Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Current Issues in Tourism

ISSN: 1368-3500 (Print) 1747-7603 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcit20

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To cite this article: Rebecca Torres & Janet Momsen (2005) Planned Tourism Development in Quintana Roo, Mexico: Engine for Regional Development or Prescription for Inequitable Growth?, Current Issues in Tourism, 8:4, 259-285, DOI: 10.1080/13683500508668218

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500508668218

Planned Tourism Development in Quintana Roo, Mexico: Engine for Regional Development or Prescription for Inequitable Growth?

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In the 1960s the isolated tropical forest enclave of Quintana Roo was targeted by the Mexican Government to serve as the cornerstone for launching what is now considered to be one of Mexico's most successful economic development strategies – Planned Tourism Development (PTD). This paper commences with a brief review of the role of state-driven PTD in Mexico's national economic development agenda. Government discourse surrounding the Cancun project emphasised tourism as a mechanism for promoting 'regional development' through creation of backward linkages to other economic sectors – notably agriculture and small industry – to benefit the region's marginalised Mayan peasant population. Based on research in Quintana Roo, this paper contends that while PTD has generated profit for the Government, transnational corporations and entrepreneurial elites, it has failed to achieve backward linkages that may have improved conditions for the region's impoverished rural population. Employing a case study approach, the paper illustrates the failure of PTD to stimulate balanced regional development, while analysing PTD's role in reinforcing existing relations of domination and subordination to produce new patterns of uneven development and inequity within Quintana Roo.

Keywords: tourism, development, agriculture, Mexico, Cancun, Maya

State-sponsored large-scale planned development of modern, Western post-industrial urban tourism centres, or Planned Tourism Development (PTD) (Torres, 1997), has become an important element in the development strategies of several emerging nations throughout the world. While Mexico has been the leader of PTD, increasingly nations such as Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Egypt have implemented master-planned tourism as an economic development strategy. Based on a Master Integral Plan, PTD resorts are typically planned and built from the ground up in unique, isolated and attractive locations. This paper situates PTD in Cancun, a resort planned in the late 1960s and built in the early 1970s, as a cornerstone of a new externally-oriented Mexican national economic development strategy. In addition to the obvious profit-making objectives, Cancun's original planners also intended that it serve as a 'growth pole' (Boudeville, 1966; Perroux, 1955) for stimulating 'regional development' in the isolated tropical forest enclave territory of Quintana Roo. While the ultimate goal of tourism development in Quintana Roo – and all resorts for that matter – is to

1368-3500/05/04 0259-27 $20/0
Current Issues in Tourism

generate profit for investors, economic development objectives underpinned the project. Governmental planners' discourse emphasised development of backward linkages between tourism and other sectors of the local economy. They believed that these linkages, when combined with the 'multiplier effect', would not only stimulate economic development but also serve to alleviate poverty and improve the socioeconomic conditions of the region's marginalised rural Mayan inhabitants.

This study, based on research conducted in Quintana Roo in 1996–8, contends that, while the PTD, 'top-down', statist model of tourism development in Quintana Roo has been successful with respect to its central profit-making objectives, it has failed to stimulate significant backward linkages to other economic sectors, notably agriculture and small-scale industry. PTD has not significantly improved the socioeconomic conditions for the majority of Quintana Roo's original rural Mayan inhabitants. Indeed, the region's move to an almost complete dependency on the tourism sector has created striking divisions and hierarchies within physical, economic and social space – most notably between urban tourist space and rural agricultural space. These divisions and hierarchies are manifest in 'layers' of inequality and uneven development across the Quintana Roo physical, economic and social landscape which directly results from this type of tourism development. In Quintana Roo, rapid growth of the tourism industry has reinforced existing unequal relations of domination and subordination, while also producing new social, political and economic hierarchies manifest in patterns of uneven development.

This paper commences with a brief review of the role of state-driven PTD in Mexican economic development strategy. A case study analysis of Cancun's unique role as Mexico's first PTD resort and its impact on different social groups and regions within Quintana Roo concludes that, while the resort has generated profit for the Government, transnational corporations and entrepreneurial elites, it has failed to improve conditions for the region's most marginalised populations.

Tourism and Development

The dramatic growth in leisure time following World War II, combined with an unprecedented increase in disposable income and the advent of affordable global transportation have propelled the tourism industry to the top position among recognised global business categories (*Economist*, 1991; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Schlüter, 1994; WTTC, 1991). As tourists from the 'North' seek new and more exotic locations, governments in the 'South', along with transnational corporations, are promoting tourism development as a source of foreign exchange, investment, employment and economic growth. National development plans now routinely incorporate the assumption of 'trickle-down' tourism benefits as a general stimulus to other sectors of the economy (Mowforth & Munt, 1998) – most notably in terms of agriculture, non-traditional exports, small-scale and cottage industries and ancillary services. Increasingly, developing nations are turning to tourism as a mechanism for priming regional development in their most remote and 'underdeveloped' spaces through backward linkages to other sectors of the economy. Empirical evidence suggests, however,

that inter-sectoral linkages often fail to develop (Bélisle, 1983; Momsen, 1998; Pattullo, 1996). Tourism growth, more typically, results in increased dependency on foreign imports which, in turn, compete with or inhibit the development of local agriculture and small industry, while also draining precious foreign exchange reserves. In lesser developed countries, tourism benefits tend to bypass local inhabitants, with the lion's share accruing to transnational corporations, non-local entrepreneurial elites, and national governments (Britton, 1991; Bryden, 1973; Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Tourism centres, in some cases, may actually contribute to local poverty by serving as magnets for rural-to-urban migration. Rural immigrants in search of improved job prospects typically compete for a limited pool of low-paying jobs and end up living in cramped, squalid and unsanitary conditions on the resort periphery.

During the 1960s, Quintana Roo, an isolated tropical forest enclave on the southern border with Belize and Guatemala, was targeted by the Mexican Government to serve as the first PTD resort. PTD is now considered to be one of the country's most successful economic development strategies with master-planned resorts having been established in Ixtapa, (Guerrero), Loreto (Baja California Sur), Los Cabos (Baja California Sur) and Huatulco (Oaxaca). Early government discourse concerning the Cancun project emphasised tourism as a mechanism for promoting 'regional development' by creating backward linkages to other economic sectors – notably agriculture and industry – to benefit the region's marginalised rural population (Enríquez Savignac, 1972; FONATUR, 1971; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1989; Lee, 1978; SECTUR, 1996; Torres, 1997). In this, Cancun has been more successful than many of the later PTD Mexican resorts. Large-scale mass tourism development located on the barrier island of Cancun was viewed as the key to repopulating and reinvigorating the isolated coastal region of Quintana Roo. In 30 years, Cancun has grown from an unpopulated stretch of beachfront property to become one of the world's leading mass tourism destinations, receiving more than 3 million visitors per year (in 2000) (Asociación de Hoteles de Quintana Roo, 2003). It is Mexico's and Latin America's principal tourist destination, attracting 25% of all international Mexican tourists (Mexican Government Tourism Office, 2000). The population of Quintana Roo is estimated to have increased more than tenfold since 1970 (INEGI, 1970, 2000b). Cancun is now home to approximately half the state's population (INEGI Website, 2000a). Tourism has become the region's economic engine, with tourists spending approximately 2 billion US dollars a year in Cancun alone (Padgett, 1996). The tourism industry accounts for approximately 75–80% of Quintana Roo's gross domestic product (GDP) (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Castro Sariñana, 1995; Cothran & Cothran, 1998). Accompanying these economic benefits, however, are the detrimental environmental, social and cultural impacts associated with conventional, large-scale mass tourism development (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Bosselman, 1978; Green, 1987; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997).

Cancun-style Fordist[1] PTD resorts are being replicated as a tourism development model throughout Mexico and in many other parts of the world such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. As one of the first and most mature examples of a PTD resort, Cancun presents a unique opportunity to examine the PTD

model as a catalyst for regional development. This allows enhanced understanding of the limitations of PTD in fostering equitable socioeconomic development.

Mexican Economic Development: From the 'Mexican Miracle' to PTD

To understand the importance of PTD in Mexico, it must be situated within the wider Mexican economic development agenda of the past 70 years. Following the Lazaro Cardenas presidency of social and economic reform in the 1930s, Mexico entered into a period characterised by political stability, rapid state-driven development and internally oriented import substitution. After World War II, various Latin American nations, including Mexico, pursued a state-led strategy of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) to promote balanced economic growth and modernisation. Drawing its inspiration from ideas expounded by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL in Latin America) headed by Argentine economist Raul Prebisch (1950), ISI countered the conventional economic wisdom of 'comparative advantage' inherent in the modernisation and development paradigm of the time. In that approach, an assumed global imbalance in production and consumption obliged 'peripheral' developing nations to export abundant primary raw materials to 'core' industrialised countries for the manufacture of goods which were in turn sold to both peripheral and other core nations. While each profited from their respective 'comparative' advantage, the wealth generated by the industrialised nations dwarfed that of the primary producers – reinforcing the imbalance which served as the foundation of the model. Born in reaction to the third-class nation status perpetuated by this model, the overtly nationalistic and internally oriented ISI economic development strategy was based on the promotion of domestic industrial production within a 'walled' economy protected by comprehensive tariffs, duties and quotas designed specifically to minimise targeted imports. Practised from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, the Mexican ISI strategy successfully stimulated domestic industrial expansion while also maintaining strong aggregate economic growth. During a 30-year period from 1940 to 1970, Mexico experienced a period of economic growth that averaged approximately 6% per year. Labelled the 'Mexican Economic Miracle' (Barkin, 1990; Hansen, 1971) it ushered in a period of unprecedented economic and social stability in the country. This 'miracle' of accelerated economic growth can be attributed in part to government policies promoting both public sector and private investment (domestic and foreign) in infrastructure, industry and agriculture. Hansen (1971) also argues that Mexico's economic growth during this period outstripped that of other large industrialised Latin American countries pursuing similar strategies. He attributes this to geographic proximity to the US being conducive to more trade, investment, technology exchange and tourist expenditures. He points out that US tourist expenditures helped the Mexican balance of payments by increasing foreign exchange earnings and avoiding serious foreign exchange bottlenecks to Mexican development. Despite its apparent success, the rapid economic growth built on an ISI strategy did have shortcomings, which included: (1) triggering uncontrolled growth of urban areas (Clancy, 1999; Cothran & Cothran, 1998); (2) failure to address balance of

payments deficits (Cothran & Cothran, 1998); (3) inability to reform structural weaknesses in the economy; (4) lack of quality controls (Torres, 1997); (5) neglect of the agriculture sector (Clancy, 1999); (6) further concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few elite groups; (7) emphasis on the production of luxury goods rather than those of basic consumption for the masses, (8) deepening of income disparities between peasants and industrial wage earners (Cardoso & Faletto, 1976; Roberts, 1982) and (9) exacerbating regional inequalities. While the 'Mexican Miracle' and its associated ISI strategy achieved strong aggregate economic growth, it failed to realise the social, political and cultural changes (Cardoso & Faletto, 1976; Dachary, 1992; Hirschman, 1971; Roberts, 1982) necessary to ameliorate the mounting social problems of poverty, inequity, social injustice, environmental degradation and accelerated urbanisation facing Mexico and the rest of Latin America. Hansen argues that the real Mexican miracle was the ability of the Mexican political system to absorb the social pressures resulting from the rapid growth of public welfare. He suggests that, 'the bill for rapid growth is generally paid through forgone consumption on the part of those segments of society who can least afford it' (Hansen, 1971: 4).

Michael Watts, in his AAG Progress in Human Geography address: '1968 and All That . . . ,' put forth 1968 as a 'seminal year' when the social activism of the 1960s came to a head and served to catalyse a global 'thickening of civil society'. Torres (1997) contends that the Quintana Roo backwater, which he likens to the bucolic, mythical city of Macondo in Gabriel García Marquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* appeared at its surface to be untouched by the seminal global events of 1968. In 1968 Mexico as a nation had, however, come to the realisation that it must implement profound changes in its political and socioeconomic structure[2]; in particular there was a growing awareness of the absolute need for alternative models of development. Faced with a global economic crisis, social unrest, radical student movements, accelerated urbanisation, increased unemployment and the end of the *bracero* migrant farm labour programme (Massey *et al.*, 2003), the political and economic stability of the 'Mexican Miracle' was waning. Indeed, Barkin (1990: 10) suggests that the Mexican miracle 'disintegrated into the morass of debt-fueled crisis'. During the mid-1960s and 1970s, Mexico began to adopt more 'outward' oriented market-oriented and export-driven economic strategies including the export of oil and agricultural products, the 'Twin Plants' or *Maquiladoras* program and PTD (Dachary, 1992; Torres, 1994). Few could imagine at the time that the isolated tropical forest enclave of Quintana Roo – a virtual tropical prison for political exiles under President Porfirio Díaz (Torres, 1997) and a refuge for Maya rebels – would serve as the linchpin for launching what is now considered to be Mexico's most successful economic development strategy – Planned Tourism Development (PTD).

As a major pillar of the new export-oriented Mexican economy, tourism now became a 'strategic sector' and enjoyed attention from central planners commensurate with that label (Haydt De Almeida, 1994; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999; Schlüter, 1994). PTD was selected as a new economic development strategy because of the promise it held for attracting foreign exchange, generating employment and stimulating regional development. Tourism development was viewed as a conduit for modernisation (FONATUR, 1994). According to Torres, PTD has also served as a mechanism to integrate marginalised regions of Mexico

into the global economic order and 'consequently has redefined their peripheral role in both the international and national arenas' (Torres, 1997: 182). Cancun, as Mexico's first 'Tourist Integral Centre' (TIC), was the cornerstone of a strategy which planners hoped would be an early model for driving forward the tourism sector through PTD.

The notion of controlled, planned tourism development became particularly important, as the detrimental effects of untrammelled tourism growth and associated spontaneous and chaotic urbanisation were rapidly becoming apparent in Acapulco, then Mexico's elite resort (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Bosselman, 1978; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999; Reynoso y Valle & de Regt, 1979). The careful consideration given to PTD in Cancun was in part an effort to avoid future *Acapulquización* characterised by unplanned tourism growth leading to environmental deterioration, a lack of infrastructure, the emergence of squatters' settlements, an increase in urban poverty and squalor and an overall decline in the quality and exclusivity of the resort. While Acapulco was Mexico's first major international tourism resort, Cancun was the first pre-planned resort based on a master plan. It is worth noting that Ixtapa, in Guerrero, is another example of a PTD resort which was planned at the same time as Cancun and was established shortly after the birth of Cancun (Reynoso y Valle & de Regt, 1979). Nevertheless, we consider Cancun to be the first PTD resort.

Over the past 30 years, tourism has served as an important engine for both economic and regional development in Mexico. During times of economic crisis, Mexico has relied heavily on its tourism industry for recovery. It has taken on added importance during the neo-liberal enforced austerity, structural adjustment and push for export-led growth characteristic of the Mexican economic strategy since the 1980s. Clancy suggests, 'tourism is best seen as a leading sector within Mexico's larger development strategy of export-led growth' (Clancy, 1999: 12). President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) targeted tourism to spearhead economic growth and regional development (Casado, 1997; Cothran & Cothran, 1998), and more recently President Ernesto Zedillo declared tourism a 'strategic industry' to aid in the economic recovery necessitated by the 1994–95 economic crisis (Cothran & Cothran, 1998).

PTD: A Statist Development Strategy

The Mexican state has played a leading role in conceptualising, planning, financing and administering the Tourist Integral Centres which are at the heart of PTD strategy. Torres (1997: 185), in his analysis of state intervention and tourist entrepreneurship in Quintana Roo, suggests 'TICs are formed through strong state intervention in the economy. TICs are the result of the visible hand of the state.' He describes PTD as a 'top-down' process and contends that: 'The TICs were created because of a political decision of the federal government and not because of a local political decision of the regions where the TICs were developed' (Torres, 1997: 215).

Several authors suggest that the critical role of the Mexican state in driving PTD is a prime example of a statist development strategy (Clancy, 1999, 2001; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999; Torres, 1997). Clancy (1999) compares the behaviour of the Mexican state with respect to PTD to that of 'developmental states' in East

Asia. State agencies conceptualise and initiate large projects, and then bring in the private sector in a controlled manner, thus achieving a channelling of resources to facilitate project development. He contends that heavy state involvement dictates a 'statist' as opposed to a 'neoliberal' label for PTD.[3] According to Clancy, PTD in Mexico runs counter to the notion of tourism as a neoliberal industry, a notion put forth earlier (Clancy, 1999). Torres points out that despite the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, the Mexican state still has strong bureaucratic structures and specialised institutions – particularly those related to oil and PTD (Torres, 1997).

The National Tourism Promotion Fund (FONATUR) provides a powerful example of the critical role of a state entity serving as an engine for PTD. In 1974, the Department of Tourism (SECTUR), working through the federal Banco de Mexico, created FONATUR by marrying the Tourism Guarantee and Promotion Fund (FOGATUR) and the Tourism Infrastructure Trust Fund (INFRATUR) – the Mexican Government's two most important tourism development agencies. Enríquez Savignac, president of INFRATUR and a key actor driving PTD in Mexico, described INFRATUR's powers as:

(1) To promote and carry out the 'touristic' infrastructure programme, as a complement to other investments by the Federal Government.
(2) To promote private investments as a complement to state infrastructure investments.
(3) To acquire, plan for development, subdivide, sell and lease real property.
(4) To coordinate with other agencies of the Government, either federal, state or municipal, promotion of the tourist industry.

'In order to fulfil these objectives, it has been assigned to INFRATUR, adequate material resources and legal powers; therefore, the programme with which it has been entrusted may be carried out flexibly and dynamically' (Enríquez Savignac, 1972: 108).

Torres describes FONATUR, INFRATUR's successor, as 'a chameleon, an organizational animal with impressive memetism capacity that allows it to perform several functions in several arenas and environment'. He outlines the following FONATUR functions (Torres, 1997: 199–203):

(1) Federal Bureaucratic Institution: FONATUR works in conjunction with SECTUR to develop, apply and supervise policy, legislation and regulations related to the tourism industry.
(2) Financial Institution: FONATUR serves as a bank to channel loans to construct hotels and tourist businesses. It has financed a significant share of Mexican TIC development and nearly 40% of all Mexican hotels.
(3) Parastatal Enterprise: FONATUR operates as a large quasi-public corporation which has the ability to enter into joint venture agreements, invest in enterprises and promote businesses – similar to any other private entrepreneur or corporation.

FONATUR took the lead in conceiving, planning, constructing, financing, and to some extent investing in (direct equity participation) the five new Mexican Tour-

ist Integral Centres – Cancun, Ixtapa, Los Cabos, Loreto and Huatulco. To date FONATUR has developed 15 'megaprojects' (Cothran & Cothran, 1998). While it is common for governments to play a large role in planning tourism development (Hall, 1994), equity participation and ownership is rare (Williams & Shaw, 1998). Mexican PTD is unique in the critical, multifaceted role the state has exercised through the strong arm of the FONATUR chameleon. Without having taken a conscious, statist, approach to tourism industry development, it is highly unlikely that Mexico would have become the global tourism power it is today.

The Quintana Roo Case Study

The remainder of this paper presents a case study of PTD in Quintana Roo, specifically the establishment of the Cancun TIC and its role in fostering regional development in the state. We argue that, while Cancun has been successful at generating profit for the Government, transnational corporations and entrepreneurial elites, it has failed to achieve significant backward linkages while also failing to improve, appreciably, the condition of the region's impoverished rural population. Indeed, not only has PTD failed to stimulate balanced regional development, it has served to reinforce existing relations of domination and subordination while also producing new patterns of uneven development and inequity within Quintana Roo.

The Cancun TIC as an engine for developing the 'empty quarter'

Until the late 1960s, Quintana Roo was considered one of the most remote, underdeveloped, 'savage' and isolated corners of Mexico. It was a space of exile, imprisonment, isolation and refuge for the rebellious or contumacious. Quintana Roo was a 'double periphery' (Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997) or a 'periphery-of-the-periphery' (Torres, 1997). Cancun, a desolate barrier island on the north-east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, was the 'empty quarter' (Torres, 1997) of Quintana Roo, with a settlement of only 117 inhabitants in nearby Puerto Juarez and three or four fishermen on the island itself (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Martí, 1985). Productive activities focused on subsistence farming and small coconut *ranchos* (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Gamboa Alonzo, 1969; Vallejo Camargo, 1982), in addition to fishing. The physical and social construction of Cancun, the Tourist Integral Centre, involved a radical transformation of this 'empty quarter' from the rural production space of a few Mayan peasants to the consumption space of millions of foreign tourists. Torres (1997) contends that this transformation of Quintana Roo from tropical forest enclave into a 'post-industrial tourist place' reinserted the region into a new peripheral function in the global capitalist order. This was recognised by the granting of statehood to Quintana Roo in 1974.

Tourism was not entirely new to the Yucatan region at the time of Cancun's inception as a resort. The most important tourism centre on the peninsula was the colonial city of Merida, with an estimated 575 rooms, 70,000 international visitors, and a similar number of domestic tourists in 1970 (Enríquez Savignac, 1972; FONATUR, 1971). The 'cradle' of Quintana Roo tourism was the tropical Island of Cozumel which began attracting adventurous tourists seeking exotic locations in the early 20th century (Arnaiz, 1992; Dachary & Arnaiz, 1985; Martí, 1985). By

1970, Cozumel had 307 rooms and was attracting approximately 36,300 foreign tourists and 24,200 national tourists to its tropical reef, Mayan ruins and world-renowned sail fishing tournaments. Isla Mujeres, a small, sleepy island near Cancun and site of a minor Mexican naval air base, had its own nascent tourism industry dating back to the early 1950s (Arnaiz, 1992). By 1970 Isla Mujeres, with 139 rooms, was attracting a total of 8100 foreign and 18,800 domestic tourists each year. The growth of tourism was limited in all of these locales due primarily to a lack of modern infrastructure, room capacity, promotion, communications and transportation. Only the most adventurous, 'alternative' travellers would venture to these remote destinations.

As the first Tourist Integral Centre, Cancun served as a cornerstone for the new PTD programme – an important component of Mexico's new externally oriented national economic development strategy. Despite the key role of Cancun and PTD in reorienting the Mexican economic development strategy to generate more foreign exchange, early discourse on the Cancun project emphasised tourism as a mechanism for promoting 'regional development' to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the local inhabitants (Enríquez Savignac, 1972; FONATUR, 1971; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1989; Lee, 1978; SECTUR, 1996; Torres, 1997). Undoubtedly this regional development focus was in part an effort to meet the criteria of the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) which provided approximately half of the phase I public capital necessary to construct Cancun (Enríquez Savignac, 1972). Torres contends the IDB was never interested in promoting 'moneymaking machines for tourism' and required a commitment on the part of the Mexican Government that Cancun would stimulate regional development to improve socioeconomic conditions for Quintana Roo residents (Torres, 1994, 1997). Others suggest that the Mexican Government viewed tourism as a mechanism for correcting the glaring regional inequalities in wealth and income (Haydt, 1994; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999) that had been prominently highlighted during the social movements of the 1960s. The discourse of regional development and social justice would become even more pronounced in later Mexican Government tourism development plans published in the 1980s and 1990s (Casado, 1997; SECTUR, 1996).

Promotion of regional development has consistently been stated as an important objective – along with the usual goals of generating employment, increasing foreign exchange reserves and improving profit margins – by various national tourism development plans that have featured Cancun (Casado, 1997; Enríquez Savignac, 1972; FONATUR, 1971; SECTUR, 1996). Planners in their public discourse and rhetoric suggested that the Tourist Integral Centres 'will be converted into authentic regional development growth poles' (FONATUR, 1980).

Despite the fact that regional development has been articulated as a principal objective in all Mexican tourism development plans, the question remains, did the Cancun TIC achieve regional development for Quintana Roo's local inhabitants? There are numerous indicators that point to Cancun's economic success. It is the most dynamic of the Tourist Integral Centres, attracting 80% of all the foreign exchange generated by Tourist Integral Centres (Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999; Torres, 1997) and one-third of Mexico's total income from tourism (Cothran & Cothran, 1998). Tourism accounts for between 75% and 80% of the gross domes-

tic product (GDP) of the state of Quintana Roo (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Castro Sariñana, 1995; Cothran & Cothran, 1998). Sixty-five percent of the economically active population in Quintana Roo works in the tertiary tourism service sector. Tourism is 'king' in Quintana Roo (Torres, 1997).

The close, cooperative collaboration between public and private sector institutions and individuals, of both domestic and international origin, as prescribed by the Cancun Master Integral Plan, proved to be a very powerful formula for economic growth in Quintana Roo. Cancun clearly exceeded all original economic expectations and through that success it provided the PTD blueprint for four subsequent Tourist Integral Centres – Ixtapa, Los Cabos, Loreto and Huatulco. Cancun is also notable because Mexican capital has played an important role in developing the resort. According to Clancy (2001: 13), 'the industry has not been "captured" by transnational corporations (TNCs), as many critics of Third World tourism would contend'. While there is significant foreign involvement both through direct equity and franchise agreements – Mexican ownership is predominant (Torres & Momsen, 2005). Favourable macroeconomic indicators, however, do not necessarily translate into regional development or improved quality of life for local inhabitants. Several authors point to the failure of tourism development in Cancun to create backward linkages to other economic sectors, particularly agriculture and industry (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Castro Sariñana, 1995; Dachary & Arnaiz, 1985; Daltabuit & Pi-Sunyer, 1990; Green, 1987; Torres, 1997, 2000b). Indeed, in the case of agriculture, tourism development arguably contributed to the sector's stagnation. The proportion of Quintana Roo's economically active population in farming dropped from 53% in 1970, prior to the establishment of the resort, to less than half that in 1990 (19.3%) and then declined by half again over the next decade to only 10% in 2000 (Table 1) (INEGI, 1970, 1990, 2000). The decline in the proportion of people working in agriculture reflects a nationwide trend throughout Mexico (dropping from 22% in 1990 to 15.8% in 2000); however, it has been more pronounced in Quintana Roo. Longitudinal agricultural production data for Quintana Roo also reveal stagnation of production over time for most crops (CIAG, 1999) despite a tenfold increase in the state's population between 1970 and 2000 (INEGI, 2003). Only 4% of the fruits and vegetables consumed by Cancun hotels are supplied by Quintana Roo producers (Torres, 2003) despite these being products for which the region's smallholders could have a competitive advantage. While agricultural conditions are challenging throughout the peninsula, geographic proximity, family labour advantages and tropical climate potentially provide Quintana Roo's smallholders with a competitive edge in producing high-end, vine-ripened, labour intensive specialty fruits and vegetables. In addition, several experiences in the region with 'rustic greenhouses' and other alternative technologies have shown that many of the environmental constraints to production can be overcome in a fashion that is both economical and locally appropriate (Torres, 2000). Nevertheless, linkages between the region's tourism industry and local agriculture remain very weak. Most fresh produce is acquired through specialised food suppliers who truck in products from Mexico City's *Central de Abastos* wholesale market which collects products from across Mexico, and to a lesser extent foreign imports. Neighbouring Yucatan State, with arguably worse growing conditions than Quintana Roo, however, now supplies 20% of fruits and

23% of vegetables (by volume) to Cancun's hotels (Torres, 2003; Torres & Momsen, 2004).

The Mexican state's reflex assumption that the 'trickle down' effect of tourism industry profits would benefit other sectors of the local economy and generate benefits for local people (Torres, 1997; Wall, 1997), has proved to be incorrect. While Cancun has created many regional jobs, the best go to expatriates and immigrants from other Mexican states. Local Mayan villagers invariably occupy the lowest rungs of the system, enjoy less job security and receive the lowest pay among all contemporary Quintana Roo inhabitants. Superficially, this can be attributed to the low level of human capital of Quintana Roo's Maya. With experience limited to agriculture, they were not adequately prepared to compete for tourism industry jobs other than those in construction, low-end food service, janitorial and maid service and domestic work. Additionally, failure to create explicit tourism linkages with other sectors of the economy such as agriculture and industry, has led to a process of rural flight and uneven regional development in Quintana Roo. Virtually all of Quintana Roo's wealth is now concentrated in the urban tourist poles, while rural areas remain marginalised and impoverished (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Castro Sariñana, 1995; Dachary, 1991; Ken, 2000; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997; Torres, 1997). Quintana Roo's nearly total dependence upon the tourism sector (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Castro Sariñana, 1995; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1989) leaves it highly vulnerable to shifts in global tourism trends – the downside to the region's reinsertion into 'capitalist space' (Torres, 1997) as a periphery serving core-nation consumers. In particular, Cancun is especially vulnerable to shifts in American consumer tastes because of the dominance of US tourists in its market. Of Cancun's 3 million visitors in 2000, 58% were American followed by Mexicans (26%) and Europeans (9%) (Asociación de Hoteles de Quintana Roo, 2003) with an annual average of 67% in 2002 (CTO, 2004).

It is often considered that the most detrimental impact of tourism in the region has been the rural migration that has occurred in response to the concentration of wealth and employment in urban resorts. The tourist poles have served as a magnet for rural populations in search of improved income-earning opportunities (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Bosselman, 1978; Cardin, 1995; Haydt de Almeida, 1994; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1989; Sàlvà, 1995). This has led to uncontrolled growth of urban squatter settlements on the periphery of Cancun, Puerto Juarez and Playa del Carmen and other tourism centres. The Quintana Roo Government has been unable to keep up with the growing demand for basic services and infrastructure in these settlements, where migrants live in increasingly squalid conditions. Many Quintana Roo rural Maya are under no illusions and recognise that living conditions in their villages are preferable to those in the urban shanties They choose, therefore, to migrate back and forth rather than settle permanently in the tourist poles (Momsen, 1999). Many immigrants, however, do not have this option because of the distance and costs associated with travelling back and forth between their home place and the city. In the cities, the health consequences of inadequate water, sewerage and wastewater treatment systems have wide impact. Many shanty dwellers find it difficult to maintain reasonable standards of personal hygiene. This poses special problems for the tourism industry which must adhere to the highest

sanitation and hygiene standards. 'Almost all' food-service workers in a major high class Cancun hotel who were known to live in shanty towns were found, in one internal survey conducted by the hotel, to be carrying an active, communicable enteric infection (Torres, 2000).

The rural-to-urban exodus of poor Quintana Roo farm families has also had profound negative impacts on regional agriculture and rural communities. With the loss of youth and male labour, agriculture has experienced a significant decline (Kandelaars, 2000). Competition for labour from the tourist sector has resulted in a labour deficit in the agrarian sector, driving up the cost of labour to the point where commercial farming, in particular, is not profitable. While the average low-skilled labourer living permanently in Cancun can earn over twice as much as an agricultural worker with similar skill levels (Torres, 2000), the relative income advantage is tempered by the high cost of living in Cancun. Nevertheless, people living in rural areas are often worse off because they too are now affected by Cancun's high prices. Lacking Cancun's relatively higher paying jobs, this has served to further exacerbate regional inequalities in wealth between the rural and urban populations. Given that most of Quintana Roo's rural inhabitants are still Mayan Indians, this has also widened the income gap between Mayas, Mestizos and those of Hispanic descent. While PTD has generated numerous low-end seasonal employment opportunities, increasing linkages to the resorts have also created social hardships for the rural, predominantly Mayan communities of Quintana Roo. These include: changing social values (Lee, 1978), changing consumption patterns (Campos Cámara, 2002; Daltabuit & Pi-Sunyer, 1990; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997), an increased proportion of single mothers (Torres, 2000) and loss of local Mayan language and cultural practices (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Daltabuit & Pi-Sunyer, 1990; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997). Other social problems directly related to tourism development in Cancun include increased prostitution and drug addiction (Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Federation of Quintana Roo, nd) which circular migration takes back to the villages.

Apart from the negative social and cultural impacts of tourism mentioned above, tourism has also produced severe negative impacts on Quintana Roo's physical landscapes (Arnaiz, 1992; Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Bosselman, 1978). The most notable case involves the eutrophication of the Nichupté and Bojórquez lagoon systems around which the tourist resort and city of Cancun were constructed (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Bosselman, 1978; Dachary & Arnaiz, 1985; Kandelaars, 2000; Merino *et al.*, 1990; Merino *et al.*, 1993; Reyes & Merino, 1991). In particular, Cancun's inadequate wastewater treatment capacity, largely a function of the city's inability to keep up with exploding urbanisation, is perhaps the most important environmental problem threatening its most precious tourism asset – the coastal environment. While water services have improved dramatically over the last decade, many of Cancun homes and businesses (outside the hotel zone) remain unserved by wastewater collection. Wastewater that is collected goes untreated in one location (Chichen Itza treatment plant) and receives only low grade treatment in another (Cancun 2000 treatment plant) (Skillicorn, 1997). Eventually, this untreated and poorly treated discharge finds its way into local recreational waters – destroying the lagoon system and compromising coastal waters in the protected lee of Isla Mujeres

(Bosselman, 1978; Haydt de Almeida, 1994; Skillicorn, 1997). The lagoons also suffer from environmental damage due to constriction of the natural flushing action resulting from ill-advised filling of lagoon channels to permit further construction of hotels. Other tourism-related environmental problems include land, water and air pollution, destruction of the coral reefs, commercial over-fishing, over extraction of fresh water, beach degradation, elimination of wildlife, deforestation and destruction of natural habitats (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Daltabuit & Pi-Sunyer, 1990).

Tourism development has clearly provided Quintana Roo's original inhabitants with tangible benefits as they have gained access to the cash economy provided by tourism. Indeed, remittances from family members working in the tourist poles play an important role in rural household livelihood strategies throughout Quintana Roo. Most Quintana Roo rural immigrants, nevertheless, have been limited to takings from the 'bottom of the barrel' – low-end, temporary, subsistence employment and infrastructure concentrated almost exclusively in the urban tourism poles. Immigrants from other Mexican states with higher education levels occupy most of the better-paying jobs. Rural inhabitants have arguably benefited from tourism-related infrastructure projects such as improved highways, as well as water and electrification projects that are part of the nation-wide rural development initiatives. While there have clearly been benefits associated with tourism development in the region, the reality is that PTD has failed to achieve significant improvements in the quality of life of Quintana Roo's most marginalised indigenous rural inhabitants. In a presentation focusing on 'Tourism Development and the Worker in Quintana Roo' the *Federación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos del Estado de Quintana Roo* (Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Federation of Quintana Roo, nd: 3) summarises this point:

> The Cancun project has achieved part of its objectives with respect to the diversification of tourist centres in the country, as well as generating foreign exchange by establishing an astounding rate of tourism development. However, it has not achieved the regional development objective, nor has it improved the living conditions of workers in the region with respect to salaries, housing, nutrition, recreation, transportation and technical training.

Quintana Roo: A landscape of uneven development

Neil Smith (1984: 131), in his seminal work, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, presents a Marxist geography of capitalism which puts forth a theory of uneven development based on the 'dialectic of geographical differentiation and equalization.' In its most common use, the term uneven development refers to the uneven rates of growth between different sectors of the economy. Smith, however, extends the notion through a more geographical perspective which emphasises the spatial dimensions of capitalist development. Smith (1984: 155) contends: 'Uneven development is social inequality blazoned into the geographical landscape, and it is simultaneously the exploitation of that unevenness for certain socially determined ends.' According to Smith, uneven development is both the product and the geographical source

of capitalist development. Mowforth and Munt (1998) suggest that tourism development and the distribution of its benefits is intrinsically uneven and unequal in nature. While the *encomienda*, debt peonage and the hacienda – all mechanisms to extract Mayan land and labour during the colonial period – have long disappeared, tourism serves to reinforce this historical legacy of unequal relations of domination and subordination between rural Mayan farmers and Hispanic-descent urban elites. Tourism also reproduces new social, political and economic hierarchies which are manifest in spatial patterns of uneven development in Quintana Roo and may be seen as a form of neocolonialism. These hierarchies are manifest in inequitable socioeconomic spatial regimes that have evolved in the state (detailed below).

Scholars point out that Quintana Roo was, until recently, a marginalised backwater, a periphery of the core Mexican nation state, which in turn is highly dependent upon the core capitalist countries such as its powerful neighbour to the north (Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997; Torres, 1997). Within the Quintana Roo periphery, there is an internal structure of dependency wherein rural indigenous people are subordinated to foreigners and Mexican elites. Tourism has served to reinforce and perpetuate these relationships of inequality and subordination by channelling capital and labour from the rural to urban centres. Pi-Sunyer and Thomas (1997: 195) contend: 'the realities of luxury tourism in Quintana Roo can be summed up as a system in which the poor subsidise the rich' through what they term an 'ethnic division of labour'. The tourism industry was built on the backs of local Mayan peasants who continue to sustain it through their cheap labour. Pi-Sunyer and Thomas argue that tourism development in Quintana Roo has failed to narrow the gap between the rich and poor through regional development as planners had hoped. In fact, the tourist enclave pattern of development has exacerbated inequalities and created new disparities in wealth and through the tourist 'demonstration effect' made these disparities more strongly felt.

These marked socioeconomic spatial regimes have created striking divisions and hierarchies within both physical and social space. Many Quintana Roo Research Centre (CIQROO) and state development projects divide the state municipalities into the Tourist Zone (the core), the *Zona Maya* (the periphery) and the Southern Zone (see Figure 1). The Northern Tourist Zone consists of the urban tourist areas along the Cancun-Tulum coastal corridor, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel. This zone includes four municipalities: Isla Mujeres, Benito Juarez, Cozumel and the recently formed Solidaridad. The *Zona Maya*, which is primarily rural and contains the majority of Quintana Roo's Mayan population and villages, extends over three municipalities – Lazaro Cardenas, Felipe Carillo Puerto and Jose Maria Morelos. The Southern Zone consists of a single municipality, Othón Blanco, which includes the state capital (Chetumal) and borders Belize.

Comparison of infrastructure, employment, revenues, and socioeconomic statistics between these three regions reveals stark disparities (see Table 1). There is a high concentration of capital, wealth, investment, infrastructure and services in the Northern Tourist Zone. The *Zona Maya*, with the highest concentration of indigenous inhabitants, is extremely impoverished and marginalised. Indeed, it is possible to conceive of the *Zona Maya* as a 'triple periphery', given its subordi-

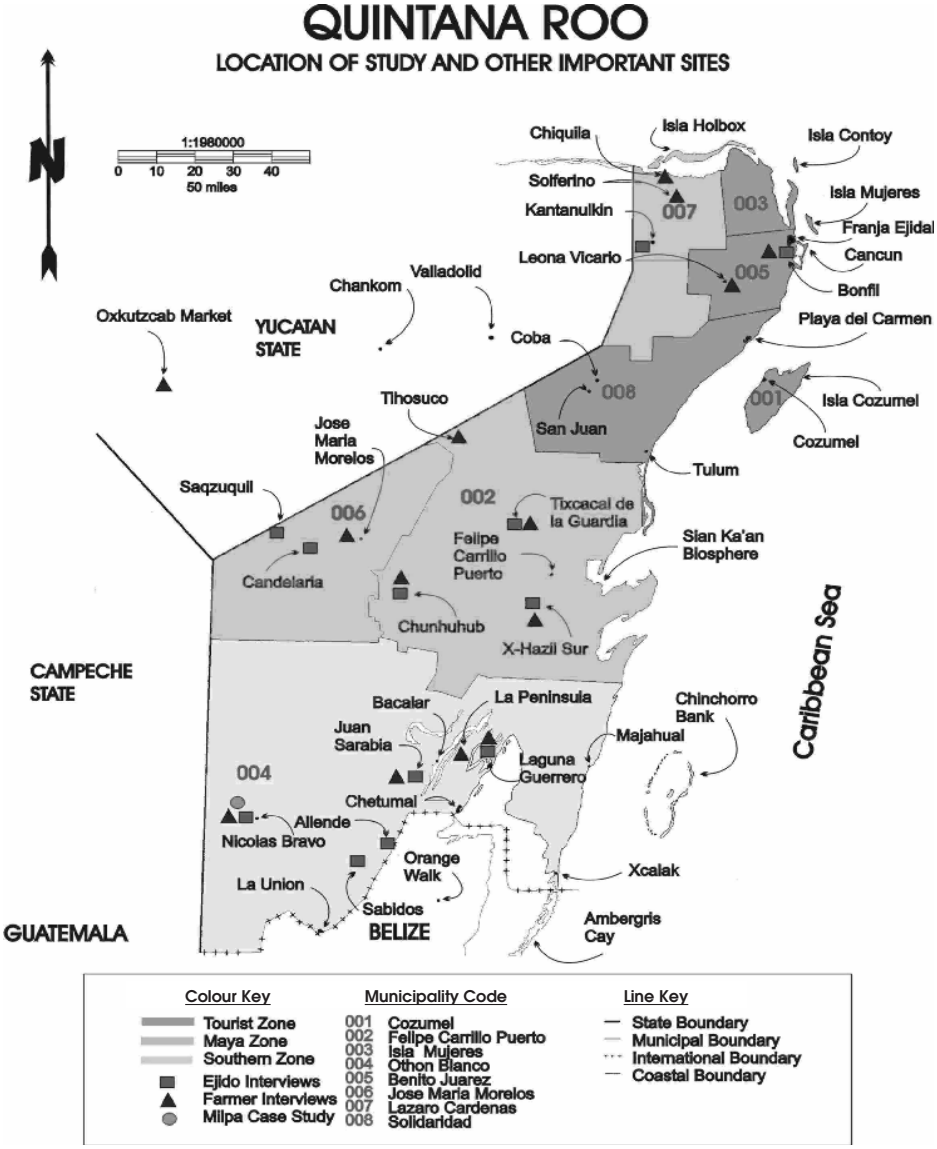

Figure 1 Quintana Roo socio-economic spatial regimes
Source: Base map taken from INEGI (1994b); Chloropleth adaptations developed by author

nate position within Quintana Roo – the 'double-periphery'. People living in the *Zona Maya* benefit the least from tourism development (Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Dachary, 1992; Hiernaux-Nicolás, 1999; Torres, 1994, 1997, 2000), although many of the zone's youngest inhabitants have been drawn away by the lure of higher paying jobs in the tourist poles. The Southern Zone lies somewhere between the two extremes of the Tourist Zone and the *Zona Maya*. Presence of the state capital, and the zone's better soils, higher rainfall, and strategic geographical location on

Table 1 Socioeconomic indicators in major zones of Quintana Roo (2000)

Socioeconomic Indicators	*Tourist Zone*	*Zona Maya*	*Southern Zone*	*State Average*
% indigenous language speakers (mono & bilingual)*	17.1%	70.0%	13.7%	22.9%
% economically active population (in agriculture)*	1.8%	51.6%	19.5%	10.3%
% inactive population*	37.5%	53.8%	48.7%	42.1%
% illiterate population*	3.6%	12.7%	6.8%	5.5%
% with education above primary school*	49.5%	26.9%	41.9%	44.8%
% housing with private toilets*	88.3%	53.3%	88.1%	84.5%
% housing with sewerage*	93.4%	32.4%	74.0%	82.4%
% of total state economic units by zone**	70.4%	6.7%	22.9%	
% of total wages in state paid by zone **	90.0%	1.0%	9.0%	
% of state gross product generated**	88.3%	1.0%	10.7%	

* *XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2000*INEGI
**XII *Censo Económico 1999*, INEGI

an international border have served to attract more resources. These spatial regimes are not rigid. There is a continual flow of people, goods, and services across space. In particular, the influx of rural peasant immigrants from the periphery is reshaping the tourist poles. Immigrants settle and exert pressure on local government through political movements to provide services, infrastructure, and housing subsidies. The continued, narrow, focus on mass tourism, with little diversification, has served to exacerbate these regional disparities between the zones. Rather than stimulating regional development, as stated in the original Cancun development plans, tourism development in Cancun has deepened regional inequalities and impressed a pattern of uneven, asymmetrical development upon the Quintana Roo landscape. From a national perspective, macroeconomic indicators suggest that overall the state of Quintana Roo is considerably wealthier than it was before tourism. This hides the reality of the marked PTD-induced inequities within the state. Dachary (1992: 14) contends: 'This regional asymmetry represents a polarised development which runs counter to integrated development, which was originally attempted.' Torres (1994) comments that the asymmetrical and unequal development in the region can be attributed to the lack of integrated economic development planning at the regional level. He points out that the original Cancun project only contemplated tourism development in the northern part of the state – particularly Cancun, Cozumel and to a lesser degree Isla Mujeres.

The Northern Tourist Zone, which contains the urban mass tourism centres, is the wealthiest and has the best infrastructure. It generates more than 88% of Quintana Roo's gross domestic product and contains the vast majority of the state's population.[4] Seventy per cent of all economic units[5] are located in this zone and 90% of all wages paid are in this zone (INEGI, 1999, 2000b). Clearly this is the region that benefits most from the tourism industry. Only 17% of the population in this region speak an indigenous language (mostly Maya speakers). Most inhabitants are of Hispanic and mestizo origin, arriving as immigrants from

other parts of the country. Despite its impoverished urban shanty towns, the Tourist Zone has significantly better socioeconomic and infrastructure indicators than do the other two zones (see Table 1). Illiteracy, for example, is less than 4%, with nearly half of all inhabitants in the tourist zone having studied past primary school. Eighty-eight per cent of all homes have some type of private toilet and 93% have sewerage (INEGI, 2000b).

The Southern Zone and *Zona Maya* are the less developed areas of Quintana Roo. The Southern Zone dominated by the state capital, Chetumal, has an economy dedicated to supporting the state bureaucracy and trade with neighbouring Belize – which includes one of the most geographically concentrated drug flows in the world. Socioeconomic figures for this region are somewhere between those of the core Tourist Zone and the peripheral *Zona Maya*. While less agricultural in nature than the *Zona Maya* (20% of the economically active population in agriculture in contrast to 52% in the *Zona Maya*), this region contains most of the limited commercial agriculture in Quintana Roo as well as the area's only industrial agricultural production – sugar to supply a mill located in the town of Alvaro Obregón. As with the Tourist Zone, the region's population comprises a mix of immigrants from other Mexican states, with some local Mayan inhabitants. Only 14% of its population speak an indigenous language, indicating an even lower proportion of Mayan inhabitants than live in the Tourist Zone.

The *Zona Maya* is the most marginalised and impoverished region in Quintana Roo, with over 75% of its inhabitants speaking Maya. The Mayas of this peripheral region are the 'poorest of the poor' (Torres, 1997), constituting the underclass in Quintana Roo. All socioeconomic indicators are lower in this region (Dachary, 1992). For example, adults with education above primary school account for only 27% of the local population, in contrast to 42% in the Southern Zone and 50% in the Northern Tourist Zone. Illiteracy, at 13%, is highest in the *Zona Maya*. Infrastructure is severely lacking in contrast to the north. There is only one hotel in Felipe Carillo Puerto, and it does not qualify to receive a single star.

Since the neoliberal economic reforms of the late 1980s initiated under President Carlos Salinas, differences between the regions have been exacerbated. With the majority of agrarian credit and subsidies to smallholders having been cut, agriculture, occupying 52% of the economically active population in the *Zona Maya*, is severely undercapitalised. Agriculture in this region is predominately subsistence, *milpa* shifting cultivation which yields an average of only half a tonne of corn per hectare in the state of Quintana Roo (Centro de Investigaciones Agrícolas de la Peninsula de Yucatán interview, 1997). For many families, this yield is hardly worth the effort and barely meets their household consumption needs. Many farmers plant only in order to retain their claim to *ejido* land. In some, more conservative Mayan communities within the *Zona Maya*, *milpa* remains an important part of communal culture and provides an essential link to traditions of the ancestors (Momsen, 1999).

The absence of business in the *Zona Maya* is striking. Only 7% of Quintana Roo's economic units are located in this region. Of all the wages paid, only 1% were generated in the *Zona Maya* (INEGI, 1999). The region accounts for a mere 1% of the state's gross domestic product. The fact that until recently the four municipalities in the *Zona Maya* did not contain a single functioning commercial

bank is a strong indicator of the lack of economic development and marginalisation of this region. The region is highly dependent on temporary migrant remittances from the Tourist Zone to generate cash. There is a continuous stream of residents moving back and forth between their villages and the tourist zone. The Tourist Zone has drawn labour resources away from this region to generate wealth in the core, but some of this wealth returns and is spent on housing and consumer goods in the villages.

The *Zona Maya* is largely self-defined as an ethnic space by the Maya themselves through their strong sense of identity. Felipe Carrillo Puerto was the centre of Maya resistance in the Yucatan Peninsula. Guided by the cult of the talking cross during the 19th century caste war, this region served as a forest refuge for the rebellious *Cruzob* Maya in their struggle against oppression by the Mexican elites and Creole *hacendados*. In many respects, the *Zona Maya* has remained an autonomous Mayan space, never fully 'pacified' by the Mexican Government, and with little outside contact until the development of the *chicle* trade in the 20th century. Oddly, the chewing gum consumption habits of the United States served as the vehicle for penetration into the region. Years after the demand for natural *chicle* had declined, it would be the leisure patterns of the US which would once again open the region, in the most dramatic way imaginable.

The Tourist Zone has drawn away the most productive resources from the *Zona Maya* by attracting much of its youth to work in the resorts. Given the lack of economic opportunities in Mayan villages, many households make the rational decision to send one or more members to tourist zones to remit back earnings. Not only does this increase household standards of living, it also serves as an income diversification and risk mitigation strategy. The cumulative impact, however, has resulted in many communities having lost nearly all their young people – males in particular – to the Tourist Zone. This is debilitating, not only from a labour point of view, but also with respect to cultural norms and values. Once in the city, there is pressure to replace elements of Mayan culture with those of the mainstream. Loss of Mayan language, dress, consumption habits, religious beliefs, customs, and oral histories, among other practices, have been noted by scholars (Arnaiz, 1992; Arnaiz & Dachary, 1992; Daltabuit & Pi-Sunyer, 1990; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 1997). Once in the tourist poles, impressionable Mayan youth look to foreign tourists and Mexican elites to reinvent their identities. In some cases the new values, practices and consumption patterns are brought back to the Mayan towns and villages replacing 'traditional' lifestyles, but in other cases villagers resist the degradation of their culture and may even commodify part for tourist consumption (Momsen, 1999). Some village leaders have actively discouraged out-migration, while promoting Maya language and cultural practices, and alternative rural livelihoods (Torres, 2000). Nevertheless, these represent the minority of villages that have strong internal leadership, often linked to ethnic Maya identity, and have consciously chosen to minimise the flows of out-migration. Given the lack of backward linkages, these villages have remained extremely marginalised and impoverished, with few visible benefits from the millions of tourists who visit the state each year.

Leaders of the Mayan community are aware of the threat from the outside. They know that tourism development poses a serious challenge to their future as an ethnic group. The mural prominently displayed on a Municipal Centre wall in

Figure 2 Mural in *Zona Maya* municipality, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo State, Mexico

Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the capital of the *Zona Maya*, presents telling imagery and words (see Figure 2). The painting depicts a Mayan man growing from a stalk of corn holding aloft a dove in one hand and a Mayan scroll in the other. In the back-

ground are green, symmetrically arrayed agricultural fields, Mayan gods and a pyramid. Below the writing is a Mayan holy book. A banner flying atop the painting reads: 'The *Zona Maya* is not an ethnographic museum: we are a community moving forward.' The banner sends a not-so-subtle message to the droves of anthropologists and academics who have come to study Mayan civilisation over the past century. Scripts flowing from Mayan books below the corn-man figure read:

> In recent years, as indigenous people, we confront a force more threatening than ever:
> NEOLIBERALISM
> This barely hides their desire to eliminate us through politics which undermine our socioeconomic sustenance, territory, organisation, internal unity and ways of life. For neoliberal plans progressive communities are an impediment. We will not lose this war, here in this land, because this land will be reborn.

These words, warning of the threat neoliberalism poses to indigenous communities, are reminiscent of the rhetoric of the Zapatistas in Chiapas. They also stir memories of the caste wars of 1847 and Mayan prophesies, with the reference to war and rebirth. While the Caste War occurred over 130 years ago, its legacy remains strong in the *Zona Maya*. More conservative Mayan communities maintain a military structure dating back to the Caste War, with the purpose of guarding the sacred talking crosses. Unlike Chiapas, the *Zona Maya* of Quintana Roo has been relatively free of social unrest in recent years – most likely because of the pressure release provided by tourism-related employment of Mayan labourers. Nevertheless, these are clearly the words of a community that feels threatened by the encroaching forces of the global capitalist system. Tourism development is the strongest manifestation of these global forces in the region. On the other hand, development of the *Ruta Maya* as a tourist attraction may serve to protect Mayan culture.

The Quintana Roo landscape is deeply divided by unequal and uneven development. Tourism has served to create new inequalities and perpetuate existing disparities between urban Mexican elites and Mayan peasants. The core Tourist Zone draws land and labour resources from the *Zona Maya* periphery and the Southern Zone semi-periphery. The *Zona Maya* has been reduced to the role of supplying the workforce for the Tourist Zone, rather than providing agricultural products to meet tourist demand – its greatest potential benefit (Dachary, 1992; Torres, 2000). The peripheral *Zona Maya* and Southern Zone depend upon the Tourist Zone for survival, but the bulk of tourism industry benefits either remain in the Tourist Zone or are exported to other Mexican states and abroad.

Conclusions

The Cancun project represents a 'growth pole' approach to regional development, based on the notion that by establishing a tourism-based growth pole (such as Cancun) economic gains would trickle down to other sectors of the economy and surrounding areas. With respect to growth pole theory, Castro Sariñana (1995: 39) states: 'This is the idea underlying the creation of Cancun.'

Tourism was viewed as a mechanism to 'spur' backward linkages to other sectors such as agriculture, industry and handicrafts. This model of development rested on the passive, 'trickle down' assumption that tourism would automatically stimulate these other sectors (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Wall (1997) points to Cancun as a classic example of a state-driven modernisation approach to tourism development where it was assumed the Cancun growth pole would create backward linkages with other sectors to develop the marginalised Quintana Roo region. Reflecting on the numerous problems associated with the Cancun growth pole, including explosive urban development, lack of public services, low agricultural productivity and environmental degradation, Campos Cámara (2001) concludes that Cancun has been converted from a growth pole to a *polo de subdesarrollo* (underdevelopment pole). She argues that Cancun has generated imbalances and internal contradictions in the region. There is little evidence that, in the Cancun instance, coordinated plans existed, or that linked financial resources were allocated to non-tourism sectors in an effort to tie them in with PTD. As in other regions of the world, the 'growth pole' approach to development has resulted in patterns of uneven and unequal economic development. 'Top-down', statist PTD has been successful in promoting economic growth in Quintana Roo and it has been immensely profitable for domestic and international investors, as well as the Mexican Government. PTD has failed, however, to create backward linkages to other economic sectors such as agriculture and industry in Quintana Roo which could have resulted in more balanced regional development and more equitable distribution of tourism industry benefits.

PTD in Quintana Roo has not only failed to stimulate other economic sectors, it has served to perpetuate and exacerbate regional inequalities and patterns of uneven development between rural agricultural and urban tourist spaces. These processes of uneven and unequal development subordinate agriculture to tourism and construct layers of inequality manifest in marked socioeconomic spatial regimes across the Quintana Roo landscape. The result has been a form of unbalanced and asymmetric 'dependent' development, with urban tourist resorts representing the 'core' which exploits and feeds upon the rural periphery. While PTD has proved to be a highly profitable model of tourism development for transnational corporations, entrepreneurial elites and national governments, it does not necessarily translate into regional development, nor does it guarantee poverty alleviation for marginalised people. With the Cancun PTD model being replicated along the southern Quintana Roo coast and throughout Mexico and Asia, Cancun, the original and most extreme form of PTD in existence, holds important lessons for other resorts pursuing a passive, trickle-down strategy of regional development.

PTD could prove to be more effective at promoting more equitable socioeconomic regional development, and even contribute to poverty alleviation if 'pro-poor' tourism strategies were integrated into the original master plan (Torres & Momsen, 2004). Aid agencies and development think tanks are now advocating new 'pro-poor' tourism strategies that seek to maximise tourism industry benefits to the poor while also reducing negative impacts (Ashley *et al.*, 2000, 2001; DFID 1999a, 1999b; Roe & Urquhart Khanya, 2001). Proponents of pro-poor tourism contend that pro-poor business practices are beneficial to tourism industry entrepreneurs, while also fostering political stability, mainte-

nance of a happy and productive workforce and good host/guest/community relations. They argue that pro-poor business practices are also inherently attractive to the new breed of socially conscious 'responsible tourists' (Roe *et al.*, 2002). While small-scale, niche market and alternative tourism models clearly lend themselves to pro-poor approaches, advocates argue that pro-poor should not be excluded from larger scale mass tourism (Ashley *et al.*, 2001). Pro-poor tourism strives to 'unlock opportunities for the poor at all levels and scales of operation' (Ashley *et al.*, 2001: 3). While requiring a complete paradigm shift on the part of tourism planners, government officials, entrepreneurs and transnational corporations, and strong investment in regional communities (beyond the tourist poles), pro-poor dimensions could be incorporated into master-planned resorts in a manner which enhances profitability and sustainability while also stimulating backward economic linkages and more equitable regional socioeconomic development. Pro-poor approaches to project design and planning can also help to mitigate some of the negative impacts of tourist growth pole development, such as accelerated migration, urban squalor and rural poverty. PTD projects represent a potential mechanism to achieve pro-poor tourism objectives within the context of mass tourism development.

Acknowledgements

Support for this research was provided by the National Science Foundation, the US-Mexico Fulbright Program, the University of California Jastro Shields and Humanities Awards and a UC MEXUS grant.

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Notes

1. Several scholars have drawn the analogy between mass tourism development and Fordist industrial mass production. Fordist mass tourism resorts are characterised by economies of scale, undifferentiated consumers, rigidity, standardisation, small numbers of producers and an emphasis on 'sun and sand' tourism (Ioannides & Debbage, 1998a; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Rojek, 1995; Shaw & Williams, 1994; Smeral, 1998; Torres, 2002; Urry, 1990, 1995; Vanhove, 1997; Williams & Shaw, 1998).
2. The 1968 Mexico City student riots were the most poignant manifestation of the political forces pushing for political, social and economic change.
3. The case of the tourism industry in Peru is, perhaps, a better example of a neoliberal approach to tourism development. With the nation's sweeping neoliberal reforms under President Fujimori in the 1990s the 'entrepreneurial' role of the state in tourism development was dramatically reduced in favour of the private sector (Desforges, 2000).
4. A reliable precise figure is not provided as reported figures vary widely. The continuous flow of rural peasants and immigrants from other states renders population estimates even more problematic. Often these more fluid populations are undercounted by the national and local population counts and censuses. Population statistics for Cancun alone vary widely. In the Government, infrastructure officials use the population of 1 million as a current working figure; however, reports demonstrate significant variation.
5. Economic units are industrial, commercial and service establishments; private enterprises; and public sector corporations (INEGI, 1994a).

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