How they do it: Community Based Tourism;
Case study of the community participation of Kikil, Yucatan, Mexico

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Abstract

Community based tourism is seen as an alternative form of tourism where communities have the opportunity to develop in a sustainable way. Moreover there is the case of ecotourism projects where the intention is to safeguard the culture of a community while using the natural and cultural assets in order to attract tourism. Following these, in order to look into community participation and the involvement of the local residents this research focuses on the development of the cenote project in the community of Kikil in the state of Yucatan, Mexico. Moreover, the research shows that tourism is still the best practice to achieve positive impacts in this community. Linking concepts related to issues of empowerment, communication, collaboration and governance to determine the level of participation of the people working at the cenote project of Kikil. Hence, in line with the involvement of the actors, this was achieved while interviewing some of the stakeholders. Thus, the study showed how the local people from Kikil came together and formed a cooperative of 13 families in order to develop a community project. They have had many good influences while embracing this project. Most members have perceived empowerment in some skills, they are also eager to learn more and gain more knowledge in order to offer a better service to the visitors. However, during the development of this project together they have also experienced some conflicts due to the lack of communication with other stakeholders that has resulted in some misunderstandings. Regardless, they can be seen as a model to follow from other communities in the Region that would also like to develop a sustainable tourism project.

Keywords: community, tourism, participation, actors, collaboration, empowerment, governance.

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Abbreviations

SECTUR – Ministry of Tourism
CULTUR – Patronage of the Units of Cultural and Touristic Services
CDI – National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities
SEFOTUR – Ministry of Tourism Promotion of the State of Yucatan
UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Association

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The tourism industry is considered to be one of the fastest growing industries, with the expectation that it will keep on increasing (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). The increase of tourism in developing countries is considered to have negative effects (Mowforth & Munt, 1998), firstly, on the environment, because it contributes to climate change with around a 5% of total CO_2 emissions (McKercher, Prideaux, Cheung, & Law, 2010), as well as the effects of urbanization, water contamination, etc. Secondly, the loss of cultural heritage in the community, because of the interaction with the tourists, that may affect the lifestyle of the residents. Moreover, an additional negative effect could also be on the host society, when there is an increase in the cost of living, and increased crowding (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). For that reason, the implementation of new forms of tourism have been introduced with the aim of overcoming the problems of traditional tourism, for example ecotourism and sustainable tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Although the industry can lead to negative impacts, these forms of tourism implemented in local communities have led to more positive impacts, such as an increase in employment, more investments from stakeholders in the areas, more cultural activities, etc. (Andereck et al., 2005).

According to the United Nations World Tourism Association (UNWTO) there is a need to work towards sustainable practices as a way to achieve economic development and poverty reduction (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The country of Mexico, according to the Ministry of tourism (SECTUR, 2016) is working towards achieving a more sustainable tourism sector. For that reason, it promotes ecotourism, as a way to protect nature, the culture, and to offer opportunity to the communities to have other forms of income (SECTUR, 2014) than having the need to migrate in order to find a job opportunity.

The tourism industry in Mexico is the fourth source of income for the country, which is why it is considered one of the most important economic activities of the country, reaching the 32 million of international arrivals in 2015 (SECTUR, 2016). As aforementioned, one of the priorities of the government is to work towards sustainability in the tourism sector, so the industry should not be seen only as a way to make profit but as a mean to reach sustainable development (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). With the objective to achieve sustainability, communities working with tourism projects, could help to reach an integral participation in tourism by reducing negative impacts on the environment and increasing positive ones such as job opportunities for the local residents of the communities (Haywood, 1988; Okazaki, 2008). This kind of ecotourism has been

implemented in Mexico, and particularly in Yucatan state, as a way to reduce poverty by giving the people more job opportunities (Araújo-Santana et al., 2013) and alternatives to stay in their own community without having to migrate to other village. Thus, by respecting the culture and nature of a locality there is also the preservation of the environment for future generations (Araújo-Santana, Parra-Vázquez, Salvatierra, Arce, & Montagnini, 2013).

The State of Yucatan is located in the southeast of Mexico, it is mainly known for its Mayan culture, the archeological pyramids and its gastronomy. The tourism industry in Yucatan is considered to be one of the main strategic areas for the economy because it generates more than $1,500 million pesos a year, and over 20,000 jobs for the yucatecan people (Daltabuit, Hernández, Barbosa, & Valdez, 2007). Therefore, having communities working towards a tourism project means more opportunities for the people living in the communities to have other forms of income and more infrastructures for the locality (El Financiero, 2015).

The present research work is focused on Kikil, a Mayan community in the state of Yucatan, Mexico, and situated 4.5 km north of the municipality of Tizimin. It is also located on the main road to Río Lagartos, a well-known coastal town. Kikil was a mayan community in the prehispanic epoch, after that, it was colonialized by the Spanish conquerors and evangelized by the Franciscan Catholic congregation. While the Spanish conquerors were living there, a convent and a church were built by the local people. There was also a main cenote, which is a natural underground reservoir of water that enriched the community with fresh water. Recently, 13 families have grouped together to manage the cenote. This cooperative of people goes under the name of "Servicios Ecoturisticos de Kikil" (Ecotouristic services of Kikil). Thus, the purpose of this research is to have a better understanding on how the community participation of Kikil is working towards a best practice for nature conservation and how are they coping with this new form of tourism, what kind of strategies and decisions are they making to enhance the project as their aim is to be considered as one of the main attractions for ecotourism activities in the east part of Yucatan.

1.1 Problem statement

According to one of the objectives of the ministry of tourism of the State of Yucatan (SEFOTUR, 2012), nature tourism is considered to be one of the most important activities of the area. Their objective is to promote ecological and sustainable ways to develop

tourism infrastructure in the communities (El Financiero, 2015). This is with the intention to have more services to offer to the tourists and to attract them to the communities. The main idea is to focus on the natural resources of what the area has to offer to the tourists such as the cenotes.

The tourism ministry of Mexico argues to work toward sustainability but little is known about the communities that have already been working with ecotourism projects. Thus, there is a lack of research about community based tourism with the focus on the community participation in the state of Yucatan. The government has no evidence that Kikil's project is a working model.

1.2 Research objectives

In relation to the previous problem statement, the aim of this thesis is to understand the participation of the stakeholders in the community project of Kikil. When referring to community based tourism and participation there is a close relation with concepts of power redistribution, communication and governance. Thus, I will investigate more closely to these concepts to understand its characteristics and their relation in the development of the community project of Kikil as well as to understand the perception of the outcomes of the project from the members of the cooperative.

As a result I intend to contribute to the literature of community based tourism in the state of Yucatan following a qualitative perspective which will help to comprehend the different perspectives of the stakeholders. Further recommendations for improvement will be suggested.

1.3 Research questions

The following questions will frame the research. The research questions reflect the objectives outlined above:

Main question:

How was the process of the community of Kikil while developing a tourism project and did it have an effect in the participation of the residents?

Based on the main question, four sub questions are also to be answered:

"What is the collaboration of the members of the project or other actors related to it (collaboration)?"

"How is the communication trough the stakeholders in relation to the project?

"Whether there is any constraint or limitation to the community participation in the project of Kikil?"

"How does power redistribution and collaboration influences community participation?"

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Community based tourism

According to the UNWTO (2013) tourism can be seen as a way to offer more opportunities for local communities to reach sustainability by managing their cultural and natural assets to offer services that benefit their economy by creating more job opportunities. An example of this is community based tourism which places emphasis on the importance of the residents from a community working together to develop and generate other ways of income as a means to raise their living standards by using their cultural and natural resources to attract tourism (Hall, 1994 in Blackstock, 2005). It is stated in the literature that it is also important that all residents from the host community to be supportive with the project, in order to offer a better service to the tourists (Blackstock, 2005; Scheyvens, 2008). The greater the involvement and participation from the residents in all the planning and decisions made, the better the outcomes and the more successful the project will be for the community (Blackstock, 2005). Other considerations when the residents work together is that they can achieve more objectives within the community and also better communication with other stakeholders (government, other institutions, etc.) (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). The aim is to build a good relationship between the members of the community in order to offer the tourists a better experience, which at the long term can bring more benefits to the locality (as cited by Laws, 1995; Stabler, 1997; Jamieson, 1997 in Blackstock, 2005).

A community usually consists of a heterogeneous and diverse group of people who share the work and economic profits of a collective initiative (Cowlishaw, 1988; Hoggett, 1997 in Blackstock, 2005). Although not all the residents of a host community are involved within the project. According to Drumm and Moore (2005) there are different degrees of participation for the host residents who take part in the development; some choose to

work part time or full time, others try to build networks with tour operators, and there are also the ones who work independently (Drumm & Moore, 2005).

There is available information which indicates that when a community takes part in a tourism project, it is essential to follow a planning process (Drumm & Moore, 2005), the outcome can involve positive and negative impacts that will be experienced during the implementation. The positive impacts can be generated as a form of more available job opportunities for the residents. However, there are also negative impacts which can have effects on the lifestyle of the residents of the host community such as more traffic, not enough places for parking the cars, problem between residents and the tourists, changes in the lifestyle of the residents (Andereck et al., 2005). An example of a negative effect in a small community can be the fact of charging a fee on the services and the residents or people of the area disagree with it. Nevertheless, by charging a fee to access the natural resources, selling goods, handcrafts or food, the people working for the project gets a benefit from having more revenue to keep the project running, properly manage it, also to maintain it and improve the services. These impacts differ from a large scale or small scale communities, thus, the characteristics are very different depending on the different region where the community based tourism is studied (Scheyvens, 2008).

2.2 Community based tourism in Mexico

As said before, each region has different characteristics which makes each case study different, due to their own circumstances which makes them unique from other case studies.

Mexico is a country mainly known for sea and sun, and mass tourism industry. Since the eighties, there has been a shift from the focus of the mainstream tourism to pay more attention to ecotourism, which is considered to be a more sustainable way for rural communities to generate more income (Drumm & Moore, 2005). Different organizations, governmental and non-governmental have supported ecotourism projects in rural communities in Mexico as a strategy to achieve nature conservation as a means to minimize poverty (Daltabuit et al., 2007). The Mexican touristic agenda has a focus on providing better economic conditions for the marginal communities in order to improve their livelihood (Araújo-Santana et al., 2013). Thus, the federal Government and private institutions in Mexico have implemented various programs to contribute to the achievement of this goal (Mayan World Program) with the focus on offering new touristic

products at a local community level while following more sustainable ways of tourism (SECTUR, 2011).

In the year 2000 the Federal Government recognized ecotourism as a way to benefit and support local residents as a priority for the tourism sector (SECTUR, 2002). The majority of the ecotourism projects "are located inserts in indigenous communities, which are characterized by beautiful natural landscapes and unique cultural elements" (Gómez-Velázquez, Velázquez-Sánchez, Santiago, & Delgadillo, 2016 p. 156). It is seen as a potential activity for development, to communities which have natural areas and offer cultural activities (Gómez-Velázquez et al., 2016). According to Daltabuit et al. (2007) the environmental and cultural characteristics of the state of Yucatan makes it an important region for the development of the tourism industry. It is a governmental strategy to offer employment to the community members.

2.3 The case of Yucatan

Most literature talks about the Yucatan peninsula which means that they are talking about the states of Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo, being the latter the most focused by the researches. For this research the main focus will be the 'state' of Yucatan which is known mainly for its Mayan culture, archeology and gastronomy. Yucatan has many natural and cultural attractions being the archeology and its Mayan culture the principal attraction for the state to promote (Daltabuit et al., 2007). However, it also has natural reserves, beaches and cenotes which are also main natural attractions promoted by the government as a form of ecotourism that distinguish the state and makes it unique from the other states from Mexico (ibid).

In 2012 the interest of the tourists in the archeological zones and the Mayan culture in the state of Yucatan grew due to the change of the Mayan calendar. According to the tourism ministry office of Yucatan (SEFOTUR), the attraction for the Mayan culture benefited the cultural areas of the state; there were approximately 2.39 million people who attended to the main archeological areas, particularly to Chichen Itza which is the most representative one in the state. The government of Yucatan stated that the cultural tourism in the state will keep on increasing and will stay as the principal motive for the tourists to visit the state and for this reason improvements and better services should be offered (SEFOTUR, 2012). In Yucatan there is a strong sense to reach sustainability and it forms part of the strategies of the government (ibid). Moreover, the ecotourism is seen as one of the main

activities for the local communities to get involved in the process of sustainable development because it contributes to the economy, to the conservation of natural resources and to preserve the culture of the communities as a way to improve the quality of life of their residents (Daltabuit et al., 2007).

Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework

The next framework is to highlight the key concepts to be used in this study. The aim is further understand how the community of Kikil and the tourism project are influenced by the community participation.

Moreover see how the local cooperative of Kikil is experiencing their community project and to use this case study as background information for future similar projects in order to provide insights in how to develop a project. Furthermore the related concepts discussed in this chapter will be used to analyze the outcomes of this research and further explore how these concepts relate to the Kikil community project.

3.1 Community participation

Various scholars have argued that local participation is an important aspect for the success of a community project (Stem et al, 2003 in Stronza & Gordillo, 2008; Mowforth & Munt, 1998).   The concept of community participation varies depending on the application and definition, so it can be argued that there is no single definition. Some argue that participation is more than a fair distribution of resources, is about sharing the knowledge among the participants to learn from each other's ideas (Connel, 1997). Tosun and Timothy (2003), argue that the participation of the community can be seen as a form to preserve the culture of the destination as well as the natural resources. Arnstein (1969) mentions that participation is linked to power redistribution which means having a fair division of the benefits and the costs. For this study, I would like to understand how the participants from the local cooperative of Kikil manage to be successful, moreover to find out what is the reason behind it through their own perspective. How these people perceive collaboration, communication, culture background. Furthermore, the relationship with the rest of the community, government authorities and other involved actors within the project.

Some scholars also relate community participation with the increase of democracy and development (Haywood, 1988). This definition would also help to understand the participation planning of the community of Kikil, as he defines community participation as a process in which there is a mean to increase democracy and also increase the development of a community and within this process all the stakeholders should be included, such as the residents of the community, local government, business people, tourists, Ngos, etc., in a way that all can contribute on the decision making processes (Haywood, 1988). Yet, in this study I will look into the relation of the people involved with the cooperative in relation with some of other actors involved. So, I do not go into depth with the relation of all stakeholders but only the local authority, people involved within the cooperative and some other main actors involved.

Furthermore, Arnstein (1969) develop the participation ladder which indicates that there are three levels of participation involvement of the stakeholders (non-participation, tokenism and citizen power). Her theory is about empowering the people who are powerless; is about sharing the power from those who have it to the powerless in order to gain more participation from the community residents. Yet, in theory this is the way it should be done, however in real life it is not as easy to implement (Tosun, 2000).

On the other hand, there are some scholars that have criticized community participation and see it as a time consuming process due to the lack of business experience of the community residents (Taylor, 1995), and at the end they will have to keep the maintenance of the project by themselves (Getz and Jamal, 1994). Also the thought of involving the stakeholders can be a cause of problems because there is a difference of interests and power distribution (Campbell and Vainio-Mattila, 2003). Moreover, there are some communities that have more than one group of people living within the same community and each of those groups has different interests for the development of the community. So, when trying to include everyone's interest each stakeholder might have a different idea and interest, which makes it a challenge to come up with an agreement after everyone's opinions. Nevertheless, it is said that by taking into consideration the opinion of all stakeholders could promote a more sustainable development. Because it would help to empower the people who in some cases result to be excluded due to the lack of communication and it would give them the opportunity to contribute with their opinion to the project (Scheyvens, 1999). The exchange of these ideas and information with the stakeholder can help to create better policies and plans. Since understanding others in a collaborative way leads to have better solutions and a more effective decision making (Drumm and Moore, 2005).

Although the various critiques to community participation it is argued to be the best way for reaching a sustainable development (Okazaki, 2008). For example the cooperation of the residents can help to the improvement of a community project. Okazaki (2008) improved a model in order to see the level of community participation (see figure 1).
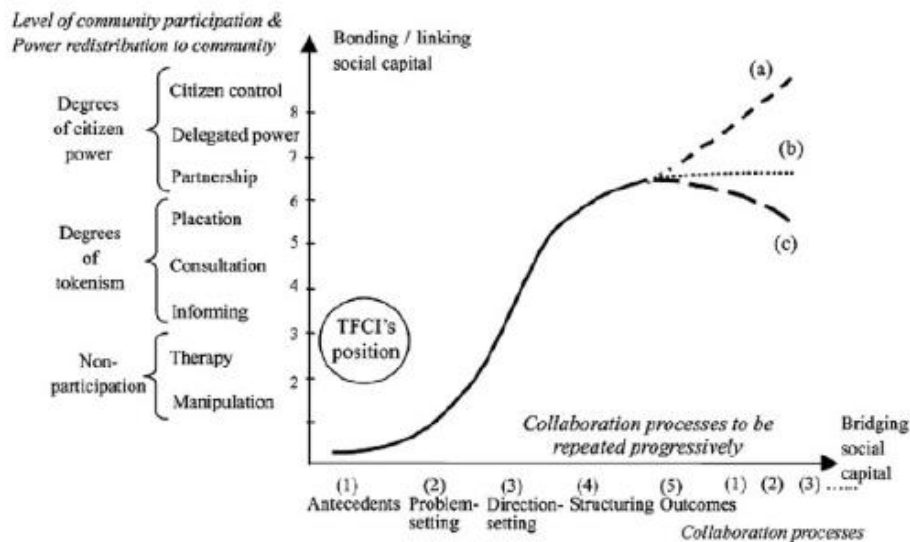
Figure 1 Okazaki Model (2008)

The model allows observing how the community participation has different levels and how each community can go up the levels through community participation. It also permits to see the collaboration process with other actors outside the community.

Furthermore, the contribution of the local residents and other stakeholders can help to safeguard the culture and natural resources of the community as tourism assets (Felstead, 2000). Finally, by attracting more visitors to a project, better results can be achieved if they also transmitted to other people, thus it would help to have a better development of the natural assets, the infrastructure and facilities (Murphy, 1985).

For this research I look up more into depth the needs to develop power redistribution, collaboration and community participation as suggested by Okazaki (2008). Moreover, to find out if the cooperative is facing any conflicts or limitants. Thus, for the state of Yucatan the tourist industry is consider important for the development of a community. Most communities in Yucatan have cultural and environmental characteristics to use in order to attract tourism. Furthermore, It is argued that the tourist development is an important strategy for the government (Daltabuit et al., 2007). Yet, the government focus is to offer

social and economic benefit to the local communities; more specific offer benefits to touristic projects of the indigenous people (State Government, 2003 in Daltabuit et al., 2007). Nevertheless, community based tourism has also favored the private sector which is said to be the one in control of the market and the tourism industry.

3.2 Ecotourism

There is a wide range of literature that refers about ecotourism. Within the literature, multiple interpretations have been made about the explanation of it. Thus, it can be argued that there is no a universal definition that can be standardized. So, for this research, when I talk about ecotourism is to make reference to an alternative way of tourism that has been define as the tourism activity which involves going to places where the tourists can experience the natural resources, and have a closer experience in contact with a rural community (Drumm & Moore, 2005). This kind of tourism aims to generate income for nature conservation and also income for the local people who lives in the area. There are various activities carried out in this form of tourism which gives the opportunity for the rural communities to develop tourism projects following ecotourism (Okazaki, 2008). For example, environmental awareness, minimize the negative impacts such as social, physical and behavioral, positive experiences for the tourists, economic benefit for the local community, etc.

There are also various critics about the implementation of the term 'ecotourism', as some research state that this alternative form of tourism should not be seen as the main solution for the communities, because there are some cases where ecotourism has been referred to as merely a marketing tool (Thomlinson & Getz, 1996, as cited in Scheyvens & Scheyvens, 2015). However the commitment, the joint effort of the local residents and the use of the natural resources of a rural community it is an indicator of trying to reach sustainability (Chuenpagdee, Fraga, & Euan-Avila, 2002) while avoiding the harm to nature and by developing new ways of economic profit for the residents of the community. For example in the case of the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori community, use this kind of ecotourism to offer new ways of employment options for its community residents (Scheyvens & Scheyvens, 2015).

Wall (1997) mentions that communities will experience new changes, he considers that the residents as entrepreneurs get in touch with different cultures and on the other hand, the tourists are looking for new experiences out of their ordinary life (Wall, 1997). The changes are different from each participant who is involved, because everybody has a different opinion about what changes are considered desirables or not (ibid).

3.3 Governance

The term governance makes reference to the "act of govern" (Hall, 2011 p.439), likewise, how is a society governed, what processes, activities and rules are following, and under what systems (Bullkeley, 2005; Stoker, 1998 in Bramwell, 2011). The governance role in the tourism industry is closely related to policy, planning, and destination management (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Moreover, it does not only involves the government but also other actors who can work collaboratively, such as the residents of a community, business people, agencies, organizations or markets. The relationship of these actors could be internal or external, either way could represent challenges for development in some of the processes, tasks or decision making of the project (Goodwin & Painter, 1996 in Bramwell, 2011.) these challenges could be different discourses and realities, power relationships, agreements, etc. It is very hard to follow a strict way of governance because different countries, destinations or projects have each of them different actors, backgrounds which make them unique and each follows a different way of development.

The governance process in the tourism industry is about including actors who can work with other stakeholders and together, influence and steer other groups to the desired situation. Moreover by working in partnerships is a joint implementation of power.

The planning of a community project cannot be controlled by one actor but there should always be agreements and networks to achieve the community goals. It is a collective network involved in the decision making process (Bramwell, 2011) aiming to build stability and partnerships to lead to some good results. However, all the actors involved can have different priorities and perspectives on how to manage the project, and their actions can be the cause of conflicts.

An example case study of governance in a community of Kenya, carried by Lamer et al (2014) was to compare two private community partnerships and examine the involvement of the actors. The outcomes show that the communities had partnerships between private entrepreneurs, state actors, non-governmental actors, etc. but those partnerships involved many problems such as: political struggle, imbalanced relationships from private investors and the residents, because of the unequal distribution of power and benefits between the residents. The most common cause for the problems was because each actor had a different discourse (different ideas and beliefs). Although, some individual actors would make coalitions to contribute with other actors and by sharing their resources, they could achieve similar goals and would not cause many problems. However, the

partnership between communities and various actors still kept on increasing (Lamers, van der Duim, van Wijk, Nthiga, & Visseren-Hamakers, 2014). This case studies show that even with arising challenges and problems the communities would still had greater benefits such as better education, healthcare and security (ibid).

Conclusion

For this case study the intention is to look into community participation: empowerment, collaboration, communication, by linking issues of governance and ecotourism. CBT associates with equal and more democratic terms in order to offer more sustainable development for a community. It is said that there should be an involvement of the community in order to the success of a project (Rocharungsat, 2008). Hence, for this study I intend to evaluate the cooperative project of Kikil by making sense of the perceptions of the members of the cooperative together with the main actors. Thus, it is possible when taking as reference the levels of participation and collaboration presented in the model by Okazaki (2008) in order to determine whether a project is going in the right direction or not.

The development of tourism projects is said to work better if the participation from the stakeholders is at a high level rather than at a low level. However, every CBT project depends on the social, cultural and political context of their community. Thus, a further understanding of the development of the Kikil project can be argued by looking at the related issues presented by different researches also presented above, to see which issues are also related to the impacts of tourism in the community and the related actors.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Based on the previous research questions and purpose, in this section I will provide an overview of how the data will be gathered and which techniques will be used. In order to demonstrate the current situation of the community participation from the stakeholders involved in the project of Kikil, Yucatan including the perception of the cooperative and staff members. In section 4.1 we will look at the research design. As this is a qualitative research the use of semi structured interviews is outlined in the section 4.2.4 as a form of gathering the data (4.2) and to clarify the different perspective and purposes from the stakeholders. The positionality of the researcher as well as the data analysis and limitations of this study will be also clarified.

4.1 Research design

The selection of the community of Kikil was because of its good implementation and development of their tourism project. Moreover it is a small community which can be studied within the time frame for this study. The community project of Kikil has been carried out for a couple of years now; so I expect that community residents have a clearer perception about the changes that the project has brought to their community. For this research an interpretivist approach will be employed as the researcher aims to deconstruct the images to understand the experiences of the participants and their meaning behind it. Every participant has a subjective experience, so the intention is to understand how they make meaning of their experiences about the community participation. A social research is about enhancing the "understanding of the social world's meanings" (Gorton, 2010, p.6). The use of interviews is to not get a superficial description but to understand the meaning of what the participants give to the issues discussed during the interviews.

The main focus for this study was the local residents of the community of Kikil and other actors involved in the project. All participants were either residents of the community or related to the development of the community project. In order to approach the local residents, a previous contact was made through Kikil Facebook fan page, in which I have made contact with a person involved in the project. Having this person as a contact makes it easier for me to reach the local residents and ask them to participate in this study. Thus, my approach to the community was much easier and also more accessible to engage the people to participate in the study. Additionally at the end of the interviews and everyone's participation, I offered them a small souvenir from the Netherlands. The schedule of each interview was according to the residents' available agenda.

4.2 Data collection

This study was based on gathering qualitative data by using semi structured interviews; the intention of using semis structured interviews is that every interviewer can lead the direction of the interview (Boeije, 2010). The data was gathered by the researcher during field work (December – January). Likewise, information from the government and newspaper articles from the internet about the project of Kikil were used for further analysis, with the aim of getting a deeper understanding on the different levels of involvement of the actors.

4.2.1 Motivation for case study

The choice of Kikil's community was because the development of the cenote of Kikil was getting much attention through social media. Approximately 5 years ago, people from the community started working and cleaning the village with the intention to attract tourists. However, tourists and local people from the state of Yucatan did not know about this place; nor tour operators, agencies, local tourists, etc. So, when I started to see their posts on social media, moreover how they were developing the cenote project so rapidly, it immediately caught my attention. It was in a matter of less than two years that this community changed from having and old and abandoned ex-convent to being able to offer visitors a new touristic product. This product consists in a tour through the cenote by also offering the experience of being in touch with the nature; tourists can take a swim in the cenote or just relax enjoying the nature of the place.

4.2.2 Recruitment of the participants

The sample was strategically selected for this case study, the participants were either people working for the cenote project as members of the cooperative, staff members, or people who in some way had a connection with the project, could be either as: part of a government program, or as part of any other organization. This selection in a qualitative research is known as purposive sampling; this technique is considered to be very specific with the selection of the participants with the intention to gain more important information for the research (Coyne, 1997).

The strategy was to ask the first interviewees for other names of people involved in the project. When using this snowball method was easier to reach other participants that were involved with the project (Boije, 2010). Before going into field work, I had no knowledge of the people that had an involvement with the development of the cenote project.

 Furthermore, there are ethical considerations taken into account for this study as for social qualitative research there is a need to protect the participants' privacy in order to avoid any conflicts (Boeije, 2010). For that reason, an introduction of the research was made so the interviewees' knew beforehand what the research was about. Likewise, I also introduce a privacy agreement to ensure them that I was not going to disclose their information to anyone. In addition, I offer anonymity and confidentiality for all the acquired data (recordings, interview transcripts, notes, etc.).

4.2.3 Topic List

A list of questions was performed and carried out as semi structured interviews, in order to understand how the people of the community came together, formed a cooperative, and moreover how was their participation while developing the project. The idea was to retrieve as much information possible about their experiences and motivations to become part of the project. So, before the interviews a list of topics had already been selected. These topics were taken from the literature review. The focus was on issues of the communication, the power relations so who is in charge and how are they able to maintain their project in the tourism industry. Furthermore, these topics are shown in the next table:

Table 1 Topics from the literature

Main topics	Sub topics
Participation	Communication
	Empowerment
	Power relations
	Collaboration
Governance	Main actors involved

The field work was done in an average of four weeks. It was done during the end of December 2016 to the beginning of January 2017. This period was a busy time of festivities and holidays for the municipality of Tizimin (included Kikil), due to Christmas and New Year celebration but mainly because in that specific Region of Yucatan they have a major festivity of the 'Three Kings'. Nevertheless, for the field work was very interesting because due to the Holidays more tourists were visiting the cenote. That was very helpful while observing how the people interacted with the locals and foreign tourists.

4.2.4 The interviews

The interviews helped me gain information related to how the cooperative was working and managing their project. By using semi structured interviews, the participants gave me their opinion about the project and also about how the community was related to it. It is of great importance to let the participants expressed themselves in order to know what

they are experiencing. Thus, the list of questions, helped in order to make sure all the topics were covered without leaving anything out. Likewise, had prepared some extra examples in case the participants did not understand the question and more explanation was required. Sometimes, during the interviews other important issues were mentioned that where important to the study; for example the conflicts that had arisen as a result of the project.

Most interviews were held in the community of Kikil, specifically in the area of the cenote while the rest of the interviews took place either in the municipality of Tizimin which is very close from Kikil, more or less about 5 to 10 min by car; or in Merida which is about 1 to 2 hours' drive from Kikil. The location was up to the participants and each of these interviews was done individually. The first couple of questions were done with the aim of being easy to answer, so the participant could be more relaxed; this was done with the attempt to gain their trust in order to have a more open communication.

When doing the interviews a brief explanation and introduction of the research was given to all the participants; a total of 14 interviews were carried out. The first interviews were with the people working at the cooperative either staff or cooperative members; this first group was very open about sharing their experiences and motivations. The other group of interviewees which were the related actors was not as open as the first group. Thus, in order to gain their trust a more detailed explanation about the study had to be given, next to this a reaffirmation about the anonymity of the interview.

The interviews lasted about 40 minutes to 2.5 hours each depending on the participants. Most of the time the participants that were working in the cenote where willing to participate very early in the morning when there was no visitors, as mentioned before it was a busy time in the community due to the festivities in the municipality, so the cenote was constantly welcoming many tourists. The staff members were randomly approaching me when they were not very busy. I did not want to be seen as interfering with their work, hence I constantly said I could wait or return other day. However, getting to the community was not as easy because transportation to get there was not easy to find, moreover public transport is consider not very reliable, so I had to constantly ask my family for a borrowed car to take. The rest of the interviews were previously scheduled either at the municipality of Tizimin, in Kikil or in Merida. Most of these other interviews were held at the participants' office.

All the interviews were recorded; this was done with the participants' permission. Recording allows the researcher to focus on the participants while they are telling their

experiences and also benefits to give the participants the entire attention (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, the interviews where done in Spanish, so there was no language barrier since both the researcher and the participants speak Spanish as their mother tong, therefore the use of an interpreter was not necessary.

4.2.5 The Participants

The participants are now introduced in the research with a pseudonym for the sake of respecting their identity (Boije, 2010). Likewise, age and duration of working in relation with the project are also introduced (see table 2). A total of 14 interviews were taken, from these 14 participants there are 3 consider to be children older than 11 years old for the research; the youngest one was 12 years old together with his brother of 14 and other participant of 17. It is know that children are a vulnerable group (Morse, 2005 as cited in Boije, 2010) so for these reason more ethical considerations and procedures had to be followed when interviewing them. First, the permission of the mother was granted prior and in order to be able to interview them, moreover the mother was all the time close to where the interviews were being held. Second, the interviews were more of friendly talk, thus the children were not asked the same questions as the adults but it were related to their tasks in order to appreciate their experiences. There was also the affirmation that this children were working there as an incentive of attending to school. Thus, by asking them I could get their perception of working at the cenote. Furthermore, there was no pressure for them to participate, but on the contrary they wanted to be part of the research as most of the staff and members were being part of it.

 It was valuable to hear their opinions about the project. As they are also part of the staff meetings taken place at the cenote. Yet, other motivation to interview them was because one of the children received training for bird watching, she had the task of guiding the tourists while teaching them how to observe and distinguish the local birds. Thus, to further understand if they were working at the cenote from their own conviction; because for the cooperative members was clear that the cenote was going to be inherited to the younger generations from the community. Children from the communities in Mexico are known to work from an early age but not all times is their choice to do it.

The criteria for the selection of the rest of the participants were in order to include everyone's point of view. Most of the participants working for the project weren't born in Kikil but had been living there for an average of 10 to 20 years. From the staff and cooperative members 4 were females and 6 were males. 3 of the women had no jobs before the cooperative and were full time housewives. On the other hand, 2 of the 6 men

had a full time job before the cooperative and now devote all their time working at the cenote; 1 works at the cooperative as a side job mainly on his free time, his main occupation is being in charge of a ranch; 1 recently dropped out of school and works there full time and the remaining 2 are full time students which help around during the weekends or after they had finish their homework on weekdays. The average salary they earned monthly is around $600.00 pesos, converted to euros is around, 30 euros per month. We need to take into consideration that this amount of money could variate a lot depending on the amount of tourists they received at the cenote.

The other participants are related to the tourism industry; either working for an organization related to tourism, the municipality or the government. The motivation to choose these participants was because they added valuable information to the research due to their insight, as it also helped to gain a better understanding about the case study. The following table (2) shows the characteristics of the participants for this research.

Table 2 List of Participants

Pseudonym	Relation with the project	age	duration of relationship with the project
Olga	Cooperative member	54	Since the beginning
Juan	Staff member	38	Since the beginning
Conchi	Cooperative member	Around 60 (doesn't know)	Since the beginning
Reyna	Cooperative member	35	3 years
Flavio	Staff member	17	1 year
Alex	Staff member	19	2 years
Manuel	Staff member	19	3 years
Diego	Staff member	18	3 years
Victor	Staff member	14	2 year
Lupita	Staff member	12	2 year
Francisco	Local authority	Around 30	1 year
Martin	Local advisor	62	3 years
Marisa	Municipality government	30	Less than a year
Pedro	State government (CDI)	35	3 years

The staff members were chosen because of their daily labour at the cenote, additionally to get a different perspective from the cooperative members. Next to this, I interviewed

some of the cooperative partners that where more engaged within the project since the very beginning; this was with the aim to understand the whole process before and after setting the cooperative. Furthermore, the actors where chosen because their names were mentioned during the interviews due to their involvement with the project or because they worked at a governmental institution related to the project.

4.3 Data transformed and analysis

After finishing with the interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed in a word document. This was done word by word, exactly as the recordings (verbatim) and subsequently these transcriptions were coded for further analysis. These transcripts remain in Spanish as also the coding's with the aim of only translating the quotes that were used for the research.

Coding was used as a tool to create order to the transcripts (Boije, 2010) by categorizing the information. The intention was to look for the most relevant information taken from the interviews and look for patterns to compare, categorize and conceptualize (Strauss and Corbin, 2007 as cited in Boije, 2010). The coding used in this research was inductive and deductive; the inductive codes were taken from the transcripts while looking to expressions or words that were constantly repeated by the participants. On the other hand the deductive coding was taken from the literature review, with the aim to relate theory with the data obtained from this particular case study. Furthermore, axial coding was also used for the purpose to create categories and subcategories to make a more coherence and suitable analysis of the codes (Boije, 2010).

The intention of the data gathering regarding the interviews, recordings and transcripts was to look for a relationship in order to make sense of the data (Boije, 2010). Additionally I intend to answer the research questions with the data analysis and identify the perceptions of the stakeholders for this particular community project.

4.4 Limitations of the study

Even though, this research has contributed a good insight in community participation literature, there are also some limitations, thus this section has the aim to describe them. The number of participants for this research suggest a large part of the people who are

involved in this particular community project, however was not so big in its scope. Yet, there could also be more people involved that could give their opinions about the project for example other local residents from Kikil and also from the municipality.

Other issue was that sometimes the interviews took longer because participants most of the time deviated from the original question, so there was constantly the need to clarify their answers once more to get to the main point. In the future this might be prevented by socializing more with the participants prior to the interview and these private experiences would decrease.

On the other hand this case study has been about one community in the southeastern part of Yucatan. Thus could not generalize the findings to other communities based in other parts of México but maybe only for the state of Yucatan. Furthermore, all this results are from the first years of development of the cenote project and it is expected that it would change in the near future. Likewise, there was no official data from the visitors available, since the cenote has started to collect some information from its visitors.

Chapter 5 Results

The aim of this chapter is to deliver the findings of the field research. The information gathered from the community members who were part of a cooperative project and also some of the main actors involved within the process. The people working at the cooperative have come together as a group of 13 families. These people have been granted the land of the cenote of the community of Kikil. Thus, to start the chapter an explanation has to be made about how this community came together and start working in a tourist development project.

5.1 The community

The community of Kikil has a population of approximately 200 people. The majority of the people have lived in Kikil since they were born; others are either migrants from the municipality of Tizimin or other communities from the state of Yucatan. Most of the people who live there are related in some way, most times is because they belong to the same family. The community has 2 little stores, one school, a Franciscan ex-convent and church (abandoned) and one cenote. The main type of work for the community has always been related to livestock or farming. Moreover, the region and specifically the

municipality of Tizimin and its surrounding communities are known as a livestock area. For year's people living in this region has been related to farming of livestock types of work. Thus, some residents of the community of Kikil saw an opportunity to develop their village by attracting the tourism industry while making use of their natural and cultural resources. As it is a new industry for them, various local residents are still not opened for these new challenges and still remain with the type of work they are used to.

Figure 2 Map of the Yucatan Peninsula
Source: mexmap.com

The access to the community of Kikil can be from the state of Yucatan or from the state of Quintana Roo (see figure 2); both ways have an easy access to the village. Its location is very strategic, because is two hours from Merida (capital city of Yucatan), and also 2 hours away from Cancun (most important city in the state of Quintana Roo). This can be seen as an advantage from the local residents of Kikil, because they can be reached by the tourists and locals from Merida and also by the locals and tourists from Quintana Roo. Thus, the community has a main access from the road of Tizimin – Rio Lagartos which is also the location of the entrance to the cenote. Next to this, the municipality of Kikil is about 5 minutes' drive away from Kikil, and Rio Lagartos is about 30 minutes' drive; the latter is a coastal town that attracts most local tourists to the zone.

5.2 How did the community started with the project?

During the interviews participants gave a brief explanation of how the project started in the community and also a brief introduction of their involvement in it. First, a previous commissar of the community of Kikil had the vision to attract tourism to the community because he saw that they had the advantage of having a Franciscan ex convent (see figure 3) that with a little cleaning and maintenance could attract tourists to the community. Next to this the community also had a natural cenote. Thus, at that moment the commissar gathered a group of people who could safeguard and clean the Franciscan ex convent and church. The church and the ex-convent are in the center of the village with a very good location (main road) which attracted the people driving through the village. These people, started by cleaning, gardening, painting the church in order to restore it and

Figure 3 Franciscan ex convent and church

at the same time they also manage to clean the main plaza of the village. Moreover, the visitors that stopped by the ex-convent had to pay a fee of $10.00 pesos which included entering the church and the ex-convent together with a tour to the cenote. The money gathered from the entrance fee and tour, was re invested for the cleaning and maintenance of the ex-convent.

"The entrance fee of 10 pesos for the convent was something meaningful, just because we had two persons working there and other people going to clean cut the bushes to leave it everything beautiful and

decorated" (Juan, Staff member).

Some of the local people related to this did not understand why they were helping or why was it helpful to clean the church. But in the meantime they felt they were part of something. By that time they were starting to contribute with their time and work and still no economic retribution was seen. These people did not care about the economic benefits, the most important thing is that they were working and they could see the changes in the community.

"I initiated with the commissar, over there at the ex-convent. There we cleaned the field, we did gardening… we worked there for 4 years without any pay. We had very, very clean the center of Kikil, the park, the convent" (Olga, Cooperative member).

"They ask me if I wanted to go…I started going and I liked it. We grew affection for all the things, to the plants" (Alex, Staff member).

"Even so, the commissar signed some papers that stated that we were the cleanest community, they came to certify the village." (Conchi, Cooperative member)

Yet, when the government changed and other person was chosen new commissar, the church and ex-convent had to be hand in to the new local authority. Very soon after this the new authority in charged closed the entrance for visitors and stopped giving maintenance to it.

"The new commissar wanted to ex convent. We delivered the ex-convent very clean and very pretty" (Olga, cooperative member).

"The new commissar fought to stay with it and see that he is not working it and it is abandoned well we left it and came here" (Conchi, cooperative member).

In the meanwhile the previous commissar saw a second opportunity to gather a larger group of people and look for economic funding and support in order to start a touristic project with the natural resource of the cenote. Thus, they did it through the federal government, moreover with the institution of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities that goes under the acronym CDI (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas). This government institution offers different programs that help funding projects for the development of small communities who would like to offer an Ecotouristic project in their communities. That was the starting point of creating a cooperative group of local residents from Kikil towards the development of the natural resources they had in the community.

"Juan told me once: I just delivered all the papers to put together a cooperative and you will participate and I asked, Juan what is a cooperative? You will see it later he answered and I said okay. One day he came around with some papers and told me: you have to sign because these are the papers of the cooperative and we will go over to the cenote." (Reyna, cooperative member).

The residents of Kikil were invited to participate within this new ecotouristic project. The first approach was through an open meeting where all the community was invited. This was in order to see who was interested in joining with this new project. However, most of the residents of the community showed little interest for the project. There were just a few of them who followed the opportunity of being part of this new cooperative. Though, the ones who followed had no idea of what a cooperative was or how they were going to work in this new project. There were some who started their participation just because they were trusting on one person's leadership and at the same time they were uncertain about the future of the project.

"I did not go to the meetings, I did not know, I just said to myself this is not going to work, this is not going to work. The least expected day Juan comes to me and says: you have a meeting in Tizimin – what am I going to do in Tizimin- I said. Don't you remember that I signed you up for the project? – Yes, is there a meeting? Is the project approved?- we don't know yet but you have to go to the meeting".(Reyna, cooperative member).

After finally gathering a group of 13 families to form the cooperative they also were granted with the land rights over the cenote. Once having the land rights and the participation of some of the residents the cooperative was formed. As a result, the cooperative that goes under the name of Ecotouristic Services of Kikil (Servicios

ecoturisticos de Kikil) was formed in December of 2015. In this same year the cooperative started working at the cenote of Kikil and since then they have been showing improvement with their project. The project offers the tourists the right to enter the place, the use of bathrooms, showers, a life vest to go into the cenote and also food and drinks from their own restaurant.

5.3 CDI Government role

The National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous Communities, which in Spanish follows the acronym of CDI, was the one government institution who finances the project of the cenote of Kikil. This institution has the aim to promote, evaluate and keep track of projects that would serve as a way to support the sustainable development of the indigenous communities.

The first contact the community had with the CDI was through their website. The website has all the programs and requirements they offer as institution. Generally, that is what all people should look into before approaching the government institution. The next step was to choose a program, in the case of the group of Kikil; the program they followed was the program of nature tourism, more specifically, the Program for the Improvement, the Production and the Indigenous Productivity. After having chosen the program, they approach the CDI in order to get all the rules and guidance they had to cover. Furthermore, the community had to deliver a proposal which they did through a hired assessor and then had to wait for the outcome of the evaluation.

Finally the CDI approved the project of Kikil; the community got the first out of three funding's from the federal government to start working the project. Having these, the members started working with the first stage of the project which started in December 2015. Furthermore, during 2017 they should receive the last financial support from the CDI and then start building the final phase which are some bungalows in order to offer accommodation for the tourists. For every phase the cooperative receives a check with the financial support. With this money they have to manage to deliver the proposed results for each of the phases of the project. The first financial support was of six hundred thousand pesos, the second one was one million two hundred and fifty thousand pesos and the third support would be of eight hundred thousand pesos. With all this financial support the cooperative has manage to build a ladder for the cenote, a deck (see figure 4), a kitchen, two palm roofs, 4 bathrooms with showers, a reception area (see figure 5), and are starting to build some bungalows.

"We signed an agreement between CDI and the organization in which they have to comply because we are giving a large resource and therefore we do not want just to give it for them to spend or just divide it but we give it so they can start with the project" (Pedro, state government).

Figure 4 The ladder and deck

Source: Ximbalyucatan.com

Figure 5 Reception Area, Palm roof

Source: Wanderlum.com

Additionally, the CDI asks the cooperative to hire an assessor. This assessor would be the person in charge of keeping track of the project; give tips and key elements for the improvement of the project and he would be in charge of the management of the process towards the development of the tourist industry in the community. For this reason the assessor has to cover certain profile.

"Either could be a biologist or have a tourism degree. This person would be in charge to orient the people for example: hey you need a visitor format. This person will gather up with the members and design the format and explains them the use of it. He will also help them with the legal requirements."

5.4 The municipality of Tizimin

Kikil belongs to the municipality of Tizimin. This municipality is one of the 106 municipalities of the state of Yucatan and it is considered to be the largest one. This municipality is located northeastern of the state of Yucatan and it is formed by 86 commissaries. The major of Tizimin introduced the development of tourism as one of the main targets for his political agenda. Therefore a new office of tourism was opened at Tizimin and has no longer than one year running.

"When there was a change in the authority of the municipality, the word tourism in Tizimin already sounded, then the candidates to the municipal presidency in their speeches already spoke of the tourism, of Kikil, of el cuyo which is a port that also has Tizimin... the one who won the presidency opened a coordination of tourism and is already a first step" (Martin, local advisor).

Moreover, the office wants to start promoting some of the major tourist attractions to the region and Kikil is one of these major attractions they can already offer as a touristic product.

"There are many projects that we are focusing on right now; Kikil is one of them, el cuyo, and Tizimin which is the head of the municipality." (Marisa, municipality government).

The aim of the municipality is to be known not only as a farming and livestock area but they want to offer something different in order to attract more visitors to that region. The municipality has shown its interest towards tourism by keeping a good communication channel with the already ongoing project of kikil. It is important for them to make strong alliances with an already running touristic projects so they can have diverse products to offer. Consequently, they have support the project of Kikil by giving them the ownership of the land to the cooperative. Moreover they have invited the members of the cooperative of Kikil to participate in some events held in Merida in order to gain more promotion to their project.

"What we did as municipality was basically to support the families of Kikil. Giving them the concession of the land so they could manage all the resources generated form the cenote. So they can have sustainability for their families." (Marisa, municipality government).

For the municipality it is important to maintain a good communication with the cooperative. In this way they can have more opportunities to dialogue for future events or needs. But until now there has been a lack of communication from both sides. An example could be that the municipality offer the cooperative an opportunity to participate in a tourism fair in the city of Merida. Even though this seemed like a big opportunity for the promotion of the project, the community of Kikil rejected the offer. Despite the lack of interest showed from the cooperative, the municipality again invited them to participate in other fairs.

"If you do not approach us, we cannot guess what is going through your mind, we will not be able to support then, and if we cannot solve it maybe we will see how we can channel them with some other instance to see How things can flow" (Marisa municipality government)

5.5 Communication

The participants gave clear examples of how they interecated with staff member and cooperative members. During this interaction, communication was very important for them, because it was a the way they could involved everyone and ask for their opinions for the future of the project. Some participants said that before starting with the cooperative project, all community members were invited to the first meetings. In this meetings people will show wether they were interested in participating in the project or not. The findings during field work show that before the cooperative was set up they had an open communication and invited everyone from kikil who wanted to join and be part of the cooperative. Juan (staff member) also mentioned that the cooperative will always welcome people from the community to work in the project.

"Well we started by inviting all of the people from the community and nobody wanted, nobody wanted to participate. We held meetings and everything and again nobody participated. Open meetings, everything was opened because we needed more families to be involved, more people and nobody wanted, they did not have time" (Juan, staff member).

Community members want to remain in their confort zone and do not want to ventour in the tourism industry wich is completely knew for them; the main type of work in that area is farming and agriculture.

"Other families are deep-rooted to their old customs, agriculture and farming. They are not attracted to tourism. a little is the uncertainty, is it going to work? Or are we going to make money?. They better stay with what they have been doing for years which gives them results." (Marisa, municipality government).

Other issue that came up from the participants is that in some caseslocal residents do not want to make an effort to get involved in the project or generally to work, because they get money from other fundings and organizations. This results in having residents that lack the desire to have a job.

"Practically they have what the husband gives them and what they receive from the government. The gentlemen have programs, who give them money. There are people who receive up to 5 thousand pesos every 2 months plus what comes from other resources from abroad (international foundation from canada)" (Juan, staff member).

Within the cooperative members it is clearly that they have a good communication. They regularly gathered up for meetings and try to involved everyone. They ask for everyones opinion and they vote in case is needed to make a decistion. Even when there are no meetings members and workers are always asked for their oppinion and most of them are aware of the future projects for kikil.

"Everyone has to give an opinion, even the most quiet one is asked to give an opinion; she will be asked how she thinks about it, sometimes she says she does not understand so it will be explained once more. She is a quiet person, so if we don't ask she will just say I agree and that's it" (Reyna, cooperative member).

Other type of communication is from the cooperative to the local authorities. In this case there is almost no communication engagement. The local authority expressed that he lacked information about the project. Moreover, indicated that he did know something about it but he was not sure; he was not sure about anything regarding the project.

"I think if I am not mistaken the first funding was I think like $600 thousand pesos and then I thinks they asked for the second one of $1,000,000.00 million pesos, I think they already have that. First they build a palm roof (palapa), I think now they used it as an umbrella or something like that. The second funding with that they make the bathrooms, the reception, and everything else, no?" (Francisco, local authority).

There were a lot of misunderstandings between the local authority and the members

working at the cenote. The commissar had other expectations from the cenote. He expected that the members of the cooperative cooperate to the commissary with financial support. At the same time he tried to express his gratitude towards the cenote because it gives new work opportunities to the people of Kikil. However this insufficient interaction between the local authorities and the community members is increasing much more and developing as a major obstacle and limitation for the development of the community.

"As we are people from Kikil, we have the right to what is here, right? Obviously without jumping to the others, but I think that they must be aware that thanks to Kikil, to those who are here the ancients thanks to them there is a Kikil.   And they have 'that' but they did not send it to build, the cenote was of spirit, nature, right? Well then I feel that there is no agreement now or anything signed but there will be soon there must be something where, for example, they should be reporting everything that's going on and everything It is being spent." (Francisco, local authority).

The demand for the local authority as the commissar described it, is due to the lack of communication between the commissary, the local municipality and the cooperative. There is no transparency according to the local authorities; however the members of the cooperative are being transparent with the financial funding to those who have given the economic support.

However when I talked to the municipality they clearify that the local authority did not have a reason to be involved.

 "The concession is to the cooperative, he (the commissar) does not get involved; he only see after the open spaces, the church, the park and the green areas".(Marisa, municipality government).

5.6 Collaboration

The collaboration includes working with the local authorities, municipal authorities, government institutions like SEDUMA and CDI and, other stake holders. Yet, collaboration is experienced diferently from various participants. As stated before the lack of communication between the community, local & state authorities, the cooperative and other stake holders contributes to the deficiency of coordination and collaboration. For example one participant expressed that whoever wants to work along with the

cooperative has to agree with what the members aim for. Whilst other parties want to work in a different way. Thus, reaching a midpoint has been a major obstacle.

"There was a bit of disagreement at the time because they wanted to handle things their own way and I said no. Things are done here as we say they are made. If you agree then you are welcome, if not thank you very much for your participation." (Juan, Staff member).

There is also a civil association called PRODETUR who has also helped the cooperative with the coordination of some events like the Cha Chaac (see figure 6). Their aim was to promote the tourism in the region of Tizimin. Although, this civil association was of help to the community members, now is no longer providing any coaching to the members but they trying to help in their own way. Which is no longer working and it is the cause of some conflicts and misunderstandings.

"Practically the events were done with PRODETUR years before, but now the cooperative can do it alone. People from PROETUR are people who sometimes help, but more than help, sometimes have generated conflicts with those people. They say they are going to chek uppon somethings but athe the time they do nothing about it and leave us bad. So in that case we better do it alone, is something fairly simple that does not involve much expense." (Martin, local advisor).

"PRODETUR enters, but wanting to handle finances especially, the first one who came with us was a person from Tizimin with the idea of taking the convent from that time on. But over time the teacher realizes our situation that we were not really doing things wrong and tells them there is nothing to follow these people on the contrary we need to support them because what they are looking is work and they are proving it." (Juan, staff member).

There are some private companies that have also shown an interest in developing a tourism project in Kikil. Likewise, these companies would want to manage the members of the cooperative because of their lack of management skills. As a result, some of the participants described the idea of working together with other companies as good but only to learn from each other. However, they do not want to be told how to handle their own project.

"The foundation helped roofing the ex-convent. They also presented a nice model where they wanted to change Kikil's image. It was very nice but they wanted to appropriate of all this part, just how they have done in many other places. Anyhow it didn't go on, and it is good because we still have Kikil". (Juan, staff member).

On the other hand there is also the collaboration from local authorities. While doing the interviews I got different answers from both: the members and also the government.

Most the participants only recall the help from the CDI which is help from the federal government and do not recall the help or collaboration from the local and municipal government. For example one participant only sees collaboration from the federal government. In fact he expressed that the state government authorities have not had the interest in their project and moreover, the municipal government has been an obstacle to reach a better outcome.

"They have not looked at our Project, the intention is to invite them to a tour to be included in their marketing. We have not depended on them, now social media allow us to be present in the world without the need of expensive promotion" (Martin, local advisor).

"The previous mayor was practically the one who gave us Green Light and now the new one is holding us back he does not want to, I do not understand, I have not managed to understand why he does not want Kikil to advance." (Juan, staff member)

In addition, the local tourism authority from Tizimin indicated that it has not been easy to reach a midpoint with the members of the cooperative. However they keep offereing their collaboration in order to help them to attract more tourists to the cenote.

"We try to work along with them to have positive results since we have to to support each other. So, we try to give them the necessary tools so that they can run their project. we have to sit down to dialogue with the cooperative because if they have some ideas we have others. The goal is always to reach a middle point for both parties to benefit, sometimes it costs us a little bit more to agree but I think is part of it." (Marissa, municipality government).

It is very important to build up trust between the cooperative and the local authorithies and other related parties for the benefit of all related actors. Nevertheless, tourism authorities must work on some specific goals together with the cooperative and get to an agreement. Furthermore, there is a constant debate about the main goal of the project. For some people is only about economic benefit and for others is about the sustainability of the community and the people.

Because of the project and other political reasons of the community, the residents of kikil have been divided in two different groups. The group of the people who works at the cenote and the other group that kept the ex-convent. However, cooperative members would like to work along with the rest of the residents of kikil. They have even tried to approach the commisarry but since each group has different ways of thinking they have not been able to work togheter.

"he told him to join us and he did not want to. He wanted his own group. So, they left him to see what he was going to do and he has done nothing. To avoid problems, I do not keep saying anything we will just see how he manages . It is not that he is bad but we have tried to talke to him like 5 or 6 times."(Manuel, staff member).

Within the community there are two main groups division who have different interests. That could be the cause of an obstacle to reach the participation of all the community. The residents neither support (Okazaki, 2008) the project or are against it. They are more like expectators. Nevertheless there is a conflicct of interests within the community residents because both groups would want to achieve tourists development in the community. Thus, each group have different goals, this division has led to perceived misunderstandings. Both groups took the opportunity of developing a resource in order to atract tourism. One group took the ex convent and the other group has stayed with the cenote. The main cause of this conflict was because the group that kept the ex-convent want a economic benefit out of it. On the other hand, the group that kept the cenote wants to provide future generations of residents of kikil a way to subsist by working at the cenote and to improve their chances to have a better life.

"It is very hard to work with people with a different way of thinking. I mean those who do not think in the future of the people of Kikil or even given them jobs"

Even the local government has an idea in mind that involves developing the ex-convent but by hiring people from the municipality but not from the community. This is exactly what the community members' fear about working together with other associations, private companies or even the government.

"We do not want them to get involved so they tell us what we have to do and how we are going to manage things. What we are looking for is that the benefit goes directly to the people. We do not want to be like the other cenotes that are managed and the people from the community becomes the employees." (Juan, staff member).

Within the cooperative there is a strong collaboration from the members. They trust their leader and work together as a team. Moreover most participants expressed that the people working at the cenote has become like family.

5.7 Power redistribution

The connection and role of power between the cooperative members, local government, state government, and federal government comes from top to down. The community members have to follow the regulations from government. However the members of the cooperative can still take the decisions on how to manage the project. Nevertheless they still have to follow the suggestions given by the government. For example there is a government institution which is the secretary of urban and environmental development (SEDUMA) who is in charge of the preservation, conservation and protection of the natural environment of the state of Yucatan. This institution approached the cooperative once they had already started with the project. Moreover, they visited the cenote and gave some instructions to be followed. The result was that the members had to change a lot of the things they had already worked on and if they did not comply with it the result could be a penalty fee. The members of the cenote had already plant some flowers and trees that had to be removed, they also placed some rocks close to the cenote that had to be removed, furthermore they also made some artificial ponds around the cenote that also had to be removed. All of this because the cooperative was not informed beforehand about this regulations. As a result this governmental institution had the power to demand change within the project and could have been prevented if the members of the community were informed with anticipation. Nevertheless this institution should also be included in the information from the CDI to avoid these changes.

 There is a gap of information between the members of the cooperative and the residents of Kikil about the future of the project. Only few people are familiar with the next phases of the project and the benefits that it can bring to the community. Even though there are some people that might now about it there is an unequal distribution because the information remains with the members of the cooperative but it is not shared with the rest of the community members. The local residents are not aware of the benefits they can have or the options they can undertake if they participate and take part of the tourism industry (Arnstein, 1969, Selin and Chavez, 1995, Okazaki, 2008). The cooperative members are the ones who have the power over the tourism development of Kikil. For the moment the only people in having direct benefit from the project is the people that is involve in the cenote.

Some local tour guides and travel agencies have shown an interest to take tourists to the cenote of Kikil, have been welcomed by the cooperative members. The members have shown that they are open to cooperate and to hear external opinions about working together. Nevertheless they are aware to negotiate with the authorities and other

stakeholders in order to take some business decisions but not very opened to change the way they manage the cenote.

It was not easy to start working with the project. The members had to deal with many obstacles in order to obtain the resources they needed. Furthermore, they also had to deal with people that where working for them because they saw them as uneducated so in that case they wouldn't know better. Hence, it was not an easy dealing with this kind of people who believe they are more powerful than others.

I had the idea in mind of the Project and start knocking doors (for help)…well I almost fight the architect. I told him, good show me the expense notes and everything and he tells me who are you? You have not even studied, and I say I do not need to have studied to realize that you're stealing us and I told him from today you do not get any peso more from us.

On the other hand, internal participation within the cooperative is cordial and they always try to maintain good relationship with everyone and specially good communicaton in order to keep it that way. They trust eachother, they are also aware that there is an equal distribtion of the money they earn a day. Participants showed that they have a main lider, yet, cooperative members and staff also participate, like Olga (cooperative member) said during here interview:

"Decitions are made among all, we even call those who are not regurlarly coming to work, we call them and they join the meetings"

"there are always criticisms but us, we do not overshadow, we continue, not because of them we are going to stop because we are a group and the groups are united… the understanding here is, … Everyone gets along with everyone, there are no fightings they do not allow it, first they will make us calm down" (Manuel, staff member).

One important element for community based tourism is that at least one person of the community assumes the role of leader of the project (Giampiccoli and Kalis, 2012). In the case of Kikil there are two leaders: one leader is the one who at the cenote takes the role of being in charge.

"I told Juan: you have to support me and he said: but in what way? If I have no relation with the project, if the members do not want me there what can I do. Well I will name you my personal advisor because I cannot do this alone; that attitude of telling people what to do, does not apply to me."

Besides, the second leader is the one who has the role of president of the cooperative. She is the one who appears before the public and represents the community, nevertheless

they also take into account Juan as one of the main responsible related to the project. He acts in collaboration with other actors, always trying to find the ways to do what's best for the community.

"I talk to Juan and he talks to me about the agreements and after we agree, among all we are going to decide which, and the decision is taken between all, what the majority says that is what is going to be done, thus we take the agreements." (Reyna, cooperative member).

5.8 Empowerment

At this stage of the project Olga express her gratitute for working at the cenote because she is experimenting new contact with people from different cultures. This gives her a drive to wanting to learn more languages and wanting to improve her capability as a guide for the tourists.

"The sound of their words is almost the same as in maya and from that I learn. I say to Juan is not that I know how to speak English but I do understand them… I want to learn their language. When I started working at the ex-convent, when people came I did not what to say or what to talk to them. Well I did not have the experience, now I got rid of my shyness and do talk with the tourists."(Olga, cooperative member).

At this point most of the participants expressed that they are having positive impacts from the project. Most of them are learning new things and improving their skills, in a way this gives them confidence and empowarement to learn and know more (Scheyvens, 1999).

"I liked to go to the ex-convent because before that I did not learn (know) how to mow the lawn. Olga constantly told me that I had to learn and I always told her that I was afraid. She would tell me to get rid of that idea. So after me and her would be in charge of cutting the lawn. Before that I always stayed at home."(Conchi, cooperative member).

Even woman that had not been working are hired to work at the community. These are the local minorities that before the cenote project had no work opportunities, they regularly just stayed at home and now have an employment (Scheyvens, 2002). The women from Kikil play a key role in the whole development of the touristic project.

"These women are working, they are still working and they do not stop working. They have already changed, now they work for a living and also take care of their children and it is good because that lady at the beginning did not want to speak (Olga) I have not been

able to change 100 percent her life. Before she was a person who was mistreated, raped by her husband. I even had to put a stop to the husband." (Juan, staff member).

The cooperative is always trying new things they want to offer something that makes it different from other cenotes. Additionally, they are aware of the value their culture brings to the project and also that tourists are looking for something authentic and more cultural related. As Scheyvens (1999) argues this gives them a certain type of empowerment, because they are being recognized.

"We did events … Cha Chaac which was already done 2 or 3 years ago. We retook it along with cultural events a night before, we programmed always this event at the same time as the equinoxes and taking advantage of the holiday period. We managed to capture the attention of the media that was our main interest a diffusion of the media" (Martin, local advisor).

Figure 6 Cha Chaac Mayan tradition

Source: yucatan.com.mx

More over there is also a positive educational outcome from the project. Parents supports the children to help within the cenote only after they have already finished with their homework. They only have one requirement before helping out; they have to show their notebooks to prove their attendance to school. Positevely this is a way of supporting edcucation in kikil because they are empowering children with education in order to help at the cenote.

"What they require is a little that these young people grow a little intellectually, mature so they can take over other areas of the company" (Martin, local advisor).

Some of the participants have attendent or participated in trainings or other type of courses related to tourism development, management, etc. This means that just a few of them have been granted the opportunnity to increase their knowledge. In order to make

participation possible within the cooperative the members share what they learn (Tossun, 2000). It is important to teach the other members new skills.

"About two months ago, I was taught how to watch the birds and how to recognize them, and what they are called" (Lupita, staff member).

Nevertheles, when discussing about courses and trainings with the tourism authorities from the municipality, told me that actually they were going to implement more trainings for the community members of kikil so they could improve their english skilss. Likewise, the CDI will also provide trainings for the management of the tourist development to the community members but only when they have all the project complete and running and reached the next phase which is the indigenous paradise program.

"In fact, with the program 'paraisos indigenas' (indegenous paradaise) what we stressed out more is not so much structure but the trainings. Thus, there are trainingds in 'modern ecotourist' and norm 133, quality system clean dot, between many others and during this support that they get they will also have to hire and assesor for tips and guidence during the process."

5.9 Governance

There were many actors involved when the cooperative members were at the very beginning of the project: people from the government, previous employers, community teachers, local residents of the municipality. At the beginning they had some benefactors that trusted the members and wanted to contribute to the project, this people had no major interest in the project other than good faith and a good relationship with a cooperative member. But all of them have played an important role with the initiation of the project and some of them still try to contribute by advising, consulting them what is the best to do in some cases and in some cases played as facilitators of needed resources. For example one community teacher is helping them with gardening and plant agriculture.

"He supports us with the plants. He comes and tell us some stories about our town and then you know a little bit more, in fact when we used to have events at the ex-convent he will bring some old paintings from Tizimin of how everything used to be, and that is really nice, because is nice to know about your town and its history" (Reyna, cooperative member).

Other teacher has also guided them to preserve the old mayan traditions in order to attract more visitors. He has also support them in many different ways by trying to guiding

them in the right direction. Cooperative members expressed their gratefulness towards this teacher who has been a support to them since the beginning of the realization of the project.

"I do not know if you were told of the Professor Martin, he has been much more involved in the whole matter, he has supported them from the beginning when there was practically nothing when they were in the question of ideas wanting to consolidate as a touristic project, then the teacher Martin has helped them a lot and has been an accompaniment to them" (Marisa, municipality government).

Although there have been some actors that want to manage and control the cooperative and the members, there have been also other actors that have offered their help as for example, outside consultor who helps them to work along with tour operators and local guides in order to have a good relationship. There have been other private and government authorities that have also offered something to the cooperative.

"people who come and find out about our cause, what we do, what we aim for and by themselves they approach us and want to help in some way. Thank God, a lot of people have come and supported us. It's something wonderful, I mean good things happen. The mere day 24 comes Pedro and look I brought you toys this and this.... He is from Tizimin but works in the state government and then another phone call from a federal deputy and tells me I'm sending things to your people. They already know that we are working." (Juan, staff member).

The cenote has attracted the attention of other people that would like to offer a different product to the tourists. A local from the municipality of Tizimin who owns the land next to the cenote, has opened a Jurassic park (see figure 7) to offer a different product to the tourists.

"There is other person who has a nearby land… exactly that one, 'the dinosaurs'. He has had the vision of doing something in the cenote from years ago but there was no one who supported him" (Marissa, municipality government).

Figure 7 Jurasic Kikil

Source: laisureste.com

One major finding was how social media plays a very important role for the development of the tourist project in the community of Kikil. Cooperative members and other actors consider this as their main strategy to attract more tourists to their project. They often expressed that thanks to social media they could reach a large amount of people that would want to visit the project or in other cases provide help to the cooperative. The members prefer to not ask for favours now and try to develop the cenote of Kikil by themselves.

"Of course especially now that we have the great ease of the power of the internet and social networks that are an excellent help throughout this movement: Facebook, internet, have been given the ease and openness. I feel that for example what helps us a lot is when someone writes something about Kikil and uploads it through social networks. It gives much interest to see that people from outside are writing about Kikil about the cooperative and all that." (Martin, local advisor).

5.10 Ecotourism

The federal government through the CDI has granted the community with the financial support for the means to develop the community towards ecotourism. The aim of the government is that the community improves their economic benefits while safeguarding their natural resources. Additionally, other major point is that while fostering ecotourism and the participation of the community there is an empowerment for the residents because they are gaining knew knowledge and skills.

"to begin with they have to follow the regulation of the construction, they have to use friendly with the environment materials, also according to the region…by having few

tourists they can give a better service like teaching them what kind of birds there are, what kind of flowers there are, what kind of animals there are, how the cenote works and that is environmental education" (Pedro, state government).

At the community of Kikil the participation of all residents is very poor. However the cultural values have been strengthening due to the cultural events which involucrate more local residents which are not included in the project of the cenote. The community has find in its culture a valuable asset to attract tourists to the community. Cultural attractions to the community have been of major importance because it attracts more visitors. The most important attraction is the cha Chaac which is a mayan tradition used in that region to ask the mayan gods for a rainy season in order to have a better agricultural harvest. The members of the community together with a civil association, the municipal government and other consultors have managed to do activities and a cultural festival towards that main ancient mayan tradition.

They have also managed to preserve the cultural handcrafts due to the tourist development. Woman and children are working in artisanal paintings in wood, fabric and even stone. They have designed a new craft called kikiles which are stones painted as an insect; they have even come up with a background history about the kikiles and the cenote.

"He knows that I draw everything that's why they sent for me and they brought me here to be part of the cenote (project) and they told me that they wanted me to draw Mayan symbols, drawings about animals, I did it even on top of the hats." (Flavio, staff member).

Because of the project there is a major concern in maintaining clean the water from the cenote. All of the members work together when doing this task. Men, woman and children go in the water in order to clean the cenote.

"When we started it was all dirty in the cenote trash and everything, we started cleaning the cenote, we tied a rope to ourselves and started to collect bottles and little by little. (Manuel, staff member).

5.11 Positive impacts

The interviews with the members showed that the opportunity of working with the cooperative had improved their way of life. Not only because of the economic gain but also because they feel they are part of something important, some of them expressed that

they are learning and would like to improve their communication skills to be able to establish more open conversation with tourists.

"When I started here my husband always asked me what I was doing at the cenote and I told him – I invite you, lets go. One day he got sick and had to go very far to his job as a caretaker and he did not like it. Then I told him again, stay, we will not earn much but it is something, and he told me do you think so? And I told him yes! Now he is here, he likes it so much here that sometimes he does not even go home, he is the caretaker."

They now have the opportunity to remain in their community without having to look for a job elsewhere; there is no need to migrate. They feel that the project of the cenote is providing alternative ways of economic benefit for their people. It is normal to hear that people migrate to other cities or towns. the same happens in kikil, many people have stayed in this community or have gone to other ones.

"I am from Tizimin. My husband came to work to kikil and we stayed… uh! More than 12 years I lived here, kikil adopted me."

This can be argued to be a possitive effect that for the community because it has been providing jobs to many people from the community.

"We have been inviting people to sum up. For example now that there is a lot of tourists, we need more help from the community to bring this forward."

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this research a closer look has been taken to concepts of community participation which include empowerment, communication, power redistribution and governance. In this final chapter the intention is to summarize the findings and most importantly to see how these concepts apply to the case study of the ecotouristic project of Kikil, in Mexico. Thus, I explored the participation of the cooperative members by making interviews to the staff and members of the cooperative, as also to some related actors to the project. All of these results helped to finalize the research with the discussion and conclusions that will be described in this chapter; the results of these interviews were introduced in the previous chapter. Following this, I will answer the research question while looking to the main findings and to finalize I will take a closer look to the limitations of the research. After that, some suggestions for future research will be given.

Kiki is a small community in the northeast part of the state of Yucatan. This community has cultural and natural resources to attract tourism to the area. That is the reason why some local residents from Kikil saw this as an opportunity to promote their community as a touristic one. While these people undertake the project, at the same time they are safeguarding their natural and cultural resources while also perceiving economic benefits. When doing the field research, the participants expressed that since the very beginning, the project has delivered very positive changes to the community which is consistent with many other case studies about CBT as stated by Andereck et al. (2005) where communities experienced more positive effects than negative. Furthermore, Kikil is not experiencing much negative impacts such as overcrowding, traffic or higher prices like stated by other case studies (Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Reid and Boyd, 1991; as described by Andereck et al., 2005). However, managing the project has not been an easy task to undertake, and the staff and cooperative members have also faced various challenges in order to run the project. Regardless these challenges, the cenote Kikil has achieved to be an outstanding project for the CDI.

The people who belong to the cooperative of the cenote Kikil had the intention to involve all the community residents to work along with the project of the cenote. However, when the meetings took place, most of the people showed a lack of interest to work in the project. Either because is something new for them and they are afraid to change or just because they preferred to remain in their habitual way of living. Nonetheless, 13 families gathered up in order to achieve the development of the cenote. The people who formed the cooperative had no previous knowledge about management or the skills to run a project. Regardless to the constraints, the members of the project had a slow start process (Okazaki, 2008). They had to look for help with other stakeholders in order to advance. Several of these actors had contributed with their knowledge and others with financial help. Among these actors there are local advisors, a civil association, local tourism authorities, the major of the municipality, and the state & federal government (CDI). The CDI set the guidelines which had to be followed by the cenote cooperative. This governmental institution supports the communities by providing financial resources and, in order to get this kind of support, communities have to follow their regulations and policy agreements. Thus, to secure these procedures, the members of the cooperative have to find help from a local advisor (Bramwell, 2011); this person is the one in charge of guiding them and in charge of filling the necessary formalities and papers to the CDI to be approved.

The project has faced different conflicts due to the involved actors; they have showed to have different discourses for the ways of understanding the development of the cenote (Jamal and Getz, 1995; Okazaki, 2008). This lack of coordination has resulted to be the

major constraints of the cooperative towards the development of the project. This has resulted in a division of the local residents: from one side the cooperative of the cenote and from the other side the commissar and his advisors. According to the collaboration process introduced by Selin and Chavez (1995), De Araujo and Bramwell (2002) and Okazaki (2008), the community of Kikil is in the stage of problem-setting, because even though the project is independent to the cooperative, they still have to work together in consensus with other stakeholders like the residents, tourists, CDI, SEDUMA, and the local and municipality authorities. In this stage, some of the stakeholders perceive the benefits of working with the cooperative. More important they also acknowledge where the problem relies when working together. However, there is still a long way to go before they come together in a more structured way and follow up the next collaboration process of direction setting (Selin and Chavez, 1995; Okazaki, 2008; De Araujo and Bramwell, 2002).

The findings have shown that due to this division some obstacles have been dealt with the cooperative. The cooperative cares for the development of the community while the local authority (commissar) cares for the financial benefits that the tourism industry can provide to the residents of Kikil. This conflict has led to the power relation of the local authority together with the municipal government to reclaim and take the ex-convent from the cooperative. This shows the control of the authority of the municipality over some of the resources and also makes clear who has the power. Regardless to these conflicts, the participants expressed their interest in working along with the commissar and his people in order to attract more tourists to the community by developing more touristic projects into their community. This was achieved thanks to the relationship with a local consultant who has an active engagement with the project (as cited by Ashley and Jones, 2001; Jamal and Getz, 1995; in Okazaki, 2008).

Other government institutions that were identified as main actors were the SEDUMA and the CDI. This both institutions have different focuses: the latter focus on the development of the indigenous communities while the former focuses on the safeguard of the environment. The cooperative had to work with each institution in order to achieve the project. There were some difficulties along the process because the members were not informed about the regulations of the SEDUMA from the start of the project. This lack of information resulted in a lot of changes to the project in order to comply with the regulations. Thus, an appropriate information should be facilitated (Manyara and Jones, 2007) in order to avoid delays, time and money, a coalition of this both institutions should be made and furthermore inform the people prior they start with the project.

The local residents perceive that the tourism development in the community is evolving. Nonetheless, tourism is relatively new for them and benefits are still not showing a big

difference in the development of the community. Thus, the results show a lack of involvement from the residents of Kikil in the project (Stone and Stone, 2010). Regardless to their lack of participation the project has been a successful development in comparison with other similar projects that the CDI has had. Other finding was the lack of collaboration between the local authority and the members of the cooperative. There is no exchange of communication which is leading to misunderstandings, and also can be the cause of distrust. Communication should be clearly in order to avoid conflicts. The expectations of the commissar are not in line with the project, this could be avoided if there were a more open collaboration between the tourism authorities, the CDI and the cooperative to include the local residents in open meetings where they could understand more about the project and how the community could benefit from it. In line with the above mentioned, the future plans of the project are only known by the cooperative members and staff, resulting in a lack of opportunity to the residents to get benefit from it. However, it was also expressed that the members have intended to approach to the rest of the community but they have shown little or no interest towards the development of tourism in their community. This clearly shows the power relations from the cooperative to the rest of the residents of the community and how there is not much communication between them.

According to the level of community participation and power redistribution presented by Okazaki (2008) following the steps presented by Arnstein (1969), the project of Kikil suggest to be placed in the informing level. As stated before, prior to the creation of the cooperative, the members made an open invitation to all community residents to participate in the project. On the other hand, if the focus was made on the internal participation, the levels concerning power redistribution would be much higher. The internal participation of the cooperative members is very strong and very well handed. The division of the tasks is done accordingly to the member's capabilities and skills. They also have a strong communication between them where there is always the mean to involve everyone in all the decisions to be made. More importantly, their decisions have much influence in the development of the project and also in the daily activities. Even though in most of the cases the leaders are the one attending to meetings with the government authorities, they make sure to inform the members in their regular meetings.

The results also reflect how the members have experienced the empowerment of knowledge through the development of the project. Most participants reflected upon the opportunities they have experienced by working at the cenote and how this has increased their confidence, skills and knowledge. They are more involved now with the tourists than before. When they were just starting they did not know how to establish a conversation and now they are ready to have more interaction with the visitors, this trust and

confidence has been gained over time and because of the daily task of attending the project. If they also would have more training from the CDI and other authorities, much more knowledge they would be gaining and improving their skills (Arnstein, 1996). Next to this, a better way of improving would be if the cooperative was offered training from CDI as part of the financial program in order to start operating or, in case they do not have sufficient man power, to restrict an amount of money from the project directed to trainings; since they already have the advice from a consultant he could also be the person in charge of this task. It is suggested that this training should be given since the very first phase of the development of the project, followed to each phase of the financial support given by the CDI. Next to this, other key element that emerged was that the municipality was aware of giving English language trainings to the cooperative so the members could properly communicate with international tourists. Although this is beneficial, it should be open to the entire community so they could all take part in the tourism development.

Some other key elements that emerged from the results were that the development of the project in Kikil has brought awareness of other actors after seeing Kikil success. These actors are taking advantage of the cenote to offer a different option to the tourists. As is the case of a 'Jurassic world' attraction opened next to the cenote.

 The overall result reflects that the cooperative has a good leadership and the development of tourism in the community of Kikil has brought major positive impacts (than negative ones) for the future of the residents. Furthermore, tourism is offering more job opportunities, as a result there is a decrease in migration from the people looking for other sources of work, and they now have other opportunities of working in their own community. Moreover, the members have an extra income, while managing the project. The results also demonstrate that community members are engaging more into cultural aspects, which means that slowly they are embracing their mayan roots and history; they are aware that by using their cultural aspects they attract more tourists to the cenote. Thus, CBT in Kikil is fostering a more sustainable development due to tourism through a project related to ecotourism managed by a group of people from the community.

6.1 Recommendations for further research

This study has focused upon issues of empowerment, power relations, collaboration and governance in order to understand the participation of the actors and how they interact and relates to each other. Nevertheless, the study showed that one of the major conflicts was the lack of communication between all the related actors. For this reason a

suggestion for further research would be to develop a communication strategy for all related actors, moreover a strategy in order to reduce future problems of trust and misunderstandings. Furthermore, comparisons of this case study with other similar projects from the CDI to see how different or similar the processes have been in order to modify policies and guidelines for the benefit of the governmental institutions.

It is expected the growth of the cenote project in the near future so a study of the positive and negative impacts would be recommended in order to look into issues of economic, environmental and social impacts. Nevertheless as mentioned by the CDI this project could be seen as a model for other communities that would like to develop themselves thanks to the tourism industry.

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