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azazo@ubiobio.cl

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Núñez Camarena, Gina M; Ettinger Mc enulty, Catherine
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THE TRANSFORMATION OF A CULTURAL TERRITORY THE DEVELOPMENT OF “PUEBLOS MAGICOS” IN MEXICO: PÁTZCUARO AS A CASE STUDY

GINA M. NÚÑEZ CAMARENA
CATHERINE ETTINGER MC ENULTY

I. INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, the promotion of culture and diversity-based tourism dates back to the start of the 20th century. In 2001, with seaside tourism already consolidated, 10 World Heritage Site cities and widely known archaeological sites, the Mexican Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR) designs the “Pueblos Magicos” or Magical Towns program (PM), as a new diversified inland touristic option. This program sought to take advantage of the historical and cultural features of small stand-out locations throughout the country, calling on towns with a given touristic potential to foster this economic activity as part of their local development (SECTUR, 2001). At this time, the heritage-experience binomial in tourism management was not an essential requirement for inclusion, thus providing the opportunity for towns that needed an economic push or that were in decline, to join the program. After 17 years of operation and development, the PM program has been studied from multiple area-based approaches. From the public policy side, Treviño et al. (2015) refer to it as an alternative for local development and the generation of employment in impoverished regions. De la Madrid (2014) and Shaadi et al (2018) confirm that the current situation differs between the perception of the local population and the municipal administrations. From the social science and humanities area, they describe that the program has led to the construction of a social imaginary, and urban narratives which have tended to be part of the positioning of different PM, which are offered to specific markets (Valverde, 2013; Bustingorry, 2016; Lopez-Levi, 2015) as a commercial product. On the other hand, Azevedo & Hiriart (2015), Chávez & Rosales (2016) agree that heritage management has challenges associated to preserving local architecture, the land and local traditions. While Barrón et al (2019) and Winiarczyk-Razniak et al (2019) make the call that, from management, it should be acknowledged that an important number of PMs still have extraordinary rural specificity, and

that in some cases, society still has a traditional way of life (Winiarczyk-Rażniak & Raźniak 2019; Barrón, Madera & Gómez 2019; Azevedo & Hiriart 2015). There is no revision in this literature that compares the location of the towns registered in the program with the goals that are outlined, nor are there any studies based on the comparison of economic data from before and after towns joined the program, to assess the compliance of its goals.

Taking this under consideration, this work looks to analyze the relationship between the goals set out in the program, working on three scales. The first observes the way in which PMs have spread throughout the country, identifying whether impoverished regions have really benefitted from the program. The second one compares the transformation of the service sector in the state, along with the evolution of those designated in Michoacán. In the third scale, work was done in Pátzcuaro, the first PM of the state, to identify whether the development of urban improvements has entailed a benefit for the municipal territory.

Methodologically speaking, a comparison of the three periods of the Federal Government (2001-2018), where SECTUR incorporates the 121 PMs, is made, mapping their location to contrast the result with the first inclusion criteria. Using a quantitative analysis, the economic trend which Michoacán is immersed into is shown, identifying the role that the economic sectors have in the state GDP. In Pátzcuaro, as the case study, urban infrastructure projects and plans are compared, mapping their location, to contrast plans against reality, performing this analysis through onsite visits.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The 21st century has brought a global change in the management of development activities, promoting the goals of the millennium following the 2030 agenda and, in turn, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (Trejo, 2017). Puig & Foronda (2017, 2018) mention that the sustainability-tourism binomial must be present in the tourism policy management and in the programs that emerge from this (WTO, 2016; Ruiz Lanuza & Alvarado Sizzo, 2018), in order to promote development guarantees for these emerging communities (Puig-Cabrera & Foronda-Robles 2018, 2017, WTO, 2016). SDGs, in their connection with tourism, suggest through the management, fostering the growth and development of communities, bringing local producers and unions together (N°1), integrating them in the value chain of the local products sector (N°2), in order to reduce the inequality gap (N°10) (WTO, 2001, 2016). If SDG associated to tourism are not followed, destinations with resources cataloged as World Heritage will see themselves immersed in the arrival of visitors, and if tourism in unsuitably handled, the activity may not close the gap in inequality, thus causing a harmful footprint from this activity (as mentioned in Ruiz & Alvarado, 2018).

Contextualizing tourism from a contemporary point of view emphasizes the later analysis about the management of the PM, given that the guidelines are based on sustainability. Although PMs emerge at the beginning of the 21st century, it is essential to make a quick tour around tourism in Mexico, to show the focus towards cultural tourism.

III. BACKGROUND

Heritage and cultural tourism

Ever since the 30s, when the Mexican government set up the Tourism Development Company, taking advantage of the interest that Mexico had awoken abroad, this set off an infrastructure creation and improvement process, including roads, highways and railroads (Mateos, 2006). The Mexican National Railroads (FNM) along their United States – Mexico border route (A), promote the stations in the center of the country from a touristic point of view. A branch in Acambaro (B) leads to Mexico City (B¹), and to the lake district of Pátzcuaro (B²) at the end of the route. The Pan-American Highway opened its first section in 1936 from Laredo to Mexico City, branching off to Guadalajara, passing through the Pátzcuaro lake district (Ettinger 2018), a site promoted as an opportunity to experience the Purépecha culture (Fig N°1).

Figure 1. US – Mexico train guide (1897). Start of the line in Laredo (A), branch in Acámbara (B), end of the line (B¹) Pátzcuaro – Mexico City (B²). Source: Mexico National R.R (1987), Laredo Route. Short Line to Mexico City. Map obtained from David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.

In the mid-20th century, the government casts aside the drive towards cultural tourism, to focus on the development of seaside resorts. Since the 90's, this policy has taken a turn back towards broadening the tourism market in Mexico and its World Heritage cities. In 2000, the Federal Government restructured the growth aims, with tourism appearing within the 2001-2006 National Development Plan. In 2001, with Vicente Fox as President, SECTUR created the Pueblos Mágicos Program as a strategy for “complementary and diversified tourism inland, based on the historical and cultural features of outstanding locations” (SECTUR, 2014). In a more idyllic discourse, the Mexican Government mentions the symbolic features, legends, history, significant events and the day-to-day life that emerges in each one of the socio-cultural manifestations, as the “magic of the location” [...] (SECTUR, 2001), promoting the identity of the peoples as part of the tourist attraction.

The first operational rules established criteria to “be covered”, so that the interested town could achieve its incorporation, with these being: 1. Involvement of the society and local authorities, 2. Planning and regulation instruments,

3. Impulse for municipal development, 4. Offer of attractions and services, 5. Singular value, “the magic of the location”, 6. Highway conditions, 7. Impact of tourism on the location [...] and 8. Development of local capacities (SECTUR 2008, 2001). At the end of this period there were 32 PMs. SECTUR made a study evaluating the program, showing that the PMs analyzed had incipient tourism, in most cases, given that the majority, on joining the program, were unaware of the management. For this reason, a pro-Pueblo Mágico group had to be set up [...], which would represent the voice of the community and the organizations involved in the administration.

During the Administration of Felipe Calderón (2007 – 2012), inconsistencies are seen in the program regarding the federal, state and municipal administration, with their veracity being questioned from different fronts. The period ended with 51 new PMs, doubling the number of inclusions compared to the previous period. From 2001-2012, a total of 1,138,938,118 pesos (US\$56,949,405.90) was invested (Velázquez 2001; Treviño Aguilar, Heald & Guerrero Rodríguez 2015) but also as significant symbolic space of interactions in the contemporary societies. Keyword: tourism, public policy, Mexico, social constructed reality. Introducción En el siguiente artículo analizaremos las definiciones centrales que están presentes en la conformación de las políticas públicas para el turismo en México. El objetivo es mostrar que algunas de las características que ha tomado el desarrollo turístico en México están determinadas por definiciones previas que se tienen sobre grupos nacionales específicos (el Gobierno Federal, grupos empresariales, most in material improvements in the towns. Armenta (2014) mentioned that the increase was linked to political pressures [...], with the goal of obtaining the resources of the program. Political and economic players joined the criticism, mentioning manipulation in the designations (Bustingorry 2015; Armenta 2014; Shaadi, Pulido & Rodríguez 2018).

In 2014, during the Administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, the program was temporarily suspended, to review the current criteria (SECTOR, 2014) and redefine the guidelines. These are based on the core concepts of sustainability, competitiveness, IT and transversality, defined as components of the new Comprehensive Intelligent Destination Management Model.

The criteria for inclusion were modified leaving 1. [...] accreditation [...] of an area [...] in charge of tourism attention and management, 2. [...] tourism service providers, 3. [...] touristic attractions and resources, 4. [...] connectivity conditions [...] to the urban centers, 5. [...] Tourism Development plan. The guidelines clearly specify that they already must have a tourism management roadmap, and a minimal tourism infrastructure, while the “magical and cultural” aspects, as well as the base size of the population, disappear. The period ended with the inclusion of 38 locations, reaching 121 PMs, with an investment of

US\$125,000,000 (Armenta, 2018).

The program is currently in a “budgetary suspension”, given the priorities of the new Head of State, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-2024), while SECTUR, for its part, suggests seriously evaluating its continuation, with the cancellation of the budget assigned from the Federation (Pátzcuaro Pueblo Magico Committee, 2019).

IV. METHODOLOGY

From a comparative logic, the way in which the PMs have been geographically organized in Mexico is analyzed in periods, contrasting whether the program has really been promoted in disadvantaged regions, looking to discern whether the distribution follows the base guidelines of the program. The base guidelines are used, given that 68% (83 of 121) of the PMs were incorporated while these were in force. In a subsequent scale, the decision was made to observe the state of Michoacán, in the west of the country, considering its importance regarding the number of PMs it has. The proposal is to evaluate the socio-economic behavior between 2001-2016 and thus clarify to what extent tourism has had an impact on the economy of the PMs. Through a comparative analysis, we compare the evolution of the 8 PMs in the State, referring to the prevailing situation before and after their incorporation. For this, the variables set out by SECTUR are compared, such as the arrival of tourists and the opening of tourist amenities (hotels and restaurants). To do this, we compared data from the national and state SECTUR, and those issued by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) over the 2000-2016 period.

On the third scale, Pátzcuaro was chosen as a case study, on being the first PM of Michoacán, joining the program in 2002. It is a town with a long history in tourism, related with an important pre-Hispanic and vice-regal legacy, along with the current presence of indigenous cultures related to the three traditions acknowledged as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. To contrast the extent in which being a PM has resulted in an improvement for the town, and under an urban criterion, site visits were made, as well as revisions of the urban projects and plans that have been made. These are referenced on the map, in order to identify their location and recognize whether these have reduced the urban shortcomings of the local population.

V. RESULTS

The arrangement of Pueblos Mágicos in Mexico

Three stages are seen in the incorporation of localities to the PM Program, corresponding to the six-year periods of

the Federal Government. The first (2001-2006) ended with 26 Pueblos Mágicos in 20 of the 32 States. Hidalgo (2), Jalisco (3), Mexico (2) and Michoacán (3) lead the lists. The second period (2006-2012) closed with 51 incorporations, and a total of 83 PMs. Michoacán (8), Puebla (7), Guanajuato (5), Jalisco (5) and Zacatecas (5) saw an increase in PMs. The third period (2012-2018) adds 38, reaching a total of 121 PMs. Puebla (9), Mexico (9), Michoacán (8), Jalisco (8), Guanajuato (6), Hidalgo (6), Querétaro (6), Veracruz (6) and Zacatecas (6) appear with a higher number of PMs (Fig. N°2).

Figure 2: Distribution and location of the 121 towns incorporated in the Pueblos Mágicos program, during the 2001-2018 period. Source: Preparation by the author from information obtained from SECTUR (2002-2018). Satellite image taken from Google Earth.

By contrasting the distribution with the base guidelines, we can mention the following (Fig. N°2):

- In the first period, the program is spread throughout Mexico, and PMs lacking in tourism management and others with a certain degree of experience are included. In the second, the focus is on the center of the country, and the States with World Heritage Cities (WHC) are benefitted. In the third period, with the restructured guidelines, towns with a tourism background, or those located in already consolidated regions, are included.
- PMs as a tourism alternative inside the country are present from north to south, just as indicated in the SECTUR 2001 guidelines. However, the distribution is not homogeneous, tending to concentrate in the center of the country.
- The central region tends to be economically the most stable and developed in infrastructure. Along with the northern states, it contributes 69.4% of the GDP from the tertiary sector. On the other hand, the south is the least benefited and developed region. This confirms that the PMs, as a development program, are not promoted in the depressed regions of the country.
- We can mention that the PMs of the south are located in a region that is already positioned in seaside tourism, which again falls into a contradiction with the official line, between diversifying tourism inland and developing non-touristic regions.

Michoacán and the touristic regionalization of the State

Michoacán is located in the west of Mexico and its great cultural wealth has positioned it as one of the states with the highest number registered in the program. The state SECTUR has proposed a touristic regionalization that follows the physical, natural, and mainly the cultural features. We can mention that the state capital (Morelia) is recognized

as a WHC, while three traditions associated to the Purépecha culture are included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage: traditional Mexican food: the Michoacán paradigm the indigenous festivals dedicated to the dead, and the Pirekua, the Purépecha song. It has 8 PMs.

Figure 3. Evolution of the activities that the GDP of the State of Michoacán comprises, 2000-2016. Source: Elaboration by the author with data from the INEGI economic censuses (2010, 2010, 2016). Map taken from the digital map of Mexico V6.3.0 (GAIA), edited by the author for its analysis (2016).

To analyze the evolution of PMs in the state, we can mention the activities of the state GDP in the last 16 years, contrasting official documents like the Official Gazette of the Federation (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2013), State Development Plans (2012-2015, 2015-2021), state economic censuses (2013-2015), and State yearly reports (INEGI, 2012, 2013, 2015). It is stated that in the 2000-2016 period, the activities that make up the GDP have varied in importance, with primary activities falling from 20.9% to 13.7%, the second sector from 24.2% to 16.9%, while the tertiary sector rose from 54.9% to 69.5%. This shows that services are the base of state economy. Tourism sees an increase in the arrival of tourists, rising from 2,705,285 tourists in 2012 to 3,830,712 in 2017 (Fig. N°3).

As a result of this, it is confirmed that the State and the Federation set up and allocated investments to the PMs of Pátzcuaro, Cuitzeo and Tlalpujahua; prior to their naming, Tzintzuntzan and Salvador Escalante (Santa Clara del Cobre) received investment to form part of the "Don Vasco Route", as of 2014. The resources were obtained from the Prodermágico agreement. The growth of the tertiary sector has led to the creation of accommodation and restaurant infrastructure, which have tended to be installed in the historic hubs, promoting a change in land use, and with this, the disappearance of the basic services nearby.

Three variables, which INEGI record annually as a reflection of tourist activity, are compared: development of the accommodation sector, the restaurant sector and the arrival of visitors (National Institute of Statistics and Geography 2015; 2012). It is seen that the 8 PMs have not evolved homogeneously. On comparing the variables, we can outline as positive, those PMs that show progress in the variable analyzed, regarding the situation they have on joining the program, or on the contrary, the PMs that backtracked are seen, always comparing them with the moment they joined. Upon showing no evolution, we describe this as stagnation (Núñez-Camarena, Sabaté Bel & Pesoa Marcilla 2016; 2017) (Figure N°4).

Figure 4. Evolution of the Pueblos Mágicos of the State of Michoacán, 2001-2016. Source: Preparation by GMNC from the data of the INEGI economic censuses (2010, 2010, 2015) and statistical and geographical annual records of Michoacán, SECTUR (2010-2016). Map taken from the digital map of Mexico V6.3.0 (GAIA), edited by the author for its analysis (2016).

Pátzcuaro, Pueblo Mágico

Pátzcuaro is a town with a tourist vocation and good highway infrastructure with the state capital and the indigenous communities settled around the lake (Figure N°5). The regional hub to sell arts and crafts has been important for tourism in the state of Michoacán from long before being included in the PM program.

Figure 5. I. Location of the town of Pátzcuaro in respect to the city of Morelia. II. Pátzcuaro Lake seen from the jetty of Ucazanastacua. Source: Map taken from the digital map of Mexico V6.3.0 (GAIA), edited for its analysis by GMNC. Photograph taken onsite, GMNC (2015).

From an urbanism point of view, official documents of the State Government are analyzed, along with municipal urban development agreements between 1987 and 2017, aiming at identifying the changes made in the town, before and after becoming a PM. The changes mentioned in the document are laid out on the map. We have classified these as local protection, tourist infrastructure, urban image, property restoration and change of land use projects (Figure N°6). In the mapping, we mention that 85% of the interventions are done in the urban area, mainly in the HMZ (Historic Monuments' Zone), reflecting improvements outlined in the national highways and main roads, the restoration of historic buildings and public spaces like squares and gateways, and the piers that are restored as an infrastructure that is necessary for those living within the lake (Figure N°7). Given the housing demand, agricultural use has changed to housing use.

Figure 6. Urban projects developed in the town of Pátzcuaro, 1984-2017. Source: Preparation by GMNC from the data of the Official Gazette of the State of Michoacán (1984-2017); plans and projects of the Town of Pátzcuaro. Map obtained from the digital map of Mexico V6.3.0 (GAIA), edited for its analysis by the author (2016).

Figure 7. Urban image of the Historic Monuments Zone (HMZ) of Pátzcuaro: hotel founded in 1884 (1) retrofitting of a 17th Century property (2) and retrofitting of the public space (3). Source: Photograph taken onsite by the author (2016).

Restoring homes in the HMZ tends to be costly and not very profitable for the population who still live in it. In the interviews held, the residents express that restoring their homes is a complicated process, due to the demands and lack of flexibility of the INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History). As a result, it is more profitable for them to sell them to foreign investors or to change the land use to services. We have confirmed onsite that, in the last 3 years, family workshops and spaces dedicated to producing arts and crafts have changed their use to the service sector. Going into depth

about the evolution of changes in land use in the HMZ would require writing a separate article. What is necessary to do is mentioning that, as part of the tourist immersion, the hotels and restaurants are concentrated in the HMZ (Figure N°8).

Figure 8. Distribution and location of the accommodation and restaurant infrastructure in Pátzcuaro PM, 2017. Source: Preparation by the author with data from the Official Gazette of the State of Michoacán (1984-2017); plans and projects of the Town of Pátzcuaro. Map obtained from the digital map of Mexico V6.3.0 (GAIA), edited by the author for its analysis (2017).

VI. GENERAL CONCLUSION

SECTUR, through the PMs, has managed in 17 years, to diversify tourism inside the country, bringing 121 towns with an invaluable wealth in heritage into the limelight. As we have seen, the geographic distribution of the PMs has not been even. Following the goals of the program, the south of Mexico, on being the most vulnerable region, could have seen a higher presence of PMs. However, the lack of infrastructure and means in the region has not allowed developing the program.

Originally, the program sought to foster tourism as a sustainable part of the activities there were already developed locally. On being a SECTUR program, most of the PMs settled on developing tourism, ignoring the opportunity to unite tourism with the local economic drivers, and continuing to encourage local development activities.

On joining the program, the towns see the PMs as an uncomplicated alternative to handle budgetary items, since some PMs sought to correct basic shortcomings of the local population through the resources of the program. Incorrectly, false expectations have been created, thinking that the program is the opportunity to mitigate the deficiencies the population has.

Michoacán has managed the wealth of heritage that the territory has, incorporating 8 PMs to the list. However, as we could confirm, the positive progress of tourism has not been perceived across the board. Pátzcuaro, as a case study, shows progress in the arrival of tourists, as well as with the opening of accommodation and restaurant infrastructure, allaying, to a certain extent, the demands of the visitors. The urban improvements in the town are mainly marked in the HMZ. However, promoting other areas of the town with a given but less explored heritage wealth, may be a local alternative to diversify cultural tourism in the Purépecha region, with the purpose of mitigating the collapse the historic hub suffers on occasions.

