Entanglements of Power and Spatial Inequalities in Tourism in the Mexican Caribbean

David Manuel-Navarrete

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Abstract

Research on entanglements of power inquires into the multiple positions from which power of domination and resistance are exercised across time-spaces. This paper discusses the dominating efforts of colonizers (Europeans, Yucatecans, Mexicans and US-Americans) to territorialize the Mexican Caribbean in order to anchor it to global patterns of accumulation. The hegemonic power to grid, survey and discipline a region that for a long time was conceived as "empty space" becomes entangled with the resistance power exerted by indigenous Maya and local ecosystems. These entanglements of power have converged in contemporary Akumal to produce a geometry of spatial segregation in which Mestizo and Maya workers are segregated by government and businesses from spaces designated for tourist use. My findings show that spatial inequality has been constructed along a pattern of increasing globalization, local reconfigurations of local power positions, and the trans-nationalization of space. In Akumal this pattern could only be imposed by reinterpreting space, through tourism, from the logic of a resource to be exploited, to the logic of a good to be preserved and enjoyed in-situ. Local resistances to this hegemonic pattern have managed to delay and sometimes bend some of its spatial outcomes. The latest of these bends led to the creation of Akumal Pueblo. An analysis of the detailed genealogy of this bending reveals that a great source of resistance power to alter hegemonic spatial outcomes resides in human agents whose identities were formed autonomously, that is, squarely outside the region's entanglements of power, but who have chosen to re-signify them in order to fully embed themselves within these entanglements.

Keywords: Spatial Inequality | Political Economy of Tourism | Tourist Enclaves | Socio-Ecological Inequality | Quintana Roo

Biographical Notes

David Manuel-Navarrete holds a degree in Environmental Sciences and M.S. in Ecological Economics from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), and a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Waterloo (Canada). He has worked at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and has assisted Argentine and Brazilian authorities in sustainable development policies. At King's College London his research focused in the analysis of climate change governance. His current research interests include two phenomena, namely, tourism-related urbanization and climate change adaptation in urban coastal areas. As a critical geographer, he utilizes systems perspectives and community-based methodologies to examine spatial inequalities and power asymmetries associated with these phenomena. David has a broad experience conducting research internationally, including projects funded by Canadian, German, Spanish, UK, United Nations, and U.S. funding bodies.

Contents

1.   Introduction

The notion of entanglements of power was introduced in human geography debates by Joanne Sharp et al. (2000a) to argue that power is constituted through countless processes of domination and resistance that are inherently and fundamentally spatial. Building on Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, Sharp et al. claim that:

> [R]elations of power are really, crucially and unavoidably spun out across and through the material spaces of the world. It is within such spaces that assemblages of people, activities, technologies, institutions, ideas and dreams all come together, circulate, convene and reconvene, it cannot but be so, and it is only as a consequence of the spatial entangling together of all of these elements that relations of power are established (Sharp et al. 2000b: 24).

Following this argument, entanglements of power are defined in this paper as the knotted threads of domination and resistance intertwined across time-spaces that materialize in specific places. The emphasis on the resistance/domination dialectics, which is at the core of Sharp et al. (2000a)'s notion of entanglements, involves a Gramscian assumption of a division between rulers and ruled, or more powerful versus less powerful. Yet, this does not mean that power is neither unidirectional, nor the exclusive property of the more powerful. On the contrary, power is seen as relational, as both cause and effect of socio-ecologically entangled conflicts, contradictions and struggles that take place within, and at the same time shape, material spaces.

This paper analyzes the entanglements of power between groups, people, and socio-ecological structures that are woven within a tourist enclave of the Northern Mexican Caribbean.[2] on the Eastern coast of the Yucatán peninsula (Figure 1). A rapid spatial appraisal of this enclave reveals a segregation of workers from tourist space. Four differentiated and separated spaces are readily observable (Figure 1): (1) Akumal Playa, a beach resort largely owned and populated by American citizens; (2) Bahía Principe Residential and Golf Resorts, a Spanish owned all-inclusive complex; and two Mexican towns, (3) Akumal Pueblo and (4) Chemuyil, three miles apart and each inhabited by over a thousand Mestizo/Maya. This spatial division entails inequalities manifested in terms of unequal access to valued spaces such as beaches or coastal lagoons, as well as unequal opportunities to profit from tourism and/or have access to beach areas for recreation and housing.

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[2]   The Northern Mexican Caribbean comprises the coastal and inland areas of the state of Quintana Roo that stretch from Cabo Catoche to the north down to Tulum to the south.

Figure 1: Map of the Yucatán Peninsula and Akumal's Tourist Topography of Segregation
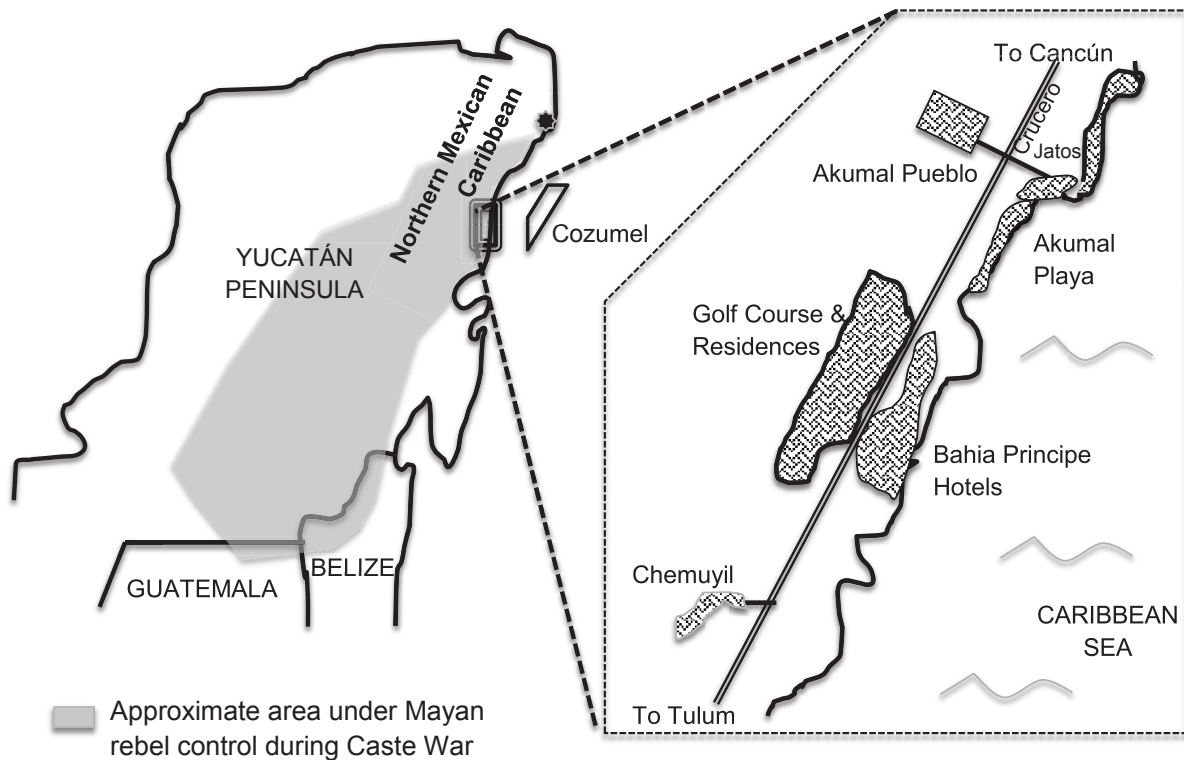
Source: Map by author

A deeper spatio-temporal inspection reveals that the area was for centuries practically depopulated, until Quintana Roo's tourist boom of the 1980s. However, this had not always been the case. In pre-Columbian times, the Northern Mexican Caribbean was a densely populated chiefdom, Ekab, containing numerous coastal towns dedicated to sea trading and fishing. It was with the Spanish invasion of the Yucatán Peninsula, from 1527 to 1545, that Ekab's population started its rapid decline (Roys 1957). In the first decades under Spanish rule some small encomiendas[3] were established (Andrews and Jones 2001), but low productivity, hurricanes and increasing incursions of pirates led to virtual depopulation and the end of effective Spanish control of this vast coastal area by 1670 (Gerhard 1993). In fact, along the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Mexican Caribbean, together with the southern interior regions of the peninsula became part of a wide "frontier" inhabited by tens of thousands of rebel Maya, self-identified as Cruzob (People of the Cross), and harvested by loggers from British Honduras (Redclift 2006). For centuries, this frontier separated colonial Yucatán, where the vast majority of Yucatec Maya peasants lived, from British colonizers and enslaved Africans to the East. Until the early twentieth Century, this frontier was a source of

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3   A tract of land or village, together with a group of Indians, granted by the King of Spain to a Spanish soldier or colonist.

Mayan resistance to cultural domination and economic exploitation from Europeans and criollo elites (Jones 1998). As a result, the Northern Mexican Caribbean remained relatively disentangled from colonial and government powers until late twentieth century, when the Mexican government re-signified and re-territorialized the Northern Mexican Caribbean, now part of the new Mexican State of Quintana Roo, according to the needs of global tourism.

The Mexican Caribbean past is often portrayed through the metaphor of an "empty space" "filled" by tourism (Manuel-Navarrete, Pelling and Redclift 2011). This metaphor and the dominance of mass tourism development suggest that current spatial divisions are the direct outcome of the hegemonic territorial re-organization of the region in accordance to the needs of global tourism (Manuel-Navarrete et al. 2010). However, ethnographic research in Akumal and the region's history of entanglements of power reveal a much richer picture. For instance, there is an ethnic overlay superposed to spatial (and labor) divisions between tourist spaces and the residential spaces assigned to workers by tourism planners. On the one hand, it is easily observable that Americans and Europeans own and run the accommodations, restaurants and shops, and can afford access to (presumably public) beaches, while indigenous people clean, serve and tend to the needs of the international traveler elite. On the other hand, in-depth interviews reveal that, for instance, the Mestizo/Maya of Akumal Pueblo have enacted resistance strategies to the spatial segregation imposed upon them that can be traced to colonial times and which have afforded them an easier access to the beach than that enjoyed by Chemuyil's workers. This is just but one example to show that today's uses (and meanings) of tourist space in the Mexican Caribbean are far more complex, contradictory, contested and conflicting than the mere analysis of territorial planning, or current institutional arrangements for the appropriation of space by certain dominant groups, would suggest.

2.   Theoretical Context

A main argument in this paper is that understanding contemporary spatial inequalities requires analyzing space as the expression of past and present entanglements of power. Space is produced through practices, relations, connections and disconnections:

> We make space in the conduct of our lives, and at all scales, from the intimate to the global. […] [S]pace is always in process; it is never finished; never a completed holism. There are, in more practical terms, always connections, relations, yet to be made, or not made. Space is an on-going production. In consequence, […] always open to responsibility and to politics (Massey 2006: 92).

Central to the notion of entanglements is the weaving of time and space and the need to research them together, as co-constitutive of each other (Massey 2005). However, capturing spatio-temporal continuities (and discontinuities) is elusive, perhaps more so under post-modern conditions of accelerating time-space compression and elimination of spatial boundaries (Harvey 2004), and the empirical study of entanglements of power is not an easy task (Few 2002). Tim Coles and Andrew Church (2007) discussed the implications for tourism of researching entanglements of power, but they eluded the spatio-temporal challenge by focusing on power and the relation of tourism with wider social processes. David Crouch (2007) discussed non-representational ways of encountering space through repositioning the individual, the human, the subject into the making of space and hence into the making of tourism, but his analysis centered in *the tourist* and the meanings of space that tourists identify and articulate, rather than the spatio-temporal entanglements between hosts and guests.

Spatial inequality and segregation have been analyzed by development and political economy approaches to tourism as the product of host-guest asymmetries (Shaw and Williams 2004). Drawing on Erving Goffman´s (1959) social division of front and back regions, Dean MacCannell (1973) described the tourist front as the meeting place of hosts and guests, and the back as the place where workers retire between performances and relax to prepare for the next performance. In a similar vein, Tim Edensor (1998) distinguished between enclavic and heterogeneous spaces to discuss how tourist space is increasingly regulated, commoditized and privatized. Enclavic spaces, such as the Bahía Príncipe all-inclusive resort, are carefully staged and designed, while in heterogeneous spaces, such as Akumal Playa, stage boundaries are less clear and a wider range of improvisation is encouraged, despite local power-holders still exercising policies of exclusion and control. In the political economy front, Stephen Britton (1982: 341) pioneered the description of enclaves in terms of spatial confinement of tourists and their expenditures. This pioneering work prompted the discussion of physical and economic barriers between visitors and hosts in terms of colonial legacies (Crick 1989). Recent political economy approaches dwell in the emerging field of critical tourism and continue to explore the relations between local communities and privatized enclaves (Bianchi 2003; Gibson 2009). In addition, critical tourism researchers are paying increasing attention to power relations and the grounding of tourist space in unequal symbolic relations of power which are characteristic of globalization (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; Coles and Church 2007).

The empirical analysis of spatio-temporal entanglements presented in this paper contributes to critical tourism research on power and inequalities in tourist spaces. It draws on two months of intensive fieldwork in the area of Akumal as well as discontinuous research engagements with the Mexican Caribbean during the last four

years. Fieldwork in Akumal focused in local perceptions about the history of spatial segregation. Ethnographic observation and life story interviews revealed a great variety and complexity of mechanisms involved in the production of space and entanglements of power. A large part of this complexity could not find space in this paper. For instance the performative, embodied, sexual and dimensions of power and the latest entanglements of the area with international tourist corporations are just mentioned in the passing (although they were explored somewhere else, and also by others such as Claudio Minca (2009)). The entanglements presented here address territorial planning as well as the question of how power is exercised across history (diachronic perspective), including by whom, under what socio-ecological arrangements or to what end. Furthermore, in order to explain persistent spatial inequalities, it questions how structural and agency-based dynamics of power consolidate, or not, into particular spatial patterns (synchronic perspective). The paper also considers the changing identities of those positioned within the entanglements and, as stressed by Doreen Massey (2000), of how these identities are themselves constituted through the practice of interrelation:

> If one takes seriously the implications of entanglements of power then not only does the identity of 'the resisters' [and dominators] shift and multiply, but so too does the characterization of identity itself (Massey 2000: 284).

Accordingly, instead of considering given identities, prior to their engagement in interaction, identities are seen as fundamentally constituted in and through those engagements with people and socio-ecological systems, those connections and disconnections through time and across space (Massey 2006). Although still limited in scope, the empirical analysis of entanglements of power presented here is a contribution to the critique, and eventual transcendence, of dominant spatial organizations of society, which are determinant in the creation of both subjectivities and possibilities for relations of power (Sharp et al. 2000b). In particular, this research underscores the spatial organizations created from the (trans-regional) entanglements and disentanglements between peoples from distant lands.

3. Entanglements Across Time in the Yucatán Peninsula

In 1526, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and first King of Spain granted Francisco de Montejo the royal patent to conquer the Yucatán Peninsula. The next year Montejo and several hundred men, including some enslaved Africans, arrived in the Northern Mexican Caribbean and created Salamanca of Xel-ha, about 10 km south from present Akumal and close to today´s Xel-ha lagoon and aquatic theme park which is yearly visited by more than half a million tourists. The invading expedition resisted by a socio-

ecological structure described by the very Montejo as unhealthy and populated by a warlike and astute race (Molina Solís 1896: 414). In fact, the rugged terrain of the Mexican Caribbean was crucial in the Spanish defeat:

> The forest around us, besides dense and tangled, was studded with calcareous rocks which averted the easy maneuvering with horses, an excruciating obstacle because the cavalry was the supreme resource to intimidate and dominate large masses of Indians (Molina Solís 1896: 449).

According to chronicles of the invasion, Montejo had found a Spanish sailor, named Gonzalo Guerrero by chroniclers, who after surviving a shipwreck close to coasts of Akumal had lived since 1511 with the Indians and formed a family with a Maya woman, identified by chroniclers as princess Xzacil. Guerrero apparently refused to be "rescued" by Montejo in 1527 and was later reported as having joined the Maya in fighting the Spanish. The figure of Guerrero as a cultural icon of *mestizaje* has endured until today throughout continuous reinterpretations (Adorno 1996).

By 1528 the Spanish definitely abandoned Salamanca of Xel-ha and the Mexican Caribbean. After an interview with Hernán Cortés in Veracruz, Montejo decided to invade the peninsula from Tabasco. The Western half of the peninsula was more open, drier and less forested, and after five years of fierce combat the Spanish finally controlled the western and coastal Yucatán by 1545. To the Spanish´s disappointment the peninsula lacked tradable natural resources, especially mineral wealth, and it soon became clear that the only exploitable riches were its lands and relatively large workforce (Farriss 1984). However, estimates indicate that Yucatec Maya population in the invaded territories abruptly declined from 700,000 - 800,000 in the early 1500s (Solano 1971; Cook and Borah 1978) to about 272,576 by 1550 (García 1978). European epidemics, war, plagues, droughts, and migrations to the forests in the South were the likely causes of this brutal descent. Furthermore, the early decades of Spanish occupation did not help population recovery (Gerhard 1993). On the contrary, the eagerness of *encomenderos,[4]* the clergy and colonial officials to convert the Maya and to live one way or another from their labor fostered further population decline, down to 141,436 by 1580 (García 1978).

Colonial structures of labor exploitation took advantage of pre-Hispanic hierarchies. Thus, former Maya administrators and middle men (*halach winiks* and *batabs*) were often re-appointed as *caciques* and continued to collect taxes from peasants that were now to be handled into Spanish hands, instead of Maya Lords (Quezada 1985). Thus,

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[4] Usually European invaders and soldiers who were granted the right to tax a certain grouping of Indigenous.

despite changes in titles, colonial governance structures replicated the pre-Hispanic chain of command and Spanish ruling over Maya peasants was largely indirect (Farriss 1984). However, as elsewhere in the Americas, establishing a new pattern of wealth accumulation required radical spatial restructuring sand the reduction of indigenous populations around the new Spanish centers. The concentration of the labor force was also instrumental for conversion to Christianity and effective ideological control. Across the scattered Yucatecan chiefdoms, this spatial reconfiguration likely involved widespread relocation. As described by a Spanish *encomendero* to explain the steep decrease in population:

> Another cause for the great decrease in the numbers of Indians is to have left their old villages or settlements where they used to be settled or located, which they did not leave on their own will […on the contrary] were pushed to move and leave their houses, fruit trees and sown fields so that they arrive to the monasteries and are indoctrinated and instructed in the things of our holy catholic faith, and those who did not agree to move were displaced by force against their will by burning their houses, and cutting their trees and plants (quoted in García 1978: 64, translation from Spanish original by author).

After 1700, the indigenous population under Spanish domination experienced some significant increase from 185,000 (plus 21,250 non-indigenous) up to 380,000 (plus 120,000 non-indigenous) in 1820 at the time of independence from Spain (Gerhard 1993). Nevertheless, Yucatán remained below pre-Hispanic population densities, and a marginal, backward colonial territory (Farris 1984). *Criollo* liberals publicly ascribed this situation to some flaws and vices of pre-capitalist colonial administration (Rugeley 1996). However, according to some authors (e.g. Jones 1998) low levels of wealth appropriation by the Spanish can be related to Mayan spatial resistance strategies, which made colonial governance particularly difficult. For instance, the constant opportunity of moving far into the bush beyond any colonial control impaired any efforts to force the Maya to stay in one place and maintain a dependable tribute-paying population. Such residential mobility is probably an ancient pattern related with the geographical, genealogical and cultural continuity of Mayan nobility and territory. As I discuss in the case of Akumal, this pattern of mobility and retreat to the forest was still active in contemporary Maya´s spatial resistance strategies to global tourism´s patterns of accumulation.

4. Neo-Colonial Capitalist Entanglements

Yucatán's independence from Spain in 1821 accelerated the on-going agriculture liberal reforms oriented towards enlarging *haciendas*[5] and cash-crop monoculture, such as sugar and *henequen*, to assort the growing North American industrial markets (Joseph 1985). Reforms also conduced to more stringent bureaucratic controls and the privatization of waste and public lands (*terrenos baldíos*), thus threatening both peasants´ informal access to these lands, and the various administrative privileges enjoyed by *caciques*[6] within the old colonial system (Rugeley 1996). In addition, relatively autonomous, even if heavily taxed, *milpa*[7] farmers were forced into the hardship and enslavement of sugar plantations' debt peonage regime (Strickon 1965). These were the crucial factors in the scaling up of Mayan resistance that led to the bloodiest, most militarily successful indigenous/peasant rebellion in Latin America, the so-called Caste War (1847-1901) (Reed 2001).The stronghold of rebel *Cruzob* became established a few dozen miles south of Akumal in the central forests of the Mexican Caribbean, an area still known as "the Maya Zone" (Figure 1). The "pacified" Maya and the Maya from *haciendas* gradually began to call themselves "Mestizos" to consolidate their dissociation from those rebels who kept up resistance (Hervik 1999). A major spatial consequence of the Caste War was the holding back of the expansion of *haciendas*, which were thriving in North-western Yucatán between 1860 and 1910 through the boom of *henequen* ("green gold") (Wells and Joseph 1996). Nevertheless, despite *Cruzob* control, global capital would creep in the Mexican Caribbean, first, through the plundering of mahogany, dyewood, turtles and manatees mostly by British companies, and, later, through the penetration of the American *chicle* (chewing gum) industry (Konrad 1987). This pattern of entanglement with global capital has persisted until the present through the enclavic character of the region, where produced goods were exported while consumed goods were imported (César and Arnaiz 1998).

The *Cruzob* rebellion officially ended in 1901 with the Mexican army´s occupation of towns controlled by Maya rebels. This event prompted a territorial re-organization of the Mexican Caribbean in which the Mexican government sought to regulate the interests of global capital (César and Arnaiz 1998). It started with the creation in 1902 of a *territorio* politically independent from Yucatán´s emergent *Henequenero* bourgeoisie. It

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[5] The *hacienda* regime is a large-scale form of production with a resident force of dependent labour which made owners nascent capitalists by providing scale, flexibility and control of production to take advantage of expanding commercial markets (Rugeley 1996).

[6] Broadly defined in the context of Yucatan as a Maya with some command of Spanish and perhaps literacy and with the ability to serve as a broker between the Maya and Criollo worlds (Rugeley 1996).

[7] The *milpa* is a pre-Hispanic Meso-American multi-crop growing system to produce maize, beans and squash.

would continue with the division into the Northern, Central, and Southern zones, which persists until the present. In the Northern Zone a few Yucatecan oligarchs attempted to establish forest concessions and sugar plantations, in partnership with German companies (Villalobos 1993). However, the zone remained largely depopulated, with the exception of its islands and some random *chiclero* continental incursions, until the tourist boom of the 1980s. The Central (or Maya) Zone became in 1912, after the Mexican Revolution, a new Mayan chiefdom officially controlled by *Cruzob caciques* or *batabs,* who became effectively entangled within *chicle* production chains. In exchange for fees and taxes, these new *batab* lords would enable the insertion of Mayan labor into a system of indebtedness (*enganche*) in which brokers working for transnational companies would lend money to Mexican contractors, who in turn would distribute it amongst central chiefs for them to hire the foremen and the *chicleros* (Redclift 2006). Finally, in the Southern Zone the Mexican government established the administrative center of the new *territorio*, and repopulated its border with British Honduras while establishing a system of forest concessions exploited by British and American corporations (Villalobos 1993).

The government of General Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) would bring a re-organization of the relationship between labor and entrepreneurs in the Central and Southern zones through the promotion of unions, cooperatives, and *ejidos.*[8] However, the decline of *chicle* in the 1960s, due to substitution with synthetic rubbers, plunged the forest enclave into a period of economic stagnation until a new export, in the form of archeologically rich Caribbean beach environments, would generate new entanglements of power through the commoditization of land and landscapes in global markets. Through this commoditization, Spanish corporations would seize control over large tracts of the coast, now named in planners jargon as "the Tourist Zone" and repackaged for international audiences as the "Mayan Riviera".[9]

The Caste War had an unexpected territorial spin in the Northern Mexican Caribbean when fifty-one families of traders, and their Maya servants, expelled from Yucatán by the *Cruzob* sought refuge in the vacated island of Cozumel[10] and created in 1848 the town of San Miguel (Sabloff 1977). The following year a group of 350 Maya farmers, ideologically and economically related to the first group, arrived in the island and settled 10 miles to the south in El Cedral. This spatial division reflected the socio-cultural stratification of Yucatecan society, which was thus accurately reproduced in

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[8]   A characteristic Mexican legal and economic regime of organization based on the communal ownership of land.

[9]   A term conceived in 1998 to market the coast south of Cancún, stretching from the north of Playa del Carmen down to Tulum.

[10] Cozumel is the largest island of Mexico located less than 15 miles east from Akumal.

Cozumel. Even though officially incorporated to Yucatán as a municipality, the island´s geographical isolation granted a high degree of independence and facilitated the flourishing of a local elite of merchants (César and Arnaiz 1998). At the same time, proximity to the Northern Caribbean coast enabled the lucrative participation of this emerging bourgeoisie in the exploitation of the continental forest resources. The port, established of course in San Miguel, became crucial in the trade of timber and *chicle*. In addition, *Cozumeleños* owned the concessions to exploit copra[11] along the coast. As a matter of fact, the island´s elite kept administrative control over today´s Mayan Riviera and Akumal was part of Cozumel's municipality until 1992. When both *chicle* and copra fell into crisis in the mid-1950s, Cozumel´s dynamic bourgeoisie started a reconversion into tourism. The first hotels were ready in the early 1960s and 33,000 tourists were already visiting the island in 1967, of which 77% were foreigners (César and Arnaiz 1998). Even though *Cozumeleños* played an important pioneering role in Quintana Roo´s tourism development, the 1980s boom had to be effected by the Federal government as it was extended far beyond the reach of local bourgeoisies to become entangled with global financial structures.

5. Early Tourist Entanglements in the Northern Mexican Caribbean: The Case of Akumal

Akumal[12] Playa is generally regarded as the first tourist enclave to emerge in continental Quintana Roo before Cancún´s first hotel was inaugurated in 1974. In the 1940s, Akumal was a 4,000 tree copra concession granted by the Federal Government to *Cozumeleño* Argimiro Argüelles (César and Arnaiz 1998).This concession stretched along 15 miles of coast between Yal-ku and Xel-ha lagoons (Figure 1). Around 1956 a private treasure hunting expedition led by Clay Blair, Jr., arrived in Akumal Bay from the United States in search of a Spanish shipwreck. By that date, copra was already in rapid decline due to recurrent plagues, low international prices, and devastation from Hurricane Janet in 1955. Only one Maya family lived permanently on the Bay and survived by selling coconuts and turtles to Argüelles, who carried them by boat to Cozumel (Personal communication 2011).

In 1959, a few years after the arrival of US treasure hunters to Akumal, a group of Mexican businessmen created the Club of Exploration and Aquatic Sports of Mexico (CEDAM for its Spanish Acronym). Leading CEDAM was Don Pablo Bush, a Mexican-American adventurer and owner of the Ford automobile dealership in Mexico City. One of CEDAM's major expeditions was the rescue of *Matanceros* shipwreck from Akumal

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[11] The dried, oil-yielding kernel of the coconut.

[12] Akumal means "place of the turtles" in Maya.

Bay's waters (Bush 1964). Pablo Bush was instantly seduced by Akumal´s beauty. In 1962, he acquired Argüelles' copra concession rights with the idea of developing a tourist resort. Pablo Bush had previously visited Cozumel and realized that: "In these virgin beaches there was the best tourist zone of the country" (May 2003, translation by author).

Pablo Bush was able to start a stable settlement about ten miles north from Montejo's first failed attempt of Salamanca of Xel-ha. Instead of seeking the exploitation of primary resources, the area would become entangled with global capital through the commoditization and provision of access to seafront space for relatively wealthy (white) Americans. Such provision turned increasingly lucrative with the development of Cancún (70 miles north of Akumal) and the progressive improvement of terrestrial communications. As with Montejo's expeditions, Akumal viability required both the approval of distant authorities and a stable supply of indigenous labor. A few Yucatec divers and sailors, who had been hired for CEDAM's expeditions, became established in Akumal.[13] However, the workforce needed to build and run the emerging resort would be composed of Mestizos from central Yucatán, some of them expelled from *henequen* plantations, who were subsisting through *milpa* cultivation. They principally arrived from Sotuta and Kantunil to repair *palapas*, cook, serve the tourists, clean, or build and tend hotels and beachfront opulent residences owned by American citizens. Until the 1980s, Sotuta and Kantunil had fixed their population through corn cultivation thanks to public support through the National Company of Popular Subsistence (CONASUPO), which was reformed after the 1982 debt crisis and finally dismantled in 1999 (Fraga, in press). Immigration to the coast was largely structured around kin and friendship bonds. The ex-*Cruzob* inhabiting the forests south from Akumal would be largely disentangled from Akumal's development. Incidentally, Bush happened to have some sporadic contacts with the "Last Mayas, hidden in the jungles" (Bush 1964: 167). Such contacts were tense, but Mayas' hostility did not diminish Bush's interest on the, perhaps idealized, ancient Mayan culture, an interest that would persists in subsequent tourist promotion of the area. Bush was also captivated by the myth of Gonzalo Guerrero and Xzacil. He ordered a bronze statue representing Guerrero and his family, which was placed at Akumal's entrance in 1975 (Adorno 1996). The sculpture was donated to Yucatán's government in 1980 but a replica remains in Akumal until today.

Until the 1970s the Federal government was largely disentangled from the Northern Mexican Caribbean. This changed when President Luis Echeverría, the main promoter of the Cancún project, took office in 1970. Cancún had been identified as an investment priority by the Bank of Mexico and became the base for the large scale

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[13] Presently owners of local businesses in Akumal Playa and generally perceived by the inhabitants of Akumal Pueblo as Bush's ex-foremen.

entanglement of the Northern Mexican Caribbean with global financial capital through tourism. Neither local *Cruzobs*, nor the many Yucatec that became entangled to the area as new proletarians, would have much saying in the shaping of the tourist-based re-territorialization of the Mexican Caribbean. Even though the Mayan past of the area would be profusely employed for its commercial promotion, the new territory would be marked by the segregation of contemporary Mayas from tourist space, as the case of Akumal will illustrate.

5.1   Mass Tourism Begins in Akumal

The advent of Cancún re-defined the significance of Akumal's coasts for the Federal government. Pablo Bush would have to negotiate the extension of his tourist resort project with President Echeverría. By 1972, an agreement was forged that gave Bush full ownership over a reduced fraction, about 55 ha, of his copra concession.[14] In exchange the Mexican government received the rest of the land, which fell under the management of a federal trust called Fideicomiso Caleta Xel-ha y del Caribe (FIDECARIBE).[15] Bush created a corporation, Promotora Akumal Caribe, and obtained in 1975 the government's authorization to divide and sell his coastal strip (Periódico Oficial del Estado de Quintana Roo 20 January 1975).[16] The government's permit included a donation of more than 10 ha for a park, market, school and local government agency, but did not consider any spatial provision for tourist workers' housing.

The first tourist infrastructure in Akumal included condos (*casitas* Akumal), two restaurants, a dive club, two or three hotels, a supermarket and a few beachfront villas. Don Pablo founded the Yacht Club of Akumal to regulate the development of an exclusive, American community (Manuel-Navarrete 2011). During the 1970s, a floating population of about fifty Mestizo/Maya workers was accommodated in two strings of *palapas*[17] around today's basketball court. Salaries were low, about 15 to 20 pesos a day,[18] but food and basic utilities were provided by the employer (*patrón*). For *milperos* the prospect of making some cash was enough incentive to stay:

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[14]   Concessions only grant possession rights.

[15]   FIDECARIBE was transferred to the State Government in 1993 to become a big player in Mexican Caribbean tourist development. The trust continued acquiring and selling lands across the state. In 2005 FIDECARIBE was integrated with other urban development institutions into a state agency named IPAE (Institute for Real Estate Property).

[16]   Published as: "Permiso por el que se concede el permiso a la Promotora Akumal Caribe SA autorización para fraccionar los terrenos de su propiedad conocidos como Akumal Norte y Akumal Sur".

[17]   A thatched-roof wooden hut very common in the Caribbean.

[18]   This was the minimum salary at that time in Quintana Roo (personal communication with union leader).

My salary was only fifteen pesos a day and it was hard work. I cleaned the kitchen, and did a bit of everything. I preferred the life in the *milpa*, but what made me stay is that when January came, they gave me 500 pesos in tips, it was a lot of money, I had never had 500 pesos on my hands (Personal communication 2011).

In some respects, Akumal was organized like an *encomienda* or *hacienda*, but given the temporality of tourism and abundant availability of labor from Yucatán, workers were not encouraged by business owners to stay. Class divisions between employer and employee were always clear-cut. In addition, tourists and business owners essentialized Mestizo/Maya workers as traditional, pre-modern Maya. This tended to revert Mestizos back to pre-Caste War identities, or rather forward to their modern idealization. Thus, as Mestizos/Maya from Kantunil and Sotuta ventured into former "*Cruzob* lands", their Mayaness became an object of tourism, particularly in the presence of foreigners, even though they continued self-identifying themselves as Mestizo or Maya when travelling to their towns in Yucatán (Field observations 2009). At the same time, tourism also enriched the categories that Maya/Mestizo used to identify foreigners (*ts'uules*). Since independence from Spain, the Maya applied the term *j-waach* or *huacho* any Mexicans from outside Yucatán. *J-waach* emerged to designate the soldiers repeatedly sent to keep the peninsula under Mexican control and has a derogatory connotation (Hervik 1999). In Akumal, the arrival of tourism added to Mestizo/Maya daily usage the categories of *gringo* (often carrying a connotation of arrogance and unwanted intrusion), *güeros* (in reference to blond hair and white skin color), and *turistas*, perhaps implying customer/employee type of relation.

An important point in terms of entanglements of power is that business owners, workers and international tourist shared at the beginning the same (contiguous) spaces in Akumal. An increasing number of workers sought a permanent place to stay and built their own *palapas* nearby in a new settlement, contiguous to the hotels that would be known as the *jatos.*[19] In the minds of some workers, Pablo Bush had reluctantly approved this occupation:

One day in the evening Don Pablo asked us to gather around because he had something to tell us. He told us, you grab all this part [of land] by the court and divide it equitably, because this land is mine but before this … [in reference to President Echeverría] takes it away from me, I prefer to cede it to you. It was a good gesture, but not that much because it is like when someone who owes you

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[19] A jato is a hut or palapa that Maya from Yucatan build by their milpas to stay overnight during cultivation and harvesting.

money decides to pay his debt when we both are being assaulted by someone else (Personal communication 2011).

At the end of the 1970s, Akumal workers became entangled with syndicalism when Jose Burgos arrived from Chetumal, Quintana Roo's capital. Mestizo/Maya workers perceived Jose Burgos as a "person with strong and combative personality" (Personal communication 2011). Syndicalism had started to develop in Cozumel's port and the southern forests concessions of Quintana Roo after the Lázaro Cárdenas presidency of social and economic reform (César and Arnaiz 1998). During the 1940s unions and cooperatives were promoted and some syndicalist structure and culture seems to have emerged in Quintana Roo even though remaining under strict government's tutelage. However, according to personal communications, most workers who arrived in Akumal straight from Yucatec rural communities had been hardly exposed to syndicalism. At the beginning business owners did not oppose the Union, but it took time to get workers involved:

> All of a sudden the policy of creating a union started. Back then there was nothing; the company could fire you at any time. We had to form a coalition to defend ourselves. People started to trust us when they saw that the union was formally constituted. […] At the beginning people used to say: What else I want? He [*el patrón*] gives me house and food. Then we had to explain that the contract forced the company to do so because we were in the middle of the forest and there was nothing around. By that time, the entrepreneurs already had their own association (Personal communication with former General Secretary 2011, translation by author).

A crucial event for the union's consolidation was the strike of 1980. Mismanagement in one of the hotels put workers in a difficult situation when its Canadian owner stopped paying salaries. Under Burgos guidance workers accumulated water and corn provisions and after six days of strike received their salaries back:

> After three days, business owners came to ask us to come back to work. We did not fall into provocations and took it as if we were on holidays. Fishers would leave in the morning and hunters in the evening. We had everything we needed. Entrepreneurs became angry because they thought someone was funding us. […] Once the Canadian was kicked out, the hotel was taken over by the Comermex Bank (Personal communication with author 2011, translation from Spanish by author).

Eventually, business owners managed to get rid of Burgos. Allegedly, he became too much of an annoyance to business owners ("*a cada rato andaba perjudicando a las empresas*"). However, immigrants kept arriving from Yucatán to the *jatos* during the 1980s and one of the main Union's concerns became to obtain land ("*solicitar terrenos"*). The union members addressed their land demands to authorities in Chetumal and Cozumel, but with no success. Community demands were channeled through the clientelistic entanglements of Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Manuel-Navarrete et al. 2009). Workers sought the attention of the authorities by highlighting the participation of the Gastronomic Union in the Confederation of Mexican Workers (a pillar of PRI's governance system) and their role legitimizing the PRI as loyal voters. In 1981 the Union leaders addressed a letter to the PRI's candidate to governor of Quintana Roo to demand a solution to the serious housing problem in Akumal. The letter offered the commitment of the Union to support his candidacy "with the Union's human elements and political strength […] by voting with faith and enthusiasm" (Comité ejecutivo 1981). However, as different governors and mayors took office, each would listen to the demands, make promises and even sign agreements, but nothing actually changed.

In 1987, a less friendly letter to the new governor of Quintana Roo demanded the legalization of FIDECARIBE's lands that workers had in possession. They asked to be allowed to buy the land at an affordable price because "we are not foreigners with money but workers fighting to improve their family and as Mexicans we have the right to have a special treatment given that it is our understanding that on the beach only people with money and mainly foreigners can buy due to high costs" (Personas que ya tomaron 1987). The main concern amongst workers was to obtain a secure livelihood and the chance to pass a patrimony on to their children. However, amongst the workers there was also a small group of Mestizos with small properties in Yucatán who sought the opportunity to set up small businesses close enough to the beach in order to have access to tourists. This somehow reproduced the social stratification of Mestizo/Maya communities during colonial and neo-colonial times. Not surprisingly, this group of camouflaged workers is still referred to as the *caciques*.

By the late 1980s there were three hotels in Akumal with about 200 rooms (César 2008). The *jatos* had already more than one hundred homes. Business owners articulated a discourse against the informal settlement that mixed aesthetic, sanitary and business concerns. The main line of this discourse is still consistently uttered by business owners today:

> It was all disorderedly built *palapas*, from the wall of one *jato* to the other there were only 50 cm. It was a swampy area all-full of mosquitoes and when it rained

they had to line up stones to cross over. They had to sleep with the lights on because there were rats at night. One cannot have such an eye sore so close to where tourists are (adapted from five personal communications with business owners 2011).

Business owners looked for an alternative to this situation and achieved government support to build a new service town, today´s Chemuyil, three miles away.

5.2   Making Space for Tourism and the Urban Entanglement of Maya

The Federal government traced the streets of "Chemuyil City" in 1986, but the 280 social houses were not built until 1990. Each 75 square meter house was offered to workers for 46,000 pesos, about 15,000 dollars total or 200 dollars per square meter, to be paid over thirty years to INFONAVIT (Institute of the National Fund for Workers Housing). The workers' consensus was that Chemuyil's houses were small, poorly built and overpriced (Personal Communications 2011). In addition, binding contracts for thirty years and mortgage schemes were largely foreign to Mestizo/Maya families. To make things worse, the wording of the house-purchasing contract was unconventional. Buyers were designated as "solidary debtors" to indicate that they were assuming the federal loan that the construction company, which belonged to one of Akumal business owners, had received to build the houses.

In terms of space, moving to Chemuyil meant to be miles away from the workplace and Akumal beach. Thus, Maya were once again disentangled from the seaside and the trading potential it could offer them. In addition to dislocation, the bizarre housing unit layout (with each lot including two houses) and some condo rules imposed upon workers were equally disempowering. Many workers interpreted the scheme as more than a disinterested action to provide a roof to people in need and also more than a simple commercial transaction (Personal Communications 2011). At the least, one can discern a paternalistic intent on the part of business owners to enforce a certain urban aesthetic while "assisting" the Mestizo/Maya in their transition from the *jatos* towards "proper" urban living. For instance, the bizarre distribution of two houses per lot, each with a different owner who would share a common space that could not be modified without mutual agreement, was and is interpreted as a restriction to avoid modifications of the house layout. This interpretation is further supported when one looks at some patronizing rules contained in the housing development regulations to ensure the use of the homes "according to morals […] without compromising the solidity, security, sanitation, conviviality, prestige or good appearance of the housing development" (Akumal Branch of the Mexican Hotel Association 1994, translated by author). In addition, regulations established that the housing development's administrator had to

be a person designated by the Akumal Branch of the Mexican Hotel Association. All this suggests, at the very least, a "civilizing" intent on the part of Chemuyil promoters, which one cannot help but to link to Spaniard and *Criollo* colonial attitudes, and which has persisted until today through the commitment of local businesses to "improve" the appearance of the settlement (Abreu 2009).

By 1991 only about ten families had willingly moved to Chemuyil. Then, business owners threatened workers with laying them off unless they signed a "solidary debtor" contract. A deadline to abandon the *Jatos* was established for March 1992. Many employees from companies that were members of the Akumal business association accepted to move under the threat of losing their job. However, some chose to resign and join independent workers in a resistance strategy that resembled that of the Maya during colonial and neo-colonial times: they retreated into the nearby forests owned by FIDECARIBE. *Caciques* supported this strategy in the hope that would allow them to obtain a property close to the coast where the tourists were. Resistance was facilitated by internal conflicts between the business association and a Canadian who managed one of Akumal's restaurants under a thirty-year lease. However, this conflict was settled by 1992 and business owners turned to the State government for assistance to remove "squatters" from Akumal and relocate them to Chemuyil City.

In the early 1990s, the government of Quintana Roo initiated a territorial reorganization of the area south of Cancún in order to expand Cancún's corporate-style tourist enclave model, although a lower-density version of it. Under the plan of Ecological Land Zoning of the Cancún-Tulum Corridor, different levels of government were to coordinate the touristification of the territory running parallel to the coast along the Federal Road 307. Thus the lands where Akumal workers were building their new *palapas* were being conceived by planners within one of the 48 territorial units of the Cancún-Tulum corridor to which specific hotel room densities were assigned. In fact, this planning scheme established a land use pattern that would segregate the local population to one side of the Federal road, which in the late 1990s was widened and turned into a highway connected with Cancún's international airport, while reserving the coastal side to hotel developers and tourists. Despite the government plans, a new *jatos* continued to grow to more than a hundred *palapas* in the *Crucero* (the crossroads of the highway with the road to entry Akumal), on FIDECARIBE lands incidentally designated for tourist use under the Cancún-Tulum corridor.

5.3 Unexpected Entanglements and Creation of Akumal Pueblo

In 1990, Allan Hernandez Juarez, an ex-syndicalist and ex-*guerrillero*, arrived in Akumal from Mexico City and bought a stand-alone *palapa* close to the *Crucero*. For Akumal's

Maya/Mestizo he wasa *j-waach*, but were readily categorized as "one with the same personality as [syndicalist] Jose Burgos" (Personal Communication 2011). Don Allan wished to live with the Maya, and as one of them, because in his view they were the most disadvantaged ("*jodidos*") people in Mexico. In addition to strong revolutionary convictions, he was an accountant and had some knowledge about Mexican law. In 1991 he started "The Fight" (*La Lucha*), a term that would become broadly popular in Akumal. His decision to "live as a Maya" was crucial for the success of Akumal's Fight, and it might be interpreted as an attempt to embody Gonzalo Guerrero's myth. However, probably more important were the ways in which Don Allan entangled indigenous, peasant, labor and nationalist narratives of resistance in combination with effectively involving in the conflict some key actors from Federal governance structures.

The Fight's first step in 1993 was to constitute in assembly and legally register Akumal's Neighbors Union, with the *caciques*' support. This same year an official petition was addressed to local and regional authorities and political leaders. In this petition, Akumal is resituated as a very old culture, the cradle of Gonzalo Guerrero's *mestizaje*, while the relocation to Chemuyil is presented as an expansionist attempt of businesses to erase both this ancestral identity and the right of the Maya to exist as a people. This ethnic discourse is combined with revolutionary rhetoric mixing class and labor demands:
Was FIDECARIBE created by the Federal Government to take the land away from *Quintanaroenses* and sell it to the bourgeois? […] Have not we made already enough millionaires with our labor force while we continue to live from hand to mouth? (Asociación de colonos del pueblo de Akumal 1993, translated from Spanish by author).

In 1994 and 1995, petitions were extended to President Salinas de Gortari and Ernesto Zedillo with an increasingly aggressive rhetoric confronting local/Maya/Mexican people against corrupt local politicians at the service of foreign interests:

> Do the dollars of foreigners give them the right to do anything? No, we do not believe that you Mr. President thinks as our local politicians do, but we are afraid that the Indian from here have, like the ones from Chiapas [in reference to the Zapatista], reached their limit and are not going to lower their heads ever again (Comité de la Union de Vecinos de Akumal 1994, Solidaridad Akumal 1995, translated from Spanish by author).

During this time, a key event took place in Akumal that gave momentum to the Fight. A government's delegate with two policemen started to tear *palapas* down in the *Crucero* with a chainsaw. After two *palapas* went down people gathered in rage and chased the delegate who had to run into the jungle and hide for his life. The mob tore down two

walls that FIDECARIBE had put up to warn that to live in the *Crucero* was a punishable crime.

In 1995, Don Allan was travelling to Mexico City to gather the support of Quintana Roo's representatives in the Mexican Parliament and Senate. He also established contacts with the Director of FIDECARIBE Luis Perez Quintal, who ended convincing Allan about the legal complications involved in acquiring lands on the coastal side of the highway due to the high taxes that tourist planning assigns to this zone. On August 18th 1995, a meeting was held in a neutral place with representatives from the regional and local governments and the Neighbors' Union. After the meeting, Perez Quintal asked Don Allan to prepare a serious proposal. Three days later Allan presented a proposal to create a town of 186 homes on the inland side of the highway, but right by the *Crucero*. Business owners still preferred Chemuyil, but considered the proposal as a second best option. The *caciques* were not willing to give up on getting lands by the beach and saw the proposal as a betrayal, but Allan's main concern was to provide titled lands to workers unable to pay high taxes. Don Allan forged an agreement with Perez Quintal and took it to Mexico City to ensure its implementation. The *caciques* joined local government officials and tried to boycott the agreement. Upon his return from the capital, Don Allan was put in jail under false accusations, but one of the Senators supporting him helped his release.

At the end of October, Hurricane Roxanne hit Akumal and shattered the *Crucero*, but the regional government and business owners were already committed to carry out Don Allan's proposal. A few weeks after Roxanne, a public draw was held to assign the lots in today's Akumal Pueblo. Each lot of 200 square meters cost 5,000 pesos (more than double the size of Chemuyil's at one tenth of the cost). The *caciques* had been already brought in and mysteriously managed to get the best lots in the draw. Allan obtained his own lot and has lived there since. Three years later the governor of Quintana Roo, sold the majority of FIDECARIBE's coastal properties around Akumal to Spanish hotel corporations. Grupo Piñero bought a property of 116 ha, including hundreds of meters of beach between Akumal Pueblo and Chemuyil, and paid on average 4.58 US dollars per square meter. In 1999 Grupo Piñero started the construction of an all-inclusive resort complex that today counts with almost 3,000 rooms and employs many people in Chemuyil and Akumal. Thus, almost five hundred years after the first attempts, a stable entanglement between Spanish entrepreneurs and Maya was forged on the Caribbean coast of Northern Mexico.

6.   Conclusion: Entanglements of Power in Mexican Caribbean Space

The geometry of segregation of Mestizo/Maya workers from tourist space in Akumal appears on the surface as the direct outcome of the territorialization consented to by workers and imposed by national and state governments according to the needs of global tourist capital (Manuel-Navarrete 2011). As discussed in the introduction, these asymmetric geometries were identified in tourist development studies and characterized as front/back or enclavic/heterogeneous spaces. Political economy and critical tourism approaches have also theoretically explored the neocolonial character of tourist space and its functionality to expand capitalist forms of production into areas with no other production potential. However, the field is still far from deploying geographical and spatial understandings of tourist enclaves in systematic and organized ways. This paper applies spatio-temporal analysis of geographies of domination/resistance to empirically advance the explanation of the spatial inequalities produced by tourism. The notion of entanglements of power exposes the genealogy of spatial segregation by uncovering the multiple positions from which domination and resistance power is exercised along a region's history until their knotted threads converge into contemporary spatial geometries.

In the Mexican Caribbean, the arrival of European invaders started a pattern of entanglements characterized by the simultaneous globalization and local reconfiguration of power, and a simultaneous process of transnationalization of local space. On the one hand, domination power became more distant and elusive (more global, perhaps, but centered in Europe spheres), while local positions of power had to evolve and reinvent themselves in order to adapt to both globalization of power, and the new positions of resistance that it provoked. We have seen examples of this reinvention and adaptation when the domination exerted by pre-Hispanic *batabs* over Maya peasants evolved in colonial times under the figure of *caciques*, which was vital for Mayan resistance to the hegemony of Yucatec *haciendas*. These entanglements are reinvented in contemporary Akumal as colonizers from European origin stay in positions of domination, Mestizos (now in roles of tourists' servants) re-position their resistance strategies within the domestic PRI system, and *caciques* (now as Mestizo petty bourgeoisie) join these new forms of resistance while still seeking their personal advantage. On the other hand, transnationalization takes place as distant positions of power, such as the Spanish Crown, inexorably tighten their grip on local space by adopting new entangled forms, such as Mexican government, British timber corporations, Quintana Roo government and Spanish tourist corporations. The territory of Quintana Roo is constructed through recurrent transnational interactions and practices of global actors, which

are vital for stabilizing local positions of domination and enclave-like exploitation. This transnationalization of local space increasingly constraints local power (Bush negotiations with Echeverría come to mind) while at the same time legitimizes local privileges, and forges subtler forms of consent, as shown in the entangling of the Gastronomic Union with the PRI structure of Quintana Roo's government.

The forms of domination and resistance that emerged from the triple pattern of entanglement described above guided the logics of territorialization of the peninsula and influenced Akumal's spatial outcomes, but not in a totally determinant way. For instance, local socio-ecological structures effectively resisted the system of *encomiendas*, while *haciendas* never became stabilized in the Mexican Caribbean. They ended up arriving through Cozumel as copra plantations and perhaps internalized by the immigrants from Sotuta and Kantunil who arrived in the Akumal tourist enclave. However, the point is that this triple pattern was never totally inexorable and its stabilization was problematic and required negotiations and bends sometimes leading to unexpected spatial outcomes. In particular, Akumal Playa and Pueblo also illustrate the capacity of human agents to support, but also resist and alter, the reproduction of hegemonic spatial outcomes. Certainly, Akumal Playa was spatially structured by global patterns of contemporary capitalism such as the appreciation of seafront land, but also by Bush's agency and his resistance to Federal government plans, in the same way that Don Allan's agency was crucial to resist the Bushes and government plans to relocate workers in Chemuyil. In both cases, the power to bend hegemonic outcomes may partly reside in personalities entirely located outside the region's entanglements. Thus, Don Allan's ability to override the domination/resistance structures of the PRI, the *caciques* and the business owners would have precisely consisted in his autonomy from them. Another element of power/space highlighted by the analysis of entanglements is the role of socio-ecological discontinuities and heterogeneities, which are inherent to the spaces where domination power becomes entangled to produce stable patterns of exploitation/accumulation. We have seen how the ecology of the Mexican Caribbean delayed Spanish occupation while its impenetrable forests and lack of mineral resources were crucial for Maya to challenge European and Mexican hegemonies for centuries. Spanish managed to establish a stable pattern of accumulation through the *haciendas* system. But this only worked in the drier Northwestern lands of the peninsula. Globalization brought about new possibilities of accumulation related with the exploitation of forests and British and Americans entangled structures of accumulation that allowed the establishment of a merchant bourgeoisie in Cozumel Island which would pioneer local tourism development.

The important point is that for a long time there was not any stable entanglement between local ecological structures and the socio-ecological structures of accumulation brought about by European colonizers. This can be interpreted as a form of resistance of space itself, or of its embedded socio-ecological structures, to specific entanglements of power. This resistance could only be overcome through the entire re-signification of the Caribbean landscape. This re-signification was pioneered by Pablo Bush, and took on the commoditization and provision of access to seafront space for the recreation of American elites. The Mexican government would then set the territorial basis to incorporate European and American middle classes through new forms of spatial division and commodification that incidentally enabled Spanish re-colonization via the all-inclusive resort model. In this new context, retreating to the forest was again a strategy of Mestizo/Maya to resist the encroachments of tourism, but to be successful in altering the hegemonic and unequal spatial order, this strategy had to become entangled by foreign resistance practices internalized by an autonomous agent who repositioned locally his transnational identity of resistance.

7.   Bibliography

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