

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURISM ALTERNATIVE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RIVIERA MAYA, QUINTANA ROO

*Rosa Isela Fernández Xicotencatl*

Universidad de Quintana Roo  
f.isela@gmail.com

*Álvaro Martín Vázquez Leyva*

Instituto Politécnico Nacional  
amartin\_vazquez@live.com.mx

*Alejandro Palafox-Muñoz*

Universidad de Quintana Roo  
alejandro.palafox.munoz@gmail.com

This paper addresses the archaeological tourism and local development potential of the Riviera Maya of Quintana Roo, Mexico. In countries like this, with a dependent and little or no federal support for municipalities and localities in the dependent state entities of this activity for development economy, tourism is of vital importance of strategic, economic and cultural survival. The tourism policy of the country, however, has only benefited large hotel corporations and travel agencies that have the potential and resources to compete in the domestic tourism market.

In order to survive, the small towns in the country's municipalities in tourism are the only way to be included in the logic of the tourism market. These locations have developed forms of community self-organization in the use of their traditional and current knowledge, the wealth of its natural resources and/or archaeological and, in general, in their cultural heritage as a means of emerging collective action and alternative to the government's tourism policy.

In the context of economic globalization and the economic paradigm that supports the framework of rationality of the designers of cultural and touristic policies of the country suppose the idea of culture –and within it, the archeology– as a commodity, profitability and gain. Idea opposed to the customs of the community locations. The progress of these community groups has led to the implementation of other ways of imagining and recreating tourism through active and inclusive participation of tourists, with a sense of knowledge and understanding of the history and present of culture, as well as a responsible interaction with geodiversity and biodiversity that is. The forms of organization, problems

and obstacles they face and the impact on local tourism among other issues that have not been addressed in its proper dimension by the social sciences in our country.

The construction of the theoretical framework was based on a critical perspective by proposing and developing the following assumptions:

- a) Tourism is a *fetish* of globalization. Associated with the *market* in the form of *commercialization of culture and nature*, tourism becomes an *ideology* that hides the relations of force and power that sustains and accompanies the evolution of this capitalist system: the exploitation of natural resources and ownership and commodification of local cultures and ancestral knowledge by large tourism companies through management techniques and market related aimed at the exploitation of tourism.
- b) Tourism *passively* relates to the common sense of the subject. Although the etymological meaning of tourism related to early European Modernity, not so with his semantic conception in subsequent socioeconomic conditions, so at the present time we have a reductionist representation (as an economic phenomenon and individual consumption) of the social fact of tourism in the framework of rationality of tourism policies.
- c) Tourism is a *media* and *narcissistic experience*. In the direction of the global economy towards commercial consumption, large tourism companies implement seduction strategies focused on individual narcissistic *self-person*. In this sense, the acquisition of knowledge, forms of socialization and awareness that can be generated in the tourist in their interaction with the sociocultural reality of the place, constitutes an obstacle to overcome.

For its part, the methodology used was qualitative type, with depth and semi-structured interviews with the study subjects. A relationship of trust with the owners of the land and communities was established to understand the dynamics of organization, lifestyles and personal stories that keep thoughts, behaviors and emotions reflected in the decision-making of actors. In total, 15 interviews with local residents were held during the month of September 2015.

The argument's work considers that domestic tourism has not meant equitable economic benefit to the country. Although in 2014, tourism in Mexico represented an increase of 4.4% over the previous year, which resulted in 4.8 million tourists more, even if the economic recovery at the national level was slow since 2009, this growth, accounting to 9% of Gross Domestic Product, it was not reflected in the development of communities near tourist destinations and prompting the Mexican government to implement policies for the growth of tourism aimed at attracting foreign investment through the exploitation and management of natural, cultural and historic resources. This allowed large companies to be established and to influence the functioning of local businesses through subtle and not so subtle forms of pressure to authorize them unsustainable practices, or laws were amended in order to encourage investment. Consequently, tourism of great economic capital was reinforced, without decision-making of local people to improve the welfare of human life in general.

Moreover, while in 2014 the state of Quintana Roo recorded 21.2 million tourists (70% national and 30% foreign) to archaeological sites, the bulk of the population only visited the predominant areas (Chichen Itza and Tulum), to the detriment of those considered junior but located in most municipalities in the state. Partially responsible for this problem is assumed by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), as institutional authority of the administration and investigation of archaeological sites in the country.

In addition to the problems of this Institute (INAH) related to their lack of coordination with states, municipalities and local stakeholders to improve the administration and updating of the legal and regulatory framework devolve power historically concentrated in the same Institute, excessive bureaucratization and emphasis is added political above academic criteria for decision-making. Hence his lack of commitment in supporting sectoral policies to the development of communities that are located in and around the archaeological sites of the state and country, and are the communities themselves take over the local tourism development.

The paper concludes with the following recommendations:

- Promote a change in the policy agenda of national and international tourism so that actions and resources based on the prior recognition of the concept, the way of being and doing tourism from the perspective of local communities intended, and in economic benefit from them.
- The need for a change in culture and perception of agents to recognize this local tourism as a process of self-knowledge and self-consciousness, beyond the vacuous media, consumer and commercial tourism.
- The testimonies of the analyzed sites show that there is potential for archeological tourism from a more responsible and inclusive perspective from the local.
- The importance of generate synergies of relations with other state and local actors (universities and research institutes) in the design of curricula from the problems faced by these communities to educate and empower them to develop skills and knowledge on the development and management of cultural projects based on the use of social networks, based from an epistemology of their own worldview and cultures.
- To reinforce the archaeological heritage in the programs of land use and urban development as well as national and international financial support for the construction of community museums in order to serve for the realization of school practices in natural reserves, which would allow them tourism have direct contact with archaeologists and raise awareness about the value of cultural heritage in any community.
- We propose that from the force have taken civil society organizations, must conform groups begin to interact with each other to organize information events and education, and include those identified in social networks for the distribution in support of conservation archaeological heritage, as well as landowners and members of communities and thus begin to create an organization with clear actions that they become representative of the country and heard by different levels of government.

