is there any chance that the common-holders and citizens of Comaltepec will approve that initiative?

- **Gerardo López:** In the assembly the common-holders agreed to take part in the project. From my standpoint, this has to continue; we can't cut short work that's begun. The door is open and we want to keep going and for them to work with us so the pending activities can progress.

**Brigitte Baptiste:** How do the organisations and communities see the possibility of building their own research mechanisms and agendas? How do the communities want the researchers to participate in their local development plans?

- **Gerardo López:** This has been an ambitious project as far as research for the communities is concerned and its methodology has been very much applied to the community. Now we have to decide on how we'll have to organise ourselves and take care of the natural resources. Our challenge is to involve men and women more in community life.

**Leticia Merino:** Migration is a fact in Comaltepec. You have spoken of integrating women and young people in decision-making. But how will you include the migrants?

- **Gerardo López:** There's been a lot of migration. Now people are coming back because the US border is closed and people need work, so we try to create sources of employment.
- **Néstor Hernández:** We keep up relations with associations of Comaltepecans in Oaxaca, in Mexico and in the United States.

**Alejandra Cruz:** How can we continue this research process among the communities from different countries?

- **Gerardo López:** Yes, there is a possibility of continuing interchanges with other communities. We're open to that.
- **Jorge Carballo:** We want to continue generating interaction among the communities. The young people have really caught on to this project. I think the comics are very good, because they stimulate kids and help them understand the challenge of natural resources.

- **Nayive Mina:** We're well prepared with knowledge we can share with other people from the communities, to keep researching. We're going to relay things in the communities so we can move forward in these processes.

**Antonio Ruiz:** Was there an opportunity for the local communities to mutually interchange experience? Will the researchers create a module so that others can take advantage of how the researchers and communities interacted?

- **Silvia London:** In the economics department of the National University of the South we don't have a specific co-researchers programme, though we do have a database of all information the communities provide us. A necessary step is to be able to interact more formally, in a more systematic manner, so we can include the communities in the research processes.
- **Luján Bustos,** researcher from IADO-CONICET: When the park rangers, students and other people saw us making measurements and beach profiles they wanted to learn those techniques. We taught them and now they're the ones doing the measuring. We want them to send us that data; we'll evaluate it and send it back.
- **María Adelaida Farah:** The whole co-researchers process in Colombia was done via a Xavierian continuing education course, for which the co-researchers received a formal capacity diploma. Also, we researchers inputted the COMET-LA lessons and methodological experience in the classes of our formal courses.
- **Óscar Hernández:** With support from the Tropenbos Foundation, at SENA we were able to develop research scenarios to be included in seven centres. We have to recover the lessons learned and disseminate them in SENA's 33 schools.
- **Roberto Escalante:** We want to propose an online master's on 'methodology for studying the commons', making use of the UDUAL network. UNAM has indicated that it is very interested in this and in setting up one for biodiversity. We now have to make a proposal to get those master's degrees off the ground.
- **Leticia Merino:** The first modules of that master's have already been planned. They just have to be revised.

## [Research and social responsibility: the vision of research institutions](#)

### Speakers:

*José Carlos Gómez Villamandos, rector of the University of Córdoba, Spain*

*Brigitte Baptiste, director of the Von Humboldt Institute, Colombia*

*Iván Islas, director of environmental economics at the Institute of Ecology and Climate Change of Mexico*

*Gonzalo Zambrana, former vice-chair for South America of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy*

*Coordinator: Gerardo Perillo, COMET-LA coordinator in Argentina*



**José Carlos Gómez Villamandos, rector of the University of Córdoba, Spain**

We live amid a model for economic development whereby the universities' participation is not totally active, though they are becoming more involved. This model, based on the triple helix of administrations, universities and the productive sector, does not provide all answers to our needs, because development has been viewed as an end in itself and not as a means to achieve social wellbeing and nature conservation.

When society joins this model as a fourth helix, from bottom up, the apparition of the universities' responsibility emerges.

Scientists have made great efforts to ensure their projection in society. But why? It's been done because society considers us important and not so that society can get involved with us. What society has to do is permeate toward the university. Projects that favour that approach like COMET-LA are increasingly happening, though slowly. We are very behind social demand and society is asking for accountability.

There's a tradition among scientists whereby knowledge is valued for itself and as an end. At the university we translate that knowledge more in merits rather than reporting it to society. The scientists' grandeur makes them lose the transcendence of transferring their knowledge to society.

Researchers are isolated from society. In Spain we have the problem of the function of university personnel and researchers. So there's no awareness of the transcendent need to educate new generations. A change is needed, a local response to a global problem. We have to progress toward knowledge transfer and an open system, where there's no academic requirement to take part. The universities have to establish a system where they can propose social projects, so society can choose which ones it wants to develop, and participate in them.

A research ethic must be maintained; we have to associate with society and overcome obstacles to move forward. We have the ability to analyse; we are still a hub joining many institutions with political powers, which obliges us to remain active in this area. We have to promote responsibility within the classroom, render accounts and ensure that politicians don't

feel like they own the money. We have a mission to fulfil on society's behalf and they are obliged to help us accomplish it.

We have to provide education in values, so that students develop a critical sense, changing the system from ego-system to eco-system marked by collaboration and participation, joined to social responsibility.

**Brigitte Baptiste, director of the Von Humboldt Institute, Colombia**

The Institute arose from the association of various national universities, NGOs and the Colombian Ministry of Environment, which heads it. We have a public function; by law we are delegated the production of knowledge for better decision-making.

Among the actors we deal with there are three major groups: the state and public institutions; the private business sector; and the civil society sector, the local communities.

What are the challenges of creating a scientific institution and working in this context?

Many researchers pass on to us research agendas concerning issues associated to natural resources but indicate they don't want to work in collective territories because it's complicated. We've tried to understand why they think working with the communities is so tough. If the function of research is to produce knowledge associated to society's needs, then why do they think working with society is difficult? Prior consultation or dialogue problems are some of the arguments. But the role those communities play in conserving biodiversity and traditional values must be defended.

Mankind's impact on the biosphere is huge; we've gone beyond the limits of planetary security and haven't been able to equitably distribute resources on the planet. That vision, however, is not necessarily shared by everyone, especially from the local standpoint. The world may be coming to an end but that's not what's seen from the collective territories, because although there are problems in rivers and forests, they are perceived as being local and manageable. So risk perception is much different and has to do with access to information and the ability to take part in global discussions with local perspectives.

Innovative narratives are emerging which serve to connect local phenomena with global problems. We haven't known how to document those narratives and I believe the COMET-LA project is helping shed light on how the global is built from the local. The state has to diffuse the territory's diversity in rules, in homogeneous visions that generate prescriptive locks that can regulate resource management.

With this in mind, we wonder whether the wide range of options can coalesce toward adaptable solutions. I believe it has to lead to a proposal for collective work which we can all join.



**Iván Islas, director of environmental economics of the Institute of Ecology and Climate Change of Mexico (INEC)**

INEC is a federal government institute which provides technical input to the secretariat for better decision-making.

Our concern from the Green Growth Department is about how we can change the vision of economic development based on natural resource destruction to a vision whereby development and wellbeing derive from natural resource conservation.

We know that in terms of external events climate changes affect the poor the most. Work must be done with very clear information in cost/benefit terms. The clearest signs come in price terms, though sometimes when natural resources are concerned those prices are distorted. That's why the information has to be clear. If we can use the same instruments used in economics we use them and that can lead us to better decision-making.

At INEC we've been internalising positive externalities. We therefore promoted payment for hydrological environmental services, a programme that's more than ten years old which involved research into forest communities to learn how they made resource management decisions. Those communities have needs and have to use the ground to obtain economic benefits. Society doesn't realise that those well-kept forests bring environmental services and benefits which we all enjoy, though the owner doesn't see this reflected in financial terms. That programme, which was successful, has enabled society to acknowledge those environmental services.

Even so, there are still many challenges to improve that programme. One of them has to do with the organisation of the communities. If the community isn't organised the natural resources may be endangered. The state's task is to help them build capacities and get organised.

**Gonzalo Zambrana, former vice-chair for South America of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy**

The duty of the research function is to research well and to do that we have to ask what, why and how to investigate.

An outstanding aspect during the conference was the concern about generating public policies that solve problems.

Good research has to be done, though such processes must also lead to better student training.

COMET-LA considered different aspects: the environment, public policies, development, participation and culture, etc. They are all complex phenomena that don't allow a fragmented approach to knowledge. We've been working on this and continue doing that today.

One of the major challenges is precisely the situation's complexity. When we deal with an environmental problem under one form of knowledge, we are generating specific

responsibilities and hence management schemes. In other words, if we don't understand the reality well, then we generate professional responsibilities badly and a bad management scheme.

We should make an appropriate interpretation of the real situation, coordinated with sustainable development. The consideration of environmental themes can be done from the complexity of the component parts that define the reality, how we conceive nature and how we relate to it.

One of the major challenges is coordinating with the sciences, which up to now have been managed from the multi-disciplinary level, with a view to advancing toward an interdisciplinary approach. To do this, what's needed is an exercise whereby the different sciences combine to house a complete range of knowledge, establishing a dialogue of knowledge.

Another challenge is to make the environmental theme cross-cutting and to be ready to work with a methodology that's open to discovering new theories.

### **Gerardo Perillo, coordinator of the COMET-LA team in Argentina**

When the project began, our team believed it focused on climate change. But the project derived toward aspects that were much more social. Likewise, at this conference the part concerning environmental aspects has been less evident in the presentations. The question is how we compare the communities' perception of the monitoring scientists conduct in them. We measure things and when we compare them with the population's perceptions we see they don't always coincide. This doesn't mean that one or another side is wrong, but that we have different ways of considering and achieving those results and we have to find a way to make them converge.

I'd especially like to thank Néstor (Hernández) and Manuel (Riascos) for their explanations at the last Bahía Blanca meeting, because they transmitted their force as a community and helped the Argentine community view itself as such.

Lastly, it's important to achieve the inclusion of young people. One way to get them involved is for students to conduct their own research projects so they can then appropriate the project. In Comaltepec's case, why not propose that they carry out their own timber industry project or any other initiative they want to design and undertake?

- **Leticia Merino:** We're all seeking a kind of knowledge. There are different kinds of valid knowledge, but they have to be oriented toward problem-solving. When we talk about local knowledge we should consider it as local scientific knowledge.
- **Mar Delgado:** When we do science we have to understand what people want and generate spaces for interchange. A major battle has been planned but there's a lack of local data. Other projects exist in virtual laboratories whose data can be uploaded to a server so work can be done in the future. We going to explore systems that are cheaper and more accessible and which can interest the communities.

- **Silvia London**, researcher from the National University of the South, Argentina: What's interesting is that individuals are moving according to perceptions (even though the scientific data says one thing or another), so interchange is important to enable them improve perceptions.

**Silvia London:** When I work on environmental concepts, there's an ecological economy branch. When externalities are internalised, we economists put a price on that. The problem with putting a price on something is how that analysis can include the timelessness of resource management. At the INEC how do they calculate sustainable development when they value externalities?

- **Ivan Islas:** How present and future use of resources is valued is important. The state uses a 12 percent rate. We've fought for the rates to be lower.

**Roberto Escalante:** The social is also scientific. It's important to understand it that way, because otherwise the social aspect would seem subordinated. Up to what point does science hold the whole truth or enter dark spaces where there it has no answers? Up to what point does the other more factual knowledge of trial and error also have those dark spaces? The challenge is how to discover mutual usefulness and symmetric enrichment.

Payment for environmental services is the light answer to the issue of how much natural resources are worth. It would be interesting for INEC to visit Comaltepec, where environmental services are paid for by the cloud forest. It would be interesting for INEC to study the relationship between environmental payments and overcoming poverty where they are made.

- **Iván Islas:** With the payment for environmental services we want to value the communities' opportunity cost for the forests' maintenance. What the communities are given is minimal, because it is just another programme with scant resources, which can't cover everything.
- **Gerardo Perillo:** The combination of all the disciplines is what makes the project successful.

**Diana Maya:** One thing is the research's responsibility: how it gets to the communities. On the other hand is the challenge the people who work with the communities face. We aren't recognised as science and in the meantime they measure us as researchers for other processes. Our resources for working with the communities are hence diminished.

- **José Carlos Gómez:** The problem is that we've lost direction in research. Among scientists the models function, but they have to be applied. We worry more about publishing and generating knowledge than transferring it, owing to the promotion system in universities. The evaluation paradigm has to change. Weight will no longer be evaluated; the question will instead concern the research work's contributions to society and the long or short term impact.

- **Brigitte Baptiste:** In the institute's case the researchers generate knowledge which is used to support decisions and is constantly linked to products that can have an impact. Products aren't recognised in researchers' careers. Researchers must be made to assume that they do have a political perspective. We can't wash our hands of this.

**Roberto Escalante:** (to José Carlos Gómez) To gain access to the university you have to be educated; they don't let people in who have knowledge but no degrees. Your university has a good forest area. What possibilities are there for people from Comaltepec to go study in Córdoba?

- **José Carlos Gómez:** The University of Córdoba already has such programmes; what has to be sought is financing.
- **Gerardo Perillo:** At the National University of the South there's a programme whereby adults over 25 years old can access the university without needing a prior degree.
- **Leticia Merino:** In the courses on commons no degrees are required.

## And after COMET-LA? COMET-LA's strategy for the future

### Speakers:

*Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of COMET-LA*

*María Adelaida Farah, coordinator of the Colombian team of COMET-LA*

*Silvia London, researcher from the National University of the South, Argentina*

*Mar Delgado, general coordinator of COMET-LA*



**Roberto Escalante, coordinator of the Mexican team of COMET-LA**

At UNAM we have obtained financing to keep working in Comaltepec and perhaps also in other communities in Chinantla. We'll spend next year analysing things thoroughly with them and will study the feasibility of different projects the community is considering, such as ecotourism and the sawmill.

We're also drawing up an economic history of the community's environment covering the last 60 years, from the fight against the paper company up to the present. All the research work will be compiled in a book dedicated to Santiago Comaltepec.

We're also going to develop instances for conceiving something in common, to create a culture based on what's strategic, on detailed reflection. In Comaltepec the dynamics are accelerated, leaving no room to reflect about the future. In the scenario workshops this possibility was talked about a lot and it has to be further developed.

On the other hand, we're going to create an alliance space for the communities involved. We have a cooperation agreement between the Chinantec communities, Pehuen Co, Monte Hermoso and the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima. We believe it can be a space for joint work and attract resources of all kinds, whether monetary or not, to support the communities' efforts. Other Community Councils that weren't part of COMET-LA have also asked to join this solidarity agreement.

**Silvia London, researcher from the National University of the South, Argentina**

Before COMET-LA the Argentine team was already working at the study sites and this will continue, because the university operates in those sectors. For us, COMET-LA opened a door to joint work involving the university, the local community and other communities from other countries. We plan to continue this intense relationship with the communities working on the socioeconomic and socio-environmental aspects. The challenge is to keep in contact with the other communities, because unfortunately this requires resources. The proposal is to keep seeking funds that can help us maintain this very important link, especially because the community has indicated its intention to work with us, to keep building this new interaction space for the Argentine community.

**María Adelaida Farah, coordinator of the Colombian team of COMET-LA**

For Colombia it was fundamental to form the group of co-researchers and build capacities with them so they could get involved in developing the project and its methodologies. In 2015 we want to apply a call by the Pontifical Xavierian University for social investment projects, in order to keep working with the group of co-researchers. They are the Councils' forthcoming generation and we aim to keep accompanying them.

The Xavierian has maintained a convention with Fundapav and Ecobios for several years. They are the NGOs that work with the Councils. By means of that agreement, ecology students from the Xavierian have done fieldwork in the Councils. We want to update the convention so the students can keep working with the Councils, because both sides gain feedback from

those processes. We also want to continue formulating research projects and hope to obtain resources from the university to work with the communities.

There's also an ethnic territories observatory at the Xavierian which can support the Community Councils in the prior consultation process, in the pending regulation of the Law 70 chapters.

Also, the Von Humboldt Institute wants to copy COMET-LA's methodology in some of its research projects and this can also be done with other faculties and institutions.

With Alice Newton of the NILU we want to generate a biodiversity research project. Also, based on COMET-LA, we contracted with Argentina to take part in a fishing network.

Finally, we want to highlight the cooperation and friendship agreement that will be signed by all the COMET-LA communities. The aim is to keep working together.

### **Mar Delgado, general coordinator of COMET-LA**

The first goal is to make the lessons learned in the project visible and useful. It has been a continual learning process, bringing to light different kinds of knowledge and ways of doing things. A lot has been learned, especially the form of sharing with generosity, which was a huge lesson, because it's not the way things are done in Europe. The aim now is to see how this manner of working can be applied in Europe.

I found someone who wants to copy the COMET-LA methodology. This is a great challenge and the social actors will have to get involved.

In Spain there has been an upsurge in very active movements. The political powers are being contested and the communal way of doing things is again on the rise. A workshop should be organised to create an agenda for researching commons in Spain. Rural society is getting older and little by little losing communal rights. That's an interesting scenario where we are going to work. Things are being done, but they're not so visible. We want to bring to light those themes and ways of doing things.

I'm going to keep seeking spaces to converge with the COMET-LA partners. Latin America is no longer a research priority for the European Union, so the opportunities don't come up as directly as they did before, but the work can still go on. We've created a powerful and innovative network and we have to strengthen it.

I can offer the work in the university, which is a space where there are always opportunities, theses and research projects. There's always money when there are good ideas and projects. The communities have empowered themselves; they've progressed. If you have research needs, seek out the means – the universities don't set the pace of things.

**Leticia Merino:** With Roberto Escalante we spoke of work prospects that can involve those who are here and others. At the International Association for the Study of the Commons we have public policy forums where we invite donors; we have a magazine, a bulletin and a regional library. We've thought of beginning a new process with an Iberian American

magazine devoted to the commons, in which we could publicise the COMET-LA realities. There are also online courses that can be taken by people without academic training. The second module will concern how to campaign and impact public policies.

**Mar Delgado** proposes that the COMET-LA articles be published in the magazine's first issue and **Leticia Merino** promises to send the rules.

**Roberto Escalante:** A proposal was made for an agreement between the COMET-LA communities and others who have joined the initiative. The participants in that convention are thus Comaltepec, Monte Hermoso, Pehuen Co, the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua, Lower Calima, Córdoba and Aguacalara, and the NGOs Fundapav and Ecobios.

As the convention's first activity, UNAM offered two people from Comaltepec the opportunity to go to Colombia on a strategic interchange. UNAM will pay for the trips and Comaltepec will decide who goes. It also invited the Colombians and Argentines to go to Comaltepec.

The representatives from the Community Councils of Upper and Middle Dagua and Lower Calima, Monte Hermoso, Pehuen Co and Comaltepec signed the agreement.

## Closing session

### Speakers:

*Eduardo Flores, representative of the artisanal fishermen of Pehuen Co and Monte Hermoso, Argentina*

*Gerardo López, head of the Commission of Commons of Comaltepec, Mexico*

*Julio César González, legal representative of the Community Council of Lower Calima, Colombia*

*María del Mar Delgado, general coordinator of the COMET-LA project*



### **Eduardo Flores, representative of the artisanal fishermen of Pehuen Co and Monte Hermoso, Argentina**

Thanks to the joint work of the fishing communities and the scientific accompaniment we've turned back adverse situations and salvaged a resource that was about to collapse. For that reason I want to stress that empirical and scientific knowledge should go hand in hand. We've discovered many coincidences between us and the COMET-LA organisations.

Until recently, we fishermen were labelled revolutionaries for wanting to conserve the resource. Today everyone in the El Rincón area is on our side. Even the project stopped its activity per our proposal, which we considered an act of respect towards us.

It's very important to work together from the communities. Hopes go from down to up and not vice versa. Our fishing terminal emerged from the bottom. Today Federico (Seleme) has come to represent the political side, so I want to highlight that there are politicians who favour us; not all are absent.



The recently begun COMET marks the kickoff for implementation of community-based management policies at Latin American level. We all have to strive for those resources to be sustainable over time.

I'm grateful for having taken part in this project. We're not alone; rather we're just a group of crazies involved in this environment thing. I leave feeling a lot stronger and with the pleasure of having met people from other places with the same worries. I'm happy to be part of the COMET-LA family.

**Gerardo López, head of the Commission of Commons of Comaltepec, Mexico**

For Comaltepec the COMET-LA project has been very satisfactory and significant. I didn't take part in the initial activities, but resumed actions when I took office as communal authority, so the project could proceed. When you talk of policy, you have to bear in mind that activities undertaken in communities with community management are also a part of policy.

We have to stay organised and all the more so now that we have signed a collaboration agreement to carry out projects in a coordinated manner. Comaltepec has a lot to offer at national and global level; we have great professionals and natural resources. I'd like young students to receive support so they can learn in other countries and universities.

Comaltepec wants to keep progressing. But it's important not to put our uses and customs aside, because we are an indigenous people, with our own customs and a language to preserve.

**Julio César González, legal representative of the Community Council of Lower Calima, Colombia**

COMET-LA gave us an opportunity to take part in the opening and closing of this project. We'd like to thank the European Union for backing this initiative.

The cultural interchange we experienced, of ideas and thoughts, has given us more support and commitment, enabling us to strengthen our internal organisation process.

For their support, I'd like to thank the Community Councils of Dagua and Calima, the co-researchers, SENA, the Xavierian, Fundapav and the other project entities. We face a great challenge, which is to keep moving forward in natural resource conservation.

We had the opportunity to travel in the same bus, launch, "*brujita*"... and we shared the traditional component of the different regions. Hence, we participated in the learning arena, in that dance to proceed with everything we'd promised to do.

We all began well and we're all ending well. That indicates the degree of responsibility we've all achieved. Colombia has its doors open to continue in this network and to respond to the challenges of climate change. Today isn't an end; it's a beginning. United, we shall prevail!

**María del Mar Delgado, general coordinator of the COMET-LA project**

I'd particularly like to thank the communities that allowed us to work with them and to make a special mention of the Mexican team's excellent work for the organisation of this conference.

**As a final gesture, COMET-LA awarded certificates to the communities in thanks for their participation.**