

LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL COORDINATION OBSERVATORY REGARDING COVID-19 IN YUCATAN, MEXICO

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ABSTRACT: Public and social actions amid COVID-19 involve complex governance challenges –processes through which political and social participants seek to coordinate alternatives and make decisions in a critical or uncertain scenario–. This essay analyzes the Regional Governance and Social Coordination Observatory to contest COVID-19 in Yucatan, Mexico. The Observatory established a local governance model to analyze the experiences in which heterogeneous actors organize and cooperate to address the problems from the pandemic. We aim to demonstrate that this model is capable of examining and characterizing these initiatives, and discuss its potential as a tool to improve local governance processes.

Keywords: local governance, social observatory, pandemic, COVID-19, Yucatan.

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a global threat and has caused a worldwide humanitarian crisis with serious consequences to our health systems, the economy, employment, food and security. These effects are severe, especially in more vulnerable regions and countries with limited resources to respond to its magnitude and damage. Such is the case of Latin America, where even after decades of state reforms, we still have social inequality, low trust in public institutions, corruption problems, fiscal weakness, and irregular productivity and economic growth.

Not surprisingly, with the outbreak of the pandemic, one of the great concerns is precisely the governments' capacity –national and subnational levels– to respond in an efficiently and timely manner to complex and high emergency situations. Uncertainty requires accurate decisions to protect life and the well-being of entire populations. To carry out far-reaching responses to this contingency, –particularly to vulnerable communities and groups–, implies important governance challenges. We understand governance as the coordination between government and non-government participants who conduct collective action processes (institutional arrangement –rules of the game– and interaction dynamics), that allow to create legitimate and effective solutions to address public problems (Plumtre & Graham, 1999).

In the case of Mexico, as a federalized country, the governance challenge facing COVID-19 is enormous. Two considerations can be highlighted. First, the need to have a collaborative environment between the federal government and its 32 states; and second, state governments need to organize coordination and arrangements mechanisms with their local governments (municipal level), who carry out their own actions and policy measures but not always in an orderly and coherent manner. In dire circumstances such as the current one, we consider that governance processes at the local level are fundamental. It is precisely at this level is where communication, coordination and cooperation mechanisms should be put in place. To allow government and non-government actors to communicate, organize and cooperate and manage actions that are appropriate to the specificities of their local contexts.

Under this proposition, we discuss the importance of local governance processes due to the pandemic in Yucatan, Mexico. We focus our analysis on the Regional Governance and Social Coordination Observatory (ORGA, in Spanish) created as a tool for local monitoring and surveillance of these processes due to COVID-19. ORGA covers five key topics in the region: i) Food security; ii) Economy and jobs; iii) Gender violence; iv) Mobility restrictions, and v) Mayan people.

We present two issues regarding ORGA. First, we sustain that ORGA's analytical model is appropriate to examine and characterize local organization and cooperation experiences, where heterogeneous actors participate and address the problems derived from the pandemic. Second, we discuss to what extent ORGA's management model can foster greater dialogue capabilities, participation and coordination, by providing a convergence space to a diverse and community interested parties. Thus, we want to underscore the potential of this social observatory as an instrument that contributes to improve local governance processes, increase decision-making capacities and build cooperative alliances and strategies for face COVID-19 in the topics mentioned above.

1. COVID -19 AND THE DILEMMAS FOR GOVERNANCE IN MEXICO AND YUCATAN

The COVID-19 crisis in Mexico is marked by deep regional asymmetries. Each state has contrasting conditions and resources to face the pandemic. This is evident in issues like health care access, employment, productive activities, political environment, social cohesion, educational institutions, connectivity and access to information, use of ICTs, etc. The state and local governments' capacities to response are exceeded and, in many cases, contradictory positions and actions have been taken in the face of the pandemic; which has led to disagreements and conflicts between the different government levels.

Since the emergence of COVID-19, lockdown policies in Mexico, such as the national campaign of healthy distance –Jornada Nacional de Sana Distancia– (March 23 until May 31, 2020), were implemented and adapted with different consequences and derivations in the states and municipalities. There went in hand with their own prevention and lockdown measures and actions. However, after the “new business as usual” began (June 1, 2020), increased tension and lack of coordination between the federal and subnational governments' processes became visible. For example, the epidemiological traffic light –implemented in a differentiated manner for each federal entity–; constant disagreements, regarding the traffic light's color in which each state is placed. Since November 20, the Secretary of Health placed Yucatan in yellow,¹ but on that day, the state governor reported that it would be in orange, ratifying more severe lockdown restrictions.

¹ Yellow indicates that working activities are permitted, taking precautions with the most vulnerable persons (over 60 or that have a health precondition). Public areas are opened, enclosed ones may open but with reduced capacity (Secretary of Health, Mexico, <https://coronavirus.gob.mx/semaforo/>).

Despite the unity and governance agreement (signed on March 31, 2020 by the federal government and the county's 32 governors), to face the health emergency; institutional arrangements and mechanisms for coordination between the federation and state governments remain diffuse or non-existent, and the same is true between state and municipal governments. Furthermore, the data generated on COVID-19's evolution do not provide certainty, since inconsistencies have been highlighted by all parties. In addition, despite the media's abundant information regarding COVID-19 facts, there is no consolidated information on the participation of non-governmental actors (civil organizations, entrepreneurs, scientists, etc.) in the schemes to address the problems from the pandemic. Particularly at the regional and municipal levels.

From a local context the lack of reliable actions, coordinated strategies and decisions between neighboring municipalities, accentuate the social perception of uncertainty that the emergency is not under control, and various groups are unprotected and vulnerable. In Yucatan's case, a study by Suárez M. et al (2020) places the state among the entities with the highest degree of vulnerability (based on a COVID-19 vulnerability index). This index measures three dimensions: i) demographic; ii) health; and iii) socio-economic. The local governments' in Yucatan are located between critical and very high vulnerability. Making it one of the regions that concentrates the most marginalized municipalities in the country.

This is not the first study that puts Yucatan as a vulnerable region. A high percentage of the population in the peninsula is vulnerable due to social deprivation: Yucatan 33.3%; Campeche 31.8%; Quintana Roo 41.2% (CONEVAL, 2018). 60% of the population recognizes themselves as indigenous (INEGI, 2015), which is worrisome, considering that a report by the Secretary of Health (2020) indicates that the COVID-19 fatality in indigenous population is higher (16.5%) than that calculated for the general population (12.4%). Also the Yucatan Peninsula is vulnerable to climate change and socio-environmental problems. In fact, during the contingency, different weather phenomena were registered and left thousands of victims in the peninsular territory. Among the most severe were the tropical storm Cristobal (June 1-5), hurricanes Delta (October 5-10) and Zeta (October 26-29). All these events increased the population's vulnerability in ways that have not yet been well studied.

The state of Yucatan is governed by Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). The three most populated municipalities in the state: Merida (capital city), is governed by PAN; Kanasín, by Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI); and, Valladolid by Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena). The state is currently in the 17th position regarding COVID-19 infections (orange traffic

light). However, Merida was first place in active cases for several weeks in July. Pressure was generated by political and social sectors demanding the governments to be more effective and coordinated. However, having different political parties at the municipal level, in some cases opposites of the state government, is a sign that having coordination and concerted actions at the regional level, is complex.

In addition to the federal government's requirements, Yucatan established various measures to safeguard public health. Some included restrictions on motor vehicles, restricted hours for outdoor activities and alcohol sales prohibition. People and businesses opposed these provisions arguing they were vertical and authoritarian, they violate rights and individual freedoms. Also, at least 24 municipalities had their own procedures, ranging from sanitary filters to banning the entry of non-residents.

Lastly, regarding the context of the pandemic in Yucatan, in the midst of the severe economic and social crisis which stroke the poorest (especially, in several municipalities, like Merida, Kanasín and Valladolid), citizen care systems (food distribution and aid, and community dining rooms) emerged to address its effects.

In this scenario, local governance is useful to understand how these processes empirically develop, and how government stakeholders at the municipal and state level interact and coordinate with citizens, social organizations, businesses, the scientific community, among others to decide and implement actions to face the pandemic. In the following section we discuss the theory of local governance to understand its conceptual and analytical framework regarding the social observatory where we focus our exploration.

2. LOCAL GOVERNANCE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

From a local perspective the concept of governance implies studying the social coordination mechanisms' fashioned at the community, municipal and regional levels. The study of these processes centers to understand the interaction between society and the government, in other words, the mechanisms of citizen participation in local spaces, and the institutions that generate these spaces (Sánchez and Giraldo, 2015). The concept of governance has different interpretations and approaches. For this paper we focus on its horizontal form of interaction between government and citizens, which facilitates an inclusive decision-making process and public management at the local level.

Various authors (Brugué and Gomá, 1998; Navarro, 2002; Cabrero, 2010) agree that the local level is the appropriate setting to develop governance. It is the location with greater proximity between political and social participants, enables citizens to be actively involved in government processes', and influence political decisions and implementation. Therefore, local and regional administrations must encourage participatory democracy, transparency and an accountability system. This allows governance to be a facilitator of local development.

For Kooiman (2003), there are three modes in which governance processes are displayed, and are relevant for the local environment. The first is *self-government*. The community itself is responsible for the decision-making processes regarding public issues. The community has an alternative government approach versus the traditional system that seeks order and control. The second is defined as *co-governance* (an intermediate level), with more horizontal interaction formulas, which facilitate cooperation, coordination and communication between society's members to solve a problem that affects them collectively, with or without the presence of a dominant government actor. The third, suggested by Kooiman, is *hierarchical governance*. Here the government plays a central role, but enables interaction grounds through formal channels, and establishes rules and responsibilities in decision-making. Although the three modes of governance coexist at the local level, the third is the most common in the Latin American context, where a significant degree of centralized power is maintained (Zurbriggen, 2011).

Centralized power leads to greater verticality in the decisions and actions undertaken at the regional and municipal levels of government, who depends on the capacities and decisions of the national level to develop their policy programs. In the context of the pandemic, the situation represents an important challenge and requires the development of resilience mechanisms and adaptive capacities of various social groups and the different levels of government to face this crisis (Pérez, 2020).

Furthermore, local administrations in Latin American present high signs of authoritarianism, patronage, corruption, cronyism, and government authority captured by local elites. All these factors inhibit the construction of an effective institutional framework that allows bringing the population's diverse needs and demands to public decisions (Hernández, 2011). Although these cultural inertias can only change progressively since they are deeply rooted in political and bureaucratic structures. It is essential to generate mechanisms that promote "collective power", as mentioned by Bourgon (2010), and exercise checks and balances on these closed networks.

For the Latin American setting, Jorquera (2011) refers that local governance corresponds to the management of local public affairs through power and authority (political institutions and citizens must be together in this exercise). This notion appears to center in hierarchical governance (Kooiman, 2003). Such is case of Mexico, where municipal and state authorities are subordinate to the federal government, given their scarce political and institutional capacities and a context marked by a high degree of power centralization, which assigns operational tasks to local administrations (Moreno, 2012).

A fundamental characteristic of local governance is the need to coordinate decisions and actions undertaken by local and regional governments, with those of the federal level. In a way that guarantees coherence between the different political-administrative levels (European Commission, 2005). This is essential in the context of COVID-19, which requires to intensify efforts to address –at the different territorial levels– its impacts.

From UNDP's (2020) perspective, similar to the effects of COVID in organisms with pre-existing diseases, societies suffer from chronic pre-pandemic weaknesses such as poverty and inequality, low trust in public institutions, fiscal weakness and low productivity and economic growth. COVID-19 not only represents a health emergency and a humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis, but also a governance deficit. This issue must be addressed considering that a proper management of the pandemic depends on a good governance performance. This requires a leadership capable of coordinating the efforts of state level and social actors (Kaufmann, 2020). In subnational contexts, this leadership entails the challenge to capitalize, support and reinforce the civil society's efforts and initiatives aimed to support the most vulnerable population.

For this pandemic, Bourgon's proposition (2010, p. 16) becomes relevant:

The goal of the government is not to try to predict or control any potential shock. This can be impossible or counterproductive. Rather, it is to promote a resilient society, which means building its collective capacity to learn, adapt and ensure a more equitable distribution of risks, as a way to mitigate negative impacts on the most vulnerable societies.

In other words, there will be greater possibilities to resolve the adverse effects of the pandemic, when better mechanisms are generated and the government becomes a partner and promoter of citizens to develop them as active agents of change.

Also, the characteristics of local governments are replicable in the Yucatan setting –which our analysis is focused on–. For example, the budget dependence on the federal administration for the development of local policy programs. Even though Yucatan was a pioneer in formally implementing the development of public policy planning in the country (Quintal, 2008), this was diminished due to the establishment of the neoliberal reform model in Mexico, which centralized the development of policies to the federal government.

This fostered the subordination of unions, political parties and businesses to the policies imposed from the center, and discouraged citizen participation in decision-making regarding public issues. However, Merida, the state capital, presents important actions referring citizen participation’s mechanisms at the municipal level. Since 2004, the development of these instruments have evolved to community councils in neighborhoods and police departments, and urban participation councils, and open forums to address the community’s requests (Quintal, 2008, p. 412).

These instruments generated a fertile environment to develop local governance; initially they were not led by the government, but by civil society stakeholders (Quintal, 2008). This is a significant fact, to consider that local governance in Yucatan is not generated in a hierarchical manner, but in co-governance modes, such as the one we present here. We sustain that governance processes can be encouraged in the region, even in the dynamic, complex and highly uncertain pandemic context, and can generate resilience and reduce social vulnerability. In a scenario such a this a social observatory can play a relevant role, as we will discuss.

3. ORGA COVID-19 IN YUCATAN: A LOCAL GOVERNANCE ANALYTICAL MODEL IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

Academic literature on social observatories indicates that its definition is not fully established. There is agreement in considering that an observatory should “... respond to the construction and dissemination of socially relevant knowledge ...” (Moreno and Mantilla, 2016, p. 355). Social observatories’ usefulness usually is to expand knowledge about the trajectory and trends of a social phenomenon, and promote deliberation and public debate. They can be a strategic thinking and surveillance center that contribute to better understand and make decisions regarding collective problems (Angulo, 2009).

On August 19, 2020, ORGA-COVID-19 was created, and apportioned to the National School of Higher Studies in Merida of the National Autonomous

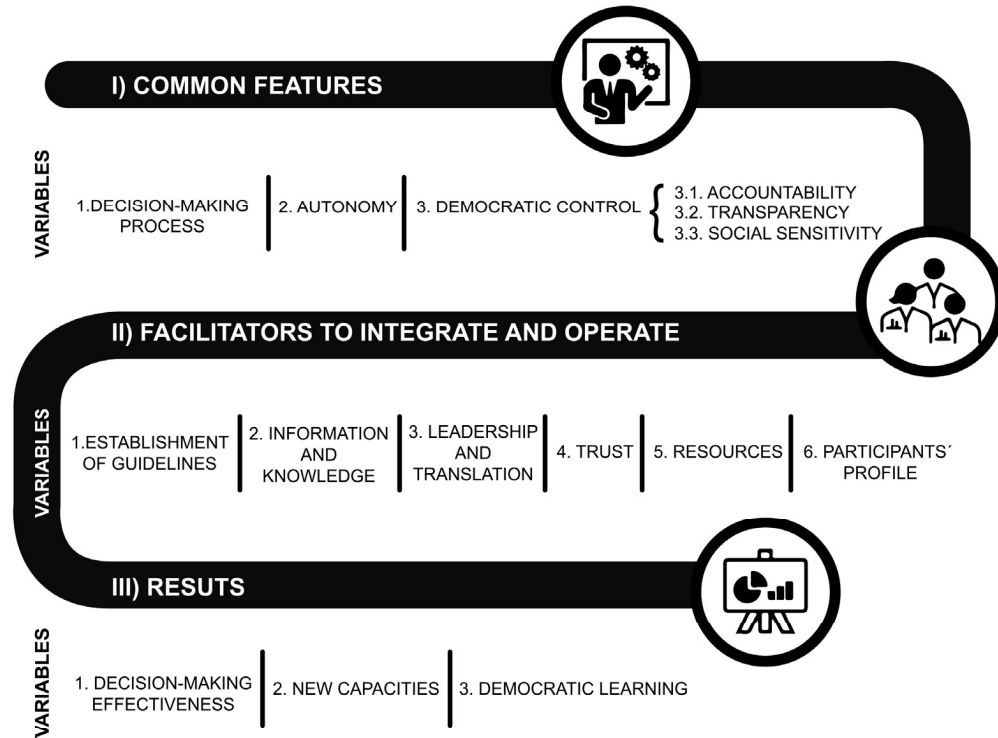
University of Mexico (UNAM, in Spanish) and financed by the National Science and Technology Council (Conacyt, in Spanish). It was an academic proposal for the need of a specialized instrument to analyze and monitor the local governance processes in the face of the pandemic in the state of Yucatan.

This initiative draws from the local governance conceptual framework, addressed in the previous section. According to Puga, (2020), governance is “... the coordination between diverse social participants to carry out specific actions, design or implement public policies or make decisions for the benefit of a group or society”. This definition –regarding local governance in the face of the pandemic– of interactions between government and society, has not necessarily occurred within institutional or formal organizations, for example, citizen’s committees. Nor do they imply policy making. Thus government-society’s interactions and collaborations regarding a collective need, may have concrete actions but are not always formalized within the government’s structures.

The observation of COVID-19 and local governance processes focuses on experiences with heterogeneous participants, whose interactions promote alliances and cooperative strategies, enclosed by cooperation and conflict. These experiences are observed through the lens of a conceptual and analytical local governance model that allows to characterize the processes and identify their functioning conditions and their results (see Figure 1).

With this understanding of governance, we establish an “ideal type”. Thus, the experiences studied can be related to the theoretical model. This ideal type assumes that there is no permanent governance condition in the relationship between society and the government. Instead, there are specific collaboration situations or areas to dialogue or converge. In special circumstances, such as the pandemic, local governance can take the form of specific actions arising from the interaction between government and society, leading new citizen participation mechanisms’ to make inclusive decisions.

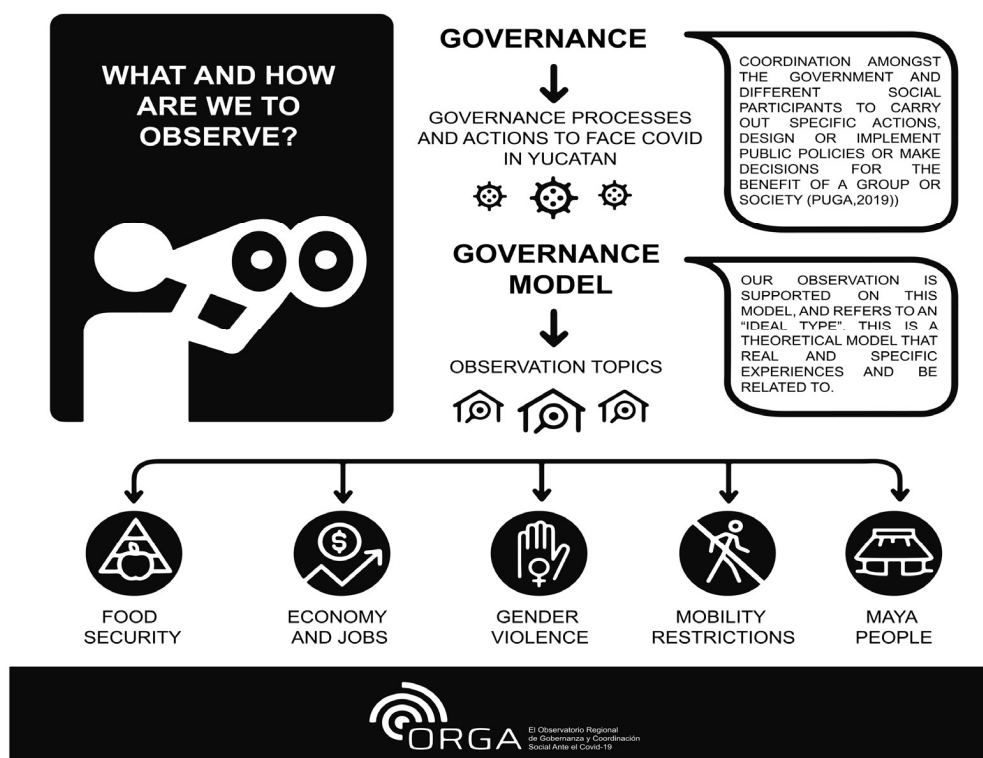
FIGURE 1. ORGA COVID-19
LOCAL GOVERNANCE ANALYTICAL MODEL



Source: Infographic from http://orga.enesmerida.unam.mx/?page_id=234.

As outlined in the introduction, ORGA’s analytical model is structured around five observation topics that consider critical issues of the pandemic in the peninsular context, (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. ORGA COVID-19
LOCAL OBSERVATION SCENARIOS



Source: Infographic from http://orga.enesmerida.unam.mx/?page_id=234

For ORGA, governance refers to a process and not so much to a stable arrangement. It implies the transition from hierarchical schemes to horizontal ones. The search for consensus, valuing plurality and the balance between the government’s proposals and the society’s needs and demands. Therefore, the importance to consider the different governance modes proposed by Kooiman (2013). Although we focus on those that highlight on regional and municipal level participation. ORGA’s governance model includes three levels of analysis, each with its own variables that relate theory to its operation.² These levels and variables are the following.

- I) Common Features. This level analyses the setting that actions must fulfill when undertaken jointly by the community, municipal or regional participants (government, associations, universities, civil organizations, citizen groups) to address a specific issue. For practical purposes we define it as the “participating group”. It has three variables:

² The model developed on this paper is the “conceptual matrix” elaborated by ORGA’s research group.

1. Decision-making process: Focuses on the decisions regarding organizational aspects, use of resources and actions' paths of the participating group. The decision-making process should be horizontal and include both the plurality of local actors related to the problem, and what social sectors involved represent. Mutual consent decisions are preferable; using negotiation and deliberation as mechanisms.
 2. Autonomy. We analyze it on an individual and collective level (Luna and Velasco, 2017). In individual autonomy each member of the participating group has the ability to define their goals, follow their own rules, control their resources, and make decisions. Collective autonomy implies that the participating group is not subordinate to any government, social or business entity and, therefore, can make decisions within the institutional limits in which its operation is framed.
 3. Democratic control. It involves three traits to build an institutional framework in local spaces: accountability, transparency, and social sensitivity (Luna and Chávez, 2014). Accountability allows the participating group to report and justify its management results' and deliver periodic results reports. Accountability operates by obligation and law (Schedler, 2011), it involves communication processes between the members of the participating group as well as with external actors. Transparency as an accountability instrument (Peschard, 2007) and entails the participating group to provide information for public scrutiny. Social sensitivity promotes a framework of respect and empathy to the community's needs and problems (Luna and Chávez, 2014). For ORGA, we refer to the participating group's capacity to respond.
- II) Facilitators to integrate and operate. This level refers to the mechanisms and factors that enable the participating group's integration, in a governance environment. With six variables:
1. Establishment of guidelines: The guidelines agreed between the group members to reduce uncertainty. They include the requirements so local actors can participate in joint actions, roles and responsibilities each one will assume, group structure, modes of the joint work and the how to implement the adopted decisions. Considering that in local level actors share a common institutional framework, we expect that there will be more political and social disposition to establish these rules.
 2. Information and knowledge: They include the availability of up-to-date, reliable and timely information, as well as the need to include experts or guests, who contribute with their knowledge in the discussions and decision process. Information and knowledge require prior learning

practices that help establish the terms in which information, documents and reports will be generated.

3. Leadership and translation: Leadership is a complex balance between the ability to exercise authority and the ability to coordinate different conceptions, interests and languages, valuing the autonomy of each member. Translation is a mechanism to communicate in the “same language” (Luna and Velasco, 2017). Although the participation of heterogeneous actors makes translation difficult, in local settings people and organizations share a common sociocultural identity, which facilitates communication processes.
 4. Trust: Is a factor that facilitates cooperation when formal rules are weak, and therefore uncertainty. In a proximity context, there is a higher possibility to strengthen trust to facilitate local governance processes. Trust can be founded on friendship (personal trust), legitimacy and credibility (prestige trust) or mutual benefit (strategic trust) (Luna, 2003). However, the existence of an environment shaded by authoritarian decisions and the absence of democratic control, discourages trust, and splinters the group’s integration.
 5. Resources: To achieve the group’s objectives, it is essential to have material resources like: infrastructure (office, furniture, warehouses), technological (computers, internet, website, etc.) and financial (government funding, donations or from the participants themselves).
 6. Participants’ profile: The local participants involved must have previous experiences and learnings regarding organizational processes or immersion in social or political activities. Also their commitment regarding the established objectives the time they devote to this process.
- III) Results: This third level is harder to measure. It requires time to observe the governance processes’ results and products. We established three variables:
1. Decision-making effectiveness: Refers to the costs and benefits of the joint actions of the participant group. Effectiveness implies the efficiency –proper use of resources to reach the objectives– and the effectiveness of the achieved results. Effectiveness includes evaluating the quality of the decisions made and their resulting actions, including their social contribution, and long-term effects (Luna and Velasco, 2017).
 2. New capacities: Refers to the resulting capacities due to the joint actions to address the pandemic’s impacts. It includes the development of capacities for dialogue, coordination and organization, the creation

of new initiatives (such as organizations, groups, among others), social creativity and change of perspective.

3. Democratic learning: Finally, the lessons learned by government and local actors are examined as part of their collective actions carried out in a governance environment. These favor the processes of citizen participation and the government's institutional and directive capacities. These learnings include horizontality in decision-making and democratic control mechanisms.

4. ORGA COVID-19 IN YUCATAN FOR BETTER LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

So far, we have outlined ORGA's capabilities as an instrument that focuses on studying specific local governance experiences in the context of the pandemic. This has shed new knowledge regarding these processes. However, this social observatory figure entails the need to have mechanisms of knowledge management to organize and provide usefulness to the available data and information, and promote accurate communication and transfer to its social actors. In order to contribute to the decision-making process in uncertain contexts (Sarmiento et al 2019).

Social observatories become knowledge centers and collective intelligence catalysts. Information and knowledge's interaction and exchange increases individual intelligence, and thus promotes spaces to encounter and collaborate between dissimilar actors, who share areas of interest around certain issues or phenomena (Agudelo, 2009). Observatories are also catalysts for citizen participation, a fundamental governance processes component.

This standpoint is explicitly present in ORGA's operating model. Along with its research work, ORGA develops management and network efforts to build strategic alliances and collaboration mechanisms with key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Regarding our research paper, for each observation space described in Figure 1, a team of specialists and students carried out the following functions:
a) Daily monitoring of governmental and social actions in the observed issues.
b) Development of a case study to analyze (based on the analytical model), a particular governance arrangement, as described in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. ORGA COVID-19'S OBSERVATION CASE STUDIES AND TOPICS.

CASE STUDY	OBSERVATION TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
Restriction government decrees. Collaboration processes in conflict contexts.	 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS	Generate information regarding the government's implementation of mobility restrictions in Yucatan, the role of businesses and analysis of information given to the citizens.
Gender and governance during COVID-19 in Yucatan	 GENDER VIOLENCE	Analyze the governance action factors regarding how do gender violence aid services in Yucatan adapt to the pandemic.
Emergency economic aid in Merida due to COVID-19. Shared decisions between businesses and the government.	 ECONOMY AND JOBS	Study, analyze and provide information regarding the agreements and alliances processes between businesses, the state government of Yucatan and the local government of Merida to promote the economy and jobs due to COVID-19 through the program "Estamos contigo".
Food security, governance and policy. Strategies and alliances in Yucatan during COVID-19.	 FOOD SECURITY	Examine the government and society's strategic actions to counter the consequences of food insecurity in vulnerable groups in Yucatan due to COVID-19.
Governance and participation: Health care for the Mayan People in times of COVID-19.	 MAYA PEOPLE	Highlight the development of actions regarding translation, dissemination and health care that follow the Guide for the care of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples in the face of COVID-19, and the collaborative role of the government and Maya indigenous participants in these processes.

Source: Infographic from http://orga.enesmerida.unam.mx/?page_id=234 .

Also, a specialized team in management and networking was responsible for the institutional contact with government actors –state level and the selected municipalities– (Merida, Kanasín, Hunucmá, Umán and Valladolid), as well as non-government and social organizations, neighborhood groups, businesses, universities and interested citizens in each of the observation areas.

The observatory became a space to meet and dialogue, in these five areas of local interest, where a diverse number of participants can converge through specific dialogue mechanisms such as:

- Forums. One for each observation field where participants can publish questions and comments. The website <http://orga.enesmerida.unam.mx/> has a link for this purpose.
- Agora ORGA. An inclusive participation setting where the government, businesses, academic and social sectors can meet regarding the governance observation processes due to COVID-19 in Yucatán. It operates through panels, discussion tables for each issue and points of view. All are available on the observatory's website.
- Users' workshops. Presents the municipal governance best practices and experiences of social coordination in the face of COVID-19 in Yucatan. They operate on digital platforms.
- Information network. Set up to generate and disseminate current and significant issues regarding the observation areas to the members of our information network
- Dissemination of results. To publish the observatory's findings. It will begin in the first quarter of 2021.

This management model and method to engage actors is activating a network focused on governance and observation issues between institutions, government agencies, associations, scholars, media and expert groups. They all participate encouraged by the opportunity to dialogue and have voice in the decision-making processes.

ORGA's immediate challenge is to consolidate these alliances and a constructive dialogue between diverse local participants, fostering the creation of new deliberation channels regarding public problems and citizen participation in decision-making to face the pandemic. In a postCOVID-19 scenario, ORGA could foresee that these alliances are applied to design and implement public policies with a local and participatory perspective, necessary for the reconstruction of the social order after the crisis.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In this paper, we deliberate on the relevance of addressing governance processes in the scenario of COVID-19. We highlight that the local level, is the arena with the greatest possibilities to articulate collaborative actions concerted solutions and develop social resilience capacities to overcome its effects, by means of taking advantage of the local support networks and environment resources’.

The Regional Governance and Social Coordination Observatory in the face of COVID-19 in Yucatan, is an initiative that provides an analytical model to understand the governance processes and a convergence field where different social actors are able to foster trust bonds to share and articulate new ideas and proposals aimed at reducing the population’s vulnerabilities during and after the pandemic we are living.

As a recent instrument, this observatory faces several challenges to ensure its sustainability and become a center of thought and strategic surveillance, and contributes to improve local governance processes in our region. Some of these challenges are:

Consolidate the production of organized information, analysis and prospecting methods, and short and medium term recommendations to improve public policy actions in the face of the pandemic.

Promote an enduring dialogue with all social groups (reflection and public debate on social, economic and cultural issues) regarding the consequences of the pandemic in Yucatan.

Position itself as a regional and national observatory replicable for other regions, due to its: a) Analytical and organizational model to know and monitor the pandemic. b) Its capacity to produce and distribute documentary information and specialized data. c) As a linking model with society that includes a strong dialogue between public-private sectors and social groups.

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