

Rural tourism and peasantry, a social approach from ecology, culture and economy

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Abstract: As a specific category, a definition of Rural Tourism should take place within a special dimension where it works directly with differential proceedings. The sprouting of this phenomenon can be explained as a conjunction of the severe crisis of the countryside. Post-materialism of the advanced societies within industry reacts in a new order for the Rural Field. In spite of the great potential in this particular type of tourism and due to its growth in the tourist markets, it can not be taken as the panacea to rural problems. Because of that we find it opportune to make a reflection upon the relation between peasantry, seen as an object of tourism. It is established with this relatively new and nontraditional activity as well as its shades in the economic, ecological and cultural spheres of the rural surroundings

Key Words: Intercultural, pluri-activity, rural space, farming economy

Resumen: La definición de turismo rural es una categoría específica centrada en el campo como dimensión espacial y como lugar social, que afecta directamente a ciertos actores diferenciados. El surgimiento de este fenómeno puede explicarse como una conjunción de la severa crisis del campo, los nuevos usos del espacio rural y el reacomodo posmaterialista de las sociedades industriales avanzadas. Pese al potencial de este tipo específico de turismo y a su acusado crecimiento dentro de los mercados turísticos, no se puede plantear como la panacea a los problemas rurales, por lo cual resulta oportuno reflexionar acerca de la relación que el campesinado como objeto del turismo establece con esta actividad relativamente nueva y no tradicional, así como sus matices en las esferas económica, ecológica y cultural de los entornos rurales.

Palabras clave: interculturalidad, pluriactividad, espacio rural, economía campesina.

Introduction

The present essay begins with a theoretical discussion on the interconnection between the image of peasantry as a distinctive class of society, and rural tourism as a possible strategy for development; for said end, we undertake the social analysis of the relationship between both concepts, from the perspective of the ecological, cultural and economic analysis.

The first part is a sociologic approach to the concept of rural tourism; there, the center-periphery interrelations that give as a result the use of the rural space destined for touristic leisure are articulated. Likewise, a theoretical discussion on the appropriateness of the rural tourism term to define such a practice from the spatial delimitation from a broad concept is carried out.

Secondly, we approach the importance of the relation between the concept of rural tourism and peasantry as an organic and inseparable relationship, as for the former refers to real strategies of sustainable rural development. This perspective starts from the supposition of analyzing tourism as a social phenomenon, of which peasantry becomes a central object and its end as a development proposal.

Then, the ecologic relation the peasantry establishes with its environment is stated, from traditional energy-transfer systems, analysis wherefrom this organic and biological relationship aims for a new use of the rural space of social determination and rational use of natural resources, through its destination for touristic leisure ends.

Later on, the relation of rural tourism with peasant culture is approached; in this sense peasant culture is defined from the perspective of traditions and customs in order to later confront that partial cultural system with a broad concept of culture, sketched from anthropology, with which the cultural interrelation between the countryside and city and the hegemony of the culture radiated from urban centers toward rural peripheries is established. This places the intercultural clash of these two poles that occurs before the touristic phenomenon on the center of discussion.

In another section, we approach the need of intercultural negotiation as a communication strategy between the actors of rural tourism, seen from the general theory of systems. Said model of negotiation becomes a critical vision of the system of impositions and from-above-to-below communication.

In the aforementioned perspective of intercultural communication, the most polarized aspects expressed in the tourist fact are stated, on the one side the cultural expression the rural pole establishes, and on the other that of the urban pole. Later, the prosaic dimension (aesthetics of the quotidian) is stated as axis of the discussion of the intercultural differences, from this it is proposed a system of analysis by means of interrelation matrixes of the prosaic with semeiotic and symbolic tools.

Finally, the relation of rural tourism with peasant economy is established, it begins from the principle that the activity is sustainable and with a great potential in economic terms; yet the reached conclusion is that the specific contribution rural tourism might make to peasant economy is given by the way this activity contributes to the yearly subsistence of the farmer's family.

Toward a sociological definition of rural tourism

From the theoretical point of view, it is indispensable to state a sociological reference framework to explain rural tourism. According to some theoreticians it is important to retake the theories of center-periphery by Galtung and the post-materialism by Inglehart, as a first approaching to the subject. From this perspective, we have stated the materialistic-post-materialistic orientation of society, which explains the change of values in occidental societies that occurs as from the 1970's decade (Elzo *et al.*, 2001).

In these terms rural tourism becomes an activity conceived in the cities, in which the urban dwellers aim to enjoy the remnants of a past world that advanced industrialized societies cannot satisfy with their massive touristic models. Linked to this, it is possible to add the ecologist boom of the 1960's and 1970's, the interest in the ethnical, the search for authenticity, or what is of advantage from the center to be turned into touristic leisure in the peripheries. This activity is centered on the basic axes of agricultural, people's and spaces' exploitation.

In this first approach rural tourism is defined from broad conceptions, which correspond to the European models where one finds articulated key concepts such as recreational activities, rural housing, displacement and temporary permanence outside the normal abidance place and the potential of the spaces to satisfy leisure necessities.

Nonetheless, given the interest of this essay in the image of peasantry, it is important to state the conception of rural tourism not only from the purely touristic perspective; it is necessary to heed the specific characteristics of Latin America and from them articulate new enriching elements to the definition, such as: touristic process, advantageous use of resources, motivations of the travel, needs of the local development in rural communities and the definition of the impacts of the tourist activity.

According to this, the statement of the tourist activity as an alternative must overcome the touristic sphere and propose a balance point between rural development and tourism. This is indispensable, since discussions on the concept oscillate between these poles, and the fundamental interest is to define that touristic activity which really contributes with alternatives to peasant populations.

In the simplest terms it can be stated that the preference for using the rural tourism term takes place in the sense that this conception can group any touristic activity that takes place in the rural environment; however, as it has been said before, the idea of an activity that promotes rural development and integrates peasant societies requires much more specific terms.

It is important to distinguish between the tourism that is called rural, which is operated by touristic companies, with a solid marketing, economic and administrative apparatus, located in rural spaces where a touristic product is constructed in the traditional terms and that is part of a market segment (this is to say, that exists indeed as an offer) but that is part of the alternative tourism denomination, such is the case of the Haciendas in Jalisco, Mexico. Likewise, we need to separate the so-called agro-tourism, developed in rural sceneries, in spite of being operated by zones of intensive production and highly-profitable agro-industries which add to their assets the possibility of a touristic exploitation, as it occurs in the north of Italy. Either the case,

the touristic practice might directly employ some farmers who complement their agricultural labor with this other alternative activity. In this point the real contrast should be established with the tourism that is actually operated by farmers and indigenous people, where diverse activities which have as an only end the true coexistence with the rural world; in strict terms, this would be the authentic concept of rural tourism.

According to this schematic division of rural tourism, it is intended to pinpoint that which is the most suitable for the concrete case of Mexico. Nevertheless, as in every typology, its function is merely didactical and schematic and the pure cases are not found in concrete reality; hence definitions must be generated to the extent cases appear, needless to say before a so new and relatively scarcely explored activity.

In this sense, what we state thus far is to think of the postindustrial movements as an explanatory vein of the appearance of this new touristic interest (Álvarez, 1994); yet, not disregarding the fact that the main beneficiaries of this activity and those who receive their impacts are the farmers. Said perspective is preconditioned to the coexistence of tourism with elements proper to peasant ecology, economy, society and political organization. This model of rural tourism acquires relevance in a country that, as Mexico, has a large number of peasants and indigenous peoples, and where a paradigmatic case has been witnessed in the case of the Joint Peoples of the Sierra Norte de Oaxaca (*Pueblos Mancomunados de la Sierra Norte de Oaxaca*).

Hence, a touristic activity fundamentally developed by farmers would be more leaned towards rural life as a holistic discourse of the relation of the farmer with their environment than towards agricultural production as an isolated element; this is to say, it refers to the subsistence productive activities; it is an activity totally operated by farmers and respectful of its traditional organization forms. Their sustainability criteria are associated with their lifestyles and are reflected on a well-preserved environment. Their organization and flow might be powered by means of the creation of circuits; however, the fundamental idea is the coexistence with peasants in a specific point, regardless the rest.

In this section where it is attempted to define the tourist activity that affects the peasant, it is worth clarifying in this respect to a term widely known and with a vigorous growth: ecotourism. In this sense, we want to clarify the tendency to immediately associate ecotourism with rural tourism. This is due to one of the defining categories to build the concept is to consider as central problems the space and the actors that are affected by touristic activity and with it to state the huge differences in scenarios where tourism takes place, which are not necessarily the same in both cases.

As it has been previously pointed out, a simple way to define rural tourism would be like “every tourist activity developed in the rural environment”; nonetheless, this apparent simplicity requires the complication of defining the rural as a space and tourism as an activity that occurs in that scenario. As for rural space, it is noteworthy there is no univocal definition in this respect, but this widely differs depending on the place alluded to and the topic it is analyzed from; for instance, in the European Union some attempts to unify the concept have been made, but they are not homogeneous in respect to their classifying elements that oscillate between aspects relative to the number of inhabitants, geopolitical order, territorial extension and the level of urbanization. Notwithstanding it is possible to consider that the rural space might be defined, with a greater gain for touristic analysis, in function of its uses and occupations. In the first place it must be considered as a vital space for rural population; i.e., it becomes the physical support whereupon the necessities of inhabitation and social relations of the population occur; secondly, it is an economic space, i.e., a production factor that allows satisfying their inhabitants’ needs. Here it is possible to draw to the notion of peasant ecotypes, of which Wolf (1978) presents some of the diverse possible typologies in the rural environment; and finally, a third use as a recreational space would have to be found, where people alien to the community exercise their leisure time with important social and economic consequences. With this, it is observed that rural touristic activity takes place along with multiple realities that occur in the same space, or in other words, tourism is not the center of the rural productive activity, as it might be the motor of development, a complement or simply something punctual.

Under this conception, the topic of rural development turns out to be central, beyond touristic productivity, since tourism is just another means, yet the main topic is development. In this sense, we must bear in mind that development is an occidental invention of capitalist modernity, and a critical perspective would be an element that guarantees the legitimacy of said development, we must be attentive to what the destination of that development is and who their beneficiaries are, which would be reflected on sustainable and socially fair practices. All of the above means that it is important to understand the contributions tourism might potentially generate in the economy and the environment, state from the inside an improvement in the peasant's quality of life, revalue the natural and cultural heritage of the community.

Likewise it is relevant to define, generally speaking, tourism from its sociological perspective and by doing so, revalue the aspects that for this specific definition might be of the most usefulness.

In accordance with Gruyer (1909), tourism is a social phenomenon explained by the necessity to rest and appreciation of beauty and wellbeing, obtained as one interacts with the virgin nature and through the relations between peoples, which causes an increment in the number of enterprises, the development of trade, industries, professions and the perfecting of the means of transport. For Hunziker and Krapf (1942), tourism is a set of relations and phenomena derived from the stay of foreigners, excluding abidance, for the exercise of a main lucrative activity, permanent or temporary. On its own the International Conference on Statistics of Travels and Tourism (*Conferencia Internacional sobre Estadísticas de Viajes y Turismo*, 1991) defines it as the set of activities of people who displace to a place different from their habitual environment for a period of time with leisure ends. Finally, UN defines it as the activities that people perform as they travel and stay in places different from their habitual environment in a consecutive period, less than a year with leisure or business ends or because of other reasons.

Heeding these paradigmatic definitions, it is possible to say that tourism refers to a displacement or travel without implying a change of address, that is excluded in these displacements to the place of residence, the time

of stay has a central importance, however, the activities carried out in that destination are more important. With this we can define a typology of tourism at a generic level as an economic and social fact, which makes it clear that it is a phenomenon fundamentally studied from economic and social sciences.

Likewise, the study of the development of tourism is explained from favorable economic factors reflected in a greater acquisitive power in industrial societies in occidental countries, technical factors in technological advances in the fields of communications and transports, sociological factors caused by the expansion of human population in stressful situations and searching for natural environments, diminution of day labors and establishment of holidays with payment, cultural factors such the extension of education, culture and greater interest in other peoples, and psychological factors with the expansion of advertising and marketing techniques (De la Torre, 2004).

The aforementioned elements, in the last definitions, should be related in such manner that they express and approximation to the concept of rural tourism, for instance:

every kind of touristic advantage in the rural space, as long as it always fulfills the following limitations:

It is a diffuse tourism, respectful of the cultural and natural heritage, it implies the active participation of the farmers, it implies traditional activities opposed to the gigantism and touristic monoculture, the benefits produced remain in the zone.

Rural tourism is that tourist activity carried out in the rural space, composed of an integrated offer of leisure, directed to a demand whose motivation is the contact with the autochthonous environment and an interrelation with the local society.

The definition by the Spanish Association of Rural Tourism (*Asociación Española de Turismo Rural, ASETUR*) is stated as “the set of activities developed in said geographic space (rural space), exceeding mere lodging and that might suppose some sources of income, complementary to those traditionally dependent on the primary sector, for the stable inhabitants”.

In these definitions it is possible to find at least three elements that directly involve the peasant sphere: on the one side, tourism would be a complementary income integrated in their very economic logic; on the other side, rural culture is the fundamental element of the touristic product; and thirdly, the integration into the rural community and the participation of the visitor in its dynamics (intercultural relation).

Given the amplitude and vagueness of the concept of rural tourism, it is possible to say it is likely to be associated with other concepts, nonetheless, as it has been previously exposed, the former has distinctive characteristics that may differ from the latter; however, from time to time one may include the other, and these are: ecotourism, green tourism, domestic tourism, adventure and sport tourism, alternative tourism and agro-tourism. This amplitude of concepts depends on the natural, ethnological and geographic characteristics of each country, but it can be noticed in the empirical fact that rural tourism is distinguished by being respectful with the environment (it wants socio-economic development from the conservation of nature), it is an economic activity *per se* (it is a complementary economic income), it involves the entire community from socio-cultural and economic integration, its base is the rural environment as a whole (the holistic dimension of a small community).

Notwithstanding, it is not possible to state a conception of rural tourism that makes it the panacea of the peasants' problems, for despite its benefits as the diminution of the rural exodus, economic diversification, cultural revaluation and rescue, reinforcement of identity, conservation of the environment, at cetera, it is opposed a series of risks such as the abandonment of traditional activities, urbanization, anarchic development, social strains and risks in the natural and landscape integrity.

Every human activity has features and benefits, and it is because of this the need to state rural tourism as a complex social phenomenon, as in this dimension its entire complexity is articulated, particularly when the proposal tends to the practice of a relatively new activity in a vulnerable sector, as peasantry is.

Peasantry and rural tourism

Rural tourism is a complex activity that becomes evident as a relation between diverse resources and social actors. In this sense and according to De la Torre (2004), the object of tourism is the set of elements that compose the touristic offer in the market, and it is expressed in terms of the primordial offer that the natural resources unspoiled by men are, and the cultural resources that the direct diverse manifestations of human idiosyncrasy are. Separately, one finds the complementary offer that is a consequence of the primordial offer and is based on adequate touristic infrastructure and structure. In this sense, the role of the peasantry becomes central, as it is an intrinsic part of the object of tourism; it is to a good extent a substantial agent in the shaping of the touristic product. The role of the peasant before touristic activity is given by the character of the relation established with the outside world, which in productive terms is expressed as the transference of its surpluses toward the urban poles by means of well-defined strategies of domination. In the case of rural tourism, the fundamental idea is to preserve the urban hegemony and transfer the “surpluses” of cultural and environmental capital of the rural environment to the city travelers through tourist activity. From the European perspective, the appearance of rural tourism as an accepted segment in the hegemonic markets is a response to the degeneration of advanced industrialized societies and their corresponding manifestations; which means that in the face of the environment’s depletion and the popularization of culture, it is sought to satisfy the human need of leisure through the extraction of the “surplus”, if it may be called so, of the autochthonous cultures and their preserved environments.

Based on the previous lines, it is intended to state that in spite of the change of values as for ecologic awareness and respect for rural cultures, in the insertion of tourism as a new use for the rural space, it cannot be avoided that this activity’s irruption into the traditional activities of the farming sphere is related to the unfolding and generalized diffusion of the values and principles of modernization toward the rural. This does not mean that tourism breaks into the countryside in a similar manner as mass culture does through marketing and communication, just to name an instance, but from a postmodern approach where the failure of the (touristic) values of

modernity is assumed and it is attempted to restate human behavior by means of returning to the origins (in this case the countryside). The city visitor expresses a different aesthetic appreciation regarding the environment and rural culture, yet in terms of what Lipovetsky (2002) expressed, from the logic of post-duty translated as a hedonistic axiomatic set, rather than the ancient ethics of the divine duty or the modern revolutionary responsibility toward other human beings.

Within this schema the peasant holds a marginal place within their relation with urban centers, as now they do not only transfer their productive surpluses, but offer their vital space, culture and everyday life to urban touristic leisure in return for a supposed development. In function of this, it is possible to state that with a schema of multidimensional development (i.e., not exclusively economic) with touristic approach, the peasant must hold a central place and understand them as a specific social actor with very own problems and not only as a common agent of the touristic market, susceptible to be exploited; as, in accordance with Wolf (1978), the farmers do not operate as an enterprise in the economic sense, for they provide development to a house, not to a business. This supposition starts from the family unit as a productive group that secures the subsistence of said nucleus, which means that tourism, as a strategy of development, must be tightly linked to the peasant and their family, where the impacts, both positive and negative that eventually might appear, will be reflected.

Tourism is an activity that will be benefitted from the social surpluses produced by the farmers, once it has satisfied their vital needs with the least possible; accumulate ceremonial funds, which are substantial part of the touristic attraction and that are not generally paid by the tourists, for example the travelers that use their time to “town-seeing” and enjoy the celebration of a town but do not pay any remuneration for said aesthetic enjoyment, but on the contrary, they take advantage of the surplus the farmers have generated for that end. On the other hand, even though tourism might be seen as an activity that generates surpluses to traditional production, these usually escape as hiring funds, due to the asymmetry the rural environment faces to operate the touristic activity, since they normally contribute to satisfy the needs of structure and infrastructure required to shape a touristic destination.

In another sense, the position of peasants in projects of rural tourism is still through their relation with the city as the emblem of development and as a material support of the State apparatus; this is to say, their figure is shaped in function of the contrast with the urban visitors and the sort of specific relation, regularly, asymmetric that the latter establish with the former. Thus, their place in society becomes central, not so much as food provider, since this is industrially possible without the intervention of farmers, but rather as the supplier of a service in which the simplicity of their identity and lifestyle is sought, yet without valuing them completely but in an intermittent manner as object of travel. Hence the economic problem of the peasant oscillates between balancing the demands from the external world and the necessity to support their households. Tourism becomes a diversification strategy of the income for traditional agriculture, as a way to increase their revenues to support their families.

In this phenomenon the rural population is distinguishable and is shaped in the immanent relation of the peasant-host and urban-visitor, but above things in the adaptation and combination of attitudes and activities given by tourism, though which the support of the peasant way of life and the preservation of its cultural manifestations. In the following section we will approach the relation of use and appropriation of the space, as place of touristic leisure and their ecologic implications.

Ecology and peasantry: tourism and the new uses of the rural spaces

The basic form in which peasants secure their subsistence is closely related to the relation they establish with the environment. From the theoretical viewpoint, the study of the peasant ecotypes produces a broad variety of typologies that these systems of energy transfer from environment to human assume, which eventually present variations of cultural nature and relative to the specific ecosystem where transferences take place. Wolf (1978) defines the peasant ecotypes as the farmer's ecological adaptation, through a series of food transfers by means of procedures with which put to use the inorganic sources of energy within the productive process. Traditionally, and presently, it is possible to find empirical evidence of the fact that these energy transfer systems are the mechanisms with which farmers have secured

and secure their existence. In this context, the proposals by rural tourism imply not the substitution of this relation with the environment, but an addition to the mechanisms of resource acquisition for peasant subsistence. The aforementioned means that the tourist activity in the rural sphere does not imply the suppression of the traditional forms of subsistence, but on the contrary, it centers them on the touristic interest as a main attraction. The reading of the landscape as the diverse cultural expressions which occur in it are the raw material which will give way to a touristic motivation. All of this becomes the need to think of rural tourism as a partial strategy inserted into development processes even broader.

The small community is a functional unit to analyze the ecologic relation of the peasant and the touristic use of the rural space. In this sense and based upon Robert Redfield (1971), the distinctive features of the small community are as follow:

Firstly, it is important to underscore the characteristic of differentiation that the small community has as an enclosed space, in which it can be defined where it starts and where finishes; this spatial enclosing is a relation of semeiotic order that can be distinguished from the reading of signs existing in the landscape, which on the one side is observable for the tourist alien to community, and on the other, it is expressed in the farmer's group awareness. This signifies the existence of an ecologic relation with the physical surroundings where the touristic phenomenon occurs and it is experienced as the interpretations the inhabitants make of their space, and offer it as a touristic attraction in contrast with the imaginary the city visitor constructs upon said space.

Secondly, we might state that this legible space is small by definition, reason why it is operative for the rural touristic journey as it is a partial experience, yet profound and intense that may provide the traveler with a fairly full image of rural life in determinate community.

Thirdly, the small community is a homogenous environment where social composition is rather plain, depending on the registrations of age and gender; the occupations are repeated through generations. In this sense the homogeneity is understood as a form of slow change in peasant communities, which is likely opposed to the quotidian experience in the urban poles.

Finally, the small community is somehow self-sufficient, as it is possible to satisfy the basic needs of human beings and to establish an elemental network of primary relations inside of it. Hence, the touristic destination will be assimilated as a small environment capable of satisfying the needs of the travelers; always understanding that they go in the search of an authentic experience within the rural environment, and do not consider to move the comforts and luxuries of the modern tourism to the confines of the agro whatsoever.

The proposal of tourism in rural communities has extremely favorable conditions to be unfolded from the ecologic point of view. In the very case of Mexico, rural spaces with geographic, climatologic and soil variety and diversity can be found; the presence of many and very varied ecosystems, great natural attractions and a humongous cultural wealth. The perspectives of ecologic relation towards rural tourism in Mexico and in many developing countries are very encouraging. Nonetheless, it is necessary to inverse the perspective of the conventional touristic models so as to deeply understand the particular ecologic relation of the peasants and imprint it on the visitors' awareness. In this same sense, rural inhabitants are not exempt in ecological issues; therefore, a touristic program correctly boosted, based on basic principles of environmental sustainability, might influence favorably on restating the relation farmers establish with their environment.

The difference between the ecologic relation the peasant establishes with the environment from ecotypes and the use of natural resources to be touristically exploited lays in the fact that tourism as a social practice, for both parts, is not conditioned by a biological instinct, but depends on a system of collective values. In these terms, tourism has meant a constant process of expropriation and exploitation of the resources of the communities, unfortunately for the benefit of the large capitals. According to this, it is necessary to state the ecologic relation in rational terms and planned to that it is possible to invert the values toward a re-signification of individualism, hedonism and the return to nature; this is to say, the rescue of the individual and authentic over the material and standardization of the characteristics of current societies.

This new rational ecologic relation is product of a negotiation between the re-signification of the values of the city and the countryside, which must be based on a vision of sustainable development in a broad sense. Thus, sustainable development is mainly a social and political project that points at decentralization (of the touristic markets) and the ecologic ordering of production, and which offers principles and orientations to the projects of democratization of society, based on the direct participation of the communities in the appropriation and transformation of their environmental resources, and which must not have other orientation than eradicating poverty, increase the quality of life and satisfy the basic needs of humanity. This definition, in discourse, is very complacent, yet the subjacent topic is to actually understand the way the farmers establish their relations with the environment, in such manner that those principles are stated and respected when promoting projects of rural tourism.

As it has been previously pointed out, tourism as a social practice corresponds to a dominating rationale, therefore, the translation of the beach destinations towards the countryside does not imply on its own a new ecologic relation. Because of this the importance of analyzing tourism in all of its stages, for in its recent popularity also represents a threat for the environment. The common denominator of occupying the rural sphere as a touristic destination represents a radical modification of the very social practice. This alternative of use of the ecologic space, unknown by the farmer, must be spread in a participative and consented manner to boost a re-signification of the peasant ecologic relation, by means of a re-appropriation of the natural resources, management of service and appropriation of the benefits. It is necessary to totally re-conceptualize the relation with nature and the use of resources in such manner that the peasant becomes aware of their touristic role within this model, not only as an operative instrument of the touristic services but as the ultimate end of development.

Rural tourism is inserted within the community's ecologic system, as a system of interrelations among the addition of its parts, so when defining the systemic nature of the community the idea of the community as a whole must be taken into account and insert the touristic practice into that system

of parallel coexistences with culture, economy and peasant social relations; otherwise the mere touristic phenomenon isolated does not express any substantial contribution to the development of the communities, but on the contrary, the logic of markets and the economic rationale prevailing in the large monopolies that control the activity at worldwide level are obeyed. In the following section, we will approach the diverse relations that rural tourism establishes with peasant culture, with which we state the intercultural dimension as an inevitable sphere in the touristic model as an alternative of development.

Rural tourism and peasant culture

Peasant culture as such cannot be seen from the traditional approach that anthropology makes as every manifestation of human action, but in its enclosed and distinctive character it is much more fruitful to study it as the set of conditions and traditions typical of peasant society. To a certain extent said culture keeps an intimate relation with the cultural patterns in small communities. This specific sort of culture is cemented on an ideological order, since according to Wolf (1978) an ideology consists in acts and ideas, ceremonies and beliefs, which motivate functions. Some of them are expressive, such as weddings, funerals, religious offices or harvest celebrations; series of acts and ideas such as these also have a protective function; they help human beings in the unavoidable crises of life, failures, diseases and death. What is more, as they lend a hand that alleviates anxiety and hardens before frustrations and discomforts, they link the intimate personal experience to the general one. There are three fundamental axes on which the ideology is exercised and presented as material manifestations of peasant culture: the ceremonial, religious traditions and peasant movements.

Having sketched the peculiar and distinctive in peasant culture, it is very relevant to think that culture is partial, and in the general and anthropologic senses of the term, it has a cultural relation of interdependence with the city, considering the former as decisive in development, transformation and decline of culture. In this terms our instance that of rural tourism is paradigmatic and brilliantly illustrative.

The city has historically become the pole of haute culture, with which concentric subcultures have been created towards the periphery that become manifestation of popular societies; in this sense, the city has developed an hegemonic order of culture, fundamentally regulated through morals and technics. On the basis of this, the transformation of popular societies is stated in terms of urbanization, which might be a direct consequence of tourism. Urbanization is a determining factor in the views of the world, ethical practices and typical personalities as reflections of a specific community; and it at last means the development of two forms of cultural awareness, polarized in the countryside and in the city. In touristic practice, the irruption of the urban culture into the sphere of the peasant culture is not necessarily harmonious nor is it integrated organically, so the intercultural negotiation is a problem that must be approached in the sphere of development.

Intercultural negotiation in rural tourism projects

As it has been previously commented, tourism in rural zones is an activity that requires dramatic changes in the awareness of the involved actors. These changes and new conceptions are relatively hard to achieve and even harder when there is not a good level of understanding between the subjects and objects of tourism. Unfortunately, communication for rural development has been misunderstood as the set of techniques and tools, in the best of cases, applied by professionals in the subject. However, it is not possible to deny the fact that communication is an inherent fact to human being and it is not reserved to a limited number of professionals. It is because of this that the proposal opts for intercultural negotiation, as a way to make the integration between travelers and their host efficient, which must be foreseen in the stages of planning, operation and evaluation of the touristic projects. Even if it is true that in order to be able to make the activity operative it is necessary create a change of mentality in the farmer and that this change is susceptible to be boosted by means of strategies of social and ecologic marketing, it is also important to recognize that a substantial part of the touristic product is what the farmer has to say about their quotidian life, culture and customs (Calomadre, 2000). This means that despite tourism is

a developed activity and from which peasants have a lot to learn, a real communication process might foster the participation of rural inhabitants in the elaboration of projects of tourism, as they know their capabilities and limitations, and those who eventually may propose the alternatives to follow in the development of touristic projects (Carmona, 2002). A model of real communication implies negotiation as a precondition for the understanding of the other and is a critical stance to top-to-bottom models.

The cultural manifestation of rural population

Tourism is an activity with a series of patterns and procedures already established, as for it is a commercial and productive action with heavy social and cultural implications, it must be borne in mind a clear cultural interrelation with the rest of communities where it will operate. The fundamental objective of this cultural integration is directed to understand the risks and opportunities tourism offers and emphasize on them in the community it will take place. The precarious situation of the countryside and the peasant pluri-activity have originated the discovery and proposition of new uses for the rural space. It is because of this that we cannot support that rural tourism appears spontaneously by initiative of the farmers, nor is it the abrupt irruption of the city dwellers in the countryside. This is a phenomenon that has been created synchronically, and in order to be used direct communication with the rural population is needed so as to generate projects suitable to each specific reality. The integration of the peasant culture into the touristic discourse and, in semeiotic terms, with the variety of signs its environment provides might greatly contribute to tourist activity. The reading of the landscape as a touristic resource and as a component of the small community is indispensable. The communication with other peasants shows its perception of the geographic situation and size of the territory, of the climate and water resources. Likewise it will give an account of its socioeconomic status, of the available infrastructure and services, all in all of its cultural richness. The crucial point from a perspective of development is the motivations, competences and perspectives the community has of tourism, somehow learn if they have been sensitized before this activity. Learning these tangible factors and their symbolic

expressions is what ultimately might speak on behalf of the capability for the intercultural dialogue of the community, necessary for the touristic activity. At the time, it is the conjunction of these elements the one to be used to spread among the inhabitants its prospective touristic potential and the optimal way to make use of it. In these terms, communication becomes an indispensable element to meet rural culture, which has a dual end within the schema of intercultural negotiation; on the one side, it is an expression form of the autochthonous cultures, and on the other, it is the reflection that on the tourists they find of themselves under touristic manifestations.

The cultural expression of urban tourists

The urban visitor who displaces to the countryside is a constant emitter of messages in the intercultural dialogue. In a very broad sense, the tourist transforms the rural space into images that they construct from their imaginary on the countryside and the material supports that they find in their travel destinations. The motivation to travel, according to Augé (1998), occurs in the image of discovery that opens the encounter space with the actual spaces of others. City tourist pursues in the travel an experience already codified in the search of mythicized by the social imaginary so as to experience, understand or enjoy from the angle of social convention. This mental appropriation of the space is translated into a series of messages that interact inside the rural touristic subsystem and compose the circle of intercultural negotiations. Hence, a travel speaks of propitious moments to travel, a determinate duration, certain objectives to be fulfilled, a concrete sort of travel, ways to spend time in the destination, motivations, degrees of satisfaction, and fame socially attributed to the destination.

The operative unit of the touristic activity would correspond to the capacity of negotiation and reciprocity between each of the emitted messages, both for the recipient community and the visitors. In function of this communication it is possible to be able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages to settle the tourist activity as a strategy of rural development.

The prosaic, as a paradigm of intercultural negotiation in rural tourism

Once we exposed the problem of intercultural negotiation in the programs of rural tourism, it is opportune to approach one of the fundamental problems of the encounter between two cultures: the quotidian aesthetics. The analysis of a philosophical question of communication as a series of generative matrixes that explain the need of an intercultural negotiation for the operation of rural tourism projects is proposed. It is important to overcome the common places of the aesthetics in order to be able to carry out in a correct manner the present statement. In the first place, aesthetics does not refer to the canonically beautiful, but to partial beauties, locally appreciated; therefore, aesthetics does not exclusively refer to artistic values or the separation of the quotidian life, but there exists a communicative and deep aesthetics in any fact susceptible to be analyzed. In this sense, the Japanese aesthetics that finds values of beauty in the imperfection of nature and that even is an art of the impermanent, Wabi sabi, Juniper (2003). Nonetheless, why to approach the topic of aesthetics in an essay of rural tourism and peasantry? Despite it does not seem as though, the reason is simple, and it might even be assumed as obvious. Tourism is a hedonistic leisure of deep aesthetical significance, and the base of the intercultural negotiation as communication strategy has implications of aesthetical order, as the urban visitor will find a clash within the aesthetical values of the city and the quotidian beauty of the visited peoples will be transformed by the action of tourism.

Aesthetics keeps a dual order of communication: the symbolic and the semeiotic; this is to say, their signs are unsaid or, underlie that which is obvious and expressed. It is indeed in these unexpressed elements where the intercultural clash is stronger and where the efforts of the negotiations must be reinforced to operate an enterprise as complex as tourism is. Within the branches of the aesthetics the prosaic is to be found, which studies the aesthetical interchanges at quotidian level, and it is with these tools with which we can influence, by means of semeiotics, on the evaluation and implementation of communicative programs between the countryside and the city when they meet in the touristic practice.

Among the models for the analysis for communicative interchanges in the prosaic, we find:

a) The rhetoric and its diverse registrations, as differences in lexicon, acoustics, in the kinesics, in the iconic (including the discourses on the landscape and the places in touristic interest).

b) The dramatic and its modalities such as proxemics, kinetics, tonic and pulse.

These two models express the most accused variations in the interchange of quotidian aesthetics. In the concrete case of tourism here analyzed, it is possible to state that the differences are not bilaterally chaotic, for in the case of the tourist it is indeed to the search of aesthetical registrations opposed to the usual ones what motivates the travel; this means that, from this perspective, the aesthetical difference is potentiated as a communicative vehicle that calls touristic attraction, with the exception of some registrations that surpass the tolerance threshold of the tourist, as the lack of services. These uncomfortable registrations must be dissuaded or hidden in the communicative schemas. Nevertheless, as for peasants, the new aesthetical stimuli are usually very annoying, as these occur in their habitat and disturb into their aesthetics threatening their vital space. The implementation of touristic models must be clear in respect to these impacts, yet it must emphasize communications related to the diverse benefits of tourism and the strategies to reduce their impacts. Katya Mandoki (1994) has developed an approach of prosaic matrixes that might be useful to learn the specific points where intercultural negotiation for tourist projects must coincide. The matrixes of prosaic proposed by Mandoki are concrete situations where the subject is planted with their roots that locate them and determine them, and in function of which they generate reactions of acceptance or rejection. Hence, a way of looking at life is given by matrixes that are juxtaposed, since the subject experiences different matrixes along their life and even in a day they can fluctuate from a matrix to another, such as the medical, familial and professional.

All of this supposes we are able to develop a rural touristic matrix where an own iconic given by the landscape and its images might be stated, a specific props given by a series of autochthonous artifacts, a peculiar acoustics and so successively. The aforementioned touristic matrix may allude to the most representative aspects of the intercultural prosaic variation in bidirectional terms; i.e., both for the host and the tourist. This schema of aesthetical variations allows articulating proximities and distances between the countryside and the city around which the communicative process must be established. This refers to a balance of empirical nature, which demonstrates the fundamental needs of communication in projects of rural tourism.

Rural tourism as a contribution to peasant economy

Rural tourism is an activity with great potential, yet it is still holding a marginal place in the main developing countries. According to analyses elaborated by economists, tourism at a worldwide level generates 3 thousand 500 million USD a year, 127 million of jobs and implies the mobilization of 715 million of visitors. This general framework provides an idea of the humongous proportions of the market that countries with touristic potential, such as Mexico, want to seize. In the concrete case of this country, this activity is the fourth generator of income, and the tourism that is practiced in rural zones represents circa 757 million MXN. In this sense, tourism might be considered as an emergent entrance to rural communities, mainly in the face of the deterioration of the classical tasks, such as agricultural activities. In Mexico, a total of 323 social enterprises composed of farmers and indigenous people devoted to this activity are known. However, despite their great economic potential, the emplacement of the tourist activity in preserved environments conveys the risk of affecting these reservoirs if original instruments of management and planning are not implemented. Likewise it is necessary to evaluate the eventual negative social consequences, which, by and large, might appear at the level of landscape destruction, inflation, trans-culturing and imposition or clash of alien customs (López Pardo, 1998).

The richness of the contribution from rural tourism does not only have positive effects at local level or of short reach, at a general level, when it is combined with the traditional touristic offer, it might contribute to the touristic diversity of a country and in the reception of a larger number of tourists for longer in the national territory. In these terms and in accordance with the sociological theories that explain the appearance of rural tourism, we see this re-conceptualization of the nature of travelling crystallizes in worldwide trends, as the segment of alternative tourism is one with the fastest growth rhythms, whereas the segment of traditional sun-and-beach model grows at a 3.4% rate, the former does it at more than 10%. The size of the market for this new sort of tourism has been estimated by the specialists in more than 180 million people.

The previous data are a manifestation of economic movements at macro level, where the practice of rural tourism is to be found. In spite of their highly illustrative value they are nothing but the expression of a capitalist logic that even if not antithetic, in many a case does not correspond to the statements that some theoreticians make on peasant economy. For Chaianov in Shanin (1979), peasant economy is a specific sort of economy, totally determined in function of the composition of the farming family, the number of members, their coordination, their consumption demands and the number of workers it has. In this sense, it widely differs from the capitalist concept, as it does not express the expenses of production in units corresponding to the peasant economy; thus, a numerical evaluation of the economic benefit of rural tourism cannot be carried out, but it must be expressed in function of its concrete contribution to wellbeing and the survival of the farming family. This means that rural tourism, as a contribution to the specific economy of the farmer cannot be measured in monetary terms, it can only be compared; which to a certain extent turns out to be very subjective, since the comparison parameters will be expressed in terms of the satisfaction of the familial needs, the laboriousness of the tasks and other conditions. In this essay the monetary balance only has an illustrative character to perform the analysis and understand the phenomenon. Finally, it might be said that tourism could not be stated as the economic panacea of the peasantry, as its development and execution is intermittent in the high and

low seasons the activity has; yet its eventual contribution to farming economy is not limited to the daily and constant contribution this activity has, but rather to the way it contributes to the satisfaction of the yearly budget of the family consumption, this is to say, the securing of its subsistence for another cycle (García Cuesta, 1996).

Conclusions

Rural tourism is a strategy of development inserted in a spatial environment determined by the countryside, where there is a new use as a place of touristic leisure. The appearance of this phenomenon is explained by the relations of centre-periphery and post-materialism in advanced industrial society, linked to a severe crisis of the countryside and the new uses of the rural space. Rural tourism is not the panacea of the severe crisis of the countryside but a strategy inserted in larger processes of development.

Tourism as a dynamic agent of globalization generates accelerated modernization processes and integration of isolated zones of the market economy. This situation is an element that must be taken into account in the different phases of the project of rural development, especially when it is undertaken in peasant or indigenous populations, where a violent change might generate acculturation processes, massive migration and other negative effects.

The countryside faces a conjunctural crisis before which rural tourism may be restated as an alternative; yet at the time it might contribute to the process of peasant-depleting, acculturation and transformation for a more active insertion into the dominating process of globalized society.

Peasant culture establishes an integration or a clash with urban culture in the face of the touristic fact, with which in intercultural negotiation a strategy of efficient communication is observed, towards the comprehension of autochthonous cultures as touristic resources.

The prosaic and its generative matrixes are a model of suitable communication for intercultural dialogue, moreover when tourism is understood as a subsystem of development with profound aesthetical signification, both for the visitor and the host.

The ecologic dimension of rural tourism is a fundamental axis, both for the tourists who look for a preserved environment and the local population which values their resources and preserves the environment as a precondition for sustainable development; a critical position toward communication-market, based upon intercultural communication of prosaic matrixes, might contribute to a change of values in relation to the care of the environment.

Rural tourism constitutes a contribution to peasant economy, as long as this activity assimilates the particularity of this specific sort of economy and integrates the model of familial subsistence of the farmer, incorporating in it the components of the familial nucleus and contributing, at least partially, to their annual demands of survival.

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