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Sustainable local development from the perspective of actors in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, Mexico

Desarrollo local sostenible desde la perspectiva de los actores en el municipio de Cadereyta de Montes, México

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Abstract

Sustainable local development is a community integration strategy; therefore, it is essential to develop it through community participation processes. This research sought to examine the approach to sustainable local development from the perspective of local stakeholders, generating a baseline for analysis. This process used participatory methodologies with 275 participants, resulting in a stakeholder map and a working framework. This was achieved through dialogues and meetings facilitated by the Autonomous University of Querétaro. It is crucial to preserve the biocultural, social, and economic aspects that stakeholders perceive in Cadereyta de Montes as potential for sustainability. It is important to combine institutional frameworks, public policies, and citizen participation to protect the environment and build spaces for sustainable local development. This involved supporting business management and consolidating new sectors. In conclusion, collaborative and intersectoral work is fundamental to creating sustainability processes. Local development originates through local initiatives. This research presents feedback from participants and reveals how local development works in accordance with territorial needs to achieve sustainability.

Keywords: business management, communities, knowledge, participatory management, sustainable development.

Resumen

El desarrollo local sustentable es una estrategia de integración comunitaria, por lo tanto, es esencial desarrollarlo a través de procesos de participación comunitaria. Esta investigación buscó examinar el enfoque del desarrollo local sustentable desde la perspectiva de los actores locales, generando una línea base para el análisis. Este proceso empleó metodologías participativas con 275 participantes, lo que resultó en un mapa de actores y un marco de trabajo. Esto se logró mediante diálogos y reuniones facilitadas por la Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro. Es crucial preservar los aspectos bioculturales, sociales y económicos que los actores perciben en Cadereyta de Montes como potencial para la sustentabilidad. Es importante combinar marcos institucionales, políticas públicas y participación ciudadana para proteger el medio ambiente y construir espacios para el desarrollo local sustentable. Esto implicó apoyar la gestión

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empresarial y consolidar nuevos sectores. En conclusión, el trabajo colaborativo e intersectorial es fundamental para crear procesos de sustentabilidad. El desarrollo local se origina a través de iniciativas locales. Esta investigación presenta la retroalimentación de los participantes y revela cómo el desarrollo local funciona de acuerdo con las necesidades territoriales para lograr la sustentabilidad.

Palabras clave: comunidades, conocimiento, desarrollo sostenible, gestión empresarial, gestión participativa.

Introduction

Sustainable local development is an approach that allows for the identification and development of strategies for the social growth of a territory — according to studies conducted by Vásquez Barquero (2007). The management of sustainable local development promotes alternatives that intervene at political and social levels, aiming at governance from the perspective of Melgar et al. (2022). This process involves environmental management, political issues, participatory management, and ways of planning the territorial space inhabited by communities.

In accordance with the above, the object of study of this research lies in examining sustainable local development from the perspective of the actors who participated in the research in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes. Aspects such as the environment, business, politics, and economics are taken into account —factors that are integrated within local development. Based on this, the research question is posed: ¿Why is it important to examine the sustainable local development approach from the perspective of local actors for future participatory management strategies in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, Querétaro, Mexico? This question is supported by the theoretical framework of Rizzo et al. (2022) and Hariram et al. (2023), which explain how local development is composed of elements necessary for sustainability, such as citizen participation, the local productive system, respect, and responsibility for the environment.

According to the studies of Covarrubias Melgar (2024), this research is important because it examines an approach and grounds it in local terms. Likewise, it explores the category of sustainability within an approach that has emerged in recent decades as a development option, according to Wittwer (2023). Additionally, this research innovates by giving voice to the participants of the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes to understand what is needed to develop it from an organic perspective, taking into account the idiosyncrasy and territorial needs. Basically, this research shows various perspectives: The vision of “local development” proposed by the participants in the research considered the economy and business development to be key. This vision emphasizes promoting local development through entrepreneurship and the creation of sustainable and environmentally friendly businesses. Thus, “the actors, using their knowledge”, acted as sources of knowledge derived from their experiences in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes. The participants also considered that local development can be achieved through biocultural and social aspects, and through the young population as an economic driver.

Therefore, the objective of this research was to examine the sustainable local development approach from the perspective of local actors, to establish a baseline analysis on this topic in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, Querétaro, Mexico.

Theoretical Framework

The local development approach: generates economic, social, and environmental growth in a specific location. It contributes to the sustainable development of localities, based on the use of internal community resources, such as human potential and natural, social, historical, and cultural resources. These potentialities are used to promote sustainable employment and wealth generation (Ningrum et al., 2024). Community participation is key to this approach, allowing for collaboration among different actors and stakeholders to establish development guidelines. Strengthening individual and collective capacities is key to creating and maintaining local opportunities (Mast, 2024).

Another relevant factor in the local development approach is the zoning of exploitable resources, which can serve as a driver of economic growth. Sustainability is a long-term goal that advocates for clean production and environmentally harmonious processes in collaboration with communities (Silva et al.,

2023). Based on this context, collaborative processes and stakeholder knowledge are key to generating public policies and guidelines that endure over time. For Stokan, Deslatte, & Hatch (2021), local development allows for the emergence of new interpretations of the territory and the creation of strategic companies, industries, and businesses, especially in communities far from the predominant economic centers.

The local development approach aligns closely with the entrepreneurial processes that can emerge in communities, as well as their implications at the territorial level. The theoretical framework offers a comprehensive analysis of the socioeconomic and environmental growth of societies that emerge as booming centers of economic activity, adapting to the needs that society itself addresses (Delgado Méndez et al., 2021). In this way, the local development approach represents a vision that integrates elements of sustainability and applies them to the emergence of new businesses and enterprises in these emerging communities. This approach has the potential to catalyze significant changes in the community situation, which can ultimately lead to greater well-being and growth for the society in question (Bortz et al., 2024).

Conception of sustainable local development: the concept of local development in the context of sustainability is constructive. It arises when communities use their resources to meet needs. This contributes to the creation of local development based on spaces for collective participation; this implies the recognition of biophysical, cultural, and citizen participation characteristics. According to Rojas Casarrubias et al. (2025) and Rizzo et al. (2022), the local development approach to sustainability emphasizes the articulation of public policies focused on serving people and adapted to the realities of the municipality, which allows for social and economic coordination. This emerges in communities with the potential to develop new businesses.

Territory as a Strategic Axis: the relationship between territory and production is significantly robust, as it promotes business innovation through territorial characteristics and the intellectual capital rooted in local communities (Banha et al., 2022). Currently, territorial organizations have become focal points of interest for global companies, generating productivity processes that boost competitiveness and respond to international market globalization trends.

Sustainability: in the context of local and business development encompasses crucial dimensions such as equity, quality of life, and a governance process that fosters cohesion and the interconnection of communities, as well as participation in political and media processes that contribute to social development (Alencastro et al., 2020). In this sense, sustainability aligns with the concept of “good living” and respect for territorial identity and social construction based on the specific needs of a given area. From another perspective, Melgar (2024), argue that the sustainability approach in the business sphere seeks to strengthen local development, considering variables such as local initiatives and collective thinking for respectful entrepreneurship, in addition to ensuring economic viability to achieve sustainable local growth. From the vision of Cardozo et al. (2021), sustainability in the business realm implies the creation of new businesses that are independent and promote social well-being. It is an opportunity to strengthen business commitments to the social environment and contribute to the social fabric itself.

According to the Secretaría del Bienestar (2025), in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes in 2024, 52.2% of the population lives in moderate poverty, while social backwardness ranges from 1.079 to 2.469, which indicates a low level compared to other contexts. In 2024, urbanization indicators reached 60.6%, but health indicators registered a value of 0%, educational infrastructure obtained 2.3%, and water budget planning was 5.2%. The information revealed that the sustainability of the study area has important areas for development: addressing local development through the creation of new businesses and empowering young people to do so. This is consistent with the positions of Covarrubias Melgar (2024) and Cardona et al. (2025a; 2025b), stating that public policies are necessary to support the economic integration of the municipality's various sectors; in the words of Melgar et al. (2022), generating space for territorial planning and governance.

Methodology

Study Context: the study was conducted in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes. This municipality is important because, after brainstorming with five academics, the study of this area of the Querétaro semi-desert was proposed. Furthermore, the potential of the young population, that is, those between 19 and 40

years of age who are economically active, was considered (INEGI, 2020). Another relevant factor is its diversified economy, where the service and commerce sectors predominate, accounting for 43% and 36%, respectively (Data México, 2023). This presents significant challenges in terms of local development, particularly because previous studies (Reséndiz-Martínez et al., 2025) highlight the need to identify, from the perspectives of various actors, how to achieve sustainable, environmentally friendly, and responsible local development.

Type of Study: the research is qualitative, specifically a case study. A reference case was taken to analyse and describe the phenomenon under study, as well as to construct empirical data and patterns associated with dialogue among actors. This approach addresses the research question and the phenomenon being studied.

Population Group: the population group consisted of all individuals over 18 years old who wished to participate. Through an open call at the Autonomous University of Querétaro, four groups were formed: professionals, university students, entrepreneurs, and individuals with various trades. In total 275 actors participated, which allowed for the construction of a proposal for sustainable local development.

Process Initiation: the process began with a dialogue of knowledge, where the dimension of the problem was narrowed down, and the phenomenon under study was reduced. This allowed for establishing the research's necessity and delimiting the object of study.

Phase One (Observational Phase): In this phase, a process of immersion and engagement with entrepreneurs was carried out. The observational approach, according to Velásquez Carrascal et al. (2021), involves a deep and careful examination of the study context. This phase was divided into two stages:

- ✓ **Field Immersion:** this lasted approximately one month, during which five observations were conducted in five different communities within the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, selected at random. The communities were: Boyé, Cabecera Municipal, El Aguacate, El Palmar, and Vizarrón.
- ✓ **Engagement with Entrepreneurs:** a meeting was held with 10 people, which improved the understanding of environmental management and sustainable local development. This methodological process provided a robust reflection on the opportunities and progress that could be achieved for local development in Cadereyta de Montes.

Phase Two (Local Perspective): at this point in the research, the local perspective was taken into account. Thus, the aspects that would shape local development had been identified within the research: political, social, economic, and institutional. These pillars demonstrated the opportunities for the study. The study also concluded with a stakeholder map. Two meetings were held to develop this map: first, with a total of 105 participants, and second, with 160. Thus, a total of 265 participants participated in the study.

- ✓ **Quadrant 1:** includes actors with significant impact on local development.
- ✓ **Quadrant 2:** contains actors with a high level of power and decision-making capacity in public policy and territorial planning.
- ✓ **Quadrant 3:** groups actors who can make decisions at an institutional level.
- ✓ **Quadrant 4:** identifies actors directly responsible and interrelated.

This actor map allowed for the visualization of how different actors influence local development and facilitated the identification of strategies to address the detected needs, according to the vision of Florido del Corral (2021).

Phase Three (Planning): in this phase, the structuring of two scenarios was considered: internal and external, in addition to a SWOT analysis. The first step was to conduct the SWOT analysis through desk work, using the already systematized information. Subsequently, the internal analysis was carried out, where the strengths and weaknesses identified in the SWOT were confronted. This internal analysis addressed the levels of empowerment that the actors detected within the municipality. The external environment was analyzed through opportunities and threats, that is, everything surrounding the municipality, including public and private institutions and projects. However, it would serve to foster local development.

Data Analysis: the analysis of the information was carried out through the construction of narratives based on dialogues with the actors. These narratives were analyzed jointly and comprehensively to generate ideas and suggestions that would enhance the research, focusing on the thematic interest: local development.

Based on the transcription of the dialogues with the actors, the analysis of the information began. This process allowed for the systematization of participation and, subsequently, the loading of data into the Atlas.ti software. There, a content analysis was conducted, identifying patterns and key concepts. As a result, the following categories of analysis were constructed:

- ✓ Commitment to entrepreneurs in the region.
- ✓ The local perspective: essential, as it enabled the study's analytical approach. Once the information obtained in the field was systematized, the stakeholder map was created, and the SWOT tool was developed based on this map (based on internal and external environments). Atlas.ti software was used for the analysis.

In terms of plausibility and reliability, the analysis was carried out until information saturation was achieved. This meant that each time an actor mentioned a concept, it was validated with the following actors to identify similarities in their responses. In this way, triangulation was achieved at the actor level. Subsequently, theoretical triangulation was performed, contrasting the findings with relevant Barney (1986), Barney (1991), Sen (1998; 2000) who validated the discussion of the results.

Information Validation: this was carried out by asking similar questions each time they met with the actors. This process allowed for the reduction of information and the finding of points of convergence, achieving greater precision and relevance in the findings.

Results and discussion

The following results present the process of working with local actors to reflect on the approach to sustainable local development (figure 1).



Figure 1. Work meetings with local stakeholders

Source: own elaboration.

Immersion and Observation: Strategies for Local Sustainable Development

The research process began with a brainstorming session among several academics. Subsequently, it was proposed to conduct fieldwork, which was developed through five observations made while traversing parts of the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes.

For example, in the first observation conducted in the municipal seat, needs such as solid waste management, better organization of local commerce, maintenance of green areas, and, above all, the modernization of infrastructure was detected, considering that it is a "Pueblo Mágico". The second observation took place in the Vizarrón district. A series of opportunities to contribute to community development were identified in that area. The third observation, in the community of El Aguacate, evaluated opportunities for improving road infrastructure, education, health promotion, and access to drinking water. The fourth observation was conducted in the delegation of El Palmar, where the need to manage solid waste and develop actions focused on the protection of cultural and landscape heritage was identified. The fifth observation was carried out in the delegation of Boyé, which is important because it is known for pottery

and stands out for its representation in terms of traditions. Additionally, it has an Otomí community, so within the aspects of local development, it cannot be separated from the biocultural heritage of the territory. These observations yielded similar results to those of the studies by Sherman et al. (2022) and Ince (2023), which addressed the sociocultural and environmental problems faced by communities, especially those not connected to a population center. These observations reveal the need to develop local strategies based on sustainability, taking into account public policies, economic growth, and, above all, intersectoral linkages.

Participation with Local Entrepreneurs

Participation with local entrepreneurs from the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes was facilitated by an invitation from the "Competitive Management" research group of the Faculty of Accounting and Administration of the Autonomous University of Querétaro (UAQ). Ten people attended, which contributed to broadening the research perspective. These entrepreneurs represented marble, limestone, agricultural, and commercial companies. This allowed us to identify, based on their positions in the dialogue, the importance of managing strategies between the municipality, academia, and the economic sector to promote local development.

The merchants considered that the municipal government has not established a dialogue with the various economic actors to define routes that allow the emergence and dynamization of the local economy, focusing on environmental sustainability and the protection of natural resources. For their part, the representative of the extractive sector considered it necessary to continue investing in infrastructure and road development to create new economic spaces and connect communities.

Representatives from the agricultural sector pointed out that the key issue for sustainable local development is water, which has progressively been sold to the city of Querétaro. This has resulted in the development and infrastructure of the state having no impact or benefit for the agricultural sector, according to their perception.

Water is a fundamental element in territorial needs. This stance identifies that all actors who participated in the discussion consider the environment as a crucial factor in achieving sustainability and promoting local development as a government strategy. However, it is perceived that the government is disconnected from these processes of synergy among the various economic actors.

From a critical perspective, several elements emerged that question the stance of the actors involved in the process. These actors seem to be focused on solving problems in their economic sectors rather than addressing the needs of the citizenry and the democratic exercise in the management of natural resources. It is necessary to generate a local space where companies also determine the direction of sustainable development, which can generate collective well-being. However, this discourse is diluted because, ultimately, the needs of certain economic sectors are prioritized, achieving that the political dynamics and structure of government are aligned with those needs. This vision is shared by Makhathini et al. (2020), who proposed the role of politics as a factor within structural problems at the social level; a consideration that is immersed within the present investigation, given the proximity of local development with the various economic sectors that must promote sustainable practices.

In the case of South Africa, infrastructure has been essential for driving economic development in municipalities far from political and economic power centers. A similar situation occurs in Mexico, where numerous communities are distant from state capitals, populated cities, or development hubs. While in South Africa—according to the analysis of this research—private investment played a key role in job creation and reducing inequality gaps, in Mexico, the local development agenda is more government-centered (federal, state, and municipal), responding to partisan and public priorities. A relevant difference, also highlighted by Corrales & Mendoza Cota (2021), is that infrastructure projects in South Africa do not always incorporate prior consultation mechanisms with communities, unlike in Mexico, where these processes are mandatory for approving or rejecting development initiatives. However, both countries share a common focus: governance planning as a central axis, where sustainability and community participation are cross-cutting elements. In both contexts, as noted by Morales Cobos (2024), infrastructure challenges aim to address historical inequalities, though through different models: South Africa relies more on private investment, while Mexico prioritizes government intervention and social consultation. From another angle,

for this research in the engagement phase (Mast, 2024), the problems of local development are a combination of political and social aspects; a situation that is exposed in the study.

The Local Perspective

The local perspective was crucial in constructing the actor map that can influence sustainable local development. During a second meeting with 265 actors, several elements were combined, leading to the identification of four important pillars:

- ✓ **Political Vision:** all actions should be in conjunction with a public and partisan agenda. Sustainable local development should be a government philosophy based on a public agenda and the ability to negotiate with businesses and central, federal, and state governments for the common good.
- ✓ **Social Vision:** it is necessary to bring together people, activists, and communities to generate strategies that align with the needs of the municipality.
- ✓ **Economic Outlook:** this presented significant growth opportunities given the number of companies operating in the region.

These visions present important challenges regarding how local development can disengage from predominant economic discourses and foster community autonomy. According to Xu et al. (2022), the various local visions are important because they reveal interculturality and diversity of thought, which were present in the research. Furthermore, Aleksandrova et al. (2024) argue that economic, social, political, and institutional visions serve to evaluate public management and the cycle of public policies. However, these postulates were not within the scope of this investigation. This research contributes to the debate, given that local development has the particularity of exposing the need for integration of government actors. This was explained by the participants as follows: "Local development should seek intersectorality and improve the various political, social, economic, and environmental processes in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes".

Other research by Delgado Méndez et al. (2021) and Abad (2023), conducted in Colombia on local development, analyzes how this process generates territorial changes, some with positive results and others with less significant impacts, especially in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This view coincides with the study conducted in Brazil, where Sapata Carubelli et al. (2021) argue that sustainability acts as a turning point within political systems, allowing progress to be made on local issues through community consultation processes.

In Argentina, according to García & Tarsia (2024), local development is also approached from a comprehensive and community-based perspective, highlighting how communities can influence decisions at both the local and global levels. In this context, local development is not only configured as a strategy of resistance to the effects of globalization, but is also based on intercultural aspects and territorial configuration as elements of identity and social meaning, as proposed by Walsh (2015). These approaches are directly linked to the present research, especially in the way communities take an active role in the transformation of their territories, combining the global with the local from a critical and participatory perspective.

Actor Map

The identification of local actors was achieved through two meetings with the individuals involved, meaning the actors themselves identified their role within the environmental strategy aimed at local development (Table 1). Subsequently, the participants evaluated two dimensions: influence and power. This led to proposing the role of stakeholders within the actorial processes of constructing local development. This is explained by Alfie-Cohen & Garcia-Becerra (2022) and Hollebeek et al. (2022), who emphasize the role of actors in mitigating environmental vulnerability, actions that contribute to local development. This research intersects with the aforementioned in how actors can play a determining role within socio-environmental problems in the study area and translate this into a form of local management, i.e., the mechanism of local development.

However, within this research, an important stance emerged: how to strengthen the role of actors in local development based on territorial needs. This can be explained by the results of

Rojas Casarrubias et al. (2025), which proposed a strategic community program for strengthening local actors, promoting decision-making and leadership. This was not considered in this investigation but will serve as a baseline for future research.

Table 1.
Actor Map

Actor Type	Local Actors	Influence	Power	Total
Institutional	1) Secretaría de Desarrollo Sostenible	3	3	9
	2) Secretaría de Educación	3	1	3
	3) Hospital General	1	1	1
	4) Secretaría de Salud	2	3	6
	5) Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS)	1	1	1
	6) Registro Civil	1	1	1
	7) Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado (ISSSTE)	1	1	1
	8) Secretaría de Desarrollo y Promoción Económica	3	3	9
	9) Comisión Nacional del Agua (CONAGUA)	2	2	4
	10) Secretaría de Desarrollo Social	2	3	6
	11) Instituto de la Mujer	2	2	4
	12) Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales	2	2	4
	13) Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural	2	2	4
	14) Cabildo Municipal	3	3	9
	15) Church	1	1	1
	16) Civil Society	3	3	9
	17) Cattle Ranchers Association	2	1	2
Society	18) Social Movements	3	3	9
	19) Ejidatarios	3	1	3
	20) Universities	3	1	3
	21) Influencer's	1	1	1
	22) Community Leaders	3	1	3
	23) Students	3	1	3
Political	24) Municipal	3	3	9
	25) State	3	3	9
	26) Federal	3	3	9
Economic	27) Industrial Parks	3	2	6
	28) Local Entrepreneurs	3	3	9
	29) Multinational Corporations	3	3	9
	30) Mining Companies	3	3	9

Source: Own elaboration. Note: This actor map was constructed through the participation of individuals involved in the research and was evaluated based on the influence and power of each actor for sustainability.

The participation of local actors in the development of Cadereyta de Montes has led to the identification of four key pillars (Figure 2):

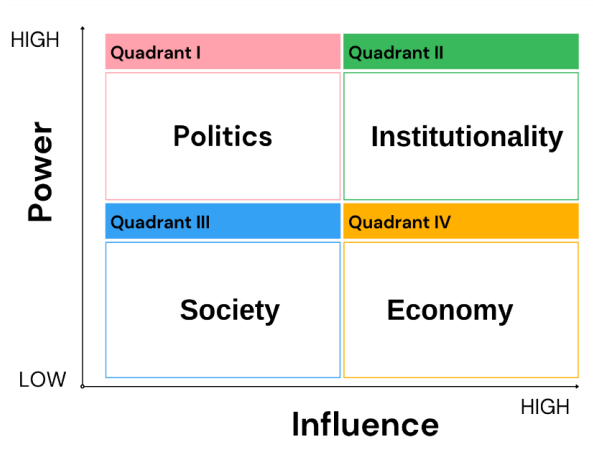


Figure 2. Actor positioning map.
Source: prepared by the authors.

- ✓ **Institutional:** develop actions that promote business development, joint actions between the various levels of government.
- ✓ **Social:** social actors, institutions, and leaders with influence in decision-making. Active participation of individuals in achieving local development was emphasized.
- ✓ **Political:** conjunction of the three levels of power (municipal, state, and federal). It has a significant role in building new businesses. Emphasis was placed on cooperation between institutions.
- ✓ **Economic:** generation of public policies and work at the sectoral level.

The identification of these four pillars reflects the importance of collaboration among the different local actors in the development and management of businesses in Cadereyta de Montes. All these actors must work together in effective synergy to ensure successful business and local development. These propositions are not far from the results of Lima Vargas et al. (2024), where the role of businesses and young people was examined. That is, for this research, the preponderant role that young people have in achieving local development is due to the communication channels of this social group with the business sector. Because, in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, 40% (Data México, 2023) of the population is young, between 19 to 40 years old, which represents a dominant and determining labor force in terms of cooperation between the municipality, businesses, and society.

- ✓ **Quadrant 1:** significant impact of stakeholders on generating business development. However, they have a low level of decision-making power.
- ✓ **Quadrant 2:** stakeholders with significant decision-making power and territorial planning. They have a large budget. However, their impact on business development management may be low.
- ✓ **Quadrant 3:** these are institutions with decision-making capacity and maneuverability in generating new businesses and connecting with the power system.
- ✓ **Quadrant 4:** stakeholders with direct influence and responsible for the sustainability model to achieve local development have a low level of decision-making power at the political level.

Working with local actors in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes revealed that they consider a complex, dynamic, and sustainable local development approach necessary. The territory should include planning processes at different levels: social, territorial, and organizational of businesses, considering their impact in terms of sustainable and social development. This implies an integrative vision of the problems that arise when development is not planned, particularly in sustainability that does not arise from the social needs of a territory, something exposed and proposed with the information from Barahona et al. (2023). The actors who participated in the study view this type of analysis favourably, in which each has a role and participation at the social level, implying assuming certain responsibilities for the benefit of the need to maintain or propose a sustainability strategy aimed at environmental conservation.

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats)

The municipality of Cadereyta de Montes faces significant territorial challenges, particularly in relation to business and economic development. One of the main challenges is involving local communities and strengthening them from within to increase the number of businesses and achieve sustainable economic development (Table 2). This is particularly relevant due to the municipality's proximity to the city of Querétaro, making it a strategic buffer zone for the expansion of business clusters and employment growth. According to Cruz González & Ortiz Liñán (2024), this geographic aspect has favored the strengthening and growth of municipalities such as Ezequiel Montes and the one in the study area. Furthermore, the municipality has significant cultural, political, economic, and environmental resources that would allow for sustainable business development.

However, the study area lacks a government framework that aims for local development; this is related to the disconnection from the knowledge and needs of communities. Participants recognized the opportunities available to the region; however, strategies and links with the government sector are lacking to take advantage of the territory's strengths. Morales-Lormendez, Navarro Garza, and Flores Sánchez (2021) emphasize the importance of a local development model based on participatory processes and government strategies that aim to integrate young professionals. This postulate is present in the research.

Table 2.
Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats (SWOT)

Category	Factors
Strengths	Gastronomy, Local industry, Security, Social intervention projects, Universities, Large number of SMEs, hospital, Indigenous communities, Young productive workforce, Entrepreneurship, Local government support for businesses, Economic incentives for business creation, Industrial parks
Opportunities	Potential Rural tourism, Cultural heritage, Greater economic development, Increase in job offers, Tax incentives, Infrastructure projects, Public-private partnerships
Weaknesses	Informal business sector, Unstable WiFi networks, No sewage system, Inadequate solid waste management, High bureaucracy, Low citizen participation, No local development policy, Lack of incentives for technological improvements, No entrepreneurship promotion funds, No training program for business skills, Low quality of health services
Threats	Pollution from mining, Political polarization, Unemployment, Inequalities, Poverty, Lack of drinking water, Crime, Lack of public presence in local decision-making, Poor condition of road infrastructure, Lack of regulation on the over-extraction of natural resources, Lack of regulation for polluting companies, Lack of sustainability strategy, Inadequate working conditions, No structured public agenda, No ecological planning, No technology update in the business sector

Source: Own elaboration.

Note: This SWOT was constructed through the participation of the people involved in the research.

The analysis of the call for dialogue with local stakeholders in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes—which was conducted in March 2023—revealed strengths and opportunities that can be leveraged to achieve inclusive and strategic local development. One of the main assets of the municipality and its surrounding area, according to Concepción Valverde (2024), is its landscape resource within the semi-arid ecosystem, which offers the opportunity to develop sustainable tourism that capitalizes on the landscape and local gastronomy—a factor presents in this research. Additionally, the local industry is diversified and can generate employment for the young population; it is important to note that for this research, this sector of society is a key factor in achieving local development.

For dos Passos et al. (2023), the municipality offered an opportunity to create a local development model within the research. It is necessary to work locally on infrastructure improvements, basic sanitation, community environmental management, and links with local government actions. Likewise, it is necessary to develop public policies and agendas that integrate citizens and various economic sectors to plan development from diverse perspectives aimed at achieving business growth and environmental stewardship.

On the other hand, the municipality has significant opportunities, such as a young and skilled workforce, thanks to the presence of educational institutions and the support of local and state governments. Likewise, there are incentives to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), according to Delgado Gualmatan et al. (2021). Local SMEs face the challenge of competitiveness strategies; from this perspective, this sector represents a niche for social and economic growth in Cadereyta de Montes.

Therefore, the municipality has a series of assets and opportunities that can be leveraged to achieve inclusive and sustainable local development, but it also faces challenges that must be addressed with strategic and collective solutions. This has a theoretical explanation from the perspective of Velásquez Carrascal et al. (2021), such as promoting the primary sector and generating partnership strategies, along with clear public policy and sustainable ecological planning. These factors can be key to the success of local development.

Strengths: with the identified strengths—and nuanced by Ibáñez (2020)—it is important to build a series of sustainability strategies that consider the priorities demanded by the population. The model should focus on the responsible use of natural, human, economic, and social resources, achieving sustainability and enabling social inclusion, collective work, and intersectoral management. With this perspective in mind, teamwork between local government, academia, communities, and the business sector will be of great importance. The implementation of sustainable local development would not only lead the municipality to local development, but also to the empowerment, growth, and consolidation of local stakeholders and an improvement in the municipality's image, both internally and externally. This should be more a collective effort of stakeholders than a political strategy.

Opportunities: From the perspective of local stakeholders, the development of the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes is facilitated by the opportunities that the municipality has within the state. Therefore, there are various opportunities to understand sustainable local development—a proposal also made by Martí (2023), considering that the municipality must resolve environmental, social, political, and management issues of new spaces for investment.

The first opportunity is to promote, through public policies, the young population to start new businesses that respond to the needs of the territory. This can also contribute to the support of vulnerable groups and stimulate the local economy. The second opportunity is to support small family businesses, ensuring training and tools for innovation. Promoting small businesses would dynamize the municipality's economy, diversify it, and motivate the creation of new enterprises. The third opportunity is to attract new investors from other parts of the federation and the state, articulating the business to the subsanation of the difficulties existing in the municipality. The fourth opportunity involves enhancing industrial parks, improving road infrastructure, and connecting the municipality with access roads so that farmers can market their products, increasing competitiveness. The fifth and final opportunity is to begin building alliances between the private and public sectors as a strategy to boost and leverage local development within a framework of collective intersectoral work.

Weaknesses: according to Hollebeek et al. (2022) and the research findings, local stakeholders—a factor at play causing damage to the investment level—are insecurity. Investment needs to be protected; however, factors causing insecurity, such as organized crime, result in a weakness that prevents investment. Additionally, investment could change the course of the municipality's needs because it would focus on improving the public and basic services sector, mitigating the informal economy, and positioning the municipality as an ideal place for investment.

However, the problem of insecurity does not stand alone; its root lies in poverty and social inequalities. This suggests the need for greater investment in support, assistance, and educational programs, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship—something explicitly noted in the research by Álvarez & Nagao Menezes (2023) and this investigation—because it could integrate the disadvantaged population and change a factor that alters investment possibilities.

On the other hand, it is necessary to analyze the stance of government authorities, given that one of the weaknesses denounced by stakeholders is the bureaucratic procedures for entrepreneurship. It should be clarified that business development can be limited not only by bureaucracy but also by the lack of

infrastructure in terms of water, energy, internet, and access roads, which makes it difficult to achieve standards of business development.

Threats: in response to the threats affecting local development and sustainability in Cadereyta de Montes, Querétaro (Mexico), it is necessary to consider several factors. The territory consists of local stakeholders who recognize various elements that hinder local business development, such as: lack of planning in public agendas and policies aligned with the sustainable development of the territories, deficient infrastructure to meet investment demand and human capital management, lack of improvements in road infrastructure, drinking water, and sewage, solid waste problems, political polarization, and population displacement to other cities in search of opportunities.

Internal Environment: intersectoral collaboration is not articulated as a public policy, government agenda, or territorial strategy, which is a critical point affecting business development and local growth. This is compounded by individual interests rather than community interests, the presence of a vulnerable indigenous population, and environmental issues that are not legally and politically regulated, affecting the utilization of natural resources without clear regulation.

It is necessary to promote dialogue processes between business, political, academic, and social sectors to address threats and establish a broad public agenda that serves to structure sustainable planning that addresses intersectoral and community interests. This would allow the emergence of a sustainable business model with environmental responsibility and local development within the framework of planning based on territorial needs. According to Burgos-Ayala et al. (2020) and Dethiou & Belini (2021), in line with current findings, it is necessary to ensure the participation of all local actors, including Indigenous and vulnerable populations, and to comprehensively address environmental issues to guarantee the sustainable development of the territory and the emergence of new businesses.

External Environment: to consolidate a sustainability model that contributes to local development, it is important to consider the external context. There are multiple political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and legal factors that help understand external pressures and aid in consolidating sustainable local development. The role of stakeholders constituted a way of understanding the external scenario with a sustainability focus. In the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes, Querétaro (Mexico), both positive and negative factors in the external scenario influence local development.

The results were positive, as were the willingness, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness of the stakeholders involved. The importance of improving government strategies and having a solid sustainability approach was emphasized. However, participants expressed the need to pursue a sustainability approach that engages the economic and environmental sectors in dialogue. This would serve as a local development strategy. It would also support sustainability, competitiveness, innovation, and the strengthening of business management.

However, negative factors also accounted for an external environment that can negatively affect the development of business management and local development. One of the most important problems within these results—and for Wittwer (2023)—is the lack of political will to carry out regulatory processes and policies that address environmental impacts and foster the growth of small businesses and the creation of formal jobs. Additionally, there is a need to increase fiscal benefits for businesses and entrepreneurs and to find a balance between the consumption and conservation of natural resources. Lastly, the need to address local infrastructural difficulties to promote sustainable and efficient development in the municipality was highlighted.

Conclusions

The research identified a series of needs and challenges that must be addressed to achieve and promote sustainable local development in the municipality of Cadereyta de Montes. It concludes that the objective can be achieved, but a baseline remains to be established to fully understand the behavior of the phenomenon under study. This marks a turning point and begins to document the need for local stakeholders to understand local development as a sustainability strategy. These observations are closely aligned with economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, underscoring the need to develop intervention actions in the area under study.

The research approach was fruitful because the participants revealed the needs of their economic sector. These contributions were neither positive nor negative, but rather realities and reflections based on economic initiatives from the perspective of the object of study. Likewise, the stakeholders emphasized the importance of economic strengthening and believed local development is an opportunity. This revealed the importance of stakeholder and citizen participation in building the local development model, and in influencing businesses, the environment, and government.

From a local perspective, four axes emerge: political, social, institutional, and economic. These axes give rise to the stakeholder map and frame a strategic mechanism within local development management. A proposal also emerges that assigns each element responsibility for a specific part of local development; this view complicates the concept and the way to integrate it.

This stakeholder map demonstrates the complexity of local development; that is, it is not exclusive to one sector, but rather multisectoral and intergovernmental. Internal and external analyses demonstrate that growth and development require social synergy, community cohesion, political and government engagement with disconnected communities, and the creation of public policies from the grassroots, not from the bureaucracy. Therefore, it is necessary to work toward joint solutions to address the social, environmental, economic, and political issues affecting a given territory, taking into account the perspectives of the community, economic sectors, society, academia, and civil and social organizations, among others, with the aim of generating positive impacts that benefit the population.

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