

## **Tourism and sustainable development of Qhapaq-Ñan: development problems and opportunities**

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### **Abstract**

In the development process, the territory is not a passive recipient of external interventions but a space that has its own strategy of insertion into the general dynamics. The territory is seen as a 'network of interests' or an 'agent of social transformation'; that is, as a set of social relations that give rise to and at the same time express an identity and a sense of purpose shared by multiple agents (Vazquez-Barquero, 2000). This approach is what will make it possible for tourism to be truly an endogenous and sustainable development agent. In this sense; through this scientific note on Qhapaq-Ñan, the authors seek to clarify the possibilities of the territories located in their vicinity to achieve sustainable local development, through tourism, which generates opportunities in order to improve the quality of life of local communities without affecting or altering world heritage. The Qhapaq-Ñan, in terms of archaeological heritage, is the largest serial heritage asset known in the American continent, encompassing six Andean countries. This Andean road system constitutes the tangible expression of the Inca expansion and of the coexistence of the imperial order with the various local cultures. The declaration of Qhapaq-Ñan as world heritage, in 2014, has led to joint efforts between various countries, various provinces, departments and different sectors in order to preserve this asset of exceptional universal value.

**Keywords:** Andean countries, archaeological heritage, territory.

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## The environment of Qhapaq-Ñan

It is called Qhapaq - Ñan, Andean Main Road, the Andean road system inherited from the Inca empire that involved populated centers, warehouses, checkpoints, among others, constituting the most important technological work in pre-Hispanic America. The road runs through six countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Perú and seven Argentine provinces (Jujuy, Salta, Catamarca, Tucumán, La Rioja, San Juan and Mendoza) as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Map of Qhapaq-Ñan territorial extension in Argentina (MINTUR, 2014).**

During 2001, the Republic of Peru started the Inca Trail Project. Its main objective was to investigate, revalue heritage, conserve and put the road and its associated sites in public use. For this, it invites Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador to participate, joining Colombia after 2002, with whom the good is shared and simultaneously, the project for its candidacy as world heritage by the United Nations Organization for the Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO, 2008). The six countries decided to join forces to revalue and recover the archaeological heritage of the Qhapaq-Ñan and promote the local development of the communities associated with it. It is in this way that an unprecedented regional cooperation process is born, worldwide (Albuquerque, 2015a).

'The exceptional universal value of the Qhapaq-Ñan as a creative work of the human being is appreciated as a whole, as an integrating element of populations, cultures, environments, resources and deities, which due to the challenges it had to face and the originality of the solutions that incarnates, has no comparison in the history of mankind (Rolandi, 2012). This value does not reside in any particular segment or region, but fundamentally in the whole, in the interrelation of all its components'.

Among the six countries, there is a total of 693 524 km of roads, in addition to 309 associated archaeological sites that are located along the Tawantinsuyu, which have been inscribed on the world heritage list as a transnational serial asset in the itinerary category cultural: any way of

communication by land, water or of another type, physically determined and characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historical functionality at the service of a concrete and determined purpose, which meets the following conditions: a) be the result and reflection of interactive movements of people, as well as multidimensional, continuous and reciprocal exchanges of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between peoples, countries, regions or continents over considerable periods of time; b) having generated a multiple and reciprocal fertilization, in space and time, of the affected cultures that is manifested in both their tangible and intangible heritage; and c) having integrated the historical relationships and cultural assets associated with their existence into a dynamic system (ICOMOS, 2008).

There is no citation in the cited literature, on the basis of criteria of exceptional universal value II, III, IV and VI criteria of exceptional universal value (vue); II. Witnessing a considerable exchange of influence, during a specific period or in a cultural or specific area, in the areas of architecture or technology, monumental arts, urban planning or landscape creation; III. Provide a unique, or at least exceptional, testimony about a cultural tradition or a living or disappeared civilization; IV. To constitute an eminently representative example of a type of construction or architectural or technological complex or landscape that illustrates one or more significant periods of human history; and VI. Being directly or materially associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, beliefs or artistic and literary works that have exceptional universal meaning. The committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used concomitantly with other criteria (UNESCO, 2008).

Argentina selected 14 road segments and 34 associated archaeological sites, distributed in the 7 provinces involved. In the surroundings of the Qhapaq-Ñan there are a variety of human groups that range from small native and peasant communities to towns and cities. It is noteworthy that even today there are several segments of the Qhapaq-Ñan that continue to be the main access route to certain places, and that are used by peasants to move to neighboring homes and towns or to their grazing areas (Albuquerque, 2015b, Carreño, 2016).

In some cases, traditional use seems to be able to contribute, to a certain extent, to improve their conservation, once capacities are developed, while in other segments, the proximity to highly populated localities exposes heritage sites to a risk of disaster given the increase of the physical-environmental, socio-cultural, economic-productive and political-institutional vulnerabilities, where the absence or lack of coordination of actions by the municipal, provincial and national states reveal inefficiency and poor governance (Carreño, 2004; Martínez and Morillo, 2015).

The recognition of Qhapaq Ñan as a world heritage site has the effect of significantly increasing the visibility of the property, making it possible to further develop its potential as a tourist attraction World Tourism Organization (2013). Tourism generates a series of expectations, such as the creation of employment, the appreciation of cultural traditions and the natural environment, and the improvement of the quality of life in general. However, it is necessary to take into account its real scope and risks.

The complexity involved in managing this good of exceptional universal value implies that mechanisms must be sought to improve the coordination of public policies in the different sectors and at different levels of management is the greatest challenge.

This implies focusing on the assessment of the institutional capacities of the Nation and the Province to accompany the local territories to efficiently specify the use plan in 2012, the then Ministry of Tourism of the Nation developed the use plan that included a visitation program so that it could become a true management instrument to organize, promote, regulate and monitor tourist activities within the Qhapaq Ñan -Andean Road System-Argentina, as well as being in charge of preparing a works manual tourist public-.

Given these singularities of the Qhapaq-Ñan, the endogenous and sustained development of the territory is a need that, carried out, will facilitate tourism to present itself as a moderator between responsible tourist visitation and the conservation of archaeological sites (Pedersen, 2005; Rolandi and Raffaele, 2012). While the culture sector, as a key sector on the subject, must generate the necessary tools for the knowledge and identification of Qhapaq-Ñan as world heritage, which must be transmitted under the same image and identity so that it can be interpreted by the visitors. Likewise, the communication of Qhapaq-Ñan as an exceptional universal value must be carried out from the integral vision of all its segments (in the 6 countries), and therefore the conceptual and interpretative line must follow the same principles among all the states parties (ONU, 2012).

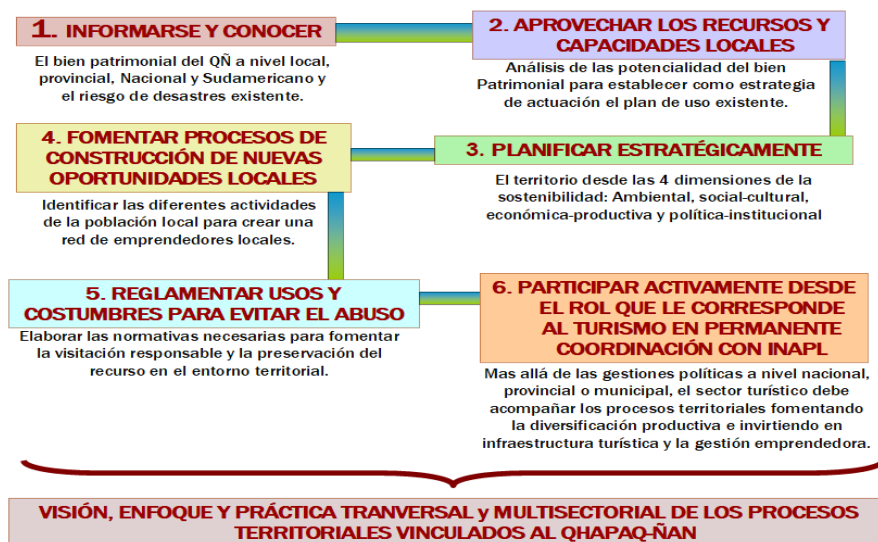
Both tourism and culture are the key sectors that must facilitate all processes quickly and efficiently to strengthen the local productive network, understanding that it is the communities themselves that must organize and train on the world heritage they own and develop small enterprises that collaborate with each other to form a competitive offer that improves the local quality of life.

Under this complex context, represented by the Qhapaq-Ñan, the only world heritage of its kind, and with the purpose that time does not continue to pass without the communities directly involved being able to take advantage of said resource to improve their capacities and offer different options for visiting the heritage site and nearby towns, the authors propose a proposal for local tourism development that allows reducing vulnerabilities, improving living conditions and optimizing the opportunities that tourism can offer, provided that the state protects the property (Vázquez-Barquero, 2000; Vizúete *et al.*, 2015). In this instance, it is possible to analyze the guidelines that should guide the action from the problematic or complex context that is represented in the Qhapaq-Ñan.

Based on this scientific essay and without losing sight of the complexity that the Qhapaq-Ñan represents, the characteristics of each site, segment and cities directly involved in it, the proposal begins with the analysis of each territory with its specific peculiarity on the which will carry out the sustainable local development process; through tourism. This will not be linear and must be based on the following premises.

Territory: state of conservation of the site, knowledge of disaster risk; qualitative factors: productive and social capacities, organizational capacity: management instruments and institutional framework, entrepreneurial initiatives, investment and innovation: promoting these

instruments will allow the generation of value in the territories, from these premises, the endogenous and sustainable development process that the authors suggest that it should serve the tourism sector in relation to the Qhapaq-Ñan, as seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Process of sustainable local tourism development in relation to Qhapaq-Ñan.**

## Conclusions

In this sense, it is understood that the active and permanent participation of the actors who coexist, produce, reproduce and conserve the world heritage of the Qhapaq-Ñan is essential and to understand that both its conservation as world heritage and the potential development of sustainable tourism, they necessarily depend on understanding the territorial dynamics that expose both heritage and tourism to an undesired risk scenario. It is from these contexts that the planning, management, development and management processes of world heritage must unify criteria based on a common denominator that unites culture and tourism from a comprehensive and systemic vision that is rooted in the territories.

In this sense, the authors understand that, the great challenge that the development of the territories currently implies requires the cooperation of public administrations and local actors, mainly with regard to improving efficiency and equity, environmental sustainability, productive diversification and the strengthening of small business networks. But in turn, local development initiatives must be combined with public policies that improve transport and communications infrastructures and that promote scientific and technological innovation in companies, so it is important to strengthen relations between the public sector and the private sector.

Finally, it is believed important that, to overcome current challenges, it is necessary to strengthen governance through coordination and cooperation and institutional changes.

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