

**Local productive systems and tourism. Alternative for socioeconomic development in Cuba**

**Sistemas productivos locales y turismo. Alternativa para el desarrollo socioeconómico en Cuba**

**Sistemas locais de produção e turismo. Alternativa para o desenvolvimento socioeconômico em Cuba**



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**ABSTRACT**

In the analysis of socio-economic development in Cuba, the municipality-tourism articulation is assumed as a strategic necessity. However, this relational process has not reached the desired levels, expressing this, a contradiction that manifests itself in the need to favor articulating processes between the municipality and the sectorial tourist activity and the limited contribution of the current local productive forms. In response to the above, the following is presented as a problem: limited articulation between the municipality and the sectorial tourism activity with a focus on local development, defining itself as the objective: theoretically to base the viability of local productive systems, as an alternative for the articulation of municipal tourism sectors with a focus to local development, secondary sources are used in the verification of the current state of the problem at national level, obtaining as a result from the materialistic dialectical method, theoretical elements that visualize local productive systems as local productive organizational forms suitable for the achievement of this articulation.

**Keywords:** local development; local productive systems; sectorial tourist activity

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## RESUMEN

En el análisis del desarrollo socioeconómico en Cuba la articulación municipio-turismo se asume como necesidad estratégica. Sin embargo, este proceso relacional no ha alcanzado los niveles deseados, expresando ello, una contradicción que, se manifiesta en la necesidad de favorecer procesos articuladores entre el municipio y la actividad turística sectorial y la limitada contribución de las actuales formas productivas locales. Atendiendo a lo anterior se presenta como problema: limitada articulación entre el municipio y la actividad turística sectorial con enfoque en el desarrollo local, definiéndose como objetivo: fundamentar teóricamente la viabilidad de los sistemas productivos locales, como alternativa para la articulación municipios turismo sectorial con enfoque al desarrollo local, se utiliza fuentes secundarias en la comprobación del estado actual del problema a escala nacional, obteniéndose como resultado a partir del método dialéctico materialista, elementos teóricos que visualizan los sistemas productivos locales como formas organizativas productivas locales adecuadas para el logro de esta articulación.

**Palabras clave:** desarrollo local; sistemas productivos locales; actividad turística sectorial

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## RESUMO

Na análise do desenvolvimento sócio-econômico em Cuba, a articulação município-turismo é assumida como uma necessidade estratégica. No entanto, este processo de relacional não atingiu os níveis desejados, expressando uma contradição que se manifesta na necessidade de favorecer processos de articulação entre o município e a atividade turística setorial e a limitada contribuição das atuais formas produtivas locais. Tendo em conta o acima exposto, o problema é apresentado como: articulação limitada entre o município e a atividade turística setorial com foco no desenvolvimento local, definindo como objectivo: para fundamentar teoricamente a viabilidade dos sistemas produtivos locais, como alternativa de articulação dos municípios turísticos setoriais com foco no desenvolvimento local, são utilizadas fontes secundárias na verificação do estado atual do problema à escala nacional, obtendo-se como resultado do método dialético materialista, elementos teóricos que visualizam os sistemas produtivos locais como formas organizativas produtivas locais adequadas para a realização desta articulação.

**Palavras-chave:** desenvolvimento local; sistemas produtivos locais; atividade turística setorial

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last thirty years, the need to interact on a changing socio-economic context, both national and global, has been a feature that has defined in Cuba, transformations in the framework of socio-economic regulation mechanisms.

These changes will be conditioned by the need to reorient internally, mechanisms of economic planning, aimed at readjusting the economic-administrative and management relations, inducing a process characterized in terms of territorial planning, by implementing processes of decentralization in decision making, without affecting the vision of the country project.

Since then, the local development approach has gone through a process of maturation and systematization that has become a theoretical construction, based on the characteristics of the economic and socio-political system in Cuba, implying concrete proposals that, from the management of local government, contribute to energize development processes within the country from the conscious mobilization of existing resources in the municipalities (Torres, 2016).

Externally, the policy would be aimed at promoting, based on existing comparative advantages and acquired competitive advantages, external insertion, considering this the main route for extended reproduction, taking into account the country's limitations, in order to achieve adequate levels of accumulation in accordance with its development.

In this direction, tourism was assumed as a sector that, given its intrinsic characteristics, could favor the sustained growth of the economy and incorporate the country into the dynamics of international trade, giving its development the rank of strategic priority to stop the sharp drop in economic growth and project the future development of the country (Perelló Cabrera, 2015).

However, the development of tourism activity has been characterized by a sector-based logic, based on an extensive approach to its management, which in the territorial sphere has not favoured the necessary transformation in the structure and organization of the local productive base, implying that (Gascón González, 2013; Menoya Zayas et al., 2017):

- Lack of investment actions in favor of improving the technical-productive infrastructure of the municipality.
- Not taking advantage of the tangible and intangible heritage of the towns as a complementary offer to diversify and improve the quality of the tourist product.
- Underutilization of local productive factors that allow greater levels of efficiency in the tourism sector, via import substitution.

In this sense, Menoya, et.al. (2017), refers that:

"it is necessary to integrate at local level two management processes that run parallel, fail to optimize their levels of possible connection and therefore the synergistic effect derived from their interrelationship; these are: the management of local development, led by the municipal government on the one hand, and the management of tourism at the level of physical-geographical space, directed from central administrative levels that give little room for maneuver to local governments for decision making on tourism in their respective districts".

In this direction, we are currently witnessing a favorable context with respect to the relationship between local development and tourism, which is expressed in the improvement of the economic and social development model.

The above is expressed in the recognition of the importance that, for the development of tourism has; the increase of the competitiveness of the country on the base of an adequate relation quality-price, the recognition of the non-state activity as complementary offer to the state one, the search of alternatives in function of a better use of the infrastructures in the diversification of the product, to increase the participation of the national industry and the services, the need to spread the best values of the cultural patrimony of the Revolution.

This implies the search for new forms of productive organization at a local level that allows both processes to be interwoven in a dynamic of joint development, which breaks with the current parallelism between local development and sectoral tourism.

In view of this, the authors propose as an objective of the present work to theoretically base the viability of local productive systems as an alternative for the articulation of municipalities and sectorial tourist activity.

This is justified by the idea that the analysis of the characteristics that define the local productive system allows it to be considered an adequate tool in the current context of Cuban socioeconomic development.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

During the research the dialectical materialist method was applied, as a guiding method, assuming the Marxist approach to economy; this allows the evolutionary analysis of the forms of local productive organization in the country, as well as the elements that typify it in the current context of realization of the economic and social mechanisms of realization.

It was also used the use of secondary sources to obtain information through studies and assessments of experts in the field, which allowed to identify the shortcomings in terms of articulation municipality tourism activity with a focus on local development.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the local dimension applied to the field of tourism has become, since its first foundational studies in the 19th century, an organic component of its theoretical-conceptual system, since tourist activity takes place through specific inter-spatial displacements, conditioned by differentiating characteristics between the emitting and receiving place.

Since then, there has been a conceptual evolution of tourist activity that is increasingly framed in the dynamic processes that occur within the local systems where the phenomenon takes place.

However, from the previous argument, the analysis of the local scope in the referential framework of tourism is going to suffer transformations from the 70's consolidating in the 90's of the XX century, results of the changes that would operate towards the interior of the productive structures of multiscale dimension, converging in time, with a new theoretical-conceptual rethinking on the theme local development - tourism. It is indicated by its importance for the research:

1. Transition to an intensive economic model based on a flexible productive organization, characterized by market segmentation.
2. The emergence of new development paradigms, including the endogenous approach and the sustainable development paradigm.
3. The study and rediscovery of forms of productive organization at the local level.

The above would condition a positive context for the transformation of the tourism reference system, focused on the impacts produced by its realization in the local dimension. In this sense, the "World Tourism Conference" held in 1980, recognizes the need to conceptually assume the multidimensional character of tourism impact, by pointing out that

"The satisfaction of tourism needs must not constitute a threat to the social and economic interests of the populations of tourist regions, to the environment, especially to natural resources, which are the essential attraction of tourism, or to historical and cultural sites".

For the decade of the 90s of the 20th century, the development of the concept of sustainable tourism as an alternative construct, converts the conceptual approaches of sustainable development-tourism-local development into a unique theoretical body. Its convergence is the result of factors that are gaining strength, determining greater depth in the study of the tourism-local development relationship:

- The growing dynamism, in quantitative and qualitative terms, that the sector is acquiring in the global context of the economy, and the recognition by the sciences that study the tourism phenomenon of its ambivalence regarding its implications in the transformation of the receiving environments.
- The extrapolation to tourism activity of studies and initiatives to prevent the systematic deterioration of the environment and the socio-cultural effects produced by its expansion.
- The consolidation of the focus on the local dimension as an alternative to development, which, transcending the conceptual analysis of tourist activity constitutes a break, at least in theory, from the conception that only pointed out the passive importance of the local.

Based on these premises, the local dimension will acquire a relevant role in the transformation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of tourism, which began at the Rio Summit and continues to the present day, having as its main elements:

- The recognition of the ambivalent impacts that tourism activity reproduces on local development, accentuating the questioning of the traditional or mass development model (Cañada, 2013)
- The proposal of alternative or low intensity development models, where the culture of respect prevails over the tangible and intangible heritage of the host localities (Cañada, 2015)
- Consensus is developing on the need to improve the mechanisms of redistribution of wealth as a contribution to eradicating the social, economic and cultural marginalization of host localities (Rubí González & Palafox Muñoz, 2017)
- It is systematized on the need to deepen the processes of democratization from a greater protagonism of the local population in its management of the development with axis in the tourist activity (Burgos Doria, 2016)

In this direction, the "World Charter for Sustainable Tourism+20" recognizes that:

"Tourism should use local goods and services in ways that can increase community linkages and minimize economic leakage, recognizing social and economic cohesion as a fundamental principle of sustainable tourism development".

The above has generated a new focus in the area of the sustainability paradigm, assumed as Responsible Tourism that, as a social movement that is pro-active, in addition to questioning the destructive effects caused by the trans nationalization of tourism activity on a global scale, puts forward concrete proposals to insert the local scales of government into the national and global structures of tourism value, in defense of its multidimensional development (Rifai, 2016).

In this scenario, it is not casual then that, in the analysis of sustainability and responsibility of the tourist activity and its relation with the local, a point of concreteness is constituted by the explicit recognition, in the framework of the objectives of sustainable development until 2030 (UN, 2018 Objective 8, target 8.9) of: "Elaborate and put in practice policies aimed at promoting a sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes culture and local products".

### **Tourism and local development in Cuba**

The redimensioning of the local dimension, as an alternative of development and the recognition of tourism as a strategic sector of the national economy, allows to establish in the decade of the 90s of the 20th century, a context of convergence and point of inflection as far as theoretical creation and implementation of policies are concerned.

However, this will be characterized by parallelisms that will limit the synergy of developments in both directions that could occur in a context of adequate articulation. For the authors of this research work, three fundamental characteristics are recognized that affect the synergetic relationship between the municipality and the country's tourism activity.

1. The main and most consolidated tourist destinations in the country are managed in a kind of enclave modality, which does not assume the localities as active actors in their development.
2. The model of tourism development in the country, manages its value chain vertically, assuming the municipality only as a physical space support.
3. The analyses that are carried out to measure the dynamics of growth and development of tourism use the variables of macro and microeconomic impact, disabling the meso-economic study in the behavior of the efficiency of the sector.

This has meant that tourism has not had the desired impact on the municipalities in Cuba. Coinciding with (Gascon Gonzalez, 2013) in recognizing as main problems:

- Predominance of the economic approach in the projection and execution of the actions, politics or tourist strategies of development without these having a direct link with the premises and objectives of the process of local development.
- Poor participation of the municipal authorities in the tourist management acting as process facilitators, absence of efficient mechanisms to value tourism as a factor of development at a local scale in the rural areas.
- Loss of control of resources by the territories.
- The local population shows a growing interest in tourist activity as a source of income and not as a complement to traditional economic activities, and there is a tendency to reorder the local economy towards services.

With that as a consequence: The demobilization of productive factors, fundamentally the human factor, the transformation of traditional economic-productive activities, the increase in the cost of living of sectors not linked to tourist activity, the over dimensioning of relations of competencies over cooperatives, among other problems of a multidimensional nature.

In this same direction, one of the main limitations that affect the articulation between municipality and tourism is the demonstrated inexistence, in the design of productive structures at local level, that are inserted in the tourism value chain, and favor a change in the productive structure at that scale as a contribution to its development, and in another direction to reach a greater productive efficiency of the tourism enterprise, by means of import substitution.

However, the socio-economic model that is being perfected based on the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, and its subsequent updating, represents a new stage in the search for that necessary correlation between the municipalities and the tourism industry in Cuba.

In view of the above, we agree with Betancourt, Viamontes and Torres (2015, p. 105) who consider that

"Tourism policy in Cuba implies the development of tourism as a priority activity for the socio-economic, political and cultural progress of society, and makes clear the importance of the territory (province-municipality-locality) in the whole development of tourism activity, which shows the

need for a close and indispensable tourism-territory relationship, always seen from the perspective of sustainability".

For this reason, it is necessary to carry out specific forms of productive organization that allow the articulation between the municipality and the sectorial tourist activity. In this scenario, the local productive systems are assumed as an alternative paradigm of local organization.

### **The local productive systems and the sectorial tourist activity in the conditions of Cuba**

The specialized literature that addresses the issue of management, planning and insertion of territories, communes or localities in the development of tourism activity, agrees on the importance it has for the realization of its multiplier effect towards these sub-national spaces, the construction of integrated organizational structures (Madruga Torres, 2015; Narváz & Fernández, 2013; Perelló Cabrera, 2015).

The concepts of tourism cluster and local productive systems (LPS, from now on) are approached not only as mechanisms used by economies with a high development of their productive forces and a consolidated maturity of their productive structures, but also as an alternative for developing countries in their need to insert themselves into the global chain of international tourism.

Taking into account these elements, we agree with the authors Soto and Chauca (2014), who recognize that the clusters are not an ideal structure for local development with a focus on tourism, assuming the concept of LPS, as an organizational form more in line with the interests of local development, an aspect that is justified, taking into account the differences between them, namely:

- The cluster approach is predominantly economic; its main objective is based on improving the production function that allows them to achieve greater competitive advantage.
- The association processes are based on a vertical type of organization, which is difficult for Pymes to access, except where these become the interest of the sector.
- Their vision of development is more identified with the growth approach, to the detriment of its multidimensional character (environmental, political, socio-cultural).
- In the LPS, innovation is assumed as a system that transcends the technological framework by systematizing the social-organizational approach.

However, authors such as Herrera (2014), consider that the term local productive arrangement is more in line with the socio-economic structural realities that characterize underdeveloped countries, assuming that the low level of socialization of production that identifies them is the main limitation for the development of LPS. In the opposite sense other authors with whom it coincides, recognize in this form of productive organization, constituent element of local development (Rendón & Forero, 2014; Soleno, 2015).

In the specific case of Cuba, its viability is justified by elements that typify the model of socio-economic development in Cuba (Alonso Alemán & Bell Heredia, 2013), namely The new character that the law of correspondence acquires in the construction of socialism where the relations of production become the motor of the development of the productive forces; the formation of human capital as a basic element to undertake transformative processes in the field of knowledge management and innovation; an integrated and institutionalized system of knowledge and innovation management that is articulated in networks; the level of institutionality that facilitates the articulation of the different socio-economic actors around common projects and objectives; the planning and the political will to move towards higher levels of economic development in the local-municipal area.

In this sense, Rendón and Forero (2014, p. 90) propose that the

"LPS are then a possible alternative, given that they not only constitute a mode of business organization that emerges from the existing productive structure, but also respond to a series of problems that have a basis in the industrial weakness of the modern world in underdeveloped countries".

The study carried out on the subject, both nationally and internationally, makes it possible to determine its fundamental features, and constitutes a theoretical basis that argues for its viability.

- The territory becomes a socio-economic variable.
- It is built through specialized networks, which integrate the economic, political, social, and institutional variables.
- It favors the development of innovative environments.
- It stimulates the organization of small dynamic productive structures.
- It favors the creation of social capital by re-dimensioning the processes of cooperation and association between local socioeconomic actors.

In view of the above, the LPSs are considered as a specific organizational form that, at a local level, favors the articulation of the municipalities to the sectorial tourist activity, being defined for the Cuban context, from Madruga (2015) as A continuous and multidimensional process of social construction, which integrates the different socio-economic forms of property development, typical of the transition period, under cooperative forms of inter-activity association, characterized by flexible planning structures, favoring an innovative and participative environment for the whole of society, allowing the insertion of the municipality into the structures for the development of sectorial tourism in accordance with local development, under the direction of the political and government authorities.

For the authors of the present work, the LPS constitutes a complex phenomenon, structured by internal subsystems and external factors with implications for its development.

According to the specific study of its realization, in function of articulating the municipalities to the sectorial tourist activity, five subsystems are identified, which,

although they interact as a whole, both present towards their interior a dynamic of their own, they are Subsystem of planning and policy design; Subsystem of knowledge and innovation management; Subsystem of human resources management; Subsystem of production of material goods; Subsystem of service activity.

### **Planning and policy design subsystem**

Its identification is consolidated in the idea that in the construction of socialism planning becomes a law, which implies not only a process of resource allocation by the state but the construction of a true transforming subject that makes coincide, from the diversity of forms of property realization, common interests for the conscious transformation of the technical-productive structures of the municipalities.

The LPS as a specific form of socio-productive organization at the municipal level, express in essence a novel form of production relations based on the recognition of all local actors in the realization of objectives that are designed as common.

This implies a conscious activity that brings together the main political actors of governments and civil society as a whole in the design of strategies. However, the authors consider that these elements are not properly addressed in the specialized literature inside and outside the country, which leads to a recognition of the market as a fundamental actor in the regulation of social relations between different socio-economic actors.

In the present work, the authors assume that, within the framework of the socio-economic development model in Cuba, the LPSs should be the result of the elaboration of local development strategies, because of the agreement of all local actors, recognizing as their main characteristics: their integrality, objective, participative, propositional, of transformation of the social subject.

At this same level of analysis are considered as deficiencies of the planning process of local economies, with negative implications in the reorganization of productive structures:

- lack of a prospective approach in the design of strategies that allow us to visualize the future, from the structural changes in organizational reengineering, necessary to achieve the proposed objectives and to move towards the outsourcing of the local economy with a focus on tourism
- development strategies are formal documents that do not assume the role of an instrument for the planned development of municipalities, nor do they call for the participation of social economic actors in their design
- in their conception, the non-state forms of management are assumed to be second-rate actors, when they should, based on the transformations that are taking place in the functioning of the Cuban socio-economic development model, have a more central role in the planning of the proposed development objectives

Tourism, by its very nature and particularities with respect to other socioeconomic sectors, has in the values created by society; education, security levels, environmental care, capacity for innovation, social integration, acceptability of the local population, key

components that condition competitive advantages, aspects that will achieve the expected results if assumed with an organizational approach, and planning from the institutional structures, determinants in the design of public policies.

### **Innovation and knowledge management subsystem**

The dynamics with which the tourist activity is managed in the world, from the redesign of new modalities and products turns it by its own nature into a generator of a constant flow of innovative processes, to it is added the importance that in its impact has had the development of the Technology the Information and the Communications (TICs) in its planning and management. In Cuba, its rapid insertion into the international market has been given, among other elements, to organizational innovation of innovative management processes in its productive structure at the sectoral level (Darias, 2013).

Tourism, due to its high dynamics in the international market, has as a characteristic the need to build competitive advantages, being a determinant factor in its development and capacity of insertion in the international market, the potential to internalize the innovative processes that are developed as tacit knowledge in the territorial environments where the companies are located, favoring the transition from static to dynamic tourism products.

### **Human resources management subsystem**

The human resources management, in the context of the development of the knowledge-based economy, becomes the most important factor in any organization seeking to enter the value chains (Cuesta Santos, 2014).

At the local level, this favors the generation of externalities from the construction of a social capital that generates a climate of reliability and strengthens social and identity values that allow consciously establishing goals, control and evaluation mechanisms.

The high qualification of human resources has been one of the elements that has influenced Cuba's rapid insertion into the international tourism value chain.

Hence the importance of this subsystem to achieve positive synergies that result in competitive advantages for the areas of tourism development and increase the welfare of the population without neglecting the traditional productive activities of the municipalities and move without breaks in their productive base, to more structurally complex forms.

### **Material Goods production subsystem**

This subsystem concretely determines the processes of transformation of the productive structure at a local level, and facilitates processes of accumulation towards the interior of the local system, preventing escape or flight of capital, which, in the specific case of Cuba, also affects the efficiency of the tourism sector.

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It is carried out through production chains, which integrate public and private economic agents, favoring the generation of innovations, fundamentally in processes and organizations, and greater benefit to local production.

### **Service activity subsystem**

Tourism is a service activity by nature; however, the network of elements that characterize it makes it a complex and systemic process, determining the seasonality of the tourist and the lengthening of the tourist product cycle.

The tourist, in essence, moves from his place of residence in search of satisfying real or potential needs; his consumption means converting this subsystem into a direct source of exportation while generating economy of scale for the tourism company based on its capacity to visualize the existing tourism resources in the locality, whether tangible or intangible.

### **External factors to the subsystem**

Model of economic functioning: From this model, the mechanisms of socio-economic regulation are determined, which favor or obstruct the effective realization of integration between local public and private actors, as well as collective participation in development planning.

Legal regulatory framework: It establishes the concrete forms in which the types of relations needed between state tourism enterprises and the socio-economic interests of the municipalities are established. Its importance lies in the fact that it can constitute a brake on the expansion of local productive forces, taking into account the prerogatives or legal recognition established for the management of local tourism resources and their valorization from the structural transformations of the local system.

Competition in the markets: LPSs, as flexible structures open to the environment, will be conditioned by market forces, the emergence of new competitors or product substitutes, and will determine the structural capacity of these products to consolidate in the market or to disappear.

Changes in tourism demand: Tourism demand is one of the most important elements in the nature of LPSs, which is closely related to market competition, which operates not only on the needs of tourists but also on the interests of tourism companies.

Considering this, it is assumed that the dynamic behavior that characterizes the structure of the LPSs constitutes in itself a new organizational form to strengthen the articulation of the municipality with the sectorial tourist activity in function of local development, without failing to recognize the external components of the same, which intervene in its realization dynamics.

Tourism in Cuba is managed as a formal production system, which makes it impossible for Cuban municipalities to integrate into its value chain by managing their production processes. The LPS approach then becomes a viable and necessary alternative, taking

into account the potentialities achieved by the country in its development of the productive forces in the last six decades.

To this end, it is necessary to transform the production structure at a local level in Cuba, conditioning a legal framework that meets the desired expectations, so that producers, whatever their form of management or appropriation of the means of production, are integrated, based on local development based on sustainability.

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**Conflict of interest:**

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

**Authors' contribution:**

The authors have participated in the writing of the paper and the analysis of the documents.



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