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## CULTURAL TOURISM, HERITAGE AND IMAGINARIES OF TRI- CULTURAL URBAN COMPLEXES: PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN AND PLAZA DE LAS TRES CULTURAS

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*Victor Medina*

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**Abstract:** The main objective of the work presented here is to characterize, from the hermeneutic application, the importance that cultural tourism has in contemporary society, its linkage and disciplinary relationship towards the construction of conceptual theoretical elements of value, such as the tricultural urban complex; resulting in the proposal of two important attractions located in the Historic Center of Mexico City, as spaces of high symbolic significance whose potential for responsible tourism appropriation is very relevant.

**Keywords:** Historic center of Mexico City; tricultural urban complex; urban imaginaries; cultural heritage; cultural tourism.

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the different aspects of contemporary reality in which tourism has relevant characteristics, the theoretical and functional construction of the term has demonstrated a need for (re)configuration whose attention should not continue to be postponed. From a humanistic-qualitative perspective, tourism can be seen as a discipline in the process of development towards scientificity, understanding the exercise of leisure, recreation and free time as a basic right for any individual inserted in modern society; that is, it is given a philosophical and reflexive connotation whose implications directly precede the complementary perspective with which tourism is commonly linked. Derived from the interference that tourism exerts in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions, it is identified with the role of an activity that develops the space and the community in which it has an impact; that is to say, a positivist-quantitative perspective is built around what at first arises genetically as a need and a right.

Although the purpose of this paper is not to delve into the emergence of or the relationship between the visions just described, it is important to have at least a notion of the

current state of tourism from an epistemological perspective, which will make it possible to establish the necessary foundations for understanding the theoretical and methodological elements on which the proposal is based.

Due to the richness and diversity of elements that deserve to be observed, appreciated and valued from a tourism perspective, this field has had to be taxonomized according to the main theme that the attractions and the motivation for travel represent for the potential traveler interested, being able to exemplify this classification institutionally as follows: traditional tourism, alternative tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, medical tourism, meeting tourism, sports tourism, among others; while those already mentioned can be sub-classified again in categories with a greater degree of specificity.

According to the Institute of Cultural and Artistic Management (2022), in the global spectrum, cultural tourism has increased its popularity in recent times, a situation that has managed to overcome important challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, a context that is seen as an opportunity for growth and self-criticism. For the purposes of this paper, this argument is taken up again and the motivation of the tourist to learn, experience and discover the legacy that the spaces denominated as tourist attractions possess, particularly those that are able to boast the denomination of heritage, is interpreted. In the following section we will address the characterization of this meaning and relate its relevance for tourism.

As for the geographical delimitation of the proposal, the role of the Historic Center of Mexico City as a bastion of cultural tourism at the national level is evident, while the methodological need to identify, understand and interpret the spaces from a systemic and complex approach, as proposed by Rolando Garcia, is exposed; thus also making palpable the disciplinary relationship that exists in the construction of

tourism knowledge with other disciplines such as epistemology, anthropology, architecture and urbanism, to mention a few.

As a result of the work presented here are findings linked to the construction of a trans-disciplinary path in the approach to tourism with a realistic human sense, contemplating cultural tourism as an opportunity to appropriate the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, considering the role of the imaginaries and their possible outflow for the strengthening of the conceptual proposal of the tri-cultural urban complex as a space of high symbolic significance for the host community and visitors who come to two of the most important public spaces in the capital of the country: The Plaza de la Constitución and the Plaza de las Tres Culturas.

With due moderation, we promote the pertinent discussion of the role that the construction of the tricultural urban complex, in the cases of study approached, will represent for cultural tourism in the short, medium and long term future, taking into consideration the intention of promoting the fructification of the exercise of tourism from a more responsible applicability with a humanistic sense, which at the same time does not limit and democratize the benefits that are already generated today in the social and economic spheres.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present work emanates from the development of the doctoral research of the first author of the proposal; who, directed by the co-author of the same, has sought to identify and analyze the possibilities of disciplinary relationship that exist between fields of knowledge whose epistemological meanings have a considerable area of opportunity, being simultaneously in what López Rangel (2003) refers to as a moment of cognitive overcoming. At the same time, the disciplines in question share a functionalist bias with respect to their

construction and elucidation at the level of reality, a situation that presents itself as an ideal context for the approach of the triad tourism, architecture and urbanism.

The proposed relationship may seem simple at first glance, however, the reflexive approach to which it will be subjected, merits a greater degree of deepening in the theoretical and methodological aspect in order to subsequently materialize such correspondence. The link proposed in this paper takes as main connecting elements three important theoretical concepts whose epistemological and functionalist handling will allow clarifying the reciprocal assimilations that have led to the illustration of what the tricultural urban complex is capable of representing for the appreciation, (re)valorization and appropriation of space from a perspective of responsible tourism.

## CULTURAL TOURISM

Addressing the topic corresponding to what cultural tourism represents today is not a simple task that can be reduced to an institutionalized semantic construction. In order to understand the true meaning of what this categorization symbolizes, we must first note the essence that the word *culture* denotes; with the intention of not extending this task too much, we will recall the Roman conception of the term and its proximity to the cultivation of the spirit, while bringing up the principle of Tylor (1871) and its acceptance in terms of the complexity and multidimensionality with which it is plausible to relate it.

Then, concretely for the purposes of this work, culture is understood as the set of knowledge that the human being has developed from his possibility of reasoning and the complementation that his experiences and the environment itself provide him, resulting in the differentiating organization of species which is usually called society and which is characterized by the genesis, development, communi-

cation and evolution of a set of identity traits; which due to their singularity components deserve to be recognized and appreciated by another fragment of the human collectivity; thus configuring the interest and intrinsic motivation that each individual, probably identified as the potential tourist of the future, has to express in order to constitute a synthetic meaning of what cultural tourism means.

According to Salazar, González and Macías (2020), a first historical approach to cultural tourism is identified in the seventeenth century, a time when young Europeans of high social class (aristocrats) made the so-called *Grand Tour*, a trip whose main objective was to expand the knowledge and cognitive horizons they possessed based on the approach to other ways of thinking different from those with which they had been educated. In contemporary times, one of the most relevant antecedents for cultural tourism is presented in 1947, when the first edition of the *Edinburgh Festival* was held, a massive event recognized as the first space for post-war exchange, in which life, the arts and global neutrality are celebrated regardless of notions related to political thought and whose objective is to allow an approach to diverse uses and customs.

From a quantitative perspective, cultural tourism in Mexico increased by 23% with respect to the years 2023 and 2022 (Valadez, 2024), counting as main indicators the number of visitors generated to archaeological sites and museums, information that shows the importance of this sub-sectorization, at the same time that, in the words of the Center for Higher Studies in Tourism (CESTUR, 2015), evidences “the scarce background of specialized studies on the subject”, since from the perspective of the authors of this paper, the dimensionality of cultural tourism cannot be limited only to the flow of two spaces. For this reason, we propose the characterization of the tricultural urban complex as a component of

the tourist system, since this concept, in most cases, will have to partially include the two elements just described, together with other relevant factors such as heritage and public space with the relevant consideration of their forms of appropriation. This relationship will be addressed in later sections.

## ASSETS

Consistent with what was stated in the previous subsection, we configure heritage as a primordial and genetically inherent element in the conception of what culture means and therefore what cultural tourism is all about. In its broadest notion, heritage can be understood as the legacy that our ancestors have forged as an identity, consciously or unconsciously, with the intention that its existence and prevalence be recognized, thus causing an endless loop in which each human generation will have to bequeath something to its successor. According to Ribeiro da Costa (2012), the operational perspectives related to heritage were not considered until 1796 with the creation of the Museum of French Monuments as a direct consequence of the development of thought provoked by the intellectual movement of *the Enlightenment*.

In the 21st century, institutionally on a global scale, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is the highest body that establishes the guidelines on which the term heritage is conceptualized and materialized; this being granted to cultural goods and places, the places of historical interest, natural sites and landscapes, as well as intangible elements that due to their immeasurable value to humanity, shall be preserved for the appreciation and appropriation of the current and future generations from a perspective of respect. According to UNESCO itself (2014), because of the characteristics it possesses, heritage can be classified as follows:

- a. Cultural.
  - a. Material.
    - i. Furniture.
    - ii. Property.
  - b. Immaterial.
- b. Natural.

Due to the nature and objectives proposed for this work, the heritage that will be most relevant for the configuration of the tricultural urban complex is the tangible and intangible cultural heritage with its corresponding ascriptions and whose characteristics give meaning to the two spaces under study, understanding that the Constitution and Three Cultures squares can be observed as similar historical urban landscapes whose built heritage, historical ensemble and appropriation of daily practices constitute cultural elements of high symbolic significance and motivation to visit both complexes, interpreting this displacement according to what Hiriart (2020), characterizes as an act of solidarity capable of promoting strategies and public policies that encourage the conservation of these spaces.

## IMAGINARIES

As a final component of the theoretical background of this proposal, the conception of imaginaries for the resignification of cultural tourism and heritage as genetic elements of tricultural urban complexes is configured.

Like many other terms, imaginaries have a relativistic and subjectivistic conception with at least multidisciplinary implications. According to the Gaceta Sanitaria (2010), imaginaries are concepts that the social sciences use to refer to mental realities and the representative designation of society. In the case of the triad tourism, architecture and urbanism, imagination as a possibility of mental projectionist configuration plays a fundamental role as a common element with a wide margin of functionality and representativeness in each of the specific fields of knowledge, as well as in the points of inter-

section through which the non-disciplinary relationship between them would be building.

According to Guzmán-Ramírez (2016), urban imaginaries are “social and historical constructions that lead to the continuous and indeterminate creation of figures, forms and images of the city”, understanding then this configuration of the city as the space and place in which tourism takes place.

As for the tourist perspective, Marc Augé (2008) criticizes tourism as an activity plagued by stereotypes whose consequences are glimpsed in the *reification* of relevant elements such as culture, understanding that probably the irresponsible exercise of tourism does not lead beyond the apparent *derealization* and it is necessary to “relearn how to travel, in order to relearn how to see”.

## METHODOLOGY

### TRANSDISCIPLINARY METHODOLOGY FROM A HUMANISTIC-QUALITATIVE VIEW OF TOURISM

With the intention of fulfilling the purposes stated above, a non-disciplinary relationship methodology was applied at the level of transdisciplinarity. Space in which a macro-discipline is formed, based on the knowledge of different disciplines within the theoretical framework based on a humanistic-qualitative conception of tourism. This conception proposes travel as the main purpose of tourism, in its role as a human practice, understanding that according to its own genetic nature, it is capable of altering the meaning of space-time, and therefore the history, memory and even the very essence of the hypercomplex human being in its multidimensionality; encompassing unexpected and surprising situations, which together could be part of the imaginaries that the subject (potential tourist) will have to build around the heritage that for their own interests motivates their displacement.



According to the Zurich Declaration of the Center for Transdisciplinary Education (CENTRANS, 2000), the transdisciplinary perspective provides an active and open concept of nature and the human being, which, although not absolute, serves the purpose of human survival and justice. This perspective transcends the segmented fields of exact, human, social sciences, art and even spiritual experience, thus motivating reconciliation and recursive complementation between the fields of knowledge just listed.

When implementing a transdisciplinary hermeneutic methodology to explain the syncretic origin, as well as to expose the identity and tourist appropriation value of the patrimonial assets that make up the tricultural urban complexes that contain the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas, it is considered pertinent to make visible the three pillars of transdisciplinarity: complexity, the logic of the included third party and the dimensions of reality emanating from the data of modern science; coming from the latter the dialogue with other cultures and the cognitive corpus of all the great traditions of current and ancient knowledge.

On this scoop, it has been understood the existing interrelation between the theoretical and spatial concept of the tricultural urban complex with respect to the hypercomplex human being, travel and hospitality, taking as essential foundations the epistemology of complexity, the methodological logic of the included third party and the dimensioning of reality. This transdisciplinary strategy, basically, has to contribute and guarantee real changes in the tourist experience of the human being, since it prioritizes the critical interpretation of the effects caused by the interdefinition of the elements just listed in the cultivation of the mind and spirit.

Delving into the etymology of the concept, transdisciplinarity, as the prefix “trans” indicates, indicates that which is at once be-

tween disciplines, across different disciplines and beyond any discipline, so that being part of the purposes of this work the understanding of the contemporary role of cultural tourism, it has to be interpreted from the unity of knowledge, the meaning of heritage and imaginaries that the potential traveler glimpses in the tri-cultural urban complexes of the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas.

As indicated by the International Center for Research and Transdisciplinary Studies (CIRET, 1996) in the face of the different dimensions of reality, the space between and beyond disciplines is full, since the quantum void is filled with all the existing potentialities, which in turn come from the complex systemic organization of the different dimensions of reality and the logic of the included third party. This logic is understood as a principle of transdisciplinarity where cause and effect relationships are replaced by multi-scale, multidimensional and multilevel conceptualizations, understanding that the theorizations proposed at the same level, temporal scale, spatial scale or dimension are insufficient to explain the different dimensions of reality, spatial or dimensional scale are insufficient to explain the totality of the phenomena by revealing contradictions and differentiated contexts in the humanistic-qualitative conception of tourism, in this particular case in the transitory occurrence presented in the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas .

## **METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH WITH A TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH**

According to Basarab Nicolescou's (1996) approach, the transdisciplinary methodology clarifies the different dimensions of the problematized reality produced in tri-cultural urban complexes due to tourism, by making it possible to identify the tourist and the heritage context he/she visits, as part of a new way of observing and solving the infinitely com-

plex problems that they reciprocally generate.

Transdisciplinarity considers different levels, temporal and spatial scales, as well as dimensions of reality from a complex epistemology and the principle of the included third party. In the present work, the tricultural urban complexes of the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas are proposed as tourist attractions that motivate travel and that can be reinterpreted through the understanding of complex logic where the third party excluded from classical logic is added, in an inclusive level of reality where the contradictions between two facts coexist, previously determined in one level of reality, but whose contradiction is solved in a second level of reality close to the initial one (Edgar Morin WEB, n/d).

Transdisciplinarity as a methodology analyzes the journey and its motivations; in this case the case studies are observed from an explanatory and interpretative approach, through a set of interrelational mechanisms. This study (re) configures the conceptualization of the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas as heritage assets capable of deepening a hierarchical scale of values, where the tri-cultural urban complex is at the top.

Due to the existing dialogic relationship between disciplinary and transdisciplinary methodologies, the holistic understanding of the tricultural urban complex in its role as a tourist attraction cannot be inscribed in disciplinary research, which is why compositional elements are taken from different disciplines, including tourism, architecture, urbanism, history, anthropology and even philosophy, among others. Likewise, this research will be supported by specific empirical and pragmatic techniques such as participatory observation, ethnography and the socio-historical and discursive analysis of documentary information sources. The application of these techniques is carried out with the purpose of interpreting inter-relationally the meaning and importan-

ce that the case studies represent for contemporary cultural tourism in Mexico City.

## **CONFORMATION OF THE TRICULTURAL URBAN COMPLEX AND ITS MEANING**

Walking through the Plaza de la Constitución, one can instantly appreciate the enormous vitality and versatility of this public space, considered a World Heritage Site since 1987 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as part of the Historic Center of Mexico City.

To understand its dynamics, it is enough to mention the adaptations and remodeling that have taken place in said site, being in 2017 the most recent one carried out to the main plancha of the popularly called *Zócalo*, while in this year 2024 surrounding pedestrianization works have been carried out in an area of 19,400 m<sup>2</sup>, of which 16,108 m<sup>2</sup> have been designated for exclusive pedestrian use and 3,292 m<sup>2</sup> for road circulation in two shared access lanes with bicycles and indispensable service vehicles (*Creciendo con Nuestro México*, 2024).

In terms of its historical evolution, the modifications just mentioned have been the most significant since 1960, when it was given its current configuration as a civic plaza. This design replaced the park of the Porfirian era, which had completely left behind the idea of building in its center a monument commemorating the country's independence in 1843, of which only the plinth was built, thus giving rise to the colloquial name by which the official Plaza de la Constitución is known, in allusion to the Constitution of Cadiz of 1812 (Meraz Moreno, Díaz Pérez, and Castellanos Dounce, 2019).

Regarding its appropriation and configuration since pre-Hispanic times, in 1524 the space was inaugurated as a closed plaza surrounded by European-style buildings, after the conquest of the city of Mexico-Tenochti-

tlán by the Spaniards and their allies. This vision would contrast with the existing vision of the ceremonial precinct of the Templo Mayor, which contemplated the political and religious center of the capital of the Mexica empire in an open plaza whose main genetic intention was the ritual dedication and the highlighting of the monumentality of the buildings it contained, such as the Palace of Moctezuma, located in the place where the National Palace is currently located.

This brief process of (re) configuration described around the Plaza de la Constitución shows its syncretism, as it preserves its design as a centrist euro square and the monumental open space of the same has gradually gained surface, legibility and character, preserving in its surroundings buildings of the cultures of the pre-Hispanic era such as the remains of the Templo Mayor, of the cultures of the viceregal era such as the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, and of the cultures of contemporary Mexico such as the headquarters building of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, thus giving relevance and meaning to the intricate variety of practices that surround and enhance the landscape as a tri-cultural urban complex with multidimensional impact.

As for the sense of appropriation, since pre-Hispanic times the current Plaza de la Constitución has been the site of important multidimensional events and manifestations, highlighting for example those of a social, cultural, religious, political and commercial nature; However, since 1997, the square has become an ideal space for the celebration of popular cultural, sports, entertainment and recreational expressions, especially the organization of massive concerts with important social, cultural and economic implications. Thus, it fostered the symbolic and identity growth of different groups and its sensory richness, permeating daily aspects, such as visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and taste per-

ception, with which the activities carried out in this place have a coexistence link (Urbina Islas, 2012).

The Plaza de las Tres Culturas was built as a closed plaza in 1964, based on the design of architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, in charge of designing the Tlatelolco Tower of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of the Noalco-Tlatelolco Urban Housing Complex conceived by Mario Pani Darqui and inaugurated the same year (Medina Martínez, García Ayala and Gallegos Navarrete, 2023). This housing complex based on the precepts of functionalist architecture and progressive urbanism was built on what was the pre-Hispanic city of Mexico-Tlatelolco, which has been conceived by several authors as the twin city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, characterized mainly for housing the largest and most diverse trade and supply center (tianguis) in Mesoamerica.

In its role as the last bastion of resistance of the Mexica empire, this city was sacked and destroyed by the conquistadors, who used its stone remains to build the current Temple of Santiago, over the ancient teocalli; thus emerging the Barrio Santiago Tlatelolco, which over time became precarious until it housed mainly vacant lots of the Railroad Union, workshops of the company La Consolidada, warehouses of the Buenavista station and marginal housing.

From 1944 to 1968 the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) recovered 67 structures that were part of the ceremonial precinct of the pre-Hispanic city of Tlatelolco, which were integrated by the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, to his conception of the project relevant to the Plaza of the Three Cultures. The name of this public space, declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mexico City in 2018, was conceived as a consequence of the existing urban configuration, since around the area there were buildings characteristic of cultures from three different periods of Me-



xican history; the pre-Hispanic represented by the set of buildings of the archaeological zone of Tlatelolco, the viceregal by the Temple and Convent of Santiago, and the modern or contemporary by the buildings of the Urban Housing Complex Nonoalco-Tlatelolco, which still persist after the earthquakes of 1985 and 2017 (Pazos, 2015).

Historically, the Plaza de las Tres Culturas and the surrounding buildings have hosted fundamental social and political events for national development, such as the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1972, the student tragedy of October 2, 1968, among others of a festive and cultural nature, such as the annual celebration of the Magna Pilgrimage of Dances.

In contrast to the Plaza de la Constitución, the vitality of this heritage public space is less, mainly due to the decrease in the variety of practices that house the buildings in its immediate surroundings, which also limit its pedestrian accessibility and because of its solemn character, the perceptive appreciation by third parties has been affected from the physical and symbolic sense of appropriation, despite its great versatility and legibility.

### **THE TOURIST IMAGERY OF TRICULTURAL URBAN COMPLEXES AND THEIR**

When analyzing the discourses emanated from the perspective of different actors related to the case studies, the results allow us to observe the imaginary conformation that they have around the configuration of the tricultural urban complexes existing in the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas, being interpreted as spaces and patrimonial goods product of the syncretic process of the current Mexican culture. A culture made up of different cultures opposed to each other, but at the same time complementary and indissoluble within the Mexican identity, making reference again to part of the principles of comple-

xity and transdisciplinarity. Thus making evident a Mexican identity that is in each of its parts, and each of these parts, is found in each of these territories product of their cultures throughout three different periods of history.

It is this context that evidences and exposes the sociocultural transformation that residents and visitors have internalized as a fundamental part of their life experiences. Therefore, in order to understand the heritage value of the tourist attractions of each of these tri-cultural urban complexes, it is not enough to understand each of their parts separately, since they contain information that goes beyond the genetic conception of the Plaza de la Constitución and the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in conjunction with their immediate surroundings.

It is important to emphasize that recursively, the integral value of the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas cannot be conceived without taking into account their immediate contexts, since they are the ones that solidify the significance in their role as tri-cultural urban complexes; which cannot be interpreted in depth separately from the Historic Center of Mexico City or the Historic Center of Tlatelolco, nor of Mexico City, nor of the country.

Consequently, it is considered that the tourist trips promoted by these two tricultural urban complexes allow not only the cultivation of the mind by enlightening tourists through the experience of knowing these heritage assets and spaces that are part of the memory and idiosyncrasy of Mexicans and that boast diverse samples of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, but also enables the reading and interpretation of diverse passages of their history, as well as the syncretic character of their identity, determined by the amalgamation of their heterogeneity. Therefore, based on this argument, the tri-cultural urban complexes are configured at the top of the scale of values held by the heritage environments where they are inserted.

For tourists, decoding the syncretic origin of Mexican culture through the tri-cultural urban complexes around the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas, allows them to understand the relevance of the interrelation of heritage assets and spaces held by contemporaneity as part of the legacy and distinctive heritage. Consequently, these tourist attractions from the humanistic-qualitative approach of tourism, give account of a dialogue of the cultures of the pre-Hispanic, viceroyalty and modern times, with different civilizing origins such as the Mesoamerican and the European, continuing in this way the process of transcending the conflicts and contradictions between their worldviews, promoting as well the conciliation of their interests for the common good, where what really matters are the characteristics of human union and not those of segregation.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **FROM CULTURAL TOURISM AS A SET OF PRACTICES TO A GOOD LIFE EXPERIENCE**

Based on what has been exposed up to this point, it is plausible to assert that the figure of the tricultural urban complex stands as a synthesis of contemporary Mexican culture, since it is capable of producing travel experiences for potential tourists through the transformation of mind and spirit, by amalgamating the contradiction of the syncretic Mexican identity, manifested in its misnamed cultural products, traditions, customs and behavioral patterns, as well as in the imaginaries that they themselves construct.

Because of the Mexican social essence, it is interesting to explore and discuss the role that the tricultural urban complexes studied in this work will play in cultural tourism at the destination level, since it is necessary to take into consideration complementary variables

that are part of the complex tourism system of the locality. For example, the acceptance of the hospitality variable as a differentiating element of the coexistence on site is proposed. This variable, together with the authenticity and singularity of both spaces in a patrimonial sense, have amalgamated and enriched the tourist imagery where the coexistence of the complementary opposites is mentally configured within the unit, product of multiple factors, which have to impact its multi-scale, multidimensional and multilevel contexts.

Unlike the conception of cultural tourism provided by the Mexican Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR in Avila Aldapa, 2007), results such as the above allow us to interpret this subcategorization of tourism not only as a set of actions with a functional and economic sense, but as a travel experience where the enrichment of the mind and spirit of potential tourists plays a fundamental role; thus forging the acceptance of a humanistic-qualitative vision of tourism, which in a complementary manner rejects the semantic configuration of resource given to heritage by exalting it as a common good of humanity that by its genetic characteristics has been bequeathed and must be preserved in the same tenor for the appreciation and (re) valorization of future generations.

In a critical way, the need for this epistemological reconfiguration around the field of knowledge relevant to tourism from the functional point of view is raised, since from the conception of tourism development projects, hospitality and mutual understanding should be taken into consideration as part of a good life for the communities that produce heritage and are the object of the exercise of a possible responsible tourism. According to Conde (2011), this type of circumspections should be carried out for the common good of all those involved in tourism, with a sense of social justice, responsibility, deontology and moral cleanliness

## **THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES, AUTHENTICITY AND UNIQUENESS**

Going back to what was addressed in the previous subsection, going beyond the notion of heritage as a resource also implies going beyond the cataloguing of tangible and intangible heritage identified as tourist attractions. It implies understanding and reading the heritage components as complex subsystems interrelated in themselves towards the configuration and identification of, for example, the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas, as unique and authentic spaces that provide meaning from and towards the identity of the society that conceptualized them.

In the context just mentioned, it is important to frame each of the heritage assets that are part of the tri-cultural urban complexes object of this study, because although based on the hologrammatic principle of complexity, the parts are found in the whole and the whole is found in each of its parts, each of the components that constitute a fragment of the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas merit the (re) configuration of its role as a tourist attraction, since each one of its components has enough symbolic, historical and cultural charge to show off as part of the popular tourist imaginary, understanding this as a mental symbolic representation integrated by the interrelation of the most significant elements valued by the interrelation between the tourists and everything that integrates the destination of the trip.

In the case of the imaginaries derived from cultural tourism, these not only have to do with the tangible and intangible heritage assets with which the tourist comes into contact at the time of his trip, but in this mental configuration is built all the potential experience that he will have to live as part of the apparent exit that has caused his daily life.

In the case of the tri-cultural urban complexes represented by the Plazas de la Constitución and de las Tres Culturas, the selection of the highly significant elements that the potential tourist will have to take into account for the selection of the destination are perceived as biased to the idiosyncrasy and the level of education that they possess, since the variability of factors at play is exacerbated, being able to find among the most recurrent the historical value and the identity load that these spaces are capable of meaning for the individual and their human collectivity.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The role that tourism plays in contemporary society has no room for questioning the benefits and multidimensional benefits that it is capable of generating in space and, sometimes, in the community in which it affects. However, as stated at the beginning of this work, the construction of a more human, real and critical vision regarding the integral development of the activity is necessary with a view to the future, especially when taking into consideration that various “economies” at a global level project tourism as their main means of progress and growth in the coming decades.

It is necessary to mention that by using the term “economies” we are not succumbing to the positivist-quantitative and functionalist vision with which tourism activity is usually related in the first instance, but on the contrary, we intend to show the multiscale level that the planning and realization of the trip is capable of representing for the different actors involved.

It is true, unfortunately due to systematic issues embedded in the fragment of reality in which we live, the monetary factor prevails and is a limiting factor or a facilitator, as the case may be, for the free exercise of tourism, however, according to the genetic configuration of travel, the very essence of momentary displacement outside the place of habitual residence for

various motivations, should serve the greater good approximate to the mental and spiritual self-enrichment of the individual.

As stated throughout the proposal, the understanding of the environment and modern contexts requires the implementation of qualitative methodologies that promote the analysis of society and the different degrees of relationship and evolution that exist between individuals, being a hermeneutic, complex and transdisciplinary approach, at least, an alternative for the understanding of these correspondences.

Being coherent with reality, as well as with several authors, tourism and culture are an inseparable binomial, since no matter how minimal the interaction between two individuals who do not share the slightest identity trait, the possibility of cognitive enrichment is latent; in this way, culture is interpreted as one of the focal points on which tourism activity is developed and its taxonomic derivation merits a greater and deeper study, which we will address on another occasion.

As for heritage, being part of culture, it is interpreted as an extension of what has just been expressed, understanding that from the humanistic-qualitative sense of tourism, the enterprise to which greater attention should be paid is the conservation and valorization of this element, regardless of its material or immaterial nature. It is the duty of tourism to

promote a greater sense of responsibility and respect for culture and heritage, having as a first approach the imperative need to abandon the semantization of the term "product" to refer to the elements just mentioned.

Regarding imaginaries, particularly those associated with tourism, they are usually taken for granted, actually the tourist activity has dismissed such an important resource as the main promoter of experiences and travel intentionality. The work presented here invites the inclusion of this figure from a perspective of integrity for tourism development, remembering that, practically always, any situation or event that happens in the physical world has already happened in the world of ideas.

The conformation and interpretation of what the tri-cultural urban complex represents is a proposal for a humane and responsible tourist approach to the spaces addressed throughout this work; Its historical, cultural, patrimonial and identity relevance has been considered for the vision of those who visit and admire it, thus promoting the intentionality of legacy towards the future from a complex and transdisciplinary approach, capable of positively and multidimensionally influencing the daily life of all the actors involved that directly and indirectly affect the existence of two of the largest historical urban landscapes that can be found in the heart of Mexico City.

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