

# Cultural Heritage, Alternative Tourism as a Socioeconomic Driver in Xochiapulco Puebla

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**Abstract:** *This research is an analysis for the incorporation of tourism projects in the community of Xochiapulco Puebla from a local development perspective, which is motivated by alternative tourism as well by studying its background since the community lacks tourist use of both natural and cultural resources, starting from the situation in which the community finds itself in the tourist and economic sector to be able to study the opportunity that the inhabitants of Xochiapulco could have to generate tourist activities cultural that go hand in hand with the inhabitants. What is intended then is to help the community to take advantage of the cultural resources it has to generate a good local economy from a socio-economic theoretical framework of Xochiapulco Puebla.*

**Keywords:** Alternative tourism, socioeconomic, projects, community

## Cultural heritage

Currently, cultural heritage is undoubtedly one of the main issues to be addressed within the framework of the public agenda of States, since its protection and conservation has been in the eyes of a society increasingly concerned with transmitting and inheriting the cultural legacy of ancient civilizations.

The concept of patrimony has many meanings, and this goes through the study of several disciplines such as Law, which tells us that patrimony has deep roots in Civil Law because it has a close relationship with the institutions of Private Law, in that Patrimony is "the set of active legal possessions supported by a subject, and because, in addition, this is a set of relationships that implies rights and obligations" (Báez, 2004). This definition can be useful in the field of property, understood as the possessions that a subject has and that are subject to the scope of legal regulation. Although the concept of heritage can be seen from several points of view, for the purpose of this project, these definitions may fall a little short, since they restrict the scope of heritage to the assets owned by a natural person, that is, it would be limited to the private sphere.

Taking into account this aspect, it is necessary to try to define what heritage is from a more general perspective that contemplates the public, as something that belongs to everyone and that is of general interest, thus heritage would point to that which "is born from the displacement of the sense of Common Good of being anchored in communal goods (what belongs to everyone and to no one, which can be used by all but not alienated by any) to be owned and managed by the State". (Báez, 2004) or also, if you like, heritage can be seen as the reference that points to a link with inheritance, not of individual goods for a person, but for a society, for a specific culture. However, taking into account this perspective of the concept of heritage, it is necessary for the purposes of this project, to direct the idea of conservation of this heritage that is collective and

belongs to everyone. Some authors highlight the need for civil society, as the main guarantor that heritage belongs to everyone, to that same society, and that it be safeguarded by it, that is, to place a fundamental task on civil society as the main responsible for the safeguarding of said heritage. According to: Any voluntary action in favour of the conservation, cleaning, protection and explanation of heritage is extraordinarily positive, whether it is carried out in the context of schools (formal education) or civil society (non-formal education), which have often become active agents in the safeguarding and protection of heritage. The contemplation, appreciation and study of heritage contribute to the lifelong learning of people, helping them to increase their knowledge about their society and about other societies, ultimately allowing them to build critical capacity and participation. (Zamorano, 2007).

This author shows that the responsibility for the conservation of heritage does not only pass through the actions that the State can exercise as an institution, reducing the public to the merely political, but rather, to a matter of ethical responsibility that every citizen must have in his environment and towards others. For this reason, "the conduct of civil society will always be of enormous importance in relation to the conservation of cultural property and, for better or for worse, of greater impact than the role played by government institutions" (LLul Peñalba, 2005). The term cultural heritage is closely related to the concept of Heritage, as it refers to legacies, testimonies, inheritances of previous societies and generations to those of the present. If we talk about culture, we are assuming a permanent relationship between man and the environment, that is, what man himself has modified over time in that environment to create new things that will serve in many cases the next generations. "It must also be understood that culture is constituted by the knowledge, skills and habits acquired by man as a member of a society." (LLul Peñalba, 2005).

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Culture and the environment are closely related: the former is a form of adaptation to the environment, if it is transformed or modified, culture is also undergoes transformations, changes or readaptations. To this extent, Culture is all that human production in relation to the environment in which man and his material and immaterial creations develop. That is why when reference is made to Cultural Heritage, reference must be made to the set of manifestations or objects born of human production, which a society has received as a historical heritage and constitute significant elements of its identity as a people. Such manifestations or objects constitute important testimonies of the progress of civilization and exercise a model or referential function for the whole society, hence their consideration as cultural assets. (López Nieves, 2008).

Nowadays this term is associated with the collective wealth of crucial importance for cultural democracy, it is a term that has expanded over time and ceases to have a limited definition, to encompass not only the material creations of man through time, but also of immaterial creations. In this way we can add one more definition of cultural heritage in a broad and non-limiting perspective, which allows us to understand it as something that is not only stored in a building, preserving objects and rarities, but as something that must be preserved in the minds of people, of societies in general. To this extent, cultural heritage can also be understood as an accumulation of elements that characterize a society or human group, which are in a permanent process of growth and enrichment, and which are likely to be transmitted from one generation to another and constitute, for each person, for each social group and for each society, the foundations with which they face their vital situation, in order to have a better control of their environment, to establish more productive relationships with the other members of society and, finally, to manage more and better living conditions. (López Nieves, 2008).

### Cultural heritage (material)

Within the framework of the strategies to preserve the cultural legacy at the international level, social and/or political movements emerged that allowed the design and implementation of strategies to save it, in this sense that the first efforts were glimpsed in 1945 it was decided to create UNESCO (The United Nations Education Organization, Science and Culture) whose mission is to contribute to the consolidation of peace, poverty eradication, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue, so that later in 1954 an agreement will be signed that protects the cultural heritage in case of conflict to prevent this transfer of cultural property and that is how in 1970 a convention is created to prohibit the exploitation of cultural property but this representation of the Cultural heritage is the most evident and the one that has been most shown to define cultural heritage, as it is the tangible evidence that is preserved over time in the different spaces for it. These material cultural assets can be furniture such as religious and archaeological pieces, house furniture, documents and books, among others, and real estate represented in public spaces, urban centers, architecture, archaeological sites, murals, roads, etc.

### Cultural heritage (intangible).

Intangible cultural heritage began to be spoken of in the nineteenth century, which developed throughout the twentieth century. One cannot speak only of the material creations that man has bequeathed to the next generations, but also of all those non-tangible expressions, of all those spiritual and cultural creations expressed in language, in customs, religions, legends, myths, in short, of all that mental production of man that he has made through the ages. We can define intangible or intangible heritage as the notion of culture, understood in a broad sense as "the set of distinctive features, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, that characterize a society or a social group and that encompasses the ways of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, and the human rights of the individual human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (López Nieves, 2008).

Intangible cultural heritage brings together the different expressions and manifestations of life in a given place. They are passed down from generation to generation, depend on carriers for their existence, and are essential for maintaining social cohesion among group members. Intangible cultural heritage comprises these elements:

### Oral and narrative tradition.

*It is the way of transmitting from generation to generation, from grandparents and parents to children, the culture of a community through stories, romances, legends, songs, riddles, prayers, spells, sayings, etc.* (Carter, 1987)

- *Traditional knowledge about cooking, agricultural cycles, herbalism and traditional medicine.*

*It is characterized by the typical dishes, the way in which they harvest and that certain foods are harvested, as well as traditional medicine that consists of herbs and plants, is inherited from generation to generation.* (Carter, 1987)

- *Myths and conceptions of the universe and nature.*

*It is the creation is a mythological-religious story that seeks to present the beginning of the universe, the Earth, life and the first human.* (Carter, 1987)

- *Dance and musical expressions.*

*Those dances that can be regional, pre-Hispanic, traditional that are still carried out in conjunction with music originating from a certain place.* (Carter, 1987)

- *Life and religious festivities.*

*Generally it is the customs, and patron saint festivals that can be seen in the smallest towns, but nevertheless it does not only happen in this type of region it can also occur in cities and even entire states.* (Carter, 1987)

Intangible heritage also has the characteristic of being traditional without ceasing to be alive; is constantly recreated and its transmission is mainly carried out orally, many elements of this type of heritage are threatened due to the effects of globalization, homogenizing policies, and the lack of means,

appreciation and understanding that all this together leads to the deterioration of the functions and values of these elements and the lack of interest in them among the new generations. "Intangible cultural heritage, by its very nature, is fragile and more vulnerable than other manifestations of cultural heritage, as it depends on social and environmental actors and conditions that allow it to flourish and survive." (López Nieves, 2008)

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage in Mexico.**

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are two sides of the same coin: both carry the meaning and memory of humanity. However, while tangible heritage may be destined to outlive the people who built it, intangible cultural heritage is much more tied to its creators and depends, in most cases, on oral tradition, as it relates to particular value systems and knowledge, as well as to the social and cultural contexts in which they were created. Although the notion of intangible heritage has now become familiar, the concept is relatively recent. In the case of Mexico, this understanding comes from the work carried out in UNESCO's international meetings and general assemblies, as well as from the guidelines and normative documents that this organization has generated. "During the 1970s and 1980s there were some attempts to produce an international document for the protection of 'folklore', attempts that focused on the protection of intellectual property and that were prepared in conjunction with WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization" (Aikawa, 2004).

Subsequently, it was not until 1989 that the General Conference of UNESCO was held and unanimously adopted the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional and Popular Culture, and then in 1992 this same body began with the Intangible Cultural Heritage program, from which many of the current principles for the safeguarding of this heritage were established.

Some of the aspects that have been emphasized since then were the revitalization and transmission of cultural practices as central strategies to ensure the protection of expressions, the need to employ approaches other than the conservation of tangible heritage, and the avoidance of the freezing and folklorization of cultural practices (Aikawa, 2004).  
Alternative tourism trend in Mexico

Tourism has been seen as a strategy to safeguard cultural heritage since culture is present in the activities demanded by tourists. Trips give the opportunity to disseminate the human manifestations that for many centuries have left testimony of the existence of cultures, that is why it is important to preserve cultural heritage.

The immense value of a tourist town to measure all the pulsations of a historical time that go far beyond the frivolity of the mere rest of a few and wealthy elites. For this reason, perhaps that stage of tourism in its beginnings was undoubtedly a true golden age, which has been the most attended by international historiography.

Meanwhile, it was not until 1990 that the first practices of alternative tourism in Mexico "began with a very recent stage of local development, which meant that it came at a time when history was very infected and influenced by other disciplines, especially cultural anthropology, literary criticism, geography and the new sociology." (Holder, 2005). In this way, the first approaches to alternative tourism were made from the perspective of new perspectives, the creation of stereotypes and places, the tourification of spaces, since then it has been considered as the key mechanism in tourism construction, the tool that allows us to understand how a new way of looking at both local development and sustainable tourism has led to a gigantic industry of global reach, which caused the first states of Mexico to be integrated into a local development glimpsed from alternative tourism since it began the inclusion of the regional community of a certain tourist spot. The main states to implement it were: Yucatán, Guanajuato, Chihuahua, Puebla and Campeche.

It is true that, as it emerged as a specialty relatively late, at the end of the 90s, the time of economic history that had triumphed resoundingly since the 50s in all its versions, from culture, agriculture, and local development, the first classics of the history of tourism are much more cultural, anthropological or social, but alternative tourism, We must not forget, it is a gigantic global business, and the appearance of a tourist center entails millionaire investments and the creation of markets around it. "In that sense, it is essential to make good economic histories of tourism that are still lacking, at least in the case of Mexico, but that, in this historiographical cyclical swing, will probably find their meaning again." (Holder, 2005)

It was not until 2002 that Alternative Tourism emerged as an option to mass tourism, based on considering options for activities that took into account the full realization of the human being, "an ever-increasing contribution to education, the equality of destiny of peoples, the liberation of man and respect for his identity and dignity, the animation of the originality of cultures and respect for the moral heritage of peoples." (López Nieves, 2008). Various modalities ranging from Adventure tourism, Ecotourism and Agrotourism, as the most popular variants, make this form of tourism an attractive option for the promotion of activity in localities that seek to achieve a harmonious and sustained development, who defines alternative tourism as "Activities developed on a smaller scale, by local providers, consequently with lower impacts, and a high proportion of the profits retained in the locality." (López Nieves, 2008) this type of tourism can be identified by contrasting it with tourism in general, which is found in the involved a large number of tourists who move to the management of large operators, generally multinationals.

Alternative Tourism, on the other hand, presents an option for the development of small-scale recreational activities in communities or places where it is possible to carry out a stricter control of the negative impacts of the activity. For this reason, it seems to constitute a modality capable of contributing to local development, given the possibilities it offers for the constitution of networks and intersectoral relations between actors directly

or indirectly linked to the activity, and the alternative of generating locally produced income, and retaining it also for the benefit of the local community.

Alternative Tourism has a series of characteristics that are unique to it, and that distinguish it from other forms of tourism: "the process of tourism development is controlled by the local population rather than by external influences; small-scale development with a high proportion of local entrepreneurs; environmental conservation and minimization of social impacts" (Holder, 2005).

#### **Tourism and local development in Xochiapulco, Puebla.**

Tourism in Puebla has become an economic activity of great transcendence and economic importance at the regional level, which is why tourism is seen as a necessity for Mexico, since it generates income, jobs, is a source of foreign exchange income that allows balancing the balance of payments of different economies, among other factors. "Along with this, it is a source of deep inequalities and considerable socio-environmental impacts in less developed nations of the world." (Moreno, 2017).

Xochiapulco or also known as Villa de 5 de Mayo is located in the northern mountains of Puebla its main economic activity is agriculture, it is located 193 km from the city of Puebla and has a population of 3,873 inhabitants of which 1640 are minors, 2,233 are adults and of those adults 8% are over 60 years old.

In Xochiapulco, 2,126 people live in indigenous homes, 370 have dirt floors and 90 have only one room. It is considered a magical town although many people even from the city of Puebla do not know its existence, it shares territory with the magical town of Zacapoaxtla which is located 28 km from Xochiapulco, however the town is ignored by tourists since they only visit Zacapoaxtla, despite the fact that the community of Xochiapulco has cultural resources for tourism that can help increase local economic development. which there is no activity from which the tourism community can benefit.

The promotion of Alternative Tourism projects in the municipality of Xochiapulco, state of Puebla of the Mexican Republic, is important, since in that entity there are many indigenous communities with history and ancestral wisdom, approaching the postulates under which alternative projects must be built is the central point of this work to also document the possible future impacts that may arise.

Its foundation dates back to 1450 and received settlers (in 1570) migrants from Chicontepec, Veracruz, descendants of ethnic groups such as the Nahuas and the Otomi, who came in groups of few people looking for a place to settle, locating places where the land was fertile for planting, and it was, in 1606, that the site called Iczota, almost uninhabited, was chosen to establish these groups.

"In 1609, the indigenous people of Iczota were subdued by the Spaniards, who called the population San Andrés Villa 5 de Mayo Xochiapulco, where the indigenous language still

prevails" (Moreno, 2017). They have a pre-Hispanic cultural heritage that they have preserved, unfortunately their crafts are not always valued and, therefore, they are not well paid and, as has been pointed out, they do not find job alternatives for the people of the community.

These cultural characteristics, together with its geography, allow us to evaluate, as an alternative, a fair tourism project in a rural community such as Xochiapulco, where the active participation of members of the population, it would generate economic benefits for all the inhabitants, raising their standard of living and, at the same time, promoting their involvement in the conservation of the cultural heritage they possess, expressed in their architecture, crafts (elaboration of woolen articles) and gastronomy, given that, in the fair tourism model, there are generally responsible visitors who value the optimal use of cultural resources. They know how to appreciate and respect the socio-cultural authenticity of communities, as well as their traditional values.

The methodological procedure of this research was based on a research analysis on the region, historical data that includes a wide variety of experiences in the collection and analysis of data on social capital. The proposal of this research is about a tourism project; Although it is focused on seeing the possible participation of communities that are with high rates of poverty and on projects that provide them with the means to make the benefits for them - a strategy that is based on analyzing the level of trust, solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity, encouraging communities to incorporate new sources of income without replacing existing activities, including them in the planning, development and operation that will increase their economic and social benefits.

#### **Conclusions**

Alternative tourism is an opportunity with features of social viability for the economy and development of the communities of Xochiapulco, since the tourist service is accessible, due to its characteristics, for this type of environment in which both the factor of cultural heritage, crafts and gastronomy are combined. The tourism management of the community means channeling resources of physical and human capital towards a common strategic vision and a participatory democracy that is vital for the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the area and for its functionality as a tourist space where tourism serves as a process of economic development.

All this will be feasible as long as it is carried out hand in hand with concerted planning, with adequate management and with the participation of the resident population, which must actively contribute, so that the initiative promotes sustainable development and contributes to improving the quality of life of the community.

In these schemes, the planning of activities, the promotion of tourist services and products play a leading role in the creation of added value for tourists, and the conservation of cultural, environmental, architectural, artisanal and gastronomic heritage

is also important in this type of destination. The resident population with its decisive attitude and participation in tourism.

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