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Tourism, compounding crises, and struggles for sovereignty

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ABSTRACT

Applying justice theory in tourism studies has yielded a vibrant flourishing of scholarship in recent decades. Yet, it is still argued that a clear conceptualization of justice tourism is still lacking. Sovereignty theory has seen broad application across many social sciences in recent decades, yet despite a clear connection, the tourism scholarship has engaged minimally with the sovereignty literature. This article aims to assimilate sovereignty theory into the justice tourism scholarship by carrying out a deep historical analysis to demonstrate how destination residents negotiate chronic and acute crises in the Galápagos Islands, a place with no original human population. With global immigration projected to grow and exacerbate environmental conflicts in the coming years, the current research is well-poised to provide urgent and generalizable insights into the sociocultural underpinnings of increasing human mobility, the environmental conflicts that exist between different value systems and worldviews, and the opportunities that exist to promote improved destination management on behalf of human wellbeing in places experiencing intense in-migration. Historical analyses are thus critical to understanding the subjective and temporal nature of struggles associated with justice-centric concepts, including but not limited to sovereignty.

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Introduction

Applying justice theory in tourism studies has yielded a vibrant flourishing of scholarship in recent decades, embodied by but not limited to a 2021 special double issue of *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (reprinted as Jamal & Higham, 2021a). Justice was actively theorized in the broader social sciences for decades, much of it traced to Rawls's work on distributive and procedural justice (Rawls, 1971). Rawlsian applications of theory about distributive and procedural justice eventually trickled into the tourism literature. In the recent "justice turn" in sustainable tourism scholarship (Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021, p. 2), numerous other forms of justice (e.g. restorative, cultural, Indigenous, social) are now theorized. As scholars have emphasized (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021; Jamal & Higham, 2021a; 2021b), these various justice frameworks can provide a powerful means with which to assess and promote recovery from both chronic (e.g. climate) and acute (e.g. COVID-19)

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crises. They also stimulate critical reflection on the tourism sector itself (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Filep et al., 2022). Yet, despite this recent flourishing, it is argued that "a clear conceptualization of justice tourism is still lacking, and its theoretical grounding is still too limited" (Guia, 2021, p.503).

Like justice theory, sovereignty theory has seen broad application across many social sciences in recent decades. Moving far beyond early Westphalian notions of territorial or nation-state sovereignty, recent theoretical contributions in development studies and agrarian studies have expanded to more constructivist analyses of numerous forms of sovereignty, with food sovereignty receiving the most scholarly attention (Patel, 2009; Jarosz, 2014). Each of these forms of sovereignty emphasizes justice-centric ideas of local representation, participation, and influence in local decision-making processes, yet despite a clear connection, the tourism scholarship has engaged minimally with the sovereignty literature (Naylor et al., 2021; Naylor & Hunt, 2021). Integrating sovereignty into justice theory in tourism could thus provide clearer conceptualization and theoretical grounding by establishing that tourism-enabled sovereignty is a necessary precursor to just tourism and destinations.

The Galápagos Islands provide an ideal context to demonstrate the value of a sovereignty analysis. The arrival of people to the archipelago was very late. Yet, the rapid growth of the human population in just the last 70 years has brought claims of sovereignty, legitimacy, and justice that are evolving, adapting, and diversifying as the islands' resident populations grow. Long-standing crises related to the need to prioritize conservation and promote nature-based tourism to support it are now complemented by responses to an acute COVID-19 crisis that temporarily halted elements of those long-standing discussions. Underlying it all is a growing crisis related to the cultural identity of the burgeoning island society. *Is this a place to promote human flourishing, or should resident concerns remain subordinated to protecting the islands' unique ecosystems? Whose interests are best represented in the decisions and policies related to community development? For whom is the Galápagos?*

The purpose of this article is to assimilate sovereignty theory into the justice tourism scholarship by carrying out a deep historical analysis to demonstrate how residents in the Galápagos Islands negotiate chronic and acute crises. Our methodology expands descriptive and interpretive theory-building regarding sovereignty and tourism (Lynham, 2002; Dennis, 2019; Smith et al., 2013; Jamal & Higham, 2021b), and it also responds to the call of Nunkoo et al. (2021, p. 19), who point out that "disciplines such as anthropology and the humanities have yet to be fully integrated into sustainable tourism research." Furthermore, our author team is comprised entirely of current residents of the Galápagos, three of whom are native-born Ecuadorians. Our writing, therefore, addresses a need for greater representation of voices from the global south in scholarly literature (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). It also ensures the analysis is imbued with a direct emic understanding of the study context. This approach reveals the deeper origins and entangled nature of long-standing struggles for various forms of sovereignty among Galápagos resident sectors.

Literature review

Tourism researchers have pervasively cited justice and related concepts of fairness, equity, and ethics (Jamal, 2019). The connection between justice and tourism is traceable to early writings by tourism anthropologists and development scholars in the 1970s (e.g. Smith, 1977, De Kadt, 1979). However, justice research has evolved significantly since then, influenced by prominent international legislation advocating social and environmental sustainability (e.g. 1987s Brundtland Report and 2015s UN Sustainable Development Goals). Seen as one means of accounting for social sustainability, the justice concept fostered critical views of mass tourism as inherently exploitive of destination residents (Dangi & Petrick, 2021), thereby implying support

for alternatives seen as more socially and environmentally "responsible," such as community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, and ecotourism (Jamal & Higham, 2021b; Jourdan & Wertin, 2020).

Theorizing justice in tourism studies draws heavily upon Eurocentric philosophies such as Aristotelian ideas about the good life or Rawls's ideas about distributive justice and procedural justice (Rawls, 1971; Jamal, 2019; Jamal & Higham, 2021a). Yet as scholars have applied interpretivist, constructivist, Indigenous, feminist, and post-development research methodologies to move beyond Rawlsian perspectives, they have also helped push this work into new theoretical realms and its current state of flourishing (Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021). As the justice turn has unfolded, tourism scholars' emphases have diversified into additional notions that include but are not limited to the following: organizational, interactional, recognition, performative, destination, cultural, and restorative justice. Issues of human dignity and self-determination remain the main guiding concepts for justice frameworks, which are promoted as prerequisites to environmentally and socially sustainable tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2021).

Although tourism scholars have assessed a "potpourri of justice outcomes" (Guia, 2021, p.504), a consistency within this scholarship is the emphasis, time and again, on tourism's role in fostering wellbeing, particularly wellbeing as understood and recognized within destination communities themselves (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). An interest in justice thus dictates an imperative of understanding whose voices are marginalized, which voices are heard, and how local populations view the fairness of their participation and representation in decision-making processes of most influence over their own social and environmental wellbeing (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021). Stronger conceptual and theoretical clarity in tourism and justice writing is likely to result from sibling social science or humanities disciplines that embrace historically focused analyses of tourism's role within long-standing struggles to overcome oppression and improve local wellbeing (Nunkoo et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2021). Sovereignty theory may provide such clarity. As further reviews of the tourism-justice scholarship have already been provided elsewhere (e.g. Jamal, 2019; Jamal & Higham, 2021a), in the remainder of this article, we shift our focus to the prolific sovereignty literature that has been largely overlooked to date by tourism scholars.

Introducing sovereignty

The term sovereignty is commonly traced to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which characterized nation-states as the supreme authority over geographical boundaries (Stepputat, 2015). Though that conceptualization continues to form the basis of the modern field of international relations, the sovereignty concept has since diversified into various forms of interest both within and outside academia. As in the Rawlsian justice literature, contemporary research on sovereignty has benefitted from constructivist, critical, participatory, and other radical forms of inquiry that have greatly expanded the focus to other realms (McMichael, 2014). For instance, these approaches have resulted in much research on the mobilization of Indigenous communities to achieve nested *intellectual* and *cultural sovereignties*, demarcating them as necessary precursors to overall *Indigenous sovereignty* (Coffey & Tsosie, 2001).

Food sovereignty has stimulated a vibrant area of scholarship (e.g. Patel, 2009; Agarwal, 2014; Edelman et al., 2014; McMichael, 2014). Inspired by social movements (e.g. Ecuadorian food sovereignty movement *Via Campesina*) related to injustices in the control of food systems (Patel, 2009), food sovereignty refers to "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni, 2022, para. 3). Although a deeper review of food sovereignty literature is also beyond our scope here, Jarosz (2014) provides an influential

overview of the theory and practice of food sovereignty that highlights several key threads. First, there is a clear distinction between food security (e.g. simple access to food) and food sovereignty, which represents local control and decision-making, thereby recognizing the political dimensions of food systems (Agarwal, 2014). Second, elaborating on this crucial distinction, rural studies scholars are now calling for ideas of food sovereignty to be extended to encompass broader ideas of *livelihood sovereignty* (e.g. MacRae, 2016; Tilzey, 2019), ideas recently invoked in tourism settings (Naylor & Hunt, 2021; Naylor et al., 2021; see below).

A third thread in the sovereignty literature recognizes "formations of sovereignty" as a way of dealing analytically with the political landscapes formed through multiple, coexisting, overlapping, and sometimes competing claims to sovereignty over people, resources, and/or territories." (Stepputat, 2015, p. 129). Such nested formulations represent varying degrees of political agency and autonomy among heterogeneous local communities, thereby situating sovereignty on a relational scale based on locally produced representations of fairness, political participation, and human wellbeing. A sovereignty perspective implies that system reorganization often results from negotiating sovereignty gaps exposed at the global, national, insular, and sub-insular levels during periods of systemic disturbance (Mawyer & Jacka, 2018).

Finally, and broadly consistent with justice literature, sovereignty theory reinforces that understanding what is socially sustainable requires first understanding whose 'reality' dominates and which people are advantaged or disadvantaged in the process. In conceding that communities are often comprised of heterogenous cultures that are simultaneously interwoven and evolving, we can therefore conceive of sovereignty as "not an extraneously existing object" but rather "a living process" that builds and maintains "relationships between people, institutions, technologies, ecosystems, and landscapes across multiple scales," especially temporal scales (Iles & Montenegro de Wit, 2015, p. 483). Sovereignty theory thus highlights the value of historical analyses for understanding these critical community dynamics.

Tourism and sovereignty

Discussions of sovereignty in the context of tourism are very limited to date. What does exist has often invoked traditional Westphalian sovereignty ideas to analyze how tourism redefines diplomatic relations and territorial claims between nation-states (Timothy et al., 2014), such as the transition of Hong Kong around the turn of the century (e.g. Perry Hobson & Ko, 1994). Even more limited writing analyzes tourism's influence on the negotiation of Indigenous sovereignty in Indigenous communities in Hawaii (Williams & González, 2017) and Ecuador (Santafe-Troncoso & Loring, 2021), and in aboriginal communities in South Australia (Nicholls & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2016). Bunten (2014, p.311) examines tourism as a possible threat to cultural sovereignty of indigenous populations, defined as when "tribal peoples have intellectual property and ways of life that are protected and governed under tribal law." Like many references to sovereignty, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) mentions sovereignty only in passing, not as a particular framing device for analysis.

Responding to the call for broader application of food sovereignty concepts to local livelihood systems, some scholars have recently defined *livelihood sovereignty* in the context of tourism as "the enhanced levels of local resident control and influence over management institutions and decision making regarding the persistence of valued traditional practices, how new production opportunities are integrated into socio-ecological systems, and how local community wellbeing is perpetuated over time" (Naylor & Hunt, 2021, p.6; Naylor et al., 2021). This definition acknowledges that tourism-related livelihood security (i.e. income and employment) *is insufficient to achieve livelihood sovereignty*, as there is a distinct need for local communities to retain local control and decision-making within the tourism sector to ensure it develops in ways that advance community goals (Naylor et al., 2021). Thus, as food security is a necessary but insufficient

condition for food sovereignty, tourism-related livelihood security is a necessary but insufficient condition for just tourism.

Historical methods

Humanities-based approaches, including historical and anthropological analyses, remain exceptions rather than the rule in the peer-reviewed tourism scholarship (e.g. Caton, 2016; Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2021; Jamal, 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2021). Distinct from humanism as a philosophical stance, our humanistic anthropological approach instead straddles anthropology and the humanities disciplines, especially history. Tilly (1983) characterizes historical research as "studies assuming that the time and place in which a structure or process appears makes a difference to its character, that the sequence in which similar events occur has a substantial impact on their outcomes, and that the existing record of past structures and processes is problematic, requiring systematic investigation in its own right instead of lending itself immediately to social-scientific synthesis" (p.79). The historical approach is thus well-suited to understanding the interwoven temporal dynamics of crises, sovereignty, and tourism in the Galápagos.

To carry out this approach in a context where the "native" human population is not Indigenous but rather comprised of a variety of diasporic, immigrant cultural groups, our historical approach can be further characterized as ethnohistory. Ethnohistorical research creates "a more inclusive picture of the histories of native groups through analyses and interpretations that seek to make evident the experiences, organizations, and identities of indigenous, diasporic, and minority peoples that otherwise elude the histories and anthropologies of nations, states, and colonial empires" (American Society for Ethnohistory, 2022). To enable more in the way of descriptive and interpretive theory-building rather than predictive or causal modeling (Smith et al., 2013; Dennis & Indiana University, USA 2019), our ethnohistorical emphasis favors the subjective and interpretive aspects of analysis over more positivist or empirical traditions within the social sciences and tourism studies more specifically (Nunkoo, 2018), it "embraces emic perspectives as tools of analysis" (Hester, 2018, p.258). We, therefore, actively seek to represent biased interests in our study context.

We rely on hallmark archival research methods among primary and secondary sources in libraries, institutions, and private collections rarely circulated beyond Ecuador (McDowell, 2013). Additionally, to account for views of Galápagos residents, we also draw extensively on *our own lived experiences as current residents* of Galápagos. The first author is a university-based researcher who began studying human-environment relations in the Galápagos Islands in 2012. The second and third authors have eight years of experience in tourism research and directing the scientific agenda and knowledge management platforms at the Charles Darwin Foundation. The final author directs the Galápagos Chamber of Tourism, an institution dedicated to conserving the Galápagos through legal and technical support for the tourism sector. We are not observers nor participant observers but full participants in Galápagos society who also happen to be university researchers, scientists, analysts, and directors of institutions directly involved with monitoring, managing, and studying tourism in the Galápagos Islands. Such positionality is rare in tourism research, enabling us to incorporate emic and etic insights into the analysis below.

Compounding crises in the Galápagos islands

Nowhere is understanding the consequences of anthropogenic disturbance more urgent than in UNESCO's first World Heritage Site (Durham, 2021), where Darwin's description of the Galápagos as "a little world within itself" remains apt today. Theories of island biogeography hold that islands provide simplified conditions that put systemic dynamics into sharper relief than would otherwise be the case (MacArthur & Wilson, 1967; González et al., 2008; Baldacchino, 2016). Yet it is not just the simplified systems that characterize the islands but also the non-Indigenous

nature of the fledgling human population in Galápagos that make the place a compelling context in which to conduct a justice-centric sovereignty analysis. Unlike contexts for justice research that juxtapose powerful with powerless or Indigenous with colonizer, *the Galápagos had no native population*. Rapid human convergence in recent decades creates a valuable context to analyze, interpret, and explain how diverse sovereignty interests are negotiated in response to chronic and acute crises, including those related to tourism. To the extent that Galápagos represents a set of fragile socio-ecological conditions undergoing accelerating human-induced change, they can yield insights into how local populations around the planet negotiate chronic and acute crises. This section elaborates a historical analysis describing how the acute *COVID crisis* was overlain upon several chronic crises underway in the Galápagos Islands: the long-standing *conservation crisis*, the mounting *tourism crisis,* and an underlying *cultural identity crisis*.

The chronic conservation crisis

The Galápagos remained free of human presence until 1535 (Ospina, 2001), when wayward Europeans made the first recorded visit. Documentation appears in accounts of pirates, buccaneers, and mapping expeditions that visited in subsequent centuries. Numerous nations sought dominion over regional forms of trade, especially lucrative whaling revenues, during an "exploitation" phase of Galápagos history. Yet, for nearly three hundred years since discovery, no nation claimed territorial sovereignty. Finally, prior to Charles Darwin's 5-week visit in 1835, Ecuador annexed the Galápagos Islands in 1832. The earliest recorded protective action in the Galápagos came in 1883 when the National Ecuadorian Constitution endowed unique governance status through special laws (Barragán Paladines & Chuenpagdee, 2017). Freshwater and ease of access led to Floreana experiencing the earliest colonization efforts (Latorre, 1999). After various failed efforts on that island, other freshwater sources on larger Isabela and later on San Cristobal led to "successful" plantation settlements on those islands, often supported by convict labor (Latorre, 1999; Ospina, 2001). Finally, in the 20th century, the most populated island today, Santa Cruz, was permanently settled. Until as recently as 1950, the total permanent presence across all islands was no more than 1400 residents.

After centuries of little growth or demographic change, land reforms on the Ecuadorian mainland rebranded the islands as an agricultural frontier to be conquered, creating new drivers of migration (Ospina, 2001). In the decades leading up to 1950, dozens of scientific expeditions by private universities (e.g. Stanford, Johns Hopkins), research centers (e.g. California Academy of Sciences), wealthy financiers (W.K. Vanderbilt, V. Astor), and assorted Western scientists collected, cataloged, and named the natural history of the islands. As these expeditions brought back descriptions of unique adaptations of the endemic species and otherworldly volcanic landscapes to Western audiences, a powerful imaginary was cultivated that implied a fragile environment full of unique wonders in desperate need of protection from impending impact of land-grabbing farmers. Mobilization of this narrative led to the 1959 creation of the Galápagos National Park (Ecuador's first) and the Charles Darwin Foundation, each headquartered in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz island. With the creation of these institutions, a conservation crisis was institutionalized in the islands that deemed it necessary to protect the Galápagos before further human arrival (Barragán Paladines & Chuenpagdee, 2017).

The initiation of organized tours in subsequent decades placed the conservation crisis squarely at the center of the rationale for tourism development (Epler, 1993; 2007). In 1973, the Galápagos was declared an insular province based on its "singularity," and a National Galápagos Institute was established to govern it (Grenier, 2007). State-based infrastructure improved, including roads, hospitals, and schools. Migration to the islands shifted from a frontier-based model focused on subsistence agriculture or fishing livelihoods to an amenity-based model defined by market-based opportunities in tourism (Ospina, 2001). Employment ratcheted up, and living

Table 1. Current population in inhabited islands.

Island	Area (ha)	Inhabitable area %	% of 2015 population*	2015 Population*
Santa Cruz	98,522	44%	62.2%	15,701
San Cristobal	55,697	34%	28.1%	7,088
Isabela	470,344	20%	9.3%	2,344
Floreana	17,229	1.2%	0.4%	111
				25,244

Sources: INEC, 2015.

conditions soon exceeded those in other Ecuadorian provinces, further incentivizing in-migration. Tourism growth made Santa Cruz the population and de facto decision-making center, placing the archipelago on a growth trajectory that continues today (Epler, 2007; Hunt, 2021; Table 1).

By 1984, the Galápagos held UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, giving it the mandate to account for human activities and "promote solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use … under diverse ecological, social and economic contexts" (UNESCO, 2021). Nevertheless, the stacking of conservation designations in the islands led to conflicts over restrictions on marine resource use. To alleviate rising concerns about impacts of tourism on fragile island environments, the Ecuadorian National Assembly passed the Special Law for Galápagos in 1998. In addition to giving origin to the Galápagos Marine Reserve, the Special Law established a co-management model of governance, new resource management policies, and residency rules to limit immigration. Furthermore, to ensure more tourism benefits flowed to local communities, the Special Law specified that 100% of the revenue received through park entrance fees remain in Galápagos, earmarked for the overall Governing Council of Galápagos, the municipalities in the Galápagos, and the smaller parishes in the islands (CGREG, 2021).

Despite the Special Law's accommodations, bitter conflicts grew during the lobster and sea cucumber booms of the 1990s. In 2000, fishers protesting restrictions burned the national park headquarters, held park staff hostage, and hung giant tortoises to protest fishing restrictions (Lu et al., 2013; Durham, 2008). Uncontrolled growth of tourism, and continued conflict regarding harvest restrictions in the marine sector, exacerbated the conservation crisis and resulted in UNESCO putting the Galápagos on the list of World Heritage in Danger in 2007, whose officials stated, "The principal factor leading to the inscription of the property [as a] World Heritage in Danger arises from the breakdown of its ecological isolation due to the increasing movement of people and goods between the islands and the continent, facilitating the introduction of alien species which threaten species native to the Galápagos" (Strahm & Patry, 2010, p. 6).

In response, restrictions on both fishing and tourism were implemented, and the fishing community gained representation in the Galápagos Governing Council. Consequently, UNESCO removed Galápagos from the list of World Heritage in Danger in 2011. The conservation crisis was nevertheless permanently cemented into narratives related to the islands (Lu et al., 2013). Threats to local environments have grown in scale since the park was created. Even with the careful controls introduced by the Galápagos Biosecurity Agency (ABG) in 2012, the number of introduced species continued to grow and threaten native species. Legal extraction leaves certain fisheries (e.g. Galápagos grouper) teetering on collapse. The logistics of protecting the expansive marine reserve have failed to eliminate illegal fishing or legal overfishing, leading to ongoing media attention to the extraction of shark fins and other protected species by large-scale international fishing fleets (e.g. Alberts, 2020). Such media representation fixates a conservation crisis squarely within the global imaginary of Galápagos.

Evolution of the tourism crisis

The contemporary history of Galápagos is often traced to the installation of a US Army Air Force base on Baltra Island in 1942 (Latorre, 1999). Containing more paved surfaces than the rest of

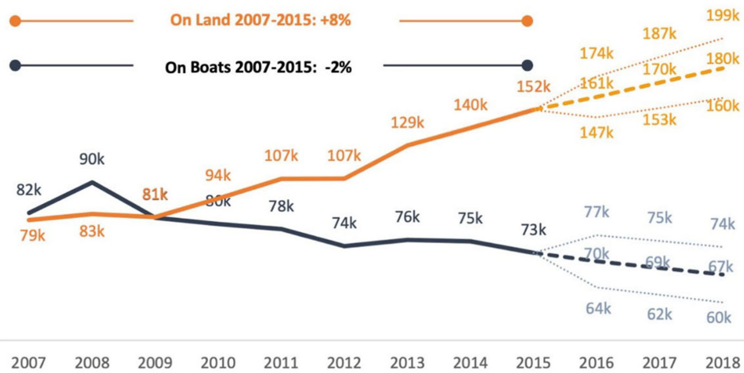

Figure 1. Pre-pandemic distribution of Galápagos tourists on land vs. boats*.
Source: Adapted from Observatorio de Turismo, 2022 (*compound annual growth rate and projection for 2016–2018)

Ecuador at the time, the base made the islands accessible by air for the first time. The US withdrew at the end of World War II, and what remained was transferred to the Ecuadorian government. The facilities were rarely used for years, and only piecemeal tourism efforts occurred. Organized tourism then got underway with Ecuadorian company Metropolitan Touring, which initiated the "floating hotel" model of visitation in the Galápagos in 1969. Metropolitan took passengers onboard luxury cruise ships that embarked on week-long tours. Following carefully controlled itineraries to designated park sites, tourists remained under constant supervision of naturalist guides who were to keep a conservation ethic squarely at the center of the tourism experience. The "floating hotel" tourism model accounted for nearly all tourism between the early 1970s and 2000s. This approach led to the Galápagos being referenced as "the place where ecotourism originated" since it kept environmental impacts minimal while providing visitors with high-quality nature experiences (Honey, 1994). Tourist numbers were to be capped at 12,000 visitors. The National Park carefully managed quotas for visitation to different park sites to control for ecological impacts and preserve the visitors' immersive and uncrowded nature experience.

Yet even in the early days of tourism, the islands were already wrestling with how many visitors were too many. When visitation was still under 20,000 annual visitors, De Groot (1983, p.291) already concluded that "unless decisive action Galápagos, will become another example of man's dangerous habit of preferring short-term economic gains over long term ecological and economic interests." Ten years later, when 42,000 visitors were visiting the islands each year, tourism was acknowledged as "the driving force which, directly and indirectly, dictates the pace and types of changes occurring in the islands" (Epler, 1993, p.1). Despite such dire predictions, tourism growth continued. Yet the lobster and sea cucumber booms in the 1990s raised concerns about overfishing that displaced those regarding tourism's impact (Durham, 2008). Seen as comparably benign, tourism development was further incentivized by 1998s Special Law. The Marine Reserve it created only added to destination marketability (Barragán Paladines & Chuenpagdee, 2017). "Predictions made by De Groot that the "resulting environmental damage will reduce the attractiveness of the islands and tourism will eventually decrease, causing economic damage as well" (1983, p.299–300) did not come to pass. Instead, by 2010, the Galápagos were receiving more tourists per month than were arriving annually in the early 1980s.

While tourism concern abounds in the writings on Galápagos, several distinct changes have emerged since 2010 that are often overlooked (Hunt, 2021). First, starting that year, more visitors stayed in hotels on the islands than aboard cruise boats (Observatorio de Turismo, 2022). The long-established growth of small cruise visitation on a preset itinerary of islands within the Galápagos National Park began to level off as visitor numbers reached the maximum number of overnight berths (Figure 1). By 2008–2009, the Special Law's incentives for locally owned businesses had manifested in more land-based operations. In the years of the global economic crisis,

these businesses began to thrive due to the higher financial capacity of mainland Ecuadorians to afford travel to Galápagos. Airlines operating flights from the mainland also made domestic visitation more accessible. Thus since 2010, cruise tourism has been overtaken by the growth in on-island tourism. Rather than a slow-paced week-long tour aboard luxury boats, most visitors now stay in more modest land-based accommodations and make only a few day trips to local park sites, mostly public beaches.

A second fundamental change since 2010 involves shifting market segments. US visitors long dominated visitation in the Galápagos, yet in 2017, Ecuadorians became the single largest market segment (31%) of annual visitors (PNG, 2019). US visitors are now second with 29% of total arrivals, and no other country provides more than 5% of the total. Notably, international visitors dominate the cruise-based visitation model, while the growing Ecuadorian market dominates the on-island model. In the first trimester of 2022, the Ecuadorian market segment accounted for 79,160 visitors to the Galápagos, 88% of whom stayed on land (7% stayed in on-island lodging and 5% stayed with friends/family)(PNG, 2021). In contrast, the second-largest market, the United States, accounted for 33,987 visitors, 65% of whom stayed on boats and 34% stayed on land. This growth of the Ecuadorian market corresponds to a further intensification of the on-island model of tourism in Galápagos that competes with other sand-sun-sea destinations on the coast of the Ecuadorian mainland for this domestic market (Mestanza-Ramón et al., 2021; Hunt, 2021). Such destinations are characterized less by interpretive nature-based experiences with unique and globally significant species and more by beach visits, surf and scuba lessons, upscale cafes selling locally-grown coffee grown, rented electric scooters zipping up and down the streets of Puerto Ayora, bars and discotheques, and an increasing number of craft breweries (Burke, 2021; Carvache-Franco et al., 2021). Moreover, with National Park site quotas to visit specific islands filled by the long-standing agreements with the operators of larger passenger cruises, there is little opportunity for shorter-term, on-island visitors to see the farther reaches of the park. This pivot away from an exclusively nature-based visitor experience and a decoupling from the conservation ethic embodied in small cruise tourism are changing the fundamental character of tourism in the Galápagos (Hunt, 2021).

A third fundamental change since 2010 is intertwined with the last two. It relates to resident demand for recreational access. The national park's management plans were designed around the floating hotel, cruise tourism model. Designed disembarking sites were established in areas throughout the archipelago, and carefully managed schedules for visitation to these sites were created to distribute environmental impact, provide constant supervision by trained guides, and ensure optimal visitor experiences centered on nature interpretation. With the shift to on-island tourism outlined above, visitors to remote park sites are now the minority of overall visitation. The less-regulated park sites nearest to the islands' population centers, which have no visitation quota, have become the most visited sites in the Galápagos National Park (PNG, 2021). Whereas residents can visit these sites with no fee nor guide accompaniment, international and domestic tourists are charged a fee and required to be escorted by certified guides to these same sites. Mainland Ecuadorian tourists now dominate this on-island visitation. As reported in governing council documents (CGREG, 2016), in local media (e.g. Vega, 2020), in peer-reviewed literature (e.g. Cajiao et al., 2020), and as we have experienced on many occasions, increasing congestion elevates tensions with the resident population, who have long considered these local park areas "recreational sites" primarily for their use. Concerns for "recreational sovereignty" have entered the public discourse around park management priorities, including at multi-institutional participatory workshops hosted by the Consejo de Gobierno that two current authors attended.

Despite the concerns over the magnitude of tourism expressed in nearly all writings on Galápagos, cruise-based tourism grew immensely without significant environmental impact. A visitor to a remote park site will likely have a similar experience now as a 1980 visitor. The same cannot be said of the dramatic development in the population centers, where changes have been dramatic. It is, therefore, not the magnitude of tourism alone that is driving challenges in

the contemporary tourism crises. Instead, it is a fundamental change in the model of visitation that has come to dominate the islands. This domestic tourism market has become the primary segment, and a qualitatively different tourist experience is now provided and acquired in the islands.

An acute COVID crisis

Annual tourism visitation reached all-time highs of over 270,000 visitors in 2018 and 2019. Then in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused approximately 25,000 monthly visitors generating $1.5 million in entry fees to plummet to zero (PNG, 2021; Díaz-Sánchez & Obaco, 2021). As occurred in destinations across the globe, the vulnerabilities inherent in a high reliance upon tourism-based economies were made painfully evident. A drop-off in transportation and shipping between the mainland and the islands sparked food security concerns. Individuals who had the means immediately invested in cultivating food products for self-consumption, while others engaged in temporary labor exchanges to ensure access to locally grown foods (Burke, 2021). Food producers (fishers and farmers) organized themselves into new formats to trade their produce. Home delivery services sprouted to help meet food needs and keep restaurants and other establishments afloat. Nevertheless, without a constant flow of tourists, a lack of food and livelihood sovereignty was brought into stark relief for residents, particularly in the two lesser populated islands of Isabela and Floreana, where infrastructure and services are minimal.

By August 2020, residents stranded outside the islands had been allowed to repatriate, and the first researchers and visitors were allowed to enter the islands. As the pandemic continued to unfold, the return of permanent and temporary residents precipitated broader discussions regarding for whom is Galápagos, who should be allowed to obtain temporary residency, and thus who should be allowed to compete for acutely limited resources and livelihood opportunities. While such discussions are encountered on a routine basis in the course of our collective work in Galápagos, these debates were most acutely experienced by two current authors at a series of inter-institutional participatory workshops that focused on redefining the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the Galápagos (Co-Galapagos, 2021). Yet the need to re-activate the economy, of which tourism is the core activity, remained central in the official discourse regarding the prioritization of resources. In the desperation to restart tourism's economic motor, pre-pandemic concerns for excessive visitors and questions regarding how high to raise the entrance fee were immediately set aside in favor of discussions of how to re-activate and get the masses back as soon as possible (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Nevertheless, as of April 2021, before vaccines were administered anywhere else in Ecuador, nearly the entire Galápagos population received a vaccine, leading to the tourism-friendly assertation that the islands were the first fully vaccinated province in the world. The tourism sector was directly involved in this accomplishment, donating approximately $740,000 in food kits, medical supplies, respirators, PCR tests, and logistical efforts. In the process, it was reconfirmed to the local population how vital tourism was to the health sovereignty of the Galápagos (Werkheiser, 2014). Meanwhile, others capitalized on the moment to reopen old narratives about opening direct international flights to the islands. Direct flights had been discussed in October 2019, five months before the pandemic, when widespread protests erupted in mainland Ecuador, resulting in the temporary closing of mainland airports and highways (Altmann, 2020; El Comercio, 2019). Those closures provided a cautionary preamble regarding the islands' non-sovereign dependence on the mainland. Discussions regarding the viability of international flights directly to the Galápagos Islands that avoided mainland Ecuador altogether made their way to the National Assembly for analysis (Quito Informa, 2020). The disturbance brought about by COVID nearly led to a reorganization of dependencies on mainland Ecuador in the interest of greater tourism sovereignty for certain groups in the islands.

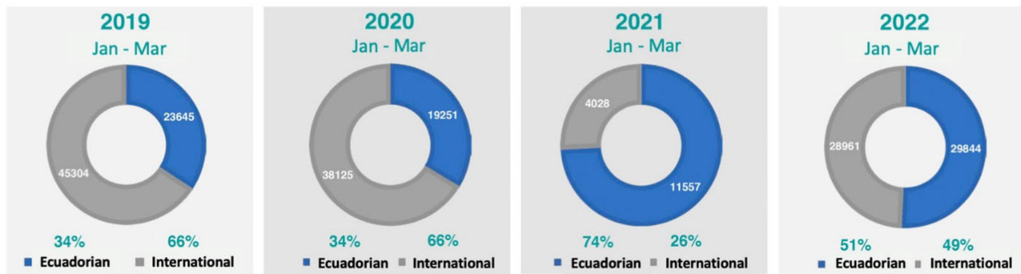

Figure 2. Recent Ecuadorian vs. International visitor arrivals in Galápagos.
Source: Adapted from Observatorio de Turismo, 2022

The pandemic has also sped up changes in the composition of visitors. The slight advantage acquired by the Ecuadorian market (34% of all visitors in 2019) grew to 74% of all visitors in 2021. It remains 51% of total visitation in the first trimester of 2022 (Figure 2). Whereas international visitation has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, domestic visitation already exceeds them (Figure 3). This gap has widened considerably as mainland residents seek opportunities for leisure via extensive discounts that make tourism to the islands historically affordable. Although these domestic visitors have been critical to re-activating the tourism economy in the islands, they pay very different fee structures than international visitors. Displacing international markets with increased domestic markets thus inhibits recovery of the budgets at the Galápagos Governing Council, the municipalities and parishes, and the National Park. With most domestic visitors staying in the towns, the potential to provide profound nature-based experiences is substantially reduced since time spent inside the national park is limited. The growing domestic market does not yield comparable levels of financial support for conservation (Díaz-Sánchez & Obaco, 2021). The extent to which the extreme dominance of the Ecuadorian market is a temporary condition or an enduring characteristic of the tourism crisis underway pre-pandemic remains to be seen.

The pandemic also heightened another aspect of the tourism crisis – the demand for local recreational access for Galápagos residents. Although there had been pushes for increased domestic (i.e. democratic) park usage to promote greater awareness of the value of the protected area, the pandemic provoked extensive local use of park sites like Tortuga Bay and Garrapatero beaches as outdoor recreation became one of the few sanctioned public activities. The latter site even saw an increase in visitation over 2019 levels (PNG, 2021). As was true around the world, time spent in nature was a powerful coping strategy and an essential means of ensuring one's psychological wellbeing during the pandemic, especially in places that were otherwise under extreme lockdown (Taff et al., 2021). In Galápagos, such shifting park visitation dynamics will likely require careful restructuring of visitation fees and management strategies. Now established, the recreational tensions between residents and domestic tourists are likely to persist beyond the pandemic.

Underlying cultural identity crises

Migration to the Galápagos increased over the 20th century, often stimulated by changing conditions on the Ecuadorian mainland (Table 2). Agricultural reforms and droughts created both push and pull factors for those arriving from the province of *Loja*, who are associated with farming in the islands (Ospina, 2001). The "tuna wars" first instigated those from provinces of *Guayas* and *Manabí*, both located on the Ecuadorian coast, to relocate to the archipelago in favor of improved fishing conditions (Barragán Paladines & Chuenpagdee, 2017). *Tungurahua* province is the traditional land of the *Salasaca* peoples, who continue to arrive in large numbers to work in construction, taxi driving, conservation, and tourism (Ospina, 2001). Individuals from *Pichincha*

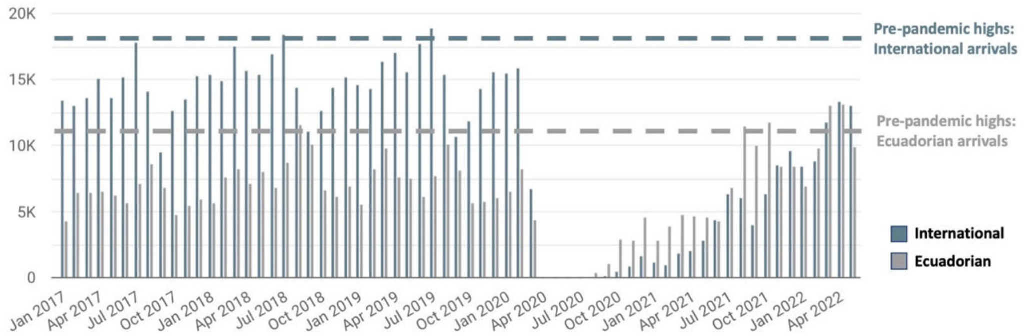

Figure 3. Monthly arrivals to Galápagos by market segment.
Source: Adapted from Observatorio de Turismo, 2022

Table 2. Galápagos residents places of birth.

Place of birth	Galápagos	Guayas	Tungurahua	Manabí	Pichincha	Loja	Chimborazo	Others Provinces	Outside Ecuador	TOTAL
TOTAL	9,125	4,798	3,043	1,551	1,460	1,130	557	3,250	330	**25,244**
%	**36.1**%	19.0%	12.1%	6.1%	5.8%	4.5%	2.2%	12.9%	1.3%	**100**%

Source: INEC, 2015.

(province of Ecuadorian capital Quito) tend to be associated with work in conservation in the park, associated conservation NGOs, or tourism. Norwegian farmers from *Hardangervidda* and utopian visionaries from the United States arrived in earlier periods of the 20th century. Many Germans also migrated to the islands in the inter-war period. This convergence of multiple ethnic groups, cultural worldviews, livelihood strategies, and diverse ways of being within a limited historical timeframe has created a unique and multi-layered society linked by the shared negotiation of the islands' ecological conditions, socio-political arrangements, and special laws.

Today there is thus broad recognition in the islands that the Galápagos do not yet have a cohesive culture but rather diverse cultural influences that lie at the heart of what have been, at times, bitter conservation and development conflicts in the islands. Given the absence of Indigenous presence, the convergence of numerous cultural influences and worldviews in the Galápagos extend into forms of power that bond authority with territory and determine what is considered "just" outcomes for the growing resident population. Typical settler colonial theory is thus inverted, as the *colonos* and *pioneros* (i.e. colonists and pioneers) in the Galápagos have the longest-standing claims to Galapagueño cultural heritage and sovereignty. Additional complexity stems from 1998s Special Law, which enacted residency statuses for the islands. Long-term foreign residents were instantly granted residency, while native-born Galapagueños living on the mainland fell outside residency restrictions (Hoyman & McCall, 2013). Today, residency can only be inherited from permanent resident parents or acquired by marriage with a permanent resident. Others working in Galápagos do so on temporary residency permits. The Special Law thus entrenched "us" and "them" conflicts within the islands and served as a breaking point that enabled distinctions between an Ecuadorian identity and an emerging Galapagueño identity.

The migration, residency, and identity dynamics are made more complex by the underreported in-migration and informalities in the residence-granting and work permitting processes (Villacis & Carrillo, 2012). The population influx can lead to practices not in harmony with the fragile environments encountered in Galápagos (e.g. Grenier, 2007; Barragán Paladines & Chuenpagdee, 2017; Burbano & Meredith, 2021; Burke, 2021). Yet as frontier livelihood strategies (e.g. agriculture and fishing) and the associated identities give way to amenity-based, tourism-related livelihood strategies, recent migrants were able to fold themselves more quickly into the political, economic, and environmental governance structures associated with the acceleration of tourism. As a result, new tensions emerged regarding legitimacy, heritage, and the right to refer

to oneself as *galapagueño*. As long-term residents are referred to as "colonos" – a juxtaposition with (nomadic) indigenous peoples – there is no way to "decolonize" Galápagos.

Tensions exist between agricultural pioneers who largely occupy the humid highlands, the fishing communities long-situated on the coasts, and the latter-day arrivals working in the conservation and tourism sector concentrated in the growing towns. Although tourism is a primary economic activity in the towns, aside from the park entry fees, the economic impact is not evident to the resident population because the massive revenues generated are not distributed proportionally or equitably. Under the historical floating hotel tourism model, there was considerable leakage of tourism earnings. Most of the cruises were owned by non-Galápagos companies, most supplies and equipment were imported, and many top guides were not locals. Eventually, this leakage from the floating hotel model generated resentment. With the backing of the 1998 Special Law, local community leaders and NGOs began to advocate for "a new model of ecotourism" that prioritized the maximization of economic benefits for local communities, not just for the external tour operators in charge of the floating hotels.

While these broad strokes oversimplify what are culturally interwoven, temporally dynamic, and highly hybridized worldviews about the Galápagos environment, both natural and human, incompatible cultural sovereignties remain widely seen as being at the heart of conflicts over use of natural resources, loss of endemic species, disruption of the islands' fragile ecosystems, and long-term visions of what Galápagos should be (Grenier, 2007; Durham, 2008; Lu et al., 2013). Moreover, these differences have precipitated a revolving door of leadership at key institutions like the National Park, the Charles Darwin Foundation, and local government offices. Taken together, the divisions hinder broader collective action built upon shared conservation values.

Discussion

It is argued that the struggle to overcome crisis is quite inherent in the idea of sovereignty, as there is an implied need to eradicate unequal or unjust arrangements in favor of more representative, fair, and ethical outcomes, access to resources, or governance systems (Hansen & Stepputat, 2006). Likewise, sustainable tourism "inevitably relates to crisis in some way" (Hopkins, 2021, p. 1430), either by its responses to crises, its contributions to crises, or its use as a form of recovery from crisis. This account of the Galápagos links sovereignty and justice theory via a discussion of crises. This analysis also reflects varying degrees of convergence and divergence of livelihood security and sovereignty across these crises. In all instances, diverse and often conflicting cultural worldviews of the immigrant-based population often inhibited efforts to reach a consensus regarding appropriate policies for environmental protection and sustainable community development (Grenier, 2007).

With global immigration projected to grow and exacerbate environmental conflicts in the coming years (Reuveny, 2007), the current research is well-poised to provide urgent and generalizable insights into the sociocultural underpinnings of this increasing mobility, the environmental conflicts that exist between different value systems and worldviews, and the opportunities that exist to promote improved cooperation on behalf of social and environmental wellbeing in places experiencing intense in-migration. Since a critical step to promoting the collective action and inclusive governance necessary for confronting accelerating change is understanding the sociocultural dynamics within and between groups that dictate thoughts, values, conflicts, and behaviors (Ostrom, 2009), tourism discourse has much to gain from further study of how nested formations of sovereignty manifest in destination contexts (Stepputat, 2015; Naylor & Hunt, 2021).

As seen during the COVID pandemic, there were certain "virtues of insularity" (Baldacchino & Starc, 2021) and a certain degree of "splendid isolation" provided in the Galápagos Islands during the COVID pandemic (Agius et al., 2022), yet these "advantages" did not come without

Table 3. Struggles for sovereignty in Galápagos.

CRISES	Conservation	Tourism	COVID-19	Cultural identity
Inherent Struggle	***Protect nature*** *from past and present human disturbance*	*Ensure tourism is providing benefits for* ***local residents***	*Prioritize* ***permanent*** *resident wellbeing and quality of life*	*Recognize and elevate the heritage of* ***early pioneers***
Nested sovereignties	• *Territorial sovereignty (*Benton, 2010*)* • *Conservation sovereignty (*Mawyer & Jacka, 2018*)*	• *Livelihood sovereignty (*Naylor & Hunt, 2021*)* • *Just tourism (*Jamal, 2019*)* • *Socialized tourism (*Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020*)*	• *Health sovereignty (Werkheiser, 2014)* • *Insular, "splendid isolation"*(Agius et al., 2022)	• *Non-sovereign autonomy (*Baldacchino & Milne, 2009*)* • *Islandian sovereignty (*Prinsen & Blaise, 2017*)*

heightened concerns for food and livelihood security. As has been noted, "the intersections of crisis are likely to pay reference to the particular time-spaces of crises, but seeks to look not at them as clashing priorities, but instead as highly relational crises which are likely to have been differentially experienced by portions of the population and economy" (Hopkins, 2021, p. 1426). Sovereignty conceptualizes such clashing priorities as "malleable" and "negotiable," thus articulating opportunities for marginalized populations to confront and negotiate established bases of power for their favored outcomes (Iles & Montenegro de Wit, 2015). For these reasons, work that seeks to capture multiple subjectivities of heterogeneous community interests will be timely in many destinations where local concerns are often marginalized by more powerful non-local actors or efforts to restart the tourism industry post-pandemic (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Sovereignty outcomes are not a function of a given recipe of conditions but are place- and time-specific (Jarosz, 2014; Naylor & Hunt, 2021). Deeper historical analyses like the present work can reveal how numerous nested and entangled sovereignties are simultaneously sought across multiple timeframes, geographic spaces, livelihood sectors, and cultural landscapes (Table 3). Here, the chronic crises in the Galápagos have involved struggles for territorial and diplomatic sovereignty, livelihood sovereignties, and conservation sovereignty. A lack of native population means these various sovereignties are not based on Indigenous claims or heritage but on residence time (e.g. Latorre, 1999; Ospina, 2001). Diverse European, mestizo, and Indigenous colonists create competing claims to territorial sovereignty (Benton, 2010) and sub-insular "Islandian sovereignty" (Prinsen & Blaise, 2017). Now that the work of island sovereignty scholars has spilled over into tourism studies (e.g. Baldacchino, 2016), historical analyses of other destinations are likely to provide valuable insights into the value systems at play as communities respond to social and environmental crises.

Attention to historical dynamics of arrival and settlement also establishes a critical baseline for how advantage and power shift over time. Integrating the humanities and historical analyses into tourism research is therefore vital to improving understanding of the subjective and temporal nature of struggles associated with justice-centric concepts, including but not limited to sovereignty. Recognizing cultural variation and divergence of associated worldviews over time is essential if we hope to manage for more just outcomes of tourism and conservation in and beyond the Galápagos (Jamal & Higham, 2021; Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021).

Finally, a historical analysis conducted by current residents of the destination is timely given the justice and the decolonial turns underway in the social sciences. Reflective work in and beyond the Galápagos "alerts practitioners to economic and social trends which may impact on global tourism post-pandemic" (Filep et al., 2022, p.1). Our practical contribution to sustainable tourism studies thus demonstrates how the sovereignty framing facilitates the sociocultural and historical understanding needed to effectively analyze, design, promote, and manage just tourism and just destinations (Jamal & Camargo, 2014).

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to assimilate sovereignty theory into the justice tourism scholarship. The value of sovereignty theory was demonstrated in our ethnohistorical analysis of how Galapagos residents negotiate chronic and acute crises in the Galápagos Islands, a place with no original human population. Such historical analyses are critical for improving our understanding of the subjective and temporal nature of struggles associated with justice-centric concepts, including but not limited to sovereignty. With global immigration projected to grow and exacerbate environmental conflicts in the coming years, the current research is well-poised to provide urgent and generalizable insights into the sociocultural underpinnings of increasing human mobility, the environmental conflicts that exist between different value systems and worldviews, and the opportunities that exist to promote improved destination management on behalf of human wellbeing in places experiencing intense in-migration. It will just require improved recognition of the often-overlooked human history of tourism destinations, the sovereignty-related struggles present in these histories, and how those struggles dictate destination community responses to chronic and acute changes and crises over time.

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