Maya cosmopolitans: everyday life at the interface of archaeology, heritage, and tourism development

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MAYA COSMOPOLITANS:
EVERYDAY LIFE AT THE INTERFACE OF
ARCHAEOLOGY, HERITAGE, AND
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

by

Sarah R. Taylor

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
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Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts & Sciences
Department of Anthropology
2012
Maya Cosmopolitans:
Everyday Life at the Interface of
Archaeology, Heritage, and
Tourism Development

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Sarah R. Taylor

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<td>BANRURAL</td>
<td><em>Banco de Desarrollo Rural</em> (Rural Development Bank)</td>
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<td>CBT</td>
<td>Community-based Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCY</td>
<td><em>Cuerpos de Conservación de Yucatán</em> (Conservation Corps of Yucatan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDI</td>
<td><em>Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas</em> (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONAFOR</td>
<td><em>Comisión Nacional Forestal</em> (National Forestry Commission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONASUPO</td>
<td>Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (National Company for Popular Subsistence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DICONSA</td>
<td><em>Distribuidora e Impulsora Comercial de la Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares</em> (Distributor and Compulsory Sales for the National Company for Popular Subsistence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESW</td>
<td>Engineers for a Sustainable World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDSS</td>
<td>Foundation for Developing Sustainable Societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONATUR</td>
<td>Fondo Nacional del Fomento al Turismo (National Tourism Development Fund)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INAH</td>
<td><em>Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia</em> (National Institute for Anthropology and History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INEGI</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática (Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INI</td>
<td><em>Instituto Nacional Indigenista</em> (National Indigenist Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td><em>Procuraduría Agraria</em> (Attorney General’s Office for Agrarian Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCAMPO</td>
<td>Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo (Program of Direct Aid to</td>
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Farmers)

PROCEDE  Programa de Certificación de Derechos ejidales y Titulación de Solares Urbanos (Program for the Certification of Ejidal Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots)

PRODEFOR  Programa Para el Dessarrollo Forestal (Program for Forest Development)

RAN  Registro Agrario Nacional (National Agrarian Registry)

SECATUR  Secretaría de Turismo (Secretary of Tourism)

SEDESOL  Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretary of Social Development)

SRA  Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria (Ministry of the Agarian Reform)

UNESCO  United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWTO  United Nations World Tourism Organization
Abstract
The village of Ek’Balam is located approximately 300 meters from the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone by the same name. The ruins at Ek’Balam are some of the most impressive pre-Columbian stuccoes found in the Maya World. In 1994, the archaeological zone opened to the public, and since then this village of around 350 residents has experienced numerous changes. While residents have always had ties to the regional economy, the opening of the archaeological zone represented their first extended engagement with the tourism industry. A major agent of change in Ek’Balam is a community-based tourism project, funded primarily by an agency of the Mexican government. In 2001, they began searching Mexico for good locations to implement community-based development projects. Ek’Balam became their pilot project, and since then proyectos (projects) have come and gone as quickly and as often as tourists.

This is a study of how a group of people negotiates and maneuvers through a web of social programs, tourists, and the like to live their daily lives. In this milieu, potentials for development are everywhere. On the backdrop of the constant rotation of state and federal programs implemented to aid Mexico’s poor, indigenous, rural citizen...its peasants…tourism arrives as the new “proyecto” (project). With this arrival comes a shift in the way that mundane aspects of life are viewed and carried out. It is at this interface that transnational ideologies of ecological conservation and sustainable economic development complicate the local level conflict between tourism and tradition. Given these conflicts, can community-based tourism be a viable avenue to sustainable development? This dissertation presents a discussion of the strategies employed by residents to negotiate the design and management of a CBT project in the midst of everyday life.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation, like all of those that have come before it, was authored by one person but written by many. I would like to acknowledge and thank them here. The greatest debt is, of course, owed to the residents of Ek’Balam. Their patience, generosity, and good humor allowed me to begin this research and the friendship of many families and individuals enabled me to complete it. In particular, I am grateful to Guadalupe Ay Tuz, who has been my friend and hostess since the day I first arrived in Ek’Balam in 2004. Her family kept me fed, safe, and healthy, and has vouched for the character of their *gringa* more than once. I would also like to thank Mario Mena Uc and Gutberto May Tuz for their enormous contributions to this research. They graciously allowed me to accompany them into the *milpa* any time I have asked, and somehow never tire of recounting the old stories and explaining the most mundane activities. Their patience when asked to repeat themselves and their gentle teasing about some of my more ridiculous questions make them the best collaborators an ethnographer could imagine. Lee Christie also deserves thanks for her friendship and provision of creature comforts during many hot summers.

Throughout my academic career, I have been fortunate to have multiple influential teachers and mentors. I am truly grateful to my dissertation committee and especially my committee chair and adviser, Walter E. Little, who has influenced my development as a scholar in many ways, and has been a great support throughout this process. I look forward to the transition from being his student to being his colleague. Robert Jarvenpa opened my eyes to a new facet of this research, and I have benefitted from his expertise. I am grateful to Marilyn Masson for agreeing to join my committee and for her constant encouragement. I
brought one committee member across the country with me, so to speak, and I thank Ron Loewe for continuing to advise and influence my research. There are a few other mentors who I would like to thank here as well. Quetzil E. Castañeda has been an important mentor and friend to me, and has provided me with valuable feedback and promising opportunities numerous times. I am also grateful to him for his assistance in learning Yucatec Maya. He is an amazing teacher and scholar and I am so fortunate to have the chance to work with him. Jayne Howell is another mentor who regularly went above and beyond to support me and my progress through graduate school. Her influence is apparent in my scholarship, but even more so in my teaching. Much of what I learned in her classes, I find myself emulating in my own. It may seem excessive to include undergraduate mentors in these acknowledgments; however, there are two individuals in particular at California State University, Chico who are in many ways responsible for this product. William Loker created a strong foundation for my later education in anthropology and interest in applied work, and Charlotte Ekland introduced me to Yucatan. I am grateful to both of them for getting me started on this path.

The Department of Anthropology at the University at Albany, SUNY is a great place to be, and I thank the department for its support. During my years here, I have benefitted from many conversations with other students and have made some truly amazing friends. Prominent among them is Heidi Nicholls, for whom I am so grateful. Our successes have been celebrated together and our failures have been tempered by each other’s support through this process. I would also like to acknowledge Christine Preble for her optimism and thank her for being wonderful to work alongside in so many capacities. Caroline Antonelli logged many hours helping me learn to make maps, and all of the maps included here were greatly improved by her patience.
The Institute for Mesoamerican Studies generously funded a season of research through the Christopher DeCormier Memorial Scholarship. I am grateful to the IMS and especially to the DeCormier family for this support. Other phases of this research were funded by the American Philosophical Society, University at Albany’s Initiatives for Women, and the CSU Chico Research Foundation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction
In the center of the Yucatan Peninsula lie the ruins of Ek’Balam, translated from Yucatec Maya as black or star jaguar.¹ In 1994, this archaeological site joined the other 46 zones in the region open for exploration by the tourists that arrive in Campeche, Yucatan, or Quintana Roo each year. These three states make up the Yucatan Peninsula. The Mexican state of Quintana Roo, home of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, receives about one third of all foreign tourist expenditures in Mexico, and since 1970, this state has had a higher rate of growth than any other part of México. However, when the distribution of income is examined a different story is told. According to Ana Juarez (Juárez 2002), Quintana Roo is home to some of the country’s poorest and most malnourished citizens. In comparison to Mexico’s national averages, this state has higher rates of infant mortality and divorce, and a lower life expectancy (SEDESOL 2001). Cancun is the tourist emporium located on the northeast tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. Since its creation in the 1970s, it has become a destination famed for its white beaches, turquoise sea, and 280-kilometer coral reef. For guests it offers, “good and predictable hotels, an exotic ambiance of margaritas and mariachis, lush tropical forests, and Maya ruins” (Pi-Sunyer, Thomas, and Daltabuit 2001). More than 2 million visitors enter the Maya World through Cancun annually, 60 percent of whom are North Americans. The final destination of the majority is the Mayan Riviera, which refers to the Cancun-Tulum corridor stretching approximately 80 miles from the northern tip of the peninsula south to community of Tulum. This government-planned and internationally funded destination marked a shift in the way that Mexico conducted and managed tourism. The country had long been the object

¹ The Cordemex Dictionary is the authority for translation between Spanish and Yucatec Maya. It is translated there as black or dark jaguar (Vásquez, Manzano, and Sansores 1980). All translations from Spanish to English are my own.
of the touristic imagination, particularly for North Americans; however, with the creation of Fondo Nacional del Fomento al Turismo (National Tourism Development Fund, or FONATUR) the Mexican government established its first foray in the governance of tourism (Castañeda and Burtner 2010; Cheong and Miller 2000; and others). In some ways, this was an obvious extension of the existing role of the federal government in the promotion and management of heritage. Since 1939, the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National Institute of Anthropology and History, INAH) has governed the nation’s patrimony in the form of archaeological zones.
Ek’Balam is just north of the major tourist corridor that connects Merida, the state capitol of Yucatan, with the resorts of Cancun (Figure 1).

These two cities represent very different ends of a tourism continuum. On one side is the culturally vibrant colonial city that boasts a remarkable history since its founding in 1542. On the other are the white sand beaches of the Mayan Riviera. While this region of course also has a history, it was swept clean through the process of back filling and construction that created the resorts. What remains are a few archaeological sites in an otherwise safe and sterile destination. In the space between these two extremes are villages, cities,
archaeological zones, haciendas, forests, and the million Yucatec Maya who live in the three states that make up the Yucatan Peninsula (INEGI 2010).

The ruins at Ek’Balam are some of the most impressive pre-Columbian stuccoes found in the Maya World, and their excavation and subsequent opening of the site to visitors was a welcome addition to INAH’s holdings. One of the most important attractions at Ek’Balam today is the acropolis. This structure is one of the largest monuments in the Northern Maya Lowland region. More importantly, it is open for climbing and exploration. When the famous Castillo at Chichén Itzá closed in 2005, Ek’Balam’s Acropolis became one of the two remaining pyramids for visitors to climb within day-trip range of both Merida and Cancun. Travel to Ek’Balam is safe and easy, a characteristic of the region that adds to its allure for tourists. A comfortable, two-hour bus ride takes the visitor from their hotel in Merida or Cancun to the colonial city of Valladolid. There they exit the bus station and are greeted immediately by taxi drivers who will chauffeur them to Ek’Balam and bring them back about two hours later for around 30.00USD (300.00MX)². This leaves them plenty of time to explore the archaeological site, climb the pyramids, and perhaps purchase some souvenirs. The drive to and from the archaeological site is pleasant and comfortable. A main highway heads north from Valladolid and passes through the town of Temozon, providing a glimpse of daily life. Ten kilometers north of Temozon a highway turns east and leads directly to the archaeological zone. What most visitors do not realize is that this is still referred to locally as the “new road.” Before its completion in 2003, the road to the ruins took a much different route (Figure 2).

² The exchange rate varied during the phases of this research between 1.00MX:10.00USD and 1.00MX:14.00USD.
Until this time, the entrance to the archaeological zone was located just outside of the village of Ek’Balam, approximately 300 meters from the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone. This village of around 350 residents has experienced numerous changes since the initial excavation of the archaeological zone. While residents have always had ties to the regional economy, the opening of the archaeological zone represented their first extended engagement with the tourism industry. A major agent of change in Ek’Balam is a
community-based tourism project that, until 2003, was located just outside of the entrance to the site (Figure 2).

![Figure 3. Location of initial entrance to arch zone.](image)

The community-based tourism project in Ek’Balam, known to residents as “the Cabañas,” is funded primarily by the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission of the Development of Indigenous Villages, CDI). In 2001, they began searching Mexico for good locations to implement community-based development projects. Ek’Balam became their pilot project, and since then proyectos (projects) have come and gone as quickly and with nearly as much increasing frequency as tourists. Philanthropic groups or regional nongovernmental organizations design some, but
the majority of them are projects that come from the state and federal level. Among the many “friends of Ek’Balam” are adventure or eco-tourists, a handful of protestant missionaries, the federal agencies of the CDI, the Department of Forestry (CONAFOR), Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretary of Social Development, SEDESOL), Secretaría de Turismo (Secretary of Tourism, SECATUR), and Distribuidora e Impulsora Comercial de la Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (Distributor and Compulsory Sales for the National Company for Popular Subsistence, DICONSA). There are nongovernmental organizations, such as the Red Indígena del Turismo Ambiental (Indigenous Network of Ecotourism, RITA) and Maya Tours, Mexican nonprofits Terra Maya, Aldea Maya, and the Cuerpos de Conservación de Yucatán (Conservation Corps of Yucatan, CCY), and the Foundation for Developing Sustainable Societies (FDSS) from the Unites States. A U.S. student group, Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW) recently began a project, and there are students from the nearby Universidad del Oriente working on their social service requirement. Volunteers in the Viajeros Solidarios and Campamento programs are nearly ubiquitous, and a Maya Spirituality group hosts regular events. Increasingly, this tiny town is bustling with the many projects going on at any given time.

The interface between transnational ideologies of community and conservation as imagined by non-locals or “friends of Ek’Balam” and the actual practices of conservation and community-based tourism on the part of locals is a major component of this research. With the introduction of volunteers and other visitors who do not fall wholly within the category of tourist in Ek’Balam, the host-guest relationship becomes even more complex. Through interactions between locals and visitors it is possible to see they ways in which residents perform indigeneity based on their perceptions of the desires of the individuals and
agencies. At this point, a limited amount of ethnographic work has been conducted on the voluntourism phenomenon and most of the scholarship on the topic comes from tourism management and hospitality studies. McGehee and Santos (McGehee and Santos 2005) define voluntourism as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need” (760). While some scholars have focused on the volunteer motivations and the ways that non-local agents (volunteers, projects staff, etc…) use stereotypes of traditional indigenous culture to impose their objective of sustainable community development, I am more interested in understanding how locals gain and maintain external aid in order to attract the tourist dollar. These purposeful strategies are constructed in such a way as to allow locals to use their knowledge to meet the perceptions and desires of visitors. This symbiotic relationship is based on specific concepts, such as community, conservation, and development; however these are defined and employed in very different ways by various stakeholders.

The Pity of Modernity
The first thing one learns about the typical tourist in Ek’Balam is that they are not, regardless of how it may at first appear, a tourist. In fact, they are working hard to inform themselves about their destinations and the people and experiences they will encounter there. They are willing to pay more and forego many luxuries in their quest for authenticity of experience. What is the benchmark of this authenticity? No tourists allowed. MacCannell also recognized this sentiment, and wrote in The Tourist (1976) that, “it is intellectually chic nowadays to deride tourists” (1976: 9). An apt illustration of this sentiment is expressed by MacCannell’s citation of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ statement, “travel and travelers are two things I loathe—and yet here I am, all set to tell the story of my expeditions” (1976: 9). The discourse surrounding
tourist perceptions of other tourists always contains something about “the beaten path,” which is avoided by all. The following excerpt from an interview with a husband and wife staying in Ek’Balam illustrates this desire for an experience that is perceived as different or more authentic by the typical tourist in the village.

D: Another thing that was really great was to bring [our son] to a place like this that was really untouched and not spoiled by commercialism, and surrounded by a village of native people so that he could get a real sense of what the natural beauty of the place was like and what the real sense of it is without the gift stores, the tour busses, without all of that and without it being touched. To get a feel of what the area is like.

J: Yeah, we’re not real tourist folks. We prefer to be in a village or to be with a family, or to be in a place like this here where we’re still part of it. If you’re going to go to the jungle, there is no sense in staying in a resort where they close the gates and say, “don’t go outside because the people are bad” and you have to stay there and spend your money there. Instead of a pool, I would rather swim in a cenote, you know?

[Transcriptions: 2007-0627(22:07)]

The sentiments expressed here are not unknown to residents of Ek’Balam. They are, in fact, regularly reinforced by their repetition in the context of tourist encounters, by CDI staff visiting and advising the project, and by the media (with which residents are highly engaged). Strong images and associations are contained and transmitted in narratives such as this. The idea that Ek’Balam is “untouched and not spoiled by commercialism,” and the association of “native people” with “natural beauty” are just a few of the ideals and expectations into which residents mold themselves as part of touristic performance.

This dissertation is about understanding how a group of people negotiates and maneuvers through a web of social programs, tourists, and the like to live their daily lives. In this milieu, potentials for development are everywhere. On the backdrop of the constant rotation of state and federal programs implemented to aid México’s poor, indigenous, rural
citizen...its campesinos...tourism arrives as the new “proyecto.” This research did not produce a picture postcard of a day in the life; rather I focused on the active processes in which residents choose to participate. Instead of selecting the way that residents are affected by the arrival of tourism as the object of study, I present a story about this arrival onto the already lush landscape of everyday life. With this arrival comes a shift in the way that mundane aspects of life are viewed and carried out. Suddenly, heritage is all around. Homes have become cultural markers and the forest is an attraction. The ubiquitous nature of heritage has created in Ek’Balam a drive to provide the authentic; to create an ecosystem of authenticity.

**Ecosystem of Authenticity**

Anthropologists have employed the concept of an ecosystem in their work in varying ways. Early uses from around the 1960s are attributed to both a rejection of the earlier environmental determinism and the use of biological concepts to take some of the burden off of the concept of culture (Morán 1990:3). The resurgence of interest in ecosystems as a framework for anthropological inquiry views ecosystems:

...as complex adaptive systems that possess intriguing structural qualities, such as resilience, hierarchy, scale, nesting, dissipative structures, and autocatalytic design, and descriptors of dynamics, such as nonlinearity, irreversibility, self-organization, emergence, development, directionality, history, co-evolution, surprise, indeterminism, pulsing, and chaotic dynamics. (Abel and Stepp 2003:12)

I present this lengthy definition knowing of course that an ecosystem can be more simply defined; however the cacophony of characteristics that Abel and Stepp conjure in their definition lends itself to the metaphorical way that I use the concept of an ‘ecosystem of
authenticity’ throughout this dissertation. The earliest definition of an ecosystem is a “system in which there is constant exchange between organisms, but also between the organic and inorganic” (Tansley 1935:299). The ecosystem in which residents of Ek’Balam reside is defined by its history and its future, contains lush forest, barren *milpas*, and archaeological remains. It is home to people who are in constant negotiation with the idea of authenticity and who have an array of notions about how to generate and maintain it. As we will see through their stories, providing an authentic Maya village is dependent on multiple factors; houses should look a certain way, individuals should dress a certain way, men should farm their land and actively conserve the parts they are not farming, women should grind corn on a *metate* and weave hammocks. The list of correct behavior is long, and the task of following these prescriptions for authenticity is a conscious, active choice made by many residents every day.

While the notion of an ecosystem is of something inclusive, it can be broken down into two parts: the physical surroundings and the people who inhabit them. As such, my research took a two-pronged approach. The first objective set out to understand how households in the community balance economic strategies that prioritize tourism—such as handicraft production, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of accommodations—with traditional economic strategies for land-use, which is mainly production of maize for subsistence. The second objective of this research was to explain the relationship between economic and ecological decision-making processes and the local social structure of kinship, specifically with regard to its correlation with a household’s ability to benefit from local tourism development.

It is at this interface that transnational ideologies of ecological conservation and
sustainable economic development complicate the local level conflict between tourism and tradition. Given these conflicts, can community-based tourism be a viable avenue to sustainable development? This dissertation presents a discussion of the strategies employed by residents to negotiate the design and management of a community-based tourism (CBT) project in the midst of everyday life. Residents turn to markers of indigeneity in response to external demands, including maintenance of an image of rurality, increased valuation of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and staged ritual performance. Because the degree to which an individual engages these strategies is dependent on their social position within the community, the choice to incorporate them into everyday life is a political one. The positioning of conservation as an economic strategy for some households further politicizes these negotiations.

Community-based development projects are important sectors of the funding portfolios of major international donors. The World Bank’s funding of such projects rose from $325 million in 1996 to $2 billion in 2003 (Mansuri and Rao 2004). The use of the CBT model as an impetus for conservation follows the logic that if an enterprise that benefits a community is dependent on biodiversity, that community will take action to aid in conservation. Community-based ecotourism projects are particularly well suited to this model because the maintenance of rich biodiversity is a key resource (Kiss 2004; Bookbinder et al. 1998). The result is a common belief that benefit is the sole driving factor for participation in conservation (Berkes 2004). This hypothesis was tested systematically and it was found that in some cases with little economic incentive for participation in a conservation initiative, levels of conservation remained relatively high (Salafsky et al. 2001:1586). This suggests that success is not dependent only on the potential for economic
benefit, but also on local participation or buy-in to the motives and methods for conservation. In Ek’Balam, social position is the primary determining factor for participation in conservation.

Two discrete sections make up the theoretical framework that situates this research. The first is the use of cosmopolitanism to understand the way that residents employ a leveraged identity to gain and maintain the focus of funders and tourists. The second is political ecology to frame the intersection of socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to and result from CBT development. The household is the constant that connects the people and the places. The overarching theoretical context is the process of capital accumulation in everyday life.

The inextricable relationships between land-use, conservation, a community’s resources, and external institutions that politicize these relationships are paramount to my research (Escobar 1998). Early studies of natural resource management and decision-making focused on men as the land managers (Paulson, Gezon, and Watts 2005); however, my household-scale research accounts for women. This is particularly important because of the shifting economic role of women due to the increasing touristic value of handicrafts (W. Little 2004; Taylor 2008). In the 1980s the household was converged upon, perhaps as a last attempt at structure before the post-modern movement shifted the discipline’s focus to individuals, self, and what Bourdieu calls “an explosion of narcissism sometimes verging on exhibitionism” (Bourdieu 2003:282). Since then, there has been a spectrum of studies of the relationship between the household and the outside worlds. Inherent in these is debate over the inside-outside dichotomy. On one hand, Tracy Ehlers presented the household as insular and closed, and as having a high level of separation from the outside world (2000). At the
other end of the spectrum is Walter E. Little’s research in Aguas Calientes, Guatemala. There he found the household to be open and public, even presenting an influential argument for the household as a stage for performing tourism (W. Little 2000). June Nash’s research occupies the middle ground between these two (Nash 2001; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983). The household is usefully understood as a productive unit, though this too has varied in the literature. Alice Littlefield’s study of the hammock industry in Yucatan (Littlefield 1978) positioned the household as an engine of economic production, while Richard Wilk’s *Household Ecology* (1997) presents the household as the center of ecological production. In both cases, the household is a tool that facilitates analysis of the roles of women. Both of these views perpetuate the gender streaming approach commonly found in development initiatives, which count on women to be both productive and reproductive engines. This perspective is similarly expressed in the literature on the ‘triple burden’ of women throughout Latin America (Bose and Acosta-Belen 1995; Hays-Mitchell 2002).

The construction and maintenance of this ecosystem of authenticity is a contentious process that necessitates an examination of the groups involved. As we will see throughout this study, things are not always as they seem. This Maya community is actually a group of households with disparate views on many things, not the least of which is what is authentic. For many, authenticity includes structures, attire, and food ways. For others authenticity is primarily a way of interacting with the natural environment. This group sees agriculture as the seminal marker of being an authentic *campesino*, and feel that the other things are less foundational. Still others want authenticity represented through the built environment, and want to transform Ek’Balam into an ideological extension of the monumental center of the archaeological zone.
After only a short time in Ek’Balam, it became clear to me that the primary organizational structure in the community was kinship. I learned quickly that every resident was a member of one of seven kin groups, and that each of these groups had been in existence in the community since 1939 when they began the petition for their ejidal land grant. I found myself in exploring a web of social and familial relationships, economic strategies, and varied resource management that were connected by a place. The emphasis on neoliberalization and global flows of goods and people is a crucial point of inquiry for our discipline today. These forces are perhaps most visible in Mexico in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and in the age of such heavily contested U.S. immigration policies. Further, tourism studies are fraught with pitfalls that can only be understood if we consider movement across political and, increasingly, virtual borders. Nonetheless, I present an interpretive ethnography that is a tale about people who are rooted in a place. Some now find this model outdated, however I argue that in looking at development initiatives that attempt to position this community in varying locations along the folk-urban continuum and the active compliance and resistance to this on the part of residents, interpretation is the most effective way to hear the many voices that make up this ecosystem. In a time of multi-sited inquiries, I present a community study. During this post-post-modern era of individual mobilities, I examine not the tourists who are arriving, but the Mayas who never left.

Organization of the Dissertation

Rafael: “What book is that, the one you are reading?”

Sarah: “This? It’s a dictionary, a Maya-English dictionary.”

Rafael: “Ahh, I thought it was a book like the ones the gringos always look at.”
Sarah: “What book is it that they always look at?”

Rafael: “Quien sabe? [Who knows] But they’re big and always have lots of maps. Maybe if we had some maps more gringos would come here.”

[Transcriptions 2004-0812 (2:01)]

According to most residents of Ek’Balam, gringos love maps. They spend a lot of their time reading from large books and looking at maps. For people in the village, maps are used in the specific context of land dealings, but apart from this, most residents have never seen a map.

Maps occupy a very special place in the anthropological process. In early ethnographies from around the world, the map of the village or region was one of the first pieces of information given to the reader. Maps remain an important component of many more recent monographs on Mesoamerica as well. Tourists have a different relationship with maps. One of the most important qualities that attract visitors to Ek’Balam is its location “off the beaten path.” Interestingly, these very books provide a map to aid the traveler in leaving the so-called beaten path without getting lost.

Maps of Ek’Balam are just that: visual representations of the monumental center of the archaeological zone. The cartographer never panned to the west or zoomed out from the focus at the base of the Acropolis to include a modern Maya settlement in the representation of an ancient Maya city. To some travelers, a destination with no map is a touristic dream come true. Upon arrival though, even the most seasoned traveler feels lost. If they are guests at the CBT project, they feel removed from the town. Guests at any of the hotels are unsure

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3 The slang term ‘gringo’ (or ‘gringa’ in its feminine form) are used almost interchangeably with ‘foreigner’ in Ek’Balam. In other parts of Mexico they have a negative connotation, but in Ek’Balam they are used as simply a classificatory term.
of walking around the village in the evenings because they really do not know what is out there. They saw the main road into town, made a quick right turn, followed by a left and another right, and arrived at their destination. If, as in the case of Antigua, “the preponderance of maps undermines the tourist experience,” what does a dearth of maps mean for tourists in Ek’Balam (W. Little 2004:67)?

The remainder of this chapter is a map, so to speak, to serve as a guide to the sections that follow. The dissertation is divided into four sections: 1) an introduction to the study and the research site and a review of relevant anthropological work in Mesoamerica; 2) a discussion of community-based development and its relationship with tourism; 3) local land tenure systems, politics, and history, and the use of Maya identity in the development and promotion of tourism initiatives; and 4) a discussion of volunteer tourism, heritage, and ecology. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the methods used in this study and of the units of analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the trajectory of the anthropological fascination with Mesoamerica in general and the Maya World specifically. The long history of occupation of the Maya World by archaeologists and ethnographers created a legacy within which today’s Mayanists must work. This necessitates an understanding of what work was done and the historical and political forces that shaped the study of Mayas, both past and present. Early studies of the Maya were mainly concerned with the ruins of the pre-Columbian society, and were initially undertaken by explorers sent under the auspices of colonial government posts. As archaeology developed as a science, the ancient past of Mesoamerica became an important focus of numerous scholars.

Most of the ethnographic literature from the Maya World consists of community studies, making this a particularly important body of literature for this study. This topic is
presented in the second section. Chapter 4 deals with the history of community studies in the Maya World and discusses some of the major themes found in this literature. Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of community as an object of study by explaining its current positioning as an object of development. The economic processes surrounding the development of the Yucatan Peninsula as an international tourism destination were a part of a larger shift toward neoliberalism seen throughout Latin America and even the world (Clancy 2002; Warren and Jackson 2003; Van den Berghe 1994).

The third section is a presentation and analysis of the bulk of data generated by this research. Overall, the section provides an argument for how the four arenas of history, economy, ecology, and identity coalesce through a series of interactions within Ek'Balam and between these hosts and their many guests to create and maintain an ecosystem of authenticity. Even more than the ongoing interest in community within Mesoamerican studies, the concept of identity receives an extraordinary amount of attention. As previously mentioned, the study is based on the notion that in this ecosystem of authenticity heritage is both tangible and intangible, and that to understand its design, creation, and maintenance we must define the people and the place. In Chapter 6, I present the place and its role in the process. This chapter includes a discussion of the village’s history in the context of regional history in order to provide a complete picture of the economic shifts that have shaped the present. Chapter 7 further contextualizes the discussion of engagement with identity politics and the anthropological study of indigeneity in the Maya World, with Ek'Balam as the case study and stage for the theatrics of Maya Identity. Chapter 8 presents data on the way that ecology and the natural world are part of the tangible heritage; however the way that the land is used plays a role in the intangible heritage of a household. The concluding section consists
of a discussion of volunteer tourism as a phenomenon and examines the way that interactions surrounding this phenomenon are shaped by the factors outlined in Part III. Various maps provide views of Ek’Balam throughout the chapters. All of these maps are the product of a mapping project conducted by community members and myself between 2010 and 2012 in response to Rafael’s statement that maybe a map was what had been missing. The maps culminate in a map of the ecosystem of authenticity as imagined by residents of Ek’Balam.

**Ek’Balam, Pueblo Maya**

I have spoken at length with each of the last five municipal commissioners and they all have told me that now Ek’Balam is a pueblo Maya. What remains unclear is what this actually means to them. What does it mean to the general population? Further, how is a household’s decision to participate in tourism or not a factor in the meaning they give to the village’s status as a pueblo Maya? The reason I ask these questions is that “Ek’Balam has something special going for it” as Joan, the proprietor of Eden Retreat, would say. She periodically wonders aloud at the sheer volume of people coming great distances to do something they see as helpful for the community. “Why Ek’Balam?” she often asks me, thinking I may have an anthropological theory that could help explain this phenomenon. If we were to ask one of the local politicians, they would say that it is precisely because it is a village of Mayas who invite outsiders into their homes to show them how they live, or at least how they imagine that the visitor thinks that they live. It is a Pueblo Maya.

The use of identity as a strategy for attracting tourism and, perhaps more importantly, external aid and development initiatives, is nothing new. Similarly, the performance of this leveraged identity for economic gain from tourism is not a novel occurrence. Scholars of tourism have discussed this at length since the beginning of this specific field. This, then, is
not a story about identity, though identity plays a crucial role here. Nor is it a story about performing tourism, though it contains many scenes of performances in front of tourists. This is a story about 350 people who happen to speak Yucatec Maya and, as it happens, live 300 meters from an impressive terminal classic archaeological site located only 15 kilometers north of the major highway that connects the tourist destinations of Cancun to the east and Mérida to the west. It is about the daily choices that residents made over the past ten years that have shaped the development of tourism in their community. These choices include negotiations with federal funding agencies, regional nongovernmental organizations, foreign and national entrepreneurs, tourists, volunteers, and each other. The latter category of negotiations is the one that deserves the most attention, because this is what happens daily and the results of these negotiations determine how a household will engage with external actors. These negotiations are constructed over the cooking fire, in the fields, and on the way to grind the day’s corn.

The negotiators are members of this community only in so far as it is geographically bound. That is, they all live within the 17 square hectares, or 42.01 acres, defined as the urban area of Ek’Balam. Beyond that, the utility of the term “community” as a defining factor wanes. What is more useful in understanding the intra-community relations are kin groups and households. The use of community as a definitive category is common throughout ethnographic work, and particularly stands out in Mesoamerica’s ethnological record as being the most prevalent unit of analysis from the 1930s through the 1970s. The early organization of rural dwellers throughout the Mesoamerican countryside may have

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\] 1 acre is equal to 0.4 hectares. Acres is the unit used throughout the dissertation.
spurred this. The community is similarly conceived as a framework for and object of
development, as will be discussed in later chapters. For the purpose of this study, I limit the
use of community to references to the community-based tourism project and instead refer to
residents, households, and families made of extended kin groups.

Recent literature on tourism has called for a change in the way we present research.
Many previous studies have focused on the impact of tourism on a local population. This
study will avoid employing “impact” as a framework for understanding tourism in Ek’Balam
to the greatest extent possible; however because something like agency is difficult—if not
impossible—to quantify, we must recognize that while residents are autonomous actors
working within a politicized system (Stronza 2001) they are also beholden to the factors that
are out of their control. They happen, for instance, to speak Yucatec Maya and live 300
meters from the archaeological site of Ek’Balam.
Part I: Locating the Maya in Theory and Practice

The following section discusses the way that the Yucatec Maya have been studied by explorers, archaeologists, and ethnographers over time. In Chapter 2, I add myself to this list and discuss the objectives that guided this research. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the boundaries of the geographic region of Mesoamerica and the way that Yucatan specifically is toured. This practice of touring includes explorers in the 1850s, the anthropologists who came after them, and the tourists who are the most recent arrivals. Before embarking on this tour, however, it is important to understand the destination. Many factors have worked simultaneously over the past ten years to make the village of Ek’Balam a destination. The agents engaged in the process include residents, funders, volunteers, missionaries, and tourists. These groups were traditionally divided into two categories in the literature on tourism: hosts and guests (Smith 1989). However we must move beyond the “host-guest founding myth” (Aramberri 2001) to inform the much-needed creation of new theoretical paradigms for the study of tourism in which the “hosts” are autonomous actors working within a politicized system rather than natives waiting to be duped (Stronza 2001). Rather than hosts, I propose that residents of Ek’Balam are guides on this tour, as they have certainly been mine. The following passages introduce my primary guides and offer the Ay Balam household as a metaphor for understanding the countless ways that residents pursue and experience tourism.

Summer, 2004
The sound of barking dogs, startled from their sleep and roosters crowing is heard throughout the night. Roosters do not wait until daybreak to crow, and instead are clocks to mark the
passing hours. When the sun does rise, the cacophony of gobbling turkeys, sleepy children, men calling to their dogs to head to the milpa, and radio programs drowns out the roosters. On Saturday mornings, the radios blare especially loudly, as the people enjoy the four-hour Mayan language program broadcast from the local station. Smoke seeps out of kitchens and into the air, slowly at first then more quickly as the cooking fires get going. Women are stoking them to heat water for Nescafe or Chocomilk, after which they will heat up some of last night’s tortillas or, on some days, they will pull down the bag of assorted pan dulce (sweet bread). On Tuesday and Saturday nights, a vendor from the panadería (bakery) comes through Ek’Balam honking his horn and selling baked goods. A weekly purchase of pan dulce is stored out of reach of the animals in the hanging rack that, for a brief period of its existence, was the front guard of an oscillating fan. Everything has a use here, regardless of what the manufacturer’s suggestion was. Fan guards double as hanging racks for storage out of the reach of small children and animals, and as grills to place over the fire. They are conveniently shaped in the same way and size as the comal, which is balanced on the three rocks of the fire and used to cook tortillas. In the small homes that are prone to mild flooding, nothing can be stored on the ground, and there must indeed be a place for everything. The thatch roof provides many opportunities for storage, aided by long iron hooks that hang at various lengths and hold burlap sacks, pots, buckets, and cardboard boxes.

A lazy Saturday spent with the family in the summer of 2004, and the whole house is in high spirits. I took the day off from my usual roaming around the village to talk to people and did not leave the house and yard but a few times. The children are animated and fooling around, playing between their two languages and only letting me in on the Maya when they are satisfied that I have searched my tiny vocabulary and cannot find the word. Doña
Gomercinda and Don Lucas keep up an occasional dialogue between themselves while still listening to everything we are saying. Doña Gomercinda, my ever-present translator and source of all knowledge, interjects with explanations in Spanish when she sees that I have been left behind by the rapid fire of short syllables and the raised voices that are reserved for antagonizing a sibling.

Eugenio, the eldest child at seventeen, is home from Cancun for the weekend and is spending a rare evening in the house, though shortly he will head out into the night to visit with friends and drink only as many beers as he can keep hidden from his mother and father when he comes in to sleep. Until just a few months ago, he attended high school in Temozon and stayed with his aunt, Doña Dona, only returning to the village on weekends. He would have been one of the first young people from Ek’Balam to complete his education through high school, but drinking got the best of him. This is an increasingly common pastime among the younger generation. No stores in the village sell alcohol however, so there is a common assumption among many families that living in Temozon increases the likelihood of young men learning to drink, as it is locally called. If a student wants to continue beyond the 6th grade, they must leave Ek’Balam for Santa Rita, Aktuncoh, or Temozon. For study beyond the 9th grade, Temozon is the closest option. It has only been two months since ‘Genio left home for the coast, and this leaves his mother quite worried for him. He realizes this, but sees migration as the only viable option for him. He is not interested in farming, does not want to participate in the CBT project, and wants to earn money for his family.

The other children are excited when he is home and try to be as close to him as

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5 Residents use the prefixes ‘doña’ and ‘don’ to refer to all married women and men, respectively. An honorific is in reference to elderly people, it remains in common use in rural areas in Yucatan.
possible without annoying their big brother who now lives such a different life than they do. All are interested in his life there, though none shows interest in going themselves when they are older. They are young though, and this may change when it comes time for them to look for their own lives. Doña Gomercinda is aware of this, and will worry for them when the time comes as she now worries about Eugenio. As she says, you never know if he is healthy or sick, working or walking the streets.

Cancun is a common option for young men in the village, and with every year, there are more and more heading to the coast to find work as masons, carpenters, and day laborers. This trend has multiple effects on the village, which can be seen in the increase in drunkenness on weekends and the rise in cases of sexually transmitted diseases reported in Ek’Balam. Some continue living in two places, with one foot in their traditional world and the other in the very fast-paced modern world of Cancun, while others make a complete move with their wives and children and return to their villages only occasionally.

Dinner this evening consists of a family favorite, *ensalada* with salted pork. Temozon is locally famous for its smoked meats, sausages, and salted pork, and a trip through there is generally not complete without purchasing at least a half-kilo of *salado*. Part of the animation of the children is due to Eugenio’s presence and a great dinner, while the other part is because the long school year is finally over. This means that the hot and sticky days are filled with slingshots, corn sack shrouded forts, *chacara* (hopscotch) and a mountain of dirty clothes for Doña Gomercinda to wash every few days. The end of school means that Angel has more time to devote to his work at Eden Oasis. Joan keeps him and a handful of other young boys busy with gardening tasks and other odd jobs. While Joan is a controversial figure among some groups in the village, the Ay Balam family has a close relationship with
her. Doña Goma works there as well, washing towels and linens three times a week. For his twelfth birthday, Ángel saved up his earnings and Joan matched what he had to buy a new bicycle. Ángel is following in the steps of his brother Eugenio, and plans to go on to secondary and high school. Rosa, the oldest daughter, took the opposite route and left school after finishing sixth grade. She is thirteen and content to be done studying and have time to help her mother around the house, perfect her weaving techniques, and work from time to time in the kitchen of the community’s tourism project. The two younger boys, Federico and Nacho, are the hams of the family and keep everyone entertained, be it intentional or otherwise. They go everywhere together but are very different from one another. Each one has attributes that are almost the opposite of the other. Federico is already suave at just eleven, and an eager entertainer while Nacho is practical and gruff; a typical nine-year-old boy. Seeing them walk together, arms thrown casually over the other’s shoulder and so complementary of each other that they sometimes seem like one boy, it is impossible for me to think of anything other than the Hero Twins of Maya mythology. The youngest child is Maria de la Cruz and she is the littlest child with the biggest personality. I think often about how much I will enjoy seeing her as a young woman. At six years old, she is sassy and sweet—though never at the same time—and quite seriously tells you that it is cold if you comment on how hot the afternoon is.

The kitchen house can hardly contain all of the energy of the family, and the boys float in and out, as they eat, joke, and then go into the main house to watch whatever is on the new color television that they have just finished paying off. Like them, the smoke from the cooking fire drifts lazily out through the separated poles of the curved walls and up through the thatch roof and into the night air. The only constants during the meal are the
patting sound of Rosa and Doña Gomercinda making perfectly round tortillas at a small table next to the fire, just as fast as the boys can eat them, and Don Lucas seated at the larger table eating and conversing in his unique way of part Maya, part Spanish, all the while glancing at Doña Gomercinda to fill in the spaces between.

Don Lucas was born in Xkumil and moved to Ek’Balam with his family as a young man. His was one of the first families to make the move in 1969, and seven of his eight siblings still live in the village. He is a tall man, with a long, regal profile. His skin is very brown, and his thick black hair is just showing the first signs of grey near his temples. I spend much time observing Don Lucas, and find that he spends just as much observing me. He notes every blister, bite, and scratch and he fusses at Doña Gomercinda when she does not notice or if she does not tell him when I am ill and not eating much. Don Lucas is an ejidatario and is one of the socios (associates) of the CBT project. He enjoys most of the work that he does for the project and trusts in the prospect of his participation being a good choice economically. The only part about it that he does not enjoy is when guests arrive during his shift as velador (night watchman). Every twenty days, it is his turn to spend twenty-four hours at the Cabañas. He does some gardening and takes care of any tasks that need to be done. He is also in charge of checking in any guests who arrive. Don Lucas, like all of the other twenty-three socios, does not speak English. His Spanish, like twelve of the other socios, is broken at best. When guests do arrive, he has a difficult time communicating with them and attending to their needs. This interaction is uncomfortable and even embarrassing for him and translates from the guests’ perspective as poor customer service. Still, he maintains that this project will improve and says that he wants to keep participating so that once business does improve, his children will be able to work there.
Once everyone has finished their food, Eugenio leaves with his brothers not far behind. They will follow him on their bikes as far as he will permit, after which they will join the rest of the young boys playing soccer and riding their bikes around the plaza. Doña Gomercinda, done making tortillas and satisfied that everyone has had enough to eat, comes and joins us at the large green plastic table. She and Rosa are always the last to eat, though Don Lucas lingers at the table or in the hammock until they finish. I sit with him on this night, enjoying the conversation we have all settled into now that the younger children have left. Doña Goma is entertaining us with a story about a family who came through that afternoon on the village tour. According to her, they had the biggest gringo baby she has ever seen. She often remarks on how big the children of tourists are. The first question she asks in most encounters is how old the children are. Now that summer vacation is here, there are always children running in many directions. She calls one over who is the same age to compare their size. When she inquires about this, she generally draws the conclusion that the gringos are able to take better care of their children because they are wealthy. Her first reaction when a family comes on the tour is to touch the children and to tell them to sit beside her if they seem uncertain. This is what she would do with any child, and so seems the logical response to making a timid child comfortable. She has learned however that often times the parents are the ones who seem uncomfortable with this. They want to keep their child as far away as possible from the cooking fire, and they are not accustomed to strangers touching their children. Doña Goma equates this with her feelings about photography. She has observed over the past few years that tourists take photos of children. She worried at first, and sometimes still does, that they were so interested in the children because they wanted to steal them. She deduced that the photos were brought back to perspective adoptive parents.
Joan played a large part in quelling some fears about photographs, but there is still a level of discomfort. For Doña Goma, it is subsiding in part because she has more interactions with tourists than many other women do in Ek’Balam. Between her work at Joan’s and the village tour that stops at her house, she interacts with tourists on a regular basis.

Once Goma has finished eating, she begins to put the food up in small pails that hang from the thatch on long hooks and stacks the dishes on the table to wash in the morning. Always the last to bathe, she pours hot water into a bucket and disappears into the bathhouse. All of the children and Don Lucas have taken their baths and left a pile of dirty clothes in the bathhouse. She calls out to no one in particular: “Very nice! Now I’ll spend all day tomorrow washing clothes and there will be nothing to eat!” This elicits a response from Cruz and Nacho who have returned from playing and are settling in their hammocks. Nacho grumbles that he will kill a *paloma del monte* (mourning dove, literally ‘dove from the forest’) with his slingshot and cook it himself. Cruz, overtired from the day, begins to cry and say that she will be hungry tomorrow and calls for her mother to please come to bed. Everyone sleeps in the one-room thatch house next to the kitchen. Hung from the beams are four brightly colored hammocks. Goma and Cruz sleep in one, Lucas and Federico in another, and Nacho, Beatrice, and Angel in a third. The fourth hammock is mine, and as much as I argue that I would be happy to sleep in the kitchen, everyone insists that there is plenty of room. Finally, Doña Goma finishes her bath and comes into the house. Lucas closes up the kitchen and turns off the lights, then shuts the back door of the house but does not tie the rope to secure it. Federico has returned, but Angel is still out riding his new bike. Eugenio is out with friends and will probably not be back for some time.

Once Lucas is satisfied that everything is in its place, he turns off the light and settles
in to watch television with the rest of us. The television rests on a shelf near the ceiling where everyone can see it, and we all drift off to sleep watching the dramatic, opulent lives of characters in the current *novella* (soap opera).
Chapter 2: Methods
My engagement with residents of Ek’Balam can be summed up as a series of negotiations in various social fields. This is of course true for most ethnographers, but the reason that I introduce this chapter with a discussion of these negotiations is that the definition of these social fields and the way that people negotiate with each other in and between them is at the foundation of my research. Because this research is in the context of nascent tourism development, and because I myself look like a tourist to both locals and visitors, it is important for me to highlight from this early point the multiple roles I occupy in Ek’Balam; tourist, volunteer, anthropologist, teacher, *gringa*, and friend.

The two most important tools that ethnographers possess are the ability to be both participant and observer, and the understanding of why this is such an essential skill. Before presenting a discussion of the methods I employed in this research, I would first like to explain how I arrived at that meeting between residents and funders in Ek’Balam as an anthropologist-volunteer-other. In May 2004, I was an undergraduate at CSU Chico who had been granted the opportunity to head south for the summer to Yucatan to conduct independent research on tourism and cultural change. I expected that I would find a village, and I would be respectful in my manner and diligent in my field notes and I would ask people what they thought of tourists and how their lives had been impacted by this phenomenon. At the end of the summer, I would have conducted twenty interviews and would have the informed consent of each individual recorded on my trusty Dictaphone. This image, of course, bore little resemblance to the way the summer actually proceeded.

A particularly helpful taxi driver brought me from Valladolid to Ek’Balam one afternoon and explained that there was a Canadian woman who had a hotel there. We decided
that would be the first destination. The road into Ek’Balam is only wide enough for one car in most spots and lined on either side by milpas, or cornfields. In the distance, you can see monte alto (high forest) but close to the road, it is obvious that the land has not been left fallow for more than a few years at a time.

Figure 4. Village of Ek’Balam, 2012

The road ends at the village’s central plaza. The first house you see upon entering is that of Doña Ima and her family. Next to the road, they have a small open structure with a thatch roof, under which hang hammocks woven in a riot of colors. Directly ahead of where the road ends is a concrete catholic church on the far side of the plaza and the brightly painted comisaría to the right. In front of the comisaría is an open field of grass crisscrossed
by well-worn paths. Behind the *comisaría* is the heart of the village; *la cancha*. Children use this concrete slab for pick up soccer games that start as soon as school is out and last well into the night. Next to *la cancha* is a concrete gazebo surrounded by four benches. In the afternoon, this is a place for little girls to play *chacara* (hopscotch) and in the evening men slowly move over to the benches to visit with each other and catch up on the news of the day. *La cancha* is surrounded by huge Ceiba and Flamboyante trees.

The road continues around the main square of the plaza, past houses of pole and thatch and others of cement block. One block into the village, the road crosses another. A turn to the right (north) leads to the original entrance to the archaeological zone, and is one of the five ancient *sak beo ’b* of the old city. Just off this road is Eden Retreat, a Canadian owned hotel that opened in 2001. Joan, the proprietor, has created an impressive oasis of tropical plants, thatch-roof Cabañas, an inviting pool, and a menu of vegetarian, Mayan-inspired cuisine on her one-acre of land in Ek’Balam. Continuing straight leads past more houses and to the elementary school. Across from the school is a *solare* (yard) encircled by a stone wall. Within the wall are two pole and thatch structures, a cement-block house, and a small group of animal pens in the back. This was my second stop in the village.

That first summer I thought that the Flamboyante trees were some of the most beautiful things I had ever seen. Their brilliant orange flowers bunched at the end of every branch and the delicate leaves danced in the afternoon breeze. Sitting in a cherished patch of shade in the afternoon, watching the flowers float to the ground and noticing the contrast between the nearly fluorescent orange and the clear blue sky that just refused to rain quickly became my favorite pastime. There I would sit, under the Flamboyantes in the center of town, hyper aware of my every pore as a sheen of sweat developed on my back, arms, and
face, and write up my notes each day. At first, I sat alone and watched men returning from their *milpas* on bicycles, their dogs close behind. I watched children running back to their houses after the school bell rang and women returning from the maize grinder on paths across the grassy field. Shortly, I gained children who would come and watch me watch the village. They began to talk to me and, by the end of the second week, I had a whole bevy of children who tailed my every move. This was just in time for me to find out that most of the women thought that I was there, a childless woman from the United States, to steal a child.

On the day I first arrived in Ek’Balam, I had the great good fortune to meet Gomercinda Ay Balam, who was to become my caretaker, cultural liaison, translator, and advocate. Her voice stood out among those of women who were uncertain of my intentions. In their eyes she spoke from a place of authority; she actually had the *gringa* living in her house. I stayed with the Ay Balam family that summer and every time I have been there since. Gomercinda, or Doña Goma, is the mother of six children. In 2004, they ranged in age from age seventeen to six. Though I did not realize it at the time, I could not have chosen a better family to stay with, thereby aligning myself with them. They hold a neutral position in local politics, and while they are participating in the community-based tourism project, Don Lucas, Gomercinda’s husband, is never in a leadership position. Doña Goma is at worst seen as a bit chatty, but is rarely the subject of gossip around the village. No one in the family is known for drinking to excess, and Don Lucas is regarded as a hardworking man from one of the founding families in the village. The roles played by members of the Ay Balam family in village life directly affected my ability to understand the nuanced social fabric of this small town.

Three years had passed before Doña Goma told me her version of my arrival story. I
found it so interesting that she called it that… *tu historia, la historia de cuando llegaste* (your story, the story of when you arrived). Having a *gringa* living in your house was no easy task in Ek’Balam, particularly during my first summer there in 2004 when tourists were still a spectacle. She always told me that if other women started asking about the particulars of my arrangement with her that I should just let them wonder or act like I did not understand them. As time went on, I became friends with many families and was regularly invited in to visit during my daily walks around the village. By the summer of 2007, I found myself realizing that when women saw that I had learned how to make tortillas they inevitably asked if I would ever come back again. Many were doubtful when I explained that I would. The connection between my hard won tortilla making skills and my return was not apparent to me at first. Finally, I asked Lupe about this and she laughed and laughed. She explained that during that first summer, in an attempt to avoid jealousy from the other women about the money I was presumably paying to stay at her home, she told them all that I just pulled up in a taxi in front of her house, asked if she would teach me how to make tortillas in exchange for an occasional purchase of beans or produce. When she agreed I unloaded my things and never left. While the influx of even small purchases into the household economy is welcome and helpful, the fact that I was not giving her money directly squelched the jealousy, and that she was providing a service to me maintained the correct relationship between her and a *gringa*. Her story further served to position me in the innocuous role of a student, as someone who only came to learn this one skill. This undoubtedly effected to some degree the way in which other residents perceived me and interacted with me in the beginning.

**Research Objectives**
The foundational points of inquiry for my dissertation research came out of preliminary
phases of research in Ek’Balam. The first phase took place in the summer of 2004, between May and August, and in June of 2005. The research conducted during this time was basic. The useful results were the village census and the relationships I was able to build. The second phase of this research was for my Master’s thesis in the summer of 2007 and January of 2008. This research was more focused, and aimed to understand the areas of daily life that were most affected by the presence of tourism and tourists in the village, and to identify the obstacles that the community-based tourism project was facing. The third and final phase of the research spanned various trips to Ek’Balam between May 2009 and January 2012, totaling eight months. This phase produced the bulk of the data presented in this dissertation, though it benefitted greatly from the preliminary research conducted in the first two phases. The following objectives were identified through the examination of preliminary data and during the first trip of the third phase in the summer of 2009.

**Objective 1**
The first objective set out to understand how households in the community balance economic strategies that prioritize tourism—such as handicraft production, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of accommodations—with traditional economic strategies for land-use, which is mainly production of maize for subsistence. There is a tension between tourism and tradition that is easily seen when this question is considered. Internal and external power structures converge to determine many of these options, including how agricultural land will be used. *Ejidatarios*—land-owning residents—are faced with the choice to continue farming their land, engage in reforestation efforts, or sell their land to individuals from outside of the village.
Objective 2
The second objective of this research was to explain the relationship between economic and ecological decision-making processes and the local social structure of kinship, specifically with regard to its correlation with a household’s ability to benefit from local tourism development. Using the quantitative data yielded by the census regarding kin group membership and household production strategies to form a sample group, this objective then incorporated household interviews, individual interviews, and participant observation to provide qualitative data for analysis. Oral histories garnered additional data regarding historical inter-household relations and changes in the political structure of the village.

Kinship studies have never been an integral part of Mesoamerican ethnology. In order to keep up with British social anthropologists working in Africa and Indonesia, American ethnographers turned to communities and *compadrazgo*. This is especially true in the Maya regions of Mesoamerica, where Williams Hanks’ *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya* (1990) and Eve Danziger’s *Relatively Speaking: Language, Thought, and Kinship among the Mopan Maya* (2001) are among the only ethnographies that address kinship in depth. Elsewhere in México there has been, comparatively, more emphasis on kinship, however as previously mentioned it is generally nestled within discussions of the *compadrazgo* system (Nutini and Bell 1984; Nutini, Carrasco, and Taggart 2009).

Objective 3
The third and ultimate objective of this research was to understand how these social and economic processes influence interactions between hosts and guests. This objective was achieved through the conceptual mapping of keywords, individual interviews, and participant observation. While these interactions have always taken place, it was not until the publication
of Nunez’s “Weekendismo” (Nuñez 1963) that an ethnographer took tourism as a serious phenomenon worthy of study. The topic of tourism has continued to be of great interest to Mayanist ethnographers as hordes of tourists began arriving in their fieldsites. Some of the most prominent themes found in scholarship on tourism in Mesoamerica are authenticity, economic development, the state, and the potential and actual role of “community” in the tourism development and promotion processes.

Ek’Balam provides a context for understanding the many factors at work in development initiatives, kinship and land use, and the tourism encounter. The results of this analysis are a rich description of how one group of people is actively negotiating with tourism and development. While the contribution to theoretical approaches to tourism and development will be clear, the applied nature of the subject required an applied approach to the way that the research was designed and conducted.

**Application, Theory, and the Artifice of Division**

“The truth is not that which is, but that which we do. Reality judgments cannot be separated from value judgments. Besides, it is enough for us to think of a situation for us already to begin to transform it. According to this new conception, applied anthropology itself becomes a science; it is the science of reforming or revolutionary praxis” (Bastide 1973:170).

Before presenting the methods used in this research and the theoretical concepts that framed it, I would like to comment on what James Ferguson calls the “academic conceit that theory is only generated in the academy and then disseminated in the field” (Ferguson 2005). This section is a brief discussion of what I see as the central and crucial role for anthropologists today: the application of social theory generated in the academy to real world situations and the acceptance of theory as a valid product of fieldwork. These processes form the feedback
loop that has informed my work thus far and will undoubtedly continue to be foundational to
the manner in which I conceptualize my own research and that of our discipline as a whole.

The body of this discussion is based on a central argument that rests on three pillars. First, development is not applied anthropology. The Development Project, as McMichael calls is it (2008), drew the immediate attention of anthropologists for reasons that I will address later, however applied anthropology did not spawn development. The anthropologists working in the early development projects were doing so in an attempt to temper the negative effects that were readily predicted as the result of the neo-colonial development model. Second, applied anthropology is not development. Applied anthropologists today work in a whole host of fields and fill numerous roles. Development agencies and organizations do employ many anthropologists, as a result to calls for the inclusion of the type of knowledge that anthropologists are adept at dealing with (Michael M. Cernea 1985). At the same time, anthropologists are also employed outside of the academy by schools, local, state, and federal governments, libraries, advertising corporations, non-profit organizations, and multi-national businesses. Further, Kathryn A. Kozaitis (2000) and others argue that teaching, whether performed by applied or academic anthropologists, is in itself an act of application. The distance between the multiple arenas for applied anthropologists and development is apparent.

Lastly, research in arenas viewed as being ‘applied’ is in dire need of theoretical frameworks that are better suited to the unique problems that arise in these contexts. At the same time, however, the amorphous ‘theoretical’ side of anthropology is in need of practical contexts in which academy-generated theory can be tested, modified, and applied. This research draws on the combination of praxis and theory (Kozaitis 2000; Eddy and Partridge
common to applied anthropology; there are both tangible products and theoretical contributions. The three products of this research are; 1) a catalog of flora and fauna and information about traditional ecological knowledge incorporated into a teaching device for use in the classroom, 2) a volunteer manual for use by the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (CCY), and 3) a map of the village and surrounding area.

Many scholars define the term praxis differently. Kozaitis defines *praxis* as, “a way of work by anthropologists engaged intellectually mediated, ethically sound, and socially responsible work that transcends classification, rank, or context of engagement” (Kozaitis 2000:46). She offers a second definition of *praxis* in the context of the practice of anthropology as, “practical, political knowledge and skill gained by participation in the public sphere” (2000:56). Marietta L. Baba looks to Marx as the first to develop a concept of the relationship between knowledge and practice, or *praxis*, and its application to the social sciences (2000). Baba looks at praxis not as solely practical activity, but instead as action whose tenets must be, “values and purposes, namely, those of liberating individuals from alienating and exploitive processes” (2000:26).

William Partridge points out the distinction between the Greek idea of *praxis* in its English meaning of ‘practice’, and the meaning that Aristotle gave the word, which distinguished the disciplines that dealt with human life (Eddy and Partridge 1978:142). Partridge also emphasizes the difference that Aristotle saw between *theoria* and *praxis*. *Theoria* is knowledge for the sake of knowledge, as is produced through the theories and activities of sciences and arts. *Praxis* is compiled of the theories in the same sphere that are interested in action, and for whom the result is not the creation of knowledge, but the performance or effectiveness of a given activity. Partridge sees praxis contextually as,
“theories and activities that affect human ethical and political behavior in social life” (1978:142).

When I began this research, I had a very clear plan to study the economic shifts occurring at the household level in Ek’Balam. I did not intend to examine identity and its relationship to tourism development beyond its utility as an economic strategy. I never meant to elicit data on traditional ecological knowledge or to understand ethno-ecology as both tangible and intangible heritage. The situation on the ground dictated that these were the points of interest not only anthropologically, but also locally. Residents of Ek’Balam are not particularly interested in how each household puts food on the table, nor do they want to know how this has changed since tourists began arriving in the late 1990s. They saw little utility in my study and, while they tolerated my questions, they did not exhibit much interest in the outcomes. They instead showed me that land was the crucial variable, and that it is ecology as much as economy that is a vehicle for people to negotiate means of daily life. For this reason, I adopted a grounded theory approach to both the research design and the data analysis.

Methods
The theoretical framework within which my research is positioned forms what I think of as a dialectical relationship between theory and methods. Because the environment—and particularly the resources it provides—is an important factor in the social and political context of the village, it is imperative to include methods for data collection that are specifically geared toward gaining an understanding of these factors individually. While much of the data are collected and produced through specific questions and methods, the data generated through participant observation provide the context. Existing ties with various
families and individuals in the village—both participants in the community-based project and those not participating—facilitated my role as both participant and observer.

The rationale for including applied methods follows the logic that project staff of a federal development agency will not read my dissertation; few people will. What they may read however are executive summaries and reports on areas of specific interest to them. It is for this reason that I chose to collect data in ways that are understood outside of anthropology and accepted as best practice in addition to tried and true ethnographic methods. For example, many methods employed in the process of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) are included in my research design. Some of these are traditional ethnographic methods given new names, such as the “do-it-yourself” method, which calls for the researcher to engage in whatever activity the people they are working with do (Chambers 1994).

This research took place between 2003 and 2012, during which time I spent fifteen months in the village of Ek'Balam and five months elsewhere in Yucatan, for a total of twenty months of fieldwork. The longitudinal nature of this process made the research approach particularly fit for the study of this tourism development project and the ways that residents of Ek'Balam negotiate with the many changes they face. In 2004, during my first trip to Ek'Balam, the twenty-seven original associates of the CBT project completed construction of the Cabañas and opened for business. In 2006, the Cabañas received their first review published in an international guidebook. In 2007, the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (CCY) began their Solidarity Travelers program and sent their first volunteers. By 2008, numerous volunteers had passed through the village, along with multiple missionary groups. This was also the year that the CBT project lost the most participants, dropping from 21 to only 13. The summer of 2009 began the narrative of crisis in Ek’Balam. With news of
the H1N1 Influenza virus tourist arrivals ground to a halt just before their busiest season. By the first months of 2012, residents saw a return of tourists and the Cabañas were receiving the highest volume of guests ever. In addition to being present during so many important changes, the extended nature of my research has also facilitated long-term relationships with my friends and informants. In 2010, my husband and I were invited to hold a hetz mek and become godparents. The child is the son of Rosa and Teofilo. Rosa is the oldest daughter of the family I stay with, and when I first arrived, she was just 13 years old. She is now my comadre, and I have gained the ultimate justification for staying exclusively with one family; I have become their kin and they mine.

Because of the longitudinal nature of this study, it was important to collect quantitative data to complement the qualitative data collected through participant observation and interviews. This created benchmarks by which I could measure change between 2004, 2007, 2010, and 2012. My initial attempts to collect this data consisted of casual conversations and a sort of snowball sampling (Bernard 2005) in which individuals I already knew introduced me to others, of whom I could ask the same questions. My interactions with residents were limited to members of the Ay Balam household, with whom I was staying, the \textit{comisario municipal} (mayor), and the \textit{comisario ejidal} (land commissioner). Not coincidentally, in 2004 these two individuals also held the roles of the president and the treasurer of the CBT project’s civil association. After only a few weeks in Ek’Balam, I felt that I was quite well positioned. I had enjoyed multiple visits with local authorities who were eager to answer my questions and agree to interviews. They were also very hospitable and considerate of introducing me to their neighbors who I had not yet met.
Figure 5. Ay Balam household, Ay kin group

Figure 6. May Uc household, May kin group
It quickly became apparent that I was only exposed to members of a particular extended family or perhaps close friends of this family who also turned out to be considered related through the fictive kin system created by designation of godparents. What they had in common were positive attitudes about the CBT project and hopes that tourism would quickly lead to a new, better life. At this point, I faced the question of how to gain access to the families I was not familiar with and, further, how to identify them.

**Transect Walk**

The solution was a census of the village using the transect walk method as described by Low, Taplin, and Scheld (2005). This consists of soliciting the help of three members of the community to guide me around the village on three separate occasions. While walking up and down each street of the village on each occasion we worked to fill in information about the households, and by listening to their descriptions of the physical layout of the village, I
was able to collect information that would not otherwise have been available. The repetition of this process with more than one member of the community increased the validity of the information gathered by ensuring that it was not simply a personal bias that was yielding facts about one household or another. The visual cues provided by the changing scenery prompted the guides to discuss aspects that I may not have thought to include in my interview guides and questionnaires. Because of the small size of the village, the method did not use a direct line or transect. Instead, it covered all of the blocks in town. This method is commonly used by researchers performing Participatory Rural Assessments (PRA). The transect walk is typically done during the initial phases of research, and is used as the basis for producing a more detailed map. I conducted the transect walk at the beginning of each phase of the research.

The main information gathered through this process was with regard to genealogy, relationship to the community-based project, ejidal land holdings, family size and number of generations living there, main income, and presence of individuals who work outside of the community. This initial stage of data collection also yielded valuable information regarding the familial groups represented in the village. Because of its small size, I was able to gather household level data for all households in the village.

The utility of this strategy in the initial stage of fieldwork was three-fold. First, by being guided around by different individuals I was introduced to people from multiple social circles. The interest elicited by a resident walking with me and pausing to chat at different houses enabled me to talk with people to whom I would not have otherwise had access. Second, the information previously available with regard to the success of the community-based project came from multiple sources, however once I was able to see the data on family
structures, kin group membership, and participation in the community project, it became clear that the voices espousing the virtue of the project were coming from those directly involved and, therefore, benefiting. The transect walk method was subsequently used in 2007, 2010, and 2012 to collect and update the census data for the village.

Historically, ethnographers have remained skeptical of PRA and other similar field methodologies. These are often seen as ‘quick and dirty’ approaches to understanding what ethnographers know to be very nuanced social and cultural contexts (Nyanzi et al. 2007). At the same time, ethnographic methods come with their own limitations. A combination of PRA methods, such as the transect walk, used in conjunction with in-depth, iterative interviews proved to be the right fit in the case of this research.

The use of this method in an early stage of the research made subsequent research more productive. By identifying familial ties through this systematic questioning, the kin-based social structure of the village revealed itself. The residents of Ek’Balam belong to seven extended families, or kin groups. These groups practice patrilocal residence patterns (Figure 8) and land and other resources are passed down through patriarchal descent lines.
While Mexican *ejidal* law states that women can have land tenure, the *de facto* practice in Ek’Balam does not allow for female *ejidatarios*. The history of these kin groups began at the time of the initial petition for *ejidal* land made in 1939 by five men; Claudio May Tuz, Anacleto Mena Aguilar, Delfino Ay Uc, Fulgencio Chan Chan, and Atitlano Tuz Poot. These men and their families had worked and lived on a nearby hacienda. They waited for their land grant to be complete for three years, during which time two other men and their families joined the initial group; Delfino Dzib Uc and Miguel Lopez Pat. Don Delfino’s family had recently left a cattle hacienda to the north, and Don Miguel’s family was looking for an opportunity to attain land to farm after living in Temozon.
In the May kin group diagram (Figure 9), we see that Don Claudio is the apical ancestor. The patrilocal residence pattern is also visible here. Dashed circles identify households, or residential groups. These are specifically households in Ek’Balam that are part of the overall May kin group. For example, Florentina, the daughter of Concepción and Guadalupe and granddaughter of Claudio May Tuz, is not indicated here as a household belonging to the May kin group.
Figure 10. Example of patrilineal organization in kin groups.

They reside in Ek’Balam, but Antonio and Florentina’s household is primarily associated with the husband’s family. Figure 11 is a diagram of the Mena kin group. We see here that Antonio and Florentina’s family is part of the Mena kin group.
The dissertation uses specific terms to refer to various levels of these structures and relationships. The term ‘kin group’ is used in place of ‘extended family’ because of the maintenance of consanguine familial relationships regardless of kin group membership. Most individuals, and particularly women, are members of both a kin group and an extended family. In the case of Florentina, she is a member of the Mena kin group. Her residence is on the north side of the town center, opposite the house she grew up in on the south side of the center. Her labor goes toward the maintenance of the household she lives in with her husband, his parents, her children, and Antonio’s brother and sister. The corn she prepares each day for her children comes from her father-in-law’s milpa. Kin group obligations are an important part of life in the village; however, family ties are often times strong regardless of
kin group membership. Concepción and Guadalupe May, Florentina’s parents, enjoy having a large family and encourage regular gatherings at their house. On any given night, it is common to find many of Guadalupe’s sixteen grandchildren at her home, and Florentina comes nearly every night to visit her younger sisters. When asked, she responds that she is very much a part of the May family. This is true even though her kin group is Mena.

The term ‘household’ refers to a nuclear family or families and their immediate relatives that share the same main residential area. The solare (yard) may contain multiple structures, but all members of a household share meals and pool their resources. The average household size in Ek’Balam is 6.63 persons. Each household belongs to one of the seven kin groups found in the village, and the households cluster spatially into groups based on patrilocal residence patterns (Figure 8). The rationale for delineating households from the larger kin group is that while they are linked to the larger group, they do not always have daily interactions with other members. Additionally, they are autonomous with regard to participation in tourism, ecological conservation, and their domestic mode of production (Sahlins 1972).

There are instances in which a daughter remains a member of her parents’ kin group, and, though these are rare exceptions to the rule, they aid in understanding the political dynamics at play within and among the households and kin groups. The Ay kin group provides two examples of this scenario (Figure 12). Two daughters remained in the Ek’Balam with their husbands and families. They live within the Ay section of the village and their households are part of the Ay kin group.
The Ay kin group as a whole has maintained a high level of farming and has not sold much of their land. When Antonia and Paulina married, they decided to stay in Ek’Balam. Their kin group had ample land, so their husbands were able to farm. These men are not eligible for status of *ejidatario*, however in every other way their participation in village life is the same.

The kin groups in Ek’Balam do not refer to themselves by the names they are assigned here, though these are all common surnames in the village. They are designated by their descent from an apical ancestor, all of whom were the seven men who initially settled Xkumil and received the *ejidal* land grant.
**Collaborator Sample**
The initial result of the transect walk was the compilation of a collaborator sample that was representative of the various groups in the village. After distilling the data down to numbers, I was able to choose 50 individuals that spanned the seven kin groups, age ranges, household economic strategies, and relationship to tourism. The subsequent information that I gathered from this group was then more reliable and representative of the whole host of perspectives held by members of the community.

Figure 13. Preliminary research design model

In 2010, I expanded the sample number to 100, while maintaining the same ratios of representation. The nature of social life of the village guided the choice to collect quantitative data using a purposeful stratified sample (Patton 2002). Had I chosen a random sample, it would not have been representative because of the small size of the population and the need for the sample to be representative of the kin groups. An example of the relationship...
between the sample group and the population is found in the instances of *ejidal* membership in the two groups (Figure 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ejidal Membership (in sample)</th>
<th>Ejidal Membership (in population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14. Ejidal membership in sample (n=100) and population (N=347)

The number of individuals whose kin group by marriage is reported as “Not Applicable” (N/A) refers to the individuals who were unmarried in 2012 (n=13) and the number of individuals who married into families from outside of the community (n=12), generally from the neighboring towns of Aktunco or Temozon (Figure 15). This number consists mostly of women; however, there are a few exceptions to this.
Figure 15. Kin group representation in sample.

The result of this process was a collaborator sample that reflected the population, and with which I gathered quantitative data. The quantitative data allowed me to alter some of the questions I was asking during in-depth interviews in order to garner information about the community-based project that was not apparent from preliminary conversations. These data also guided my research with households participating and not participating in the community-based tourism project. Once the social organization of the village became clear, I decided that the household would be the most efficient unit of analysis. The household interviews are semi-structured and conducted with representatives at the household level (the male and female heads of household) in order to identify patterns within and between the seven kin groups. There are approximately 45 households in the village, and the male or
female head of each served as the participant in the household interview.

**Research Setting**
The narrow road littered with potholes that reveal the white earth beneath and closely lined with *monte bajo*, literally “low forest,” does not seem like the correct choice when at the intersection of the main road into the ruins and this smaller road that, according to barely visible hand painted signs, leads to the Maya village of Ek’Balam. It is this choice that travelers to the area are faced with daily, and not surprisingly most choose to head on into the ruins via the road more traveled, that is if they are even aware that there is another option. Though the road to the ruins at one time took this second, less developed route and led through the small village of Ek’Balam, past thatch houses, playing children, and roaming poultry before arriving at the archaeological zone, in 2003 the new road was built and now the traveler can easily bypass this scenery and get straight to the archaeological zone they came to see.

Upon entering the village, the remnants of the abandoned hacienda around which Ek’Balam was founded can still be seen woven through the plaza in the center of the village. The church is built upon a raised foundation that was where once stood the grand house of the *hacienda*. The well remains visible next to a tank, to the west of the commissary building. An old stone wall of the hacienda separates the playground area from the church and empty space, and beneath the many Flamboyante trees, you can still see the rock walls that cordoned off the garden of the grounds. Rather than a traditional central plaza, Ek’Balam has a mismatched square of land in the center of town that is divided into four sections: the church, the kiosk and playground, the *commisaría*, and the empty area crisscrossed with walking paths.
To the west of the plaza, the “old road” continues through the village toward the old entrance to the archaeological zone. The pavement ends and the road becomes a sak be, or white road, for a stretch before turning into a thin cattle trail that disappears into monte alto, or high forest, just past the community’s hotel, U Najil Ek’Balam.

![Figure 16. Map of CBT project in relation to village.](image)

The hotel consists of nine palapas built in the style of the thatch houses in the village, but reinforced with plaster and paint on the inside walls. The three large palapas are divided into two rooms with bathrooms inside; while the remaining six are each one large room with
a bathroom in a separate structure just a few steps from the back door. Each room boasts multiple beds in king and twin sizes, ample mosquito netting, screened windows, flush toilets, and ceiling fans, which are all amenities not found in any houses in the village. The process of appointing the rooms was quite interesting for the residents participating in the tourism project, and according to some of the leaders, they were grateful for the advice of their sponsors because of their lack of experience with tourists and generally anything to do with a hotel. The average age of the men working on this project is 45, and of the eighteen participants, only three had ever stayed in a hotel.

On the east side of the compound is the kitchen and dining area, which is under a grand thatch roof. The kitchen is built from stone and has all of the amenities you would find in a commercial kitchen, including a large gas range that the cooks find especially enjoyable to work with. The dining area can hold nearly 75 people, and it overlooks a chaltun, or low area full of rocks, tall trees, and iguanas lazing away the day. The many trees in the chaltun and interspersed throughout the structures have painted white trunks, and a stroll through the cement walking paths connecting the various palapas reveals signs hung on the trees with their scientific, Spanish, and Maya names. On the other side of the road is the reception structure, a large open-air theater and stage, and a ceremonial steam bath or temezcal. The men who participate in the project take 24-hour turns as veladores or guards to perform repairs, tend the gardens, lawn, and pool, and check guests in and out of the hotel. Every afternoon when the shift changes there is a group of men seated on rocks outside of the reception structure, talking about what needs to be done at the hotel and catching the last velador up on the events of the day in the village.

The village of Ek’Balam is located in the southeast corner of the ejido of Xkumil, in
The political leaders in Ek’Balam and Temozon have varying levels of involvement with each other, depending mainly on the relationship between the president of the municipality and the village’s municipal commissioner at a given time. These elected political offices change at the same time every three years. The social connections with the town of Temozon are much stronger than the political or economic ties. Many individuals in
the village have family in Temozon, and frequently young men from Ek’Balam marry women from this neighboring community, creating multiple social links to families in Temozon.

**Sources of Income**
Excursions to Temozon are common, especially among men looking for *chamba* (work doing odd jobs). There are many more opportunities for temporary employment there than in Ek’Balam or one of the other nearby villages. Among the jobs the men perform are house construction, clearing land, mending fences, working cattle, and generally anything else they can find. This is an important source of income most of the year, and particularly in the summer when most people’s stores of corn have been exhausted and they must purchase bags of it.

Working the *milpa* is the most important activity for the majority of residents in Ek’Balam. Figure 18 shows the eight most important sources of income found in the community and the change in over the eight-year period from 2004 to 2012. These categories are referred to throughout the chapters, and as such will be clarified here. Each data for category are based on the responses of individuals in the collaborator sample when asked if this was a significant source of income for their household. Diverse economic strategies are important to the success of a household, and all households without exception are reliant on any number of these sources of income at a given time. To provide an illustration of this, in 2004 82 percent of the collaborator sample listed ‘Milpa’ as one of their sources of income. Of that 82 percent, most also listed additional sources of income.
Figure 18. Change in household income sources, 2004-2012 (n=100).

The category of ‘Crafts’ is reported by anyone who produces and sells crafts for sale to tourists (e.g. hammocks, embroidered blouses, etc.). The category ‘Chamba’ is all odd jobs previously mentioned. These are often outside of the village, but this category differs from migration in that they come home each day after working. Rarely does chamba refer to steady work. ‘Migration’ is the designation given to anyone who spends at least half of their time outside of the village for the purpose of employment and maintains some sort of residence outside of the village. The category ‘CBT Project’ includes anyone who reported participation in the project. This includes the ejidatarios who are participating in the community’s tourism project, members of their families who have either indirect benefit from the fact that the head of their household works there or who have direct income from
working there themselves. ‘Other Hotel’ includes any individuals who reported having income from Eden Oasis, Dolcemente, Casa del Alux, or Kaxil Kan. These are the four tourism establishments in the village apart from the CBT project. This also includes members of the household that are part of the village tour offered to guests at Eden. The category of “commerce” is used to represent individuals who have income from some form of commerce in which they are directly involved. This mainly includes individuals who sell goods from their homes. Examples of items sold are snacks, sodas, water, and produce. The selection of goods available in the stores range from the simple offerings of soda, gum, and snacks to the extensive offerings in one store that include items ranging from batteries and laundry detergent to toilet paper and rope, and all manner of packaged snack foods. ‘Archaeology’ refers to work at the archaeological zone that individuals are currently performing, and excludes previous work during the initial excavation because the majority of men were involved in this activity. Positions currently held include guides and security duty, both during the day and at night and, since 2011, construction and maintenance of protective thatch coverings for the stuccoes.

**Age and Generation**
The population of Ek’Balam (N=347) can be divided into four generations. I have categorized these generations for the purpose of this research as founders (1), children of founders (2), first generation in Ek’Balam (3), and children of first generation (4) (see Figure 19). Because all members of the fourth generation category (children of the 1st generation) are young children, none were included in the sample group for this research.
The average (mean) age of the collaborators in the sample group is 41.16 years old. The most frequent age (modal) in the sample is 32. This could be explained by the fact that this is near my own age, and so I had easier access and more frequent interactions with individuals of approximately this age. Figure 20 charts the ages of the 100 individuals in the sample group. These ranged from 15 to 85. The linear age that is represented by the single line represents an even distribution of 100 individuals between the ages of 15 and 85. The actual distribution shows a slightly disproportionate distribution, especially near the ages of 20 and 30, yet the sample distribution generally follows the linear age line. This means that the sample is representative of young, middle-aged, and elderly individuals.
Among the collaborators, the majority (60 percent) completed their education through the sixth grade (Figure 21). This is now compulsory, though this is a development in the past 15 years. Before this time, education was not compulsory. It was in 1980 that the school was constructed in the village. Before this, children had to travel to Temozon to attend even primary school. In Figure 21, we see that this trend is reflected in the data from the sample. In the first generation (founders), the majority had no schooling. In the second generation, (children of founders) 45 percent completed school through the third grade and 20 percent completed the sixth grade. In the third generation (first generation in Ek’Balam) 75 percent completed their education through the sixth grade, with another 5 percent continuing through the eighth
The bulk of the research during all of the phases took place in the village of Ek’Balam, though research was also conducted with individuals in Temozon, at the archaeological site, and in neighboring ejidal lands. Ek’Balam has a population of 347. Almost all residents are descendants of the initial twenty-seven men who solicited and received the ejidal land in 1936. The site of the village was not the original settlement location, and was officially founded in 1972. Because the archaeological site plays an important role in the economy and, ultimately, identity of the village of Ek’Balam, it is included in the research setting. Proyecto Ek’Balam (The Ek’Balam Project) began in 1984, and since then the archaeological site has played an important role in the neighboring village of the same name. Between 1984 and 1994, many locals were employed by the archaeological team to help with the excavation and restoration processes. When the archaeological zone opened to the public in 1994, the slow stream of visitors began flowing. Today, the archaeological zone is recognized by residents as being the primary attraction that
all other tourist services should be built around. Archaeology and archaeological zones have been of great importance throughout the region for longer than most residents can remember, as sources of economic opportunity, history, and more recently heritage. This research conducted in a village just 300 meters from an increasingly popular site sheds light on exactly how the importance of the archaeological site plays out in everyday life.
Chapter 3: Anthropology in and of the Maya World
The Maya are perhaps the most heavily studied culture group in the world. Ralph Loveland Roys, a prolific Mayanist and deemed by J.E.S. Thompson as being, “by far the greatest gringo scholar in Maya,” proved that it would take several professional lifetimes to study every aspect of the Maya (Ventur and Roys 1978:3). The Maya World spans the nation-states of México, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. This spatial classification is part of the larger culture area of Mesoamerica, which stretches from central México to Costa Rica.
Paul Kirchhoff (1943) first defined Mesoamerica as both a place of study and an object of study using the designation of cultural traits found throughout the region. From an archaeological point of view, these traits are reliance on maize, beans, and squash as domesticated crops, religious practices involving monumental architecture, a polytheistic belief system, use of a ritual calendar, and market exchange as the basis of the economic
system (Smith and Masson 2000:2). While these are shared cultural traits, they are not necessarily unifying. By the 1980s, archaeologists had replaced the traits with practices (Hendon and Joyce 2004:3), and employed the model of Mesoamerica as a fragmented area of diverse cultures connected through trade. Ethnographers first defined Mesoamerica based on the cultural traits they observed in the communities where they worked. Many of these had to do with common style of dress and economic means of production (Tax and Redfield 1968). While Kirchhoff’s southern boundary of Mesoamerica was placed just east of Guatemala and the western tip of Honduras, some argue that it should actually extend further south and east through Central America (Fox et al. 1981; Lange 1976; Helms and Lange 1979). Language is another factor used to define Mesoamerica as stretching from northern México south to the Gulf of Nicoya in Costa Rica (Creamer 1987:35).

This chapter discusses the trajectory of the anthropological fascination with Mesoamerica in general and the Maya World specifically. The chapter begins with a short discussion of the various regions of the Maya World and of the early studies of these regions. The long history of occupation of the Maya World by archaeologists and ethnographers created a legacy within which today's Mayanists must work. This necessitates an understanding of what work was done and the historical and political forces that shaped the study of Mayas, both past and present. Early studies of the Maya were mainly concerned with the ruins of the pre-Columbian society, and initially undertaken by explorers sent under the auspices of colonial government posts. As archaeology developed as a science, the ancient past of Mesoamerica became an important focus of numerous scholars.

**Mesoamerica and the Maya World**

In 1992, the five governments of the Mundo Maya, or Maya World, signed an agreement to
combine their efforts in sponsoring a large-scale tourist project in the Maya regions of México, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. The idea of a developed route to connect the many tourist attractions in this area was first coined by National Geographic in 1989, when they published a projected map of La Ruta Maya (Garrett 1989:424). The driving force behind this project was the consensus that tourist dollars were slipping away due to an uncoordinated infrastructure throughout the indigenous zones. An official map detailed the project and marked major rivers, highways, and towns assigned significance based on what they offered the visitor. Towns that had little attraction for the visitor to the Maya World were excluded from the map, regardless of the fact that many of them held great importance to the Mayas of the particular area. This, then, begs the question; where are the Maya in the Maya World (Brown 1999:296)? How do the Maya view the marketing of their culture and what role do they play in this process? In addition, what relationship do they have with the archaeological sites that market their heritage?

Gentlemen of leisure, explorers, archaeologists, and ethnographers have been “romancing the Maya” (Evans 2004) since the mid-1800s, and archaeological zones in the Maya World have been important attractions since long before the tourist era began. Among the most famous are the ruins of Chichén Itzá, which have been part of the public imaginings of “Maya Yucatan” since the widespread popularity of John Lloyd Stephens’ “Incidents of Travel in Yucatan” (1843), which introduced the world to the ruins through Frederick Catherwood’s detailed illustrations. State governments as well as agents of the federal government have embraced the ancient Maya heritage as their most important (and profitable) characteristic. The promotion of tourism at archaeological sites brings into question issues such as politics of patrimony and the management of ruins, as well as the
present-day negotiations surrounding land rights in archaeological zones and the internal and external forces involved (Breglia 2006) and the intersection of heritage, tourism, and identity in and around the archaeological zone (Quetzil E. Castañeda 1996; Q.E. Castañeda 2003). It is in the state and federal promotions of this region that the view of Maya identity as a colonialist construct (Quetzil E. Castañeda 2004; Hervik 1999; Restall 1999) is complicated by the new emphases on multiculturalism and neo-liberal development models (Loewe 2009).

Since the beginning of the tourist era in the 1970s, the Maya of areas experiencing rapid tourism development have been increasingly shifting from a subsistence lifestyle to reliance on wage labor and handicraft production for the tourism industry. These new means of production are seen in villages in the highlands of Guatemala (Annis 1987) as well in urban centers (Little 2004), and in the tumultuous regions of Chiapas (Earle and Simonelli 2005). The Yucatan Peninsula is developing at rates far and above those seen in other parts of the Maya World (Torres and Momsen 2005). Scholars working in this area find that loss of land and the marketing of both the physical and human environments have led to inflation and displacement of traditional local industries (Juárez 2002; Kintz 1990; Pi-Sunyer, Thomas, and Daltabuit 2001). Often times the only potential for the Maya in the tourist industry is the occupation of bottom level positions, pushing them even further toward the periphery and transforming them into what some have called “a rural proletariat” (ReCruz 1996). When examining the current position of the Maya in these areas, it is necessary to remember that their subordinate status has changed very little since colonial times. At the same time that Mayas are pushed out of some means of participation in tourism throughout the region, the commodified Maya-ness is a major component of the attraction of millions of
The question remains then, what is Maya? More importantly, who are the Maya?

The Maya civilization covers an area of 324,000 square kilometers (Sharer and Traxler 2006:23) and spans the countries of México, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. From an archaeological perspective, the Maya World divides into three major regions: lowlands, highlands, and coastal plain. These are further divided into the northern, central, and southern lowlands, and the northern and southern highlands. Scholars have written volumes of books on the Maya and still questions remain unanswered. The Maya of today still inhabit the same regions and number more than seven and a half million, making them the largest indigenous group north of Peru (Coe 1999:ii). Mayas form an absolute majority in almost all of the communities in which they live. There are approximately twenty-nine existing Mayan languages spoken in southern México and Central America (Burns 1983:2).

The modern Maya consist of four major sub-groups: the Highland Maya, the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Maya, the Yucatec Maya, and the Lakandon Maya (Coe 1999:233). The Highland Maya occupy the central and western highlands of Guatemala, and comprise an estimated 60 percent of Guatemala’s population of ten million. This group consists of various smaller groups, such as the K’iche’ and Ixil. Most highland families subsist on corn farming or craft production, but some men travel to the lowlands for seasonal work on cotton plantations, coffee fincas, etc. The Yucatec Maya live on the lowland, limestone peninsula of Yucatan. They also subsist mainly on corn farming, but practice a slash and burn method and rotate their crops, unlike the permanent fields found in the highlands (Coe 1999: 238).
The Northern Maya Lowlands
Within Mesoamerica, as both a conceptual and geographical space, there are multiple subdivisions that follow linguistic and physical boundaries. Much of the history of exploration and archaeology is similar throughout this region; however, the focus here is in the subdivision known as the Northern Maya Lowlands. The Northern Lowlands region was first settled in the Middle Formative period (c. 900-600 BC), and spans the area referred to today as the Yucatan Peninsula (Evans 2004:182). The lowlands of the Maya world as a region are divided into three parts; the Southern Lowlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Northern Lowlands (Sharer and Traxler 2006:41). The Northern Lowlands are generally considered to begin to the north of El Mirador and extend west to the Gulf Coast of Campeche, east to the Caribbean coast of Quintana Roo, and north to the Gulf Coast of Yucatan. Early settlement is thought to be the result of migrants moving north along the west side of the peninsula from the Petén region, and later migrants moving up the east coast from Belize (Evans 2004:185).

While the region’s human history began with early occupation in the Middle Formative Period, it remained a place of dynamic sociopolitical change through the Conquest Period (AD 1502-1547). The region is, and was, inhabited by individuals known today as the Yucatec Maya. There is much debate in current scholarship as to whether or not this bears any resemblance to an identity they would have associated themselves with (Castañeda 2008; Hervik 1998; Magnoni, Ardren, and Hutson 2007; and others)

The Yucatec Maya called their home Ulmil cutz yetel ceh, meaning “the land of turkey and deer” (De Landa 1937:2). The story of the naming of Yucatan is relayed in Diego de Landa’s book Yucatan Before and After the Conquest. He wrote that when Francisco
Hernandez de Cordoba landed on the peninsula he inquired of the people what this land was called. They responded cotoch, meaning “our houses” and when asked how the land was theirs, the reply was ci uthan, which means, “he speaks well” in modern Yucatec Maya. According to Landa, this latter response was adopted and changed by the Spaniards to “Yucatán.” Another account of the naming says that the response to the Spaniards’ inquiry was “ma t’aan, ku y u’ub a t’aan,” or “we do not understand what you are saying!” (Restall 1997:122).

The Northern Lowlands have a long pre-Colombian history, and their post-contact history is actually one of the longest in Mesoamerica. On his fourth and final voyage in 1502, Christopher Columbus came upon a canoe off the coast of Honduras. From the cargo carried by the vessel, he quickly assumed that it was a trade vessel of some sort. This assumption was correct; the Yucatec Maya ran the trade network that connected the Mexica post of Xicalango on the Veracruz coast of México with the rest of Central America (Clendinnen 2003:3). Columbus’ crew rifled through the trading goods, keeping little more than an old man whom they felt would serve them well as a guide, and let the canoe go on its way. The effect of this encounter within Mayan society is unknown, but word of these strangers undoubtedly spread quickly along trade lines and throughout the peninsula. It has been suggested that this first contact between Maya and Spaniard was the catalyst for the prophesy of Chilam Balam. A prophet-priest of northern Yucatan, Chilam Balam foresaw the arrival of fair-skinned, bearded men who would come and should be cooperated with, as they were to be emissaries of the self-exiled Kulculkan, or Feathered Serpent.

The next contact that the people of Yucatan had with Spaniards was nine years later. In 1511, a Spanish ship had wrecked off the coast of Yucatan. The handful of men who
survived stumbled onto the northern shore, only to die at the hands of the natives, hunger, or disease. Only two men survived this ordeal: Gerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero (Jones 1989). It was not until 1518 that these survivors were discovered by an expedition to the peninsula led by Cortés. The men of the expedition had been baffled by the utterance of “Castilan” by many of the Maya they encountered. After a series of conversations with translators and promises to the captors, Cortés persuaded Gerónimo de Aguilar’s lord to release him. His Spanish had become poor, but he was able to recount the events of the shipwreck. He also told Cortés of Gonzalo Guerrero, who remained alive somewhere in the southeast.

After the shipwreck, it seems that Gonzalo Guerrero had “gone over to the natives” and refused to be rescued (Clendinnen 2003:17). He had married an Indian woman, had children with her, and became a warrior. It is also believed that he organized the attacks on various Spanish expeditions, including the failed Cordoba landing at Cape Contoche. He apparently continued leading attacks against his former compatriots until 1534 or 1535, when the tattooed body of a white man was found among the dead after a battle in Honduras. Skirmishes continued in Yucatan for many decades, and the Maya were the last to be successfully pacified long after the Spaniards had gained control throughout the rest of Mesoamerica.

**History as Heritage**
The past is everywhere in Yucatan. The past is a source of employment, a destination, a contestation, and a wonder of the world. As a scholar of tourism working in Yucatan, it is impossible to discuss the present state of tourism without discussing the past. This past consists of the pre-history told to us by modern archaeology and the history told to us by
explorers, early archaeologists, and, since the 1970s, nearly a million Americans annually. By past, I am talking about the monumental remains of the past. I am talking about heritage. Maya heritage is a topic that is debated unendingly, and is a thorny subject that I will address in more detail later. What I am interested in for now are the actual, physical remains that survived the torrential rain of hurricane seasons, the bone-dry winds of La Canicula, unending monarchical transitions, colonization, industrialization, de-industrialization, and now almost 2,000 pair of feet a day. I am talking about the ruins. These are the remains of the ancient Maya; the heritage of the modern Maya.

Scholars engaged in the anthropological study of tourism often find ourselves caught up in a negative cycle with the term tourism, which has the pedestrian connotations of hordes of unwitting vacationers descending on a locale. Alternatively, travel comes with its own issues, namely the fact that it is so vague and is these days used as an alternative to calling oneself a tourist. Instead, I will use the term touring throughout this chapter. Touring can be defined as traveling from place to place, especially for pleasure. It is also the act of making a tour. While I would not call early explorers and archaeologists in Yucatan tourists, I am confident in the assertion that they were touring. Similarly, much of the work of present-day ethnographers in Yucatan can also be seen as engaging in the practice of touring. This makes the anthropological landscape created over the past 200 years then a perfect context for our tour of the history of touring in Yucatan.

As an ethnographer working in a village adjacent to an impressive Terminal Classic archaeological site, I view the area’s archaeological remains, or rather the politics surrounding their excavation and management, as highly important to my research. Tourism has become an important economic force and a dynamic sociopolitical factor in this region,
and the most important attractions drawing tourists are the monumental remains of the past and the authentic cultural displays of the present. The connections made between the two are dependent on which map, guide, or other public interpretation is available; however they are historically dictated at the institutional level. This has come from the Mexican agencies promoting tourism and managing cultural resources, as well as university-based projects and international scientific organizations. It is this institutional history of who tells the story of the past and present that is of great interest. More interesting yet is the present contestation of whether or not these interpretations should include voices from outside of governmental and academic institutions and, if so, how these transitions should be made.

This remainder of this chapter reviews the major phases of exploration (Black 1990) or tour-ing in Yucatan. Like much of Latin America, this was an exciting destination for adventurers in the 1800s. While many who came in the first half of the 19th century were men of leisure, they most often spent their leisure time imagining the origins of the ruined cities where they set up camp. I have identified six major phases of the exploration of Yucatan through touring and archaeology (see Figure 23). These are exploration, institutionalized archaeology, indigenismo, mass tourism, alternative tourism, and most recently hacienda tourism.

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These are of course not firm, nor do they fit nicely into adjacent time slots. Instead, they are more like the people who we find touring: varied, in search of different experiences during their tour, and desiring different types of objects to bring back as souvenirs.

**Explorations after Independence, 1821 to 1924**
After México’s independence from Spain in 1821, the pre-Colombian history of the country was suddenly available for access and interpretation by both nationals working to forge a new, independent Mexican identity and by international explorers and scientists (Evans 2004:11). Exploration continued through the early 19th century as part of the colonization and pacification of New Spain. This was a time filled with tales of adventure in the greatly unexplored regions of Africa and the Americas. The books written by those who traveled for months by sea and found things previously un-fathomable to the European imagination were being purchased as quickly as they could be printed. According to R. Tripp Evans, “more publications devoted to Mexican antiquities appeared within the nation’s first two decades of independence, in fact, than had been produced during the past three centuries of Spanish rule” (2004:10). Many explorers launched their expeditions under the auspices of government commissions to Spanish America. Moneyed men of high, if not regal, classes were able to petition for commissions on the basis that they had the finances to fund their...
expeditions. This arrangement yielded benefits to both the government and the individual; the government was able to maintain involvement in Latin America, and the individual had a viable pretense for their unconventional wanderlust.

Perhaps the most prominent of these explorers in Mesoamerica was John Lloyd Stephens, who was accompanied by Frederick Catherwood in his expeditions throughout Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (Evans 2004:44). Upon their return from their first expedition throughout Central America, Stephens published a monograph filled with tales of adventure and incredible sketches. The success of this first publication in 1841 funded the duo’s second expedition to Yucatan. The archaeological travel narratives that resulted from this trip were published as a monograph in 1843 to great success. Perhaps the excitement over Stephens’ stories from Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan stems from their singular tone and approach to documentation. Stephens was not interested in postulating grand new theories about the origin of the monuments he found or in rehashing the “dubious scholarship” of the earlier generation of European explorers in the region (Evans 2004:45, Black 1990:46). Instead he set out to quietly propose that the ruins of Maya civilization were not of Old World origin, but in fact were created indigenously and at a much later date that was previously argued (Evans 2004:45).

One of the themes that run through Stephens’ writings is the contrast of the glorious civilization glimpsed by the public via Catherwood’s drawings and the ruin in which the people around the crumbling monuments lived. An example of this juxtaposition is seen in Catherwood’s drawing of the arch at Kabah, in which we see a scantily clad man—presumably a native—staring up at the edifice. This image serves to remind the reader that the people left here are not the great architects of these cities, but instead are merely porters.
and laborers (Evans 2004:66).

“The Maya Indians of present-day Yucatan can be said to dwell in the ruined house of their ancestors...but it is the archaeologist, not the Indian, who sees the grandson living in the broken shell of the grandfather’s mansion; certainly the Indian attributes to the situations no quality of pathos. The ruins are not, for him, a heritage.” (Redfield 1932)

During this period, ancient history and historical remains were the destination; however, they had no connection to modern Maya residents. People living near abandoned cities were a labor pool. In this phase of the tour, history was not heritage.

**The Institutionalization of American Archaeology, 1920-1970**

While earlier explorers came from France, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, archaeologists working in the Maya world are generally trained in the United States at one of four institutions: The Peabody Institute at Harvard, The Carnegie Institute of Washington, Tulane University, and the University of Pennsylvania (Black 1990:37). The Institutional Period saw a shift in the funding of archaeological explorations and excavations coming from wealthy dilettantes, explorers, and gentlemen of leisure to funding through U.S. universities and affiliated academic institutions, such as the four listed here (Golden and Borgstede 2004:271).

With the shift to the funding sources of Maya archaeology, governments have sway over which projects were funded and even over questions of research design. While this period was also accompanied by intensive ethnographic and ethnohistoric research in modern Maya communities, when it came to the question of their potential stake in the archaeological history they were considered to have very little sway (Golden and Borgstede 2004:270).

Additionally, the focus and scope of archaeological research became narrower, which in turn
limited the venues for dissemination of results. It was not until Sylvanus G. Morley’s (1946)*The Ancient Maya* was published that a semi-popular report on Maya archaeology was available.

Unique among these four major institutions that have led scholarship in the Maya world is the Carnegie Institute of Washington (CIW). The CIW was founded in what Quetzil Castañeda calls the “third space” between the university and government-sponsored scientific agencies (Castañeda 2008:29). In 1902, at the time in which the CIW was formed, it was the only non-governmental agency embarking on scientific investigations in the Maya world. According to Castañeda, “The Carnegie projects, by conscious design, converted Yucatan into a laboratory, a research lab in which the experiment was civilization itself” (Quetzil E. Castañeda 1996). The CIW is, according to Trefil and Hazan, “one of the most important and yet least studied institutions in the history of American Science” (Castañeda cf Trefil and Hazan 2008:31).

With the inception of the Maya program, the CIW became the dominant agency in Maya studies. Under Sylvanus G. Morley, the CIW sought out new sets of archaeological remains in hopes of “revealing and restoring the grandeur of Maya civilization” (Black 1990:77). The excavations at Chichén Itzá in the Northern Maya Lowlands began in 1924 as part of the CIW’s first large-scale excavation project, and continued for the next 15 years under the institutional leadership of Sylvanus G. Morley, Alfred V. Kidder, and Harry E.D. Pollock (Black 1990:75). The archaeological site of Chichen was chosen because Morely believed it to be the principle city of the New Empire Maya. Additional rationale for site selection included logistical factors such as accessibility, available labor force, and healthful climate, as well as the site’s ability to offer at least twenty years of study, be arguably the
center or metropolis of the surrounding regions, and whose significance to Maya archaeology justifies intensive investigation (Rivers, Jenks, and Morley 1913).

These criteria for site selection are not specific to Chichén Itzá, but are in fact relevant to the selection of sites throughout Mesoamerica. According to Black, “sites with the most impressive standing masonry architecture and carved stone monuments have been singled out throughout the history of Maya archaeology simply because such features epitomize Maya civilization” (1990:239).

**Rural Surveys and Household Archaeology**

In the middle of the 20th century an attack was launched on Maya archaeology, and especially the Carnegie projects in Yucatan, by Clyde Kluckhohn and Walter W. Taylor (Sabloff 2004:13). The timing was particularly important because it was contemporaneous with the publication of Morley’s (1946) synthesis of the field, as previously mentioned. One of the major criticisms directed at the discipline was their fixation with the monumental, ritual architecture found at the major sites throughout the region. Kluckhohn and Taylor assert that the Carnegie projects were interested only in research leading to an understanding of the elite and did little to investigate the archaeological remains of the common Maya (Taylor 1948:59). According to Sabloff, this was a major turning point in Maya Archaeology and, he argues, “that in many respects, explicitly, implicitly, or in effect, Maya studies over the past five decades have been a massive response to the criticism that Kluckhohn and Taylor leveled against the field” (2004:14). The result of this response has been, among other things, a new focus on the archaeological investigations and remains of the non-elite. In practice, this is seen in increasing frequency of rural surveys being included in projects and in the recent emphasis placed on household archaeological remains.
Indigenismo and Archaeological Remains

“Since John Lloyd Stephens bought Copan for $50.00, the governments that control the modern Maya realm have become increasingly aware and protective of the archaeological legacy of the Maya civilization” (Black 1990:38).

In Mexico, as in many countries, archaeological remains are considered to be property of the nation and a source of patrimony. In México particularly, this patrimony has been an important foundation for the creation and promotion of a national identity. As part of the indigenismo movement, the pre-Colombian past in México became an important key to promoting México and Mexicans as hybrids of an indigenous past and a cosmopolitan future. From the 1960s on, national identity became a crucial concern for many Latin American countries and, by extension, the foreign archaeologists working there. The remnants of the past became the heritage of the nation, or patrimony.

The promotion of archaeological sites through heritage tourism is a prominent strategy on the part of Mexican government agencies, namely the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) and the National Secretary of Tourism (SECTUR). The designation of several archaeological zones in the Maya world as sites of world heritage through the United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization (UNESCO) has increased the scope of these promotions. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Maya world are, in order of inscription to the list, Tikal (1979), Copan (1980), Quirigua (1981), Palenque (1987), Chichén Itzá (1988), Uxmal (1996), and Calakmul (2002).

Because nearly all of the 46 sites on the Yucatan Peninsula (encompassing the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo) are administered by INAH, the Mexican government is complicit in the policies made for the excavation and opening of sites
to tourism. With the designation of sites onto UNESCO’s list, the archaeological remains became more than patrimony of México. They became the heritage of all of the world’s citizens. Out of the state promotions of tourism between the 1920s and 1960s came Project Cancun. Cancun is the tourist emporium located on the northeast tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. Since its creation in the 1970s, it has become a destination famed for its white beaches, turquoise sea, and 280-kilometer coral reef. For guests it offers, “good and predictable hotels, an exotic ambiance of margaritas and mariachis, lush tropical forests, and Maya ruins” (Pi-Sunyer, Thomas, and Daltabuit 2001:122). There are about 150 hotels in Cancun with more than 24,000 rooms and 380 restaurants. Four million visitors arrive each year in an average of 190 flights daily. Tourist expenditures totaled US$8.8 billion in 2002, 5.4 percent more than in 2001, and the highest in Latin America.

The development of Cancun, like most tourism development, occurred in many phases. It began as a government economic policy favoring the international and national economic investment in the hotel industry. During this process, the Mexican state took on the new role of initiating and planning tourism development (Michael Clancy 2001). From the conception of the idea to the receipt of 21.5 million dollars in funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 1971, the “Cancun Project” was orchestrated by the government through newly formed and empowered agencies such as FONATUR, the Fondo Nacional del Fomento al Turismo, or the National Foundation for the Stimulation of Tourism (Clancy 2001:133).

In many ways, the incorporation of Maya heritage in the development and promotion of Cancun can be seen as similar to that of the exploration and archaeology phases. That is, the residents, or modern Maya, were seen as a labor pool. The history of the ancient Maya
was promoted as an attraction, and little connection was made between the two. While archaeological remains had then become both patrimony of the nation and a destination, they were still, for the modern Maya, not a heritage.

**Adventure tours**

In the 1990s, some tourists began looking for an alternative to the sterile, constructed experience offered by the resorts of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. These were travelers who saw themselves as adventurers rather than tourists. They were searching for unique experiences and felt that finding something “off the beaten path” would provide this for them. The Yucatan Peninsula, which had once been Mexico’s Wild West, was now tamed. As Dina Berger notes, “the sharp edges of the Mexican experience have gradually been rubbed off, leaving behind a pleasing essence of foreign travel” (Berger and Wood 2010).

This was in many ways the ultimate marker of success for the Cancun Project and was one of the most attractive factors for many visitors. For others however, they felt that seeking out authentic Maya culture was the only culture left in the region. Many modern Maya communities are off the “beaten path” both literally and figuratively. Even those who do live on major tourism routes present a lifestyle that is exotic to visitors. Mass tourism development led the bushwhacking campaign and now the Mayan Riviera is, in the eyes of many tourists, “beaten.”

This marked a major shift in the aesthetic of touring in Yucatan. Now modern Maya were being sought out as both attraction and destination. By the mid-1990s the state secretary of tourism, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages (CDI), and the national forestry service (CONAFOR) were identifying villages to target for community-based tourism and conservation initiatives. Cultural tours that incorporated authentic living
Maya culture, archaeological sites, and ecotourism activities became wildly popular. The past finally became, for the Maya, a heritage.

**Hacienda Tourism**
Finally, we arrive at the last phase of our tour, the hacienda. The beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century saw yet another shift in the motivations for touring in Yucatan. Historic haciendas began to be developed into luxury hotels. This mode of touring is reminiscent of the touring during the exploration phase. The modern residents of the towns near a restored hacienda (many of whom are descendants of enslaved hacienda workers) are again a labor pool. It is the structure itself, the remnants of the past, that are the attraction. Similar to earlier phases, the remains of the hacienda are not, for them, a heritage. The violent and oppressive history of the debt peonage system that produced tons of the much needed sisal fiber during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century is all but erased from sight. What remains are historic buildings and employees trained to provide fine service to the temporary *patrones*. This is in some ways a reversal of the reconstructed ethnicity seen in community-based tourism. Ethnographers in Yucatan are finding fertile ground for study in this new twist on touring. Lisa Breglia calls the haciendas Yucatan’s “other Maya heritage” which is overshadowed by the archaeological heritage (Breglia 2009). This surely is a phase of touring that we will learn more about in the near future.

**Toward a Public Archaeology**
Public interpretation is the version (official or otherwise) of history presented at an archaeological or heritage site or museum exhibit (Walker 2009). It is through this interpretation that the public, be they tourist or local, is educated on the content and meaning of what they are seeing. Appropriate interpretation, according to Walker (2009), Castañeda
(1996), and others includes an explanation of the fact that buildings were restored and not
discovered, and that piles of rubble are not natural features of the landscape.

For much of its history, archaeology in Yucatan has not produced site reports or
otherwise disseminated data in a manner suitable for public consumption, either by local
communities or others. This was due, perhaps, to the idea that locals and the lay public would
not be interested in archaeology. This, however, is not the case. K. Anne Pyburn and Richard
Wilk contend that, with regard to local interest in archaeology, “they may not see local
history the way that archaeologists do, but enthusiasm for information and objects from the
past appears in many cultures and its magnitude is often staggering” (Pyburn and Wilk
1995:80). In response to the various calls for a public anthropology, many sites are
developing websites, school curriculums, and other ways to disseminate information.

**Conclusion**

This retrospective on anthropology and touring in Yucatan has provided a history of the way
that modern Maya have been alternately included and excluded from the conceptualization of
heritage and the promotion of tourism. It will surely be interesting to see how this ebb and
flow continues as both the desires of tour-ees shift and the role of the local community
changes. Each of these phases is a signpost on our tour that reminds us of what came before
and, perhaps, predicts what the future of tourism in Yucatan will bring. The cyclical nature of
ancient, erased, government-sponsored, authentic, and now again erased Maya-ness can be
seen particularly well in the case of community-based tourism development in Ek’Balam.
The village of Ek’Balam is an example of a community that has been targeted for the
development of alternative tourism initiatives.

The lack of education available to so-called descendant communities about what is
touted as their Maya heritage is but one example of disconnects between the touristic presentation of Maya culture and heritage and the actual practice of exploring that culture. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss the way that the designation of history as heritage is the crucial component in the creation and maintenance of an ecosystem of authenticity.
Part II: The Development of Community

The relationship between host and guest has been characterized in myriad ways over the last 35 years. Some have presented it as an unequal relationship based on wealth disparities, and others have spent much time looking for the “impact” of the host on the guest. Since the shift in many of our field sites to alternative tourism development strategies we have seen subtle changes in the paradigms researchers use to frame their work. Whether or not it functions well, the community-based tourism model at least forces us to consider the agency of the hosts as developers and managers of tourism destinations. Numerous case studies report on the way that tourism affects the lives of local populations, however Stronza states that “we have yet to develop models or analytical frameworks that could help us predict the conditions under which locals experience tourism in particular ways” (2001:263). This is especially true when investigating alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism and community-based tourism initiatives.

The community-based approach to development takes for granted the fact that there is a community in which to base the project or initiative. The consideration of community is nothing new in Mesoamerica. Ethnographers in Mesoamerica have been studying “community” for nearly as long as they have been working in the region. Early in the history of Mesoamerican ethnography, the community emerged as the central form of social organization into which all “peasant-Indians” could be classified and from which all behavior could be understood. As John Monaghan commented, the triad of “Indian peasant community” is as ubiquitous in ethnographies from the region as discussions of corn, beans, and squash (Monaghan 1999:3).
The two chapters in this section of the dissertation address community from different sides. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the way that ethnographic studies of Mesoamerica incorporated the concept of community, and offers some insight as to why. Chapter 5 examines community not as an object of ethnographic study, but as a foundation for development initiatives. Here a brief history of development and anthropology’s engagement with it provides a context for understanding how the community-based model came into fashion and use. Through these two chapters, we will come to see that a community is rarely what it seems from the outside. The Ay Balam family again will help us to understand the ways that Ek’Balam resembles and differs from the community imagined by the agencies funding the CBT project.

**Summer, 2009**
The air outside this afternoon is hot, dry, and relentless. It has not rained yet, and people are beginning to worry that the rains will not come in time. Doña Goma just returned from the Diconsa\(^6\) store with ten kilos of maize. There was not much of a harvest last year because of the lack of rainfall, so the Ay Balam family must purchase a large portion of their corn this year. Fortunately, Diconsa just announced that it would not raise the price of white corn this year as was feared. I ask Doña Goma how they are able to afford the maize, and she replies, “We can’t. *Estamos en crisis por la enfermedad que dicen* (We are in crisis because of the sickness that they are talking about).” It has been two months since the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) outbreak, and everyone is feeling the effects. Goma has not sold one hammock in two months and there have been very few village tours. They are cutting corners

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\(^6\) The *Tiendas Comunitarias Diconsa* (Diconsa Community Stores) program aims to improve nutritional capacity in Mexico’s rural communities of between 200 and 2500 residents. This program came to Ek’Balam in 2008, and has been very well received.
everywhere they can. She returned to Eden Retreat to ask Joan if she needs help with the laundry or cleaning, but Joan is barely able to stay open this summer and does not have the resources to take on any additional employees. Last week, she had to cut her staff to a bare minimum.

The house and yard are noticeably quiet these days. Eugenio is still in Cancun working, though there is not work for him every day and some weeks he does not work at all. This means he comes home less frequently and brings less money for the family when he does. Angel left last week for the coast to find work with his brother. Eugenio said that his boss was looking for additional people for a different job, so Angel will be able to make a little money. Don Lucas rides up on his bike to the Almendra tree where Goma and I are enjoying the shade. She is weaving a hammock with brown and olive green thread. Don Lucas thinks these colors are awful and tells her as much, but most women in the village maintain that having a military green hammock is the best way to make a sale. They know that gringos wear this color and that these are the most frequently purchased hammocks.

Don Lucas joins us and shares his news. He just returned from Temozon, where he went to work for the day fixing a roof. On the way home, he stopped at Doña Dona’s house to check on Rosa, his eldest daughter. Last month she eloped with a man from the village. This devastated both families, and created high tensions in the village. Teofilo, Rosa’s husband, is the son of Don Jose Cruz and Doña Filomena. Jose Cruz was one of the socios of the CBT project, but dropped out of the project a few months ago. While Don Lucas is not one of the project’s leaders, interactions between Jose Cruz and all of the remaining socios are tense. The Dzib Tuz family is large, and Teofilo’s eldest sister is married to Don Lucas’ younger brother. They have separated themselves from Lucas’ family to such an extent that
when his mother fell ill last winter, they refused to contribute money to her medical bills. When a young couple elopes, it creates a dramatic situation in which two families who have had no time to consider the idea of the union are suddenly joined. Rosa and Teofilo have been sent to live with Doña Dona for the time being while their parents cool off.

With the three eldest children gone, only Federico, Nacho, and Maria de la Cruz remain. Federico is fifteen now and is working with one of the groups in the volunteer summer camp. This summer the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (CCY) is holding their first summer camp program. There are 35 college students from all over Mexico, South America, and Spain in the village for this three-week program. They are divided into teams, and take turns working on the four community development projects initiated for the camp: adobe stoves, nature trails, a community museum, and an art project for the children. Each team has children of the CBT project’s socios on it as part of the participatory nature of the program. Federico and his friends love it! It was not initially designed to attract only the young men in the village, but because it is inappropriate for young women to run around the town with strangers none of the socios let their daughters join the teams. Since the camp started two weeks ago, Federico only comes home to eat and to bathe. Two nights ago, he spent the whole night with the volunteers at the comisaría in the center of town. All of them are camping out there, and their local teammates are spending increasing amounts of time with them. His parents were upset, but they see how much he is enjoying himself and so let it be. Whenever someone asks where Federico is, Don Lucas replies that he is at the party. “Ek’Balam siempre está de fiesta ahora (it is always a party in Ek’Balam now).”

Nacho on the other hand is uninterested in anything that has to do with the Cabañas, the volunteers, or tourists in general. This is the first time that the two boys are not spending
most of their time together. Nacho brushes this off though, and talks about how happy he is to work in the milpa. The crisis forces Lucas to take any chamba (odd job) that comes up, so Nacho has been responsible for much of the agricultural work this season. He is as worried as his father is about the lack of rain.

It feels as though the heat is making each day longer and more difficult. Many households are in the midst of conflicts, which is all the more apparent because Don Lucas is currently serving as the town sheriff. In the last two weeks, someone coming to him about a conflict or altercation has awaked the household in the night many times. The crisis caused by the “enfermedad que dicen (the sickness they are talking about)” extends beyond financial woes and into the social life of the village. There are numerous allegations of brujería (witchcraft) being made against the Dzib kin group, and this has everyone on edge. One member of the Tuz kin group died quite unexpectedly in May, and another young man is gravely ill. Some residents whisper that Hilario Dzib Tuz is a Way Miis, and place the blame on him for these afflictions. Others believe that the entire kin group is at fault, and swap stories about sighting his grandmother with playing cards and of the unexplained vigor of her flowers in this time of drought. Chismes calientes (hot gossips) rise up from all corners of the village and blow around on the hot, dry breeze.

The contrast between the animated activities of the volunteer camp and the strained interactions among many residents is striking. I comment on this and Don Lucas tells me that it is la canicula. This is high summer when the ground is almost dried out; the dog days. La

7 The story of the Way is common throughout Yucatan. In short, the way is a human who can take the shape of various animals in order to conduct various nefarious activities in the night. Ron Loewe provides a detailed discussion of this story in his article “The Wisdom of Way Kot: Art, Rhetoric, and Political Economy” (Loewe 2008). In the case of Don Hilario, he is accused of taking on the form of a miis (cat) in order to move unseen through the night and enter houses of the Tuz kin group.
canicula makes everyone a bit harried as they hope for rain. The prospects are not good, according to him, because for the fifth consecutive summer the village will not hold a cha’ chaak ceremony to call down the rains.

The heat is keeping everyone from being industrious, and we are all content to keep our activities confined to the shade of the Almendra. Nacho unties a bundle from the back of his bicycle and lays it out on the ground. He returned just before lunch from spending all morning in the milpa collecting the vines he is now untangling. He and Don Lucas set about cutting them to various lengths, and Doña Goma instructs me to go get my camera and my notebook. She is sure that I will want to take pictures and write about this. Don Lucas is teaching Nacho how to make a xux, which is a large cylindrical basket used for harvesting maize. It is carried on the back by a tumpline across the forehead. Nacho is animated and clearly waited some time for his father to teach him this craft. Not all men still make their own baskets, and it is a point of pride for Don Lucas to teach his son this craft. Doña Goma wonders if tourists would buy smaller versions of these baskets. Nacho responds “What tourists? Ya no hay gringos aca (there aren’t any more gringos here)!”
Chapter 4: Imagining Community

The quest for “community” has been called an obsession by some and a failure by others. What can be agreed upon is the fact that it has been an important, if troublesome, force driving development, scholarship, theory, and practice. In the recent volume *Seductions of Community* (2006), Gerald Creed traces the progression of “community” as a concept, romantic notion, and finally as “modern pastoral” (2006:23).

Victor Turner introduces a discussion of structure, *communitas*, and *societas*. *Communitas* is defined as a model of human relations that emerges in a liminal phase and is characterized by a lack of structure and communion of individuals in this liminal state who are connected by their collective role as submissive to the dominant authority (Turner 1995:127). What is interesting here is the further discussion of *communitas* and its distinction from “community.” With the current interest in defining “community”—whether to espouse its virtue or critique its shortcomings as a unit of analysis—Turner’s discussion remains relevant forty years later. Turner makes a broad definition of possible units of social structure as “relationships between statuses, roles, and offices” (1995:130).

The systematic ethnographic study of community in Mesoamerica has contributed significantly to the conceptual study of communities in other culture areas. Mesoamerica presents an interesting case for many reasons. Hugo Nutini commented that in Mesoamerica the community had “long ceased to be part of the tribe but was not yet part of the nation” (Nutini 1996:1).

Peasants, Limited Good, and the Quest for Community

In the first half of the 20th century, Mesoamerica served as an “ethnographic laboratory” for anthropologists interested in understanding peasants and in identifying the elusive
community. Among the first to begin the proliferation of peasant village studies were Eric Wolf (Wolf 1955; Wolf 1957), Robert Redfield (Redfield 1941; Redfield and Rojas 1934), and Frank Cancian (Cancian 1965; Cancian 1972). The community emerged in Mesoamerican ethnographic studies as the most useful and common unit of analysis early on. In addition to attempting to classify individuals as peasant, campesino, and Maya, various ethnographers attempted to create the community and its particularities as bounded entities for study. For example, Sol Tax (Tax 1937) used linguistic classifications and administrative designation of the municipality to refer to groups and to imply ethnic difference. He saw the municipio (municipality) as both an ethnic and geographic unit. Using the existing political and geographic designation created for Tax a tangible unit by which he could better deal with the study of communities (1937).

In contrast to this early work by Tax, Eric Wolf (1955) emphasized the need for historicizing ethnographic research and acknowledging that the community cannot be a static category because it is influenced by political and economic interactions both externally and within a particular community. Similarly, George Foster discussed the ways in which the Popoluca were categorized and found that while they were originally thought to be one group based on geographic and linguistic affiliations, it was in fact discovered that they were multiple groups, or what he called a “conquest culture” (George M. Foster 1943). With this, Foster effectively brought identity into the process of defining units of analysis for study in Mesoamerica.

Cancian also used the community as a unit in his early research, however in later publications he stated that by the mid-1970s ideals about the peasantry had been transformed by capitalist relations of production, state relations, and the role of the so-called peasant in
the national and international political economy (Cancian 1992). With this and similar assertions by other ethnographers, it became clear that the community was not an adequate unit for study in the Maya World. According to George Marcus and Michael Fischer, “the relationship of local cultures to national and international systems has long been problematic for anthropologists” (Fischer and Marcus 1986; see also Knorr-Cetina and Harré 1981). In many cases, external influences were considered secondary to the local situation, yet at the same time the macro world systems perspective was guilty of presuming that all change moved from the core to the periphery, and that there was no generation of change happening at the local level. Later, Edward Fischer argued for a middle ground between these two extremes by suggesting that Maya individuals been seen as “actively seeking their self-conceived best interests while working within larger systems not entirely of their own making” (Fischer 2001:6).

**Community Change**

One of the most common recurring themes in the ethnographic literature from Mesoamerica is change. Some have argued that the peasant is resistant to change while others have presented him as agreeable to it. For Frank Cancian, change has been the preeminent theme running through his fieldwork, as well as the four monographs he has written about the Tzotzil community of Zinacantan in the Chiapan highlands. There are numerous possibilities for why change has been such an important theme for him, one of which could be his early dependence on Eric Wolf’s (Wolf 1957) model for the closed corporate community. It is difficult for many communities to fit into this otherwise useful model. Perhaps the early designation of Zinacantan as a closed corporate community in his first monograph, *Economics and Prestige* (1965), has framed his work since then and led him to see the
economic shifts and “opening” of the community over time as not symptomatic of the numerous changes happening at the global level, but as specifically signposts of a declining community.

That Cancian focused on community as an object of study is not surprising. As he states, “in 1960 anthropologists studied communities-with as much regularity as Zinacantecos wore their costumes” (1972:17). His fieldwork there continued through the 1970s when the focus shifted from community to world-systems, as ideas about the peasantry became complicated by capitalist relations of production and the role of peasants in political economy. These factors illuminate his reasoning for examining change; not only was life in the village altered, but his theoretical inclinations were in the process of major change. The often-found perception of indigenous groups as slow to change, backwards, and un/under developed has led to a general approach of the state that assumes little change on the part of indigenous communities. Tax, on the other hand, argues, “developing communities need the freedom of the marketplace and a good display of merchandise from which to choose, and no salesman” (Tax 1957).

To begin a discussion of wealth differences among peasant societies one must first look at local determiners of wealth. This is one of the crucial missed steps in many early community studies throughout Mesoamerica, because if an emic definition of wealth is not established then the community as a whole will be viewed as “poor.” The concept of relative poverty is important to this process, as it aids in the identification of wealth. Oscar Lewis further argues that distribution is crucial to understanding wealth and, because so much of wealth is gained through land, that land tenure is of the utmost importance (Lewis 1947:184).
Campesino, Ejidatario, Peasant, Person
Orton Baños, following Arturo Warman (1988) defines campesinos as individuals who meet all of the following four criterion; 1) depend fundamentally on their work or labor, 2) maintain profound connections with the land, either directly or indirectly, 3) retain control over decisions made with regard to the production process, and 4) are integrated as individuals and as members of households into community structures (Baños Ramírez 1989:24). This definition does not however extend itself to ejidatario because that is a judicial term and status. This, according to Baños, has resulted in theoretically vacant investigations of campesinos living within the ejidal structure. Similarly, de la Peña presents six working definitions of the peasantry as:

1) Transitional, 2) Resilient to invasions from the outside world, 3) Based on the household as production-consumption unit, 4) A result of the impact of wider society—especially capitalist society, 5) Linked to the wider society via asymmetrical links, and 6) As a mode of production that is articulated to other modes of production, especially capitalist ones, and often referred to as ‘petty-commodity.’ (De la Peña 1982:7)

A main characteristic of this mode is “its inability to generate more capital than necessary simply to perpetuate itself” (1982:7).

George Foster’s concept of limited good (G.M. Foster 1965) is generally concerned with the nature of cognitive orientation and the way that this is represented economically. Foster argues that because a peasant community is a closed system, the commonly accepted view is that all things exist in finite quantity that cannot increase. What this means for members of a community is that increasing one’s lot can only be done at the expense of another (1965:296). Theoretically, this would drive peasants to either the extreme of maximum cooperation or individualism. Foster states that the first choice is uncommon, as
peasants always choose individualism (1965:301). Following this logic, Foster calls for a change in the fundamental goals of development by working to change the peasants’ view of limited good rather than increasing achievement. The concept of limited good has been useful to Mesoamerican community studies, but it has also been roundly criticized. James Gregory questions whether limited good is not a peasant worldview of all goods and wealth, but instead of their access to them (Gregory et al. 1975:73). Further, John Bennett suggests a reversal of Foster’s model by seeing limited good as not a typology but rather a result of prolonged exploitation (Bennett 1966).

Wolf defines the peasant as an “agricultural producer in effective control of land who carries on agriculture as a means of livelihood, not as a business for profit” (1965:148). Peasants are then organized into peasant communities with similar characteristics, which “induce them to content themselves with the rewards of shared poverty” (1965:160).

Residents of rural towns and villages (whether referred to as peasants, campesinos, or simply “rural poor”) are shifting to a dependence on multiple earning strategies. This leads theorists such as Sachs (Sachs et al. 1995), Whatmore (1993) and other to concede that rurality cannot be confined to a descriptive term for agricultural producers. Rural residents throughout Mesoamerica were long thought to be engaging mostly in penny capitalism (Tax 1972), however Cornelia Flora (1990) “argues that global monetary and fiscal policies now assume more importance than trade in rural-urban relations” (in Sachs 1995:143). This is surely the case in Ek’Balam, where many have given up on corn and are farming tourists.

Like the idea of community, rurality is a difficult notion to wrangle. Duncan Earle defines rural as, “both a physical, ecological relationship to a specific natural habitat, through the basic productive unit of the household, and a cultural orientation toward maintenance of
that relationship” (Earle 1984). Alicia ReCruz further complicates the definition of a rural, Maya, community with her study of families who travel back and forth from Cancun to Chan Kom (ReCruz 1996). Their life in the city as laborers in the tourism trade surely disconnects them from the rural community defined by so many ethnographers in Mesoamerica; however, their maintenance of social and cultural ties to Chan Kom creates a situation in which households must straddle two lifestyles and two milpas (ReCruz 1996).

Chan Kom is a Maya village located just 70 kilometers south of Ek’Balam. In 1950, the village of Chan Kom was similar to Ek’Balam in many ways. The population was about 251 in 1934 and 437 in 1948, and there were five of what Redfield referred to as “great patrilineal families” (Redfield 1950) which were among the village founders and maintain prominence within the community. According to Redfield, “when villagers are engaged in commerce, under each other’s noses, and compete for trade, the situation is plainly different” as compared to if everyone is involved in agricultural pursuits (1950:62). The subgroups of these Yucatecan villages and the anciently and persistently competitive groups are the great patrilineal families. If these families more or less co-operate for the common good, the village prospers. If they engage in bitter struggles with one another, the village cannot go forward” (1950:62).

Reexaminations of Redfield’s “little community” model brought into question the assumptions that came along with relying on the community as a category in ethnographic inquiry. The fact that it left little room for understanding internal stratification and socio-political power structures made the little community only useful for evaluation at the surface level.
**Household-level Analysis**

With the publication of *Household Ecology* (1997), Richard Wilk established himself at the forefront of the movement to use the household as a unit of analysis in economic research and, more broadly, in ethnographic studies of kinship and community. Wilk provides a roadmap for understanding agrarian social formation and the economic system within and around agrarian communities. The household is, as Wilk argues, the most efficient unit for analysis in this situation because of the need for labor, knowledge, and leadership within this particular social formation. Earle states, “rural communities are aggregations of households, bound together by proximity, a moral universe, and social bounding mechanisms” (1984:4). What separates Wilk’s approach from other attempts at providing taxonomy for local-level social organization is his attention to the “black box” trap that so many scholars fall into (1997:82)? Wilk uses the black box to refer to the homogenizing tendency that accompanies so many community studies. Instead of positioning the Kekchi Maya as the "other" or opposite of the Spaniard, Wilk maintains his focus on what he calls the "niche.” In doing so, he avoids using a schema to discuss structural changes in household organization and economics with the expansion and contraction of production, thereby steering clear of the Redfieldian continuum upon which so many communities have been placed. His attention is instead on the household decision-making processes and their consequences. Wilk uses the household as an active center, but not as an agent itself. This conveys the dynamism of the household and allows him to move away from the homogenizing effects of "community.” Throughout the process, Wilk continues to recognize the variability within and between households in size, structure, and function.
Community-based tourism and the Legacy of Community

The intersection of the concern for community and its application to the arena of development is apparent through the observation that as the commons become resources, whether natural, cultural, or material, they are moved out of the conception of community and toward the market. This serves to further confuse the concept, according to Escobar (Escobar 1996). The unqualified definition of community assumes a lack of stratification within the target group, and is too often used to “denote a culturally and politically homogenous social system or one that, at least implicitly, is internally cohesive and more or less harmonious” (Mansuri and Rao 2004). A widely known example of this assumption is Redfield’s “little community” (Redfield 1941).

From the new tradition of participatory development comes the concept of community-based tourism development. This approach is an attempt to use grassroots development practices and the cultural knowledge of stakeholders to create a tourism project whose benefits are widely dispersed among the “hosts,” and whose aspects of marketing and cultural performance are negotiated and determined to be acceptable by the community. Some of the first attempts at community-based tourism were integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs). These projects were a part of the Wildlands and Human Needs Program, which was initiated by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1985 (Stonich 2005:80). According to Stonich (2005), the goal of these projects was “to improve the quality of life of rural people through practical field projects that integrated the management of natural resources with grassroots economic development” (Larson et al. 1998). While ICDPs now represent over half of the funding allocations of the WWF, in the 1980s they were practically unheard of. The WWF now separates the ICDPs into first generation
projects of the 1980s, and second generation projects undertaken in the 1990s and later (Stonich 2005:80). The first generation projects became large and unmanageable, similar to the rural development projects of the 1970s, and are now recognized as not being very integrated at all (Stonich 2005:80). The ICDPs of the second generation emerging in the 1990s were modified to incorporate a view of local people as the stewards of resource management. These projects were commonly referred to as community-based conservation projects, and attempted to provide for more community involvement and strengthened relationships between conservation and development (Stonich 2005:82). The improvements in project design notwithstanding, this generation of ICDPs was criticized for some of the same things mentioned in critiques of community-based tourism development; namely that they attempt to standardize concepts such as community, participation, and representation (Stonich 2005:82), thus generalizing the needs and desires of the intended beneficiaries of a project into a “one size fits all” model.

The problematic use of “community” as a target of development and the unquestioned association between ejido and community is clearly demonstrated in the design and implementation of community-based tourism development. In Ek’Balam, as in other community-based development projects throughout the region, the project was designed to use the existing ejidal structure in the village as the framework for determining who would participate in the project as part of “the community.” All ejidatarios and their families were eligible to become socios of the project. They would then be involved in the construction, management, and maintenance of the project in exchange for a share of the profits. The problem, however, begins with the fact that not every household in the village has an ejidatario associated with it. There are a few cases in which a woman chose to stay in the
village and bring her husband to live there based on economic factors or the need to care for an aging family member. The husband cannot become an ejidatario. Another reason that a household may be landless has to do with the shifting land tenure system. Because it is now possible for individuals to sell all or part of their land, the available plots to those who previously could have solicited land in the ejido to make their homes or milpas is decreasing. The fact that the community-based tourism project begins by limiting participation to ejidal members automatically excludes some residents from participation and, in turn, benefit.

Among some sections of the community there is much excitement about the CBT project, U Najil Ek’Balam (House of the Black Jaguar), locally referred to as “the Cabañas.” The employment it provides is of great importance to those directly benefitting from it, and the families that are closely involved talk about the pride that they feel when tourists come to stay there. The three men in charge of the organization are eager to improve their business and expand the services they have to offer visitors, and actively seek out the advice and assistance of both CDI and CCY. The self-stated objectives of the project are to: 1. Take advantage of the flora and fauna of the region through ecotourism; 2. Create tourist attractions from the caves and cenotes that were used for religious ceremonies; 3. Generate additional economic income for the community of Ek’Balam in order to stop the need for emigration of its residents; and 4. Become accustomed to providing good accommodations to local, national, and foreign visitors.

With the construction of U Najil Ek’Balam, the village of Ek’Balam became the location of CDI’s pilot community-based tourism development project. In the years since its completion, the Cabañas project has had both success and failure. Originally it was envisioned as a project that would benefit all members of the community, whether ejidatarios
or otherwise. This changed once the project got underway and it was determined that the existing *ejidal* structure would serve well as a structure for implementing the project, as and such that only *ejidatarios* would benefit directly.

The first was a grant from CDI. It was a grant for all of the inhabitants of this locality, because all of us deserve the help, even if they are not an *ejidatario*. The second came from CONAFOR [Mexican Forestry Agency]. They have helped us greatly. There still has not been any education for us though. This is one of the things that we are working on. The truth is that here almost no one has studied. Most no more than their grade school. We need to learn English, but it is hard…we are *campesinos* and we work. ~Don Rafael [Transcription 2009-0624 (11:21)]

The commitment on the part of participants involves a 24-hour shift as *velador*, or guard, every eighteen days and occasional donation of materials for upkeep of the structures and grounds through the provision of *guano*, or palm fronds, for the thatch roofs and wood from their parcels.

By 2007, at least five families that were working with the project decided that they no longer wanted to be involved. For some families in Ek’Balam the promised benefits simply ceased to justify the costs in time and, indirectly, in money. For the individuals and families who continue to work directly with the Cabañas this project remains an important source of income and even pride for them and they are eager to see it succeed. The attitude held by these individuals toward those who are not positive about the project is increasingly aggressive, as is the attitude of the latter to the former. In the three years between 2004 and 2007, numerous changes occurred that indicate this broader shift in the relations between the families who are and who are not participating in the village’s community-based tourism project.

I have spoken with members of the families who are no longer participating about
how and why they made this choice. Some individuals were not comfortable discussing their
decision and the reasoning behind it, which is understandable given the social pressures
surrounding the project. Justino is a twenty-five-year-old man who is the grandson of one of
the village founders. His father and grandfather decided to stop working with the CBT
project in 2005. For most of the project’s existence, they had questioned how widely it would
benefit the community, but after one of the men serving as a director of the association
showed up with a very large new truck the two men decided that they could no longer lend
their effort to the project. When asked why the family left the project, this was Justino’s
reply:

I read in the newspaper that they were sent lots of money by the government to build
their Cabañas, but the people have not seen any of this. Only some of the people are
working there, it is not good for everyone. They choose who they give money to and
who not to . . . There are rumors going around that new truck was bought with the
money that was for the Cabañas and the ejidatarios. Most of the people say it is so . . .
. Hopefully we will be able to talk enough to stop this at some point. They are the
only ones benefiting . . . they are very corrupt. For me and my father and my
grandfather, we are not in agreement about this. It will not grow into a tourist area
with them running things. I know that when you are talking with them you hear pretty
things coming from their mouths, they speak well. But it is because they don’t know
you. They think “well, she has come to help us; maybe she will make Ek’Balam
known to others.” This is what I do not like about the pueblo. It makes me feel bad
that it is like this in our pueblo. But it will never have big tourism if they do not
change. With the grants they were supposed to bring people, but there are none . . .
how will they pay for the Cabañas they built if no one comes? It would have been
better if they didn’t do it at all. ~Justino [Transcription 2005-0723 (37:04)]

The criticism from some members of the community notwithstanding, the leaders of
the CBT project are positive about the progress they have made as well as the effects the
project has had on the community. According to them, the benefits can be divided into three
parts: social, economic, and environmental. They state that the project has generated twenty-
three full time jobs and sixteen part time jobs that indirectly benefit 70 families living in the
community, and that with this work they are able to integrate all members of the ejido into
the project. According to official statements about the project given at a meeting with
funders, the economic benefits have provided a better quality of life for residents based on
the income from the sale of handicrafts and touristic services. On the environmental front,
they claim that the project has made the community more conscience about their natural
resources and as such, many have begun to reforest their parcels with plants that are useful as
both commercial products and for the improvement of the monte (forest) surrounding the
village.

Community Participation
Regardless of the successes of the community’s tourism project, participation declined by
twenty-four percent in the three year period between 2004 and 2007. Figure 24 shows that
overall rates of participation dropped consistently between 2004 and 2012, to the rate of only
32.50 percent of the collaborator sample involved with the CBT project currently. The
reported benefits of this project for the community as a whole vary depending on the source
of information. While the leaders of the Cabaña project state that 70 families are receiving
economic benefit from the project, I found this number to be greatly exaggerated when actual
levels of participation and sources of income were examined.
Reported sources of income also imply that many households do not have any direct financial benefit from tourism in the village. The average number of individuals living in one household unit is 6.63. Multiplying this number by the 70 families purported to be benefitting from the Cabañas project gives a product of 464 individuals—more than the entire population of the village. A number that is more realistic for stating economic benefit is 70 individuals, or about 11 households.

This follows closely the data from the sample group regarding responses about participation in the project and kin group membership. As we see in Figure 25, some kin groups have high levels of participation with the CBT project (Ay and May), while others reported sharp drops in participation during the same period. Participation among members of the Chan kin group fell by 37 percent and participation in the Tuz kin group fell by 46 percent. The decline seen in the Lopez kin group was less drastic at seventeen percent.
Figure 25. Levels of participation in CBT project by kin group

**Domination of the “Little Community”**
The phenomenon of elite capture or domination as demonstrated here is recognized as being particularly troublesome in the implementation and execution of community-based development initiatives. The operationalized definition of community-based projects centers on the control over the design, implementation, and management staying in the hands of “The Community.” As mentioned earlier, the use of this term without qualification fails to account for the local structures – social, economic, and political – that are of great importance to the success of a project and the fruition of any rhetoric regarding shared benefit. Avoiding or overlooking this important aspect in the planning and implementation phases of a project inevitably leads to what Rao and others (2004) refer to as elite domination.
An interesting point in keeping with these statements is that the reported levels of participation in tourism outside of the CBT project—through the sale of handicrafts, employment in a tourism business, or employment at the archaeological zone—does not mirror the levels of participation in the project (Figure 26). In fact, it rose consistently over the seven-year period, with the category of ‘Crafts’ increasing by 32 percent among the collaborator sample.

To understand the relationship between the idealized project benefits and the actual rate of gain experienced by members of the community, I would like to revisit the study of Chan Kom by Robert Redfield (1934, with Villa Rojas; 1950) and the reinterpretation of this study by Victor Goldkind (1965). In 1948, Redfield returned to Chan Kom to follow up on his previous study and report on the changes that took place over the 17-year period. Much of what he reported with regard to the levels of social stratification had remained unchanged during this period. Goldkind’s reinterpretation of Redfield’s study focuses on the claims
made by Redfield (1934, 1950) that the village of Chan Kom is made up of a homogenous group of Maya, and that while “differences in status do exist [they] lie simply between one person and another. There are no social classes” (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:101). According to Goldkind’s reinterpretation of Redfield’s data “some degree of structural heterogeneity deriving from the social stratification system which should be postulated as a basic characteristic of this type of community” (1965:883).

The utility of this example can be understood by applying the idealized ejidal model of social relations and power structures presented by Redfield to the more realistic model that Goldkind proposes. Redfield’s homogenous society is similar in every way to the assumptions made by the agency funding the CBT project about the social structure of the village of Ek’Balam, whereas the actual situation found eight years after the opening of the Cabañas follows Golkind’s reinterpretation of the data. Based on the differences in participation levels shown in Figure 25, a few kin groups dominate the CBT project and receive the majority of the benefit. This is not the outcome imagined by CDI, and Ek’Balam is not the homogenous, idyllic “little community” that was to be the foundation for this project. From the outside, residents of Ek’Balam appear to be in similar social and economic situations. In comparison to the places from where most visitors, volunteers, and project staff come, this is a poor village. What they do not initially see is that within this poverty there are many levels of relative poverty. This, like many similar development contexts, overlooks this crucial consideration.

Levels of participation in Ek’Balam’s CBT project are one way by which we can identify the differences between kin groups. Participation in the political life of the village is another useful area to examine. The following is a list of the comisarios municipales in
Ek’Balam since the move from Xkumil in 1972:

- Don Ruperto Dzib 1972-1974
- Don Gutberto Mena 1975-1976
- Don Claudio Chan 1977-1980
- Don Agustin Chan 1981-1984
- Don Evaristo Ay 1985-1988
- Don Manuel Ay 1989-1982
- Don Evaristo Ay 1993-1996
- Don Gutberto Mena 1997-1998
- Don Mario May 1998-2001
- Don Federico Chan 2002-2004
- Don Marcelo May 2004-2007
- Don Mario May 2007-2010
- Don Claudio Chan 2010-2011
- Don Marcelo May 2011-present

With the exception of the Ruperto Dzib, all municipal authorities are members of the Ay, Chan, May or Mena kin group. These are the same four groups that have the highest levels of participation in the CBT project, and are generally the most financially secure and politically powerful. This does not imply that they are wealthy; only that they have higher levels of household income than the other kin groups.

The domination of community-based projects by elites is especially common in rural areas. Mansuri attributes this to the power held by village elites based on their ability to speak with development planners, read project documents, and manage finances (2004:10). The role of external institutions can exacerbate the elite domination of a project. According to Jackson (1997), this happens when the institution’s frontline staff overlooks local power relations because of the pressure to report positive results. Additionally, there is rarely interaction between the agents of the institution and any locals other than those representing the project’s leadership, and therefore agency representatives are not aware of the perception of the project by the community at large. When staff from the funding agency comes to
Ek’Balam, they too deal exclusively with the leaders of the project. They are understandably eager to see it succeed and do not question the actual effects of the project or the sharing of benefits throughout the community.

These conclusions follow those of many other social scientists working with community-based development projects, both in and out of the realm of tourism. The existing social relationships and power structures contained within “The Community” are exactly why the use of this term as a defining category over which development initiatives can be superimposed is so troublesome. In Ek’Balam, as in most small, rural, indigenous communities presented as case studies in the literature, the rhetoric of benefits shared among the community can be realized as a reality only when the development trajectory is slow, focused, and based in careful use of existing local knowledge.
Chapter 5: Objects and Subjects of Development
Because of the exogenous nature of most tourism projects, “local people and their communities have become the objects of development, but not the subjects of it” (Mitchell and Reid 2001:114). Participatory development strategies attempt to create a reverse development environment by working from initiatives identified and defined within the community. The use of the CBT model as an impetus for conservation follows the logic that if an enterprise that benefits a community is dependent on biodiversity, that community will take action to aid in conservation. Community-based ecotourism projects are particularly well suited to this model because the maintenance of rich biodiversity is a key resource (Kiss 2004; Bookbinder, et. al. 1998). The result is a common belief that benefit is the sole driving factor for participation in conservation (Berkes 2004). This hypothesis was tested systematically and it was found that in some cases with little economic incentive for participation in a conservation initiative, levels of conservation remained relatively high (Salafsky, et. al. 2001:1586). This suggests that success is not dependent only on the potential for economic benefit, but also on local participation or buy-in to the motives and methods for conservation. Based on my findings, social position is a determining factor for participation in conservation in Ek’Balam.

Defining Development
Development is many things. This section outlines and discusses the concept and practice of development in an attempt to provide a well-defined base on which to build the later discussion of development and anthropology. Amartya Sen famously defined development as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 1999:3), while Arturo Escobar calls it (among other things) “a growing will to transform drastically two-thirds of
the world in pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress” (Escobar 1995). James Ferguson sees development as “the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us” (Ferguson 1994). International aid agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) define the process of development as working toward “a better life.” While these are all interesting and even eloquent statements of what development means, not one actually describes what development does.

The roots of development can be traced to the colonial era and even before. McMichael states that at this time in the nineteenth century development was understood philosophically and practically as "...the improvement of humankind" and an opportunity for the social engineering of the colonial holdings (McMichael 2008:2). This dichotomy was further strengthened by the relationship between industrialism and colonial development. The industrialization process led to increased class inequalities at the level of individual societies, while the spread of colonialism created inequality on the international level (McMichael 2008: 3). The disparity of wealth and unequal access to basic needs that was so heightened during the colonial era certainly did not disappear once the colonies gained independence. Instead, they became more and more apparent, and led to a geopolitical atmosphere that was dictated by inequality.

With the wave of decolonization that swept the world after World War II, development came to be seen in a new light. Rather than an agenda of social engineering to benefit the colonial powers, its goal was linked to the national sovereignty and economic development of the old colonial holdings. At this point, the world was divvied up into three
subdivisions: the First, Second, and Third Worlds. The First World was Western, and its defining quality was capitalism. Similarly, the Second World was mainly defined as the communist countries, or the Soviet bloc. The Third World was a catchall for the other half of the world's population. It consisted of the post-colonial regions that remained rural and were generally viewed as impoverished. They were, in fact, in comparison to the First World. At the time that these designations were created, 67 percent of the population lived in the "Third World," yet it enjoyed only 18 percent of the world's income. These numbers were almost exactly reversed in the "First World," which was home to only 20 percent of the world's population and brought in 65 percent of the income. It was within this global context that Harry S. Truman made his infamous speech on January 20, 1949. As the leader of the First World he stated,

"We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism- exploitation for foreign profit- has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing (McMichael quoting Truman, 2008: 22)."

With these words, the world was divided into two distinct categories: developed and underdeveloped.

McMichael identifies two ingredients for the institution of the Development Project. They were the nation-state and economic growth. The nation-state was based on the model taken from nineteenth century Europe of "...territorially defined political systems" (McMichael 2008: 24). Economic growth was seen as both the vehicle and goal of development. It made the progress of the nations on the path to modernity quantifiable. Success or failure could thus be measured in such absolute terms as Gross National Product.
and per capita income.

By the early 1980s, the flaws in both of these "ingredients" and of the Development Project as a whole had become apparent. The World Bank had changed the definition of development from nationally managed economic growth to successful participation in the world market. With regard to this new definition, McMichael points out that, "...as states absorb global economic activity into their social fabric, they subordinate their political and social futures to the global economy" (2008: 115). This heightened focus on the world market and the specialization of industry within the Third World led to new separations within this region. For the first time in U.S. foreign policy, the spread of democracy was less important than that of free enterprise.

With the debt crisis of the 1980s, the world saw major shifts in the way that international agencies conceptualized development. McMichael looks to the "consolidation of the global economy" as one of the major causes of these changes (2008: 116). According to Esteva, the very concept of development created the category of underdeveloped peoples who, “ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others’ reality” (Esteva and Prakash 1992:x). In this new global economy, money was easy to borrow, thanks to the financial liberalization that streamlined the exchange of money across borders. Nevertheless, after almost a decade of unchecked loaning and borrowing, the dollar was stretched thin and interest rates rose to relieve it. After being programmed to specialize their export economies, the Third World was then told by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that they should stimulate development from within. Another factor leading to this demise was the inequity of wealth and growth rates among the nations of the Third World. They had been unified as the
Group of 77 in the mid-1960s, but by the decade of the debt crisis, they were no longer perusing common interests. The recognition of the Newly Industrializing Countries only served to exacerbate this divide.

**Anthropology and Development**

“The marked antipathy of much mainstream anthropology for development, as well as the sharp separation of an applied development anthropology from a theoretical academic sort, may be taken as signs not of anthropology’s critical distance from development but of its uncomfortable intimacy with it” (Ferguson 2005:141).

Development anthropology is defined as “the study of development problems and the application of anthropological knowledge toward their solution” (Little and Painter 1995:33). These problems include issues in the areas of poverty, education, hunger, and the environment. The development of this field began in earnest in the 1970s when major actors in international development, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), became concerned that the social aspects of development were as important to the success of projects as the gross national product (Ervin 2005).

It was at this time that anthropologists saw increased opportunities for work within the field of development, as more and more agencies were recognizing the need for anthropological knowledge to be applied to their projects. At the same time, development anthropology was also interested in and engaged with the opposition to large-scale development projects and agencies. It is important to make the distinction between development anthropology and the anthropology of development, due to the differing approaches to development that anthropologists bring. The first is the practice of
development, and the latter is the study of development (Kedia and Van Willigen 2005). The study of development is commonly critiqued and is not accepted as a sub discipline because there must be a “distinct arsenal of theory,” which is lacking in development anthropology (P. Little 2003).

While there are various publications that place the emergence of development anthropology as a field of study as early as 1900, Little maintains that it is at least a post-WWII phenomenon and even then did not become a widely studied field until the 1970s. Prior to this period, the journal *Economic Development and Culture Change* was the premier journal in the field, in which anthropologists and other social scientists debated the best approaches to development; however they did not question the underlying premise that the Western model for market and technology was the ultimate goal (Escobar 1995). According to Little, anthropologists also contributed to modernization theory – either knowingly or otherwise – by “providing empirical grist for the economists’ models” (P. Little 2005:37). Examples of this are WA Lewis and Theodore Schultz’s assertions that the development problems of the poor were due to their “non-modern” ways of life (1964), and Oscar Lewis’ culture of poverty theory (Lewis 1971).

A large body of scholarship on development anthropology was formed in the 1970s and 1980s, but even in the last fifteen years, there has been an increased interest and awareness of this field. What was once considered a specialty of applied anthropology is now a study undertaken even by those who would not consider themselves to be applied anthropologists. The link between development and applied anthropology is clear; both are mainly concerned with the application of anthropological knowledge. Regardless of this connection, many anthropologists who took employment in the field of international
development in the 1980s were not identified with their discipline, and have been criticized for losing touch with anthropological methods and theories, and with the very communities they were purported to assist. Additionally, universities in the US and abroad were not prepared for the growing demand for training in the field of development. There were only a few universities such as University of Kentucky and the University of Florida that had Ph.D. tracks that were a combination of anthropology and development studies.

A lack of theory is the common critique lodged at this topic, and it has been argued that since all development work is informed by theories on how societies and economies are formed and changed, it is important for there to be an increased emphasis on the theoretical framework of these projects (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Little 2003; Ferguson 1997). Little’s suggestion is that anthropologists in this field of study “build on the methodological and analytical strengths that distinguish them from other anthropologists and social scientists” (2005:45). There are two areas in which this theoretical contribution has been made: intrahousehold relations and common property systems (Little 2005:45).

With the increase of population growth around the world, new problems were presented that changed the development discourse. The Basic Needs approach began to dominate development in the late 1980s. This new focus on needs of the people in developing countries shifted some attention from economic growth factors (Cernea 1991). The weakness of the purely economic model and its high failure rate were illuminated, and it became obvious that alternatives were needed. The failure of previous development projects was recognized to be in part because of the lack of recognition of the needs of the target group and the agency of individuals within this group (Loker 2004). Organizations such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
began to change their approach to development.

In his oft cited article, Michael Cernea defines development projects as, “…purposive planned interventions used to accelerate economic development” (M.M. Cernea 1991:4). While these projects are easy to define, the framework with which they should be approached is not as obvious to many in the development field. However, because of the changing emphases within development the roles of non-economic social scientists are also changing. Traditionally social scientists entered the development project at the end to evaluate its effectiveness. This has been termed ex-post evaluation (Cernea 1991). In this traditional role, social scientists have absolutely no input on the actual project during its execution. Though they may be able to look back and point out fatal flaws within the program, this does not affect anything more than the final write up of the project. This, in turn, relegates the views and advice of the social scientist to a file on a failed project (Chambers 1994).

A second traditional role of the social scientist in the development project has been the opposite of ex-post evaluation. The ex-ante or social impact report evaluation is somewhat more inclusive of socio-political factors, but still has the same crucial problems that are found in ex-post evaluation (Kothari 2005). This form of evaluation only sees the problems in the general framework of the project and cannot take into account the problems that will inevitably arise during the course of the project. Another flaw in the ex-ante evaluation is that they are seldom complete. Once the project is implemented there will probably be changes as need arises. The social scientist is not consulted on these changes and therefore cannot evaluate the changed project until the ex-post stage, rendering the social impact report incomplete. These factors all make this form of evaluation very easy for the technicians working on the project to ignore (Chambers 1994).
Both of these roles for social scientists are passive, and leave much to be desired. Cernea offers alternatives to these traditional top-down models. One of these is the more effective applied research, which would, “generate the basic social information for a certain project” (Cernea 1991:8). He argued that sociological knowledge must be used at all stages in order to make a difference in these projects. A broad based change not only within development, but also within the methodologies used by the social sciences is needed. The resulting method, in his view, would be social engineering and participatory development.

**Critiques of Development and Applied Anthropology**

Development as a concept and practice has been rejected by a group of scholars following Foucault’s understandings of power (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1988; Sachs 1992). They call for a post-development era, in which “community and indigenous knowledge become a reservoir of creative alternatives to development” (Edelman and Haugerud 2005). James Ferguson posits development as the “anti-politics machine” that systematically constructs objects of knowledge out of regions targeted for development, allowing various interventions that remove the existing power and replace it with the power of “the machine” (1990:21). This group of cultural critics of development represents one side of the debate on how culture matters to development. On the other side are the proponents of a hypermodernist perspective. This group maintains that traditional culture can be maladaptive, especially when faced with shifts in a global market (Harrison and Huntington 2000).

The accommodation of culture is at the heart of many debates over economic development strategies (Rao and Walton 2004), and the arguments can be divided into two categories; multiculturalism and globalization. Timur Kuran explains the position of
multiculturalists as maintaining that “globalization, by destroying local cultures, harms the affected communities, [and] even humanity as a whole,” while the globalists “consider the march of civilization unstoppable” (Kuran 2004:115). The importance of culture in the economic development process must be prefaced by an identification of which of the myriad definitions of culture will be used; as such, Kuran defines a community’s culture as “the beliefs, preferences, and behaviors of its members, along with the mechanisms that link these traits to one another” (Kuran 2004:117). The beliefs and preferences of an individual, along with those of the larger group to which he belongs, are a part of socialization. While many cultural anthropologists presume these beliefs to be emic constructions and therefore inherently beneficial to the group in question, Kuran argues that they are often times “ill-suited to future economic growth” (2004:118). Once a custom is found to be potentially harmful, the “extent to which the population wants the custom preserved” must be determined (Kuran 2004:118).

Development Theory Stages
Development practice is driven by overarching theories throughout its many transformations. The first stage of development was driven by the paradigm of modernization. This is based on an evolutionist perspective that positions societies on the “traditional modern development continuum” (Sharpley 2000:3) and determines these positions through various demographic means such as gross national product (GNP). Economic growth is the main objective of this paradigm, and is equated with development. It has been argued that this is the paradigm to which tourism development subscribes. According to Sharpley, “the perceived developmental contribution of tourism through, for example, foreign exchange earnings, the multiplier concept and backward linkages throughout the economy, are firmly
embedded in modernisation theory” (2000:3). It is presumed that development is the successor of tourism because of the stimulated economy.

Economic neoliberalism came about in the late 1970s and was based on the argument of increasingly conservative governments in the United States and Western Europe that the role of the state in development should be re-examined and diminished. The influence of the state on development was greatly reduced by the introduction of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). These programs replaced an existing commodity with another in hopes of adjusting the economies of developing countries. In some cases, tourism was posited as a viable replacement commodity for production (Sharpley and Telfer 2002:58).

Alternative development theory can be characterized as being a critique of the economic neoliberalism that preceded it. This paradigm came into the development discourse because of increasing dissatisfaction with previous models that were based on the successful examples of developed countries and attempted to implement projects without regard for local conditions. In 1990, Mahbub ul Haq worked with a group of prominent development economists to create a rubric for the measurement of development that accounted for physical and emotional well-being in addition to economic status (Ull Haq 1995). This was a departure from the previous indices that were based in purely economic factors, such as Gross National Product (UNDP 1990), and was based in large part on Sen’s conceptual framework (Haq 1995).

Out of alternative development theory came the basic needs approach and participatory strategies such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy 1993; Chambers 1994). Many tourism researchers claim that this paradigm has the most relevance to the study and planning of
tourism development (Sharpley 2000; Telfer and Wall 1996; Brohman 1996) because of its emphasis on sustainability concepts, however it is difficult to define in much the same way that sustainable tourism can be. The term “sustainable development” is linked to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987 report, “Our Common Future,” which is often referred to as the Brundtland Report (Hall 1999:3). Sustainable development is defined in this publication as development that, “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland 1987:43).

The citation of this early definition of sustainable development is in no way meant to imply that there is agreement with these terms. The concept of sustainable development has proven difficult to translate into action and has been widely critiqued. In the words of Arturo Escobar, the Brundtland Report is, “a tale that a disenchanted (modern) world tells itself about its sad condition” (1995:198). It was not until the 1990s that tourism became linked with sustainable development. In 1992, the United Nations held the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), known as the Rio Earth Summit. Though important to the development of tourism, this subject was not on the agenda.

The tourism industry is recognizing the potential for sustainability and moving toward it. The UNWTO, the World Travel and Tourism Council, and the Earth Council created Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry in 1995. Its purpose was to raise awareness of the environmental concerns associated with tourism, yet little emphasis was placed on the social aspects of sustainable development. By the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit, the focus was shifting further toward economic and social development and to the reduction of poverty in particular. This was due, in part, to the UNWTOs commitment to the
UN’s Millennium Vision, which hopes to halve worldwide poverty by 2020.

Tourism as development
Tourism is often hailed as a vehicle to development and, since the 1990s, a strategy that can yield high levels of sustainability (Ashley and Maxwell 2001). This common association between the terms “tourism” and “development” as separate ideas sharing an intimate causal relationship (i.e. tourism equals development) was rarely questioned in the literature until recently. Perhaps the similar evolution of tourism planning frameworks and development theory negated the need for a conceptual bridge between tourism and development studies. A new wave of authors are beginning to question this relationship (Sharpley and Telfer 2002; Simms 2007). Examples are Richard Sharpley’s (2000) examination of the theoretical divide between development and tourism and Doñald Reid’s (2003) discussion of the relationship between tourism and globalization. Sharpley questions whether or not tourism development can actually be placed under the purview of sustainable development, and suggests that it may be “a red herring [that] draws attention away from many of the realities of tourism development, realities which are in opposition to a number of the principles and objectives embodied in the concept of sustainable development” (2000:14). Sharpley provides a theoretical framework to link sustainable tourism to sustainable development principles, which until recently was missing from the literature. To understand the relationship between tourism and alternative development theory it is important to review the evolution of development paradigms and trace this through some major shifts in both practice and theory. As Anja Simms cautions, any brief review of development theory risks oversimplifying this ambiguous and often poorly defined concept (2007:40), yet a solid theoretical base through which today’s development thought can be understood with regard
to tourism development is of great importance.

The relationship between tourism and sustainability is fragile at best. Some go so far as to suggest that sustainable tourism cannot be accomplished vis-à-vis the concepts of sustainable development because the production and consumption aspects of the tourism industry are incompatible with the principles of sustainable or alternative development theory. Sharpley argues that this inconsistency positions tourism development more suitably in the realm of modernization theory (Sharpley 2000:1). Others question that argument and in turn suggest that while sustainable tourism is not always sustainable development, it can be a means to that end.

The past years in Ek’Balam have seen a slow but steady shift toward reliance on tourism for economic benefit. Events of 2008 and 2009, starting with the economic downturn and then followed quickly by the H1N1 influenza outbreak, have left the region in dire economic straits because of the sharp decline in tourism. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourism arrivals declined worldwide by 8 percent between January and April 2009 (UNWTO 2009:3). Because of the decline in value of the peso, US dollar spending declined 7.6 percent in Mexico, representing a forecasted 9 percent decline in tourism receipts in the country’s GNP by the end of 2009 (UN World Tourism Organization 2009). During the summer of 2009, I found families that quite literally were going hungry because they had not sold a single hammock in more than two months. For households that no longer have the means to rely on food produced on their own land and whose migratory husbands and sons are lacking work on the coast, the alternative earning strategies are few. This brings into question the validity of the argument for tourism as a sustainable tool for development.
Participatory Development
Participatory development has recently come into the favor of many major international donors because of their dissatisfaction with the outcomes and effectiveness of aid programs designed after the traditional development model (Abraham and Platteau 2004:210). For the individual programs, this means that the participation of the intended beneficiaries is critical to the success of the project because of the recognition of the importance of their cultural knowledge. This approach has been called for throughout the last two decades, but was slow to be implemented into the scope of international development. One of the major components of this shift is the realization that many development programs have repeatedly resulted in failure. These programs did not succeed largely because they were “sociologically ill-informed and ill-conceived” (Cernea 1991:1). The application of social knowledge in development is termed by Cernea as “putting people first.” He argues that this is “not just a goodwill appeal to the humanitarian feelings of project planners,” but is an integral factor in the effectiveness of these programs (Cernea 1991:7).

Attempts at defining participation within the developmental context are as varied and unsuccessful as the attempts at defining community previously discussed. Some say it is the inclusion of local knowledge in the project design and implementation, yet others such as Mansuri and Rao counter that this is often a “construct of the planning context and concealed the underlying politics of knowledge production and use” (Mansuri and Rao 2004:12). McTaggart offers a useful alternative in his definition of participation through its distinction from involvement. He sees authentic participation as a situation in which participants share in the conceptualization, practice, and implementation of research (McTaggart 1997), whereas involvement simply refers to the amorphous local knowledge project model criticized by
Mansuri and Rao (2004). This level of collaboration results in what Earle and Simonelli call the “fast-food model of community involvement with its own development decisions” (2005:140).

The participatory approach can be a challenge in the context of sustainable development of tourism because of its emphasis on “the community.” Jarkko Saarinen notes that the host community is made up of different groups with different ideas as to the manner in which tourism should be developed (Saarinen 2006:1122), and the question of which group is defining the parameters of the community is troublesome. Additionally, sustainability should not be mistaken for a vehicle to equality among members of the host community and other participants in the tourism industry (Saarinen 2006:1123). This critique notwithstanding, participatory development and its “community” approach have great potential for the improvement of rural development, especially as it pertains to tourism. The cultural commoditization and performance aspects of tourism require a strategy for distributing benefits that is borne out of some level of consensus among members of the community in question. Once this is accounted for, the level of sustainability maintained by a project will undoubtedly increase because of the increased incentive for involvement of local stakeholders and community members. Various recommendations for proceeding in this direction with future tourism development have been suggested by Stonich and other social scientists.

For every approach—participatory, community-based, or sustainable development models—there is a gendered aspect. Participatory development, according to Andrea Cornwall, “appeared to hold the promise of opening up new spaces for addressing issues of gendered power, agency, and representation” (Cornwall 2008:1330), however when the
question of who participates is asked it is generally framed in questions of how communities are defined or what constitutes actual inclusion of local stakeholders. The opportunities for women in the participatory model are rarely considered. In the case of the community-based tourism project in Ek’Balam, the question of who participates was never even asked.

**Defining Success**
Each of the numerous stakeholders in the development process has a different idea of what the outcomes should be. Financial benefit is of course important, however over-generalizations are made about community pride, valuation of indigenous heritage, increased connections to the past, and educational opportunities. Most projects that hope to serve as vehicles to successful development, however we define it, fall into one of two categories: external and internal. The category of external projects (into which most initiatives fall) is defined as those projects whose design and plan for implementation is generated by an external group. Internal projects are those designed and implemented locally. This is not to say that all resources come from within the village; only that residents determined the focus of the project. Proponents of the community-based and participatory approaches to development argue that the internal nature of a project gives it a greater chance of success because of its consideration of local needs. In Ek’Balam, this is not the case. Both types of projects enjoy nearly the same level of success. Duncan Earle offers an alternative to these two approaches to community development. He states that “rural communities can improve their internal conditions by changing their external relations in a properly conceived development effort” (1984:3). The remainder of this dissertation will present data on the development process in Ek’Balam.

The ultimate goal of development is always important. More often than not, the stated
goals of the funding agency or organization bear little resemblance to the implicit benefits envisioned by community leaders and liaisons. Earle and Simonelli provide illustrations of this difference in their discussion of the interactions between Zapatista community groups and regional NGOs. According to them,

“…social transformation without economic outcome was useless. Economic outcome with culturally inappropriate social transformation was also unacceptable. But in spite of the contradictions, group after group chose to eat from [the NGO’s] fast-food menu of projects” (2005:142).

When tourism is positioned as the vehicle to development, this vision is all the more crucial. It is undesirable to develop a rural Maya village to the point that it no longer feels rural to the visitor because of the frequent association of rurality with indigeneity. What looks like success in a different context could actually mean disaster for tourism development. In these cases, the entirety of the community is the destination. This includes the actual CBT project, but also the houses that a visitor must pass on the way to the project. By extension, the people living in those houses must also maintain a certain image in order to fit-in. Both the physical and social realms of the village must together form this ecosystem of authenticity.
Part III: An Ecosystem of Authenticity

Thirty years ago, residents of rural areas throughout the region were not Maya, at least not in the way that many of them are today. Fifteen years ago, a village like Ek’Balam was not called a Pueblo Maya, and while there were some mestizas still living there and most of the men were campesinos, the word Maya was reserved mainly for the name of the language they spoke. So how can a whole population of Maya-speaking non-Mayas suddenly become Maya? This question vexes anthropologists and, as Ron Loewe points out, comes in and out of fashion among Mesoamerican ethnographers every 17 to 20 years, “eating everything in sight before vanishing as quickly and mysteriously as it appeared” (Loewe 2010:59). Loewe goes on to point out that the more recent uprising of debates surrounding Maya identity was less concerned with essentialism than with the actual term. I argue that this is a product of the rampant development of tourism in and around Maya-speaking communities and the complete incorporation of “Maya” as an ideological and literal destination for the Yucatan Peninsula’s booming tourism trade.

The Yucatec Maya in the states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo have long had the attention of anthropologists. In the last 50 years, they have caught the attention of tourists as the Maya Riviera was developed into a world-class destination. Now in the Mexico of multiculturalism and neoliberal governance, indigenous groups, have become the focus of the state in a new way (Gledhill 2004). The maintenance of this focus however is dependent on their actions as proper citizens and, as Castañeda has termed them, as “heirs of heritage” (Castañeda and Mathews, in press). Implicit in the mandate to participate in development, requires being “bound to a restricted notion of indigeneity and community that
effectively keeps their demands at a safe distance” (Overmyer-Velázquez 2007). This indigeneity is itself tied up in tourist expectations, which in turn guide the mandates of external institutions. The mandate is, above all, to be Maya.

While this mandate of government sponsored Maya-ness is communicated to purveyors of tourism destinations and commodities, it is met in contrasting ways within the development of mass tourism in urban settings and the development of adventure or eco-tourism in rural areas. The common theme is authenticity. In creating and maintaining a Pueblo Maya, residents are increasingly preoccupied with defining *lo autentico* (the authentic). All of this brings us to the ever-elusive question of authenticity. Is there a difference between traditions that are maintained in relative isolation from tourists and those that are performed specifically for tourists? Does the authenticity of one render the other in-authentic? Conflicting views on these questions are found in the literature on tourism (Medina 2003:354). According to Dean MacCannell (1976), authenticity that is staged ceases to fall into the category of an authentic cultural expression. Erik Cohen (Cohen 1988) disagrees and discusses a new category for such performances; “emergent authenticity.”

In many ways, the authenticity debate from tourism studies overlaps with the identity debate found in Maya ethnology (Medina 2003). Identity is often at the foundation of tourism studies in Mesoamerican communities, such as Walter E. Little’s concept of performing tourism and, in turn Maya identity (2004). Ronda Brulotte’s use of Dean MacCannell’s reconstructed ethnicity in examining the nationalist paradigm that equates rural craft production with indigeneity among Oaxacan artisans is another example of this (2009:458). For MacCannell (1984), “reconstructed ethnicity” is a response to the pressures of cultural performance, as mandated by the tourism encounter (in Brulotte 2009).
Into this discussion of authenticity comes capital. Capital is, in one form or another, the ultimate goal of a successful development endeavor. The role of economic capital in this case is clear: tourists bring money. They have to pay to stay at the Cabañas (the community-based tourism project), they may pay a local taxi to shuttle them back and forth to the archaeological zone on a particularly hot day. If they are staying at the Cabañas they have to buy their meals there, and—perhaps most significantly—they purchase hammocks and other handicrafts from women around the village. Because access to participation in the CBT project is dictated first by *ejidatario* status, land and land tenure will be framed as the context for examining economic capital. Chapter 6 provides a history of the shifting access to land and its economic capital through a discussion of the local and regional history of land tenure and occupation.

Most credit Pierre Bourdieu as the first to discuss the concept in his book *The Forms of Capital* (Bourdieu 1986). What is unique about the context of tourism development in Ek’Balam is that economic, or material, capital is directly generated by and reliant on cultural capital. Bourdieu makes this statement about cultural capital:

“in an undifferentiated society, in which access to the means of appropriating the cultural heritage is equally distributed, embodied culture does not function as cultural capital” (1986:243).

In Ek’Balam, appropriation of cultural heritage is anything but equally distributed. Embodied culture, in the case of Ek’Balam is cultural capital. Residents gain this form of capital over time as negotiations with tourists become impressed on the individual’s habitus. There is an explicitly performative aspect to this process, as will be discussed shortly. This, according to Bourdieu, is the product of frequent negotiations that over time have taught
people what it is that tourists expect. Chapter 7 explores cultural capital and argues that residents maintain access to it through specific tactics and strategies.

Access to tourists—and therefore the opportunity for sale of handicrafts and the presentation of cultural capital—is dictated in some ways by the level of symbolic capital that a household has. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as “capital—in whatever form—in so far as it is represented...as a socially constituted cognitive capacity” (1986). Examples of symbolic capital in Ek’Balam are access to the formal role of cook or housekeeper at the community-based tourism project and purveyor of sodas and snacks through an informal commercial endeavor. Access to the formal role is gained through having an ejidatario who is participating in the community-based tourism project in the household. In this case, cultural capital and material capital are both gained through access to symbolic capital. In the case of the informal role however, the political ecology of the household and their land-use decisions generate symbolic capital. Chapter 8 discusses the concept of the ecologically noble savage (Redford 1991) as symbolic capital for households in Ek´Balam.

The last form of capital at work in Ek’Balam is social capital, which refers to the quantitative and qualitative nature of social relations. This is both called a link between the theoretical benefits of participation and the actual success of the community-based approach, and roundly criticized as an un-measureable value that is about as tangible and useful as the unquestioned ideals of “community” or “participation” (Fine 2001). The criticisms of social capital as applied to development notwithstanding; it is a useful concept in this case because it deals with group membership and what that means at the group and individual levels. The prime example of this is the relationship between ejidal membership and benefit from the community-based tourism project. Social capital is also at work in relations between hosts
and guests (Jones 2005). Residents’ ability to interact with non-locals—be they tourist, volunteer, or funders—is both dependent on their social capital and allows them to generate additional capital.

This ability brings us back to the question of authenticity. In the process of creating and managing an ecosystem of authenticity, residents are in constant negotiation with visitors and each other to determine the authentic and preserve it. The contrast between the static authenticity of monuments in the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone and the dynamic authenticity of the village is stark. While questions about interpretation and accuracy surround the academic conversation about archaeological sites, these are absent from local discussions. Residents accept the facts presented by the archaeological projects. There is a certain level of disenchantment with the monuments in the archaeological zone locally, which came along with their transformation to a destination for tourists. In contrast, the hundreds of archaeological structures outside of the main site retain their status as enchanted places. They are still guarded by alux ‘ob, and are the origin of evil winds. The commodification of all things Maya has not affected the power that these structures house or the way that residents must treat them. Examples of this alternating enchantment/disenchantment are presented in the following narrative.

**Summer 2010**

Late afternoon under the Almendra tree outside of the block house, and most of the Ay Balam family is sitting around and visiting. Sundays are days for relaxing, and even Doña Goma is passing the time weaving and leaving the laundry for tomorrow. The talk around the house all afternoon has surrounded the “discovery” of an unconsolidated mound in the path of the nature trail. This summer’s volunteer camp is continuing work on the nature trail.
project started last year, and yesterday their work landed them at the edge of a large platform. Conflating anthropologist and archaeologist, the team leader came immediately to the house to find me, thinking that they had in fact discovered a previously unknown structure. Much to their delight, it was decided that a ceremony should be held to appease the *alux* (guardian spirit, *duende* in Spanish) guarding the mound and to cleanse any evil winds that may have been released by disturbing the structure.

This morning, the twenty-eight volunteers, Don Marcelo, Don Rafael, and I met at the site. The volunteers were walking along the trail from the Cabañas to the structure, and the three of us were coming from the village via the baseball field. On the walk there, Rafael explained to me the ceremony and expressed excitement in being able to perform it for the volunteers. I asked Marcelo if they would be doing this were it not for the volunteers. He replied that they would still make an offering if they disturbed a *müul* (mound, archaeological ruin), but that it would not be very elaborate. Presumably, they would not be bringing their anthropologist and her video camera to film the event.

When we arrived, both men gasped and were visibly upset by the sight of the twenty-eight volunteers and the numerous children who they had invited. Children are particularly susceptible to the evil winds, and are not permitted near monuments. I was aware of this concern, but thought that it was a relic from a different time. Children accompanied me on numerous occasions to the archaeological zone, and the Ay Balam family and I visited Chichen Itza in 2007. No one had mentioned the danger this posed for the children to me before this morning. The two men scolded the children in Maya and they quickly dispersed. It was clear to the volunteers that they should not have brought the children, and the ceremony began with a somber hush over the crowd.
We are all discussing the ceremony as we wile away the afternoon enjoying *Charritos* (a popular puffed chip snack) with jalepeños and Coke. Doña Goma explains to me that the ruins in the archaeological zone are not the same as those found in the forest. They have been climbed, excavated, and reconstructed, and are visited by hundreds of people each week. “*Ya casi no tienen sus duendes* (They almost don’t have their guardians anymore).” It seems they have become disenchanted from the perspective of residents, and that the monuments themselves, much like the perception of their role as sites of heritage for the modern Maya, move through phases of enchantment and disenchantment.

**Chapter 6: Land Reform, History and Economic Change**

The previous section introduced the many arguments for and against the economic rationale found in Mesoamerica’s small, rural, agrarian villages. Many generalizations and comparisons are made across the various regions and nation-states. For instance, Annis’ (1987) discussion of milpa logic in the Guatemalan Highlands echoes Sandstrom’s (1991) work in Amatlan, and Cancian’s argument that change is leading to the decline of community is similar to de la Pena’s work. At the same time, it is also important to recognize the differences between regions in Mesoamerica. Many of these are directly related to the political borders that separate the nations. Where the different regions of the Maya World are similar is in the role of “community,” however it may be defined, in the processes of tourism development, commodification of indigeneity, and anthropological research. The role of land reform and the creation of the *ejidal* system in the post-Revolutionary era have had immense influences on the social, economic, and political environments in today’s agrarian communities of Mexico. This section argues that systems of land tenure in Mesoamerican countries were part of the creation of “communities,” which then became an
obsession of anthropological inquiry as discussed in the previous section.

The complex and inextricable nature of land tenure and social structure in agrarian communities throughout Yucatan is readily apparent. The social and political significance of land in rural Mexico has roots that began in the agrarian struggle of the early 1900s (Fallaw 2001). Because an understanding of land tenure can only be achieved if it is regionally and historically contextualized and embedded in the national political economy, this section of the discussion will begin with a short history of the struggle for land during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the eventual land reform and appropriation that finally came to Yucatan and Chiapas in the 1930s.

History is an important element in the narrative surrounding tourism development in Ek’Balam. Important historic events punctuate the perception of time, such as the abolition of slavery and the hacienda system in the 1930s and the stories of Maya rebels hiding supplies in caves throughout the ejido during the Caste War. Generations are categorized using events such as these that mark time. For example, among the generation of individuals born around 1950, any reference to their parents includes a phrase to locate them historically.

Well, my father and his brothers were children of some of the ones who went to the governor in Mérida to solicit land for the ejido. In this time, the campesinos were not so free. They lived in slavery, they did not have land, and they did not work for themselves. ~Don Lucio [Transcriptions 2004-0727 (1:54)]

Members of the previous generation (born around 1925) refer to their parents with stories about the Caste War to place them in history.

My deceased parents were slaves, you know, and they worked on a hacienda near here. When the war came, they helped the people hiding in the caves, the ones that ran away from the rich [hacienda owners]. They brought them a little bit of corn and some beans when they could. You should go to those caves. Some of them have
carvings in the rocks where they wrote their history. When I was young and we were looking for the place to make our ejido, my father showed me the caves and told me these stories. ~Don Wiliam [Transcriptions 2007-0802 (42:36)]

In the summer of 2009, residents were involved in a community museum project as part of that summer’s Campamento program (CCY’s volunteer summer camp). The project’s goal was to create a museum in the multi-purpose cabana at the CBT project. The museum would be a traditional Maya house and kitchen. The goal was to incorporate all of the authentic items found in a Maya home, and to accomplish this, volunteers were tasked with asking residents to donate things from their homes. Once everything was gathered, signage would be placed in the museum to identify and describe each item. I collaborated with CCY that summer and played the role of adviser to the project. Eric, CCY’s director, felt that having someone already familiar with the various families would make it easier for the volunteers to acquire all of the items. While the concept of the community museum was designed and introduced by CCY, residents played a major role in changing it and shaping the outcomes. This was an important interaction for several reasons. The museum was not envisioned as being particularly historical in nature; however, a few older residents participating in the CBT project decided that the history of Ek’Balam needed to be included. Don Wiliam asked me:

How can they make a museum of our traditions without understanding how we got here? If they don’t know how those traditions changed? We have not always lived here, you know. Pues, you already know. You should tell them that they need to ask us about our history. It is more important to show the tourists how we used these things than it is to just tell them the names. They won’t care about the names. ~Don Wiliam [Transcriptions 2009-0612 (2:00)]

Here Don Wiliam alludes to their arrival story, which is a central piece of the historical
narrative in Ek’Balam. The interactions surrounding the museum marked the first time that the relationship between history and authenticity was debated in the context of the CBT project. There was great disagreement about what should be included in the museum to represent a traditional Maya home. Some men felt that there should be metal pots and utensils, iron hooks, and dishes. They argued that the only modern things that should be excluded were items made of plastic. According to them, this would date the traditional home to approximately the 1960s. Others argued that the home should be “more authentic.” They felt that it should not have metal pots and hooks, and should be appointed in the way of the *antiguos* (ancient ones), which broadly refers to those who were alive when the monuments were constructed. This group wanted to see a hammock woven of sisal in the museum because the colored nylon thread used today would not have been available then. Throughout this debate, the volunteers and I were attempting to create a list of items to solicit from residents in order to get started on the museum project. We decided that it made sense to begin with the items that were not being debated, such as baskets and items made of wood or bone. After substantial deliberation, participants determined that the museum should represent a house from the beginning of Ek’Balam’s current occupation. This would be a house from around 1965-1975, when they began to build up the town in its present location.

**Ek’Balam’s Arrival Story**

Just 300 meters to the east of the CBT project in Ek’Balam is the site center of the archaeological zone. Ek’Balam, the archaeological zone, is a Late to Terminal Classic Site (*AD* 700-1050), though it was continuously occupied from as early as the Middle Formative (700-450 *BC*) and through the early Hispanic period. At 6 square kilometers, it is a large sized site center, though only about 75 percent has been excavated and restored (Houck 2004:36).
It was fairly recently that the archaeologists came to begin the excavation at Ek’Balam. Most residents of the village have a story to tell about the process, as many of them were hired to work with “la INAH.” This is a quote from one of the men who worked during most of the initial excavation process.

At this time, the archaeological zone was covered with grass and plants, because we did not have the vision that it would become an archaeological zone. Then the people came. One person came here with us and asked if I could take him there because we were the only ones who knew much about it and the entrance was here. I told him yes, let’s go. This person began to work with ten others. We helped and brought water and began to chop the jungle off the ruins. He worked there for about two weeks and left. He told everyone that Ek’Balam existed and they came to give us the good news. Then we began to care for it… ~Don Felipe [Transcriptions 2007-0718 (4:07)]

Since the excavation of the archaeological zone and the subsequent arrival of tourism, the archaeological zone has been incorporated into the historical narrative of Ek’Balam. An example is found here in this account of how the current village location was chosen.

When we got here we saw the mountains of the ruins and so here we rested. There was a well here from the time of the slaves; it was a Hacienda long ago. So we began to burn and chop our milpas...we were working and struggling. We worked in the rain and in the heat of the sun, always struggling. And now look at all we have, at how beautiful it is where we are. And the name Ek’Balam, well, those are family names that we still have here. It was always called this, and this is its history, from the ruins to the hacienda to where we are now. Other places, they don’t have their history, but my history, our history is here. And why? Because of the ruins. What are the visitors going to say if they arrive and it is still abandoned? You have to have a plaza and care for the ruins. ~Don Felipe [Transcriptions 2007-0718 (26:49)]

Multiple waves of archaeologists have conducted research at the ceremonial site center (Bey et al. 1998) and in the rural area surrounding the site (Houck 2004). Excavations of settlements dating only to the 16th and 17th centuries were conducted to the north east of the
For most residents of Ek’Balam, history began when they received their ejidal land. The second major point in their history is the move from the village where they first settled to the location of the village today. The village of Ek’Balam is located in the ejido of Xkumil. This ejido is in the milpa zone of the Yucatan Peninsula and, until the last 20 years or so, was very much like the hundreds of other ejidos in this region. The area surrounding the archaeological zone and pueblo of Ek’Balam was occupied continuously from the Middle Formative through the early Hispanic periods (Bey et al 1998). The urban area covered a large space of 12 square kilometers and could have supported a population as large as 25,000.

The first references to Ek’Balam are found in the Relacion de Tiquibalon (1579). The conquistador Juan Gutierrez de Picon became the encomodero of Tiquibalon in 1579. The encomienda system was a tributary system, in which a Maya community paid through goods and service to their encomendero. The Catholic Church and the encomienda system worked together to transform Yucatecan communities into Spanish-style municipios (municipalities) consisting of individual nuclear households (Hanson 2008:302).
Figure 27. Proyecto Ek’Balam Urban Survey (From Bey and Ringle1998, and Hanson 2008).

**Agrarian Reform**

In 1922, Alvaro Obregón instituted the *ejidal* land tenure system to appease the Zapatistas of Morelos, even though he himself had neither faith in the economic prowess of the traditional village economy nor concern for the indigenous peoples (Gonzales 2002:190). The lands distributed to the indigenous groups were agricultural communities called *ejidos*. Eyler Simpson defined the *ejido* as “the word used to refer to all types of land which have been restored to agricultural communities under the land reform process. By extension the word is also used to designate the communities possessing such lands” (E. N. Simpson 1937).

Individual residents, or *ejidatarios*, received plots of land that would remain in their families
for generations, though not as private property (Gonzales 2002:191). This distribution of land was little more than a gesture. It was not until the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas that the reform truly happened.

Cárdenas was very ambitious, and hoped to make the revolution work through the implementation of the main ideas of the Constitution of 1917. Among these were agrarian reform, subsoil rights, labor reform, the state’s power over the church, and socialist education. His reforms were radical, but his delivery made them acceptable. Cárdenas traveled to remote rural villages to share with the peasants and campesinos his ideas about the land and who should control it. Between 1928 and 1932, Cárdenas allocated 141,663 hectares among 181 villages in Michoacán, a trend that spread throughout Mexico over the next decade. Cárdenas’ ejidos were modeled after the Soviet example of profit sharing and self-management (Gonzales 2002:226).

In 1935, Hacienda Xkantoh was dismantled in the wake of the major land reform that was finally coming to Yucatán. This was the last state in the Mexican Republic to realize tangible changes in the hacienda system. Xkantoh was populated by approximately 500 Maya peones (peons), which was a small number in comparison to haciendas in the henequen zone that had as many as 1500-2000 workers and their families living within their boundaries (Katz 1974). Xkantoh was engaged in a mix of agriculture and livestock, growing corn, beans, and grazing cattle. By 1939 a group of 24 campesinos had gathered together to petition for their ejidal land grant.

Well, my father and my mother lived in Xkumil, they lived there in Xkumil, and that is where we grew up. We were not many, about 10 thatch houses. In this time, the time of my parents, they solicited the land. There was a president named Lazaro Cardenas who helped the people, the campesinos who lived in the haciendas. He
gave them the land and called it an *ejido*. For example, Xkumil received a piece of land that is 767 hectares for the 24 *campesinos* who wanted to live there and work the land. And so that is where we started. ~Don Wiliam [Transcriptions 2009-0612 (51:08)]

By 1942, the *ejidal* land grant was complete. Two new families joined the initial 24 *ejidatarios* for a total of 27.

In Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution outlines three forms of land tenure: small private property, *ejidos*, and agrarian communities. Depending on the type of tenure a particular group agreed upon, *ejidos* were then divided into individual plots and the *ejidatarios* chose an heir to their tenure from their spouses and children. It is important to note at this point that there are often times vast differences in the *de jure* legislature and the *de facto* practice. This is particularly true because of regional differences that made the rights of *ejidatarios* distinct in each area. Additionally, wealth disparities play a large role in the way that land tenure was utilized and practiced. Luin Goldring (1996) provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding property rights in Mexico. He suggests that we conceive of property rights as a package. This is based on his recognition of the fact that wealth and power differences between *ejidos* and even in the same *ejido* will be determinants of who has access to the various elements of a package of property rights (1996:272). Goldring further distinguishes between the official package based on documentation, policies, and programs, and the actual package that involves the practice of property rights (1996:274).

Under this *ejidal* law, land had to be worked by the *ejidatario* and could not be rented, sold, or left unused. The idea was that land would form a basis of subsistence for
peasant families and would not become an economic commodity. Following this thinking, *ejidatarios* were also prohibited from possessing more than one piece of land, and they were granted “use rights,” not ownership of the land. Because of this, they were unable to sell their plots. Under the law, the *ejidal* assembly, which consists of all *ejidatarios* in a given *ejido*, could reassign the use rights for a particular plot if they felt that the laws were not being followed. In addition to the individual plots of an *ejido* there are also common use areas, which are generally made up of pasture and woods, and accounted for 77 percent of all *ejidal* holdings in Mexico (Nuijten 2003).

*Ejidal* plots and use rights to this land provide a level of status that is readily apparent when differences between those who are *ejidatarios* and those who are not are noted. On a more basic level *ejidal* land provides basic food security as well as access to participation in multiple government sponsored programs, such as the *Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo* (the Program for Direct Assistance in Agriculture, PROCAMPO). The PROCAMPO program was instituted in 1994 as part of a government-sponsored effort to liberalize rural Mexico (Klepeis and Vance 2003). The many factors surrounding the social and economic benefits of maintaining use rights to *ejidal* land give *ejidatarios* additional political connections that very often lead to domination of the political life of the community.

After approximately twenty-five years of living in Xkumil, some residents and local officials decided that it was time for a change. The village was just outside of the border of their *ejidal* lands, within the *ejido* of Temozón. This caused periodic conflicts with *ejidatarios* from Temozón. The location near the northern border of the *ejidal* land also made the travel from the village to the milpas arduous.

Xkumil is a neighbor of Temozón, but there is no archaeological zone and there is no
way to make a life there. Because of this we couldn’t do much there. When we were there we didn’t even have an ejidal commissioner because no one knew anything…we knew only how to sign our names. I read no more than my studies to the second grade, no more than this. I read a story of Chichén Itzá, Mayapan, and Cobá…but we had no zone there. After I read this book I wanted to work with the people, but what we had there was no good for anything. All we had there was a cave. When the rain fell in this time the trash and everything would be there and the water would be dirty. We did not want to live there anymore and so we brought everyone here. ~Don Ruperto [Transcriptions 2009-0712 (31:14)]

In 1969, local authorities began exploring the ejido and looking for a new place to settle. In the location of their first settlement there was not a cenote, or limestone sinkhole, from which they could access water. Their water came from a cave that filled in the rainy season and whose water was rarely clean. Additionally, there were no good plots nearby on which to make their milpas, the land cultivated to grow corn, and so they had to travel a long way each day to work in their fields. In the process of soliciting the land for the ejido, the original ejidatarios did not know to ask for additional land for the village site. Because of this, the village of Xkumil was located on land in the ejido of Temozón. Don William explained why this was a problem and why it was important for the population to move to a new location.

I finished my primary school, and in this time I was young and I began analyzing the forest and the situation we had, and when I looked at the ejidal documents I saw that we did not have a place in the ejido set aside for the pueblo. And so I got up and started talking to people when I was only 17 years old. And I told them, “Why did you not ask for a dotacion, a piece of land set aside for the pueblo of Xkumil?” And they told me “well, we failed there, we did not know that this was something we needed because we did not have the understanding.” Some began to say that we should just live together with the people of Temozón, but this is not recommendable, because the people of Temozón should have their land and the people of Xkumil should have their own. And so I asked my father and the other ejidatarios “Why don’t we make plans to form a village in this ejido?” And others helped me and said
“well, let’s go make these plans.” So we got ourselves up and went to Mérida to see the agency that attended to the campesinos, which at that time was the Office of Agrarian Reform, and we asked them if we could form a village so that the people could separate and work apart from those in Temozón. And they explained to us what to do, but that we would have to use land from inside our own ejido, they could not give up any more land. And so we designated this place where we are now,Ek’Balam. ~Don Wiliam [Transcriptions 2009-0612 (01:04:19)]

There are multiple reasons for the move from Xkumil to Ek’Balam. The ongoing conflicts with ejidatarios from Temozón was probably the most important, followed closely by the existence of a functioning well. It is interesting to note that residents now offer the existence of the archaeological zone as part of the rationale for relocating where they did. It is not possible to know whether this would have been presented prior to the initial mapping and excavation at Ek’Balam.

While some hail Mexico’s agrarian reform as a victory for the country’s huge indigenous population, others see it as yet another way in which the state created, dominated, and then pacified Indians (Friedlander 2006). Baños hypothesizes that because of the state’s failure to modify certain structures in place during the colonial period, agrarian reform is little more than a new bureaucracy overlaid on an inequitable social system (1989:23). Sheldon Annis calls the milpa “the productive engine of colonial Indianness” (1987:73). This may be the case in Guatemala where he conducted his fieldwork; however, it can be argued that in Mexico it is the ejido that is the “productive engine” of Indianness. In Amatlan, Mexico, Alan Sandstrom found that village life is organized around non-capitalist principles, and accordingly people “…allocate their scarce resources toward alternative ends according to rational principles” (1992:189). Among these rational principles is the knowledge that while increased agricultural output is the logical means for increasing wealth,
this does not persuade individuals to stop planting corn in place of more productive crops. Decision making, according to Sandstrom, is based on “milpa logic” instead of market logic (1992:202). Because of this, villagers must generate cash income, and are dependent on political and economic forces from the nation’s power centers. Through the maintenance of a specific lifestyle among indigenous groups based on economic need and the necessary tie to government administered lands, the state functions as an agent of power that provides the context for “everyday struggle” (Joseph and Nugent 1994). Their argument is that popular culture is “the symbols and meanings embedded in the day-to-day practices of subordinated groups.” This however assumes that pop culture is a product of subordination. If we see land reform and Mexico’s ejido as purveyors of popular culture—that is, the culture of the populous—then we see how the state is further implicated in the creation of identity in rural regions. Rural studies of popular culture often frame it as folklore, or what Canclini and others call “apocalyptic” views of mass culture as destroyer of the authentic. To quote Canclini, “capitalism has not succeeded in eradicating tradition” (García Canclini 1990).

**Land Tenure, Tourism, and Free Trade**

The push to expand the domain of market forces can be interpreted as an effort to replace campesinos who were in perpetual need of assistance with efficient, maximizing producers. [Goldring 1996:273]

The Federal Agrarian Reform Law of 1971 was replaced by the Agrarian Law of 1992 as part of the major reforms called for by NAFTA. This affected multiple issues with regard to land tenure in Mexico’s Agrarian sector. The most important of these changes are the following: no additional lands would be expropriated to create new ejidos or augment existing ejidal holdings; permission was granted to ejidatarios to rent, sell, buy, or lease land
in an attempt to modernize the system of land tenure; *ejidatarios* can work with private enterprises and individual investors; and the *Programa de Certificacion de Derechos ejidales y Titulacion de Solares Urbanos* (PROCEDE), or the Program for Certification of *Ejidal* Rights and Titling of Urban Plots will give individual land titles. Once all land in an *ejido* has been titled the assembly can vote to move into *pleno domino*, or private ownership and can only maintain their *ejidal* status if at least 20 percent of *ejidal* members want to remain as such. PROCEDE was envisioned and launched as a vehicle for the mapping and measurement of boundaries and registration of plots. Both are widely regarded as neoliberal policies that will improve land markets and the legal security of these lands (Nuijten 2003:478).

Xkumil was one of first *ejidos* in Yucatan to go through PROCEDE’s titling process. In order to complete the process there must be a majority vote from the *ejidal* assembly. During the initial meetings in the summer of 1994, it became clear that this would not be a simple process. Thirteen of the twenty-six *ejidatarios* wanted to parcel the *ejido* and the other thirteen did not. The debate went back and forth over a period of a few weeks until an agreement was reached; they would divide the *ejido* into two pieces. The group that did not want to parcel consisted of mostly the older *ejidatarios* who were accustomed to making milpa in larger areas of 100 to 150 mecatés. After PROCEDE each *ejidatario* would only have twenty-four hectares. Many of the younger *ejidatarios* saw great benefit in parceling for various reasons. For some whose families relied very little on their *ejidal* tenure and were mostly engaged in migration or other economic strategies, PROCEDE meant that they could sell their parcels. Although at this time the archaeological site had barely begun to attract visitors, some foresaw that there would soon be a demand for land near the site. Individuals
who spent much of their time working near the coast had met workers from other towns throughout the region. Those who were from ejidos near the coast had already seen the inflated prices that people were able to get for their land. These stories trickled back to Ek’Balam, where they were met with great interest.

The decision to divide the ejido was presented to PROCEDE and they agreed that they would wait until this had been completed and then they would title the new ejido in the names of the thirteen men who were in favor of the process. When the decision was reached and the ejidal assembly adjourned, the thirteen pro-PROCEDE ejidatarios went to Temozón to purchase some supplies. After their return, they set off at 8:00pm to mark a border. Six of the thirteen ejidatarios against PROCEDE accompanied them. Somewhere during the process, the group realized that regardless of how evenly the ejido was divided, there was no equitable way to ensure that both halves were even in all manners. The only way to truly accomplish this would have been to also divide the village. Among the thirteen against PROCEDE were four of the village founders who made the move from Xkumil to Ek’Balam. The other nine were children of these men and of the two deceased village founders. They remembered vividly the discord that the village faced before leaving Xkumil. According to Don Fede,

So they sat us down, those old men, and they said ‘enough of this, we’re stopping right here!’ Pues, we stopped there right in the middle of the ejido, almost half way through with cutting the new border. Don Delfino spoke first. He asked the youngest of us, Daniel and Lucio, if they knew why we moved from Xkumil to Ek’Balam. These two were born in Ek’Balam. It was their home, and they didn’t remember Xkumil at all. They didn’t remember the time when we had no school and no electricity. Between Don Delfino, Don Ruperto, and Don Gute they told us the history again. Whew, we heard that story a lot! But at the end they said that the younger ones had learned more and were more educated. They said that if we all thought that this was the right thing to do, then they were in agreement with their
sons. They could not be stubborn enough to break up the town, because they knew that they would have to be the ones to leave, and that their wives and children would not want to. ~Don Federico [Transcriptions 2011-0102 (52:00)]

At 3:00 the next morning the group returned from their venture and spread the word that they would not divide the ejido. PROCEDE came ready to parcel and title half of Xkumil, and the agent from the Agrarian Reform office came ready to map the ejido. When they arrived, the assembly told them that they would parcel the entire ejido.

**Household Earning Strategies**
The past five years in Ek’Balam have seen a slow but steady shift toward reliance on tourism for economic benefit that is in some cases replacing subsistence farming and other pre-tourism earning strategies. In other cases, it is allowing for additional spending on items that were previously out of reach financially, such as household appliances and tuition fees for study beyond the 6th grade. The main avenue for economic participation in tourism is the creation and sale of hammocks and other handicrafts. The second option for participation is through the community-based tourism project.

The development of mass tourism in Quintana Roo has created numerous opportunities for migration, and most (if not all) communities in the region have migratory populations. The cycle of out-migration from rural pueblos to Cancun for employment in the tourist industry has immense effects on not only those navigating a new urban life, but also on the families they leave behind. Alicia Re Cruz states that the “reconfiguration of the family among those who migrate breaks the bonds of the original village family” (1996:114). Shifting gender dynamics with the household are also seen in the wake of economic change.

The manifestation of these trends in Ek’Balam are visible in the diversification of
household production and income (Schüren 2003:53). The economic crises during Latin America’s “Lost Decade” of the 1980s led to a shifting role for women as wage laborers. In the town of San Cosme, Mexico, Frances Abrahamer Rothstein recorded a doubling of women’s share of labor from 12 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 1989 (Rothstein 2007:96). She also reports that half of young women are in the labor force. While neoliberal reforms in Mexico and elsewhere increase the availability of work for women in the non-agrarian labor force, many are “confined to low-paying jobs, without protection, security, or hope of mobility” (Safa 2002:141). Within the agrarian sector, the opportunities for formal sector employment are even worse (Stephen 1993:27). Similar to Rothstein’s experience in San Cosme, the roles found within the new household earning strategies are dictated not only by “internal family dynamics” (1995:167), but instead by external forces, the most predominant of which is tourism. What is unique about this case is the fact that only three to five women in the village hold jobs in the formal economy at any given time, via the two foreign-owned hotels in Ek’Balam. The rest are participating in the local, informal economy. The most common means for participation is the production and sale of hammocks, which has become a main source of income for many families. The opportunity to sell hammocks directly to tourists—rather than through intermediaries who previously pocketed most of the profits—has created a new entrepreneurial spirit in the village. The new income generated through handicraft sales—women’s work—has also been the primary source of capital formation for individuals wishing to start small businesses. There are now six households that have goods for sale out of their homes, whereas in 2004 there were only two. They range from an operation that sells a few bottles of Coke and snacks to stores that contract with the grocery store in Temozon to sell all manner of groceries on consignment.
After a few years of receiving a small payment for the village tour (about 2.00USD per tour) and regular tips in varying amounts from the visitors, Doña Gomercinda was ready to make the purchase she had been anxiously awaiting; a refrigerator. This expenditure of 300.00USD bought on credit from an appliance store in Valladolid was a very big decision for the family, but Don Lucas agreed that it was up to Doña Gomercinda to determine how these earnings would be spent.

Well, she works hard to take care of the house and our family but is always happy to stop what she is doing and welcome the gringos who come to see how we live and how she makes tortillas. Whew, for years she has said, “when can we find the money to buy my refrigerator?” And now, thanks to the gringos, we have one. She is so happy now when she goes in to get Coke from the fridge to sell to someone. And with the money she makes from selling snacks to the kids, well that helps with the money we pay [for the refrigerator] every 15 days. It truly is Doña Gomercinda’s fridge.

~Don Lucas [Transcriptions 2009-0704 (9:08)]

Within weeks of the purchase of the refrigerator, Doña Gomercinda was buying Coke and juices to sell to neighbors. Other households are also following this trend, and it is mainly the women who are involved in the purchase and re-sale of goods. Indeed, the majority of the material capital used to start these micro-enterprises was generated by women’s participation in the formal and informal tourism economy.

These changes can be seen in Figure 28, which shows the three most important sources of income in Ek’Balam and the change between 2004 and 2012. “Milpa,” which has declined slightly but steadily, refers to individuals whose main household earning strategy is the production of maize. The category of “commerce” is used to represent individuals who have income from some form of commerce in which they are directly involved. “Crafts” refers to anyone who produces and sells handicrafts to tourists. The number of households
engaged in this strategy is higher than those engaged in commerce. Examples of crafts for sale are hammocks, purses, and embroidered blouses or *huipiles*. The households engaged in commerce sell soda, packaged snacks, or other consumable goods. One important difference to note is that almost all sales in the ‘crafts’ category are to visitors, while nearly all sales in the ‘commerce’ category are to residents.

![Change in income categories](image)

**Figure 28. Change in income categories, 2004-2012**

The ever-increasing stream of tourists arriving in Ek’Balam, and other previously remote villages, to purchase handicrafts is not only increasing the availability of cash, but is leading to familial changes, such as the redistribution of wealth, and a shift in traditional gender roles. In this sense, Ek’Balam is becoming more like high volume tourist destinations such as Guatemala where Walter Little reports that household gender relations have shifted

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8 The percentages shown in Figure 28 represent the percent of the collaborator sample (n=100) that reported income from one or more of these categories. As discussed earlier, most households engage in multiple economic activities.
to such an extent that it is “possible for women to support children without the aid of men, making them more economically independent and powerful within the community” (2000:174). The ability of women to contribute financially to the household has resulted in additional educational opportunities for their children. There is a free, public school in the village that children attend through the 6th grade. At this point it becomes rather costly to continue their studies because it means either securing daily transportation from Ek’Balam to a neighboring town where there is a school or staying with a family member who lives in that town. The increased income from handicrafts and other informal endeavors allows women to put money aside to handle these costs. In 2004 I knew of only two young people in the village who were in the process of completing their studies through the 12th grade. In 2007 that number jumped to five, and in 2009 I knew of nine students attending “la prepa.”

The new economy that has emerged in the wake of agrarian reform and the concurrent development of tourism is similar to what Sol Tax identified as system of “penny capitalism,” that is “a society which is ‘capitalist’ on a microscopic scale” (Tax 1963:ix). Other scholars working in predominantly Maya communities throughout Yucatan have noted similar economic shifts. Ellen Kintz, writing about her work in Cobá, Yucatan, also calls upon Tax’s term when discussing the increase in economic enterprises initiated by women (1998:598). She states that while historically women were excluded from the cash economy, they “have now become the managers of cash which flows into their household from a variety of sources” (Kintz 1998)(Kintz 1998:597). Various factors contribute to the new role of women as “managers” of the household economy, not the least of which is migration. Though the frequency of migration in Ek’Balam is lower than in other nearby ejidos, there are a number of households that are headed by women the majority of the time.
The Development of an Entrepreneurial Spirit
When the decision of whether she would continue with her studies or leave school to help
with the household and perfect her weaving skills came along, Rosa was quick to choose the
latter. Her mother wonders why she dislikes school so much and quietly wishes that she had
stayed in school. Doña Gomercinda says that when she was young she had to leave school
after the third grade in order to help with the house and her younger siblings, and laments the
fact that her daughter is not taking this opportunity to complete her education. Nevertheless,
Rosa hears none of this, for because when she turned fifteen she was a woman; free to make
her own decisions about her education. She is also an excellent weaver, and her hammocks
will augment the family income as well as allow her to begin earning her own money to buy
clothes and thread for more hammocks and help support her new family. This is a trend
common among the young women of the village.

The house at the entrance to the village is that of the Tuz May family. There is a
small *palapa* hung with multicolored hammocks, which is the first thing a visitor sees of the
pueblo. Houses of either block or thatch line up along the north, east, and south side of the
plaza, while the west side is dominated by the house of Doña Carolina. Her looming butter
colored edifice stands in stark contrast to the whitewashed poles of Don Wiliam’s thatch
house with political propaganda painted on the front. Eight of the houses around the plaza
have hammocks displayed under small thatch roofed *palapas* in hopes of making a sale to the
occasional passer-by. The positioning of houses took place long before the first tourist
arrived in Ek’Balam, and the advantageous placement of some houses for selling hammocks
is both a product of luck and a point of contention for some of the women whose houses are
located in other parts of the pueblo that do not get as much tourist traffic. Competition is
fierce when it comes to selling hammocks, and women who bring hammocks from areas off
the plaza are not welcome by others who have deemed a group of tourists “theirs.” This is a
difficult situation for the tourist as well. When the occasional group comes into the town and
stops in the plaza—which is the only obvious place to pull over—they are all but attacked,
and one does not have to speak Maya to understand that insults and harsh words are being
exchanged between the women who were first on the scene and those who come later.

The production and sale of hammocks is a main source of income for many families
in the village. Some women rely on hammocks for all of their staples, such as corn and
sugar. Doña Filomena’s husband leaves the village for work and returns cada quincena, or
every 15 days. Though he earns well for his work on a ranch, he is not working a milpa, and
so the family must purchase their corn locally from other families or in the neighboring city
of Temozón. Doña Filomena talked to me about the economic importance of her weaving in
2007.

If you make two hammocks, one will buy a bag of corn, which right now goes for
about 170 pesos [17.00USD]. Then from the other I take all of my expenses—sugar,
coffee, bread, everything. It is only when I sell a hammock for 350 pesos
[35.00USD] that I can get the money to buy more tubes [of thread] to start another
hammock. ~Doña Filomena [Transcriptions 2007-0629 (12:00)]

The opportunity to sell hammocks to tourists creates a new entrepreneurial spirit in the
village. As recently as 2004, hammocks and the traditional embroidered huipil were the only
crafts produced, but now the artisans of Ek’Balam extend their talent to the creation of mini
fruit hammocks, crocheted purses, soda tab belts, and embroidered tank tops for sale to
visiting gringos.
Cada Quincena: Migration to Cancun
The Maya migrants to Cancun in the early 1970s describe it as a milperío (ReCruz 2003:496). This was due to the fact that it was geographically very similar to the forests that they explored to make their milpas. In the same way that the Maya have ventured away from the community to find land suitable for the milpa, so too are the migrants venturing away to look for work in Cancun. This is one way that Cancun is viewed ideologically as a parallel to the traditional milpa (ReCruz 2003:497). A second component of this perception is that both milpa work in the villages and wage labor in Cancun form a source of survival for the Maya (ReCruz 2003:497). However, the development of Cancun did not account for housing for the growing migrant work force. Many migrants were forced to clear the forest, often encroaching on the milpa land of local Maya, in order to create housing areas. The resulting migrant neighborhoods, called areas populares, had no running water, electricity, or infrastructure in general (ReCruz 2003:497).

Since the beginning of the tourism boom on the Caribbean coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, many residents of rural areas have been migrating to this region to look for work. While the village of Ek’Balam did not have large numbers of their young men leaving for employment, the numbers were steadily increasing. According to one of the men in the village,

Many . . . many people are going to look for more for their lives. The truth is that in this time the life that we are living is a little different than before. Before there were only campesinos, all of the people went to the campo to work. In this time now it is not like this. Many want to go work in a city as a driver or in construction. This is what the men are looking for, but what they find there is dependence on the money, on drugs, whatever. Before it was not like this . . . we all planted, worked, burned our milpas. Now no. Also there are people dying on the road to Cancun. It is very dangerous. Sometimes when they are returning on Saturdays and drinking a little they crash. Almost no one wants to work in the campo now. The old system is
leaving. Some feel that it is because there is not enough land to work. Now there are no forests like before. They too have gone because now we are many. Watch on Mondays all of the men who go to look for their lives. Most are married and want to make money for their wives. So, they go to Cancun. But Cancun is changing too, there used to be mountains of work there but now not as much. People from all over Mexico have gone there to work, not just Yucatecos. ~Don Rafael [Transcriptions 2010-12-22]

In 2004, many individuals expressed concerns over the number of young men who were leaving the village for work. There were concerns with regard to the changes that the village was experiencing, but also concerns for the safety of the migrants. This was repeated multiple times in the interviews.

There are people who go. There is not money here. But it’s dangerous. Sometimes they return and sometimes they don’t. If they crash they will never arrive in their pueblo again. ~Don Ruperto [Transcriptions 2009-0802]

There is a heavy silence that punctuates discussions about the young men who are migrating. In 2009, Pascual, a young man from Ek’Balam, died while incarcerated in Cancun. The village is still reeling from this news. He was working on a construction crew, but there was not enough work to keep all of the workers. His boss hired him out to another man who had work. His new job was to guard a junk lot on the outskirts of the city. By day, Pascual was stripping the items of any valuable metals and by night, he was to sleep there and make sure that no one else was coming into the lot to do the same. The job was good for a few weeks, but then the boss stopped coming as frequently. He owed Pascual two weeks’ worth of pay when he came again. He did not have the money and left without paying him. The next time he came, Pascual explained that he was nearly out of food and water and did not have any money to buy more. The man said he would be back in two days with his pay. A week later Pascual still had not seen him. He had not eaten and was rationing the little water that he had.
He decided that he needed to do something or he would die there. He took some of the copper that he had stripped and set off to sell it. The boss returned the next day and filed a report that Pascual had stolen from him. He was incarcerated immediately. Eugenio, Lucas and Gomercinda’s eldest, was the foreman of the crew that Pascual was on before being hired out to this other job. When he was allowed to make a phone call, he contacted Eugenio to tell him what had happened and asked him to post bail. Eugenio did not have the money, but contacted his employer hoping that he would. He responded that this was not his problem since Pascual was not his employee any more. Eight days later Eugenio received another call from jail; it was an officer with news that Pascual was dead. He asked Eugenio to contact his family and to come get his personal affects. Eugenio talks very little about this incident, but says that he thinks about it constantly. His parents worry even more for him now because he is drinking more and more. They fear that one day he will be the one who does not come home.

Figure 29 shows rates of migration and how they have changed. Before 2003, nearly half of the collaborator sample reported that work outside of Ek’Balam was a major source of income for their household. In 2004, 20 percent of the individuals in the collaborator sample reported that they or the head of their household migrated to Cancun for employment. In 2004, this number was reduced by half. The leaders of the CBT project state that this is because of the employment provided by the project.
Figure 29. Rates of Migration

It is true that many men stopped travelling to the coast during the construction of the Cabañas. Still, the number of people migrating for work was too high for some members of the community who felt that leaving for work in Cancun translated to the young men not valuing the way of life in the village.

Many of the things that have changed are because the people have gone to other places, Cancun, Mérida, distant places where there are other examples for them to copy and when they come back here, they have already seen the other forms. What they see in other places is what they practice, and so really, they feel superior, or different, things that they might not say. But us as the people here should not forget our customs and traditions. In one month that someone goes to Cancun they return like this. They have begun to forget. The people who are going now are the ones who were unhappy and do not want to return to their land, they do not want to continue practicing that which we have here. ~Don Ruperto [Transcriptions 2009-0802]

When I explored further and asked questions about who had previously migrated but had once again settled in the village full time I found that prior to 2003 twice as many people were employed outside of the village as in 2004. I inquired further about these numbers and
found that 2003 was when the Cabañas were completed and opened for business and was also the year that Eden started attracting guests. In 2007, the number of individuals relying on migration as a primary earning strategy had dropped almost in half again, and was down to 12 percent of the collaborator sample. These figures are encouraging to some of the older individuals in the community, especially those who are working closely with the Cabañas project.

Actually, there are not so many from here that go to the coast these days. Here in Ek’Balam, right now we have a little work, like with the many projects we are doing and with Joan. Because of this we do not have too many going to Cancun. The people who are going now are the ones who were unhappy and do not want to return to their land, they do not want to continue practicing that which we have here. What they like is a more active life where they can do many different things. We only have right now about two vehicles that go to Cancun, it is minimal. And this is encouraging for those of us who work with our project, because if we can create something that will allow our sons to stay here and not have to go look for their lives, well, this would be very good. ~Don Felipe [Transcriptions 2007-0718 (48:56)]

Based on the levels of migration reported in 2004 and 2007, the CBT project and other touristic endeavors in the village are having the desired effect of creating employment in the village and alleviating the need for individuals to leave in order to earn enough money. In addition to work at the Cabañas, Eden, Dolcemente, Kaxil Kan, or Casa del Alux, construction for the various outsiders who have purchased land and need it to be cleared and built on is an increasingly common form of employment that can also be linked to the presence of tourism in the village. In 2010, the number dropped even lower to eight percent. Some still attribute this to the success of tourism in Ek’Balam, though others say that at this was because of the economic crisis that started with the H1N1 Influenza scare in 2009.

**Economic Capital in Everyday Life**
The role of land in Ek’Balam is much more than economic in nature, which makes it an
interesting object to focus on. It is both economic capital and cultural capital. Access to land through an individual’s status as an ejidatario is what provides their household with the cultural capital to benefit from tourism through the Cabañas project. These changing household earning strategies depend on cultural capital in ways that I address in the next chapter. The ability to diversify these strategies is what has always maintained households in Ek’Balam.
Chapter 7: On Being Maya and Getting By
While the presence of millions of tourists in the Maya World certainly complicates the debate over what exactly we mean by “Maya,” it is one that has been going on since long before Cancun was transformed from a sand spit in the Caribbean to the world-class destination it is today. The interest in and importance of heritage in the context of a tourism-driven economy does necessitate the identification of heirs, and thus the use of identity politics to determine the modern-day Maya heirs of Maya culture. The scholarship on identity in the Maya World can be roughly divided into two sections: constructivists and essentialists (Medina 2003:352). Essentialists argue for cultural continuity between ancient and modern expressions of Maya-ness. For them, a Maya person living today is a clear descendant of a resident of one of the hundreds of ancient Maya cities throughout the region.

Another version of this debate is presented by Fischer (2001), who separates essentialism from anti-essentialism. He defines essentialism as “analysis that is simplistic or universal in its assumptions” (2001:9). He goes on to give the Redfieldian propensity for the use of trait lists, which essentializes indiduals and groups by reducing the diversity of lived experience to mere categories. In contrast, the anti-essentialist approach is summed up in his assertion that “what we know about the Maya, or any other group, is ultimately distilled from what we know about particular individuals, a knowledge that is as best incomplete” (Fischer 2001:10). The constructivist and anti-essentialist arguments surrounding Maya identity are broadly a critique of the notion that the modern and ancient Maya shared cultural traits. Peter Hervik refers to this notion as the reification of daily life through ethnographic work in Yucatan (1998).

To move past a discussion of Maya as an essential identity, Loewe suggests that the
political syncretism of *mestizaje* become the foundation for analysis, in order to understand “how ethnic groups relate to one another structurally as well as symbolically” (Loewe 2010). Similarly, Florencia Mallon (1995) discusses how a nationalist ideology is developed both from the top down (i.e. concepts of how to deal with indigenous populations) and from within these populations (i.e. what it means for a resident of a rural village to be a proper citizen?).

Among residents of Ek’Balam it is common knowledge that tourists do not come all the way to this small village only to be shown blenders, t-shirts emblazoned with sports team logos, and other signposts of all things modern. This undesirable presence is mentioned with such frequency by visitors that locals joke about what has come to be known as “the pity of modernity.” This is not of great interest in and of itself. For years travelers—be they tourist, anthropologist, or otherwise—have sought the experience of the “Other.” What is of interest however is the level of cognition that the “Other” has of this phenomenon. Multiple strategies are employed at the household level to perform tourism (Little, 2004, 2000; Edensor, 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Annis, 1987), and having this knowledge is seen by residents as simply savvy business sense. Clearly, if someone is paying for a tour of a Mayan home you need to provide exactly that. It is here that the ideas of modernity, authenticity, tradition, and cosmopolitanism become fluid and difficult to identify as discrete characteristics within an individual and a community.

This chapter takes as its point of departure Ferguson and Gupta’s (2002) discussion of the shifting role of the state in shaping “local communities” (981). This is based in part on the realization that states are not simply “functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented.
and understood in particular ways (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:981). It is this production of cultural symbols that makes the state socially effective. These concepts are particularly useful in understanding what I have come to refer to as “government sponsored Maya-ness.”

Across the Yucatan Peninsula, state governments as well as agents of the federal government have embraced the ancient Maya heritage as their most important (and profitable) characteristic. More importantly, the state has identified the indigenous past as the tangible remnants of it as national patrimony. Ferguson and Gupta (Ferguson 2002), following Foucault (Foucault 1991), discuss the concepts of verticality and encompassment in the context of the new wave of NGO’s as purveyors of development. This is an apt lens with which to examine the situation in Yucatan, where in many cases the state itself, which has historically been the top of “top-down” development, is instituting community-based tourism projects. This shifts the approach on the part of the state, but the effect on the actual projects and the communities charged with managing them remains unclear. What we find is a situation in which the local is the symbolic seat of power in the project, but the state is still guiding the cultural production aspect in order to maintain its social effectiveness.

The aim of this chapter is an understanding of the articulation of local tactics to conceal cosmopolitanism while remaining competent in the eyes of the funding agencies to build and manage a tourism project, and the strategies employed by the state that reinforce the importance of performance for tourists. These development endeavors problematize concepts such as verticality, encompassment, and governmentality. The desire on the part of state agents to designate and market “local” leads to situations in which the individuals defined as such are expected to exist in concurrent states of authenticity and modernity, as traditional and cosmopolitan.
**Authentic Mayas**

“Cruzita, ven aca para poner tu traje (Cruzita, come here and put on your costume)” shouts Doña Gomercinda across the yard. Maria de la Cruz is stubbornly hiding in the bushes to avoid putting on her child-size *huipil*. She has her hair in a beautiful up-do thanks to her older cousin, and she is nearly ready for the big night. The *Fin de Curso* celebration is an important event that marks the end of the school year, graduation for the sixth-graders, and the beginning of summer vacation. The theme for 2004 is “The Magic of the Circus,” and Cruz will be playing one of the lions in the third grade lion tamers skit. Before her mother will let her put on her lion *traje*, or costume, there is another costume she must first don.

I have the camera out and will take many pictures for different families over the course of the evening. Doña Gomercinda sees this and decides that I should have a picture of Cruz in her traditional *huipil*, even though this is clearly something the child rarely wears. Later I asked Cruz why she disliked wearing her *huipil* so much, and she answered “*Las abuelitas andan de mestiza, pero yo no lo quiero…¡no soy abuela!*” (The little grandmas go as *mestizas*, but I do not want to…I’m no grandma!).

*Anda de mestiza* is the common way to refer to a woman who regularly wears a *huipil*, and translates literally as “one who walks as a *mestiza*.” The literal translation of the term *mestiza* is “mixed blood,” and in many parts of Latin America it is used to refer to individuals descended from Spanish and indigenous family lines (Loewe 2010). In Yucatan, *mestiza* refers to women who wear *huipiles*. Both her maternal and paternal grandmothers wear *huipiles* every day. It has been only in the last

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9 For a detailed discussion of social categories in Yucatán, please see Ron Loewe’s *Maya or Mestizo: Nationalism, Modernity, and its Discontents* (University of Toronto Press, 2010) or Peter Hervik’s *Maya People Within and Beyond Boundaries: Social Categories and Lived Identity in Yucatán* (Routledge, 2003).
forty years that women have made the shift from these loose-fitting, embroidered dresses to the modern *catrín*-style skirts and dresses favored by younger women. While Cruz would never wear her *huipil* on a normal day, there is always one that fits her stored up in the thatch for special occasions. She had been taught at this young age that when tourists want to take photos, it is a picture of a small *huipil*-clad Maya that they want to capture.

Change and continuity are common themes in Ek´Balam when the topic of tourism arises. Many people discuss the economic changes that households are undergoing, while others talk about the things in the village that should remain the same. There is a push for maintaining a level of authenticity in Ek´Balam. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the was that authenticity is designed and maintained is a subject of constant debate. The museum project in the summer of 2009 was the first time that I witnessed extensive debate over authenticity, but since then it has permeated many aspects of daily life in Ek´Balam. Prior to 2005, there were some households who had chosen the more modern and expensive blockhouses over the traditional thatch houses found in the village, however these were very expensive. The construction of a block house was a display of wealth. In 2005 the CONAFIT program brought block houses to nearly every lot in the village to help rebuild after hurricane Wilma. The result is that while most lots still have at least one thatch structure, almost all of them have a block house. There are advantages and disadvantages to the new style of construction. In the summer the houses are extremely hot, but in the winter they help keep out the cold, wet night air. There is a consensus that they are the nicer option, and many families prefer the blockhouse as the primary living area.

From the outside, the houses have changed the appearance of the village. This is undesirable according to some residents, including the leaders of the Cabañas. In order to
combat the modernization of Ek’Balam, the leaders tasked some volunteers with creating an urban plan that would restore the authentic look of Ek’Balam. Figure 30 is a map of the proposed plan for the village. The highlights of the plan are a proposal to create a thatch awning in front of every blockhouse and the construction of a ball court in the center of town.

Some residents link the changes in the village directly to the arrival of tourism in the region, such as this relation of the effect of the young people traveling to Cancun for work. Don Felipe explained:

In reality, ourselves as Mayas…it is a shame to see that in other places our traditions have gone into the past, when we were the owners, the originals. We should continue conserving our past for our children so that in their time, it will not be lost—our customs and traditions are the most essential to our life. Our people are beginning to see what has changed. The people of before dressed like this normally, in the Yucatecan way with their white shirt and pants and their little sandals like these and

Figure 30. Proposed urban plan
their little hat. But today very few of us use these sandals. It embarrasses them to wear these sandals. We are not now like the people from many years ago. Our ancestors, our grandparents, they wore clothes like this, but today the men, our sons, do not want to put this on. ~Don Felipe [Transcriptions 2004-0729]

I must remark here that there was a “Disney-esque” feeling to this conversation. Sitting in the yard of a new blockhouse with a man who previously lived in Cancun for fifteen years and now runs the taxi service in Ek’Balam, I was filled with the sense that tourism has made these vanishing traditions profitable. Would he, or anyone there, be expounding the value of conserving these old ways if they could not be marketed touristic performance? When defining authenticity, as we saw in the case of the museum debate, how far back should the village reach?

Yucatan’s tourism promotion agency, Secretaria de Turismo del Estado de Yucatán (SECATUR-Yucatán), relies heavily on the popularity of archaeological zones and Mayan culture in its promotions, as is apparent from a visit to its website “Maya Yucatan” (www.mayayucatan.com.mx). The importance of satisfying the tourist gaze is communicated to residents of Ek’Balam in multiple ways, including interactions through the village tour and strong suggestions from the main agency sponsoring the community tourism project (CDI) regarding the presentation of Mayan culture through employee dress codes and staged ritual ceremonies. This marketing strategy on the part of the government and tourism industry has elicited an interesting response among the residents of Ek’Balam. In a manner quite similar to what Walter Little found in his work in Aguas Calientes, Guatemala (2001), rather than dismiss the interest of tourists in their lifestyle, residents have embraced their notoriety and are engaged in a near-constant performance of tourism.

John Urry introduced the concept of the “tourist gaze” (1990) to the field of tourism
studies, and it has greatly influenced subsequent studies (Perkins and Thorns 2001:1986). Urry defined this idea as a departure from Foucault’s “medical gaze” as presented in *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003). According to Urry, the tourist experience is created in large part by gazing at environments that are somehow different from those found in the tourist’s everyday surroundings. If touring is a process of gazing at whatever is encountered, then the construction of these encounters is the defining force underlying what (or who) is the recipient of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990:1). The idea of individuals residing in a tourism destination as passive subjects of a tourist’s gaze assumes that these individuals have neither agency in the process nor cognition of their role. Because we know this to be a false assumption, the concept of the engaged performance of tourism as the response to the gaze is more useful.

Increasing numbers of scholars discuss the concept of performing tourism. Walter Little focused on the public performances for tourists in Guatemalan marketplaces (W.E. Little 2003), and found them to be much more than sales strategies. He refers to the process of building rapport with tourists for the purpose of making a sale as performance, in part because they are not building long-term relationships and the encounters are therefore temporary (2003:530). Tim Edensor looks to Erving Goffman’s (1959) discussion of the roles we play in everyday life in both the “front stage” and the “back stage” (Edensor 2001:60). He explains this dichotomy as follows:

“the nature of the tourist stage contextualizes performance: whether it is carefully managed, facilitates transit and contains discretely situated objects (props); or whether its boundaries are blurred, [and] it is cluttered with other actors playing different roles” (Edensor 2001:63).
From this description of the process, we can see that the “actors” are not just performing tourism, but are also performing “otherness.” To further the metaphor, let us look to Disneyland as a destination. All employees there are “cast members,” and as such are in a state of constant performance from when they step through the door in the tall wall that separates the theme park (front stage) from the outside world (back stage) until they leave for the day. Their expressions, costumes, and often times even mannerisms, correspond to the particular “land” in which they work. It would be jarring to see a pirate in Tomorrowland. This, according to Crang, is but one example of the “meaningful settings that tourists consume and tourism employees help produce” (Edensor cf Crang, 2001:69). When applied to the situation in Ek’Balam, the residents are the “cast members” and the places in which and upon which the tourist rests their gaze comprise the “front stage.” The implications for these encounters are many, but it is when the lines between “front stage” and “back stage” are blurred that these become problematic.

The village tour offered through a hotel in Ek’Balam is a popular activity that many guests say is the highlight of their vacation. The tour consists of visits to three houses in the village to see different women performing daily tasks. At Doña Gomercinda’s house, the guests learn how she prepares the corn and grinds it on the metate. They are then able to try their hands at tortilla making and eat fresh, hot tortillas before moving on to the next stop. From Doña Gomercinda’s house the tour moves on the house of Doña Ana where visitors can watch her embroidering huipiles, children’s dresses, and napkin sets on her treadle sewing machine. The last stop on the tour is the house of Doña Gloria where she gives an impromptu weaving demonstration and lets visitors attempt to weave a few rows of the hammock on her loom.
Doña Gomercinda’s house is a favorite stop on the tour because of the high level of interaction involved in the tortilla making demonstration. Guests are fascinated by the metate she uses to grind her corn and amazed when they attempt to grind the corn and realize the amount of strength it takes. They inevitably ask how much corn she grinds each day and how long it takes her. With a twinkle in her eye, she explains that to grind enough corn for the 400 or so tortillas consumed daily by her family of eight takes about four hours on the metate. By this time the muscles in the visitor’s arms are aching and they may have pinched a finger or two between the stones, but they never turn around to see the metal hand crank secured to one wall of the kitchen house and wonder at how much more efficient that tool would be. The metate belonged to Doña Gomercinda’s great-grandparents and she says that she remembers her mother using it from time to time, but she has never once ground corn on it for anything other than this tour. When the visitor’s move on she will wash the metate and return it to the corner of the kitchen where it will stay until the next tour comes through, after which she will proceed to grind the day’s corn in the shiny metal grinder that is one of her most prized possessions.

The example above of Doña Gomercinda’s tortilla-making performance would fall squarely into MacCannell’s conception of “staged authenticity” (1976:91). He argues that encounters such as this contain “a kind of strained truthfulness [that] is similar in most of its particulars to a little lie” and that “social structure itself is involved in the construction of the type of mystification that supports social reality” (1976:93). If this “mystification” is deliberate, then one must recognize the role that the “cast member” (Doña Gomercinda, in this case) plays in the process. Knowledge of what the tourist expects to see and experience in this encounter is required to successfully set the stage and provide an adequate feeling of
authenticity, thus making her possession of this inter-cultural awareness a display of her cosmopolitanism.

**Maya Cosmopolitans**
In order to discuss ideas such as cosmopolitanism in the context presented here, it is important to first look for definitions of this concept. Pollock et. al. (2000) define cosmopolitanism as much as they define its opposite, that is, they tell us what it is not: it is not a known entity to be traced from the Stoics through Kant as attempted by Harvey (2000), nor is it a concept that has been fully realized. What it is, according to Pollock et. al., is something that has an inherent need to remain undefined, because “specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncospolitan thing to do” (2000:577).

One solid place on which to stand is that social, cultural, and historic forces such as nationalism, globalization, and translocation are managed by the adaptive strategy of cosmopolitanism.

In his 1990 article on cosmopolitans and locals, Ulf Hannerz defines the concept loosely as simply people who move about in the world, however in a stricter sense he sees it as the “coexistence of cultures in the individual experience” (Hannerz 1990:239). The context of a rural village in the midst of tourism development offers an interesting dynamic to his discussion of what it means to be cosmopolitan. Given the tone and trajectory of the article, he was speaking about Western travelers, and the distinction was even made between the cosmopolitan and the more pedestrian “tourist,” with whom cosmopolitans abhor to be confused. Yet his argument goes on to discuss cosmopolitanism as more than a state of being, but also as a competence achieved by the individual. He described this competence as “a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking,
intuiting, and reflecting” (Hannerz 1990:242). In essence, Hannerz is defining cosmopolitanism as a state of awareness of and engagement with the ‘Other’ vis a vis a constant maneuvering through “a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms” (1990:243). Therefore, I argue that cosmopolitanism as an adaptive strategy is employed at the local level, not by tourists hoping to be redefined as sophisticated travelers through interaction with the ‘Other-Maya,’ but by residents of Ek’Balam (re)defining themselves as sufficiently ‘Maya’ for consumption by the ‘Other-tourist.’ Further, the exercise of cosmopolitanism as an adaptation can be viewed as a tactic used by residents to maintain engagement with the state for continued support of their community-based tourism project, while concurrently yielding to the state’s strategies for touristic performance.

“…it wasn’t very Maya”
To understand how cosmopolitanism plays out in the touristic encounters at the local level, I would like to offer an ethnographic example from Ek’Balam. In the summer of 2004 I asked Don Felipe, one of the men running the community-based tourism project, about the plans they had to cater to tourists and what sort of things the community hoped to offer:

It would be best if we could have some activities in the afternoons, like walks with [tourists] through the jungle to teach them what we know. We could organize a hetz-mek, it is a ritual that we do when a boy is four months old. We do it because when he grows he will work the milpa, which has four corners. For girls it is at three months, like the three stones around the fire. The tourists are all very interested in things like this. We could also have a Ch’a Cha’ac so that they can see how we care for our milpas. The INI [CDI] tells us that this will bring more guests here because there are not many places that still have their traditions where the tourists can go to see things like this. It would be good if we could organize things like this for the visitor to see. ~Don Felipe [Transcriptions 2004-0617]

This aspect of performance for tourists is found in other parts of life in the village as well, including traditional rituals and ceremonies. Not long after my arrival in Ek’Balam in
2004, I was invited to the annual Ch’a chaak ceremony. This is a ceremony that has been held every year dating before the arrival of the Spaniards. Chaak, the god of rain, is the patron of this event. However, he shares the day with the Virgin Mary.

The Ch’a chaak ceremony takes place in the middle of la Canícula, a period of drought before the heavy rains, which usually lasts from the middle of June through the middle of July. This is an especially crucial time for the residents of Ek’ Balam who are still farming; the corn has been planted and is growing, but remains small and vulnerable to a severe lack of water. The eventual yield of the milpa depends on the rains coming before the ground has dried completely. For this reason, it is necessary to hold the Ch’a chaak sometime in the first two weeks of July.

Two groups are involved in the preparation and execution of this important ceremony; the men who run the ceremony and their wives. One ejidatario is designated as the dueño, or the sponsor of the ceremony. This is a large commitment financially, as it is his responsibility to provide the cleared land on which the ceremony is held and to pay the h-men, or holy man. Each man who participates is expected to be able to bring masa, the ground corn used to make tortillas, and a chicken as offerings to Chaak. The dueño of the ceremony in 2004 was Don Lucas, the father of the Ay Balam family.

The ceremony began at seven in the morning with the making of the sacred wine and the construction of the altar. The yax’ mesa, or green table, is at the center of this and many other Mayan rituals. Made of a table with four intersecting arches in the cardinal directions, it represents a portal between earth and sky through which the various gods can be contacted.

10 For more on this phenomenon see ReCruz, 1996.
Juan de la Cruz Pech was the *h-men* who ran the ceremony, and he welcomed me when I arrived. Between each of the four phases of the ceremony, he stopped to explain some of what they were doing, as everything was carried out in Maya and in 2004 I knew approximately five words in Maya.

After the ceremony, I had many questions as to the way in which this has changed over the years. Though I was familiar with some of the central aspects of the ceremony, such as the construction of the *yax’mesa*, I had expected to see the majority of the male residents still who were still farming in attendance, save for the handful of Seventh Day Adventists. Once the day got underway, I realized that there were only nine men participating this year. I later inquired about this in a conversation with Don Rafael. He explained that many of the religious ceremonies are lacking in attendance, if even held at all.

There are changes in the faith of people here. Before, all believed in the ceremonies. Now there are many religions and it is like politics. Before this time of rain the people said, “we need the rain,” now it has come to grow their *milpas*. They say, “Thank God,” but who among them was there at the Cha Chaak? God sent the rain because we asked for it. We spoke the name of Chaak. There are almost no people who still believe, they think they can speak directly to God. The ceremony that we had 15 days ago celebrates being Maya. There is another ceremony called *lo-ca-pal*. It is a new benediction for the land. You do it for the *milpa* too. We do it every two years to renew the land and the animals. Usually it is about 20 people. But now, no. The last time we had this was 4 years ago. They are going to be lost, because how will the children know about them. There are many changes. ~Don Rafael

[Transcriptions 2007-0718 (01:12:47)]

During my second summer in the village (2007), I expected to attend the ceremony again, and was interested to see how the levels of participation had changed over the three years since my first stay. In the month of June, I began to inquire about the date that the *Ch’ac Cha’ac* would take place. Each of the individuals I spoke with was hesitant to give me a
time, and instead told me to ask someone else. By July there was little pretense about holding
the ceremony at all, and I was told that there would be no Ch’a Cha’ac this year. According
to many residents, this is the first time that a summer has passed without being punctuated by
this important event.

Similar to the encounter at the house of Doña Gomercinda that was recounted earlier,
these conversations with Don Felipe reveal a person who is completely aware of the
expectations and desires of the tourist and is able to cater to them through the selective
presentation of “traditional” rituals. At the same time, he recognizes the importance of
demonstrating this competency to CDI without letting it come through in the performance for
tourists. In order to accomplish this he, and other residents, employ the tactics at their
disposal. These tactics are informed by the daily tourist discourse about what they expect to
see, desire to experience, and do not want to know.

In the summer of 2009, a Ch’a Cha’ac ceremony was again held in a clearing on the
outskirts of the village. The following is an ethnographic account of this event and an
analysis of what it illuminates with regard to understanding touristic performance and
cosmopolitanism. The scene is a clearing in the woods on the outskirts of a small Maya
village, in the summer of 2009. There is a hmeen, or spiritual healer, in the center of the
clearing whispering an eclectic mix of prayers to Cha’ac, the god of rain, Jesus, and Maria.
He kneels at a table made of leaves and branches that is the altar for many Maya rituals. The
yax mesa or green table has leafy branches that arch over it and attach to each corner,
resembling the arch of the sky and the celestial realm. Surrounding him are just-dead
chickens, an aluminum tub of wine made from the Balche tree, buckets of masa, and jícaras
to drink sweet atole.
The importance of the ceremony and the role of the *hmeen* have been well documented by generations of anthropologists in the region, and as an ethnographer I am quite taken by this scene. This was previously an annual event, but due to many changes within the community the last time that a *Ch’a Cha’ac* ceremony was held in the village was during my first summer there in 2004. The experience of being invited to observe something that I had heard of through the pages of ethnographies by the likes of Redfield and others was amazing to me. I was, admittedly, a tourist of sorts. A guest among hosts, an “anthropologist-Other.” I suppose that they could have done anything and I would have thought that, regardless of what I expected, it was very “Maya”.

Returning to 2009, let us redirect our gaze from the center of the clearing to the edges. Standing, sitting, mingling, and crouching to get the best view are approximately 60 people, consisting of tourists, volunteers, project staff from a federal development agency, state and local politicians, representatives from the state secretary of tourism, and of course me, the “anthropologist-Other.” What we are witnessing is an event co-sponsored and organized by the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (an NGO), the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages (CDI), and members of the civil association in the village that manages a community-based tourism project. The volunteers had just spent the last month working on various development projects in the village through CCY’s program. The politicians were invited by SECATUR (*Secretaria del Turismo del Estado de Yucatán*) to see how regional community-based tourism projects are run. The tourists were simply guests staying at the community-run hotel, fortunate to have arrived when they did.

The strobe-ing of 60 flash bulbs lights the scene, and there is an excitement radiating from the crowd. I am thinking that this is going quite well and that the various delegates will
be very pleased. This sentiment is shared by the president of the civil association, who thinks that they have really nailed what it was that was requested: a traditional Maya rain ceremony. The women in the kitchen cleaning and cooking the chickens killed during the ceremony feel the same. They tell me that the old tradition was to have the *Ch’a Cha’ac* overnight, lasting from about 10:00pm until dawn the next morning. It had been many years since they had done one like that, but for this occasion they wanted to demonstrate *el verdadero, el autentico*.

The *Ch’a Cha’ac* ceremony ended at dawn, and everyone returned to their hammocks to rest for a bit before starting the day. As I walked home with the family I stay with, we discussed the level of Maya-ness that was displayed and they explained to me how hard it had been to find a *hmeen* who would still perform an overnight ceremony. When I asked again why they wanted it to be overnight, they said that the guests in attendance were very important to the continued funding of U Najil Ek’Balam, the community-based tourism project in the village, and that they were clear about wanting this event to be *maya verdadero* (real Maya).

Once we arrived at the Ay Balam house, I asked what “real” Maya was. Doña Goma said that one way to tell a real Maya was from their attire, but then noted that if that were the case then she would not be Maya because she dresses *de catrin*, or in a modern style of skirts and dresses instead of a *huipil*. Maria de la Cruz, the youngest daughter, added that she thought that Maya meant both being a *mestiza* (a woman who still wears a *huipil* daily) and speaking Maya. Goma quickly saw the contradiction in this and exclaimed that if she made me a *huipil* to wear that I would be *sak maya* (white Maya) and if she learned English then she would be a *box gringa* (black or dark North American woman). We continued joking
about how the women politicians who attended wore beautiful *ternos*, the dress version of the traditional *huipil*, and the actual Maya women were not because they spent the ceremony working in the kitchen. A simple *huipil* can cost upwards of 500 pesos (50USD) because of the detailed embroidery. For most women, this is not the preferred attire for killing and cleaning chickens. I asked Cruz how we could identify a man as being Maya or not, and she explained to me that a man would be whatever his wife was, of course. At this Nacho, one of the family’s sons, ran out of the kitchen house and then returned promptly with his father’s machete tied to his waist with a rope and his tee-shirt turned inside out so that the Los Angeles Angels’ logo was hidden. He began to pound his chest with his fist and said in his deepest voice, “*soy maya* (I am Maya)!”

We found out the next day that we were not the only ones who noticed these paradoxes. The final word from the esteemed attendees at the ceremony was not as positive as was expected. They wanted to know why none of the women in their beautiful *huipiles* were at the ceremony, and why the women in the kitchen were not wearing their “Maya dresses” while they worked. They were dismayed at having to stay up all night in order to see the whole ceremony, and the ones who returned to their rooms for a few hours of sleep during the night were frustrated by having missed part of the ceremony. In parting, the politicians thanked the leaders of the civil association for their trouble and stated that while the event went smoothly, “it wasn’t very Maya” (Fieldnotes: 2009-0724).

This illustrates some of the disparate logics within which residents of Ek’Balam negotiate tourism and conduct their daily lives. Households in this community balance economic strategies that prioritize tourism with traditional economic strategies for land-use, and are all the while reminded that they should maintain a sufficiently “Maya” identity.
regardless of how the balance tips. Among the economic strategies that prioritize tourism are handicraft production, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of accommodations and other touristic services. Traditional strategies for land use are mainly *milpa* agriculture, producing maize for auto-consumption. During this balancing act the idea that tourism is the new game in town is reinforced, and as *milpa* agriculture decreases some worry that it will soon be the only game in town. It is at this juncture that touristic performance, as a means to capital accumulation, becomes a form of governmentality.

**Tactics and Strategies of Governmentality**
Foucault defined governmentality as “how people govern themselves and others through the production and reproduction of knowledge” (Wearing and McDoñald 2002:197). While the use of the concept by Ferguson and Gupta remains similar, they posit governmentality in the shifting context of the neoliberal economic project in order to develop their idea of transnational governmentality (2003:989). In Ek’Balam, governmentality can be seen as being enacted on two levels; residents distribute knowledge and how to best exploit the presence of tourists in their village by producing adequate levels of Maya-ness, and the funding agency, working on behalf of the federal government, governs residents by mandating the display of their Maya-ness for tourist consumption.

The shift on the part of the state from a position of verticality to one of encompassment, as both the top and bottom of development through the creation of agencies such as CDI, allows it to enact a different kind of governmentality. To be successful at gaining and maintaining funding, residents are expected to respond to this in multiple ways. However, their funding is on the line and they have little power over the way that they are governed through their tourism project, leaving them with only the tactic of being
uncosmopolitan cosmopolitans.

For de Certeau, the difference between strategy and tactic lies in power. He defines a strategy as “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships” when a subject has a “base from which relations can be managed” (de Certeau and Rendall 2002). In contrast, a tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” (2002:37). Those using tactics are forced to act within boundaries delimited by either the law or by a foreign power. Additionally, those using tactics do not have the advantage of viewing their “adversary as a whole within a distinct, visible, and objectifiable space” (deCerteau 1984:37). This is a useful lens through which the daily negotiations with tourism in Ek’Balam can be viewed and understood.

**Conflicting State(s)**
The difference between the strategies employed by the state and the tactics used by residents can be seen in all of the interactions that surround the development of tourism in Ek’Balam and other, similar destinations. It is the state that sponsors and markets Maya-ness (as a strategy for soliciting tourism), and the residents who determine just how they will enact this marketing tool at the local level. Juan Castillo-Cocom presents the shifting creation and modification of ‘Maya’ as descendant of royalty, proletariat, indigenous, and spectacle through the changing agendas of political parties. The PRI party, or *Partido Revolucionario Institutional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) “[The Maya] were a ‘problem’ for the PRI, that is, understood as something that eventually would be concluded or solved ‘properly’; while for the PAN they were an ‘issue’, because it is a final outcome that constitutes a solution (as of a problem) or resolution (as of a difficulty)” (Cocom 2005:147). The PAN response to the Maya “issue” was the creation of various pseudo-non-state agencies, such as
INDEMAYA (the Institute for the Development of the Maya Culture of the Yucatan State) in 2001, and CDI (the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages) which replaced the National Indigenous Institute (INI) in 2003. CDI’s Mission and Vision are to:

Guide, coordinate, promote, support, promote, monitor and evaluate programs, projects, strategies and actions to reach the public and sustainable development and full exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples and communities in accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution of the United Mexican States. Work with indigenous peoples and communities to define their development projects in a framework of equity and affect the formulation, implementation of public policies to their benefit, living in social and economic conditions similar to the national average and have full enjoyment of their rights and respect for diversity.

Agencies such as CDI and INDEMAYA are examples of NGOs that “are not as ‘NG’ as they might wish us to believe” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:993). While they are state agencies, they work to create local or grassroots support through their emphasis on community-based development initiatives, affording them an image of being hands-off. This complements the regional sentiment of separation from the national government that is found in Yucatán by casting the image of an NGO over these agencies. Following Das and Poole’s discussion of the margins of the state, I argue that the foray of the Mexican state into the business of indigenous development effectively blurs these lines (Das and Poole 2004).

**Pueblo Mágico as Cultural Capital**
In 2001, the Mexican Secretary of Tourism (SECATUR) initiated the *Pueblos Mágicos* (Magic Villages) program in conjunction with state and local governments. They define these as places “with symbolism, legends, history, important events, day-to-day life – in other words, ‘magic’ in its social and cultural manifestations, with great opportunities for tourism”
The goal of this program is to revalue and recapture the culture and tradition of these villages that have always been in the collective imagination of the nation as a whole and represent fresh and different alternatives for local and foreign visitors. More than a rescue, is a tribute to those who live in these beautiful places throughout Mexico and have guarded for all of us the rich culture and history they contain” (SECTUR 2012).

Izamal was inaugurated as the tenth Pueblo Mágico in 2002, and currently there are 50 Pueblos Magicos throughout Mexico. In 2010, the new municipal commissioner in Ek’Balam, Don Alonzo, began talking with me about this program. He is a guide at the archaeological zone who went to Izamal for training. He came back excited about the prospect of Ek’Balam becoming a Pueblo Mágico. Authorities consider five criteria when a village applies to the program: traditional architecture, emblematic buildings, festivals and traditions, production of artisan crafts, and maintenance of culinary traditions. Part of the catalyst for the new urban plan was the idea that if Ek’Balam met these criteria they would be on their way to gaining this designation. The most interesting aspect of this process is the diachronic nature of the plans for authenticity. In thinking about the space that would be included as part of the Pueblo Magico ideal, the urban area is included along with the rest of the ejido and the archaeological zone. Figure 31 is a map of the key places that are part of this plan. In the south are the urban area of Ek’Balam and the monuments in the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone. Included here as points on the map are the CBT project, the well and hacienda foundation in the center of town, and the ball court. In the north is the rest of the ejido and Hacienda Xkantoh. In the farthest north portion is the abandoned village site of Xkumil. Key points in this region are caves, cenotes, milpas, unconsolidated monuments, and reforestation areas. All told, the map contains features that span time.
periods from the Terminal Classic period (circa 1000AD), the early Hispanic period (circa 1600), the hacienda era (circa 1850), post-Revolutionary land reform (circa 1930), to the present. Residents, however, are ambivalent about assigning periods to the map. They feel that without these designations the map creates a picture of the entirety of Ek’Balam’s heritage. This map is an image of the ecosystem of authenticity.

In the minds of many residents in Ek’Balam, the ability to maintain this authenticity is dependent on their use of cultural capital and creation of symbolic capital. As dueños (caretakers) of this ecosystem, they are acting as stewards of all facets of their environment: cultural, ecological, and economic. They are fulfilling their role as “heirs of heritage,” and most importantly, they are Maya-enough.
Figure 31. Ek’Balam’s Ecosystem of Authenticity
Chapter 8: Politics and Ethno-ecology
The relationship between resource management and the local communities in which these
resources are based is as important as the role that external institutions play in the process. A
key factor on this side of the equation is incentive. Locals are likely to respond to incentives
for protecting natural resources in manners that directly correspond to the benefit they will
receive. Success, then, is dependent on local participation or buy-in to the motives and
methods for conservation as well as other non-economic factors.

The concept of political ecology grew out of attempts in the 1970s to conceptualize
the role of nature and ecosystems in the existing theoretical framework of political economy.
This was a result of various social forces converging, namely the resurgence of public
interest in Marx and the burgeoning environmental movement. Early researchers were using
concepts such as the social relations of production and the control of resources—typically the
domain of political economists—and applying these tools to environmental issues
(Greenberg and Park 1994).

Research and scholarship on environmental change was often separated into two
camps; on one side were the discussions of this issue in the context of historical change,
population growth, and intensified need for resources, while on the other were discussions of
the technical dimensions of environmental issues, with implications for policy and
management. The first often resulted in the abstract placement of blame for environmental
degradation on humankind in general and the developed world more specifically. The
second provided grist for development agencies and organizations hoping to superficially
account for sociological factors, but often times ending in failure (Bryant and Bailey 1997).
This led some scholars to rethink the way that the concept of political ecology is translated
into practice. Raymond Bryant and Sinéad Bailey outlined three fundamental assumptions that they argue are crucial to this process. They are 1. that the costs and benefits associated with environmental change are not distributed evenly; 2. that this uneven distribution is complicit in changes to the existing social, political, and economic inequalities; and 3. that the variations in effect of environmental change has political implications because of its effect on the power of actors in relation to other actors (Bryant and Bailey 1997:28). Given these assumptions, political ecology is of particular use to the understanding of local-level decisions regarding the natural environment and its shifting dialectic within and between ongoing political, economic, and social factors.

In some ways, anthropologists are particularly adept at considering ecological factors in their research because of their ability to deal with non-static forces such as culture. On the other hand, Ian Scoones (1999) suggests that this may be exactly the reason that anthropologists are sometimes slow to recognize the importance of human-environment relations. That is, he questions whether the rapid shifts and nuanced nature of culture caused environmental factors to blend into the background.

That political ecology has had a major effect on thinking surrounding environmental change and its socio-economic counterparts is undoubted, however some maintain that it is more of a collection of approaches than an actual theoretical approach in and of itself (P. A. Walker 2005). Scholarship that falls under the purview of political ecology can draw from diverse theoretical traditions, such as political economy, cultural ecology, environmental economics, and social movements theory (Escobar 1998). For this reason, I find it important to clarify the way that a political ecology approach informed this research.

In addition to a lack of operationalized definitions for the key concepts involved in
community-based development mentioned previously, the fact that local commons are influenced by regional, national, and global institutions is often overlooked (Becker and Ostrom 1995). The role that development institutions play in the conservation of the commons is not as romantic or easily sold as that of local communities, but it is integral in the way that local resources are managed (Anderson 2005; Anderson 1996). At the same time, however, the very process of creating development institutions and adopting their strategies for conservation presupposes that resource management can be scaled-up. This, according to Fikret Berkes (2002), is true regardless of the fact that there is little evidence to support this assumption.

**Ecologically Noble Savage**  
Community-based conservation is defined as “local voluntary initiatives involving a minimum of several households in which at least one of the outcomes of local management practices is either maintenance of habitats, the preservation of species, or the conservation of certain critical resources” (Western and Wright 1994). These initiatives are also referred to as community natural resource management (CNRM), and community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Because avenues for conservation are mainly defined by external institutions and encouraged by the federal funding agency of the community-based tourism project, a brief discussion of the perceived relationship between indigenous groups and conservation is important.

Images of indigenous residents of rural areas engaged in conservation are reified by popular media, travel writings of explorers from the 17th century, and by conservationists and some cultural ecologists of the 1970s. The perception that indigeneity is marked by knowledge of how to successfully and sustainably manage natural resources has been
summarily discarded by anthropologists at this point; a view expressed best by the systematic questioning of the “ecologically noble savage” (Redford 1991; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Hames 2007; and others). Numerous factors, including rapid population growth in many rural and tropical areas, depletion of resources, and soil degradation led to a view that the “harmonious past” in which indigenous peoples practiced sustainable resource management was, well, past (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:632). Conservation became the explicit responsibility of the state and the “developed world.” Implicit factors in this process were liberalization of trade and the concurrent trends of privatization, which were arguably the initial cause of much of the environmental degradation because of the shrinking land available for use by indigenous agriculturalists. It is important also to note that the groups of indigenous peoples are made of up individual actors, and as such work on land managers has been as important as that on land management (Scoones 1999). Additionally, the fact that the resources being managed are themselves constructed socially and politically to have varying levels of value must underscore a political ecological approach to this topic (Harvey 1974).

The reaction to the caricature of indigenous peoples as stewards of their environments has been a shift to their portrayal as poor conservationists destroying the ecosystems in which they live; the image of the “the wasteful savage” (Anderson 2004:118). According to Anderson (2004), Headland (1997), and Alvard (1993), anthropologists occupy the middle ground of this otherwise polarized debate. The area in which the discourse of the “ecologically noble savage” has persisted is in the images marketed and consumed within tourism.

One of the stated goals of the CBT project in Ek’Balam is to maintain and improve
the local environment through conservation, reforestation, and education. Most of the groups that work with the project are there with biodiversity conservation at the top of their priority list. In many ways, these initiatives have been successful at the Cabañas. The separation of trash into cardboard (burnable), recyclable plastic, aluminum, and other plastic is second nature to the individuals who work in the kitchen and around the grounds. Visitors, volunteers, and program staff comment regularly on how pleased they are with the way that the socios have learned to keep the Cabañas clean without burning plastic. The tension between these images of the ecologically noble savage and the wasteful savage is visible as soon as the visitor leaves the Cabañas area and walks through the village. Burning trash is a regular occurrence in Ek’Balam.

A few factors are important for understanding this practice. First, when someone says they are cleaning up the trash in the yard, this includes garbage in the form of bottles, cans, plastic bags, and paper. This also includes organic waste, such as leaves, table scraps, pieces of broken dishes, etc…Until fairly recently, all “trash” was either organic, paper, glass, metal, or ceramic, and burning it was the only logical thing to do. This brings us to the second factor: what should a household do with the trash that it does not burn? Just outside of town on the far side of the baseball field is the town dump. It is a rejollada (sunken area) that has been filling up slowly but surely over that past fifteen years. I have taken visitors to see the dump on many occasions, and the sight is invariably met with alternating sentiments of pity and disgust. This is particularly true when they arrive at the dump via one of the CBT project’s nature trails. They cannot understand how residents could do this to their land; their environment. In just a moment, the idyllic, sustainable, indigenous village has become a trash generating, ecological disaster area. Visitors leave the dump with question about how
residents could be so careless with their trash, and why they do not use the trash sorting and gathering facilities at the Cabañas. Unfortunately, the trash facility at the Cabañas is reserved for trash generated by the Cabañas and their guests. The socios would have to take the plastic to Valladolid to sell much more frequently if the whole town was bringing theirs as well.

Another aspect of the dump that visitors often overlook is exactly what kind of trash is there. If you observe the dump for a few minutes, you begin to visually pick out items. A pile of plastic two-liter soda bottles, one old sandal, and a broken bucket. Then a collection of wine bottles, the cardboard box for a cappuccino maker, and a toilet seat. These may seem like normal trash; however, the latter items do not exist in any houses in Ek’Balam. These items come from one of the other tourism businesses in the village, all of whom deposit at least some trash there weekly.

The dump is sure to leave visitors with a disappointed feeling, yet they continue to insist on going. The socios now refuse to accompany them and instead point them in the general direction. Don Marcelo used to take visitors there, but he says that it is too uncomfortable.

Why do they want to see our trash? It is really odd. And when I take them the whole time I am telling them that we don’t have many options now but that we are hoping to stop using the dump in maybe the next five years. The whole time they tell me how awful it is to see all of this trash. Well, I agree! But what should I do if I don’t bring it here? Bueno, I can’t burn the plastic anymore because I know it is bad for my wife and children and that the gringos do not like the way it smells. Should I build the trash its own house next to mine? So now I tell them no. The dump is just next to one of the trails, and if they want to see it, pues, adelante, chen beya mu bin’i (well, go ahead, but I’m not going). [Transcriptions 2011-1230]

This notion of the “ecologically noble savage” has inhibited an examination of the sociocultural factors dictating agricultural production, conservation efforts, and their overall
interaction with their environments, especially given that biodiversity conservation and natural resource management are nearly always found in rural projects. It is the rural producers who are most affected by the neoliberal policies that lead to decreasing availability of and access to land.

**Land Sales: “…you just sold your lovely mother.”**

Nacho is gleeful in the first days after the school year is over. He is eager to be able to devote his days to work in the fields with his father, Don Lucas. They rise early to eat a few tortillas and then ride their bikes out to the milpa and return in the early afternoon full of energy and stories about their morning. When asked if he would ever consider going on to study or leaving for work in Cancun like his two oldest brothers have, Nacho is especially quick to explain that his brothers did not want to work in the fields under the sun and he does not want to read books and study hard. He also says that he has no interest in living in Cancun, where all of the food comes from stores and tortillerías (tortilla factories). “I will follow my father even if my brother does not” he proudly and adamantly exclaims.

With the arrival of tourism, land in Ek’Balam has taken on a new value. What was once a necessary resource for agriculture and space to build homes is now a commodity that is increasingly gaining the attention of outsiders, both from elsewhere in Mexico and foreigners. This process accelerated between 2004 and 2007, demonstrated by dramatic increase in outside ownership within the ejido. In 2004 two lots were owned by individuals from outside of the community, both for the purpose of profiting from the increasing amount of tourists in the region. In 2007, there are no less than eight lots within the ejido owned by individuals from outside of the community.
By 2012, non-locals own thirteen lots in the urban zone of Ek’Balam and portions of five parcels in the rest of the *ejido*. This number is increased by unknown amounts when outsider-owned lots in the neighboring *ejido* of Santa Rita are taken into account.

The trees and plants of the *monte* were previously a vanishing interest beyond the basic need for *guano*, or palm fronds, for thatched roofs and lumber to construct houses. Now that some leaders in the village are becoming aware of the value placed on these things by external forces (i.e. funding institutions and the increasing importance of eco-tourism activities and accommodations), they are working internally to encourage conservation
efforts among the community’s *ejidal* members. This process is aided by the designation of funds by the *Comisión Nacional Forestal* (CONAFOR), or the National Forestry Commission. This agency was formed by the federal government in 2001, and among the projects it has coordinated since then is the *Programa Para el Desarrollo Forestal* (PRODEFOR), or the Program for Forest Development.

The question then is how these changes in land use and ownership are affecting members of the community as they attempt to continue farming on *milpa* lands and enjoy adequate land within the village for their homes. In 2004, many of the community members I spoke with had strong opinions about others selling their land, however they all realize that because the land is parceled it is the right of each individual to do so.

Now, in the time that we are in, it is a little complicated. You know why? In my role as *ejidal* commissioner, I cannot tell people that they cannot sell their land to tourists or foreigners. But with time they will see that the land is going. There will not be a place for their children to live in the pueblo. For example, this is my son and his newborn son. In 20 years, more or less, this child will not have land. Because many people are coming, the tourists are coming here. They want to have a life here in Ek’balam. There are people selling their own property. This, well, later where are their children going to live? Where are they going to make their milpas or the palapas of their sons or daughters? Why does this happen? For money. But there are people selling their parcels. The *ejidal* parcel is an inheritance. If I decided to sell my parcel what would I give to my children and grandchildren? You see, we are multiplying. We are growing but the land is not. For this reason I am careful with the parcel that I have, for the inheritance of my children and grandchildren. Sometimes a person comes looking for a piece of land. I, as *ejidal* commissioner, have to call an assembly of the *ejidatarios*. Then we have to decide if we can donate the land to this person who is soliciting us. But sometimes the person will already have a parcel and they will have sold it. The people say that 10 meters from the main road, they can ask 20,000 pesos for this. The person who comes here from far, well this is cheap for them! For example, the story of Joan.¹¹ She wanted to buy a big piece of land. The

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¹¹ Joan is the owner of Eden hotel, a small scale lodge that opened in the village in 2002.
land that she has is about 2,000 square meters. She bought her land for 20,000 pesos. For her, about 2,000 dollars, right? And so there is an example of why this is happening. But, God willing, the people will think first. That they will hold on to their lands because more people are going to come here from other countries. If they keep coming and buying, well, good for the person selling, but it does not have a benefit for the pueblo. Only personal benefit. They are selling their children’s futures. ~Don Rafael [Transcriptions 2004-0802]

This passage is representative of the sentiment found in most of the interviews conducted. Because more people are coming to the region, outsiders are becoming aware of the business opportunities available there. Don Rafael’s concern that his sons may not have land to work when they come of age is a stress felt throughout the community. Based on this passage, the going price for land in 2004 was approximately $4047.00USD per acre. In 2007 the price had changed significantly according to the individuals interviewed. By 2012, the price per acre had skyrocketed. Currently, there is a 0.1 acre lot in Ek’Balam listed for $140,000MX, or approximately $14,000.00USD.

**To Plant or Protect**

And so if I take two, three, or four hectares and sell it to a rich man, then my land is just getting smaller. And then where are my children and grandchildren going to live? It is ours to live on with our children. It is not a question of selling the land. But many people do not understand it this way. Many people say ‘they gave it to me because they gave it to me,’ and ‘it’s mine because it’s mine!’ But it is not true. What one needs to understand is that the land is our mother. If you sell your land, it is an insult, I would say…you just sold your lovely mother. Because from the land come all of the things we need. From it come the spicy, the sweet, and the salt. From it comes the materials for our houses. But if someone sells their land, they no longer have the right to cut wood, because then it is private land. And this is what they do not think of.

~Don Claudio [Transcriptions 2010-12-29]

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12 2,000 square meters is equivalent to 0.4942 acres or 0.200 hectares.
13 Approximately 4.94 to 9.88 acres.
When it became apparent that there were multiple options for land use, I assumed that these decisions were guided by kin group membership, as were decisions about tourism participation. What I found however was an array of choices that do not fall in the same patterns that tourism participation did. Of particular interest is the pattern of involvement with the PRODEFOR program. The Programa Para el Dessarrollo Forestal (PRODEFOR), or the Program for Forest Development, was initiated in 1997 as a conservation initiative to increase biodiversity in rural, unprotected regions of Mexico. This program designates large numbers of native trees and plants to various ejidos with an understanding that they will dedicate a portion of their ejidal land (generally about ¼ of the parcel) to reforestation and conservation (UNFF 2004). While rates of land sale and land cultivation vary wildly, a consistent number of people are choosing to participate in the conservation effort (Figure 33). Additionally, some families that have very little involvement with the CBT project show similar rates of conservation activity to those who have high involvement.
However, since much of the talk of conservation within the CBT project surrounds nature as a tourist attraction, those not involved in tourism in the village have little potential economic benefit from their conservation efforts. This program has intense support from the majority of Ek’Balam’s ejidal assembly, mainly because of its potential for tourism.

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14 Similar to the responses for sources of income, households can be involved in multiple strategies for land use. This is even more apparent within kin groups because of the autonomous nature of each household with regard to resource management. For example, one household in the Ay kin group may farm a small portion of their land and have the rest in reforestation, while another may be engaged in both of these strategies and also have sold a portion of their land.
Figure 34. Reforestation areas in the ejido of Xkumil.
The current plan is the creation of an uninterrupted swath of *monte alto*, or high forest, to run from the CBT project to the parcel of Don Marcelo. There tourists will be greeted with refreshments and a *palapa* hung with hammocks where they can rest a while before exploring the caves located on this parcel.

*Bueno,* talking about the nature that surrounds us here we can appreciate the many native trees of this region. We are actually implementing the planting of trees like the *Ramon,* the little *Zapote* and palms of *Guano.* We are still trying to have more variety in the plants, and this is precisely one of the attractions we are considering. In its time, the path could come through here, and you could enjoy all of the plants and all of the things that live here, and all that there is to see in this area. We also want to teach both our companions and the visitors that come how we are taking care of the nature that we have, the little of it that’s left. ~Don Marcelo [Transcriptions 2009-0802]

**Irrational agronomists**
For at least 3,000 years, people have been farming the Yucatan Peninsula, introducing species from other regions, and constructing terraced and ditched gardens to protect the species they found useful (Faust 2005). Multiple forces have changed these interactions, including agrarian reform, tourism, and development initiatives. The practice of community inclusion, decision making, and “agency” in conservation and natural resource management initiatives implemented in Ek’Balam clearly follows the assertion made by Bennett (1996a), Agrawal and Gibson (1999), and others that the social behavior of producers is a factor neglected in agricultural research and in conservation or resource management research.

According to Bennett (1996a) agricultural research consistently neglects environmental consequences of chemical fertilizers and other technologies and the social behavior of the producers. He states that farmers were considered unreliable, “since they
could not be relied upon to use the techniques and strategies that research had shown would produce the best results at the least cost” (1996:129). In the mid-20th century farming in North America shifted from being perceived as an important and useful human endeavor to a branch of the business world. This corporatization of farming led to a decrease in concern for resource conservation for numerous reasons. In Mexico’s ejidal sector this shift came in the 1980s, as international pressures presented unending reports to the Mexican government confirming the low productivity of the ejidal system. Subsistence agriculture is not rational from a neoliberal economic standpoint, and the “opening” of the Mexican economy through the end of ejidal reform was seen as progress (Dornbusch and Helmers 1991). What we see repeating here in the relations between state agencies and residents of indigenous communities is really the classic “economic man” discussion as laid out by Frank Cancian: He asks, “are peasants able to be economic maximizers or are they unable to maximize because they are bound to traditional production strategies” (Cancian 1972:1)? This question has been posed, answered, re-phased, and even discarded, however we have not actually moved as far from it as we would like to believe. Guillermo de la Peña (1981) questions some of the models of modernization, unilineal change, and the peasantry that have been presented with regard to this question. He argues that, “the national economy—more precisely, the process of capital accumulation—has entailed the existence of ‘non-modern’ sectors, articulated to ‘modern’ organizations” (1981:26).

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge**
The form of the village transect walk was repeated in the forests and agricultural lands surrounding the village in order to gauge levels of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and to determine which features are considered important in the natural environment. With
the increasing interest in alternatives to the “top-down” approach, traditional, local, or indigenous ecological knowledge has become a popular method for engaging local communities in conservation initiatives. TEK is defined by Berkes et. al. as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission” (Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2000:8). It is important to note, however that, like the realities underlying the highly idealized gloss of “community,” TEK is often contested in the literature. Some argue for increased rigor in the methodology employed when collecting data on traditional ecological knowledge (Davis and Wagner 2003), while at the same time recognizing that the knowledge itself is not necessarily empirical in nature (Vabi 1996).

The story that is unfolding in Ek’Balam is the same one retold by numerous anthropologists working on, in, with, and even against development projects: somewhere along the line someone, probably agency staff and project designers, failed to ask the right questions. Encouraging conservation as a means to attract tourism is of little interest to some households, yet conserve they do. Recent literature from such journals as Human Ecology boasts a sizeable increase in the discussion of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which was mentioned previously as one of the non-economic factors contributing to land use decision-making. Many scholars argue that this is the key to gaining an understanding of resource management as seen from the “native” point of view in hopes of using this information to scale-up conservation initiatives. What I wonder is if we are painting ourselves into a corner, so to speak, much in the same way that occurs in the midst of a discussion of community and its potential as a vehicle for development. Traditional ecological knowledge represents an intangible that does not lend itself to measurement. It is
for this reason that it is often neglected in attempts to design and implement community-based conservation initiatives. At the same time that it is neglected as a source of empirical data, it is assumed to be a marker of indigeneity and the desire to actively engage in environmental and biodiversity conservation that accompanies it.

*Natural Capital as Symbolic Capital*
A common critique of existing resource management models is that they do not consider the social capital. Pretty and Ward hope to develop new forms of social organization “that are structurally suited for natural resource management” (2001:209). The recognition of the importance of these groups and relationships is often lacking in rural and agricultural development. The idea of a “socionatural system” has been slowly incorporated into international development thinking and has generated frameworks and methodologies that attempt to account for human-environment interactions.

“Like all public goods, it is difficult to say who is at fault when natural capital declines. Without rules, individuals tend to overuse and under invest in it: they are tempted to take the benefit without contributing anything themselves—in effect, to free-ride. When such public goods and services are considered free and so valued at zero, the market signals that they are only valuable when converted into something else” (Pretty and Ward 2001:211).

The authors begin their discussion with a review of the history of community studies, which “shows the ways in which ‘community’ has moved in and out of fashion, and prompts caution in accepting community as a panacea to problems concerning the conservation of natural resources” (2001:629). What is of the most interest with regard to conservation in Ek’Balam is the fact that regardless of an individual’s level of involvement with the CBT project or their relationship with the community’s socio-political structure, residents are open
to conservation and reforestation plans.

When discussing conservation, most residents focus on reforestation, though the motives for engaging in this process vary greatly from the incentives discussed by both the funding agency (CDI) and the volunteer program (CCY). Non-local social actors (project and NGO staff and volunteers) discuss conservation as an important way to attract ecotourists, and encourage residents to develop their land into areas protegidas (protected areas) for visitors to enjoy. Some residents are on board with this, though the desire to develop conservation areas for tourism is limited to the households that have the potential to benefit from tourism. Curiously, residents who do not stand to benefit from providing wooded areas for visitors to enjoy engage in conservation at similar rates. Nora Haenn found similar disconnects in her research in Calakmul. She states, “farmers bristle against regulations that restrict hunting, swidden burns, and the felling of older growth forest. At the same time, they publically spouse environmentalism in order to cultivate financial aid in governmental and international circles” (1999:483). While some residents in Ek’Balam are engaging in conservation and reforestation for their purpose of creating a tourist attraction, more are dedicating portions of their parcel to conservation because they believe that the existence of monte alto, or high forest, will improve nutrient and moisture levels in the soil of adjacent sections that they continue farming.

One of the village founders who are no longer working with the CBT project was eager to discuss his plans for conserving his parcel with me. His father was a chiclero after they left the hacienda, and this man has fond memories of following him into the forest in search of Zapote trees. There are no known adult trees of this type left within the ejido, but thanks to PRODEFOR there are now quite a few young trees. This, according to Don
Ruperto, is important no matter what the reasoning behind it.

I am a milpero . . . I love the fields very much. My father was a chiclero. Here there are no trees for this. What happened is that we used all of the good wood from the Zapote . . . we began to cut and cut when we arrived. Now we are trying to re-plant from the little seeds to bring back the trees that used to be in the jungle. Once you cut one of these they do not grow back sometimes, but now they are. For my part, I don’t really care about the tourists. I don’t work on the project we have and my sight is too bad to weave hammocks to sell to the gringos. My wife used to weave all day, but now she is gone too. But if the tourists come and enjoy the forest and the things that we have preserved, and this makes my grandchildren want to continue reforesting and caring for our parcels like we should have all along; well, bienvenidos! (welcome!)

~Don Ruperto
Part IV: At the Interface of Heritage and Ecology

Ethnographies start with ethnographers telling arrival stories. Generally, it is some variation on a story about getting off the bus, waiting for the dust to clear, and then looking around and figuring out where to begin. These arrival stories are fresh in my mind, having spent the last five years or so reading ethnographies in graduate seminars. Sometimes topics seem to have their own arrival stories. This is the case with the anthropology of tourism. Many monographs about tourism at some point discuss the arrival of anthropology to tourism as a serious scholarly pursuit. In fact, most edited volumes on the topic dedicate much of the introduction to the telling and re-telling of this arrival. I suppose we call it “positioning,” but why the need to wax reflexive about an entire field of study?

Even while our arrival story is flying hot off the presses out into the growing market for literature on tourism, there is another arrival story brewing. As new forms of touring emerge and gain popularity, are those of us engaged in the anthropological study of tourism too busy talking about how we got here to discuss where we are going? The case in point here is that of volunteer tourism. Voluntourism is a growing niche market, especially among “gap year travelers,” or recent college graduates who choose to take a year off before entering the job market or continuing on to graduate school. In a manner similar to the way eco-tourism grew out of and along with the turn toward all things “green,” voluntourism is growing along with the increased turn toward volunteerism. Increasingly, “gap years” and other travelers leave home to spend time on some sort of volunteer initiative, to participate in solidarity tourism, or both.

Solidarity tourism arrived in the 1970s, when individuals began traveling to areas
where liberation struggles were taking place. It is likened to sustainable tourism, but with the indication that the focus is on social or cultural sustainability rather than only ecological or economic. Political contexts employ the concept of solidarity as well. There are numerous travel options that provide an opportunity for the tourist to “stand in solidarity” with a political entity or with a group of people opposing a political entity. The Olive Harvest Campaign is an example of this form of solidarity. Finally, we find solidarity as way to describe the camaraderie that develops among individuals who are interested in similar travel options. A Facebook group, “Traveller’s Solidarity” plays on the desire of many travelers to set themselves apart from tourism and, more importantly, from the more pedestrian tourist. The many forms of solidarity tourism provide travelers with numerous options, and volunteer initiatives are positioning themselves as forms of solidarity tourism. Given that the concepts surrounding solidarity and volunteer tourism mirror the stated goals of alternative tourism development, it is no surprise to find them increasingly linking with community-based tourism projects.

In thinking further on the question of tourism ethnography and its arrival story, it seems that the need to distinguish ourselves from the tourist drives its proliferation. As I research the volunteer tourism phenomenon, I find that there are not as many anthropologists studying this as I had thought. The majority of work is coming out of tourism and hospitality studies. Yet it is probable that, like tourists in general, anthropologists are encountering volunteers around their field sites with increasing frequency. Perhaps we are again seeing a reluctance to examine this because of the similarity it bears to our own work. Many scholars have attributed the latent scholarly reaction to tourism among anthropologists to reluctance to explaining the difference between touring and fieldwork. Is the repetition of this latent
reaction a departure from our arrival story or is it a new arrival all together?

Voluntourism offers yet another layer of difficulty, for who among ethnographers is not at some time also a volunteer? I certainly have been asked to help from time to time with tasks such as translating promotional documents and painting signs, or troubleshooting a computer problem. I had not thought of myself as a volunteer in the context of my research on a community-based tourism initiative until last summer when a community leader asked me how I would like to be introduced to a group visiting from a similar project. Volunteer? Teacher? Anthropologist? My first reaction, of course, was anthropologist. Don Marcelo questioned this and wondered if they would understand what my role was. He said, “volunteer, I think Sarah.” He said that he would tell them I worked on the nature trail project. When I quibbled that I did not really work on that project, he countered, “but they will like that, they’ll understand it. Everybody has a project.” With that, he identified me as someone who was in solidarity with the community. Even though I may have felt solidarity in my role as an anthropologist dedicated to this field site, he knew that what mattered more was the solidarity that others perceived me to have. He knew that they would want to know my arrival story; how I got there. By categorizing me as a volunteer, he was essentially telling them “she’s supposed to be here.” Perceptions in this context are crucial to him. To be perceived as Maya garners interest of tourists and federal development funds. To be perceived as poor, traditional, and rural secures the desire of volunteers to come to help. Similarly, to be perceived as standing in solidarity with this community provides voluntourists with a clean conscience; they have acted as conscientious consumers, as conservationists, as activists. Moreover, they have achieved solidarity with other like-minded travelers who anxiously wait to tell their own arrival stories. Perhaps the telling and re-telling
of anthropology’s arrival to tourism (or vice versa) is about perceptions. By explaining how we got here, we too are stating that we are supposed to be here.

**Winter, 2012**
The first days of the New Year are the *xok k’in* (counting days), that predict the weather for the rest of the year. The 1st through the 12th each represent a month, counting forward from January on the 1st. The 13th through the 24th are the months in reverse order. The six days between the 25th and the 30th each represent two days, and the 31st is the *gran final* (big finish); every hour beginning at 12:00am represents a month, first counting forward to 11:59 am, then backwards from noon to 11:59pm. The ability to predict the weather is important here, as it is for any farmers. The men carefully observe the weather during the month and discuss it at length in the evenings in conversations on the plaza and around the dinner tables.

Don Lucas spends much of dinner this evening going over the weather patterns of the first part of the *xok kin* with his four sons and his son in law. They have been out to the milpas nearly every day for the last week. Lucas says that he needs to see how much rain falls on his fields, because sometimes the amount of rain there will differ from the village. Teofilo, Rosas’s husband, agrees and asks how the rainfall has been on Lucas’ milpa. He is working both his father’s and his brother’s, which are in very different parts of the *ejido* from Lucas’ parcel. Rosa and Teofilo ‘escaped’ (eloped) in June 2009. She is now twenty and has recently given birth to their second child. For the first part of their relationship, they lived with his family just down the street, as is customary. Since Sandra was born, they have been living at the Ay Balam house, and show no signs of leaving. The family has accepted Teofilo for the most part, though Eugenio still tries to rile him up when they are drinking.

Eugenio joins the conversation with questions about how much is left in the fields to
harvest. Eugenio moved home from Cancun in September. He said that there was very little work there and he missed his family. Some work became available at the archaeological zone replacing the huge palapa that covers the stuccoes, so he was happy to take it. The family is large now, and has spread out to fill all of the houses. After the hurricanes in 2005, the government program CONAFIT brought cinderblock houses to Ek’Balam and most other villages in the region. They finished the construction in 2006, but it remained mostly empty until 2009 when they finished the concrete floor and the stucco in the walls. Now both the blockhouse and the thatch house are full. The kitchen is jam packed with Goma and Lucas, Rosa, Teo, and their two babies, the four boys, and Cruz. We all eat in waves, with each one vacating the table when they finish. Cruz fills bowls and makes sure there are enough tortillas on the table.

Angel is also home from Cancun and alternates between helping his father in the milpa and doing odd jobs around town. He graduated from secondary school in Temozón in 2009, and planned to go on to high school. He took the exams and registered to begin in September. The summer of 2009 was a difficult one throughout Yucatan. In May the H1N1 (swine flu) epidemic broke out, which deterred most tourists from travelling in Mexico. At the same time, those who did generally spent less because of the economic crisis. This affected even households that still farmed, because that winter there had been an infestation of worms in the milpas, decreasing the harvest to nearly nothing. Angel decided that school was just too expensive and told his parents that he would not go. Instead, at only 17 years old he joined Eugenio in Cancun.

Federico and Angel sit side by side and periodically burst into laughter. They are half-listening to the conversation about the recent weather, and half-exchanging insults with
each other. Federico is still in school and is as suave as ever. He loves to sing and desperately wants to learn how to play the guitar. He is convinced that being a musician is the way to a girl’s heart. His preoccupation with girls at the age of seventeen is normal, but Goma still worries that he is going to run off or “get into trouble” with one of the volunteers with whom he is always spending time. When the volunteers come either in large groups or individually through one of the Conservation Corps of Yucatan’s programs, they work with the children of the CBT project’s socios on whatever project it is that they are assigned. Lucas is one of the eleven remaining socios, so his sons are often invited to work with the volunteers. Federico jumps at these opportunities and talks to me at length about how smart and pretty the female volunteers are. Unfortunately, these interactions have also left some young men with irreparably marred reputations. The volunteers go home, but the young men who were seen spending so much time with them are seen as being unfit for local girls to date and, potentially, marry. This situation has damaged relationships between some families as well. When a girl’s parents deny a young man the privilege of visiting their daughter, his family often takes great offense to this because it is a reflection on how they raised their son. Luckily, Federico has not yet gained this reputation, but he tells me that it is only a matter of time.

In contrast, Nacho has no interest in the volunteers or the CBT project in general. Both he and Eugenio encourage Lucas to quit the project because they think that it is a waste of effort and resources. At sixteen, Nacho still spends his days going to school, helping his father in the fields, and improving his aim with the slingshot. He is still gruff, and is much more serious than his brothers are. He does not care for dressing up, and refuses to use the hair gel from the big tub that his brothers use daily. He says that when he is in the forest it
does not matter what he looks like and that is where he wants to spend his days. The times
that he softens up are when he is playing with his niece and nephew, Sandra and Nestor.

Maria de la Cruz has made sure that everyone has enough to eat and is now back to
taking care of Nestor. His uncles were feeding him, but have announced that he is a disaster
and are happy to give the job back to their littlest sister. Cruz is a young woman now, at
thirteen and a half. She is in sixth grade and will graduate from primary school this summer.
Like her sister, she refuses to commit to secondary school. Her teacher and her parents hope
that they can change her mind as the time draws closer, but her siblings know how stubborn
she can be and doubt that she will. What Cruz does look forward to are the afternoons that
she spends with her nephew. Since he was born in March, 2010, she has been his primary
caregiver. At the time, Rosa and Teofilo were living with his parents and Cruz woke up early
each morning to pick up Nestor from their house and bring him back. She would feed him
and get him dressed before school started. Doña Goma cared for him until classes ended at
noon. Cruz would come running home and go directly to him. Now, at nearly two years old,
he calls Cruz ‘mama’ and calls Rosa by her name. When Nestor comes up in conversation,
most of the women around town comment on how Cruz just instinctually knew how to care
for him. They speculate that she is touched with the gift of being a midwife. Doña Goma’s
sister, Doña Dona, is the last local midwife that residents use. Most women go to the hospital
now to give birth, even though it is very expensive. Ever since Beatrice became pregnant and
began being cared for by her aunt, Cruz has shown an intense interest in midwifery. Many
residents are pleased to see this, because she is the first young woman to show any interest
for learning the trade. Dona is 65, and believes that in two or three years she will be too old
to continue delivering babies. Between caring for Nestor, school, and helping Doña Goma
with housework and weaving, it is hard for Cruz to imagine time for anything else. For now, Cruz’s response is “quien sabe! (who knows!).”

As always, the boys drift in and out of the kitchen. When everyone is done eating, only Lucas, Goma, Teofilo, and I remain. They are teaching me more about the xok kin and explaining how these predictions can alter their planting schedule. Last year they had the first good harvest in four years, and they are hopeful that this one will be the same. Doña Goma meanwhile puts up the leftovers and heads to the bathhouse. Tonight, as on all other nights, she is the xtu’p (the last one) to bathe. She likes to wait until after she finishes cooking because it gets so hot next to the fire. On this night, she will wash the dishes instead of leaving them for the morning. She is expecting a tour at 8:30am and wants to be prepared. The tours have become second nature to Doña Goma and the family, and she has been teaching gringos to make tortillas for more than eight years now. She enjoys joking with them about how many tortillas she needs daily, and how long it would take if she had to rely on their help. I sat in on the tour a few days before, and noticed that she smiled for the camera and directed them to take advantage of various photo opportunities before she moved onto the next part of the process. I ask her about this as we finish up the dishes, and she says that the photos do not bother her any more. She marvels, “How many places in the world has my face been? I never would have thought that people from all these other countries would know who I am.”

With that, she laughs and dries her hands on her nightshirt. “Tak a wenel, xunan (you should sleep, xuna), you have to go to the milpa with Lucas tomorrow, right?” I agree, and remind her that she has a big day tomorrow as well. First, a group of seven will arrive at 8:30am for the tour, and then she has to go to Temozón to visit Doña Doña. The next stop is
Valladolid to make a payment on a loan, and then home to make lunch. In the afternoon, there is a meeting with agents from SEDESOL checking up on the garden project. Finally, in the evening, she is hosting a volunteer who is here working on the nature trail project. When I finish this long list, she jokes that everyone comes to Ek’Balam to work on a different project, but managing the requirements that come along with each group seems to be her project.

Most everyone has settled into his or her hammock to watch television. Half of us are in the blockhouse and the other half in the thatch house. Both houses have televisions, but the blockhouse now has satellite cable. Everyone has been enjoying this for the past three months. Eugenio pays for it, because he says that his younger brothers, sisters, niece, and nephew can learn from it. The Discovery Channel ushered in 2012 by airing and re-airing a series called “2012: The Maya Prophecies.” We are enjoying the episode about the crystal skulls tonight, and they are filling me in on some of the episodes that I have yet to see. Teofilo rolls over in his hammock and asks me “what do you think, Cuma? Will the world end in December like they say? Do you believe it?”

I reply “min crextik (I don’t believe it)! But plenty of people are wondering about it.”

To that Eugenio exclaims, “Maybe they will all come here to find out! That would be a lot of tourists!” The advertisement is over and the show starts again. We all return our attention to it, and fall asleep thinking of crystal skulls, apocalypse, and hammock sales.
Chapter 9: Conclusion
Perhaps, like indigeneity, the concept of community is both strategic essentialism and essential strategy (Fischer 1999, Castañeda 2007). For the federally funded development agency, the use of "community" provides a cultural and racially bounded entity that can be targeted for development. The unwieldy aspects are avoided because the agency is not responsible for designating exactly which residents will be developed; instead it will be left in the hands of the community. For the individuals and households, claiming membership in the community, and even further calling the community a Pueblo Maya, is an essential strategy. By claiming this identity, individuals are able to use their indigeneity to attract support in the form of funding for their CBT project, labor from voluntourists interested in community development, and from tourists hoping to partake in a different, authentic, and sustainable form of tourism.

The interface between ideologies of community as imagined by non-local social actors and the actual practices of community-based tourism (CBT) development on the part of locals has long been a concern of applied anthropologists working on CBT projects. The relationship between volun-tourists and the volun-toured illuminates local manipulation of external aid and non-local stereotypes of indigenous identity, as employed in sustainable community development.

The presence of religious missionaries in Ek’Balam drastically increased between 2004 and 2007. In 2004, one family was Seventh Day Adventist and consisted of about 10 people. They converted in the late 1990s after some missionaries came for a brief stay in the village. A group of Mormon missionaries arrived in the village in 2003 and erected a small playground structure with a slide and swinging bridge in the central plaza, but did not
achieve any conversions and were not seen again after their three-week stay. Aside from these two accounts, I heard nothing about other religions in the village or visits from other missionaries during the summer of 2004.

In 2007, shifts in the religious practices of many residents were visible. A Catholic mass is held every other Sunday at the church in the plaza, and the women and girls put on their best clothes, pick fresh flowers, and head to the center of the village. Some men attend the mass each week, though the congregation that fills the church is predominately female. During my stay in 2004, I observed that the church was overflowing every time there was a mass. The pews and plastic chairs were all full and there would be adults standing in the doorways and children pouring out onto the stairs. The attendance of the bi-monthly masses in 2007 was much smaller. The ratio of men to women was the same, but the congregation easily fit into the pews and chairs inside the church.

While I did not encounter any missionaries in Ek’Balam during the summer of 2004, I saw the arrival of two different groups and an individual in the summer of 2007, and by 2009 there were multiple church groups coming on a regular basis. One of the groups came three times between June and August 2009, and the other came once. The first group is a Baptist Church in Playa del Carmen that brings youth from the states on one-week missions to small villages in the region. They came bearing small toys and beaded crosses for the kids and sang “Jesus Loves Me” in Spanish. The second group is a local evangelical church from Mérida who came with more practical offerings of plastic zipper bags full of beans and rice for the women in the village. The individual is an American woman who works with an evangelical congregation in Cancun and focuses on bringing services to the residents of the village, with special attention to the needs of the children. She made three visits to Ek’Balam
in the summer of 2009.

I do not have enough information to draw conclusions between the decline in Catholic Church attendance and the increase in evangelical Christian missionaries, but I can confidently say that the growing popularity of Ek’Balam as a tourist destination has put it on the map as a potential site for mission work. According to the leader of the Baptist group,

A place like this is ideal for youth missions because they can come and see the way these kids are living, talk to them about how Jesus can change their lives, but there is fun stuff to see too. It’s great for these guys to know about the way of life here and then have time to really think about it, like in the ruins or cooling off in the cenote. (June, 2009)

Voluntouring
Voluntourism is a distinct form of touring that results in engagement between local and non-local social actors that are different from those documented in the context of other tourism initiatives. Among the projects planned by CCY are adobe stoves, nature trails, demonstration gardens, and a community museum. There are currently two active volunteer programs in Ek’Balam. The first volunteer program is the annual Campamento or summer camp. This is held in the first three weeks of July. These volunteers come from all over Mexico, Spain, and South America, though the majority is Mexican university students. The second is Viajeros Solidarios, or Travelers in Solidarity. The travelers in solidarity sometimes continue work on the summer camp projects to make progress or perform upkeep and maintenance tasks, however these volunteers are mainly expected to work on individual projects. Most of these are either some sort of capacity building for the CBT project or teaching English classes. The summer volunteers all stay in the comisaría in the center of town and buy and cook their own meals. In contrast, the solidarity travelers are more involved in households. They sleep at the Cabañas and eat with families of the socios. They are responsible for paying their way there and any incidental expenses, but their room and
board is partially paid by the CBT project associates. The reasoning behind this plan was that if the residents involved in the CBT project were bearing some of the financial burden, they would be more engaged with the volunteer initiatives. Each family who is participating in the CBT project hosts the volunteer for a week. They eat three meals a day at the house. The cost for this is $400.00MX ($40.00USD) per week. The volunteers staying for three weeks or less are responsible for paying part of this. Those staying for a month or more do not have to pay for their meals.

Once we have a handle on who volunteer tourists are we still have to understand what it is they do. Well, they do “projects” just like all the friends of Ek’Balam. This is the most common answer when a resident who is not a leader of the CBT project is asked about the volunteers’ activity. These projects are often times determined by the volunteers themselves based on an individual’s knowledge, or can be designed by CCYs director in consultation with the CBT leaders. Simpson points out that “the dominant ideology is that doing something is better than doing nothing, and therefore that doing anything is reasonable” (K. Simpson 2004:685). This process legitimizes the idea that young, unskilled labor can be a solution to development problems. This runs into the same issue that all “projects” in EB do...misunderstandings of existing context, goals, feasibility, and outcomes. Poverty is something they are coming to help alleviate by “doing good” however, they have a very vaguely defined vision of what that means. For most this does not include them having to partake in poverty. This creates a tense relationship when volunteers are faced with the personal conflict of wanting to maintain “solidarity” with residents but also wanting to maintain a certain comfort level. This is particularly common among the short-term volunteers who are paying for their meals and sometimes become frustrated by the lack of
variety in their diet.

Finally, it is crucial to understand the local view of the volunteers. Do residents want the volunteers? During a research period in 2011, I had planned to gather data on traditional ecological knowledge in the village, but this was not what people wanted to talk to me about. In nearly every interview, the conversation turned to the volunteer program. Residents were eager to tell me what was happening and, overwhelmingly, what was going wrong. Among the dominant sentiments are the following criticisms:

1. “They say they are coming to teach us something but we end up teaching them everything.”

2. “They don't seem to be doing anything. They eat our food and enjoy our town for free but when they leave we don't see anything from their work. Are they working at all?”

3. “The conduct of volunteers is very bad and it is changing many things. The volunteers come and they want to party. They want to go out with boys and they want to drink. So it is problematic for multiple reasons...we lose respect for the volunteers, but then this also has a negative consequence for the kids in the village. They develop reputations and then are not seen as fit for girls in the village to spend time with.”

The remainder of the chapter will provide brief examples of these issues and will offer strategies currently being implemented and evaluated to alleviate these problems. The first example is a horticulture project initiated 2009. It started with CCY and the volunteers building a garden in the southwest corner of the CBT project parcel. Once this was established, an expert came to stay for three months to teach residents about permaculture. This project was based on an externally identified need to reinvigorate kitchen gardening and to be used in corn farming. This project faced difficulty from the start. The problems included first, that he was telling a group of farmers how to farm, and second, kitchen
gardens are used and maintained by women. Women will not leave their houses to come and work at the demonstration garden so they are not able to learn the gardening strategies being taught. While it is technically located in the village, women are busy in their homes and do not make time to walk over to the garden. Similarly, because it is at the Cabañas, only wives and daughters of socios would feel welcome to attend. There is also a gendered aspect to the failure of this project. Farming is what men do and while the demonstration garden was growing plants common to kitchen gardens, the methods presented were more like farming and less like gardening. By the end of the summer, it was recognized that they would need to build the gardens at people’s homes if they want this to catch on, however this would require a higher level of interaction between families and volunteers.

**Potential solutions: working toward actual solidarity**
Through observation of the summer camp over two summers, conversations with solidarity volunteers and extensive discussion with CCY’s director, we have identified a lack of preliminary knowledge and training as the main reasons for tensions surrounding the volunteers and the marginal success of projects. Our proposed solution is a manual that includes a discussion of cultural norms, the types of food they can expect during their stay and brief training about the history and culture of the village. This was implemented in the summer of 2011 for the first time. Volunteers were given the manual before arriving and took part in a training session their first day in the village. Additionally we created a plan for increased exchange between volunteers and residents regardless of the residents’ relationship to the CBT project. This plan begins with home visits. With the help of a local guide (a teenage boy or girl, depending), I took volunteers in small groups to a house for a visit. Once they had been to the house and met the family they were able to return regularly during a
period in the afternoon scheduled for home visits. The idea is that the volunteers will form relationships with these families and be able to better understand the community and identify felt needs that will inform project design. Two of the main factors that led us to this solution are the unequal levels of participation among households in the CBT project and the gender norms that keep girls and women from interaction with volunteers.

**Essential Strategy**

This discussion of cosmopolitanism, performance, and governmentality in the context of rural tourism development provides ethnographic evidence that frames negotiations with tourism and touristic performance. As previously discussed, they are forced into a space between cosmopolitan and indigenous, tradition and modernity, in which they must cater to very different demands. Residents are constantly producing and reproducing their identity as Maya and indigenous while flexing their knowledge of touristic desires and good business sense in order to create and maintain a successful engagement with the tourism industry. I argue here that this is a product of the alternative development strategy of community-based projects, and can be found in many similar contexts outside of Ek’Balam, and even Mexico. The movement of the government to an encompassment model complicates their interactions with residents and blurs the expectations they have for the projects they fund. Moving fluidly between a hands-off, “if you build it they will come” form of governmentality and a high-involvement directive to “be as Maya as you can be” is but one of the strategies possessed by government funders. The response to these strategies at the local level, as we have seen through the examples provided here, is the creation and employment of the multiple tactics necessary to perform tourism.

Interestingly, this is not always the case in Guatemala, where being Maya can be a
strategy of inclusion in the various politics of the pan Maya movement and can also be a burden of exclusion as the Ladino population attempts to separate themselves. According to Castañeda, the role of Maya or indigenous identity is much different in Yucatan. He states, “these categories of identity are fundamentally downplayed in everyday life except in contexts in which they are used as tools by which to address power and manipulate the state to attain socioeconomic benefits” (2007:6). Similarly, Castañeda makes a comparison between the strategic essentialism of the cultural/racial indigeneity as employed by Marcos in the Zapatista uprising and indigeneity as an essential strategy as used by venders at Chichen Itza. He describes this process as:

the odd disjuncture of an Indigeneity based on the Strategic Essentialism of race and culture and a situational Indigeneity as an Essential Strategy that recognizes and deploys multiple identities and identity politics. In so using this strategy, the Pisté Maya are not reverting to strategic essentialism, but making use of an essential stratagem that allows them to switch to other identities and other political strategies in other contexts. In contrast, Marcos can never take off his mask. [2007:9]

A return to Theory and Practice

I would like to return to the idea that theory and practice must form a reciprocal relationship that is to the benefit of both rather than a one-way flow that is beneficial to none. According to John Bennett (Bennett 1996b) anthropology as a discipline has failed to generate theory due in large part to the fact that it is mainly based in theory borrowed from other disciplines. If applied anthropology then does little more than borrow from academic anthropology, the a-theoretical critique is grounded (Angrosino 1976).

It is my position however that this is not actually the case. I know that every critic of development and of applied anthropology in general has their favorite failed project or example of poorly executed fieldwork. I too have a few that I keep close in mind when I am thinking about my own research. We must remember though that there is poorly executed
“theoretical” anthropology as well. Derek Freeman (1989) makes a case for this, as do Patrick Tierney and the slew of players in the Yanomami drama (2002). Many other critiques emerged in the last decade of the 20th century, including the post-modern movement that re-examined the way we do and report on fieldwork (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Perhaps this is the process of intellectual deforestation addressed by Wolf, and each new group is indeed “bringing the axe to their predecessor” (Wolf 1990).

The relationship that my research has with methods, theory, and practice can be conceived of as a feedback loop. “Grand Theory” is adopted by anthropology and modified to be of more use in specific situations. These modifications are tested through empirical research (fieldwork). At times this consists of traditional ethnographic research, the product of which allows us to make generalizable statements about a group, region, or other social phenomenon. Other times the testing happens in an applied context that employs mixed methods in the process. This further stretches and strengthens the theoretical framework by allowing the researcher or the research team to say something specific that is not necessarily generalizable. A series of research periods such as this provides a group of cases, and at this point the outcomes and data can be examined and, if significant, can be used to scale-up a project or process based on these cases.

I am aware that Escobar (1995, 2002), Ferguson (1997) and others may argue that this is precisely the problem; however I argue that so long as billions of dollars are being hurled at projects falling under the purview of “development,” anthropologists should feel an obligation to use our specialized knowledge of theory and practice to help where we can. Gone are the days of salvage anthropology, in which the greatest aspiration of the ethnographer was to piece together the life ways of the native before being spoilt by progress.
We accepted long ago that change occurs through diffusion and contact, however we are reticent to view the change brought about through an applied or engaged anthropology as a part of this process. Perhaps it is as Roger Bastide states,

“For the era when cultural relativism triumphed ended in similar failure to the era of forced assimilation and of evangelism out of which it had grown. It had been hoped that respect for Indian cultures would finally be actualised in the abandoning of the ‘white man’s burden.’ But relativism merely hid the old ethnocentrism—in effect because it arose in a situation of the integration of one world within another” (1973:16).

Eric Wolf contends that “applied anthropology, by definition, represents a reaction against cultural relativism” (1964:24). Is the lingering view that the culture responsible for applying anthropology is superior to the recipients still with us?

I would like to finish by returning very briefly to my earlier assertion that applied anthropology is not development. For all the discussion of development, I want to be sure this point is not lost. Applied anthropologists work in more places than can be listed here, the majority of which are outside of development and some of which are at the request of the population they are working with. Examples of this are found in the emerging field of program evaluation, as well as education and medical anthropology. In order for anthropology as a discipline to fill these roles we are so well suited for, “anthropologists must create and manage our public image so that we are not excluded when people think about evaluation” and other arenas for practice, according to Crain and Tashima (2005:42). This can be achieved by publicizing the roles – potential and actual – that anthropology can play. Qualitative approaches need to be incorporated into the process and seen as being as important as quantitative methods. This will require anthropologists to involve themselves in interdisciplinary teams so that individuals from many disciplines can be exposed to the tools
of anthropology. The actual process and outcome of anthropological work has to be translated into terms that are understandable through the lens appropriate to the project. By doing this, anthropologists will carve a niche for themselves as reliable and sought after practitioners, which is (for better or for worse) the likely future for half today’s cohort of graduate students studying anthropology.

**Final Thoughts and Further Research**

I concluded in my Master's Thesis that an anthropological approach to understanding the complex negotiations with tourism in everyday life could “ease what would otherwise be a rough transition along the 'folk-urban continuum' into the hyper-real world of virtual tradition fostered by global tourism” (Taylor 2008:113), however I am not sure that I can draw the same conclusion at this point in my research. Instead of being a fixed spectrum upon which tourists, archaeologists, ethnographers, and others place and re-place Mayas depending on their progress toward modernity, perhaps the folk-urban continuum itself is the fluid component. Ethnographers in Mesoamerica are famously concerned with duality, with the folk-urban dichotomy being but one example. We are preoccupied with authentic and inauthentic renditions of culture, with tradition and modernity, with Maya-ness as essential or constructed. In the context of tourism studies, the front stage/back stage contrast is incorporated into the dichotomous nature of our work as well. Many scholars write about their subjects as fixed. Canclini (1990), Redfield (1950), and others all discuss the movements of people on a scale in and out of modernity. While these authors recognize the agency in the process, they still frame “traditional” and “modern” as discreet locations on a continuum that, because of the spatiality of the conceptual framework, cannot be dually occupied (W. Little 2004:264). What Little points out however is that "in Antigua the
normal routine of local people is tourism," which is a fact that changes the distinctions between home and work (2004:87). In contrast to Edward Bruner's (1996) conception of a tourism borderzone as an “empty stage waiting for performance,” Little sees the traditionally dichotomous spheres of tourism and tradition or front and back stage as being mixed up and, really, “just the way life is” (2004:265). I, too, argue for this mezcla, or mix-up when examining tourism in the public and domestic spheres of everyday life.

The fluidity of a continuum recognized to be a sliding scale of sorts elicits a different identity—as in identifier—depending on both the placement and the agent doing the placing. When a Yucatec Maya man is put in charge of organizing a traditional Maya rain ceremony, in the action of reaching down and replacing his rubber flip-flops with rope sandals he is sliding the continuum beneath his feet and setting it to “folk.” Later, when he is asked to coordinate a group retreat for CDI's project staff, he picks up his day planner and his cell phone and turns the continuum up to “urban.” If these are the types of identity-identifiers we are using, are we not saying that his identity is based on ability, knowledge, and financial resources? If this is the case, I worry that we are slipping down the slope toward an image of the uneducated indio as the inhabitants of folk communities.

At the foundation of the community-based tourism project in Ek’Balam and similar projects elsewhere is money. There would not be money funding a project if there were not tourists to spend money. No one asked the question that was on everyone’s mind: what if we build it and they do not come. Further implications of this scenario are dire. What if a family sells their land and shifts to complete reliance on the sale of hammocks? What if a farmer chooses to dedicate his parcel to conservation through a federal program that exchanges sapling trees for the promise to never cut them? He hopes that the biodiversity that
he is creating and conserving will be an attraction, but what if there is no one to attract?
These terrible questions became part of the collective discourse in 2009 when the region was devastated by the Swine Flu (H1N1 Influenza) outbreak. Families who had been enveloped by the tourism development machine suddenly had nothing to fall back on. Households that had been doing quite well selling handicrafts and groceries found themselves eating a soup of ground pumpkin seeds, a few tortillas, no beans, and certainly no meat. Is this what a sustainably developed community looks like? Is this progress? And, to reply to the politician in attendance at the Ch’a chaak, is this Maya? I do not believe so. Let us not mistake poverty for indigeneity.

I have many interactions with tourists when I am in the field, and they invariably ask the same question when I explain what I am doing there: “Is tourism good for this village or bad?” That is not really a question that I am capable of answering, and certainly not something that will be the same for every household there. What I can say is that the events of the past two years have left everyone talking about crisis. Would they have shared in the economic crisis felt everywhere if they were not engaged in tourism as a principle earning strategy? Probably. But they would have still had something to eat. On the other hand, none of the youth would be continuing their studies, learning other languages, or imagining any future other than being a farmer. The lingering state of crisis has led leaders in the community to examine what is happening there and to step up their actual engagement in the decision-making process. The word “apoyo” there seemed to mean a gift or grant of money a few years ago. Now people, especially young people, use it to refer to assistance, both monetary and through the donation of physical labor and knowledge. They took it upon themselves to decide how they would organize the Ch’a chaak and how they would
demonstrate their Maya-ness for the guests they welcomed.

I have argued in this dissertation for a re-evaluation of the way we think about Maya-ness and also the way that we position Mayas in the Maya World. What I have found in the context of my research on sustainable community development is that being Maya is an experience that is situational, context specific, and above all driven by the meaning and power ascribed to the term by the person using it. Using this discussion as a starting point, this research provided insights into how the ideological conflicts surrounding economic development are played out in the negotiations between internal community politics and non-local social actors, which make that interface a crucial object for inquiry. Additionally, the conflicts implicit to conceptions of “community” as a target for development are made explicit through the systematic questioning of what exactly it means to be a member of a local, indigenous, or sustainable community in the process of being developed with the hope of being Maya and getting by.

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