

Article

Sustainability and Tourist Activities in Protected Natural Areas: The Case of Three Natural Parks of Andalusia (Spain)

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Abstract: As a form of protection, a nature park is often created to protect and valorise natural and cultural heritage in peripheral rural areas. However, in terms of multifunctionality, new nature parks incorporate traditional productive activities, such as recreational and tourist activities, which sometimes compromise sustainability. The research objective is to study the relationship between tourism and sustainability in the nature parks of Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche, Sierra Norte de Sevilla and Sierra de Hornachuelos that make up the Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve in Andalusia, Spain. Therefore, selective interviews have been carried out with the stakeholders to establish their perception of sustainable tourism and the presence of dominant discourses. The main conclusions indicate: (1) the presence of different dominant discourses on sustainability, namely the conservationist and mercantilist ones, with the prevalence of the economic dimension; (2) poor awareness and adaptation to the context of global change; and (3) the presence of competitive relationships that generate difficulties for the governance of sustainable tourism.

Keywords: protected areas; stakeholders; sustainable tourism; Sierra Morena



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1. Introduction

Since the mid-20th century, there has been a progressive disempowerment of rural communities, which downgraded them to the periphery [1,2], marginalised them “to the dominant development processes” [2] (p. 2) and exposed them to external decision-making and the continuous loss of competitiveness and employment [3,4]. As a result, these processes conditioned sustainability and generated a complex institutional context of development in these areas. Agriculture lost its monopoly in rural areas [5], and the multifunctionality of uses and diversification became an opportunity to adapt to the changing reality [3,6]. As a part of adaptive strategies [6], a novel [7] non-productive socioeconomic activities were incorporated. These activities included leisure and recreation (tourism, restoration), conservation and maintenance of biodiversity and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage, residential development and traditional productive activities, which were reinterpreted [3,8].

In this context, the public administration understands the need to protect, conserve and safeguard natural and cultural resources, to establish Protected Nature Areas (herein PNA) to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems [9], to provide ecosystem services [10] and search for solutions to climate change [11]. Rural spaces, previously agricultural, turned into so-called “preserved spaces” [12], where environmental attractiveness and ease of access generate advantages, yet with certain limitations of use since local decision-making is subject to conservation criteria [2]. Nonetheless, such a nature conservation process is not exempt from contradictions [13] when attempting to turn into a natural environment socioecological system. It generates different perceptions, conflicting opinions, rejection and management problems resulting from the relationship between the social system and its environment [14] and the discourse between conservation and productivism. Therefore,

it is necessary to integrate the local population into the establishment, decision-making and management processes of PNAs [15]. By integrating the PNA into the social and territorial environment through management instruments, these areas would evolve from the so-called “museum” to conservation broadly and compatibility with the rational use of resources [16,17].

Different categories of PNAs are created, which often overlap in the same territory, ranging from total protection (naturalisation) to flexible protection structures, in which the protection of natural and cultural heritage coexists with socioeconomic development and socioecological systems [10,15]. This is the case of nature parks (herein NtP) in Spain that are integrated into more conservationist models [16]. NtPs play an essential role in leisure activities [18] and tourist and recreational activities [19,20], positioning themselves in the tourist market until these PNAs form a pillar of the Community Agricultural Policy and the LEADER initiative [19,21]. In this way, the PNA appears as one of the large-scale tourism typologies of peripheral rural spaces [4]. Although environmental tourism is the classic motivation in PNAs, in this case, it is not only ecotourism or nature tourism but somewhat rural tourism, where nature-based products and services are added [18,21,22]. In the context of post-Fordism or “a la carte” tourism [23], rural tourism incorporates an advanced segmentation, the search for experiences and sensitivity to environmental issues as a response to changing demand [18,21,22,24]. However, it often goes from promoting the place to selling it [25], and tourism simultaneously produces and hides the contradictions of capitalism based “on creating attractions, or new sources of an accumulation from the very crises it produces” [26] (p. 529). Thus, three processes converge in the territory, namely: (1) patrimonialization through the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage, (2) enhancement of tourist value through the creation of new spaces [1] and (3) commodification of nature [26]. These coexisting processes generate discourses between conservation and exploitation [2,27], authenticity and trivialisation [28], abandonment of traditional activities and implementation of new ones, changes in use and simplification [29] or public service and private use [26]. Thus, in the context of increasing recreational and tourist frequentation [18,21], sustainability and sustainable tourism in rural areas and PNAs are perceived as a challenge given the complex and conflicting relationships [30] and exposure to risks due to their inherent fragility [31].

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in applying sustainability to tourism [32–34]. According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism is tourism “that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” [35] (p. 12). However, as Saarinen [34] and some other authors [36–38] in the scientific literature point out, this vision introduces the necessity of the industry, despite the need to establish limits to growth. On the other hand, it is difficult to apply the concept of sustainability imprecisely [39], which results in continuous failure [40]. It led to consider sustainable development and sustainable tourism diversely, flexibly [41] and indistinctly [40], leaving sustainability as “a ‘wicked’ or meta-policy problem that has led to new institutional arrangements and policy settings at international, national and local scales” [42] (p. 5). Ultimately, the rational use of resources that sustainability entails depends on values and ideologies [42] and, therefore, must be understood within the context of political-economic discourse aiming for sufficient and efficient tourism [43]. Consequently, despite contradictory, divergent or tangent discourses [44], sustainable tourism as a dominant paradigm in tourism development is identified [32,34,45]. Nevertheless, it fails to orient itself towards genuine sustainability of planning, management and policies, democratic empowerment, environmental conservation and social justice [45], or behavioural change towards sustainability [46], generating a hybridisation between neoliberalism and sustainable development [45].

Currently, a dominant discourse of sustainability and sustainable tourism appears to be somewhat rhetorical and more of a fashion to address the public [47], since sustainable tourism is considered an end. Another prevailing discussion considers sustainability

as the need for neoliberal growth defined by the markets [48], based on introducing new definitions instead of solving issues. On the other hand, sustainable tourism development tends to focus on the product [40], and tourists who buy sustainable tourism products are still fewer [49]. The ideal green tourist does not consume less. Instead, they do so responsibly [50], which results in businesses focusing on responsibility rather than sustainability [51], since responsible tourists pay for it. This situation often masks the unsustainable activities of companies [34]. In other words, responsibility arises from tourist segmentation or the emotional relationship with nature (perception) [41]. Consequently, there is room for a critical analysis of the relationship between sustainable tourism and sustainable development [52], which does not emphasise establishing the limits of growth [43] and avoiding its impacts [34], understanding that “more does not mean better, and growth does not mean development” [37] (p. 131).

Nonetheless, the interpretation and application of the sustainability concept differ according to the type of destination [41], the natural environment, the characteristics of the community, the institutional framework and the management policies [53] that are necessary to be adapted to the context [54]. Thus, in PNA, including rural areas, sustainability and sustainable tourism are given significant importance, and a challenge of sustainability is perceived as the *sine qua non*-condition. Thus, tourism sustainability is, at the same time, a planning criterion for future development [38] and a primary instrument to increase the quality of life of the local population, maintain natural values and attractions and improve the quality of the tourist experience [55]. Tourism in rural areas or PNAs is often considered to be sustainable in itself [56] because it attracts a small number of visitors, does not require a wide range of “services, infrastructures and [types of] equipment” (herein SIEs) and tourists tend to be interested in the host community, its landscape and environmental attractions. Yet such a correlation lacks support in the scientific literature [27], and many intended measures have not effectively contributed to sustainability [56]. Moreover, many of such intents fell into perverse effects [37] by generating negative impacts, indicating that conservation strategies are essential to sustainable development [16,57,58]. Therefore, although sustainability is one, it is necessary to take into account the presence of its four interdependent and interconnected dimensions [38,41,59] as follows:

- The environmental dimension relates to the optimal use of natural resources, compatible with the maintenance of ecological processes and the conservation of biodiversity [38,60]. Understanding that tourism depends on conserving the resources that attract tourism is critical [61].
- The economic dimension focuses on economic growth, efficiency and optimisation of resources [38,60,62] for the satisfaction of material human needs and objectives [63], job creation and long-term competitiveness [38], while preventing economic growth from pressuring other sustainability dimensions [64]. Although there are increasing constraints for tourism policy, planning and management to consider and incorporate into sustainability issues [65], biases often occur towards the economic dimension [32].
- The sociocultural dimension emphasises respect for the material and immaterial culture of the community [2,38,63] and social capital [38], which results in the strengthening of equity, social cohesion and improvement of the quality of life [38,62] and contributes to intercultural understanding and tolerance [38]. The sociocultural dimension is valuable in addressing the problems of tourism development [58], fundamental in rural tourism based on a close personal interaction between residents and visitors, contributing to the revaluation of authenticity and identity [2,66].
- The political–institutional dimension concentrates on the political system and the distribution of power [62,67], including the development of management systems, governance and stakeholder participation [38,63,68], and a favourable context, defined by the regulatory framework and institutional structures [34] without which sustainable tourism cannot exist.

This multidimensional vision of sustainable tourism and the above-indicated dimensions prevail in the literature. They are considered a tool to define sustainability issues,

highlighting that the interconnectivity between the dimensions is widespread as a holistic and long-term concept [41].

Therefore, this study aims to address the stakeholders' perception of the sustainability of tourism activities in a subregional area of Andalusia (Spain) forming three NtPs: NtP "Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche", NtP "Sierra Norte de Sevilla" and NtP "Sierra de Hornachuelos", which together constitute the Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve. The research, thus, raises the following questions: (1) Are tourism activities sustainable? (2) Which dimension of sustainability dominates? (3) What dominant discourses are present among the actors, and how are they manifested? (4) How do relationships between stakeholders influence sustainability management?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data and Methods

This research applied the case study in the analysis and the prevailing discourse of the perception of sustainable rural tourism, the perception of sustainability by stakeholders [17,41,47,59], relationships between stakeholders and governance in rural spaces and PNAs [15,69–72].

This research attempts to analyse the awareness, understanding, commitment, attitudes and practices of those involved in or influencing the sustainable tourism planning process [4,73,74] through their opinions and perceptions [17,41,69,75] on three central themes: (1) sustainability, including its dimensions, and tourism [38,41,59]; (2) the presence of dominant discourses and the rhetoric of sustainability [44]; and (3) management problems derived from relationships between stakeholders [60,69,73]. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews (herein Int) were carried out with ten open questions (see Table 1), adapted from Renfors [41].

Table 1. Interview questions.

Code	Question	Topics
(q1)	What function do the nature park and biosphere reserve have in your destination (and others)?	(2,3)
(q2)	What is the value of the landscape in tourism?	(1) (2) (3)
(q3) ^(a)	How do you perceive sustainable tourism development in your destination?	(1)
(q4) ^(b)	Does sustainability have a substantial effect on the tourism development of your destination? Why?	(1)
(q5) ^(a)	What kind of conflicts related to sustainability is created between stakeholders?	(1) (2) (3)
(q6) ^(a,c)	Could you give a practical example of sustainable tourism development in your destination? What would you improve?	(1) (3)
(q7) ^(c)	What happens in the context of global change with your destination?	(1) (3)
(q8)	Are there difficulties in managing the tourist space?	(1) (2) (3)
(q9) ^(b)	Does tourism contribute to local development?	(1) (3)
(q10)	What consequences has COVID-19 had on the destination?	(1) (3)

^(a) Questions based on Renfors [41]. ^(b) Questions adapted from Renfors [41]. ^(c) Control questions are aimed at the total or partial understanding of what the interviewees are being asked and to establish whether the answers respond to the awareness or dominant discourse. Authors' elaboration.

A non-probabilistic sampling method was used by conducting 40 interviews between April and July 2021 (Table 2). Some interviewees were directly identified: NtPs directors, local action groups (herein LAGs) managers, municipal stakeholders—including mayors or council members and municipal tourism technicians—and a private foundation, i.e., nature conservation NGO. Tourism companies and business associations were selected according to the type of services they provide, e.g., accommodation and tourist activities, and their local or foreign character [76]. Some were chosen based on good practices described by the interviewees, applying the snowball technique [41,77]. The territorial balance of the interviews was sought (relevance within each NtP, centrality/periphery) (Table 2). Given

the restrictions imposed by sanitary measures due to COVID-19, the interviews were conducted via videoconference on Google Meet©. These restrictions prevented the conduct of systematic interviews with the local population.

Table 2. Conducted interviews.

NtP	Municipality ¹	Interview	Position/Type	Genre	Age Range
Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche	Aracena	(Int01)	NtP director	M	50–59
	Aracena	(Int02)	LAG manager	F	50–59
	Cañaveral de León	(Int03)	Mayor	F	40–49
	Cumbres Mayores	(Int04)		F	30–39
	Almonaster la Real	(Int05)	Councilor	F	30–39
	Cortegana	(Int06)		F	40–49
	Aracena	(Int07)		F	50–59
	Aroche	(Int08)	Municipal technician	F	40–49
	Arroyomolinos de León	(Int09)	Tourism company	M	40–49
	Jabugo	(Int10)		M	50–59
	Alájar	(Int11)		F	50–59
	Cortegana	(Int12)		F	30–39
	Los Marines	(Int13)		F	50–59
Aracena	(Int14)	Business associations	F	50–59	
Santa Olalla del Cala	(Int15)	Foundation manager	M	20–29	
Sierra Norte de Sevilla	(Sevilla)	(Int16)	NtP director	M	40–49
	Cazalla de la Sierra	(Int17)	LAG manager	M	30–39
	Alanís	(Int18)	Mayor	F	40–49
	Cazalla de la Sierra	(Int19)		M	50–59
	Real de la Jara	(Int20)	Councilor	F	30–39
	San Nicolás del Puerto	(Int21)		M	50–59
	Las Navas de la Concepción	(Int22)	Municipal technician	F	20–29
	Cazalla de la Sierra	(Int23)	Tourism company	M	50–59
	Cazalla de la Sierra	(Int24)		M	40–49
	Constantina	(Int25)		F	40–49
	El Pedroso	(Int26)		M	20–29
San Nicolás del Puerto	(Int27)	F		30–39	
Puebla de los Infantes	(Int28)	Business associations	M	50–59	
Sierra de Hornachuelos	(Córdoba)(a)	(Int29)	NtP director	M	50–59
	(Obejo)(a)	(Int30)	LAG managers	M	50–59
	Posadas	(Int31)		M	50–59
	Villaviciosa de Córdoba	(Int32)	Councilor	M	>60
	Hornachuelos	(Int33)	Municipal technician	M	40–49
	Almodóvar del Río	(Int34)	Tourism company	F	30–39
	Hornachuelos	(Int35)		M	50–59
	Hornachuelos	(Int36)		F	30–39
	Hornachuelos	(Int37)		F	40–49
	Posadas	(Int38)		F	30–39
Posadas	(Int39)	M		50–59	
Hornachuelos	(Int40)	Business associations	M	40–49	

¹ The seat does not coincide with the municipalities of the NtP.

The interviews were transcribed and coded, depending on whether it was verbalised by the interviewees (emic) or identified by the researcher a posteriori (etic) [78], to determine the underlying discourses [75].

The interviews were complemented with territorial recognition, i.e., patrimonial valuation, accessibility analysis and informal interviews with the local population on tourism and sustainability between September and November 2021. The fieldwork and informal discussions allow contrasting the opinions of the stakeholders interviewed with direct observation and the local population's views.

2.2. Case Study

Sierra Morena is a Mediterranean mid-mountain range that extends through the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. The ecological and landscape richness led to the creation of six NtPs in the Andalusian Sierra Morena [79], composing the scope of the study of the three westernmost NtPs (Figure 1). Namely, NtP “Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche” (herein SAPA), NtP “Sierra Norte de Sevilla” (herein SNS) and NtP “Sierra de Hornachuelos” (herein SH). These three NtPs are also the Special Conservation Areas and Special Protection Areas for Birds. They were declared as the UNESCO Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve (herein DSMBR), and SNS was declared as the UNESCO World Geopark (herein UWGpSNS) [80].

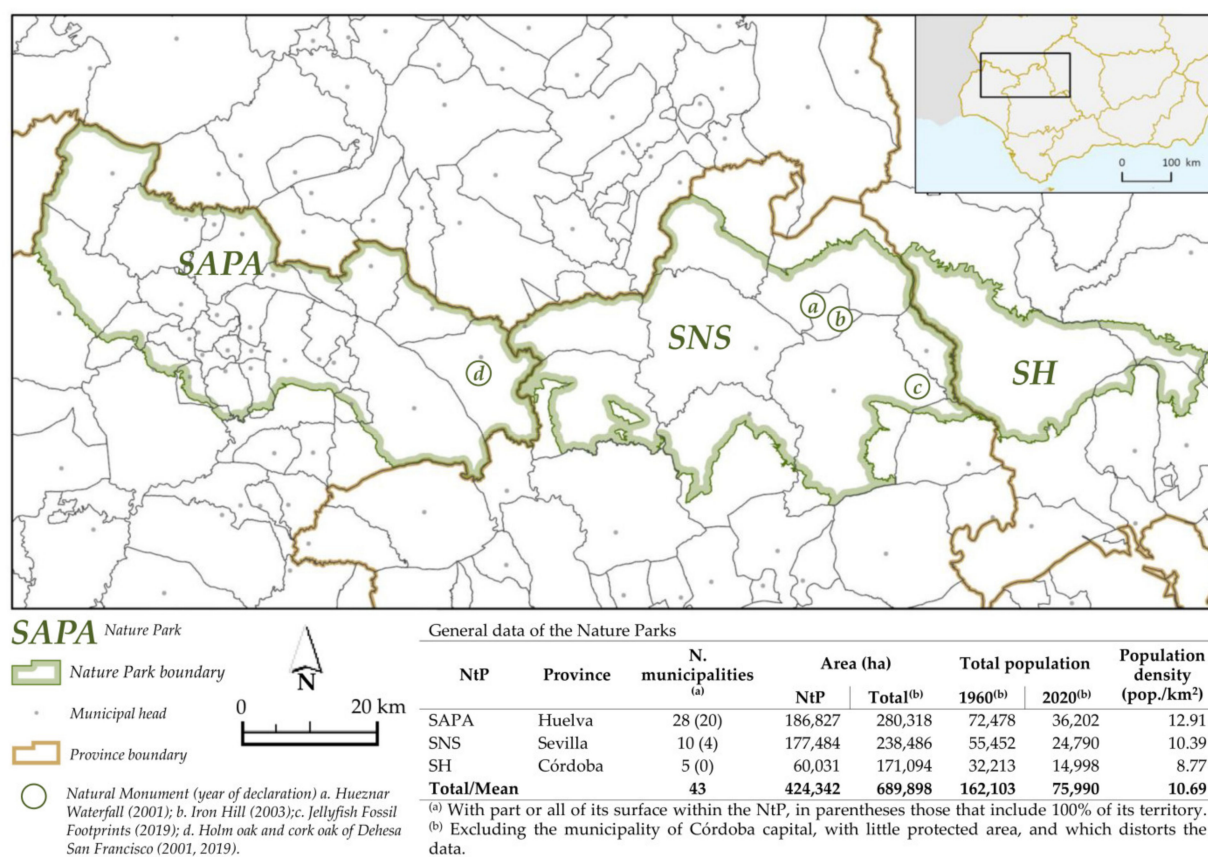


Figure 1. Scope of the study. Source: [80,81]. Authors' elaboration.

The specific characteristics of Sierra Morena gave rise to an agro-silvo-pastoral exploitation system that is unique in the world known as “dehesa”, or “montado” in Portuguese (Figure 2), which is a cleared Mediterranean forest where forestry, livestock and the hunting vocation predominates, with an exploitation system dominated by large estates [82,83]. The dehesa has generated an exceptional landscape with high heritage values [84], yet it is subject to change processes of coverage and degradation due to abandonment or overexploitation [85]. Currently, the dehesa is facing the extreme effects of climate change and the seca (fungal disease of *Quercus ilex* and *Quercus suber*, the main species of the dehesa) [11].



Figure 2. Dehesa de San Francisco, Santa Olalla del Cala (SAPA). Dehesa of cork oaks where you can see free-range Iberian pigs.

SAPA and SNS are large NtPs with population settlements in the interior, while SH has an intermediate area and large properties predominate, lacking an internal network of settlements [20]. In addition, most of the surface of these NtPs is a private property [20].

Since the 1960s, several general and specific factors have generated the crisis and the massive rural exodus in Sierra Morena [86], which lost 52.55% of its population between 1960 and 2020 (Figure 1). Today it has an ageing population and low demographic density (10.69 inhabitants/km²), with 18 municipalities with <10 inhabitants/km² [81]. Only 4 municipalities have >5000 inhabitants (2020), whereas 18 municipalities have <1000 inhabitants [81]. Traditional economic activities are linked to the dehesa [83], highlighting the Iberian pig farming in SAPA and SNS (Figure 2) and its associated industry [86,87], while in SH, hunting and forestry activities predominate [20].

SAPA and SNS have regional entities with LAGs practically identified with their territory, while SH is distributed between two LAGs (see Figure 3).

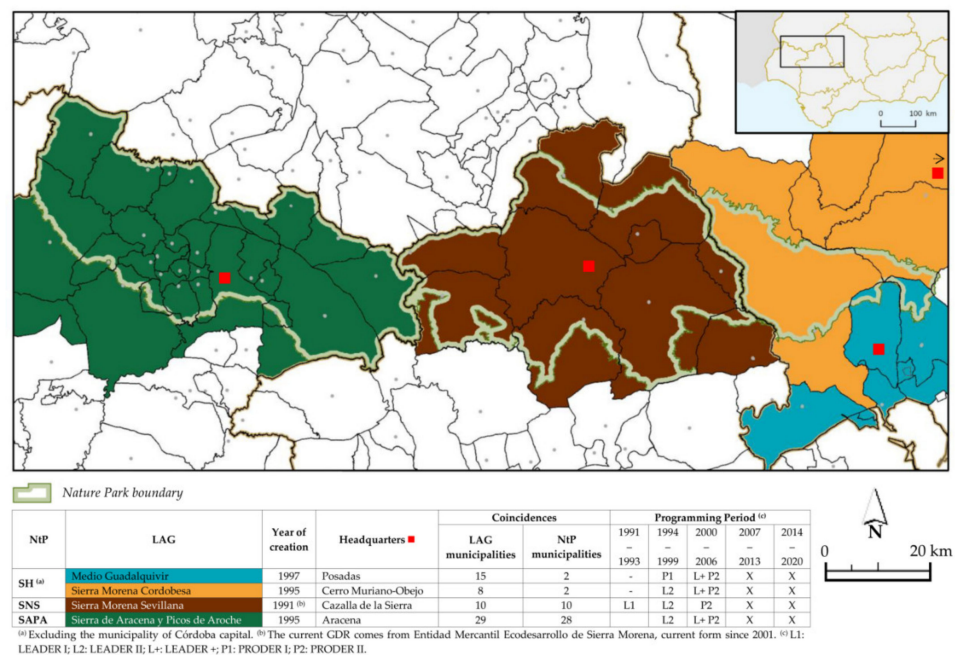


Figure 3. LAGs in the scope of the study. Source: [88]. Authors' elaboration.

It is a space with a marked peripherality, poor land communications with the provincial capitals and within and between the counties. The better accessibility of the east of SAPA and south of SNS leads to developing leisure and residential functions linked to the city of Seville [83,89,90]. There was practically no tourist offer at the time of the proclamation of the NtPs [91], assuming the tourism offer organised itself organically [21,27]. However, the unequal activity distribution remains until the present, with a predominance of rural houses and the recent appearance of tourism activity companies [92].

3. Results

3.1. *The Presence of Dominant Discourses and the Rhetoric of Sustainability*

The declaration of the three NtPs protects biodiversity and guarantees territorial unanimity between NtPs directors and the Foundation. The LAGs' managers agree on the importance of protecting and conserving yet highlight the lack of territory revitalisation by the NtPs. They indicate that it is necessary to "overcome its function as a figure of conservation, as has happened in other NtPs of Andalusia" (Int30). While tourism companies and business associations highlight conservation, they only partly assign protection as a guarantor of environmental sustainability. Municipal stakeholders often perceive NtPs as a limitation imposed on the local population from outside.

For NtPs directors and LAGs managers, NtPs have been fundamental for attracting tourists, although mostly central areas benefited more due to better accessibility, tradition and tourist offers. Companies that offer outdoor activities highlight that there is still much-untapped tourism potential. Tourism companies and business associations relate NtPs (and DSMBR) with promotion and marketing opportunities, emphasising that being part of an NtP allows for ecotourism and sustainable activity for a specific tourist/visitor. Nonetheless, it is indicated that efforts to foster environmental protection are usually limited to advertising and posters, without creating a real fundamental change in the client. However, they recognise that they have become the main tourist attraction in the central municipalities over time.

Considering the above, NtPs directors and LAGs managers highlight that the declarations of the NtPs have led to the development of other protection types, including DSMBR, Special Protection Areas for Birds, Special Conservation Areas and UWGpSNS, as well as the obtaining of other certifications such as the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism and Sierra Morena Starlight Reserve (herein SMSTRE). Although the DSMBR is perceived as motivated by the NtPs directors, they affirm that its importance has not been visualized nor its potential developed because there is no management instrument (this document is currently being drafted). It is divided between three provinces, making it unfamiliar to the LAGs managers. For tourism companies, DSMBR is relatively unknown, and they even deny its existence. For municipal stakeholders, these declarations and certifications are just titles that are added to others or patrimonial protections, e.g. tourist brands and patrimonial declarations, linking their quantity directly to the inflow of visitors. Only one of the municipal stakeholders highlights that DSMBR is a recognition of the traditional way of exploiting natural resources, assuming international promotion and the receipt of public aid.

For the directors, sustainability is a context for developing NtPs as established by the regulation. The LAGs managers point out that the values of sustainability have been recognised during the pandemic, with citizen participation being crucial for achieving it, yet without undervaluing its economic costs. It is generalised among municipal stakeholders to affirm that traditional and tourist activities have always been sustainable despite the prevailing three visions, as follows:

- (1) The sustainability of traditional activities and tourism is necessary; "without sustainability there is no development" (Int03); raising awareness among companies and the local population is essential.

- (2) Traditional and tourist activities are sustainable, but sustainability creates “a difficulty to compete” (Int32); urban spaces receive “water, air and recreation” (Int17) for which the NtPs “need compensation” (Int01).
- (3) Sustainability is “something to sell nature” (Int33), and now “everything has to be sustainable” (Int04).

For tourism entrepreneurs, sustainability is an end. Still, they affirm that this is not the case for most tourism companies that seek sustainability because of the subsidies that can be obtained or because tourists demand it. Other tourism entrepreneurs even say that “sustainability is an invention” (Int27) because tourism activity in rural areas must necessarily be sustainable. In contrast, others claim to be learning to use sustainability “as a strength for development” (Int14).

3.2. *The Pre-Eminence of One Dimension over the Others in Sustainability in Tourist Activities*

The NtPs directors perceive sustainability in tourist activities because tourism is highly regulated by laws within the PNA, making it a comparative advantage for tourist satisfaction. Additionally, they tend to question the sustainability of some tourist actions, emphasising the need to exercise greater control overall. While they understand that nature tourism and ecotourism have great potential and the effects of over-frequency and overload are punctual time- and space-wise, sometimes they cause problems for the owners at harvest time. The emergency in the light of global change, with a technical and comprehensive vision, is particularly emphasised with accompanying proposals to make investments, e.g., of Next Generation EU funds, to address them. The suggested measures for sustainability are the control of access to maximum protection areas, the promotion of energy self-sufficiency in urban centers, support for active tourism and advice on diagnoses and environmental plans for companies. Implementing the Andalusian Nature Park Brand, SMSTRE and stargazing, mushroom picking, hiking and specific examples of certified companies are among the best practices. The model to follow would be that of other Andalusian NtPs.

LAGs managers agree on the increasing sustainability of tourism activities and the positive and growing influence of sustainability on the destination. However, they point out that many times the activities are sustainable for companies because of “opportunity (business) and not because of conviction” (Int02), as a way of advertising, since tourists traditionally do not choose the destination entirely only because it is sustainable. Although they point out that the trend is changing and the investments necessary to achieve sustainability are amortised thanks to the satisfaction of a “new view of the tourist” (Int31) who pays for sustainability and nature tourism and ecotourism linked to experiences, companies incorporate sustainability into their management and facilities through “personal awareness” (Int02). In the case of over-frequency and overload, LAGs managers share the views of the NtPs directors, highlighting the problems of overcrowding in urban areas and the economic impacts on farms. Likewise, while LAGs agree with NtPs directors on the global change, they indicate that “those who most notice the changes are the smallest peoples” (Int02). Although they tend to think that “it is not something imminent” (Int31) and “they only see the problems when they translate into something economical, as occurs with the drying of the oak” (Int02), they call for necessary measures to raise awareness among the population and strengthen the nature preservation legislation. They underline as measures for sustainability the promotion of energy self-sufficiency and the reduction of light pollution. Good practices focus on projects resulting from cooperation networks such as SMSTRE, the Ruta del Jabugo (herein RJ), the LongDistance Trail 48 and activities linked to the UWGpSNS. As with the NtPs, LAGs also discourse about outdoor activities, extreme sports and accommodation companies but critically assess the certifications that “tax quality” (Int17). LAGs managers do not provide role models.

Municipal stakeholders agree that tourism, including traditional activities, is sustainable. Nonetheless, there are three different opinions:

- (1) Most consider sustainability inherent in traditional and tourist activities since “the environment has been preserved because traditional activities are sustainable” (Int19). They relate nature tourism and ecotourism to recreation and some complementary activities. Despite some denials, they primarily defend the need to control capacity to avoid overcrowding so that it does not damage traditional activities. Only some interviewees identify climate change as an issue, without considering it imminent, and refuse to foster legislation, expressing that “it is necessary to adapt, but we are used to it” (Int22). As measures for sustainability, these stakeholders propose betting on experiential ecological tourism and smart rural destinations, with the limitation that there are no subsidies and aid for sustainability. In contrast, others suggest sustainable investments, e.g., renewable and efficient energies, diversification of products, motorhomes, enhancement of resources, trails, paths and renovations. Sound practices are related to the development of municipal strategic plans and are exemplified by accommodation companies, agri-food companies with a tourist offer, outdoor activities and extreme sports, adventure parks and heritage rehabilitation. The model to follow as a destination refers to other municipalities of the NtP and other NtPs of Andalusia and the Basque Country.
- (2) The perception of sustainability as the basis of development is limited to some municipal stakeholders who advocate that traditional and tourist activities are generally sustainable, but “not everything rural is sustainable” (Int20), making awareness necessary. They identify nature tourism and ecotourism with active and sports tourism, disconnection and personalised services and experiences. They highlight a non-massive context, especially in more peripheral municipalities, and the need to limit the tourist flow and plan. Tourist companies are held responsible for overcrowding “because they think that the more people the better instead of looking for a model of quality business” (Int03), and seasonality is very marked. They relate global change as a major issue. Collaborative projects such as SMSTRE, LongDistance Trail 48, RJ, ecovillages, municipal awareness campaigns, programs against depopulation and cultural and environmental initiatives and activities as well as accommodation companies with tourist activities (agritourism, gastro-tourism) stand out as good practices. They mention regional models with particular emphasis on cultural initiatives.
- (3) Sustainability as an NtP imposition is seen by the minority (SNS, SH), which points out that tourism activity has to be developed “within a sustainable framework” (Int21). It has to be legal and certified to satisfy tourists “who seek sustainability” (Int21), and this has increased during the pandemic. They do not consider over-frequency and overload, except at specific times due to the pandemic, and do not perceive any effect of global change. The measures for sustainability are related to tourism quality, while routes oriented toward a specific segment of demand are considered an example of good practice. As a model, Navarra is mentioned.

Tourism companies and business associations agree that they act in a sustainable destination where the work of the NtPs with the business community is essential. From here, two different visions are developed:

- (1) A majority group, consisting of tourism companies and business associations, attribute tourism sustainability to: (a) local companies that work for environmental and economic sustainability, while foreign companies do not carry out sustainable activities; (b) the activities that are internally monitored as sustainable versus the non-monitored unsustainable ones; (c) sustainable private business activities versus unsustainable public ones because they are unrealistic and compete with private ones. These companies agree that sustainable tourism does not exist and sustainability is not a motivation, despite some changes since the pandemic as tourists, especially youth, are progressively getting involved with sustainability and complying with the rules. Betting on nature tourism and ecotourism is done for the central values of the territory, the “silence, the place” (Int23). New types of transport such as bicycles and horseback riding are available for a tourist who does not want to go by car and is respectful of

the environment, though it costs more. Overcrowding and overload are not an issue, and conflicts are due to the lack of visitors' civility. The measures for sustainability proposed are limited to training and awareness actions, and the references to global change are few. They are reluctant to converse about good practices. However, networks such as SMSTRE, RJ, service companies such as electric bicycles, adventure parks and the creation of charging points for electric vehicles are mentioned, pointing to quality certifications as an impediment. Management models are from neighboring municipalities and NtPs, indicating companies with similar activities and providing examples such as the Pyrenees or the Spanish Ecotourism Club.

- (2) A minority group of tourism companies perceives that tourism sustainability is due to the company's efforts since many wield "the flower of sustainability, and those who have spent their entire lives working in the territory, on the other hand, do not have any recognition" (Int12). They relate nature tourism with a source of employment that provides differential value in terms of negative value. It distinguishes between ecotourists who come from abroad looking for a specific offer and sustainability and nearby travelers looking for a place for their vacations and travelling in a group. At the same time, tourist satisfaction is unrelated to sustainability. Overcrowding and overloading are considered a "cancer of the territory" (Int10) that occurs in specific attractions due to lack of action and regulation, especially in the best-connected places. Self-limitation, the non-admission of large groups and the search for under-tourism are pointed out as sustainability measures. These companies understand global change as an essential and multidimensional issue. Although it does not currently affect reserves, going so far as to point out that it is necessary to "educate ourselves and educate others" (Int13), the change of tourist activities towards sustainability and the search for new, nearby markets is needed due to the decline in international tourism in the context of global change. They primarily emphasise the individual measures for sustainability, e.g., not having a pool, eliminating chemicals, ensuring energy efficiency, creating ecotourism experiences, and realising FAM trips and environmental certifications. Good practices include the implementation of municipal 2030 agendas and programs against depopulation, promoting stargazing and bird watching and strengthening companies with specific cultural and environmental activities in the open air or extreme sports without emphasizing role models.

The Foundation voices the lack of sustainability of some traditional and tourist activities. It considers that nature tourism and ecotourism are necessary but ensures controls to avoid over-frequency or overload. The measures for sustainability include the awareness of the local population and tourists as well as raising tourist capacity controls. It focuses on climate change, especially the dry season, and notes that all activities must be made sustainable, not by prohibiting, but rather by controlling traditional practices to adapt. Activities such as bird watching and mountain biking are highlighted. The Foundation perceives itself as an example of good practice.

3.3. The Political–Institutional Dimension: The Relationships between Stakeholders and the Difficulties in the Management of the Tourist Space

The different stakeholders establish collaborative relationships with other stakeholders, among which are:

- Municipal stakeholders: collaboration with other municipalities is based on formal and informal networks.
- Municipal stakeholders and tourism companies: municipal support for companies.
- LAG managers are the generation of networks with the different LAGs and with other external local agents.

Other cooperation relationships are highlighted by only one type of stakeholder, regardless of whether it affects several stakeholders, e.g., the vertical and horizontal coordination underlined by the NtPs directors (see Table 3).

Table 3. Relations between stakeholders and the indicated causes.

Type of Relation	Interviewees	Description of the Relations	Indicated Cause (Verbalized)	Institutions and Organisations Involved ¹
Positive	(Int22) (Int40) (Int19) (Int21) (Int08) (Int07)	Tourism cooperation and complementarity between municipalities	Formation of formal and informal networks	3
	(Int15)	Cooperation with external tourism companies	Control of tourist flows (bundling)	5, 7
	(Int30) (Int31) (Int02) (Int17)	Cooperation between the LAGs and with other stakeholders internal and external to the NtPs	Existence of a network and application of the LEADER approach; outward projection	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11
	(Int33) (Int07) (Int36) (Int26) (Int11)	Cooperation of municipalities and tourism and hospitality companies	Information; technical support; nearest administration	3, 4, 6
	(Int30)	Cooperation in development strategies with NtPs	Shared actors (NtP governing board)	1, 2
	(Int12)	Cooperation between similar or complementary companies	The joint vision of destination and trust	4
	(Int01) (Int16)	Vertical (JA-TD-NtP-SM) and horizontal (NtP-PC) coordination	Regulatory framework and organisational structure NtP; participation of the municipalities in the NtP Governing Board	1, 2, 12, 13, 14
	(Int01) (Int15)	Collaboration in nature conservation	Same conservation goals between institutions	1, 7
Negative	(Int02) (Int22) (Int03) (Int21) (Int20) (Int05) (Int28)	Competition and lack of subsidiarity between municipalities; generation of "micro-destinations"; lack of coordination between attractions; scarcity of tourist activities in municipalities	The rivalry between municipalities; different levels of development; lack of communication; the existence of municipal lobbyists; political decision-making without counting on and considering the tourism sector	2, 3, 4, 6
	(Int36) (Int39) (Int37) (Int26) (Int09) (Int24)	Conflicts of use between tourism and private property	The predominance of private property; lack of entrepreneurship; incompatibility of uses; usurpation of public space	1, 4, 8, 9
	(Int29) (Int01) (Int02) (Int17) (Int32) (Int19) (Int39) (Int27) (Int24) (Int28) (Int15)	Disagreements between municipalities, NtP and JA; management conflicts; a desire to exit NtP	Restrictive regulatory framework; different speeches, politicisation; lack of communication; lack of control of activities; technical ineffectiveness; public oversight of SIEs	1, 3, 8, 14
	(Int39) (Int37) (Int35)	Unfair municipal competition to tourism companies	Creation of SIEs with public money and private management	3, 4
	(Int39) (Int35) (Int10) (Int24)	Competition between tourism companies	Duality of local-foreign companies, main-secondary activities; lack of business culture; non-business activities; lack of originality	4, 5
	(Int01) (Int30) (Int31) (Int02) (Int17) (Int20)	The difficulty for interterritorial cooperation; lack of a DSMBR planning instrument	3 NtPs, 3 provinces, 4 LAGs, 43 municipalities, different administrations and discourses; lack of coordination; the existence of municipal lobbyist	1, 3, 13, 14
	(Int13) (Int24) (Int28) (Int14)	Non-existence of a coordinating body for tourist activity in the NtP; absence of a destination; lack of a tourism strategy (brand, destination...)	Lack of agreement between the parties and stakeholder involvement; the rivalry between municipalities; politicisation; lack of goals; lack of coordination in the regional administration	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12

¹ 1. NtP; 2. LAG; 3. Municipality; 4. Local tourism company; 5. External tourism company; 6. Business association; 7. Foundation; 8. Local population; 9. Large landowners (generally urban); 10. Other local stakeholders; 11. Other local, territorial entity external to NtPs; 12. Provincial Council; 13. Territorial Delegation Regional Government; 14. Junta de Andalucía (regional ministries). Source: Interviews. Authors' elaboration.

Competency relationships are of crucial importance for all stakeholders, while the most visible are the following:

- The disagreements between the regional administration, i.e., NtPs, regional ministries and the municipal stakeholders, are seen by other stakeholders, which generate management conflicts and divergences caused by the restrictive regulations, the top-down approach, the ineffectiveness of the NtPs and the lack of communication.
- The competition between municipalities, observed by LAGs, municipalities and business associations, generates a lack of coordination, tourist micro-destinations and inequality in the distribution of public and private SIEs, caused by the rivalry between municipalities and the generation of lobbyists, centre-and-periphery relations and the lack of communication.

- The administrative limits created a lack of interterritorial cooperation, as perceived by the NtPs directors, all the LAGs managers and a municipal stakeholder.
- The lack of coordination and a common tourism strategy within the NtPs, perceived by tourism companies and business associations, causes the lack of destinations and a brand.

The tourist companies verbalise other competition relations about conflicts between the tourist activities and the owners that dominate the NtPs due to the usurpation of cattle trails and the limitations that private property supposes in the NtPs. Competition between tourism companies is based on local–foreign discourse, main–secondary activity, lack of business culture and originality and the presence of non-business activities, including unfair competition from non-industrial activities and even municipalities.

4. Discussion

4.1. *The Presence of Dominant Discourses and the Rhetoric of Sustainability*

Each stakeholder builds their reality, expressing their interests [93] collected in the dominant discourse and a representative framework [44].

The regional administration illustrates the preservation of the natural heritage through the NtPs directors, who are assigned the role of the so-called gatekeepers [94] in the process of patrimonialization and with a conservationist discourse where sustainability is the objective established by law [95]. A conflict is generated by the management of resources between conservation and traditional activities that manifest the “nature-society dualism” [96], demanding compensation by municipal stakeholders for the right to economic development and productivism despite limitations [97], and incorporating the idea of local heritage, which opposes the collective patrimonialization that comes from outside [98].

Tourism is an attractor of ecological services that positively interferes with appreciating of natural and cultural values [99]. In this way, internal and external pressures in the PNAs foster the economic use of resources greater than the intrinsic value of natural and cultural heritage [26] and, therefore, sell products and markets places, cultures and traditions [28]. A mercantilist discourse is formed [100] and linked to a vision of development as a union of endogenous and exogenous forces, public and private, based on endogenous resources yet projected outwards in terms of the flow of tourists, the arrival of capital and funding [72].

The conservationist discourse is assumed by conviction by proactive tourism entrepreneurs [101], as identified by LAGs and other companies alike, the Foundation based on their purpose [102] and some municipal stakeholders [103]. The LAGs discuss sustainability from a broader perspective of equality and existing challenges rather than ecological thinking [41]. They position themselves on the side of conservation, but complemented with sustainable tourism as an attractor [99].

Firstly, the productivist discourse and then the mercantilist one is accepted by business associations, most tourism companies and municipal stakeholders [103]. They redefine the sustainability concept and tend to fall into contradictions when simultaneously speaking of sustainability and the elimination of limitations or the increase in the number of tourists [43].

These discourses are not permanent and tend to change [72]. Thus, in the municipal elections of 2015 and 2019, the traditional political forces of social and Christian Democrats lost the elections in several municipalities. The new leaders changed the focus of local policies, allowing us to speak of municipalities of change, as dissenting voices, environmentalists and conservationists who positively value NtPs as a guarantee of sustainability. On the other hand, in 2019, the regional elections involved a change in the regional government with a center-right coalition that promotes a change in the regional environmental administration, favoring economic activities such as tourism, which implies a more productive discourse, as perceived by the interviewees, contrasting with the previous position that separated tourism, conservation and sustainability [104].

4.2. *The Pre-Eminence of One Dimension over the Others in the Sustainability of Tourist Activities*

All interviewees agree that tourism and tourism activities are sustainable [3,27]. However, the different stakeholders insist on one of the dimensions of sustainability and interpret sustainable tourism differently.

The conservationist discourse is dominated by the perception that the environmental dimension of tourist activity is necessary to care for and improve the environment in the NtPs, since sustainability cannot be renounced before and outside of tourist activity [27]. Namely, NtPs directors, LAGs managers, municipal stakeholders of change, proactive companies and the Foundation are concerned about global and climate change [105]. These concerns generate uncertainties about conservation and tourism activities [37] and make tourism companies focus on changes in activities. The landscape affects their business [106], and thus they consider maintaining long-distance visitors without damaging natural capital [33] and better managing local tourism flows [107]. To mitigate the effects, they propose policies and actions aimed at reducing sources of greenhouse gas emissions through investments and legislation [11,108], sustainable tourism activities planning [108] and carrying out awareness-raising campaigns for local and tourist populations [109]. The interviewees attribute to the tourists a motivation connected with their emotions and personal relationship with nature through experiences [21,110,111], a rediscovered relationship with the environment after COVID-19 [112] and a progressive involvement in the sustainability of specific tourism [27].

Environmental sustainability is fundamental for proactive European companies that specialise in high-added-value nature tourism and ecotourism [22]. They respond to the conviction by developing sustainable products [49] to turn sustainability into an instrument of business success [113] by focusing on the viability of the company [114] instead of performance. These interviewees consider that tourism does not generate significant environmental impacts, except those derived from the spatial-temporal concentration of demand [27], pointing out that it is necessary to control the flows by regulating the physical load [24,115]. Thus, companies can limit the offer to themselves to maintain quality by betting on non-aggressive and low-intensity tourism [75], where only the NtPs directors show concern about the use of water resources [11]. Sound practices are identified with the environment and resources conservation [116], the will to preserve heritage for the future [27] and the eco-efficiency of companies [56].

However, the specific examples that emphasise environmental and economic dimensions and, to a lesser extent, sociocultural and political-institutional, have common characteristics. These characteristics include innovation [117], generation of cooperation networks [118] and employment [119], a propensity to collaborate [71], enhancement of synergies [113], entrepreneurship [120], local sourcing [114], diversification of the product supply [121] and offering quality through environmental accreditations and certifications [116]. Neo-rural businesses and foreigners have launched many of these initiatives [13,66], although there are also innovative local initiatives [55]. Generally, the initiatives mentioned are few, reiterated and concentrated in SAPA, with more significant tourism development [20]. These interviewees are concerned about seasonality, which compromises service quality and business viability [27]. Moreover, they highlight the impact of visitors who occupy private farms or steal harvested fruits with the urban idea that everything in the countryside belongs to everyone [41]. They do not follow models and only mention other Andalusian NtPs.

The economic dimension predominates and is considered the most critical [41,63,72] by the majority of municipal stakeholders, tourism companies and business associations, insisting that sustainability is not well sold due to the scarce effort of the administration and necessary public aid for companies [56]. They see tourism as a private economic activity [52] from which people live and produce economic growth, a more important objective than sustainability [32,61], curtailed by the limitations established by the NtPs. While it is not a criticism of sustainability, they understand that the restrictions do not benefit tourism companies. Sustainability is attributed to the location, origin and activities, regardless of

whether they are environmentally sustainable and compatible with protection [4,76,122]. Therefore, sustainability is not considered a necessity, but an option [123].

Moreover, for tourism companies and business associations, nature tourism and ecotourism become a business opportunity to satisfy tourists [34,49], create products that emphasise natural heritage and thus increase their profitability [23] and amortize the investment. Therefore, sustainability is a learning, rhetorical discourse [46,124], in which sustainable tourism in a collective context becomes responsible tourism in the personal sphere [34,51]. Its main interest is to sell nature or receive subsidies, to benefit from the few tourists who buy sustainable products [49] and tourists who seek domesticated nature [22]. Therefore, they do not value environmental sustainability as a tourist motivation [22] but merely an attraction for tourists without considering the impacts [55].

Nonetheless, these interviewees recognise that nature tourists have increased during the pandemic [122], and companies must take advantage of it. They tend to reason that global change is not imminent and is only appreciated when it causes economic damage [11], whereas climate change requires adaptivity [125]. With few exceptions, the majority acknowledges that over-frequency and overload are common in specific places and times [27], especially in central areas and urban centres, mainly due to hikers and the perimeter closures established during the pandemic [126]. Likewise, it is perceived that the NtPs must solve the issue since the environmental dimension is exclusively their concern. However, it is not a priority matter, and some positively value the high demand caused by COVID-19. In any case, they deny the possibility of developing restrictive regulations prevailing a short-term view of local authorities [127] and tourism companies, which are committed to increasing flows instead of improving quality and sustainability.

Almost no measures for sustainability are considered, and they identify it with the implementation of plans to promote ecotourism and segmentation through smart rural destinations [117]. These interviewees vaguely speak of initiatives, activities and projects that respond to market segmentation while criticising the accreditation and certification requirements that tax the ecological [117]. The specific initiatives mentioned respond to neo-Fordist products of the Disneyization of nature [22] and are neither innovative nor original [21,22]. On the other hand, electric vehicle recharging points or the diversification of products, e.g., e-bikes or motorhomes, are considered modernity [128] without considering sustainability, e.g., in terms of carbon footprint or derived pollution [129]. The models to follow are chosen not based on sustainability but on entrepreneurial success, indicated by brand awareness and continuous tourist inflow.

Contrary to the interviewees' opinions, the sociocultural dimension of sustainability is fundamental for residents [41,68]. LAGs managers and municipal stakeholders interrelate it with the economic dimension [41,59] by linking it with the environment. The economic dimension reflects the wish to continue living in the place, maintain and improve the quality of the residents' lives, preserve vitality and address depopulation and ageing, rather than the capacity of the community to accept negative social impacts due to saturation [27]. Additionally, municipal stakeholders tend to understand social good as the maximisation of market transactions [100]. As the territorial analysis and the literature on the field of the study indicate [12,83,89,90,130], the interviewees are resistant to mentioning social impacts and latent conflicts that depend on stakeholders [58]. Given the sociocultural value of the dehesas and the fact that a large part of the population is still linked to primary activities, the interviewers insisted on abandoning and changing the predominant traditional activities [27], focusing on the economic arguments, e.g., low profitability and the abandonment of the activity, rather than social ones, e.g., uprooting, showing that they do not relate the loss of farm labour in favour of tourism with the loss of the landscape that justifies tourist activities and experiences [119]. Only some interviewees valued agritourism-based initiatives very positively [56,131] and indicated more sustainable, conservationist discourse as examples to follow.

4.3. *The Political–Institutional Dimension, the Relations between Stakeholders and the Difficulties in the Tourist Space Management*

Depending on the participating stakeholders, there are three levels of relationships: public–public, private–private and public–private.

4.3.1. Public–Public Level

The NtPs directors specify cooperative relations at institutional levels, i.e., horizontal coordination between NtPs, municipalities and the Provincial Councils and external vertical coordination with the regional administration. The latter is the one that sets the management guidelines, responding to a traditional top-down model in PNAs [132].

The relationship between the NtPs and the municipalities is the most competitive, observed by all types of interviewees in the three NtPs, given the non-participatory management model [19,133,134]. It results in the NtPs directors being seen as external agents to the territory [19,104], except in SAPA, where the headquarters is in the region and the physical proximity determines this perception. Nevertheless, the NtPs directors consider themselves local stakeholders [94]. According to municipal stakeholders, the regulatory framework imposes limitations from the outside [16,19,83] and restricts the right to development without offering compensation [41]. The NtPs directors perceive the constraints of economic activities and urbanisation as the explanation for conservation, yet they also see opportunities for multifunctionality and diversification, generating an economic boost [104]. However, there are also underlying, unspoken issues to be addressed:

- (a) There is the presence of two dominant discourses, i.e., mercantilism and conservationism.
- (b) Local politicians understand themselves as the supporters of the local population and the productive system, as the self-assigned function [72].
- (c) Concerning point b, the municipal leadership's role in appropriating heritage as a local government discourse opposes collective patrimonialization with the politicisation of nature protection that is wanted to exist in the NtP [19,83].
- (d) Directors perceive the municipal stakeholders as opposing the NtPs [133].

These conflicts between local administrations and NtPs do not depend on the traditional governing party in the municipality or region. They are related to the dominant economic activities [12], the tourist centrality and the lower identification with the NtPs, showing that the patrimonialization process has not been completed. Even in the periphery, the municipal stakeholders of the change see the control of activities and conservation as a collective patrimonial function for non-productive functions that must be controlled in the context of global change. They perceived the significant natural value of the above restrictive framework [17].

The NtPs directors also perceive as an issue the so-called border effect between three NtPs in 3 provinces and 43 municipalities, caused by the institutional framework [73] that limits territorial cooperation [135]. This limitation is appreciated in border municipalities, i.e., between provinces, regions and Spain and Portugal, by preventing intermunicipal collaboration.

On the other hand, municipal stakeholders mostly positively highlight the relationships between themselves through formal networks, e.g., associations, projects or routes and informal networks of shared interests [71]. Municipal stakeholders mainly indicate competitive relationships between municipalities, the concentration of tourism initiatives, the lack of coordination in the management of attractions and their lack of originality as the drawbacks [21,22] due to the prevalence of local discourses [20]. Furthermore, the municipalities of change and the most peripheral ones communicate the presence of municipal lobbyists in supramunicipal structures, e.g., municipal associations and LAGs [136], aiming to benefit their municipalities by reproducing centre–periphery models [137].

The directors agree that there is a lack of funding, material and personal resources in the NtPs [104] due to a management system based on public budgets and subsidies [24] and not on payment for ecosystem services [138]. For some municipal stakeholders, the lack of funding and continued financing translates into increased sustainability costs [56]. On the contrary, for others, the most significant matter is not funding, but that aid and subsidies

are aimed to benefit the same objectives. This opinion is recurrent in business associations, pointing out that sometimes immobilised financing is waiting for decision-making [55].

4.3.2. Private–Private Level

Interviewees view tourism companies positively based on their activities and economic, social and cultural contribution. The parties see business associations as valid interlocutors, such as tourism industry networks [70]. Tourism companies and business associations appreciate many positive and negative relationships and interrelationships at the private–private level, where the work of the LAGs stands out [139]. Nonetheless, the cooperative relationships between tourism companies stand out where cooperation is based on their activities, ideological affinity and proactivity trust and complementarity relationships [140]. Despite that, competitive relationships are also generated between companies:

- (a) Local companies' origin of the promoters or investment is attributed to sustainability [76] because they are local, thus questioning the legitimacy of external initiatives [141]. They do not consider their characteristics and connections with the community [142] nor the role of the neo-rural [66,143] in neo-endogenous tourism [144] or community-based tourism, which is especially visible in SAPA [13]. Foreign companies, however, blame local companies for their lack of originality [21,22].
- (b) The professionalisation of the activity refers to companies with tourism as their primary activity, which emphasise that those with tourism as a secondary, non-professionalised activity do not take care of sustainability. Therefore, the reason is opportunism that considers tourism an attractor [99] and the lack of business culture and training [27].
- (c) The type of activity points to non-business activities as a significant issue as such activities do not have business maintenance costs and act as unfair competition. They consider the offer of cultural and environmental activities by cultural and private associations as either unregulated or illegal [20,27,104]. In contrast, unmonitored activities and autonomous tourism are perceived as unsustainable [64].

4.3.3. Public–Private Level

The interviewees highlight the relations at the public–private level of cooperation and, especially, of competition, which relate to the lack of information, communication and participation in decision-making [134].

The LAGs and their managers are valued positively by all the interviewees as internal, legitimate, public–private institutional actors that respond with collaborative work to an institutional incapacity [145]. They collect stakeholders' interests at different levels [145] and lead, coordinate and bring together projects and actions to stimulate and promote tourism [50,104]. LAGs managers point out their cooperative relationships based on the LEADER approach and decentralisation [137] with many institutional and private stakeholders and with other municipalities and counties that go beyond the border effect [73]. They aim to establish innovative territorial networks [20], projects based on a joint development strategy and diversification promoted by other entities, such as the RJ [87]. However, LAGs are only project developers who may not consistently achieve real change, partly because of stakeholder resistance to cooperation and the lack of collective learning [146].

Municipalities in the context of neoliberal governance [34,41] do not have competencies in tourism and environmental policy. They often do not have a dedicated budget, yet they act as inhibitors or facilitators of sustainable tourism development, showing local leadership to business disinterest [147] and top-down directives [67]. However, they frequently face issues related to a new specialisation [72], observed by LAGs managers as a danger of so-called "pan-tourism" where any other activities are disregarded. Municipal stakeholders specify collaboration with tourism and restaurant companies, improving business activities with advice and support, and assume the role of intermediaries, acting to enhance the tourism sector's prospects based on SIEs. The relations between municipalities and tourism companies are also competence-based, and the tourism companies explain them as follows:

- (a) The benefit of the municipalities to local companies is an obstacle for exogenous companies [41], regardless of their characteristics, especially relevant in the SH.
- (b) The benefit of the municipalities to the external companies for the search for external financing, investments and capital flows in the short term [31,72] as an expression of the mercantilist discourse and the development of alliances with external capital [12] that hinders internal entrepreneurship, mainly prevailing in SAPA and SNS municipalities.
- (c) There is unfair competition between municipalities and companies that promote SIEs with public investment, and the direct management of tourist attractions affecting negatively private business viability and calls for a clear definition of the municipal role for accountability [67,70].

For some tourism companies, the NtPs contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and the control of agricultural practices through good practices, technical support and the limitation of urbanisation. In contrast, for others, the NtPs suppose constraints and bureaucracy for their initiatives [104], as mentioned by the LAGs managers and recognised as a deficiency by the NtPs directors. The conflicts between traditional and tourism use generate a disconnection between tourism companies and the NtPs (SNS), as it does not necessarily control illegal or unlawful activities in the PNAs nor act diligently due to the scarcity of resources, and they are working as a so-called foreign administration to the territory [55].

Tourism companies and business associations highlight the lack of coordination between public and private initiatives and stakeholders. It is caused due to the inexistence of a coordinating body for tourism activities in the territory and a plan establishing tourism bases and objectives accepted by all [41,60,93]. This absence exists as an unfavorable institutional framework [53] due to the presence of administrations at different territorial scales and the distribution of environmental zones (PNAs). Tourism competencies are also divided between two regional ministries [64], leading to ineffectiveness [104]. In addition, the lack of stakeholder involvement [41], political issues and discrepant interests result in a lack of action coordination [91] and tourist micro-destination creation by the municipalities.

5. Conclusions

The perception of stakeholders about the sustainability of tourism activities, despite the contextual differences, is not substantially different from other spaces, with elements identified by Renfors [41].

Our study shows that stakeholders recognise that sustainability is generally the purpose of the PNA. However, tourism sustainability is compromised by focusing on one of the sustainability dimensions and not on the interconnection of dimensions. Sustainability is, for some, an option. For others, it is an opportunity and, for others, a conviction. It is a threat to consider sustainability as an option when conserving PNAs, and the fight against global change relies on it [57]. On the other hand, tourism should not be underestimated as an instrument for development in an agrosystem such as the dehesa, "which has been capable of changing and reinventing itself randomly from different socioeconomic and historical contexts" [84] (p. 134).

Stakeholders mutually recognise each other [63] and acquire attributes as a result of their dominant relationships with others [60,73] and perceive themselves differently based on their roles, discourses and influence and characteristics [73]. The opposing dominant discourses manifest their differences, although they might change over time. However, the dogmatism and pragmatism of the discourses are equally dangerous in a fragile territory, requiring a compromise between the actors. The relations between stakeholders materialise through ties of cooperation and competition, which hinder the governance and management of NtPs and tourist activities. At the same time, the rigidity of the regulatory framework prevents not only reaching agreements but also proposing them.

The NtPs were created to protect, although they are inhabited spaces where citizens do not participate. It indicates a paradox of sustainability where we protect the space and

restrict its use, the local population must behave sustainably and the tourist population requires environmental training.

More than three decades after the proclamation of the NTPs, tourism has developed, while sustainability remains a matter for a few, and the heritage process has not been completed. The accumulation of protection objects does not guarantee conservation. Therefore, without adequate management and financing instruments, the DSMBR continues to be, two decades later, an opportunity for sustainable tourism development.

The main limitations of this study are that it is based on the opinions of the interviewees, so it is necessary to consider to what extent to trust them [74], and the absence of in-depth interviews and/or questionnaires to the local population. On the other hand, the snowball technique can be identified as a methodological deficiency since some responses from the interviewees were recurrent.

Based on the results obtained, new lines of research are proposed, as follows: (a) examine local development processes and the impacts generated by tourism, contrasting the perception of the actors with secondary sources; (b) establish the existing relationships between landscape and sustainable tourism in the PNT; (c) study the governance and the determining factors of the relations of cooperation or competition between the actors of the PNC from the stakeholder theory, taking into account the direct perception of the local population; (d) analyse the existing relationships between proactivity, ideology and gender in the development of (sustainable) tourist activities in the PNAs.

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Abbreviations

DSMBR	Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve
Int	Interviews
LAGs	Local Action Groups
NtP	Nature Park
PNA	Protected Nature Areas
RJ	Ruta del Jabugo
SAPA	Nature Park Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche
SH	Nature Park Sierra de Hornachuelos
SIEs	Services, infrastructures and [types of] equipment
SMSTRE	Sierra Morena Starlight Reserve
SNS	Nature Park Sierra Norte de Sevilla
UWGpSNS	UNESCO World Geopark Sierra Norte de Sevilla

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