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# UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES

TOURISM, CULTURALISM, AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES:

THE CASE OF US TOURISM TO MEXICO

by  
Anna Elefthería Papanicolaou

Thesis for the degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

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# UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## ABSTRACT

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## TOURISM, CULTURALISM, AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES: THE CASE OF US TOURISM TO MEXICO

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This thesis focuses on cultural narratives and representations of Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican culture prevalent in US travel books, tourist discourse, and Mexican tourist scapes. It examines US tourism to Mexico through the lens of the imaginative geographies it is informed by and serves to mobilize. After exploring the context onto which contemporary tourism and US tourism discourse to Mexico unfolds, this thesis traces the evolution of contemporary ideas of Mexico and Mexican culture found in popular tourist narratives by looking at US travel books from the nineteenth century to the contemporary period. It then draws from empirical research data gathered through multisited ethnographic fieldwork conducted at three of Mexico's most popular tourist destinations: San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. Here, I examine the way in which particular tourist spaces – ranging from hotels, tours, expeditions, cultural courses and attractions – interweave elements of local culture into their surrounding, on-site exhibitions, and/or events programming. In addition to examining these spaces, I also consider the voices of individuals from the US who, at the time of my fieldwork, were visiting or living in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, or Cancun/Mayan Riviera. By triangulating the discursive tropes and conceptual frameworks mobilized by tourist books, tourist discourse, and tourist scapes, this thesis illustrates how culturalist readings and imaginative geographies premised on nationalist modes of understanding continue to be mobilized in the context of much of the discourse through which tourism operates.

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## *Chapter*

# ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

Human mobility has become one of the defining issues of our century. As the number of individuals who cross international borders for social, political, economic and/or environmental reasons reaches unprecedented levels, the socio-cultural topographies of today's nation-states are rapidly changing. Far from faltering in the face of an increasingly globalized world, the idea of the nation as a container for discrete social groups and 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1990) enclosing unique social and cultural configurations continues to inform contemporary political discourse and much of our understanding of the way the world is partitioned. As Gupta and Ferguson note, the tendency to conceive of countries as containers for distinct cultures and societies is so prevalent that, within much of popular discourse, 'the terms 'society' and 'culture' are routinely simply appended to the names of nation-states' (1992: 6).

During the apogee of nation building, the idea that different countries enclose well-defined sociocultural groups reached its zenith, as the forceful exclusion and/or expulsion of minority groups became a pervasive mechanism used to maintain the integrity of nation-states' narratives of purity (Wimmer and Glick-Shiller 2002). By labeling minority groups as Other – as 'them' – their exclusion, by whatever means necessary, was given justification as a means to safeguard the cohesion of 'our' nation. In his book *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006), Appadurai maintains that nationalist dogma and ideas of exceptionalism have historically been conducive to violence against minority groups, be it physical (e.g. in the form of deportation, extradition, land appropriation and even genocide) and/or symbolic (e.g. via ethnic profiling, institutionalized discrimination, intolerance, social prejudice). Today, far from seeing these sentiments vanquish in the face of globalization, we witness an upsurge in their prevalence. Violence, Appadurai argues, 'is not simply the product of antagonistic identities but ... one of the ways in

which the illusion of fixed identities is produced, partly to allay the uncertainties about identity that global flows invariably produce' (Appadurai 2006: 7). While ideas of nations as ethnically homogenous 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) clash with the realities of our socioculturally plural worlds – creating endless disjunctions and frictions – scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds have risen to challenge their seemingly unfading reproduction.

As a result of its scale and wide-ranging ramifications, one of the principal issues capturing scholars' attention has been Mexican immigration to the United States. Mounting tension, social unrest, and the prevalence of a discourse centered on representing Mexicans as extraneous to the US, as 'aliens' (see: Tancredo 2006), have bolstered the passing of policies leading to the arrest, deportation, and / or socio-political exclusion of Mexican immigrants in the US, the militarization of the US/Mexican border, and the general denigration of Mexican immigrants in US popular media. Proponents of these measures commonly claim that Mexicans appropriate US jobs and fail to contribute to the US national economy; indeed, they insist that Mexicans' very presence threatens the core of the US' identity, vitally endangering its socio-cultural homogeneity and ultimately its cohesion as an 'imagined community.' Calling upon an ideology of human rights and global responsibility however, scholars, commentators, writers, and journalists, have raised their voices to challenge anti immigrant (and often anti-Mexican) discourse as fundamentally nationalistic, historically naïve, and often mired by xenophobia (see: Akers Chacon 2006; Chomsky 2007, Chavez 2001). The parameter of the country's social fabric, they maintain, includes 'them.' Indeed 'they' are – and have always been – an integral part of 'us.'

It is not only within immigration discourse, however, that nation-based and culturally reductionist ideologies of Mexico and Mexicans are mobilized. Various seemingly banal media contribute to their unyielding re/production, through discourses that, until recently, have eluded the attention of social scientists (cf. Billig 1995). From literature, to television, magazines, documentaries, and movies, the mobilization of culture and its fusion with specific national territories has contributed to the ideological positioning of Mexicans as Other; to their representation as belonging not here (in the US) but there, in Mexico – in the country bearing their name. 'Cultural difference,' as Cordeiro writes, is interpreted and rendered explicable through diverse forms of media (2010).

On the whole, Gupta and Ferguson argue, there is room for

a great deal more anthropological involvement, both theoretical and practical, with the politics of the U.S./Mexico border, with the political and organizing rights of immigrant workers, and with the appropriation of anthropological concepts of 'culture' and 'difference' into the repressive ideological apparatus of immigration law and the popular perceptions of 'foreigners' and 'aliens' (1992: 17).

Echoing this line of argument, Kaplan notes that today's globalizing world requires the political theorization of the all-too-prevalent 'tension between universal and the particular, similarity and difference, home and away' (Kaplan 1996: 169).

### 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis deals precisely with the above ideas, i.e. with the adoption of the 'anthropological concept of culture' (in the context of notions of similarity and of difference) and the maintenance of representations of Otherness as geographically bound. It deals with these ideas, however, not in the context of immigration discourse, but in relation to a comparable and largely under-theorized phenomenon equally reliant on ideas of cultural Otherness: tourism. Until recently, tourism has been largely excluded as a worthy object of socio-cultural analysis (relegated outside the confines of socio scientific research). Indeed, there has been a long history of overlooking travel accounts based on the popular conception of tourism – particularly mass tourism – as, 'a trivial subject for academic investigation and a frivolous inauthentic activity characteristic of the pseudo-events of modern capitalist society' (Graburn 1983: 15; Boorstin 1961). But tourism, as this thesis aims to illustrate and the thriving body of research in tourism studies attests, is by no means socio-culturally 'trivial' (i.a. Berger and 2010; Cordeiro 2010a, 2011; Jawroski and Thurlow 2011; Salazar 2010). On the contrary, much like migration, the discourses that frame tourism, the representations via which it operates, and the ideologies that sustain it are built on a set of social practices and understandings that are intertwined with social, political and economic processes that, as such, require critical theorization (Williams and Hall 2002).

This thesis focuses on cultural narratives and representations of Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican culture in US travel books, tourist discourse, and Mexican tourist scapes. By drawing from fieldwork data gathered at three important sites of tourism to Mexico – San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Cancun / Mayan

Riviera – I examine cultural imaginaries and ‘imaginative geographies’ (Said 1978) of Mexico in tourism narratives and imaginaries. The research questions I look to address in this thesis are the following: how is Mexico represented in US tourism and local tourist spaces? How are cultural imaginaries intertextually and intersubjectively mobilized by different social actors and tourist spaces? To what extent do the above adopt culturalist and nationalist frameworks for depicting and understanding contemporary Mexico as an object of touristic consumption?

By examining these questions, my aim is to illustrate the way in which US travel discourse and Mexican tourist scapes are both framed by, and reproduce ideas of Mexico and the US as demarcating distinct sovereign citizenries characterized by ethnically and socioculturally homogenous populations. While my analysis here rests on tourism discourse, it is important to bear in mind that, as I have discussed in Papanicolaou (2009), much of the discourse through which tourism operates is interlaid with the same naturalized and ideologically infused understandings of Mexicans that can be found within immigration discourse. Indeed, commonly taken for granted ideas and conceptual frameworks can be found within between both types of discourse, emphasizing the importance of investigating their basis and banal (re)production. As international leisure travel grows at rates historically unprecedented, exponentially increasing the spaces of contact between people of dissimilar backgrounds and their respective representations of one another’s ‘culture,’ tourism and the discourses through which it operates needs to be urgently examined. In a rapidly ‘globalizing’ world where sociocultural heterogeneity is rising concomitantly with discourses employing ‘difference’ as grounds for socio-political exclusion (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 2006), de-naturalizing the modern notion of territorially circumscribed ‘differences,’ transcending nationalist dogma and problematizing the propagation of monolithic depictions of culture, is a task of increasing importance. As Gupta and Ferguson ask, ‘with meaning making understood as a practice, how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?’ (1992: 11).

## 1.2 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into six chapters, each outlining a key component to my investigation of contemporary US tourism discourse and cultural imaginative geographies of Mexico. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical and methodological structure framing my thesis as a whole. It touches upon the work of theorists from multiple disciplinary backgrounds and critical practices, cutting across numerous fields of inquiry. Here, my discussion begins by considering early and contemporary

tourism theory, drawing from Dean MacCannell's and John Urry's work, particularly that related to ideas of tourism as a search for authenticity and of touristic narratives and understandings as structured by a socially constructed 'tourist gaze'. It also discusses several concepts that have transcended disciplinary boundaries. Amongst them, the idea of Otherness in the context of tourism and authenticity; Said's concept of 'orientalism' and his idea of 'imaginative geographies'; Dirlik, Fassin and Fassin's notion of 'culturalism' (1987; 1995; 2001); and Michel Foucault's work on 'discourse,' particularly in relation to the concept of hegemony and the relation between knowledge and power (i.a. 1980). It then discusses Kaplan's *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996) and the work of anthropologists including Gupta and Ferguson (1992) and Appadurai (2006), specifically in the context of a critique of the spatialization of difference and the espousal of reductionist frames of understanding.

Chapter Three introduces the case of US tourism to Mexico, beginning with a brief analysis of its history and of the discourses through which Mexico has historically been represented in travel books and related texts. Here, I discuss the ways in which culturalist and nationalist ideologies are reflected in these texts, defining the former as one that reduces Other cultures to a set of naturalized and eternalized characteristics that are rendered comprehensible only by reference to themselves (Fassin 1995; Fassin 2001) and the latter as an ideology whereby different countries are portrayed as demarcating distinct sovereign citizenries characterized by ethnic/cultural homogeneity (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Chapter Four examines a series of popular travelogues and guidebooks – from the nineteenth to the late twentieth century – before turning to an analysis of contemporary travel books to, first, Mexico and, then, to the three specific sites where I conducted my fieldwork – San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. My focus here is on how travel books describe present-day Mexico and the country's social and cultural topographies in the context of both Mexico, in general, and the particular sites where I conducted my fieldwork, in particular. To analyze these texts, I draw from close textual reading and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Whetherell et al 2001; Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1999), examining a series of thematic tropes and conceptual frameworks emergent through an analysis of a number of popular texts in an attempt to illustrate some of the key narratives through which travel books have represented and continue to represent Mexico and its culture(s) as an object of touristic consumption and allure.

Chapter Five hones in on representations of culture found in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. It examines the way in which ideas of Mexican and/or local culture feature in popular tourist attractions and tourist spaces. By focusing on the local re/production, staging, and/or performance of culture, the aim of this chapter is to illustrate how methodologically nationalistic narratives of geographically delineated 'difference' extend beyond the texts explored in the previous chapter. This chapter begins by looking at the way in which Mexico's tourism officials represent each destination before considering how popular accommodation venues – ranging from small B&B's to all-inclusive resorts – integrate elements of culture into their surroundings and on-site cultural spaces. It then examines the case of two walking tours, three language schools, and two touristic centers, all of which feature culture as their primary object of attraction.

Chapter Six draws from fieldwork data gathered amongst US tourists visiting San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera and amongst US expats who once too were tourists. After discussing individuals' 'pretour understandings,' i.e. their expectations and projected landscapes of what Mexico would be like prior to arriving, I explore the resources they used to inform them. Following this discussion, I look at people's impressions and understandings of culture after having spent time in Mexico, illustrating the way in which the tourism imaginaries adopted by travel books and tourist spaces interact with individuals' 'pretour narratives' (Bruner 2005: 22) and how their touristic experiences and understandings influence the imaginative geographies which they then append to Mexico.

My fieldwork research findings are explored in Chapters Four, Five, and Six and triangulated accordingly. In other words, I consider the representations contained within contemporary travel books (Chapter Four), against those found in popular tourist spaces (Chapter Five) and those adopted by individuals before and during their journeys to Mexico from the US (in Chapter Six) in an attempt to illustrate some of the main conceptual elements and thematic tropes that go into the construction of Mexico as an object of the tourist gaze. In Chapter Seven, I provide a series of conclusions to my triangulation of the above, discussing the relevance of my theoretical approach to my research questions and providing a number of suggestions for future research.

*Chapter*

# TWO

## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks informing my research. Because its nature is fundamentally interdisciplinary, I consider the work of scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and schools of thought. The chapter is divided into two parts, each divided into multiple sections. The first part provides an overview of the theoretical perspectives that my research is informed by, while the second part discusses the methodological approach that guided my collection of empirical data and its analysis.

The first section of Part One, section 2.1.1, focuses on nationalism and imaginative geographies. It opens by discussing Anderson's concept of nations as 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983) – a concept that has become highly influential to the work of scholars who, emphasizing the significance of national imaginaries as objects worthy of critical theorization, have looked to assess their role within various domains of sociopolitical thought. This section then considers the idea of nations as 'imagined communities' against the backdrop of Said's concept of orientalism (1978) and of 'imaginative geographies' (i.a. 1994) as a way to explore the geographical spatialization of Otherness and the ensuing naturalization of its social construction in sociopolitical discourse. The second section of this chapter, section 2.1.2, interweaves the above ideas with the work of early tourism scholars like MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1990) whose theories played a key role in positioning tourism discourse as a contested space through which particular imaginaries and taken for granted understandings are endlessly produced and reproduced. Section 2.1.3 then focuses on the idea of culture within tourism discourse, examining its relation to the maintenance of imaginaries structured around representations of the

nation as delimiting specific configurations of culture. By looking at how the idea of culture became established within the conceptual grounds of tourism, I highlight its role within the generation and maintenance of imaginative geographies founded on ideas of Otherness as geographically bound and delimited. Here, I introduce the concept of 'culturalism' by discussing the work of Dirlik (1976), Fassin (1995), and Fassin (2001) as a means to explore the essentialization and reification of cultural difference within the realms of tourism discourse. The next section, section 2.1.4, examines tourism discourse's relation to the preservation of hegemonic ideologies fundamentally rooted in the maintenance of power. Finally, section 2.1.5 applies the theoretical arguments and perspectives discussed in the preceding sections to the case of US representations of Mexico as a way to emphasize their applicability to the analysis of the case of US tourism to Mexico and the discourses through which it is commonly framed.

Part Two of this chapter focuses on the methodological approach informing my selection of data and its analysis. First, it provides a general overview of my methodology for data gathering, before introducing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary tool I called upon to select, treat, and ultimately analyze my empirical data. The chapter begins with section 2.2.1 outlining the three elements that went on to comprise the empirical core of my research: US travel books and related texts on Mexico, tourist spaces located at each of my three fieldwork sites (San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera) and interviews with US tourists, expatriates, and local actors involved in the tourism industry. After presenting the rationale for my selection and interpretation of data in the first section, section 2.2.2 outlines the way in which I analyzed it. Here, I draw on CDA (as per Whetherell et al 2001; Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1999), as a method for the analysis of textual data and from the work of Jaworski and Thurlow, for the analysis of tourist spaces as semiotic landscapes constituted by 'the interplay between language, visual discourse, and the spatial practices and dimensions of culture' (2010: 1). The last section of this chapter, section 2.2.3, goes on to discuss a number of measures that were taken in the field to ensure critical reflexivity and the observation of ethnographic criteria for the collection of qualitative data. In addition, this final section also outlines a series of methodological caveats and limitations related to my methodological approach.

On the whole, the aim of this chapter is to provide a synthesized discussion of the main arguments and methodological perspectives through which to address the

issue of US tourism discourse's espousal of nationalism and culturalism within the imaginative geographies representing Mexico as an object of the tourist gaze.

## PART ONE

### 2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Discourse and ideology are two terms that run throughout not only this chapter but this thesis as a whole. While a discussion of discourse and its relation to tourism and to the maintenance of specific hegemonic ideologies represents the primary focus of section 2.1.4 below, it is essential to begin this chapter by defining what precisely I mean by the term discourse. I take discourse to be that which

defines and produces the objects of our knowledge... governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and resonated about...[and] influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall 1997: 44).

Following Foucault, I conceive of discourse as representing a 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1980: 79), i.e. a system of knowledge that, through diverse social practices, institutions and formulations, creates and recreates its object and subject, subsuming its construction within a set of taken for granted truths and ideologies. Like Fairclough, I see discourse as intertwined with power relations and institutions – as interconnected in social activity and quintessentially related to meaning and meaning making (2010: 3) and to the 'social construction of reality' (van Leeuwen 1993: 193). This reading of discourse is fundamentally tied it to the reproduction of ideologies, with ideologies understood as the 'social forms and processes within which and by means of which symbolic forms circulate in the social world' (Wodak 2001: 10). Nationalism, under this lens, can be read as an ideology that naturalizes the partitioning of world order into discrete nation states – as an ideology by which, through diverse mechanisms and social processes, 'the world of nations and 'our' place within it has come to be seen as inevitable and natural' (Bishop and Jaworski 2003: 247).

#### 2.1.1 NATIONALISM AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

The first strand of theory that informs my research draws from ideas of nationalism as an ideology that structures contemporary social realities and the discourses surrounding them. Highlighting the social construction of nationalism and the

ideological framework sustaining it, Gellner wrote of nationalism as a myth whereby polity and culture is appended to the nation in a seemingly unproblematic fashion (Gellner 1983: 55). From the mid eighteenth to the twentieth century, nation building became a useful tool for the assertion of nation-states' narratives as socially unified and geopolitically circumscribed entities, spreading throughout much of Europe and the Americas (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). According to Anderson, the spread of nationalism and its subsequent naturalization was rooted in the diffusion of mass media, particularly that related to 'print-capitalism' (1983). At the core, he wrote, nations are sustained by their widespread representation as 'imagined communities,'

imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign...imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion...imagined as limited because even the largest of them...has finite if elastic boundaries...imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson 1983: 15-16).

Anderson's idea of nations as 'imagined communities' quickly gained currency within the social sciences, contributing to the establishment of nationalism as a *bona fide* object of academic enquiry within multiple disciplinary fields. Examining the basis and subsequent mobilization of nationalist thought, Hobsbawm wrote of nationalism, i.e. of 'the principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (Hobsbawm 1990: 9), as a construction born out of modernity. As such, he argued, nationalism must be understood in relation to the rise of the modern nation-state as the dominant form of sociopolitical organization. Billig (1995) expanded Anderson's thesis of nations as 'imagined communities' to argue that the maintenance of national narratives of sociocultural cohesion are sustained, not only via public media like that of print, but also banally, through frequently disregarded sources of discourse like those found within educational and governmental institutions, sporting events, and national symbols.

The ideas of Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm (1990), and Billig (1995) played a central role in the positioning of nationalism as an object of social science research by revealing the social construction and origin of frequently taken

for granted ideas of nationhood, exposing their arbitrary nature, and problematizing many of the underlying assumptions sustaining them. Drawing from Gramsci's idea of hegemony as a form of control uncritically or 'spontaneously' accorded by 'the great masses of the population' to dominant social groups (1971: 12), a number of scholars argued that nationalism, by defining the boundaries between Us and Them, represents a type of discourse that is fundamentally premised on the maintenance of hegemonic relations of inequality (cf. Billing 1995: 175; Handler 1994: 28). According to Said, hegemony, as a form of 'cultural leadership' whereby 'certain cultural forms predominate over others' (1978: 7), represents 'an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West' (ibid).

Said developed the idea of imaginative geographies to structure his discussion of the West's discursive construction and spatialization of the Oriental Other (1978). 'Imaginative geographies', he wrote, refer to the conceptual construction of spatialized differences and the designation, 'in one's mind, of a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours,' which is 'theirs'" (Said 1978: 54). According to Said, the West's delineation of sociocultural borders along geographical lines (dividing the 'familiar' from the 'exotic') comprises an integral component of the discourse through which the Orient has been represented. These representations, he argued, have provided the impetus necessary for the propagation of the kind of imperialist thought through which the Oriental Other has been categorized, homogenized and ultimately 'managed' (1978). As such, they must be challenged because, ultimately, the struggle over geography 'is not only about soldiers and cannons but... about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings' (1994: 6). The division of space between Us and Them was argued by Reicher and Hopkins to be founded on individuals' sociopsychological propensity to differentiate (2001). Offering an analysis of nationalism from a socio-psychological perspective, they argued that nationalism and national identity is fundamentally reliant on the prevision of international difference. This is because, they maintained, determining who We are – defining Our 'national identity' – hinges on not only the characterization of Us but also of Them (see: Reicher and Hopkins 2000). To define collective forms of national belonging, stereotypes are commonly mobilized; stereotypes applied not only to imaginative geographies of foreign settings, but also to one's very own 'imagined community.' Echoing this argument, Wimmer and Glick Schiller noted that,

a central part of the nation-state project was to define all those populations not thought to represent the 'national culture' as racially

and culturally different, producing an alterity that contributed to efforts to build unity and identity (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 306).

In this way, by relying on stereotypes for the construction of a national Us; by setting up of 'a symbolic frontier' between what 'belongs' and what does not, between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' the spatial delimiting of Otherness becomes recast as rooted in geography (Hall 1997: 258) and, on that account, this thesis proposes that it be challenged.

### 2.1.2 EARLY TOURISM THEORY

The re-evaluation of the ideologies sustaining nationalism has prompted many theorists to examine the way in which space and culture are discursively compounded and exclusionary imaginaries unproblematically asserted. Various types of discourse have been examined in relation to their tacit espousal of nationalist ideologies and of imaginative geographies founded on the territorialization of Otherness. One type of discourse that remains quintessentially tied to Said's imaginative geographies and to the notion that 'there is an 'us' and a 'them', each quite settled, clear, unassailably self evident' (Said 1994: xxviii) is that of tourism.

Scholars from within different disciplinary backgrounds have set out to explore the relationship between not only leisure travel and its colonial vestiges, but between tourism (or leisure travel)<sup>1</sup> and the maintenance of nationalist ideologies (MacCannell 1976; Horne 1984; Urry 1990; Kaplan 1996). Much like the division of society and culture along territorial lines has characterized nationalism and the ideologies sustaining it, these ideas can be argued to also have informed much of the discourse through which tourism operates. In *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996), Kaplan examined the conceptual link between tourism, nationhood, and imaginaries of Otherness. Echoing Hobsbawm, she posited that tourism can be conceptualized as an 'agent of modernity' by reifying notions of geographically circumscribed cultures that need to be visited in their own location to be truly 'experienced' (1996: 59). By conjuring up a collective Them, normalizing distant territories as Other, and territorially spatializing difference, tourism discourse becomes established and particular representations of Otherness are transposed onto specific geographical terrains. According to Kaplan, a particular social and economic order is, in this way, legitimated – one using the language of 'difference' and 'similarity' as a means to reaffirm specific hegemonic relations (1996: 48).

As Salazar and Cordeiro observed, tourism is fundamentally tied to the prevision of imaginaries premised on cultural difference. It is through the territorialization and ensuing homogenization of culture and society that tourist imaginaries are (re)created, transforming distant places into objects of touristic consumption (Salazar 2010:6, 2011, Cordeiro 2010a, 2010b). The relation between tourism discourse and imaginative geographies based on inter-national difference, has today become so normalized that, to again use the words of Gupta and Ferguson,

the terms 'society' and 'culture' are routinely appended to the names of nation-states unproblematically, as when a tourist visits India to understand 'Indian culture' and 'Indian society' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-7).

To better understand the role of tourism discourse within the ideological formulation and transmission of ideas like the above, it is helpful to discuss of a number of important concepts and ideas emergent from early tourism theory.

It is widely recognized that, for much of the early twentieth century, tourism was considered 'trivial' and considered an unworthy pursuit for socio-scientific analysis (Graburn 1983:15). During the late 1970s and early 1980s however, scholars began to challenge this notion. Offering one of the first in-depth studies of the sociological roots and ramifications of tourism, MacCannell argued that tourism plays an instrumental role in the affirmation of modernity and the establishment of a world-order characterized by clearly demarcated socio-political boundaries (1976). In much the same way that nationalism scholars linked nationalism to modernity, MacCannell argued that tourism contributes to the organization of modern structures of geopolitical relations through its involvement in the maintenance of the idea of nations as embodiments of homogenous cultures and societies (*ibid*).

For MacCannell, tourism also represented a quest for authenticity; a search for a type of realism that modernity, and the increasing commercialization of (western) tourists' everyday lives, had dislodged. Tourism, he suggested, must be understood as a means through which tourists can fulfill their need for cultural and social authenticity; as a way through which to satisfy their desire to transcend feelings of alienation from their own increasingly commodified society (1976). Along this vein, tourist ephemera like souvenirs, travel books, and related media, present an image of the visited location (an image that underlies the act of tourism itself) that is fundamentally rooted in particular imaginaries and narratives that commonly draw

from ideas of authenticity (MacCannell 1976). Horne picked up this point by suggesting that tourism is akin to a type of modern pilgrimage; that it represents a 'search' for an authenticity that can only be found through romanticizing the lives of Others and through consuming pre-formed images and stages of 'their' culture. Museums, guidebooks and postcards, he wrote, create and maintain particular cultural stereotypes of authenticity, helping to validate and perpetuate 'the myth of shared culture' – a national culture, an imagined community of Them and Us (1984). Horne went on to argue that, through their espousal of national stereotypes, the discourses through which tourism operates are fundamentally involved in the reproduction of nationalist ideologies. Expanding this idea further, he wrote that

[w]hether recognizing it or not, as tourist-pilgrims we pay our respects to nationality; most obviously in tourism's most stereotyped cultural forms – the souvenir, the national dish, the national drink, the picturesque quarter, the quaint folk ceremony, the phrase book, the national dress (Horne 1984: 166).

MacCannell and Horne's ideas were further developed by Urry who introduced the concept of the 'tourist gaze' – a concept that, as I will discuss below, went on to play a key role in tourism theory and research. Much like MacCannell and Horne, Urry emphasized the need to place tourism under the lens of critical theory, noting that tourism 'is significant in its ability to reveal aspects of normal practices which might otherwise remain opaque' (1990: 2). By calling upon Foucault's idea of the 'medical gaze' (see: 1976: 89), a gaze informed by an institutionalized discourse that provides the viewer with a particular method of systematically observing and categorizing his/her immediate surroundings, Urry developed the concept of the 'tourist gaze' to characterize how socially constructed and individually upheld schema and mediated 'ways of seeing' tacitly inform the way in which tourists approach their travel destination. In this way, he wrote, tourist gazes

organize the encounters of visitors with the 'other' providing some sense of competence, pleasure and structure to those experiences...it is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences and what is 'other' (Urry 1990: 145).

Maintained and circulated within public discourses like those of communications media, the tourist gaze, Urry wrote, serves to define and structure tourist landscapes and semiotically mark what is worth from what is not worth 'seeing.' Travel books, postcards, and souvenirs, therefore, can be argued to contribute to the structuring of the tourist gaze, shaping tourists' perception and subsequent understanding of their tourist destination, involved as they are in the perpetual construction and reconstruction of imaginaries of Other social spaces.

### 2.1.3 TOURISM AS A SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY AND OTHERNESS

As I discuss in Papanicolaou 2011, the marketing of culture, the portrayal of particular groups as 'authentic' embodiments of Otherness, and the idea that through tourism's commodification of culture, a culture's intrinsic authenticity can become endangered have become important objects of tourism research (see: Mathieson and Wall 1982; Cohen 1988; Harrison 1994; Tomaselli and Wang 2001). Throughout this thesis, I employ the concept of Otherness to discuss one of the principal objects of touristic interest: difference. As Frankland notes, tourism is commonly reliant on the search and consumption of difference, particularly in the context of cultural or ethnic tourism where the exotic and 'the seductive quality of the dissimilar reaches its apotheosis' (Frankland 2009: 95). Cultural or ethnic tourism is commonly hinged on its representation as an avenue through which to engage directly with difference, i.e. 'with those who may differ physically or whose social practices are significantly alternative to our own' (*ibid*). Here, 'the idea of difference is paramount, it being the basic Otherness of those people being visited that makes them a tourist attraction in the first place' (*ibid*).

As the next two chapters will illustrate, much of cultural tourism to Mexico has been and continues to be fashioned around this idea – the idea of tourism representing an avenue for tourists to come into contact with intractably dissimilar cultures and peoples. The idea of Otherness can commonly be found unfolding along that of authenticity. The marketing of Mexican indigenous cultures, for example, and the portrayal of indigenous peoples as authentic embodiments of cultural difference – of cultural Otherness – can be perceived within the much of the discourse through which cultural tourism to Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula is promoted. This is because, as Van den Berghe notes, '[the] mystique of living Indians as pure authentic descendants of an indigenous tradition appeals enormously to the tourist quest for authenticity' (1995: 576). This mystique is, in turn, commodified, i.e. treated as a valuable commodity to be bought and sold within the tourism market. Together with authenticity, issues of cultural commodification have captured

tourism researcher's attention, particularly in relation to cultural tourism where the primary object of interest lies not exclusively on the foreignness of a place but on the exclusive foreignness of its peoples (see: Papanicolaou 2011). 'Otherness and authenticity are united in a desire to ensure that culture and ethnicity are preserved,' Mowforth and Munt note, as it is 'the promotion of primitiveness within which authenticity becomes the principal commodity' (1998: 62).

Issues of authenticity and commodification in the context of cultural tourism are, of course, not unique to Mexico. Tourism literature on Portugal, for example, abounds with representations alluding to 'real' and authentic Portugal (Cordeiro 2011), as do tourist guides in Tanzania (Salazar 2011). On the whole, as White notes in her study of tourism promotion to Fiji, ideas of cultural authenticity – ideas quintessentially reliant on differentiation – are paramount to the promotion and consequent consumption of 'exotic' tourism destinations (2007).

#### 2.1.4 TOURISM, CULTURE, AND CULTURALISM

The allure of tourism as an avenue for experiencing foreign cultures, represented as territorially bound and largely homogenous in nature, has been normalized within much tourism discourse (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-7). The critical analysis of tourism and the narratives through which it operates has, in the last decade particularly, increasingly become a focus of academic research (Salazar 2011, 2010; Cordeiro 2010a, 2010b). Aside from examining tourism discourse as a bastion of nationalist thought however, scholars have also looked at the way in which shared understandings of cultural Otherness are propagated through seemingly banal sources of discourse (see: Billig 1995; Thurlow and Jaworski 2010; Sheller and Urry 2004; Dirlik 1987) As I have argued above, nationalism and the imaginative geographies underlying tourism commonly draw from the idea of nations as territorially bound and discrete imagined communities, as spaces characterized by a 'national culture' whose members, to some extent, share a sense of 'national identity' with their fellow compatriots. But, like the idea of 'national identity' and its application to entire populations, the mobilization of the idea of 'culture' to describe the social character of entire collectivities is marked by a series of conceptual assumptions and taken for granted understandings open to debate and contestation.

Indeed, much like the concept of national identity, that of a national culture can similarly be argued to be a 'contingent construction' reified as an unquestionable fact by being 'eternalized' (rendered immemorial and everlasting) and naturalized within, for example, public discourses like those of tourism (see: Turner et al 2011:

178; Thompson 1990; Reicher and Hopkins 2001). But, as the next chapter will illustrate through an analysis of the type of discourse subsumed within US travel books to Mexico, the idea of 'culture' was not always called upon to describe Mexico's population. Indeed, its origin can be traced back to the height of nation building when, in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, culture was taken up to denote the 'uniqueness' of Mexico's social backdrop and, equally, that of the US.

The espousal of culture as an expression of social character by popular tourism discourse denoted a marked shift in the conceptualization of nations as territorially fixed and largely homogeneous communities. It was, I argue, when the topographic partitioning of Otherness along the geopolitical frontiers of the nation was gaining momentum, that the idea of culture became established within Euro-American tourist discourse. Prior to turn of the twentieth century, it was ideas of 'civilization,' like those of 'ethnicity' and 'race' (see: Gomez 2007) that were generally mobilized in sociopolitical discourse as a marker of social disposition. Indeed, during this time period, the idea of culture 'denoted a thoroughly material process' (Eagleton 2000: 1) and was predominately linked to 'cultivation' – to labor, agriculture, and crops. With the advent of nation building however, the idea of culture was transposed 'to the affairs of the spirit' (*ibid*), as the notion that 'for the state to flourish, it must inculcate in its citizens the proper sorts of spiritual disposition' (Eagleton 2000: 6) gained traction. In this way, culture became a concept used to denote social life and a word through which the collective ethos and traditions of a peoples was encapsulated – not as many, but as one.

Upheld by the naturalization of nations as territorially bound sociocultural entities, tourism discourse (as the next chapter will illustrate) began to mobilize imaginative geographies, fundamentally shaping understandings of foreign topographies by conceiving of territory as coterminous with culture and society. This went on to come largely normalized so that, for example, the notion that 'to experience Mexican culture, one must visit Mexico,' became read as fundamentally unproblematic (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-7). The fusion of culture with society came under criticism however, when Dirlik introduced the concept of 'culturalism' to describe the methodological reduction of social and historical factors to abstract questions of culture. Tying culturalism to hegemony, Dirlik argued that by representing social structures and processes as originating within primeval cultures, culturalism has historically served to maintain unequal social and political power relations. According to Dirlik, it is essential to deconstruct and examine culture, not as a way of seeing the world, but as a way of 'making and changing it' (1976: 14). By

naturalizing and further eternalizing culture, i.e. by conceiving of it as somehow *siu generis* and lying beyond the realms of history and explication, culturalism serves to obscure hegemonic relations of power. Fassin further developed the concept of culturalism and observed that it is cultural distance and a 'thirst for exoticism' (1995: 452) that commonly determines shared or 'popular' touristic narratives and understandings. The problem with culturalism, Fassin wrote, is that it is fundamentally tautological, i.e. 'it provides an interpretation without an explanation: the French are x or y because they are French, and the French have always been like that' (1995: 455). Applied to the realm of tourism, which sees culture as a geographically delimited entity, culturalism celebrates specific cultural matrices, obfuscating the appreciation of heterogeneities, of transnational influences, and of interrelations, by relying upon essentialized and monolithic conceptualizations of difference that are fundamentally tied to hegemonic narratives and ideologies. Culturalism, in other words, obscures the fact that, to use the words of Said, 'all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic' (1994: xxiv).

Even while representing national spaces as cultural mosaics, as home to a 'patchwork' of cultures (see: Chapter Three), nationalist narratives often recognize a discrete amount of cultures as 'belonging' – as forming part of its imagined community. Following their territorialization, culturalism assumes that each of those cultures is bound by a specific social configuration. The problem with this line of thinking, it can be argued, is not only that a nation's cultures are defined, but that they are seen as definable. The representation of foreign settings as culturally Other and the idea of travel as a means of immersion within 'exotic' and quintessentially 'different' destinations has long been one of tourism's central features. As Frankland notes, tourism 'relies on difference, on the provision of the extraordinary' (2009: 95). Indeed,

[w]hichever or whatever combination of Otherness we may choose to partake in, the aura of authentic difference can always be found shimmering in the background....Even if we wrap ourselves up in the tourist bubble as a protection against the very fear of difference (cf. Boorstin 1964), we still consume that Otherness, albeit in easily packaged and manageable forms (ibid).

Many scholars have observed that the consumption of Otherness through tourism is largely premised on culturalistic depictions of foreign populations and

distant territories; tied to romanticized versions of Otherness that are quintessentially rooted in pre-determined imaginaries of spatialized difference (MacCannell 1976; Urry 1990, 2007; Cordeiro 2010a, 2010b).

As Fassin notes, tourism's interest in distant lands is 'first and foremost, a curiosity for its foreignness, that is, its difference' (Fassin 1995: 451). Culture, Abu-Lughod also argued, represents an 'essential tool for making others' (1991: 143) and, consequently, for enforcing 'separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy' (ibid: 137-138) between Us and Them. Echoing this notion and emphasizing the idea of culture as socially constructed and inherently entangled with the maintenance of hegemonic power relations, Gregory wrote that culture is not 'a cover term for supposedly more fundamental structures' (2004:8), but that it is 'co-produced with them: culture underwrites power even as power elaborates culture (2004: 8). Culture, Gregory concluded, is 'is not a mere mirror of the world' (ibid).

On the whole, I argue, the unreflective adoption of culturalism and of nationalist ideologies by tourism discourse is problematic, not only because it represents other cultures in ways that those represented may disagree with, but because it anchors people to a set configuration of behavior and fixes them geographically –regardless of their location. At the same time, by assigning specific 'cultures' to specific groups and perceiving their behavior according to pre-established sociocultural matrices while at the same time affixing them to specific countries, 'they' are perpetually represented as 'different' and as belonging not here, but there – in the country bearing their name.

#### 2.1.5 TOURISM, DISCOURSE, AND POWER

'Discourse/power/knowledge are an interconnected triad' (2008: 267), Carabine wrote. Discourse influences 'the way that people understand or think about an issue' and, consequently, how an issue is 'spoken of' (ibid: 268) and to understand it, 'we have to see it as intermeshed with power/knowledge, where knowledge both constitutes and is constituted through discourse as an effect of power' (ibid: 275). Tying knowledge and discourse to the assertion and maintenance of power, Bourdieu wrote that

[k]nowledge of the social world and more precisely the categories which make it possible, are the stakes par excellence of the political struggle, a struggle which is inseparably theoretical and political, over the power of preserving or transforming the social world by

preserving or transforming the categories of perception of that world (Bordieu and Thompson 1991: 236).

It is 'through...speech, texts, writing and practice,' Carabine argued, that discourse gains its strength (2008: 268), in this way 'cohering' to build up a picture or representation (ibid). By being tied to the definition and establishment of 'truth,' the outcomes of discourse are therefore necessarily productive (ibid). According to Horne and Kaplan, by mobilizing imaginative geographies founded on binary oppositions between Us and Them – Same and Other – tourism discourses uphold 'dominant' versions of reality and social order that are, at the core, involved in the maintenance of hegemonic relations (Horne 1984; Kaplan 1996).

Horne wrote that, as tourists, we are 'moving among tourist sights, we are moving among symbols that explain the world in ways that justify the authority of the few over the many' (1984: 1). Kaplan then added that, through tourism, 'the tourist confirms and legitimates the social reality of construction such as the 'first' and 'third' worlds, 'development' and 'underdevelopment' or 'metropolitan' and 'rural'" (1996: 58). The question of how the world is described becomes particularly important, Kaplan wrote, when the language of 'difference' and 'similarity' used – a type of language that 'is always coded [and] always a narrative of the power of representation' (1996: 48). The apparent 'given' of a world in the first place divided into 'ourselves' and 'others,' Gupta and Ferguson noted (1992: 16), must be politically and historically interrogated, especially as 'the enforced 'difference' of places becomes part and parcel of a global system of domination' (ibid: 13; Appadurai 1988).

This thesis is premised on these understandings by conceiving of the discourses through which tourism operates (the systems of meaning and representation that give basis to the very act of tourism itself) as fundamentally intertwined with the maintenance of specific imaginaries that, in turn, are tied to relations of power. As such, to use Salazar's words, an analysis of 'who represents what, whom and how' (Salazar 2011:167) comprises its main objective.

## 2.1.6 THE CASE OF MEXICO

The case of US tourism to Mexico presents a case of particular importance given the long history of social and cultural exchange between both countries and the fact that tourist flows from the US to Mexico occur concomitantly with anti-immigrant sentiments directed at Mexican immigrants living in the US. As I will illustrate in

Chapters Three and Four, Mexican tourism discourse and US travel books to Mexico frequently include representations of the country and its population that render an essentialized and nationally homogenous version of Mexico as distinguished by a unique and particular sociocultural character. Mexico, however, as I will go on to discuss in the next chapter, was not always represented in US travel discourse as home to the 'uniquely Mexican.' Indeed, the idea that ethnic groups with unique 'cultures' could be territorially mapped began to spread in US travel books circa the mid 1900s. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, the adoption of the concept of 'culture' as a *bona fide* object of the tourist gaze can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when US tourism to Mexico began to be promoted as a way to experience 'Mexican culture'. The spread and incorporation of the idea of 'Mexican culture' within US tourism discourse became instrumental to not only shaping collective imaginaries of the country, but to propelling the development of Mexico's tourism industry by anchoring its promotion to representations of the unique. As the next chapter will discuss, while the mid-nineteenth century to the contemporary period, some of the discursive register employed for describing Mexico and its social makeup changed. Many reductionist and fundamentally monolithic readings of Mexico's population remained unaffected by the socio-political transformations that both countries experienced from the onset of their independence until the beginning of the twenty-first century. Nationalist depictions of the Mexican Other have, since, remained an unchallenged feature of many US travel books on Mexico.

Nationalist ideologies have been employed by a set of discourses that are seldom considered in tandem with those of tourism, i.e. anti-immigration (especially anti-Mexican) discourses in the US (see: Papanicolaou 2009). This is particularly important in the US-Mexican context, where politicians, media pundits, political analysis, talk show hosts, academics and best-selling authors have, in the past, represented Mexicans as culturally Other to justify their socio-political exclusion in the US, their deportation, and the reinforcement and militarization of the US-Mexican border (Chavez 1998; Smith, 1991; Akers Chacon and Davis 2006; Chomsky 2007). In the last decade, undocumented immigrants (aka 'illegal aliens') in the US, most of them from Mexico, have been arrested and deported by the millions (see: Escalona 2011), at the same time as a rising number of laws have been passed to deter employers from hiring undocumented workers. Support for these measures has often been warranted by reference to Mexicans and to Mexican culture as fundamentally Other. From this position, Mexican illegal immigrants ought to be deported, it is argued, because they not only pose an economic threat (via 'their' appropriation of 'our' jobs and their failure to contribute to 'our' national economy)

but because 'they' threaten the very core of 'our' identity,' vitally endangering the cultural homogeneity of 'our' nation (see: Papanicolaou 2009).

Representations that territorially ground and essentialize US and Mexican culture, highlighting the inherent difference and incompatibility between the two countries have, in this way, served to provide the impetus necessary for the maintenance of anti-immigration rhetoric and the support of increasingly punitive measures being taken against individuals from Mexico who wish to legally reside, work, and / or become naturalized US citizens. A variety of recent publications have focused on the above, noting the prevalent employment of negative representations of Mexican culture in anti-immigrant discourses (see: Davis 2004; Chomsky 2007; Smith 2001).<sup>2</sup> To demonstrate this line of argument, one can turn to Huntington who argued that the 'persistent inflow' of Hispanic immigrants ('Mexicans and other Latinos') poses a grave threat to mainstream US culture. This, he contended, is because Hispanics' unassimilable sociocultural differences threaten to 'divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages' (2004:1). Hispanics (a category Huntington regularly interchanges with 'Mexicans'), he argued, regardless of how long they have lived in the US, sustain a 'Hispanic identity apart from the national identity of other Americans' (2004: 10) and 'remain committed to their own ethnic identity and culture,' one which is 'often contemptuous of American culture' (*ibid*). Huntington then expanded this line of argument by delineating what he saw as the main differences between the cultural values of 'Hispanics' (read: Mexicans) and 'Anglos' (*de facto* read as 'Americans'). There exist, he wrote, 'ferocious differences'

between U.S. and Mexican cultural values, differences in social and economic equality, the unpredictability of events, concepts of time epitomized in the *mañana* syndrome, the ability to achieve results quickly, and attitudes towards history (2004:11).

These arguments, by relying on fundamentally nationalist principles of homogeneity that equate nation to territory, culture, and society are inherently problematic. This is because, I argue, they are fundamentally culturalistic in that they bind social groups – in this case, Mexicans and also Americans – to abstract configurations of culture. The notion that Mexicans belong in Mexico, in Their culture and within Their society, must be challenged, I argue, because it precludes an appreciation of the transnational networks and circuits that are involved in the history and character of both Mexico and the US, while at the same time denying the

inherent heterogeneity within them – e.g. the very fact that there are over twelve million people of Mexican origin living in the US and more than one million Americans calling Mexico their home. Ideas like Huntington's, ideas that are quintessentially tied to the maintenance of rigid frontiers between Us and Them and to representations of nations as discrete cultural entities, can be found informing not only immigration discourse but also other more 'banal' types of discourses, like those of tourism, which are seldom considered as socio-politically relevant or equally open to debate and contestation. This thesis' main objective is to counter this assertion. In the following sections, I outline my methodological approach for gathering and analyzing the empirical data through which to support this argument in the context of US tourism to Mexico.

## PART TWO

### 2.2 METHODOLOGY

To best examine the way in which Mexico is discursively represented, and cultural imaginaries are mobilized by different spaces and social actors, I conducted multi-sited fieldwork at three of Mexico's most popular tourist destinations between the months of January and May of 2009: San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. The methodological approach I employed for obtaining my empirical data was tripartite. It drew from travel books, participant/observation at key tourist spaces, and semi-structured interviews with tourists, 'expats'<sup>3</sup> and local actors involved Mexico's tourism industry. By triangulating these three types of data, my aim was to assess how different modes of representation portray Mexico and its sociocultural backdrop as an object for touristic consumption. Drawing on the work of scholars from multiple disciplinary perspectives, the three sections below discuss my rationale for data gathering and analysis, beginning with an exposition of each of the three approaches outlined above.

#### 2.2.1 DATA GATHERING: TRAVEL BOOKS, TOURIST SPACES, AND INTERVIEWS

The first stage of my methodology for investigating US travel discourse on Mexico began by exploring a number of travel books to Mexico available in the US<sup>4</sup>. The rationale for this rested on the idea that – alongside other media, including magazines, TV shows, novels, films, documentaries, and internet resources – travel books play a central role in the construction and maintenances of specific imaginaries of Mexico in the US, helping to define its sociocultural topographies within a

predetermined set of features (i.a. Cordeiro 2010a, 2010b; Salazar 2010). As Cordeiro notes, travel books specialize in the manufacture of imaginaries through which distant spaces are transformed 'into powerfully magnetic tourist destinations'<sup>5</sup> (2010: 12b). My analysis of travel books, and the imaginaries and discourses found within them, proceeds from this perspective<sup>6</sup>.

To select which books to analyze, I conducted a comprehensive review of available travel literature on Mexico in US bookstores, libraries, and online retailers. The following list of texts was then compiled; a list that included: *Lonely Planet: Mexico* (2006), *Lonely Planet: Mexico* (2000), *Rough Guide: Mexico* (2004), *National Geographic Traveler: Mexico* (2000), *People's Guide to Mexico* (2006), *AA: Essential Mexico* (2005), *Frommer's: Mexico* (2009), *Fodor's: Mexico* (2009) and *When in Mexico do as the Mexicans Do* (2005). In addition to these travel books, which discuss travel to the whole of Mexico, I looked at a number of publications discussing tourism to the specific regions where I conducted my fieldwork. These texts were *On Mexican Time* (2000), *Mexican Days* (2006), *Guanajuato: Your Expat, Study Abroad, Vacation Survival Manual in The Land of Frogs* (2006), *Lonely Planet: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan* (2009), *Fodor's: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan Peninsula* (2009), and *Frommer's: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan* (2009). After reviewing the above texts, I turned to an analysis of a number of key tourist spaces at each of the sites where I conducted my fieldwork. My selection of these tourist spaces rested on them being intimately intertwined with discourse and tied to the operationalization, institutionalization, enactment, and representation of cultural imaginaries. As per Jaworski and Thurlow, I took tourist spaces to represent semiotic landscapes, i.e. public spaces 'with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making' (2010: 2).

Because I wanted to focus on tourist spaces commonly frequented by US tourists, I conducted a review of the tourist attractions and accommodation venues discussed by the travel books mentioned above as including elements of local and / or national culture. After visiting several of them during my fieldwork, I chose to focus on those that seemed to attract a large proportion of US tourists and were promoted as spaces where tourists could come into contact with or learn about Mexican and / or local culture. In San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato therefore, I explored three B&Bs, two cultural walking tours, and three language schools which specialized in teaching foreigners about 'Mexican culture'. In Cancun/Mayan Riviera, I looked at the case of three all-inclusive resorts, one entertainment park featuring culture as one

of its main attractions, and one cultural excursion based on presenting tourists with a window into 'authentic' Mayan life.

The third and final stage of my research methodology consisted of an analysis of interview data gathered amongst US tourists visiting Mexico, US migrants (expatriates or 'expats') living in Mexico, and locals involved in the tourism industry (i.e. tourism ministry representatives, tour conductors, and hotel managers/owners). Because my focus was on individuals' intersubjective narratives and understandings of Mexico, I considered the voices of people who owned, managed, or worked at these spaces, in addition to looking at the voices of tourists who 'passed through' or came into contact with them through tourism. My aim through this method was to analyze the way in which different social actors interacted with the cultural backdrops and elements incorporated into each tourist space as a way to capture the disjunctions, interactions, and interrelations between their different cultural narratives and ideologies.

Prior to conducting my interviews, I devised an interview schedule that contained a series of discussion topics and questions but was flexible in terms of the order in which the topics were discussed (see Appendix A). While following a predetermined structure so as to ensure a certain degree of correspondence between the types of responses obtained, questions were individually tailored. I divided interviewees into three groups: government officials involved in the tourism industry, owners, managers and/or employees working at the tourist spaces I examined during my fieldwork, and US tourists and/or expatriates. When interviewing individuals from the first group, my questions centered on tourism development, i.e. on how tourism had developed in the last decade, on current plans and strategies for tourism promotion and marketing (particularly abroad), and on future tourism development aims and objectives. In addition, I asked a series of questions about the way in which the destination was promoted, both nationally and internationally, focusing on any particular changes to its image in relation to its cultural backdrop. The third and final set of questions I discussed with government officials concerned local responses to tourism and tourism's impact on local culture/s and social structures. The second group of people I interviewed were the owners, managers and/or employees working at the tourist spaces I examined during my fieldwork. For my interviews with this group, I discussed the history of their business or job, their motivations for becoming involved in the tourism industry, and the type of clientele their business attracted and catered to. Also, I asked about their level of contact with tourists and the image their business sought to

present, particularly in the context of whether ideas of national and / or local culture / s were integrated into the tourist spaces' general surroundings and / or touristic product. Finally, I touched on their relationship to cultural resources like travel books. The third and final group I interviewed were US tourists and expatriates. Questions first centered on their reasons for visiting Mexico, whether they had been to Mexico before and the expectations they held prior to arriving at their specific destination. I then touched on their views of Mexico, in general, and on their impressions of local culture, in particular, examining whether their views on Mexico changed as a result of their trip. In addition, I looked at their engagement with travel literature, particularly with travel books and guidebooks like those delineated above. While the topics covered with each group varied, the themes raised were interrelated so that, for example, questions about the ways in which people perceived 'Mexican/local cultures,' how they imagined their chosen destination, and how they engaged with travel books, were raised with individuals from all groups.

## 2.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The travel books, tourist spaces, and interviews examined during my fieldwork were analyzed by first identifying the discursive tropes, narratives, and conceptual frameworks they mobilized to represent and 'make sense' of Mexico as a tourist destination and portray Mexican society / culture as an object of the tourist gaze. I paid particularly close attention to the way in which ideas of culture were discussed, to the contexts in which these ideas were raised, and to patterns of representation within and between different types of data. In this way, my aim was to isolate a number of recurrent themes and discursive tropes. As elements of tourism discourse, these themes were analyzed by calling upon Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Because CDA takes up a variety of definitions and is applied to many different kinds of data (see: Whetherell et al 2001; Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1999), it is essential, prior to discussing how I used it as a methodological tool for data analysis, to define it. As per Wodak (2001), I conceived of CDA as being

fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language...[whereby] three concepts figure indispensably...the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology (2-3)

Also important to define is my usage of the concept of ideology, which I briefly touched upon in the previous section. I take ideology to refer to 'social forms and processes within which and by means of which symbolic forms [including those related to the establishment and maintenance of power relations] circulate in the social world' (Wodak 2001: 9). Following Fairclough, I conceive of CDA as 'critical' 'in that it is concerned with power and inequalities within society' (2008: 31); as 'critical' in that it seeks to challenge taken-for granted conceptualizations that are frequently naturalized and subsequently rendered unproblematic. Because uncovering tourism discourse's commonly obfuscated construction of sociocultural representations of Mexico and Mexicans as Other lies at the heart of my research, CDA, I argue, provides the ideal tool for the analysis of my empirical data. Undoubtedly, the politically charged Foucauldian definition of discourse that goes hand in hand with such an analysis is certainly not without critics of its own (Wodak 2001). My adoption of this type of CDA however, is based on the idea that its usage can lead to the exposure of social practices and understandings that are fundamentally intertwined with the construction and maintenance of hegemonic relations and sociopolitical inequalities.

In the context of the present study, I examine tourism discourse through the lens of CDA as a way to explore touristic representations of Mexicans and of Mexican culture against the backdrop of US tourism to Mexico. By doing so, my aim is to shed light on the social construction of commonly obfuscated ideas about cultural difference that are, at the core, founded upon the naturalization of binary oppositions along geopolitical frontiers and the reaffirmation of culturalist ideologies. More specifically, my approach to CDA centers on the analysis of contextually and socially situated patterns of signification related to culturalist understandings within US tourism discourse on Mexico and Mexican tourist spaces.

The first element of my research analysis involved looking at travel books geared towards US tourists visiting Mexico. As Atkinson writes, 'texts do not simply and transparently report an independent order of reality, rather, [they]...themselves are implicated in the world of reality construction' (1990: 6). Each of the texts I examined were critically analyzed by focusing on their construction and maintenance of particular 'imaginary geographies' of Mexico. Within these texts, I sought out patterns of language mobilized to describe Mexico's population and recurring concepts like 'Mexican life,' 'Mexican identity,' 'Mexican psyche,' and 'Mexican time' were lifted from these texts and deconstructed as elements of discourse (see: Chapter Four). The second element of my research methodology

involved the critical analysis of tourist spaces as spaces of tourist discourse (see: Chapter Five). Here, my focus was on tourist spaces' 'semiotic structure' (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010), i.e. their layout, aesthetic, and incorporation of visual representations of 'culture.' Video-footage, photographs, and field-notes of particular performances and events were analyzed by looking at tourist spaces (re)presentation of culture, of Mexico, of its population, and of its historical backdrop. By examining the material resources, stages, and performances found within each tourist space, my analysis was concerned with how ideas of culture were here mediated. Finally, the voices of different social actors in each tourist space were analyzed to assess the interrelationship between distinct constructs of meaning and representation called upon by individuals involved in the construction and / or consumption of culture through tourism.

As I mentioned above, my selection of interviewees was tied to the tourist spaces I looked at, so that it was their owners, managers, and or / staff, in addition to members of their clientele (US tourists specifically), who I interviewed. To analyze my interviews, I listened to each interview multiple times to gain a broad notion of the ways in which not only Mexico, its socio-cultural makeup, and its peoples were discussed, but also to gain an understanding of the individual's own history and personal experiences. I transcribed all my interviews<sup>7</sup> and listened to them systematically, looking for recurring elements within interviewees' narratives (e.g. words, concepts, images, or ideas) that were related to particular conceptualizations of Mexican culture or imaginaries of Mexico. Specific categories and objects of discourse where 'Mexico', 'Mexicans' and ideas of 'culture' were discussed were noted and mapped, identifying the different contexts in which they occurred, the ways in which these ideas were framed, and how they were 'spoken of' by different individuals. Through this process, I was able to identify a number of narratives, themes, conceptual frameworks, and discursive tropes that were intersubjectively raised by interviewees to understand Mexico and its sociocultural makeup as an object of the tourist gaze. As elements of discourse, these themes, concepts, and tropes went on to structure my analysis and discussion. By triangulating the three types of data outlined above (travel books, tourist spaces, and interviews), my goal was to position travel books and individuals' voices within wider socially-constructed spaces and contexts; contexts that, by being couched within specific hegemonic narratives and ideologies, contribute to collective understandings of Mexico as an object of touristic consumption in the US.

### 2.2.3 SELF-ANALYSIS, REFLEXIVITY, AND METHODOLOGICAL CAVEATS

Within all data gathering, particularly that involving ethnographic fieldwork, a number of methodological issues must be taken into consideration (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 19). First is the issue of protecting the privacy of interviewees. In order to protect the privacy of those involved in this study and comply with the ethical guidelines established by the University of Southampton, written/oral consent was obtained from all parties involved in my research. All participants were given a participant information sheet that provided them with information about the study and with my contact information (e.g. telephone number, address, and e-mail) in case they had further queries / comments. In addition, they were asked to sign a consent form (for a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, see Appendix B and Appendix C). Except for government representatives and individuals speaking from a platform connected to specific tourist spaces, all identifying data obtained in the field was anonymized after transcription, i.e. pseudonyms were used. In addition, all accommodation venues i.e. B&Bs, hotels, and resorts (barring one from which permission was sought given its easily identifiable nature in the context of my fieldwork analysis), were anonymized.

Aside from issues related to privacy, the issue of my positionality as a researcher vis-à-vis my interviewees was also taken into consideration while conducting my fieldwork. This was imperative because, as Taylor writes, the language user, in this case, the interviewer,

is not a detached communicator, sending and receiving information, but is always located, immersed in this medium and struggling to take her own social and cultural positioning into account (2008: 9).

A number of steps were therefore taken to account for and 'locate' my social and cultural position in the context of my interviews and qualitative data gathering (following the guidelines established for reflexivity delineated by Clifford and Marcus 1986; Bourdieu and Thompson 1990; Bourdieu 1992; Atkinson 1990; Taylor 2008). I examined my own positionality and its impact on interviewees' responses, particularly in the context of the 'national identity' I may have been assigned by those I was interacting with. I introduced myself to all my interviewees by mentioning that I am half-Greek and half-Mexican. Because of the hybrid nature of my personal background, however, the perceived identity I was seen as possessing differed between interviewees. This is because, as a product of my being half

Mexican, my 'accent' in Spanish is that of a Mexican native speaker, just as my 'accent' in English is usually classified as 'American' as a product of the fact that I spent part of my upbringing in the US. The correspondence between my 'accent' and interviewees' own modes of speech, I suggest, contributed to building a greater sense of rapport with many of my interviewees. In assessing the way in which my interviewees might have perceived me, I also paid attention to the role played by my gender and age, particularly when interviewing Mexican government officials. My approach for interviewing the latter followed a more traditional type of protocol used in Mexico when dealing with those of a higher professional rank, by, for instance, using the third-person formal tense (see: Placencia 2007). I conducted most of my interviews with tourists in English and with Mexican government officials in Spanish. When the person being interviewed was bilingual, the choice of language was given to them. In order to avoid falling in the trap of interviewer bias when carrying out my interviews, I sought to ensure neutrality by avoiding leading questions and by being vigilant about discussing my own opinions and judgments during and after interviews. Following the guidelines outlined by Schensul, et al., my interviews were conducted without a predetermined response in mind to avoid unintentionally influencing their outcome (1999: 149). While conducting my interviews, I was also attentive to the conversational settings where they took place, bearing in mind the context where the data was gathered.

While the above-mentioned precautions were taken to reduce my research's potential for bias, a number of issues that nonetheless arose from my fieldwork should be kept in mind. First is the issue of what data I included, and, subsequently, that which I excluded. Given the scope of this thesis and the length of my fieldwork, I only concentrated on a small number of tourist spaces and only on a fraction of my extensive interview data. The second, related caveat, is also tied to issues of data selection and involved my selection of texts or, more specifically, my exclusion of other types of data as material sources of travel discourse. In other words, since my focus was exclusively on travel books and related texts as objects of travel discourse, I did not discuss other resources individuals commonly employed to help design their journey and inform their imaginaries of Mexico as a travel destination. This meant that internet resources (like travel websites, guidebooks' own virtual resources, personal websites and blogs), brochures, and travel magazines, did not feature in my discussion of contemporary sources of travel discourse even though they most certainly contribute to building individuals' understandings of Mexico as an object of touristic consumption. A third caveat of my methodology related to the issue of sufficiently historicizing and contextualizing travel books and interviewees'

subjective narratives and accounts. In the case of the latter, I attempted to do this by, for example, appending a short outline of each individual's general background information in the context of his or her journey to Mexico (see Appendix F). I did not, however, delve too deeply into each individual's personal history. Another issue I would like to raise is that of translation. In this thesis, I personally translated all Spanish language extracts into English. I have, however, included all original language extracts in Appendix E so as to account for the issue of equivalence (see: Baker 1992). The final methodological issue I would like to mention relates to my selection of interviewees. My choice of tourist spaces undoubtedly impacted the sample of interviewees whose voices are included in this thesis (be it that it is through particular tourist spaces that I gained access to particular interviewees). Because examining one particular group comprised a central component of my qualitative data gathering however, this can be argued to have been unavoidable.

### 2.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of this study, this chapter sought to outline the theoretical and methodological framework on which this thesis is structured, discussing some of the main conceptual elements guiding my treatment of fieldwork data and its analysis. On the whole, by combining ideas emergent from different backgrounds and academic disciplines, this chapter provided a review of some of the key ideas guiding my approach to my treatment of fieldwork data which unfolds in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. In sum, I argue that tourism discourse represents a prominent example of the way in which culturalist understandings of Mexico that are prevalent in the US are reproduced. In seeking to investigate this phenomenon, this thesis triangulates the representations of Mexico held in travel book texts, the semiotic landscapes that exist within tourist spaces, and tourists' interactions with the former.



*Chapter*

# THREE

## CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the context of contemporary US tourism to Mexico and the narratives that commonly inform it. It sets the stage for my subsequent analysis of travel books (in Chapter Four), of tourist spaces (in Chapter Five) and of tourist voices (in Chapter Six), allowing for a more thorough depiction of the conceptual tropes through which Mexico is represented as an object of the tourist gaze in contemporary US travel discourse.

The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, Section 3.1, I discuss early imaginaries of Mexico in the US and provide an overview of some of the key historical events and processes that, from the mid nineteenth century to the 1930s, laid the foundation for the development of US travel to Mexico. Here, I also discuss how ideas of race, ethnicity, and culture were mobilized and called upon to represent Mexicans as fundamentally Other in accordance with the imaginative geographies painted by hegemonic narratives of nationhood in the US. In Section 3.2, I discuss a number of critical steps that were taken by Mexico's government administrators to ensure the success of the country's tourism industry. In addition to discussing how Mexico's tourism infrastructures, legislative frameworks, and tourism organizations became established, in this section, I also look at the way in which ideas of Mexico as a socioculturally defined entity were incorporated into the discourse through which tourism administrators sought to promote Mexico abroad. The third section of this chapter, Section 3.3, discusses the history of tourism at the three specific sites where I conducted my fieldwork: Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. In addition, it looks at the role of foreign investment in the development of Mexico's tourism industry from the 1990s to the contemporary period, particularly in the context of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. Finally, in Section 3.4, I look at the establishment of contemporary forms of 'cultural tourism' in Mexico by discussing how ideas of culture have been mobilized in the context of Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera. Here,

my focus lies specifically on late twentieth and early twenty-first century tourism to Mexico, setting the scene to Chapters Four, Five, and Six, where my empirical findings are presented. Overall, the aim of this chapter is to offer a synopsis of US tourism to Mexico, in general, and to Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, and Cancun/Mayan Riviera, in particular. By tracing the history of ideas of culture in the context of Mexico's tourism industry, it seeks to illustrate the way in which these ideas went on to become a central element of Mexico's national narratives and the discourses through which tourism to the country, and to specific destinations within it, was promoted.

### 3.1 NATION BUILDING, IMAGINARIES, AND THE BIRTH OF TOURISM TO MEXICO

#### 3.1.1 EARLY IMAGINARIES

During Spain's colonial rule of New Spain (the territory that would later go on to become (Mexico), little was known in the United States about the populations beyond its southern border. As Gunn notes, Mexico was 'almost a blank' in Anglo-American imaginaries at the time, representing only 'a vague symbol of wealth, error, and high adventure' (Gunn 1974: 12).<sup>8</sup> In the early years of the nineteenth century, however, this began to change, as the writings of the Prussian explorer Alexander Von Humboldt<sup>9</sup> provided new insights about Mexico and its inhabitants.

Prior to Mexico's Independence, Von Humboldt was given permission to explore Spain's American colonies. Indeed, the Spanish Crown lifted the veil of secrecy that enveloped its administration of New Spain to give Von Humboldt largely unrestricted access to the region. Whist there, he investigated, catalogued, documented, and wrote extensively about New Spain's geography, political structure, economy, the architecture of its cities, its trade potential, and the social organization and racial characteristics of its various inhabitants. Von Humboldt abridged his meticulous annotations (together with diagrams, tables, and maps) into a lengthy tome titled *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811). Von Humboldt shared much of his findings with the then president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, who, in thanking him, wrote to Von Humboldt that the territories he described 'are those least known and most interesting, and a lively desire will be felt generally to receive the information you will be able to give' (Schwartz 2001: 47). Between 1809 and 1811, Von Humboldt went on to share much of his findings with Jefferson, providing the US with the first in-depth depiction of the geographical, political, economic, and demographic makeup of New Spain (De Terra 1959;

Schwartz 2001: 43). Through personal correspondence, Jefferson commended Von Humboldt on his work, noting that the information he shared with the US was 'more accurate than I believe we possess of Europe' (De Terra 1959: 791). As I will discuss in the next chapter, Von Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* represented one of the first texts used as a travel book by those venturing into Mexico, becoming widely circulated and referenced as a *bona fide* guide to the region by subsequent texts. Because of its impact on nineteenth-century imaginaries of Mexico in the US, Von Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811) will be examined in more depth in the following chapter. What I want to draw attention to here, however, is the fact that prior to Von Humboldt's writings, little was known in the US about its neighbor to the south.

Of course, travel, for leisure purposes (i.a. 'tourism'), was extremely rare if not altogether nonexistent at the turn of the eighteenth century and for much of the first half of the nineteenth century, following Mexico's independence from Spain, in 1821. A series of factors can be argued to have contributed to this. First, of course, was the fact that, since this time period predated the establishment of tourism as a major socioeconomic activity, suitable transportation networks and lodging infrastructures were virtually nonexistent. Secondly, the early nineteenth century represented one of the most turbulent socio-political periods in Mexican history – one characterized by foreign incursions, local uprisings, and a succession of civil wars, a factor that, undoubtedly, dissuaded individuals from traveling to the newly established nation. Finally, the widespread circulation of representations of Mexico as dangerous and unsanitary significantly contributed to painting the country as an inhospitable space, subsequently deterring even the most intrepid of explorers from venturing into country (Simmen 1988).

While Mexico gained its independence in 1821, it is important to bear in mind that sociopolitical stability was not reached until well after the country's geographical perimeters became established. Between 1845 and 1848, almost half of what had been Mexico's territory became part of the US through the annexation of Texas and through the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty that resulted in the consignment of what today represents most of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado (see: Griswold del Castillo 1990).

### 3.1.2 NATION BUILDING AND THE MEXICAN PROBLEM

As a result of the rapidly shifting borders between Mexico and the US, the populations of both countries were closely intermeshed. Many born under one sovereign rule, later become constituents of the other. In 1848 alone, for example, 115,000 Mexicans became US citizens (Gomez 2007: 45). While US leaders regarded westward settlement positively however, Mexicans were quickly relegated as Other within the political fabric of the US. According to Gomez, Mexicans 'entered the nation as second-class citizens' as 'racially inferior to white Euro-Americans' (Gomez 2007: 45). Indeed, she writes,

by 1850, the emphasis was on American Anglo-Saxons as a separate, innately superior people who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continent and to the world (2007: 1-2).

The core issue during these early days was what some went on to call 'the 'Mexican problem,' i.e. the issue of what to do about the Mexicans living in the US' newly acquired land (see: Gomez 2007: 17). 'How should we govern the mongrel race which inhabits it?' asked the US Secretary of State James Buchanan in 1847 (Horsman 1981: 241). In addition to those categorized as racially 'Mexican'<sup>10</sup>, individuals seen as belonging to Other 'inferior' and 'lower' races – i.a. Chinese<sup>11</sup>, African, and Amerindian – were also subjected to discriminatory practices and excluded from equal participation as citizens and as members of the 'imagined community' through which the US officially envisaged itself in popular discourse (see: Horsman 1981: 278). But, ideas of the nation as an 'imagined community' were also prevalent in Mexico at the time, political leaders sought to mobilize notions of national unity and identity of a nation-wide sense of 'us' to stifle separatist movements and bolster the politico-economic authority of individual ruling parties (O'Toole 2010). Determining who formed part of 'us' and consequently who should lead the country however, became a contentious issue. In fact, it was not until the early twentieth century, after the Mexican Revolution, that national ideologies, structured around specific narratives and discursive tropes, began to coalesce (Brading 1980).

### 3.2 THE BIRTH OF US TOURISM TO MEXICO

By the mid nineteenth century, as political stability was more or less maintained under the leadership of Benito Juarez (1867-1872) and then that of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1880 and 1884-1911), US travel to Mexico began to grow. Central to the expansion and establishment of tourism to Mexico was industrialization. The mass

production of steel<sup>12</sup>, in particular, contributed to the rapid expansion of the US railway network which, together with the growing popularity of petroleum-operated automobiles (introduced in 1885) and the paving of roads and highways, played a pivotal role in increasing travel to Mexico from the US (Jaynes 2011; Berger 2006).

In addition to developments in the availability and accessibility of new modes of transportation, by increasing agricultural yields and manufacturing outputs, industrialization allowed for capital accumulation, increasing thus the prevalence of leisure-based travel. Another central factor that contributed to the growing popularity of travel was the emergence of new forms of print media like the travel books I will discuss in the next chapter. Through these texts, individuals were able to familiarize themselves with their travel destination prior to visiting it, in many ways informing what may have otherwise been 'blank' imaginaries of Mexico and particular spaces within it.

During the second tenure of Porfirio Diaz's presidency (1884-1911), considerable political and economic changes began to transform Mexico, impacting the development of its budding tourism industry (Jaynes 2011; Berger 2006). Capitalist enterprises, economic restructuring, and Diaz's encouragement of foreign investment, all contributed the 'modernization' of Mexico and to the expansion of its tourism industry. As Fisher notes, this period witnessed around 100,000 miles of railway being built as 'industry boomed, telephone and telegraph lines were installed, and major towns, reached at last by reasonable roads, entered the modern era' (1985: 396). By 1882, the railway line from El Paso (Texas) to the Mexican Central Railway, connecting areas south of Mexico City to the country's northern territory was completed.

The railway system proved instrumental to the growth of national and international markets for manufactured and agricultural goods. At the same time, it facilitated the extraction and transportation of natural resources and provided a means of transport for those wanting to travel between Mexico and the US. Together with the development of transportation networks between Mexico and the US, foreign investment in Mexico during this period, particularly from the US, was noteworthy. US companies heavily invested in Mexican industries, particularly in agriculture, mining, oil and rail. This constant influx of US capital to Mexico, and the intensification of politico-economic ties that occurred as a result, ensured the development and maintenance of both transportation and communication infrastructures, laying the foundation for the development of US leisure travel to the country. Travel to Mexico became thus considerably easier in the early years of the

twentieth century for industrialists and businessmen<sup>13</sup> and also members of the general public who began to make their way into Mexico as tourists (Garner 2001).

Just as tourism's machinery was put in motion however, civil conflict in Mexico brought it to a standstill. This was because socio-political strife engulfed Mexico during much of the early part of the twentieth century when, during the Mexican Revolution, conflict, violence, and armed uprisings contributed to the death of millions. In 1917, with the Revolution approaching its end, the Mexican constitution was institutionalized and a leading political party (the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, the PRI) emerged; by the 1920s, repeated armed insurgencies largely came to an end (Gonzalez 2002). The end of the revolution brought about considerable social reform, as government officials sought to bring about comprehensive institutional changes and rebuild the nation as a cohesive socio-cultural body.

According to Simmen, it was during this time period, a period of 'restored calm and prosperity' (Simmen 1988: xxviii) that tourism to Mexico began to gain momentum. Legislators turned towards the country's tourism industry as 'a panacea to the underdevelopment and isolationism experienced during Mexico's years of revolutionary fighting' (Berger 2006: 119). By the late 1920s, tourism thus emerged as 'the cornerstone to state-led modernization programs... at the height of revolutionary reconstruction' (Berger 2006: 3-4). By 1929, the number of tourists visiting Mexico had begun steadily rising.<sup>14</sup> This led Mexico's then-president, Emilio Portes Gil, to create a new coordinating body in charge of attracting and managing tourism to the country, the Mixed Pro-Tourism Commission (*Comisión Mixta Pro-Turismo*). As a 'new fountain of prosperity,' tourism, he argued, necessitated the creation of a larger, better-funded coordinating body (Berger 2006:7).

### 3.2.1 THE ISSUE OF MEXICANS IN THE US

From the 1930s onwards, tourism played an increasingly important role in Mexico's economy. Its development representing a priority for state officials (Clancy 2001). The idea of tourism, as one of the principal means through which to achieve economic development for Mexico, gained further attention under the presidency of Emilio Portes Gil, when 'government formally recognized tourism's potential for profit and began to study, organize, develop, and promote it' (Berger 2006: 6)<sup>15</sup>. In addition to seeing tourism as an instrument for expanding Mexico's economy, Mexico's political leaders also saw it as a means through which social unity could be achieved.

Substantial economic strain characterized both Mexico and the US in the 1930s however, and its repercussions for tourism were considerable. People's levels of disposable income in the US considerably diminished and government funds allocated to the development of tourist infrastructures in Mexico were drastically reduced (Berger 2007). With the Great Depression gathering momentum in the US, the issue of race and immigration also rose to the forefront in US public media discourses. Mexicans, be they immigrants or US citizens of Mexican descent, became the target of widespread prejudice and discriminatory practices and were increasingly categorized and characterized as Other within media espoused imaginative geographies of the US (Akers Chacon 2006). The economic climate of the 1930s, Gomez writes, 'fomented anti-Mexican racism, violence, and government hostility, including mass deportation (to Mexico)' (2007: 152) as 'more than 400,000 Mexican-origin persons, including many American citizens were rounded up by police and deported ...[and many] returned to Mexico during this period' (*ibid*). On the whole, she added, 'the racist, violent events of the 1930s were a sharp reminder to Mexican Americans of their marginal status' (2007: 152).

The representation of Mexicans as a drain on the depressed US economy and as a threat to the country's national cohesion were prevalent at this historical juncture when the imaginative geographies espoused by public media located Mexicans as belonging, not in the US, but in Mexico – in the country bearing their name (Akers Chacon 2006). Evidencing the discursive relegation of Mexicans as extraneous to the US, the 1930 US census, for the first time in history, categorized all individuals of Mexican descent as racially 'Mexican,' a move that can be argued to have validated and institutionally substantiated the idea that those of Mexican descent remained, in essence, tied to Mexico.

### 3.2.2 RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CULTURE

By the mid 1930s, ideas of race began to be supplanted by ideas of ethnicity and culture as markers of social belonging and as categories of social grouping. This, argues Gomez, allowed people 'to talk about race without talking about race' (2007: 73). In other words, it made cultural difference 'an implicit explanation of group-based inequalities' (*ibid*), an argument reminiscent of that raised by Fassin (1995) in the context of culturalism.

The establishment and mobilization of the idea of nations as enclosing, not racially homogenous groups, but culturally uniform spaces, gained traction in 1930s Mexico (O'Toole 2007). As I will discuss below, aside from acting as a means for social unification, the idea of culture was particularly relevant to the realm of

tourism promotion. By portraying Mexico as possessing a specific cultural 'identity', its promotion became anchored to the country as a tourism destination characterized by a particular – and unique – social configuration.

In this way, representations of what constituted Mexicanness (i.e. *lo Mexicano*) entered tourism discourse circa the end of the 1930s when tourist planners, architects, and engineers began to advance and defend the 'typical character' of towns and villages as something Mexican nationals and foreign tourists alike found especially attractive' (Berger 2006: 60). They did this by calling upon the argument that 'tourists [want] to see authentic Mexico' (*ibid*) – an argument premised on the idea that a version of Mexico fitted the mold of the 'real' while others simple did not. In this way, by mobilizing notions of authenticity, certain cultural representations were legitimated while others became overlooked and consequently disregarded. Considerable strides also needed to be taken to make tourism to Mexico more appealing to foreign tourists, e.g. in addition to the extension of the railway (to facilitate greater connectivity between and within Mexico and the US), migratory/border policies had to be assuaged to facilitate entering and exiting the country and comfortable first-class accommodation, eating and entertainment venues needed to be developed (Berger 2006).

### 3.3 PAVING THE ROADS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

In 1930, Mexico's tourism planners asked Frank A. Dudley, the President of the US Hotel Company of America, for advice. They wanted to know how to develop a successful tourism industry that would attract a greater number of US tourists to Mexico. Dudley told them that he noticed that Mexico's hotels, and, indeed, the whole country, 'lacked appeal' for not only 'well-to-do-American tourists' but for the US middle class as a whole (Berger 2006:41). Tourists, he said, wanted to

see Mexico's tropical forests without mosquitoes biting them... to  
drive on picturesque roads with gasoline stations, and ... to enjoy  
Mexico's beaches of fine sand at accommodations of luxurious hotels  
'with casinos, with racetracks and with all the comforts of modern life'  
(Berger 2006: 60).

As the next chapter will illustrate, US travel books at the time much agreed with the above assessment by, for example, warning tourists about the dangers and unsanitary conditions prevalent in Mexico and urging them to take a series of precautions to guarantee a pleasurable trip, i.a. bringing their own food and water,

pre-arranging accommodation, remaining on the alert for thievery and swindling, and avoiding most contact with local inhabitants.

### 3.3.1 COORDINATING BODIES AND PROMOTING MEXICO IN THE US

In order to better manage, coordinate and expand Mexico's budding tourist industry, a series of steps were taken by government and private sector organizations. In 1933, Mexico's Department of Tourism (*Departamento de Turismo*) was launched to handle all matters related to the tourism industry and, a year later, Mexico's National Tourism Commission (*Comision Nacional de Turismo*) was created to 'orient, regulate, and coordinate all that is referent to tourism' (SECTUR 2011b; author's translation). The completion of the Nuevo Laredo-Mexico highway in 1936, coupled with investment from both Mexican and foreign investors, provided the necessary impetus for the construction of hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues designed to cater to international tourists. At the same time, the ownership of automobiles in the US exponentially increased, making motorized travel to Mexico more common (Berger 2006; Berger and Wood 2010).<sup>16</sup>

As I mentioned above however, the success of Mexico's tourism industry depended on more than having adequate means of transportation and suitable accommodation, restaurants, and entertainment venues. It also depended on the successful mobilization of positive images of Mexico in the US, images through which to counter the myriad of negative portrayals of Mexico as dangerous, uncivilized, and inhospitable that prevailed throughout US public media and, undoubtedly, informed individuals' imaginaries of the country as a whole. For this very purpose, in 1937, three years after Lazaro Cardenas was elected president, 'the government began to take a financial interest in the importance of advertising in the mass media' (Berger 2006: 74) and launched the Department of Press and Marketing (*Departamento de Prensa y Publicidad*), the first official entity 'responsible for producing and distributing propaganda in favor of Mexico and its government' (Berger 2006: 74).

To promote Mexico abroad, mobilizing a positive image of the country was seen as paramount to ultimately attracting tourists to Mexico. Tourism representatives argued that defining and promoting a particular vision of Mexico, one couched within narratives that highlighted the nation's rich cultural heritage, would not only yield substantial economic dividends, but would also strengthen the country's sense of national cohesion. Through tourism, they maintained, pride in 'things uniquely Mexican' would also be evoked and a nationwide appreciation of the country's 'national treasures' – 'its vast beaches, colonial monuments,

archaeological ruins and cosmopolitan capital city' – would be reinforced among Mexico's own inhabitants (Berger 2006: 13). Various measures were taken to ensure the protection and preservation of sites represented as 'Mexican.' In 1936, for example, to safeguard sites of historic significance, the government introduced the Law for the Protection of the Artistic and Historical Treasure of Mexico (i.e. *Ley de Proteccion del Tesoro Artistico e Historico de Mexico*), a law passed for the protection and national valorization of colonial and prehispanic Mesoamerican objects dating from 1521-1821 (Berger 2006: 126).

### 3.3.2 GOLDEN ERA OF TOURISM

The institutionalization of tourism in Mexico and its treatment as a priority for the development and modernization of the country could be argued to have reached its zenith in the 1940s, a decade known as Mexico's 'the golden era of tourism' (Jafari 2000: 389). Indeed, some have argued that it was during this time period, under the presidential tenure of Miguel Aleman (1946-1952) sometimes called the 'father' of modern tourism to Mexico and a 'national tourism hero' (Jafari 2000: 389) – that tourism to Mexico rose to a position of international prominence (Jafari 2000; Berger and Wood 2010). During his time in office, Aleman played a pivotal role in the expansion of the Mexican railway by inaugurating the Southeastern Railway (*Ferrocarril del Sureste*). This rail network was particularly important because it linked regions in southeastern Mexico to both the capital and to the US (Berger 2006).

Aleman was also responsible for the creation and development of a number of important destinations, most prominent amongst them being Acapulco – a beach tourist center that quickly gained both national and international acclaim, becoming one of Mexico's (and North America's) most popular tourist destinations from its inception until well into the 1990s (Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999; Bonavides 1995; Hiernaux-Nicolas 2003). Aleman also passed a number of important federal tourism decrees. In 1946, he passed the Declaration of Tourism (*Declaracion de Turismo*), where he announced his government's commitment and growing involvement within the fomentation of tourism. Three years later, Aleman passed the Federal Law of Tourism (*Ley Federal de Turismo*) (MacDonald Escobedo 1981) and reinstated the National Commission of Tourism (*Comision Nacional de Turismo*), integrating it with a National and Executive Council, a move that served to increase the role of government in the tourism industry (Berger 2006).

Towards the end of Aleman's presidency, the idea of 'Mexican culture,' as an important instrument for the promotion and further development of Mexico's tourism industry, had gained the attention of government officials interested in its

operationalization. By 1949, the Organic Law of the Seminar for Mexican Culture (*Ley Organica del Seminario de Cultura Mexicana*) was launched, a law based on the creation of:

an institution dedicated to the service of the country's culture, doted with juridical personality, in which diverse branches of scientific, literary and artistic tendencies can be found (*Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión 1949*; author's translation)<sup>17</sup>.

As one of its primary goals, the law sought to:

spread culture in all its national and universal manifestations... maintain an active cultural exchange with the states and territories in the Republic, and with foreign institutions and individuals interested in Mexican culture (*ibid*)<sup>18</sup>.

This law was especially significant in that it marked one of the first instances where the idea of 'Mexican culture,' as a bounded entity with a defined sociocultural makeup, entered political discourse in the context of tourism. Indeed, it could be argued to have gone on to represent the basis to later government policies in the 1990s and 2000s that saw the Mexican government increasingly promoting tourism to the country by reference to Mexico's unique cultural character. While Mexico's roads and highways were being expanded and more than two dozen airports were being built around the country, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, Mexico's president from 1964-1970, expressed that tourism's potential exceeded its economic benefits he argued that tourism,

should not be seen only as a business in the world but as a means through which men can get to know one another and understand one another; understanding which is so necessary in these moments; tourism is, above all, a means for the better understanding and friendship between men and for world peace (from Jiménez 1992: 36; author's translation)<sup>19</sup>.

While notable at the time, the view that tourism could act a medium for intercultural exchange and understanding did not gain institutional recognition within the Mexican government until, as I will illustrate in the following section, well into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Prior to this period, the promotion of culture did not feature highly in government's agenda. This was primarily because,

from the 1970s until at least the mid 1990s, government's attention rested exclusively on how to maximize tourism's contribution to the country's economy.

### 3.4 TOURISM TO GUANAJUATO, SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, CANCUN AND THE MAYAN RIVIERA

In the mid-1950s, Mexico's tourism industry continued to expand. A new communications tower was built at Mexico City's airport and new terminal areas and landing zones were created to cater to an increasing influx of tourists who traveled to the country's capital – a city that, at the time, represented not only a destination in its own right but also a 'gateway' to other major destinations in the country (Clancy 2001). Below, I discuss the particular case Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, Cancun and, later, the Mayan Riviera.

#### 3.4.1 GUANAJUATO AND SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

From the 1930s and 1940s, Mexico's colonial cities drew a sizeable amount of international tourists who, having a particular interest in the country's colonial and national history, would visit cities like Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende – both cities located in the state of Guanajuato (in the geographical center of Mexico). The city of Guanajuato, capital of the state of Guanajuato, has been an important travel destination since well before Mexico's independence. Owing to its vast silver mines, Guanajuato was one of New Spain's most affluent colonies and, as such, featured highly in the agendas of Spanish travelers at the time of its colonial administration of the region. Guanajuato later rose to the forefront of Mexico's national narratives when Miguel Hidalgo, one of the country's founding figures, proclaimed the sovereignty of the country and initiated the first major battle for independence from its grounds. Guanajuato has, since then, been portrayed as Mexico's 'Independence Cradle' – its historical landscapes evoking the nation's dawn, substantiating official narratives and ideologies about the way in which the Mexico came to achieve its sovereignty. By the 1970s, the city's touristic allure expanded beyond its colonial backdrop when the *Festival Internacional Cervantino*<sup>20</sup>, launched in 1972, began attracting tourists from around the country and indeed, the world (Valdez Muñoz 2002: 89). As a site with a rich colonial heritage, a picturesque landscape, and a celebrated place within Mexico's narratives of origin, Guanajuato's attraction for international tourists interested in 'culture' continued gaining momentum, considerably rising in 1988 when UNESCO designated the city a World Heritage Site (Ferry 2005).

But it is not only Guanajuato that has historically been represented as a 'Cradle of Independence' by Mexico's national narratives and, increasingly, its touristic discourses. As a result of its role in Mexico's quest for independence, the city of San Miguel de Allende has also been commonly represented as forming part of the nation's 'Cradle of Independence' (Croucher 2009). Indeed, its very name pays homage to Ignacio Allende (1769-1811), who, alongside Miguel Hidalgo, is credited with instigating Mexico's battle for independence and has gone on to become one of Mexico's national heroes. Prior to Allende, the city was simply known as 'San Miguel' and, much like Guanajuato, represented a popular destination for travelers during Spanish colonial times. Only after Mexico's independence was attained, was the name 'Allende' appended to the city, as a way to honor Ignacio Allende: the city's 'native son.'

Since the 1950s, San Miguel de Allende has been represented as a prominent site for international tourism. From the 1950s to the 1970s in particular, it became a popular destination for American students, writers, and artists who would visit San Miguel de Allende in order to attend its arts and language institute, the *Instituto Allende* (an institute endorsed by Guanajuato's University and recognized by US universities as a source of collegiate credit). As Croucher argues, from the 1950s to the 1970s, San Miguel de Allende experienced its 'Golden Age' (ibid: 39). This was a period when 'hundreds of young people arrived from the United States, using their GI bill benefits to study at the Instituto Allende' (ibid)<sup>21</sup>. This was also a time when the city witnessed an influx of people from the US who migrated to the city – either temporary or permanently – transforming its landscape into the culturally hybrid and multilingual space it is today.

While tourism to Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende steadily rose from 1960s to the 1980s, its numbers were nothing compared to the growth that Mexico's 'sun and beach' destinations experienced at the time. Indeed, the Mexican government's tourism promotion strategy during this period revolved, not around its historic cities, but around the country's sun and beach destinations. Taking the success of Acapulco as evidence of the economic potential of beach destinations for attracting international tourist flows, Mexico's government launched a series of plans and institutions for the construction of new types of tourist spaces that would take 'sun and beach' tourism to a new level (Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the state created a series of coordinating bodies for the successful implementation of tourist infrastructures that would capture foreign capital, create jobs and revitalize the economy. The Touristic Infrastructure Fund (i.e. *Fondo de Infraestructura Turistica*) was, for example, created in 1969 as an organization to be

appended to Mexico's national bank (*Banco de Mexico*) and run by the state in order to envisage, fund, and develop a tourism industry that would become not only one of the best in the Americas, but one of the best in the world (Martí 1985). Under the presidency of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976), a series of additional institutions for the fomentation of tourism were created. The most important organism, which eventually engulfed all of government's tourism organizations that came before it, was Mexico's National Trust Fund for Tourism Development (FONATUR). Created in 1973, FONATUR's establishment, in conjunction with President Echeverría's passing of the Federal Law for the Promotion of Tourism (*Ley Federal de Fomento al Turismo*) in 1974, and the launching of a Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR), provided the groundwork for the growth of the tourism industry in subsequent years, fueled by an inflow of private investment – both national and foreign (Jiménez Martínez 1990).

### 3.4.2 THE BIRTH OF CANCUN AND THE MAYAN RIVIERA

At the request of Mexico's government, advisors to Mexico's Touristic Infrastructure Fund (i.e. *Fondo de Infraestructura Turística*) began searching for suitable areas that could be developed as new tourist destinations (Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). Amongst five other locations, they identified a relatively isolated island called Kan Kun, an island off of Mexico's eastern Yucatan peninsula that was surrounded by white beaches and the turquoise waters of the country's Caribbean coast. This island fit their vision to perfection (Martí 1985). As Evans notes, 'the area was computer selected because of its near-perfect climate, peer-less white sand beaches, proximity to major populations (US and Canada) and its pre-Columbian archaeological sites' (1994: 784).

In conjunction with Mexico's national bank, the Touristic Infrastructure Fund devised a 'Master Plan' (*Plan Maestro*), spanning from 1970 until 1995, where they delineated their overarching goals for the development of the region (Martí 1985). The primary objectives included in this plan were threefold: first, to draw sizeable dividends to the area so as to finance the industrial development of the nation; second, to create jobs for impoverished local inhabitants living in or adjacent to the region; third, to stimulate local industrial development through the expansion of tourist infrastructures (Martí 1985). This plan culminated when, funded by federal and private capital in conjunction with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) given to Mexico's national development bank (NAFINSA), what went on to become Mexico's most popular tourist center – Cancún – began to be built (Clancy 2001: 52).

Cancun was promoted in the international tourism market as a forthcoming attraction in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Its first hotel opened in 1974 and, in the years that followed, dozens of additional hotels and tourist venues were built alongside one another, absorbing the scenic setting that unfolded beyond the thin strip of land adjacent to the mainland. This came to be known as the Hotel Zone and represented the focal point of Cancun's tourism industry (see: Marti 1985). By the time Cancun's airport was inaugurated, in 1975, nearly 100,000 thousand tourists (27 percent originating abroad, mostly from the US) had traveled to Cancun (Clancy 2001: 59; SECTUR 1992). By the end of the 1970s, Cancun had become one of the most successful tourism destinations in the Western Hemisphere, its success far exceeding original expectations (Marti 1985). Indeed, Cancun became a rubric for future tourist projects and the basis for the promise of an economically profitable Mexico through which poverty, unemployment and isolationism could be eventually transcended.

Cancun's growth attracted not only foreign investment which, as Clancy argued, became indispensable to Cancun's development, 'both for infrastructure and hotel construction' (Clancy 2001: 52), it also attracted a large amount of migrants from within Mexico and abroad. Indeed, immigration to the region was such that, while in 1971 approximately 150 people lived in Cancun, by 1975 that number rose to 25,000. In parallel to Cancun's hotel district, what came to be known as Cancun's 'downtown' (commonly referred to as its *centro*, an entire urban space constructed for Cancun's workers and service-providers) began to rapidly expand (Marti 1985) so that, as the number of hotels proliferated in the region, the urban population housed within the confines of Cancun's downtown expanded (Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999).

Cancun's success grew into the decade of the 1980s and, although punctured by Hurricane Gilbert in 1988, the destination retained its world-class status well into the 1990s. Indeed, its reputation as one of the top seven most visited destinations in the world made its airport one of the busiest in the country. By 1991, Cancun's 'sun and beach' brand of tourism had attracted almost 2 million people (with almost 75 per cent of tourists originating abroad), the majority coming from the US, where Cancun had gained considerable fame as a tourist haven *par excellence* (Clancy 2001:59). But, while the turn of the century witnessed Cancun continue to attract a considerable proportion of all tourist flows to Mexico, the area south of Cancun, the 'Mayan Riviera' began to gain considerable attention from international tourists. Though the geographical confines of the Mayan Riviera sometimes vary (with some observers including Cancun and others not), the Mayan Riviera is most often regarded as representing the 140-kilometre coastal region linking Cancun to Tulum (Deltabuit Goda et al 2007) and it is in this way that I consider it.

The Mayan Riviera's first hotel opened in 1995, when the region still went under the name of 'Costa Maya.' That same year, FONATUR (the funding body that spearheaded the development of Cancun) began to explore the potential of developing the area into a destination that would include high-end tourist resorts in addition to more cultural tourist attractions (comprised, for example, of the region's Mayan architectural sites). Until this point, Harrison and Hitchcock note, culture was one of Mexico's 'assets' that had previously been more or less ignored by tourism developers (Harrison and Hitchcock: 41). Given the area's ecological resources (white beaches, tropical backdrops), archaeological richness (Mayan ruins) and sociocultural diversity (in particular the 'Mayan communities' that continued to inhabit the surrounding areas), it was argued that the Mayan Riviera could provide an ideal landscape for the edification of a new type of tourist destination. Accordingly, the area began to be developed and luxury resorts, funded by private, federal and foreign capital, started to be built along the region's coast<sup>22</sup>.

### 3.5 FOREIGN INVESTMENT

On the whole, the face of tourism underwent substantial changes in the 1990s. After the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994<sup>23</sup>, foreign investment and participation in Mexico's tourism industry became widespread and an increasing number of multinational corporations, foreign capital, and products entered Mexico at rates previously unprecedented. As trade restrictions and international tariffs between the US, Mexico, and Canada were eliminated (both on the domestic front and abroad), travel to Mexico became more common. The devaluation of the Mexican peso, which triggered a widespread economic recession in the country, and the concurrent espousal of neoliberalism by Mexico's leaders in the early 1990s, similarly played a significant role in making tourism to Mexico popular for US tourists. Because of the liberalization of free trade and the espousal of free-market enterprise, US investment and trade with Mexico contributed to transforming the landscape of Mexico's tourism industry. According to Clancy, heavy foreign participation has characterized the tourist market ever since the mid-1990s, a period characterized by the entry of chains and of large Mexican business groups, 'into the hospitality sector, first as real estate investors but increasingly also as operators and franchisers' (1990: 12).

Cancun in particular, he argued, came to rely on foreign investment, for both infrastructure and the construction of hotels. On the whole, he wrote, 'ownership and control of the tourist class hotels was, and continues to be, largely confined to international and internationally-oriented domestic capital' (*ibid*).

### 3.6 CULTURAL TOURISM AND THE NEW MILLENIUM

On the whole, the second half of the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s saw a vast increase in the numbers of international tourists visiting Mexico. From 1980 to 2000, the annual number of tourists rose from 2 million to 6.7 million (SECTUR 2001). In a period of 20 years, Mexico had become one of the principal tourist destinations worldwide, ranking 10th in international arrivals in 1996 and 8<sup>th</sup> in 2007 (WTO 1996). By the first decade of the twenty-first century, Mexico's international tourism industry had become the country's third largest contributor to the GDP (after oil and manufacture exports). As I will argue in the following chapter, the continued expansion of Mexico's tourism industry unfolded in conjunction with the diffusion of tourist discourses that, by reproducing particular imaginaries of the country, served as an ideological apparatus intertwined with the maintenance of specific narratives and nationally-sanctioned imaginaries of Mexico.

In 1999, Mexico's then president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari made clear his commitment to the continued expansion of Mexico's tourism industry by saying that, in order to 'obtain more revenue, employment and regional equilibrium, we can and want to become a greater touristic contender'<sup>24</sup> (*Salinas de Gortari, Segundo Informe de Gobierno*; author's translation). Salinas de Gortari's administration then unveiled their National Development Plan 1989-1994 (*Secretaría de Programación y Presupuesto* 1989), a plan that included a series of objectives for the social and economic development of the country. Amongst other objectives, this document emphasized the government's commitment to

foster sustained growth of the tourism sector and achieve a greater and better distribution of the generated wealth [for] the country's local economies... strengthen the national identity of Mexico by preserving cultural, historical, and traditional values... [and to] promote Mexico's image as being one of the world's main tourist attractions (Casado 1997: 46).

The document also emphasized the need to implement what was called the National Program of Touristic Modernization (*Programa Nacional de Modernización al Turismo*), a plan released in 1991 that called for

developing a distinct national tourism culture leading to the recuperation, conservation, regeneration, and expansion of the country's natural, cultural, and historical heritage (ibid).

Under the presidency of Vicente Fox, a new National Program of Tourism (*Programa Nacional de Turismo 2001-2006*) was drafted. This was a program that outlined, among other suggestions for tourism growth, a series of goals for the implementation and further development of cultural tourism. Here, his government stated that the objective of a 'cultural tourism' policy was 'to generate a profit from various forms of cultural expression to further the social and economic development of targeted regions' (Cano and Mysyk 2004: 882). In addition, it delineated the role to be played by Mexico's National Tourism Secretariat (SECTUR) within the implementation of 'cultural tourism.' This involved its increased collaboration 'with various cultural organizations, including the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), to protect, restore, and promote the country's cultural heritage' (SECTUR 2001:161; author's translation). While promising a more 'developed' and 'forward-looking' Mexico that would attract considerable foreign investment, Mexico's following president, Felipe Calderon, announced his commitment to advancing Mexico's touristic agenda so as to make it one of the top five tourist destinations in the world saying that

my government will work alongside intellectual, artistic and academic communities with the aim of promoting, defending and divulging culture in Mexico and Mexican culture in the world (*Sala de Prensa, Gobierno de Mexico* 2007; author's translation)<sup>25</sup>.

In addition to this, Calderon announced his government's *National Cultural Program 2007-2012* (*Programa Nacional de Cultura 2007-2012*), a document that declared one of his administration's primary objectives to be on the promotion of Mexican culture through the relocation of federal funds for the restoration of archaeological sites, the financial support of artists and scholars, and the implementation of educational programs (CONACULTA 2007). Through the implementation of his *National Cultural Program 2007-2012*, Calderon argued, tourism would play a central role in the promotion of Mexico's culture internationally, contributing to the economic development of the country and its 'cultural unification.' Indeed, he said, by doing so, i.e. by:

conceiving of culture into a creative space, which contains values that... [we can] transform [the country] into a Mexico with a solid individual identity for the 21st century – a winning Mexico, yes, with roots tied in the splendor of our past and our firm gaze into the future (*ibid*; author's translation)<sup>26</sup>.

Within Calderon's presidential discourse, more so than in any of his predecessors', the idea of 'culture' featured prominently. For Calderon, the amalgamation of 'culture' with 'tourism' presented an important source of income, social stability and economic sustainability (*Programa Nacional de Cultura 2007-2012*). While the implementation of a 'cultural tourism' industry and its fomentation in the international market had been a strategy that had been employed since the late 1990s, Calderon's administration promised to increase tourism's dividends in an unprecedented way, expanding tourism in areas where it was well-established (e.g. Cancun), developing it in areas that had previously been disregarded (e.g. the Mayan Riviera), and strengthening it in others with a rich history, particularly those that played central role within Mexico's official narratives of origin (e.g. cities like Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende) (Harrison and Hitchcock 2005: 41). In a press release publicized in May of 2007, Rodolfo Elizondo, Mexico's Secretary of Tourism, echoed Calderon's vision by arguing that,

[t]oday, Mexico looks to attract new markets with its wide and diverse richness in cultural and natural heritage, so that it goes beyond our traditional 'sun and beach' products and we are make national and foreign tourists turn their eyes to these corners in the interior of the republic (SECTUR 2007; author's translation)<sup>27</sup>.

### 3.6.1 THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN GUANAJUATO AND SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

By 2007, the promotion of heritage tourism to Mexico's colonial centers had become 'a key element in [Mexico's] tourism strategy' (Harrison and Hitchcock 2005: 41). Indeed, the promotion of Mexico as one of the world's chief destinations for 'cultural tourism' was argued to be one of government's principal strategies for the eradication of poverty in central Mexico, the creation of jobs in the region, and, hence, an important step towards the eventual shedding of the 'third world' label that had often been appended by outsiders to the country as a whole. According to Juan Carlos Arnau, Director of Regional Tourism for SECTUR,

[c]olonial cities can have a great touristic impact that yields an important economic value and, in addition, one of the objectives [of tourism] is to rescue the cultural elements that constitute the identity of this country<sup>28</sup> (Salinas 2007; author's translation).

Guanajuato's 'Mexican cultural elements' were painted as revolving around two poles: its Spanish colonial history and character, and the city's role in the

nation's independence movement. In 2007, SECTUR announced its allocation of 58.1 million pesos to the development of 'cultural tourism' to the state of Guanajuato, with the city of Guanajuato's portion of the sum to be invested in the 'illumination of the city of Guanajuato, world heritage site' (SECTUR 2007; author's translation)<sup>29</sup>.

Partly in an effort to alter the representation of San Miguel de Allende as a culturally hybrid – or global – space (as a result of its large population of foreign residents and considerable influx of international tourists), and to bring the city's historical and national significance into relief, SECTUR anointed San Miguel de Allende, along with other cities around the country, as a 'magic town' (a '*pueblo magico*') – a new official government designation for sites that were deemed fundamentally Mexican and thus constituting a 'typical space' of Mexican culture (SECTUR 2006). A Magical Town, SECTUR wrote, 'is a reflection of our Mexico, of what it has made us, of what we are... a Magical Town is a locality ... which emanates in each of its sociocultural manifestation and that today represent a great opportunity for tourism development (SECTUR 2006; 2007; 2011; author's translation)<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, the allure of Magical Towns, SECTUR proceeded, is pivoted on each cities' 'Mexicanness, its ancestral charm, its colors, its population, its singularity, as a unit today require revalorization...as an icon of Mexican tourism... a Mexican Town is today a distinctive symbolic, a renown touristic brand (ibid; author's translation)<sup>31</sup>. Soon after joining the city of Guanajuato in becoming a site of World Heritage Status however, San Miguel de Allende shed its title as a Magical Town (in 2008).

In the last two decades, both Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende have experienced a marked increase in the amount of international tourists they attract, primarily from North America and Europe. Stemming from this fact, foreign involvement and investment in tourism infrastructures has risen by striking proportions. With an increase in federal funding allocated to the promotion of 'cultural tourism,' efforts have increased to preserve Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende's landscapes as 'colonial treasures'.

### 3.6.2 THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN CANCUN THE MAYAN RIVIERA

Responding to an increasing desire on the part of tourists for a diversified tourist product, ideas of culture gained prominence within tourism discourses in the late 1990s. During this time period, Cancun sought to expand its perimeters by developing its downtown area into a secondary tourist attraction, i.e. by transforming it

from a purely 'ocean-side' focus to development of hotels, restaurants, clubs and malls along the lagoon-side of the island ...family attractions such as water and amusement parks...planned 'megaprojects' including yacht clubs and exclusive shopping and residential complexes (Torres 2002: 96-97).

In this way, Torres noted, Cancun underwent a marked shift away from a solely sun and beach 'tourist bubble' and towards a 'post-industrial urban tourist space' (Torres 2002: 97). Also during the 1990s, tourism developers began looking beyond Cancun, away from its Caribbean landscape, past its white sands and exclusive enclaves, towards the Mayan Riviera where luxury in parallel to culture could be promoted. Of course, it must be borne in mind that, in Cancun, cultural spaces have too been promoted. Yet, while Mayan ruins, such as those of *Chichen-Itzá* and *Tulum* did feature in the marketing of Cancun, these ruins were by no means the primary focus of the marketing of Cancun itself. As additional cultural markers to Cancun's primary product, i.e. its 'sun and beach' setting, Mayan ruins were often incorporated into hotel resorts themselves as for example, in the case of the *Yamil Lu'um*, an ancient archaeological site, which only could, at the time, be accessed through the Sheraton Cancun Resort. Hotels were also built with a 'Mayan architectural style' in mind. For example, the 'Hotel Casa Maya', built in 1980, featured a 'Mayan-style' façade in an attempt to market itself as locally 'authentic', a strategy replicated in 1987 by the 'Royal Mayan Resort' and many others who seek to ostensibly embrace 'culture' in their commercial ethos. By the middle 2000s, approximately 20 destinations in the Mayan Riviera were marked as 'tourist zones' – these included secluded 5 star resorts, smaller 'green' accommodation facilities, sites of 'authentic' Mayan culture, ancient Mayan ruins, ecological and marine 'megaparks,' and local urban areas (Torres 2002: 97). While not the primary object of the region's self-representation, ideas of culture, particularly of 'Mayan culture', have increasingly featured within the regions' repertoire of tourist attractions. As I will go on to illustrate in Chapter Five, by including Mayan architectural styles and incorporating elements of 'Mayan culture' in their entertainment programmes, for example, hotels in the region have sought to add a 'cultural' dimension to their product.

On the whole, Cancun's image during its first 25 years relied little on ideas of culture. As I noted above, local inhabitants were made invisible, not only via their segregation in the mainland, but also by the structural organization of the service industry, which relegated workers to the background, thereby producing what Hiernaux-Nicolas characterized as a seemingly floating tourist playground (1999).

That is not to say that culture played no role in the promotion of Cancun. Ancient Mayan ruins in the region were renovated together with the building of hotels as planners foresaw that they would become tourist attractions in their own right.

### 3.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to provide an overview of the evolution of Mexico's tourism industry and of the historical contexts onto which US tourism to Mexico came to be established. It examined a number of important steps that were taken by Mexico's government officials to set the groundwork for the development and subsequent expansion of tourism to the country. It looked at the way in which the development of large-scale of mass transportation (e.g. automobiles, airplanes), the extension of roads, and the passing of important measures by federal and local authorities to assist the expansion of tourist flows all contributed to increasingly number of international tourists began visiting Mexico. The chapter also discussed the development of tourism in Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, Cancun and the Mayan Riviera – three of Mexico's most popular international tourist destinations.

As the next chapter will illustrate, the mobilization of ideas of culture within the rapidly shifting sociopolitical backdrops of Mexico and the US has considerably impacted the discourse through which tourism has been promoted and its object ultimately represented. For example, in an attempt to capture a tourist market that increasingly demands place-differentiation and culture, ideas of Mexicanness have been mobilized and incorporated within tourist destinations' promotional material and narratives. Places like Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende have thus been refurbished as geographically bound emblems of Mexican culture. Destinations such as Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, which, undoubtedly possess dramatically different landscapes, aesthetics, and cultural capital, have equally embraced ideas of culture as additional element to their allure. Indeed, culture has become increasingly prominent in the promotion of diverse Mexican tourist locales, illustrating how the tourist gaze with which Mexico has been represented has transformed to suit different historical periods and institutionalized imaginaries of culture. As culture has come to represent an additional avenue for expanding Mexico's tourism industry, the register employed for describing Mexico as an object of touristic interest has changed, its destinations as sites for touristic consumption evolving against an ever-shifting social, political, and economic backdrop.

Particular discursive tropes, representations, and imaginative geographies have gained precedence or become hegemonic within US tourism discourses to Mexico. Indeed, many of the imaginaries through which Mexico and Mexican culture

are today represented in US travel discourse bear visible traces of their earlier forms. As I will argue in Chapter Four, contemporary US imaginaries of Mexico, like those subsumed within travel books, consists of a palimpsest of the imaginaries of earlier generations of writers and travelers. From the early nineteenth-century texts to late twentieth century, for example, travel books have tended to reproduce many of the same understandings while retaining a discourse that, one can argue, draws from various nationalist ideologies and narratives. Contemporary travel books to Mexico, as I will illustrate in the following chapter, nevertheless continue to draw from the same palette to paint Mexico as an alluring tourist destination and Mexicans as objects of a '*tourist gaze*' by calling upon a discourse centered on national differences and culturalistic renditions of Mexicans as Other.



*Chapter*

# FOUR

## TRAVEL BOOKS

### INTRODUCTION

Imaginaries of Mexico contained within travel books call on a diverse set of representations, tropes, and conceptual frameworks. Here, one can find ideas of Mexico as a country permeated by Otherness and of Mexicans as characterized by a particular sociocultural matrix that defines them – indeed, that fixes them – within a predetermined set of traits and behaviors. As this and the next two chapters will illustrate, many of these representations are couched within a set of ideologies and understandings that mobilize nationalism and culturalism to depict Mexico as possessing a unique ‘Mexican culture’ that defines its population in the singular. To tap into the repository of ideas and narratives that are called upon by travel books to describe Mexico and its population, this chapter explores a selection of popular US travel books from the early nineteenth century to the contemporary period. While providing a systematic analysis of travel books is beyond the scope of this chapter and this thesis as a whole, the aim of this chapter is to trace the evolution of some of the most prevalent conceptual frameworks and discursive tropes through which US travel books have characterized Mexico as an object of the tourist gaze.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, I conceive of travel books as representing a category of texts that encompasses guidebooks and travelogues (or travel memoirs). I do this while aware that, to some, guidebooks and travelogues represent two different genres. Both types of text, for example, tend to differ in terms of style, structure, and content (with travelogues usually involving first-person autobiographical narratives that chronicle an individual’s travels to/through a particular foreign setting and guidebooks writing to present a more objective gaze that omits the author’s voice in an attempt to provide impartial advice and accurate up-to date information). I consider both types of texts as belonging to the larger category of travel books however, because of the fluid nature of the boundary between travel writing genres (i.a. between guidebooks, travel guides, travelogues, and travel memoirs) and because of the fact that they all can be argued to act as mediators of Otherness.

Cohen used the term 'culture brokers' to refer to tour guides' role as mediators of cultural difference in the context of tourism (Cohen 1985). The usage of this term, I argue, is pertinent to the present discussion because, much like tour guides, travel books are involved in the construction and maintenance of specific imaginaries by selecting, interpreting, and guiding tourists through foreign sights and sites deemed by their authors as worthy of tourists' attention (*ibid*). It is, of course, important to bear in mind that both travel books and travel guides are constantly evolving, reflecting, as they do, changing social and historical backdrops. As a result, the discourse contained within these texts, their audience, and the ways in which they are consumed differ. As Jack and Phipps point out, for example, travel was a 'class-based phenomenon' during late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe when guides like those of *Baedeker* gained utmost popularity. Unlike later travel guides like those I discuss later in this chapter, travel guides at the turn of the twentieth century (like the *Baedeker*) were primarily used by travelling elite as a resource through which to determine which sites were and which were not appropriate for their consumption (Jack and Phipps, 2003: 284). With the rise of mass tourism, however, travel guides changed in order to cater to a wider, more diverse audience. At the same time as mass tourism began to gain momentum, alternative tourist guides also began emerging and the voices involved in the construction of imaginative geographies of foreign destinations exponentially grew.

This chapter is broken down into two parts. The first section of Part One, Section 4.1, looks at early nineteenth century to late twentieth century travel books. It lays the groundwork for my discussion of contemporary books, which unfolds in the second part of this chapter. Section 4.1.1 looks at early nineteenth-century texts written as descriptive and historical analyses of Mexico around the time of its independence. While not written as travel books *per se*, I consider Alexander Von Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*<sup>32</sup> (1811) and William Hickling Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico with a Preliminary View of Ancient Mexican Civilization, and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortes* (1843) as falling within said category because of their common usage as 'guides' by individuals traveling to Mexico from the US during this period. My discussion here centers on the discursive tropes through which these texts, drawing from socio-scientific understandings and ideologies common at the time of their publication, describe Mexico and its inhabitants. Section 4.1.2 then looks at late nineteenth-century guidebooks. After briefly discussing the emergence of this style of text and its impact on subsequent publications, I examine the case of *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1884) and *Campbell's New Revisited Complete Guide and Descriptive Book of Mexico* (1899), focusing on the ways in which they describe Mexico and its native population and calling attention

to their espousal of fundamentally culturalistic understandings of the country which at times echo essentialist and reductionist representations of Mexico like those discussed in Section 4.1. Section 4.1.3 then considers how two early twentieth century travel books – Charles Macomb Flandrau’s *Viva Mexico!* (1908) and *Terry’s Guide to Mexico* (1909) – portray Mexico and its rapidly shifting sociopolitical context. Because of the popularity of the latter guidebook at the time of its publication and its widespread usage by US tourists visiting Mexico, this section also examines the 1943 edition of *Terry’s Guide to Mexico*, illustrating how the register used to describe Mexico changed in the decades following its first edition. Finally, Section 4.1.4, focuses on a selection of mid-to-late twentieth-century travel books, examining how certain tropes and narratives about Mexico and its population became cemented in the discourse through which Mexico came to be represented in twenty-first century travel books. In this last section, my focus centers on the *People’s Guide to Mexico* (1976), *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* (1982), and *Mexico: the Rough Guide* (1985).

Part Two, which begins with Section 4.2, focuses on some of the most popular contemporary travel books to Mexico available in the US<sup>33</sup>. In contrast to Section 4.1 of this chapter, my discussion here is divided first thematically, and then, geographically, according the different sites where I conducted my fieldwork. This is because I explore a number of recurrent discursive tropes through which contemporary travel books represent Mexico and its inhabitants. As such, my discussion in this part of the chapter is less on the evolution of travel books’ representations of Mexico as it is on the present manifestation of contemporary representations and understandings of the country and its population. Section 4.2.1, therefore, opens by looking at US travel books’ characterization of contemporary Mexico as quintessentially foreign and, though ‘paradoxically near,’ inescapably Other. Section 4.2.2 then builds on this discussion by considering a series of discursive tropes that draw from specific conceptual configurations of ‘identity,’ ‘life,’ ‘time,’ and ‘psyche’ which travel books, I argue, append to Mexicans’ character in a seemingly unproblematic fashion. In Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, I look at travel books’ representation of Mexican culture and society as socioculturally plural yet nevertheless affixed to a territorially bound Mexican ‘national culture’. Here, I analyze travel books’ descriptions of the three specific sites where I conducted my fieldwork in an attempt to examine whether, in the context of Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende (Section 4.2.3) and Cancun/Mayan Riviera (Section 4.2.4), these more localized travel books adopt similar reductionist narratives of Mexican culture discussed in the preceding sections.

## PART ONE

### 4.1 NINETEENTH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY US TRAVEL BOOKS TO MEXICO

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, during Spain's colonial reign over the territory that went on to become Mexico, little was known in the US about what lay beyond its southern border. Travel, particularly leisure travel, was practically nonexistent at this point in history<sup>34</sup>. In 1821, after Mexico achieved its independence from Spain, few resources were available to those wanting to learn about the newly established independent territory prior to venturing inside it. Over the coming decades, two books became widely referenced for their ability to shed light on people's largely 'blank' imaginaries of the country and its population (Gunn 1974: 12): Alexander Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) and William Hickling Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843). The importance of these books was such that, when guidebooks and travelogues first emerged in the late nineteenth century, they cited Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* and Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* as indispensable resources for learning about the country's history and that of its population. As I will discuss below, the early travel books that emerged at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century paved the way for the emergence of a series of travel books that contributed to illuminating people's imaginaries of Mexico in the US. This, argued the *New York Times* in 1910, represented a task of utmost importance given that,

notwithstanding the cordial relation between the two countries, the immense amount of American capital that has been invested there, the constantly increasing stream of tourists who have discovered for themselves the interesting possibilities of the land... and the many books about Mexico that have lately been published, the people of this country are, in general, remarkably ignorant about their neighbor to the south (*New York Times* 1910: np).

However, as discussed in the previous chapter, it was not until in the middle of the twentieth century, during Mexico's 'golden era' of tourism, that the discourse through which Mexico was represented took a turn towards 'culture'. Prior to this point in history, ideas of culture, as I noted in Chapter Three, were rarely mobilized in the context of travel books' descriptions of Mexico's population. Instead, concepts like 'caste', 'civilization', and 'race' were tied to Mexicans and treated as socio-psychological elements of their character. It was, I argue, these categories of social

categorization (i.e. caste, civilization, and race) that paved the way for later understandings of culture in tourism discourse, providing the foundation to the ensuing naturalization of the concept of 'Mexican culture'. In this section, I will focus on early representations of Mexicans and how these went on to inform later representations of Mexican culture found in contemporary guidebooks to Mexico. I will discuss how certain narratives, by fusing culture with society and nation, went on to become an unquestionable attribute of the imaginaries through which Mexico became represented in US travel books. To illustrate the progression and evolution of these ideas, I trace their origins by going back to Von Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811),<sup>35</sup> a text that provided one of the earliest accounts of Mexico's inhabitants available in the US.

#### 4.1.1 EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY: EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY TEXTS

Though largely written as a socio-scientific and descriptive text of the region and its inhabitants, Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) was often used by travelers to orient and guide them through Mexico. Indeed, Alfred Conkling, author of *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1994), one of the first guidebooks to the country, wrote of Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* as a 'standard book' for readers to learn about Mexico (1884: 142), referencing it throughout *Appleton's Guide* to lend support to his own observations. While an in-depth discussion of Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) transcends the scope of this thesis, an examination of his representation of New Spain's inhabitants is central to the present discussion as it comprised the cornerstone of early understandings of the country's sociocultural milieu.

Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) was made up of six 'books'. The second of these books was titled *The People* and contained a description of the racial and social composition of the population of New Spain. This was a population that, Von Humboldt argued, was composed of seven races. All of these races, he wrote, fell within four greater castes: 'the whites, comprehended under the general name of Spaniards, the negroes, the Indians, and men of mixed extraction' (Von Humboldt 1811: 97). One of Von Humboldt's main objectives within his *Political Essay* was to present a comprehensive portrayal of the penultimate case in the above list, i.e. the 'Indians' who he also called 'Mexican natives' or peoples of the 'copper-colored race.' Indians, he wrote, typically feature, 'flat and smooth hair, small beard, squat body... red coppery color and dark, luminous and coarse and glossy hair' (*ibid*). Following a lengthy discussion of the social and scientific achievements of the ancient Aztecs and Mayans, Von Humboldt then set out to delineate the 'native' character and social pre-dispositions of Mexicans of his day by writing that,

the better sort of Indians, amongst whom a certain degree of intellectual culture might be presupposed, perished in great part at the commencement of the Spanish Conquest (1811: 117).

The 'remaining natives', he argued,

consisted only of the most indigent race, poor cultivators, artisans, among whom were a great number of weavers, porters who were used like beasts of burden ... [and] crowds of beggars (ibid)

In other words, he wrote, they represented the 'miserable remains of a powerful people' (1811: 63). For Von Humboldt, the copper-color of Mexico's native population was an emblem of their character. He labeled and characterized Mexico's native population as possessing a series of innate characteristics as a product of their 'copper colored race.' Indeed, he wrote that they were inherently, 'grave, melancholic, and silent' (1811: 122), 'indolent from nature' (1811: 139), and, 'lazy, careless and sober' (1811: 176-177). As a race, he also argued, the Mexican Indians were, 'destitute of imagination' (1811: 128) regardless of whether or not they managed to attain 'a certain degree of civilization' (1811: 128).

Von Humboldt's labeling and characterization of Mexico's native population as belonging to the 'copper-colored race' was by no means arbitrary. The unproblematic conflation of race and physiognomy with particular temperaments and dispositions that Von Humboldt ascribed to Mexico's native peoples resounded with the ideas delineated by Linnaeus almost half a century before him<sup>36</sup>. Linnaeus' famous list of the distinct types of *homo sapiens* saw physiognomy as directly linked to intellect and character so that, for example, the 'copper-colored' peoples of the Americas, Linnaeus wrote, could be distinguished by their 'black, straight, thick [hair], [wide] nostrils, face harsh, scanty [beard]' (Pratt 1992: 32). They were categorized as inherently, 'obstinate, content, free' (ibid) and 'regulated by custom' (ibid).<sup>37</sup>

The fusion of race with social disposition drew largely from the notion that 'differences in levels of culture or civilization which occurred amongst the diverse peoples of the world [derive] from differences in their biological capacities' (Degler 1991: 61). Von Humboldt's discourse on Mexico's inhabitants can be argued to have been largely rooted in the prevalence of the above ideas amongst the Euro-American socio-scientific thought prevalent during the era in which he wrote. As Pratt notes, these ideas were tied to hegemonic Euro-American understandings of race in the nineteenth century; ideas that were grounded in notions of European superiority. Along these lines, the fusion of race with character became instrumental to providing the ideological grounds necessary for the politico-economic oppression of native

populations who were deemed intrinsically 'uncivilized', 'uncultured' and unable to 'develop' or exploit their resources without Euro-American intervention (Pratt 1992:32).

Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) was widely referenced as a *bona fide* source of information on Mexico and its inhabitants and, as I will illustrate below, influenced subsequent understandings of the country for years to come, fundamentally shaping the manner in which Mexico was imagined and subsequently represented.

In 1843, another text was published which was quickly labeled a 'must read' for those interested in learning about Mexico: *History of the Conquest of Mexico with a Preliminary View of Ancient Mexican Civilization, and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortes* (1843). Authored by William Hickling Prescott, a US-born scholar and one of the most renowned historians in the country at the time, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, was written as a in-depth account of Mexico's history and went on to become one of the most influential historical tomes on Latin America during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Much like Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) Prescott's *History of the Conquest* was commonly used by those interested in learning about Mexico and/or in traveling to the country with a better understanding of its people, their history, and the country's social backdrop. Like Humboldt, Prescott described the grandeur of the country's ancient civilizations, particularly that of the Aztecs (who he wrote of as having represented a 'semi-civilized' or 'imperfectly civilized' race) discussing their political, scientific and intellectual achievements as largely a thing of the past. According to Prescott, the aim of Cortes (the Spanish conquistador who invaded New Spain and initiated the Conquest) and of the Spanish conquistadors that accompanied him, was not merely to assert their power *per se*; their aim, he wrote, was also to 'build a more magnificent capital on its ruins...[and introduce] there a more improved culture and a higher civilization' (1843: 343).

On the whole, Prescott's account ascribed to what Ringe called, 'the nineteenth-century idea of progress' (Ringe 1953: 455) by representing the Conquest of Mexico as denotative of 'the superiority of Western civilization over the morally and technically inferior Aztec culture' (*ibid*). Also like Von Humboldt, Prescott mobilized a 'myth of the pristine' (Sluyter 2006) by writing about the 'emptiness' of Mexico's indigenous peoples at the time and the abandonment and general barren nature of the country's landscapes. According to Prescott, vast empty and uninhabited fields and valleys were characteristic of the geography of Mexico. As such, he argued, their potential for (European-led) development was notable. In addition to Mexico's landscape being 'pristine,' he wrote of native Mexicans (those who had survived the

Spanish Conquest) as 'degenerate descendants' of the enlightened Aztec civilization and as lounging among the masterpieces of art which [they have] scarcely taste enough to admire, speaking the language of those still more imperishable monuments of literature which [they have] hardly capacity to comprehend' (Prescott 1843: 33). On the whole, Prescott wrote, the native population of Mexico represented 'a conquered race,' one which, after years of 'tyrannical oppression' and 'Spanish domination' had had its numbers 'silently melted away [and] their energies.... broken' (1843: 34). Echoing early understandings about Europeans as an innately superior race vis-à-vis Indians, Prescott wrote that it was precisely because of the Spanish that Mexican natives of his time were later able to 'live under a better system of laws, a more assured tranquility, a purer faith' (1843: *ibid*); in a system able to assuage the 'wilderness' inherent in their 'hardy character' (*ibid*). As with Von Humboldt's earlier writings, these extracts from Prescott's *History of the Conquest* reflect the prevailing ideas of Mexico at the time, an, as I will go on to show below, paved the way for subsequent representations of the country.

#### 4.1.2 LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY TRAVEL BOOKS

The first guidebook to Mexico, published shortly after the inauguration of the Mexican Railway and a few months before the completion of the railway network linking the US to Mexico, was *Appleton's<sup>38</sup> Guide to Mexico* (1884) (Burton 2005). Written by Alfred Conkling, *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* combined travel advice with historical and practical information about Mexico in an attempt to 'form a compendium of general information for the use of travelers as well as settlers' (1884: iv). In the introduction to the text, Conkling emphasized the importance of creating such a compendium after noting that

while many volumes of history and of general observation and travel relating to Mexico have, from time to time, been published, no book of this description is known to exist (*ibid*).

The need for this type of text, Conkling wrote, became apparent to him when

during a professional visit to the Mexican Republic... the author experienced from day to day, and frequently from hour to hour, the want of a compendious guidebook (1884: iii).

Conkling's reference to the genre of the guidebook, and indeed, his very positioning of his book as falling within said genre, could be argued to have been

inspired by his extensive travels through Europe where, at the time, guidebooks were becoming increasingly popular (Burton 2005). As Bruce noted, one guidebook in particular – the *Baedeker* – represented ‘the standard guidebook for middle-class North European travel’ in the latter half of the nineteenth century’ (Bruce 2010: 93). While Bruce does indeed comment that it is unclear whether Karl Baedeker, its founder, ‘was the “inventor” of the formal tourist guidebook, or only its popularizer,’ (ibid), the fact is that, for much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the *Baedeker* came to symbolize ‘the guidebook as the authority for travel behavior’ (ibid). According to Koshar, such was the success of the *Baedeker* guidebooks that, in 1880, ‘Baedeker became acknowledged as ‘the prince of guidebook makers’ (2002: 119). Published in Germany, nineteenth-century editions of the *Baedeker* travel guides were written in German, English, and French and covered several different European countries. Koshar located the success of the *Baedeker* guidebook series in their reliability (particularly in the context of European travel destinations), their detailed description of each destination’s history, geography, and flora and fauna, and their inclusion of comprehensive high-quality maps (2002). Interestingly, Koshar also noted that the text’s description of local inhabitants tended to be ‘cursory’ (2002: 121), a phenomenon that, he argued, was open to further exploration.

*Appleton’s Guide to Mexico* (1884) was written following the style of the *Baedeker* – as a handbook, one divided into discrete sections that discussed different topics related to travel to the country (i.a. general information, weights and measures, routes of travel, maps, an in-depth discussion of particular cities, etc.). However, in the context of the present discussion, it is important to note that Conkling’s description of Mexico’s population was minimal, as it was limited to a brief mention of Mexico’s inhabitants as falling within the ‘four great castes’ outlined by authors like Von Humboldt and Prescott, i.e.:

whites (individuals born in Europe, Spanish creoles born in America); Indians; negroes; a mixed race (mestizos from whites and Indians, mulattoes from whites and negroes, zambos from Indians and negroes) (1884: 68).

Aside from the above, *Appleton’s Guide to Mexico* (1884) did not include an in-depth discussion of the character of each of the above races as such<sup>39</sup>. What the text did suggest, however, was that tourists should limit their interaction with locals to instances when a particular service was sought, i.a. when needing transport, when

wanting to hire local laborers, or when wanting to purchase particular items, like foodstuffs or jewelry. To learn about Mexico's population, *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1884) recommended a number of what it called 'standard books' on the country, amongst them: Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* and Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (ibid: 142-143). While *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* did not explicitly write about Mexico's inhabitants at any great length, however, the text did repeatedly refer to the notion that it was because of foreigners that the country had been able to advance. Noting the links between Mexico and the US, *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* commented that,

since the year 1880, a large amount of capital has been invested...by citizens of the United States [and] an unprecedented number of the English-speaking races have visited that country either as tourists, or as explorers with a view to an actual settlement and a permanent residence (1884: iii).

The text then proceeded to note the social and linguistic interconnections between Mexico and the US by writing, for example, that 'Americans are gradually introducing their inventions into Mexico' (1884: 141), that individuals of the highest classes commonly sent their sons to the US to be educated (1884: 138), that Mexican businessmen were increasingly studying English (ibid), and that those of the higher classes dressed according to European and American fashions, discarding the 'national' dress of the lower classes (1884: 127)<sup>40</sup>. The text then noted several 'advancements' that had recently taken place in Mexico thanks to Spanish influence, i.a. the exploitation of Mexico's natural resources (1884: 76), the introduction of shops (1884: 129), the adoption of advanced agricultural methods (1884: 145), the development of the country's education system (1884: 143), and the increasing availability of hotels with modern amenities and goods suitable for foreign (especially US) travelers (1884: 50). From the onset, the text made clear its conviction that the only way forward, that is, the only way Mexico could advance, was with the help of Europeans and Americans (which, as I discussed in Chapter Three, was common in US narratives of Mexico at the time). Indeed, all of Mexico's developments and the progress it had undergone following its independence, *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* credited to 'white' European/US settlers, for instance, when writing that, 'it is hardly necessary to remark that the land will be best developed by the immigration of skilled farmers from Europe and the United States' (1884: 99). Foreign capital, he commented, 'may be advantageously invested in Mexico' (1884: 142), particularly in the context of,

[the] manufacture of hardware and machinery... improvement of harbors and the construction of wharves... organization of district-telegraph, telephone, and electric-light companies... erecting hotels with all the modern conveniences (first-class hotels are very rare)... and in] the culture of sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, and fruit (1884:142).

Throughout *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1884), Mexico was represented as largely pristine and 'open' to foreign investment and management. At the same time, its local population – especially those who were labeled as belonging to an Indian, negro or mixed race – were kept outside the confines of the text's discussion; deemed unworthy of mention beyond the context of their catering to foreign visitors and settlers. On the whole, the imaginaries espoused and promoted by *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1884), much like those found in Von Humboldt's *Political Essay* (1811) and Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1846), relied upon the 'colonial pristine myth,' one that reproduced the image of Mexico as 'backward, static, and empty' and as unable to progress (and attain the status of fully 'civilized') without foreign assistance and intervention (Sluyter 2006: 96).

At the time of its publication, *Appleton's Guide to Mexico* (1884) was 'greatly praised in contemporary reviews as meeting a long-felt want' (Burton 2005: np). In fact, its success was such that it 'prompted other writers to try their luck at producing a comprehensive guide to Mexico' (ibid). One of these writers was Reau Campbell, an American writer who, 'after the experiences of a decade of travel in Mexico,' (1895: i) published *Campbell's Complete Guide and Descriptive Book of Mexico* in 1895, a book that, four years later, was re-launched as *Campbell's New Revisited Complete Guide and Descriptive Book of Mexico*<sup>41</sup>. Like Conkling, Campbell included a preface to the above two editions by emphasizing the difficulties travelers often endured when travelling in Mexico without a comprehensive guidebook. He wrote that,

[it] is the early traveler in a country who knows the real need of a guide and descriptive book, from the fact that his journeys are made, perforce, without one, and he is compelled to find the places and things as best he can...[to] find these places and things, of which one may have only heard, is not unattended by difficulties (1895: i).

Precisely to remedy these difficulties, Campbell sought to provide a 'complete and descriptive' overview of Mexico in his guidebooks, where he focused primarily

on providing readers with knowledge of the country's 'cities and towns, of its mountains, valleys and spreading plains, and of its history and legend' (1899: iii).

*Campbell's Complete Guide and Descriptive Book of Mexico* (1895) and subsequent editions of the text opened by paying tribute to Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, doing so without mentioning Prescott by name, presenting instead a passage from his *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843:15) inside the reflective lure of quotation marks (illustrating in this way the normalization of his narrative, in the context of taken for granted representations of Mexico at the time). Here, Campbell wrote that,

[these] descriptions have been written under the spell; in the presence of an atmosphere of romantic adventure; while loitering in the fields of the Conquest; under the shadow of ruined temples, whose describing by the ancient chronicler suffices, and of which no more is known to-day than then, when it was written by him [i.e. Prescott] that those temples were 'the work of a people which had passed away, under the assaults of barbarism, at a period prior to all traditions, leaving no name, and no trace of their existence, have become the riddle of later generations (1899: iii-iv).

Unlike Prescott, Von Humboldt, and, to a lesser extent, Conkling, Campbell did not present a thorough racial profile of the inhabitants of Mexico. What he did do however, was describe the different classes of 'Mexicans' that travelers could expect to encounter when visiting the country. Different classes, Campbell wrote, wore different types of 'costumes' so that, for example, 'ladies of high degree' (1899: 57) wore, 'the Spanish mantilla of black or white lace... and the Spanish costume from shoulder to high-heeled pointed slipper' (*ibid*) while 'the middle classes wear a black *tápalo*, a shawl which is both wrap and head gear [and] the lower classes and Indian maidens wear ...the *rebozo* [a type of cotton or woolen shawl]' (*ibid*). While *Campbell's New Revisited Book of Mexico* (1899) did not distinguish between the character and social disposition of the 'different classes of Mexicans' at any great length, the text argued that, Mexicans, in general, were,

a music-loving people, whose souls are moved by a concord of sweet sounds, and if love of music is the test, few Mexicans are fit for treason, stratagems and spoils (1899: 58).

However, *Campbell's New Revisited Book of Mexico* inclusion of several photographs depicting Mexican people in their 'natural' state are worthy of note. Many of the

images included in *Campbell's New Revisited Book of Mexico* (1899), reaffirmed existing understandings, validating for example Prescott's idea that modern Mexicans are 'lounging among the masterpieces of art which [they have] scarcely taste enough to admire [and]... hardly capacity to comprehend' (Prescott 1843: 33) (see: Figure 1).

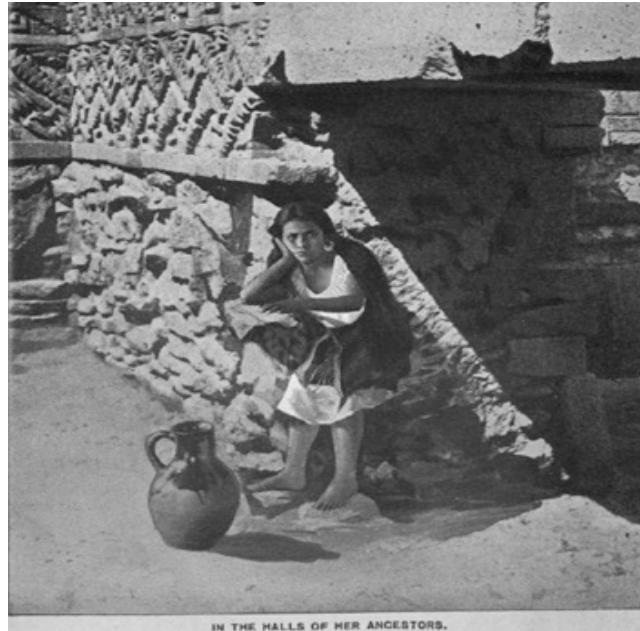


Figure 1: 'In the Hall of her Ancestors', taken from Campbell 1899: 42

By alluding, in its preface, to Prescott's idea that the cultural legacy of contemporary Mexicans had long been extinguished, and by including images like the above, *Campbell's New Revisited Book of Mexico*, I argue, contributed to the representation of Mexico's indigenous inhabitants as culturally orphaned, as, living in the 'fields of the Conquest.'

#### 4.1.3 EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TRAVEL BOOKS

Two important travel books emerged in the US in the early twentieth century: Charles Macomb Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* (1908) and Thomas Phillip Terry's *Terry's Guide to Mexico* (1909). While the former represented a travelogue (or travel memoir) and the latter a more traditional guidebook (one following in the footsteps of Baedeker, Conkling and Campbell), *Viva Mexico!* (1908) and *Terry's Mexico* (1909) were both christened by reviewers as essential resources to learn about Mexico prior to traveling to the country. I will begin my discussion of these two texts by first looking at the former.

Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* was highly acclaimed and well-received at the time of its publication and, indeed, some went so far as to argue that, at the time of its release, it represented 'perhaps the best travel book ever written by an American' (Haeg 2004). Flandrau, an American novelist, wrote *Viva Mexico!* (1908) to chronicle his five-year stay in the Mexican state of Veracruz, where he managed his brother's coffee plantation. The book was written as a personal narrative, with Flandrau providing a series of descriptions and observations about the places and peoples he encountered during his stay in Mexico. For Flandrau, Mexico represented a 'mysterious, fascinating affair' (1921: 20)<sup>42</sup>. It was, he wrote, a country characterized by its 'lovely views, its outrageous climate, its mysterious people, [and] its insidious fascination' (1921: 100). Mexico's 'indisputable charm,' he wrote, was rooted in the fact that, '*no hay reglas fijas*' (1921: 67); in other words, in that 'everyone's experience is different, and everyone, in a sense, is a pioneer groping his way' (*ibid*). One can argue that, by giving his book a Spanish-language title and asserting the above statement in Spanish, Flandrau sought to symbolically underline its local validity, lending in this way further authenticity and a patina of cultural foreignness to his statement (a statement that, as I will discuss in the below, was reproduced verbatim in subsequent guidebooks again to assert its validity, albeit in an entirely different context.) According to Salazar, this switch or 'swap' between languages can be read as an attempt to add an 'authentically local flavor' to an individual's description of a given destination. As such, he writes, '[t]he value of the local language... is less in its utility as a medium for communication than in its symbolic or metonymic representation of the foreignness of the destination' (Salazar 2011: 82; see also Jaworski and Thurlow 1994: 315 and Thurlow and Jaworski 2010).

Describing the Mexicans of his day, Flandrau wrote that they were the result of a 'mixture of Spaniard and tropical Indian' (1921: 26). The 'exotic physiognomy' of 'pure blooded Indians,' he then remarked, invariably struck Euro-American travelers 'as being an extraordinarily ornamental race' (1921: 28). In his description of contemporary Mexico, Flandrau highlighted the country's linguistic diversity by noting that Mexicans 'speak more than fifty totally different languages and many of them have never learned Spanish' (1921: 254). In addition, he emphasized the growing presence of English when commenting that Mexicans, especially the wealthy, 'are becoming more and more interested in English and are everywhere studying the language' (1921: 192).

Their linguistic diversity notwithstanding, Flandrau made a series of comments about Mexicans that, far from painting them as socioculturally diverse, called upon a series of understandings rooted in essentialized renditions of their

character as largely homogenous. He wrote, for example, that Mexicans were inherently passionate (1921: 90) and frequently emotional (1921: 67) and that Mexicans, 'from peon to professional man, conduct their affairs as if everybody were going to live...ten thousand years!' (1921: 43-44). He added that of 'what we know as 'energy,' I have seen little or nothing...[because] the desire to get anything done does not exist' (*ibid*). Wanting to remove his understandings from what he considered to be foreigners' unfair and uninformed representations of Mexicans however, Flandrau went on to delineate a series of stereotypes US tourists commonly ascribed to Mexicans at that time. Amongst them, he wrote, was the representation of Mexicans as, 'the laziest people in the world' (1921: 34), 'treacherous and dishonest' (1921: 34), and as superficially polite, that is, not polite 'from the heart' (1921: 35). Flandrau, challenged the above stereotypes by writing, for example, that,

many [Mexicans] are extremely industrious, many of them work, when they do work, as hard and as long as it is possible for human beings to bear fatigue (1921: 43).

In addition to calling attention to some of the stereotypes that were commonly appended to Mexicans by foreigners, Flandrau discussed the rapid social and developmental changes that Mexico was undergoing at the time. He did so nostalgically, reminiscing about a 'traditional' Mexico that he felt was too quickly fading. According to Flandrau, 'the mixture of nationalities has had a noticeable influence upon many native characteristics' (1921:36) and the growing presence of foreign capital, tourists, and settlers (most of them originating from the US), was 'de-Mexicanizing' much of the country (1921: 284). Tourists, he wrote, were partly to blame for this because they increasingly expected – indeed demanded – to find in Mexico, 'some of the frills of civilization,' i.e. luxurious hotels, 'smart' restaurants, an embarrassing choice of cafes and theaters' (1921: 284).

As a result of the rising wave of tourism to Mexico, Flandrau commented that each year from January to March, 'immense parties of 'personally conducted' tourists from the United States, 'invaded' Mexico (1921:222), much to the detriment of the areas that they visited. Flandrau provided the following account to encapsulate his unequivocal disdain of several practices undertaken by US tourists (an account that, as I will illustrate in the rest of this chapter and the following two chapters, in many ways was echoed in later ideas and understandings of tourism, the commodification of culture, and the relationship between tourism and the loss of authenticity):

I have seen...undoubtedly respectable women from my country with enormous straw sombreros on their heads, and about their shoulders

those brilliant and hideous 'Mexican' *sarapes* – woven for the tourist trade, it is said, in Germany... In Mexico the only possible circumstance under which a native woman of any position whatever would wear a peon hat would be a hot day in the depths of the country, were she forced to travel in an open vehicle or on horseback. As for *sarapes*, they, of course, are worn only by men. The effect these travelers produced upon the local mind was somewhat analogous to that which a party of Mexican ladies would produce upon the mind of New Yorkers should they decide to drive up Fifth Avenue wearing policemen's helmets and variegated trousers (1921: 224-226).

But it was not only tourists who Flandrau felt were 'de-Mexicanizing' Mexico. It was also US settlers. American 'colonies,' he wrote, i.e. spaces occupied by Americans who 'manage mines or plantations or railways, or the local interests of some manufacturing or business concern in the United States' (1921: 218), had become fixtures of many of Mexico's cities, particularly its capital. Together, the presence of US settlers and tourists was so ubiquitous that, Flandrau wrote, it became commonplace to meet,

Americans – both men and women – on the streets, in hotels, in shops, strolling or sitting in the plaza – almost everywhere in the course of the day's work, and in the course of the day's play (1921: 218).

In 1909, a year after Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* was published, *Terry's Mexico* was released. Assembled after 'years of travel and personal observation and experience' (1911: iii), this guidebook, from its very first edition, became a widely consulted resource among tourists traveling to Mexico. Indeed, its 1911 edition, the edition I will focus on below, was given overwhelmingly positive reviews and was commended by most major newspapers in the US. *The New York Evening Post* and *The Philadelphia Ledger*, for example, applauded it for its 'interesting and accurate information' while *The Milwaukee Free Press* remarked that 'whatever it behooves the invader of Mexico to know, has been set out in orderly sequence by the compiler of *Terry's Mexico*' (Terry: 1911: 600). According to the *Chicago Record-Herald*:

here at last is a complete guidebook...the 240 pages of introductory matter are in themselves a valuable treatise on the main features of Mexico and on the things that the intending visitor should know (1911: 600).

In addition to praising *Terry's Mexico* (1911) for the usefulness of its information in the context of tourism, the text was also applauded for its ability to

impart knowledge about Mexico to those merely wanting to learn more about the country, without necessarily intending to visit it, thus illustrating the guide's wider relevance to American imaginaries of Mexico. *The New York Times*, for example, wrote that *Terry's Mexico* (1911) was 'indispensable to a traveler in Mexico who wishes to get the most possible out of his journey' but also useful to 'the stay at home who wants to enlighten his ignorance' (ibid). Both types of audiences, the newspaper remarked, 'will find it so comprehensive in its account of all the doings of both man and nature in Mexico, past and present, as to encompass all ordinary needs' (ibid).

By the first half of the twentieth century, as the above extracts illustrate, guidebooks had become a largely normalized resource for travel advice and information. Drawing attention to Baedeker (who, as I discussed above, is generally credited with having founded the traditional guidebook as such), *Terry's Mexico* opened by stating that:

[t]he author considers the Baedeker form of guide-book to be the best in existence, and, having followed that model in the physical make-up of the present volume, he desired to acknowledge most gratefully his indebtedness (1911: v).

According to Terry, Mexico was a country that represented an ideal tourist destination because it was not only easy to access but, once there, 'travelling is cheap, comfortable and safe; English is widely spoken; and in point of picturesqueness and historical interest it has few equals' (1911: iii). Mexico, the text proceeded, is a 'land of striking contrasts' (ibid) 'with an artistic and intellectual past' (ibid); a country that, 'possesses a character and an individuality peculiarly interesting to the thoughtful traveler' (ibid).

Within what the *Chicago Record-Herald* called *Terry's Mexico*'s '240 pages of introductory matter', an entire section was devoted to discussing what its author called 'Intercourse With the People' (1911: lx). Here, it described Mexico's inhabitants and provided tourists with guidance on how to act and interact with Mexicans. It began by commenting that Mexico's 'racial makeup' was '19%... pure, or nearly pure, white race, 43% of mixed, and 38% Indian race' (1911: lx). Of the latter, Terry went on to write that 'only a small portion can be regarded as civilized' and that,

[though] they are slowly but surely merging their identity with that of their neighbors; their national life is almost gone, child mortality among them is distressingly high – albeit the women are 'much addicted to maternity' – and their customs – which are not distinguished for pulchritude – aid in their obliteration (1911: lx).

*Terry's Mexico* (1911) described what the text called 'the average Mexican' as being 'deferential from instinct' (1911: lxiii-lxiv) and 'natives' as inherently 'warm-blooded, impulsive...densely ignorant and very exasperating' (1911: lxiv). Consequently, *Terry's Mexico* counseled tourists to regard them as '*gente sin razon* – people without reason' (1911: ibid). Within its 'Intercourse with the People' section, *Terry's Mexico* also contained a subsection titled 'Beggars and Thieves' where it provided a series of recommendations on how tourists should deal with said individuals if they happened to encounter them (1911: lxvi). Beggars, the text suggested,

can always be turned away by the words '*Perdóneme por Dios!*' – Pardon me in the name of God! They... should never be assisted. Children are taught to beg from infancy, and though one pities the bedraggled and poorly clad mites, it should be borne constantly in mind that money given to them goes directly into the hands of shiftless parents who as promptly spend it for drink (1911: lxvi).

According to *Terry's Mexico*, tourists had to be vigilant of these type of people and aware that 'the average Mexican beggar is a chrysalis usually ready to develop into a full-fledged thief. His apparent misery is generally artificial – the result of laziness' (1911: lxvi). Like Flandrau, Terry drew attention to the rapid changes Mexico was undergoing at the time, i.e. changes in its landscape, political state, economic environment, and social backdrop. Also like Flandrau, Terry highlighted the increased presence of foreign settlers in Mexico who preferred to live amongst themselves in separate '*colonias*': 'Nearly all the Mexican cities now have *colonias*...where Americans and other nationalities dwell', he commented (1911: liv).

*Terry's Mexico* (1911) emphasized the large community of American settlers living in Mexico by noting, for instance, that of the 100,000 foreign individuals who lived in Mexico at the time, around 30,000 were American. The presence of foreigners was evidenced in the architecture of many cities, he wrote, which showed 'the impress of American ideas' (1911: liv). In Mexico City especially, the text proceeded, 'foreign ideas have considerably influenced the modern architecture... where the houses are not infrequently made of hewn stone, after the American style' (ibid). But unlike Flandrau, who lamented the changes brought on by the increasing presence of foreigners in Mexico, *Terry's Mexico* (1911) saw the presence of US tourists and settlers in the country as something not only positive but also necessary. This is because, like *Campbell's New Revisited Book of Mexico*, *Terry's Mexico* portrayed foreigners as playing a vital role in ensuring Mexico's development. Indeed, the guide claimed that only by coming into contact with foreigners and 'merging their

identity' with them (1911: lx), could Mexico's largest group – its mixed and indigenous races – one day hope to shed their 'uncivilized' status.

#### 4.1.4 MID TO LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY GUIDEBOOKS

In response to an increasing influx of tourist flows to Mexico, the decades following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) witnessed a wide array of guidebooks being published in the US. As Gunn notes, this was a period when Mexico attracted 'renewed attention from the United States and Great Britain' (1974: 76). Accordingly, 'as peace settled, as the railroads were repaired and roads opened up, tourists came fast, most clutching their copy of *Terry's Guide to Mexico*, quickly revised by its author, Thomas Philip Terry (1864-1945), to meet the changed scene' (*ibid*). Despite increased competition, *Terry's* guidebook series managed to further enhance its popularity during this period. In 1943, the *New York Times* wrote that:

[o]f all the books on Mexico, *Terry's* illustrious and incomparable guide best deserves to be called indispensable. Other guides come and other guides go; *Terry's* – secure in its impregnability as the greatest of all compilations of guide-book material about Mexico in English – goes on triumphantly forever (1943: i).

Following the success of its first two editions, *Terry's Mexico* was regularly re-issued to fit the rapidly changing social and political landscape of both Mexico and the US over the subsequent decades. By the time Terry's 1943 guidebook to Mexico was published, the sociopolitical backdrops of Mexico and the US had dramatically changed. Consequently, the text underwent a series of significant changes in order to cater to its changing audience. This was particularly the case in the context of its representation of tourism and of Mexico's social and cultural makeup.

The first thing that is worthy of note is the fact that *Terry's Guide to Mexico* (1943) no longer credited Baedeker as the founder of the guidebook. Indeed, attesting to the normalization of guidebooks and their widespread consumption as such, there were no references in this edition to *Terry's Guide* as following a unique style and configuration. It instead opened by calling attention the fact that, '[a]lthough Mexico lies contiguous to the United States it is much less accurately known to Americans than its importance warrants' (1943: i). On the whole, *Terry's Guide to Mexico's* (1943) description of the country's population markedly differed from its 1911 edition. While the text still described 'Mexican people' within a section titled 'Intercourse with the People,' its representation of Mexico's inhabitants became more nuanced, as it argued that of Mexico's, 'total population, 20% are of Spanish (or other white or

near white) extraction, 43% are mixed, and 38% are of pronounced Indian lineage' (1943: lx). As can be noted, absent here were the references to 'purity' found in *Terry's Guide to Mexico's* 1911 edition (see 1911: lx). Further describing Mexico's inhabitants, or rather, 'the average Mexican' (which the text referred to as always male), the guidebook claimed that,

[t]he Mexican loves companionship. His innate kindness requires some object for his solicitude, and if his spirits bubble effervescently at times, it is usually because he desired to make someone comfortable... The most frigid Northerner generally thaws beneath the genial beams of Mexican good humor and volubility (1943: Ixii).

Added to this, the text claimed that 'the average Mexican is... deferential from instinct and the brusque and discourteous stranger is regarded as ill bred' (1943: Lxiv). In addition to its description of the 'average Mexican,' *Terry's* 1943 *Guide to Mexico* went on to characterize Mexico's native inhabitants under a separate section where it wrote, for example, that 'the icy aloofness of certain Anglo-Saxons' is 'distasteful to the warm-blooded, impulsive native' (ibid: lxviii). What is also worthy of note here is the fact that the text drew a parallel between upper class Mexicans (who it described as the 'superior Mexican') and foreigners, by arguing that it is 'well to bear in mind that the abominable habits of the lower classes are just as obnoxious to well-bred Mexicans as they are to foreigners' (ibid). Then, further characterizing Mexico's indigenous inhabitants, the text commented that, 'while many of the pure or mixed Indian peoples remain low in the social scale, some are gradually improving their condition by merging their identity with that of their neighbors' (ibid). Consequently, the book stated,

the national life of the Mexican Indian has almost vanished; old tribal habits and customs are being superseded by the more civilized ways of the superior Mexican, and faint ambition is replacing the sodden lethargy, which for so long characterized them (ibid).

Besides the above reference to foreigners, *Terry's* 1943 edition, unlike its 1911 version, hardly mentioned the presence or influence of US settlers or 'American colonies' in Mexico. Indeed, *Terry's Guide to Mexico's* (1943) did not mention Americans living in Mexico at all except for mentioning them alongside other nationalities when writing that, at the time, there were about 100,000 foreigners living in Mexico<sup>43</sup> – a number headed by 'Spaniards, Americans, Canadians, British, Germans, Frenchmen, Japanese, Chinese and Turks in the majority' (1943: lx-Ixi). Yet, while not explicitly mentioning the presence of Americans, or what the 1911 edition

called the 'impress of American ideas' (see: 1911: liv), Terry's 1943 *Guide to Mexico* nonetheless hinted at the widespread involvement of the US in Mexico's tourism industry when, at the end of the guidebook, it contained 80 pages of advertisements, mainly for hotels, photographic suppliers, automobile insurance houses, tours, and tourist attractions – most of them established, owned and / or managed by Americans<sup>44</sup>.

During the 1950s and 1960s, *Terry's Guide to Mexico* continued to be a best seller and was reprinted well into the 1970s. In 1972 however, another important travel book emerged which quickly became one of the most popular travel books to Mexico in the US. Written by US writers Carl Franz and Lorena Haven and first published in 1972, *The People's Guide to Mexico* took a significantly different approach to the tourist experience and presented information in a significantly different format. The text was written from a first-person perspective and chronicled the travels of its authors. As such, it followed the form of a travelogue. However, as it included a series of tips, logistical information, and practical advice, the text could similarly be regarded as falling within the category of the guidebook. In other words, *The People's Guide to Mexico* extended across the divide between travelogue and guidebook. It sought to tap into a new and rapidly expanding tourist 'niche,' i.e. that of the young alternative, 'hippy', 'culturally-sensitive' tourist; a niche that was, at the time, frequently overlooked by most existing travel books. Written in the progressive spirit of the 1960s and 1970s, *The People's Guide to Mexico* was heralded as 'the first underground, counter-cultural travel guide to a foreign country' (Zolov 1991; Berman 1988: 235). As I will argue below, reflecting the widespread usage and normalization of the concept of culture in popular discourse, the text mediated concepts of cultural difference through repeated reference to notions of 'authenticity'.

The book opened with its authors stating their disapproval of traditional guidebooks, which they described as representing 'compilations of hotels, restaurants and nightclubs along with a few tips on where to buy authentic handcarts that almost look as if they came from Mexico' (1976: i)<sup>45</sup>. Traditional guidebooks, the authors proceeded, acted more as 'directories' that 'tell you that Mexico can put you up in reasonable American style and comfort, in air-conditioned rooms with sterilized meals for less than it would cost in the US' (1976: 1). Consequently, they argued, these books 'don't guide you to Mexico – they guide you away from it' (1976: i). In contrast to traditional guidebooks, the authors of *The People's Guide* offered advice and information intermeshed with snippets or vignettes that were meant to be representative of the 'real' Mexico. According to its authors, *The People's Guide to Mexico* was not designed to 'guide' tourists *per se* but to offer

them the tools necessary so they could explore the country at their own pace; so they could experience 'the reality of Mexico versus the tourist agency image' (1976: ii).

*The People's Guide to Mexico* began by providing tourists with information on what to pack, what (and how) to eat, how to take care for common ailments while in Mexico, and how to behave in interactions with locals. Unlike the guidebooks that came before it, the book did not contain specific sections dedicated to addressing what *Terry's Guide to Mexico* (1909; 1911; 1943) called 'intercourse with the people.' Instead, *The People's Guide to Mexico* contained descriptions of Mexico's inhabitants throughout the text, usually in the context of the authors' personal anecdotes and observations (see: 1976: 308). The text did however dedicate a section entirely to discussing 'Customs and Conflicts' (1976: 302) where the authors wrote that 'cultural shock', or, 'what happens when a tourist has his or her mind completely blown away by a foreign country and culture... works both ways' (*ibid*). Here, they explored the impact of cultural exchange on both tourists and Mexico's inhabitants.

What I want to draw attention to with respect to *The People's Guide*, is the text's usage of the word culture, which, as I discussed in the previous chapter had, by the 1960s and 1970s, become a largely normalized element of tourism discourse and a central focus of the imaginaries through which foreign destinations were promoted. In addition to referring to 'culture shock,' *The People's Guide to Mexico* also wrote that tourism should be approached with 'cultural-sensitivity' as a way to 'lessen the impact of travelling both on the traveler and on the place and people he travels to see' (1976: ii). The text's 1976 edition represented one of the first instances where the idea of culture was called upon in the context of US travel books to Mexico. As such, the text can be argued to have taken a more reflexive view of tourism and its impact on local environments. However, despite the guide's attempt to transcend a culturalistic gaze (by looking at both sides of the 'culture shock' equation), the conflation of Mexican culture with the Mexican nation remained a cornerstone of the guide's representations of the country, particularly in the case of it arguing for the preservation of the 'real Mexico.'

By the time *The People's Guide to Mexico*'s 1986 edition was published, the idea of culture had gained increased currency and had become cemented within collective imaginaries as a key ingredient of 'nation' and 'society' as its emergence and establishment, as I argued in Chapter Three, increasingly faded from view. The normalization of 'national culture' was apparent in *Harper's Magazine*'s review of the 1986 edition of *The People's Guide to Mexico*, which noted that,

anybody really interested in understanding the people, the culture, the land of Mexico should read this...the best guidebook to adventure in the whole world (1986: i).

The fusion of people with culture and land informed many of the representations and understandings through which Mexico was increasingly imagined in travel books from the 1980s onwards. Culture became increasingly pervasive and travel books' adoption of the term reflects this. Travel books' espousal of ideas of culture to refer to tourists' primary object of consumption were apparent in the narratives of the first editions of what today represent two of the most popular guidebook series in the US: *The Lonely Planet* and *Mexico: the Rough Guide*.

*Lonely Planet*, an independent company based in the United Kingdom whose books were distributed on both sides of the Atlantic, published *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* in 1982. Written by Doug Richmond – 'an inveterate traveler who had lived and worked in Mexico intermittently since the mid 1940s' (1982: i) – *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* was aimed at 'independent' travelers and, the text emphasized, those in search of a 'lifestyle that moves to a different rhythm' (ibid). The text opened by suggesting that Mexico's official motto should be '*no hay reglas fijas*', a saying that, it argued, 'prevails throughout the fabric of Mexican life from the Customs guard at the border to the menu at a favorite restaurant' (1982: 7). As I discussed in the previous section, '*no hay reglas fijas*' (which translates to 'there are no fixed rules') was a phrase used by Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* (1921: 67) to call upon the idea that 'everyone's experience is different, and everyone, in a sense, is a pioneer groping his way' (1921: 67). The writing of this statement in Spanish could again be argued to be symbolic and represent an attempt by the writer to afford it (and the text in general) with an aura of local authenticity. It is important here to pause and note the different context in which the statement by Richmond is made because, whilst Flandrau applied the phrase to tourism (in that, 'there are no fixed rules' to how tourists approach Mexico), in *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* (1982), Richmond applied it to what it called 'Mexican life,' i.e. a type of life 'unique' to Mexico. Aside from illustrating the fluid interpretation of local language comments like the above, I argue, both texts include '*no hay reglas fijas*' symbolically – as a marker of authentic cultural foreignness (Salazar 2011).

As an example of this unique, 'Mexican' life, which the text argued followed a 'different rhythm,' the guide claimed that, 'when something becomes *descompuesto* [broken] it is regarded by locals as a petty annoyance not worth becoming upset

about (ibid).’ Further characterizing Mexico’s population, the text went on to write that the majority of Mexicans ‘are Spanish speaking *mestizos*, a mixture of indigenous tribes and Europeans, with a generous sprinkling of all the other races and nationalities under the sun’ (1982: 7). According to *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* (1982), it was precisely this ‘unique blend of Indian and Spanish cultures, the rich and diverse countryside, and the warm hospitality of the people’ that made the country a ‘paradise for travelers’ (1982: np).

Three years after *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* was published, in 1985, *Mexico: the Rough Guide* was introduced in the US. *Mexico: The Rough Guide* began its discussion of Mexico by also emphasizing the country’s ‘uniqueness.’ It suggested that

Mexico enjoys a cultural blend which is wholly unique: it is an Indian country; it still seems, in places, a Spanish colony...Indian markets [are found] little changed in form since the Conquest [and] thrive alongside elaborate colonial churches in the shadow of the skyscrapers of the Mexican miracle (1985: viii).

Like *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit*, *Mexico: The Rough Guide* wrote of the country’s unique rhythm, or, rather its unique ‘temperament’:

Mexico is still a country where timetables are not always to be trusted...you simply have to accept the local temperament – that work may be necessary to live but it’s not life’s central focus (1985: x).

Describing Mexicans, it then proceeded to argue that,

there are communities of full-blooded Indians and there are few – very few Mexicans of pure Spanish descent... [t]he great majority of the population...is mestizos, combining in themselves both traditions and, to a greater extent, a veneer of urban sophistication (1985: viii).

From the 1980s until the end of the twenty-first century, new editions of guidebooks to Mexico were published by *The People’s Guide*, *Mexico: the Rough Guide*, and *Lonely Planet*. By the 1980s and 1990s, the amount of travel books to Mexico available in the US had exponentially increased. Two of today’s most popular guidebook series, e.g. *Fodor’s* and *Frommer’s* were first published in 1972 and 1984,

respectively. Together with *The People's Guide*, *Mexico: the Rough Guide*, and *Lonely Planet* these titles, as I will illustrate below, went on to represent some of the most popular guidebook series in the US. As tourism to Mexico from the US continued to increase, the numbers of individuals writing about their experiences, offering a window into different versions of the 'real' Mexico, and describing particular destinations within the country, also grew. What this meant was that, by the end of the 1990s, US tourists wanting to visit Mexico had a myriad of sources at their disposal, both in text form and, increasingly, online<sup>46</sup>.

## PART TWO

### 4.2 CONTEMPORARY US TRAVEL BOOKS TO MEXICO

There are a number of narratives and conceptual frameworks that are mobilized to describe contemporary Mexico and its sociocultural backdrop today. Many of them call upon homogenous representations of culture and society so that, as I noted above in the context of *Mexico: a Travel Survival Kit* (1982), ideas like 'Mexican life,' as a byproduct of 'Mexican culture' (both often referred to in the singular) have become increasingly prevalent. During the 1990s and 2000s, ideas like 'Mexican life,' 'Mexican culture,' and 'Mexican identity' continued to gain currency within tourist discourses, becoming cemented within public imaginaries. As I discussed in the previous chapter, around the same period, 'cultural tourism' – tourism based on cultural difference, on encountering an Other as such – began to grow in popularity, contributing to the designation of certain spaces as cultural tourist attractions where 'Mexican culture' represented the main object of tourists' interest and the primary focus of the tourist gaze. This section will discuss contemporary representations of Mexicans in US travel books to Mexico in light of these recent developments.

#### 4.2.1 MAPPING DIFFERENCE: MEXICAN IDENTITY, MEXICAN LIFE, MEXICAN TIME, AND THE MEXICAN PSYCHE

In 1988, Carolyn Osborne, a US novelist, commented that 'Mexico is so near yet so foreign, known yet forever novel, an archetype of flagrant contrasts' (Simmen 1988: lviii). Within US travel books, representations of preset-day Mexico are pervaded by precisely this idea: that while nearby, Mexico remains quintessentially foreign and 'unknown'. As I discussed in the previous chapter, imaginative geographies of

Mexico as a country suffused by a kind of perennial Otherness have become a feature of US travel discourse on Mexico since travel to the country became well-established. Contemporary travel books' characterizations of Mexico as a tourist destination, as I will argue below, continue to follow a long-standing tendency of travel books to highlight what they consider to be the most salient cultural differences between Mexico and the US while conceiving of both nations' societies as geographically delimited and encompassing a specific unique cultural configuration. Like Osborne, many of today's travel books to Mexico describe the country as exotic, different, and fundamentally unfamiliar, while drawing attention to this as 'ironic' given Mexico's geographical proximity to the US. For example, in its 2006 edition, *The People's Guide* writes that 'on a scale of foreignness, from 1 to 10, Mexico is a solid 10' (2006: 264) before adding that 'in spite of its proximity to the US and a long common border... [Mexico] often seems as different to us as Ecuador or China' (2006: 264). Likewise, *When in Mexico, Do as the Mexicans Do*, a travel guide written by Herb Kernecker, an 'experienced language teacher and author' (2005: np), portrays Mexico as housing 'a culture that is geographically so close, yet spiritually so far away' (2005: xv).

While pervasive in a number of travel books however, the geographical vicinity of Mexico to the US is not always discussed in the context of geographically compartmentalized cultural differences. Indeed, several travel books comment on the existence of various markers of US presence within Mexico. What is worthy of note here is that most travel books continue to re-assert a discourse focused not on similarity, but on difference, even while calling attention to the increasing interconnectedness of Mexico and the US. For example, the AA's *Guide to Mexico*, a travel book published by the *American Automobile Association*, notes that 'traveling through Mexico is a strangely familiar experience...because so much of it has clear European and North American influences' (2005: 6). Shortly thereafter however, the text adds that 'behind this hybrid façade lies the more secret life of the indigenous people' (2005: 6). This extract is significant in that it illustrates a delimitation of geographically induced sociocultural similarity by affirming that it is merely superficial – a façade. Another example, albeit one taking a more nuanced form, can be found in the *Rough Guide's* 2007 edition, where it argues that 'despite the inevitable influence of the US, looking to the north, and close links with the rest of the Spanish-speaking world...the country remains resolutely individual' (2007:6).

Within travel books to Mexico, representations of the country as delimiting a unique sociocultural ethnos that is at its core Other can often be found alongside references to concepts like 'Mexican identity', 'Mexican life', 'Mexican time,' and

'Mexican psyche.' These concepts, I argue, are steeped in culturalism and, as such, banally produce and reproduce a series of understandings that are unproblematically adopted and are substantiated simply by reference to themselves. As I mentioned in the previous section, the idea of 'Mexican life,' as one following a unique rhythm, was referred to by the *Lonely Planet*'s first publication on Mexico, *Mexico: A Travel Survival Kit* by writing that Mexican life follows a unique rhythm and Mexicans possess a specific 'temperament.' Contemporary *Lonely Planet* editions to Mexico continue to draw on this idea, expanding on it by, for example, writing that 'the overall tenor of Mexican life remains as humane and relaxed as ever' (*Lonely Planet* 2006: 38). Indeed, the 2006 edition included a section titled 'The Culture.' Exclusively dedicated to describing Mexico's social and cultural idiosyncrasies, this section contains a subsection titled 'National Psyche' where the *Lonely Planet* writes of 'the rhythm of Mexican life' as one defined by 'family and home ties... tradition... holidays... patriotic anniversaries and festivals' (*Lonely Planet* 2006, 58).

The concept of 'Mexican life' often feeds into that of 'Mexican identity,' with both of these tropes serving to describe Mexicans as a group characterized by particular sociocultural traits. Much like the geographical territorialization of 'life' and its characterization in the singular, the idea of Mexicans as typified by a particular identity can be found running throughout travel books' descriptions of Mexico's contemporary sociocultural makeup. Perhaps the most salient example of this comes from *The Rough Guide*'s 2007 edition where the text claims that:

the strength of Mexican identity... hits most clearly if you travel overland across the border with the US, as the ubiquitous Popsicle vendors suddenly appear from nowhere, and the pace of life slows down perceptively' (*Rough Guide* 2007: 7)

By alluding to 'Mexican identity' as geographically rooted and as following a kind of pace that dramatically strikes or 'hits' one as soon as one sets foot on Mexican soil, the *Rough Guide* paints a picture of Mexico's landscapes as being quintessentially different and palpably Other.

Concepts like 'Mexican life' and 'Mexican identity,' I argue, provide the groundwork for a broad system of representations and imaginaries. Indeed, when assessing a number of contemporary travel books to Mexico, it becomes immediately apparent that it is not only 'life' and 'identity' that are unproblematically tied to

Mexico and written of in the singular, as characteristic of its population. The same occurs with 'time', as travel books echo the observations noted in Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* Indeed, several travel books' descriptions of contemporary Mexico allude to the idea of 'Mexican time.' *Frommer's* 2009 edition, for example, writes that 'American and English travelers have often observed that Mexicans have a different conception of time [and] that life in Mexico obeys slower rhythms' (2009: 20). The idea of there being a nationally demarcated sense of 'time' is sometimes raised by travel books in the context of not only 'Mexican time' but also 'Anglo-European time' – assumed to be tourists' own. 'Gringos<sup>47</sup> [are] obsessed with time,' writes Tony Cohan in his book *On Mexican Time*, later expounding on this line of argument by adding that 'Mexicans don't seem to have time anxiety, in our sense' (Cohan 2000: 45). The conceptual categorization of national territories as containers for discrete cultural entities following unique configurations of 'life,' 'identity,' and 'time,' I argue, relies upon a gaze premised on the idea of Mexico as following a unique sociocultural makeup.

#### 4.2.2 DEFINING MEXICO AND MEXICANS: A HOMOGENOUS DIVERSITY

Travel books' representations of contemporary Mexico are not always straightforward in their representation of Mexico. Just as one can find homogenizing renditions of Mexicans as bound by specific behavioral traits and cultural markers, one can also find representations of Mexico as socially diverse and culturally plural. Oftentimes, one can find both such depictions side by side. An illustrative example of this can be observed in the *Rough Guide's* 2007 edition, where, after stating that Mexican identity 'hits you' upon entering the country, it writes of Mexico having a 'multitude of regional identities' (2007: 6). Mexico, the text writes, represents a 'patchwork of wildly different native American cultures' (ibid). Depicting this sociocultural diversity as itself territorially-bound however, the *Rough Guide* goes on to describe Mexico as enjoying 'a cultural blend that is wholly unique' (ibid) – a statement repeated verbatim from the guidebook series' 1985 edition.

Representations like the above, which subsume references to sociocultural diversity within references to national homogeneity, can also be found within the pages of the *Lonely Planet*. Here, while conceding that 'the last thing you could do with Mexicans is encapsulate them in a simple formula' (2006:57) and that 'Mexicans are not a uniform people (far from it!)' (ibid: 59), the text then goes on to apparently contradict this acknowledgement by observing that, 'Mexicans adore fun, music and fiesta, yet in many ways are deeply serious' (2006: 57). In line with travel books' common espousal of Mexican culture as both diverse and territorially fixed, *When in*

*Mexico do as the Mexicans Do*, while noting that 'various components contribute to how Mexicans behave' (2005: 107), i.e. components emergent from 'Spanish influence,' the 'multicultural crucible of ethnic diversity,' and religion, the book nonetheless argues that,

[I]looking, listening, speaking and trying to do things as the Mexicans would do them will open many a door to an unforgettable and genuine Mexican experience (ibid: xv).

According to contemporary US travel books to Mexico, a number of cultural elements comprise the 'core' of Mexican culture and society, fundamentally informing Mexicans' lives – or rather, 'Mexican life.' One such element is 'family.' *When in Mexico, Do as the Mexicans Do*, for example, comments that 'the family is the smallest unit in the big puzzle of Mexican life' (2005: 82). *Frommer's*, too, writes that Mexicans are 'family oriented' (2009: 190) and 'place a high value on family and friends, social gatherings, and living in the present' (2009: 23). *The Lonely Planet* argues that, as a result of their high valuation of familial bonds, Mexicans 'are only truly themselves within the context of their family' (2008: 39) and, under a heading titled 'The Mexican Way of Life,' *The Eyewitness Travel* guide comments that 'the traditional Mexican view of the world can be thought of in terms of concentric circles' (2006: 16), with its center containing 'the venerated matriarch' (2006: 16).

Another element of Mexican culture alluded to by travel books in their discussion of contemporary Mexicans revolves around them being largely motivated by leisure as opposed to work. *Frommer's*, for example, argues that as a result of Mexicans' placing 'a high value on family and friends, social gatherings, and living in the present... getting ahead and future uncertainties take a back seat' (2009: 20). Perhaps the most illustrative example of this line of argument however, can be appreciated in the *Rough Guide* where, with respect to Mexicans possessing a unique social disposition, the text claims that Mexicans' temperament can be subsumed within the following overarching tenet: 'work may be necessary to live but it's not life's central focus' (2007: 8), repeating, in this way, the claim it made in its 1985 guide verbatim.

In addition to defining Mexicans as being family-oriented and 'adoring music and fiesta' (more than work) (i.a. *Frommer's* 2009: 20; *Lonely Planet* 2006: 57), several travel books called upon the idea of Mexicans as defined or tacitly shaped by the country's ancient cultures and traditions. *Guanajuato Mexico: Your Expat, Study Abroad, and Vacation Survival Manual in The Land of Frogs*<sup>48</sup> for example, a travelogue-cum-travel guide written by American authors Doug and

Cindy Bower, argues that 'many Mexicans, even though highly educated, retain some vestiges of their superstitious upbringing' (2008:31). Likewise, the *Eyewitness Travel* guide writes that, 'ancient history and magic rituals [are]...inexorably intertwined with the routines of modern daily life' (2006:15). Expanding on this idea, the *Eyewitness Travel* guide proceeds to comment that even while,

the common culture of Mexico, as can be seen in the national cuisine, fiestas and the arts and crafts, blends contributions from all quarters...many pre-Columbian traditions, untouched by European influences, survive to this day (2006: 16).

This characterization of Mexican culture as blending the ancient (or traditional) with the modern can be found in numerous contemporary travel books to Mexico. Indeed, it is often this very quality that is alluded to by travel books as comprising one of Mexico's primary allures. For example, *The Lonely Planet* writes that 'Mexico's ever-present past will never fail to enrich your journey' (2008: 39). The idea of contemporary Mexicans as inexorably tied to Mexico's past can also be appreciated in *Frommer's* when, paraphrasing the famous Mexican author and poet Octavio Paz, the text notes that 'any contact with the Mexican people, no matter how fleeting, will show that beneath Western forms lie ancient beliefs and customs' (2009: 38).

#### 4.2.3 SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE AND GUANAJUATO

On the whole, the imaginaries mobilized by travel books cast a complex image of contemporary Mexico. Though commonly relying upon representations of both Mexico and Mexicans as definable within a fixed set of behavioral markers and sociocultural repertoires, when discussing specific regions within Mexico, a different conceptual lexicon is mobilized by most travel books, a phenomenon that, I argue, illustrates the cultural *bricolage* and complexity inherent in the discourses through which Mexico is painted as an object of touristic attraction. In other words, while there is a palimpsest of imaginative geographies inherent in travel books' characterization of Mexico and Mexicans, most narratives and accounts are arguably dictated by culturalist underpinnings. An exploration of travel books' representation of the sociocultural topographies of specific locations – of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato and Cancun/Mayan Riviera – can serve to illustrate this phenomenon.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato represent two of Mexico's most popular sites for 'cultural tourism.' Their 'charm', most travel books argue, stems their colonial backdrop and heritage. Some travel

books preface their discussion of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato by first writing about 'central Mexico.' For example, the AA's *Guide to Mexico* writes that 'central Mexico is the volcano-studded heart of the nation's colonial heritage' (2005: 31), adding that 'for today's conquistadors, this is ... one of the most culturally rewarding regions' (ibid). Similarly, the *People's Guide to Mexico* writes that, 'the central highlands are classic Mexico, with prickly pear cacti, heavily laden burros, re-tiled roofs, narrow cobblestone streets and drowsy afternoon *siestas*' (2006: 45). While the above descriptions are fundamentally couched in essentialized and, one could argue, stereotype-ridden representations of central Mexico, when describing the cities of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato specifically, travel books' descriptions become notably nuanced.

Various texts, for example, describe San Miguel de Allende not as 'Mexican' but as 'cosmopolitan.' According to the *Lonely Planet*, for example, San Miguel de Allende has 'all the panache of a cosmopolitan city' (2006: 638), while *Frommer's* argues that it 'mixes the best aspects of small-town life with the cosmopolitan pleasures of a big city' (2008: 192). The *Eyewitness Travel* guide also comments that the 'cultural life' of San Miguel de Allende 'combines traditional charm with the cosmopolitan culture of the large non-Mexican population' (2006: 198). While some texts represent San Miguel de Allende as combining the 'traditional' (and 'Mexican') with the 'cosmopolitan' (and foreign), not all travel books describe San Miguel de Allende as culturally-hybrid in a 'cosmopolitan' sense. Indeed, many texts write of the city's sizeable American population of expatriates, students, and visitors as a central element of its landscape and, consequently, its sociocultural character. Texts like Doug Bower's book, *Guanajuato Mexico* (2006), for example, describe San Miguel de Allende, not as 'cosmopolitan' but as 'Little America' – as a city whose culture has been resolutely changed 'from solely and uniquely Mexican to something other than Mexican' (2006: xi).

While *Guanajuato Mexico* (2006) reads the presence of a large American population in San Miguel de Allende as conducive to dilution of 'Mexican culture', other texts maintain that San Miguel de Allende's expatriate community has contributed to the cultural enrichment of the city. Hence, the *Lonely Planet* writes that 'the abundant presence of [predominately American] expatriate retirees has brought much urban renewal and cultural fusion, expanding art, music and dining venues' (2006: 635) while the *Rough Guide* comments that it is precisely the city's 'high-profile colony of artists and writers' that give San Miguel de Allende its 'distinct character' (2007: 295). Because, in contrast to San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato's foreign tourists and its population of North American expatriates is considerably less

noticeable (given that they represent a smaller percentage of the city's population), many travel books describe Guanajuato as being more 'Mexican' than San Miguel de Allende. *Frommer's*, for example, writes that 'if you're going to Mexico to lose yourself, you'll have no problem doing so on the streets of Guanajuato' (2009: 206). In a similar vein, *The Rough Guide* comments that Guanajuato is a city that refuses 'to make any special effort to accommodate the flood of tourists' (2007: 278); its 'daily ebb and flow,' the text asserts, remains uninfluenced by foreign presence. *Guanajuato Mexico* however, takes a more assertive stance by writing of Guanajuato as, 'a genuine Mexican town still largely untouched, invaded, or ruined by Americanization' (2006: xiii; 3). In Guanajuato, the text proceeds, 'you will find yourself surrounded by Mexicans: 'you will live, breath, and eat Mexican' (2006: 3-4). Indeed, such is the book's alliance to this idea that its very first chapter is headlined: 'Guanajuato: Still the Real Mexico' (*ibid*: 1).

#### 4.2.4 CANCUN / MAYAN RIVIERA

While San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato are categorized as 'cultural tourism' destinations, Mexico's Caribbean coast, as I discussed in the previous chapter, represents one of Mexico's most popular sites for 'sun and beach' tourism. As a result, travel books often call upon a different set of representations in their attempt to describe the sociocultural makeup of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. For example, as I will illustrate below, travel books to Cancun and the Mayan Riviera commonly call upon ideas of 'authenticity' to describe spaces devoid of foreign presence, particularly impoverished areas lacking tourist infrastructure, while resorting to ideas of the 'inauthentic' or 'artificial' to describe the region's sprawling tourist-scapes. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the case of travel books' representation of Cancun. In the *Lonely Planet's* guide to the region, for example, the text urges tourists to visit Cancun's 'old' downtown sector as a way to experience 'some relatively authentic markets areas' (2008: 72). In the *Lonely Planet's* countrywide guidebook, Cancun's downtown area is referred to as the 'real Cancun' – the 'genuine place' (2006: 869), as opposed to 'the Hollywood movie,' which it sees as characterizing the 'insular world of Cancun's beach resorts' (*ibid*). *Fodor's* echoes this assertion by commenting that Cancun's downtown area 'provides an authentic glimpse into modern-day Mexico [and] a colorful alternative to the Zona Hotelera' (2009: 20). Indeed, *Frommer's* observes that, here, 'locals roam the streets, taking great pride in living in an authentic cultural quarter rather than in a zone of mass tourism' (2008:25).

Travel books' representation of Cancun's tourist zone as unrepresentative of 'authentic Mexico' can be found in various texts. Cancun is 'hardly the 'real' Mexico,' writes the AA's *Guide to Mexico* (2005: 86), while the *People's Guide* claims that Cancun 'is no more representative of the Yucatan than Disneyland is of California' (2006: 57). Drawing another parallel between Cancun and the US, *Frommer's* countrywide guidebook writes that 'some travelers are surprised to find Cancun is more like a US beach resort than a part of Mexico...[it is] more American than Mexican in spirit' (2008: 527). Extending this line of argument, *Frommer's* regional guidebook to the area writes that,

[even] a traveler feeling apprehensive about visiting foreign soil will feel completely at ease here [because] English is spoken and dollars accepted; roads are well paved and lawns manicured (2009: 88).

In contrast to their representation of Cancun, travel books' representations of the Mayan Riviera tend to focus less on 'signs of Americanism' and more on what they consider to be the area's predominately 'European' cultural influences. This is particularly evident in the case of travel books' description of the city of Playa del Carmen, commonly referred to as the 'heart' of the Mayan Riviera. Mobilizing ideas of cosmopolitanism to characterize the town's socioculturally-hybrid makeup, the *Rough Guide* writes of Playa del Carmen as possessing 'a rather chic European atmosphere, due to a high number of Italian and French-owned businesses, and compared with 'hyperactive' and 'Americanized' Cancun, it seems positively cosmopolitan and calm' (ibid: 849). The AA writes of Playa del Carmen, as a 'modern town' (AA 2005: 88) while *Frommer's* describes it as a 'cosmopolitan gateway' (2008: 596). Travel books' reference to 'the real' and 'authentic,' in the context of Playa del Carmen unfolds most frequently in relation to the town's outskirts where tourism's presence and infrastructures are noticeably lacking. For instance, the *Lonely Planet* writes that, one needs to 'only head two blocks west of the hoity-toity pedestrian mall to catch real glimpses of Mexico' (2008: 103). For many guidebooks, the tourist attractions that Cancun and the Mayan Riviera have on offer lack authenticity. For example, Xcaret, an eco-theme park largely premised on presenting tourists with a window into 'Mayan culture' (see Chapter Five), is commonly described as largely artificial and contrived. *The Lonely Planet*, for instance, calls it 'McMaya' (2008: 71) and 'heavily Disneyfied' (ibid: 118; *Lonely Planet* 2006: 892) and writes that:

the contrived, premium-priced beauty here doesn't compare with the wealth of authentic and often free options available to those who don't mind veering off the beaten path (2008: 118)

In the context of travel books' representation of Mexico's Caribbean coast, references to the 'real' are instead located either in relation to tourist centers' outskirts or to the region's Mayan communities; communities that, as the *People's Guide to Mexico* notes, are accessible only by going 'beyond the artificial world of the Caribbean 'Riviera' (2006: 57) and 'veering off the beaten path' (2006: 57). 'Vast areas of the peninsula interior remain relatively unaffected [by tourism]', writes the *People's Guide*, and it is here, they proceed, in 'small, isolated villages of traditional thatch-roofed stone houses' (*ibid*) that 'traditional Mayan' can be encountered. Echoing the representation of Mayan communities as 'authentic', *Fodor's* encourages those that have 'more than a week to spend' to also 'explore some authentically Mexican inland communities that feel worlds away from the touristy coast' (*Fodor's* 2009: 15).

As I touched upon briefly above, in conjunction with mobilizing a dichotomy between the authentic/inauthentic to characterize the area's cultural gamut, travel books also call upon the binary of 'modernity' and 'tradition' in their representations of Mexican tourist spaces. This becomes apparent in travel books' characterizations of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera as 'brawny glitzy mega resorts' indicative of the 'modern' while the region's Mayan communities are painted as the epitome of the 'traditional.' Employing this conceptual divide, the *Lonely Planet*, writes that the Yucatan peninsula, on the whole, is 'caught between the relentless beat of progress and the echoes of tradition' (2008: 5). While Cancun is described as 'modern' by various texts (i.a. *Lonely Planet* 2006: 869; *Fodor's* 2009: 24) and a 'great place to experience twenty-first century Mexico' (*Fodor's* 2009: 20), within the 'rock-walled inland villages' of Mayan communities, *Frommer's* writes, 'life seems to proceed as though the modern world...did not exist' (*Frommer's* 2009: 5).

#### 4.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Guidebooks and travelogues contribute to shaping the 'gaze' through which foreign tourists can perceive Mexico and its different sociocultural spaces. While the characterization that each publication assigns to Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican culture/s differs, various recurrent thematic tropes and representations can be lifted from travel books to illustrate some of the main conceptual and discursive frameworks through which Mexico is, and has historically been, portrayed in

contemporary US travel discourses. Ideas of Mexico (and, conversely, of the US), as geographically delimiting a unique culture, identity, time, and psyche, have contributed to a discourse that has fomented fundamentally reductionist imaginative geographies of Mexico. Significantly, these representations are often banally reproduced and rendered unproblematic, encouraging the view of Mexico as a tourist destination housing a unique configuration of Otherness – with its people fixed within the pre-established coordinates of ‘their’ culture. As a result, I argue, much of the discourse espoused by travel books has contributed to the ideological occlusion of intranational heterogeneity by serving to mobilize a tourist gaze that views culture as possessing a series of homogenous elements and as territorially fixed – indeed, as something that can be experienced as soon as one sets foot on ‘Mexican soil.’

The idea that a nation’s inhabitants behave in a certain way as a product of their nationality, as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) have argued, is fundamentally rooted in a nationalistic gaze that posits culture as somehow defined and driven by predetermined and geographically circumscribed cultural elements. Relying upon nation-centered ideologies that depict Mexico as homogenous and Mexicans as following a fixed sociocultural pattern of behavior, many of the representations espoused by travel books contribute to a discourse fastened not on sociocultural plurality but on the reproduction of culturalist ideologies and depictions of Mexicans as Other. To a large extent, travel books’ reliance on the idea that national territories enclose distinct social groups – an idea which draws from an ‘assumed isomorphism between space, place and culture’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 34) – can be said to be primarily related to the fact that, in the realms of cultural tourism promotion, the very ‘selling’ of place relies on the fusion of place with unique compartments of cultural Otherness (Robinson and Picard 2006). As such, they observe, the information and images mobilized by travel books can be said to be necessarily reductionist (*ibid*: 33). Guidebooks, brochures, and related texts, they write,

effectively communicate selective images of a destination, deliver information, and generate and inform discourse at the immediate, almost instantaneous level amongst prospective tourists. They can act as scripts for tourist spaces and are followed and learnt. Guidebooks in particular play an important role in this sense. In the process of their consumption however, they have significant influence not only upon tourist and travel decision-making behavior, but upon the attitudes and expectations that tourists carry with them into other cultural settings (*ibid*: 33-34).

Within most travel books' representations of contemporary Mexico, essentialist readings of culture can often be found in tandem with notions of cultural 'authenticity.' One of the ways in which 'difference' is generally cast on Mexico's tourist destinations is through travel books' mobilization of the dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic. The interplay between essentialized representations of culture and 'authenticity' has, as I argued in the previous chapters, long been one of the central features of tourism discourse. In the context of the travel books and related texts I have discussed above, ideas of the 'real Mexico' are often called upon to describe different spaces within San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Cancun, and the Mayan Riviera. Here, representations of what constitutes 'real' culture are particularly prominent in relation to areas represented as largely devoid of foreign tourists and/or settlers.

In this vein, San Miguel de Allende's foreign tourist/expat population is represented as tarnishing the city's authenticity while Guanajuato is painted as more representative of 'real Mexico' as a result of its considerably smaller foreign population. In the case of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, ideas of authenticity are further appended to the indigenous Mayans who are portrayed by many texts as contemporary bearers of an 'authentic' (ancient) culture. By fusing the indigenous with the 'traditional' (and the past) and the built landscapes of tourist centers with the 'modern' (and the present/future), these texts reproduce teleological accounts of culture and society that, more than reflect a concrete reality, reveal a series of imaginative geographies that situate 'Us' versus 'Them' on a plane of similarity vs. difference.

The fusion of people with culture, of course, exists at several different levels in travel books' descriptions of Mexico's population. Even when, in the case of texts' discussion of specific regions, the conflation of Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican culture is sometimes challenged, it is important to note that this does not necessarily entail a disavowal of reductionist readings of culture. In other words, even while representations of Mexico as homogenously Other are overridden by representations painting certain areas as diverse and socioculturally plural spaces, the fusion of certain groups of people (e.g. tourists, 'Mexicans' or, the indigenous Mayans) with specific cultural configurations continues to operate in travel books' representations of contemporary Mexico.

Travel books' accounts of Mexico are, however, only one component looking to shape tourists' perceptions and, ultimately, their understanding of contemporary Mexican sociocultural realities. As I will go on to illustrate in the next two chapters,

the gaze that they construct can be challenged, or indeed, reaffirmed, by local tourist spaces that also seek to present tourists with 'authentic' renditions of 'Mexican culture' with narratives and images that tourists can then anchor to their own personal experiences.



## *Chapter*

# FIVE

## TOURIST SPACES

### INTRODUCTION

The idea that tourists, upon setting foot on Mexican soil, will be 'struck' or, to use *Eyewitness Travel* guide's words, (2006: 15), 'assaulted,' by a sensorial barrage of Otherness is one that can be found informing much of the discourse through which Mexico is represented in contemporary travel books. As I discussed in the previous chapter, various texts write of 'Mexican culture' as something that permeates the whole of Mexico; as something that characterizes its inhabitants within a set configuration of difference. The representations contained within travel books comprise only one element that goes into constructing the imaginaries through which tourists approach their destination and ultimately come to understand it<sup>49</sup>. Regardless of how elaborate tourists' imaginaries are prior to entering the country, as the next chapter will discuss, by coming into contact with local spaces where diverse systems of signification can be found, the act of travel can impact tourists' pre-held or 'pretour' imaginaries – expanding their boundaries, refining their scope, or altogether invalidating the narratives and ideologies onto which they are founded. In other words, individuals' experiences and contact with local sources of discourse can significantly impact the worlds that travel books have contributed to projecting.

In this chapter, I illustrate how the catalog of images, narratives, and discursive tropes that informs much of travel books' representation of Mexico and of Mexican culture, is also, to a large extent, called upon by many of the tourist spaces individuals encounter during their travels in Mexico. By tourist spaces, I mean sites imbued with meaning that are constructed exclusively for touristic consumption; sites where 'constellations of values and meanings are negotiated, constructed, and mediated and where the travel experience is interpreted, developed, rejected and/or refined' (Wearing et al, 2010: 80). My understanding of tourist spaces sees them as products of a complex interlayering of socially and discursively situated systems of representation, a view that echoes Jaworski and Thurlow's conceptualization of

tourist sites as semiotic spaces constituted through 'the interplay between language, visual discourse, and the spatial practices and dimensions of culture' (2010: 1). Under this perspective, tourist spaces come to be seen as 'culturally and communicatively constituted' spaces whose meanings are created and recreated by the way in which they are represented and by the social interactions that take place within them (see: Jaworski and Thurlow 2010). On the whole, the aim of this chapter is to examine contemporary tourist discourse through the lens of the spaces that are directly involved in the presentation, staging, and performance of culture. It examines a number of what Edensor called 'enclavics' tourist spaces, i.e. privately owned and sanitized<sup>50</sup> 'environmental bubbles' or 'themed milieus' defined by the commodification of difference and the marketing of Otherness (1998: 39-41).

The chapter is divided into three sections. In an attempt to lay the groundwork for my discussion of a number of accommodation venues, cultural tours and attractions, and courses on culture offered to foreign tourists at the three fieldwork sites where I conducted my fieldwork, Section 5.1 examines the way in which local representatives of Mexico's tourism ministry represent and promote each tourist destination, particularly with regard to their sociocultural backdrops. The reason I begin my analysis of tourist spaces by considering officially sanctioned representations is because, in this way, the similarities and disjunctions between these narratives and those mobilized by what in many cases are foreign-operated tourist spaces can best be contrasted and subsequently assessed.

Section 5.2 then explores how a number of accommodation venues – ranging from bed & breakfast-style hotels to large all-inclusive resorts – integrate elements of culture into their overarching image, surroundings, aesthetic, and on-site cultural exhibitions and events. This section draws from fieldwork observations and from interviews conducted with the owners, managers, and / or staff working at the different tourist spaces examined. By looking at how ideas of culture are created and reinforced by and within these spaces, this section illustrates the different ways in which ideas of Mexico, in general, and of culture, in particular, are locally presented.

The third and final section of this chapter, Section 5.3, focuses on a number of tours and cultural attractions (including excursions and cultural courses) offered by private organizations in each of my three fieldwork sites. In the context of Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende, it looks at two walking tours and three schools offering lectures on 'Mexican culture' to foreign, predominately American, visitors<sup>51</sup>. It then considers the case of two of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera's most popular tourist attractions: Xcaret, a mega theme park largely premised on offering tourists a window into Mexican and Mayan culture, and Alltournative, an

ecotourism company that offers tours centered on encounters between tourists and contemporary Mayan villages. While some of these spaces are more closely aligned with Edensor's definition of 'enclavie' sites than others (by being largely impermeable to external and uncontrolled 'intrusion' by members of the general public), I consider all of the above spaces to be 'enclavie' as a product of their pre-established scripting and pre-determined configuration. In other words, while all the spaces this section considers are not entirely 'shielded from potentially offensive sights, sounds, and smells' (Edensor 1998: 39), they are nevertheless designed, regulated, and commodified as sites of touristic consumption.

It must be noted that the tourist spaces I focused on during my fieldwork and discuss in sections 5.2 and 5.3 at times differ in the type of tourism they predominately attract. For instance, touching on Cohen's categories of tourist experiences (which I discuss more at length in Chapter Six), it can be argued that some of the spaces I examined during my fieldwork (e.g. all inclusive resorts and cultural theme parks) catered more to recreational and diversionary tourism while others did so more to those seeking experimental, experiential, and existential tourism experiences (e.g. like the visitors of Alltournative and those taking part in cultural courses) (1979). Regardless of the above, however, the majority of tourist spaces I explored during my fieldwork involved elements of 'Mexican culture' as a fundamental feature of their touristic image and it is for this reason that they I consider them together.

On the whole, by examining how ideas of culture are locally presented, staged, and/or performed at different tourist destinations, this chapter sets out to provide a comprehensive analysis of the situated usage of popular cultural narratives that, much like those embraced by travel books, ascribe to specific ideas of culture that are often reliant on culturalist understandings and fashioned around the maintenance of representations of cultural difference as nationally determined.

## 5.1. GOVERNMENT TOURISM REPRESENTATIVES

As I discussed in Chapter Two, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and, to a larger extent, Cancun/Mayan Riviera, attract a sizeable proportion of all foreign tourist flows to Mexico. Because of their established international reputation and popularity, each of these destinations has its own local branch of Mexico's federal tourism secretariat. Here, amongst other responsibilities, government tourism representatives are in charge of managing the destination's image – its 'brand' – and handling all issues related to the way in which each destination is promoted, both nationally and abroad. I will begin my discussion below by considering the accounts provided by

González Engelbrech, managing director at San Miguel de Allende's Tourism Council (*Consejo Turistico de San Miguel de Allende*), and with two officials who, at the time, worked at Guanajuato's Tourism Development Secretariat (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Turístico del Estado de Guanajuato*): Monica Cerna Martinez, director of promotion and public relations and Diego Carrillo, director of marketing and development. I will then turn to a discussion of interview data gathered with Guillermo Romero Zozaya, marketing director at the Cancun Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) – the official entity that handles domestic and international public relations material, marketing, and promotion for Cancun<sup>52</sup>.

### 5.1.1 GOVERNMENT'S PROMOTION OF SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE AND GUANAJUATO

San Miguel de Allende's Tourism Council stands on the city's main square, directly in front of the San Miguel de Allende's central plaza. It is a space where tourists can obtain general information, brochures, and maps of the city, as well as book private tours with local tour guides. González Engelbrech's office is located on the second floor of this building, where he manages all issues related to the city's touristic development and infrastructure. I began my interview with González Engelbrech by discussing the way in which the Tourism Council represents and promotes San Miguel de Allende, particularly in the context of international tourism markets. He said,

we promote San Miguel de Allende, first and foremost, as a cultural destination; we are talking about a good life, a premium destination – luxury – in which you will find excellent gastronomy, first-rate hotels, and a myriad of cultural festivals (SMA: MX1a).

In contrast to beach destinations, destinations that 'North Americans know,' González Engelbrech added, what Mexico's center and its colonial cities 'sell' and offer tourists is 'history and culture while at the same time offering them first class hotels' (*ibid*). Expanding his comparison of beaches to colonial destinations, González Engelbrech commented that, in contrast to places like Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, San Miguel de Allende attracts a different 'type' of North American tourist: one interested in a more 'traditional' vacation, one more educated, one having 'more culture' (SMA: MX1 b).

Continuing my investigation of officially sanctioned representations of San Miguel de Allende, I then visited Guanajuato's Secretariat of Touristic Development. Located at the heart of Guanajuato's city center, Mexican flags and cultural motifs

adorned the surroundings of the building housing the Secretariat of Touristic Development, a space where dozens of offices adjoin the building's large internal courtyard. Here, I interviewed Cerna Martinez and Carrillo, who were, at the time, in charge of promoting the entire state of Guanajuato, including the city of Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende. Cerna Martinez and Carrillo commented that San Miguel de Allende's image has historically revolved around its representation as town of 'art,' 'artists,' and 'American exiles'. But today, Carrillo said,

an important part of San Miguel de Allende that we promote is its historical part...[its role in] the battle for independence... [to show] this rich side of Mexico, this traditional side, this cultural side, this historical side (GUA: MX5a).

Despite San Miguel de Allende's sizeable influx of North American tourists and its large US expat population (particularly in contrast to Guanajuato where students and national visitors tend to overshadow international tourist flows), Carrillo commented that the promotion of San Miguel de Allende continues to revolve around 'the Mexican'. Indeed, he said, even though San Miguel de Allende attracts

a larger number of visitors, maybe 15% [who are] American or Canadian... I continue promoting San Miguel de Allende like a Mexican city... I still continue selling it as if it still had a Mexican atmosphere and all (GUA: MX5d).

At San Miguel de Allende, there are several options at tourists' disposal to experience the city's 'Mexican atmosphere,' Carrillo said, referring to spaces where they can become 'enveloped in Mexican culture:' i.a. 'cooking classes, cultural classes, Spanish classes, and folk art classes' (GUA: MX5e). According to Carrillo, an important aspect of tourism to San Miguel de Allende are the hotels it contains, particularly its small hotels and B&Bs where, he said, 'the [fact that the] manager is the owner... gives [tourists] a sense of there being a host' (GUA: MX5i). These small hotels, he said, regardless of whether or not they are owned by Mexicans or by foreigners are 'very, very Mexican' (GUA: MX5j). Indeed, Cerna Martinez added, 'all of them [have] a strong Mexican tradition... a Mexican touch' (*ibid*).

Returning to the topic of tradition, Carrillo said that when he promotes San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato in the US and Canada, the image he presents of both cities is premised on the trope of 'traditional Mexico.' This, he explained, is because there is a growing tendency,

for tourists to acknowledge culture...They travel to different countries to know the roots of the country, to know its traditions, to know its history, its culture, the gastronomy of each region, so I always comment that, Guanajuato, as a state, is a place that can offer that to tourists (GUA: MX5f).

Having raised the issue of culture repeatedly in their discussion of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato's tourism promotion and overarching allure for foreign tourists, I asked Cerna Martinez and Carrillo how they defined Mexican culture. According to Carrillo,

part of what I like about being Mexican is precisely that which we call joviality, always being happy and open, always being hosts and receiving people, having the attention of wanting to give more, to have everyone well attended, be they our own people, our own family, a visitor, a friend or a stranger... it is something very characteristic of the Mexican, always being nice and having that spirit of fiesta and happiness so that's what we try to convey to our visitors (GUA: MX5g).

Building on the above, Cerna Martinez then added that she felt another important element of Mexican culture is:

our prehistory, from which everything is born...I would compliment ... our characteristics of friendliness, joviality, and always being happy in all types of parties and related events with...our prehispanic roots (GUA: MX5h).

As the extracts above illustrate, the idea of 'traditional Mexico' comprises a central element of the way in which both San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato are understood and subsequently promoted. While acknowledging the fact that much of San Miguel de Allende's population is comprised of North Americans, its promotion abroad, much like that of Guanajuato, remains anchored to ideas of national exclusivity; to representations of it enclosing a homogenous culture – one couched within the country's very own nation building narrative, no less. What is also worthy of note is the way in which government tourism representatives, just like the travel books discussed in the previous chapter, embrace culturalist notions of Mexicans – or rather, 'the Mexican,' as defined by particular sociocultural traits (e.g. friendliness, conviviality, joviality) and a unique, prehispanic past which is seen as defining the country's contemporary society. As I will discuss below, it was not only in the context of these two destinations that Mexican culture was defined in this way. Even

in destinations that were not promoted as 'traditional', i.e. in places like Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, ideas of culture often remain resolutely anchored to the past.

### 5.1.2 GOVERNMENT'S PROMOTION OF CANCUN/MAYAN RIVIERA

Found at the heart of Cancun's *zona hotelera*, the Cancun Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB)'s offices are located inside a modern multi-story building that stands alongside a mélange of shopping centers, chain restaurants and bars, and a myriad of billboards – the vast majority in English – displaying advertisements for the region's various tourist attractions. Here, I began my interview with Romero Zozaya by discussing how the CVB looks to promote Cancun, particularly in the context of international tourism. In the last few years, he said, Cancun has focused on expanding its image to include sites found in the surrounding areas, especially those found in the Mayan Riviera. Cancun's current marketing campaign, he noted, revolves around the slogan 'Cancun Deeply Unique' and focuses on 'the principal activities of the destination... beaches ... spa... golf, shopping, gastronomy, Mayan ruins' (CAN: MX1a). It is a campaign that emphasizes Cancun and the Mayan Riviera as a unique destination, as:

the only Caribbean destination that can offer you what we can...in terms of infrastructure, in terms of quality, in terms of staff capacitation, in terms of activities...the amount of ruins we have here in the region, Mayan culture, subterranean rivers...we have everything (CAN: MX1b).

According to Romero Zozaya, culture plays a central role in Cancun's current campaign and is strongly emphasized in the image it promotes to foreign markets. As a matter of fact, he said, it is precisely the region's culture that makes the area 'deeply unique.' To illustrate this, he drew attention to a promotional advertisement where two children are shown building a sand castle that, upon closer look, turns out to be a replica of Chichen Itza, the world-renown Mayan architectural site found in the interior of the peninsula (see: figure 1).



Figure 2: Promotional ad for Cancun's 'Deeply Unique' Campaign  
(photograph courtesy of CVB, 2009)

'Mayan culture is included here,' Romero Zozaya said, pointing to this image, before adding that:

we do things that are related to the area... We have campaign images in which we show the archaeological ruins in our publicity material, in seminars, in festivals and we always talk about [how]...you can have access by coming to Cancun... to the archaeological ruins, you can go to Tulum, you can go to Chichen, you can go to Coba, you can go to twenty thousand places... Even though what is Chichen isn't part of Cancun and neither is Tulum or any of those places, the truth is that Cancun is the most central place from which to travel to any of them (CAN: MX1c).

Romero Zozaya then drew attention to the idea that Cancun represents a gateway – an essential access point – to the cultural attractions offered south of the city, in the Mayan Riviera – attractions ranging from Mayan archaeological ruins to contemporary forms of 'Mayan culture.' There are however, he emphasized, a number of differences between Cancun and the Mayan Riviera that must be borne in mind. For example, while the Mayan Riviera, is

less urbanized... less accessible...has fewer services, fewer activities...[it has] huge hotels in which you will have everything inside ...[where] you can find restaurants, discos, activities, everything so you don't go out (CAN: MX1g)

At Cancun, he proceeded,

you go out of your hotel and, at the door, you get a taxi that takes you to a shopping mall, to a commercial center, to a restaurant or twenty; you can walk over the boulevard; what I mean is, it's a city destination (CAN: MX1h).

Further differentiating between Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, Romero Zozaya commented that another factor that must be considered is the deep-rooted nature of Cancun's internationally renowned brand, i.e.

Cancun is considered and recognized internationally... in many places as the first brand of the country; there are places in the world in which they know Cancun more than they do Mexico and it's recognized as such...The Mayan Riviera is in vogue today and hopefully it will stay [that way] but...it won't connect to Cancun nor will Cancun connect to the Mayan Riviera (CAN: MX1i).

When asked about the role of culture in the promotion of Cancun however, Romero Zozaya's rigid separation between Cancun and the Mayan Riviera became notably more nuanced. While noting, for example, that Cancun's sociocultural makeup is undoubtedly diverse, because 'to begin with, Cancun is multicultural... [it] is formed from people from all over the country ... [and] there are a lot of foreigners living here' (CAN: MX1d), Romero Zozaya commented that, culturally speaking, Cancun 'doesn't have so much weight of public recognition... [because] the [archaeological] sites we have here aren't so big' (CAN: MX1e). This, he added, is precisely the reason why Cancun's brand has been extended to include more of the culture found in the Mayan Riviera. In this context, he argued, Cancun and the Mayan Riviera can be thought of as being, to a large extent, 'together... the Mayan Zone...we are the Mayan Riviera' together' (CAN: MX1f).

On the whole, the above extracts illustrate two important points that need to be taken into consideration when assessing the way in which ideas of culture are integrated into the tourist spaces of the region. First of all, they show how 'culture,' in the context of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, is often portrayed as revolving, not around ideas of 'Mexican culture' or of 'traditional Mexico,' but around ideas connected to 'Mayan culture.' The second point to emphasize is that, from the perspective of official promotional discourse, the multicultural and multilingual landscape of Cancun is portrayed as conducive to its cultural barrenness and to the dilution of its Mexican character. Because culture here is tied to the ancient Maya, to

expand the cultural imaginary of Cancun's brand, its geographic perimeters are thus extended to encompass the Mayan Riviera.

On the whole, by contrasting the ways in which González Engelbrech, Cerna Martínez, Carrillo, and Romero Zozaya integrate culture into the narratives of the promotion of their respective tourist destinations, one is able to appreciate the differential assignment given to ideas of culture in the context of different tourist destinations, all of which, nevertheless draw from ideas of authentic culture to reinforce and strengthen their allure as 'deeply unique' objects of touristic consumption.

## 5.2 POPULAR TOURISM ACCOMODATION VENUES

Local branches of Mexico's tourist secretariat have little to do with the way in which local accommodation venues are designed, promoted, and ultimately run. Many bed & breakfast-style hotels (B&Bs), traditional hotels, and resorts plait elements of culture into their surroundings, their overarching aesthetic, and their on-site exhibitions and events. Some do so explicitly by, for example, featuring cultural shows and performances, while others do so in a more implicit fashion, by carrying a number of brochures to preselected tourist attractions and including specific books on their bookshelves and throughout their on-site gift shops. In an attempt to examine the way in which different accommodation venues incorporate ideas of culture into their built environments and events curricula, this section focuses on four B&Bs in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato and four resorts in Cancun/Mayan Riviera.

### 5.2.1 SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE AND GUANAJUATO's BED & BREAKFASTS

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the landscapes of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato are often described by travel books as possessing an aura of Mexican colonial charm, an aura tied to their particular architectural style, décor, and manner of ornamentation. From the picturesque façade of their buildings to their colorful interiors, the physical landscapes of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato are commonly portrayed as possessing an atmosphere that, to foreign commentators and travel writers alike, exudes 'Mexicanness.' Below, I will assess a number of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato's accommodation venues<sup>53</sup>, most them privately owned and/or managed by US expats.<sup>54</sup>

Casa Luna, a B&B located on the outskirts of Guanajuato, was originally bought as a private home in the 1970s by an American couple that, in the mid 1990s,

decided to transform it into a B&B. I interviewed Ana, the B&B's general manager, a Guanajuato native whose family has, for generations, lived in the city. According to Ana, the general theme and style of ornamentation of Casa Luna 'is all about having... and rescuing *la artesanía* [Mexican folk art]' (GUA: MX3b). It has been a concept, she added, that has been very well received by tourists and 'at the end of the day, what tourists like the most is what stays on as a concept' (GUA: MX3c). The B&B's 'concept' – its design and overarching decor – is one largely subsumed within different elements of Mexican folk art. Here, papier-mâché *catrinas* and *alebrijes* are exhibited in glass displays, large *retablos*<sup>55</sup> adorn its shelves, and a number of handicrafts can be found against a backdrop of bright Mexican colors. Upon entering Casa Luna, tourists find themselves in the hotel's main reception area where, on a large coffee table, a number of books are laid out for tourists to consult. At the very top are three books: *Mexicolor: The Spirit of Mexican Design* (Levick and Cohan 1998), *Mexicasa: The Enchanting Inns and Haciendas of Mexico* (Levick and Hyams 2001), and *In a Mexican Garden: Courtyards, Pools and Open-Air Living Rooms* (Levick and Hyams 2005).

These texts, as widely cited beacons of Mexican style, are significant in that, as I will go on to illustrate below, they can be argued to at once inform and be informed by specific imaginaries of what constitutes Mexicanness. Couched within an aesthetic parlance that defines and seeks to reflect the fundamental tenor of the region as one following a predetermined Mexican style of ornamentation, these three books outline a series of visual elements that they represent as imbuing the landscapes of cities like San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. In *Mexicolor: The Spirit of Mexican Design*, a book written by Tony Cohan (the author of the widely acclaimed travel books *Mexican Time* (2000) and *Mexican Days* (2006)), a series of photographs are interlaced with a discussion of a 'unique Mexican sense of color', one that, Cohan writes, is 'inspired, intrinsic, inseparable from life itself – is alive in the Mexican spirit today' (1998:11). According to the text, 'Mexican street life, religious processions, and home life still bear the colorful, seemingly indomitable spirit of *alegría* (joy)' (ibid). Following a similar conceptual blueprint, one premised on celebrating a characteristically Mexican style, aesthetic, and character, *Mexicasa* was published in 2001. Written by Gina Hyams, this book focuses on inns and haciendas throughout the country, exploring the architectural tradition, the 'colorful folk art,' and the 'unique stories' behind each different site. In 2005, the third publication of this series was released. *In a Mexican Garden* (Levick and Hyams 2005), written also by Hyams, takes readers on a tour of Mexican living spaces. In contrast to *Mexicolor*, *In a Mexican Garden*, expands its breadth of coverage to include private homes and resorts where readers are invited to witness 'uniquely Mexican outdoor living spaces...resplendent

with sculpture and folk art, awash in vibrant color, and brimming with native plants' (2008: 3).

While *Mexicolor* (Levick and Cohan 2008), *Mexicasa* (Levick and Hyams 2001), and *In a Mexican Garden* (2005), all make an effort to discuss the international cross-pollinations of style and aesthetics that have (in)formed the specific architectural traditions of the sites they profile, what I want to draw attention to here is that their representations are nevertheless founded on the idea that there exists 'a uniquely Mexican sense of color and embellishment' (Cohan and Levick 2001: 8) permeating Mexican outdoor spaces and interiors – that there is such thing as a palette of Mexican colors, that there are uniquely 'Mexican homes' and 'Mexican Gardens.' Each of these three books offers a visual compass for tourists to perceive the region's built landscapes and general surroundings. Mexicanness, here, is tied to specific hues and unique architectural styles, symbolized by distinctively configured arrays of color and design portrayed as being geographically specific to Mexico – even when its transnational origins are explicitly acknowledged by their authors. Far from being 'objectively Mexican' however, these spaces, styles, and 'palettes' are informed by specific representations of Mexican culture and by particular readings of what is – and what is not – 'Mexican.' These representations and embraced by several of the tourist spaces I examined in the region.

On the whole, the type of aesthetic taken up by the above texts and by Casa Luna, illustrates the circular cross-pollination of representations and imaginaries of Mexicanness. According to Ana, the above three books are 'books that I have found tourists like a lot' (GUA: MX3a) and it is for this very reason that they are in this way promoted. Reflecting on this, Ana commented that Casa Luna 'is super Mexican and who owns it? A North American!' (GUA: MX3d) adding that 'they are the ones... who value our culture and all this the most' (ibid). The idea that foreigners somehow value Mexican culture more than Mexicans was a recurrent sentiment voiced by several Mexican local residents involved in the area's tourism industry (on a related note, see: endnote number 9). According to Ana, this fact is also evidenced by foreigners' preference for buying and renovating homes in the region while maintaining and at times even highlighting a quintessentially Mexican colonial aesthetic. Speaking of the neighborhood in Guanajuato where she grew up, for example, a neighborhood once populated entirely by Mexican families, she said that, now 'if you start to inquire, a lot of Americans have bought [homes there]...the most picturesque areas and everything, that's where foreigners are' (GUA: MX3e).

The embracing of 'the picturesque' by foreigners and their interweaving of 'Mexican culture' into the general aesthetic of their homes and B&Bs, can also be observed in San Miguel de Allende where a number of tourist spaces follow a similar thematic blueprint to that found at Casa Luna. Ana commented that it is not altogether surprising that many hotels and B&Bs in the region follow a similar aesthetic. This is because, she said, Casa Luna was the first B&B to open in the state of Guanajuato, arguing that 'everything taken up by all the other B&Bs that exist in this area originated from here, everything was inspired from this' (GUA: MX3f).

Regardless of whether or not 'all' B&Bs are direct offshoots of Casa Luna, one B&B in San Miguel de Allende that closely resembles it is Casa de la Cuesta<sup>56</sup>. Owned by Brian and Helen, two American expats who moved to the city in the late 1990s, this B&B embraces a similar style of ornamentation and design to that of Casa Luna: folk art adorns its walls, Mexican colors and tiles embellish its interiors and, amongst other texts, *Mexicolor* (Levick and Cohan 1998), *Mexicasa* (Levick and Hyams 2001), and *In a Mexican Garden* (Levick and Hyams 2005) are available for tourists to consult. Casa de la Cuesta's espousal of Mexican culture however, extends beyond its design and style of decoration because adjacent to the B&B Brian owns and operates a private museum that showcases his collection of Mexican indigenous masks (for a copy of the panel introducing the exhibit, see Appendix H)<sup>57</sup>. The museum, which has about twenty indigenous Mexican groups represented, is called *The Other Face of Mexico*. Its name, Brian said,

is very intentional, it's, like, guess what? There is a million and a half people in this country that still speak the same language that Montezuma spoke... there are still a million and a half people that speak Nahuatl ...It's incredible, it's amazing... one out of ten people self-identify to the census taker as being indigenous; they say 'yo soy indigena,' 'yo soy indio,' they don't say 'I am Mexican'... The country with the largest number of living languages is India with sixty-five followed by Mexican by sixty-two... it's incredible! (SMA: US1).

In addition to learning about Mexico's cultural diversity through attending the museum, visitors to the B&B can also attend lectures given by Helen on indigenous folk arts, i.a. textiles, pottery, woodwork, and print from around the region. These lectures take place in a workshop and gallery space located adjacent to the B&B. According to Helen, it is useful to show tourists this side – this face – of Mexico because 'most people, certainly North Americans, have a very limited concept of Mexico and the diversity of the culture' (SMA: US2a). Indeed, Brian commented,

most of the people that stay at our bed and breakfast who are Americans or non-nationals... are very surprised that there is this rich indigenous culture in Mexico (SMA: US1e).

Speculating as to why this is the case, Brian commented that it could be rooted in the fact that, even while there is a large influx of US tourists to Mexico,

most people that come to Mexico as tourists, they go to the big resorts, the big cities, and... less [people] visit the colonial areas and certainly [there is] very little contact with the rural Mexican indigenous culture, which is where [culture] is found (SMA: US1a).

For both Helen and Brian, Mexican culture is fundamentally tied to the indigenous, to that unspoiled by tourist presence. This is a view that, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is also held by travel books in reference to what they represent as constituting authentic cultural spaces, particularly in the context of areas known for attracting a large number of tourists. According to Brian, 'real culture' can only be found away from mass tourism destinations, especially beach resorts where 'airplanes and carloads of tourists [can be found] along the beach' (SMA: US1b). In fact, he noted,

in most tourist areas, [culture] is not evident... They become completely internationalized... you know, if you did see a ceremonial dance in Acapulco it would be in the lobby of a hotel, it wouldn't be authentic, in the sense it would be entertainment which is not bad, I'm not saying it shouldn't happen, but it really is a rural phenomenon. Experiencing indigenous people celebrating themselves, their customs, their traditions, their beliefs: it's really a personal experience, it's a rural experience (SMA: US1).

Here the commodification of culture and its integration within tourism circuits is read as conducive to the loss of the 'real' with the real being anchored to specific coordinates unadulterated by outside contact. This view is founded on the notion of ritual as a 'rural phenomenon' structured around particular beliefs and traditions that can only occur outside the domains of its transformation into an object of touristic consumption, as this would strip it of its cultural signification. Expounding further on the above, Brian added that,

I would be heartbroken if I went to Michoacán on October eighteenth when they have the feast day of St Marco... and they have a dance festival there and they invite dance groups from the villages around...

I would be heartbroken if I went there again and saw tour buses pulling up there... It would absolutely change the nature [of the ritual] (SMA: US1).

In many ways, the above stance reflects the ideological fusion of tourism and authenticity, or, rather, the contingency between the expansion of tourism and the loss of the authentic. Like Brian above, Watson and Kopachevsky noted that experiences, objects, activities and even the simple act of gazing can become commodified in tourism discourse and practice – i.e. turned into commodities to be bought, sold, and consumed – thereby impacting their authenticity (1994). In this context, the search for the ‘authentic Otherness’ that cultural tourism encourages, by fomenting an influx of tourists to sites of ‘real culture’, is seen as conducive to damaging the exclusivity and allure of ‘real’ and / or ‘authentic’ spaces (see: Papanicolaou 2011). Frankland characterizes this paradox as falling within a type of ‘teleological conceit’ whereupon ‘any Eden found must soon be lost, precisely because it has been discovered; any Adam or any Eve will soon be polluted, their purity compromised by the very act of contact’ (2009: 96). The idea that through tourism’s commodification of authentic culture a culture’s intrinsic authenticity becomes endangered continues to run throughout much of the literature on tourism and commodification (for more on this, see: Papanicolaou 2011; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Cohen 1988; Harrison 1994; Tomaselli and Wang 2001).

In the context of the creation of tourist spaces that fall within a specific matrix of the culturally authentic, a predetermined set of images, imaginaries and aesthetics are commonly inscribed on social spaces. The case of Casa Flores provides a useful example of this. Casa Flores is a hotel located near the central Plaza of San Miguel de Allende. Owned and managed by Cathy, originally from the US, the property used to be a Mexican-owned hotel prior to her purchasing it in 2002. Soon after arriving, Cathy began the process of renovating and redecorating it in order to transform it into a space that followed her own vision. This was because, she said, the space she inherited contained,

white-themed rooms and it was green paint... just very Asian and understated... what I inherited were themed rooms that were not Mexican... But I just changed it specifically, I added more Mexican colors... I changed most of the rooms into being more Mexican-themed because that's what I want (SMA: US6).

To inject a touch of the Mexican into the hotel – to make it Mexican-themed – Cathy remembered how she added ‘very Mexican, hot fun colors and textiles and all

that sort of thing...so there's much more of a Mexican look to things' (SMA: US6). In addition, she 'changed the gardens to be more colorful and, you know, the fabrics in the room to be more colorful so that even if a room [was] called 'Peace' it has Mexican influences in it' (SMA: US6). For Cathy, a unique aesthetic configuration (i.a. one of bold 'Mexican colors') denoted the characteristically Mexican, one that, in many respects, echoes that portrayed by *Mexicolor* (Levick and Cohan 1998), *Mexicasa* (Levick and Hyams 2001), and *In a Mexican Garden* (Levick and Hyams 2005). While Cathy's vision of what constitutes the authentically Mexican is integrated into the fashioning of a space that is ultimately intended for foreign tourists' consumption, in the process of giving the hotel a 'Mexican look,' Cathy mentioned that she kept some of the rooms intentionally neutral. This, she said, she did under the premise that 'for the Mexicans, it's really nice to have something else that would be a little different' (SMA: US6). This is worthy of note as it draws attention to how the image of central Mexico as a colorful space replete with folk art is one assumed to fit foreign tourists' expectations of the region while, at the same time, Mexicans are represented as also seeking difference, but, in their case, one assumed to be different from their own.

Continuing her discussion of culture, Cathy commented that tourists often approached her to ask if she could recommend any useful resources for gaining a deeper understanding of contemporary Mexican culture. She said that 'there is one book that I recommend to everyone and it's called *There's a Word for It in Mexico*<sup>58</sup>' (SMA: US6; more on this book in the section below). When interviewing Mariana, reservations manager at Casa Flores, she too noted the high prevalence of foreign tourists interested in learning more about Mexican culture. Sadly however, she said, all too often she finds that,

they know more of Mexican history than we do...it's happened to me, you know? Suddenly just chatting they begin to talk [about] the Aztecs this and that and I mean, I studied [but] like [when I was] eight years old...At school obviously we took Mexican history, universal history, that type of thing and if you like it, you pay attention. Yes, yes, you retain a lot of things but... it's up to you to have your own cultural archive (SMA: MX8a).

The idea that foreigners frequently have a deeper 'archive' of Mexican culture is one worth emphasizing as it resonated with Ana's argument that foreigners somehow embrace Mexican culture 'more than Mexicans.' It also echoes the argument raised by Carmen and Reina, two housemaids working at Casa Flores who, like Mariana, spoke of how the city's population of foreign residents embraced and adopted aspects of Mexican culture that they themselves did not always adopt

or did not do so as thoroughly. Carmen, for example, said that many US expats living in San Miguel de Allende build a Day of the Dead altar to commemorate the date while not all locals do it, adding that '[they] do things like this...and they do it better than us!' (ibid), she exclaimed. To this, Reina commented that 'we've noticed that they come to rescue our traditions' (ibid). Taken together, the voices of Ana, Reina, Carmen, and Mariana illustrate the gap between particular tourist narratives' conceptualization of Mexicans' contemporary realities versus Mexicans' own perception and adoption of the cultural and historical backgrounds assigned to them by the tourist gaze.

My interview with Jorge, general manager at Casa Arbol, emphasized how, in many cases, foreign tourists would travel to Guanajuato with a predetermined vision of what it is they want to see; with a pre-formed itinerary that, at its center, featured culture. Casa Arbol is a B&B located in the outskirts of the city of Guanajuato. Originally bought by two American friends in the 1980s as their home, the property was converted into a B&B in 2003. Like the venues I discussed above, its incorporation of folk art and its integration of 'Mexican colors' was reminiscent of the properties profiled in books like *Mexicolor* (1998) and *Mexicasa* (2001) – its aesthetic and motif resounding with colonial forms of 'Mexicanness' like those found in these texts and those embraced by many homes in the region. At Casa Arbol, Jorge noted that the B&B's major clientele, Americans, 'come and they want to know about culture,' but, he added, they come prepared', i.e.

they bring their schedules and itineraries...they already read and they know what they want when they get here; usually they tell me, 'we want to see these people, these galleries, and do this' (GUA: MX6c).

Aside from offering them advice on what to see and what to do, Jorge mentioned that he conducts a series of tours tailored to people's desired activities. When wanting to learn about culture, he said,

this is when we conduct more cultural tours where, usually...we talk a lot...about cultural differences...It depends because a lot of people come to see Mexican popular art...there are people who like to talk about gastronomy...It varies a lot...but usually about popular Mexican art, gastronomy, culture (GUA: MX6e).

In addition to these tours, Jorge commented that tourists sometimes asked him for additional resources to learn more about culture specifically. He said that he likes to recommend the books sold at the Casa Arbol's gift shop, a small room located adjacent to the B&B's main reception area which carries a number of books, amongst

them: books about Diego Rivera and Frida Khalo<sup>59</sup>, books about Guanajuato in general, and about Guanajuato's mining history in particular (GUA: MX6f). Exclusively profiled and propped at the very entrance of the gift shop however, were three books: *On Mexican Time* (Cohan 2000), *Mexicolor* (Levick and Cohan 1998), *Mexicasa* (Levick and Hyams 2001), and *In a Mexican Garden* (Levick and Hyams 2005). This final example illustrates, once again, the interplay between imaginaries, texts, and tourist spaces themselves.

### 5.2.2 CANCUN AND THE MAYAN RIVIERA'S RESORTS

As I discussed in the previous two chapters, the type of tourism that San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato attracts markedly differs from the type of tourism found in Cancun/Mayan Riviera. Reflecting the region's vastly different geographical and sociocultural topography, the accommodation options tourists have at their disposal in Cancun/Mayan Riviera differ from those that are popular in central Mexico. Accommodation venues, here, range from small hotels to all-inclusive mega resorts, from family-friendly accommodation facilities to adult-only venues, from 'green' ecologically friendly boutique-style hotels to expansive tourist centers. At Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, large hotels and resorts tend to predominate (instead of small hotels and B&Bs like those discussed in the previous section) which cater to different tourism experiences (see: Cohen 1979).

Not surprisingly, the definition and the role assigned to culture by these spaces also differs. This is because the tourist spaces of Cancun/Mayan Riviera, in addition to drawing on generic representations of Mexicanness, often draw from an additional cultural element: the Mayan. In this section, my focus is on some of the most popular all-inclusive resorts located in Cancun and the Mayan Riviera; resorts that the travel books I discussed in the previous chapter most frequently recommended.

The first resort I visited was the Great Princess Resort. Located in the Mayan Riviera, this Spanish-owned resort is a gated complex that includes two all-inclusive hotels connected by an internal system of roads and pathways. In addition, Great Princess Resort also boasts its own 'shopping and entertainment center', which, together with the hotel, is described by promotional brochures as having been designed using traditional Mayan architectural styles and structures including Mayan engravings and symbols, arches and building styles. In addition to embracing 'Mayan' elements, a 'Mexican' style is also at the center of the Great Princess Resort's self-representation. This becomes apparent when the brochure notes that, aside from incorporating a Mayan 'architectural style,' the hotel also incorporates a 'Mexican'

aesthetic by emphasizing its espousal of 'Mexican colors and materials.' At the Great Princess Resort, I spoke with Nina, part of the hotel's Customer Relations staff. Speaking about the hotel's use of local culture, Nina said that culture, particularly Mayan culture, forms an integral part of the hotel's surroundings. In addition to including a large statue representing a Mayan god on its grounds,

[we] have these engraved figurines and it's always things that...[are] about culture. For example, here we have...the bathrooms, the signaling for the men and women are the Aztec and the Mayan...Yes so there is always a lot of things, sometimes it's only details, sometimes it's big like the statue [and] there are people who don't notice that it's a Mayan statue but only 'ah so pretty' and then there's people who do ask (MY: MX10a).

This extract is significant in two ways. First, it illustrates the hotel's narrative, and consequently, its presentation of 'local culture' as being tied to ancient Mayan and Aztec motifs. Secondly, it points to the way in which culture is integrated into the hotel's surroundings – architecturally (e.g. through its embracing of 'Mayan' styles), aesthetically (e.g. through its inclusion of 'engraved figurines' and 'Mayan statues') and even through what could be considered trivial elements (e.g. through its 'Aztec' and 'Mayan' bathroom signals). In addition to these features, however, the Great Princess Resort also offers a night show called *Fiesta Mexicana* (Mexican fiesta or party). This show, Nina said, is

a typically Mexican show [where] we have mariachis... Mexican folkloric dances, an interpretation of a Mayan sacrifice, which is dance and music too; we have carnival games, we have bars that serve only Mexican drinks; in fact, the uniforms are all Mexican (MY: MX10b).

Mixing 'the Mexican' with 'the Mayan,' this show is about showing tourists the 'different cultures inside Mexico' (see: MY: MX10d), Nina commented, while acknowledging that 'obviously we cannot...represent all of Mexico' (*ibid*). While conducting my fieldwork in Cancun/Mayan Riviera, it soon became apparent that shows like the Great Princess Resort's *Fiesta Mexicana* represent a common form of 'cultural entertainment' offered by most all-inclusive tourist resorts in the region. One such resort is the YHN Castle.

Also located in the Mayan Riviera, the YHN Castle is part of an international chain of luxury resorts that boasts properties in Cancun, the Mayan Riviera, and several other important tourist destinations throughout Mexico (i.a. Mexico City, Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, etc.). At the YHN Castle, which opened its doors in Playa del Carmen in

2006, I spoke with Francisco, its general manager. Like most hotels under the YHN banner, he commented, the YHN Castle has a quintessentially European design that 'you notice, by their structure, that all is Spanish...If you go into the rooms, it's very European' (MY: MX6a). Some YHN Castle resorts do however, he added, incorporate a 'Mexican style' by including 'little plazas' on their grounds or *piñatas* hanging from the arched building of the hotel's main plazas. Francisco noted that 'we put them up because we're in Mexico, no? We add a little Mexican taste, a little bit' (MY: MX6b).

While the YHN Castle sought to include touches of culture within its general grounds in an attempt to 'localize' its surroundings, the hotel's presentation of culture mostly revolved its 'Mexican night show.' According to Francisco, this show consists of 'Mexican folklore, it's about showing a little bit about Mexican culture on stage, the typical regional dances' (MY: MX6c). When I asked whether this show was staged every night, he said that it was not; that it was 'on a rotation' along with other programmed performances so that 'today we have a Mexican event, tomorrow will be... [an impersonator of] Michael Jackson' (MY: MX6d), a statement denotative of the entertainment value of such cultural shows.

The YHN Castle's 'Mexican night show' took place at the hotel's outdoor plaza where, behind the main stage was hung a large Mexican flag and alongside it, large curtains of red, white, and green. 'Mexico', it became immediately apparent, pervaded the plaza's surroundings. With their all-inclusive bracelets, tourists ordered their 'Mexican drinks' (i.a. tequilas, *margaritas*, *piña coladas*) as waitresses circulated the area dressed in what was meant to represent traditional Mexican attire, i.e. wide colorful skirts and blouses like those featured in the hotel's brochures, in this way embodying specific representations of 'traditional' Mexicanness. The show began with a presenter energetically introducing the dancers who, clad in folkloric Mexican dress from different states within Mexico, performed traditional dances from various regions of the country as tourists casually watched the show while they chatted amongst themselves.

On the whole, spaces like the Great Princess Resort, the YHN Castle (and, as I will illustrate below, the Resort Maya and the Queen Tulum hotel) are polycentric and culturally stratified spaces, interweaving as they do different cultural elements – from local (Mayan), to national (Mexican) to 'global' (Euro-American) – in an attempt to create a diverse atmosphere for tourists' consumption that taps into their assumed imaginative geographies and expectations. In this way, hotels employ different cultural reference point and orientations, embracing (however banally) local indigenous aesthetics, Mexican *fiestas*, and shows featuring Michael Jackson impersonators.

After visiting the YHN Castle, I went to the Resort Maya, an all-inclusive resort opened in 1997 and located in Playa del Carmen, the 'heart' of the Mayan Riviera. Here, I interviewed Monica and Rafael, two of the Customer Relations staff who dealt with customers' enquiries. When I asked whether they too included any type of cultural entertainment, Monica and Rafael commented that a 'Mexican night show' is included in the hotel's entertainment program. Describing this show, Rafael said that it is a night show 'dedicated exclusively to Mexico...to Mexican folklore' (MY: MX4a). During this show, Monica added, 'we bring food, *mariachi*, there is a market out here with handicrafts from all around the country' (MY: MX4b). This show, she said, is useful because tourists often visit Mexico with a limited view of the country:

a lot of people....come to know the Caribbean but not to know any other parts of Mexico and it is a very big country so we try to give them all they can find here in the country (MY: MX4c).

Just as Nina observed above, however, Monica and Rafael emphasized that the night show is meant to be 'symbolic' and 'representative' of Mexico; that it does not 'cover all the country.' Instead, Rafael said, its aim is 'promote what Mexican culture is because the international guest comes here looking for that' (MY: MX4d). Indeed, they said, culture is something foreign tourists appear to be increasingly interested in, especially now, 'with the fact that now Chichen Itza is one of the wonders of the world, people are really very interested...to see not only the ruins...but also the paths, the cenotes, the caverns where the Mayans lived' (MY: MX4e). Further echoing the notion that the type of culture sought by tourists visiting the region is one that revolves around the 'Mayan', Rafael said that, to people interested in learning about culture, they recommend

Chichen Itza, [for] small ruins... Coba... [and also] sacred cenotes... typical Mayan restaurants... We recommend Xcaret, it's a place that promotes very much Mayan culture... It's a very prepared park for this (MY: MX4f).

The above is significant in that it emphasizes the way in which, while resorts in the area focus mostly on the folkloric and the Mexican through their night shows, tourists' conceptualization of local culture – what they seek to experience in the region – is mostly tied to the area's indigenous: to the Mayan.

My interview with Ella, the customer relations' manager at the Queen Tulum, the final resort I examined, further attests to this phenomenon. The Queen Tulum is an upscale resort that opened its gates in 2008 after being bought by a Spanish chain of luxury resorts with properties all around the world. Ella spoke with me about the

Queen Tulum's efforts to incorporate elements of local culture into the resort's entertainment program and restaurant. The central platform via which culture is presented to tourists, she commented, is the resort's Mexican night show where,

typical Mexican dances with Mexican music [are presented] for them to know a bit... For example on September 15th the *mariachi* come and play for people but also normally [there are] dances with typical Mexican dress and music...Generally it's like this, about all the country (MY: MX12a).

Ella argued that these shows form part of the events program of most hotels in the region, and that they are important because they provide tourists with a platform through which to learn about Mexico,

because you come from another country and arrive in Mexico and that's what you're interested in right? To see a bit of the culture and know a bit of the gastronomy so the majority of hotels have this type of show and these types of restaurants so people become acquainted (MY: MX12b).

But, aside from these shows, she said, Queen Tulum's staff is available to help tourists and offer them information about some of the regional cultural attractions they can pursue in Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. 'It's a daily thing for people to ask about where to go to experience Mayan culture' (MY: MX12c). This is particularly the case now, she said, because

people are a lot more interested in getting to know the villages, the Mayan villages and the Mayan *pueblitos* and all that really interests them very much, much more than going to well, Xcaret... They're more interested in knowing really what culture is, how they live, how they cook and all that, than going to the parks... Lately this has become better known and also more promoted (ibid).

In addition, Ella said that she recommended a range of sites to tourists interested in learning more about local culture. She said:

I recommend going to Coba, there's the pyramid and also very nice villages in its surroundings ...I also recommend to travel in this region near Chichen... [where] there are many Mayan communities... Cancun and all that, well, more than anything we recommend it to go

shopping no? But we send them south of the Mayan Riviera usually (MY: MX12d).

Echoing the common reading of Cancun as largely 'a-cultural,' this extract emphasizes the discursive fusion of culture with the Maya and the way in which, for tourists interested in experiencing culture, visiting Mayan villages and learning 'how they live, how they cook and all that' is thought to offer them a window into what culture in the region 'is.' On the whole, throughout the all-inclusive resorts I examined, the same phenomenon could be observed, i.e. one of tourists being increasingly interested in experiencing local forms of culture and hotels promoting a series of cultural attractions premised on experiencing the Maya, while incorporating the 'Mexican' within their entertainment programs as a way to offer tourists a view of the country's diversity by way of its varied folkloric dances. In the following section, I will focus on some of the attractions that the above-mentioned accommodation venues commonly promote, examining their integration of culture and the way in which it is performed, staged, and presented.

### 5.3 TOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Because resorts and B&Bs comprised only one site where tourists can come into contact with elements of local 'culture' at my fieldwork sites, this section discusses a series of popular attractions commonly frequented by tourists interested in learning more about Mexican/local culture. It begins by considering a selection of those found in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato, including walking tours and culture courses at local language schools.

#### 5.3.1 TOURS AND CULTURAL CLASSES CENTERS AT SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE AND GUANAJUATO

Organized through the Instituto Allende and frequently advertised in San Miguel de Allende's local English-language newspaper (*Atencion*), a series of daylong field trips from San Miguel de Allende to Guanajuato are available to tourists interested in visiting the latter. Headed by mostly English-speaking, Mexican-born tour guides, these tours have proven popular with US tourists who, on their visit to San Miguel de Allende, want to also explore the state's capital. For US\$64, transportation from San Miguel, entrance fees to museums and a three-course meal at one of Guanajuato's most popular restaurants are provided. As part of my fieldwork, I participated in this tour, which included visits to many of Guanajuato's eminent historical sites, particularly those central in the country's Independence movement.

In addition, it included a visit to the city's *Museo Iconografico el Quixote* (a museum dedicated to celebrating Miguel de Cervantes' famous novel, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*) and to the early home of the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. A traditional Mexican meal was then served and an hour of 'free time' was given before the tour concluded by visiting some of Guanajuato's most popular plazas and the city's marketplace where we were given time to independently explore. During this tour, a historical narrative of city of Guanajuato and its many historical sites was provided.

During the tour's one-hour break, I interviewed Rogelio – a San Miguel de Allende native and the guide in charge of our tour. Our interview began with him noting the way in which the tour has changed over time, to cater to rapidly changing social realities and tourists' changing expectations and interests. While the tour, he said, changed in 'form' however, its content remained practically the same; that is:

the tour now is exactly the same as ten years go but we've changed the order...we've given more emphasis to places of more relevance, the two museums, the *Quixote*, for being symbolic of Guanajuato and [the house of] Diego Riviera, for the popularity it has ever since Frida became a global figure, Diego Rivera was dragged by this fame, his talent too, and visiting the house is a must if you come to Guanajuato (GUA: MX7a)<sup>60</sup>.

What is important here to note is the way in which the Guanajuato tour reacts to the global circulation of cultural imaginaries of Mexico. By becoming symbolic emblems of Mexican culture at a larger – global – scale, figures like Diego Rivera and Frida Khalo enter into the local circuit of tourism. This, I argue, illustrates the global cross-pollination of discourses on Mexicanness and the way in which, locally, tourism caters to projected imaginaries thought correspond to foreigners ever-shifting tourist gaze.

Further commenting about foreign tourists' consumption of culture and their interest in learning about contemporary Mexico, Rogelio said that,

tourists don't only want to know about the official culture of places, they ask about politics, about society, about economy, about traditions, customs, legends, and myths... [and] for me it is exciting because it's people that really show a lot of interest to get to know Mexico, and learn about Mexico, and I like really trying to say and do the best possible, so people are satisfied and happy and realize that [Mexico] is not just beaches and violence (GUA: MX7b).

Transcending tourists' imaginaries of Mexico as 'just beaches and violence' (common imaginaries of the country that, as I will discuss in the following section, are prevalent amongst people's projected landscapes of Mexico abroad) was something that, to Rogelio, was very important and highly necessary because,

in my ten years of experience [as a tour guide], I have realized that the majority of people are surprised to learn Mexico's history, so rich in important events but mostly that there is such a great diversity of thought and cultural richness... Foreign tourists in general know Mexico for its beaches: Mexico is Cancun, Mexico is Acapulco, Mexico is Puerto Vallarta and now we're trying to strengthen and we are trying to make sure that tourists come and they learn about real Mexico because it's not the Mexico of the border. I am saddened to hear how in actuality they say abroad, in the US for example, that Mexico is like Pakistan in matters of security (GUA: MX7c).

But it was not only foreign tourists for whom Mexico's vast 'cultural richness' was surprising. Indeed, while most tourists taking part in his tour are from the US (GUA: MX7d), Rogelio recalled one occasion in particular in which he gave a tour to a group of Mexicans from Monterrey:

it was very interesting for them to learn about the roots of the Mexican people because, they said they felt a lot of US influence in their lives...and that knowing about life in Mexico, in the center of San Miguel de Allende, they realized Mexico was more than American influence so you become surprised when Mexicans themselves realize what they have, what we have (GUA: MX7e).

This instance of Mexican tourists being somehow surprised by elements of their country's history was not unique to the case above. In fact, something similar once occurred at the *Patronato Pro-Niños* walking tour, a two and a half hour historic walking tour of San Miguel de Allende's city center.

On any given Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning, groups of around ten to twenty tourists can be seen touring the center of San Miguel de Allende, led around the city center by an English-speaking (usually American) tour guide. These tours were created in the early 1990s as a way to raise funds for *Patronato Pro-Niños*, a charity organization founded in 1991 and dedicated to providing dental and medical care to thousands of impoverished children living in San Miguel de Allende and the surrounding communities. In 1999, one of the *Patronato Pro-Niños'* earliest tour guides, Paul Temple, wrote in the city's English-language newspaper that these tours

'have become a fixture' of San Miguel de Allende's landscape (Temple, 1999). The same, I argue, could be said today, more than a decade later. Praising the tour and drawing attention to its popularity, a recent article in *Atencion* wrote that,

first-time tourists and all-time history buffs declare this tour helps them understand San Miguel's rich history and current culture more than any other offering of this sort... [R]epeat visitors have found the Walking Tours to be an excellent way of enhancing their knowledge of Mexican history and the impact religion, revolutions and the arts have had on the community over centuries (Ludekens, 2008).

In addition to taking part in the walking tour, which for a US\$15 donation provides an overview of the city, highlighting sites of historical significance and providing a brief summary of each, I interviewed Bonnie, one of its early tour guides who is today involved with the operation of *Patronato Pro-Niños*. According to Bonnie, Bill Sommerlot, a US writer and historian, wrote a book on San Miguel de Allende and it was from this book that two of the charity's founders, the late Bert Fayne and Billie Bremer, created the script for the walking tour (a script that was revised to enhance its accuracy and relevance in 2003). Bonnie remembered how, soon after its launch in 1991, the walking tour began to quickly attract an increasing number of tourists. When I asked Bonnie whether any Mexican people had ever taken the tour she said that,

we had a couple of real Mexican groups...and I said 'you know I welcome the opportunity to give you this tour because I wanna get some feedback from you guys' [and] one group says, 'I can't give you any feedback! I didn't know any of this!' (SMA: US17a).

Rogelio's account, in a way, serves to emphasize the extent to which Mexicans are often thought of as knowing what is assumed to be 'their' history when (as the above extract together with earlier statements provided by Rogelio, Ana, Carmen, Mariana and Reina illustrate), this is not necessarily always the case.

After taking part in the *Patronato Pro-Niños*' walking tour, I asked Bonnie whether it was common for tourists to approach her afterwards to ask if there were any further resources they could access to learn more about contemporary culture. To this, she said that 'I think *Lonely Planet* is probably the best deal here but they never ask about that too much because they've already seen it' (SMA: US 17b). But, she added, there is a book about 'contemporary culture' called *There's a Word for it in Mexico: The Complete Guide to Mexican Thought and Culture* (De Mente 1996). This was a book that she widely recommended. In fact, this book represented an important

resource recommended to tourists at the central Mexican spaces where I conducted my fieldwork. It was also a book that could be found at most local bookstores and souvenir shops in both San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. For this reason, a brief discussion of *There's a Word for It in Mexico: The Complete Guide to Mexican Thought and Culture* is in order. Written by Boyé Lafayette De Mente, a US writer and author of, i.a. *Why Mexicans Think and Behave The way They Do* (2005) and *Romantic Mexico! The Images & The Realities* (2005), *There's a Word for It in Mexico: The Complete Guide to Mexican Thought and Culture*, was originally published in 1996. The text delineates a series of cultural elements that it represents as tacitly inscribed in Mexicans' linguistic repertoire; cultural elements that, if left unexplained, often confound foreign visitors. *There's a Word for It in Mexico* supplies foreigners with a lexicon of culture, in other words, a 'dictionary of cultural code words' through which to help them 'read,' understand, and navigate Mexican culture. Acting as a mediator of cultural knowledge – as a broker of Otherness – the book unfolds like a dictionary, listing a series of words alphabetically and defining them in the context of their situated usage and assumed cultural significance. Unlike a dictionary, however, the book offers an ongoing commentary about contemporary Mexican culture and society instead of providing concise and forthright definitions.

Much of the commentary included in this text, I argue, is mired in culturalist readings of Mexicans and nationally homogenizing renditions of culture. For example, defining what it calls the 'cultural code word' of *personalismo*, De Mente writes that,

[t]he first thing that foreigners in Mexico – whether business people or tourists – should know about Mexicans is that their behavior, both private and official, is generally controlled by the code of *personalismo*... not law, logic, fairness, equality of any other objective principle (1996: 242).

*Personalismo*, the text states, 'embodies the Mexican belief that personal dignity takes precedence over all other considerations, including the ethical and the moral – and woe to anyone who slights or attacks the dignity of a Mexican' (1996: 242). Within *There's a Word for it in Mexico*, the idea of dignity as a cornerstone to Mexicans' character is repeatedly posited. Defining *dignidad*, it writes that,

Mexicans have traditionally been culturally programmed to demonstrate a high order of respect to their superiors and to be hypersensitive about their own dignity and the exaggerated consideration they expect in return...[T]he concern of Mexican men

with their *dignidad* is a key element in their behavior, dress and manners (ibid: 89).

Various other words<sup>61</sup> and concepts are portrayed as interrelated to the idea of dignity (1996: 7) and dozens of different 'code words' are outlined as being critical to understanding Mexicans' character. On the whole, I argue, that the book's discussion is largely informed by culturalism (a concept discussed at length in Chapter Two) and by the notion that Mexico encloses a unique sociocultural configuration, one that can be spoken of in the singular. By adopting concepts like 'Mexican life,' 'Mexican time', and 'Mexican psyche'<sup>62</sup>, the text contributes to painting an imaginary whereby Mexicans are rendered a homogenous entity defined by specific behavioral traits and social markers. Several culturalist representations of contemporary Mexican society can be lifted from the text<sup>63</sup>; representations that concurrently serve to mobilize a series of ideas anchored to nationhood as a socially determining structure – in the context of both Mexicans' behavior and Americans' own. This is because the mobilization of culturalism and of a methodologically nationalistic gaze for perceiving, defining, and ultimately understanding Mexicans' behavior, works both ways, so that much of its discussion of Mexicans' 'way of being' is posited against Americans' assumed sociocultural patterns of behavior. For example, the book writes that, 'unlike most North Americans who regard idleness as sinful and work as a religious activity through which one achieves virtue, Mexicans tend to look at work as a necessary evil, and idle time, or recreation, as essential to a fulfilling life' (1996: 145), an idea reminiscent of those discussed in the previous section in relation to travel books characterization of Mexicans. Indeed, much like the travel books discussed in the previous chapter, *There's a Word for it in Mexico* draws from the idea of Mexican and American time when arguing that, 'about the only way around inconveniences caused by unadorned mañana responses is to diplomatically qualify how the word is being used; to specify, with a smile... 'American time'' (ibid: 183).

As I will illustrate below, many of the ideas and conceptual frameworks found within *There's a Word for it in Mexico* (1996) resound with Warren Hardy's lectures on contemporary Mexican culture at his Spanish language school in San Miguel de Allende. During my interview with Hardy<sup>64</sup>, head teacher of Warren Hardy's Spanish language school, he commented that *There's a Word for it in Mexico: The Complete Guide to Mexican Thought and Culture* (De Mente 1996) is a wonderful book that allows his students to understand

why Mexicans believe and act like they do... So you can look up...the word 'honesty', and it will explain Mexican 'honesty' versus American, and you can look up 'family', and it will explain Mexican

family versus American... It's very insightful on helping you understand difference (SMA: US22).

The Warren Hardy Spanish language school is widely recognized as one of the most influential language learning centers in San Miguel de Allende. Indeed, by 2009 there were more than 6,000 alumni, Hardy said, 'about ninety percent probably are Americans and ten percent Canadians' (SMA: US22b). Founded in the early 1990s, Warren Hardy's language school offers multiple levels of instruction for students to learn Spanish. In addition, the school offers 'intermediate readers and online tools that develop vocabulary and cultural understanding' (Warren Hardy Spanish, 2008). According to the school's online mission statement, its primary aim is 'to unite people' through language learning and the fomentation of cultural understanding' (ibid). In addition to having 'pioneered several leaning tools' and being 'a master teacher and educational innovator,' Hardy is also 'an expert on bi-cultural relations and mediation' (ibid). Echoing this fact in our interview, Hardy mentioned that 'I really am an expert in American and Mexican core values and culture' (SMA: US22c). For Hardy, teaching cultural interaction, in conjunction with Spanish, has become his life's work. This is because, he said,

You just can't teach a language without helping people to understand the culture and how to interact; people want to know how to act, not only do they want to know the protocol, they want to know what comes behind the protocol, and what people feel and what really matters to Mexicans (SMA: US22d).

The idea of teaching about culture, he commented, began ten to fifteen years ago when he developed a lecture focusing entirely on culture and its relationship to history. Ever since then, he said, his lectures on culture have become a central feature of his course. During these lectures, whose titles are, 'What Really Matters to Mexicans?' and 'Social Protocol in Mexico', Hardy discusses the core differences between Mexican and Americans, a task that, he said, is of high importance to understanding Mexicans because 'Mexicans and Americans... we're just way different' (SMA: US22f). According to Hardy, what mostly distinguishes Mexicans from Americans are their 'core values.' What this means is that, while 'the number one core value [of Americans]...would be financial opportunity ...number two, there's the control of time ...and then finally individual freedom is the third core value of Americans' (SMA: US22g), Mexicans' core values are different. The 'number one core value' for Mexicans', he said, 'and what people demand from each other' the most is, firstly,

respect and personal dignity ....the second thing that's important to Mexicans is trust and trust comes through friends and family, which is the third core value, so that's all intertwined... In this country, it's respect, trust and family and financial opportunity is way down the list (SMA: US22h).

On the whole, he said, Mexicans' cultural traits – their core values and beliefs – are born out of four hundred years of being 'basically a slave nation,' whereby '[their] civilization [was] destroyed, self-esteem destroyed – people fell into a labyrinth of darkness and despair for generations of people, that's Mexicans' history' (SMA: US22j). As a result, he said, Mexicans have developed,

the power of the heart; Mexicans live out of their hearts – they totally do. They love being together with their families, you see them in the streets, they laugh, they play, they giggle, they have this lightness of being about them because everything is coming right from here [points to his heart] (SMA: US22k).

Adding to this reading of Mexicans, he added that they 'are a nation of people that really have sunny dispositions [and] that's expressed in their music and their art; they're harmonious and they're peaceful' (SMA: US22i). According to Hardy, when his students take part in these lectures, i.e. when they learn about Mexican culture and learn the 'protocol' on how to behave in interactions with Mexicans,

they are thrilled.... [and] they just immediately go out and do it... I've never had anyone that said 'Oh that doesn't make sense to me' or 'I don't believe it' and the reason is that once people see history and we all agree that history is what defines us, then people are shocked, and many people are saddened and I see a lot of people have tears during this lecture when they think, 'Oh my gosh how lucky am I that I grew up in this nation of expansion [the US] and how unfortunate are they that they had this, but how amazing it is that in spite of that they're such lovely, kind, harmonious and generous people (SMA: US22o).

On the whole, Hardy's characterization of Mexicans, in many ways, echoes those set forth in *There's a Word for it in Mexico* and other books, such as the travel books explored in Chapter Four. Calling upon a series of understandings and narratives that define and fix Mexicans within a set behavioral repertoire, many of the ideas espoused by Warren Hardy's Spanish language school can be said to be premised on a culturalist and nationalist conceptual framework that depicts Mexico

and the US as housing unique and largely homogenous cultural groups that, far from overlapping, are actually separated from one another as a product of their history and its ensuing effect on their respective populations which are imagined and represented as discrete.

However, Warren Hardy's Spanish language school was hardly the only language school in the region to incorporate lessons on Mexican culture into its curriculum. The extent to which other language schools in the area, including Mexican-run schools with courses taught by Mexicans born and raised in the city and attended by foreign tourists, taught culture by resorting to simplified renditions of both culture and society was notable. Tourists interested in learning both Spanish and matters related to contemporary Mexican culture could, at the time of my fieldwork, sign up for courses at one of two language schools, both located within walking distance from Guanajuato's central plaza: the Academia Falcon and the Escuela Mexicana.

At the Academia Falcon, which had been operating in its present location since the late 1990s, I interviewed Esteban, one of the school's teachers and course administrators. I first asked Esteban about the origin of the school's cultural program. An academic consortium, he said, devised all the programs, and open to students' desired learning objectives; the academic consortium, he said,

gives suggestions about which are the things that they [tourists] are most interested in because sometimes you show them the program and they say 'no, I am not interested, I am more interested in language' ... or why we refer to each other in a certain way, or why we behave like we do, so we are going to investigate this topic and amplify it more and that is depending on each student's demands, what they ask (GUA: MX4a).

Conducted in Spanish and attended by a group of up to five students having an intermediate or advanced understanding of the language, cultural learning courses at the language school are given on topics that include family, tradition, politics, and indigenous culture with students free to chose which topics they would like to learn about. Esteban noted that,

the cultural classes I give are to show students everything related to culture, that is, language, geography, also traditional dances, politics and the sense of behavior – the cultural sense which we also have [and] tradition – what is the Day of the Dead and the *posadas* and all

the traditions that are most representative, Mother's day, family, so they see how family is structured (GUA: MX4b).

Esteban further noted that 'Eighty percent of our students ask to learn about family and other topics that are also widely asked for are traditions and the next, in my experience, is politics,' (GUA: MX4c). The fourth theme that they ask a lot about, he then said, is *indigenismo*: 'They are very interested in...how the government supports the indigenous... [They want to know] why they are poor and why they act a certain way, they are very interested [in this]' (GUA: MX4d).

A sampling of the school's course offerings were contained in a document that outlined the course on contemporary Mexican culture that I attended at the Academia Falcon. According to this document, the objective of this course, titled *Cultura Mexicana* ('Mexican culture'), was to:

teach the culture of our country, taking a journey through its music, its religion, its politics, its cuisine, and its traditions, so that, this way, a thorough comprehension of its ideology can be grasped by students (for a copy of this document, turn to Appendix G)

In addition to this document a double-sided sheet titled *Modo de Ser de los Mexicanos: Algunos Rasgos Caracteristicos de los Mexicanos* ('Mexicans' Way of Being: Some of Mexicans' Character Traits') was used to structure lectures on contemporary Mexican behavior. Here, one side was dedicated to the 'positive' features of Mexicans and another to their 'negative' features (see: Appendix G).

What is worthy of note here is that, much like Warren Hardy's Spanish language school, a series of culturalist definitions of Mexicans were incorporated into the Academia Falcon's cultural course curriculum sheet: from its title ('Mexicans Way of Being') to the heading of its discussion points. During these courses, however, it quickly became evident that within these headings, teachers emphasized diversity, plurality and cultural deviations (see Appendix G) so that, for example, while defining Mexicans' negative character traits as including *machismo*, lack of punctuality and *personalismo*, each of these traits was consequently discussed by calling attention to the fact that none of these traits were universally adopted in Mexico. Defining Mexicans' lack of punctuality, for example, the teacher took considerable effort to, as the course outline stated, 'avoid generalizations' and focus on 'students' experiences' (Appendix G).

Students' general reaction to the course, Esteban said, is usually one of surprise,

because you can learn [from] books but the book is limited to telling you something so when they see us and see that we give more details – about family, tradition, about how we feel, about the environment – there they change because they see the real way Mexican culture is...and how we think (GUA: MX4f).

Asked how they define 'Mexican culture,' Esteban said that

[w]e define it like a transmission of values, knowledge from generation to generation, it's about history, culture, food which goes from generation to generation; in the past there used to be only an oral way – only writings, but today: family, *indigenismo*, traditions like Day of the Dead, *posadas*, this is what encapsulated the majority of most popular common traditions (GUA: MX4g).

Much like the Academia Falcon, which adopted a series of ideas structured around the notion that there is a 'real way Mexican culture is' and a specific way Mexicans 'think', the Escuela Mexicana similarly focused on educating tourists in the 'way of being of Mexicans' ('*la forma de ser de los Mexicanos*') by offering classes on Mexican culture. At this school, located minutes way from Guanajuato's main plaza, I interviewed Lorenzo – one of the teachers commonly in charge of leading the school's cultural courses. At these cultural courses, he said,

I teach [tourists] the positive and the negative aspects [of Mexicans]. For example, a negative aspect could be for example, lack of punctuality; Mexicans...well, not only Mexicans but basically, well, Latin life is considered a bit unpunctual...For example, Americans or Europeans they say 'time is money' and we, in our culture, are more relaxed and this is a negative aspect...What could be considered a positive aspect could be Mexicans' familial union – this has always been a very positive aspect for the union the family has... So part of a way of being of Mexicans is basically some ... positive and negative aspects (GUA: MX1a).

The information for these courses, Lorenzo said, is based on news stories, newspapers, TV, the Internet, magazines, newspapers, and encyclopedias; 'basically whatever you can read or gain information from', he said. 'Mexicans' way of being,' however, he said, 'is common sense, common sense and preparation with a lot of people so they agree and form ideas too' (GUA: MX1b).

On the whole, my analysis of language schools' teaching of 'culture' emphasized how a fundamentally culturalist reading of both 'culture' and 'society,' are similarly adopted by Mexicans in their attempt to teach foreigners about 'Mexican culture'. While not as essentialist as those outlined by Warren Hardy's Spanish language school, the Academia Falcon and the Escuela Mexicana similarly mobilize ideas of 'Mexican culture', discussing it in the singular. This demonstrates not only the espousal of culturalism but also the adoption of a methodologically nationalist gaze through which to conceive of Mexico and its population as grounded in space and defined by a specific cultural makeup subsumed within a unique type of identity and life. While not directly challenging the usage of 'Mexican culture' as a defining structure, within the Academia Falcon and the Escuela Mexicana curriculum, a somewhat more nuanced definition of the cultural elements underpinning 'Mexican culture' (vis-à-vis those adopted by Warren Hardy) could be appreciated. Taken together, the representation of culture through tours and tourist spaces such as language schools serves to inform a gaze through which tourists perceive and understand Mexicans' behavior in the context of the nation's history and cultural repertoire. Culture, in this way, is defined, locally re/presented to tourists, and transformed into something that can, in a period of a few hours, be taught – and learnt.

### 5.3.2. TOURS, EXCURSIONS AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS IN CANCUN/MAYAN RIVIERA

The tourist spaces of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, as opposed to those found in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato, revolve much less around collective ideas of Mexican culture. While, as I discussed in Section 5.2.1, many of the accommodation venues found in this region embrace Mexicanness by interweaving it into their events programs and general surroundings, beyond the confines of their perimeters culture takes on a different form. Outside the resorts of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, the Maya take precedence. Today, there are several tours available for tourists to learn more about local forms of culture at Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. Indeed, as I discussed in Chapter Three, the number of attractions featuring culture as their main drawing point is rising. In this section, I focus on the case of two of the region's most popular tourist attractions, both of which strongly feature culture within their repertoires: Xcaret's night show, *Mexico Espectacular*, and Alltournative's 'Coba Mayan Encounter Expedition', two attractions I discussed at length in Papanicolaou (2011).

At Xcaret, which is one of the Mayan Riviera's most popular tourist attractions, for US\$69 tourists can swim, snorkel, dive, and admire first hand the region's flora and fauna. In this eco-park, tourists are also invited to learn about Mayan and Mexican cultures by visiting the park's on-site simulation of a 'Mayan Village,' by taking a tour of its on-site Mayan ruins, and by watching the park's widely acclaimed night show: *Mexico Espectacular*. Each of these cultural sites and performances, as I argued in Papanicolaou (2011), portray Mayan culture as fixed to the past, embracing a narrative of exotica and intractable Otherness. In the park's information brochure and website, tourists visiting the 'Mayan village' are informed that by doing so they will,

walk into the daily life of the Maya people and travel through time [by] visiting a replica of a Mayan Village... [where] you will be able to witness the everyday life of common Maya people at the time when the Maya civilization inhabited this land (Xcaret, 2010).

Here, it adds,

[t]he magical attraction of Mayan customs and traditions can be experienced through the work of their craftsmen and weavers dressed in traditional Maya attire...[who] will amaze you with their creativity as they carve Mayan sacred animals and god shapes in wood or make beautiful crafts the way they learned from their Mayan ancestors (ibid).

In addition, by visiting the park's on-site archaeological ruins, tourists are invited to 'discover the vestiges of the rich cultural heritage that the Mayans, these incredible mathematicians, astronomers, and architects left to mankind' (ibid). These two attractions – the 'Mayan Village' and the park's Mayan ruins seek to represent an 'authentic' vision of ancient Mayan culture. While one simulates a staged village where employees dressed in 'authentic' Mayan dress, enact the life of Mayan artisans and weavers, the other is largely empty, signifying the vanished Mayan civilization that left in its wake a number of archaeological ruins and a history that imbues the area with an aura of a bygone civilization (Papanicolaou 2011: 7). One can argue that the above attractions, by looking to the past and simulating an 'ancient' lived reality (in the context of the 'Mayan Village') or one extinguished (in the case of the archaeological ruins), are meant to impress an image of, not contemporary Mayan lives, but ancient Mayan life.

The third cultural attraction at Xcaret that I want to discuss is its Mexican night show. On the way to this show, a number of park employees, dressed in ancient

indigenous garb, statuesquely stand and / or play the drums along the pathway leading towards the theater where the night show takes place. Here, tourists often take photos with individuals dressed to represent Mexico's indigenous 'natives'. Inside the theatre, the show begins with a dynamic enactment and dramatization of Mexico's ancient indigenous peoples as prehispanic life is performed and staged and a picture is painted of Mexico's indigenous peoples as living in perfect symbiosis with their natural environment. This however, rapidly fades into a representation of the Conquest, with the Spanish shown invading the indigenous space, and a battle ensues that culminates in the defeat of Mexico's indigenous peoples. Directly following this performance, priests are seen entering the stage, and converting the indigenous to the Christian faith, which marks the end of first part of the show. The second part jumps several hundred years ahead and begins by presenting a series of choreographed performances and dances from all across the Mexico. By this time, the indigenous cease to form part of the represented landscape. Notably missing, also, is a representation of Mexico's quest for independence and the Mexican Revolution. Indeed, conflict (save for that of the Conquest and the ensuing subjugation of the country's indigenous population) is absent. Instead, music fills the theater as dancers from several states fill the stage, representing the diversity of Mexico's traditional music and dances. The show culminates with the apotheosis of Mexicanness as red, white and green lights flood the stage, with mariachis and folkloric dancers performing the song *Viva Mexico*.

As I noted in Papanicolaou (2011), Xcaret's night show leaves no room for the representations of Mayans living in Mexico today. Indeed, the show's representation of Mayan people is limited to its Mayan Village and archaeological tour, i.e. it is rooted in an ancient, long-forgone past. As Walker noted, Xcaret, leaves tourists 'with the overall impression that the Mayans are now extinct by merely entertaining them with a 'glamorized presentations of the Mayan culture' (2003: 71). The park, he proceeded, follows in 'the model of Disneyland<sup>65</sup> theme parks' (*ibid*).<sup>66</sup>

Understandably, Xcaret representatives see their portrayal of Mexican culture in a different light. I interviewed Lalo, one of Xcaret's employees in charge of staff development, who spoke to me about the concept of Xcaret. Xcaret, he said, ' has always been about a love for Mexican culture... about caring for our environment, our natural and cultural richness at the level of the Mayan Riviera' (MY: MX2a:). Speaking about the Mexican night show, in particular, he said that its goal is to,

rescue values... for example, a love and a value for Mexico, so that [national tourists] value what they have in their states and become cultural ambassadors to promote the richness that is not only here but

in the whole of Mexico, in all the states in the Republic... What [Xcaret] wants via the show is to represent... all the marvels that are in [Mexico] (MY: MX2b).

I asked Lalo whether he knew if the show ever changed foreigners' image of Mexico. 'Ah, yes', he exclaimed, 'of course, they come with one mentality and then they leave the show they are shocked!' (MY: MX2c). The show, he added, is, 'about showing the world Mexico's culture... so the national and the international tourist takes away a little bit of Mexico' (MY: MX2d).

For Mauricio, one of the first tour guides at Alltournative – the local ecotourism company that I focus on below, Xcaret shows tourists an ancient Mayan world, 'not the [Mayan world] we are living in now which has nothing to do with the one you see at Xcaret' (MX: MX14a). At Xcaret, he said,

they don't tell you [that]; they say this is Mayan culture, this is what Mayans are like... then people leave and for example they come with us and they say 'ah what a difference! I thought Mayan people continued painting themselves and hunting' (MY: MX14a).

Xcaret, Mauricio noted, is more about Mexico, i.e.,

they sell you a Mexico, a Mexico you can see in a whole day... but culturally, no, they don't get into what is Maya culture, how Mayan people live and the preoccupations they have... what they show is tequila, taco, and *mariachi* (MY: MX14d ; MY: MX14e).

Taken together, the above extracts illustrate Mauricio's reading of Xcaret's portrayal of Mayan culture as fixed in a romanticized past. This, he notes, has consequences that extend beyond the confines of the park because they color people's imaginaries of Mayan culture. This becomes apparent when, upon arriving at Alltournative, they voice that they thought Mayans to be a peoples living in the past. Besides Mayan culture, Mauricio also argues that Xcaret's representation of Mexico is inherently reductionist – 'Mexico in a day' – by offering a packaged version of Mexico thought to correspond to tourist's projected expectations. Here, Mexico becomes a land of 'tequila, taco and *mariachi*.' Unlike Xcaret, Mauricio said, Alltournative shows tourists the contemporary Mayan world – a more 'authentic' window into Mayan culture.

Founded in the outskirts of Playa del Carmen in 1999, Alltournative today represents one of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera's leading ecotourism companies.

From the beginning, the company's 'Coba Mayan Encounter Expedition' has been its most popular. This is a tour that introduced a unique ecotourism concept by combining visits to contemporary Mayan villages with outdoor recreational activities. Because it offered a tourist product unlike any in the region Alltournative's 'Coba Mayan Encounter Expedition' quickly gaining popularity. Through this tour in particular, Alltournative pioneered the incorporation of contemporary Mayan communities into Cancun and the Mayan Riviera's tourism circuit (see: Papanicolaou 2011).

For US\$119, tourists who take this tour have the opportunity to explore the ancient ruins of Coba, engage in a series of recreational activities (e.g. swimming, rappelling, and canoeing) in the Yucatec jungle, and visit an 'authentic' Mayan village where they can 'see how the Mayas live and experience with these wonderful people an adventure in their natural world' (Alltournative, 2010).

The tour I took part in began by one of Alltournative's vans picking tourists up from their respective hotels. Eleven tourists, six American and the rest European, took the tour, which was led, in both German and English, by Sven, a German-born tour guide living in Playa del Carmen. Driving inland, we passed several Mayan communities consisting of groups of thatch-roofed homes. As we were approaching our destination, the driver stopped the van to discuss the living conditions of present day Mayans and encouraged us to gaze out the window to see 'how Mayans live today.' At this stage, many tourists drew their cameras to photograph a Mayan woman standing in front of a wooden thatch-roof house, gazing back at us as we photographed her. The Mayan Other was in this way captured – cryonized in celluloid – and crystalized 'in the mind of memory' within 'a particular collage of mythic associations,' to use the words of Frankland (2009: 107). Here, through the medium of photography, particular imaginaries and representations of Mayan Otherness are released 'into the evanescence of the semiosphere,' allowing thus for the act of consumption to become an 'act of production within the progressive circularity of myth' (Ibid).

After touring the ancient archaeological ruins of Coba and learning about the ancient Mayan civilization known to have inhabited the area, we were taken to the Mayan community assigned to our tour. Here, all the tourists descended into a *cenote* after a Mayan shaman conducted a purification ritual that our guide explained formed an integral part of contemporary Mayans' cultural understanding of *cenotes* as sacred spaces only to be accessed after being properly cleansed. After this, we proceeded to rappel and canoe, all within the confines of the same community's land

before, finally, enjoying a traditional Yucatec meal prepared by local Mayan women, during which tourists could more freely interact with Mayan community members.

I interviewed Roger who was involved in the company's establishment. He commented that, from Alltournative's early days, its 'Coba Mayan Encounter Expedition' has proven to be its most popular. It was premised, he said, on showing how 'Mayan people are living today.' Roger explained the company's philosophy in working with Mayan communities as follows:

how they used to be before, we're not going to try to keep them that way. They are after all, like we, a culture in transition. And they're changing as we change, and you're going to see what that looks like today. In two years' time, it's going to be different. They may have concrete houses instead of wooden houses, because suddenly they have access to money, and they can build concrete houses' (MR: US13b).

Mauricio emphasized that Alltournative's 'Coba Mayan Encounter Expedition' often makes a noticeable impact on the way in which tourists imagine and consequently understand Mayan culture. This is an important task, he added, because 'a lot of people think that Mayan people no longer exist!' (MY: MX14c). This sentiment was echoed by Roger who noted that one of the expedition's primary goals is to expose tourists to present-day Mayan culture and to 'educate them about the socioeconomic conditions of present-day Mayan communities' (MR: US13a).

However, the extent to which Alltournative's Maya Encounter expedition espouses a type of 'teleological conceit' like that outlined by Frankland (2009: 96) is open to debate. This is because Mayan communities, which are indeed 'a culture in transition,' are represented as objects of touristic allure by the very product of their difference. Indeed, it is the notion of the Mayan Other as such that cements them as an object of touristic interest. As I discussed in Papanicolaou (2011), it is their relation to the past and the present that represents the primary allure of Alltournative's 'Maya Encounter Expedition.' What the tour sells is an encounter with Otherness.

According to Mauricio, following the success of Alltournative's touris, various positive changes have taken place. The health and education of Mayan children, he noted, has considerably increased. Alltournative, the company's website states, seeks to 'improve the life quality' of its inhabitants by creating jobs within their own communities, by educating them and protecting the environment, preserving local customs, and providing community members with skills training and fomenting 'respect for traditional customs within the community' (Alltournative, 2010). Coming

into contact with tourists and with technologies that until that point were unknown to them, Mauricio, said, represents a crash to many community members. On the whole however, he said,

that has been good for the Mayan communities... it is incredible to see how people adapt to computers and start doing different things and they like that...something completely different is being created (MY: MX14e).

#### 5.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Ideas of culture – sometimes complementary, other times at odds with one another – can be found throughout the various spaces I examined in my fieldwork. In Section 5.1, my interviews with government tourism representatives illustrated the extent to which ideas of ‘culture’ are integrated into the promotion of destinations as unique objects of the tourist gaze. Much like the travel books I discussed in the previous chapter, within tourist spaces, ideas of what constitutes ‘culture’ differ. While, for example, in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato ‘culture’ is often tied to a predetermined set of representations related to the cities’ colonial backdrops, in the context of Cancun/Mayan Riviera, ‘culture’ is often fashioned in accordance with nationalist conceptualizations of Mexico and / or as that connected to the Mayan.

At the accommodation venues I examined in Section 5.2, elements of ‘culture’ were incorporated into most spaces’ self-representation as a way to imbue them with a greater sense of ‘authenticity.’ As the comment by Francisco above illustrates, adding a ‘little Mexican taste’ (‘because we’re in Mexico,’ (MY: MX6b)) has been an approach taken by many sites in an attempt to ascribe to an expected desire on the part of tourists to experience particular versions of Mexican Otherness. This Otherness is often mobilized in a multicolor fashion, drawing from local, national, and even global imaginaries thought to correspond to tourists’ projections and visions of Mexican culture.

By looking at the resources available for tourists to learn more about culture, i.e. by analyzing the ways in which tours, excursions, and cultural learning centers teach ‘culture,’ the constructedness of cultural representations and their prominence within a framework structured around ideas of Otherness becomes apparent. As mediators of culture, tour guides, cultural performances and language learning courses become resources through which tourists can form and inform their imaginative geographies of Mexico.

Within all the sites in which I conducted fieldwork, cultural spaces are socially constructed and reconstructed against a backdrop of what is imagined to be an alluring object for touristic consumption. Positionality here is crucial as it is from the perspective of each gaze that spaces are built and ultimately consumed, in not static but dynamic forms. None of the spaces I explored, it must be noted, can be regarded as existing in isolation. Indeed, as Massey notes, spaces must be understood, not as static, but as inherently tied to their social backdrop, i.e. – ‘not as some absolute independent dimension but as constituted out of social relations’ (1994: 2). Regarding space as dynamic allows one to appreciate the way in which notions of cultural authenticity have unfolded against the ebbs and flows of different historical backdrops.

By juxtaposing different tourist spaces’ re/presentation of culture, the socially constructed nature and discursive multilayering of meaning imposed on diverse ideas of Mexico, Mexican people, and Mexican culture/s becomes apparent. But, one must ask, to what extent do tourist books and local tourist spaces impact tourists’ subjective understandings? To answer these questions, the next chapter looks at individuals’ interaction with both sets of cultural representations in order to examine how local ideas and imaginaries of culture are individually consumed and subjectively understood by tourists traveling to Mexico.



*Chapter*

# SIX

## TOURIST VOICES

### INTRODUCTION

When preparing to set out on their journey, tourists take various steps to ensure that their luggage is appropriately packed in the hope that, once they reach their destination, they will be equipped with the items necessary to enjoy their surroundings. In the case of Mexico, travel books counsel tourists to take a series of precautions prior to traveling to the country. The *Lonely Planet*, for example, urges tourists not to,

leave home without...clothes to cope with Mexico's climatic variations... special toiletries... a flashlight... an inconspicuous container for money and valuables ... [a] Spanish dictionary and / or phrase book... mosquito repellent... [and] sunscreen (*Lonely Planet* 2006: 25).

Choosing which items to bring and which to leave behind depends on individuals' prevision of their destination, its geography and landscape. Will it be hot, cold, or temperate? Will modern facilities be available and readily accessible? What will its topography be like? To answer these and related questions, people draw from their personal imaginaries of their chosen destination; imaginaries shaped by a variety of images, voices, and accounts gathered after 'years of exposure to the most diverse representations about the destination and geographically or culturally related areas' (Salazar 2010: 22). In his study of tourism and tourist imaginaries in Indonesia and Tanzania, Salazar observed that most of the people he encountered during his fieldwork had a sense of familiarity with their destination prior to their arrival; that they held a 'mental picture and preconception of what things will be like' (2010: 22). Bruner referred to such preconceptions as 'pretour narratives' and

argued that these narratives comprise a central element of the discourse with which tourists come to perceive and ultimately understand the place they plan on visiting (2005: 22). As I argued in previous chapters, various narratives strive to inform the imaginaries with which tourists envision their destination and, once there, the gaze with which they approach it. Regardless of their guiding power however, pretour imaginaries, as Bruner aptly noted, are not intractable, they are not fixed because tourists 'reshape and personalize' them in accordance with 'their lived experiences on tour' (Bruner 2005: 22). While some unreflexively accept them, others challenge them; while some revisit them and rewrite them, others altogether discard them (ibid: 23).

This chapter looks at the views and experiences of fifty-one<sup>67</sup> US tourists and expats<sup>68,69</sup> who, between January and May of 2009, were visiting or living in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, or Cancun/Mayan Riviera. Its focus is on the representations that individuals' encountered prior to visiting Mexico, the way in which they personally envisaged the country, and the impact travel had on their pretour narratives and subsequent understanding of contemporary Mexico. I consider tourist voices as interconnected with, though not determined by, shared discourses and collective understandings (Salazar 2010: 7). In other words, following Salazar, I conceive of tourists' subjectivities as 'not completely expressed by collective imaginaries' but as products of idiosyncratic histories, experiences and social backgrounds that have to be examined in their particularity to be truly understood (Salazar 2010: 7).

While I employ the terms 'tourist' and 'expat' throughout this chapter and this thesis as a whole, it is important to note the loose nature of both terms in the context of different modes of travel and different tourist experiences (Cohen 1972, 1979; McCabe 2005). Cohen outlines four different tourist typologies, each formed and informed by different situational contexts and individual travel patterns: organized mass tourists, individual mass tourists, explorers, and drifters (Cohen 1972). According to Cohen, by differentiating between tourist categories, a more in-depth analysis of their motivations, activities, and impact can thus be examined (Cohen 1972). In this thesis, my analysis centers mostly on what Cohen calls 'explorers,' i.e. individuals whose travels were individually organized in an attempt to 'get off the beaten track' and come into contact with 'real' and 'authentic' culture. I do, however, also examine spaces visited by tourists who would fall into Cohen's 'organized mass tourists' (e.g. those whose travels to Mexico unfold as part of packaged holiday) and 'drifters' (e.g. those looking to travel on their own, apart from any structured tourism infrastructures) (Cohen 1972). In addition to each of the

above tourism categories – or rather, one could argue, in conjunction to them – Cohen also distinguishes amongst different tourist experiences: recreational, diversionary, experimental, experiential, and existential, each oriented to different structures of meaning and travel behavior (Cohen 1979). Tourists' interest in issues of authenticity varies between each of the above modes of experience so that, for example, recreational and diversionary modes demand pleasure and entertainment while considering authenticity largely immaterial (Cohen 1979: 194). As I will discuss in this chapter, many of the spaces I examined in my fieldwork (particularly the large hotels and all-inclusive resorts in Cancun and the Mayan Riviera), are structured around catering to 'recreational' and 'diversionary' modes of tourism – with on-site attractions being ostensibly unconcerned with camouflaging their focus on entertainment. Here, as my data will illustrate, the cultural authenticity of the performances available to tourists is less important than it is at central Mexico's smaller hotels, where tourists purposely enquire about locating and experiencing 'authentic' versions of local culture. On the whole, Cohen's phenomenology of tourist types and experiences provide a useful analytical tool for deconstructing tourist behavior as subjectively and contextually variable. Going a step further, McCabe has argued that the idea of the tourist itself must too be deconstructed, arguing that 'there is ambiguity surrounding its use as a concept able to describe, explain and account for such diverse human behavior associated with leisure travel' (2005: 87). While an in-depth discussion of the concept of the tourist and the different typologies called upon to best categorize tourist behavior extend beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the above theories as they allow one to best differentiate between genres of tourism and behaviors.

On the whole, this chapter seeks to present a synthesized discussion of some of the most commonly espoused conceptual frameworks and discursive tropes called upon by individuals to understand Mexico before and during their journey to the country. In an attempt to contextualize the travel history of each of the tourists I interviewed, a brief profile of their visit/s to Mexico has been included in Appendix F. By juxtaposing individuals' voices against the images and representations mobilized by the travel books and tourist spaces explored in the previous two chapters, this chapter seeks to provide the third element to my triangulation of contemporary US tourism discourse on Mexico.

Three sections make up this chapter. Section 6.1 focuses on individuals' pretour imaginaries of Mexico, of Mexican culture/s, and of their particular travel destinations. It explores the narratives with which, as US tourists, they visited the country, assessing the significance of both travel and non-travel related discourse in

the construction of imaginaries of Mexico and its sociocultural topographies. In this way, this section illustrates the significance of both travel and non-travel related discourse in the construction of orienting narratives and imaginaries. Section 6.2 looks at the sources of knowledge that the individuals I interviewed consulted to learn about the Mexico prior to embarking on their journey in order to inform their pretour imaginaries. This section first considers individuals' usage of travel books and then explores how others' travels and individuals' own experience with Mexicans in the US informed their understandings of the country and its contemporary cultural makeup. Section 6.3 then looks at the impact travel had on people's understandings of Mexico, paying particularly close attention to the way in which some of the tourist spaces explored in the previous chapter influenced individuals' views of the country and its inhabitants.

## 6.1 PRETOUR IMAGINARIES

### 6.1.1 MEXICO

When imagining Mexico, many people think of its turquoise water and white-sand beaches; its rich natural landscapes and cloudless skies. For many, relaxation comes to mind: days spent on the beach, *margaritas*, and an enduring atmosphere of *fiesta*. Many of these imaginaries can be found in guidebooks and promotional material that sells Mexico as a seductive travel destination primarily with reference to its sun and beach destinations. In the context of my interviews, several people alluded to 'the beach' as comprising a central feature of the way in which they imagined Mexico prior to arriving. As Palma argues, the popularity of Cancun, in particular, as a 'party-centered' destination and a haven for 'Spring Breakers' plays a central role in propelling the idea of Mexico as primarily a 'sun and beach' tourist destination (2006).

Reflecting on his friends' imaginaries of Mexico as quintessentially tied to its beaches, George, now living in Guanajuato, recounted the following story. During a high school reunion he attended in Arizona, he recalled how his ex-classmates were shocked to discover that George lived in central Mexico and not the country's coast. He said,

[they asked me] 'oh you live in Mexico ...are you on the beach?'... 'no I'm in the geographic center of Mexico,' 'oh really where is that', 'like dead center', 'no beach nearby...but why are you there? What's there? What's there to do there?' They were confused you know, Mexico is for them a playground (GUA: US4).

The representation of Mexico as a 'playground,' in this context, appeared to go hand in hand with what Gunn would call, 'blank imaginaries' of the rest of the country. For George's ex-classmates, Mexico's allure ended at its coast, fading the further inland one went. This, I argue, represented a dominant trope through which many individuals represented Mexico prior to visiting the country. Janine, for instance, remembered how, when she was in Arizona, her and her friends' early images of Mexico revolved around it being 'beaches and party and shrimp tacos and stuff like that, you know what I mean?' (GUA: US6). This idea was echoed by Don, now a permanent resident of San Miguel de Allende, who spoke of how, while he 'did not have a view of Mexico' and 'did not think much about it', prior to traveling there, one image always popped up in association with the country: 'Mexico is a place where you go to the beach' (SMA: US4), he said. Also reflecting on this, travel book author Doug Bower (originally from Kansas but now living in Guanajuato), commented that 'Americans and Canadians tend to have a real fantasy and delusions or illusions, or both, about Mexico... They tend to present [an image of]...Mexico as the land of milk and honey' (SMA: US4).

But not everyone imagined Mexico as a 'playground' or as the 'land of milk and honey.' Indeed, several of my interviewees spoke about how they and their friends and family envisioned Mexico as a dangerous, dirty, and crime-riddled place before traveling there. Indeed, for many, this imaginary is so powerful that it deters them from ever wanting to set foot in Mexico. Ted, for example, who moved from San Francisco to Playa del Carmen where he now owns a small hotel, remarked on how,

we have friends that will still refuse to come to Mexico because their image of Mexico is based on 1940s movies; they really think that it's cactuses and *banditos* [bandits] and rabid dogs in the streets (MY: US7).

The perpetuation of the image of Mexico as dangerous, particularly in the context of the country's border with the US, is prevalent in many films – including the popular Hollywood film *Babel* (2006) – as well as novels like *Tijuana: Stories on the Border* (1995). Ongoing newscasts focused on crime near the US-Mexico border similarly contribute to coloring the idea of Mexico as 'dangerous,' contributing in this way to the negative imaginaries with which people in the US envision the country as a whole.

George, who I quoted above, admitted he too once saw the US-Mexico border as representative of the entire country and how, as a result, he felt 'a very strong

resistance to anything Mexican' (GUA: US4). He said, 'I didn't know it was just the border and so I figured...what a horrible country!' (GUA: US4). Reflecting on this phenomenon, Walter, a US tourist visiting Guanajuato, commented that 'all too often...people have an image they've gone across the border to Tijuana or wherever and see the border town and say that's Mexico' (GUA: US14).

The idea that Mexico, as a whole, is unequivocally dangerous continues to pervade the way in which the country is represented abroad. Indeed, the vast majority of my interviewees mentioned that their friends and family had voiced concerns about their plans to visit Mexico. For example, Lyn, a seasonal resident of San Miguel de Allende, said that 'when I told people I was coming here...a lot of people said 'oh it's so dangerous!'' (SMA: US16). Equally, Liz, who was living in San Miguel de Allende temporarily, commented that, back home in Texas, 'people worry 'are you ok?' ... It's hard because now there's an image in the States of Mexico as very dangerous' (SMA: US11).

The representation of Mexico as a dangerous and hostile territory often coexists with the representation of Mexicans as intractably different and defined by an unshakable culturally specific Otherness. In this vein, several of the people I interviewed remembered having been exposed to and / or having held stereotypical views of Mexicans before travelling to the country. David, for example, a US tourist from Colorado visiting San Miguel de Allende, spoke of what he saw as a 'tourist's view of Mexicans'. This view, he said, is epitomized by, 'the big sombrero and the guy sleeping on the corner and the taxis and you know ... they're all peasants - that nobody lives in the city' (GUA: US10). This 'view' was echoed by Eva, who, visiting San Miguel de Allende for a few weeks from Boston, noted that, in the US, 'the Mexicans have had a bad image [epitomized by] that picture of the lazy Mexican with the sombrero napping under a tree' (SMA: US13). To this, she then added that,

people have prejudices and misconceptions; my sister's husband [says] you know 'you can't drink the water', 'you'll get dysentery', 'it's not safe', 'you'll get kidnapped' he's telling me this before I left and I'm like 'whoa!' I'm going to Mexico and, I mean, I guess it could happen in New York if you don't know where you are and I mean people say that stuff to me about getting sick, getting kidnapped and all that stuff (SMA: US13).

Touching on the pervasiveness of these negative representations of Mexico and Mexicans in the US, Tony Cohan, the author of *On Mexican Time* and *Mexican Days*, reflected on how many Americans,

haven't the slightest idea of what Mexico holds or what it has to offer...Their concept is just [informed] more by immigrant workers who they don't understand, by a language that they don't understand, and by a country if they visited it probably was confined to resorts where they were catered to in their language (GUA: US8).

In a way, he then added, Mexico is 'the country next door that remains invisible to them' (GUA: US8), an observation reminiscent of that voiced by Osborne who, as I noted in Chapter Four, wrote that 'Mexico is so near yet so foreign' (see: Simmen 1988: lviii). As Cohan noted, a series of factors including the view that Mexican migrants living in the US are interchangeable with Mexican people in Mexico, the barriers posed by language, and the view that certain types of tourist spaces such as all-inclusive resorts impede true intercultural understanding, comprise important obstacles to the eventual shedding of negative portrayals of Mexico commonly found in the US. Generally speaking, he said, 'I think the perceptions of Mexico [in the US] are highly limited' (GUA: US8).

Many of my interviewees noted that the idea of Mexican immigrants as being representative of all of Mexicans informed their pretour narratives of the country. Patrice, for example, noted that before moving to Mexico from New Jersey, her perception of Mexicans revolved around her experience with Mexican immigrants. She said,

people don't have the most positive image of Mexico because what you see and what you hear and the only information you have is that there are a lot of Mexicans in New Jersey but they are all construction workers and you know...its more of the thing of loud whistling when women go by and that's kind of the impression you have really of Mexico and Mexicans (SMA: US8).

In several cases, the negative portrayal of Mexican immigrants in the US informed people's preconceived understandings of Mexico. Camille, for example, who recently relocated to Guanajuato, recalled that when growing up in Arizona she was exposed to prejudice against Mexicans and still, to this date, is. She said,

I was told [by my family] basically... that I wasn't supposed to fraternize with them. As a kid I went, 'why?' ... People have these prejudices...[My father] thought Mexicans were lazy... Some people now ask 'why would I want to go down there, they're a bunch of lazy good for nothings, they come up here' (GUA: US1).

Here, the idea of Mexicans as 'lazy good for nothings' is transposed from Mexican immigrants in the US to Mexico's entire population, informing thus the gaze with which Mexicans – on both sides of the US-Mexico border, are perceived and consequently approached. To the above, she then added that,

that's the one extreme [because] there's other people who say, 'I don't know anything about them' and then there's other people who come down here and go 'gosh, they're warm, they're colorful, they're very family-oriented' (GUA: US1).

Examined under the lens of culturalism, the above statement illustrates how, while each of these 'readings' differs, they all rely on the conceptual homogenization of 'Mexicans', i.e. their treatment as one, nationalized 'Mexican culture'. In addition, it points towards the conflation of Mexicans in the US and Mexicans in Mexico, highlighting the tendency to conceive of Mexicans – and Mexican culture – as being the same on both sides of the border. On the whole, various types of stereotypes can be found informing the imaginaries of those who have never visited Mexico. While not necessarily acting as a precursor to prejudice and discrimination, the characterizations of 'Mexicans' as a single cultural group mobilizes culturalistic imaginaries and, as such, contributes to a discourse structured not around commonalities and transnational forms of understanding, but around notions of difference and an intractable sense of cultural Otherness.

### 6.1.2 IMAGINING SPECIFIC TOURIST DESTINATIONS

The extent to which the people I interviewed conceived of Mexico as a homogenous space prior to their arrival in the country varied. While the above analysis would appear to point to the homogenization of Mexico and Mexicans and the mobilization of reductionist imaginative geographies, it is important to note that people's imaginaries became notably more nuanced when distinguishing between different parts of Mexico.

The idea that foreigners 'de-Mexicanize' space was commonly alluded to by the people I interviewed in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. Because of the large population of US expatriates living in San Miguel de Allende, author and travel writer Doug Bower said that the town might as well be called 'Disneyland,' a statement reminiscent of travel books' and a number of scholars' discussion of certain spaces as overly commodified and culturally inauthentic (see: *The People's Guide* 2006: 57; Ritzer and Liska 1997: 97–101; Walker 2003: 70). As I discussed in Chapter Three, this characterization of San Miguel de Allende informs much of

Bower's description of San Miguel de Allende in, for example, his book *Guanajuato Mexico: Your Expat, Study Abroad, and Vacation Survival Manual in The Land of Frogs* (2006). To emphasize the parallel between San Miguel de Allende and Disneyland, Bower recalled that:

one woman who was honest, said, 'well I feel like I'm living on a cruise ship in San Miguel! That's what they [American tourists] want: They expect entertainment, they go into a church and regard it as 'this is a museum and entertainment' (GUA: US).

For Bower, San Miguel de Allende's high proportion of foreigners diluted the city's 'real' culture to the extent that it was no longer existent. Kate, a tourist from Washington state visiting San Miguel de Allende for the first time, echoed this opinion. She said:

I don't think San Miguel gives a realistic view of Mexico because... there is such a huge expat community here that, you know, if you really wanted to view it in a realistic sense I think you'd have to wipe out that presence (SMA: US12).

Agreeing with the above, some of my interviewees went on to add that San Miguel de Allende could be thought of as more 'American' than 'Mexican.' Patrice, for instance, noted that, prior to visiting the city,

I've heard more of it being [a] very American town as far as many Americans have retired here which is what has kept me away for so long - it didn't interest me to go somewhere this American (SMA: US8).

Because San Miguel de Allende is largely described in travel books as being home to a large number of foreigners, vis-à-vis Guanajuato, individuals often saw the two destinations as opposite when it came their cultural and linguistic landscapes. Frank, for example, a first time tourist visiting San Miguel de Allende from Chicago, remembered how his imaginary of San Miguel de Allende was rooted in the idea that, there 'you don't need to really know Spanish, everybody seems to speak English' (SMA: US7).

In a similar vein, many of my interviewees' views on Cancun and the Mayan Riviera were also framed by notions of authenticity, or the lack thereof, which, as I discussed in Chapter Four, is consistent with many travel books' representations of the region. As both Gloria Palma in *Spring Breakers* (2006) and Torres and Momsen

(2005) illustrate, Cancun forms part of a wide-ranging set of collectively held imaginaries about Mexico in the US. In the last decade, Cancun has featured in the US in travel books and magazines, travel shows, and feature stories in newspapers<sup>70</sup> as well as in novels<sup>71</sup>, television<sup>72</sup>, cinema<sup>73</sup> and documentaries<sup>74</sup>. Out of all of Mexico's tourist destinations, Cancun is arguably the most widely recognizable in the US. As my interviews demonstrated, Cancun is often 'known' before people ever set foot there. Many of my interviewees, including those who had never been there, spoke vehemently about their unwillingness to visit Cancun, precisely because they felt they knew it and what they knew of it did not appeal to them: they saw it as 'over-Americanized' or not 'real' Mexico<sup>75</sup>.

Indeed, Simon, a seasonal visitor to the Mayan Riviera who lives in Chicago, for example, said that though he had never actually been there, he felt he knew enough about Cancun to never want to visit it. 'It just seemed a bit commercial and it seemed a bit, you know, kind of contrived', he said (MR: US10). When interviewing Edmund, Joan, and Don, all from the US and temporarily living in San Miguel de Allende, the idea that Cancun and the Mayan Riviera represented somehow 'inauthentic' spaces was raised. According to Edmund, Cancun is, 'sort of fakish' because 'the center [of] Cancun [i.e. its tourist zone] is not a real town' (SMA: US5). Joan, who at the time was sitting next to Edmund, added that all the resorts found in the Mayan Riviera 'could be anywhere really, I don't find them [to be] a Mexican cultural [experience] you know' (SMA: US21). Don concurred, 'that's not Mexican culture... if you go to Cancun its just Americans or Europeans there on the beach,' he said (SMA: US4).

The representation of Cancun as a space devoid of culture was also echoed by Eva, a frequent visitor of San Miguel de Allende from Boston, who said that,

I do not want to be in a gated thing on a beach where there is nobody who is a Mexican around except the waiters; I don't feel comfortable with that. I don't feel it's Mexico; it's just some big conglomerate that put up a hotel (SMA: US13).

In the same vein, Rupert, who was visiting San Miguel de Allende from Colorado, said that, at places like Cancun, 'I don't really feel like it's Mexico, it's just catering to foreigners' (SMA: US20a). Equally, Frank too noted that, there, at Cancun, 'you could be anywhere, it's like being anywhere with a Mexican theme and the population is mostly foreigners' (SMA: US7b) while Kate said that,

I don't think that that [going to Cancun] is really visiting a foreign country; I mean I don't think you can even say 'I've been to Mexico;' it's just Cancun! (SMA: US12a).

As can be noted from the above, the idea that a large population of foreigners 'de-Mexicanize' particular tourist destinations was commonly voiced by my interviewees when discussing the way in which they envisioned destinations like Cancun and, to a lesser extent, San Miguel de Allende. As I discussed in Chapter Four, this was a view that was also commonly alluded to by travel books in the context of these two cities where the 'authentic' is tied to specific sociocultural topographies largely devoid of foreign, particularly tourist, presence. Narratives of 'authenticity' are here dependent on readings of Mexicanness as tied to specific images anchored to specific readings of 'culture' that reproduce ideas often reliant on notions of cultural purity and the socioculturally unique. Imaginaries of Mexico are built through various mediums. Below, I will illustrate some of the resources identified by my interviewees as central to the way in which they imagined and understood Mexico prior to arriving, beginning with travel books.

## 6.2 BUILDING IMAGINARIES

### 6.2.1 TRAVEL BOOKS

As Cordeiro notes, 'the success of travel books points not to their ultimate structuring power, but, above all, to the prevailing need [for tourists] to find an orientating discourse... a faithful reference through which to understand the Other' (Cordeiro 2010:17; my translation<sup>76</sup>). The importance of travel books as 'orientating' sources of discourse cannot be underestimated. As I argued in Chapter One, travel books can mobilize fantasies; they can shape people's projected landscapes, their expectations, and the gaze with which they come to navigate and understand specific foreign territories. Travel books thus play an important role in orienting tourists by influencing the way in which they imagine and consequently prepare for their journey. As such, they serve to inform the 'gaze' through which the country, in general, and destinations, in particular, are envisioned and ultimately approached.

Elizabeth Bishop noted the power of travel-related imaginaries and representations in her famous poem, *Questions of Travel* (1965). Here, she hinted at the conceptual interchangeability between the imagined and the experienced, between 'dreams', 'imagined places', and the reality of the experiences that they represent. She asked:

[s]hould we have stayed at home and thought of here?...Oh, must we dream our dreams and have them, too?... [I]s it lack of imagination that makes us come to imagined places, not just stay at home? (Bishop 1965).

Most people I interviewed consulted a travel book while preparing for their trip to Mexico. They used them to access logistical information, to gain a better idea of where to go and what to do, and/or to learn about Mexico's contemporary culture(s). Indeed, in many cases, travel books were the first resource consulted. According to Frank, when planning his family's vacations abroad, the first thing he and his wife always do to 'get a big picture' of where they are going is to, 'go to our local library and take guidebooks out' (SMA: US7). Bower, too, remembered how, prior to visiting Mexico, 'every Friday and Saturday... [my wife and I] would go to *Barnes & Noble* and read everything; so there's *Lonely Planet* and *Fodor's*...those sort of guidebooks' (GUA: US2), a statement suggestive of the interchangeability between contemporary guidebooks like the above.

My interviews revealed that tourists used travel books for a number of different purposes. Some people, like Jason, a first time tourist to Guanajuato who was originally from California, said that he found guidebooks 'useful,' but only for one thing: 'for the facts' (GUA: US9). Referring to the *Lonely Planet* and the *Rough Guide*, Jason said that he read them mostly, 'to find out about getting into the country, getting around, getting a car ...so you can navigate' (GUA: US9). The idea that the information found in guidebooks must be supplemented by that found in other types of texts or gathered through personal experience was also echoed by Helen, who recalled how, before visiting Mexico for the first time, she read *Frommer's*. But, she then quickly added, 'I used it to get around... not to learn about the culture...No, no...you really have to go deeper than that [to learn about culture]' (SMA: US2). While Jason and Helen saw guidebooks as not representing optimal repositories of 'cultural' knowledge, others spoke of guidebooks as helpful to understanding Mexicans. Bower, for example, said that even though many guidebooks were 'problematic' in that the information they contained was commonly outdated, they were 'useful for culture' (GUA: US2).

Those who thought that guidebooks offered inadequate, inaccurate or incomplete cultural information spoke of turning to other resources in order to learn about the country's contemporary sociocultural makeup. Jason, for instance, said that he consulted several travelogues, i.a. Tony Cohan's books *On Mexican Time* (2000) and *Mexican Days* (2006) as well as Doug Bower's *Guanajuato, Mexico* (2006). 'I didn't know a lot about contemporary Mexican culture... so I decided I wanted to learn

about it,' he said (GUA: US9). Of these texts, Tony Cohan's *On Mexican Time* (2000) was often referenced as a 'must read' by those visiting San Miguel de Allende. The influence of this text as an important driver of both tourism and migration to San Miguel de Allende has been noted by various texts including the *Rough Guide*, which posits that:

the town's increase in popularity in recent years, and in many ways the cause of the influx of expats and tourists, can be, in part, attributed to Tony Cohan's popular book *On Mexican Time* (*Rough Guide*, 2007: 295).

While not considering himself an 'engine' for the growing number of American expatriates the city has attracted in the last decade, Cohan said that 'I do meet people in San Miguel who have really embraced the book and taken it to heart and will give me some credit for having driven them there' (GUA: US8). This illustrates the influential role that the more personal narratives contained within travelogues can have on individuals' understanding of 'Mexican culture' in comparison to more fact-based guidebooks.

In contrast to colonial destinations, for which there are travelogues like those written by Tony Cohan and Doug Bower, Cancun and the Mayan Riviera are featured in many regional versions of popular guidebook series (i.a. *Lonely Planet's Cancun, Cozumel and Quintana Roo* 2009; *Fodor's Cancun, Cozumel and Quintana Roo* 2009; *Frommer's Cancun, Cozumel and Quintana Roo* 2009). Many people I interviewed mentioned having read these texts before arriving in the region. Jack, a US expatriate living in Playa del Carmen, mentioned that, prior to visiting the region, 'I read *Frommer's* [and]... *Lonely Planet*' (MR: US2a) while Simon, a seasonal visitor to the region from Chicago, commented that prior to arriving to Mexico, he 'went to the bookstore and found guidebooks on the Riviera Maya' to 'get an idea' of what the area was like (MR: US10).

As I briefly noted above in the context of people's usage of guidebooks in the context of travel to San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato, tourists in Cancun/Mayan Riviera also alluded to their titles interchangeably. 'I probably read *Fodor's* or one of those' (MR: US8a) remarked Bob, now a resident of Playa del Carmen from Oklahoma City, before adding that 'I don't really consider them too much of a source of [cultural] information though' (ibid).

## 6.2.2 OTHERS' TRAVELS

Many of the people I interviewed mentioned having called upon other sources of knowledge to inform their understanding of the region. When I asked Mandy, Cassy and Jane, for example, three young friends who were visiting Playa del Carmen from California, whether they read any guidebooks prior to their trip all three said they had not; 'it was seriously mostly on recommendation', Mandy said, adding that,

[Cassy's] brother has been here about nine times in the past seven years and so he was telling us about it and then the rest of us had never been here and we wanted something a little bit different for vacation, that's how we got here (MR: US9).

As I discussed in the previous section, before traveling abroad, people often seek advice from their friends and families. They talk to those who have been to Mexico before, they look at their photographs, listen to their stories, ask for their advice, and consider their suggestions. When interviewing US tourists and expatriates in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Cancun, and the Mayan Riviera, I noted that friends and families' voices were frequently mentioned as having influenced individuals' decisions to travel to Mexico.

Derek, for example, a resident of Guanajuato who was originally from Texas, said that he did not do any research prior to arriving aside from consulting his friends. 'My friends' experiences and then my own visit was all I did,' he said (GUA: US3). More often than not, however, friends' and families' experiences were supplemented with people's own research in order to arrive at a more complete 'picture' of their destination. According to Cindy, a tourist from Wisconsin visiting San Miguel de Allende for the first time, she consulted *Fodor's* and *Lonely Planet* prior to arriving to Mexico. In addition however, she noted that 'we had a friend who had come here four or five winters ago and we met with her twice and talked to her, so that was another resource' (SMA: US). Mark, a US tourist from New York, spoke of how other peoples' accounts played a key role in shaping the way in which he envisioned Guanajuato. He said that 'I have a number of friends.... who have been to Mexico [and] they speak very highly of [it] so I had very good feelings about Mexico' (GUA: US13).

Speaking about why she decided to visit San Miguel de Allende, Karen, a resident of Florida, similarly mentioned that it was after seeing a friend's photographs and hearing about her experiences that she made up her mind that it was a place she wanted to visit. Indeed, she said, hearing her friend's stories served

to dispel a number of myths that she had previously held about the country. She said that,

I know a lot of people that I would talk to about going to Mexico and they would say 'oh don't go there, it's all full of drugs and crime and stuff'...but I knew that wasn't true (SMA: US18).

These extracts demonstrate how the experiences of friends and relatives often help to frame visitors' expectations of Mexico, and in some cases can even dispel some commonly held representations of the country that are prevalent in the US. This suggests that, in some cases, tourists' positive experiences in Mexico can have a wider effect on how the country is perceived.

### 6.2.3 US PUBLIC MEDIA

As I discussed in Chapter Three, negative representations of Mexico and Mexican migrants in US media have a long history and have been highly prevalent in the last decade. Alarmist news stories and reports, travel warnings and advisories, together with anti-immigrant (particularly anti-Mexican) discourse that is tacitly reproduced by various media outlets shapes many individuals' imaginaries of Mexico – both as a foreign country and a travel destination. My interviews yielded interesting insights into the extent to which public media discourses impacted individuals' imaginaries of Mexico. In many cases, people spoke about the media-fueled prejudices they had to confront when trying to justify or at least explain their motivations for traveling south of the US-Mexico border.

Rex, a permanent resident in Playa del Carmen originally from North Carolina, said that 'the press... the media is really painting a picture that all of Mexico as being just... dangerous and dirty' (MR: US4). In addition, Derek commented that, largely thanks to the news coverage in the US, 'everyone thinks that everybody's getting murdered in Mexico!' (GUA: US3). Betty, a Detroit native visiting Guanajuato for the first time, echoed this by mentioning that, as she was planning her journey to Guanajuato,

my daughter-in-law, every person I met was like 'you're going to Mexico?' And they said 'haven't you been reading the papers' and I said 'I'm not concerned, those are border towns. We're not going to border towns'; people get absolutely aghast (GUA: US12).

The following account, narrated separately by three different interviewees, can serve to further illustrate the central role played by news media in the construction of people's perception and negative portrayal of Mexico. It involved someone they knew who decided to cancel their trip to Mexico because of something they had seen or heard in the news. Sue, a tourist visiting Guanajuato with her husband, Walter, from California, recounted how a group of tourists from Colorado had 'cancelled their trip [to Mexico]...because of all the violence they see in the US newspapers' (GUA: US14). Finishing her sentence, Walter, who was sitting alongside her, said that 'they thought they'd get shot at!' (GUA: US14c). To add more weight to this story, Sue then spoke of another personal friend of theirs, who decided she and her family could not visit Mexico because there was, 'so much violence we hear [about] in US newspapers! We don't want to get shot! All so awful, dreadful!' (GUA: US14). It was at this stage that Lina, also a first-time tourist to Guanajuato who was sitting alongside Sue and Walter, added her own experience. She said,

there has been hysteria, I know, we get it all the time ... Before we came I would say at least eight or nine people when I told then I was going to Mexico said, 'how can you go to Mexico, don't you read the papers'? (GUA: US12).

The tendency to conceive of Mexico's crime-ridden areas as being representative of the whole country was mentioned by a number of my interviewees. For example, Dona, a travel agent specializing in tourism to the Mayan Riviera who at the time was visiting the state of Guanajuato, commented that,

[people] think of Mexico as one whole place and I tell people, 'if there's trouble in Los Angeles would you not go to Disneyworld, to Florida?' and they're like 'no'. It's like 'well it's the same thing!' (MR: US12).

Julian, a tourist from Texas who was visiting the state of Guanajuato observed that the notion of Mexico as unsafe was wide reaching, noting how,

for the last two months there's been very heavy coverage in the States about the drug cartels and the violence, mostly at the border. And that's what we hear a lot about. ... I mean there's sort of this generalization from that that things are going to hell in a hand basket. And the Defense Department puts out this report that says Mexico is going to become a failed state. ... it just infects everyone (GUA: MX11).

These extracts reveal the powerful impact of news coverage on many Americans' understandings of Mexico<sup>77</sup>, but also the fact that many US citizens who ultimately chose to travel to Mexico did not accept these representations at face value.

#### 6.2.4 MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE US

As is the case with news media, other sources of discourse that are unrelated to tourism play an active role in shaping the way in which Mexico is imagined in the US. Because elements of Mexican material culture(s), language, and social relations can be found across the US as a result of the long history of migration from Mexico to its northern neighbor and the breadth of the socioeconomic relations between the countries, many of my interviewees spoke of having entered Mexico with a number of preconceptions of Mexican society. Indeed, in a number of instances, people's imaginaries appeared to be dependent on their personal experience with, opinions of, and exposure to, Mexicans and 'Mexican culture' in the US.

'New York City has a large Mexican population and the difference between the Mexican people in New York and the Mexican people here is not that great' (GUA: US13), Mark said, adding that,

I teach English as a second language in [a] university and I'm going to say that perhaps thirty percent of my students are Mexican and I really like them so you know it helped ...[I had] lots of very positive impressions of Mexico (GUA: US13).

Similarly, Randy, who now splits his time between New York City and Playa del Carmen, said that he did not need to conduct any research prior to visiting Playa del Carmen for the first time. 'I didn't really think it was necessary because I'm from New York and I've worked with so many people from Mexico...[and also] my neighborhood has got a lot of Mexicans', he said (MR: US5).

According to Bower, the Mexican church in Kansas City that he and his wife attended, where they 'were the only *gringos*' meant that even before ever setting foot in Mexico 'we were getting a big exposure to the culture and the language' (GUA: US2), he said. Along the same lines, Derek commented that,

I'd been around Tex-Mex people all my life we call them Mexicans but you know the Tex-Mex type and uh so the familiarity with the culture [made me]... think of Mexico with less guardedness than a lot of people might otherwise think (GUA: US3b).

Linking 'Mexican culture' in the US with that found in Mexico, however, did not always yield positive representations or imaginaries of Mexico, as I noted in Section 6.1.1. Indeed, as I alluded to above, representations of Mexican immigrants often encouraged quite negative views of Mexico. In addition to Patrice, who I quoted above in the context of her envisioning of Mexico as defined by loud-whistling Mexican construction workers, and to Cohan, who noted that people's concept of Mexico in the US is largely informed 'by immigrant workers' (GUA: US8), George recalled how,

growing up in Arizona really the only exposure I had to Mexican culture was the migrant culture which of course didn't leave a very favorably impression on me; what I saw was a very closed society (GUA: US4).

Overall, the above extracts illustrate the mixed impact that interactions with Mexican migrants had on visitors' impressions of Mexico prior to their arrival in the country.

### 6.3 ON TOUR IMAGINARIES

The idea of travel as an avenue for intercultural exchange and understanding has been embraced by a variety of different organizations and tourism marketing campaigns. For example, the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism's founder argued that tourism can act as a vehicle for intercultural appreciation, one that can contribute to 'the reduction of 'isolation and fear of the other' (D'Amore 2007) while the Declaration on World Tourism stated that tourism can provide a 'vital force for peace and international understanding' (World Tourism Organization 1980). Similarly, a publication by UNESCO has claimed that tourism can promote 'dialogue among cultures... [and] assist the world's inhabitants to live better together and thereby contribute to the construction of peace' (Robinson and Picard 2006: 4) and the Tourism Bill of Rights posits that tourism can improve 'mutual understanding, bringing people closer together and, consequently, strengthening international cooperation' (World Tourism Organization 1985). In the same vein, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism states that,

through the direct, spontaneous and non-mediatized contacts it engenders between men and women of different cultures and lifestyles, tourism presents a vital force for peace and a factor for friendship and understanding among the people of the world (World Tourism Organization 1999).

In this section, I address whether, for the people I interviewed, a noticeable change had taken place in their imaginaries after traveling to Mexico; whether travel had indeed enhanced their sense of 'friendship' and 'understanding'; and whether it had brought people together and transcended the representation of Mexicans as resolutely Other.

Patrice, who referred to negative images of Mexican immigrants in the US as framing her pretour image of Mexico, observed that traveling to the country – to Mexico City especially – 'absolutely' changed her perceptions of the country and of Mexicans. She said,

instantly you see the difference and then physically in what you think of somebody being Mexican; I was a little worried about coming here, you know, my children and I are blonde; I thought we'd stand out like sore thumbs! And you don't because the image of what we think or what I thought and, even friends visiting, the image people have of what Mexicans look like is different than what they actually look like, and all standpoints: personalities, education, there is a lot of differences (SMA: US8).

Doug Bower, too, spoke of his perception of Mexico's culture as having changed as a product of living in Mexico. After noting that North Americans tend to represent Mexico as 'the land of milk and honey', he added that,

when you come here and you live here every single day and you interact every single day you realize that Mexicans are just people that have different cultural set pieces through which they express basic human nature and basic human character (GUA: US2).

Rex noted that his perception of Mexicans has changed, but, more than being changed through tourism, it changed as a product of having moved to Mexico and, by forming part of their community, and realizing that 'they're great people... Before...you don't know that they were great people... you're not part of their community...I've never really paid attention to them as people' (MR: US4).

What is important to emphasize in the context of my interviewees' discussion of travel as an avenue for cultural exchange, in particular, is the fact that, just as some tourist spaces were described as lacking an 'authentic' cultural backdrop, certain types of tourism were discussed as not being conducive to the transcendence

of pretour cultural imaginaries or expectations. Prior to speaking about her enhanced view of Mexicans as a product of her having relocated to Mexico, for example, Patrice noted that she had previously visited Cancun and Cozumel on multiple occasions but, she said, 'I don't remember doing any research then, we were taken care of...it was very inclusive and we didn't really go anywhere' (SMA: US8). Similarly, Karen said that,

I don't think you get a sense of change in a resort area so, even though I've been in Cancun three or four times, that never changed maybe, there are more hotels but culturally? That is not a cultural vacation that is just a 'go sit on the beach' [vacation]. So I can't speak to that because I don't think that that is really visiting a foreign country (SMA: US18).

Frank, too, noted that, while he had been in Cancun for short periods of time on numerous occasions, this had done little to enhance his understanding of the country. He noted that,

when you are in the beach resorts - Cancun, Puerto Vallarta - it is, it's, you could be anywhere...the population is mostly foreigners ... there is some Spanish spoken but not a lot (SMA: US7).

Echoing this point, Hugo, Kate's husband, noted that beach resorts 'become tiresome quickly... and it's harder in the beach resorts to get closer to the culture because they are either not there at all, or they are shielded from the tourists, and all you have is' (SMA: US14). The idea that sun and beach destinations 'could be anywhere', and that they lack culture, was also raised by David who said that 'it's not Mexico it's not really Mexico I mean it's a nice part of Mexico...it's not really Mexican culture' (GUA: US10). Speaking of some of the tourist spaces in Cancun/Mayan Riviera, a number of people mentioned that spaces like Xcaret, while seeking to incorporate culture, were nevertheless culturally artificial. Simon, for instance, said that, he,

found it to be a bit contrived... I've just been all over a lot of places in the world and have been able to witness very genuine sort of cultural experiences where you're just witnessing daily life, daily rituals or a ceremony that's not put on your behalf and you haven't purchased some ticket to go see it, you know... whenever you purchase a ticket to see culture you know you can pretty much be sure to be seeing culture lite (MR: US10)

To avoid this, Simon said, he felt other experiences were more attractive and informative, e.g. 'going into the wild... and going to visit the ruins and things like that... that's you know surely very genuine... I can't find those things anywhere and those weren't built for the pleasure of tourists you know haha' (ibid).

Simon's observation reveals that for many tourists, encountering the 'real Mexico' meant escaping from highly commodified tourist zones, in order to experience Mexico in less commercialized settings. Mandy, too, echoed this sentiment, noting that, 'I think, being an American like you go so many places and everything's towards Americans' (MR: US9). To this, Jane then added that,

there's no like challenge, there's no difference its just everything is so easy and I think vacations should be... to experience a little bit of another culture and I mean still have like the amenities in some ways but I don't want to just go to America abroad (ibid).

In contrast to beach resorts, the idea that travel to central Mexico offers a more 'realistic' or authentic picture of Mexico and its culture was voiced by many of my interviewees. According to Julian, for example, traveling to central Mexico had enhanced both his and his wife's view of the country. He noted that his view of Mexico has

been enhanced, it's gotten better...I didn't know how things were in the interior. I didn't really know, because I'd never been to it...but I had a general impression of its culture [that] I wanted to know more about and understand better... So my opinion has improved, even to the point of saying maybe I'd like to live here and learn the language as well (GUA: US11).

To this, Julian's wife Bobbie added that,

we certainly know more about [Mexican culture] so in that respect it's enhanced. But you know my view is that, I think it's been positive from the beginning and knowing more hasn't changed that (ibid).

Speaking about his reaction to Casa de la Cuesta's *The Other Face of Mexico* Museum and to Helen's lecture on Mexican folk art, Hugo commented that it had helped him gain a better idea of the 'very diverse culture in Mexico and the different areas' (SMA: US14). Olga too, a tourist from Chicago visiting San Miguel de Allende, mentioned how

I had no idea about the vastness [of Mexican culture]...To be honest with you prior to coming here I would have seen them as a Mexican is a Mexican, other than knowing that there are the Spanish area [and] the natives I didn't differentiate too much more than that (SMA: US9).

Echoing this reading of tourism as an avenue for the recognition of Mexico's diversity, Mark noted that, traveling to Mexico had made him aware that

it's a complex culture... Looking at it from faraway it looks to be more or less monolithic but when you get close to it, you realize that the south is very different from the middle. I've never been to the north but I now have friends and [have] met people from the north so I have an idea about, you know, the variation in Mexico (GUA: US13).

Several of my interviewees mentioned feeling 'closer' to Mexican immigrants in the US following their trip to Mexico. Olga, for example, said that

I understand the Mexicans who are in the streets in the US and they bring their culture with them and sometimes they [Americans] are not very understanding of their culture and I can understand it better when I come to Mexico and then go back home, I think that I am more tolerant... I think that it's just...so educational to travel all over the world and see how people live differently (SMA: US9).

As the above extracts illustrate, in many cases, visiting Mexico had a transformative effect on the way in which many of my interviewees perceived the country and its culture. This seems to confirm Bruner's argument, which I cited in the introduction to this chapter, that tourists 'reshape and personalize' their imaginaries in accordance with 'their lived experiences on tour' (Bruner 2005: 22).

#### 6.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

As I have illustrated above, travel books certainly play a role in the construction and maintenance of a specific type of tourist gaze, influencing tourists' understandings of Mexico and Mexican culture. In tourists' search for knowledge and useful information, a variety of other resources and life experiences also play a part in framing tourists' pretour imaginaries of the country. When interviewing US tourists and expats living in Cancun and the Riviera Mayan as well as in San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato, it became immediately apparent that travel books were not the only resource called upon to understand and 'make sense' of Mexico. Indeed,

other non-tourism related sources of knowledge were considered to be just as important in shaping the way in which people imagined Mexico. Stories of others' travel experiences, for example, in addition to people's contact with Mexicans and elements of Mexican culture in the US and their exposure to news reports and collective representations found in the US media, also played an important role in coloring individuals' 'pre-trip understandings' of Mexico.

While my focus in Chapter Four was on contemporary US travel books' discussion of Mexico and their representations of the country's 'place, space, and (social) landscape' and my discussion in Chapter Five centered on tourist spaces' presentation of 'culture', this chapter looked at how tourists' imaginaries were framed by different media, experiences and discourses – including those found in different types of travel books.

The topics discussed in this section are fundamentally intertwined, just as the ideas that structure people's imaginaries<sup>78</sup> are intrinsically connected to wider collective imaginaries of Mexico such as those explored in the previous chapters. By being symbiotically tied to each other in discourse, an analysis of individuals' pre-tour imaginaries underscores how certain ideas of Mexico, Mexican culture, and Mexican people are often held in relation to Mexico as a travel destination. While at times they challenge and other times they echo commonly-shared representations of Mexico and Mexicans such as those both produced and reproduced by travel books, tourists' pre and on-tour views of Mexico offer a rich and multi-threaded account of how different types of media, information, and discourses are commonly called upon to understand and 'make sense' of Mexico.

In the context of tourism discourse, Said's idea of imaginative geographies, as I have discussed throughout my thesis, revolves around the way in which distant places, spaces, and peoples are depicted. Rather than illustrating actual realities however, I argue, tourism imaginaries reflect the social realities and normalized representational repertoires of those evoking them, consequently shedding light on the normative narratives that form and inform the tourist gaze. Gregory, echoing Said, writes of imaginative geographies as, 'figurations of place, space and landscape that dramatize distance' (1995: 29), as 'discursive formations, tense constellations of power, knowledge and spatiality, that are centered on 'here' and projected towards 'there'' (ibid). Power relations represent an important component structuring tourists' imaginaries as it is only certain images and narratives that gain traction and become largely naturalized in discourse – ultimately shaping collective understanding of tourist space – while others are altogether discarded. Lending validity to specific 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980: 79), I argue, the discursive

construction of an Other and the division between us and them gains momentum through normative tourism discourse reliant on the idea of nations as territorially bound sociocultural entities. On the whole, the analysis of the tourism discourses through which foreign destinations like Mexico are re/presented is relevant to a discussion of power. This is because it is through tourism discourse that a particular gaze which to view Mexico (and its population) is fomented, impacting the way in which Mexico is first approached and consequently understood by foreign visitors.

Beyond tourism promotion however, what my data also illustrated is that individuals' imaginative geographies of Mexico are not monolithic or rigid, but are multi-faceted – particularly in the context of tourists' views of Mexico during or after their travel to the country. In this way, imaginaries can be regarded as malleable and open to transformation by the experience of travel itself. Indeed, my analysis of US tourists and expats' viewpoints pointed at the fact that, though acting as important avenues for the construction of imaginative geographies, travel books are only one resource that people consider prior to embarking on their journey. Similarly, in addition to being mobilized by travel books, tourist imaginaries commonly circulate through a variety of other channels (Salazar 2010: 9). As Lutz and Collins note, a complex system of artifacts and communication media, 'are in communication with one another, purveying and contesting a limited universe of ideas about cultural difference and how it can or should be interpreted' (Lutz & Collins 1993: xiii). In addition to travel texts, non-travel related discourses and personal experiences have the power to shape the way in which individuals imagine, understand and approach Mexico. In a way, one can argue that individuals' subjective imaginaries are refracted from wider repositories of discourse, in a process whereby particular narratives, ideologies, and representations are taken-up and collated with pre-existing understandings while others are discarded or ignored.

The second finding that arose from my interviews with US tourists and expats was that essentialized readings of space and reductionist views of Mexicans continue to form part of public discourses about Mexico in the US, be they within travel-related media or other sources of discourse. Representations of Mexico as dangerous and violent, for example, continue to pervade the imaginaries of many Americans, regardless of whether they travel to Mexico or not. However, the notion that these negative representations are representative of contemporary Mexican reality is commonly questioned, as my interviewees' views and understandings of the country attest.

The third finding was that issues of authenticity, such as those I discussed in Chapters Four and Five, also feature in people's imaginative geographies of

particular tourist destinations within Mexico. What was most notable was the way in which people called upon notions of the 'real' in the context of my three fieldwork sites. Tourists' representations of the Yucatan Peninsula and of the state of Guanajuato, though fundamentally dissimilar in terms of geography, local culture, landscape, and overall touristic allure, were bifurcated by a dichotomy between the 'real' (applied to Guanajuato and certain towns in the Mayan Riviera) and the 'contrived' (applied largely to San Miguel de Allende and Cancun). As a product of their housing large foreign, predominantly American, populations, for example, the latter two destinations were commonly 'read' as lacking 'real (Mexican) culture.' In both San Miguel de Allende and Cancun the prevalence of English and the pervasiveness of elements of US culture were considered, by some, as emblems of 'inauthenticity.' Conversely, Guanajuato was frequently envisioned as more 'Mexican' as a product of its low influx of tourists and expatriates and consequently richer in 'Mexican culture'. Similarly, the Mayan Riviera's Playa del Carmen and other towns, particularly those located inland, were imagined to be, to a lesser extent, denotative of a less 'Americanized' tourist experience by being rooted in local cultural settings rather than in cosmopolitan, globally marketed tourist spaces that could be 'anywhere with a Mexican theme,' to quote Frank above (SMA: US7).

The imaginaries called upon by individuals prior to visiting Mexico call upon a diverse subset of representations, ideologies, and conceptual frameworks. As this chapter has illustrated, however, visitors' views of Mexico and Mexicans are not always fixed; they can change during and after tourism to the country. Overall, the goal of this chapter was not to provide a generalized account of tourist imaginaries of Mexico, nor was it to assemble an exhaustive inventory of tourists' pre-existing understandings of the country and its people. Rather, it was to present a window into some of the representations that both form and inform tourists' imaginaries of Mexico in order to bring them face to face with the object of their representation, including local spaces, cultural places, and contemporary Mexican realities, and to ascertain what happens when the 'imagined' intersects with tourists' lived experience in Mexico.



*Chapter*

# SEVEN

## CONCLUSION

In the last 20 years, tourism has increasingly featured in the agendas of scholars from across a wide range of disciplinary fields – from sociology, sociolinguistics, social anthropology, and geography, to interdisciplinary fields like those of tourism studies, cultural studies, and transnational studies. While once considered to represent a trivial and a largely extraneous object for socio-scientific theorization, tourism today is largely recognized as a global phenomenon of sociopolitical importance; one worthy of inquiry, research, and critical theorization.

### 7.1 TRAVEL BOOKS AND TOURIST SPACES

Through an interdisciplinary approach that drew from the work of scholars within fields including those outlined above, this thesis examined the conceptual frameworks and discursive tropes informing popular imaginaries of Mexico in the US. Its focus rested on the way in which Mexico has been, and continues to be, painted as an alluring object of touristic consumption in US travel books and popular tourist spaces – two domains of cultural discourse frequently disregarded by socioscientific research.

Together with my evaluation of contemporary US travel books and a number of tourist spaces located in Mexico, I also considered the voices of US tourists visiting Mexico. My focus here was on the extent to which individuals' pre-tour and on-tour imaginaries were structured by representations of Mexico similar to those portrayed in US travel books and represented by tourist spaces in Mexico. By looking at tourism discourse through the lens of travel books, spaces, and tourist voices, my aim was to illustrate the hegemonic nature of particular narratives and imaginative geographies that are discursively mobilized in the context of the three sites where my fieldwork was conducted - San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato and Cancun / Mayan Riviera. The idea of nations as imagined communities housing unique configurations of society and culture can be found informing much of the discourse through which international tourism has historically operated. Throughout my thesis, I have sought to illustrate how this idea is both tacitly and explicitly mobilized in the context of

contemporary tourism to Mexico. Besides arguing that nationalist tropes defining Mexico as fundamentally Other are mobilized through much of tourism discourse to Mexico, this thesis contends that culturalist representations of Mexicans are similarly adopted by popular sources of travel discourse, like US travel books and Mexican tourist spaces, which continue to draw from fundamentally reductionist imaginaries of Mexico. On the whole, the aim of my fieldwork and analyses is to illustrate how cultural imaginaries are intertextually and intersubjectively called upon by different social actors and tourist spaces, paying particularly close attention to how culturalist and nationalist frameworks are here mobilized to depict contemporary Mexico as an object of (cultural) touristic consumption. Focusing on the historical and contemporary role of tourist discourse in the propagation of binary oppositions drawn along geopolitical boundaries (e.g. Us and Them, Same and Other), my thesis has sought to illustrate how US tourism discourse to Mexico and Mexican tourist spaces are (in)formed by the (re)production of a series of conceptual frameworks that are, at the core, sustained by the idea of nations enclosing discrete sociocultural communities characterized by a unique cultural matrix.

My analysis of contemporary travel books and tourist spaces, in particular, yielded a number of interesting findings. Firstly, it pointed towards US travel books and Mexican tourist spaces' adoption of ideas of Mexican culture as premised on an unique configuration of color and a distinct social topography via which Mexicans are painted as sharing a collective identity, psyche, and 'way of being' which is located within specific coordinates of 'Mexican life' and time. Through an investigation of the historical progression of Mexico's tourism industry and of the narratives called upon by US travel books to represent Mexico since the establishment of tourism to the country, Chapters Three and Four of this thesis illustrated how contemporary ideas of culture like those delineated above became established – not in a vacuum, but through a series of processes, social interactions, and wider ideological frameworks of understanding in circulation at different historical time periods.

My analysis of travel books and tourist spaces' discussion of culture, which I looked at in Chapters Four and Five, pointed towards the widespread mobilization of tropes of 'authenticity' to represent spaces largely devoid of tourists, i.e. landscapes untouched by tourist presence. Here, ideas of 'real Mexico' and of 'real culture' were commonly applied to particular imaginative geographies that, drawing from projected landscapes of purity and the pristine, saw tourism as a corrupting or 'polluting' force.

My analysis of tourist spaces' incorporation of cultural elements within their aesthetic, surroundings, and events programming in Chapter Five brought to light the cross-pollination of cultural imaginaries and the multiscalar nature of locally staged cultural representations. In various cases, it was representations thought to correspond to tourists' projected imaginaries that were locally espoused by Mexican tourist spaces, in this way acting and reacting to both national and global visions and versions of Mexican culture. This was made evident, for example, in the historical changes undergone by Instituto Allende's Guanajuato Tour in response to tourists' increased consumption of global images of Mexican culture (see Chapter Five: GUA: MX7a) as well as the way in which tourist spaces (like Casa Flores) were adapted for the consumption of foreign, as opposed to national, tourists (see Chapter Five: GUA: MX3c; SMA: US6). Here, the espousal of specific images and aesthetics of cultural signification was significant, as tourist spaces' presentation of culture so very often responded to a tourist gaze focused on collective imaginaries of Mexicanness borne out of tourism discourse.

It is important to emphasize that many of the thematic tropes and conceptual frameworks informing the way in which Mexico is represented as an object of touristic consumption – in both Mexican tourist spaces and US travel books – share common features with present day tourism discourse to other countries. Indeed, strong parallels can be drawn. As I noted in Chapter 2.1.3, representations quintessentially reliant on authenticity and differentiation become central to the promotion and consequent consumption of 'exotic' tourism destinations like, for example, Fiji (White 2007). In his discussion of tourism imaginaries in the context of tourism to Tanzania, Salazar further argues that,

Westerners long for pristine African landscapes dotted with picturesque huts topped by grass-thatched roofs. They expect to hear the sound of drums the minute they arrive in Africa, and to see natives rhythmically dancing to the ongoing cadence, representing 'real' and quintessential Africa (Salazar 2011: 35; cf. Norton 1996).

Equally, emphasizing the relationship between tourist narratives and the maintenance of specific imaginaries reliant on the reproduction of nationwide representations and stereotypes, Cordeiro's investigation of contemporary foreign tourist literature on Portugal illustrates a similar phenomenon. Here, Portugal is conceived as a fictional space that consists of

a projection screen of a pre-modern refuge, where residual elements of a 'Portuguese rural reality' are carefully selected to be gazed upon as

irrefutable signs of a preserved utopia. A granite village, an archaic tram, a bustling street, a donkey passing by, fishermen repairing their nets on a beach – these are all elements which fabricate an imaginary place (2010: 73).

On the whole, the relation between tourism discourse and imaginative geographies premised on nationalism and culturalist stereotypes can today be found coloring the imaginaries with which much of international tourism operates. As I argued in Chapter Two, the idea of nations demarcating discrete sociocultural topographies has become widely normalized in popular discourse so that, as Gupta and Ferguson write, tourism as a way to understand and experience clearly-demarcated societies and cultures fades from view as open to debate and critical theorization (1992: 7). In this vein, Mexico, as a space where tourists can travel to experience 'Mexican culture' and 'Mexican society' becomes taken for granted.

In this thesis, I have argued that the mobilization and unproblematic adoption of this view is problematic because these types of representations are centered on the espousal and reproduction of imaginaries (in)formed by reductionist and essentialist imaginaries of distant places and their populations as fundamentally Other. As I have argued throughout this thesis, within much of tourism discourse – a discourse commonly couched within the maintenance of fixed and essentialized cultural representations – difference is unproblematically asserted along geographical lines. In this context, discrete imaginaries and projected landscapes reliant on ideas of authenticity and the exotic are rendered unproblematic. It is important to challenge imaginative geographies and reductionist representations of foreign populations drawn along geographical lines because, as Gregory argues, they are all to often informed by a nostalgia and a mourning for

the passing of 'the traditional', 'the unspoiled', 'the authentic' and by romanticized and thoroughly commodified longing for their revival as Graham Huggan calls 'the postcolonial exotic' (Gregory 2004: 10).

Problematizing this, he proceeds,

is not harmless, still less a trivial pursuit, because its nostalgia that works as a sort of cultural cryonics. Other cultures are fixed and frozen, often as a series of fetishes, and then brought back to life through metropolitan circuits of consumption (*ibid*).

As I discussed in Chapter Four, US tourism imaginaries of Mexico largely draw on a number of representations and narratives that paint the country as one that, while geographically near, remains culturally foreign, noticeable distant, and perpetually Other. *Distant Neighbors*, a non-fictional book premised on shedding light on contemporary Mexican society, gives backing to this view by stating that

as one crosses the border into Mexico...the contrast is shocking – from wealth to poverty, from organization to improvisation, from artificial flavoring to pungent spices...the two countries are separated by language, religion, race, philosophy, and history (Riding 2000: xi).

Many of the travel books and related texts I explored throughout this thesis, and indeed, many of the tourist spaces I examined, call upon the idea of the US and Mexico as delimiting palpably different social and cultural configurations – as enclosing two distinct linguistic and ethnic groups, two distinct cultures, two different societies that, at the core, are highly distinct from one another. This line of thought, I argue, is fundamentally reductionist because it obscures the fact that within both nation states, there is a multiplicity of languages, religions, races, philosophies, histories, and indeed, cultures – a multiplicity that cannot be reduced to one (e.g. to Mexican culture and society, in the singular).

## 7.2 CULTURALISM, NATIONALISM, AND THE MAINTENANCE OF DIFFERENCE

The heterogeneities found within both Mexico and the US – the alternative voices like those of immigrants and minorities – are consequently disregarded by the conceptualization of the nation as a container of a predetermined and limited imagined community. In this way, through the uncritical adoption of national narratives structured on many of the ideas espoused by the tourist narratives above, the multiplicity inherent in most of today's nation states is silenced. Heterogeneities and multiplicities however, are ever present, especially in our increasingly globalizing world. As Fassin observes, there is 'no need to cross oceans to discover cultural difference [for] anyone in his society can encounter it daily' (2001: 306). Nevertheless, the idea that borders or 'oceans' must be crossed to experience Otherness continues to be produced and mobilized within much of international tourist discourse. In so doing, it contributes to the perpetuation of the notion that geographically-circumscribed cultures need to be visited in their 'rightful territory' in order to be truly 'experienced' (e.g. Mexico as the rightful territory in which to experience 'Mexican culture'). According to Kaplan, it is by transposing specific cultures, societies, and peoples onto specific geographical territories, that tourists

contribute to the confirmation and legitimation of a particular social and economic order founded on the geographical prevision of 'difference' and 'similarity' (2006: 48). In order to avoid the rigid categories that often accompany culturalist portrayals of national life, culturalism and the tacit reproduction of nationalist frames of understanding, I argue, must be called into question. As Said wrote,

Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be generally divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say of men into 'us'... and 'they' (1978: 45).

Nationalism and culturalism, far from diminishing as a result of our increasingly interconnected world, continue to be upheld, just as tourism increasingly draws from ideas of cultural authenticity to promote distant spaces and populations. Indeed, as Frankland succinctly observed, '[as] tourism has expanded to incorporate ever more people and places within its fuzzy boundaries, the very idea of Otherness has become an increasingly beguiling commodity' (2009: 263). In an attempt to cultivate understanding and cooperation between people of dissimilar backgrounds (whether they be in the same or a different nation state), I argue that socially constructed ideas of Otherness must be transcended. Instead, as Gupta and Ferguson note, what is needed is to 'interrogate, politically and historically, the apparent 'given' of a world in the first place divided into 'ourselves' and 'others'' (1992: 16).

As international migration flows increase, most nation-states continue to regard themselves (and others) as ethnically / culturally homogeneous against a backdrop of social, cultural and ethnic heterogeneities that are increasingly hard to conceal. This creates a fundamental tension between imaginative geographies and realities. De-naturalizing the modern notion of territorially circumscribed differences, transcending methodological nationalism, and problematizing the propagation of monolithic depictions of Other peoples – with 'their' cultures / nations / societies – I argue, is a task of increasing importance today, in a rapidly globalizing world where sociocultural heterogeneity is rising concomitantly with discourses employing difference as grounds for political exclusion (see: Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 2006).

By emphasizing the transnational elements involved in the production of nationalist and tourist infrastructures, performances, and local attractions, this thesis has sought to highlight the inexorable link between location and travel, between the myth of *stasis* and the reality of movement. As Kaplan (1996), Clifford (1989), Hall (1997), and Said (1978) have noted, location needs to be increasingly conceptualized as fluid and relational, as entailing mobilities and heterogeneities, i.e. as 'a series of locations and encounters' (Clifford 1989), as 'discontinuous, multiply constituted and transversed by diverse social formations' (Kaplan 1996: 183) so as to enhance the possibility of a global all-inclusive 'us' that truly transcends borders.

What my thesis illustrates is how, within US tourism to Mexico, it is after the Mexican Other is defined as such, geographically 'fixed' and culturally positioned within predetermined imaginaries and representations, that 'Mexican culture' is transformed into an object of the tourist gaze. The heterogeneities of modern nation states, however, seldom attract the attention of tourists. Commenting about this phenomenon, Kaplan wrote that, 'the poor might look exotic in a foreign setting whereas the poor at home seem invisible, uninteresting or threatening' (Kaplan 1996: 44). This 'assumed isomorphism' – between space, place, and culture – as Gupta and Ferguson have pointed out, 'results in some significant problems' (1992: 7) for there is, they argue, 'the issue of those who inhabit the border... of national boundaries' (*ibid*); the issue of

those who live a life of border crossings – migrant workers, nomads, and members of the transnational business and professional elite...  
those who cross borders more or less permanently – immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates...in their case, the disjunction of place and culture is especially clear (*ibid*).

Given the inherent multiplicity of cultural backgrounds and histories found within nation-states, can we therefore 'speak' of culture as nationally determined? Indeed, can we fix culture territorially, locate it; can we even define it? As my thesis data illustrated, for most travel books and related texts and according to most tourist spaces that trade in cultural capital, the answer is resolutely: yes. When considering the way in which individuals reacted to travel books and tourist spaces' representations of culture, particularly in the context of their pretour narratives and situated understandings however, my research pointed towards several noteworthy findings, which I discuss in the next section.

### 7.3 TOURIST VOICES

Aside from shedding light on the pervasiveness of reductionist representations of Mexico and of culturalist imaginaries of Mexicans found in much of US travel discourse, my research aimed to show the way in which individuals' pretour narratives and imaginaries are not only shaped by travel books. They are also informed by non-travel related discourses encountered prior to setting out on their journey (e.g. by stories in newspapers and TV, movies' depictions of Mexico, and their friends and family's own travel experiences). My research amongst US visitors showed that individuals tended to call upon many of the same ideas espoused by travel books. Ideas like that of authenticity, for example, were equally called upon to describe spaces devoid of foreign presence. In this way, tourist destinations attracting a sizeable influx of tourists and / or expatriates were seen as lacking authenticity. This, I argue, was a phenomenon that pointed towards a disavowal of diversity and sociocultural plurality – as evidenced by the shunning of multicultural and multilingual landscapes as 'Mexican' – in the fashioning of imaginaries of contemporary Mexico. The extent to which travel was able to challenge, transcend, or altogether overturn individuals' pre-tour representations of Mexico was, however, notable in the narratives of some individuals whose perception of Mexico and its population dramatically changed as a product of their travel to the country. See, for example, the third section of Chapter Six where Olga argues that, prior to visiting Mexico, she has a monolithic image of Mexican culture – 'a Mexican is a Mexican,' she would say (SM: US9). Travel, however, made her override this pre-tour image she had of Mexico at the same time as it changed the way in which she perceived and interacted with Mexicans in the US (*ibid*). What is central to note here is that transformations like these were seen as more likely to occur in the context of cultural tourism destinations, not destinations designed exclusively for tourists' consumption. In this way, places like Cancun and many of the all-inclusive resorts of the Mayan Riviera were read as unsuitable spaces for experiencing culture, as not 'Mexican' and as spaces that 'could be anywhere' (see: MR: US09, SMA: US18, SMA: USA7, and SMA: US21), in this way failing to impact individuals' imaginative geographies of Mexico with large.

In our increasingly globalizing world, more nuanced forms of understanding are needed that take into account transnational cultural interconnections without reference to culturally reductionist ways of seeing and relating to those from dissimilar backgrounds. Despite the flaws of mainstream tourism discourse, my analysis amongst US visitors to Mexico showed that international travel itself can, in some cases, sow the seeds of transnational understanding (see Chapter 6.3). My data

pointed out that it can only do this, however, when some of the more culturalist elements of the tourist gaze are discarded and tourist spaces move beyond the selling of predetermined and preconfigured cultural elements thought to coincide with tourists' projected imaginaries.

#### 7.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Various avenues for further research can be pursued from the present study. An analysis of the interconnection between international forms of tourist discourse represents one area open to further inquiry and research, i.e. an investigation of the commonalities between the way in which, for example, travel books to different countries continue to mobilize many of the same conceptual frameworks and thematic tropes explored in this thesis. Another area open to investigation is the way in which local populations themselves respond to travel books' representations of local culture(s), to tourist spaces' performance, staging, and enactment of elements of local culture(s), and to tourists' narratives of what constitutes contemporary Mexican cultural forms. In the context of Mexico, specifically, further exploration into the way in which travel affects individuals' understanding of the country over time would allow for a more in-depth assessment of the impact travel can have on individuals' views of Mexico. This would be particularly valuable in the context of US immigration to Mexico, an area that remains under-examined.



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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In the context of the present thesis, I use consider 'leisure travel' and 'tourism' interchangeable while fully aware of the fact that some authors distinguish between both terms, particularly in the context of travel writing (See, for example, Kaplan 1996; Buzzard 1993; Fussell 1980; de Botton 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Opposition to immigration from Mexico has often been premised on representations of Mexicans (especially those categorized as 'racially Mexican') as belonging in Mexico and as a threat to 'US culture' by retaining 'their' culture, 'their' language, and failing to assimilate into 'ours.' See, for example, Buchanan (2006), Huntington (2004), Dobbs (2006), Schuck (1998), Tancredo (2006), and Gingrich (2006).

<sup>3</sup> A term commonly used in relation to individuals who have either temporarily or permanently migrated to Mexico.

<sup>4</sup> In the present thesis, I use the word 'travel book' to refer to both the genre of guidebooks and that of travel memoirs or travelogues.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by author from, 'esses livros especializados na fabricação de outro e na transformação de um local insuspeito de topografia real num destino turístico poderosamente magnético' (Cordeiro 2010:12)

<sup>6</sup> In this thesis, I concentrated on travel books while fully aware of the impact other types of travel discourse have on the formation and construction of imaginaries. For a discussion of this, see: Cordeiro 2010a and 2010b.

<sup>7</sup> All interviews were written down, word-for-word, in a word processing document in their original language. My analysis of interviews was conducted in the language in which the interview was conducted. Translation of Spanish to English happened at the last stage, when this thesis was written. I translated all the interviews. Appendix E, which contains a list of all extracts mentioned in this thesis, contains interview data in its original language.

<sup>8</sup> Foreign travelers were prohibited from traveling to New Spain during Spain's colonial rule over the region (Pratt 1992: 136).

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Von Humboldt was a natural scientist who, between 1799 and 1804, traveled to New Spain after being granted permission to enter and explore it by the

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Spanish Crown. Interestingly, he was the first non-Spanish person given 'largely unrestricted and unsupervised freedom to travel and collect data' (Sluyter 2006: 97) since the establishment of New Spain. Von Humboldt's aim, he wrote, was to embark 'on an expedition to be of some service to the natural sciences and study various peoples in simple and advanced conditions of life' (De Terra 1959: 707). He spent the last year of his Latin American expedition, from 1803-1804, in Mexico, where he was given access to 'a wealth of Mexican archives, libraries, and botanical gardens never before open to non-Spaniards' (Pratt 1992: 114).

<sup>10</sup> While it was not until 1930s that 'Mexican' became a bona fide racial category (see: Anderson 1988), prior to this time Mexicans were often seen as belonging to a different – inferior – race. Indeed, Robert J. Walker, a Democratic Senator from Mississippi, was often quoted as arguing that Mexicans, alongside American blacks and Amerindians, belonged to a 'mongrel race' that was at the core 'barbaric' (see: Horsman 1981: 213).

<sup>11</sup> The conflation of territory with race and nation contributed to a series of acts devised to deter entry to individuals deemed to be racially Other such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1884. For example, in 1884, as ideas of 'race' and 'nation' began to fuse in the public imaginary, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed barring entry to immigrants of Chinese origin (Gomez 2007: 137).

<sup>12</sup> Via the Bessemer process

<sup>13</sup> During this time period, a number of US settlements, at economically developed cities and in cities rich in natural resources, like Tampico which housed large reserves of oil) began to form (Simmen 1988).

<sup>14</sup> A rise that led Mexico's then-president Emilio Portes Gil to create a new coordinating body in charge of attracting and dealing with tourism to the country, thus replacing the CPT with the CMPT (Comisión Mixta Pro-Turismo), by arguing that, tourism, a 'nueva fuente de prosperidad' necessitated the creation of a larger, better funded coordinating body (Gob. Press Release 1929: 11).

<sup>15</sup> It did so by first creating the CPT (Comisión Pro-Turismo), a branch of the Ministry of Interior, where members of the Migration, Health and Customs Departments investigated the prospects of a tourist industry in Mexico and produced recommendations for its successful launching (Berger 2006: 7).

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<sup>16</sup> Acapulco's airport began to receive international tourists in 1934, increasing its popularity as a chief destination for international tourism (AICM 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Original extract: 'Con el nombre de Seminario de Cultura Mexicana se crea una institución al servicio de la cultura del país, dotada de personalidad jurídica, en la que se hallarán representadas las diversas ramas y tendencias de las ciencias, las letras y las artes' (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión 1949).

<sup>18</sup> Original extract: 'Difundir la cultura en todas sus manifestaciones nacionales y universales...Mantener activo intercambio cultural con los Estados y Territorios de la República, y con instituciones e individuos del extranjero interesados en la cultura mexicana...Colaborar con la Secretaría de Educación Pública, con otras dependencias oficiales, con instituciones descentralizadas y privadas, en actividades culturales' (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión 1949).

<sup>19</sup> Original extract: 'No debe verse ya sólo como un negocio en el mundo, sino como un medio para que los hombres se conozcan y comprendan; comprensión que es tan necesaria en estos momentos; el turismo es por sobre todo, un medio para el mejor conocimiento y amistad de los hombres y paz mundial' (Jiménez 1992: 36)

<sup>20</sup> This festival, initiated in honor of Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes, is comprised of a myriad of cultural and literary events and went on to quickly become one of the country's most internationally acclaimed attractions (see: García Marchante and Poyato Holgado 2002).

<sup>21</sup> From the 1960s to the late 1980s, the city gained prominence in US literary circles (becoming home to renown US writers and cultural figures like Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady) (see: Croucher 2009: 40).

<sup>22</sup> In 1998, there were 150 hotels (with a total of 7,400 rooms) in the Mayan Riviera, a number that, by 2001, rose to 218 (with 18,730 total rooms) and by 2007 to 336 hotels (34,765 rooms) (SEDETUR 2008). Tourist flows concurrently rose, from 595,050 in 1998, to 1.5 million in 2001, and 2.8 million tourists in 2007 (SEDETUR 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Mexico's joining of NAFTA in 1994 certainly facilitated the above. The profitability of Mexico's tourism industry, which at the time could hardly be debated (given that tourism arrivals had grown, from two million in 1970 to seventeen million in 1994

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(Clancy 2001:9)), encouraged foreign interests (particularly from the US) to invest in its market, contributing to its further development and diversification. Moreover, a series previously state-run enterprises such as Nacional Hotelera (an organisation in charge of the development of hotels in tourist zones) were privatized. By 1994, Mexico had become a principal global destination, becoming 10<sup>th</sup> in international arrivals and 12<sup>th</sup> in earnings (WTO 1996: 12-13).

<sup>24</sup> Original extract: '[para] obtener más divisas, empleo y equilibrio regional, podemos y queremos ser una potencia turística mayor' (Salinas de Gortari, Segundo Informe de Gobierno: 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Original extract: '[m]i Gobierno trabajará al lado de las comunidades intelectuales, artísticas y académicas con el fin de impulsar, defender y divulgar la cultura en México, y la cultura de México en el mundo' (Sala de Prensa, Gobierno de México 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Original extract: '[Hacer] de la cultura el espacio creativo y la reserva de valores que ... conviertan [a México] en un México con una sólida identidad propia en el Siglo XXI, un México ganador, sí, y con raíces fincadas en el esplendor de nuestro pasado y la mirada muy bien puesta en el futuro' ('ibid).

<sup>27</sup> Original extract: 'Hoy México busca atraer nuevos mercados con base en su amplia y diversa riqueza patrimonial de cultura y naturaleza, que vaya más allá de nuestros tradicionales productos de sol y playa y estamos haciendo que tanto el turista nacional como el que viene del extranjero volteen sus ojos a estos rincones tan especiales del interior de la república' (SECTUR 2007)

<sup>28</sup> Original extract: 'Las ciudades coloniales pueden tener un alto impacto turístico que deviene en un importante valor económico, y que además tiene como uno de sus objetivos rescatar los elementos culturales que constituyen la identidad del país' (Salinas 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Translated from 'Iluminación de la ciudad de Guanajuato, Patrimonio Mundial de la Humanidad' ('ibid)

<sup>30</sup> Original extract: 'tourism [un] Pueblo Mágico es el reflejo de nuestro México, de lo que nos ha hecho, de lo que somos...Un Pueblo Mágico es una localidad que tiene ...

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magia que emana en cada una de sus manifestaciones socio culturales, y que significan hoy día una gran oportunidad para el aprovechamiento turístico' (ibid)

<sup>31</sup> Original extract: 'a [s]u mexicanidad, su encanto ancestral, sus colores y olores, sus pobladores, sus singularidades en conjunto requieren hoy de su revaloración... como un ícono del turismo de Mexico... Un Pueblo Mágico es hoy un símbolo distintivo, una marca turística reconocida' (ibid)

<sup>32</sup> While I will refer to travel books in their full title when first introducing them, for the sake of readability, titles will then be shortened.

<sup>33</sup> I discuss the case of the following guidebooks to Mexico: Lonely Planet: Mexico (2006), Lonely Planet: Mexico (2000), Rough Guide: Mexico (2004), National Geographic Traveler: Mexico (2000), People's Guide to Mexico (2006), AA: Essential Mexico (2005), Frommer's: Mexico (2009), Fodor's: Mexico (2009) and When in Mexico do as the Mexicans Do (2005). In addition, I explore a travel books discussing tourism to the specific regions where I conducted my fieldwork. These were: On Mexican Time (2000), Mexican Days (2006), Guanajuato: Your Expat, Study Abroad, Vacation Survival Manual in The Land of Frogs (2006), Lonely Planet: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan (2009), Fodor's: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan Peninsula (2009), and Frommer's: Cancun, Cozumel, and the Yucatan (2009).

<sup>34</sup> Several factors contributed to this, e.g. Mexico's turbulent socio-political environment following its independence, the widespread circulation of representations of Mexico as inhospitable and dangerous, and of course, the fact that tourism between the US and Mexico, as we today understand it, was barely existent in at this point in history.

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<sup>35</sup> Between 1799 and 1804, Von Humboldt traveled within New Spain after being granted permission to enter and explore it by the Spanish Crown. Interestingly, he was the first non-Spanish person given 'largely unrestricted and unsupervised freedom to travel and collect data' (Sluyter 2006: 97) since the establishment of New Spain. Von Humboldt's aim, he wrote, was to embark 'on an expedition to be of some service to the natural sciences and study various peoples in simple and advanced conditions of life' (De Terra 1959: 707). He spent the last year of his Latin American expedition, from 1803-1804, in Mexico, where he was given access to 'a wealth of Mexican archives, libraries, and botanical gardens never before open to non-Spaniards' (Pratt 1992: 114).

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, One of the underlying objectives of Linnaean categorization was to classify and characterize the distinct 'varieties' of human populations based on their physiognomic traits (Pratt 1992: 32).

<sup>37</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, those of the 'European race', i.e. 'fair, brawny [with] hair yellow, brown, flowing, eyes blue' (*ibid*) were argued to be, 'gentle, acute, inventive...[and] governed by laws' (Pratt 1992: 32).

<sup>38</sup> A title derived from its publishing company, D. Appleton & Co, a publishing company founded in New York by Daniel Appleton.

<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, the images the text chooses to include tend to reproduce the idea of Mexico's landscape as devoid of people and as a result, as rife for exploration. He tended to focus predominately on empty landscapes, buildings, flora and fauna and seldom on people; when people did make an appearance, they appeared, predominately, alone or in small groups.

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<sup>40</sup> In a way, one could argue that this pointed towards the assumed commonality between Europeans, European-creoles, and American creoles. As the above indicates, not only did they tend to dress similarly, but they also tended to send their children to the same schools (in the U.S.), to speak the same language (English), and run large sectors of the economy. This representation is however, not entirely striking, given that for Conkling, individuals from each of these groups belong to the same 'great caste': the 'white' caste.

<sup>41</sup> Given the fact that Campbell's subsequent guidebook series drew largely from the latter edition, it is the guidebook's 1899 edition I will mostly discuss.

<sup>42</sup> Because I was not able to procure the first edition of Flandrau's *Viva Mexico!* for the remainder of my discussion, I will be drawing from the 1921 edition of the text.

<sup>43</sup> This number, as can be appreciated by contrasting this figure to the one presented in the 1911 edition of the text, remained unchanged so that, while in 1911 the text wrote that Mexico's 'foreign population includes...over 100,000' (1911: lxi), the guidebook's 1943 edition writes that 'foreigners number about 100,000' (1943: lxi).

<sup>44</sup> This could be argued to have been due to the rise in the expansion of capitalist enterprise and of Mexico's increasing availability of touristic lodgings and infrastructure at the time.

<sup>45</sup> In my discussion, I will refer to the *The People's Guide to Mexico*'s 1976 edition.

<sup>46</sup> While the internet has played an undoubtedly important role in the construction of imaginaries of Mexico in the US (and beyond), its analysis lies beyond the scope of the present thesis.

<sup>47</sup> *Gringos* being a term that refers to people from the US (Morris 2005: 3).

<sup>48</sup> A title hereafter shortened to *Guanajuato Mexico* (2006).

<sup>49</sup> As I will discuss in the next chapter, a wide range of sources – from movies and newscasts, to individuals' own experiences and others' personal travel accounts – in addition to travel books, contribute to shaping people's imaginaries and eventual perception of their travel destination.

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<sup>50</sup> Sanitized as a product of their being ‘spatially segregated from local workers and cultural manifestations that might be potentially unpleasant’ (Torres 2002: 90) or, in the words of Edensor, ‘shielded from potentially offensive sights, sounds and smells (Edensor 2001: 64).

<sup>51</sup> It is important, here, to bear in mind that, unlike the two previous sections and the one that follows this, my analysis is limited to schools located in Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende. Due to unforeseen circumstances related to the outbreak of the ‘Swine Flu’ I was unable to conduct research at schools located in Cancun/Mayan Riviera because all schools in the region were closed for the duration of my fieldwork in the region.

<sup>52</sup> A repeatedly trying to get in touch with the Mayan Riviera’s central tourism office (via telephone, email and in person), I was unable to conduct an interview with one of its representatives. For this reason, this section therefore, focuses exclusively on Guillermo Romero Zozaya’s account. While the fact that I was unable to include interview data from the Mayan Riviera’s central tourism office was undoubtedly regrettable, Romero Zozaya’s account of tourism to not only Cancun but also to the Mayan Riviera made this fact largely inconsequential.

<sup>53</sup> While, at the time of my fieldwork, Frommer’s (2009), the Lonely Planet (2006) and the Rough Guide (2007) listed 28 small hotels and B&Bs in San Miguel de Allende and 38 in Guanajuato, the venues I decided to focus on, as I discussed in Chapter Two, were chosen because their particular endorsement by these texts.

<sup>54</sup> I use the word ‘expatriate’ because of its widespread usage to refer to Euro-American migrants living – either temporary or permanently – in Mexico. I do so while fully aware of its ideological connotations, particularly vis-à-vis the more politically laden term ‘immigrant’ (a term that is discarded in the context of Americans living in Mexico at the same time as it is appended to Mexicans living in the US). This represents, I argue, an interesting object for future research.

<sup>55</sup> *Catrinas* are carved wooden skeletons typical of Day of the Dead celebrations, *alebrijes* are brightly decorated wooden folk art depicting fantastical creatures, and *retablos* are devotional painting using iconography derived from traditional popular religious art.

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<sup>56</sup> This B&B, because of its inclusion of a specific mask museum, was not anonymized. Permission for naming the hotel and museum was obtained from the owners.

<sup>57</sup> Brian's primary interest are Mexican indigenous cultures, particularly those linked to ceremonial masked rituals, while Helen studies and looks to promote Mexican indigenous folk arts, i.a. handicrafts, textiles, pottery, woodwork, and prints.

<sup>58</sup> As I will discuss in the following section, this book represented a crucial resource used by local tourists and residents to learn about contemporary Mexican culture.

<sup>59</sup> Tourists' attraction to Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera is worthy of note, particularly in the context of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. As world-renown icons of lo Mexicano, Kahlo's paintings and Rivera's murals have become emblems of 'Mexican culture', particularly in the US. As such, their work appears in prevailing imaginaries of Mexicans culture abroad and the landscapes of Mexico's tourist spaces, particularly in tourist-targeted shops where fridge magnets, tote bags, place mats and other items are collectively consumed by foreign tourists as palpable markers of national culture (see: Lindauer 1999)

<sup>60</sup> While the rise of Frida Kahlo as an internationally global icon extends beyond the scope of this research what is notable in this context is the cross-pollination between tourists' imaged consumption patterns and tourist spaces' own cultural offerings (for a discussion of Kahlo's fame and popularity in the US, see: Lindauer 1999).

<sup>61</sup> One such word, the book comments, is alma ('spirit'), which, for Mexicans, represents, 'the most important of all human qualities, and their culture is fashioned around this concept...Alma is manifested in the national character of Mexicans in many ways, and colors their character and personality' (*ibid*).

<sup>62</sup> Travel books, as I discussed in Chapter Four, have frequently called upon these ideas. The notion that Mexicans talk, act, and think a certain way – that they are 'culturally programmed,' or, to use its very title, that there is such a thing as 'Mexican Thought and Culture,' in the singular – is reminiscent of the discourse called upon by travel books (e.g. *When in Mexico, Do as the Mexicans Do* (2005)).

<sup>63</sup> For example, *There's a Word for it in Spanish* argues that Mexicans are, 'an exceptionally emotional people, expressing themselves in a variety of ways which have become an integral part of their culture, from their songs and dances to every

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aspect of their interpersonal behavior' (1996: 1). It also comments that Mexicans 'on all social levels, tend to think of themselves as artists and poets, not that the majority of them paint or write poetry but in the sense that they have the poet and the painter's outlook on life' (*ibid*: 31)

<sup>64</sup> Because of his central role as the founder and head teacher of Warren Hardy's Spanish language school, his name has not been anonymized.

<sup>65</sup> References to 'Disneyland' as the apotheosis of commercialized tourist attractions, were similarly raised by a number of my interviewees in the context of destinations thought to represent 'inauthentic' spaces (see Chapter Six).

<sup>66</sup> The allusion to 'Disneyland' is raised too by Torres, who writes that Xcaret represents 'a classic example of Ritzer's 'McDisneyfication' (Torres 2002: 110). Xcare, she writes, takes Ritzer's concept one step further by appealing specifically to a new breed of 'environmentally conscious' mass consumers with specialized tastes' (*ibid*; Ritzer: 1997). 'McDisneyfication' is a concept developed by George Ritzer and Allan Liska to represent commoditized, mass produced, hyperreal 'non places' which lack authenticity and relish in a post modern vacuum of simulacra; it is a fusion of Ritzer's concept of McDonalidization and with that of Disneyfication (See: Ritzer and Liska, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Specifically, this Chapter draws from interviews with fourteen tourists and seven expats in San Miguel de Allende; six tourists and eight expats in Guanajuato; and seven tourists and nine expats in Cancun/Mayan Riviera.

<sup>68</sup> As I discussed in Chapter 3 (Methodology), I look at the accounts of both tourists and 'expatriates' based on the fact that, at one point or another in their adult life, they both entered Mexico as tourists, i.e. people who 'travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited' (WTO AND UNSTAT, 1994).

<sup>69</sup> Here, I have included data from 'expats' (a term they use to define themselves) because, of the 23 'expats' interviewed, 17 of them entered the country as tourists prior to deciding to migrate to Mexico.

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<sup>70</sup> For example, Marek (2006) and Gross (2008).

<sup>71</sup> For example, *The Ruins* by Scott Smith (2006)

<sup>72</sup> For example, *Cheers* episode *One Happy Chappy in a Snappy Serape* (1988); *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s episode titled *Anne* (1998); MTV's *Fashionably Loud Spring Break in Cancun* (2000; 2001); MTV's *Spring Break Cancun* (2005).

<sup>73</sup> *Out Cold* (2001), *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* (2003) and *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself* (2003).

<sup>74</sup> *The Real Cancun* (2003).

<sup>75</sup> I must emphasize however, that the fact that most of my interviewees took place with tourists whose journey destination was outside of Cancun, the fact that their imaginaries were largely negative, one can argue, is not entirely unexpected

<sup>76</sup> Original extract “O sucesso editorial dos guias de viagem aponta não para o seu eventual poder estruturante, mas sobretudo para a necessidade prevalecente de busca de um discurso orientador, de uma identidade, de referencias fiáveis para conhecimento de outro” (2010: 17).

<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the impact of news reports on people's imaginaries of Mexico was particularly evident when, during 'swine flu' epidemic at the tail end of my fieldwork in April 2009, there were a number of negative representations of Mexico in US media had a devastating effect on tourism.

<sup>78</sup> It is, of course, worth noting that my analysis is far from being exhaustive nor are the views discussed above necessarily representative of 'all' US tourists traveling to Mexico.



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*Appendix*

# A

## ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### GROUP ONE: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Local tourist policy

Government aims/objectives regarding local tourist development

Views on the impact/consequence of tourism to the area

The significance of international tourist discourses in its expansion

The type of image they seek to promote

How their representation of Mexican culture has/has not changed over time.

Perceived transformation of their city/village and of their quotidian lives a result of tourism

Involvement in the local tourist industry

Experiences as participants in the selling of tourism

Conceptualization of Mexican culture vis-à-vis that which they present to tourists

### GROUP TWO: TOURIST SPACE OWNERS, MANAGERS AND/OR EMPLOYEES WORKING AT THE TOURIST SPACES

The development of individuals' respective businesses

The presentation of Mexico and Mexican culture they seek to promote

Personal views and experiences of Mexican culture

Perceptions of their tourist clientele

### **GROUP THREE: US TOURISTS AND/OR EXPATRIATES.**

History of travel to Mexico

Views on Mexican culture held prior to arriving to Mexico and the way in which these have changed as a product of traveling to the country

Rationale for having written/participated in the writing of particular travel books/guides

Reasons for having decided to travel to Mexico

Experience of Mexico and Mexican culture both prior and during their travel to the country

Engagement with travel books and guidebooks and their opinion of said texts

Personal views/experiences of Mexican culture upon arrival

## *Appendix*

# B

### **Participant Information Sheet (English)**

*Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.*

- What is the research about?**

I am doing a PhD at the University of Southampton that tries to understand different aspects of tourism from the United States to Mexico. This interview will help me get a better idea of the ways in which individuals (tourists and local inhabitants) interpret and understand tourism to the region.

- What will be the format of this interview?**

Whilst this is an open interview (it is not a questionnaire), the questions I will be asking will be about particular themes (e.g. tourism, your experience as a tourist/member of tourist receiving area, etc.). The interview itself will be recorded using a digital WMA voice recorded and will last from 30 minutes to 1-2 hours.

- Will my participation be confidential?**

Your participation will be entirely confidential and the data you provide me with shall be treated in compliance with the Data Protection Act. Once this interview is transcribed, all your personal information (e.g. your name and/or that of others) shall be anonymized, e.g. names will be replaced by pseudonyms. At this stage, the recorded interview will be deleted.

- What happens if I change my mind?**

If at any stage during this interview you would like to withdraw from this study be aware that it is in your right to do so without needing to provide a reason for it. Also, if you wish to not answer any questions asked, be aware that it is your right to do so, again, without needing to provide a reason for it.

- Where can I get more information?**

If you would like to contact me at any point following this interview, e.g. if you have any questions or comments you would like to make, you may do so. Until the end of May of 2009 you may contact me at 44 23 81 01 30. After that date, I shall be in the UK where I can be reached at (0044) 07745518378. Alternatively you can email me at: aep106@soton.ac.uk.

*Thank you very much for your participation in this study.*

## Información Para el Participante (Spanish)

*Por favor lea la siguiente información acerca de este estudio detalladamente antes de que decida si es que quiere tomar participar. Si usted está dispuesto a participar, favor de firmar la forma de consentimiento.*

- **¿De que se trata este estudio?**

Estoy haciendo un doctorado en la Universidad de Southampton (en Inglaterra) el cual está enfocado en el turismo a México, especialmente el turismo de EEUU. Esta entrevista me ayudara a obtener una mejor idea sobre las diferentes maneras que los individuos (tanto los turistas como los residentes locales) interpretan y entienden el turismo a la región.

- **¿Cuál va a ser el formato de esta entrevista?**

Mientras esta es una entrevista abierta (no es un cuestionario), las preguntas que le preguntaré están basadas en temas predeterminados (por ejemplo, en el turismo, en su experiencia como turista/residente, en sus opiniones acerca del turismo, etc.). Esta entrevista va a ser grabada utilizando una grabadora digital de voz. La entrevista en si puede durar desde media hasta una o dos.

- **¿Mi participación será anónima?**

Su participación en este proyecto será completamente confidencial y toda información que usted entregue será tratada siguiendo estrictos códigos del Acta de Protección de Identidad para asegurar la protección de su identidad. Cuando esta entrevista se vea por finalizada, será transcrita e una computadora y toda su información personal (por ejemplo, su nombre o el nombre de otros) será anonimizada (por ejemplo, con el uso de pseudónimos). Cuando esto suceda, la entrevista original será borrada.

- **¿Qué pasa si cambio de opinión?**

Si en cualquier momento durante la entrevista usted quisiera retirar su participación en este estudio, sepa que lo puede hacer sin necesitar explicar porqué. También, sepa que si usted no quiere responder cualquier pregunta, o hablar de algún tema en específico puede negarse a hacerlo, nuevamente, sin tener que explicar porqué ni dar una razón por no querer responder.

- **¿Dónde puedo obtener más información?**

Si usted quiere contactarme en cualquier momento después de esta entrevista, por ejemplo, si tiene alguna pregunta o quisiera hacer algún comentario, puede con mucho gusto hacerlo. Hasta finales de Mayo del 2009 me puede usted contactar llamando a: 44 23 81 01 30. Después de esa fecha estaré en Inglaterra donde puede usted llamar a (0044)07745518378. Al mismo tiempo puede usted mandarme un email: aep106@soton.ac.uk.

*Muchas gracias por su participación en este estudio*

*Appendix*

# C

## CONSENT FORM (English)

Thank you for taking part in my study. Please tick the appropriate box below. If you have any questions, feel free to ask.

YES/NO

1. I consent to this interview being recorded (via a WMA digital voice recorder)
2. I am aware that my personal details (e.g. name and surname) will be made anonymous when this interview is transcribed.
3. I am aware of my right to not answer any question I do not wish to answer, without having to provide a reason for doing so
4. I am aware of my right to terminate this interview, at whichever point I please, without having to provide a reason for doing so

Please sign and date below.

X

Signature

X

Date

## FORMA DE CONSENTIMIENTO (Spanish)

Gracias por tomar parte en mi estudio. Por favor, marque la casilla adecuada.  
Si tiene alguna pregunta, siéntase libre de preguntar.

YES/NO

1. Consiento que esta entrevista sea grabada (usando una grabadora digital WMA de voz)
2. Estoy consciente de que mis datos personales (como nombre y apellido) serán anonimizados al momento que esta entrevista sea transcrita
3. Estoy consciente de mi derecho a no responder cualquier pregunta que no quiera responder, sin tener que dar razones para esto
4. Estoy consciente de mi derecho a terminar esta entrevista, en cualquier momento, sin tener que dar razones para esto

Favor de firmar y poner la fecha.

X

Firma

X

Fecha

## *Appendix*

# D

## INTERVIEWEES KEY

*Pages 1 and 2 contain the interviewee details for local government officials and Mexican locals involved in the tourism industry. Pages 3 and 4 contain the details for foreign tourists and expats. For example, SMA: MX1a stands for Guillermo Gonzalez Engelbrech's first extract and MY6b represents the second extract attributed to Francisco. All extracts, organized by interviewees using this key, can be found in Appendix X.*

### **SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE (SMA: MX)**

1. GUILLERMO GONZÁLEZ ENGELBRECH – managing director at San Miguel de Allende's Tourism Council (*Consejo Turistico de San Miguel de Allende*)
2. TOMAS – Taxi Driver
3. CARMEN and REINA – Employees at Casa Flores
4. CARLA – Café owner
5. RAUL – Taxi Driver
6. ROBERTO y ALFONSO – Café employees
7. LORENA – Café Owner
8. MARIANA – Employee at Casa Flores
9. ANDRES – Lecturer for the local library
10. JOSE – Events manager at the local library
11. JAVIER – Restaurant owner
12. DOMINGO – Local tour guide

### **GYA: MX**

1. LORENZO – Teacher at Escuela Mexicana
2. PEDRO – Café employee
3. ANA – Manager at Casa Luna B&B

4. ESTEBAN – Academia Falcon teacher and administrator
5. MONICA CERNA MARTINEZ AND DIEGO CARRILLO - director of promotion and public relations and director of marketing and development at Guanajuato's Tourism development secretariat (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Turístico del Estado de Guanajuato*).
6. JORGE – Manager at Casa Arbol
7. ROGELIO – Instituto Allende Tour Guide

#### **CANCUN (CAN: MX)**

1. GUILLERMO ROMERO ZOZAYA – Marketing director of Cancun Conventions and Visitors Bureau

#### **MAYAN RIVIERA (MY: MX)**

2. LALO – Xcaret's staff capacitation employee
3. MONICA – Chichen Itza Tour Guide
4. MONICA y RAFAEL – Customer Relations Staff at Resort Maya
5. JOSUE–Customer Relations Staff
6. FRANCISCO – YHN Castle Customer Relations Manager
7. GERARDO – Hotel Owner
8. FERNANDO – Heaven hotel employee
9. TITO – Heaven hotel cook
10. NINA – Great Princess Resort Customer Relations
11. GUILLERMO – Discover Mexico director
12. ELLA – Customer Relations Queen Tulum
13. CARMELA – Local writer
14. MAURICIO – Heaven hotel employee
15. ALBERTO – Bellboy at Sandos Playacar

**SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE (SMA: US)**

1. BRIAN
2. HELEN
3. PAUL
4. DON
5. EDMUND
6. CATHY
7. FRANK
8. PATRICE
9. OLGA
10. CINDY AND ROB
11. LIZ
12. KATE
13. EVA
14. HUGO
15. GLADYS
16. LYN
17. BONNIE
18. KAREN
19. PAULIE
20. RUPERT
21. JOAN
22. WARREN HARDY

**GUANAJUATO (GUA: US)**

1. CAMILLE
2. DOUG BOWER
3. DEREK
4. GEORGE
5. GINA
6. JANINE
7. MATT

8. TONY COHAN
9. CAROL AND JASON
10. DAVID
11. JULIAN AND BOBBIE
12. LINA AND BETTY
13. MARK
14. WALTER AND SUE
15. JOAN

**CANCUN (CAN: US)**

1. SAM
2. RYAN

**MAYAN RIVIERA (MR: US)**

1. TINA
2. JACK
3. JIM
4. REX
5. RANDY
6. TIMOTHY
7. TED
8. BOB
9. MANDY, CASSIE AND JEN
10. SIMON
11. SALLY
12. DONA
13. ROGER

## Appendix

# E

## SPANISH LANGUAGE EXTRACTS

SMA:MX1a: "Promovemos a San Miguel de Allende como un destino cultural y en primer lugar hablamos de la buena vida, de un destino Premium – *luxury* – en el cual vas a encontrar una buena gastronomía, espacio, buenos hoteles y un sinnúmero de festivales culturales... ahorita lo que vendemos es que a diferencia de la mayoría del norteamericano que conoce las playas pues el centro de México las ciudades coloniales ofrecen historia cultura pero a su vez se van a quedar en hoteles de primera clase."

SMA:MX1b: "[En comparación con Cancún / Riviera Maya] estamos hablando entre habitaciones de hotel tradicional, mas bed and breakfasts, juntaremos 2,500 habitaciones contra Riviera Maya que tiene 23,000 y Cancún que tiene 27,000... entonces San Miguel si lo toman como un destino comparativamente somos muy chiquitos... además que el tipo de Norteamericano que viene a San Miguel es muy distinto al que va a la playa es gente con mas cultura mas educado que cuando se retiran vienen a San Miguel y siguen trabajando ahora en actividades sociales "

SMA:MX3a: 1: no no así aquí los Mexicanos no les he visto así cosas y a los Americanos si vas a su casa y las ves llenas de cosas raras  
2: ...cuando hacen sus cosas así como el altar de días de Muertos  
1: si si el altar si dice uno hijole mejor ellos lo hacen que nosotros!  
A: no sabia como lo hacen  
2: pues le echan todo tipo de comida  
1: si si todo tipo de comida como si fuera la ofrenda un altar con las taza trinas comida Mexicana pozole mole tamales tortillas de todo le ponen  
A: y ustedes no lo hacen?  
1: pues no \*hihi\*  
2: \*hehe\*  
1: no la vedad yo no así nos hemos fijado que nos vienen a rescatar esas tradiciones  
A: y nadie que ustedes conozcan lo hace así?  
1: pues las viejitas"

SMA:MX8a: "fíjate que a veces ellos saben mas que el Mexicano tristemente... nosotros así como que a veces tenemos no tenemos la fortuna de leer y estudiar lo suficiente ellos mismos me ha pasado e? con los extranjeros entonces de repente platicando y oye de repente cuando no se que los Aztecas y yo lo estudiaste como digo a los 8 ... desde que estamos en la escuela obviamente llevamos lo que es Historia de México historia universal ese tipo de cosas y si te gusta y le pones atención si mantienes muchas cosas pero cuando no ya es ahora si que cosa personal de tener tu propio acervo cultural."

GUAM:MX5a: H: "...San Miguel Allende se fundo como una... ciudad de artistas sobre todo para exiliados de Estados Unidos entonces es donde empezó a tomar esta forma cultural, esta cuestión artística que tiene San Miguel Allende hoy en día lógicamente

parte importante con la que promovemos San Miguel de Allende es la parte histórica que tiene el municipio como tal en la lucha de la independencia el movimiento que tuvo para México pero después ahí la importancia que tiene es precisamente con las culturas estrenándose a la cultura Norteamericana o hacia otras culturas es precisamente mostrar esa parte rica de México la parte tradición la parte cultural la parte histórica."

GUA:MX5b: H: "nosotros representamos todo lo que es el estado de Guanajuato estamos hablando que ambas ciudades están dentro del estado de Guanajuato y lo vendemos como un complemento...." M: "la cultura es casi o sea es prácticamente la misma aquí a lo mejor el enfoque para el segmento el mercado sería lo diferente."

GUA:MX5c: "pero en general muy similar....lo que te digo lo que son los nativos de cada ciudad es muy similar nada mas tiene la influencia San Miguel tiene la influencia de los Estadounidenses y aquí en Guanajuato de los estudiantes y que la universidad de Guanajuato tiene un nivel académico alto y que eso."

GUA:MX5d: "yo de todos modos sigo promocionando San Miguel de Allende como una ciudad Mexicana que si tiene gran numero de visitantes de gran numero de un 15% de ya ... Estadounidenses o Canadienses pero yo lo sigo vendiendo como que todavía tiene esa atmósfera Mexicana y todo lo que pasa es que el mismo Americano pues se identifica muy fácilmente al extranjero o sea a los que ya empiezan a vivir ahí y a la lo mejor no tienen esa experiencia de como que quieren cortar con lo Americano si me entiendes y no es muy fácil habiendo ya tanta población extranjera ahí."

GUA:MX5e: "...Aquí en México y San Miguel de Allende puede ofrecer precisamente esa parte eh de riqueza histórica tradicional que estamos hablando en México con una buena inversión para sus recursos y aparte lo complementas con actividades de que bueno una vez de que están viviendo aquí incluso algunos de estos retirados vienen únicamente por periodos de 3 a 6 meses o viven ya fijamente en en México pero les puedes complementar con actividades de no se clases de cocina clases de cultura clases de Español clases de artesanías entonces le das todo ese ambiente de que se envuelven en la cultura mexicana."

GUA:MX5f: "México tradicional ya si a veces lo llamo cuando vamos a promocionarlo a Estados Unidos o Canadá hacemos mucha referencia de que si a la mejor el turista busca resorts... busca playas muy padres en Cancún o Acapulco Riviera Maya pero siempre y sobre todo ahora eh la tendencia del turista es de conocer esa cultura esa viaja a diferentes países para conocer las raíces del país para conocer sus tradiciones para conocer ...su historia, cultura...gastronomía de cada una de las regiones entonces yo siempre comento que Guanajuato el estado como tal es un lugar muy, pues, que puede ofrecer eso al turismo."

GUA:MX5g: "la cultura Mexicana, yo orgullosamente parte de lo que me gusta a mi de ser Mexicano precisamente es esa nosotros lo llamamos como jovialidad el siempre estar alegres el siempre estar abiertos el siempre ser anfitriones el recibir a la gente tener la atención de querer dar mas tener bien atendido a la mejor hasta nuestra misma gente sea familiar se visitante sea amigo, o sea un extraño...eso es algo muy característico de que el Mexicano siempre es amable siempre tiene ese espíritu de fiesta y de alegría entonces es algo que también procuramos traducir hacia nuestros visitantes."

GUA:MX5h: "yo lo complementaria con todo lo que tenemos porque tenemos una basta gama de lo que es festividades tradiciones lo que es la gastronomía y incluso vienen muchas muchos puntos de lo que es la prehistoria desde ahí nace todo entonces se complementaria con toda nuestras características de amabilidad

jovialidad y siempre felices en todo tipo de fiesta con todo lo que conlleva las raíces que son la las raíces prehispánicas.”

GUA:MX5i: “Algo muy importante también para nuestros turistas y que promocionamos son los nuestros servicios, la hotelería, ahora digo tenemos un programa que le llamamos nosotros tesoros de calidad pero que reúne los mejores hoteles este esto es pensando mas en el segmento *luxury* de hoteles de 5 habitaciones a 35, 40 habitaciones [máximo]... donde la mayoría de ellos el gerente es el o sea el dueño es el gerente del hotel entonces realmente volvemos a lo mismo da esta sensación de ser el anfitrión...”

GUA:MX5j: H: “[también] bed and breakfast pero muy exclusivo o muy una atención muy personalizada... muy muy Mexicanos algunos Mexicanos y hay algunos extranjeros” M: “si si algunos pero todos con la tradición Mexicana o el toque mexicano” H: “si el toque colonial.”

GUA:MX3a “fíjate que lo que hemos encontrado al menos yo no o sea nosotros tenemos por ejemplo de estos son los libros que les gusta mucho... acerca de lo que viene de la casa los Jardines y todo esto pero yo lo que he que notado es especialmente del turismo extranjero.”

GUA:MX3b / c / d “Se trata de tener... de rescatar la artesanía... ha agrado mucho el concepto, lo que les gusta a los Americanos que se a quedado siempre el concepto...es todo mexicanismo y de quien es? De un Norteamericano! porque casi siempre son los que valoran mas nuestra cultura y todo esto”

GUA:MX3e: “para mi es una de mis favoritas porque yo ahí crecí y ahí fue donde pase mi niñez si has visto esta la fuente y una escuela bueno yo vivía a un lado exactamente a la izquierda de la escuela entonces éramos puros vecinos de familias de familias que duramos ahí 20 30 años y ahorita si si ya empiezas a indagar y todo eso ya muchísimos norteamericanos han comprado por ejemplo en esa [zona]... o sea lo mas pintoresco y todo eso es lo que ya ya ahorita ya los extranjeros están”

GUA:MX3f “Todo a partir de aquí de los otros bed and breakfasts que empezaron a haber aquí todo fue inspirados en este... o sea de todos los que ves en San Miguel y todos fue basado en esto”

GUA:MX6b: “los huéspedes vienen prácticamente de Estados Unidos la mayoría vamos a decir un 80 por cierto.”

GUA:MX6c: “ellos traen ya sus horarios ya traen su itinerario no ellos ya leen ya saben lo que quieren cuando llegan aquí eh por lo regular me dicen sabes que queremos ver esta personas esta galería hacer esto y ellos vienen ya muy preparados”

GUA:MX6d: “yo soy el que hago los tours también yo hago tours por el día los llevo a San Miguel, Dolores Hidalgo, Querétaro, Morelia, son tours prácticamente para ir a que conozcan eh, no, no es mucho de cultura de vez en cuando viene gente que quiere saben un poco mas de cultura y es cuando les hacemos un tour mas las culturales.”

GUA:MX6e: “por lo regular hablamos mucho en lo que cuando vamos hablamos mucho de los se puede decir de diferencias de cultura este es que depende mucha gente vienen a ver el arte popular de aquí de México entonces pues hablamos mucho de eso este eh la gente hay mucha gente que le gusta hablar de gastronomía pues de todo varia mucho pero por lo regular arte popular Mexicano gastronomía cultura.”

GUA:MX6f: "como tu puedes ver ahí tenemos muchos libros ... aquí mira tenemos precisamente un libro de este es de hoteles pero tenemos de diego rivera tenemos de Frida Khalo tenemos libros de simplemente de Guanajuato de lo que era la minería y todo eso."

GUA:MX7b: "Ha cambiado pero he tenido la oportunidad de hacer una evolución personal en rutinas en conocimientos porque algo que es muy importante para los tours es estudiar machísimos porque el turista no solamente quiere la historia oficial de los lugares preguntan sobre política sobre sociedad sobre economía sobre tradiciones costumbres leyendas mitos ... para mi es emocionante porque es gente que verdaderamente muestra mucho interés por conocer mucho de México y saber de México y yo siento mucho de tratar de decir y hacer lo mejor posible para que la gente que este satisfecha y contenta y se den cuenta que no es nada mas playas y violencia."

GUA: MX7a: "mismo que hace 10 años pero lo que hemos cambiado es el orden para que la gente disfrute mas ciertos lugares...le hemos dado mas énfasis a lugares de mayor relevancia....estos 2 museos el del Qfuijote por ser simbólico a Guanajuato el de Diego Rivera por la fama que tiene y sobre todo desde que Frida se convirtió en una figura de moda a nivel mundial Diego Rivera fue también arrastrado por esta fama por su talento también y visitar su casa es algo obligado cuando vienes a Guanajuato entonces antes en ocasiones no la visitábamos pero ahora es esencial tal vez si hay cambios en cuanto a la importancia de los lugares pero no en la esencial al fin de al cabo visitamos el pípila el museo el centro la basílica la uni la casa de rivera la alhóndiga y el Mercado hidalgo"

GUA:MX7c: "me he topado en 10 años de experiencia con que la mayoría se sorprende de conocer la historia de México en precioso tan rica en eventos importantes pero sobre todo en que hay una gran diversidad de pensamiento y riqueza cultural el turista en general extranjero conoce México por sus playas México es Cancún México es Acapulco México es Puerto Vallarta este y hasta ahora empieza a fortalecerse y estamos buscando.... que los turistas vengan y conozcan el verdadero México porque tampoco es el México de la frontera a mi me mucha tristeza escuchar en la actualidad de lo que se dice de México en el extranjero allá en su país en EEUU por ejemplo de que México es como un Paquistán en cuestión de seguridad."

GUA:MX7d: "el 80% de mis turistas son de EEUU y el 20% canadiense en raras ocasiones gente de otros países como franceses italianos eh japoneses también pero la mayoría son de EEUU."

GUA:MX4a: "La secretaría académica bueno junto con los maestros les damos sugerencias de cuales son las cosas que más les interesa porque a veces les muestras el programa y dicen no me interesa más ehm la parte del idioma porque decimos tu y usted o porque nos referimos de cierta manera o nos comportamos de cierta manera ante gente que conocemos o gente que no conocemos ah entonces vamos a investigar sobre ese tema y ampliarlo más y eso dependiendo de la demanda del estudiante lo que pidan."

GUA:MX4b: "pues la clase de cultura, la que yo doy es para dar a conocer todo lo que es referente a la cultura que esta con el idioma, geografía, también es como danzas bailes tradicionales política pero en el sentido del comportamiento en el sentido cultural si tenemos también eh tradiciones que es día de muertos las posadas todas las tradiciones más representativas día de las madres la familia ven como esta estructurada la familia."

GUA:MX4c: "les damos a los estudiantes a escoger los temas que a ellos les interesa más y ahí nos dicen ah esos temas nos interesan más por ejemplo la familia el el 80% piden la familia y otros temas que también son muy demandados o piden mucho es bueno las tradiciones y el otro en mi experiencia es la política.

GUA:MX4d: "también en la cultura se me olvidaba creo que otra seria el cuarto tema que más [piden] es indigenismo yo no se mucho sobre indigenismo puedo decir mucho pero creo que no lo suficiente pero también a ellos les interesa mucho este como el gobierno apoya o no a los indígenas porque en ciertos lugares hay más indígenas que en otros que porque son pobres que porque son actúan de una manera les interesa mucho."

GUA:MX4e: "las clases ah no son en grupo máximo 5 personas si y también ellos pueden opinar pero la mayoría de los estudiantes son de Estados Unidos entonces conocen un poco pero pues algunos se sorprenden de que no es lo mismo las familias México Americanas que las Mexicanas más en este lugar que es muy tradicional."

GUA:MX4f "la reacción es que bueno es de sorpresa porque tu puedes leer los libros pero el libro es limitado a decirte algo entonces cuando ellos ven que nosotros damos más detalles sobre las familias sobre las tradiciones sobre que sentimos eh sobre el ambiente que hay entonces ellos cambian porque ven la manera real de cómo es la cultura de México ...o lo que pensamos."

GUA:MX4g: "mmm la cultura pues lo definimos como un transmisión de valores conocimientos de generación en generación es de historia cultura comida que va de generación en generación en el pasado pues solamente en forma oral pocos escritos pero en la actualidad...familia indigenismo las tradiciones el día de muertos posadas es lo que engloba la mayoría de las tradiciones más populares más común."

GUA:MX1a: "Yo les explico en aspectos positivos y en aspectos negativos el aspecto por ejemplo negativo uno de ellos puede ser por ejemplo la impuntualidad los Mexicanos no solamente los Mexicanos pero básicamente pues la vida latina se considera un poco impuntual ...por ejemplo de Estados Unidos o otros Europeos dicen el tiempo es dinero pero bueno nosotros en la cultura somos más relajados eso es un aspecto negativo básicamente no se podría considerar por ejemplo un aspecto positivo podría ser la unión familiar los Mexicanos siempre han sido pues considerados en un aspecto eh muy positivo por básicamente la unión que tienen que la familia ...entonces parte no de un modo de ser de los Mexicanos entonces básicamente son algunos aspectos de los que yo les menciono aspectos positivos y aspectos negativos."

GUA:MX1b: "de Internet básicamente de revistas periódicos y encyclopedias... [por ejemplo lo del modo de ser de los Mexicanos] eso es sentido común, eso es sentido común y preparación con varias personas para que estén de acuerdo y formar ideas también'

CAN:MX1a: "la cuestión imagen la campaña cambio muchísimo de lo que fue de Mayan Gold Coast a la actual que es la que puedes ver allá afuera que ahora es Deeply Unique, Cancún Deeply Unique en la que estamos obviamente promoviendo lo que son las principales actividades del destino digo principalmente va dirigido a cuestiones de familia promovemos playas promovemos allá afuera no se si viste la que estaba en la entrada que es un Spa tenemos Golf, Compras, Gastronomía, Ruinas Mayas, todo ese tipo de actividades lo que tratamos de hacer en un concepto un poquito más llamativo...lo principal de la campaña era además de expresar emociones era llamar la atención hacerte voltear este que te rompa con lo cotidiano con lo tradicional que te rompa con la estructura de playa sea de la revista o de la televisión."

CAN:MX1b: "Pues mira lo hemos promocionado cada vez más porque la verdad es que no por presumir no por darle redados a nuestra campaña de Deeply Unique actual pero la realidad es que Cancún si es único o sea la zona Cancún Riviera maya y demás somos el único destino de Caribe que te puede ofrecer lo que este destino te ofrece en cuestión infraestructura, en cuestión calidad, en cuestión capacitación del personal, en cuestión de actividades [capacitación del personal en el sentido de] idiomas actitud servicio trato este etc etc etc, me puedo seguir no es cuestión de actividades para realizar o sea pueden hablar de destinos de competencia de la zona y por otra manera así una playa mas bonita pero no tienen el el la cantidad de ruinas que tenemos nosotros aquí en la zona la cultura maya tienen los ríos subterráneos que tenemos nosotros tienen la cantidad de cenotes tienen la infraestructura tienen todo."

CAN:MX1c: "mm, yo que cultura es casi cualquier cosa que hagas cualquier tipo de actividad es cultural al fin y al cabo si te refieres en cuestión a la cultura maya pues lo incluimos digo hay como podrás ver en esa imagen particular la pirámide que hacen los niños de arena es Chichen Itza entonces hacemos cuestiones que vayan relacionadas a la zona así como también tenemos imágenes dentro de Tulum... tenemos igual imágenes de campaña en la que mostramos los sitios arqueológicos eso es en la cuestión publicitaria en la cuestión seminarios ferias y demás pues siempre se habla de todo lo que puedes tener acceso viniendo a Cancún y eso incluye pues a ir a las ruinas arqueológicas te puedes ir a Tulum te puedes ir a Chichen te puedes ir a Coba te puedes ir a 20,000 lados aunque si en lo que es Chichen no es parte de Cancún ni Tulum ni esos lugares lo cierto es que Cancún es el punto más céntrico pa' llegar a cualquiera de ellos."

CAN:MX1d: "Cancún si es multicultural de entrada nacional porque Cancún esta formado con gente de todas partes de la República inicialmente o sea la gente que vivimos en Cancún son contados lo que nacieron en Cancún ...es gente que vino del DF gente que vino de Monterrey de Guadalajara de Puebla de donde tu quieras y también no también existe mucho extranjero viviendo aquí no solamente del país sino de EEUU de Europa de Sudamérica encuentras gente de todos lados y así como gente hay restaurantes y hay tiendas y hay de todo de esta misma gente que vive aquí."

CAN:MX1e: "no tanto como los demás pues no tienen tanto peso o reconocimiento publico, o sea los sitios que tenemos aquí no son tan grandes esta el Meco y esta Ruinas del Rey y hay un par así que no son tan grandes pero este obviamente pues tiene mayor renombre hoy día Chichen Itza que lo que puede tener el Meco o el Rey...no es tampoco muy conocido pero ahí esta."

CAN:MX1f: "pues mira...al fin y al cabo somos destinos que se complementan, somos vecinos somos el mismo estado, somos en conjunto somos la Zona Maya somos la Riviera Maya en conjunto porque Cancún no excede digamos la zona el origen de todo esto es Cancún: Cancún fue quien fundó turísticamente , todo el desarrollo de la zona."

CAN:MX1g: "en cuestión de destino si hay muchas diferencias eh en la zona de Riviera Maya es una zona menos urbanizada es una zona que tiene, menos accesibilidad por así llamarlo menos servicios, menos actividades tu vas a encontrar en la zona Riviera Maya resorts muy grande en las que vas a tener todo dentro del resort vas a tener tu te puedes hospedar una semana ahí y no pasa nada ...es una inmensidad de hotel... los resorts son aquellos hoteles que son inmensos en los que vas a encontrar pues restaurantes discotecas actividades todo dentro del hotel para que no salgas del hotel que pasa cuando sales del hotel en Riviera Maya pues no hay nada este me refiero tienes 3 kilómetros de jungla pa' llegar a una carretera en la que a la mejor agarras una camioneta y te puede llevar en 15 minutos al centro de Playa del Carmen."

CAN:MX1h: "en Cancún sales del hotel, en la puerta del hotel agarras un taxi, te lleva a un shopping mal te lleva una plaza comercial te lleva a un restaurante o a 20 puedes caminar sobre la avenida me refiero es un destino ciudad en la cuestión de Cancún y Riviera Maya es un poquito más."

CAN:MX1i: "Cancún es considerado y reconocido internacionalmente como al segunda o en algunos lados hasta la primera marca del país hay lugares en el mundo en el que conocen más Cancún que todo México y es reconocido como tal entonces Riviera Maya tiene un auge de moda hoy día y ojala le siga pero no Cancún no se va a unir a Riviera Maya ni Riviera Maya a Cancún somos 2 destinos diferentes que nos complementamos que Riviera Maya nace a partir de Cancún? Si nace a partir del éxito de Cancún."

MR:MX10a: "esta estatua es el dios Maya... por ejemplo y las estatuas en el COBA y en el TULUM tienen este como no se como se dice como... grabado como unas figurinas y siempre son cosas que... [que tratan] de la cultura por ejemplo ahí tenemos también están ... los baños las este la señalización de los baños por hombre y mujer son los Aztecas o los Mayas.... si entonces siempre hay muchas cosas a veces nada mas son detalles a veces es lo grande y a veces son cosas pues como la estatua hay gente que no se da cuenta que es una estatua Maya pero nada más esta que lindo y hay gente que si que preguntan"

MR:MX10b: "S: tenemos la fiesta Mexicana... es una fiesta que tenemos una cena ... esta el shopping el centro comercial en la entrada que es una fiesta con este es un espectáculo típicamente Mexicano tenemos los mariachis los este vaqueros los bailes folklóricos de México un una interpretación de sacrificio Mayo que es baile y música también tenemos a juegos de carnaval tenemos a los bares que son de bebidas puras Mexicanas eh los incluso los uniformes son Mexicanos y tenemos competencia con los invitados y el grupo de animación todo esta."

MR:MX10c: "Obviamente no podemos representar todo México."

MR:MX10d: "no es más nacional tienen como una representación más nacional pero es un show de una hora y media dos horas entonces obviamente no podemos este representar todo México... si los bailes folklóricos por ejemplo son de diferentes estados... es un poco como pues no quiero decir que es un show como eso de XCARET pero es más o menos el mismo concepto... de enseñar a la gente diferente culturas adentro de México."

MR:MX6a: "lo notas, por la estructura, es muy español... y si vas a los cuartos, notaras que es todo muy europeo."

MR:MX6b: "ahora si te das cuenta por la estructura es todo tipo español no aquí si [hay] un tipo más mexicano como la placita pero si te vas a las habitaciones todo es mucho europeo... si la [piñata] pones así porque estamos en México no? \*heh\* o sea todo se pone un poquito sazón mexicana le mete un poquito... pero siempre se nota el estilo que es español."

MR:MX6c : X: "el de hoy es folklor mexicano entonces muestran un poco de la cultura Mexicana en el escenario los bailes típicos regionales de Veracruz de no se la danza del venado, no se."

MR:MX6d: X: "si nosotros tenemos una programación de 15 días no cambia hoy tenemos evento mexicano mañana será no se Michael Jackson otro de Grease."

MR:MX4a: "es un show nocturno, dedicado exclusivamente a México... al folklor Mexicano"

MR:MX4b: "traemos comida, mariachi, hay un Mercado y artesanías de todo el país"

MR:MX4c: "H: hay una noche mexicana que es la de esta noche por ejemplo...en ambos hoteles una noche dedicada solamente a México...folklore Mexicano  
M: "la comida traemos mariachi hay un mercado aquí afuera que se montan artesanías que tenemos en el país no solo en esta parte de la región sino todo país porque mucha gente ...viene a conocer el Caribe no viene a conocer otras partes y México es muy grande entonces tratamos de darles todo lo que pueden encontrar aquí en el país ...se trata de hacer algo así como una feria Mexicana no que te encuentras en cualquier estado lo encuentras en la noche."

MR:MX4d: H: "era la idea, la idea es promocionar también lo que es la cultura Mexicana aparte de que el huésped internacional que viene aquí pues viene buscando eso."

MR:MX4e "H: con el hecho de de que ahora Chichen Itza es una de las maravillas del mundo entonces la gente esta muchísimo más interesada en Chichen Itza en ver no se las ruinas que hay no solamente arriba sino también abajo las grutas lo que son los cenotes eh las cavernas donde habitaban los Mayas todo esto o sea la gente esta mucho muy interesada y cada día pregunta más."

MR:MX4f: "H: pues prácticamente todo dependiendo de lo que la gente quiera este ver si ellos dicen queremos ver este una ciudad Maya pues señor vaya a Chichen Itza queremos ver unas ruinas pequeñas bueno pues tenemos tal la pirámide más alta váyase a COBA este queremos no se conocer cenotes bueno váyase a cenote sagrado tenemos cenotes por aquí va a ver usted la diferencia eh restaurantes típicos Maya, bueno le ofrecemos uno que hay en Cozumel muy interesante, donde se come todavía un poquito más al estilo Maya que al estilo Yucateco."

MR:MX4g: "si hay gente hay gente que está muy interesada sobre todo porque han escuchado tanto de la cultura Maya y saben que todavía hay gente que vive así entonces piensa que nosotros llegamos a vivir así entonces les explicamos que no nosotros pero más adentrados a la selva hay aldeas pequeñas todavía donde incluso el Maya es la es el idioma hay gente que todavía no habla español."

MR:MX4h: "con el hecho desde que ahora Chichen Itza es una de las maravillas del mundo entonces la gente esta muchísimo más interesada en Chichen Itza en ver no se las ruinas que hay no solamente arriba sino también abajo las grutas lo que son los cenotes eh las cavernas donde habitaban los Mayas todo esto o sea la gente esta mucho muy interesada y cada día pregunta más."

MR:MX4i: "entonces de ahí aparte que la gente que llega aquí ya es con esa mentalidad que va a conocer nuestro país que tiene el interés de conocer nuestra cultura."

MR:MX4j: "el americano es el que se queda siempre a comer a tomar a divertirse a eso se queda el americano de ahí en fuera pues todos los demás este si salen empiezan a ver cultura a viajes museos todo lo que podemos ofrecerles ellos lo hacen."

MR:MX12a: "pues normalmente son bailes típicos mexicanos con música mexicana para que conozcan un poco no? realmente por ejemplo cuando es el 15 de septiembre y eso viene mariachi y toca para que la gente conozca también pero normalmente son como bailes utilizan ropa tipo mexicana y la música...en general es así de todo el país."

MR:MX12b: "realmente no tengo ahorita una fecha exacta pero pues ahora si que desde que abrió el hotel siempre los hoteles en la Riviera Maya tienen exactamente eso para que la gente conozca no porque tu vienes de otro país llegas a México y que es lo te interesa no? ver un poco de la cultura y conocer un poco de la gastronomía entonces por eso la mayoría de los hoteles tienen ese tipo de espectáculos y tienen ese tipo de restaurantes para que conozcan no?"

MR:MX12c: "eh si si si definitivamente antes nada más estaba por ejemplo de lugares turísticos lo que era Chichen Xcaret Coba no? ....ahorita la gente se interesa mucho por conocer lo que los las villas mayas los pueblos Mayas y todo eso les interesa muchísimo les interesa más que ir a lo que es bueno Xcaret se vende por si solo no pero les interesa más conocer realmente lo que es la cultura como viven como cocinan y todo eso que ir a los parques les interesa ahorita muchísimo eso."

MR:MX12d: "pues yo les recomiendo normalmente yo les recomiendo ir a los lugares donde yo he ido y donde me han platicado que es bonito no? por ejemplo yo les recomiendo ir a Coba esta la pirámide y además hay unas villas muy bonitas a todos pues los alrededores les recomiendo por ejemplo ir a Ekbalam porque no esta no hay mucho turismo todavía entonces ahorita todavía esta bien conservado no? este

también les recomiendo viajar por pues si por toda por toda esa zona por la parte de Chichen y por toda esa zona yo les recomiendo mucho porque bueno en Chichen aunque esta muy hay mucho turismo esta muy bien conservado todavía y hay muchas comunidades mayas todavía también entonces esos lugares yo es a donde les recomiendo que vayan lo que es Cancún y todo eso bueno pues más bien se recomienda que vayas para lo que es compras no? pero la parte de la Riviera Maya para abajo ahí es a donde los mandamos principalmente"

MR:MX2a: "el concepto siempre ha sido el concepto el amor por la cultura de México por ahora si que el cuidado del medio ambiente de la riqueza natural y cultura que tiene el parque Xcaret a nivel de la Riviera Maya."

MR:MX2b: "exactamente y rescatar los valores no? por ejemplo el amor a la cultura el valor a México que valoren lo que tienen en sus Estados y sean como los impulsores culturas de promover esto de las riquezas que hay no nada más aquí en México sino en todos los estados de la República entonces lo que quieren el espectáculo significar y representar por medio de este show todo lo maravilloso que hay en México."

MR:MX2c: "ah si claro vienen con una mentalidad y después que salen del show quedan impactados creo que tu lo pudiste vivir no?"

MR:MX2d: "se trata de mostrarle al mundo la cultura de México siempre es uno mismo aquí lo importante es como tu brindas eso para que el turista nacional y el extranjero se lleve un poquito de México no? por lo menos."

MR: MX14a: "J: bueno el *Mayan Village* que ellos tienen es igual hincapié a como vivieron hace muchos años los mayas tienen de hecho las canoas mayas y ese tipo cosas tienen las frutas afuera o sea te muestran un mundo maya antiguo más no uno actual...el que estamos viviendo ahorita no no tiene nada que ver con Xcaret que ves el que ves es el antiguo antes de la llegada de los españoles...no te avisar te dices esa es la cultura maya así son los mayas...después de que la gente va ahí y se por ejemplo va a alguno de nosotros dicen que diferencia yo pensé que la gente Maya todavía seguía pintándose y seguía cazando y se creen que van a llegar a ver como nosotros a la mejor nos imaginamos África que llegas y crees que no hay edificios nada y si crees que vas a estar a estar en la jungla y nada que ver no? es completamente diferente... el hecho de que no te especifiquen y nada tampoco te están diciendo que vas a ver el el mundo maya contemporáneo tampoco te están diciendo que es el mundo maya antiguo"

MR:MX14b.: "lo que te digo después de que la gente va ahí y se por ejemplo va a alguno de nosotros dicen que diferencia yo pensé que la gente Maya todavía seguía pintándose y seguía cazando y se creen que van a llegar a ver como como nosotros a la mejor nos imaginamos África que llegas y crees que no hay edificios nada y si crees que vas a estar a estar en la jungla y nada que ver no? es completamente diferente."

MR:MX14c: "que mucha gente cree que la gente Maya estaba extinta!"

MR:MX14d: "ahí si les enseñan que es tequila taco y mariachi en Xcaret"

MR:MX14e: "que ellos tienen es que una mercadotecnia muy grande que te vende un México un México que puedes verlo en un día entero puedes ver todo México en un día y si lo supieron hacer muy bien porque es internacional XCARET todo mundo lo conoce no? pero conforme a las cosas culturales no ellos no se adentran tanto a lo que viene siendo la cultura maya en como vive la gente maya las preocupaciones que tiene la gente maya no...pero te digo ves todo México en un solo día no es un enfoque hacia alguien nada más y no tiene una repercusión en las comunidades mayas que te puede decir ah es algo positivo."

MR:MX14e: "... si es increíble ver como la gente se va adaptando a las computadoras van haciendo diferentes cosas y les gusta de hecho muchos niños no conocían las cámaras fotográficas y ven las cámaras y se quedan impresionados de verse no? en las cámaras digitales y dicen no como puede ser y si se van legando todo y se va creando algo completamente diferente los niños van conociendo más cosas tienen más educación y si es un choque que ha sido bueno para bien en lo que son las comunidades mayas."

*Appendix*

# F

## FOREIGN TOURISTS & EXPATS' PROFILES

### SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE (SMA:US)

1. Brian

ROLE: Co-founder / co-owner / co-manager of CASA DE LA CUESTA

RELATIONS: Married to Helen (SMA:US2)

ORIGIN: New York City

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: +20 years (1974-1978; 1994-present)

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 1997-present

LANGUAGE: English, proficient in Spanish

2. Helen

ROLE: Co-founder / co-owner / co-manager of CASA DEL RIO

RELATIONS: Married to Brian (SMA:US1)

ORIGIN: New York City

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: +20 years (1974-1978, 1994-present)

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 1997-present

LANGUAGE: English, proficient in Spanish

3. Paul

ROLE: Tour-guide driver

RELATIONS: Married to Mexican woman

ORIGIN: San Antonio, Texas

STATUS IN MEXICO: Mexican Citizen

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: As a child/teenager (day trips across the border)

TIME IN MEXICO: 2000-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 9 years

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

4. Don

ROLE: N/A

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen, also a permanent resident

ORIGIN: US

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

TIME IN MEXICO: 2002-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: +5 years

LANGUAGE: English, little Spanish

5. Edmund

ROLE: US Consular Officer

RELATIONS: N/A

ORIGIN: California, NYC, Kansas/Mexico

STATUS IN MEXICO: Mexican/US dual citizen. Permanent Resident at SMA.

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: Lived in Mexico as a child. Latest: 2001-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 8 years

LANGUAGE: English, fluent in Spanish

6. Cathy

ROLE: Founder/Owner/Manager of CASA FLORES

RELATIONS: Single

ORIGIN: Vermont

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: 2001-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: +8 years (2001-present)

LANGUAGE: English, little Spanish

7. Frank

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen who he was visiting Mexico with

ORIGIN: Chicago

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1982 – Puerto Vallarta (honeymoon); 1984: Oaxaca (work); 2009 (leisure)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: +2 weeks

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

8. Patrice

ROLE: Temporary resident (Mexico city)

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen posted in Mexico City for work

ORIGIN: New Jersey

STATUS IN MEXICO: Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: N/a: Cancun (business trip)

TIME IN MEXICO: 1 year (2008-2009)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 5 days

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

9. Olga

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen who was not on this trip

ORIGIN: Chicago

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1988 – N/a (husband's meeting for 10-12 days)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 12 days

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

10. Cindy and Rob

ROLE: Tourists

RELATIONS: Married; daughter in law Mexican

ORIGIN: Wisconsin

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: C: as a child, El Paso and Juarez (father positioned in the army). R: never

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 12 days

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

11. Liz

ROLE: PR Manager at HOTEL CAMPOS

RELATIONS: N/a

ORIGIN: Texas

STATUS IN MEXICO: Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 2001: Cholula (college)

TIME IN MEXICO: 2008-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 1 year+

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

12. Kate

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen who was also on this trip SMA:US14

ORIGIN: Washington

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: as a child (Cuernavaca; Oaxaca; Mexico City; Puerto Vallarta); 1989: Cancun (husband's job visit)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 10 days

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

13. Eva

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: N/a

ORIGIN: Boston

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1989: Cancun (job visit)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 4 weeks

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

14. Hugo

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: Married to US citizen who was also on this trip SMA:US12

ORIGIN: Washington

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1989: Cancun (job visit)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 10 days

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

15. Gladys

ROLE: Tourist; writer

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Florida, San Fco

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: as a child in 1958: San Miguel de Allende (her mother lived there); multiple times since; lived in Pazcuaro 1997-2001; Huatulco; Oaxaca for a few weeks.

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: repeat visitor

CURRENT TRIP: several months

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

16. Lyn

ROLE: Tourist/Temporary resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Canada

STATUS IN MEXICO: Temporary resident

VISITS TO MEXICO: In her twenties, to Juarez (vacation)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: first time

CURRENT TRIP: 6 months

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

17. Bonnie

ROLE: Permanent resident/ Involved with Patronato Pro Ninos

RELATIONS: N/A

ORIGIN: USA

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: Since the 1960s. Multiple times over the last 20 years

TIME IN MEXICO: 1999-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 1999-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

18. Karen

ROLE: Tourist/Temporary Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Florida

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist/Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO: 2007 (vacation), 2008 (vacation)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: Second year visiting

CURRENT TRIP: several months

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

19. Paulie

ROLE: Tourist/Temporary Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: UK/Canada

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist/Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1991: Mexico city; San Miguel de Allende: 2 months (vacation)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: Repeat visitor

CURRENT TRIP: several months

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

20. RUPERT

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Denver, Colorado

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: N/a: Chihuahua: 1 week (visiting brother)

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: First time

CURRENT TRIP: A week (to visit a branch of the school he works at in the US)

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

21. Joan

ROLE: Temporary Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: n/a, USA

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist/Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO: n/a

VISITING SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: n/a

CURRENT TRIP: several months

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

22. WARREN HARDY

ROLE: Permanent resident/ Director/head teacher at Edmund Lloyd's

RELATIONS: married to US citizen

ORIGIN: Arizona

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: Since the 1960s. Multiple times over the last 20 years

TIME IN MEXICO: 1990-present

TIME LIVING IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: 1990-present

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

**GUANAJUATO (GUA:US)**

1. Camille

ROLE: Temporary Resident

RELATIONS: Son in law's parents run Guanajuato B&B

ORIGIN: Arizona

STATUS IN MEXICO: Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: Regularly every 2 years since 2004

TIME IN MEXICO: A few months

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: A few months

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

2. Doug Bower

ROLE: Permanent Resident/soon to be Mexican citizen. Travel Writer.

RELATIONS: Wife also in Guanajuato

ORIGIN: Kansas City

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident/soon to be Mexican citizen

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 2003 (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 2004-present

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: 2004-present

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

3. Derek

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Texas

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: as a child, at 15-16 lived in Mexico city for a year

TIME IN MEXICO: 2003-present

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: 2003-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

4. George

ROLE: Permanent Resident/Mexican citizen. Owns/runs/manages popular local café.

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Texas

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident / Mexican citizen

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: as a child, at 15-16 lived in Mexico city for a year

TIME IN MEXICO: 2003-present

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: 2003-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

5. Gina

ROLE: Permanent Resident/Mexican citizen. Owns/runs/manages Bar.

RELATIONS: married to Mexican man

ORIGIN: New York City

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident/Mexican citizen

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: n/a

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: n/a

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

6. Janine

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Arizona

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: teenager: to the border (vacation); 1995-1996: Guanajuato (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 12 years

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: 1997-present

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

7. Matt

ROLE: Permanent Resident. Musician.

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Michigan

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1989 (to play at orchestra); 2001

TIME IN MEXICO: 9 years

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: 2001-present

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

8. Tony Cohan

ROLE: Permanent Resident. Travel writer.

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: California

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: teenager: coast (vacation); 1985: San Miguel de Allende

TIME IN MEXICO: +24 years

TIME LIVING IN GUANAJUATO: late 1990s

LANGUAGE: English, fluent Spanish

9. Cindy and James – Carol and Jason

ROLE: Tourists

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: California

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourists

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1989; Mazatlan (ten days - vacation); 2-3 years ago, Manzanillo (few weeks)

VISITING GUANAJUATO: First time

CURRENT TRIP: one week

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

10. David

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Colorado

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1975 – Mexico City: 1 week (vacation); 1976 – San Miguel de Allende: 1 year (sabbatical); 1980 – San Miguel de Allende (vacation); from 1990s, every year for spring

VISITING GUANAJUATO: 1977 (vacation); many times since

CURRENT TRIP: several months

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

11. Julian and Bobbie

ROLE: Tourists

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Texas

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourists

VISITS TO MEXICO: C: 35 years ago (vacation); university: Guanajuto (one month-language school); J: high school: border (vacation), 2008: Pázcuarro (vacation);

VISITING GUANAJUATO: Second time

CURRENT TRIP: two weeks

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

12. Lina and Betty

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Detroit

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: B: repeatedly over the last 18 years, Guanajuato (on vacation, 2 weeks at a time at most). L&B: 2008 Oaxaca, Chiapas, one week (vacation)

VISITING GUANAJUATO: Repeatedly

CURRENT TRIP: few days?

LANGUAGE: English, basic Spanish

13. Mark

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: New York

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: 2007, Oaxaca (vacation: language courses)

VISITING GUANAJUATO : n/a

CURRENT TRIP: several weeks

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

14. Walter and Sue

ROLE: Tourists

RELATIONS: W: sister lived in Mexico

ORIGIN: California

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist/Temporary Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO: n/a

VISITING GUANAJUATO: n/a

CURRENT TRIP: n/a

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

### **CANCUN (CAN:US)**

1. Steve UK – Sam

ROLE: Permanent Resident. Creator of Cancun blog.

RELATIONS: Married to Mexican

ORIGIN: UK

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1997: Cancun (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 5 years

TIME LIVING IN CANCUN: 2004-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

2. Steve US – Ryan

ROLE: Permanent Resident. PR for Cancun tourism company involved in weddings.

RELATIONS: Ex-wife was Mexican, from Cancun

ORIGIN: New Jersey

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1990 (Cancun-vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 1995-present

TIME LIVING IN CANCUN: 2004-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

### **MAYAN RIVIERA (MR:US)**

1. Tina

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Ohio

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1996 (cruise ship); 1999 (vacation); 3 more times afterwards

TIME IN MEXICO: 5 years

TIME LIVING IN MAYAN RIVIERA: 2004-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

2. Jack

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: UK

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: multiple

TIME IN MEXICO: 6 years year

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2003-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

3. Jim

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: married to US

ORIGIN: New York

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1993 (vacation); 1994 (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 12 years

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 1997-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

4. Rex

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/1

ORIGIN: North Carolina

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: Multiple to the border  
(Tijuana/Juarez/vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: 2 years

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2007-present

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

5. Randy

ROLE: Temporary Resident. Hotel co-owner / co-manager

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: New York

STATUS IN MEXICO: Temporary resident between NYC and Playa del Carmen

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1993 (vacation); 1994 (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: +5 years

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2004-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

6. Timothy

ROLE: Permanent Resident. Bar owner.

RELATIONS: married to US

ORIGIN: Chicago

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: Multiple (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: +7 years

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2002-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish

7. Ted

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: married to US

ORIGIN: San Francisco

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident; small hotel owner

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 1998 (vacation); 1999 (vacation)

TIME IN MEXICO: +8 years

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2002/2003

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

8. Bob

ROLE: Temporary Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Oklahoma City

STATUS IN MEXICO: Permanent Resident

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: as a child, to Cozumel (vacation); multiple times since

TIME IN MEXICO: 3 years+

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 2006-present

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

9. Mandy, Cassie and Jen

ROLE: Tourists

RELATIONS: friends

ORIGIN: California

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourists

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: 0

VISITING MAYAN RIVIERA: First time

CURRENT TRIP: one week

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

10. Simon

ROLE: Tourist

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: Chicago

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: Multiple

VISITING MAYAN RIVIERA: Since 1980s, multiple times. 2002 (Yucatan Peninsula)

CURRENT TRIP: 1 week

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

11. Sally

ROLE: Tourist. Tourist agent specializing on US tourism to Mayan Riviera for the last 9 years.

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: New Jersey

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourist

VISITS TO MEXICO: since 82, multiple times (9 days at most each)

VISITING MAYAN RIVIERA: 2003/2004 to Playa del Carmen

CURRENT TRIP: 3/4

LANGUAGE: English, some Spanish

12. Dona

ROLE: Tourist. Travel Agent. Specializing in AI resorts in the region.

RELATIONS: traveling with husband

ORIGIN: USA

STATUS IN MEXICO: Tourists

VISITS TO MEXICO: 1995 (Cozumel); multiple since 2003

VISITING PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 6 years ago, multiple since

CURRENT TRIP: one week

LANGUAGE: English, no Spanish

13. Alltournative – Roger

ROLE: Permanent Resident

RELATIONS: n/a

ORIGIN: SOUTH AFRICA

STATUS IN MEXICO: n/a

VISITS TO MEXICO PRIOR TO CURRENT: n/a

TIME IN MEXICO: n/a

TIME LIVING IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN: 1998-present

LANGUAGE: English, Intermediary Spanish



*Appendix*

# G

## **CULTURAL TEACHING COURSE SHEETS FOR ACADEMIA FALCON**

**Pg. 2: 'Cultura Mexicana'**

**Pg. 3: Modo de Ser de los Mexicanos: Rasgos  
Positivos**

**Pg. 4: Modo de Ser de los Mexicanos: Rasgos  
Negativos**

# CULTURA MEXICANA

**Objetivo de la Clase:** Dar a conocer la cultura de nuestro país, haciendo un recorrido por su música, su religión, su política, su cocina, costumbres y tradiciones, logrando así, la comprensión cabal de su ideología por parte de los estudiantes.

## 1. Mosaico geográfico

- Ciudades y pueblos
- Perfil urbano
- Geografía mexicana
- Medio ambiente

## 2. Familia – fundación de la vida mexicana

- Estructura familiar
- Valores
- Fiestas familiares: bautismo, primera comunión, XV años, bodas
- Formas de diversión: corrida de toros, peleas de gallos, charrería, ferias populares.

## 3. Rasgos psicológicos dominantes del mexicano

- Modo de ser de los mexicanos
- Machismo
- Malinchismo
- Cómo nos expresamos los mexicanos
- Doble sentido
- Indigenismos
- El sentido del humor mexicano y la tradición humorística de México
- Puntualidad
- Otros valores: hospitalidad, modestia, solidaridad, etc.

## 4. Educación

- Sistema educativo
- Analfabetismo

## 5. Tradición Religiosa

- Religiosidad del mexicano
- "Santo patrono"
- Virgen de Guadalupe
- Peregrinaciones
- Tiempo de Cuaresma
- Miércoles de Ceniza
- Semana Santa
- Viernes de Dolores – Altar a la Virgen

## 6. Significación y sentido de la muerte

- Orígenes de esta celebración
- Ofrenda a los muertos – Altares
- Sentido humorístico del mexicano ante la muerte

## 7. Celebraciones navideñas

- Candelas (Barrios), Iluminaciones
- Posadas - la piñata
- El Nacimiento
- Santos Reyes
- Levantamiento del Niño

## 8. Educación Cívica

► **MODO DE SER DE LOS MEXICANOS**

**ALGUNOS RASGOS CARACTERÍSTICOS DE LOS MEXICANOS**

**POSITIVOS**

**Fiesta**

- Las fiestas mexicanas reflejan la diversidad cultural.
- Las principales fiestas son de origen religioso\*.
- Características de las fiestas: religiosas, cívicas.
- Presencia de la comida (mole) / bebida (tequila), como parte fundamental de la festividad.
- Sentido de cooperación por parte de todos los miembros de la familia, aún siendo pobres, no teniendo los recursos monetarios.
- Concepto de padrinos / compadres.

**Preservación de los valores y unión familiares**

- Domingo familiar, comida familiar.
- Tendencia de vivir cerca del núcleo familiar.
- Figura materna primordial, dado que es ella quien mantiene el vínculo familiar.

**Gente del campo**

- Son trabajadores, son amables, son gente sencilla y humilde.
- *Contraste rural* (vida más tranquila, típica: las gallinas..., señoras cuidando el comal..., ritmo de vida diferente; entre más pequeño es el pueblo, más tradicional es el estilo de vida) vs. *urbano* (más influencias externas, medios de comunicación, actividades rutinarias, trabajo; mayor concentración de los avances tecnológicos; centralización de los poderes políticos, económicos).

**Patriotismo**

- Desde niños se da la educación cívica para preservar este valor (niños de blanco los lunes y fechas conmemorativas).
- Se conmemoran los hechos históricos relevantes.
- 15 de septiembre, fiesta... su descripción.
- Símbolos patrios.

**\*Religión (espiritualidad)**

- Estadísticas en el almanaque.
- "México es católico por tradición, no por convicción" (por imposición).
- Símbolos religiosos: Virgen de Guadalupe, Santo Patrono; peregrinaciones.
- Tradiciones en sí: Navidad, Semana Santa.

## NEGATIVOS

### Machismo

- Estatus privilegiado fomentado por la mujer (mamá, hermana, tía). *Referencia histórica, traducción de Paola*
- Influencia de la colonización: 8 siglos los moros ocuparon España (en el islam, la mujer tiene un papel inferior). La mujer española se quedaba en casa, mientras los españoles peleaban. "Don Juan", legendario noble español con mucha virilidad, imagen sexual fuerte.
- México, mujer en casa (indígenas).  
Fusión: hombre español y mujer indígena mexicana asegurando la superioridad del hombre.
- Repercusiones: preservar la forma, no el fondo; hombre trabaja por el dinero. Hijos regados. La libertad de la mujer amenaza el estatus del hombre.
- Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: "Hombres necios..."
- Máscara del "macho" vs. "mandilón".

### Impuntualidad

- Evitar generalizar; experiencia de los estudiantes (con los servicios, transportes, etc.).
- "A ver cuándo nos vemos"; lectura en el libro de lenguaje, nivel intermedio.
- El concepto de "mañana".
- Al que madruga Dios le ayuda vs. No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano.
- Tiempo en México es *open-ended* vs. respetar el tiempo de los demás.

### Personalismo

- Falta de trabajo en equipo, sin embargo, algunas personas prefieren trabajar en equipo.
- Libros: Perfil del mexicano y engargolado en inglés, *traducido por Paola*.

### Fanatismo

- Intolerancia, falta de respeto
- En religión, en fútbol (apuestas: cortarse el cabello...), en fiestas nacionales, en lo político.
- En Taxco, flagelaciones...
- Peregrinaciones: caminar descalzos largas distancias...
- Fanatismo vs. devoción.

### Malinchismo

- Preferir lo extranjero, no apreciar lo de nuestro país.
- Anécdota: busco el mejor doctor en E.U., y resulta que es mexicano.
- La Malinche: su historia; no es traicionera, simplemente hizo su papel de esclava.

*Lluvia de ideas realizada por: Laura Baylón, Leticia Barajas, Paola Moreno, Pilar Silva, Ricardo Cervantes.*

## Appendix

# H

### *La Otra Cara de Mexico* Introductory Panel

#### **LA OTRA CARA DE MEXICO**

Quizá ningún otro objeto refleje la verdadera naturaleza de la cultura indígena, la ceremonia y la complejidad espiritual de los mexicanos, como lo hace la máscara de la danza. Las celebraciones con máscaras se remontan a los tiempos prehispánicos y en la actualidad todavía juegan un papel importante en la religión y en la vida de las comunidades de muchos mexicanos.

Las máscaras son capaces de transformar o revelar la identidad de quienes las utilizan. Cuando se usan en danzas rituales, personifican el misticismo, la magia y la tradición de la cultura que las ha creado. Las motivaciones de la comunidad para una danza de máscaras pueden incluir la necesidad de mantener promesas religiosas, invocar asistencia sobrenatural para la comunidad, dar las gracias por cosechas que se obtuvieron o simplemente expresar devoción hacia un santo.

Admiramos las máscaras mexicanas no solo por su valor plástico intrínseco, sino porque están profundamente ligadas al fervor, a la ética y al vigor con el que un pueblo se viste para definirse a si mismo y para mostrar en las mil caras de sus máscaras, su capacidad expresiva y sus profundas raíces culturales.

#### **THE OTHER FACE OF MEXICO**

*Perhaps no other single object reflects the true nature of Mexican indigenous culture, ceremony and spiritual complexity like the dance mask. Masked festivals, some dating back to pre-Hispanic times, still play an important role in the religious and community life of many Mexicans to this day.*

*Masks are capable of transforming or revealing the identity of their wearers. When worn in ritual dances they embody the mysticism, magic and tradition of the culture that produces them. A community's motivation for masked dancing may include the need to keep religious promises, invoke supernatural aid for the community, give thanks for harvests brought in, or simply to express devotion toward a saint.*

*We admire Mexican masks not only for their intrinsic plastic value but because they are so closely linked to the fervor, the ethic, and the vigor with which a town dresses itself- to show in the thousand faces of its masks its expressive capacities and its deep cultural roots.*

