

Proposal for the implementación of the French project “La Loire a Velo” for endogenous development on the cenotes route on Yucatán

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Abstract

Background. The idea to reproduce a project in the French region of La Loire, represents an area of interesting opportunity for a set of geopolitical demarcations of the state of Yucatan, whose natural, cultural and historical wealth, they make suppose the possibility of their implementation. The aim is to develop a socioeconomic study to determine the feasibility of reproduction of model of French tourism development "La Loire a Velo" in the path of the cenotes of Yucatan. The methodology begins with an investigation of qualitative type with an exploratory scope through the analysis of official public documents, to develop the diagnostic of status of the community as well as construction of the dimensions of socio-economic survey of the community, work in community focus groups and analysis of the used instruments through SWOT. Result; it sketches out the articulation of a project that involves the adoption of a proven strategy, specifically the project "La Loire a Velo" implemented in the region of the same name in France. In this sense, in the region of cenotes in the Yucatan state, apparently, it has sufficient resources that help to boost tourism development based on its natural attractions, allowing assume the possibility of assimilation of this model, considering the elements or traits of success in its implementation as basic conditions to find on this route.

Socioeconomic, feasibility, tourism development, La Loire a Velo, Yucatan

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Introduction

La Loire region in France, has found in the evolution of the "visit of the castles", an historical tourist attraction, a new concept of development based on the use of the bicycle, nowadays synonymous with a better quality of life, that allows to concatenate, through stages, the diverse local supply of the communities bordering the river that gives name to the region. In this sense, it is interesting to identify the viability of the reproduction of the French model in the geopolitical space that occupies the municipality of Cuzamá, whose features suggest its suitability in terms of basic implementation conditions, considering it concentrates natural resources such as cenotes and caves, prehispanic vestiges, colonial buildings that highlight its past, as well as a basic road infrastructure, and the proximity to the capital of the state of Yucatan, similar elements to the French project, considering the natural beauty of the river La Loire, the historical value of its castles, as well as its road infrastructure and the proximity to the capital of the country, Paris.

Under these circumstances and with the aim of dynamizing through actions that contribute to the improvement in the quality of life of the people, it was decided to choose a municipality whose location characteristics, historical background, population aspects, as well as its current economic situation, made the intervention of a group of researchers and students suitable for the aforementioned purpose. In this sense, it was decided to work in the municipality of Cuzamá, which is located in the center of the state of Yucatan, 25 minutes from the city of Mérida, whose historical characteristics and natural wealth, mainly cenotes, pose a potential and interesting development, but nevertheless, according to data from the National Evaluation Council (CONEVAL), of a total population of 4,966 inhabitants in 2010, 71.4% lived in poverty.

With 52.8% moderate poverty and 18.5% extreme poverty.

Methodology

The first stage begins using a qualitative research with an exploratory scope through the analysis of official public documents (Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista 2014) to develop the diagnosis-situation of the community.

1. Selection of official documents (2012-2015 municipal development plan, state and federal official diary ... official municipality statistics) that look at the background of the area
2. Construct the dimensions of the socio-economic study of the community
3. Analysis of selected documents.
4. Management of visits with community interest groups.
5. Design of observational records, surveys and focus groups.
6. Visits to fill in the observational records and the application of the surveys
7. Work in community focus groups.
8. Analysis of the instruments applied, through the SWOT framework (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

Likewise, areas of opportunity of the municipality will be identified in order to be able, in a second stage, to generate and / or develop through the strategies of the Local Action Groups (LAGs).

The theoretical and practical knowledge of the administration, and to develop skills in functional areas of the organization, such as marketing, finance, production and human development, in a touristic context.

Analysis from the Structural Method

It is necessary to carry out a feasibility analysis in this region, where despite the apparent tourist potential there is a lack of well-paid employment opportunities.

According to the methodological strategy proposed, the analysis of the documents containing relevant information of the municipality was carried out, being able to observe a panorama of its geopolitical space, allowing to determine the viability of the implementation of the French Veló project, based on the analysis of each one Of the three municipalities:

Cuzamá, its strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats

The municipality of Cuzama is located in the north - central region of the state, between the parallels 20° 38" and 20° 47" north latitude and the meridians 89° 17" and 89° 25" west longitude, With a height of 17 meters above sea level, bordering to the north with the municipalities of Acanceh and Seyé, to the south with the municipalities of Homún and Tecoh, to the east with the municipalities of Seyé and Homún, and to the west with the municipalities of Homún and Tecoh. 1

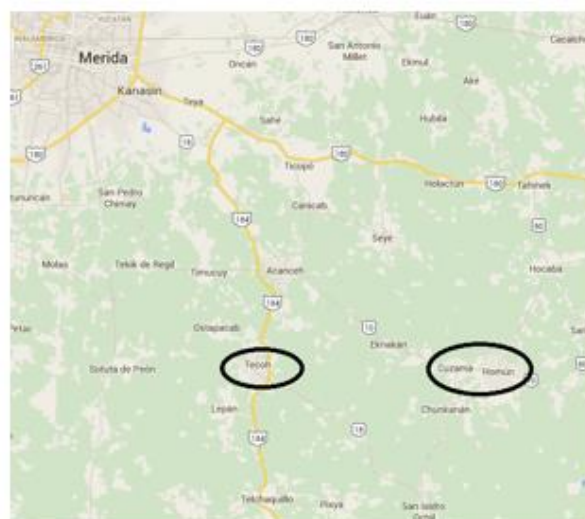


Figure 1 Cuzamá and Homun location in Yucatán. Source: Google maps

The municipal head or county seat, of the same name that the municipality, occupies an area of 150.73 km, with a geographic distance of 45 kilometers in a southeasterly direction, with respect to the capital of the state of Yucatán. The municipality is integrated by four localities of name, Eknakán, Nohchakán, Chunkanán and Yaxcueul. (Figure 1).

The strength observed in the community of Cuzamá are its natural beauties, mainly its "Cenotes" (from the Maya dzonoot: "hole filled with water") that are spring water reservoirs, typical of the state of Yucatan.

Beyond the strengths and opportunities found in the municipality, there were weaknesses that need to be addressed through the generation of synergies between different sectors of society and government.

The inhabitants of the municipality, possessing a great natural and historical wealth, have not been able to capitalize on their strengths, attending only to their daily lives, without a future development vision that allows them to optimize their resources and promote a better quality of life.

Development opportunities were observed through the generation of business plans based on local vocations, which, although they have been inherited, begin to find in their current settlers an outline of updating, which has allowed them, among other things, to generate incipient schemes based on what exists, with little or no incorporation of added value, which could be a niche of opportunity for the next years.

Attending to the existing infrastructure is another area of opportunity where, although it is possible to access the municipality by road from the state capital, there are many factors that must be taken care of, such as better signs, paving, beautification of green areas, as well as improvements in health, education and leisure services which are still very basic.

All efforts in favor of the development program in the community must be agreed and shared by public and private agents, as well as society.

It is important to raise awareness in government agencies that are in charge of fostering touristic development in the state that is also necessary to promote public and private investment in this sector and strengthen the current ones, in order to be able to achieve an improvement in the infrastructure of regions with greater affluence of tourism.²

This would surely result in the creation of a much more modern municipality, which would also allow the appropriation of new productive schemes to local vocations through sensitization and training processes in general schemes of productive efficiency, as well as certain levels of specialization, with added value according to the historical activities of the municipality.

Tecoh, its strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats

Located in the second northwest region of the state of Yucatan, the Tecoh municipality occupies an area of 452.2 km², within which are its ten police stations, Chinkilá, Oxtapacab, Sotuta de Peón, X'canchakan, Itzincab, Lepad, Telchaquillo, Mazhucil, Pixhya and Sabacché.

With a population of 16,200 inhabitants in 2010, the municipality of Tecoh comprises 0.8% of the population of the state of Yucatán, according to INEGI, 5 located between the parallels 20° 33' and 20° 48' N, and the meridians 89 ° 22' and 89° 36' west longitude, bordering Timucuy to the north, Chapab to the south, Cuzamá, Homún and Tekit to the east and Abalá, Sacalum and Merida to the west.

Based on the information collected, the theoretical background developed and the contextual elements outlined, according to the objective of the study, the following conclusions are expressed:

A municipality with natural elements, was found where cenotes can be emphasized by their endemic characteristics and their importance as a potential tourist resource, if it includes other services of a cultural or recreational nature, that, although they could contribute to create an environment that favors Local development, based on its distinctive features, has not identified and dimensioned its tourist potential, observing carelessness, disorder and lack of cleanliness in some areas of habitual traffic and even in those that appear as incipient tourist attractions.

Although a population of friendly treatment, an indispensable condition to carry out the tourist activity, was not identified in her personal, cultural and historical elements that support the possibility of ensuring that this same population will be able to incorporate to its daily life the basic features of a community with medium tourist vocation.

It is possible to distinguish a potential market for these ecosystems holders, since there is a real demand for cenotes as an ideal leisure center for families due to its low cost and associated services (landscape beauty, birding, and mammals and flora studies, among others). The road network that connects the capital of the state with the municipality, allows easy access to the environment of the capital of the municipality, however, entrances and exits of the same, mainly those that communicate between police stations, present deficiencies in its design and construction, In addition to a lack of maintenance, which makes access difficult. It is notorious the lack of signaling, not only of the tourist services, which practically is not, but also the basic signage for the rest of public services. It was observed a municipality with a basic infrastructure of services that barely reaches to satisfy its endogenous needs, which generates the impossibility that under current conditions will support tourist activity.

Economic indicators of the municipality constitute an area of opportunity, considering the levels of poverty, with a population that, although is mostly occupied, does not have sufficient income to enable them to escape the lag in which they are.

Although there are interesting elements for the reproduction of the tourist development model "La Loire a Velo" in the municipality of Tecoh, Yucatan, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive strategy incorporating different groups of organized civil society.

As well as Public actors, in order to establish a series of articulated actions, with the aim of attending both human development and basic infrastructure management for the municipality.

A dual strategy is proposed, in which local vocations are first worked by inviting groups representing the community to inform them of the benefits of improving the conditions of their natural attractions for touristic purposes. Actions are aimed at generating a transversal tourist vision, independently of the economic activities that they develop, for which, it would work in specific workshops for each group, in which besides the specific training, stimulate the vision of adding the tourist sense to its Activity, offering it as an added value

Finally, public management constitutes a pillar for the development of this community, since it was perceived the need to improve the basic conditions of communication, both in the periphery of the municipality and in its interior, as well as the undoubted need to have Better health services and to promote the arrival of complementary services for the development of tourist activity, which independently of local authorities' development plans, would constitute a mechanism of attraction, propitiating better conditions that facilitate the staying of tourists, regardless of the value To improve services for a population that has historically exceeded them. Homún, its strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats

With an area of 192.89 km², the municipality of Homún is located between the parallels 20° 38" and 20° 49" of north latitude and the meridians 89° 14" and 89° 22" of west longitude. It borders to the north with Hocabá and Seyé, to the south with Tekit, to the east with Huhí and Sanahcat and to the west with Cuzamá and Tecoh. In addition to the municipal head of the name Homún, the municipality comprises other localities.

Such as Kanun, Kanpepen, Polabán, San Antonio, Chichi Lagos, Yahalán, San Isidro Ochil, Cho chich, Chan Santo, Sintunil, Culul, Kanka chen, Kan Kadzonot, Santa cruz and Sipchac.

Based on what was discussed in the theoretical background and the results obtained, according to the objective of the study, the following conclusions are expressed:

The natural elements, of evident wealth, are primary factors that could be exploited from a revaluation of their components, given their distinctive nature, however, their tourist potential has not been identified and dimensioned, observing carelessness, disorder and lack of cleanliness, in most of the municipality.

In the social aspect, a friendly population was found, although of a distrustful nature, not identifying in it personal and cultural elements, that allow to assume the possibility that this same population managed to incorporate to its daily life the basic features of a community with touristic vocation.

On the other hand, although there is easy access between the municipality and the state capital, it is not the same situation with regard to the police station, given the obsolescence of the roads, its poor layout and neglect. In addition to the above, there is a lack of signaling of the services that the municipality has, beyond the basic existence of which they can not meet the needs of their own inhabitants.

The economic indicators denote a municipality with severe deficiencies, considering its level of poverty, with a population, which although is mostly occupied, does not perceive the sufficient income that allows them to leave the lag in which they are.

Beyond the existence of elements that could be transformed as a basis for potential touristic development, through the reproduction of the "La Loire a Velo" model, it is necessary to establish, where appropriate, a comprehensive strategy involving actors from the community in which articulated actions of government and civil society are established, with a view to strengthening basic infrastructure and human development.

Finally, the possibility of a dual strategy, in which one works, on the one hand, in the strengthening of local productive vocations, with a vision of tourism as a transversal added value, independently of the economic activities that are developed, and by the other in public management, which is the pillar for development in this community, since it is perceived the urgency to improve basic road communication conditions, as well as the need to have better health services and encourage the arrival of Complementary services for the development of touristic activity.

Results

The results report outlines the articulation of a project involving the adoption of a proven strategy in another country, specifically the "La Loire a Velo" project implemented in the region of the same name in France, traditionally recognized for its architectural heritage, mainly castles, and through this strategy of tourism development, has managed to organize a coordinated growth pole, which has dynamized directly to the communities in the region. In this sense, in the region of cenotes in the state of Yucatan, apparently has sufficient resources to promote a touristic development based on its natural attractions.

Which allow us to assume the possibility of assimilation of this model and its reproduction to a short term, considering the elements or traits of success in its implementation as basic conditions to be found in the route of the cenotes of the state of Yucatan.

Proposal

Stimulate the conditions and attractions of the Cenotes territory

Based on the local vocations is intended to propose a circuit of touristic products surrounding the cenotes of the locality. Taken on the basis of a logic of sustainable local development, taking into account the environmental, economic, social and cultural dimension of rural territories; The wealth that the community preserves through the natural beauty of its cenotes and its ancestral culture is an important asset that represents new possibilities through the initiative LEADER (Liaisons between actions of développement de l'économie rurale) that has been engine of development in the rural area of the European Community.

The Leader approach was launched in 1991 to improve the development potential of rural areas by harnessing local initiative and skills, promoting the acquisition of knowledge on integrated local development and disseminating this knowledge in other rural areas. (Comunidades europeas, 2006)

The Communitarian Initiative proposes A rural development approach which is based on some principles:

1) Organization – called “local action group” (LAG) – of a local association equipped with a small permanent technical team. It is responsible for the definition (with the effective participation of local actors) and the implementation of an action plan;

2) Development and implementation, in a series of rural territories, of a "local action plan" that defines several axes of intervention for development actions;

3) Multisectoriality and systematic search for links between actions, within the framework of an integrated global strategy (hence the acronym L.E.A.D.E.R.: “Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale”, “Links between Rural Economy Development Actions”);

4) Co-financing of these action plans by the European Commission, Member States and / or Regions in the form of an overall financial envelope rather than several sectoral budget lines;

5) Networking of the territories involved on the basis of a "European LEADER Observatory" ("European Observatory of Rural Territories" for LEADER+) based in Brussels and connected with National Animation Units.

Through this program three main goals are intended:

- Strengthen the agricultural and forestry sectors, which are two basic rural areas;
- Improve the competitiveness of rural areas in order to ensure the employment and quality of life of their populations;
- Preserving the region's environment, landscape and rural heritage.
- It is based on four main principles:
- Multifunctionality of agriculture;
- A multisectoral and integrated focus of the rural economy;

- The flexibility of rural development aid;
- Transparency in program development and management.

To develop the strategy followed by the LEADER Model (figure 2) will be to stimulate the conditions and attractions of the Cuzamá cenotes region, by creating jobs based on local vocations, supporting and accompanying them. Considering that one of the weaknesses that the community has is the low level of education, we will support students from the Technological Institute of Mérida, who are native to this region who wish to contribute in the development of their community.

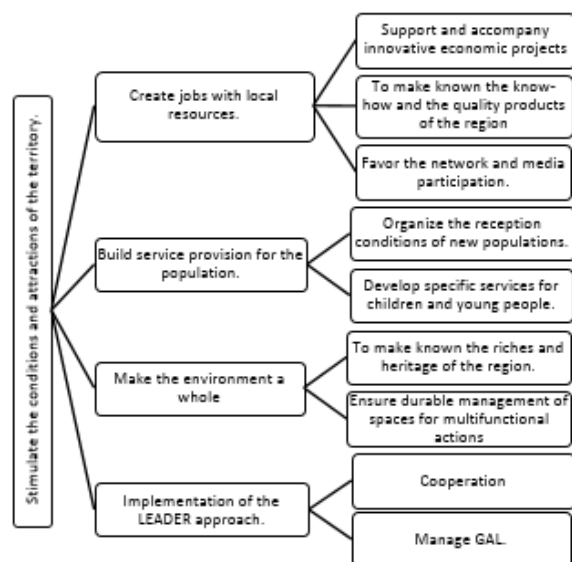


Figura 2 Estimular las condiciones de atracción del territorio. Fuente: Pays de Saint Flour Haute Auvergne



Figure 3 Zonal approach. Leader approach. Source: Basic guide. European Communities (2006)

We propose the application of the model of integral community development, based on the teaching-learning model based on a system of sensitization in human values that promotes that people are willing to learn to learn, to build intelligent communities and to break paradigms, where there is no place for manipulated electoral decisions or welfare programs, but the strategy is aimed at alleviating the difficulty from its origin, the person, the family, the community, from the internal perspective without the intervention of external agents (Arte and Values, s/f).

Integral Community Development based on universal values.

	Stage 1. We listen to you ...	Community Diagnostics.	
Local Analysis for Integral Community Development.	Stage 2. You listen to us ...	Training of community leaders	Overall community, professional and institutional evaluation.
	Stage 3. We act together ...	Specific High Impact Projects in the Community.	
	Stage 4. We evaluate the impact ...	Periodic report of progress and achievements.	

Table 1 Methodology of integral community development. Source:Arte y Valores A.C.

Conclusions

With gathered data on the first phase (community diagnosis) we identify the areas of opportunity and select the change agents, who will be the leaders in the development of innovation projects for local vocations.

In the second stage (Formation of community leaders) we work in the integral formation with the philosophy sustained in the human being. Universal values of teamwork.

In the third stage (Specific projects with high impact in the community) the projects are implemented to benefit the community. Experts are sought in the know-how of innovative projects. (Technical, financial, administrative, distribution, etc.)

On the fourth phase we evaluate the impact of the projects in the community, as well as the behavior of the community leader.

This provides the basis for stimulating the creation of jobs with local resources and the accompaniment of innovative economic projects through the "Leader" model of the European Union.

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