



UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

## EL PAPEL DE LAS INSTITUCIONES EN EL DESARROLLO REGIONAL DEL TURISMO: UNA PERSPECTIVA DESDE LA DENSIDAD INSTITUCIONAL

Natalia Restrepo Montoya

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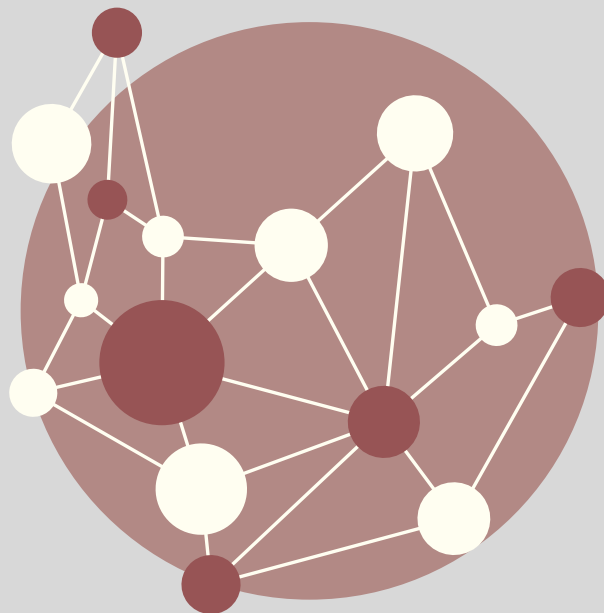
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**El papel de las Instituciones en el Desarrollo Regional del Turismo:  
Una perspectiva desde la Densidad Institucional**

***The role of Institutions in Regional Tourism Development:  
An Institutional Thickness perspective***

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NATALIA RESTREPO MONTOYA



**DOCTORAL THESIS  
2021**

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TESIS DOCTORAL

Dirigida por el Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé

Departamento de Geografía

Grupo de Investigación en Análisis Territorial y Estudios Turísticos (GRATET)



**UNIVERSITAT  
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FAIG CONSTAR que aquest treball, titulat “El papel de las Instituciones en el Desarrollo Regional del Turismo: Una perspectiva desde la Densidad Institucional”, que presenta Natalia Restrepo Montoya per a l’obtenció del títol de Doctor, ha estat realitzat sota la meva direcció al Departament de Geografia d’aquesta universitat.

HAGO CONSTAR que el presente trabajo, titulado “El papel de las Instituciones en el Desarrollo Regional del Turismo: Una perspectiva desde la Densidad Institucional”, que presenta Natalia Restrepo Montoya para la obtención del título de Doctor, ha sido realizado bajo mi dirección en el Departamento de Geografía de esta universidad

I STATE that the present study, entitled “El papel de las Instituciones en el Desarrollo Regional del Turismo: Una perspectiva desde la Densidad Institucional” presented by Natalia Restrepo Montoya for the award of the degree of Doctor, has been carried out under my supervision at the Department of Geography of this university.

Vila-seca (Tarragona), 2 de novembre/novembre/November de 2021

El director de la tesi doctoral,  
El director de la tesi doctoral,  
Doctoral Thesis Supervisor,

Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé



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## Lista de publicaciones

En esta tesis se incluyen tres artículos publicados en revistas científicas indexadas revisadas por pares:

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1. Restrepo, N., & Anton Clavé, S. (2019). Institutional Thickness and Regional Tourism Development: Lessons from Antioquia, Colombia. *Sustainability*, 11(9), 2568. doi:10.3390/su11092568

**Editorial:** MDPI - Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute

Journal Citation Reports - JCR 2019

**Factor de impacto:** 2.576 **Clasificación:** 120/265 (Environmental Studies) **Cuartil:** 2

**Número de citas (a 30 de octubre de 2021) GS:** 13

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2. Restrepo, N., Lozano, S., & Anton Clavé, S. (2021). Measuring institutional thickness in tourism: An empirical application based on social network analysis. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100770. doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100770

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3. Restrepo, N., & Anton Clavé, S. (2021). Exploring institutions' perceived roles in regional tourism development: An institutional thickness approach. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*. doi: 10.1080/19407963.2021.1962891

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## Proyectos vinculados con la Tesis Doctoral

La investigación en la que se basa esta tesis doctoral forma parte de los siguientes proyectos de investigación concedidos al Grupo de Investigación en Análisis Territorial y Estudios Turísticos (GRATET) de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, en el marco del Plan Nacional de Investigación.

---

**Proyecto:** Efectos de la transformación de las pautas de movilidad global en la evolución de los destinos turísticos (MOVETUR).

**Investigador/a Principal:** Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé (1) & Dr. Antonio Paolo Russo (2).

Grupo de Investigación en Análisis Territorial y Estudios Turísticos. Departamento de Geografía. Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

**Programa:** Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad. Plan Nacional de Investigación.

**Referencia:** CSO2014-51785-R

**Duración:** 01/01/2015 -31/12/2017

---

**Proyecto:** Análisis del papel de las políticas territoriales en la gestión de los destinos turísticos en la época de las movilidades (POLITUR).

**Investigador/a Principal:** Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé (1) & Dr. Antonio Paolo Russo (2).

Grupo de Investigación en Análisis Territorial y Estudios Turísticos. Departamento de Geografía. Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

**Programa:** Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad. Plan Nacional de Investigación.

**Referencia:** CSO2017-82156-R

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**Investigador/a Principal:** Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé (1) & Dr. Aaron Gutiérrez Palomero (2).

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## Resumen

Desde finales del siglo XX, la geografía económica ha estado interesada en estudiar el rol que juegan las instituciones en el desempeño económico de las regiones con el fin de establecer en qué medida su éxito económico depende del entorno institucional en el que están integradas.

El objetivo de esta tesis es comprender el papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo. Plantea analizar si la generación de capacidades institucionales para impulsar el desarrollo turístico en una región es un elemento facilitador de los procesos de consolidación y desarrollo turístico e impulsor de su gobernanza. Con esta finalidad, la investigación despliega un modelo analítico inspirado, en el contexto de la geografía económica, en la aproximación de la densidad institucional (*institutional thickness*), poniendo especial atención en el estudio del papel de la presencia institucional, las dinámicas de interacción, las estructuras de dominio y las agendas comunes entre instituciones en el desarrollo turístico y regional del espacio en el que se localizan.

El análisis empírico se desarrolla en una región de América Latina, Antioquia – Colombia. Observando cómo la región avanza en la creación y consolidación de instituciones clave para apoyar el desarrollo regional del turismo en el periodo comprendido desde el año 2000 al 2015, la investigación se orienta, en primer lugar, a estudiar la densidad institucional y sus efectos sobre el desarrollo turístico. En segundo lugar, analiza las consecuencias de la existencia de espacios formales de interacción sobre el tejido institucional del destino. En tercer lugar, evalúa las percepciones de las propias instituciones acerca de su relevancia y su desempeño a través de la valoración de un conjunto de factores no económicos que pueden promover o dificultar el desarrollo turístico.

La metodología de investigación comprende una combinación de técnicas cualitativas (entrevistas estructuradas, cuestionario online, análisis documental) y cuantitativas (análisis de redes sociales, análisis clúster, análisis estadístico) que se aplica de forma directa a 28 instituciones clave para el desarrollo del turismo en la región de Antioquia y en Colombia. De forma indirecta intervienen en el análisis otras 79 instituciones adicionales asociadas a la actividad turística.

Los resultados de esta tesis demuestran que la existencia de un tejido sólido de instituciones es uno de los principales impulsores para el desarrollo regional del turismo. El estudio de la relevancia de la densidad institucional puede explicar que hay asuntos cualitativos que son importantes en el desarrollo regional del turismo tales como las relaciones entre los actores institucionales y la motivación para la acción conjunta más allá de los factores económicos tradicionales. En la medida que las instituciones tienen diferentes funciones y motivaciones que pueden complementarse, reforzarse o contradecirse, la configuración de interacciones formales puede determinar el sistema

de gobernanza de un destino turístico, convirtiendo determinadas instituciones en centros de conexión o en autoridades para el impulso del desarrollo regional del turismo.

**Palabras clave:** instituciones; desarrollo turístico; desarrollo regional; geografía económica; densidad institucional; redes institucionales; análisis de redes sociales; percepción de las instituciones turísticas; geografía del turismo; Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia, América Latina.

## Abstract

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, economic geography has been interested in studying the role played by institutions in the economic performance of regions in order to establish to what extent economic success depends on their institutional environment.

The aim of this thesis is to understand the role of institutions in regional tourism development. It analyses whether the generation of institutional capacities is a facilitator of the consolidation and tourist development processes of a region and a governance driver. For this purpose, the research deploys an analytic model inspired, in the context of the economic geography, in the institutional thickness approach, paying particular attention to the study of the role of institutional presence, the interaction dynamics, domain structures and the common agendas between institutions in tourist and regional development.

The empirical analysis is developed in a Latin American region, Antioquia – Colombia. Observing how the region advances in creating and consolidating key institutions to support regional tourism development in the period between 2000 to 2015, firstly, the research is aimed at studying institutional thickness and how it effects regional tourist development. Secondly, it analyses the consequences of the existence of formal interaction spaces within the institutions of the destination. Thirdly, it evaluates the perceptions of the institutions themselves about their relevance and performance by assessing a set of non-economic factors that may promote or hinder tourist development.

The research methodology combines qualitative (structured interviews, online questionnaire, documentary analysis) and quantitative techniques (social network analysis, analysis cluster, statistical analysis) applied directly to 28 key institutions for tourist development in the Antioquia region and in Colombia. There are another additionally analysed 79 institutions intervening indirectly which are associated to the tourist activity.

The results of this thesis demonstrate that the existence of a solid cluster of institutions is one of the main drivers for regional tourism development. The study of the relevance of institutional thickness may explain that there are qualitative issues which are important for regional tourism development such as the relations between the institutional actors and the motivation for joint action beyond the traditional economic factors. Insofar as institutions have different functions and motivation which may be complemented, reinforced or contradicted, the configuration of formal interactions may determine the governance system of a tourist destination, converting certain institutions into connecting hubs or into authorities for promoting regional tourism development.



**Key words:** institutions; tourism development; regional development; economic geography; institutional thickness; institutional networks; social network analysis; perception of tourist institutions; tourism geography; Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia, Latin America.

# Capítulo 1: Introducción



## 1.1. Presentación de la investigación

El interés por el turismo como actividad económica de relevancia para el desarrollo económico ha registrado una gran expansión a nivel global desde los inicios de su análisis. Su capacidad de generar divisas, fomentar la inversión privada, impulsar la creación y el desarrollo de empresas, atraer nuevos residentes, estimular la generación de empleo o, más recientemente, ocasionar dinámicas de mejora de la prosperidad de la población local y fortalecer la sostenibilidad de los lugares, despierta el interés de autoridades a diferentes escalas y otros organismos que ven en el turismo una oportunidad de desarrollo.

A pesar de que las estrategias destinadas a desarrollar y fortalecer la actividad turística suelen basarse en factores como la atracción de un mayor número de turistas, el aumento de su gasto medio y la ampliación de su impacto en el resto de las actividades económicas del país, región o municipio (Pina & Ruiz, 2014); las formas de organizar y llevar a cabo su impulso varían en función de las características territoriales, las cuales pueden ser determinantes en términos de establecer la dimensión, naturaleza y características del turismo en un lugar.

Los entornos territoriales juegan un papel decisivo en el desarrollo y, más concretamente, en los resultados económicos de una región, siendo la innovación y la competitividad elementos que no pueden entenderse plenamente sin tener en cuenta las características sociales e institucionales en las que opera una actividad económica (Martin, 2000; Lundvall, 2010). De ahí que la existencia de un entorno territorial competitivo e innovador desde una perspectiva económica sea normalmente el resultado de un proceso de concertación entre actores locales y de una eficiente vinculación de los diferentes niveles de las administraciones públicas (Alburquerque, 2004).

En este contexto, las instituciones pueden ser consideradas elementos centrales y explicativos de la evolución de las industrias y del desarrollo de las economías regionales. En el marco de una amplia gama de disciplinas, como la geografía económica, los investigadores están generando cada vez más evidencias analíticas acerca del papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo regional para comprender cómo se producen los procesos de innovación y el desarrollo económico (Chang, 2006; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Zukauskaitė, 2013, Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

Las aportaciones existentes en el campo de estudio del turismo como fenómeno social, cultural y económico (Organización Mundial del Turismo, 2021), han abordado de manera limitada la comprensión de este factor. Por tanto, la necesidad de investigar cómo las estructuras institucionales y, en especial, la tipología, el ámbito territorial y las dinámicas de poder, coordinación e interacción afectan el desarrollo turístico en las regiones, justifica la realización de esta tesis.

## 1.2. Preguntas, objetivos e hipótesis de la investigación

### 1.2.1. Objetivo general

El objetivo general de esta tesis es avanzar en la comprensión acerca del papel que juegan las instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo analizando si pueden actuar como un elemento catalizador en los procesos de consolidación turística y en la gobernanza del destino.

### 1.2.2. Preguntas de investigación

A partir de este objetivo general se abordan y exploran las siguientes cuestiones de investigación:

- P.1. ¿El entorno institucional desempeña un papel importante en el desarrollo regional del turismo?
- P.2. ¿El entorno institucional y las dinámicas de interacción entre las instituciones determinan el grado de desarrollo regional del turismo?
- P.3. ¿Qué papel desempeñan los distintos tipos de instituciones en las dinámicas de poder y de colaboración en el destino turístico?
- P.4. ¿Cómo se pueden medir el papel de las instituciones y la evolución de las dinámicas institucionales?
- P.5. ¿En qué medida el desarrollo de agendas comunes articula al tejido institucional de un destino turístico?
- P.6. ¿Cómo perciben las instituciones su papel en la configuración de los procesos de toma de decisiones relacionadas con el turismo?

### 1.2.3. Objetivos específicos

Las cuestiones planteadas se despliegan a través de la formulación de los siguientes objetivos específicos:

- OE.1. Discutir y examinar la importancia general de las instituciones en la determinación del desarrollo regional del turismo.

- OE.2.** Analizar el papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo del turismo teniendo en cuenta la variedad institucional (administraciones públicas, agencias de desarrollo, cámaras de comercio, asociaciones empresariales, centros de innovación, instituciones educativas y otros organismos) y las escalas geográficas de impacto (local, regional, nacional).
- OE.3.** Determinar cómo las estructuras institucionales públicas y privadas, su coordinación e interacción afectan el desarrollo regional del turismo.

#### **1.2.4. Hipótesis de la investigación**

Sobre la base del objetivo general, las preguntas de investigación a responder y los objetivos específicos trazados, se plantea como hipótesis general a confirmar en esta tesis doctoral, la siguiente:

Para el éxito del turismo como instrumento para el desarrollo económico a escala regional es adecuado que las regiones dispongan, al igual que otros tipos de destinos, de un entramado de instituciones que tengan interacciones entre ellas y que cuenten con sistemas formales e informales de coordinación para la gestión colectiva de las expectativas de desarrollo y de los recursos disponibles. De esta manera las propias instituciones incrementan sus capacidades como habilitadoras del impulso y el fortalecimiento de la actividad turística y, en consecuencia, de la economía regional.

#### **1.3. Diseño y fases de la investigación**

El proceso de investigación para el desarrollo de esta tesis se ha realizado en cinco fases. Los métodos, las fuentes de información y los resultados obtenidos a lo largo de dichas fases se concretan en las diferentes publicaciones derivadas de la investigación. A continuación, la Figura 1, muestra una representación gráfica del proceso de investigación.

Figura 1. Fases del proceso de investigación.



Fuente: Elaboración propia.

- **Fase Preparatoria:** Constituye el punto de partida de la presente tesis. Esta fase inicial, se centró en la revisión de la literatura existente a partir de conceptos tales como el desarrollo regional, los sistemas regionales de innovación, la evolución de los destinos turísticos. Este proceso permitió identificar aquellas áreas sobre las que podrían realizarse mayores aportaciones. Así, en el marco de la literatura analizada se observó de manera reiterativa la necesidad de investigar cómo las estructuras institucionales afectan a la diversificación económica en las regiones, y especialmente, al desarrollo regional del turismo. De esta manera, y teniendo en cuenta que existen otros factores que pueden influir en el desarrollo turístico de una región, la reflexión se orientó a la utilidad de considerar el tejido institucional como elemento de relevancia en el desempeño de un destino turístico.
- **Fase Conceptual:** En esta fase se estableció el marco conceptual que contextualiza la investigación. El enfoque de la densidad institucional (institutional thickness), desarrollado por Amin y Thrift (1994), proporcionó las bases conceptuales para aplicar el análisis del papel de las instituciones en el contexto del desarrollo regional del turismo. La elaboración del primer borrador del marco teórico y la definición de las variables e instrumentos metodológicos fueron realizados en esta fase. Asimismo, esta primera aproximación fue presentada en el *VII Congreso Internacional en Gobierno, Administración y Políticas Públicas GIGAPP*, realizado en Madrid en octubre de 2016.
- **Fase Empírica:** El área de estudio seleccionada para llevar a cabo el trabajo de campo de esta investigación fue la región de Antioquia (Colombia). La selección de esta región no solo estuvo motivada por los intereses personales y profesionales que como autora de esta tesis podría tener. La selección se justifica fundamentalmente por el hecho de que esta región consolidó a lo largo de 15

años (2000-2015) una estrategia de desarrollo económico que integró a la actividad turística como un elemento clave, partiendo de un modelo de desarrollo endógeno, es decir, de la potenciación del papel de los actores sociales e instituciones locales y regionales.

En esta fase se identificaron las instituciones participantes en la investigación, se plantearon los parámetros de análisis y se realizó la recolección de datos efectuada, por un lado, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, y por otro, mediante un cuestionario difundido electrónicamente. Estos procedimientos son explicados en mayor detalle, tanto en la sección metodológica de este documento, como en las tres publicaciones derivadas de esta investigación.

- **Fase Analítica:** Durante esta fase, se analizaron los datos resultantes fruto de la aplicación de los instrumentos diseñados para la recolección de información. En este sentido, es importante mencionar que esta fase se estableció como un elemento vivo a lo largo del tiempo, es decir, partió de un análisis general y meramente descriptivo de los datos obtenidos y, posteriormente, se adaptó en función de los propósitos de cada una de las publicaciones realizadas y de la verificación y búsqueda de respuesta a las preguntas de investigación planteadas.
- **Fase Divulgativa:** La divulgación de los resultados de esta investigación fue sin duda un objetivo marcado desde el inicio del proceso de realización de esta tesis. Por ello, se decidió la elección de la modalidad de presentación de la tesis doctoral por compendio de artículos, dando como resultado la publicación de una serie de artículos con unidad temática.



**Tabla 1.** Resultados de la fase de divulgación.

Publicación	Título / Revista	Contribución al conocimiento
<b>Publicación 1</b>	Institutional Thickness and Regional Tourism Development: Lessons from Antioquia, Colombia.  <i>Sustainability</i>	Propone el enfoque de la densidad institucional como un concepto marco para el análisis de las instituciones y su papel en el desarrollo regional del turismo. Asimismo, desde una perspectiva cualitativa, analiza sus dimensiones.
<b>Publicación 2</b>	Measuring institutional thickness in tourism: An empirical application based on social network analysis.  <i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	Plantea un nuevo enfoque para la medición de la densidad institucional utilizando el análisis de redes sociales.
<b>Publicación 3</b>	Exploring institutions' perceived roles in regional tourism development: An institutional thickness approach.  <i>Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events.</i>	Estudia la percepción de las propias instituciones acerca de su relevancia, su desempeño y los factores clave para el desarrollo turístico, en relación con las dimensiones de la densidad institucional.

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

## 1.4. Estructura de la tesis

Esta tesis se estructura en tres capítulos. El **Capítulo 1** corresponde al marco introductorio en el que se plantean la justificación de la investigación, la hipótesis y las preguntas de investigación, los objetivos, el diseño metodológico, la conceptualización teórica y el área de estudio.

El **Capítulo 2** presenta el compendio de las tres publicaciones que constituyen el centro de esta tesis. Las publicaciones se presentan en tres apartados, siendo coherentes con los objetivos y las preguntas de investigación planteadas.

La primera publicación *“Institutional Thickness and Regional Tourism Development: Lessons from Antioquia, Colombia”* desarrolla un marco teórico que relaciona la noción de instituciones y su papel en el desarrollo regional del turismo. Asimismo, introduce el enfoque de la densidad institucional como un marco analítico innovador para analizar el papel que desempeñan las instituciones en el desarrollo del turismo, analizando desde una perspectiva cualitativa la presencia institucional, los niveles de interacción, las estructuras de dominio y las agendas comunes en 28 instituciones relacionadas con el turismo en la región seleccionada como área de estudio.

La segunda publicación, *“Measuring institutional thickness in tourism: An empirical application based on social network analysis”*, aporta un nuevo enfoque al estudio de la densidad institucional, proponiendo para su medición una serie de indicadores que son medidos mediante el uso de la metodología de análisis de redes sociales. La introducción de los indicadores propuestos permite operacionalizar los componentes definidos teóricamente por la densidad institucional a través del estudio de los espacios institucionales de interacción establecidos en el destino turístico analizado.

La tercera publicación, *“Exploring institutions’ perceived roles in regional tourism development: An institutional thickness approach”*, efectúa un análisis clúster y estadístico tradicional, profundizando en la comprensión del papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo centrándose, principalmente, en el estudio de la percepción acerca de su relevancia y su desempeño. Asimismo, el artículo identifica una serie de factores clave que tienen efecto en cada una de las dimensiones de la densidad institucional.

La Tabla 2 ofrece una visión general de la relación entre las preguntas de investigación, los objetivos específicos y las publicaciones de la tesis.

**Tabla 2.** Relación de las publicaciones con las preguntas y los objetivos de investigación.

Capítulo 2 Compendio de publicaciones	Preguntas de investigación (Sección 1.2)	Objetivos específicos (Sección 1.2)
Publicación 1	P.1, P.2	OE.1
Publicación 2	P.3, P.4, P.5	OE.2
Publicación 3	P.6	OE.3

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Finalmente, el **Capítulo 3** presenta las conclusiones generales de la tesis, incluyendo las lecciones, las principales aportaciones y las implicaciones sociales e institucionales, además de las limitaciones y futuras líneas de investigación.

## 1.5. Conceptualización teórica

### 1.5.1. El concepto de instituciones

La literatura sobre el concepto de instituciones proporciona varias definiciones. La elaboración de esta tesis aborda el concepto desde la perspectiva de la Nueva Economía Institucional (NEI), cuya escuela de pensamiento fue impulsada principalmente por Ronald Coase (1991) y Oliver Williamson (2000). La NEI establece un cuerpo teórico que contribuye a la comprensión del papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo económico, aportando un importante avance que incorpora el análisis institucional en la ciencia económica.

Desde la perspectiva de la NEI, las instituciones se definen como “acuerdos entre unidades económicas que determinan y especifican las formas en que estas pueden cooperar o competir” (North & Thomas, 1970: 5). Las instituciones componen elementos

fundamentales para la existencia del mercado y son responsables de su funcionamiento de acuerdo con las reglas, las normas sociales, las prácticas y los arreglos institucionales establecidos que mejoran la capacidad de llevar a cabo intercambios e incentivos, proporcionando información para la coordinación de actividades (Gandlgruber, 2003).

Los estudios institucionales abordan el concepto de instituciones desde dos tipologías. Las instituciones informales entendidas como los hábitos, las rutinas, las costumbres y tradiciones. Las instituciones formales que comprenden las constituciones, las leyes, la estructura de gobierno, la asignación de recursos y las limitaciones aplicadas a las organizaciones y a los individuos (North, 1990; Williamson, 2000).

En términos del establecimiento de infraestructuras institucionales, no existe una opinión unánime en el contexto de la economía institucional sobre la relación entre el concepto de instituciones y el de organizaciones (Zukauskaitė, 2013). Sin embargo, gran parte de los análisis sobre instituciones se han centrado principalmente en las instituciones como organizaciones (gobiernos, organizaciones sociales, organizaciones de investigación, etc.). Por tanto, la atención se centra en la infraestructura institucional determinada por la presencia de organizaciones, dejando de lado el entorno institucional en el que estas infraestructuras están inmersas (Zukauskaitė, 2013). En tal sentido, la consideración de ambos enfoques desde una perspectiva institucional orientada al desarrollo permite analizar de manera más integral el papel que desempeñan las instituciones informales en la configuración de las formales, es decir, determinar las formas en que las instituciones informales (hábitos, rutinas, costumbres y tradiciones) cambian gradualmente las acciones e interacciones de los agentes en todo tipo de organizaciones sociales (e.g. gobiernos y empresas) (Gandlgruber, 2003).

En ese marco, autores como Amin y Thrift (1994) desarrollaron el término "densidad institucional" que considera, por un lado, a las organizaciones como forma de institución, y por otro, una serie de factores relacionados con las dinámicas del entorno institucional que pueden ser beneficiosos para el desarrollo regional. Importa advertir, precisamente, que la presente tesis introduce por primera vez el concepto de la densidad institucional al análisis del desarrollo regional del turismo, aportando nuevos enfoques para la incorporación del concepto de instituciones a otros campos de estudio.

### **1.5.2. La densidad institucional**

A partir del amplio y diverso conjunto de disciplinas que abordan el estudio de las instituciones, emerge el concepto de la densidad institucional (institutional thickness) desarrollado por Amin y Thrift (1994). Como se presenta posteriormente, a lo largo de las diferentes publicaciones, la densidad institucional es el concepto teórico central

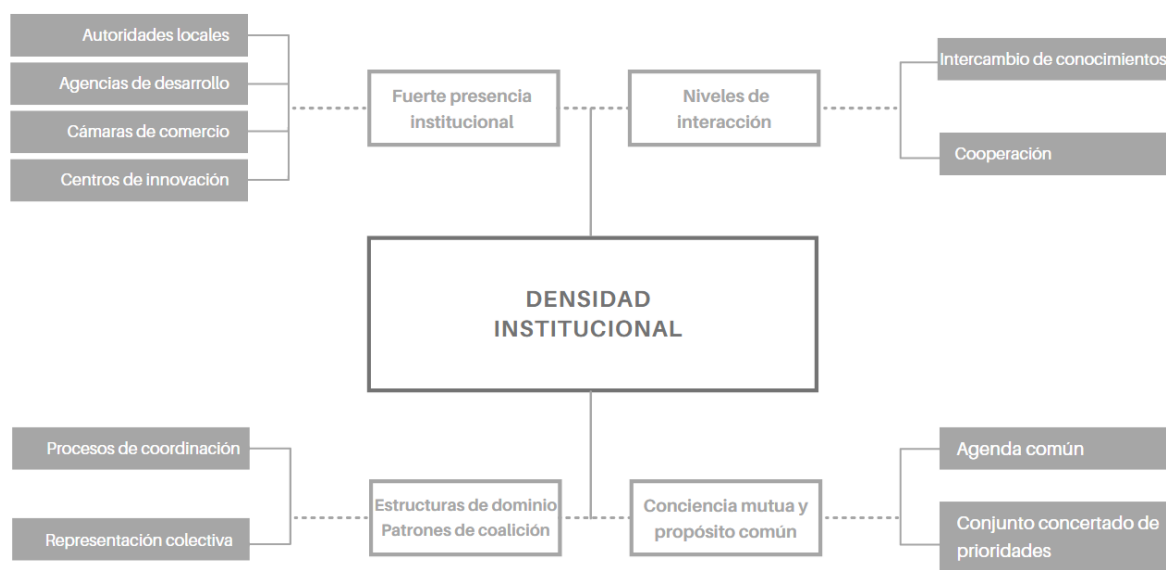
considerado en esta tesis. Esta sección, ofrece una introducción al concepto que se extiende, especialmente, en la Publicación 1.

El concepto de la densidad institucional fue introducido por primera vez por Amin y Thrift (1994), en un esfuerzo por analizar el éxito económico de las ciudades y las regiones en el contexto del capitalismo global. En su obra *Globalization, Institutions and Regional Development in Europe* (1994), los autores exponen la idea de considerar hasta qué punto las características institucionales de un lugar son importantes para sus resultados económicos, proponiendo ir más allá de un conjunto de factores económicos y afirmando que “los factores sociales y culturales también viven en el corazón del éxito económico” (Amin y Thrift, 1994: 14).

La densidad institucional se refiere a la presencia de instituciones que actúan en un territorio promoviendo acciones de desarrollo (Cravacuore, 2003). Asimismo, implica una serie de criterios de tipo organizacional, sociocultural y económico. Se trata de un concepto complejo que hace referencia no sólo a la existencia de instituciones vinculadas a la actividad económica territorial, sino que se refiere fundamentalmente a la interacción entre las empresas, las organizaciones intermediarias y el poder público local (Madoery, 2001).

En este contexto, Amin y Thrift (1994) establecen un marco para desarrollar el concepto, basado en cuatro factores que pueden contribuir a determinar la densidad institucional en un lugar concreto.

**Figura 2.** Factores de la densidad institucional.



Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Amin y Thrift (1994).

1. **Fuerte presencia institucional:** Se refiere a la existencia de diferentes instituciones u organizaciones tales como autoridades locales, agencias de desarrollo, cámaras de comercio, centros de innovación, sindicatos, instituciones educativas y otros organismos que pueden servir de base para el crecimiento de determinadas prácticas locales, generación de capacidades y representación colectiva.
2. **Niveles de interacción:** Se centra en la importancia del intercambio de conocimientos formales e informales y la cooperación entre instituciones.
3. **Estructuras de dominio y/o patrones de coalición:** Se refiere al liderazgo de los procesos de coordinación de las dinámicas que se producen. Dan como resultado la representación colectiva de lo que normalmente son intereses individuales. Equilibran las diferencias entre instituciones capaces de ejercer una influencia dominante y las que no.
4. **Conciencia mutua y propósito común:** Implica que existe una agenda común que el colectivo de instituciones desarrolla y de la que depende. Esta agenda común para el desarrollo puede estar formalmente definida o ser simplemente un conjunto concertado de prioridades.

Desde la introducción del concepto de la densidad institucional, la operacionalización de este y el desarrollo de variables para su análisis han sido difíciles de estimar (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017), dado que Amin y Thrift (1994) no fundamentan la introducción del concepto en una investigación empírica que demuestre el alcance de las interacciones entre las instituciones de un lugar, los tipos de coaliciones establecidas o la construcción de agendas compartidas.

A pesar de ello, dada la relevancia del concepto, diversas aproximaciones han sido desarrolladas a fin de establecer un marco viable para la aplicación empírica del concepto (MacLeod, 1997; Raco, 1998; Keeble et al., 1999; Henry & Pinch, 2001; Wood & Valler, 2004; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Beer & Lester 2015; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). Sin embargo, los estudios empíricos existentes se han aplicado en contextos territoriales de países desarrollados, planteando dos conjuntos principales de análisis en la literatura que se basan, fundamentalmente, o bien en el análisis de los Sistemas Regionales de Innovación o bien en el análisis de las trayectorias innovadoras en sectores industriales clave. De ahí, el interés de la propuesta analítica que se presenta en esta tesis al plantear la densidad institucional como un concepto innovador para abordar el análisis del desarrollo regional en el contexto del turismo de un país en desarrollo. Además, realiza aportaciones que contribuyen al establecimiento de indicadores y métodos de análisis que pueden ayudar a su medición para avanzar en la aplicación y utilidad del concepto.

### 1.5.3. El desarrollo regional

El concepto de desarrollo regional ha sido tradicionalmente objeto de debate por el alcance e implicaciones que se le confiere, no sólo desde disciplinas como la geografía y la ciencia regional, sino desde otros ámbitos de las ciencias sociales. Las múltiples y diversas aproximaciones dificultan el establecimiento de una definición estándar globalmente utilizada. Sin embargo, el concepto ha estado históricamente influenciado por preocupaciones económicas como el crecimiento, la renta y el empleo (Armstrong & Taylor, 2000). Además, se caracteriza por ser un fenómeno profundamente geográfico desarrollado en un contexto socio-espacial que se establece por factores físicos y humanos (Castells, 1983; Claval, 1998) y por la múltiple combinación de estructuras, instituciones y agentes (Albet i Mas, 1993).

En general, el desarrollo regional corresponde a la implementación de un proceso de toma de decisiones orientadas a la estructuración de territorios que posibiliten el despliegue del proceso productivo, la creación de infraestructura y el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida (Enríquez Pérez, 2011). Asimismo, de acuerdo con la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (2020) el desarrollo regional puede considerarse como un esfuerzo general impulsado para reducir las disparidades regionales a través del fomento de las actividades económicas (generadoras de empleo y riqueza) en las regiones.

En este sentido, para Giancarlo Canzanelli, por ejemplo, el desarrollo regional no constituye un objetivo en sí mismo. “Es un medio para alcanzar el bienestar, según la cultura y las condiciones de determinadas poblaciones. Sin embargo, el objetivo de bienestar puede diferir entre los habitantes de un lugar y de otro; sólo quien vive en determinado contexto geográfico podría fijar lo que quiere conseguir a medio y largo plazo” (Canzanelli, 2001: 24).

De forma concreta, para Pike et al. (2007) el desarrollo regional se diferencia geográficamente, variando su visión dentro y entre lugares a lo largo del tiempo. Los atributos particulares de las regiones determinan si las definiciones y variedades específicas del desarrollo regional se arraigan y prosperan o fracasan y se desvanecen con el tiempo. Por tanto, los procesos ambientales, sociales, políticos y culturales condicionan y moldean de manera profunda el desarrollo regional (Harvey, 1982; Markusen, 1987).

Desde esta corriente de pensamiento, las distintas formas que puede tomar el desarrollo regional están relacionadas con principios y prácticas normativas particulares que requieren de mecanismos institucionales de articulación, deliberación, representación y resolución (Pike et al., 2007). Un enfoque en el que, según Scott (1998), la práctica política y los procesos de gobernanza forjan el orden colectivo para el desarrollo regional, con la

capacidad de activar recursos públicos y privados que, favoreciendo el bien común, producen modelos de desarrollo que promueven la configuración de sectores productivos para mejorar el bienestar económico, social, cultural y medioambiental aprovechando todo el potencial de los recursos de una región (Keating et al., 2003; Molina, 2016).

La evolución de las teorías y los debates sobre el desarrollo regional ha estado influenciada por la introducción de los distritos industriales, los clusters, el papel de las PYMES y, últimamente, las estrategias regionales de especialización inteligente como base de los modelos de desarrollo, especialmente de los países desarrollados (Ajobiewe, 2020). Sin embargo, el rápido cambio experimentado por los estudios regionales en los últimos diez años, han dado lugar a la aparición de varias perspectivas nuevas. En este sentido, el *Handbook of Regional Growth and Development Theories* (Capello & Nijkamp, 2019), presenta las teorías más vanguardistas que pueden explicar el crecimiento y el desarrollo regional. En este trabajo, autores como Lakshmanan y Button (2019), por ejemplo, plantean la aún vigente importancia del estudio de las instituciones en los procesos de desarrollo económico, destacando que, aunque los investigadores socioeconómicos se han ocupado de la naturaleza de las instituciones y de su papel continuamente cambiante en los procesos de desarrollo, su análisis en el contexto del desarrollo regional ha recibido menos atención.

Así, desde esta perspectiva, las aportaciones realizadas por esta tesis resultan novedosas, dado que aborda el papel de las instituciones en el contexto del desarrollo regional y, asimismo, enfatiza el análisis de su importancia en un ámbito de actividad, como el turístico, de creciente interés para las regiones y las economías del mundo.

#### **1.5.4. El papel del turismo**

Los debates sobre desarrollo en el mundo evalúan el turismo como herramienta económica para el desarrollo regional (Telfer, 2014). Los beneficios y las consecuencias (económicas, medioambientales, sociales y culturales) que se derivan del desarrollo del turismo han sido investigados desde hace tiempo, reafirmando, en general, la confianza en la actividad como agente de desarrollo (Telfer & Sharpley, 2014).

En gran medida, el desarrollo turístico de los destinos ha sido impulsado para actuar como polo de crecimiento y ayudar a estimular el desarrollo regional (Telfer, 2014). En este contexto, la Organización Mundial del Turismo (OMT) de las Naciones Unidas se significa como la principal institución impulsora del turismo en el mundo y, desde la Declaración de Manila sobre el turismo mundial (1980), aboga por integrarlo sistemáticamente en la agenda global, defendiendo su valor como motor de crecimiento



socioeconómico y de desarrollo e impulsando su inclusión como prioridad en las políticas locales, regionales, nacionales e internacionales (OMT, 2021).

En consecuencia, gran parte de los países consideran que el turismo es un componente fundamental en sus planes y políticas generales de desarrollo (Dieke, 1989; Telfer & Sharpley, 2015; Telfer & Sharpley, 2014) desempeñando un papel cada vez más importante en los países miembros de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE).

La medida en que el turismo contribuye al desarrollo varía en función de diversos factores, pero es evidente que su contribución más destacada se mide en términos de la contribución económica derivada de los ingresos por turismo, la contribución a las exportaciones, al PIB y al empleo (Sharpley, 2014).

En las últimas dos décadas, el turismo se ha expandido hasta convertirse en uno de los mayores sectores económicos del mundo. Los ingresos generados por el turismo aumentaron drásticamente de 476.000 millones de dólares en el año 2000 hasta alcanzar los 1,5 billones de dólares en 2019<sup>1</sup> (OMT, 2020), contribuyendo al 10,4% del Producto Interior Bruto (PIB) en el mundo (Consejo Mundial de Viajes y Turismo, 2021).

**Tabla 3.** Indicadores del turismo internacional en 2019.

Indicador	Año 2019
Llegadas de turistas internacionales	1.460 millones
Participación del turismo al Producto Interno Bruto (PIB)	10,4%
Aportación directa al empleo mundial	119,22 millones de empleos
Inversión pública en turismo	441.000 millones USD
Inversión de capital privado en el sector turístico	950.000 millones USD

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de OMT (2021) y STATISTA (2021).

Así pues, estos datos no hacen más que evidenciar la importancia global que tiene el turismo para la economía mundial. Cabe destacar, asimismo, que a lo largo de las últimas décadas se han incorporado al análisis económico del turismo aspectos asociados al desarrollo humano como su contribución a los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio y a la Agenda 2030 de las Naciones Unidas, posicionándolo también como una actividad que debería contribuir al desarrollo sostenible y a la configuración de capital social.

<sup>1</sup> Se han tomado como referencia las estadísticas sectoriales del año 2019, dado que el contexto de la pandemia ocasionada por la COVID-19 altera de manera sustancial los datos obtenidos para el 2020 y el 2021.

Esta orientación ha sido especialmente reforzada por el creciente interés que los investigadores académicos han mostrado en analizar, de manera más crítica, los procesos de desarrollo y la planificación del turismo exponiendo la necesidad de cambiar las prácticas para apoyar la sostenibilidad (Pritchard et al., 2011; Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Moscardo et al., 2017). En este sentido, las aportaciones recientes en la literatura sobre las contribuciones del turismo al desarrollo, identifican los desafíos existentes para establecer marcos analíticos que permitan comprender como los diferentes tipos y procesos de desarrollo turístico deben contribuir, además, de los aspectos económicos, a las dimensiones socioculturales, políticas y ambientales (Deery et al., 2012, Sharpley, 2014).

La consecuencia directa de este enfoque ha suscitado, por tanto, la introducción de la acción colectiva, la cooperación, las redes, las normas y valores compartidos, la interacción social y la confianza como elementos fundamentales para el análisis de la contribución del turismo en las regiones (Woolcock, 1998), evidenciando que su integración en la economía regional a través de alianzas, asociaciones y estructuras fuertes tienen el potencial para fortalecer los vínculos sociales y económicos y, como resultado, propiciar un impacto positivo en el desarrollo de las regiones (Telfer & Sharpley, 2014). Al respecto, Mellon y Bramwell (2018) señalan el valor que puede tener la investigación sobre las instituciones turísticas y sus actividades para lograr una comprensión más completa de los procesos de desarrollo del turismo en los destinos.

Por tanto, en el análisis del papel del turismo en el desarrollo de los territorios, se evidencia que existe la necesidad de realizar mayores aportaciones sobre el papel de las instituciones, no solo turísticas, sino también las vinculadas al desarrollo general, y de que las mismas estén fundamentadas sobre la base de las teorías institucionales (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018; Jiang et al., 2019). De esta manera, la tesis presentada resulta innovadora al intentar desarrollar teórica y empíricamente una perspectiva integrada que contribuye a este cometido.

#### **1.5.5. El debate en Latinoamérica**

El modelo de desarrollo económico de los países en Latinoamérica se ha basado principalmente en la producción y exportación de productos primarios. Sin embargo, en las últimas décadas ese patrón ha ido cambiando impulsado por las políticas gubernamentales y sectoriales que buscan promover nuevas alternativas de desarrollo con mayor acento en los servicios y en la innovación.

En este contexto, la importancia del turismo para los países de la región ha adquirido relevancia al configurarse como uno de los sectores económicos con mayor potencial. Solo en 2019, Latinoamérica recibió cerca de 216 millones de turistas extranjeros.

Además, los ingresos por turismo en la región ascendieron a 334.000 millones USD (OMT, 2020). Según la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), “el turismo es un generador clave de divisas, ingresos y empleo en toda la región” (2020). En 2019 representó el 10% de las exportaciones totales y el 10% del PIB total en la región, abarcando el 35% del empleo en el Caribe y el 10% en el conjunto de países de América Latina (CEPAL, 2020).

El turismo es un ámbito de actividad económica con una larga trayectoria en algunos países de Latinoamérica, en diferentes entornos geográficos y estados de desarrollo (Altés, 2006). En este último aspecto, de acuerdo con el Índice de Competitividad de Viajes y Turismo del Foro Económico Mundial, que analiza los factores y políticas que hacen posible el desarrollo sostenible del turismo, en Latinoamérica los países siguen dependiendo en gran parte de sus recursos naturales para incentivar su desarrollo y aunque han mejorado en infraestructura, avanzan lentamente en el desarrollo de segmentos turísticos que complementen la oferta basada en sol y playa (Foro Económico Mundial, 2019). Asimismo, el mayor obstáculo de la región para la competitividad se centra en las bajas calificaciones obtenidas en elementos como la adecuación del entorno, especialmente el entorno empresarial y la seguridad.

**Tabla 4.** Índice de Competitividad de Viajes y Turismo: los 10 países más competitivos en Latinoamérica (2019).

País	Puntuación	Puesto en el ranking
México	4,69	19
Brasil	4,46	32
Costa Rica	4,27	41
Panamá	4,19	47
Perú	4,17	49
Argentina	4,15	50
Chile	4,10	52
Colombia	4,01	55
Ecuador	3,86	70
República Dominicana	3,78	73

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir del Foro Económico Mundial (2019).

Al margen de estos resultados, el Foro Económico Mundial señala la importancia de tener en cuenta que el rendimiento y valoración de indicadores varía mucho entre los distintos países dada la gran desigualdad en el nivel de desarrollo existente en la región.

El nivel de desarrollo turístico en Latinoamérica ha dependido en gran medida, además de otros factores, del grado de interés que los organismos gubernamentales, no gubernamentales y supranacionales han mostrado en planificar y promover activamente su desarrollo (Mowforth et al., 2007). Su inclusión en las políticas regionales de desarrollo, al interior de cada país, a menudo se ha visto motivada por el apoyo y los

incentivos que los organismos multilaterales de desarrollo – Banco Mundial, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (CAF), Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), Naciones Unidas, etc. – han dado a los gobiernos para el impulso del turismo, a través de programas y proyectos que se enfocan en el refuerzo de su competitividad y en el desarrollo del mismo como alternativa económica en las comunidades rurales, campesinas, indígenas o afrodescendientes. De esta manera, en los últimos años se ha registrado un aumento de la demanda de financiación para el desarrollo turístico que refleja el interés de los gobiernos latinoamericanos por aprovechar las oportunidades que ofrece el turismo como ámbito de desarrollo.

En general, el desarrollo turístico y su impacto en los países latinoamericanos depende en gran medida del contexto geopolítico y económico (Andreu-Boussut & Salin, 2018). Las instituciones nacionales, regionales y locales adquieren la tarea esencial de la planificación del turismo, a través de la cual cada territorio determina su vocación y especialización turística, los actores involucrados y las políticas públicas diseñadas para el fomento del turismo, las cuales enfatizan, en su mayoría, tres elementos fundamentales: la inversión en infraestructura, la política de promoción turística y la mejora de la conectividad para facilitar los flujos turísticos.

De manera general, la principal aportación atribuida a las instituciones en Latinoamérica es el papel central que ocupan en el crecimiento y desarrollo de la región. De acuerdo con Pinedo et al. (2020), las instituciones en Latinoamérica tienen una alta incidencia en la productividad de la región, “las instituciones juegan un rol importante en los niveles de productividad y en el crecimiento y desarrollo económicos de los países de América Latina. En un análisis realizado por Andre Vianna y Andre Mollic (2018) se presentan evidencias de que las instituciones son importantes para las economías de la región y que la relación entre ambas es altamente significativa. Sin embargo, aunque los avances empíricos acerca del papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo, ha venido creciendo considerablemente, los estudios realizados ofrecen una comprensión a nivel macro de la importancia de estas, generando un vacío en la literatura existente a nivel micro, es decir, el relativo al análisis de los efectos de las instituciones en el desarrollo de sectores económicos específicos, como es el caso del turístico. En cualquier caso, los estudios empíricos sobre estas, en el contexto latinoamericano, se muestran escasos (Pinedo et al., 2020: 11).

En este sentido, la presente tesis realiza aportes importantes a la literatura, especialmente a la de Latinoamérica, centrando el debate en el análisis de las instituciones y su papel en el desarrollo del turismo.

## 1.6. Diseño metodológico

Como se anunció en la sección (1.3) sobre el diseño y las fases de la investigación, la metodología utilizada para el desarrollo de esta tesis se divide en diversas etapas. En este apartado se detallan los métodos e instrumentos para la recolección y análisis de datos, partiendo de un marco analítico general que contribuye al compendio de las tres publicaciones presentadas.

### 1.6.1. Marco analítico

Para llevar a cabo el análisis de la densidad institucional, se ha hecho necesario operacionalizar los cuatro factores establecidos por Amin y Thrift (1994) a través de una serie de parámetros propuestos y recogidos en la Tabla 5, además de ser presentados en las publicaciones 1 y 2.

**Tabla 5.** Parámetros para el análisis de la densidad institucional en turismo.

Variable	Indicador
1. <i>Presencia institucional</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Número de instituciones/ organizaciones establecidas en la región relacionadas con al turismo.</li> <li>Tipos = a. Institución/ Organización. b. Pública/ Privada. c. Exclusivo/ Parcial compromiso con el desarrollo turístico.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Niveles de interacción</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frecuencia y motivaciones para la participación en espacios de interacción formales e informales.</li> <li>Tipos de interacción colectiva (redes, juntas y consejos sectoriales).</li> </ul>
3. <i>Estructuras de dominio y/o patrones de coalición</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procesos de liderazgo y coordinación (alianzas, agentes y presupuestos).</li> <li>Estructuras de gobernanza de representación colectiva.</li> </ul>
4. <i>Agenda común</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temáticas clave de la agenda común.</li> <li>Tipos de instrumentos desarrollados en la región para la gestión común.</li> </ul>

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Estos parámetros constituyen el marco analítico para la investigación y permiten establecer de manera concreta el tipo de indicadores que pueden ser utilizados como base para el análisis de la densidad institucional en turismo.

### 1.6.2. Instrumentos

#### – *Entrevistas semi-estructuradas*

El proceso de obtención de datos para el análisis de la densidad institucional en la región de Antioquia se basó en tres instrumentos. La realización de 6 entrevistas semi-estructuradas constituyen el primer instrumento diseñado y aplicado. Fundamentado en la selección de representantes de instituciones consideradas como estratégicas para el desarrollo turístico de Antioquia, en términos del rol desempeñado en materia de planificación y gestión del turismo en la región, entre mayo y junio de 2016 se llevaron a cabo 6 entrevistas semi-estructuradas.

El objetivo de las entrevistas fue establecer una visión preliminar acerca de la estructura institucional de la región y determinar el nivel de importancia que los entrevistados otorgaban al tejido institucional y su influencia en el desarrollo regional del turismo entre los años 2000-2016.

#### – *Mapeo de instituciones*

El segundo instrumento utilizado se basó en la construcción de un mapeo de la mayor cantidad posible de instituciones que directa o parcialmente estuvieran relacionadas con el desarrollo del turismo en la región de Antioquia. En el proceso, se identificaron hasta 34 instituciones que actúan en el territorio desempeñando acciones para el desarrollo turístico regional, tales como agencias de desarrollo, autoridades locales, regionales y nacionales, organizaciones de servicios empresariales, cámaras de comercio, gremios, universidades y centros de investigación.

#### – *Cuestionario electrónico*

El diseño y aplicación de un cuestionario electrónico fue el tercer, y más robusto, instrumento utilizado para recolectar evidencias sobre el impacto de las instituciones en el desarrollo del turismo regional y la influencia de la creación y permanencia de diferentes organismos durante el periodo de análisis establecido desde el 2000 hasta el 2016.

Conviene señalar que el uso del cuestionario electrónico tiene, además de ventajas, limitaciones y dificultades principalmente derivadas de dos elementos. Por un lado, de la tasa de respuesta que puede ser afectada por la incapacidad del participante para utilizar adecuadamente la plataforma de difusión del instrumento, por lo que se requiere de una

aplicación de fácil acceso y funcionalidad. De otro lado, la extensión del propio cuestionario, dado que, sin la presencia física del entrevistador, el respondiente puede percibir una mayor inversión de tiempo y alterar su atención en el proceso abandonándolo.

Dicho esto, a través de la plataforma para la creación de encuestas en línea SurveyMonkey® se distribuyó un cuestionario en línea circulado, a las 34 instituciones identificadas en el mapeo, entre Julio y Diciembre de 2016. En este sentido, una de las limitaciones de la distribución del cuestionario se derivó de obtener respuesta del 82,35% de las instituciones identificadas. Así, de las 34 inicialmente identificadas, 28 dieron respuesta al cuestionario. Sin embargo, una vez analizado el resultado en términos de participación se entendió que la ausencia de las 6 instituciones faltantes no representaba un elemento de riesgo para la investigación, ya que se contó con la colaboración de las instituciones más representativas en relación con el desarrollo regional del turismo. El tiempo de respuesta también se presentó como una de las dificultades a destacar, debido a que se necesitaron alrededor de cinco meses para obtener una tasa de participación alta.

En relación con la estructura del cuestionario, este fue elaborado con un total de 49 preguntas de tipo abiertas, selección múltiple y de escala Likert. Estas preguntas fueron distribuidas a través de cinco bloques temáticos relacionados con (1) información general, (2) el papel ejercido por las instituciones en el desarrollo turístico de la región, (3) los niveles de interacción entre las instituciones involucradas en el desarrollo turístico, (4) las estructuras de gobernanza de representación colectiva, (5) el desarrollo de agendas y proyectos comunes que han permitido impulsar el desarrollo turístico de la región. Adicionalmente, se realizaron 4 preguntas más sobre la opinión general de la importancia de las instituciones. Además, el cuestionario fue estructurado ofreciendo dos ámbitos territoriales de respuesta. En primer lugar, la opción de marcar las respuestas a cada pregunta refiriéndose a la capital de la región, Medellín y, en segundo lugar, refiriéndose al nivel regional, el departamento de Antioquia. Esta distinción fue especialmente útil, ya que permitió evidenciar la variación de los resultados en ambos niveles. Sin embargo, es importante señalar que, pese a la disponibilidad de datos específicos para la ciudad de Medellín, el enfoque de esta tesis, y de sus publicaciones, se concentran en analizar la escala regional.

### **1.6.3. Métodos para el análisis de datos**

#### **– Estadística descriptiva**

De manera general, para el análisis de los datos obtenidos se llevaron a cabo dos procedimientos. En primer lugar, se realizó un tratamiento de los datos y se codificaron

todas las variables. En segundo lugar, a través del software estadístico SPSS se utilizó la estadística descriptiva como técnica para organizar, describir y analizar el conjunto de datos recopilados. El uso de este método está justificado por el hecho de que la estadística descriptiva permite obtener la visualización general de un amplio conjunto de datos, presentándolos en forma sintética y ordenada. Las medidas de frecuencia, los porcentajes y la media, por ejemplo, permitieron describir y evidenciar las características de los resultados obtenidos, convirtiéndose en un insumo relevante para la definición y descripción de los comportamientos y tipologías observados en el estudio de las instituciones y su papel en el desarrollo regional del turismo. Particularmente, este método fue utilizado para el análisis de los datos presentados en las publicaciones 1 y 3.

– *Análisis de redes sociales*

En la publicación 2, cuyo objetivo es aportar un nuevo enfoque para la medición de la densidad institucional, fue utilizado el análisis de redes sociales. El uso del análisis de redes sociales se justifica, en esta tesis, por dos razones. La primera razón está fundamentada en la relación propuesta entre la densidad institucional y el análisis de redes, dado que ambos conceptos pueden considerarse inherentemente relacionales (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), tal y como se sustenta en la publicación 2. La segunda razón es que, en este estudio, se examina la pertenencia o participación de las instituciones en determinados espacios formales de interacción como eje central para determinar la importancia y los roles de cada institución. En este caso, se consideró que un enfoque cuantitativo de análisis de redes sociales era el más adecuado para abordar el objeto de la investigación. Indicar que la literatura sobre este tipo de aplicación tiene sus fundamentos en los estudios pioneros realizados por Davis et al. (1941) quienes estudiaron la asistencia a actividades sociales de las mujeres como una forma de abordar la segregación racial.

– *Análisis clúster*

La publicación 3, se centra en estudiar la percepción de las propias instituciones acerca de su relevancia, su desempeño y los factores clave para el desarrollo turístico. Para tal fin, se utilizó el análisis clúster como técnica multivariante que permite agrupar objetos formando conglomerados, resultando útil para la clasificación de las instituciones de acuerdo con su percepción sobre la relevancia y el rendimiento de las instituciones turísticas del área de estudio. Concretamente, tal y como se presenta en el apartado metodológico de la publicación, la realización de un análisis disociado de conglomerados fue necesario por el interés en definir grupos homogéneos de instituciones y en analizar aspectos diferenciales entre los diferentes grupos en relación con las cuatro dimensiones de la densidad institucional.



## 1.7. Área de estudio

Esta tesis, toma como objeto de análisis la región de Antioquia, en el noroeste de Colombia. Antioquia es la sexta región más extensa de Colombia y es la más poblada. La organización territorial de la región comprende nueve subregiones (Bajo Cauca, Magdalena Medio, Nordeste, Norte, Occidente, Oriente, Suroeste, Urabá y Valle de Aburrá) en un total de 125 municipios. Más de la mitad de la población reside en el área metropolitana denominada el Valle de Aburrá, conformada por 10 municipios (Barbosa, Copacabana, Girardota, Bello, Medellín, Envigado, Itagüí, Sabaneta, La Estrella y Caldas).

**Figura 3.** Región de Antioquia en Colombia.



<b>Capital</b>	Medellín
<b>Superficie Total</b>	63.612 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Población (2020) *</b>	6.845.093 hab.
<b>Participación - PIB nacional (2020) *</b>	14,92 %
<b>PIB per cápita</b>	US\$6.069

\*Cifras provisionales. Proyecciones del DANE.

Fuente: Datos a partir del Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE). Imagen a partir de The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, 2016.

### 1.7.1. Caracterización económica

La región de Antioquia tiene un peso importante en la economía de Colombia, representa la segunda economía con mayor participación en el Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) del país. Antioquia aporta el 14,92 % al PIB de Colombia y desde el 2010 la región registró un crecimiento económico destacado, con una tasa del 4 % promedio anual (DANE, 2020). Los sectores productivos con mayor valor agregado se concentran, principalmente, en las ramas de actividad económica de los servicios financieros, empresariales e inmobiliarios; el comercio, restaurantes y hoteles; y la industria manufacturera (Cámara de Comercio de Medellín para Antioquia [CCMA], 2019).

Estos sectores productivos se desarrollan en mayor medida en la ciudad de Medellín, capital de la región, y el Valle de Aburrá. Las demás subregiones del departamento

enmarcan su economía en sectores como el comercio y el turismo, el sector agropecuario, el sector minero y la generación de energía.

En los últimos años, Antioquia ha venido desarrollando su estrategia de futuro para la especialización productiva, especialmente de las subregiones, donde el sector agrícola es predominante. La región apuesta por la transformación agroindustrial desarrollando tecnologías y fomentando la investigación como condición necesaria para la permanencia y el acceso a los mercados a través del establecimiento de clústeres regionales: café, cacao y derivados lácteos.

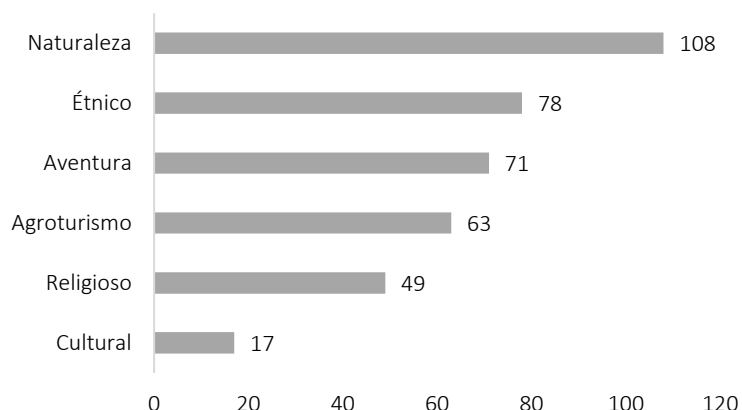
De otro lado, Medellín y el área metropolitana apuestan por el fortalecimiento de los clústeres estratégicos en los que vienen trabajando desde hace más de una década, priorizando las actividades económicas más destacadas direccionadas hacia energía sostenible, moda y fabricación avanzada, turismo de negocios, hábitat sostenible, negocios digitales, salud. Para determinar estos sectores, se consideraron factores tales como la participación en la economía, la experiencia en mercados internacionales, la generación de empleo, la capacidad de integrar y fomentar otras actividades económicas y las oportunidades que genera cada sector en el mercado. A partir de la definición de estos segmentos económicos, se produjo el establecimiento de la estrategia cluster, con la cual se logró la integración entre el sector público y privado para generar estrategias en torno al desarrollo económico (CCMA, 2019; PROANTIOQUIA, 2019).

Asimismo, la gestión colaborativa entre las instituciones públicas y privadas de Antioquia ha desarrollado numerosos esfuerzos por la expansión, fortalecimiento y cualificación de la base empresarial existente, en el marco de un modelo integral de desarrollo económico. Este modelo incluye temas transversales de alta relevancia como educación, productividad e innovación, recursos financieros, internacionalización y ambiente de los negocios (CCMA, 2019).

### **1.7.2. Caracterización de la actividad turística**

El turismo en Antioquia ocupa una posición cada vez más relevante en la estrategia de desarrollo económico de la región, por su capacidad de facilitar la articulación urbano-regional a través de una oferta turística que ha venido creciendo de manera consistente alrededor del turismo de naturaleza, cultura, sol y playa, aventura, negocios, y salud y bienestar. Los dos últimos tienen lugar, especialmente, en Medellín y el Valle de Aburrá.

**Figura 4.** Vocación turística de los municipios de Antioquia (número de municipios por tipo de vocación).



Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Cámara de Comercio de Medellín para Antioquia (2019).

La capital de la región, Medellín, constituye una de las principales ciudades receptoras de turistas internacionales, lo que la ha convertido en uno de los destinos colombianos de mayor importancia. En 2019<sup>2</sup>, la llegada de visitantes extranjeros no residentes a Colombia alcanzó los 2.814.025 visitantes, de los cuales Antioquia representó el 15,58% (438.530) del total nacional (Centro de Información Turística de Colombia [CITUR], 2021). De acuerdo con datos del Sistema de Indicadores Turísticos Medellín-Antioquia (Situr), un poco más del 60% de los visitantes extranjeros proviene de países como Estados Unidos, Francia, México, Argentina, Perú, Panamá, Alemania y España.

De otro lado, la relevancia del tejido empresarial dedicado al turismo en Antioquia se refleja en el 13 % de aportación al valor agregado de la actividad restaurantes y hoteles en el país. Destaca especialmente la relevancia de las PYMES en la estructura económica de la actividad y el sub-sector de alojamiento como elemento esencial en la competitividad y el crecimiento del turismo en la región.

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<sup>2</sup> Se han tomado como referencia las estadísticas sectoriales del año 2019, dado que el contexto de la pandemia ocasionada por la COVID-19 altera de manera sustancial los datos obtenidos para el 2020 y el 2021.

**Tabla 6.** Principales indicadores del turismo en Antioquia.

Indicador	Año
	2019
Participación del turismo al Producto Interno Bruto (PIB)	3,44%
Prestadores de servicios turísticos activos en el Registro Nacional de Turismo	5.612
Establecimientos de alojamiento y hospedaje	3.438
Ocupación hotelera %	62, 99%
Total habitaciones establecimientos de alojamiento y hospedaje	49.157

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de CITUR (2021) y del Índice de Competitividad Turística Regional de Colombia – ICTRC (2019).

De acuerdo con el Índice de Competitividad Turística Regional de Colombia - ICTRC, desarrollado desde el año 2016 por el Centro de Pensamiento Turístico de Colombia (2019), cuyo objetivo es emitir una calificación que pondera hasta ocho criterios que agrupan indicadores relacionados con la competitividad de los destinos turísticos colombianos organizando a las regiones del país en un ranking según su desempeño, en 2019 Antioquia ocupó la cuarta posición entre 24 departamentos.

**Tabla 7.** Resultados del Índice de Competitividad Turística 2019 para Antioquia.

Criterio	2016 (De 0 a 10)	2019 (De 0 a 10)	Variación 2016/2019
Cultural	4,99	8,25	↑ 3,26
Ambiental	6,69	6,13	↓ -0,56
Gestión del destino	5,40	4,53	↓ -0,87
Económico	6,84	7,23	↑ 0,39
Empresarial	2,13	2,98	↑ 0,85
Estrategia de mercadeo	5,40	7,13	↑ 1,73
Social	5,85	5,39	↓ -0,46
Infraestructura	6,42	7,73	↑ 1,31
ICTRC	5,47	6,05	↑ 0,58

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir del Índice de Competitividad Turística Regional de Colombia – ICTRC (2019).

En el 2019, los criterios de gestión del destino y empresarial registraron la menor puntuación de desempeño. Específicamente en el criterio de gestión del destino, los menores puntajes estuvieron en el presupuesto de inversión destinado al turismo y en la seguridad. En relación con el criterio empresarial, el índice de prestadores de servicios turísticos certificados en calidad turística representa una de las puntuaciones más bajas.

En relación con los aspectos institucionales del turismo en Medellín y Antioquia, tal y como se evidencia a lo largo de esta tesis, específicamente en la publicación 1, la región ha impulsado la creación y fortalecimiento de diversas instituciones públicas y privadas, cuyas políticas de actuación han logrado transformar la historia de una ciudad y una región que, de ser notoriamente violentas, han pasado a ser consideradas, particularmente en el caso de Medellín, como un modelo de innovación (The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, 2016).

## Capítulo 2: Compendio de Publicaciones



## Publicación 1: Institutional Thickness and Regional Tourism Development: Lessons from Antioquia, Colombia

Transcripción del artículo original:

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### Abstract

Researchers from different social sciences are increasingly interested in studying the role of institutions in regional development. Nevertheless, from the perspective of regional tourism development analysis, the role of institutions has been explored limitedly. Based on the institutional thickness approach, this study analyzed the role played by institutions in regional tourism development through a qualitative research procedure applied on a Latin American region. The study examined the institutional presence, the levels of interaction, the structures of domination and/or coalition patterns, and the common agendas in 28 institutions related to tourism in the region of Antioquia, Colombia. Results from this empirical analysis show that institutions play a decisive role in regional tourism development for reasons such as the allocation of economic resources, leadership, and interaction among stakeholders. Knowing these dynamics can be useful to boost better management and planning of tourism destinations throughout governance, coordination, and common agendas, and to enrich the debate on regional tourism development.

**Keywords:** regional development; institutional thickness; Latin America; economic geography; tourism geography.



## 1. Introduction

From different perspectives institutions have been considered central elements in explaining the evolution of regional economies and a wider group of researchers have increasingly generated empirical and analytical evidence of their role in regional development processes (Chang, 2008; Helmsing, 2001). In this context, Institutional Thickness, theorized by Amin and Thrift (1994), is considered a key condition to promote economic development as well as mobilize actors, organizations, and resources.

Over the last four decades, commitment to tourism as a development strategy for developing economies has increased (Hawkins & Mann, 2007). More precisely, in Latin America, tourism is considered a useful development tool, especially at the regional level (Fayissa et al., 2011). Tourism is an activity in which planners, researchers, and policy makers strive to find successful development models. Sometimes, the success of these models is related to the role of public institutions and private organizations (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014) but existing theory, evidence, and research on the role played by institutions in the evolution of tourist destinations and their regional importance as a development tool has been little explored. However, some contributions have recently started to discuss, although not explicitly, the role of institutions in regional tourism development from the evolutionary economic geography approach (Brouder et al., 2017).

Admitting that other factors also influence regional tourism development, this study aimed to analyze the impact of institutions in regional tourism development using the institutional thickness concept, and therefore to study how the coordination and interaction of public and private institutional structures affect the intensity and nature of regional tourism. Taking into account these preliminary considerations, this research examined the perception of 28 institutional representatives regarding the role of institutions in tourist development in the region of Antioquia, Colombia.

With this goal, the organization of the paper is structured into six fundamental sections. In Section 2, the theoretical foundation of the concept of institutional thickness and its relationship to regional tourism development is discussed. Section 3 presents the regional context of this study. Section 4 explains the methodological process, while Section 5 examines the results. Section 6 describes the usefulness of applying the institutional thickness approach to better understand the dynamics of regional tourism development. Finally, Section 7 highlights some key features derived from the research.

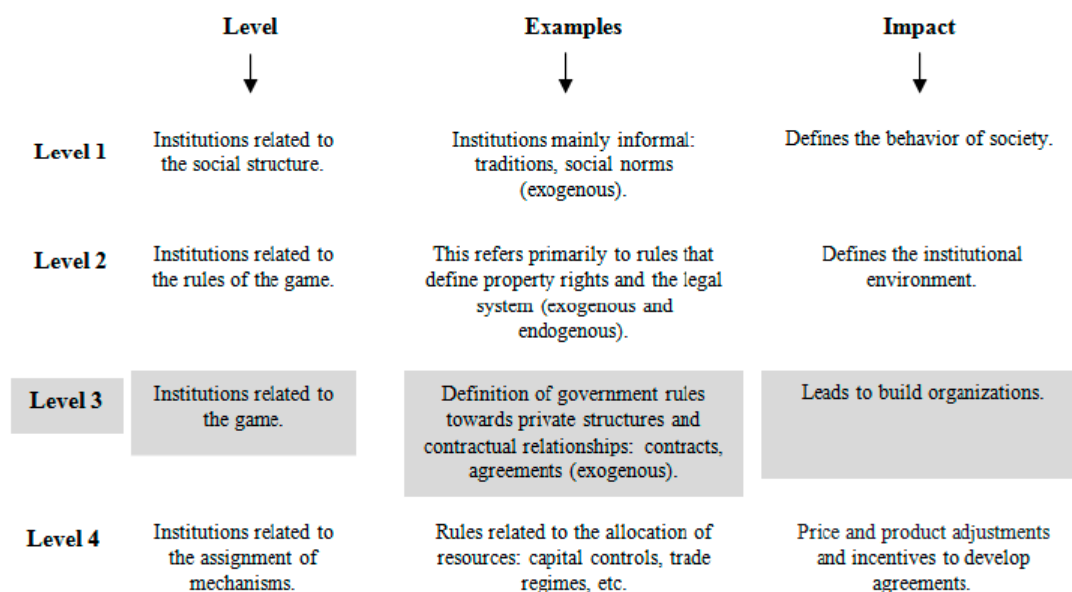
## 2. Institutional Thickness and Regional Tourism Development

At the end of the 20th century, a new vision emerged in the economy highlighting the role of institutions in economic performance: the new institutional economy (NIE) (Caballero, 2004). The NIE is a stream of thought initially developed in the mid-1970s but still perceived today as relatively young (Carrasco & Castaño, 2012). According to Ménard (2011), the analysis of institutions, their most important characteristics, and how they interact with different organizational solutions is still in its initial stages. Economists such as Coase (1991), who regarded transaction costs in companies and society; North (1993), who dealt with institutions, institutional change, and beliefs; Williamson (2000), who discussed hierarchies, markets, and governance of organizations; and Ostrom (2009), who focused on the governing of common resources, social capital, and complex economic systems, have played an important role in its emergence (Caballero, 2011). The purpose of the NIE is to explain the role of institutions in social life using an economic language, but integrating concepts from disciplines such as law, political science, geography, sociology, history, and anthropology. It can be summarized by two central ideas: institutions matter, and they are susceptible to analysis (Williamson, 2000).

Despite the existence of nuances and discrepancies (Williamson, 2000), the most common definition of an institution was developed by North (1993), who defined it as the restrictions that arise from human inventiveness to limit political, economic, and social interactions. Institutions are, in short and formally, the result of rules created by humans that shape their interaction, and, according to this author, institutional changes delineate the way society evolves over time and are at the same time key to understanding historical change. From another angle, according to Bathelt and Glucker (2014), institutions can be defined as correlated and relatively stable social interactions between economic agents that develop upon rules and regulations in rather contingent ways. In any case, it is acknowledged that institutions are fundamental in explaining the economic performance of specific societies or social groups (Kalmanovitz, 2003) and answering why some institutional frameworks are efficient in promoting economic development while others are not (Romero, 1998).

There are three ways to classify institutions (Jütting, 2003), according to the degree of formality, the scope of action, and the levels of hierarchy. The degree of formality has to do with the rules that regulate the institutions. Formal rules can be classified into constitutions, laws, property rights, common laws, contracts, and statutes, while informal rules are the norms of behavior sanctioned by society (traditions and beliefs). Depending on their scope of action, institutions can be economic, political, legal, or social. Finally, regarding the different levels of hierarchy, Williamson (2000) proposed the differentiation that appears in Figure 1. It should be said that, given the objectives outlined in the Introduction, we raise issues related to the level of hierarchy 3; that is, we take into account the relationships between public and private institutional structures.

Figure 1. Institutions according to hierarchy levels inspired on Jütting (2003).



Source: Authors' elaboration.

## 2.1. Institutions, Regional Development and Governance

In recent years, a considerable amount of work has been developed that analyzes the impact of institutions at a regional level (Beer & Lester, 2015). Existing research shows how the evolution of the institutional structure of a region explains growth processes and a great variety of results over time, both between countries and between regions within a country. The importance of institutions for regional development has become particularly evident; for instance, when reforms promoted by multilateral organizations fail, it is either because they are focused exclusively on specific economic policies and forget the institutions, or because they look for a harmonization of the role and form of institutions according to similar patterns, regardless of the circumstances of time and place (Chang, 2007).

Even though the relationships between institutions and the regional development of a territory have been analyzed from different perspectives, the main empirical efforts have focused mainly on analyzing formal institutions and their impact on economic performance over time (Coatsworth, 2008) by studying the differences in growth rates, government performance, and structures of each country (Aron, 2000). For example, Rodrik et al. (2004) found that "the estimated direct effect of institutions on income is positive and large". Alternatively, according to Jütting (2003), institutions can have indirect impacts derived from increased investment, better management of ethnic

diversity and conflicts, better policies, and increased social capital of a community. Complementarily, more recent significant work has been carried out observing links between institutional structure and regional development, regional innovation systems, regional competitiveness, leadership at a local level, relationships with the government, and intersections with human capital (Sotarauta & Mustikkamäki, 2012). Overall, the existing research on institutions has made two important breakthroughs in recent years. First, studies have shown quite clearly that institutions matter to economic growth and development. Second, it has begun to lay the theoretical groundwork for explaining why institutions matter and how these institutions are shaped (Farole et al., 2011). Nevertheless, studies have also shown that, in certain circumstances, the institutional structure can be an obstacle to development (Jütting, 2003). In this way, there is evidence that the impact depends not only on the quality of the institutional environment, but also on factors such as the local environment, the interests and behavior of the actors involved, the level of education, the quality of infrastructures, local resources, or the level of urbanization (Sotarauta & Mustikkamäki, 2012).

In their seminal work *Institutions as the Fundamental Cause of long-run Growth*, Acemoglu et al. (2005) argued that there is evidence that whether or not a society grows depends on how its economy is organized on its economic institutions. They also emphasized the idea that institutions are based on politics and on the structure and the nature of political power and this relates to the notion of social-political governance (Kooiman, 1999). Therefore, regional development is highly influenced by patterns of governance in which institution building and institution change have prominent roles (Danson et al., 2018) and policymakers are looking to regional governance as a framework for improving local and regional competitiveness (Gibbs & Jonas, 2001). In this framework, the term governance implies systems of governing and the ways in which societies are governed (Bramwell, 2018) and how these systems bring legitimacy to political processes (Rienschke et al., 2019).

In the scope of regional tourism development, governance is clearly a significant concept related to the adaptation of destinations to change (Baggio et al., 2010). It also draws attention to how governmental and non-governmental organizations often work together (Bramwell, 2018) developing rules and mechanisms for a policy, as well as business strategies and involving all the institutions and individuals (Beritelli et al., 2007; Ruhanen et al., 2010). In this framework, institutions give expression, shape and influence to the context for successful or unsuccessful regional development (Pike et al., 2016) mixing both identity and economy (Rodríguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008).

## 2.2. Institutional Thickness as a Driver for Regional Development

Among the broad and diverse set of disciplinary perspectives created from the study of institutions based on the contributions made by North (1993), the notion of institutional thickness emerges as a leading concept within economic geography and regional development studies (Amin & Thrift, 1994). Institutional thickness refers to the density of institutions and organizations that act in a territory to promote development actions (Cravacuore, 2003). The concept was introduced in a collection of essays under the title *Globalization, Institutions, and Regional Development in Europe* published in 1994 by Amin and Thrift (1994). According to their observations, institutional thickness explains the superior positioning of some regions with respect to others. Recent research has also highlighted that the performance of institutions explains the success of different territories (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013). Thus far, researchers such as Rodríguez-Pose (2013) have emphasized the importance of developing an approach that focuses on analyzing institutional effectiveness. Some researchers dedicated to the analysis of institutions have linked regional development to the density or thickness of institutions (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013). The basic idea of this approach is that the greater is the institutional thickness of a region, the greater is its capacity for growth.

Institutional thickness implies a series of organizational, sociocultural, and economic criteria. It covers different types of institutions, including financial entities, local chambers of commerce, development agencies, local authorities, innovation centers, schools, government agencies, employers, and administrative bodies. It is a complex concept that refers not only to the existence of organizations linked to territorial economic activity, but also fundamentally to the interaction between companies, intermediate organizations, and local public powers (Madoery, 2001). According to Amin and Thrift (1994), institutions generate greater legitimacy by nurturing trust relationships, stimulating entrepreneurial capacity, and consolidating the empowerment of economic activity in the local environment with institutional thickness.

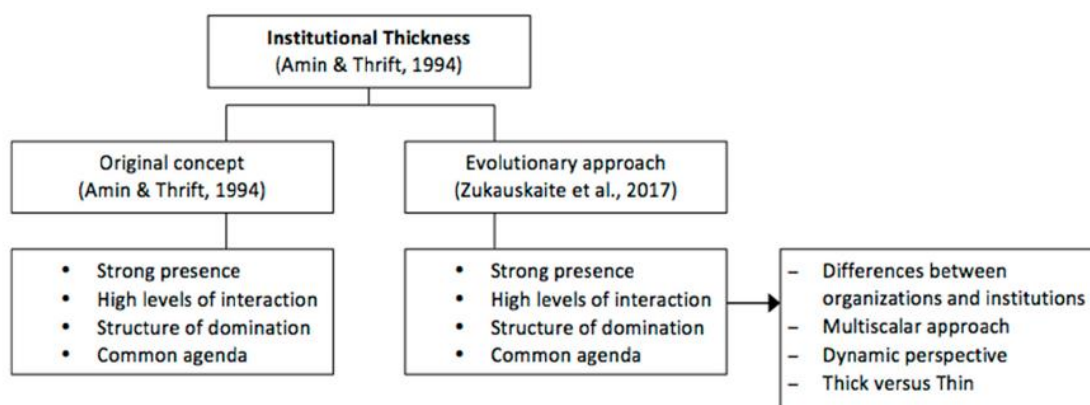
Institutional thickness as theorized by Amin and Thrift (1994) can therefore be characterized as follows: strong institutional presence, high levels of interaction between organizations, domain structures and/or coalition patterns, identification with a common purpose, and existence of shared norms and values. Institutional presence refers to the existence of different organizations, such as development agencies, government agencies, associations and business service organizations, trade unions, and research institutes, that represent local actors and collectives. Levels of interaction refer to the importance of formal and informal knowledge exchange and the relevance of cooperation among organizations. Domain structures and/or coalition patterns refer to the leadership of the coordination processes that take place, result in a collective representation of what are usually individual interests and balance the differences

between institutions that are capable of exerting a dominant influence and those that are not. Finally, mutual awareness and common purpose imply that there is a common agenda. This common agenda for development may be formally defined or simply a collaborative set of priorities. In this context, each institutional actor is a political, economic, social, and cultural agent that promotes situations aimed at capitalizing on local potentialities and assuming an active role in accompanying the development process. The weight of each actor can change during the process of organization and participation.

Since Amin and Thrift (1994) introduced the concept of institutional thickness, various approaches have been developed offering remarkable information to understand the factors that drive regional economic development. Probably one of the most significant contribution was developed by Wood and Valler (2004), who edited a collection that included various articles on theoretical and empirical approaches to developing different aspects of the concept. Moreover, recent academic works move toward frameworks that facilitate the analytical operationalization of the concept. In this respect, following Amin and Thrift (1994), ten years later, Coulson and Ferrario (2007) applied an empirical approach to develop some indicators related to the original concept: institutional presence, degree of interaction, common enterprise, and structure of domination and coalition. They also highlighted that the institutional thickness concept is not without problems. For instance, they discussed issues such as how the term “institution” has different interpretations and is approached in different ways depending on the framework of the discipline (e.g., sociology and institutionalism), to what extent conflating organizations with institutions is an important point to keep in mind and which are limitations derived from the perception that may not be possible to create or replicate an institutional structure.

In this same vein, such as the one developed by Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), have made contributions that could lead to the development of a more complete empirical application of institutional thickness, including some elements that have a prominent place in the research agenda of institutional economic geography (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Gertler, 2010), relational economic geography (Baggio et al., 2010; Beritelli et al., 2007), and geographic political economy (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). These elements discuss the concept in terms of the idea of considering four fundamental issues: the distinction between organizations and institutions, since each can play a very different role; the consideration of different territorial scales, including relationships between local and nonlocal agents; an evolutionary perspective based on changes in power over time; and the relationship of institutional/organizational density with innovation (thick vs. thin) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Evolution of the institutional thickness concept from 1994 to 2017.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Therefore, this last approach integrates a much broader evaluative context, identifies the role of relevant institutions and power relations between different organizations, deals with the balanced power distribution, and discusses the role of organizational and institutional structures that support knowledge exchange and innovation, among others. Such progress represents a change in the study of institutional thickness in a territory, and therefore in the methodology to develop indicators to gain deeper knowledge in this field and stronger empirical evidence.

Finally, it should be noted that, at least until now, most of the existing analyses around institutional thickness have been applied in the context of industrial areas and developed countries, hence the interest in considering its role in the regional development of a Latin American area in relation to its evolution as a tourist destination.

Many developed and developing countries consider tourism as important for economic progress, but the relationship between tourism and regional economic development (United Nations, 2013), as far as it depends on the development of general policies and regulatory and institutional frameworks, is still unclear.

There is a need to investigate how the density of public and private institutional structures and their coordination and interaction may affect the intensity and nature of regional tourism development. There is also a need to provide knowledge about the role of institutions as entities that monitor, promote, harmonize, and collect the interests, expectations, and objectives of actors in the industry and why institutional forms can produce distinctive economic results in each place. In this sense, recent studies reflect how regional tourism development depends, to a great extent, on human agency. Velasco (Velasco, 2008), for instance, discussed factors that imply the collaboration of public and private sector and have enormous potential, and Brouder (2014) debated how research can move from the “what” to the “how” and “why” of regional tourism development.

Thus, the analysis carried out in this study was intended to introduce the observation of the evolution of destinations from the perspective of regional tourism development, adopting the concept of institutional thickness, which has been applied in other areas of knowledge and different territorial contexts. It shows how this kind of approach can enhance its application in the analysis of regional tourism development. For this purpose, the study developed a case study of one Latin American region, Antioquia, Colombia, between 2000 and 2015. The analysis provided evidence on the usefulness of this concept in the context of regional tourism destinations.

### 3. Antioquia: Introduction to the Regional Context

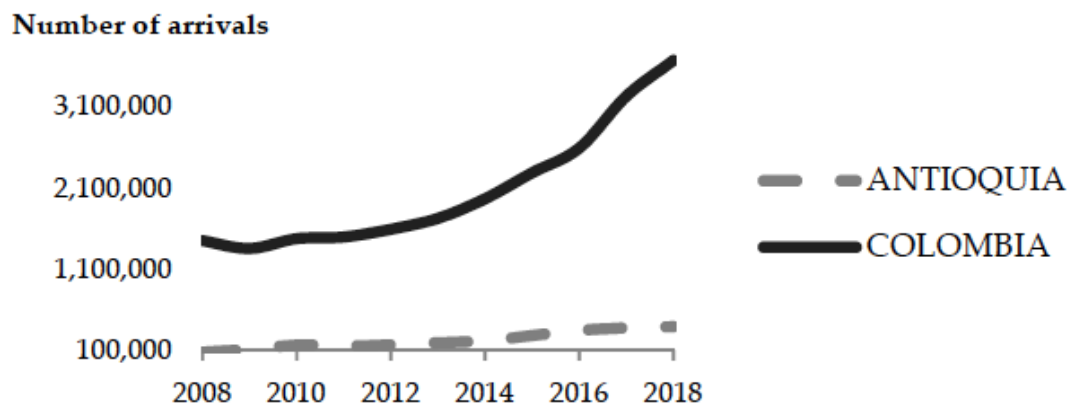
Antioquia is located in the central northwestern part of Colombia. It is Colombia's most populated region (6,690,980 inhabitants in 2018) and the largest economy after Bogota's capital district. According to data from the Colombian Statistical Office (2019), Antioquia contributes USD 46,658 million to the Colombian State, representing 15% of its total GDP. Commerce and manufacturing are the most thriving sectors in Antioquia, representing 15.9% and 15.7% of its total GDP, respectively.

During 2000–2015, Antioquia implemented a key strategy for tourism development based on empowering social actors and creating and reinforcing local and regional public and private institutions (Tourist Promotion Fund of Colombia, 2012). In the framework of this process, Antioquia and Medellín, the capital city, have been transformed, particularly Medellín (Franz, 2017). Therefore, in recent years, the city has received significant international recognition, such as City of the Year (2013), the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize (2016), and the best tourist destination in South America according to TripAdvisor—Traveller's Choice (2018); it was also nominated for the World Travel Awards in 2018.

This evolution has occurred in the context of the relevant growth of tourism not only in Antioquia, but also in Colombia (see Figure 3) during the last 10 years (Colombian Statistical Office, 2019). Specifically, while the growth rate of tourist arrivals worldwide was 7% in 2017, in Colombia it was 28% over the last 10 years.



Figure 3. Tourist arrivals Colombia and Antioquia.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Analyzing regional tourism development in Colombia as well as economic performance and dynamics implies considering the various socio-political and economic processes that have taken place in the country (Montero et al., 2018). These dynamics of growth are within the context of a chain of events and decisions that have supported tourism development in addition to other very important factors, such as improvements in the country's security conditions, the positive perception of Colombia abroad, the strengthening of infrastructures, and increased foreign investments, among others.

In this line, Figure 4 summarizes the main events that have marked the tourist development of the country since 2000 and the strategic decisions that help to make Colombia a tourist destination. In addition to the many implemented decisions concerning security, three key events can be highlighted as the basis for the development of the tourism sector: the creation of the Vice Ministry of Tourism (2006); tourism sectoral plan Colombia world-class tourist destination (2008–2010) within which the successful international communication campaign was launched, name of the campaign: Colombia the only risk is wanting to stay; and finally one of the most recent historical milestones, the signing of the Peace Agreement between the government and the FARC (2016).

Figure 4. Main initiatives that favored tourism development in Colombia (2000–2016).



Source: Authors' elaboration.

More specifically, in Antioquia, the starting point was in 1999, when the Council of Competitiveness of Antioquia started long-term, interinstitutional, constructive work to design a Vision Antioquia for the 21st Century. This was the result of an extensive process of agreement among all sectors, defining opportunities for the region in the globalized world and creating an unwavering and united force as a region. As a result, after 8,756 hours of dialogue, an unprecedented agreement for the future was established in the recent history of Colombia with the ambitious vision to convert Antioquia: "In the year 2020 [in] the best corner of America, fair, peaceful, educated, booming and in harmony with nature" (Regional Competitiveness Council, 1999). In this vision, tourism was presented as a key element of economic development, from the business side but also in terms of the city and regional governance strategy, which implied the creation and reinforcement of specific institutions. This vision made progress with the creation and consolidation of key institutions to support regional tourism development (Figure 5).

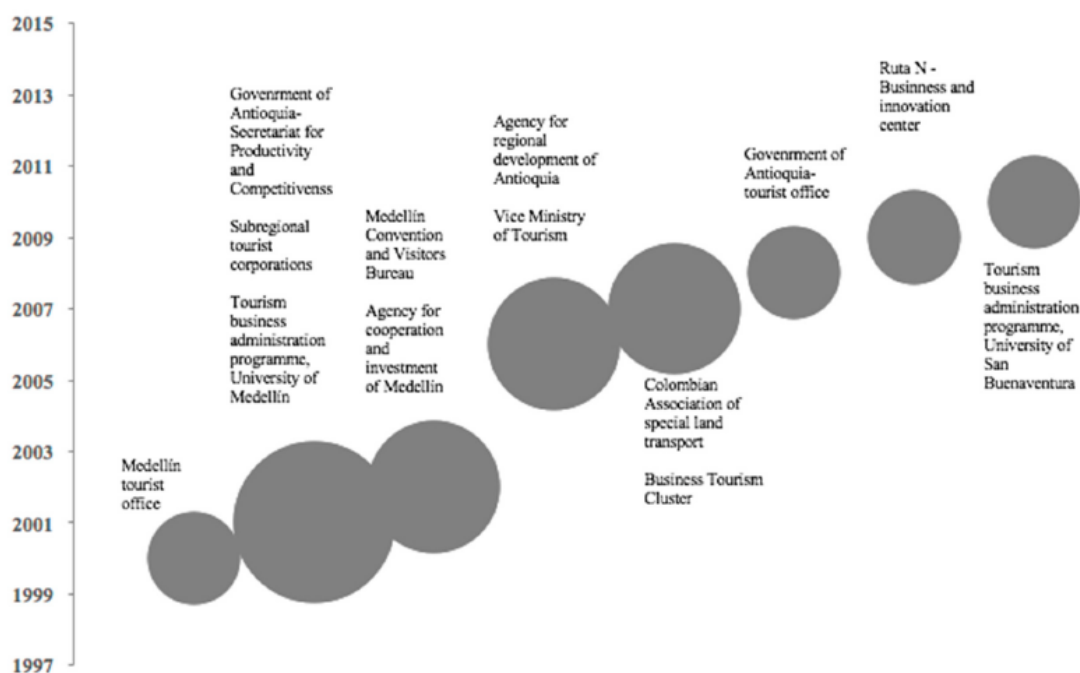
The vision marked the initial development of an agenda of strategic actions to respond to anticipated challenges in the region. That common agenda was materialized with the PLANEA: Strategic Plan for Antioquia, which has guided the decisions and actions of actors and sectors interested in the region's development toward the achievement of shared goals (Uribe & Riascos, 2007).

In 1995, the Medellín Chamber of Commerce contracted the firm Monitor, created by Michael Porter, to conduct studies on the competitiveness of some industrial sectors in Antioquia. As a result of those studies, the creation of clusters was identified as a priority

for Antioquia’s competitiveness. In response, the region prioritized the most important economic activities and established the Cluster Community, by which the integration of public and private sectors was achieved to generate agendas focused on economic development. The developed clusters were energy (2007); textiles, design, and fashion (2008); business tourism (2008); construction (2008); medical and odonatological services (2009); and technology, information, and communication (2009). Clustering efforts have achieved satisfactory results in terms of GDP growth, private investment, and new employment. Since then, the focus in the region has been on uniting public and private interests as well as guiding how the new efforts can generate new public policy, confidence, and innovative businesses in the region. Another important road map for the region and its tourism sector was a process initiated by the Tourism Development Plan of Medellín 2000–2009, which soon became the city’s tourism guidebook. The plan helped to clarify a common vision and strengthened the partnership-based approach to defining and implementing tourism policy.

Figure 5 shows how Antioquia made progress in the creation and consolidation of key institutions to support regional development in tourism during the study period. The institutional integration between the public and private sectors was also formalized with the creation of the Business Tourism Cluster, and Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau. In addition, a national context of opening new airlines, hotels, and theme parks and the creation of the Vice Ministry of Tourism in 2006 was transcendent.

**Figure 5.** Main institutions linked to the development of tourism in Medellín and Antioquia, 2000–2015.



Source: Authors’ elaboration.

Finally, it should be noted that economic growth and job creation in many regions of the country generated a significant increase in disposable income for families and allowed domestic tourism development initiatives. At the regional level, tourism was recognized as a key element of local economies. This recognition was evident in the development plans at both the national and regional level (Brida et al., 2011).

In this transformative context, the hypothesis that the role of institutions in the dynamics of tourism regional development was fundamental can be stated, and this is therefore the key point of analysis.

#### **4. Research Design and Methodology**

Recent discussions on differences in development between different regions highlight the importance of institutions (Acemoglu et al., 2005; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Montero et al., 2018). The concept of institutional thickness can therefore be conceived as a building block for an analytical and replicable approach to the analysis of the role of institutions in regional development (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007). Institutional thickness refers to the density of institutions and organizations that act in a territory to promote development actions. It is characterized by four main elements: strong institutional presence, high levels of interaction between institutions and organizations, domain structures and/or coalition patterns, identification with a common agenda or mutual awareness.

The role of institutions and their impact on regional tourism development has not yet been analyzed in terms of institutional thickness, much less in a Latin American context. This is an opportunity and a challenge to contribute as much to the literature on tourism as to the investigations in regional science, even though indicators of institutional thickness are quite difficult to estimate (Zukauskaite et al., 2017).

To develop the analysis of institutional thickness in this study, parameters set out in Table 1 are defined. They address both the key elements related to institutional thickness already discussed by Amin and Thrift (1994) and those updated and adapted by Zukauskaite et al. (2017).

**Table 1.** Parameters for the analysis of the institutional thickness in tourism.

Variable	Indicator
(1) Institutional presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Institutions/Organizations established in the region in relation to tourism.</li> <li>• Types = a. Institution/Organization. b. Public/Private. c. Exclusive/Partial commitment with tourism development.</li> </ul>
(2) Levels of interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency and motivations of participation in formal and informal spaces of interaction.</li> <li>• Types of collective interaction (networks, sectoral boards, and sectoral councils).</li> </ul>
(3) Structure of domination, coalition patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and coordination processes (alliances, agents, and budgets).</li> <li>• Governance structures of collective representation.</li> </ul>
(4) Common agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key issues of common agenda.</li> <li>• Types of common management tools developed in the region.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In this framework, to understand the role of institutional thickness in tourism regional development, four research hypotheses were set up and an experimental approach was developed. The hypotheses are the following.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** Institutional development has played a significant role in regional tourism development.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** Institutional level and types of interactions between institutions shape the extent of regional tourism development.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** Regional tourism development depends both on the performance of structures of domination among institutions and on the role played by institutions in collective spaces of representation.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** The building of interinstitutional common agendas is key for regional tourism development.

### *a. Data Collection*

The process of obtaining data to observe the strength of institutional presence in the region, the levels of interaction among organizations, the existing domain structures and/or coalition patterns, the identification of a common purpose, and the existence of shared norms and values was carried out through a qualitative research procedure. The design and implementation of the data collection procedure were carried out in two phases.

The first phase consisted of structured interviews with the aim of having a preliminary view of the institutional structure of the region and knowing the level of importance that interviewees assigned to institutions regarding tourism development over 15 years (2000–2015) (see Appendix A). Interviews were conducted between May and June 2016, and selected institutions were approached according to their relevance as tourism-related organizations in the region. Institutions interviewed in this phase included the following: Governorate of Antioquia, Directorate of Tourism Development of Antioquia, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Vice Presidency of Planning and Development, Undersecretary of Tourism/Mayor's Office of Medellín, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Hotel and Tourism Association of Colombia (COTELCO), and National Federation of Merchants (FENALCO). The interview data were analyzed through the interview transcripts, identifying topics highlighted in the answers, elaborating on descriptive summaries and further evaluating the connections of these issues with the conceptual framework.

The second phase consisted of designing a questionnaire to obtain measurements for the defined variables and provide evidence on the impact of the institutions on regional tourism development over 15 years (2000–2015). Selected institutions included tourism and regional development agencies (6); local, regional, and national authorities (5); business service organizations (2); chambers of commerce (4); associations (5); universities (4); and research and innovation centers (2).

To identify the appropriate institutions, the process began with mapping the institutions established in the region that were directly or partially related to tourism development. During this process, up to 34 institutions were identified as having played a significant role in the development of tourism in Antioquia between 2000 and 2015. Of these 34 institutions, 28 took part in the study. The other six institutions did not reply to the survey. However, this does not represent a significant negative impact on the analysis, because we obtained the participation of the most active and relevant stakeholders in the territory. In any case, the following institutions did not participate: Colombian Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies (ANATO), Turibus (tourist bus), Chamber of Commerce of Urabá (only involves a small proportion of the region), Tourist Corporation of Bajo Cauca

(only involves a small proportion of the region), Comfenalco (a private nonprofit organization), and Fontur (a public institution at a national level).

It is important to note that, following Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), we decided to differentiate between institutions and organizations. Differences between the two types were determined by the characteristics of their structure; that is, whether they function through public or private arrangements and resources. Institutions refer to authorities that design and regulate norms, laws, policies, and context conditions. Organizations include firms, universities, support agencies, and associations, among others. According to Zukauskaitė et al. (2017: 331), “mapping institutions and organizations as separate entities provides a more detailed analysis into the factors underpinning regional development, and more precise identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the specific context under consideration”. In our case, these distinctions were very useful to understand what happens inside the region, not only in terms of density but also regarding coordination, leadership, resources, and operationalization of territorial objectives.

### ***b. Questionnaire Design***

Questionnaire surveys are a popular data collection method for academic research in a variety of fields. This type of data gathering method was useful in this study to collect, analyze and interpret the different views of institutions and organization involved in Antioquia’s tourism development. Therefore, an online questionnaire was sent to the target agents between July and December 2016 through the online platform SurveyMonkey®. The questionnaire included open, multiple choice, and Likert scale questions. The questions were divided into five thematic sections (see Appendix B).

The first section referred to general information data, which included general information about the institution, territorial scope, information on the estimated budget, and percentage of resources allocated to regional tourism development. The second section was about the role played by the institution in the development of tourism in the region (infrastructure, governance, business fabric, arrival of visitors, and economic and social impact). The third section was about the level of interaction within the network of institutions involved in tourism development, their degree of involvement, cooperation, and exchange of information. The fourth section explored the governance structures resulting from the collective representation of what are usually individual and/or sectoral interests, formal and informal representation spaces that allowed the objectives as a tourist destination to be achieved. Finally, the fifth section collected information related to the development of common agendas and projects that allowed the promotion of tourism development in the region. Additionally, four more questions were asked

regarding general opinions on the importance of the institutions for regional tourism development.

Data collected over this period were subsequently analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Data for 28 institutions/organizations were entered in the tool and processed using nominal, ordinal, and interval data.

The following section presents results based on the analysis from interview data and survey responses.

## 5. Results

According to the idea that institutional thickness should focus on the perceptions of regional economic agents on their institutional environment (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017), this section operationalizes the concept through the research findings with the aim of describing each institutional thickness feature in the regional tourism development of Antioquia.

### 5.1. Strong Institutional Presence

The first element of institutional thickness refers to the existence of an institutional and organizational fabric represented by different types of structures. In this analysis, this approach explores the number (density) of institutions/organizations involved in regional tourism development, their commitment, and the spatial scale. Appendix C shows the institutions/organizations involved in the tourism sector of Antioquia that participated in the study. These institutions/organizations are classified according to legal and administrative structure as public, private, or mixed (private–public). The commitment to tourism development can be exclusive or partial, and this feature is provided in accordance with the functions attributed to each institution/organization and the budget allocated for tourism development. Regarding this item, participating institutions/organizations considered that their commitment to tourism development evolved positively. In fact, a large proportion of the institutions and organizations exclusively dedicated to tourism development were created after 2000 (see Table 2).

Based not only on the number of institutions/organizations in the region, but also on their efficiency and impact on tourism growth, 53% of those interviewed considered the existence of institutions as an explanatory factor in improving the governance of the destination and 52% considered the creation of new institutions between 2000 and 2015 as fundamental to tourism development.



**Table 2.** Summary of characteristics of institutions/organizations participating in the study.

Type %	Character %	Spatial Scale %	Commitment to Tourism Development %	Year Founded %
Institutions 21%	Public 32%	Capital City 14%	Exclusive 50%	Before 2000 61%
Organizations 78%	Private 54%	Regional 61%	Partial 50%	After 2000 32%
	Mixed 14% (Public-Private)	National 25%		N/A 7%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The creation of institutions related to tourism development in the region demonstrates a strong institutional presence. This is evidenced not only in the number of institutions, but also in their ability to play their role properly, apply their knowledge, and allocate the necessary resources for regional tourism development. Having institutions/organizations that are committed to general economic development strengthens and fundamentally supports the competitiveness of the destination.

Such development can be traced in the region in general and in Medellín in particular. Regarding general regional institutions, an important aspect has been the incorporation of the development of the tourism industry into their agendas, which help to explain the tourism's positive performance in recent years. Otherwise, at the regional level, findings highlight a lack of political continuity, particularly in the case of the government of Antioquia. Finally, results obtained show that a large part of the organizations constituted since 2000 were created with a specific objective related to tourism development and, therefore, with a higher level of specialization.

## 5.2. High Levels of Interaction

Levels of interaction between institutions are related to the importance of formal and informal knowledge exchange and the relevance of cooperation. In this regard, 57% of the interviewees considered the level of interaction between institutions/organizations as intermediate. In the words of one interviewee: "Sometimes the interaction has been complicated by the difference in visions and objectives, and particularly the interest to play the leading role. Institutions are made up of people, and in certain circumstances, some people want to stand out more than others."

This is an issue that has evolved over time. At the beginning of 2000, institutions showed that there was dispersion and little discussion among them, while, since 2007, actors have demonstrated a medium-high level of interaction. The level of interaction has increased through the design and implementation of joint projects. For example, the intensity of existing relationships between tourism development institutions and

general economic development institutions is considered as medium-high. The nature of this relationship is mainly attributed to infrastructure projects (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Levels and key motivations of interaction.

<b>(a) Frequency</b>	Government institutions	Between 2 and 3 times a month.
	Private institutions (Chambers of commerce, Associations)	At least once a month.
	Business associations	At least once a month.
	Academic institutions	Between 2 and 3 times a month.
	Family compensation funds	Less than once a year.
	Research and technological centers	Less than once a year or never.
<b>(b) Key motivations of interaction</b>	Key motivations of interaction between tourism institutions/organizations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Knowledge and experience exchange.</li> <li>2) Policy and projects planning, design and implementation.</li> <li>3) Training.</li> <li>4) Strengthening entrepreneurial capacity.</li> <li>5) Organization of events, fairs, etc.</li> </ol>
	Key motivations of interaction between tourism institutions/organizations and territorial development institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Infrastructure.</li> <li>2) Security.</li> <li>3) Legislation and regulations.</li> <li>4) Economic impact on the destination.</li> <li>5) Financial Resources.</li> </ol>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Relationships between tourism development institutions/organizations are motivated by the exchange of information and experiences; the design and execution of plans, programs, policies, and projects; and training actions (Table 3). In particular, the institutions for which the most interviewees reported high levels of interaction were the Subsecretary of Tourism of Medellín (73%), the Department of Tourism of Antioquia (53%), and the Medellín Chamber of Commerce (53%). The role played by the Medellín Chamber of Commerce is striking, as its importance is ranked at the same level as the regional government. This can be explained by the low political continuity reported in the case of the government of Antioquia. In fact, the political continuity at the regional level, in the context of Antioquia, has been due to the Medellín Chamber of Commerce, ensuring the sustainability of actions, projects, and partnerships.

In some areas, institutions/organizations have formed partnerships through formal relationships (worktables, committees, councils, etc.); these partnerships were 65.13% local (municipal level), 61.11% regional, and 57.80% national. Although relationships in the public sphere stand out as being formal, private organizations also often work together through such relationships. Over the years, they have established formal agreements and alliances that have made tangible progress through economic resources and projects.

Institutions/organizations interact informally (through personal relationships, casual meetings, sporadic meetings), but evidence shows that, in the period 2000–2015, 87.50% of participants belonged to some formal space (e.g., regional council, committee, sectoral table, etc.). According to 45% of participants, these formal spaces allow for more efficient coordination in everything that takes place at the destination.

The pattern of exchanges and frequency of interactions were described as intense. Participants reported that their frequency of interaction with public institutions (government of Antioquia, Medellín Mayor's Office, Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, ProColombia) was between two and three times a month (Table 3). This dynamic is also reflected in private institutions (Chamber of Commerce, federations, and unions). On the other hand, patterns of interaction were seen as considerably low in regard to the frequency of making contact among tourism stakeholders and other key players for innovation, such as technological centers, which participants reported having interacted with only once a year.

In these dynamics of interaction, collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors have been described repeatedly in the discourse by regional tourism stakeholders and strategic plans formulated during 2000–2015. The potential of these alliances has led to transformations that have been key to economic development, primarily based on the creation of an institutional fabric.

### **5.3. Structures of Domination and/or Patterns of Coalition**

This element considers leadership and the coordination processes that take place in the destination, along with the power relations. In the case of Antioquia, this indicator has been determined by three factors: the role of each institution, the budgetary resources available, and the stakeholders' perceptions of those who have the power at the destination.

First, the role played by each institution/organization is determined by its founding objectives, and sometimes these functions can influence the level of power that one actor can have over another; for instance, in legislative terms in the case of public institutions, in terms of competitiveness in the case of associations or universities, or in terms of

economic impact and employment in the case of companies. However, the formal mission of each institution/organization is not always related to what happens in reality. In Antioquia, one of the negative aspects related to the creation of a large institutional atmosphere has been the duplication of functions, such as in situations where a certain institution plays a role that does not match its original functions. In the case of Antioquia, respondents reported this phenomenon as a reality. There is fragmentation in the roles played by some actors. For instance, a case emerged with the creation of a network of tourism corporations at the regional level, which took on the role of the government of Antioquia in the municipalities without any prior agreement, and this caused friction and confusion in the regional governance destination.

Second, economic resources play a fundamental role in power dynamics. In this sense, Antioquia shows a high degree of domination exercised by public institutions. From the point of view of the allocation of resources, each participating public institution allocated between USD 36,000 and 200,000 for tourism development of the region in 2015, while each private institution allocated less than USD 36,000. Nevertheless, 48% of institutions and organizations stated that their budgets increased over time (since the year of creation).

Third, the perception of actors who are related to the destination stands out in terms of the spatial scale. In the case of Medellín, a key player and leader in the tourism development of the city has been the Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau. This institution set the agenda of the city in its function as a business destination and led the city's internationalization strategy. Therefore, it is an agent that exercises power in defining tourism policies of the city. Regionally, perception favors the Medellín Chamber of Commerce as an actor that has representation and recognition and clear guidance to implement projects with a strong impact on the competitiveness of the destination. On the other hand, actors such as universities or training centers cross-cut the others; that is, they have no power over other actors, but their existence is fundamental for the sector to build regional capacity through knowledge and innovation.

Finally, patterns of coalition refer to governance structures that result in collective representation of what are normally individual and/or sectoral interests. These spaces are established as collective representative places through formal mechanisms that allow the objective as a tourist destination to be achieved (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Governance structures of collective representation in Antioquia and their institutional aims.

Formal Space	Leadership	Main Objective
Regional Council of Tourism of Antioquia	Government of Antioquia— Tourism Direction	Promote the development of tourism in the region through leadership and institutional, business and subregional coordination.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Lakes and reservoirs zone)	Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Antioquia	Joint vision of regional tourism and collective construction of programs and training workshops.
Private Committee on Tourism	Cotelco and Anato	Convergence and coordination between the different sectors of the private sphere.
Tourism Security Council	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	Increase safety for tourists.
Council of Cultural Heritage of Antioquia	Institute of Culture and Heritage of Antioquia -ICPA	Protection, conservation and management of cultural heritage.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Altiplano zone)	Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Antioquia	Design and implement processes related to competitiveness and sustainability of tourism products.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Route Aburra—North Zone)	Medellín Chamber of Commerce	Entrepreneurs Network to develop tourism in the municipalities of the Aburrá Norte.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Urabá)	Urabá Chamber of Commerce and Urabá-Darién-Caribe Tourism Corporation	Develop five projects related to: nature, culture, tourist signage, business strengthening and marketing plan.
Private Committee of Antioquia	Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure	Promote a high level debate with public, governmental and private actors on issues that affect the competitiveness, development and progress of the region.
Regional Competitiveness Commission of Antioquia	Government of Antioquia, Medellín City Council, Metropolitan Agency and Medellín Chamber of Commerce	Space created to discuss, validate and promote initiatives and projects that promote: Productivity and competitiveness policy, Regional Competitiveness Plan in Antioquia.
Tourist Competitiveness Agreement of Antioquia	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism—Vice Ministry of Tourism	Consolidate tourism clusters, applying competitiveness processes to the regions.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

These spaces of coalitions are identified as sectoral consultation bodies that ensure the participation of all stakeholders in important decisions made about the destination. These spaces have established a collective vision of regional tourism development and have determined the standards and frameworks.

#### 5.4. Mutual Awareness and/or Common Agendas

Mutual awareness and common enterprise imply that institutions collectively develop a common agenda, which may be formally defined or simply represent a set of clear, shared regional priorities (Bowler, 1999). From there, the three most important alliances and the four most key institutional actors in the building of tourism regional development common agendas were the following:

1. The Government of Antioquia and the Regional Competitiveness Council, which defined a vision for the region's economic and social development;
2. The Medellín Chamber of Commerce, which recognized the need for the diversification of the regional economy and developed the "Cluster Community" in partnership with the Medellín City Council; and
3. The Medellín City Council, which strengthened the tourism sector by collaborating with partners to improve the attractiveness of the capital city and, in turn, the entire region.

In general, actions undertaken from those processes are related to the elaboration of a common vision, the development of a regional competitiveness strategy, and the promotion of the region and the capital city as a tourism destination. At the same time, the key issues of common agendas focused on developing public policies, defining roles, accessing funding, and attracting investment. From our analysis, interviewees argued that existence of common agendas and institutional empowerment have been key for Antioquia's regional tourism development. However, there has been a persistent perception that the efficiency and thoroughness with which they have been implemented have been suboptimal. Consequently, although it is recognized that common agendas have clearly been established, 42% of institutions and organizations considered institutional coordination to be inefficient, particularly at the regional level (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Management tools and institutional coordination efficiency.

Development Plans	Efficiency *	
	Medellín	Antioquia
Public policies	Efficient	Inefficient
Projects	Efficient	Inefficient
Strategic/Sectoral plans	Efficient	Efficient
Alliances, Agreements	Efficient	Inefficient
Funding	Efficient	Efficient
Training	Efficient	Inefficient

\*According to the opinions of the participating institutions/organizations.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 5 shows the types common management tools developed by participating institutions at regional and city level. Such results highlight the disparity between the region and capital city in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of tools for managing local as well as regional development. The efficiencies of those tools relate closely with institutional performance and political stability in the territory. In that sense, participants stressed the importance of developing agendas that transcend political and electoral timeframes as well as facilitate the continuity of objectives established jointly by the public and private sectors.

## 6. Discussion

The conventional thinking about the relationship between tourism and regional development is present in a wide range of studies [56]. Some academic research focuses on the local, place-based factors that influence tourism development and ask why some tourism areas develop more than others. Debates on regional development evidence the importance of institutions to explain differences between regions (Acemoglu et al., 2005; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Montero et al., 2018) and can be applied to regional tourism development.

From the institutional perspective, globalization is producing new forms of regional differentiation and tourism is a key driver to this, with attention focused on the regional level as a key scale of economic organization (Cumbers et al., 2002). The economic success of a region is highly dependent on the local and sectoral institutional setting

and the framework of governance in which the regional economy is embedded (Boschma & Frenken, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2000). This concept of embeddedness has been particularly influential in directing attention to the social and institutional factors that shape the processes of economic development in particular places (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Grabher, 1993; Oinas, 1997). This approach highlights the importance of developing strategic governance and networks in order to envision region-promoting collective action, thus generating institutional and political forces to act (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007). In the case of Antioquia, this argument is supported by evidence of collective action and institutional efforts to develop a long-term vision for the region. Since the early 2000s, Medellín and Antioquia have made very important transformations in its institutional and governance structures (Franz, 2017), making a positive impact on tourism governance through the establishment of new institutional structures, by applying policies for tourism development, by defining resources and rules, and also through coordination and cooperation among numerous actors including all the institutions and individuals. All of this is key according to previously stated evidence provided by, e.g., Beritelli et al. (2007) and Ruhanen et al. (2010).

On the other hand, the evidence collected also reflects that in Antioquia private organizations have gained power and are capable of deeply influencing the decisions made by government. This is the case, for instance, of Medellín Chamber of Commerce and private tourism associations (Cotelco, Anato, Fenalco). This dynamic is directly related to the arguments expressed by Dredge and Whitford (2011) based on the idea that pre-existing institutional structures and underlying power structures determine outcomes in tourism governance. This also relates to Valente et al. (2015) statement that regional tourism organizations established and led by business actors are more effective in leading regional tourism development.

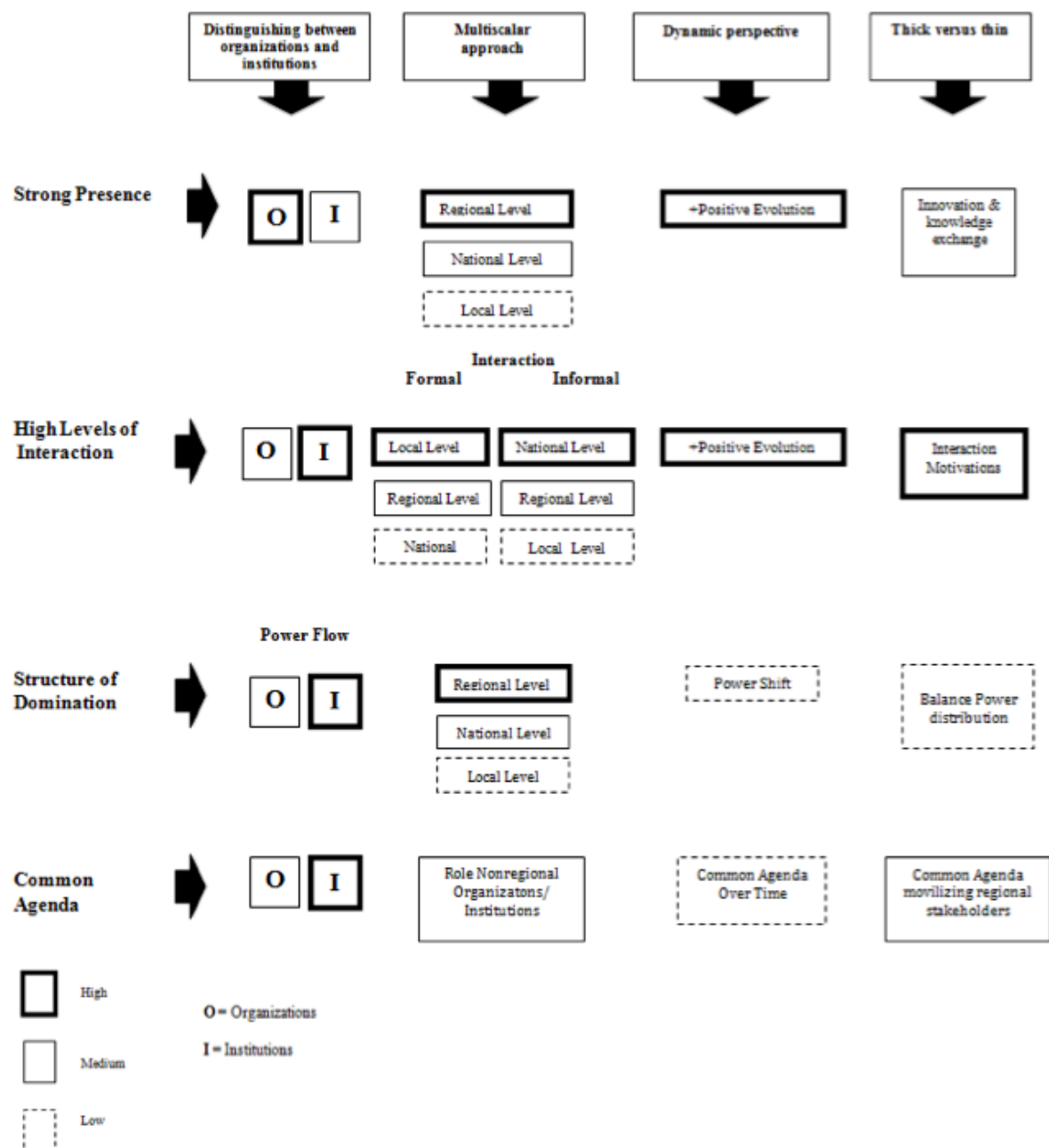
Through the institutional thickness concept, Amin and Thrift (1994) stated that institutions generate greater legitimacy by nurturing relationships of trust, by stimulating entrepreneurial capacity, and by consolidating the empowerment of economic activity in a local environment. This argument relates regional development success to the plurality of interacting actors through a strong institutional presence and high levels of interaction. In this respect, as the empirical evidence shows, this dynamic represents a fundamental element in the development of tourism in Antioquia. However, as Rodríguez-Pose (2013) argued, and as it can be applied to regional tourism development in Antioquia, while institutions are essential for regional tourism development, implementing regional development strategies based on institutions must confront the problem of the lack of a definition of effective institutions.

Figure 6 graphically summarizes the key variables related to the dimensions of institutional thickness and the dynamics within the institutions in the region of Antioquia. This figure was created following the elements proposed by Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), and it is of interest in order to analyze the effect of each dimension on: (a) the weight of



institutions versus organizations; (b) the multiscalar impacts; (c) the dynamic perspective; and (d) thick versus thin. Distinction between lines represents the intensity of these elements, relates each component developed by Amin and Thrift (1994) with each element conceptualized by Zukauskaite et al. (2017), and provides an overview of the institutional framework. Therefore, the main results presented in Figure 6 can be understood as follows.

Figure 6. Institutional thickness in Antioquia Regional Tourism Destination.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

First, regarding institutional density, the main results obtained point out a greater presence of private organizations involved in tourism development in the region. According to the multiscale perspective, the institutions/organizations that have the greatest influence on the destination encompass a sphere of regional influence, and their functions and actions impact the entire region.

In addition, the results show that the region had a positive evolution during the period 2000–2015 and participants attributed this evolution to the creation of a new institutional/organizational fabric. In this sense, Hypothesis 1 (H1) was confirmed as there is evidence that institutional development has played a significant role in regional tourism development. In fact, participants felt that this new fabric has improved the governance of the destination.

In regard to interactions, this analysis has identified how interactions and relationships are largely influenced by the motivation of each institution/organization to interact with others. In this sense, institutions represent higher levels of interaction than organizations. This dynamic can be explained by the fact that their public nature requires constant interaction with local, regional, and national private stakeholders. However, particular attention needs to be paid to the functions they play and the incentives they provide (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

The way in which institutions are interrelated specifies that formal interaction spaces are mostly used by local institutions/organizations, while interactions on a national scale take place through informal interaction spaces. This is an important point according to Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), as far as according to them regional development is shaped not only by interactions among local actors, but also by linkages between local and nonlocal actors. For this reason, organizational network analysis should include national and global actors and the evolution of their interactions over time. In this respect, the evolution of interactions in Antioquia has been positive, as many of the participants in the study claimed to belong to different formal and informal interaction spaces during 2000–2015. This engagement is clearly relevant to generate collective learning processes and networking in the region (Keeble et al., 1999), confirming Hypothesis 2 (H2). So, institutional interactions shape the extent of regional tourism development.

Regarding the power dimension, not all institutions/organizations are equally important for regional development and innovation (MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999). Political economy theories on why some regions are successful while others fail in achieving development emphasize the importance of power relations (Franz, 2018). In Antioquia, the findings show that certain actors can play a decisive role in regional tourism development, whether this is influenced by a greater allocation of economic resources or strong leadership and interaction capacity in relation to other institutions/organizations. In this analysis, the power shift is largely determined by regional institutions, but it is important to clarify that, in the context of Antioquia, the power is determined by a greater

availability of economic resources for institutions. Proof of this is that institutions/organizations at the national level have less relevance in the process of regional tourism development, at least in the case of Antioquia where governance capability is strong. This is a significant dynamic that could clearly change depending on the context of the place. Nevertheless, in the Antioquia context, changes of power between institutions/organization appear to be minimal, preventing a low balance in the distribution of power. Identifying this dynamic is valuable in order to determine which institutions/organizations at which geographic level have the most power to influence regional development, and to what extent, how, and why the power balance changes over time (Zukauskaite et al., 2017). In addition, determining the distribution of power across the political landscape is crucial for an understanding of the changes in institutions and their effects on the policy environment for economic development (Franz, 2018). Finally, in Antioquia, the power to influence policies or institutions in regional tourism landscape is often related to leadership through spaces of coalitions that ensure the participation of all stakeholders in important decisions. This collective participation has been more effective than the role of the structures of domination. Therefore, this means that the Hypothesis 3 (H3) could also be confirmed.

The fourth and last characteristic that defines institutional thickness is the development of a common agenda. In Antioquia, interviewees argued that the existence of common agendas and institutional empowerment has been key for regional tourism development, confirming the Hypothesis 4 (H4). At the same time, it has been proven that common agenda operationalization is usually more efficient when it is carried out by entrepreneurs and not by institutions/organizations (Valente et al., 2015). This also demonstrates the decisive role of entrepreneurs in triggering positive changes in the evolutionary trajectory of the destination (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2016). The design of development plans and strategic/sector plans is the most frequent pattern for implementing common agendas. However, implementation depends on changes in the regional and local political context. This reaffirms the idea that common agendas are influenced by the specific patterns of domination and relative power (Raco, 1998).

## 7. Conclusions

This paper argues that institutions are important drivers for regional tourism development and highlights the relevance of institutional thickness as concept for research.

Institutional thickness, as initially theorized by Amin and Thrift (1994), is considered a key condition to promote economic development and mobilize actors, organizations, and resources. This approach provides valuable insight into the four factors (strong

institutional presence, high levels of interaction between institutions, a mutual awareness and common enterprise among institutions, and the existence of structures of domination and/or patterns of coalition) that can influence the social and economic performance of a place according to them.

Academic literature shows that institutional thickness has been investigated according to different perspectives until now. However, efforts have been made to build empirical frameworks (Chang, 2007; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017; Keeble, 1999; MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999; Raco, 1998; Henry & Pinch, 2001) mainly in developed countries and industrial activity contexts, gaps exist in the study of how different institutional scenarios affect regional growth and on how they contribute to this according to the type of economy (Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2019).

In this study, we attempted to address this gap by applying the four constitutive features of institutional thickness in a developing region and regarding its evolution, transformation and development as tourism destination. This connects our analysis with recent approaches on analyzing the dynamics of a destination from Evolutionary Economic Geographies approaches (Brouder et al., 2017). This is also relevant as within the economic development models adopted by the Latin American and Caribbean countries in which tourism plays a relevant and strategic role, the growing demand to develop tourism is also reflected in the wide range of institutions supporting this sector (Elliot, 2004).

In doing so, this analysis follows the enormous work done in recent years by social scientists to try to understand the role of institutions in economic development (Farole et al., 2011). Bearing in mind that there are other cross-cutting factors that influence regional tourism development, this analysis proposes an empirical application based on the institutional thickness approach not only to determine the ways in which a strong institutional atmosphere influences regional tourism development, but also to learn what aspects can determine its efficiency.

The empirical approach has produced an interesting assessment allowing us to observe the role played by institutions in regional tourism development and the dynamics among the agents involved in this process according to the four factors of institutional thickness. This approach provides a new perspective on the role of institutions in regional tourism development in Latin America, particularly in Antioquia, Colombia, one of the most prosperous regions in the country. Besides, the proposed methodology provides insights to introduce this analytical framework in other regions with similar geopolitical and economic dynamics. Studying and characterizing the nature and relationships of institutions in such geographical contexts can lead to better management and planning of tourism destinations considering issues such as governance, coordination, leadership, and the establishment of common agendas, and enrich the debate on the subject.

Overall, confirming the initial hypothesis, the paper highlights that the concept of institutional thickness can accomplish a valuable synthesis of diverse and often disconnected arguments to account for regional tourism development as it can also make it when accounting on regional economic performance (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007). Therefore, based on our empirical application, we highlight the following lessons.

First, institutional thickness may explain why qualitative matters are important in regional development as relationships between regional institutional stakeholders and motivation for joint action are relevant in assessing regional performance beyond traditional quantitative factors. Second, issues related to political governance are clearly related to institutional thickness. For instance, we found that this aspect has been relevant in the case of Medellín and Antioquia, where “good governance” has also been coordinated with institutional and organizational factors. Third, the development pace of institutions in the case analyzed also show that exogenous factors can have an important influence too (Franz, 2018). Fourth regional development changes take place partly due to changes in institutional frameworks (e.g., policies, legislation, and budgets), and, in this scenario, some institutions are more prominent than others in different phases of the development process (Zukauskaitė, 2013). This consideration is reflected in our results, showing that public institutions play a key role, principally determined by their financial capacity, but also reveal that organizations such as the Medellín Chamber of Commerce is playing a strong leadership when public institutions or regional government does not assume that role.

Obviously, future analyses may be required to propose other indicators and methods for measuring the role of institutional thickness in regional tourism development. In this respect, considering the important role and the different sides of the interactions between institutions probably social networks analysis could be useful for this purpose, as far as networks analysis extends beyond the attributes of individual actors and can evidence how they are positioned within a system (Hu et al., 2019).

Finally, we highlight that this paper contributes to the discussion about the role of the recent institutional and economic developments in some Latin American regions specifically in the tourism landscape demonstrating the usefulness of institutional thickness and opening a new window for future applied research to tourism regional development. From a managerial perspective, the results also suggest that the development of institutions and organizations focused in this specific sector is a convenient tool to stimulate, accompany and create a common vision for the tourism industry at regional scale.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Structured Interview Questions.

- Question 1: According to your opinion, how has tourism evolved in the region of Antioquia over the last 15 years (2000–2015)?
- Question 2: What factors do you consider to have been determinants for tourist development of the region?
- Question 3: What relevance do you give to the roles of institutions in regional tourism development?
- Question 4: Do you think that the creation of new institutional fabric established over the last 15 years has been fundamental to achieving the results attained in the region?
- Question 5: Do you think that the political system and/or the political stability of the region have contributed significantly to the development of tourism?
- Question 6: Could you mention at least three institutions that you consider to have been fundamental to tourism development in the region?
- Question 7: Is there an institution that, in your opinion, has provided the greatest leadership for regional tourism development?
- Question 8: Has the creation of new institutions between 2000 and 2015 made it possible to generate complementarity in destination management, or has it generated a duplication of functions?
- Question 9: How would you evaluate the level of interaction between institutions?
- Question 10: How coordinated are the institutions to carry out policies, programs, and projects designed to contribute to tourist development in Antioquia?
- Question 11: What kind of collaboration takes place among the institutions related to tourism in the region: formal (through committees, regional councils, etc.) or informal (through sporadic collaborations, personal relationships, etc.)?
- Question 12: Has collaboration among institutions created synergies that have improved tourism development policies? If so, what kinds of synergies have been created?
- Question 13: In which type or types of initiatives, projects, or programs do you consider institutions in the region to be better articulated?
- Question 14: In your opinion, do all the institutions involved in tourism development in Antioquia share a common agenda or agendas?
- Question 15: Do you think that, in the current institutional framework, there is any institution of significant importance that is not participating in regional tourism development? If so, which one?
- Question 16: Could you mention at least one successful regional project in which all the institutions have been actively involved during 2000–2015?
- Question 17: Looking ahead, do you think it is necessary to create new institutions in order to strengthen tourism development of the region? If so, what should their aims be?

**Appendix B. Institutions and Tourism Development in Antioquia.**

<b>Institutions and Tourism Development in Antioquia</b>		
<b>Section</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>
<b>1. General Information</b>	Basic information about the participants, name of the institution/organization they represent year it was established, territorial scope, and other information.	13
<b>2. Importance of Institutions in Regional Tourism Development</b>	Roles played by institutions in the regional tourism development of Antioquia and to understand the relevance of the institutions in tourist development evolution.	5
<b>3. Institutional levels of interaction</b>	Levels of interaction within the institution's network involved in regional tourism development according to their degree of involvement, cooperation, and information exchange.	5
<b>4. Structures of domination and/or patterns of coalition</b>	In this section, governance structures and spaces of collective representation are explored. These spaces can be formal or informal and help to fulfil the objectives as a tourist destination.	11
<b>5. Institutional mutual awareness</b>	Information related to common agendas and projects that have allowed the promotion of tourism development in the region.	7
<b>Other final questions</b>	General opinions on the importance of the institutions for regional tourism development.	4

**Appendix C.** The 28 institutions/organizations participating in the study.

Institution/Organization	Type	Character	Spatial Scale	Commitment to Tourism Development	Year Founded
Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce	Organization	Mixed*	Regional	Partial	1992
Subregional tourist corporation—Suroeste Antioqueño	Organization	Private	Regional	Exclusive	2005
IDEA—Institute for the Development of Antioquia	Institution	Public	Regional	Partial	1952
Network of Subregional tourist corporations	Organization	Private	Regional	Exclusive	2013
Comfama—Colombian family social fund	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1954
Proantioquia—non-profit, privately operated foundation	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1975
University Colegio Mayor de Antioquia	Organization	Public	Capital City	Exclusive	1946
Fedec—Colombian Federation of Eco-Parks, Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism	Organization	Private	National	Exclusive	2007
Ruta N—Medellín Business and Innovation Center	Organization	Public	Capital City	Partial	2011
Oriente Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1987
Association of tourist guides of Antioquia – ASOGUIAN	Organization	Private	Regional	Exclusive	1996
Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau	Organization	Mixed *	Regional	Exclusive	2004
Magdalena Medio and Nordeste Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1988
Vice -Ministry of Tourism	Institution	Public	National	Exclusive	2006
Cotelco Antioquia—Hotel and Tourism Association	Organization	Private	National	Exclusive	1993
FENALCO ANTIOQUIA—Association of merchants	Organization	Private	National	Partial	1946
PROCOLOMBIA	Institution	Public	National	Exclusive	1992
SENA—National Learning Service	Institution	Public	National	Partial	1957
Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area	Organization	Public	Capital City	Partial	2002
ACOPI ANTIOQUIA—Colombian Association of SMEs	Organization	Private	National	Partial	1957
University of San Buenaventura	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1967

Science and Technology Center of Antioquia—CTA	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1989
Medellín Chamber of Commerce	Organization	Private	Regional	Partial	1904
Subregional tourist corporation—Occidente de Antioquia	Organization	Mixed*	Regional	Exclusive	2001
Subregional tourist corporation—Urabá	Organization	Mixed*	Regional	Exclusive	2005
Tourist Office/Mayor's Office of Medellín	Institution	Public	Regional	Exclusive	Unanswered
Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office	Institution	Public	Regional	Exclusive	Unanswered
University of Medellín	Organization	Private	Capital City	Exclusive	1950

## Publicación 2: Measuring institutional thickness in tourism: An empirical application based on social network analysis

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### Abstract

This article uses social network analysis to measure institutional thickness in a regional tourism destination in Colombia. Through the analysis of 107 institutions, the empirical findings show that the configuration of formal interaction spaces determine the governance system of the destination turning certain institutions into hubs or authorities. The contribution of this research is two-fold. Firstly, it provides a new approach to the study of institutional thickness by applying a social network analysis methodology making possible to identify the components theoretically defined such as the role of institutional presence, levels of interaction, structures of domination, and common agendas in tourism. Secondly, it highlights the importance of understanding the role of the regional institutional environment and the governance framework of tourism destinations to better plan and manage their dynamics and effects.

**Keywords:** Institutional networks; Institutional thickness; Social network analysis; Tourism geography; Economic geography.



## 1. Introduction

Institutions are key in mobilizing social, political, and economic stakeholders and in generating capacities to produce growth, innovation, and structural change through the operation and governance of the economic system (Vazquez Barquero, 2005). According to Swyngedouw (2000), the economic success of regions is highly dependent on the local institutional environment and the governance framework in which they are integrated. Institutions understood as factors able to explain differences in economic development started to gain popularity by the early 1990s (Chang, 2011). The interest on this topic led to the creation of a new approach, the New Institutional Economy (NIE), emerging a new vision to discuss how the institutional dynamics of a territory activates its development potential. In this frame, institutional thickness, theorized by Amin and Thrift (1994), is considered a key condition to promote economic development as well as mobilize actors, organizations, and resources (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

Even though institutional thickness has become a key reference for a large body of works related to institutions and regional economic development, few attempts have been made to measure its components and to reflect on its empirical application (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). The operationalization of the study of institutional thickness' factors represents a challenge from the standpoint of its empirical application. This is especially relevant as far as related theory links institutional thickness to economic development. Some attempts have been carried out to develop quantitative indicators (Beer & Lester, 2015; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Escobal & Ponce, 2011) but most of them still display ambiguities (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017) and cannot be applied to different contexts or used for comparative studies.

Discussions on institutional thickness have also emerged within the framework of the ever-growing literature on socioeconomic networks and territorial embedding, which highlight institutional and sociocultural factors as the basis of economic success (Keeble et al., 1999). Thus, it is not illogical to claim that there may exist a close relationship between the analysis of institutional thickness and the characterization of socioeconomic networks that substantiate the relationships identified in a territory. In fact, there are analytical proposals that share the idea that research on networks and on institutions should align themselves (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008), as economically successful regions are networked regional economies in which the cognitive, organizational, social and institutional proximity between their stakeholders promotes their growth (Boschma, 2005).

In tourism, research regarding institutional environment considers the study of the role of stakeholders (Ritchie & Crouch, 2005) and, particularly, the analysis of stakeholders' networks in destinations as a key factor (Baggio et al., 2010; Baggio, 2011; Hazra et al., 2017; Scott & Cooper, 2007; Scott et al., 2008a, 2008b). Recent studies reflect how

tourism development depends, to a great extent, on the action of human agency (Brouder et al., 2016) and discuss how research needs to move towards to know how and why (Brouder, 2014) it can occur. Additionally, because it is generally accepted that the relationship between tourism and economic success is not automatic (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2013), a current challenge for tourism research is to explore how and under which circumstances this relation produce distinctive economic results. As general policies, regulatory frameworks and the density of public and private institutional structures and their coordination and interaction play a role within the general economics dynamics, (Ménard, 2011), it looks of interest to explore if the nature and relations of institutions in a tourist context influence the management, planning, and performance of destinations and its general economic development.

In this vein, this article seeks to help to address the first of the two factors included in the relation between institutional thickness and economic development through tourism development making the contribution to incorporate the institutional thickness analysis in tourism research using Social Network Analysis. This is understood as a first and necessary step that can be used further to analyse the role of institutions in the economic dynamics of tourism destinations. To do so, from a theoretical standpoint the paper identifies some key elements in the relation between institutional thickness and networks, arguing that because institutions are embedded in relational contexts, thus networks are essential components of a strong institutional context. Therefore, the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) contributes to bridge the gap in the measurement of the institutional thickness factors. In consequence, the main contributions of the paper are, first, to provide a new approach to the study of institutional thickness by applying a social network analysis methodology and making possible to measure factors such as institutional presence, levels of interaction, structures of domination, and common agendas in tourism. Second, it highlights the importance of advancing in the understanding of the role of the institutional environment and the governance framework of tourism destinations to better plan and manage their dynamics and effects.

To do this, Section 2 presents a review of the literature addressing the institutional thickness concept, the close relation between institutions and networks, and the nature of them in the context of tourism. Section 3 describes the methodology implemented. Section 4 introduces the empirical evidence obtained and discusses results with reference to existing literature thereon so far and Section 5 summarizes the contributions and poses several concluding observations.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This section explains the institutional thickness concept according with the original work of Amin and Thrift (1994) but also considering recent approaches (Zukauskaite et al., 2017) with the aim to build a conceptual and operational approach on the relationship between institutional thickness and networks analysis. This is based on the established evidence that both are inherently relational, and they refer not only to the interaction between their components but also consider issues such as domination, power relations, mutual awareness, and others (Amin & Thrift, 1994; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

### 2.1. Institutional thickness: an overview

In the context of the NIE, the concept of “institutions” still lacks a commonly agreed definition (Voigt, 2013). However, the most usual understanding of an institution was proposed by North (1990), who defined it as the restrictions that arise from human inventiveness to limit political, economic, and social interactions. This definition comprises implicit constraints, formal rules, and enforcement mechanisms (Voigt, 2013). According to Searle (2005), “an institution is any collectively accepted system of rules, procedures, practices that enable us to create institutional facts.” In this framework, organizations are an important form of institutions (Posner, 2010) and this is the approach that this work uses in order to delimit how institutions are addressed.

The NIE sustains that in order to analyse the role of institutions in a region it is essential to focus on the relationships between institutions and the context (Fornahl & Brenner, 2003; Ménard, 2011). Among the broad and diverse set of disciplinary perspectives created from the study of institutions, the notion of institutional thickness emerges as a key concept within economic geography.

Institutional thickness was introduced in a collection of essays under the title “Globalization, Institutions, and Regional Development in Europe” published in 1994 by Amin and Thrift. It refers to the density of institutions that act in a territory to promote development actions. The main idea of this approach is that the greater is the institutional thickness of a region, the greater is its capacity for growth (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019) although researchers such as Rodríguez-Pose (2013) have also emphasized the importance of institutional effectiveness. Institutional thickness implies a series of organizational, sociocultural, and economic criteria. It covers different types of institutions, including financial entities, local chambers of commerce, development agencies, local authorities, innovation centres, schools, government agencies, employers, and administrative bodies. Therefore, institutional thickness refers not only to the existence of organizations linked to territorial economic activity, but also fundamentally

to the interaction between companies, intermediate organizations, and local public powers (Madoery, 2001).

Institutional thickness as theorized by Amin and Thrift (1994) set a framework based on 4 factors. The first factor refers to the existence of a *strong institutional presence*, understood as the existence of a range of institutions such as local authorities, development agencies, chambers of commerce, innovation centres, trade unions, educational institutions, and other bodies that participate in building capacities as well as in collective representation. The second factor relates to the *levels of interaction* and the importance of formal and informal knowledge exchange and cooperation between institutions. Thirdly, they identify a factor related to *domain structures or coalition patterns*. It refers to leadership and collective representation of what normally are individual interests. Finally, the fourth factor refers to *mutual awareness* and *common purposes* introduced through the development of *common agendas* between institutions.

Since Amin and Thrift (1994) introduced the concept of institutional thickness, it has further developed following various approaches. Probably one of the most significant contribution was made by Wood and Valler (2004), who edited a collection of articles on theoretical and empirical approaches developing different aspects of the concept. Subsequently, numerous academic works have focused on the analytical operationalization of institutional thickness. In this respect, Coulson and Ferrario (2007) applied an empirical approach to produce some indicators such as institutional presence, degree of interaction, common enterprise, and structure of domination and coalition. Moreover, institutional thickness has been investigated according to different perspectives in order to build empirical frameworks mainly in developed countries and industrial activity contexts (Beer & Lester, 2015; Cheng & Lie, 2009; Giordano, 2001; Henry & Pinch, 2001; Keeble et al., 1999; MacLeod, 1997; MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999; Raco, 1998; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). The most recent contribution, developed by Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), could lead to the development of a more complete empirical application of institutional thickness. These authors address the concept by considering four fundamental issues: the distinction between organizations and institutions, the consideration of different territorial scales, an evolutionary perspective based on changes in power over time; and the relationship of institutional density with innovation.

Despite these contributions, there are difficulties to operationalize the institutional thickness concept, especially quantitatively. In this vein, network analysis could be useful for this purpose.

## 2.2. The relationship between institutional thickness and networks

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that all institutions are integrated embedded in institutionalized relational contexts. These assertions are based upon the epistemological foundation itself that makes up the NIE. This is a perspective in which the relational dimension, that is to say, links established between institutions through interaction, formal or informal exchanges, domain dynamics and/or coalitions or the existence of common purposes, are essential. Hence, the possibility of focussing an institutional thickness analysis through a perspective of networks. In this sense, Owen-Smith and Powell (2008) already introduced a series of empirical studies showing how institutions and networks can effectively come together and presented the idea that networks are like scaffolding for institutions and enabling the potential of common issues between institutional thickness (Amin & Thrift, 1994) and the network analysis (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), as is shown in Table 1.

From DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) perspective, each one of the 4 processes that are established by the institutional thickness approach is inherently relational. The interaction between stakeholders is facilitated by the social rules; status emerges from vertical relations; coalitions are formed by horizontal relations; information is shared within the already established relations; and mutual awareness and response capacity are constituted through two-way links of recognition and observation. The modelling of these four processes requires different types of institutions, various kinds of relations and of a range of flows connecting the relations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this vein, taking the point of Meyer and Rowan (1977) that institutions are embedded in relational contexts, it could be argued that networks are essential components of a strong institutional context.

**Table 1.** An integrative view of the relationship between Institutional Thickness & Networks Analysis.

<b>Institutional Thickness</b> Amin and Thrift (1994)	<b>Network Analysis</b> DiMaggio and Powell (1983)
<b>Factors &amp; Process that involved</b>	
i. Strong institutional presence.	i. Increased interaction among participants.
ii. High levels of interaction between local institutions/organizations.	ii. Heightened information sharing.
iii. Structures of domination and/or Patterns of coalition.	iii. The development of well-defined status orders and patterns of coalition.
iv. Mutual awareness and/or Common agendas.	iv. Mutual awareness and responsiveness.

Source: Own elaboration based on Amin and Thrift (1994) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

From DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) perspective, each one of the 4 processes that are established by the institutional thickness approach is inherently relational. The interaction between stakeholders is facilitated by the social rules; status emerges from vertical relations; coalitions are formed by horizontal relations; information is shared within the already established relations; and mutual awareness and response capacity are constituted through two-way links of recognition and observation. The modelling of these four processes requires different types of institutions, various kinds of relations and of a range of flows connecting the relations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this vein, taking the point of Meyer and Rowan (1977) that institutions are embedded in relational contexts, it could be argued that networks are essential components of a strong institutional context.

### 2.3. Institutions, networks and tourism

Tourism is a social and economic activity that is growing considerably on a worldwide scale. Based on the nature of the tourism sector, which links multiple stakeholders in decision-making and is often described as multi-stranded, this article applies an empirical approach to institutional thickness to it.

Although the components of the tourism sector differ across countries, there are certain subsectors which are clearly identified as being components of tourism activity (Lickorish

& Jenkins, 2007), such as accommodation, travel agents, tour operators, and transport (airlines, shipping, rail, and car). Moreover, tourism involves a range of institutions with different legal characteristics (both in the private and public sectors), such as state-authorized autonomous agencies, state agencies, agencies that provide product development or destination marketing organizations, and trade organizations (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013). Indeed, tourism involves other service and industrial companies that are not specifically devoted to tourism such as restaurants, among the most characteristic, but also a wide range of suppliers from consultancy to engineering to name two of them. Those companies are not designed for tourism but have part of their income based on the performance of the tourism activity. Additionally, in this same vein, there is a range of institutions such as chambers of commerce, universities, or other public and private agencies that even though they are not fully involved in the tourism sector often play an essentially background role in the development of tourism as partner institutions.

In this context, the tourism sector links multiple stakeholders and it is the result of the intensity of the cooperation, the participation, and the consensus in decision-making among them what fosters the activity and increases economic outcomes (Carlsson, 2000; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013). In other words, the nature and relations of institutions and organizations in a tourist context influence the management, planning, and performance of destinations (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). In this sense, it can be easily acknowledged that institutional thickness and networks have a strong connection because both approaches refer not only to the existence of institutions and organizations (companies, intermediate organizations, and local public powers) linked to a territorial economic activity but also fundamentally to the interaction between them (Madoery, 2001).

In tourism literature, issues regarding institutional environment have only been partially addressed, given that in general, the research has not been specifically focussed on understanding the role of institutions as elements that monitor, promote, harmonize and compile the interests, expectations, and objectives of the stakeholders in the tourism sector. Conversely, research has mainly studied the role of the stakeholders from a perspective of their influence in the governance of the destinations. Still, a series of works have explored the role of institutions in tourism development (Desforges, 2000; Hall et al., 2004; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Roxas & Chadee, 2013) albeit not specifically from the NIE perspective (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

Otherwise, there are numerous network analysis in tourism from different perspectives. Gibson et al. (2005) highlight their role as a key tool for the destination's local economic development. In 2008, Scott et al. (2008a) studied inter-organizational networks in tourist destinations and the effects of interactions between them for producing products and services. More comprehensively, Van der Zee and Vanneste (2015) analyse 98 articles published on network analysis in tourism in order to understand and demonstrate its role in terms of tourist management. This is, in fact, a growing stream of research based on

applying mathematical properties to the study of tourism through the theoretical-methodological principles of SNA (Scott & Laws, 2010).

Hence, analysis has incorporated approaches such as the thickness of tourism networks (McLeod et al., 2010), the centrality of the networks and stakeholders in tourism (Bras et al., 2010), or the degree of intermediation that might facilitate the connectivity of the tourist networks (Ramayah et al., 2011; Zach & Racherla, 2011). In a complementary sense, the recent work developed by Sanz-Ibañez et al. (2019) applies social network analysis to identify the knowledge networks generated in a tourist destination.

In any case, most of the previous analysis does not explicitly link network analysis to the institutional thickness.

### 3. Methodology

Because of the well-known limitations in the operationalization of the study of the factors that make up institutional thickness (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017) and taking into account the common issues introduced above about the relationship between institutional thickness and networks analysis, this paper adopts formal Social Network Analysis (SNA) methods to advance the empirical operationalization and the measurement of institutional thickness. To do so, it makes a pilot study in a regional tourism destination.

A social network is a set of actors (e.g. individuals, groups, and organizations) and the relations defined among them (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Correspondingly, SNA consist of a collection of techniques for mapping, measuring, and analysing social networks using both qualitative and quantitative data (Blanchet & James, 2011). SNA can be used as a research or evaluation method to understand how the social structure influences actors' behaviour when working together, sharing resources, or communicating across a network (Carrington et al., 2005).

#### 1.1. Regional context

In order to operationalize the institutional thickness through the application of SNA, this article examines it in the Antioquia region between 1997 and 2016. Antioquia is located in the central northwestern part of Colombia. It is Colombia's most populated region (6,690,980 inhabitants in 2018) and the largest economy after Bogota's capital district. In 2018, according to official data from the Colombian Statistical Office (DANE), 2020, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Colombia was 280.249 M€, among which 14.7% corresponded to Antioquia. Commerce and manufacturing are the most thriving sectors

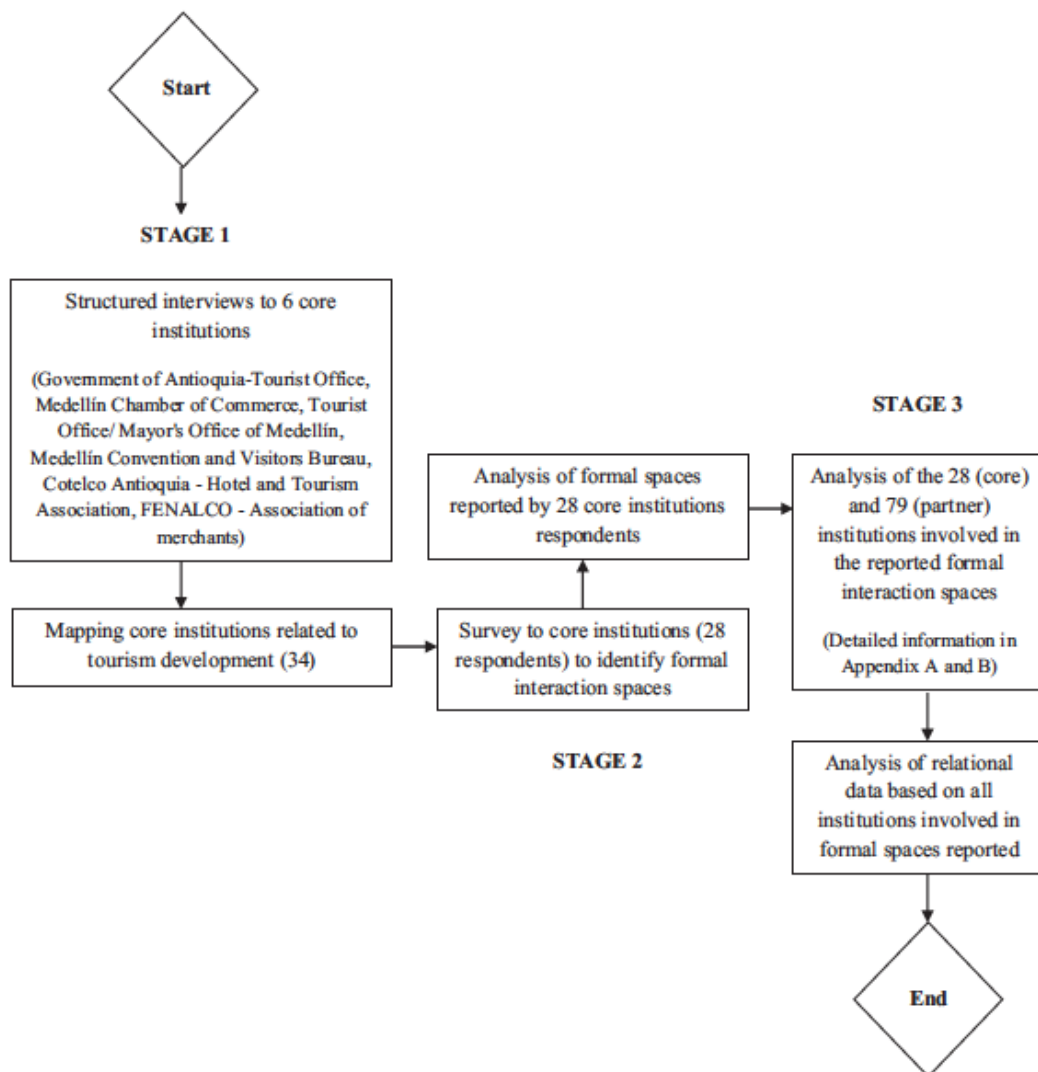


in Antioquia, representing 16.3% and 16.3% of its total GDP, respectively. Antioquia has seen a significant increase in its tourist development in the last two decades and Medellín, the capital city, has consolidated an international recognition being designated as City of the Year in 2013 and the best tourist destination in South America according to TripAdvisor in 2018. The city was also awarded by the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize in 2016. The tourism development path started in 1999, parallel to the consideration of tourism as a key element for the regional economy and it has been considered part of the economic success of the region (Brida et al., 2011). Since then Antioquia has advanced in the creation and reinforcement of key institutions to support tourist development (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

## 1.2. Data collection

Data gathering for this paper has been developed in three stages (Fig. 1). First, 6 structured interviews were held between May and June 2016 with representatives of corresponding key institutions in terms of the role carried out by them as regards tourism planning and management (Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cotelco Antioquia - Hotel and Tourism Association, FENALCO - Association of merchants) (see Appendix A). The objective of the interviews was to build a preliminary vision of the region's institutional structure and learn about the importance of them for regional tourism development.

Figure. 1. Data collection process.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

The second stage was devoted to map the relevant institutions, either directly or only partially related to tourism development. During the process, 34 institutions with a significant role in the development of tourism between 2000 and 2016 were identified according to strategic planning documents, and information contrast with regional actors. Of these 34 institutions, 28 responded (Table 2) a questionnaire between July and December 2016. The questionnaire was designed to collect evidence on the impact of institutions in the development of tourism in Antioquia and to draw the institutional relations they had with each other and with other institutions not exclusively focused on tourism planning and management (see Appendix B). The 28 participating institutions at this stage of the research were the most active and influential while the 6 institutions

from which we did not get answers were incorporated in the study during the third stage of data collection.

More precisely, on the basis of the information obtained from the participating 28 core institutions, during the third stage of the data gathering formal interaction spaces between institutions (partnerships, sectoral boards, and sectoral councils) were identified. This enabled to include 79 additional partner institutions (see Appendix C) to the 28 initial core ones, which were reported as participants of the formal interaction spaces linked to tourism development in Antioquia between 1997 and 2006 (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Core and partner institutions related to tourism development.

Type	N Core	N Partner
Tourism and regional development agencies	6	
Local, regional and national authorities	5	13
Business service organizations	2	10
Chambers of Commerce	4	
Associations	5	42
Universities	4	2
Research and innovation centers	2	
Institutions for regional development		9
Other institutions for regional tourism development		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 3 shows the formal interaction spaces in which the 107 (28 core +79 partners) identified institutions participate. The first column lists the names of the identified formal spaces including partnerships, sectoral boards, and sectoral councils. Partnerships are defined as relations created between institutions in order to achieve common goals or increase bargaining power. Sectoral boards refer to spaces for agreement with tourism, governmental and academic bodies to assist in the management of the destination. They involve the voluntary participation in trade associations, entrepreneurs, the public sector, organizations, and the academia. Sectoral councils are defined as consultative spaces with common interests and joint visions for the generation, agreement, and development of initiatives, projects, and policies related to the tourist activity. The *issue* column summarizes the themes discussed inside such spaces, the *leadership* column highlights

the institution that exercises the coordinator role and the *number of partners* column refers to the number of institutions that make up each formal space.

**Table 3.** Formal spaces in Antioquia and their institutional aims.

Formal space	Issue	Leadership	Number of Partners
Medellín municipal table of tourism competitiveness	Tourism competitiveness	Medellin City Hall - Tourism Direction	25
Regional Council of Tourism of Antioquia	Tourism competitiveness	Government of Antioquia - Tourism Direction	21
Medellin Tourism Public Policy Council	Tourism competitiveness	Medellin City Hall - Tourism Direction	26
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Lakes and reservoirs zone)	Development and Management of tourism resources	Eastern Antioquia Chamber of Commerce	18
Private Committee on Tourism	Planning and Coordination (Private scope)	Cotelco (Colombian Hotel Association) y Anato (Colombian Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies)	9
Tourism Security Council	Tourist Security	Vice Ministry of Tourism	11
Council of Cultural Heritage of Antioquia	Development and Management of tourism resources	Institute of Culture and Heritage of Antioquia -ICPA	7
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Altiplano zone)	Development and Management of tourism resources	Eastern Antioquia Chamber of Commerce	7
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Aburra-North Zone)	Development and Management of tourism resources	Medellín Chamber of Commerce of	13
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Urabá)	Development and Management of tourism resources	Urabá Chamber Commerce - Urabá Tourism Corporation	4
Private Committee of Antioquia	Regional Development and Competitiveness	Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure	39

Regional Competitiveness Commission of Antioquia	Regional Development and Competitiveness	Government of Antioquia, Medellín City Hall, Metropolitan Agency and Medellín Chamber of Commerce	14
Tourist Competitiveness Agreement of Antioquia	Tourism competitiveness	Vice Ministry of Tourism	14

Source: Authors' elaboration.

### 1.3. Networks' construction

Once the relational data related to participation in different formal spaces had been gathered (Appendix D) these were converted into formal structures (i.e. graphs) in order to be mathematically processed. Specifically, the analysis focused on the relationship between coordinating organizations and participants in the different formal spaces. Thus, we understood the participation in a formal space, whatever its typology, as a link and (to a certain extent) a form of recognition of the participating organization in relation to the coordinating one.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that our approach is not that of a netnographic methodology, where traces of actual interactions among actors are available and can be directly assessed. In this paper, the analysis is centred in membership or participation of actors (i.e. organizations) in certain activities (i.e. Formal Spaces). In other words, instead of studying "who interacts with whom", we look at "who coincides with whom at different activities" and "who organized activities attended by whom". This approach has a long tradition in SNA, starting from Davis et al. (1941) studying the attendance to women's social activities as a way to approach racial segregation. Some examples in the literature of applications include company directorates (Burriss, 2005), scientific collaboration (Newman, 2001), movies (Watts & Strogatz, 1998), or knowledge management in a destination (Sanz-Ibañez et al., 2019).

Consequently, in this paper, each organization is represented by a network node or vertex, and two organizations are connected by means of an arrow if one of these (the origin of the arrow) has, at least, participated in one formal space organized by the other (target of the arrow). Besides the direction, arrows represent the importance of the participant-coordinator link between two organizations. The more formal spaces coordinated by the organization *i* has participated in organization *j*, the thicker (heavier) will be the arrow between *j* and *i*. The social networks built this way represent the 'institutional map' of the destination and allow us to quantitatively measure the different aspects of the institutional thickness.

Given that this study covers quite a 16 years' time window, we also assumed that the structure of the 'institutional map' may have changed over time (and, with it, its

institutional thickness). In order to quantify changes, two periods were identified (1997–2007 and 2008–2016), and a network of organizations was built for each one. The division into these two sub-periods is justified for two reasons. Firstly, by the fact that at the beginning of 2000 Antioquia and Medellín proposed a roadmap for the tourism sector (the Tourism Development Plan of Medellín 2000–2009), formulating the configuration of an institutional network non-existent until then. As a consequence, from 2008 that Antioquia showed a noticeable institutional increase and, likewise, and this is the second reason, tourist flows increased considerably as from 2008.

Once the networks corresponding to the two sub-periods were built, changes in the institutional thickness could be identified and measured by comparing their structural characteristics. In order to do this, we proposed precise structural measures that provide information on each one of a selected number of indicators related to the variables of the institutional thickness previously identified (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

Table 4 shows the structural measures proposed for each one of the selected indicators related to the 4 institutional thickness established variables and brings the connection between social networks and institutional thickness.

**Table 4.** Selected variables, indicators, and structural measures of Institutional Thickness for the Antioquia regional tourism destination case.

Institutional Thickness Variables	Indicator	Structural Measure
Institutional presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Institutions/Organizations related to tourism.</li> <li>Node attributes types:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institution/Organization.</li> <li>Public/Private.</li> <li>Exclusive/Partial commitment with tourism development.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of nodes</li> <li>Frequency of node attributes</li> </ul>
Levels of interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequency and motivations of participation in formal spaces of interaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link density</li> <li>Average degree</li> <li>Average weighted degree</li> </ul>
Structure of domination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership and coordination processes (alliances, agents, and budgets).</li> <li>Governance structures of collective representation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hubs&amp;Authorities (HITS centrality)</li> <li>Assortativity</li> </ul>
Common agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key issues of common agenda.</li> <li>Types of common management tools developed in the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clustering / Modularity</li> <li>Average Path Length</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Authors (2019).

Structural measures are borrowed from SNA's toolset. For each of these structural measures, a definition is provided below justifying its relation with the corresponding variable.

#### 1.4. Structural measures

- **Number of nodes:** Nodes correspond to institutions that have coordinated or participated in formal spaces. Therefore, the number of nodes provides information on the institutional presence.
- **Frequency of node attributes:** Nodes have individual attributes. The three considered attributes in this paper are: Institution vs. Organization; Public vs. Private; and Exclusive vs. Partial commitment with tourism development. Thus, proportions for each provide qualitative information on the composition of the network.
- **Link density:** Obtained by dividing the number of existing links or arrows in the network by the maximum possible number that might be found. Thus, the greater the level of interaction between the organizations (i.e. the more formal spaces exist, or the busier they are) the network will show more links and, therefore, the higher its density will be.
- **Average degree:** Average number of links that connect each node (i.e. outgoing as well as ingoing arrows). Therefore, this measurement provides information quite similar to the density.
- **Average weighted degree:** The previous measurement provides information on the number of interactions between organizations, but not on their intensity (i.e. in how many spaces organized by  $j$  has  $i$  participated). The average weighted degree provides this information (expressed as an average per organization), thus complementing the link density.
- **Hubs & Authorities (HITS centrality):** Relevance of each individual node in the context of the network. HITS centrality provides two scores (Hub and Authority scores) to measure the relevance of a node as the source or destination of the arrows that connect to other important nodes in the network (Kleinberg, 1999). In the context of this work, the HITS centrality scores provide quantitative information on the authority of certain institutions (gained by means of the

coordination of certain spaces) and on the role of other institutions contributing to such authority.

- **Assortativity:** A measure of the tendency of nodes to interact preferably with others similar to them (based upon some specific characteristics) (Newman, 2002). Thus, for example, if the assortativity is calculated based on whether the organizations are public or private (one of the three types considered in the 'Institutional presence' variable), it provides information on the 'degree of endogamy' the organizations present according to their legal nature.
- **Clustering/Modularity:** Social networks have the tendency to present a modular structure, that is to say, that nodes are grouped in communities or modules more connected between each other than with the rest of the network. These communities can be identified by means of techniques similar to statistical clustering analysis. Conversely, modularity measures how marked is the modular structure of a network. The greater the modularity (with a maximum value of 1), easier it is to determine the modules that make up a network. Given the criteria used to build the networks, the organizations (nodes) belonging to one same community will have participated in formal spaces with similar interests or attributes.
- **Average Path Length:** Calculated by means of the shortest path that can be established between two nodes through its links. In the context of this work, the minimum value of this measurement would correspond to the case in which all the organizations would have collaborated in one single formal space (i.e. the connection would almost be direct through the coordinator organization of said space). As the values of this measurement get higher, less overlapping of common interests (and, therefore, of shared formal spaces) can be found.

More detailed information and the mathematical expressions used to calculate the structural measures can be found in Appendix E. In order to establish a framework to confirm the applicability of SNA to the study of the region institutional thickness and the interpretation of results, hereunder 4 questions are posed that the analysis must be able to answer.

**Question 1.** How can we measure the evolution of the intensity of institutional thickness?

**Question 2.** What are the levels (flows) of interaction inside the interaction spaces? What is the connectivity level? How do the relations evolve?

**Question 3.** What roles have the different types of institutions played in the power and collaboration dynamics?



**Question 4.** To what degree does the development of common agendas bring the group of institutions together? To what degree does it define differentiated groups?

## 2. Results and discussion

The main goal of this paper is to demonstrate that the network approach is a comprehensive and useful tool to quantitatively operationalize the analysis of institutional thickness. The study, applied to the context of tourism, has the ability to empirically size a set of structural measurements that provide evidence related to a group of selected variables among those established in the seminal work of Amin and Thrift (1994) and empirically developed by MacLeod (1997), Raco (1998), Keeble et al. (1999), Henry and Pinch (2001), Coulson and Ferrario (2007), Beer and Lester (2015), and Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), among others. Specifically, this network-based approach has been useful to analyse institutional thickness because a) it enables a quantitative measurement of the evolution of institutional thickness in a destination; b) it is a systemic approach for the whole destination, considering all its institutional participants under the same perspective, and c) it reveals aspects non-visible by means of other approaches (e.g. counting the number of spaces each institution participates in, studying the composition of each formal space separately, among others). Results are presented and discussed placing special emphasis on the value obtained due to the social network analysis (SNA) approach.

### 4.1. Descriptive overview

Structural measures defined to study the institutional thickness selected variables are presented in Table 5. Values obtained for each period reflect variations in the institutional tourism dynamics of Antioquia and the role of institutions in regional tourism development (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Values of all the structural measures for both networks analysed.

Variable	Structural Feature	Value	
		1st Period (1997–2007)	2nd Period (2008-2016)
Institutional presence	• Num. of nodes	N= 74	N= 107
	• Node attributes types:		
	a. Institution/Organization.	Institutions:23%	Institutions:25%
	b. Public/Private/Mixed	Organizations:77%	Organizations:75%
	c. Exclusive/Partial commitment with tourism development.	Public:23%	Public:27%
		Private:74%	Private:68%
		Mixed:3%	Mixed:5%
Exclusive:16%		Exclusive:20%	
	Partial:84%	Partial:80%	
Levels of interaction	• Link density	D= 0.018	D= 0.014
	• Average degree	$\langle k \rangle = 2.60$	$\langle k \rangle = 2.95$
	• Average weighted degree	$\langle kw \rangle = 2.76$	$\langle kw \rangle = 3.64$
Structure of domination, coalition patterns	• Hubs&Authorities (HITS centrality)	Hub and Authority scores (Table 6)	Hub and Authority scores (Table 6)
	• Assortativity	$A_{pp} = 0.26$	$A_{pp} = -0.07$
Common agenda	• Network diameter	4	5
	• Average path length	2.731	2.924

Source: Authors' elaboration.

An interesting preliminary finding is that albeit institutions of a private nature have a significant presence in the two analysed periods, public institutions have been the cornerstone upon which Antioquia has established itself as a tourist destination. In fact, as we will see later, public institutions have been densely formally interconnected through the sectoral boards and sectoral councils gaining authority through their

coordination (see Appendix B). Thus, within the context of the Antioquia tourism inter-institutional network, the authority of public institutions has guaranteed a positive and lasting institutional evolution for the destination. This is a key issue that, as seen in other studies, creates competitive advantages (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008).

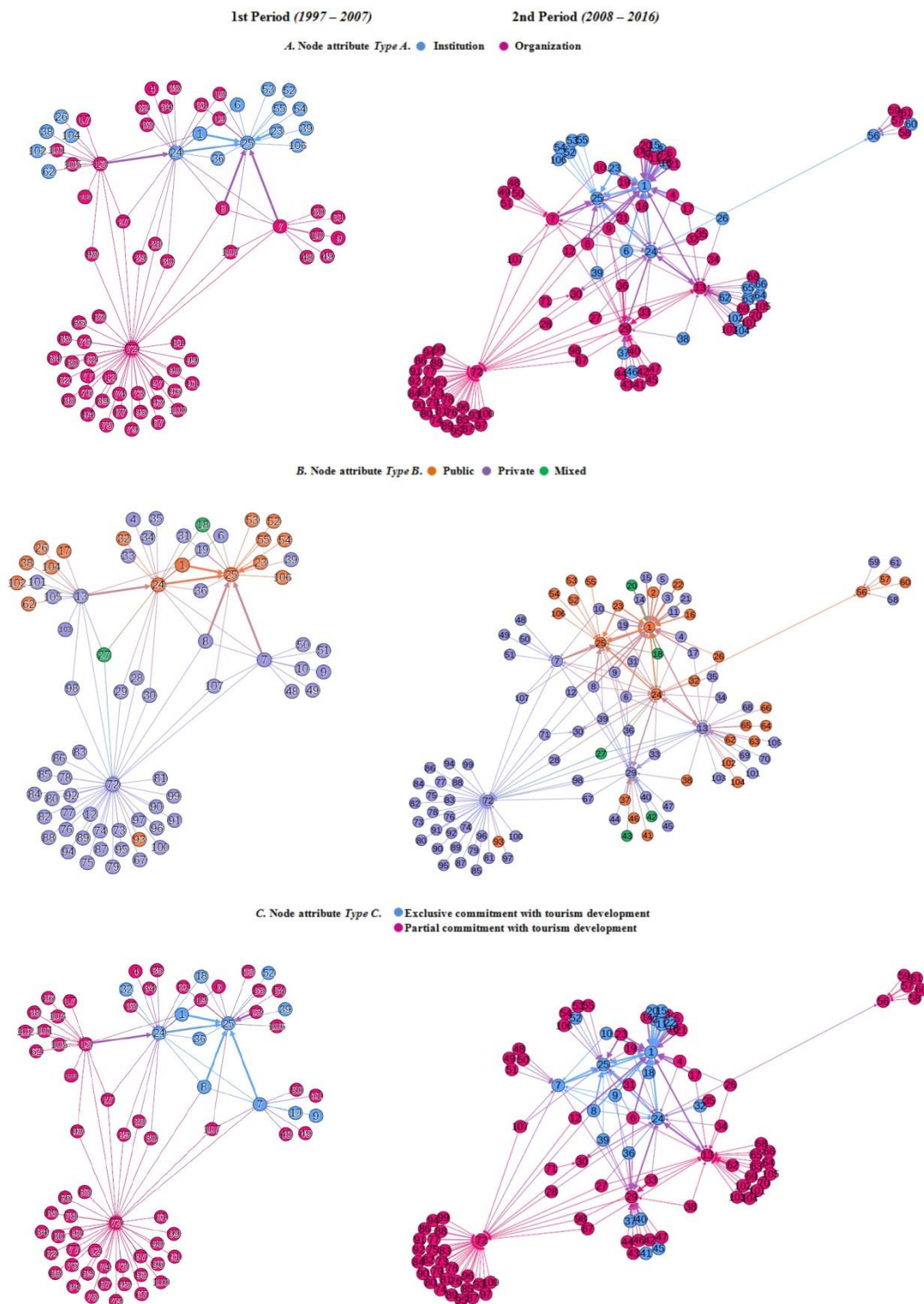
#### 4.2. Network maps and institutional thickness

Fig. 2 represents the network maps that show the institutional tourist density of Antioquia over time and supports the notion that institutions do not operate in isolation but are connected to achieve common goals. Connectivity between institutions is reflected through their participation in formal interaction spaces. Thus, nodes in the networks correspond to institutions that have coordinated or participated in formal spaces and the number of nodes provides information regarding the institutional thickness dynamics in the destination.

Institutional presence indicators provide information related to the number of institutions (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007) involved in regional tourism development in Antioquia. Institutional presence has been approached considering the three types of node attributes set out in Table 4. Visual comparison of the networks in Fig. 1 represents 107 institutions involved in the tourist development of Antioquia and reveals an increase in the number of institutions and organizations over time. In the second period, the majority of the pre-existing institutions and organizations remained, but new ones were added. Hence, networks corresponding to the second period present a 54% increase in the total number of institutions/organizations. Within this increase, 27% were institutions of a public nature, 68% of private organizations, and 5% institutions of a mixed nature. This evolution demonstrates an increasingly strong regional institutional presence as well as a qualitative change of the main characteristics of the destination institutions involved in regional tourism dynamics, including their broadening coverage in areas and interests (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007).

To clarify, colours have been used in the networks drawn in Fig. 2 in order to represent the node attributes according to each case. Each node represents one institution and is identified by a number that corresponds to the order in the list provided in Appendix C. Arrows indicate each institution's participation (arrow source) in, at least, one formal space coordinated by another (arrow destination). The arrows' thickness indicates the importance (i.e. number of formal spaces) of that relation.

Figure 2. Networks of institutional thickness in Antioquia.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

It is important, first, to highlight the distinction made between institutions and organizations. Following Zukauskaitė et al. (2017), this distinction provides detailed insight into the factors that sustain regional development and more accurate identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the specific context. Essentially, main differences between institutions and organizations relate to their public or private structure but, more precisely speaking, institutions refer to the authorities that design and regulate rules, laws, and policies and generate conditions in a territorial context, while organizations include companies, universities, agencies and support partnerships (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

Additionally, Fig. 2 is useful to see that although private institutions are the majority in both periods, a greater integration between public institutions and private organizations is observed in the second (i.e. more links with a greater weight between organizations of a different nature). This integration can be highlighted in the diversity of institutions and organizations connected to those identified with the IDs 1 and 13 (Medellín City Hall and Medellín Chamber of Commerce, respectively). This greater integration between public and private institutions causes the change in the assortativity sign between the two periods [(0.26) and (- 0.07), respectively].

All in all, although no significant changes are observed regarding the link density, network analysis illustrates how a set of individual relations between institutions grouped into different types, including both exclusively and partially committed institutions have woven the tourist sector in Antioquia, creating a dynamism that has encouraged its evolution, which allows us to provide an answer to Question 1.

#### 4.2.1. Levels of interaction

Network analysis provides different information concerning the level of interaction between institutions. Regarding the node attribute Type A, the network of the second-period reveals more crossed interactions between institutions and organizations, especially due to the greater presence of institutions and the growing authority of some of them (i.e. note the change in nodes 1 and 56).

The average degree is closely related to the density of interactions in the networks, showing that the cohesion between the institutions and organizations increased during the period 2000–2016 (2.95). The increase of the weighted degree (3.74) confirms a greater thickness as well in the links of the second period, also identified visually in Fig. 2.

In this sense, the resulting second-period network presents growth in its connectivity and interactions, providing an answer to Question 2. In the second period, thicker arrows are

observed, indicating that the interaction between institutions and organizations tends to be stronger (i.e. the organizations tend to coincide in more formal spaces). This is noticed in the links between institutions and organizations 1, 13, 24, and 25 (again, Medellín City Hall, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia – Tourism Office, and Vice Ministry of Tourism) that occupy central positions in the second-period network. This pattern confirms that the tendency to incorporate new institutions in developing a destination becomes crucial to facilitate and implement the integration of sustainable common and political agendas for tourism.

The gradual growth of the number of interaction spaces created in Antioquia constitutes the basis of an accelerated interaction and collaboration between stakeholders. This perspective confirms that developing a destination is not solely a consequence of local, regional or national government policies, but rather evidences the importance of generating a particular institutional environment to support and integrate the economic life of companies and the arrival of visitors to the destination (Amin & Thrift, 1994).

#### 4.2.2. Structure of domination

Identifying the relevant role of the institutions and power relations, understanding changes in power over time and illustrating the distribution of the balance of power are key issues in the analysis of institutional thickness (Zukauskaite et al., 2017). In our approach, the Hubs and Authorities scores provide data on the roles played by the different institutions and the level of leadership or power exercised between them. This answers Question 3.

In general, the analysis allows to distinguish between three categories of institutions according to the degree of power or leadership they exercise (see Table 6): a) 'pure' Hubs and Authorities that only present significant values of one of the two scores and, therefore, only stand out in one of the two roles (e.g. organizations 8 and 72: Anato and Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure); b) institutions with low power, with non-significant values in both scores (e.g. in the second period, organization 30 – Urabá Chamber of Commerce); and c) institutions/organizations (public and private) with the capacity of exercising power, represented by relatively high values in both scores. The latter type is particularly interesting, given that it corresponds to institutions that have gained authority coordinating important formal spaces and, simultaneously, have given authority to other institutions participating in a wide variety of spaces, thereby bringing the network together.

Within this latter group, the case of Medellín City Hall (Id.1) should be pointed out as a public institution that has evolved from being a 'pure' Hub to present high values in both scores during the second-period.

In addition, the case of the Medellín Chamber of Commerce (Id.13) shows an interesting pattern. It moved from low hub and authority in the first period to consolidate as high hub and authority in the second period. This pattern is justified on the fact that in the second period the Medellín Chamber of Commerce increased its involvement in the tourism sector, through the creation of a tourism cluster in 2008, consolidating its presence in different formal spaces. Since then, the focus of this organization has been on uniting public and private interests as well as guiding how the new efforts can generate new public policy, confidence, and innovative businesses in this key sector.

**Table 6.** Institutional influence according to the Hubs & Authorities scores.

1st period 1997-2007		2nd period 2008-2016	
Low Hubs & Authorities	High Hubs & Authorities	Low Hubs & Authorities	High Hubs & Authorities
-Cotelco.	-Government of Antioquia- Tourist Office.	-Cotelco.	-Tourist Office/ Medellín City Hall.
-Medellín Chamber of Commerce.	-Vice -Ministry of Tourism.	-Uraba Chamber of Commerce.	-Medellín Chamber of Commerce.
			-Government of Antioquia- Tourist Office.
			-Vice -Ministry of Tourism.
			-Oriente Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce.

*Low/High: These institutions/organizations have low or high scores in the ranking according to the calculated Hub or Authority scores.*

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Particularly, as regards the node attribute Type C (exclusive or partial commitment with tourism development), in the second analysis period the nodes exclusively involved in tourist development clearly occupy central positions, whereas the nodes only partially involved occupy the periphery. The latter case is reflected with the homogeneity of the network around node 72, the Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure, which is a pure hub authority and only involves institutions partially involved in tourist development.

Likewise, this set of institutions does not increase its connectivity with the rest of the network as we move from the first to second analysis period.

The existence of several highly ranked authorities in the destination does not mean that only certain institutions can coordinate the interaction between the actors, nor that positions of power can be changed in the destination to improve the regional organization or common agendas to be developed. It is not so much about who has most power, but about the interest of institutions directly or indirectly involved in participating in the region's tourist activity (Valente et al., 2015).

#### 4.2.3. Common agenda

In general, the common agendas are undertaken from processes that are related to the development of a common vision for the destination, the development of a regional competitiveness strategy, and/or its promotion as a tourist destination. (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). The values of the network diameter and average path length (Table 5) provide relevant information regarding the differences between the particular agendas of institutions in the destination and, indirectly, the existence of a common agenda.

Results show that these values remain low (approximately half of the values would show the two networks randomly connecting to the same nodes following the model of Erdős & Rényi, 1959). This result could be interpreted as, despite the increase in the number of institutions and formal interaction spaces, the destination maintains the convergence of particular interests in the common agendas developed in the first analysis period. In other words, the new formal spaces that emerged in the second period have not led to the dispersion of the efforts and the new institutions incorporated follow the common interests already established in the destination.

The persistence of common agendas over time demonstrates the clarity of the main regional actors' vision. Thus, the developed tourism agenda has been shown as sufficiently open to involve everyone and mobilize different stakeholders and institutions from all levels (Zukauskaite et al., 2017), but also heavily focussed on some themes, projects, and programmes allowing them to guarantee the foreseen results as referred to in Question 4. This is a positive factor for the governance of the destination, with a network of stakeholders able and committed to developing a long-term agenda, even when new actors are added to the process.



## 5. Conclusion

The literature on institutional thickness has sharpened the view of how institutions influence regional development (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). However, even before considering the relationship between institutions and economic success, there are also limitations in the operationalization of the study of institutional thickness' factors, representing a challenge from the standpoint of its empirical application.

Moreover, caution should be also the guide when discussing under which circumstances tourism is contributing to economic success (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2013).

Therefore, the aim of this article has been to provide a useful approach to the study of institutional thickness by applying a social network analysis methodology. In so doing, it made possible to quantify institutional presence, levels of interaction, structures of domination, and common agendas in tourism as a preliminary standpoint to design further complementary analysis on the relationship between institutional thickness and tourism development and, if it is the case, economic success. The paper advocates on the importance of advancing in understanding the role of the regional institutional environment and the governance framework of tourism destinations to better plan and manage their dynamics and effects.

This article shows that SNA is a valid tool not only to determine relations between institutions but also to observe how they define their connections, to size the evolution of the institutional thickness, to identify the role of each institution depending on their nature and level of involvement, and to determine how the design of common agendas attributes authority to some of them. In this sense, SNA has been proved as a useful methodology to set measures that enable identification and assessment of institutional thickness factors synthetically and quantitatively.

In order to demonstrate this approach, it has been applied to one Latin American tourism destination and recently configured institutional fabric and interaction mechanisms among institutions have been examined. Results broaden the knowledge regarding the institutional dynamics occurring in a regional tourism destination by proposing and testing analytical tools that can shed light on the influence of institutions into tourism regions.

As regards the regional application context, results indicate the role of institutions in creating a tourism related path for the Latin American region of Antioquia from the lowest development level. This reinforces the idea that institutions may play an important role in structuring regional economic policies and that the effects of institutional networks in transforming economic structures may be evident in the long-term (Pike et al., 2016). Additionally, results show how collaborative structures have been fundamental

in the institutional dynamics of the Antioquia region. These collaborative structures have been identified as formal spaces characterised by the participation of a diverse range of actors with a role in the destination's management system (Carlsson & Sandstrom, 2008). Over time, these formal spaces enable certain institutions to acquire greater power in the institutional network of the destination. This is mainly determined by its influential capacity through coordination or domination of key issues. This type of result is particularly useful in a sector such as tourism, which is highly fragmented and with an important presence of small and medium firms and initiatives (Hazra et al., 2017). Moreover, it allows us to categorize the power of private firms, auxiliary or support institutions and private and public tourism related institutions.

Considering all of this, it is important to highlight finally that being one of the first applying SNA to study institutional thickness in the context of a regional tourism destination, this article opens the door for future developments in order to advance the understanding of regional tourism dynamics and paths or, even, economic development processes related to other industries or in different geographical contexts.

In this vein, comparative studies between destinations could be performed so the structural measures can enable the development of a numerical scale or range that could place the degree of institutional thickness of a destination beyond the number of institutions rooted in it. Otherwise, the analysis of how the different types of formal interaction spaces (partnerships, sectoral boards, and sectoral councils) could offer differentiated capacities concerning the institutional organization of the destination could be also be developed. At the same time, how sectoral topics and common agendas are efficient to configure interactions and bring the region together towards the achievement of fully established goals should also be a question to approach through the use of SNA.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Interview protocol.

#### 1. Objectives of the interview

- 1.1. Make a first approach on the institutional reality of the tourist sector in the Antioquia-Colombia region.
- 1.2. Learn about the level of significance the respondents give to the institutions for the tourist development of the region. Relevance of their role in positioning the region in recent years.
- 1.3. Enquire about the way the institutions have influenced the evolution of tourist and economic development of the region.
- 1.4. Understand the level of interaction between stakeholders and the reasons for the interaction.
- 1.5. Investigate the shared processes they develop and carry out.

#### 2. Selection of the respondents

The institutions selected for the set of interviews have been chosen taking into account the relevance of the role said institutions exert on the regional tourist development and the extensive knowledge they have of the sector and its evolution in recent years. In this respect, the following institutions participate:

1. Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office
  2. Medellín Chamber of Commerce
  3. Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín
  4. Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau
  5. Cotelco Antioquia - Hotel and Tourism Association
  6. FENALCO - Association of merchants
3. Media and approximate duration

The interview was held using media such as Skype. The approximate length of the interview did not exceed 45 min.

#### 3. Background information

- *Definition of Institution*

From a theoretical standpoint, the most widely accepted concept on institutions was provided by the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1993, Douglass C. North, through his work "The importance of



New Institutional Economics (NIE). According to North, institutions are the humanly devised constraints to limit social and economic policies. This includes informal constraints, such as sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions and norms of behaviour, as well as the formal constraints (constitutions, laws, ownership rights).

According to the broad definition of the concept of institutions, we may determine that it is not only limited to structures of a public nature. From the standpoint of Institutional Thickness, the concept which is the object of our study, institutional thickness refers to the density of organizations and institutions operating on the ground visualising development actions (development agencies, local and regional authorities, business service organizations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, research institutes, etc.) which represent local stakeholders and collectives.

#### 4. Interview script – Formulation of the questions

Q1: According to your view, how do you consider tourism has evolved in the Antioquia region in recent years?

- a. Positive
- b. Negative
- c. Static
- Why?

Q2: What factors do you think have been the determining factors for the tourist development of the region?

Q3: What relevance do you give to the role of institutions in the tourist development of the region?

Q4: Do you think that the creation of the new institutional fabric introduced during the last 15 years has been a key component to achieve the results obtained at present?

Q5: Do you think, in general terms, that the political system and/or political stability of the region, have prominently contributed to tourist development?

Q6: Could you name at least 3 institutions that you consider have been instrumental for the tourist development of the region?

Q7: From your point of view, could you point out the institution that you believe has greater leadership in the tourist development of the region?

Q8: Has the creation of new institutions enabled the generation of complementarity in the management of the tourist destination of Antioquia or on the contrary has it caused friction or the duplication of functions?

Q9: How would you assess the level of interaction between the institutions?

Q10: How coordinated are the institutions in order to undertake policies, programmes and projects established for the tourist development of Antioquia?

Q11: What kind of collaboration takes place between the institutions associated to the tourist development of the region: formal (through working committees, regional councils, etc.), informal (through occasional collaborations, personal relationships, etc.)?

Q12: Has the collaboration between the institutions created synergies that have improved the programmes and policies for tourist development in the region? What type of synergies?

Q13: For what kind of initiatives, projects or programmes do you consider the different institutions in the region best articulate?

Q14: Based on your knowledge, do you think that all the institutions involved in the tourist development of the region of Antioquia share a common agenda?

Q15: Do you believe that, in the current institutional fabric, any institution that you consider to be highly important for tourist development of the region is being left out and is not present nor participating today? Which one?

Q16: Could you name at least one successful regional project, that has managed to actively involve all the institutions (from 2000 to 2015)?

Q17: Looking towards the future, do you believe that new institutions are required in order to strengthen the tourist development of the region? For what purpose?

## Appendix B. Questionnaire.

This research seeks to understand how private and public institutional structures, their coordination and interaction; affect the intensity and nature of development in regions, specifically taking into account the role of the tourist sector. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect the opinion of different experts involved in the tourist development of the region of Antioquia as regards the influence the creation and action of different private and public institutions has had on regional tourist and economic evolution.

### Questions

1. Name of the Institution you belong to.

2. Scale of territorial impact:

- (1) Local/Municipal
- (2) Subregional
- (3) Regional
- (4) National

3. The nature of your Institution is:

- (1) Public
- (2) Private
- (3) Mixed

4. Could you indicate in what year was your Institution created?

5. The scope of action of your Institution's activity is aimed at:

- (1) Territorial Planning of Tourism
- (2) Destination Promotion and Marketing
- (3) Strengthening and Competitiveness
- (4) Infrastructure development
- (5) Management of Tourist Facilities
- (6) Financing
- (7) Academical Training:
  - (7.1) Professional Technical Level (relative to Professional Technical programmes).
  - (7.2) Technological Level (relative to technological programmes).
  - (7.3) Professional Level (relative to university professional programmes).

6. With what type of Institutions does your Institution usually interact more intensely with in order to achieve its objectives? Please, specify their names

- (1) Government Institutions. Could you state its/their name(s)? Specify.
- (2) Private Institutions. (Chambers of Commerce, Federations, etc.). Specify.
- (3) Unions / Associations. Could you state its/their name(s)? Specify.

- (4) Academic Institutions. Could you state its/their name(s)? Specify.
- (5) Compensation Funds. Could you state its/their name(s)? Specify.
- (6) Technology Centres. Could you state its/their name(s)? Specify.

7. Please, select the reasons for which you usually interact with the aforementioned institutions.

*In Medellín*

- (1) Exchanging information and experiences
- (2) Designing and implementing plans, programmes, policies and/or projects
- (3) Attracting resources
- (4) Promotion actions for the destination
- (5) Marketing actions for the destination
- (6) Training actions
- (7) Business enhancement actions (business sessions, access to markets, etc.)
- (8) Lobby for achieving targeted objectives
- (9) Hosting events, trade fairs, meetings, etc.
- (10) Solving common problems

*In Antioquia*

- (1) Exchanging information and experiences
- (2) Designing and implementing plans, programmes, policies and/or projects
- (3) Attracting resources
- (4) Promotion actions for the destination
- (5) Marketing actions for the destination
- (6) Training actions
- (7) Business enhancement actions (business sessions, access to markets, etc.)
- (8) Lobby for achieving targeted objectives
- (9) Hosting events, trade fairs, meetings, etc.
- (10) Solving common problems

*In Colombia*

- (1) Exchanging information and experiences
- (2) Designing and implementing plans, programmes, policies and/or projects
- (3) Attracting resources
- (4) Promotion actions for the destination
- (5) Marketing actions for the destination
- (6) Training actions
- (7) Business enhancement actions (business sessions, access to markets, etc.)
- (8) Lobby for achieving targeted objectives
- (9) Hosting events, trade fairs, meetings, etc.
- (10) Solving common problems

Please specify, if there are any other reasons.

8. Does the interaction that occurs, take place in formal spaces (working tables, committees, councils, etc.) or informal spaces (personal relationships, casual encounters, occasional meetings)? (Specify).

9. Could you state the collective representation spaces for regional tourist development that have existed during the 2000-2015 period or that are still in force?

10. During the 2000-2015 period, did your institution belong to any collective representation space that worked for the tourist development of the region? (e.g. Regional Council, Committee, Sectorial Table, etc.).

(1) Yes

(2) No

11. From your perspective, state the three most important spaces you have formed part of, the territorial level and period of participation.

12. During the 2000-2015 period did a common agenda exist in order to mobilise the tourist development of the region speedily and efficiently?

13. From your perspective, state the three most important components and/or elements of this common agenda.

**Appendix C.** Core and partner institutions/organizations participating in the study.

ID	Institution/Organization	Core/Partner institution	Nature	Scale of influence	Involved		
					Networks	Sectoral boards	Sectoral councils
1	Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín	Core (Key institution)	Public	Local		x	x
2	University of Medellín	Core	Private	Local	x	x	
3	Politécnico Jaime Isaza Cadavid	Partner	Public	Regional		x	
4	University of San Buenaventura	Core	Private	Regional	x	x	
5	Cesde	Partner	Private	Local		x	
6	SENA - National Learning Service	Core	Public	National		x	x
7	Cotelco Antioquia - Hotel and Tourism Association	Core (Key institution)	Private	National	x	x	x
8	Anato	Partner	Private	National		x	x
9	Association of tourist guides of Antioquia - ASOGUIAN	Core	Private	Regional		x	
10	Gastronomic tour	Partner	Private	Regional	x	x	
11	Laureles Hotels	Partner	Private	Local	x	x	
12	ACOPI ANTIOQUIA - Colombian Association of SMEs	Core	Private	National		x	x
13	Medellín Chamber of Commerce	Core (Key institution)	Private	Regional		x	x
14	Airplan	Partner	Private	Local		x	
15	Procolombia	Core	Public	National		x	x
16	United Nations Office	Partner	Public	National		x	
17	Science and Technology Center of Antioquia - CTA	Core	Private	Regional			x
18	Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau	Core (Key institution)	Public-Private	Regional	x	x	x
19	Comfenalco	Partner	Private	Regional	x	x	x
20	Plaza Mayor Medellín Conventions and Exhibitions Centre	Partner	Public-Private	Local		x	
21	Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area	Core	Public	Local		x	

22	Arví Park	Partner	Public	Local	x	x	
23	National Police	Partner	Public	National		x	x
24	Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office	Core (Key institution)	Public	Regional		x	x
25	Vice -Ministry of Tourism	Core	Public	National		x	x
26	Council of Medellín	Partner	Public	Local		x	x
27	Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce	Core	Public-Private	Regional			x
28	Magdalena Medio & Nordeste Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	Core	Private	Regional			x
29	Oriente Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	Core	Private	Regional	x	x	x
30	Urabá Chamber of Commerce	Partner	Private	Regional		x	x
31	Comfama - Colombian family social fund	Core	Private	Regional			x
32	University Colegio Mayor de Antioquia	Core	Public	Local	x	x	x
33	Cornare	Partner	Public	Regional		x	x
34	Corantioquia	Partner	Public	Regional			x
35	Corpouraba	Partner	Public	Regional			x
36	Network of Subregional tourist corporations	Core	Private	Regional	x	x	x
37	Local tourist offices 7 municipalities in eastern Antioquia	Partner	Public	Regional		x	
38	Public Companies of Medellín – EPM	Partner	Public	Regional		x	x
39	Fontur	Partner	Public	National		x	x
40	Subregional tourist corporation – Oriente Antioqueño	Partner	Private	Regional	x	x	x
41	Local tourism networks	Partner	Public	Regional	x	x	
42	ISA	Partner	Public	National		x	
43	ISAGEN	Partner	Public	National		x	
44	Cooperatives, Corporations, Foundations	Partner	Private	Regional		x	
45	Tourist Services companies	Partner	Private	Regional		x	
46	Local aqueducts	Partner	Public	Regional		x	
47	Acciones Comunales	Partner	Private	Regional		x	
48	Acopecón	Partner	Private	Local		x	
49	Asocentros	Partner	Private	Local		x	
50	Unicom	Partner	Private	Local		x	

51	Acoltés	Partner	Private	National		x	
52	Tourism Police	Partner	Public	National		x	x
53	Colombia's Administrative Department of Security (DAS)	Partner	Public	National		x	x
54	Colombia national army	Partner	Public	National			x
55	Fire department	Partner	Public	National			x
56	Institute of Culture and Heritage -ICPA	Partner	Public	Regional			x
57	Regional Library Network	Partner	Public	Regional	x		x
58	Network of Houses of Culture	Partner	Private	Regional	x		x
59	ASOREDES	Partner	Private				x
60	Representatives 2 subregions of Antioquia	Partner	Public	Regional			x
61	Representative of Cultural NGOs	Partner	Private	Regional			x
62	Valle de Aburrá Metropolitan Area	Core	Public	Regional		x	x
63	Metro of Medellin	Partner	Public	Local		x	
64	City Council of Copacabana	Partner	Public	Local		x	
65	City Council of Bello	Partner	Public	Local		x	
66	City Council of Barbosa	Partner	Public	Local		x	
67	Business corporation Pro-aburrá Norte	Partner	Private	Regional		x	
68	Mall Puerta del Norte	Partner	Private	Local		x	
69	Social Foundation	Partner	Private	Local		x	
70	Hatovial S.A.	Partner	Private	Local		x	
71	Subregional tourist corporation – Urabá	Core	Private	Regional		x	
72	Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure	Partner	Private	National			x
73	ANDI - National Association of Colombian Industry	Partner	Private	National			x
74	CEO	Partner	Private	National			x
75	AES	Partner	Private	National			x
76	ACICAM	Partner	Private	National			x
77	ACIEM	Partner	Private	National			x
78	AMCHAM	Partner	Private	National			x
79	ANALDEX	Partner	Private	National			x
80	ASENCULTURA	Partner	Private	National			x
81	ASOCOLFLORES	Partner	Private	National			x
82	ASOPARTES	Partner	Private	National			x





**Appendix D.** Formal interaction spaces in Antioquia and partners involved.

Formal space	Partners
Medellín municipal table of tourism competitiveness	<b>(25)</b> Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, University of Medellín, Politécnico Jaime Isaza Cadavid, University of San Buenaventura, Cesde, Sena, Cotelco, Anato, Asoguian, Gastronomic tour, Laureles hotels, Acopi, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Airplan, Procolombia, United Nations Office, Science and Technology Center of Antioquia - CTA, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Comfenalco, Plaza Mayor Medellín Conventions and Exhibitions Centre, Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area, Arví Park, National Police, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Vice -Ministry of Tourism.
Regional Council of Tourism of Antioquia	<b>(21)</b> Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Cotelco, Anato, Vice -Ministry of Tourism, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Aburrá sur Chamber of Commerce, Magdalena Medio y Nordeste Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce, Oriente Chamber of Commerce, Urabá Chamber of Commerce, Comfama, Comfenalco, SENA, Colegio Mayor de Antioquia, University of San Buenaventura, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tourism cluster (Medellín Chamber of Commerce), Cornare, Corantioquia, Corpouraba, Network of Subregional tourist corporations.
Medellin Tourism Public Policy Council	<b>(26)</b> Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, University of Medellín, Politécnico Jaime Isaza Cadavid, University of San Buenaventura, Cesde, Sena, Cotelco, Anato, Asoguian, Gastronomic tour, Laureles hotels, Acopi, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Airplan, Procolombia, United Nations Office, Science and Technology Center of Antioquia - CTA, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Comfenalco, Plaza Mayor Medellín Conventions and Exhibitions Centre, Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area, Arví Park, National Police, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Vice -Ministry of Tourism, Council of Medellín.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Lakes and reservoirs zone)	<b>(18)</b> Oriente Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Cotelco, Anato, SENA, Cornare, Network of Subregional tourist corporations, Local tourist offices 7 municipalities in eastern Antioquia, Public Companies of Medellín – EPM, Fontur, Subregional tourist corporation – Oriente Antioqueño, Local tourism networks, ISA, ISAGEN, Cooperatives, Corporations, Foundations, Tourist Services companies, Local aqueducts, Acciones Comunales.
Private Committee on Tourism	<b>(9)</b> Cotelco, Anato, Asoguian, Fenalco, Gastronomic tour, Acopecón, Asocentros, Unicom, Acoltés.

Tourism Security Council	<b>(11)</b> Vice -Ministry of Tourism, Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Fenalco, National Police, Tourism Police, Colombia's Administrative Department of Security (DAS) Colombia national army, Fire department, Cotelco, Anato.
Council of Cultural Heritage of Antioquia	<b>(7)</b> Institute of Culture and Heritage -ICPA, Government of Antioquia, Regional Library Network, Network of Houses of Culture ASOREDES, Representatives 2 subregions of Antioquia, Representative of Cultural NGOs.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Altiplano zone)	<b>(7)</b> Oriente Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Vice-Ministry of Tourism, SENA, Cornare, Local tourism networks, Local tourist offices 7 municipalities in eastern Antioquia, Subregional tourist corporation – Oriente Antioqueño.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Route Aburra- North Zone)	<b>(13)</b> Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Vice -Ministry of Tourism, Valle de Aburrá Metropolitan Area, Metro of Medellín, Corantioquia , SENA, City Council of Copacabana, City Council of Bello, City Council of Barbosa, Business corporation Pro-aburrá Norte, Mall Puerta del Norte, Social Foundation, Hatovial S.A.
Agenda for the competitiveness of the tourism sector (Urabá)	<b>(4)</b> Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Vice-Ministry of Tourism, Subregional tourist corporation – Urabá, SENA.
Private Committee of Antioquia	<b>(39)</b> Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure, ANDI - National Association of Colombian Industry, CEO, AES, ACOPI, ACICAM, ACIEM, AMCHAM, ANALDEX, ANATO, ASECULTURA, ASOCOLFLORES, ASOPARTES, Business Security Association, AUGURA, BASC, CAMACOL, Aburra Sur Chamber of Commerce, Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Oriente Chamber of Commerce, Urabá Chamber of Commerce, Magdalena Medio Chamber of Commerce, Colombian German Chamber of Commerce, Creative Circle, COLFECAR, COFECOOP, COTELCO , DEFECARGA, Federation of NGOs  Departmental Committee of Coffee, FENALCO, FITAC, LONJA, PROSUR, LUNSA, Proantioquia - non-profit, privately operated foundation, SAI- Society of Engineers and Architects, SCA - Society of Architects.
Regional Competitiveness Commission of Antioquia	<b>(14)</b> Medellín Chamber of Commerce, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Valle de Aburrá Metropolitan Area, Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, Antioquia Guild of Businesses, Proantioquia - non-profit, privately operated foundation, Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce, Representative University - Company - State Committee, Science and Technology Center of Antioquia - CTA, General Confederation of Labor, Council of Medellín, Departmental Assembly of Antioquia, Internationalist Entrepreneurs,

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Tourist Competitiveness Agreement of Antioquia

**(14)** Tourism cluster (Medellín Chamber of Commerce), Vice-Ministry of Tourism, Government of Antioquia-Tourist Office, Local Mayors of Antioquia, Tourist Office/ Mayor's Office of Medellín, Network of Subregional tourist corporations, Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, SENA, Comfenalco, Cotelco, Anato, Comfama, National Police, Fontur.

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**Appendix E.** Formal definition of structural measures.

Structural measure	Short definition	Formal expression	Reference
<b>Link density</b>	The ratio between the number of observed links and the number of possible links in the network.	$\frac{E}{N(N-1)}$ <p>Where:                      E: Number of links                      N: Number of nodes</p>	Wasserman and Faust (1994)
<b>Average degree</b>	Average of the number of links connected to each node.	$\frac{\sum_i k_i}{N}$	Wasserman and Faust (1994)
<b>Average weighted degree</b>	Average of the sum of the link weights connected to each node.	$\frac{\sum_i w_i}{N}$	Barrat et al. (2004)
<b>HITS centrality</b>	Measures the relevance of a node as the source or destination of the arrows that connect to other important nodes in the network.	-	Kleinberg (1999)
<b>Assortativity</b>	The level of homophily in the network. It is positive if similar nodes are more connected than expected and is negative otherwise.	$r = (\text{number of edges between similar nodes}) - (\text{expected number of such edges})$	Newman (2002)
<b>Modularity</b>	The extent to which a network is divided into differentiable modules (e.g. subgroups, subpopulations).	$Q = (\text{number of edges within communities}) - (\text{expected number of such edges}).$	Newman (2006)
<b>Average path length</b>	Average number of steps along the shortest paths between any pair of nodes.	$\frac{\sum_{i \neq j} l_{ij}}{N(N-1)}$	Wasserman and Faust (1994)

### Publicación 3: Exploring institutions' perceived roles in regional tourism development: an institutional thickness approach

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#### Abstract

In recent decades, commitment to tourism as a development strategy has grown across Latin America. However, despite being praised as an economic and social catalyst in various regions, developing tourism appropriately requires a dense institutional environment marked by leadership, trust, and governance. Against that background, we aimed to analyse institutions' perceived role in regional tourism development and perceived key factors of such development in relation to four dimensions of institutional thickness. To that end, we conducted a cluster analysis of data from 2000 to 2015 representing 18 institutions' perceptions of tourism in Colombia's Department of Antioquia. Key identified factors perceived are, particularly, the exclusive or partial focus of institutions with the tourism value chain, the relationship with technology centres, the importance of spaces for collective representation, and the acknowledgment of infrastructure as a principal investment for regional tourism development.

**Keywords:** Institutions; institutional thickness; economic geography; tourism geography; Latin America.

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, fostering sustainable tourism across Latin America has been a strategic goal of organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (Atles, 2006), the World Bank (Ortiz & Solo, 2009), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Organization of American States (UNWTO & OAS, 2018). Nevertheless, as underscored by Oliveira-Santos (2015), the results have yet to align with the region's immense potential. Among the economic, political and social problems that may be responsible for the deficit, dismal public policy and historically limited commitment to tourism as a means of social and community development have imposed important limitations (Andreu-Boussut & Salin, 2018). According to the World Economic Forum (2020), however, by better understanding, the factors that affect tourism development, public-private cooperation can be calibrated to maximise tourism's potential to boost the growth of small and medium-sized businesses, reduce poverty, and encourage greater gender parity in the labour force.

In that vein but acknowledging that other factors might also influence tourism development, this paper addresses institutions' perceived role in tourism's evolution in a regional economy in Latin America. Its approach is coherent with mounting evidence of not only institutional density's significance in processes of regional development but also the importance of institutions' perceived role in catalysing institutional engagement and commitment (Chang, 2008; Helmsing, 2001). In fact, analysing how institutions shape regional development has long been a recurring focus in research on economic geography and innovation (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). At the same time, despite numerous studies examining perceptions of and attitudes towards tourism development from the perspective of local residents and visitors (Hammad et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021), a gap in knowledge exists regarding institutions' perceptions of their role in such development and the institutional factors that intervene in processes of tourism development.

In response to that gap, we aimed to analyse institutions' perceptions of their role in regional tourism development and perceived key factors of such development in relation to four dimensions of the institutional thickness (Amin & Thrift, 1994). To that end, a study has been designed to identify the perceptions that different institutions involved in tourism development in Colombia's Department of Antioquia have about their roles in consolidating regional tourism development from 2000 to 2015, as well as the perceived factors of institutional thickness that might explain such consolidation.

## 2. Conceptual framework

As fundamental components of social and economic life, institutions enable ordered thought, expectation and action by imposing form and consistency in human activities (Hodgson, 2006). The importance of institutions' role in economic development is now also increasingly appreciated, backed by wide-ranging evidence of their weight in determining the level of economic development across regions and countries (Ferrini, 2012). Nevertheless, debate persists regarding what aspects of institutional contexts are important for economic development (Nunkoo et al., 2012). From yet another angle, institutions' role as catalysts of collective action has been generally accepted (Basurto & Coleman, 2010; Becker & Ostrom, 1995), as has their role in providing infrastructure that territories can use to guarantee the effective management of resources (Anderies, 2015).

Despite those findings, the literature's primary focus on how stakeholders influence the governance of destinations (Ali et al., 2017; Deng et al., 2016; Oh & You, 2019; Sánchez Cañizares et al., 2016) has left aspects of institutions' perceived role in regional tourism development only been partly addressed. However, because different institutions have different specific interests and varying degrees of influence on policymaking and the resulting directions of policy (Bramwell, 2004), knowledge on how they perceive their role in shaping decision-making processes and interactions related to tourism needs to be expanded.

As various studies considering the institutional environment at destinations have shown (e.g. Brouder & Fullerton, 2015), institutions – local authorities, development agencies, private organisations and other bodies – play a pivotal role in tourism (Liasidou, 2019). In literature addressing evolutionary economic geography regarding tourism institutions (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018), Jamal and Getz (1995) have evaluated the evolution of institutional processes in parallel to tourism associations, Pavlovich (2003) has examined organisational networks in the evolution of tourism destinations, and Wray (2009) has considered the institutional life cycles that affect tourism policies. Still, other scholars have investigated the role of institutions in tourism development from more general perspectives (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019; Desforges, 2000; Hall et al., 2004; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Roxas & Chadee, 2013).

In research on perceptions of tourism development, studies have largely focused on the perceptions of local residents and visitors while neglecting the perceptions of the institutions involved (Hammad et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). According to Nunkoo et al. (2012), however, because power relations, leadership, trust, and governance are important for development and translate into a configuration of organisations able to promote or limit regional development, understanding how institutions perceive their role in tourism development is pivotal. Institutions' perceptions, whether objective or subjective, are also important because they have an



imperative voice in tourism governance and occupy a key position in the political economy of tourism development (Bramwell, 2011). In the same sense, it is widely acknowledged that institutions control most of the planning aspects associated with tourism development (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2021) and implement constraints as well as opportunities for action and for the distribution of power (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018).

Recent research addressing institutions in tourism from the perspective of the new institutional economy (e.g. Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019; Restrepo et al., 2021) has applied analytical frameworks involving the notion of institutional thickness. It has been defined as a set of factors influencing the organisation of institutional agents that can sustain or obstruct the tourism development. As theorised by Amin and Thrift (1994), institutional thickness encompasses four dimensions. The first refers to the existence of a strong institutional presence, understood as a range of institutions (e.g. local authorities, development agencies, chambers of commerce, business associations, innovation centres, trade unions, educational institutions, and other bodies) that participate in the building of capacities. The second dimension is related to levels of interaction and cooperation between institutions and the importance of exchanging formal and informal knowledge therein. The third dimension addresses existing structures of domination and patterns of coalition, including leadership and spaces of collective representation. Last, the fourth dimension refers to mutual awareness and the goals established through the development of common agendas.

Applying an institutional thickness approach can illuminate the societal and institutional arrangements that both favour and constrain tourism development at destinations as claimed by Zapata and Hall (2012). Thus, an approach such as the one proposed herein, based on a novel framework for analysing the perceptions of institutions involved in regional tourism development, can help to identify non-economic factors that sustain such development (Zukauskaite et al., 2017) and perceived key elements in each dimension of the institutional thickness (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Study area**

This study analyses the perceptions of acting institutions in Colombia's Department of Antioquia about their role in tourism development in the region, which we chose to examine for several reasons. First, at the international level, tourism has managed to consolidate itself as a priority sector in Colombia's economy, one with an annual average growth rate far above the world average. According to data from the UNWTO (2019),

from 2005 to 2019 the average annual growth in tourism demand was 5.2% internationally, whereas Colombia's was 8% (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2019).

Second, at the national level, Antioquia is Colombia's second-most competitive region, behind only the Capital District, which contains Bogotá, the country's capital. Factors fuelling Antioquia's success include the sophistication and diversification of business there, the ease of doing business, the labour market, and the adoption of information and communication technologies (Private Council on Competitiveness, 2019). Antioquia also stands out for having implemented a governance model, in place now for more than three decades, in which public-private alliances have developed and strengthened direct institutional responses to long-term challenges in the region. Concerning tourism, for example, from 2000 to 2015 the governance model allowed advances in creating and consolidating institutions that are pivotal to supporting tourism development in the region (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). As proof, institutional integration between the public and private sectors has formalised the creation of bodies such as the Tourism Cluster, the Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Plaza Mayor Convention Centre. Above all, the model has ultimately encouraged the establishment of a common agenda that guided Antioquia and its capital, Medellín, in becoming an outstanding international destination, one endorsed by a range of awards (World Travel Awards, 2020; TripAdvisor, 2018; Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, 2016; City of the Year, 2013).

Third and last, research has shown that institutions in Antioquia have played a vital role in the region's tourism consolidation, particularly in structuring regional policies and driving an economic transformation (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019).

### 3.2. Data collection

Addressing the period from 2000 to 2015, the perceptions of 18 institutions affiliated with tourism development in Antioquia were evaluated. The data collection tool employed for the analysis was a questionnaire distributed via the online platform SurveyMonkey for the 5 months from July to December 2016.

The questionnaire was divided into five thematic sections. The first referred to general information about the institution that the participant represented, whereas the second addressed the institution's role in tourism development in the region, its perceived relevance, and its performance. The third section concerned the level of interaction within the network of institutions involved in the region's tourism development, after which the fourth explored the resulting governance structures. Last, the fifth section collected information about the development of common agendas with other institutions.

To capture the perceptions of participants about various factors in relation to the four dimensions, the questionnaire used a Likert scale, a common instrument for measuring affective and participative variables (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014), that allows obtaining respondents' preferences and degree of (dis)agreement with any number of statements. In our study, we used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Bertram, 2007). The scale was defined with reference to the initial contributions of six key institutions regarding their role in regional tourism planning and management: the Government of Antioquia Tourist Office, the Medellín Chamber of Commerce, the Tourist Office and Mayor's Office of Medellín, the Medellín Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cotelco Antioquia Hotel and Tourism Association, and the National Federation of Merchants (FENALCO). Structured interviews with representatives of those institutions were performed between May and June 2016.

Sample selection began with the mapping of institutions involved, whether directly or indirectly, in tourism development in Antioquia. Of the 28 institutions invited to participate, 18 (64%) responded to all of the questions addressing their perceptions of the role of institutions in developing regional tourism. The fact that 10 institutions did not reply did not significantly impact the analysis in a negative way, because the final sample used for the analysis contained all of the most active, relevant public and private stakeholders in the territory in all areas of the value chain. Among the 18 institutions that did participate were 5 tourism and regional development agencies; 3 local, regional, or national governmental authorities; 3 chambers of commerce; 3 professional and sectorial associations; 3 universities; and 1 research and innovation centre. As for the representatives of each participating institution, 44% were department directors (i.e. in economics, planning, tourism, and business), 20% were general directors, 17% were academic directors (i.e. deans of tourism faculties), and 11% were public officials (Appendix A).

### 3.3. Data analysis

As shown in Table 1, the results of the questionnaire were classified into two areas – Area 1 (i.e. perceptions of the relevance and performance of institutions) and Area 2 (i.e. key development factors in the dimensions of institutional thickness). To study Area 1, a dissociative cluster analysis, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), was designed. Performing a dissociative cluster analysis was justified by the goal to define homogeneous groups of similar institutions based on the available variables and measurements. Thus, three clusters were created considering the scores from the questionnaire regarding the institutions' perceptions of their own relevance and performance.

**Table 1.** Areas for the analysis of perceptions.

Area	Variables and/or dimensions
<b>Area 1:</b>  Perceptions of the relevance and performance of institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of institutions' relevance</li> <li>• Perception of institutions' performance</li> </ul>
<b>Area 2:</b>  Key development factors in the dimensions of institutional thickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profiles dimension</li> <li>• Interactions dimension</li> <li>• Coalitions dimension</li> <li>• Common agenda dimension</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In the study on Area 2, the three groups identified by dissociative cluster analysis were categorised by applying agglomerative cluster analysis, which yielded two new, final clusters. For the analysis of Area 2, the means and standard deviations (SD) of the scores on the questionnaire were calculated, and significant statistical differences in the perceptions of key factors in relation to the four dimensions of institutional thickness were estimated.

## 4. Results and discussion

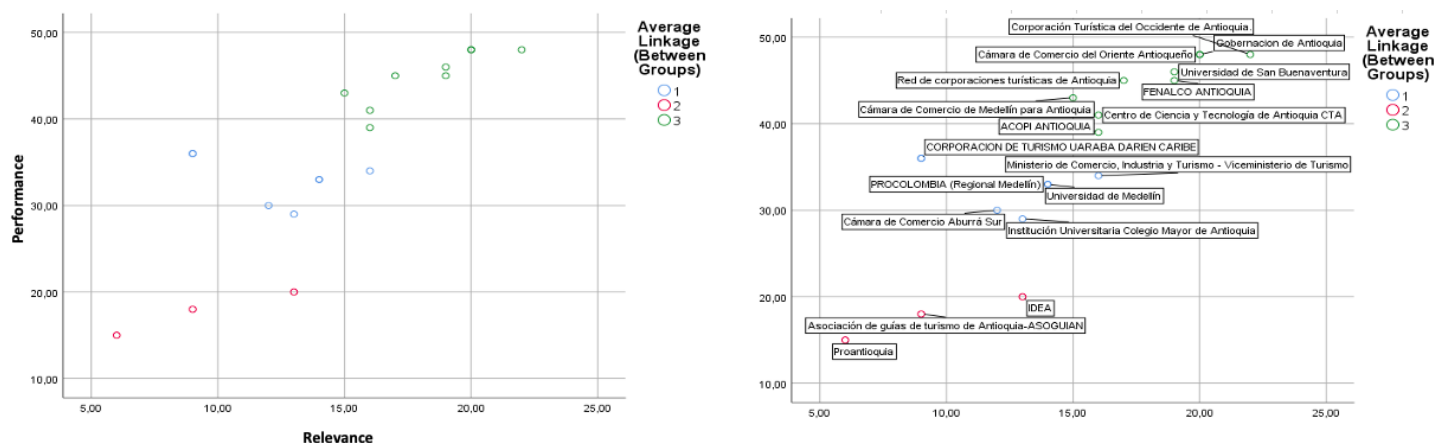
The study's chief goal was to analyse institutions' perceptions of their role in regional tourism development and perceived key factors of such development in relation to four dimensions of institutional thickness. This section presents the results according to the two areas (i.e. Area 1 and Area 2) classified in Table 1 for the analysis of perceptions.

### 4.1. Area 1: perceptions of the relevance and performance of tourism institutions

Trust in institutions is critical for good governance (Nunkoo et al., 2012) but partly depends on how regional agents evaluate the relevance and performance of the institutions in question (Lühiste, 2006; Mishler & Rose, 2001). Thus, research has generally suggested that a positive evaluation of institutions is positively related to trust in those institutions (Wong et al., 2011) and that such trust justifies their creation and existence.

In Antioquia, the creation of institutions involved in regional tourism development has not only catalysed social and economic activity but also positively impacted the governance of tourism via the articulation of policies, the allocation of resources, and the establishment of rules (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). However, aside from quantitative evidence of those trends, which can be viewed in terms of economic impact and relate to the arrival of international tourists, institutions have a range of perceptions, as qualitative evidence, about their role in regional tourism development. Consequently, the first area analysed concerned how institutions perceive their relevance to and performance in regional tourism development, which allowed determining the degree to which they (dis)agree that an institutional fabric in the region has been vital to tourism development in Antioquia. Figure 1 shows how the results indicated three different groups of institutions.

**Figure 1.** Perceptions of the relevance and performance of institutions.



- Cluster 1: Institutions considering the relevance and performance of tourism institutions to be medium.
- Cluster 2: Institutions considering the relevance and performance of tourism institutions to be low.
- Cluster 3: Institutions considering the relevance and performance of tourism institutions to be high.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

A significant share of the representatives scored the relevance and performance of the institutions as being medium or high. Only three institutions were perceived to perform poorly in tourism and have little relevance to the sector. Table 2 summarises the common characteristics between the three clusters versus the characteristics that differentiate them.

**Table 2.** Common and different characteristics and perceptions between the clusters.

Common characteristics and perceptions	Different characteristics and perceptions
<b>Relevance</b>	
All three clusters consider that the creation of institutions has been essential to tourism development in the region.	Clusters 1 and 2 consider that the institutions have not evolved positively nor been committed to tourism development in the region.
All three clusters consider the region's institutions to be strong given their high degree of decision-making power at destinations.	Clusters 1 and 2 consider that the region's tourism sector lacks highly trained human capital.
All three clusters believe that the institutions lack a relevant financial structure.	
<b>Performance</b>	
All three clusters believe that the institutions have given the region visibility at the national and international levels.	The clusters differ in their perceptions of the role of institutions in improving governance in the region.
All three clusters believe that institutions complement each other in the management of tourism destinations.	The clusters have different perceptions of their role in the region's increased competitiveness in tourism during the period analysed.
All three clusters consider that the existence of numerous, diverse institutions facilitates the different role of each.	The three clusters differ in their perceptions of how institutions have contributed to fostering innovation in the region's tourism activity.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

With the exception of the association of tourist guides (ASOGUIAN), the institutions with less-than-positive perceptions are focused on general issues related to regional development. With orientations not exclusively related to tourism, their involvement in the region's tourism activity is partial or supportive. More precisely, most of those institutions primarily focus on developing primary or industrial economic activities in which the institutional dimensions or factors may differ from those connected to tourism. For instance, it is well known that regional economic development and immediate economic benefits are important in tourism, as are other factors such as the protection of environmental and sociocultural resources (Bramwell, 2011; Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010).

At the same time, the results also show a positive, direct relationship between the performance perceived by the tourism-focused institutions and their perceived relevance. That relationship confirms that Antioquia has managed to develop a strong institutional fabric for regional tourism development. This is an interpretation supported by evidence showing that regions where most institutional agents perceive a favourable institutional environment may be regarded as being institutionally dense (Zukauskaitė et

al., 2017). However, aside from institutional density, other key factors received mention from participants who have conditioned regional tourism development, as discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2. Area 2: key development factors in the dimensions of institutional thickness

As indicated in the methods section, the analysis of Area 2 involved categorising the three initial groups via agglomerative cluster analysis. As a result, Clusters 1 and 2 were combined obtaining two final groups, as shown in Table 3 (Nielsen, 2016). The characteristics of the institutions represented by each group are detailed in Appendix A, and an analysis of the results in light of the four dimensions of institutional thickness is presented below.

**Table 3.** Institutions included in each final cluster for the analysis of institutional thickness dimensions.

Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Government of Antioquia, Tourist Office	Vice Ministry of Tourism
Subregional tourist corporation, Occidente de Antioquia	Subregional tourist corporation, Urabá
University of San Buenaventura	PROCOLOMBIA
Oriente Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	University of Medellin
FENALCO ANTIOQUIA, association of merchants	Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce
Network of subregional tourist corporations	IDEA - Institute for the Development of Antioquia
Science and Technology Center of Antioquia – CTA	Proantioquia
Medellín Chamber of Commerce	University Colegio Mayor de Antioquia
ACOPI ANTIOQUIA, Colombian association of SMEs	Association of tourist guides of Antioquia - ASOGUIAN

Source: Authors' elaboration.

#### *Density*

The dimension of density, the first element of institutional thickness, refers to perceptions of the existence of institutional and/or organisational fabrics represented by different types of structure. In that dimension, results refer to the number (i.e. density) of institutions; their public, private, or mixed nature; each institution's degree of involvement in tourism; and the spatial scale (Appendix A). However, for the purposes of

the study, the analysis of the dimension focused on the perceptions of the institutions in each cluster regarding the diverse factors that may enhance or weaken regional institutional thickness and therefore increase or reduce the generation of capacities in regional tourism development (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Perceptions of factors that affect institutional thickness.

Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	P
	N=9 average±S.D.	N=9 average±S.D.	Significance
1. Political continuity	4.11±1.05	4.44±0.73	0.531
2. Priority of the tourism sector as a development model	3.89±0.60	4.89±0.33	<b>0.002*</b>
3. Clarity in the roles of institutions	3.89±0.60	4.44±0.73	0.082
4. Degree of specialisation of human capital trained for institutions	4.11±1.17	4.67±0.50	0.197
5. Establishment of public policies	4.11±1.17	4.78±0.67	0.097

\*significant result < 0.05.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The findings show that, in general, a consensus exists between the clusters in the perceived influence of certain factors on institutional thickness in the region. Nevertheless, the role of tourism, or the priority of the activity, stands out as a factor with a statistically significant difference in perception between the clusters. In particular, institutions in Cluster 2 consider that a factor in the institutional environment favouring regional tourism development is the priority granted to tourism activity by institutions. Together with general economic development, institutions involved in determining tourism development and promoting tourism policies nationwide – for example, the Institute for the Development of Antioquia, the Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce, the Vice Ministry of Tourism, Proantioquia, and Procolombia – consider that element to be a key factor. That view can be interpreted as vindication for the need to continue positioning tourism as a core element in the country's development policies. Along those lines, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) has highlighted that tourism should be a significant economic sector both regionally and locally because it provides real prospects for inclusive, enduring economic growth. Thus, policymakers should recognise the need for coordinated responses across governmental bodies and the need to work closely with the private sector.



### *Interaction*

The dimension of interaction refers to exchange flows between institutions related to the exchange of knowledge and information and that ultimately affect cooperation, learning, and innovation in the sector.

**Table 5.** Perception of interaction flows.

Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	P
	N=9 average±S.D.	N=9 average±S.D.	significance
1. Degree of interaction between tourism institutions	2.22±0.44	1.78±1.09	0.114
2. Weight of interaction with governmental institutions	3.89±1.90	3.67±1.73	0.799
3. Weight of interaction with private institutions	3.11±1.62	3.33±2.00	0.676
4. Weight of interaction with unions, associations	3.44±1.74	2.67±1.66	0.346
5. Weight of interaction with academic institutions	3.67±1.73	2.78±1.86	0.262
6. Weight of interaction with compensation funds (non-profit institutions)	3.33±2.35	2.11±1.76	0.341
7. Weight of interaction with technology centres	3.75±2.38	1.22±0.44	<b>0.035*</b>

\*significant result < 0.05

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 5 shows how a general balance between the clusters exists regarding perceptions of the weight of interaction flows with public and private institutions. The balance reinforces the idea that interaction between the various stakeholders in a tourism destination is essential to cultivating the destination's success (McLeod, 2020). Although public and private-sector entities interact to develop and manage the area, institutions in Cluster 1, with a statistically significant difference versus their counterparts in Cluster 2, perceived that their interaction flows with technology centres have been strong and frequent. Most of the components in Cluster 1 represent institutions with a high degree of influence over tourism development in Antioquia, including Antioquia's Tourist Office, chambers of commerce, and business associations. Those institutions, by considering technology centres to be highly relevant intermediaries for responding to specific needs

(Sanz-Ibáñez et al., 2019), may consider that such a relationship can raise rates of innovation in the sector. However, other studies have revealed that personal interactions also facilitate the diffusion of innovation via SME networks (Ceci & Iubatti, 2012; McLeod, 2020).

### *Coalitions*

In the framework of institutional thickness, the dimension of coalitions refers to the importance of processes of coordination as well as leadership and power relations in the implementation of actions for regional development. To promote coordination and define power relations between the various institutions, governance structures promote the collective representation of sectoral interests (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). Those structures are spaces of representation with formal mechanisms (e.g. sectoral committees, regional councils, and working committees) that allow tourism destinations to achieve their objectives.

**Table 6.** Perception of the coalition and coordination spaces.

Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	P
	N=9	N=9	significance
	average±S.D.	average±S.D.	
1. Importance of collective representation spaces as places for sectoral dialogue	4.33±0.5	4.44±0.53	0.638
2. Importance of collective representation spaces for the promotion of public policies	4.22±0.67	4.22±0.67	1
3. Importance of collective representation spaces for the design and implementation of new projects	4.44±0.53	4.33±0.50	0.638
4. Importance of collective representation spaces for sharing information	4.22±0.67	4.11±0.60	<b>0.040*</b>
5. Importance of collective representation spaces for defining action guidelines and regulations at the destination	4.00±0.87	3.11±0.93	0.235
6. The collective representation spaces have allowed establishing a concerted vision of the destination.	4.00±0.50	3.56±1.33	0.105

7. The collective representation spaces have allowed defining the roles and competencies of institutions.	3.78±0.67	3.11±1.36	0.405
8. The collective representation spaces have allowed more efficient coordination at the destination.	3.89±0.78	4.22±1.20	0.496

\*significant result < 0.05.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 6 shows a statistically significant difference between Clusters 1 and 2 regarding the perception of spaces of collective representation as mechanisms for sharing information. In general, the relationships generated via those spaces seem to be largely determined by more rigid thematic patterns, which may reveal an institutional rigidity that precludes the flexibility needed to address issues outside the established agenda. In such cases, information is shared informally. A second notable result, albeit not statistically significant, is a difference between Clusters 1 and 2 regarding the perception of spaces of collective representation as mechanisms that define guidelines and regulations. The institutions in Cluster 1 consider such spaces to be important because they determine the behaviour and rules of action for the institutions at the destination, whereas the institutions in Cluster 2 seem to perceive them as operating as structures for dialogue. Those results confirm that the involvement of various stakeholders along with the interplay of power and knowledge occasionally prompts contradictions in opinions and interests (Dredge, 2006; Liasidou, 2019). According to Zapata and Hall (2012), the public sector generally adopts the roles of initiator and convenor of collaborative mechanisms that encourage players in the tourism industry to participate in policymaking

### *Common agenda*

The dimension of common agenda implies that the institutions develop a formally defined and shared set of clear regional priorities. According to McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2021), planning is an essential activity in tourism that generally entails setting and meeting objectives. Thus, establishing common agendas appears to be a priority for regional tourism development. However, based on the results shown in Table 7, a statistically significant difference nevertheless exists between the clusters: institutions in Cluster 1 perceive that infrastructure is not a priority element in the common agenda, whereas their counterparts in Cluster 2 perceive that the factor ranks among the most relevant.

**Table 7.** Perception of the common agenda.

Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	P
	N=9	N=9	significance
	average±S.D.	average±S.D.	
1. The existence of a collective common agenda	3.50±0.93	4.11±1.36	0.343
2. Infrastructures as a priority of the common agenda	1.89±0.60	3.11±1,17	<b>0.024*</b>
3. Security as a priority of the common agenda	2.22±1,09	2.56±1.24	0.553
4. Legislation as a priority of the common agenda	2.33±1.00	2.22±1.20	0.834
5. Social impact as a priority of the common agenda	2.33±1.00	1.89±1.27	0.288
6. Economic impact as a priority of the common agenda	2.78±0.97	2.11±1.17	0.170
7. Attraction of investment as a priority of the common agenda	1.89±1.05	2.44±1.51	0.511
8. Capturing resources as a priority of the common agenda	2.00±1.00	2.89±1.45	0.197
9. Coordination for implementing the common agenda	2.33±0.71	3.00±1.58	0.574

\*significant result < 0.05.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

As highlighted earlier, a large share of the institutions in Cluster 2, including the Institute for the Development of Antioquia and Proantioquia, play an important role in the regional development of infrastructure. Such institutions perceive that, in Antioquia, infrastructure for communication and transport and other means of support for sustaining tourism activity need to be strengthened, if not developed in the first place. That perspective aligns with the general perception that infrastructure, along with factors such as the zoning of land use, transport, the environment, perceptions of the landscape, and regulations about carrying capacity (McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2019), is integral to the competitiveness of tourism destinations. However, other research has revealed that the domains of institutions related to general development (e.g. of transport or communication services) have complex but necessary relationships with tourism institutions as they operate together and apart from one another (Hopkins, 2020).

## 5. Conclusion

This article has discussed the perceptions that different institutions operating in Colombia's Department of Antioquia have about their role in regional tourism development from 2000 to 2015, as well as what factors they consider to be crucial in light of the dimensions of institutional thickness (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). Introducing institutional thickness into the analysis allowed focusing on a set of specific non-economic factors at each destination (i.e. institutional presence, interaction patterns, mutual awareness, common agendas, and structures of domination and/or spaces of collective representation) as part of an integrated framework for analysing the role of institutions in tourism development in a region in Latin America.

The results showcase that, on the one hand, perceptions of the relevance and performance of institutions in relation to regional tourism development are more or less positive depending on the type of institution and its exclusive or partial relationship with the activity. According to Nunkoo et al. (2012), that result may have stemmed from how the relevance and performance of institutions are evaluated regarding their objectives.

In the case of this study, the objectives of the institutions partly linked to tourism development have differed from those of institutions with exclusive functions within the tourism sector's value chain. The fact that institutions dedicated to general regional development perceive that tourism institutions contribute little value to the region's development creates a scenario in which the capacity of tourism institutions and tourism activities themselves may be questioned. As highlighted when analysing the density of institutional thickness, that trend is of concern to the participating tourism institutions, insofar as they perceive the need to prioritise tourism as a tool for regional development in a significantly different manner.

Despite recognition of tourism's economic impact as reflected, for instance, in tourism satellite accounts, the debate over its impact remains commonplace, especially in Latin American countries, albeit not limited to discussing whether tourism is important enough to promote regional economic development. At the same time, robust research attempting to explain the link between regional development and tourism has been limited (Calero & Turner, 2020), meaning that a way forward based on institutions' perceptions of the relationship, as outlined in this article, is highly sought. Furthermore, the article is clearly connected to a better understanding of how public-private cooperation and managerial practices can maximise tourism's potential to boost regional economic development and reduce poverty.

Additional contributions of interest respond to the other identified factors perceived within the framework for institutional thickness, particularly the relationship with technology centres, the importance of spaces for collective representation, and the

acknowledgment of infrastructure as a principal investment for regional tourism development.

Those three factors may each encourage higher rates of innovation in the sector, contribute to good governance and a more democratic manner of development (Bouckaert & van de Walle, 2003), and promote the sounder allocation of resources. Such efforts may result in the increased competitiveness of destinations and, in turn, directly enhance tourism's effects on regional development.

Taken together, our findings contribute to research on tourism in at least three ways. First, they contribute to the discussion about the governance of destinations by increasing knowledge on the perception of the roles, functions, and positions of the different institutions involved. Second, they allow a better understanding of the reasons behind the commitment and involvement of business associations, chambers of commerce, and public administrations at different levels, among other bodies, and their perceived roles in creating a strong, innovative environment marked by an institutional thickness that can guarantee development (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Sanz-Ibáñez et al., 2019). Third, the identification of factors perceived as being key by the institutions may benefit the approaches used by practitioners to promote mechanisms able to achieve competitive advantages for tourism destinations in particular and regions in general (Cooper, 2015; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008).

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Profile of respondents.

Institution / Organisation	Character	Spatial scale	Commitment to tourism development	Year founded	Profile of interviewed representative
Aburrá Sur Chamber of Commerce	Mixed *	Regional	Partial	1992	Department Director
IDEA - Institute for the Development of Antioquia	Public	Regional	Partial	1952	Public Servant
Network of subregional tourist corporations	Private	Regional	Exclusive	2013	General Director
Proantioquia - non-profit, privately operated foundation	Private	Regional	Partial	1975	Department Director
University Colegio Mayor de Antioquia	Public	Capital city	Exclusive	1946	Academic Director
Oriente Antioqueño Chamber of Commerce	Private	Regional	Partial	1987	Department Director
Association of tourist guides of Antioquia - ASOGUIAN	Private	Regional	Exclusive	1996	General Director
Vice Ministry of Tourism	Public	National	Exclusive	2006	Department Director
FENALCO ANTIOQUIA - Association of merchants	Private	National	Partial	1946	Department Director
PROCOLOMBIA	Public	National	Exclusive	1992	General Director
ACOPI ANTIOQUIA - Colombian association of SMEs	Private	National	Partial	1957	Department Director
University of San Buenaventura	Private	Regional	Partial	1967	Academic Director

Science and Technology Center of Antioquia - CTA	Private	Regional	Partial	1989	Department Director
Medellín Chamber of Commerce	Private	Regional	Partial	1904	Department Director
Subregional tourist corporation - Occidente de Antioquia	Mixed*	Regional	Exclusive	2001	General Director
Subregional tourist corporation - Urabá	Mixed*	Regional	Exclusive	2005	General Director
Government of Antioquia - Tourist Office	Public	Regional	Exclusive	Unanswered	Public Servant
University of Medellin	Private	Capital city	Exclusive	1950	Academic Director

\*Private–public funds.

Source: Authors' elaboration



## Capítulo 3: Conclusiones



En este capítulo se presentan las conclusiones derivadas de la investigación desarrollada en esta tesis doctoral destacando las principales lecciones obtenidas, las aportaciones al conocimiento realizadas y las innovaciones metodológicas planteadas. Asimismo, se comentan brevemente las implicaciones institucionales que resultan del análisis y se sugieren futuras líneas de investigación.

### 3.1. Lecciones

La tesis doctoral reconoce y muestra la relevancia de las instituciones para favorecer el desarrollo regional del turismo. El análisis del papel de las instituciones desde la perspectiva de la densidad institucional otorga un conocimiento que integra diferentes factores, logrando determinar elementos que pueden intervenir positivamente en los ámbitos de la gobernanza regional, la planificación y la gestión del desarrollo del turismo.

Del conjunto de la investigación realizada, los resultados obtenidos confirman, tal como se plantea en la hipótesis, que es adecuado que, a escala regional, los destinos dispongan de instituciones que tengan interacciones entre ellas y sistemas formales e informales de coordinación para la gestión colectiva de las expectativas de desarrollo y de los recursos disponibles y que, de esta manera, las propias instituciones incrementen sus capacidades como habilitadoras del impulso y el fortalecimiento de la actividad turística y, en consecuencia, de la economía regional. Se recuerda, en este mismo sentido, que el objetivo general de la tesis es avanzar en la comprensión acerca del papel que juegan las instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo, analizando si pueden actuar como un elemento catalizador en los procesos de consolidación turística y en la gobernanza del destino.

Más en detalle, a la luz de los objetivos específicos y de las preguntas de investigación planteados en el marco de esta tesis, la Tabla 1 relaciona las principales lecciones extraídas de cada una de las publicaciones.



**Tabla 1.** Visión general de los objetivos, las preguntas de investigación y las lecciones derivadas de cada publicación.

Publicación	Objetivos específicos (Sección 1.2)	Preguntas de investigación (Sección 1.2)	Lecciones
Publicación 1	OE.1. Discutir y examinar la importancia general de las instituciones en la determinación del desarrollo regional del turismo.	P.1. ¿El entorno institucional desempeña un papel importante en el desarrollo regional del turismo?	L.1. El valor de las capacidades institucionales.
		P.2. ¿El entorno institucional y las dinámicas de interacción entre las instituciones determinan el grado de desarrollo regional del turismo?	L.2. El papel de la política. L.3. Los arreglos institucionales para la sostenibilidad.
Publicación 2	OE.2. Analizar el papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo del turismo teniendo en cuenta la variedad institucional (administraciones públicas, agencias de desarrollo, cámaras de comercio, asociaciones empresariales, centros de innovación, instituciones educativas y otros organismos) y las escalas geográficas de impacto (local, regional, nacional).	P.3. ¿Qué papel desempeñan los distintos tipos de instituciones en las dinámicas de poder y de colaboración en el destino turístico?	L.4. La visión compartida.
		P.4. ¿Cómo se pueden medir el papel de las instituciones y la evolución de las dinámicas institucionales?	L.5. Los espacios de interacción.
		P.5. ¿En qué medida el desarrollo de agendas comunes articula al tejido institucional de un destino turístico?	L.6. La evolución del liderazgo. L.7. Las dinámicas de poder.
Publicación 3	OE.3. Determinar cómo las estructuras institucionales públicas y privadas, su coordinación e interacción afectan el desarrollo regional del turismo.	P.6. ¿Cómo perciben las instituciones su papel en la configuración de los procesos de toma de decisiones relacionadas con el turismo?	L.8. La percepción de las instituciones. L.9. La coexistencia de los enfoques sectorial y territorial. L.10. El turismo y su proyección.

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

A continuación, se argumentan las lecciones extraídas y el fundamento de su utilidad.

**Lección 1: El valor de las capacidades institucionales.** La generación de capacidades institucionales centradas en el turismo, constituye un mecanismo conveniente para formular, implementar y guiar una visión común de desarrollo del turismo a escala regional. La Publicación 1, muestra como gran parte de las instituciones constituidas en Antioquia desde el año 2000, fueron creadas con un objetivo específico relacionado con el desarrollo del turismo y, por tanto, con un cometido especializado a escala regional. Esta generación de capacidades nos ilustra, en concreto, sobre cómo el establecimiento de estructuras institucionales puede generar un impacto positivo en el desarrollo de la actividad en el medio y largo plazo, dado que estimulan la capacidad empresarial e impulsan la actividad económica del entorno. Esta cuestión, que es planteada por Amin y Thrift (1994) en el marco del concepto de la densidad institucional, queda plenamente confirmada en esta investigación en lo referente al desarrollo regional del turismo.

**Lección 2: El papel de la política.** Las dinámicas políticas influyen claramente en todos los factores que constituyen la densidad institucional. En el área de estudio analizada se ha demostrado que las decisiones políticas de la región se han articulado con los factores institucionales y organizativos del destino logrando un efecto positivo en el desarrollo del turismo (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). El rumbo del desarrollo del turismo está determinado de manera importante por la política en la medida que ésta se constituye en un factor exógeno que tiene una influencia fundamental (Franz, 2018). Se desprende del análisis, por lo tanto, que la interacción entre instituciones se basa, en gran medida, en cómo se articula el poder político y ello las relaciona con la gobernanza del destino (Kooiman, 1999). Tal como se ha apuntado en otros estudios, los responsables políticos consideran la gobernanza como un marco para mejorar la competitividad local y regional (Gibbs & Jonas, 2001). Es en este contexto que se observa la implicación de las instituciones como parte del sistema de gobierno que aporta legitimidad a los procesos políticos (Riensch et al., 2019).

**Lección 3: Los arreglos institucionales para la sostenibilidad.** La trayectoria, evolución y transformación de los destinos turísticos están altamente condicionados por los cambios en los marcos y arreglos institucionales en los que operan (políticas públicas, legislación y presupuestos). Los arreglos institucionales no solo garantizan la coordinación entre instituciones, sino que además permiten trascender los plazos políticos, facilitando la continuidad de los objetivos establecidos de manera conjunta por los actores públicos y privados (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2019). La Publicación 1, evidencia 3 aspectos de relevancia para garantizar la sostenibilidad de las decisiones que impactan de manera positiva en el destino (1) la definición colectiva de una agenda común, (2) el

establecimiento de mecanismos para llevar a la acción la agenda común establecida, (3) la creación de coaliciones a través de la formación de espacios formales de interacción que garantizan la participación de todos los interesados en las decisiones importantes. Asimismo, el área de estudio analizada demuestra el papel decisivo de los empresarios y las instituciones privadas en el cumplimiento de los arreglos institucionales para garantizar que la trayectoria evolutiva del destino sea positiva (véase, al respecto, la discusión de Sanz-Ibáñez y Anton Clavé (2016) sobre el papel de las dinámicas empresariales en el aseguramiento del cumplimiento de objetivos comunes).

**Lección 4: La visión compartida.** La motivación para la acción conjunta está determinada por los intereses colectivos de todas las instituciones. Es conocido que la mejor forma de expresarlos es a través del establecimiento de una agenda común desarrollada por las instituciones (Amin & Thrift, 1994). Esto implica movilizar a diferentes actores e instituciones de todos los niveles en torno a temas, proyectos y programas específicos (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). En particular, tal como se observa a través de la Publicación 2, la existencia de una visión compartida constituye un factor de cohesión y de motivación (MacLeod, 1997; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007) que puede proporcionar elementos positivos a la gobernanza del destino, con una red de partes interesadas capaces y comprometidas con el desarrollo de una agenda a medio y largo plazo, incluso cuando se añaden nuevos actores a las diferentes fases del proceso de desarrollo (Restrepo et al., 2021).

**Lección 5: Los espacios de interacción.** Las instituciones están incrustadas en contextos relacionales (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Por este motivo, el desarrollo regional del turismo también se apoya en relaciones constructivas que implican una amplia diversidad de instituciones y modalidades de interacción y que se sustentan, primordialmente, sobre la configuración de espacios de articulación de lo público y lo privado para la gestión coordinada de todos los ámbitos que constituyen el destino. En este contexto, la interacción se ve facilitada por vínculos bidireccionales y por flujos de información que conectan las relaciones (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) a través de la existencia de espacios de interacción entre instituciones (Restrepo et al., 2021). En el área de estudio analizada se demuestra como a través de alianzas, juntas y consejos sectoriales las instituciones configuran estructuras de colaboración que se caracterizan por la participación de una amplia gama de actores en el sistema de gestión del destino (Carlsson & Sandstrom, 2008).

**Lección 6: La evolución del liderazgo.** El papel de algunas instituciones puede ser más o menos prominente dependiendo de la etapa del proceso de desarrollo en la que se encuentre el destino turístico. Mediante el contraste de dos periodos temporales que muestran la evolución del entorno institucional en la región de

Antioquia, la Publicación 2 de esta tesis demuestra como determinadas instituciones van adquiriendo mayor poder en la red institucional del destino turístico y como esta dinámica está propiciada por la capacidad de influencia a través de la coordinación o el dominio de cuestiones clave para el desarrollo regional de la actividad. Este hallazgo, resulta de especial interés puesto que contribuye al análisis de la evolución de los destinos, identificando los principales actores que intervienen directa o indirectamente en el desarrollo del turismo a lo largo del tiempo, las funciones que desempeñan y la dinámica de cooperación y competencia dentro de la red institucional tal como es planteado por Sanz-Ibáñez y Anton Clavé (2014). Asimismo, evidencia la importancia de tener una visión dinámica de la densidad institucional para comprender mejor los procesos y mecanismos del cambio institucional (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

**Lección 7: Las dinámicas de poder.** Las competencias formales constituyen un factor importante para determinar el grado de poder que ejerce una institución (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007). En el caso de Antioquia, la coordinación de agendas comunes atribuye un alto grado de autoridad a aquellas instituciones que asumen el rol de liderar dichas agendas, dado que tienen más poder para influir en el desarrollo regional del turismo. Esta lección ofrece un valioso conocimiento para comprender cómo y por qué cambia el equilibrio de poder a lo largo del tiempo (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

**Lección 8: La percepción de las instituciones.** Abordar el análisis de la densidad institucional desde una perspectiva de abajo hacia arriba permite obtener información sobre la percepción que los propios agentes económicos regionales - las instituciones - tienen de su entorno institucional (Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). La percepción que las instituciones tienen sobre sí mismas permite definir si las regiones son institucionalmente densas y si sus competencias formales se corresponden con sus funciones y sus poderes reales (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007, Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

**Lección 9: La coexistencia de los enfoques sectorial y territorial.** El desarrollo regional del turismo exige una coalición de numerosas instituciones a diferentes escalas territoriales e involucra tanto a instituciones vinculadas de manera directa con la actividad como otras que solamente influyen en el desarrollo de este de forma indirecta. Esta particularidad puede generar contradicciones en las opiniones e intereses de las diferentes instituciones (Dredge, 2006; Liasidou, 2019). Tal como se postula en la Publicación 3, la convergencia del enfoque sectorial y el territorial debe llevarse a cabo mediante un proceso de definición de objetivos en los que todas las instituciones establezcan un conjunto formalmente compartido de prioridades en un marco definido de planificación regional (McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2021).

**Lección 10: El turismo y su proyección.** Las instituciones turísticas deben adquirir un mayor protagonismo en los procesos de desarrollo regional para que el potencial y el valor del turismo sea percibido como estratégico y se logre la convergencia del conjunto de agentes (incluidas las instituciones no especializadas en turismo) del territorio para impulsar su desarrollo. Desde esta perspectiva, las instituciones no solo cuentan como herramienta económica para el desarrollo regional (Telfer, 2014) sino como elemento fundamental para asegurar la sostenibilidad de las dimensiones socioculturales y ambientales de los territorios (Deery et al., 2012, Sharpley, 2014).

En definitiva, las lecciones extraídas permiten evidenciar la importancia de incorporar los factores institucionales en el análisis del desarrollo regional del turismo desde dos ámbitos. Por un lado, como parte de la estrategia de desarrollo regional y de gestión del turismo. Por otro, como fundamento de la gobernanza y la dirección sostenible, con una visión colectiva y compartida, del papel del turismo en los destinos.

### 3.2. Aportaciones al conocimiento

Los resultados obtenidos en esta tesis producen aportaciones al conocimiento desde diferentes perspectivas. Destaca, principalmente, el aporte derivado de la introducción del concepto de la densidad institucional a los estudios en turismo, que resulta no solo novedosa sino también fructífera. Dicha introducción aporta un nuevo enfoque a los esfuerzos realizados hasta el momento, de gran interés e importancia, pero no suficientes, para comprender tanto desde una perspectiva académica como empírica el papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo del turismo (Nunkoo et al., 2012; Valente et al., 2015; Mellon & Bramwell, 2018). De esta manera, la tesis contribuye, con un planteamiento innovador, a la demanda planteada por Mellon y Bramwell (2018) con relación a la importancia de adoptar enfoques basados en el institucionalismo y la economía política para analizar las influencias históricas, los legados estructurantes y las secuencias de cambio en los destinos.

Si bien es cierto que la literatura existente ya aborda el significado del concepto de instituciones tanto desde una aproximación sociológica como económica, los estudios sobre el desarrollo del turismo a menudo suelen referirse a las instituciones de manera limitada, incluyendo tan solo en esta categoría a los organismos públicos. De esta manera, dejan de lado otra serie de actores que participan en la forma de interpretar y aplicar las normas, en la configuración de coaliciones, en la adopción de los acuerdos y en la fijación de nuevas circunstancias tras la implantación de decisiones y cambios en las políticas de los destinos turísticos (Capoccia, 2016; Fioretos et al., 2016; Gains et al., 2005; Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Mellon & Bramwell, 2018). En esta línea, la presente

tesis amplia el espectro sobre lo que se puede considerar el tejido institucional en el ámbito del turismo y otorga un enfoque más amplio a la tipología de organismos que lo integran. Para ello, toma como marco de referencia los enfoques sugeridos de manera temprana por Amin y Thrift (1994) y, recientemente, por Zukauskaitė et al. (2017). Más en detalle, la Publicación 1 pone de manifiesto la existencia y el papel de diferentes tipos de instituciones como las agencias de desarrollo local/regional, los organismos gubernamentales, las asociaciones y organizaciones empresariales, las instituciones universitarias y de investigación, todas ellas presentes en la configuración del destino turístico y representantes de los actores y colectivos locales y regionales.

El modelo analítico propuesto adopta el concepto de la densidad institucional (Amin & Thrift, 1994) para el análisis de su papel en la configuración de un destino turístico realizando aportes clave en cinco sentidos. En primer lugar, a través de la incorporación de indicadores en el análisis de la densidad institucional, hasta ahora no establecidos en estudios anteriores, no solo de temática turística sino en relación con otros sectores de actividad o a otras dinámicas regionales y locales multisectoriales (MacLeod, 1997; Raco, 1998; Keeble et al., 1999; Henry & Pinch, 2001; Wood & Valler, 2004; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Beer & Lester 2015; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). De esta manera se da respuesta a la demandada necesidad de hacer operativa la aplicación del concepto de densidad institucional (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017) y se demuestra la correlación que puede existir entre la existencia de una fuerte densidad institucional y el desarrollo, en el caso analizado, positivo del turismo a nivel regional. Se pone de manifiesto, por lo tanto, la utilidad del concepto para el análisis de los procesos de desarrollo.

El segundo aporte clave tiene que ver con los métodos de análisis utilizados y, particularmente, con la relación que se plantea en esta tesis entre los conceptos de redes y la densidad institucional. Esta relación es propuesta y argumentada a través del contraste realizado entre los factores institucionales propuestos por Amin y Thrift (1994) – la presencia institucional, los niveles de interacción entre las instituciones/organizaciones, las estructuras de dominio y/o los patrones de coalición, la conciencia mutua y las agendas comunes - y los procesos relacionales establecidos por DiMaggio y Powell (1983) – la interacción entre participantes, el intercambio de información, los patrones de coalición bien definidos y la conciencia y responsabilidad mutua - desde la perspectiva del análisis de redes. Se trata de una relación que no había sido propuesta hasta ahora y que, a la vista de los resultados obtenidos, se ha demostrado de gran interés en la medida en que se observa que ambos conceptos son inherentemente relacionales (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) y que pueden complementarse para fortalecer la producción de conocimiento relacionado con el contexto en el que las instituciones están inmersas y operan (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020).

Asimismo, la aplicación empírica del concepto de la densidad institucional adoptada en la Publicación 2 a través del análisis de redes sociales utilizando técnicas para mapear,

medir y analizar las relaciones a partir de datos cualitativos y cuantitativos (Blanchet & James, 2011) tales como la definición de medidas estructurales para el análisis de la densidad de enlaces entre instituciones (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), la centralidad (Kleinberg, 1999) y la asortatividad (Newman, 2002), entre otros, han permitido evidenciar la validez de la innovadora metodología propuesta para la medición de la densidad institucional. Estas medidas estructurales han contribuido, en concreto, a evaluar cuantitativamente la evolución de la densidad institucional en el destino turístico analizado - Antioquia -; a facilitar la adopción de un enfoque sistémico para el análisis de los procesos institucionales, y a revelar aspectos que no habían sido visibles a través de otros enfoques como, por ejemplo, la consideración de los espacios formales de interacción en los que participa cada institución como mecanismos para establecer flujos relacionales y otorgar autoridad a quienes ejercen el rol de liderazgo. Tales cuestiones pueden considerarse un tercer aporte clave de la tesis doctoral realizada.

Finalmente, como cuarto aporte clave, se han realizado hallazgos no expuestos en otros estudios empíricos sobre la densidad institucional en relación con otros ámbitos de especialización económica (MacLeod, 1997; Raco, 1998; Keeble et al., 1999; Henry & Pinch, 2001; Wood & Valler, 2004; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Beer & Lester, 2015), como es el papel de las variaciones en la dinámica institucional, que ha sido posible gracias al análisis comparativo de periodos temporales diferentes. Ello ha permitido hacer contribuciones al entendimiento de los procesos históricos de creación, reproducción y cambio de las instituciones (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018) que vinculan los resultados de la tesis a los estudios sobre la evolución de los destinos turísticos que se vienen realizando desde el enfoque de la geografía económica evolutiva y relacional (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014).

De igual forma, esta tesis ha demostrado que analizar las percepciones de las instituciones sobre sí mismas, aunque sean subjetivas, es importante, en la medida en que su voz es prescriptiva en la gobernanza del turismo y que ocupan una posición fundamental en el desarrollo turístico (Bramwell, 2011). Esta reflexión, planteada en la Publicación 3, ha permitido ir un paso más allá de lo habitualmente conocido en lo referente a la percepción de los agentes del destino acerca de los procesos de desarrollo turístico, pues gran parte de los estudios existentes se han centrado en las opiniones de los residentes locales y los visitantes, descuidando las percepciones de las propias instituciones implicadas (y que en ocasiones lideran efectivamente) en el impulso de la actividad (Hammad et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). Así, y éste se configura como el quinto aporte de valor de la tesis, se ha logrado revelar cuatro factores, a la luz de la densidad institucional, que las instituciones del área de estudio analizada perciben como cuestiones clave para el desarrollo regional del turismo como la participación exclusiva o parcial de las instituciones en la cadena de valor del turismo, la relación con los centros tecnológicos, la importancia de los espacios de representación colectiva y el

reconocimiento de la infraestructura como principal ámbito de inversión para el desarrollo de la actividad.

En general, las tres publicaciones en las que se ha sintetizado el resultado de la tesis, han permitido contribuir a la comprensión de la relación entre el turismo y los procesos de desarrollo, evidenciando la relevancia del papel de las instituciones en la planificación del turismo y, en consecuencia, en el despliegue de procesos de desarrollo regional en general y dando respuesta a la necesidad de fortalecer el conocimiento de dichos procesos sobre la base de las teorías institucionales (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018; Jiang et al., 2019). Esta es, como es conocido, una perspectiva de análisis con larga tradición en el ámbito de la economía y la geografía regional y al que la literatura ha dedicado una especial atención (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Helmsing, 2001; Keune & Creation, 2001; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Danson et. al., 2018). Sin embargo, ha sido hasta el momento, un ámbito de análisis y reflexión en relación con el cual ha habido aportaciones muy limitadas en lo referente al papel del turismo (Nunkoo et al., 2012; Mellon & Bramwell, 2018).

Es importante indicar, asimismo, que en el contexto de la literatura académica existente sobre el papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo regional y, en el caso de esta tesis, del turismo, el trabajo aquí presentado realiza una aportación singular al conocimiento desde la perspectiva de las dinámicas prevalentes en Latinoamérica y, específicamente, en la región de Antioquia. No debe olvidarse que ello es especialmente significativo en la medida que en el contexto del turismo mundial Latinoamérica desempeña un papel clave (Organización Mundial del Turismo, 2020) y que hay un importante vacío existente en el despliegue de investigaciones sobre el turismo, sus condiciones de desarrollo y sus impactos, en los países de la región (Picazo-Peral et al., 2015). Instituciones como el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), han puesto de manifiesto el interés en profundizar sobre el conocimiento del turismo en la región y han reconocido la importancia de apoyar a los países en su uso efectivo de las instituciones existentes como herramienta para el desarrollo sostenible (Altés, 2006). Por tanto, esta tesis contribuye a cubrir también el vacío de tener análisis profundos tanto del proceso de configuración turística de la región a partir de la generación de capacidades institucionales como de la necesidad de impulsar el potencial del turismo como agente de transformación sostenible del territorio latinoamericano (CEPAL, 2020).

### **3.3. Aportaciones metodológicas**

Las aportaciones metodológicas que se han realizado en esta tesis en lo referente al estudio del papel de las instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo son de tres tipos.



En primer lugar, tal como se desprende de las propias consideraciones anteriores, el propio marco analítico desarrollado significa una aportación metodológica importante en la medida que establece una serie de parámetros como base para el análisis de la densidad institucional, específicamente, para el ámbito productivo del turismo. Estos parámetros han permitido plantear indicadores que pueden ser utilizados en cualquier contexto geográfico y también para otras actividades económicas. Esta aportación cubre una necesidad largamente reclamada desde los estudios sobre la densidad institucional (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017) que han expresado regularmente la complejidad de hacer del concepto un método operacional. Se entiende que esta ha sido una dificultad que en esta tesis ha logrado superarse.

En segundo lugar, se hacen aportaciones metodológicas derivadas de la utilización del análisis de redes sociales que permiten introducir métricas para avanzar en la evaluación empírica de la densidad institucional. Tal y como se plantea en la Publicación 2 y se ha indicado en el apartado anterior, el trabajo desarrollado comparte rasgos propios del análisis de redes sociales (Davis et al., 1941; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Blanchet & James, 2011), pero a su vez introduce elementos novedosos para lograr evidencias empíricas en la aplicación del análisis de la densidad institucional, así:

- Se definen como unidades de análisis los espacios formales de interacción, constituyéndose en estructuras de intersección, conexión o unión entre instituciones que confluyen en una agenda común.
- Se desarrollan medidas estructurales para cada variable e indicador propuesto en la medición de la densidad institucional (aplicada en este caso al análisis del desarrollo regional del turismo) y se procesan matemáticamente.
- Se establece un marco para la diferenciación de instituciones “núcleo” e instituciones “socias” en el proceso de desarrollo del turismo, lo cual permite analizar el papel que desempeñan los distintos tipos de instituciones en la dinámica de poder y colaboración de la región.
- Se contrastan las características estructurales de la densidad institucional a través del análisis de distintos periodos de tiempo para mostrar como la evolución y los cambios producidos afectan al papel que toman las diferentes instituciones en el desarrollo regional del turismo.

Finalmente, en tercer lugar, el estudio acerca del desempeño y la relevancia institucional basado en la percepción de las propias instituciones, ha evidenciado la importancia de considerar esta cuestión para entender mejor los procesos de desarrollo regional y obtener una mejor comprensión sobre las opiniones que los agentes regionales tienen de su entorno institucional (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017). Este

enfoque ha permitido realizar aportes metodológicos significativos y novedosos relacionados con:

- La definición de criterios de percepción sobre el desempeño y la relevancia institucional.
- La categorización de las instituciones en función de su propia percepción acerca de su relevancia y desempeño.
- El planteamiento de factores clave percibidos en el desarrollo regional del turismo en el marco de la densidad institucional y su peso equivalente.

En su conjunto, las aportaciones metodológicas realizadas han permitido obtener evidencias empíricas desconocidas hasta el momento, no sólo para el área de estudio y el ámbito de actividad productiva analizadas sino también en relación con la temática estudiada y las variables e indicadores parametrizados. De esta manera se ha avanzado, una vez más, en la operacionalización y el uso del concepto de la densidad institucional, en tanto que el marco analítico es útil y se han obtenido medidas de valoración sobre la relevancia y el desempeño institucional que permiten, por lo tanto, ampliar la capacidad de realizar nuevas investigaciones fundamentadas en una base metodológica que puede ayudar a realizar estudios comparados. Tales estudios pueden ayudar a evaluar la eficiencia y el desempeño institucional (Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Zukauskaitė et al., 2017).

### 3.4. Implicaciones institucionales

Sobre la base de los resultados presentados en esta tesis, se pueden extraer una serie de implicaciones institucionales, que, si bien no tienen por qué trasladarse de manera directa a la práctica en el corto plazo, sí que permiten reflexionar sobre el funcionamiento de los marcos institucionales para el desarrollo del turismo e introducir o fortalecer dinámicas de acción en el medio y largo plazo.

En este sentido, la investigación realizada plantea una reflexión que tiene implicaciones sobre la gobernanza del destino, reafirmando la importancia de dotar al turismo de un tejido institucional que actúe no sólo como impulsor de la actividad, sino también como articulador y generador de consenso respecto a los objetivos y la agenda común que se quiere impulsar. Se entiende que en la medida que las estructuras de gobernanza del destino están esencialmente conformadas por instituciones, éstas deben establecerse con una clara división de roles y funciones, un fuerte compromiso colectivo y la participación de lo público y lo privado a diferentes niveles (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Sanz-Ibáñez et al., 2017).

Se desprende también del análisis realizado que el papel que las instituciones públicas deben adoptar en el marco de la gobernanza del destino debe ser amplio. En la administración pública moderna, las instituciones ya no desempeñan solo la función de proveedoras de recursos económicos y fiscalizadoras del cumplimiento de la legislación (Solano, 2014) sino que deben configurarse como instrumentos para impulsar la participación y articulación de todos los agentes en la gobernanza del destino. En este sentido, los espacios de representación colectiva analizados se muestran como mecanismos efectivos para fomentar el consenso en la toma de decisiones y la acción conjunta, configurándose a la práctica como un instrumento para la gobernanza colaborativa (Ansell & Gash, 2008). A largo plazo ello debe traducirse en una cierta estabilidad y sostenibilidad de la evolución turística del destino, independientemente de los aspectos políticos que puedan afectar el rumbo de la actividad.

Por otro lado, las instituciones privadas, representadas en universidades, asociaciones empresariales y profesionales, cámaras de comercio, centros tecnológicos y de investigación, entre otros; aunque actúen con independencia, deberían integrarse cada vez más a las dinámicas de gestión del destino, con el objetivo de garantizar que las políticas públicas, los planes, los programas y los proyectos desplegados en el territorio, contribuyan a mayores niveles de competitividad, transparencia y eficiencia institucional. Situar a todas las instituciones en el centro de las estrategias de desarrollo de las regiones, puede significar, si se hace de manera adecuada, una contribución importante para activar y mejorar la suerte económica del territorio (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020).

Finalmente, dada la transversalidad y la diversidad de instituciones e intereses que confluyen en el turismo, de los resultados obtenidos se desprende que los destinos deberían ir adaptando y reconfigurando sus procesos de desarrollo, innovación y sostenibilidad; reorientando estrategias y vinculando a los agentes necesarios para abordar los retos de nuestro tiempo, como el cambio climático, el futuro del trabajo, el envejecimiento de la población, la justicia e inclusión social, la transición energética, la transformación digital y otros desafíos que, si bien no ocupan al conjunto de las instituciones turísticas, afectan de manera directa el futuro del turismo. Todos ellos hacen necesaria, tal como se ha visto, por ejemplo (y aunque no haya sido objeto de análisis en esta tesis) a raíz de la crisis sanitaria provocada por la pandemia de la COVID-19, la implicación de instituciones que, aunque no están estrictamente vinculadas a la actividad turística, deben integrarse para configurar fuertes interconexiones, condición clave para la generación de valor, la cohesión entre agentes y la innovación en el desarrollo regional (Scott, 2006). Esta es una observación importante para las instituciones vinculadas a la planificación del turismo como ámbito de desarrollo en la medida que hace evidente que la capacidad de las regiones turísticas para consolidarse y evolucionar en una dirección positiva reside en la capacidad de configurar un tejido institucional que incluya a instituciones turísticas y a otras no especializadas, pero con intereses en el ámbito del turismo. Es la acción colectiva de unas y otras instituciones la que va a permitir desarrollar instrumentos para el despliegue de procesos de transformación e innovación conducentes al desarrollo sostenible del turismo en las regiones.

### 3.5. Limitaciones y futuras líneas de investigación

Tal como se ha venido comentando en este capítulo de conclusiones, en esta tesis se ha introducido el concepto de la densidad institucional para el estudio del desarrollo regional del turismo, generando una propuesta de marco analítico para su medición y aplicación. Más allá que ello ha resultado innovador y fructífero desde una perspectiva analítica, debe indicarse, que la perspectiva transdisciplinar requerida para su desarrollo e implementación ha implicado algunas limitaciones. En primer lugar, la adopción del concepto de la densidad institucional aplicado al contexto del desarrollo del turismo ha resultado un desafío, en la medida que la escasez de trabajos al respecto ha impedido realizar un contraste con estudios similares. Sin embargo, como se ha comentado en los apartados anteriores, esta condición, también ha supuesto una oportunidad para realizar aportaciones significativas y novedosas a la literatura científica del turismo.

En segundo lugar, debe recordarse que, dada la inexistencia de referentes previos al respecto, la aplicación empírica diseñada para el desarrollo de esta investigación se ha circunscrito a una sola región, por lo que, a pesar de su valor y del interés que han despertado en las publicaciones académicas que han difundido sus resultados en la comunidad científica, es necesario reconocer que no hay constancia de cómo los resultados obtenidos pueden presentar variaciones en diferentes contextos. De ahí, la necesidad de seguir profundizando en la aplicación del marco metodológico propuesto a través de su estudio en otros escenarios territoriales. Ello abre sin duda nuevas posibilidades para posibles futuras investigaciones. Por ejemplo, observar el comportamiento de las diferentes variables en el análisis de regiones con dinámicas dispares a las observadas en Antioquia como es el caso de regiones en las que también se ha realizado un importante esfuerzo en la configuración de capacidades institucionales, pero en las que el éxito en el desarrollo del turismo como vía para la mejora de las condiciones económicas, sociales y ambientales a nivel regional ha sido limitado.

Finalmente, teniendo en cuenta que algunos investigadores han intentado relacionar la densidad institucional con el éxito económico (en algunos casos, como plantean Coulson & Ferrario, 2007) desde una perspectiva cualitativa para obtener parámetros con una justificación científica, resultaría de interés la combinación del marco analítico propuesto en esta tesis con un análisis comparativo de la evolución de otros indicadores socioeconómicos de la región a estudiar. Este enfoque podría reforzar los hallazgos presentados tanto en esta tesis como en otros estudios ya realizados para otros ámbitos de especialización productiva (MacLeod, 1997; Raco, 1998; Keeble et al., 1999; Henry & Pinch, 2001; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007; Beer & Lester, 2015), especialmente, desde la perspectiva de la correlación entre la densidad institucional y el desempeño económico ya sea éste favorecido tanto por la actividad turística regional como por el impulso de otras actividades económicas.

En cualquier caso, el carácter extenso de los factores que engloban el concepto de la densidad institucional permiten otras alternativas analíticas: que cada uno de ellos pueda ser abordado de manera particular en un análisis más profundo o bien que se amplíen los indicadores de manera que sea posible ratificar o rectificar cuál de los factores ejerce mayor peso en el desarrollo regional del turismo en cada situación o contexto geográfico definido; a saber, la fuerte presencia institucional, los niveles de interacción, las estructuras de dominio o de colación, las agendas comunes, o todas en su conjunto. Sin duda, futuras investigaciones pueden contribuir a despejar algunas de las nuevas incógnitas que, como ocurre en cualquier trabajo generador de conocimiento, han aflorado a partir de la obtención de resultados derivados del marco metodológico aplicado en esta tesis. En cualquier caso, se espera que los avances logrados hayan provocado la posibilidad de formular nuevas preguntas y vías de estudio para su solución.

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<sup>3</sup> Listado de referencias incluidas en los Capítulos 1 y 3.

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UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

EL PAPEL DE LAS INSTITUCIONES EN EL DESARROLLO REGIONAL DEL TURISMO: UNA PERSPECTIVA DESDE LA DENSIDAD

Natalia Restrepo Montoya



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