

Editorial

## **Actor relationships, a tool for the development of small-scale local sustainable tourism**



**Las relaciones actorales, una herramienta para el desarrollo del turismo local sostenible a pequeña escala**

**As relações atorais, uma ferramenta para o desenvolvimento do turismo local sustentável a escala pequena**

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**T**ourism as a process of social construction in local development requires a systemic logic that seeks to achieve a balance in terms of local dynamics and actors involved. The development of small-scale sustainable local tourism conceives a transformation process from an economic, social and environmental perspective; it provides an opportunity for local actors to participate in their own development, aimed at overcoming existing conflicts and taking advantage of existing opportunities for local tourism development, which provides an improvement in the living conditions of its population through decisive and concerted action among the different local socioeconomic agents (public and private) for the more efficient and sustainable use of existing endogenous resources, through the promotion of local entrepreneurial capacities and the creation of an innovative environment in the territory (Albuquerque Llorens, 1997; Gutiérrez Taño et al., 2020).

Small-scale Local Sustainable Tourism (TLSpe in Spanish) is part of a new concept contained in the Cuban economic-social development model, based on municipal autonomy and existing tourism potentialities, channeled in the Municipal Development Strategies, which define Local Sustainable Tourism programs to be implemented in local development projects. In the development of the TLSpe, the interests and actors relations define tourism activity in the territory and have the capacity

to intervene and modify the territorial reality; that is why their analysis is important (Rodríguez Martínez et al., 2020).

The TLSpe requires the participation of local actors in charge of tourism development and the generation of productive processes, among which there are actors that have a great capacity to influence and shape the territory: the local community, the public sector, the private sector and tourists; this is how in the territory there are relationships of coordination, collaboration and cooperation through the implementation of collective strategies for the development of sustainable tourism activities, based on the determination of tourist attractions (Ramírez Pérez et al., 2020).

The study of actors relations in tourism (Moscoso, 2013), is an explanatory factor in the configuration and settlement of the activity in a territory, the transformation of this territory under different conceptions and the creation and emergence of a model of sustainable local tourism development on a small scale. To this end, local actors (public and private) must materialize the necessary actions to optimize the use of endogenous resources in order to increase employment, improve the standard of living of local inhabitants and satisfy their needs. It worth saying that their actions must be aimed at addressing and solving local problems of society.

In order to achieve that the actor concertation becomes a tool for TLSpe, conflict resolution is necessary; for this, the identification and degree of participation of the actors (power dynamics) in the tourism activity, which gives rise to a certain tourism development model, is required. It constitutes a set of strategy elements designed by certain actors to achieve certain objectives (Romero Cevallos, 2019).

Tourism activity should become a useful tool for sustainable development, according to Arguedas Mora et al. (2004), Bushell and Eagles (2007), Booth et al. (2010), Santiago Escobar (2019) and Torres Cadena (2019), where there are actor relationships. It is not, then, a concept with exclusively economic implications, but rather one that promotes the rescue of cultural traditions and generates a level of relationships between its actors, strengthening the links in the territory.

The development of actor relationships and their role in tourism activity are addressed by several authors. Páez Vives and Pérez Hernández (2018) point out the importance of intersectoral integration and identify the role of actor relationships from the very development of the tourism process, proposing the need to incorporate the multidisciplinary vision, which responds to the satisfaction of social needs in terms of sustainable local development.

Tourism development, from its interrelation with other sectors, requires the optimization of this system, which should be sought in the improvement of the interrelationships between the participants that make up the tourism offer. Therefore, it is important to highlight the relevance of the actors involved in tourism development in general: the public sector, the private sector and the population that, according to him, are involved in one way or another.

The small-scale local tourism development model requires intersectoral integration, with a multidisciplinary vision, to the extent of defining the actors involved and analyzing possible conflicts. For this, a possible solution is described from the relationships of the actors; it is offered by Capote Pérez (2022) through the creation of National Ecotourism Councils and analogous groups at the local level that act under a set of established priorities.

According to the experience of Ramírez Pérez (2022), in Mexico and Costa Rica, local tourism councils have been created with the objective of achieving participatory development.

In the Cuban case, Ramírez Pérez (2011) recognizes the creation of the local council since 1993 for the progress of local tourism in the Las Terrazas Complex, which is seen as the starting point for the strengthening and functioning of consultation, decision making and roles of local actors. According to Rodríguez Basso et al. (2021), the creation of local tourism councils is very necessary and should be made up of participants from the localities involved. In this council, the interests of each locality should be analyzed and the role and state of relations where tourism development is generated should be determined.

In the TLSpe development process, various interrelationships are established in order to contribute to systemic integration and cooperation. These relationships will depend on the number of actors in a territory and the level of unity that is reached in the development of the project. The level of actor relationships within small-scale sustainable local tourism will be stimulated by the Local Tourism Council, which should collegiate the established development guidelines, organizing the level of priorities foreseen.

However, for Capote Pérez (2022), facilitating the systemic interrelationship between the different actors and tourism at the local level is not enough only with the creation of a Local Tourism Council, but depends on its performance, paying greater attention to the sustainability of the territory, from the functionality and hierarchy, the exchange and hierarchical differentiation of the external variables: environmental, economic, legal, social, cultural and political, expressed through the

exercise of power and that affect the internal variables, represented in the territory by the actors. These, in turn, put pressure on resources, considering that not all internal variables receive and emit matter, energy and information in the same way and are expressed in the same way in the relationships between actors.

If the TLSpe is managed to the locality as a whole, thought from the sustainability, it corresponds to manage from the integration of all the actors that intervene in the area and its space of influence, from all the dimensions. This procedure makes it possible for it to recover added values: greater degree of conservation, systemic value, greater local organization, greater economic and financial development in terms of the progress of local economies, better application of new technologies in good sustainable tourism management from good relations between actors, this can constitute a TLSpe destination, with two functions:

- I. The first is inward, working with the maximum effort of its local members: for conservation, territorial development and harmonious and systemic intervention on a sustainable basis
- II. The second is outward, creating an offer that captivates the desire of the tourist demand and generates ways of progress for the host communities and the participating actors, based on their own conditions and resources, which places them at the center of their own development

It is important to point out that there may be contradictions in the development of the TLSpe, since different decisions with varied definitions converge in it, generated by the systemic nature and by the relationships of actors, which must be mutually collegial, respecting the double function mentioned above.

It is the territory where the goods and services of the tourism modalities and the activities they entail will be provided, being able to establish clear elements of differentiation with other similar products, Gómez et al. (2018). It is the actors of the territory who synchronize in order to develop emerging tourism models distinctive of the territory and the resources it possesses, implemented only and through a structural coupling between the actors, as well as the selection of the form, mechanisms, places, times in which these will be enhanced.

In the construction of the TLSpe, the actors play a fundamental role since they are involved in their own tourism development. This leads to planning actor relationships from the social and business perspective, the levels of interaction of the actors, their modes of coexistence, interpretations of

reality, motivations, expectations and assumed meanings of their behavior and relationships; this is part of the construction of the local tourism experience.

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