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Communitarian initiatives on cultural heritage preservation: achievements and challenges

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Abstract

In Mexico there are major museums that show the historical greatness of both places and people. But although the wealth that exists in almost all the national territory is vast, great museums could hardly contain it all. In Mexico there are initiatives to establish rural community museums showing the appreciation and interest that local people have for their heritage resources, hence the conservation work should also consider its inhabitants. The existing experience shows the need to adapt the work of institutions like INAH, without undermining their efforts to safeguard the assets, to include such initiatives in this work. The population of Sisal, principal seaport during the colonial era, shows part of the achievements and challenges that these initiatives. The objective was to analyze the processes of asset management in the community of study. We identified the achievements and challenges in the management processes by using a qualitative approach, applying interviews and direct observation. We did twenty one semi-structured interviews with major adults, fishermen, housewives and municipal and ejido authorities. This paper highlights the approach in relation to Sisal heritage management, identifies the problems, achievements and challenges faced by its inhabitants and makes findings and recommendations for the future. Finally, we identify factors that interact with the heritage and believe that the participation of the community is important for managing the assets in question to define its future conservation. The data collected show that the port through an initial stage for the development of cultural tourism that could generate positive implications for both economic and social and cultural rights. The experience of Sisal could serve as an example for other communities in the region.

Key words: Heritage, management, community, museums, Sisal

Resumen

En México existen museos de gran importancia que muestran la grandeza histórica de lugares y población, pero ningún museo podría contenerla toda. Las iniciativas para establecer museos comunitarios en zonas rurales evidencian el aprecio e interés que las poblaciones locales tienen por sus recursos patrimoniales, por ello la conservación debería considerar también a los habitantes. Las experiencias existentes muestran la necesidad de adecuar los trabajos de instituciones como el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), sin menoscabo de su labor como salvaguarda del patrimonio, para incluir tales iniciativas en esas labores. La población de Sisal, Yucatán, principal puerto de altura durante la época de la Colonia, muestra parte de los logros y retos de esas iniciativas. Nuestro trabajo tiene el objetivo de analizar los procesos de gestión patrimonial de la comunidad de estudio, incluyendo las iniciativas comunitarias para conservarlo. Pone de relieve el enfoque relacionado con el manejo del patrimonio, los logros y retos enfrentados por sus habitantes al involucrarse en los procesos de gestión. Los datos recabados demuestran que el puerto atraviesa una etapa inicial para el desarrollo de un turismo cultural que pudiera generar efectos económicos, sociales y culturales positivos. La experiencia de Sisal pudiera servir de ejemplo para otras comunidades de la región, porque la participación de la comunidad es importante para la gestión del patrimonio en cuestión, pudiendo definir su conservación en el futuro.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio, gestión, comunidad, museos, Sisal

Introduction

All countries possess sites of interest which represent spaces of attraction and identity for both tourists and inhabitants. In Mexico there are museums of great importance which show the historic greatness of such places and its people, however it is hard for big museums to contain this entire greatness because it is vast and encompasses nearly the whole country. The majority of Mexican communities have numerous cultural resources that they do recognize and appreciate, but they often lack economic and technical resources for preservation. Without attention, these resources could deteriorate, so the preservation task should consider these communities too. In this work we propose the integration and interaction of those levels and sectors that participate in the heritage preservation of a Yucatan

Peninsula coastal community emphasizing the inhabitant's participation and the role played by institutions like Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National Institute of Anthropology and History, INAH). Our study demanded an intensive bibliographic search related to this theme, which was used as the foundation to develop the theoretical framework of this work. We identified the achievements and challenges in the management processes by using a qualitative approach, applying interviews and direct observation. We did twenty one semi-structured interviews with major adults, fishermen, housewives and municipal and ejido¹ authorities.

¹ The *ejido* is a communal form of land ownership created by the Agrarian Reform in Mexico.

This paper focuses on the heritage management in Sisal, Yucatan, with the aim to analyze these processes made by the community, including the initiatives for preservation and the way in which communities could integrate these activities, the identification of the most important achievements and challenges that inhabitants face to keep their heritage, and the relationship between community members with institutions in charge of any heritage issue, with the purpose of understanding these dynamics. Existing experiences show the necessity to adapt the work of institutions like INAH in order to include community initiatives in these works, with no demerit of its task as heritage keeper. The population of Sisal, main port during Colonial era, shows some of the achievements and challenges that these initiatives have. Recompiled data show that the port is currently going through an initial stage for the development of cultural tourism which could provide positive economical, social and cultural impacts. The Sisal experience could be an example for other regional communities, because community participation is important in preservation and management.

Cultural heritage and management

When we talk about heritage we assume a collection of interactions between culture and inhabitants of a certain destination, which implies certain management strategies by the interested parties. One of the major challenges of organizations dedicated to heritage management is to understand that not only should heritage managers be involved in heritage itself, but the local people as well. During the fieldwork carried out in this study it has demonstrated some of the strategies that community inhabitants had implemented for heritage preservation, in spite of the minimal information many of interviewees provided on the subject.

Based on the aforementioned we tried to analyze the concept of heritage which, as an important part of the culture, incorporates the collective memory of communities and nations and takes shape with mankind's ability to conceive the meanings that rise in the past and construct the future (Arizpe, 2009). Heritage and culture are two realities that converge in their goals because they are concepts that answer a social demand that could contribute to the development and preservation of communities. In the interplay between these two elements we found the concept of cultural heritage in which the culture, from an anthropological perspective, is in permanent transformation, and with changes that society is accumulating to create a set of elements -materials, ideas, symbols, experiences- that allow it to shape its own heritage (Bonfil-Batalla, 1994; Vecco, 2010). Florescano (1994) considers that the concept of cultural heritage is beyond our own concept of folklore, of traditions, and includes ancestral cultural practices, the way in which such traditions are integrating everyday and the past which influences the historical formation of Mexico. Cultural heritage, as a collection of historical resources that a community has created to ensure its survival

and reproduction, is constituted by the archaeological, historical and artistic vestiges and the living culture of the current communities. These concepts are related to the way in which every community adopts the past and the heritage management uses to be determined by the social differences that occur within the society (Florescano, 1994; Lumbreras, 1984). Strengthening of the institutions which record such heritage in an appropriate manner constitutes the basis to achieve a suitable preservation. Nowadays these organisms are effective agents of transformation because they often lead heritage management programs but they do not consider neither visitors nor native population.

Although cultural heritage encompasses much more than assets, material and immaterial, of a nation, we know that there are other concepts around it that lead us to redefine the concept of heritage and to think about other levels of its management and preservation. Access to cultural heritage is a right and implies an obligation to respect the heritage values, interests and equity of the community, the historic properties owners, the landscapes and cultures (Icomos, 1999) and its management to keep the cultural values of that heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations (McKercher & Du Cross, 2002). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2008) points out that cultural heritage management aims to maintain the cultural values of the assets of cultural heritage for the enjoyment of current and future generations. The above mentioned lead us to ask: how are these management and heritage processes implemented? Who manages the heritage in communities? Who participates? How can these communities engage in these processes? The aim is to promote development with local participation, by appreciation and preservation of heritage and by the active participation of inhabitants of a certain place or region, as in this case study.

Historical and geographic context of the port of Sisal

Sisal is a rural community located on the northwestern littoral region of Yucatan state, in the Gulf of Mexico, at 53 km of northwestern of Merida (Inegi, 2005) and, until 1871, was the main commercial port of the Yucatan Peninsula. Its littoral extension is 27.5 km and has limit with the State Reserve El Palmar (Corredor Biológico Mesoamericano México, 2010). According to the 2nd Account of Population and Housing 2005, Sisal had 1652 inhabitants, of which 872 are men and 800 are women and 414 inhabited houses (Inegi, 2005). The main productive activities in this coastal region are fishing, hunting, salt extraction, coconut cultivation, agriculture, wood cutting and, recently, service facilities for sun and sea tourism (Batllori-Sampedro, González-Piedra, Díaz-Sosa, & Febles-Patrón, 2006). This place has achieved the development of a tourist industry which capitalizes on its constant flow of national and international visitors. According to the current tendencies of world tourism and the heritage attributes that the site possesses, there are plans to activate the economy by developing alternative tourism activities, such as the ones promoted by state and

federal dependences in the region like Seduma.² Examples of these projects are routes by the swamp and tourist activities in the beach zone, where the local population is in charge of the services offered (López-Maldonado & Castillo-Burguete, 2010). Synergies of the zones, heritage diversity, and local participation are entwined to create strategies that promote, in a conscientious way, the use and management of heritage resources of the community and the participation of interested parties during the entire management process.

Methodology

We used methodology that allowed us to integrate the local inhabitants vision. We selected key interlocutors considering those who live together with the site and interact in the place as inhabitants, owners, users and facilitators of services. Testimonies of interviewees enhanced the historical interpretation during the entire methodological process that we performed in this study. Our fieldwork was carried out in May 2009 and from October to December 2010. A qualitative approach (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996) and semi-structured interviews were used during fieldwork. We integrated the points of view and the local knowledge of participants basing us on the direct observation recorded on field diary, general tours by the study area and interviews (Mayan, 2001; Rodríguez, Gil, & García, 1999). We got information about the current communitarian exploitation of the assets, its attributes and other socio cultural aspects of the community. Interviews were transcribed, codified and captured in the *Atlas.ti v. 6.2* software, we elaborated field records and data were categorized (Wolcott, 2001), triangulation was used to verify them (Creswell, 2003) and, finally, a focal group was made (Krueger, 1991).

Institutions as coordinators of the management process. INAH and the local people

At first, heritage in the port was perceived by inhabitants mainly as a medium for tourist attracting but implementation of management strategies achieved the preservation of it. Some of these strategies include: the creation of relationships with those institutions designated to the preservation of heritage, the implementation of a board, financed by its own members since its beginning, which promote the local heritage preservation, the development of a cultural tourism profile and the diffusion of artistic manifestations in the community.

Analyzing the role of these institutions we obtained a framework about the particular situation that the community of study lives related to the management of its own heritage, in which the restoration, management and preservation of that heritage is an exclusive and entire activity of INAH in Mexico (INAH, 2011) but it is not responsible for any guarantee that these monuments,

protected sites and cultural environments could be taken into account in the planning processes (Swensen & Jerpäsen, 2008). INAH has the absolute control on the excavation, restoration, surveys, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and in general way, on the research of heritage at national level. Despite of sites promoting plays a key role in the preservation of cultural heritage, these activities requires direct authorization from INAH (Stritch, 2006).

We have seen that in Mexico the preservation of heritage is depending of this institution and it is intrinsically bonded to the creation of educative or recreational attractions for visitors, however emphasis is often put in the restoration and esthetical presentation themselves. Also there are other aspects related to the heritage management; for example, there is evidence of cases in Sisal of erosion, vandalism and pillage, lacking protection, management programs, related laws and trained personnel to protect the value of heritage resources. If we consider that INAH does not include communities, which are losing their traditional rights to accessing their own heritage, and in addition this institution does not have enough spaces to host the whole information and curatorship of vestiges and assets of the entire nation, then we are in front of a major problem because the numerous heritage assets of rural communities cannot be attended.

Communitarian initiatives implemented for their own heritage management. Some results

Artists, intellectuals, anthropologists, among others, have been interested in the concept of heritage but the way in which communities incorporate in management processes that allow to participate on the management of their own heritage have been forgotten. Indeed it is difficult to talk about the heritage value because its unique and incomparable elements often do not take into account the participation of local people. This is motivated because some communitarian initiatives could be benefic when the aim is to manage and understand their relationship with the environment, not only for issues of knowledge and cultural participation, but also in the way they promote awareness of those involved in the process, the value that gives the community and the response it provokes in people. Studies that include such initiatives have been somewhat scarce; this may be due to lack of interest in these topics, the nature of the common use of the assets, the lack of consultation and the exclusion of communities in those processes.

In this section we describe the successes and failures that inhabitants of the port encountered from the experiences of respondents in managing local heritage. In Sisal we find that people do appreciate their assets due to initiatives and strategies implemented by community groups. To test the above premise we decided to identify and analyze some of the challenges and achievements in management processes of such groups who organize, manage, promote and actively participate in the preservation of their heritage. Based on some projects implemented in the port,

² Seduma: Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente de Yucatán (Secretariat of Environment and Urban Development)

such as tours to the archaeological remains, the proposal of creating a museum of the sea, and the “Empress’s Road”, the interest in including the attractions mentioned in a route of cultural tourism, participation of local people and the initiatives that led them to participate in these projects have played an important role. Integrating these heritage in tourism projects, this wealth that receives little or no attention, could generate greater economic benefits than those obtained solely through the sun and sea tourism.

The ones to promote these activities and the cultural heritage are the local groups because they are responsible for managing the funds for the heritage preservation and play a key role in driving recovery projects and recovery of such property, as exemplified by the group Patronato Pro Rescate de la Historia de Sisal (Board for the Rescue of the History of Sisal, PPRHS) who had a major performance in restoring the building of the Former Custom, locally known as “La Aduana”³ (Figure 1) and in promoting the heritage of the community. The PPRHS was able to launch other major cultural events and festivities in the port, and obtained financing for the creation of Sisal’s dock. However, involved people do not always have the financial resources necessary to carry out the steps or with the appropriate organizational capacity. Nevertheless, with the help of donations and intensive work, the community was able to recover and rehabilitate the property in question, installing even a small communitarian museum and a temporary exhibition centre. Besides the afore mentioned other spaces have been equipped to provide tourist services and there have been activities such as bike rides to mangrove areas, tours in small boats to visit nearby sites, bird watching, reef diving tours and interpretation trails.

The results of fieldwork show us that in Sisal there have been established some groups whose main activities are related to the conservation of heritage and they have been implemented some cultural projects for tourism. Some of the strategies and goals were: to preserve and maintain the community history, achieving the community integration through cultural events to learn about its own history, transforming the image of the site commonly viewed as a tourist destination for sun and sea to a more cultural one and change the seasonality that the port used to have. Although community participation in the processes of local heritage management will not guarantee correct operation, interviewees mentioned being satisfied and considered a significant step towards the recovery of the port goods, especially if we consider that an external institution makes decisions on such resources. Even though some respondents had negative views about the lengthy procedure taken by INAH for management processes, most recognized the important role it plays and in this regard one respondent said “... we wanted to form groups to teach people what is the culture and history of Sisal, but we had to ask for help to INAH because they manage everything that is valuable, all the historical issues” (Fisherman, 46

years). This does not mean that the mere fact of creating cooperative agreements, and collaboration, is a sufficient guarantee to become success projects.

The experiences of interviewees showed some of the conflicts arising from the lack of funding and agreement between management institutions and the other officers involved in the process. For example, respondents mentioned that, at first it was difficult the management process for La Aduana when they tried to receive support to initiate proceedings for the recovery of assets and obtaining the rights or the transfer of capital asset. Another problematic aspect mentioned was the lack of experience they had for an appropriate management of the received funds as well as surveillance and monitoring for a properly channelization. In this regard one respondent commented “... we really do not have funds, we met when we do an activity or a way out [of Sisal], we took our money pocket and give 20 pesos to 50 pesos, depending on the expenses that are” (Housewife, 46 years). In contrast, other activities less problematic, although it has influenced the welfare of their families, were the long hours of waiting for treatment at the time of the search for the respective institutions. In relation to the previous one interviewee mentioned “... We were walking around, I think it was like two or three years of this and sometimes we waited even a whole day. But long before the formation of PPRHS it had already begun the effort. I think it has about 10 or 15 years that began to do La Aduana as we know it now” (Housewife, 42 years).

Another major conflict presented revolves around resource management and lack of support from officials and authorities, as shown by the testimony of one interviewee “... There were many problems in the past few years with the former mayor of community and so we left the group, but people say that they want to start again to work together” (Housewife, 49 years). For some time, this activity had been in charge of one of the members of PPRHS, however, some of the challenges that faced was to promote the importance of heritage management among young people, women and elders of the community. When asked about the interests that led one respondent to participate with PPRHS said “... the PPRHS was formed because we really wanted to rescue La Aduana because it was very dangerous and full of trunks” (Housewife, 49 years). The study results suggest that the origin of such initiatives are in: 1) interest in the use and value of the assets, like La Aduana building that community recognizes as valuable and meaningful for them, 2) the interest in creating cultural spaces for young people living in Sisal, 3) knowledge of the potential risk of degradation of such assets, 4) the apparent loss of other important heritage elements in the port, 5) the interest for the creation and promotion of cultural events that attract more visitors to the community, 6) promote cultural tourism to a greater or lesser extent.

One of the initiatives mentioned by respondents was the creation of PPRHS whose aims were to promote, manage and recover the assets of the port. For example, in the

³ La Aduana is one of the most representative historical building of Sisal, Yucatan.



FIGURE 1. HISTORICAL BUILDING LA ADUANA IN SISAL, YUCATAN

case of La Aduana, after a long period of management, restoration of the building's history and characteristics, reconstruction and a brief discussion of chronological and activation issues, it opened in 2007 (Figure 2). It was then reviewed and discussed the uses that could provide the building as well as cultural activities were permitted to offer at that place on campus users.⁴ At first it was used for communitarian cultural events, films, exhibition of crafts and regional food sales. The participation of women in these areas was vital to achieving the goals outlined in the recovery of assets, as they raised funds to continue the management costs. In this regard one respondent said "... we sometimes we did not have even for a ticket bus. Then they came for us, took us and then we return (...) we came in, talked, they told us and then we went out from there but economical aspect was basically our main constraint" (Housewife, 35 years).

Consolidate funding for restoration work and empowerment were requested at other times and other institutions but also performed festivals, exhibitions, cultural activities and community tours, highlighting the heritage of the port. Today such activities are no longer made; the respondents attribute it to no interest to continue with the projects and due to they do not possess the necessary skills to continue them. The building of La Aduana currently operates as a

multipurpose room and has not been included permanent museum exhibitions that include the history of the port. If the above is made they could generate economical income for the people and create opportunities for local development by promoting interaction with the surrounding communities and achieving the recovery of the built heritage of the port and the implementation of cultural and artistic activities. Respondents said they are interested in creating these spaces, in training and contribute to local development through cultural activities such as creating a museum in the community and to rescue the history of the port, as mentioned they know very little of it. The main motivation of the people to participate in the past in the process of heritage management was to ensure the protection of property because it was in an advanced state of degradation. Some women reported that the reason that led them to participate in heritage management to restore it was to know that their children would have cultural spaces.

Previous experiences show the need to adapt the work of institutions like INAH to include community initiatives in its work, without neglecting his task as a heritage keeper. Unfortunately, studies in this area are scarce or often consider other organizational aspects of the community, including other areas and attractions, the role of women in management processes and the participation of the population in general.

⁴ INAH gives the buildings in concession only for certain specific activities.

Investigating local decisions relating to heritage

We have seen so far that heritage is economically, culturally and socially significant, especially considering its dual aspect (natural and cultural) and their complexity. We have also seen that there are several meanings of the concept of heritage and this is reflected in the variety of key features that make it up, but the capital value of a place is best understood when research and documentation to identify the sites is done depth and when there is active participation of local people (Australian Heritage Council, 2009). The assets we refer here concerns not only monumental issues, but who possesses a valuable cultural significance and includes the perception and use of historical monuments, modern buildings, festivals, cultural events, folklore and other fields aimed develop the potential of a territory and represents a factor of friendship and understanding between peoples. Although there have been few studies to determine the types of assets, they can be classified according to variables such as the type of resource accessed, its main features, the reasons and type of tourists (McKercher & Du Cross, 2002). The assets could provide economic benefits and encourage visitors and communities are involved in educational experiences and gain understanding of the historical attributes of a particular place. Bringing different sectors related to heritage will integrate and maintain the culture, heritage and community in balance so that the people could manage and enjoy their own heritage properties in the present and keep for the future. This enjoyment of heritage could be combined with local initiatives such as festivals, concerts and other attractions, and attract tourists and provide economic benefits to these populations have been identified as Bowitz and Ibenholt (2009).

Some forms of assets that can be identified by the communities to include objects from the past, the history of a place and manner of living of the people, buildings, structures, sites and groups of sites with valuable natural

attractions. If objects or sites fail to show historical, cultural, social or natural are important to a particular place represents customs or ways of life that are characteristic of the local area, or if only occupies an important place in the life of the people should be preserved for future generations.

The increasing cultural spaces such as museums in rural areas to preserve the existing heritage community has urged us to focus our attention on the linkages between population and culture, and the way in which residents participate in the preservation of their heritage. Part of our interest that currently some authors have described the relationship in ways that tourists perceive the heritage of the places they visit (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2006) but information about how the inhabitants of the communities which possess valuable heritage resources, receive and manage their heritage is scarce.

It is known that the Mexican government has removed most of the assets in the communities, in order to preserve for the benefit of the nation, but could not maintain such quantity of goods or assets is that some of them deteriorate or do not have a proper storage. Because of this problem and, to value or appreciate the heritage (Ballart, 1997), communities begin to reclaim what they consider theirs. This causes the creation of adjuvant that comes to change the paternalistic nature of the museum

bringing to life traditional Mexican community museums. Proper management and promotion of heritage could provide information that contributes to the understanding of the history of the community and through other activities, could be preserved and reinserted into the social fabric. The culture, the preservation of historical memory, the incorporation of design events and artistic and cultural spaces are some activities that have promoted the interests of the inhabitants of a community of the coast for the preservation of their heritage.



FIGURE 2. LA ADUANA: BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER (RIGHT) RESTORATION

Museums and community. Instruments for the promotion and preservation of local heritage

Museums are considered a major attraction, are usually made up of art galleries and monuments are part of a universal cultural system for the dissemination of knowledge and experience (Herreman, 1998; Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). They are more than places dedicated to the placement and exposure of collections and works of art are considered as a privileged means of communication and play a central role in making culture accessible to the public. Different types of museums could provide varied experiences for their visitors (Dicks, 2003) and other participants. The benefits are not just for tourists who visit them, who may have more in common with other locals to tourists (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011); but exhibits in these areas could generate additional revenue and compensate people such as seasonality in tourism. These goods could act as a magnet for attracting visitors and the general population and the resources to support conservation projects could come from several sources (UNESCO, 2008).

Today museums can rely on various sources of information and play a positive role in spreading the knowledge society on a large scale. Museums are trained for such a role: cultural heritage value and employ competent specialists and sensitive to cultural traditions. Can support and promote cultural diversity, continuity of tradition and cultural creativity continues. Herreman (1998) mentioned that museums have gone through a stage with new trends, because of the social approach they adopt, like a community museum, whose main objective is to preserve and display cultural, material, ways of thinking and use of the social group to which it belongs, while setting the location of objects in their original cultural space (Sheng & Chen, 2012). The community museum could make use of the cultural heritage of the social group that generates it. In the exhibition halls of the museums community can reinterpret their past and present, recognize and reinforce each stage as a group with a past, tradition, heritage and a shared cultural identity.

Sisal exhibition spaces might have other options that offer cultural and recreational tourism that visit, with a center that is the focus of other cultural, educational, social services and bibliographic research, the museum being a meeting place for craftsmen, actors, dancers, artists and graphics. The identification of these spaces provides a starting point to reconsider the establishment of museums or interpretive centers that include them. In Sisal, a museum would contribute to the affirmation of the values of cultural identity, making a speech that included the history museum of the population and a selection of cultural heritage features of the social group to disseminate what feel is their own and with which they identify. It is also to integrate the old building of La Aduana to tell the story of the port and the ecological environment through additional routes for trails. The architectural ensemble of the maritime customs could be dedicated to the museum's

exhibition spaces, services and gardens or outdoor areas, and accommodate the community heritage collections.

The knowledge of life at sea, the types and functions of marine transportation, naval events and natural disasters in the past may also be part of the exhibits on the premises. The collections may be formed by a set of objects and documents that reflect the diversity of maritime activities such as commercial shipping, fishing, shipbuilding, nautical science, maritime history or technology. For all these reasons we propose the creation of museums in nearby communities, managed by local community members, which could enable them to have control and management of local cultural resources (Magnoni, Ardren, & Hutson, 2007). The development of these proposals might influence how heritage is perceived and appreciated, and the important cultural heritage resource in the area could be used to create tourism routes that allow visitors to walk, meet and learn about the history and the environment. If the importance of heritage is recognized by community residents and visitors, so they could protect and preserve this heritage (Figini & Vici, 2011).

Some conclusions

The preservation of heritage importance and qualities suggest that it is to give a value or sense of appreciation. Whether use value, symbolic and even aesthetic heritage must always consider as a means and not an end in itself, as suggested by Ballart (1997). He notes that in the economic context wealth has different types of values: use value, material that meets a need or a desire for knowledge, a formal value, which awakens our senses and draws its qualities, and a symbolic value significant that relates us to the past and present form a bridge between people separated by time. The people of Sisal value their heritage and that is why the port has spurred synergies between local actors and enhanced the ability of community organization. This value is given to community heritage, archaeological, historical, cultural and natural resources is to be used as a tool to provide the evidence needed for the practice of tourism activities in the region. Community participation is important for managing the assets in question may define its future conservation. In this sense, the community has been able to participate not only in the management of local heritage, but also in the way we use those resources to express their cultural materials history and culture. Training local people is vital in tourism-related activities, so they can participate and benefit from it.

Special attention is required for projects that include other communities that have valuable heritage assets and ensure that the tourism industry to better understand the need to protect the heritage, values and policies. Tourism could contribute to justify the adaptive reuse of historic buildings or places with heritage as a means of preservation. However, by not including the communities in the management plans and conservation values are lost intangible assets. This probably the property be retained, but the meaning and historical value are lost.

It is necessary to show interest in the promotion of heritage to visit new places and do not forget others. The training of specialists, performing scientific and technical studies, provision of equipment and implementation of programs and meetings to promote, especially among young people is vital.

Museums play a major role in research projects of cultural tourism and Sisal experience could serve as example for other communities in the region. Obtaining an independent expert opinion on the evaluation and selection of heritage sites could impact positively on the economic, social and cultural development. Community participation is crucial to managing the assets in question and its conservation.

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