

“THE GREAT AND MAGICAL TOWN OF PAPANTLA” – LIMAKXTUM CHALHKGATMANAW



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

- 2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY, AND CREATIVITY
- 6. CULTURE, EQUALITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, INCLUSION, DEVELOPMENT,
CULTURAL, LOCAL, ACCESS, TRADITIONS, HERITAGE,
HISTORY, GROWTH

1. Context

The city of Papantla is located north of the State of Veracruz, near the “El Tajín” archaeological site. It is also where the Totonac language is spoken. It is recognized as a Magical Town thanks to its symbolic and cultural elements, as well as its legends, traditions, history, momentous events, and everyday life, which itself is founded on practices, ancestral knowledge, and local customs. Furthermore, it is the source of the ancient *flying men* ritual, listed as a UNESCO Cultural Intangible Heritage ceremony.

The project is overseen by the “Sustainable Regional Tourism Development and Magical Cities Program” (PRODERMAGICO).

2. Papantla de Olarte and culture

The city’s tourism policy is in line with Agenda 21 for culture insofar as it establishes a dialogue with inclusive and intercultural cultural policies. Tourism pays special attention to the society’s most vulnerable populations, particularly women and youth, and aims to more broadly involve and engage residents in cultural practices and Totonac culture. The city has also committed to training people in sustainable cultural tourism as an opportunity for them to participate in, and enrich the cultural life of Papantla.

IT EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM BY PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON HOW ITS CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS, HISTORIC CENTRE, AND GASTRONOMY BENEFIT THE GENERAL POPULATION. THE INITIATIVE CENTRES ON THE PAPANTLA FLYERS RITUAL CEREMONY, THE EL TAJÍN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA, THE CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS ARTS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED VANILLA.

Papantla contributes to preserving and strengthening Totonac culture in accordance with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. With respect to the creative economy, productions, content, and Totonac narratives lend a unique quality to the city and create significant economic benefit. Furthermore, in keeping with 2030 Agenda the aim is to specifically revitalize cultural and creative communities in order to reduce inequality and gaps in the Indigenous population throughout the State of Veracruz. Totonac cultural practices convey forms of expression, creativity, and identity building, which are all rooted in human dignity and embody an approach to sustainable development that is human-centred.

3. Project goals and implementation

3.1. Main and specific objectives

The goals are to promote sustainable cultural tourism and its impact on local development, as well as to position Totonac culture as a means of attracting tourists with its dances, flyers, the El Tajín archaeological site, the Centre for Indigenous Arts, the historic centre, gastronomy, and locally grown vanilla.



Specific Objectives:

- To facilitate comprehensive, sustainable, and intercultural tourism development with inclusive, strategic, and participatory planning that based on the social needs, strengths, opportunities, and goals of the municipality. The aim is to define policies, objectives, and targeted strategies in accordance with legal provisions.
- To combine the efforts of all three levels of government through public programs, establishing a model for monitoring and evaluating specific results.
- To guide the decisions of all areas of the administration around regulations, efficiency, transparency, and accountability.
- To establish coexistence and security for inhabitants and visitors.
- To boost economic growth and social inclusion by improving the competitiveness of the city's companies, the productivity of farming, and investment in local areas of opportunity.
- To maintain and develop infrastructure, as well as access, particularly in places with greater social disadvantages.

3.2. Project development

Beneficiary population

The population of Papantla and surrounding areas, as well as the tourists that visit.

Main actions developed

- El Tajín archaeological site, the Centre for Indigenous Arts and the Voladores (Flyers) ceremony, and the local production of vanilla were all inscribed under the respective designations of UNESCO World Heritage.
- The "Citizen Awareness" program was used to promote regulations around the public perception of urban life, tourism, environment, transit, roads, and noise pollution control, etc.
- Work groups were set up in different productive and cultural sectors within a Citizen Tourism Forum.
- Guidance on the economic development of El Tajín archaeological area, and the first square within the region on **Personal Image and Hygienic Food Handling**, Health Jurisdiction Number 3 and the H classification for fixed food and beverage establishments.



- The ongoing program, **LET'S TALK ABOUT TOURISM IN THE MAGIC TOWN OF PAPANTLA**.
- Guided tours of the main tourist attractions for local students and tourists.
- Communication for the dissemination, prevention, support, and protection of tourism in the event of climatic changes or significant warnings for the archaeological zone of El Tajín.
- Coordinated actions with the managers of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) for the correct and functional operation of archaeological areas.
- Training municipal officials with workshops on tourism.

SOME POSITIVE FACTORS INCLUDE THE INCREASING PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LOCAL CULTURAL ACTORS, RE-ESTABLISHING THE VALUE OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE, AND THE CROSS-CUTTING EFFECTS GRANTED TO SUSTAINABILITY, THE TOTONAC LANGUAGE, THE WORLD VIEWS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND LOCAL NORMS OR CUSTOMS

- Sharing practices with 70 providers of professional tourism services.
- Establishing a clear image for the Magical Town of Papantla city brand.
- Pedestrian area in the central garden.
- Restoration of "The Destruction of Man" mural.
- Organizing ongoing cleaning campaigns such as "Crackdown Against Garbage", "Post Cleaning", "Anti-Visual Pollution", and the "Normalizing Roaming".
- Direct support for the 2017 Tajín Summit.
- Hosting the "Papantla Brilla" event.
- Building "Our Totonac House".
- Promoting the Tutunakú dialect among children.
- Cultural tourism pavilion during the Corpus Christi Fair.



- Commercial and friendly ties through the familiarization trip program - Fam Trips.
- *Tourism Tianguis in Acapulco, Guerrero.*
- Agreements for tourism and cultural exchange between the Magical Towns of Mexico.
- Invitation to the presentation of Papantla as a Magic Town at a press conference in Mexico City.
- Host to one of the four most important Day of the Dead festivities in the State of Veracruz.
- Agreement between SECTUR Veracruz and TURISSSTE, CDMX. Presentation of the Tourism Catalogue of the Magical Towns of Coatepec, Coscomatepec, Orizaba, Papantla, Xico, and Zozocolco of the State of Veracruz for the sale of tourism products.

Primary Challenges

Measures to counter climate change; greater inclusion for excluded populations; strengthening cultural tourism small businesses and security control for the area.

4. Impact

4.1. Direct impact

Impact on local government

Papantla has had to learn to manage a tourism project based on local development, cultural rights, institutional governance, and sustainability. At the same time it must uphold its designation as a Magic Town, thereby demonstrating itself as a significant biocultural hub, with the subsequent economic benefits and status.

Impact on culture and cultural stakeholders

The project has created a better quality of life for the local population by putting the tours and the charm Totonac culture at the centre of its strategy. This has helped make culture the core of one of the most important local public policies in Mexico.

Another example of its positive impact is the increasing professionalization of its cultural actors, the subsequent re-establishing the value of tangible and intangible heritage, and nature as a fundamental part of Totonac cosmogony. Additionally, it facilitates intercultural interactions between Indigenous populations (Totonac peoples), Afro-Mexican and multiracial persons, as well as visiting foreigners.

Impact on the region

The Magical Towns of Mexico have maintained a connection with Papantla, and are inspired by the cultural perspective that this municipality has adopted.

4.2. Evaluation

The program has had significant cultural, social, and economic impacts, which is particularly apparent in the positive tourism around Totonac culture and, with it, the increasing number of hospitality and restaurant establishments. Vanilla is also essential for everyday life in Papantla. Totonac craftsmanship is, and will continue to be, a platform for generating business and respect from locals and foreigners alike.

The evaluation of the project quantifies the city's progress and establishes a survey profile and grades for the activities with the aim of improving the project's implementation.

4.3. Key factors

The following were the essential factors that led to Papantla being added to the List of Magical Towns:

OTHER MAGICAL TOWNS HAVE MAINTAINED A CONNECTION WITH PAPANTLA, AND ARE INSPIRED BY THE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE THAT THIS MUNICIPALITY HAS ADOPTED.

1. The involvement of the society and local authorities.
2. Planning and regulation instruments.
3. The boost to municipal development.
4. The available attractions and services.
5. "The Magic of the Area" as a defining initiative by the Ministry of Tourism.
6. Regional Spaces and Conditions.
7. Impact of Tourism on the Locality and the Sector
8. Local Capacity Development.

4.4. Continuity

The program's ongoing work is reported every two months with evaluations by the federal and state governments.

5. Further information

Papantla de Olarte Veracruz was a candidate for the fourth UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (November 2019 – May 2020). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2020, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices implemented under Agenda 21 for culture.

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