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Horse culture and the Community Development in Cerro Largo, Uruguay: a differentiated mean of development

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyze, using a panoptic approach, whether formally organized equestrian activities can become a mean of multidimensional-community development for the region. The methodological design used in the field work for data collection was mostly based on interviews with relevant actors related to the equestrian activities of Cerro Largo (Uruguay) and observation of events, recording details related to the denomination, the character and essential practice of each “equestrian activity”, components of the typological profile that we have defined to characterize it. Once the research process has elapsed - in alternating phases of analysis and synthesis, observing details and looking at the whole, in a permanent round trip between empirical data and theory, we understand that the initial question about the possibilities of the equine to become a mean of community development, has a positive response. However, it is a provisional response because to become a real possibility, the work of transforming the potential barriers into dynamic parts of the proposed development processes, should be done.

Keywords: Equines. Equestrian activities. Equestrian sector. Development.

Equinocultura e Desenvolvimento em Cerro Largo, Uruguai: um vetor de desenvolvimento diferenciado

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é analisar, através de uma visão panóptica do fenômeno equino, se o conjunto de atividades equestres, dotadas de organicidade, pode se tornar um vetor de desenvolvimento multidimensional da região.

O desenho metodológico que usamos no trabalho de campo, para coletar os dados, baseou-se fundamentalmente em entrevistas com atores relevantes relacionados às atividades

equestres de Cerro Largo (Uruguai) e observação de eventos, registrando detalhes relacionados à denominação, ao caráter e prática essencial de cada “atividade equestre”, componentes do perfil tipológico que definimos para caracterizá-la.

Decorrido o processo de pesquisa - em fases alternadas de análise e síntese, observando detalhes e olhando para o todo, numa permanente viagem de ida e volta entre dados empíricos e teoria, entendemos que a questão inicial sobre as possibilidades do equino se tornar vetor de desenvolvimento, tem uma resposta positiva. No entanto, é uma resposta provisória que, para se tornar uma possibilidade real, deve-se trabalhar para transformar potenciais barreiras em elementos dinâmicos dos processos de desenvolvimento propostos.

Palavras-chave: Equinos. Atividades equestres. Setor equestre. Desenvolvimento.

Equinocultura y Desarrollo en Cerro Largo, Uruguay: un vector de desarrollo diferenciado **Resumen**

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar, a través de una mirada panóptica del fenómeno equino, si el conjunto de actividades ecuestres, dotadas de organicidad, pueden convertirse en vector de desarrollo multidimensional de la región. El diseño metodológico que hemos utilizado en el trabajo de campo, para recopilar los datos, se ha basado fundamentalmente en entrevistas a actores relevantes relacionados con las actividades ecuestres de Cerro Largo (Uruguay) y observación de eventos, registrando detalles relacionados con la denominación, el carácter y la práctica esencial de cada “actividad ecuestre”, componentes del perfil tipológico que hemos definido para caracterizarla. Transcurrido el proceso de investigación - en fases alternadas de análisis y de síntesis, observando detalles y mirando el conjunto, en un viaje permanente de ida y vuelta entre los datos empíricos y la teoría, entendemos que la pregunta inicial acerca de las posibilidades del equino para transformarse en un vector de desarrollo, tiene una respuesta positiva. Sin embargo, es una respuesta provisoria que para transformarse en una posibilidad real, deberá trabajarse para transformar las potenciales barreras en elementos dinamizadores de los procesos de desarrollo planteados.

Palabras clave: Equinos. Actividades ecuestres. Sector ecuestre. Desarrollo.

1 Introduccion

Cerro Largo is a border territory located northeast of the República Oriental del Uruguay, southern of the Rio Negro. To the east of Cerro Largo is Laguna Merín, "a product of water accumulation in a tectonic depression, which has an area of 3,750 km²" (shared with Brazil) (MINISTERIO DE AMBIENTE, 2021). Cerro Largo is inhabited by a population of 84,698 people, of which 93% live in the capital or populated centers and it is part of the the Uruguayan northeast, a region with the lowest Human Development in Uruguay (OPP, 2019). It has a rural area of 13,258 km², mostly used for livestock farming since the beginning of the 17th century that has a cattle and sheep populations of approximately 1,013,000 and 845,000, respectively (MGAP, 2021). Historically, the economy of the region was first based on leather, and later meat and wool. The equine population has never been considered in main studies of regional development as an economic and social asset itself, but as an instrument in the livestock farming system.

We consider interesting to start by mentioning the document entitled “National Plan for Economic and Social Development” (CIDE-OPYPA-MGA, 1967), produced and published by the Office of Planning and Agricultural Policy of the Ministry of Livestock and Agriculture. This document has been discussed at political, scientific, and academic levels. The preparation of this document gathered a relevant

group of international specialists, with the purpose of producing a diagnosis and an economic projection of Uruguay. This document, apart of its contribution to the agriculture and livestock reality, by adding a futuristic overview to them, has been considered as a reference to any discussion on rural development in the country. This idea of a landmark document is what we want to revisit. We deliberately set in that moment, the 1960's, the beginning of the historical period that we intended to reconstruct.

Firstly, the document has a clear emphasis on economical aspects, explained by the proximity of the global war events in which the world had been immersed for almost 40 years, and on the urgent need of peace to rebuild what had been destroyed in order to produce more material wealth for a growing population. In this period, Uruguay received significant immigration inflows that determined its course. It remained exposed and vulnerable, however, to everything that happened from the international focus of war. The key to get out of the crisis then, was to grow economically. Development would come by increasing wealth.

Secondly, we have an interest in commenting on the production sectors of Uruguay, defined as the most important in the report. The report explicitly revised the sector that would be vectors of development to increase the wealth and the economic growth of the country. In this sense, three groups of sectors are mentioned: (1) agricultural products (wheat, corn, barley, rice, sunflower, peanut, flax, sugar beet, sugar cane, potatoes, vegetables, tobacco, cotton, deciduous fruit trees, citrus, wine vineyards, sorghum); (2) livestock products (cattle, sheep, dairy, poultry, pork); and (3) forest production. After revising some of the restrictions to the growth of these sectors, the report makes general recommendations that, in the opinion of the technicians, would allow to overcome such limitations and emphasizes the potential of increasing the country's exportations by developing mixed production systems that include agriculture and livestock production.

Thirdly, we highlight from the report the comments on the factors of production. The specialists, in this section, focused on the ingredients that explained the productive results of the different sectors and how they could eventually be part of an economic development plan. In this sense, the report underlined the capital, labor, and natural resources that the country has. Thus, analyses on the productive practices, use of external supplies, and productivity were added. Finally, the report analyzed the use of economic incentives for production, e.g. markets, prices and marketing of supplies and of agricultural products and credit, and taxation (CIDE-OPYPA-MGA, 1967).

In short, the aforementioned report can be used as a guide to the methodology that evaluates the means of economic development, and allows us to comprehend the Uruguayan reality 50 years ago. At the same time, it allows us to conclude that the most comprehensive study made on the economic dynamics of the Uruguayan territory does not mention the equestrian sector as part of the agricultural and livestock activities.

Only in 2012, 45 years after the report, was published the first, and until now, only study addressing the equestrian sector, its activities and potential to boost, alone and in combination of other activities, the economic and social life of the country (URUGUAY XXI, 2012).

Having in mind that "modesty must mark both the prospective task and the reflections on the general method of science" (AROCENA, 2015, p.324), we wish to address this phenomenon, focus on the territory of the department of Cerro Largo and the northeast region of Uruguay. Combining the knowledge accumulated through collective intellectual efforts to the experience of the routine daily work, accounting for the challenge of thinking in a common future of lasting prosperity, implies a great intellectual complexity. Furthermore, "the future has an open nature, in the sense that there are several possible futures", (AROCENA, 2015, p.325), "some of which can be characterized by changes in trends, discontinuities and ruptures" (JOUVENEL, 2004a, cited by AROCENA, 2015, p.325).

Horses have always been recognized by their significant instrumental-historical-cultural role, however always subsidiary to their functional role in livestock production systems. Only approximately 20 years ago that the role of equine's greater prominence began to be outlined.

Equestrian activities can be traced back to the origins of livestock in these lands, in the 17th century. It has always, however, been considered a secondary element, a part of the livestock sub-system, in which it is considered as a tool of the production system. Despite this undervaluation of the equestrian sector, it is becoming increasingly clear that the products and services derived from the equestrian sector persist in a sustained manner, increasingly transcending the traditional sectors and the country itself (URUGUAY XXI, 2012). Other sectors, on the other hand, such as that of traditional products of agricultural origin destined for human needs, suffer with relevant oscillatory trajectories in their activities. Even more serious, is the commercial decline of products such as leather, sunflower, and sugar beets, which used to be pillars of the country's economy. It is then, interesting to observe that the growing relevance of the equestrian sector as a sector itself has been ignored, and, at our best knowledge, there are no formal studies that focused in the equestrian sector beyond equine science courses taught in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the National University where the horse is treated as an object of study and health care. Although the Uruguay XXI report (2012) explored the economic potential of the equestrian sector, there is no study that analyzes the potential of equestrian activities, viewed as a mean of multidimensional development.

In a previous study, the diversity and level of organization of equestrian activities in the Department of Cerro Largo were revised (LENA, MARQUES, MORALES, ROVERE, 2020). This study reported the equestrian activities identified in the region, and they were described, inventoried, and classified based on a characterization developed by the authors, and on their relevance in the region in which they were evaluated. During this process of treatment and analysis of the information generated and reviewed, it was possible to advance in the knowledge of the equestrian phenomenon in this region, which included 15 equestrian sports activities and 10 work activities based on the use of horses.

Following this previous study, this research aims to **analyze, using a panoptic approach, whether formally organized equestrian activities can become a mean of multidimensional-community development for the region**. Considering the specificities of the horse culture and the territory targeted in this study, "where it is necessary to understand the complexities of the cultural identity of the place, which

is in constant metamorphosis and that the different realities comprise different phases of the cultural world of the people " (MÁRQUES RIBEIRO, 2009, page 137). This research is the first formal study on the effects of the horse culture on the region of Cerro Largo and analyzes how to boost the activities associated to the horse culture and enhance its positive effects on the community.

The methodological design used in this research for the field work, was mostly based on interviews with relevant actors related to the equestrian activities of Cerro Largo, in order to determine the relationship that these equestrian activities have with a multidimensional community development of the region, using a rural-territorial-endogenous approach.

If our guiding question is "can the equestrian sector of Cerro Largo be a factor that contributes to other elements, In order to obtain increasing levels of prosperity and not be exhausted solely in economic growth", it is essential to define, first of all, as precisely as possible what development means in our research and in this article in particular.

2 Theoretical references

When we approach this topic, following Valcárcel (2006), the first thing we detect is the evolution that had the expression and concept of development applied to the communities in the last fifty years. The word 'development', which has a polysemic connotation from its origin, started to appear as a synonym of a nation's progress and increase in wealth after the Second World War. In such period, several ideals were elaborated from different schools, supported by their own doctrines. We will try to specifically address the different dimensions and approaches, that historically have been added as adjectives to the concept of community development.

Paraphrasing Bury (1971, p. 19) and simplifying his idea, we may say that we will make "a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future", defining, in first place the characteristics of the "location", object of our study, and from there explain the concept of "Community development" that we will refer to in this study.

In the 1970's, the main objective of economic growth was enriched with the concept of equity. Then, development is linked to economic growth with equity, which is related to the distribution of wealth. It is not only important to accumulate capital, but to observe a surge of social dimension. The objective of the economic growth also includes a balanced participation of the whole society. The benefits that economic growth would bring should reach everyone, improving employment rate and the real income.

Still in the 1970's, the concept of endogenous development emerged progressively, assumed by UNESCO and other international organizations, contrasting with neoclassical theoretical paradigm, dominant in that in the field of economy.

The two general principles of endogenous development are the following: (1) cultural identity, which implies the recognition of the right of each nation to preserve its own culture, considering that cultural identity requires heritage conservation and openness to new contributions (UNESCO , 1977) and (2) the active participation of the members of the community.

Between 1970 and 1990, the environmental dimension emerged and progressively established itself in the concept of community development, recognized by the use of specific terminology as eco-development, alternative development, sustained development, and sustainable development. The starting point for all these approaches was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, also called the first Earth Summit. The 8th Article of the final declaration establishes that there is a deep link between economic, social and environmental development. Likewise, in such conference, a plan of action for the Human Environment was agreed. The fourth recommendation of such conference promoted the origin of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the first appointed Executive Director, Maurice Strong, coined the term Eco-development in the opening meeting of UNEP, in Geneva in 1973 (VALCARCEL, 2006).

However, the conceptualization and international dissemination of this term was due to Sachs, who explicitly defined it in 1974 in his book “Enviroment et styles de developement” (SACHS, 1974). The supporters of the Eco-development try to harmonize five dimensions of development: (1) Social pertinence and fairness of the solutions: development should include an ethical and social purpose; (2) ecological prudence; (3) economic efficiency: ensure that efficiency is considered based on macro-social criteria and not only macroeconomic profitability; (4) cultural dimension: pursue acceptable solutions; (5) Territorial dimension: produce new spatial balances in the territory.

It can be said that the concept of Eco-development was the prelude of the concepts of sustained and sustainable development.

Nerfin, in the introduction of the book "World Strategy for Conservation" (1980), published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund, points out the need of preserving natural life resources to have a sustained development along the time, defining by an economic growth that does not harm ecosystems and it is permanent in the long term (NERFIN, 1978). Therefore, the environment dimension is presented as part as the concept of development. Furthermore, development is not defined if natural resources are not preserved. This concept of sustained development precedes the concept of sustainable development.

In 1987, according with Valcarcel (2006), the World Commission for Environment and Development, after 4 years evaluating the impact of development on nature around the world, submitted to the General Secretary of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, the report “Our Common Future” (1987). This report is also known as the Brundtland Commission report. This report presented the concept of sustainable development, which is a deeper and more complex concept.

In Chapter II of the report of the aforementioned Commission, sustainable development is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Unlike pure ecologists, who start from nature, the Brundtland report starts from the human being, its needs, inventiveness, institutions, and then its approach to nature, rather than the other way around. The report emphasizes the human needs, especially, for those more economically disadvantaged, to whom it puts more

attention. It underlines the physical limits of the environment and natural resources for an economic growth, in order to meet the needs of the present and future generations. Therefore, it denotes an explicit concern for the future generations, which was absent in previous approaches and strategies of development. In this definition of sustainable development, the consideration of the planet and its natural resources in function of the future generations is a new and core element.

In the 1980s emerged the ideas of Amartya Sen, also known as the capabilities approach. His approach starts with the following premise: "Although goods and services are worthy, they are not sufficient. Their value lies in what they can do for people, or rather what people can do with them." (SEN, 1983, p.1116).

For Sen, development cannot be reduced to the idea of increasing the supply of goods, but to increase the capabilities of the people. In this sense, different from the proposed by the intellectual of the modern age, the reference for development is not the economic growth, but human beings.

Other approaches that can be added to the aforementioned ones are the territorial approach and post-development. In this regard, Kliksberg writes: "the crisis of the conventional thoughts on the current development opens the opportunity to actively cross social capital, culture and development. Until recently, the main ideas on development put limited attention on what was happening in these fields. In this sense, many inquiries occurred without accounting for possible links with the development process (KLIKSBERG, 2000).

Later, Chambers (1989) presented novel ideas researching the integration of development, environment and community using a territorial approach.

Peemans (1996) adds: "Development is seen as intrinsically linked to the ability to consolidate social ties within communities located in defined territory. It is also related to the ability of the communities to manage their natural environment in a viable way, through the construction of an appropriate institutional framework and through a cultural identity that has its material basis build in the given territory.

Shejtman and Berdegué (2004), sharing this perspective, addressed the rural community development. They defined Rural Territorial Development as "a process of productive and institutional transformation from a determined rural space, whose purpose is to reduce rural poverty. They defined the territory as a set of ties established by social interaction in a given space.

Janvry and Sadoule (2002), in the same line, published an article entitled "A territorial approach to rural development" (2004), where the authors establish that the territorial approach to a rural development has the purpose to (1) achieve the highest addition of value of underutilized local resources; (2) integrate rural and urban activities in a single territorial dimension, focused on regional economic projects; (3) provide new employment and investment opportunities to the poor rural population generated by the improvement of the local dynamic.

After reviewing the evolution of the concept of development related to the communities, and considering multiple contributions, in the context of this research, a desirable development to be sought should have a reasonable balance between the economic, social, ecological and cultural dimensions, and have an endogenous-territorial-rural approach. We think that the equestrian sector of Cerro Largo, considered without being subordinated to others sectors (i.e. livestock production), can contribute to the economic growth of the community, with a harmonious

distribution of the wealth generated, caring for the environment and providing culturally acceptable solutions. In addition, it can integrate rural and urban activities in a single territorial dimension, focused on regional economic projects, incorporating to the activities of the poor rural population, preserving the cultural identity, and empowering the initiative and participation of the community. We will call this combination of multidimensionality that combine several approaches, lasting prosperity. In this research, it is the “place” where we want to go as a community. Changing according to the traditions, with cultural permeability, according with Lanternarie (1966).

Pursuing this objective does not imply dismissing the expansion of capacities; by the contray, it can promote this expansion to all levels of the society, achieving an expansion of the right and freedom of the individuals, as well. Always within the framework of lasting prosperity for the whole community, where economic and social improvement still be reference dimentionts.

3 Methodology

When we planned the research field work, we did it from the Grounded Theory perspective (without discarding details of other paradigms) and considering an emerging design: flexible, circular, holistic (NOBOA, ROBAINA, 2015, p.21). Starting with the inventory and characterization of the equestrian activities surveyed in Cerro Largo (LENA, MARQUEZ, MORALES, ROVERE, 2020), we try to link this set of activities and the territorial dynamics that they generate, with their potential to contribute to multidimensional development of the department of Cerro Largo and sorrounding region. The activities developed for this work consisted of interviews with relevant actors, in-person participation in activities connected with this study, active participation in activities connected with the equestrian sector, and out-loud readings of the information collected with relevant actors to achieve a better understanding and organization of concepts and information collected.

Interviews

In the first instance, we focused the field work on the interviews. For this, we defined an interviewee profile and an open guideline to be followed during the interview. Regarding the profile of the interviewee, we defined: (1) People with a recognized professional career in the field, with strong institutional links. (2) Solid knowledge in one or several equestrian activities, immersed in the dynamics of the activity, resident of Cerro Largo; (3) Experience in organization of and participation in events, and inter-institutional articulation; (4) Medium-high educational and cultural level, capable of broadening the analysis to other local scenarios, and with interpretation of the contexts. Regarding the interview guidelines, we began with a more comprehensive conversation about the economic and social situation of the department, based on the most relevant economic activities in the region and we progressively focused on a detailed description of the equestrian activities identified. This research process, progressive and subject to its own dynamics, in Noboa and Robaina (2015, p. 32) is defined as theoretical sampling, "where new cases are selected because of their potential to extend or delimit emerging notions about the reality under study". Regarding the number of interviews, we adopted the criterion of saturation, which determines the end of the process when information already

released and collected starts to appear recurrently. In our case, we made 9 long interviews (approximately two hours). We consider the possibility to increase the number of interviews with more specific guidelines and shorter in future research.

In-person activities

Secondly, we established a program of in-person activities with the objective to visit the places where equestrian activities take place. On site, in addition to observing the activities, we had the opportunity to talk with the actors. In these exchanges, beyond the social interaction implied, we aimed to find out details of the activity, collecting empirical data on the field, contrasting to theoretical assumptions (Flick, 2007). Our annotations focused on the type of activities, common practices associated, and distinctive traits.

Despite that the systematic data collection to support the evidence for this study covers a period of three years, we have been working for 18 years in the region, in close contact with the horse culture, and have visited all the locations where equestrian activities are carried out. During that period, in addition to observe, we maintained a permanent dialogue with all the actors.

Activities with direct participation

a) Preparation of an educational plan.

Before starting this research, we created a team to develop an innovative educational plan at university level, focused on equine production systems, and organization and management of different equestrian activities. This enriching experience was an example of participant observation, and it contributed to the project and to the execution of the research on which this study is based on. After starting this project, the research work itself connect us to different emerging projects in the territory. This experience allowed us to participate in multi and interdisciplinary teams, learn about unpublished records and statistics as well as learn about a wide range of references related to the horse topic, and more important, it gave us the opportunity to listen to the actors carefully.

All these experiences, consequence of the interviews and the observation plan, following Noboa and Robaina (2015), and from our perspective, contributed to “understand social and cultural features that allowed us to interact with individuals and groups of people, and the realities that were our object of our study. At the same time, these activities allowed us to build maps of individual and collective actors, and their interactions”. They allowed us to continually review the formulation of our hypothesis and of the questions that this research intended to answer.

b) Radio program.

Another fundamental source of information for this study was the active and permanent participation in a radio program. During the last 3 years, we integrated the team of a radio program dedicated to the equestrian world, which reaches the entire northeastern region of Uruguay and has a permanent presence in social networks. Our participation in the radio program ‘The horse for all’, which is hosted by Medina Chereza and Griotti, allowed us to obtain journalistic information that provided data and allowed a permanent monitoring of the progress for the qualitative content of this study.

Other instruments

Another instrument adopted to collect numerical and non-numerical data, descriptions and observations, was the careful reading out-loud and commenting on the materials produced and organized with the information collected from the key actors. Different from interviews, they have been readings of the first advances and of the first attempts to organize the information obtained. In this way, we gradually approached the knowledge of the internal rational of the activities with equines (organizational architecture and operation of the units) in Cerro Largo and the region. In this way, we intended to improve and complement the information collected and achieve a deeper interpretation, analysis and discussion of it.

In summary, in the field work we utilized the following instruments: (1) Interviews; (2) Observation - this being part of the activities and journalistic information; and (3) Out loud Readings with the key actors.

4 Results and Discussion

Before starting to present the results generated in this research, we want to specify our definition and meaning of community development, from which we will assess and discuss the information looking for a more creative and qualitative debate (FLICK, 2009):

First specification about development:

The equestrian activities are studied as a mean of development for the region, from the perspective of sustainable development, using a territorial-rural approach that intensely links the countryside with the city, and the city with the countryside, seeking to correct spatial imbalances. With an endogenous approach, it appeals to rescue an important part of the cultural identity where the community is empowered. This process promotes a sustained economic growth with a reasonable distribution of the wealth generated, socially accepted and inclusive, respectful of natural resources by exploring alternatives that do not produce harmful levels of pollution for the population and the habitat, and careful of all aspects that refer to the culture of the region. We understand that these definitions entail an expansion of individual's capabilities and freedom, and consequently more opportunities may emerge in a framework defined by the goal of a lasting prosperity for the community.

Second specification about a mean of development:

By proposing the horse as a mean of development, we are appealing to a part of our cultural heritage, and it is of great originality. The horse is a transcendent part of the cultural identity in the country and in the region. Among other evidences of this fact, a horse figure features on the national coat of arms, one of our main national emblems, as a symbol of freedom.

According to Cabrera Pérez (2010), referring to the horse culture in general: "it is a clear manifestation of our presence on earth and part of our way of life. It is part of a historical process and takes meaning as a social expression. As part of a cultural system, it is configured in this way as a value of identity, and draws partially the differentiation of our people". This applies to the horse as a mean of development and its specific cultural weight.

Simbolically, the equine allows the faithful respect of our roots, and protects our traditions, customs, and history, and allows to maintain intact everything that we

venerate. That fulfills us and generates feelings of well-being and enjoyment. Therefore, irrespect of the debate brought up by us, it is impossible to avoid the involuntary confounding of rational and passional elements.

It is an significant intellectual challenge to think in transforming the horse – an icon of persistency and sustainability - from having a merely instrumental character, functional to livestock production and a secondary actor in rural life, to integrate a system that generates wealth and employment, gaining visibility at the national and departmental levels, as a product with an extra-value, to later in the future become a driving force, a mean of multidimensional development, as we have already defined.

This link between development and culture is transcendent for the characteristics of this mean of development. In the words of Odak (1985): “all the human dimension should be encompassed to have a meaningful development, it will have to encompass all spheres of human activities, certainly including the culture. The importance of considering the culture in the development for the stability (durability, and we add sustainability) of the efforts put into achieve it, should be emphasized”.

Once these specifications were expressed, we share the results:

1.- Livestock has been the most important economic and social activity for more than 400 years in the department of Cerro Largo, occupying the entire territory, and the horse has been a fundamental tool to sustain it. A very strong link between the inhabitants of this geographic region and horses has been developed as a result of this historical process. Such is this link that there are nowadays multiple and diverse activities where the horse is the main protagonist.

2.- Very different levels of development of the equestrian activities can be detected when they are observed individually. In the group of equestrian sports, a scale to measure the dynamism of the activity can be established, assuming a gradient 0-10, for example, the turf would be 9 while the race track would be 1. This gradient shows a pattern that fluctuate between bussiness and leisure. In Uruguay, the turf participates in the National Integrated Turf System. There are five race courses throughout the country, including Melo. They have a very tight calendar for the whole year, and bets are made directly (“online”) with the guidance of the Casino National Office, a unit of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The turf has a very good promotion. The races are broadcast on a dedicated TV channel, and the human resources in all areas show a improving-level of professionalism. Finally, the turf owns its own sports arena, which is in expansion and under good management, with the headquarter located in the Center of Melo. In addition, the number of prizes has significantly improved in the last 4 years and this is a motivation for the all the parts to maintain the efforts for further improvement.

3.- In general, it is observed a lack of bussiness criteria in the equestrian activities surveyed; passion prevails over rational criteria. It was a common denominator among all the actors consulted, this supremacy of the veneration and passion for the horse, over other kind of values and considerations. Sentences like the following can be found in the interviews : "We produce rice, everyone has a role and this activity absorbs most of our time, however, when we talk about horses, we all go together without diferences between owners and employees and we drag the Family with us." (GAMARRA, 2017). “We were a big group. We prepared the horse very carefully and we won. When we win, we celebrate. The next day my wife told me: you were happier yesterday than the day that we got married”. (BOOKING, 2018). “Instead of spending

money on a psychologist, I am going to see my horse" (RODRÍGUEZ, 2017). "The only way to get over the death of my son was going to saddle up and go out alone to the field to enjoy my horse" (RIVADAVIA, 2018). "When I was a kid watching cowboy movie, I cried when the native peoples were killed because the horses left drifted away. I wanted to bring them together" (FONSECA, 2017). "The soldiers of the Regiment laughed when I called my horse to have 'mate' with me" (ROVIRA, 2018). (note: 'mate' is a local and traditional drink similar to green tea).

4.- Very little investment for training and education of the human resources at all levels. "Here, everyone knows everything, each to their own" (FONSECA, 2017). Marked disbelief in applied scientific knowledge and in technological aspects. However, the motivation generated by the high level competition would promote to envisage the importance of science and technology, and the impact of them on achieving good results (BOOKING, 2018).

The UDELAR, an institution of knowledge, teaching and research at the higher level, started just in 2018 with short courses by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Municipality of Cerro Largo. Such courses continued in 2019 and these activities, promoted the First Conferences on Horse culture em Melo and the First National Congress of Blacksmiths (NIN, 2018). 5.- Although each Equestrian Activity "unit" has their own organization structure and projection, there is a general lack of projects or programmes with shared objectives among equestrian activities. Each activity surveyed operates independently, with few cooperation links established between them. The organizational and institutional structure are weak in the equestrian sector.

Beyond a frustrated attempt of organizing "The Horse Week" at the end of the 90s early 2000s, there is a lack of consolidated concept that promotes the integration of all equestrian activities in an organized system that articulated the Equestrian Sector (DEL RÍO, 2018).

The journalists of the radio program "The horse for everyone", which covers all the activities related with horses, do not have an explanation for this phenomenon. They attribute this phenomenon to individualism, mistrust and meanness attitudes for sharing information. (MEDINA CHEREZA, GRIOTTI, 2018). The "witch" - a higher level horse that is mischievously included in a competition with ignorance of its background by its opponents - is like an institution in the town races (RIVADAVIA, 2018). He added: on the racetracks there are "bad game monitors" to ensure that there are no illicit maneuvers in the development of the competition.

6.- Along the year and the territory of the department of Cerro Largo, there are activities with horses. The competition activities are always linked to the urban locations and to the capital, concentrated on weekends and holidays, between March and December. On the other hand, the non-sports activities, particularly the ones related to agricultural work, livestock production, industry and commercialization, take place in suburban and rural areas along all weekdays.

7.- There are also certain stigmas in the population. They could hinder the process that we are proposing to imagine and walk-through. Some of these stigmas are linked to gambling, called "timba". Others are linked to the industrial destination of horses, called "mortadella" (horses sent to slaughterhouses). These are topics handled in silence, very discreetly, and with feelings of sadness. Others are related to animal welfare and ethics: violence and mistreatment are particularly questioned in events

called “Jineteadas”, as well as the Raids and blood extractions (“sangrias”). Surely, a well-conducted conversation and treatment of the topics and the unfavorable opinions can mitigate their negative effects. The Turf, for example, has been able to achieve it. (RODRIGUEZ, 2017).

Moreover, among the results, when we try to have a panoptic perspective of the equestrian sector, there are factors shared by all activities, which could act as catalysts, and in this sense, we would like to highlight:

i. There is a passion, veneration and identification of inhabitants of the region with the horse explain the involvement of the vast majority of the community as actors and spectators.

ii. It is a topic of lively conversation in the societal. "There is no one who does not own hundreds of photos and time scores of horses on their phone" (RIVADAVIA, 2018).

iii. The horse is recognized as an important part of the region's history, traditions and cultural identity.

iv. There is a vast production of cultural and artistic expressions dedicated to horses as an expression of love for horses.

v. "Behind every house there is a stable" (GAMARRA, 2018). The horse has the ability to unite people and families from all social classes.

vi. The diversity of roles that the horse can adopt throughout the territory. It is a bridge between rural and urban space.

vii. It involves actors of all age groups without gender distinction. "The equestrian disciplines are only Olympic activity that does not have male and female categories" (ROVIRA, 2018).

In addition to these aspects, there is also a list of common needs and services that could generate a positive and synergistic dynamics such as:

i. Farmer's need of knowledge and skills for herd and stallion's management to produce foals regardless the horse activity in their adult life.

ii. The network for horse services, promoted by private companies that provide veterinary assistance, specific medical care, food, horseshoes, saddles and accessories, etc.

iii. The entire network of Rural Business Bureaus are involved in the commercialization of equines and are part of a wide and strong network of links between equines and people.

iv. Horse blood extraction for pharmaceutical purpose and slaughterhouses do not discriminate against any breed, work history, sports and state.

v. The media, rural specialized media programs, specialized journalists, who promote all aspects of the equestrian activities.

vi. The public and private institutional structure connected to the rural areas and agricultural space.

Together, all the aforementioned items compose a framework interested in promoting a structured and functional organization to catalize the equestrian sector and the department.

5 Final Considerations

Here, it is necessary to recover the challenging question. Can the horse be a mean of community development for Cerro Largo and for the northeast region of Uruguay? Without losing the perspective of the researcher, we assume the role of an agent promoting local development, looking for alternatives that allows higher levels and lasting prosperity of the community, to sum our modest contribution to what other agents have been thinking and working in the same direction.

Onde finished the research process in alternating phases of analysis and synthesis, observing globally and in detail, going back and forth between empirical information and theory, we understand that the answer to the initial question whether the possibilities of the equestrian sector becomes a mean of community development, is positive. However, it is a provisional response, which in order to become a real possibility, should be worked on to transform the potential barriers into catalyzing elements for the proposed development process. In this sense, from the experience gained with this research, two areas clearly emerge to be prioritized to achieve such catalyzing effect.

Strategic coordination

It is necessary to promote a more intense interaction between the different equestrian activities, developing a powerful network that reinforces coordinated actions, which benefit the whole sector. According to Abramovay (2000), to achieve a coordination of the actors through the social proximity among them. This coordination would allow to overcome weaknesses related with natural attributes of the region and location problems, among others. Without leaving the individual flow or future strategic plans, through a planned process, transform them into an integrated system that progressively involves the entire equestrian sector. The rural institutions, both public and private, and the network of suppliers and service providers have a relevant role in promoting this development. This stronger articulation must be promoted from both the private and public sectors. Thus, having an endogenous approach and considering the characteristics of the target community, it is especially important to establish a criteria for the actions that guarantee legitimacy, representativeness, neutrality, and trust on the leaders of these process.

Education

Information on the regional equestrian activities should be included at all levels of formal and non-formal education to maintain the cultural roots that these activities have in the community and make them common to rural and urban areas.

Additionally, economic resources, time, infrastructure and applied technology for the build-up of human capacities should be invested to allow that these activities promote a multidimensional development as it was described in previous paragraphs. Both formal and non-formal education have an important role, in this sense. Education, at the fundamental, university, and technical levels, has a central role to generate a better balance between the passionate and rational components of the decision-making process based on training, and allows a true “expansion of individual capacities” (SEN, 2011) and strengths planning, method, supervision and evaluation of common purposes.

A methodological approach would be necessary in order to visualize that for expanding this process, it is needed to intensify a more professional, better managed and more coordinated dynamic of the local current activities. The results should be a greater economic exchange of goods and services abroad, and in a greater social and cultural exchange, through the arrival of national and foreign visitors to learn and/or to participate in the different types of activities related with the development of the equestrian activities.

The horse and equestrian activities can become a mean of development if some actions are carried out, however, in much greater extent because it brings together other essential and specific aspects that no other activity can achieve in this region. For the population of Cerro Largo, the horses are part of their most precious cultural heritage. They are present along all the territory and socio-economic levels. People identify intensely with them. They are present at work, in sports and in the leisure activities. It is a powerful driver of domestic tourism, promoting an intense mobility of people often from geographically distant points. Even more, for many inhabitants of Cerro Largo, horses are a way of life, a pleasure. People that share their life with them have a social recognition in the Community. Veneration for equines is observed and felt. Thus, the growth of the equestrian sector, from our point of view, is associated to the seek of higher levels of community growth, measured by social and economic indicators, and translated into feelings, as well as into emotions. For such reasons, we affirm that there are foundations for a lasting prosperity for the inhabitants of this region of the country, which may be quantifiable with objective indicators of multidimensional development, and that additionally will provide subjective elements linked to the individual and collective well-being of this region.

In summary: the region can become more dynamic by taking care of the balanced growth of the equine population both in quantity and quality, by developing powerful plans within the equestrian institutions, by generating new ones, by promoting a better coordination between institutions, by the use of professional and trained human resources at all levels, and by generating and promoting attractive, varied and harmonized calendars of activities.

A balanced "equestrian world" will be an attraction for the local community and visitors from other regions of the country and abroad. These visitors, potential consumers of local goods and services, can also become temporary or permanent residents of the area, and investors, as well.

In this way, harmonizing these two elements, the horse can be a mean of multidimensional development of Cerro Largo including the entire territory.

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