

FEASIBILITY OF INTRODUCING TOURISM TO INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA'S LAKE ATITLÁN: SANTA CLARA LA
LAGUNA AND SAN JUAN LA LAGUNA IN THE TOWNS OF PALESTINA,
PANYEBAR, PASAJQUIM. STUDY ABROAD PROJECT AT SANTA
CLARA LA LAGUNA, LAKE ATITLÁN, GUATEMALA

Lisa Blenkinsop
Metropolitan College of London

The purpose of this report is to analyse the resources available in selected indigenous towns in Santa Clara and San Juan in order to develop a sustainable basis for tourism under the three pillars of sustainability, including economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors.

The towns under analyses are:

- Santa Clara La Laguna
- Palestina
- Panyebar
- Pasajquim

In assisting Vivimos Mejor in reaching their goal of developing an Eco-tourism trail as a beneficiary to conserving the coffee and maize plantations as well as the surrounding land for reforestation and environmental protection this report should conclude:

- **Whether tourism will be accepted in these non developed towns by the indigenous locals?**
- **If the towns resources are sufficient to adapt to tourism or if change and development will be necessary?**
- **If the eco – tourism trail is a possibility considering all variables possible and if it will assist in the conservation desired by Vivimos Mejor?**

- **Will tourism bring economic benefits to the towns without disrupting their way of living?**

Research Methods:

Based on various research this project involved attending a series of meetings over several weeks with Vivimos Mejor and roughly 30 locals from various backgrounds representing Palestina, Panyebar and Pasajquim. The meetings mainly took place in Palestina at a local school, the first meeting I attended was presented by Vivimos Mejor who gave a powerpoint presentation on the need to conserve the natural resources and the biodiversity within the municipalities of Sololá using a system of regional parks that are protected and conserved for sustainability of culture, agriculture and the natural resources that serve the people of Lake Atitlán. This included the conservation of Medicinal Plants, Coffee, Maize, the Ecosystem, Forests and the water system of the lake. To assist with the conservation, Vivimos Mejor envisions the development of an eco-tourism trail through the towns in order to bring economic advantage, minimize development and to create a control tool for tourism as it starts to develop. After the first meeting took place, the rest of the meetings were based on activities that allowed Vivimos Mejor to gain information on each of the towns involved. The representatives were grouped into their locations, and provided with pen and large poster paper in order to draw maps and charts of their towns, the daily activities, what natural resources they had, What was produced, agriculturally, artistically, and traditionally, What services they had in their towns and what they felt was an issue for their town. These meetings allowed communication between Vivimos Mejor and the locals as well as providing the essential information for the project. It also gave me the opportunity to assess the economic and environmental issues that was of concern in each of the towns.

A fairly obvious observation is that the representatives of these towns that participated in the meeting research was undertaken within the towns mainly because they could address possible tourism and socio cultural issues. This I believed would give me the answers to the above questions and therefore did not represent the thoughts of the representatives that had already initiated ideas through Vivimos Mejor. Using a survey of questions a small sample of anonymous locals were formally interviewed in order to get a feel of what they felt about tourism and what resources the towns had already developed that could be used for tourist locations and activities that could serve tourists. The sample size attempted was 10 resident locals in each town. Through the process of doing my research, various factors came to light that not only hindered completing the surveys but also served to show certain probable factors that would be an issue concerning tourism this included language barriers. My Spanish is not so bad; however, most of the local Maya indigenous in these towns speak Quiché and are obviously uncomfortable with Spanish and more so with an outsider. Transport issues are a major issue, there is minimal transport that serves these areas and the mud track that serves this route is destroyed whenever it rains a lot. Sometimes the mass of rain that is unleashed most afternoons during the rainy season creates major problems along with the distance between Santa Clara and Pasajquim. Whilst the timing of the journey depends on the weather and roads, it can take over an hour to drive to Pasajquim and up to four to walk. In order to get a feel for the towns' atmospheres and environments several trips were made to each of the towns. Not all of the trips were productive; however, each journey gave me a further insight in what interactions may occur between a tourist and the locals as well as various issues that could arise.

The Route from Santa Clara La Laguna – Palestina - Panyebar - Pasajquim

Transport and Location -

Santa Clara lies high in the mountains between Santa Lucia and San Juan's Cerro La Cristalina around the lake including San Juan's main town and several routes to and from other main tourist destination, including San Pedro and Panajachel. Being 20 minutes away from the Pan-American Highway, it is possible to enter Santa Clara from Mexico as this main motorway serves Central America by bus, pick up truck or micro bus. A fairly interesting journey can be made from Los Encuentros on the Mendez bus that will swiftly take you passed Cuarenta Y Ocho, a well known public transport spot on to Chuiraxamoló, a protected national park slightly higher up in Santa Clara where there is a camp site and Zip line. This route will then pass through Santa Maria a small town with a disputable history that has located itself in the centre of Santa Clara, next to Santa Clara's main town. It is necessary to recheck your destination at this point as it appears, when first travelling into Santa Clara, there is a sign welcoming you into Santa Clara, though in reality the entrance to the town is the entrance to Santa Maria Visitación. The bus then takes a short 3 minute trip over a small bridge that links it to Santa Clara's main downtown area. Several buses serve Santa Clara, however for connection to the main towns closer to the lake continue with the Mendez bus which links San Pablo, San Juan and San Pedro for a visit to the lake. For the more adventurous, there is a supply of pick up trucks that also serve the above towns. The trip to Pasajquim via Santa Clara is a fairly bumpy hands on trip, an early start is advisable as the first pick up leaves roughly at 6am another at 10am and the last at 2pm with fairly similar return Journeys. There is sufficient and regular supply of pick ups to Panyebar and Palestina, although timings are regular no printed timetable exists and it is necessary to question locals for a timely trip.

Issues Concerning Local Public Transport

- Lack of information
- Routes and destinations stops of pick ups and buses
- No timetable
- Weather
- State of the road that links all the towns

The journey from Santa Clara to Pasajquim is solely served by pick ups which are weather permi trucks. In addition to the roads being cleared from fallen forest debris and rocks from where this sand has been taken from the sides of the mountain causing small parts of land to collapse into the mud road on days of heavy rainfall. This was one of the main concerns that arose in the surveys of the locals and in the meetings. However main government involvement would be necessary to improve the road. If this mud track was paved and developed it would assist the locals' transport hugely connecting the towns and the carrying capacity of tourists to the towns. In contrast, however, it would also take away a huge characteristic of the road which could be seen as an adventurous journey as well as advertised as a mission for the more adventurous tourist. As well as creating a control on tourist carrying capacity to the towns and their attractions once tourism does develop.

Physical Tourist Attractions and Possible Tourist Activities

Although each town has obvious similar each has various activities that could be further develop meetings and the various charts drawn up by the locals as well as my visits to each of the towns various activities and attractions came to light.

Many of the locals speak Spanish and Quiche, there is a lot of tradition including

Mayan indigenous dress, crochet, traje, corte and tailoring. The split between religions is Evangelical and Catholic, and each town has at least one of these churches. All of the towns grow maize and café with slight variation on what other crops they grow. They still use traditional medicines in most the towns and all have access to a health clinic of some sort.

Out of the majority of the sample of tourist surveys taken up with the locals concluded that most were welcoming to tourism and supported it however also agreed that some form of protection would be needed mainly for the forests and Cerro Pannan being one of the highly suggested tourist attractions passed Pasajquim and Panyebar. All took the view that tourism would help the economies and services in the towns. The main overall concerns of the towns were the state of the roads and the situation with rubbish dumping and water contamination.

Main attractions described by the locals were Lake Atitlán, Las Cristalinas, Chuiraxamó, and Cerro Pannan as well as various Miradores (scenic overlooks).

Santa Clara's Main attractions:

Chuiraxamoló This is the name for the mountain located in the local national park reserved for conservation of the forest. This area became a site for tourist activity with the construction and inception of a Zipline tour that overhangs the canopy. A 20 minute trip from Santa Clara by bus or a two hour walk up hill from the top of the main town will take you to the top of the mountains. The walk itself hold excellent views of Lake Atitlán and the beautiful landscape though it is not for the faint hearted, however for the less energetic it is best served by local transport. There is a charge of 20Quetzales (q) for entry to the park and 80q to do the Zipline as a tourist. There is also a camp site

here for those who enjoy the outdoors, however the sole facility is a small stall selling crisps, sweets and drinks, so carrying cash and water if walking is a necessity.

A Market Visit Every Tuesday and Saturday the central Square of Santa Clara is filled with Market traders that sell all types of foods and goods from traje to live chickens. It is abundant with culture from the surrounding towns, and is the largest nearest market from Los Encuentros, Sololá and San Pedro, and also serves all the communities and surrounding towns needs.

Basket making Being one of the main productions other than maize and Café, Santa Clara is well known for basket making, those tourists that wish to enjoy a tranquil afternoon avoiding the rain could well be taking a small class in basket making, for a small fee, for the class and the opportunity to create their own souvenir.

'Sendero de Panica' The Mirador passes Vivimos Mejor's Nursery here and you can view the entirety of San Juan as well as the lake, Las Cristalinas and San Pedro.

Services in Santa Clara

Hotels: There are three hotels in Santa Clara the main one being Las Cañaverales which also has a restaurant based at the bottom of the 1st street. For a more basic option there is also the hostel at 20q a night based above a mechanic store which is fairly basic with showers and toilet.

Shops: The abundance of shops in Santa Clara makes it easy to find most essentials including medicines as there are two Pharmacies.

Restaurants: Las Cañaverales and Comedor Centro are both fairly decent for eating and both have excellent coffee, there are various other cafes around but the majority open dependent on business and not necessarily open on regular days. Sundays they have been known to close as well as Wednesday, the day after the market.

Public Toilets: There are public toilets in the Plaza, however you may also use toilets

in restaurants if you care to ask and pay 1q.

Campsite: The sole campsite out of all the areas at present is Chuiraxamoló.

Problem Issues in Santa Clara

- The rubbish in the streets, that is, cleaning of the plaza after the markets
- No tourist information on hotels, sites, transport.
- The weather, it rains most afternoons so all outdoor activities should take place in the morning and indoor activities in the afternoon.
- Nearest Cash Machines are in Sololá or San Pedro
- It is not on many of the maps or international guide books internationally
- Language
- Educating tourists and locals to interact respectfully

Palestina's attractions

Due to transport, weather and timing issues it was not possible to complete the surveys in Palestina. In addition my informant for this town was not able to attend our meeting to view the town. Therefore the information here relies upon the information gained from briefly visiting the town and attending the some communal meetings.

San Juan's Palestina is the nearest of the towns to Santa Clara. It is about an hour's walk or a 15 minute drive, although pick ups have been known to get stranded on the way back into Santa Clara. There are several shops but no tourist facilities, hotels, although a participant of the survey advised that there is a temporary campsite currently running. Most of the resident indigenous locals are inclined to speak Quiche, their first language, which could be an issue when communicating.

I was informed by the locals that attended the meeting that the main commodities farmed in the area were: were coffee, maize and avocados. The cultural interest would

include women's dress skirt production (cortes) and the aserradores (saw mill).

Residents believe that the town would welcome tourists because of the income they would bring to the town, but also for the experience of exchanging cultural knowledge.

The indigenous dress and traditional medicine were also believed to be of value for tourism. In addition to the environmental tourism provided by a visit to Cerro Pannan and the mirador Cumbre de Panakui.

Issues in Palestina

Depending on what activities are considered in Palestina at present there are not many tourist based economic activities that will benefit this community. It is fairly close to Santa Clara and is the first town that tourists will come across. Without physical activities the main tourist attractions will be the traditional dress and the miradors as well as the colorful cemetery.

Panyevbar Main Attractions

Cerro Pannan is the most favoured tourist spot by the locals (and its forested mountain sides) however they also wish to preserve its natural resources as well as promote them. Through the meetings and surveys I found that was the main sight mentioned at Panybar and Pasajquim. I was advised by a local resident that it was actually closer to get to Cerro Pannan from Panyevbar than from Pasajquim, as it was an hour and 45 minutes up hill past the health clinic where you can get a great view of the mountains on a clear morning, through the forest and another 45 minutes and down hill into Cerro Pannan. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to visit Cerro Pannan due to transport, timing and the weather. However other sources informed me that there are no tourist services in Cerro Pannan although tourists have found their way there and

camped over night and returned the next day.

Miradors: The list below is a number of miradors that the locals have listed as excellent view points in Paneybar.

- Chowonon
- Paquisis
- Pacuchicha
- Patzunaj
- Cabeza de burro

Traditional Medicine:

From the activities in the meetings I was able to draw out what resources the towns had most of, Panyebar, it turned out, grew the most plants for traditional medicine. This is an ideal cultural commodity that would satisfy tourists and could also be incorporated with the history of the Shaman's and current state of affairs concerning modern and traditional medicine. It also seemed an ideal location to possibly create a traditional medicine center/museum of this kind in the green houses that already exist on the hill towards the exit heading towards Pasajquim. An informant advised that these where built by the Japanese, however due to land reforms the current owner now grows maize here!

Weaving

As you leave Panyebar for Pasajquim there is a small cabana type hut with a Vivimos Mejor sign above the door that is used for traditional weaving. This would be an ideal location for locals to sample try on a small peace of weaving for themselves on for a fee, or just to give a history of the weavers within the towns.

Services inPanyebar

- A Campsite near the town as you leave for pasajquim
- Restaurant - Centre of the town Vecino
- Restaurant – Near the School

Issues inPanyebar:

As in Palestina getting to Paynevbar is just as difficult due to transport restriction, however the road once there is well paved. Again the locals all welcomed tourism, however saw various problems that could arise which were:

- Languages as most locals speak Quiche
- Transport would be a problem for tourism
- The streets are a problem
- No place for reception and information
- No tourism infrastructure

In addition to this list there would be the necessary to create basic facilities for public use such as toilets, standards of the cafeterias in addition to the camping ground that has recently developed. The ownership of the Greenhouses is also an issue when looking at the idea of a Traditional medicine location.

Pasajquim's Main Attractions

Pasajquim is the smallest of the villages within the town with amazing views. However it is the hardest location to reach and with the least facilities. Without question the main location to visit here would be Cerro Pannan, however I was informed it was a two hour

walk away down a mud track.

Cerro Pannan

Cerro Pannan lies in the valley of the mountain and there are several routes that take you up to the top of the mountain and down into the valley. The first is as described in Panyebar. Whilst the next option is the mud track leading out of Pasajquim, which according to locals can take a two hour walk, as no transport serves this area.

Informants described Cerro Pannan as having three natural springs that are large enough to swim in, there is a well known mirador that looks out to the pacific ocean and a feasible sight for Camping. However again there are no facilities here according to local informants.

Services in Pasajquim

- Several basic stores
- Indigenous local house that sells coffee

Issues in Pasajquim

- Minimum Transport/No clear route to Cerro Pannan
- Bad Roads
- Language barrier
- No cafeteria or public rest place.

An Ideal eco tourism trail from Santa Clara to Pasajquim

Using the current analysis of the towns above and their facilities and resources below, I suggest the following packaged tours and activities that would be a possible tourist product with minimum input to changing the towns facilities.

Package 1 – A day in an indigenous village – Santa Clara

Arrive Monday or Friday afternoon in Santa Clara

(As the Market is open the next day.)

Drop baggage at hotel,

Visit to Santa Maria with guide to explain history of two indigenous towns, local dress and community.

1 night in hotel in Santa Clara

7.00am Breakfast

8 – 12pm Chuiraxamoló an early start is best to avoid rain fall and to get the best views of the lake, the trip could be advertised as a hike through the mountain up to Chuiraxamoló followed by the Zip line and returning on the bus to Santa Clara.

12 – 2pm Lunch and Market free time. (The market begins to close at 2pm)

2-5pm Basket making

Tourists taught basic weaving principles for basket making and shown to create their own small souvenirs at a charge (A mat or basket to take away).

Package 2 – Walking the Trail

Arrive in Santa Clara Tuesday afternoon, drop bags at hotel.

(Spend 1 night at hotel)

Day 1

(Hotel to arrange packed food and water for trip)

6am Quick Breakfast

7 – 9 am Walk the Mud track to Palestina

stopping at the mirador cornfields on route

9-11am Walk to the Centro medico in order to take the Paynebar route into Cerro

Pannan

11am Arrive at Cerro Pannan

- Set up Camp

12pm Lunch - Campsite to have set location for barbeques on set days

1-5pm Free Time swimming in natural springs, Mirador and tour of Cerro Pannan given with information by guide.

5-8 Barbeque for dinner – Set up by guide

Day 2

8am Cold breakfast

9-12pm Free Time in Cerro Pannan

12.30 - 2pm Walk through centre of Cerro Pannan through the finca that borders Santa Lucia to go on the mud track that takes you to Pasajquim for the walk back

2-3pm Await pick up truck from Pasajquim to Santa Clara for fun and speed

3pm Return back to Santa Clara.

Package 3 – Horse riding tour

As package 2 above but using trained horses as transport.

Package 4 – Hot air ballooning over the mountains

8-10am Hot air balloon ride from Santa Clara to Pasajquim and Cerro Pannan, with views of the mountains and the pacific ocean.

10-2pm Eat lunch at Cerro Pannan, Barbeque or buffet!

2-4 Return to Santa Clara

Suggestions for the above tours and similar tours for the towns.

Tour Guides

The above tours rely on a guide that will take tourists to the locations of Activities, Miradors and the guided walk. The tour guide can be seen as an information tool, advising about the environment culture and politics of the towns as well as a security feature on behalf of the locals as well as the tourists. Also as a communication tool it would be necessary that the tour guide spoke at least Spanish and Quiché if not English too, depending on whether the tour was marketed towards nationals or international tourists.

Timing

From Mid-May through October, most downpours occur in the afternoon. For this reason it would be essential that any walks and outdoor activities take place either early morning or in the summer season.

Transport

As mentioned before, the roads are fairly delicate and at times treacherous during the rainy season. If tours were to be held early morning during the rainy season, trained horses would be an ideal form of transport as well as a selling tool for such a tour. This would also cut back on the amount of actual time travelling and give the tourists more time to enjoy the views and scenery. The main issue that is of concern here is the lack of trained horses to handle humans and the necessary facilities on route that would need to be added (e.g., trained tour guides). Tour Guides have to be able to handle horses/food/ and refreshing points for the horses. All since there are various vehicles that take the route, some form of traffic control would need to be administered for locals and horses.

Hot Air Ballooning

This is an ideal, slightly extravagant way of viewing the landscape, as well as being a unique form of tourism without actually worrying about the trail itself or possible issues of environmental damage. This could be done with the creation of two to several possible landing spots with excellent miradors. Once this kind of tour becomes successful, other tours around the region could be incorporated on different days to increase economic efficiency. It would not need anything more than a trained guide and to take the hot air balloon up. There would be the need for trained guides and food set up for arrival at Cerro Pannan. I visualise this as a slightly more luxurious option that would appeal to the less adventurous tourist.

Market Distribution & Planning for the Tourism Product.

Market distribution concerns the information outlets that tourism providers use to market their products. In most instances it is the key element of a successful tourism product. There are several forms of distribution outlets that are available to principals, the most successful to date is the internet, whilst the retail tour operators follow closely behind, with every form of media outlet possible. This involves branding, imaging, and visualisation of the tourism product creating the exotic “other” for the tourist gaze. Through market distribution you are able to supply your product to a variety of customers in order to create demand using intermediaries.

The remote locations of the towns and the lack of transport and knowledge in the area means that tourists in other parts of the lake are unaware of the natural beauty and attractions within the towns as well as possible activities that would be available. In order to promote the areas it would be necessary to use various intermediaries in order to promote the municipalities of San Juan and Santa Clara. A suggested distribution would be as follows:

- **International Guide books**

The majority of travellers that seek adventure would consult an international guide book, and this is an easy way of reaching international tourists without the expense.

- **Eco tourism Organisations such as Tourism Concern**

Often other eco tourism organisations promote environmentally friendly tours on their websites and in their guides, and often withhold sturdy reputation that attracts the desired consumer.

- **Internet**

This is another fairly international, as well as cheap, resource for promotion; however, there may be doubts whether a developing tourism product would successfully benefit from internet advertising as a sole product due to consumer trust. Nevertheless, using other intermediaries websites such as GAP or Travel Latin America that have developed trusted branded products that consumers trust.

- **Current retail Operators and hotels in Panajachel, San Marcos, San Pedro Santa Cruz**

Most of the lake side towns are a hub of international tourism for Lake Atitlán and are the ideal locations to advertise by means of brochures or leaflets, these locations can also act as a direct booking services where by the tourist product is sold, a commission is taken by the tour operator or hotel and the remainder passed to the relevant principal or possibly the Tourist Information Centre in Santa Clara.

- **Creation of a Visitor Information Centre in Santa Clara**

Due to Santa Clara being a central hub for transport this is the first point of contact for many tourists that wish to take the above tours or head to Chuiraxamoló. To have an information center on arrival into the town, possibly at the top of the main road

that runs around the lake, would serve as a marketing ploy for those travelling past the town by bus, as well as an information centre for the trails and tours around the towns. As well as acting as a distribution and booking outlet, in addition a "Visitor Information Center" could be the control hub for the finances and organization of the tourism product as well as the coordinator of various information outlets around the lake..

Marketing for Tourist Typologies

Depending on the type of tourists you wish to acquire it is necessary that you market to match their credentials. Previous researchers (Smith 1978) have categorized the following typology in order to define the type of tourists that visit locations:

Explorers – limited number of travellers, active participation and enjoy observing the locals, easily accommodating and accepting of the norms and values of local culture.

Elite – Small number of travellers who travel frequently but with pre-arranged services and usually accepting of norm cultural values temporarily.

Off Beat – looking for adventure from normal vacation often trying to avoid mass tourism, adapt well to local norms.

Unusual – tourist gazers and one day tours, usually in pre packaged holidays, wants secure adventure.

Incipient Mass – Steady number of tourists looking for home comforts.

Mass - arrive frequently in huge numbers and expect to be catered to with western standards.

Charter - Usually have minimal involvement with locals and arrive accepting western standards and comforts.

In the case of the indigenous towns we are looking at it would be acceptable to market for the first four typologies in order to attract the correct type of tourist desired

as well as marketing to those whom the tourism product would be desired by.

The Three Pillars of sustainability

In order to create sustainable tourism it is essential to consider three issues when developing tourism:

- **Socio Cultural Issues**

Culture as Commodity: The indigenous communities of San Juan La Laguna and Santa Clara La Laguna hold strong traditional values and gender roles that are more prominent in some of the towns than others. Whilst tourism has started to develop, the current status is that Santa Clara has so far had the most interaction with tourists, and the greater the distance from Santa Clara the less interaction. Where culture has become prominently the main attraction of tourism, there has also been interaction and pressure from governments to hold back development in order to conserve the tourism commodity once an economic gain has been realized, and although tourism can contribute financially to local people, it is of no use if they cannot build better roads or schools, even when there is a local desire to do so. This has been known to occur in Cyprus where Mountain Villagers in Pafos have been denied planning permission to redevelop traditional mud houses for modern concrete developments.

Jobs: The Increase of jobs as development progresses and tourism shifts the peripherals of the economy is not always beneficial. New roles are often developed within tourism that are taken by the younger generations. This not only upsets the household income as children in families start earning more than their parents but this also means old traditional roles may die as women also find roles within tourism as the income from tourism replaces previous Job roles.

Community Displacement: This is known to happen by means of the job-roles

shifting, where teenage children take on jobs so that they may not have time to study or even to participate with their family in functions such as church, which is highly regarded in most indigenous communities, to the point where family members miss meals and family ties and functions are disrupted as the tourism economic gain becomes more important through the influence of tourism consumption.

Land & Proprietorship: Another issue is that the privatizing of land and the current state of occupancy seems leads to uncertainty in areas such as Pasajquim where land disputes have been known to develop. This issue would also need to be addressed as well as to the practice of traditional rites that may still be ongoing within the proposed areas for reforestation and conservation.

Languages and dress: Currently there are two main languages spoken within the towns Quiché and Spanish. The nature of tourism and accommodating for tourists means that locals must adapt to the environment in order to make visitors feel welcome. This not only means learning other languages such as English but also taking on the same forms of dress as a tourist that creates a perceived form of trust by a tourist. This not only means that after a while indigenous languages can be lost, but also that cultural dress as well as culture can become diluted in order to satisfy a tourist sense of comfort. This also brings up the issue of authenticity of cultural rituals and dress whereby local traditions are changed or recreated in order to satisfy tourist desires to gaze upon the indigenous.

- **Environmental Impacts**

Conservation: Tourism is often used as a form of preservation in order to preserve land and have economic gain. However when land is preserved it must be remembered that the land has multiple use. It is all very well to conserve land for

tourism however it must be accessible to local people that need access to their natural resources as well. Firewood, for example, is one of the main sources of energy around the lake whilst the water source at Cerro Pannan and through the various mountains serve most of the communities within the remote towns, unless a replacement is found when conserving these resources, the participation of the locals and interaction with NGOs do not present a reality as locals will continue their practices as necessary.

Rubbish Disposal: The disposal of rubbish as well as dog droppings is a major concern around the towns in terms of tourism as no system is set up through the rainy season. It is washed away into the mountains or the lake which is not only unattractive but also takes away from the natural beauty of the area. A recycling initiative could well be sought after, however this would involve educating locals as well as introducing new systems. This is one of the main concerns of locals around the towns.

Water Sources: There are several water sources that run through the mountains into the towns and at Cerro Pannan itself. A further concern through tourism is contamination of water sources that locals are dependent on. It is necessary to educate tourists of the delicate nature on the environment in order that they understand that they must respect it and that it is not solely for their use.

The trail itself: Transport is one of the major issues concerning the roads, the mining of sand to replenish the mud track road after each torrential down pour, causes small land slides of fallen rocks and fauna to land in the mud which is then cleared by local workers each morning. This itself is a major factor causing the route to be unsafe for tourism by any means of transport as well as tourist. However the formation of an

asphalt road could also cause more pollution through an increase of vehicles.

Development: Kept to a minimum, the feasibility of cabanas and camping grounds with basic barbeques and amenities at various locations, easily serve the needs of tourist as well as being a novelty in their own right. Further development than this would not be essential and also help to maintain the carrying capacity of the land, making it difficult or uncomfortable for more than the desired capacity of tourists to visit. This also limits damage and interaction with conserved and reforested areas.

- **Economic Issues**

Although the towns involved are viewed in Western terms as underdeveloped and poor they are sufficiently independent to the point that tourism's economic benefits should be seen as a secondary source of income in order not to upset the current economic state. If the towns were to become dependent on tourism, any decrease or shift in sales and visitors could have drastic effects if other sources of employment and income were lost. A prime example is natural disasters which can be frequent in delicate environments. Civil unrest could deter tourism as well as freak weather such as the heavy daily rain fall through May to June that I was told was quite unusual for the time of year I visited. Regarding the maintenance of the profits gained from tourism within the local communities as well as using it to assist with the conservation and reforestation projects that are the purpose of promoting tourism to these communities, it is necessary to implement a finance system that can maintain control of fund raised. As tourism progresses an increase in visitors to the markets and shops and accommodations will see direct economic benefit, however, the actual payment for tour operation should be redirected into benefiting the communities.

The Santa Clara visitor information centre could hold an account into which all funds from booked tours could be deposited and from which salaries could be paid to the trained tour guides, horse keepers, etc, can be paid from. This also means that tour operators within other areas of the lake can deposit funds from their bookings into such an account and these funds as raised will be contributory to development of the towns, reforestation or conservation as desired.

Suggestions for considering tourism along the routes discussed and forms of transport:

- Consider trained horses for transport as this is the most feasible way of travelling the route without hindrance or issues concerning the weather or mud track.
- Check out the cost of training and maintaining a hot air balloon, this would be a fabulous way to view the mountains and one of the most unique ways.
- Set up an information centre specifically devoted to these regions and coordinating tourism and tourists as well as holding information on the towns; they should hold information on transport and stopping points.
- Set up a program to tackle the rubbish situation within the towns.
- Take an environmental check on the route through the towns. Is this route sustainable, safe? The current changing state of this road is a huge factor to travelling through the towns, yet it is also very unstable.
- Establish a finance system that allows funds to benefit the local communities as well as the projects that are being established.
- Introduce signs for transport, mirador locations and directions, throughout the route. However, ensure that they are written in Quiché and Spanish at least.
- History & knowledge plaques are excellent ways of informing visitors and locals of

historic specifics about a town or place or person in various locations. Again these should be written in both Quiché and Spanish.

- Ensure full participation from communities.
- Market distribute as much as possible in order to develop a visitor base and market the location, with as much information as possible to the correct consumers.

Suggestions for Visitor Attractions

- **Historic Museum in Santa Clara** stating the culture history of language, traditional dress, and politics of the towns.
- **Traditional Medicine School/ Visitor Museum for local and Visitor Participation in Panyebar:** A traditional Medicine centre that holds the history and artefacts from the indigenous communities as well as the history of shamanism. However, this place should/could still be used by locals and visitors for current ailments.
- **Descriptive and historic plaques on walls and located around towns as well as Mirador signs.** This could turn the towns into living museums whereby no change or development is necessarily needed; however, visitors could follow a guided, numbered map route that takes them through the town to the miradors and various sights of interest. This would also be an interesting tour for local and school children, as an extra curricular activity.
- **Language school/Museum.** There are over 23 Mayan languages spoken in the region, and at least three of them are spoken in Santa Clara and San Juan. I strongly believe that a museum should already exist. Most elders in the towns speak Quiché as a first language whilst Spanish is their second. Furthermore, in

San Juan La Laguna, Tz'tujil is the main language (along with Spanish) spoken.

- **Weaving fabric centre.** Basket making is Santa Clara's main activity; however, it is not very prominent in the town. Basic tours could easily be developed of the basket makers, and the *traje* that is woven to produce a rich history of the traditional dress and what it represents to the town and Lake Atitlán itself.
- **Rock climbing.** In addition to Chuiraxamoló, it would be feasible within the national park or other areas to start a rock climbing school. This would take trained people and Equipment, but it would add to the list of activities that would attract tourists and bring more income into the town(s) of the area.
- **Bungee Jumping:** The only problem with this adrenalin rush is the unsightly crane over the gorgeous environment; however, it does not damage the environment, apart from the physical sight of a bungee jumper and the staging equipment. But this can be used a self marketing tool. It also produces a high number of participants.

Suggestions for further research:

Although my overall time in Santa Clara was 7 weeks, the actual basis of what I was trying to establish was not clear until the 2nd week of my journey. This was due to making official contacts and establishing at what stage the programme was and what had to be achieved. Language barriers hindered my progression as my Spanish was not perfect, and, in the meetings that took place I found that I would need to adapt to sitting back and observing in order to understand rather than participating. The next two to three weeks were spent organizing assignments and understanding the cultural

barriers that landed before me. Each assignment produced another visit to the towns that I struggled to get to although each visit also rendered an adventure unseen by any of my fellow students who were based at other locations. Every conversation that I managed to understand held a dramatic statement or amusing story that distracted my dismal journeys in the rain. I would advise any researcher that gets passed being interrogated as to whether they are Government investigators or find themselves stuck on a pick up truck for two hours in the middle of two of the most remote towns within San Juan to find a local translator that will establish the trust of those you are researching on as well as enable constructive communication amongst the many warming smiles from those that welcomed my questions.

Many Thanks to: Alida for looking after me so well, Pancho, Sheili, Suli and Tuca for cheering me up on those rainy days. Vivimos Mejor for allowing me to participate, & my fellow students that inspired new ideas! Thank you to all the local people in each of the towns that participated in my surveys.

Bibliography:

Sharpley, R. The Tourism Business, 2002, Business Education Publishers, Sunderland.

Scheyens, R. Tourism for Development – Empowering communities, 2002, Themes in Tourism, Prentice Hall, Pearsons Education Limited, England.

Smith, Valene R. Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978.

J.Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, 2000 Sage Publications, London

Mowfourth & Munt, *Tourism & Sustainability Development and new tourism in the third world*, 2003, Routledge London & New York

P burns, *An introduction to Tourism & Anthropolgy*, 1999 Routledge, London & New York

Eltringham, Fisher & Stewart:*Rough Guides 2nd EdThe Rough Guide to the Mayan World*, 2001 Penquin Books, London

E Chambers, *Native Tours – The anthropology of Travel & Tourism*, University of Maryland, Waveland Press, illinois.