

COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE MAYA WORLD

by

Cody Silveira, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
with a Major in Geography
May 2020

Committee Members:

Jennifer Devine, Chair

Colleen Myles

Sarah Blue

COPYRIGHT

by

Cody Silveira

2020

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Cody Silveira, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express gratitude to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Jennifer Devine, for her advice, guidance, contacts, and support throughout the past two years. Her work involving tourism development, indigenous land rights, and conservation within the developing world has served as both inspiration and motivation for me to unlock new doors of knowledge and embark on similar paths of study. I would also like to thank my committee members, Drs. Sarah Blue and Colleen Myles, for their suggestions, comments, and edits regarding my thesis and comprehensive exams as well as the classes I enrolled in under their instruction, which helped strengthen my scholastic background. Gratitude must also be given to the members of the Association of Forest Communities of the Petén (ACOFOP) and the Management and Conservation Organization of Uaxactún (OMYC) whose knowledge, time, and cooperation provided the foundations, answers, and insights for many of the questions I had and would soon develop while trekking across the sublime enigma that is Guatemala. Next, I would like to give a special thanks to my close friends: Mataya Wright, Kayla Weirich, John Tompkins, Emily Pulido, and Riley Hickerson for their unconventional support, interest, and feedback throughout my research process. Their knowledge, zeal, and devotion to self-reliance, conservation, and outdoor recreation helped inspire me during the less fruitful moments of this project, while their companionship and influence motivated me to become a more well-rounded scholar and steward of nature. Together, may we never lose our sense of awe and adventure in the wild places of our planet and may our undying love for the American West never be extinguished. Another token of appreciation must be given to Mrs. Allison Glass-Smith for her guidance and assistance throughout both the master's program application process and my formative graduate school years at Texas State University. I would not have been anywhere close to accomplishing my goals and aspirations had it not been for her. Admiration and gratitude must also be extended to Dr. Brian Cooper, whose tutelage, passion, and guidance both inside and outside the classroom has inspired me to pursue geography and teaching as an educational discipline and future career. These past two years as his graduate assistant have been both rewarding and enlightening, as he has allowed me to both lecture about my research and observe firsthand the skills, strategies, patience, and rapport necessary to become an effective and unforgettable professor. Finally, I would like to thank my family, in particular my mother and father, Mark and Michelle Silveira. Not only have they inculcated within me the tenants of knowledge is power and *carpe diem*, but through our fortunate circumstances and opportunities over the span of my life, they have also instilled within me an avid desire for international travel and that a life spent outdoors is a life well worth living.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ABSTRACT	x
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
Pre Columbian Era	4
Chicle: Bubble and Bust	6
From Bananas to Genocide.....	8
Conservation, the Petén, and the New Century.....	11
III. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
Defining Ecotourism in the Global South	17
Developing Ecotourism: Successes and Challenges	18
Ecotourism Strategies within Guatemala.....	22
IV. METHODS	25
Data Collection.....	26
Data Analysis	28
Limitations	29
V. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS.....	31
Past Tourism Development Approaches in Uaxactún	31
Current Marketing Strategies and (Potential) Tourism Products	38

Challenges and Barriers to Ecotourism in Uaxactún.....	52
VI. CONCLUSIONS.....	63
REFERENCES.....	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Classic Maya Temple, Site A, Uaxactún, Guatemala	6
2. Map Outlining Current Boundaries of the Maya Biosphere Reserve	13
3. Corn Doll Artisan Products	36
4. <i>Chicle</i> Demonstration	42
5. OMYC Guide Explaining <i>Xate</i> Production.....	42
6. Uaxactún's Preclassic Maya Observatory.....	49
7. Artifacts at the <i>Chicle</i> Worker's Museum	51

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
ACOFOP	Association of Forest Communities of the Petén
ANACAFE	Guatemala National Coffee Association
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COCODES	Community Councils of Urban and Rural Development
CONAP	National Council of Protected Areas
FARES	Foundation for Anthropological Research and Environmental Studies
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FYDEP	Petén Promotion and Development Association
INGUAT	Guatemala Tourism Institute
LIDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
MBR	Maya Biosphere Reserve
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
OMYC	Management and Conservation Organization of Uaxactún
REHMI	Recovery of Historical Memory Project

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

ABSTRACT

This thesis research seeks to evaluate a paradox of sorts interrelating the successes, challenges, and opportunities of community-based ecotourism development in Guatemala. In the village of Uaxactún, in the northern Petén department, tourism development has floundered despite the community's surrounding archaeology sites, forests, biodiversity, and unique cultural tourism experiences. To understand the reasons contributing to a lack of tourism initiative, awareness, and development, the products, marketing strategies, and structural dynamics hindering community and ecotourism growth within Uaxactún were assessed. Further completion of this research also encompassed four weeks of ethnographic based field methods such as semi-structured interviews, archival analysis, and participant observations. I argue that Uaxactún has immense potential to develop community and ecotourism as an economic supplement to agriculture and the harvesting of non-traditional forestry products (NTFPS). The community boasts the first excavated ruins in the Mayan World, an onsite museum with over 500 artifacts, and tours regarding the history and viability of community forest management. Despite these positive aspects, the community's tourism sector faces significant challenges. Community tourism remains hindered by a lack of promotion, adequate accommodations, and reliable and safe transportation. Furthermore, I argue that two of the most pressing challenges facing future tourism potential and development within Uaxactún are a lack of interest in and prioritization of community tourism by the Guatemalan government, and relatedly, large-scale traditional tourism in the Maya

Biosphere Reserve (MBR) that threatens to undermine forestry communities. Uaxactún's experience is not unique; rather, it illuminates the challenges and opportunities of community and ecotourism development across the Global South.

I. INTRODUCTION

Within the country of Guatemala in 2019, the tourism industry constituted 6.2% of the total GDP while accounting for 6.5% of total jobs in the country (WTTC 2020). Much of the nation's tourism has been primarily concentrated in the Sololá Department, which includes Lake Atitlán and the colonial city of Antigua, as well as the Maya archaeological and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site of Tikal in the northern Petén department. This steady increase in international tourists is, however, only a recent influx that increased following the end of the Guatemalan Civil War in 1996 (Lyon 2013, Argueta 2015, LaPan et al. 2016).

Located less than 15 miles from the World Heritage Mayan site of Tikal, which receives 200,000 tourists annually and contributes over \$USD 200 million to the national economy (GDT, 2010), the Maya archaeological site and contemporary village of Uaxactún remains largely outside of the tourist trail. Encompassing a rich history of wars and political alliances with Tikal and El Mirador, Uaxactún's archeology site was first excavated in 1916 and was the first Mayan archaeological site in the Maya Lowlands area to be uncovered. Totalling three separate sites that date back to 400 B.C. and surrounding the village today, Uaxactún is most commonly associated with its impressive astronomical observatory (Argueta 2015). Within the town itself a privately run *Chiclero* Workers Museum hosts a wealthy array of Preclassic and Early Classic Mayan artifacts that have been excavated in the surrounding area (Argueta 2015; Devine 2018), while local guides provide guided hikes to Uaxactún's archeology sites, as well as the surrounding rainforests which envelop more remote Mayan sites such as El Zotz, Rio

Azul, San Bartolo, Naachtún, and El Mirador (Argueta 2015). Isolated at the end of the Petén 3 road and overshadowed by the more publicized and accessible site of Tikal, tourism within Uaxactún struggles to attract steady visitors while greater incomes and infrastructure for the citizens that reside there remains unforeseeable.

Although viewed as a success story as a community forest concession that sustainably harvests forest products, the community's land rights are not guaranteed. Outside business interests, such as petroleum, palm oil, sugarcane, and cattle ranching, threaten sustainable development activities like forestry and eco-tourism in Uaxactún. Continued development of Uaxactún's tourism sector, would alleviate poverty for many village residents as well as provide more capital and resources to solidify the community's forest concession and land rights. To understand this tourism development paradox, this thesis evaluates the success and challenges of past development strategies while also identifying additional tourism and marketing products to help develop Uaxactún's tourism sector.

This research asks the following questions: What past tourism development approaches have been implemented in Uaxactún? What are the successes and benefits of these strategies? What are the community's current strategies and most marketable tourism products? Lastly, what factors are preventing or hindering growth within the archeology and community tourism sectors in Uaxactún? To answer these research questions, I conducted four weeks of field work encompassing short term ethnographic field methods in the Petén department of Guatemala. Additionally, one week prior to travelling to the Petén, I participated in five days of intensive Spanish language study for four hours a day at Escuela Mayab Spanish School in San Pedro La Laguna,

Guatemala. My improved language skills, provided more fluid conversations relating to my project and built trust with my interview subjects, which were fundamental to ensure the success of this project.

For countries within the developing world, ecotourism provides greater economic livelihoods, allows women to participate in the work force beyond traditional domestic roles, creates educational spaces to develop conservation initiatives, and strengthens relationships between local communities and visitors. Furthermore, ecotourism allows local communities to leverage political power to achieve and maintain land tenure rights and greater personal freedoms. The lack of funding, unequal distribution of economic benefits, conflicts over natural resources, the forced resettlement of indigenous populations, and the lack of recognition of ancestral land claims have limited the growth of grassroots, ecotourism ventures throughout the development world. Through research and observation of both past and current strategies of tourism development in the Maya Biosphere, this project evaluates the viability and hindrances to further tourism development within the community of Uaxactún. Through practical insights and evaluations gained from conducting field work in Uaxactún, the community serves as a case study that will provide a framework for other communities wishing to further develop their tourism sectors that face similar structural challenges.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pre-Columbian Era

For the people living in the Petén, Uaxactún was officially established in the Mayan Preclassic period around 500 B.C. and lasted until 889 A.D. according to the last inscribed monument at the site. Consisting of six different excavated ruins, the earliest Groups: D, E, F, and H were built around seasonal lakes known as *bajos* which became inundated with rain and mud during the summer months and infiltrated by thick, scrubby vegetation during the dry winter season. Groups A and B were constructed much later and transitioned the center of power to a series of high hills to the west that were connected by a series of roadways known as *sacbeobs* (Coe and Houston 2015, Sharer 2005). This shift in power came to be known as the Entrada period which commenced in the year 378 A.D. when Siyaj Kak (Smoking Frog) took over as the leader of the Teotihuacan army, a group originating further north in the Central Valley of Mexico. Siyaj Kak soon led a campaign of conquest and subjugation throughout the Petén region. First imposing control over Tikal, through the young ruler Yax Nuun Ayiin (Curl Snout), Siyaj Kak executed the royal family in Uaxactún and established full control of the city (Sharer 2005). From there, him and his successors facilitated massive building projects became the ceremonial and burial temples that are largely present at Groups A and B.

Consequently, numerous stelae and murals depicting ornately clad warriors, as well as women, were erected to boast of the invader's conquests. In the centuries following the Entrada, Mayan culture shifted as it adopted new aspects from their

conquerors such as green obsidian, the talud-tablero style of architecture, and the projectile spear throwing apparatus known as the *atlatl* (Coe and Houston 2015). Soon wars of conquest and human captives became commonplace as lavish new temples and burial practices for the royal family were complete with large ornamentally decorated vaults containing offerings of jade, pearls seashells, green stone mosaics, and multicolored codices to honor the revered and fallen rulers. Despite these new influences and a flourishing of conjoined cultures, Tikal became the seat of Mayan power due to its dominance, through tribute and force, over much of the trade routes and political relations of the Petén. Uaxactún became a tributary city to Tikal and was subsequently abandoned around 900 A.D. while the jungle eventually enveloped what little evidence existed as to how and why this city and so many others like it fell (Sharer 2005 Coe and Houston 2015). These temples, explicitly precise in symmetry, ritual, and location sober the onlooker who then contemplates the cost of human labor that was always required for these building projects. Knowing fully well that the completed works serve as timeless monoliths to the fallen nobles, these once crimsoned matinées also featured routine decapitations, heart removals, and fire rituals that were meant to honor or placate a number of different gods whom always demanded both blood and sculpture in exchange for cyclical certainties and good fortunes. Funny enough, it is believed that the unrestrained and boisterous howler monkey, who ranks among the artisans, craftsman, and storytellers of the Maya pantheon, was divinely conceived first to fulfill the gods' demands.



FIGURE 1: Classic Maya Temple, Site A, Uaxactún, Guatemala. Source: Cody Silveira (July 27, 2019).

Chicle: Bubble and Bust

Moving forward to the late 1800s and early 1900s, *chicleros*, tree tappers who harvest sap from the sapodilla tree to produce organic chewing gum, were hired by the Wrigley Chewing Company to search the northern Petén for the white sap, process it, and eventually sell the product to global markets. The present village of Uaxactún was originally founded as San Leandro in 1910 and built directly between Groups: D, E, F, and H. At the time, the village was only accessible from Flores, the capital of the region, by mule or horse. In 1916, archaeologist, Sylvanus Morley, on behalf of funding from the Carnegie Institute in Washington D.C., first excavated the ruins which he categorized into Groups A and B (Coe and Houston 2015). At Group A, Morley found the oldest stelae at the site, Stelae 9, which bore an 8-cycle long calendar dated to 328 A.D, the

earliest known inscribed Mayan date and thus the earliest known Classic Maya center within the Mayan region (Coe and Houston 2015). During and after his exploration, the name Uaxactún became associated with the site and surrounding *chiclero* camps. Rumor has it that the etymology of the town's name suggests Uaxactún is a mispronunciation of the word Washington since it was the Carnegie Institute in Washington D.C. that funded Morley's excavations. He then bestowed the name Uaxactún (place of eight stones) based on this stela inscription and the name was officially adopted in 1930. From 1924 to 1937, groups of archaeologists embarking on five-day excursions from modern day San Ignacio, Belize began arriving in Uaxactún, thus spearheading the Carnegie Institute Uaxactún Project, the first large scale excavation in the Maya region that would help to define future field methods and archaeological practices (Sharer 2005).

From 1890-1970, *chicle* dominated the Petén's economy as new airstrips were built to facilitate access to the valuable white sap of the sapodilla tree while hundreds of *chicle* workers lived and worked in new settlements around Tikal, Uaxactún, and Carmelita (Schwartz 1990). *Chiclero* wages at the time were higher than those working in the coffee, banana, and sugar plantations while the *chicle* industry promoted early forms of environmental sustainability through conscientious tree tapping techniques (Schwartz 1990). Meanwhile in 1958, the National Agency for the Development and Strengthening of the Petén (FYDEP) was established and for nearly 30 years, FYDEP army officials controlled economic monopolies over all *chicle* (chewing gum resin), cattle ranching, forestry, and agriculture industries within the department (Schwartz 1990, Pellecer Robles 2010). Combined with the introduction of cheaper chemically engineered substitutes and continued civil unrest throughout the 1970's and 1980's *chicle*

production virtually disappeared from the community (Devine 2013, Schwartz 1990). From then on, Uaxactún would remain isolated from nearby urban centers resulting in the community's severe impoverishment and dire need of supplemental economic activities. Although the industry became severely undercut, the *chicleros* gained a deep appreciation and respect for their forest environments in which they worked. These attitudes eventually radiated outwards to the remaining villagers who were united not by racial identity or Mayan ancestry, but rather as environmental stewards and forest overseers (Devine 2013).

From Bananas to Genocide

Simultaneously during the *chicle* boom in the early 20th century, Guatemala, under President Manuel Estrada Cabrera, negotiated with the produce giant, United Fruit to construct telegraph lines, schools, railroads, and seaports throughout the country in hopes of gaining desperately needed foreign investment to improve infrastructure and develop the nation's economy (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). In exchange for their public works programs, United Fruit was given vast swathes of land for its banana plantations and was formally exempted from paying any import duties and business taxes (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Over the decades, United Fruit dominated the country as a banana republic, controlling the lion's share of banana production which encompassed 4 million acres, or roughly 70 percent, of arable land within Guatemala (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). In 1951, democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz, sought to move Guatemala away from its export-oriented, economic dependence on the United States. A year later, he passed Decree 900 which purchased fallow, unused farmland over 223 acres and redistributed it

to 100,000 landless, rural peasant families. The 1952 land reform included approximately half of United Fruit's land holdings, which were abandoned due to an infestation of Panama Disease that virtually wiped out the entire Gros Michel banana crop (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Prior to the 1960's, the Gros Michel banana cultivar served as the dominant export banana to Europe and North America with the majority of the global supply grown on plantations throughout Central America (Koeppel 2008). With global banana exports declining drastically and their land leases being confiscated and subdivided, United Fruit negotiated for the compensation of all confiscated land which totaled \$600,000 USD (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Although this number is a small fraction of the true value of the seized land holdings, Arbenz and the Guatemala government at the time chose to accept Guatemala's 1952 financial report as a basis for their compensation figures. Despite not being further penalized for tax evasion, which the Guatemalan government tolerated for decades as an unfortunate aspect of conducting business in a banana republic, the company was obliged to pay all export duties, offer fair prices for acquired land, and obey the Guatemalan Constitution moving forward (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005).

In response to Arbenz's 1952 land reform, United Fruit appealed to the U.S. State Department to demand that the Guatemalan government pay them \$16 million dollars, the actual dollar value of all company land holdings (Koeppel 2008). Additionally, United Fruit launched a formal investigation that proposed unsubstantiated, exaggerated claims linking Guatemala to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the United States was entrenched within the McCarthy era of anti-communist sentiment and hysteria, so little convincing was needed for intervention from Washington (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger

and Kinzer 2005, Devine 2013). Additionally, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles formerly worked as a prominent lawyer for the New York based law firm Sullivan and Cromwell that represented United Fruit several times in negotiating land accumulations for the company in both Honduras and Guatemala throughout the mid twentieth century (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Simultaneously, John Foster Dulles' brother, Allen Dulles, previously served as a member on United Fruit's Board of Trustees and now, under Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, was appointed the head of the CIA (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Both he and Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, owned substantial stocks within United Fruit (Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005).

Citing United Fruit's report as a major threat to United States business interests, the three men successfully convinced President Eisenhower to authorize CIA Operation PBSUCCESS in 1954. This operation coordinated with the Guatemalan military and U.S. radio networks to blockade, spread anti Arbenz propaganda, and bomb munitions depots and other targets in and around the Guatemalan capital (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Although the rebel military forces were severely outnumbered and suffered substantially more casualties than Arbenz's forces, many in the country were convinced by the false propaganda campaign and strategic bombings that a full-scale U.S. invasion was eminent (Koeppel 2008, Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). Arbenz eventually resigned and the country soon suffered from a series of U.S. supported military coups and juntas that targeted trade unionists and Maya peasants believed to be communist supporters and sympathizers.

From 1960-1996, the Guatemalan military, with training, funding and armed largely by the United States, disappeared or murdered approximately 200,000 people and a million more were displaced (REHMI, 1999). The conflict came to be known as the Guatemalan Civil War or the Silent Holocaust. In the early years of instability following the overthrow of Arbenz, the first of the military juntas sought to enrich themselves and influence settlement by looking north to the Petén department, Guatemala's largest internal division on the frontier with Mexico and Belize which constitutes approximately one third of Guatemala's entire territory. The newly created FYDEP program began granting free land to anyone who could "improve" it in the Petén. This incentive alongside civil war atrocities and political instability in the rest of the country resulted in a mass exodus of Guatemalan civilians to the department resulting in rapid population increase from 1960s to the present (Schwartz 1990, Pellecer Robles 2010).

Conservation, the Petén, and the New Century

In 1989, amidst this steady migration and a renewed archaeological interest in the Petén, five Central American countries discussed a broad development plan to provide for increasing numbers of tourists and market notable archaeological rediscoveries through a proposed massive joint ecotourism development project (Garrett 1989). Referred to as *La Ruta Maya* Project, the Maya Route, the project called for the mapping and interconnection of a 1500-mile tourism circuit utilizing roads, footpaths, cable cars, and riverboat access across Guatemala, Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. The primary goals of the governments in all five countries were to invigorate better cooperation, unite themselves under a common Mayan ancestry, and halt the loss of wide expanses of tropical rainforests (Garrett 1989). Although the plan was supported by the

foreign ministers within each country, it was ultimately scrapped during the 1990's when Mexico's peso became devalued after the signing of NAFTA and the country plunged into a deep recession (Allen 1998). Additionally, El Salvador was still suffering from its decades long civil war while Hurricane Mitch, which struck Honduras in 1998, set back the Honduran economy by 50 years, and rendered one fifth of the population homeless (Inter American Development Bank 2000). For the time being, tourism development within these countries was put on the backburner for more pressing issues.

Meanwhile in Guatemala from 1985 to 1996, a period referred to as the Guatemalan Peace Process, conservationists from within the country and abroad united to convince policy makers to establish the Maya Biosphere Reserve in 1990 which spans 1/10 of the national territory (Sundberg 1998). This act was preceded by the creation of a national parks system and the organization, the Council on National Protected Areas (CONAP) in 1989, whose mission involved the oversight of such development. The World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and UNESCO praised the creation of the MBR as both a deterrent to rapid deforestation within Central America and a conservation strategy that coincides with ecotourism. However, many of the small villages in the region saw the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR)'s creation as a new act of land dispossession and rights abuses. CONAP prevented many long time Petén dwellers from accessing their native homelands and implemented restrictions on activities such as firewood harvesting, corn planting, and housing construction which resulted in violent protests conducted by communities advocating for a return of their land ownership and inalienable rights (Finger-Stitch 2003).

As illicit activities increased within the reserve and residents continued to be treated like illegal squatters, USAID granted more than \$10 million, in the MBR's infancy to conservation efforts monitored by non-profit concessions and conservation organizations (Nations 1996). Out of locals' frustration with lost usufruct land right and in the context of government plans to create private timber concession in the MBR, residents formed the Association of Forest Communities of the Petén (ACOFOP). ACOFOP is an umbrella NGO that unites the nine currently active community forest concessions, which includes Uaxactún. ACOFOP and Uaxactún residents successfully lobbied in 2010 to create a 83,558 hectares forest concession (see Figure 2). ACOFOP today serves as the most powerful, unifying forest concessions program that aims at securing land tenure rights for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within the multiple-use area of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Devine 2018).

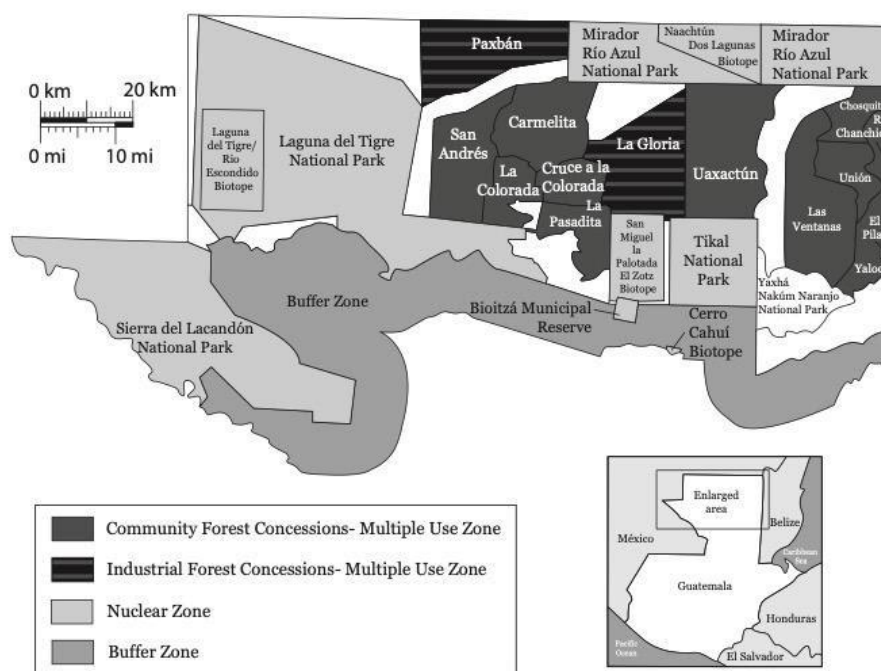


FIGURE 2: Map Outlining Current Boundaries of the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

Source: (Devine 2018)

Almost immediately following the formation of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, ACOFOP and the forestry concessions were under threat from the first of several attempts to undermine their collective land rights. In 2000, newly elected president Alfonso Portillo emitted a presidential degree that changed the boundaries of the MBR by applying the boundary of Mirador-Rio Azul national park into the concession territory of the villages of Uaxactún and Carmelita. This green land grab (Devine 2016) is similar to others in that it has become a strategy of creating new natural spaces predicated upon historic notions of fortress conservation (Brockington 2002) that equate to the often violent land evictions and peasant exclusion policies which exist in natural protected places throughout the developing world (Macleod 2001, Haller, West, Igoe & Brockington 2006, Galvin, Meroka, Alca, & Alvarez 2008). After a three-year legal battle, the motion was considered unconstitutional and the land rights of the forestry concession model in the Maya Biosphere Reserve was restored (Clipston 2020).

Another attempt at a large-scale tourism development in the MBR was spearheaded by the Guatemalan government and further illustrates continued competing interests of how to protect and promote the area. In 2008, the Cuatro Balam Project, initiated under then president Álvaro Colom, set out to increase ecotourism in the Maya Biosphere Reserve to 1.5 million visitors and create one large protected entity of more than 21,000 sq. km. that would encompass natural parks and archeological sites such as El Mirador, Tikal, Uaxactún and Piedras Negras (IADB 2009, Valladares 2012). According to a proposal sent before the Inter-American Development Bank Multilateral Investment Fund, “The goal of the project is to contribute to the

sustainability of tourism in Guatemala as an icon of Mayan culture. The purpose is to support the establishment and management of a tourist destination in the Northern Cluster of the Cuatro Balam Area in Petén, as well as the participation therein by local communities as well as micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the sector's value chain" (IADB 2009). The plan called for massive projects to be undertaken within a 15-year period including huge improvements in highway and hotel investment as well as an electric train that would travel nine miles an hour and transport tourists to the various archaeological sites throughout the MBR. The project further envisioned a National Center of Mayan Studies and University of Biodiversity to train and educate biologists, archaeologists, and tour operators in hopes of invigorating greater conservation focus and active participation from members of Petén communities (IADB 2009, Valladares 2012). While President Colom has long since left office and the Cuatro Balam with him, there are no shortage of large-scale development projects that continue to threaten Uaxactún's community forest concession and the community's right to participate in tourism development along with it.

In 2010, another proposed governmental bill was in the works that threatened community forestry rights by proposing to once again expand the boundaries of the Mirador Rio-Azul National Park into community forestry territory (Devine 2018). This bill replicates the language and aspirations of the 2000 bill that would have amplified the Mirador National Park boundaries into concession territory (Devine 2018). In this moment, once again, tensions between Dr. Hansen's proposed tourism development project and the territorial boundaries and land uses of the community forest concessions came to a head. When Manuel Baldizon lost his presidential run, the threat of the 2010

bill subsided, but it is currently finding new life in a proposed Congressional bill, this time in the United States. As such, community and ecotourism advocates in Uaxactún feel threatened by competing, large scale development plans for the MBR that not only exclude them, but are predicated on limiting the territories and rights of forest concessionaries. This historical context is critical to understanding the possibilities and challenges of tourism as a development strategy within Uaxactún, and other communities across the Global South, with the focus of the next section examining literature on the ecotourism in developing countries.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Ecotourism in the Global South

From the 1950s to 1980s many developing countries employed traditional forms of tourism, like inclusive resort, theme park, and cruise tourism, to promote development and poverty alleviation, only to find that these tourism initiatives exacerbated economic inequality and created many environmental problems related to water and waste management (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Sharpley 2000; Fletcher 2014, Devine 2017). In response to traditional tourism's environmental impacts, its failure to alleviate poverty, and the emerging focus on sustainable development in the 1980s, state agencies and international donors identified *ecotourism* as the cure all to the economic and environmental challenges facing many Global South countries (Lawson 2007; Mohan and Stokke; Smith 2003). Ecotourism emerged in the 1980's as an international response by the global environmental movement who sought alternative options that steered away from large scale, unsustainable, and environmentally degrading tourist ventures (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Sharpley 2000; Fletcher 2014).

Despite the absence of a widely held definition, scholars such as H.M. Donohue and R.D. Needham (2006) and Richard Sharpley (2000) applied a thematic content analysis across 30 academic articles⁹ to identify words and phrases associated with ecotourism. Nature based, preservation/conservation, and education were top three most cited examples associated with the term, while mention of local involvement and capital investment were not as prevalent. Other researchers, like Robert Fletcher (2014) simply define ecotourism as a service industry based in relative austerity, adventure, and an

immersion in outdoor spaces, and recognizes that the industry transforms or manipulates the physical environment to meet the expectations, standards, and economic goals of both “hosts” and “guests.”

Although I concur with Fletcher (2014) that nature based, outdoor recreational activities should be included within ecotourism ventures, I also agree with Buckley (2000) who argues that costly equipment combined with low profits and earnings can result in barriers to incorporating low-impact outdoor recreation activities in ecotourism. Also, while conservation education is important and should be implemented within an ecotourist venture, other opportunities that forge connections between hosts and guests hold the possibility for more meaningful and transformative tourism exchanges (Smith 2003; Devine 2017). Such opportunities include participating in rural economic activities like farming or coffee production, visiting local history museums or sights, or interacting with individuals or community-based groups. Yet, these elements of social capital building are largely absent, underfunded, or under promoted by both the private and public sector (Devine 2017).

Developing Ecotourism: Successes and Challenges

Ecotourism is routinely promoted as an unparalleled economic solution to the goals of development and sustainability in the Global South, however, the level of success is largely dependent on several factors. Ultimately, success and overall sustainability of ecotourism within the Global South is largely linked to equitable land rights, community involvement, and access to resources and the financial benefits of tourism (Haller and Galvin 2008; Devine 2016; Devine 2017). In terms of land rights,

Devine (2017) discusses post-war tourism in Guatemala and focuses on rising levels of tourism in the country. This rise in tourism, she argues, coincides with the promotion of racial, gendered, and geo-political tourism imagery that contrasts with actual grassroots tourism movements and land use politics. The two case studies she examine, the New Horizon cooperative and the Maya Tz'utujil community, emphasize forms of ecotourism the practitioners define as “solidarity tourism” and “cultural tourism” respectively, which utilize collectively managed land use and cooperative community involvement to organize tours and projects that educate patrons on the Guatemala civil conflict, local empowerment, and natural environment to great success (Devine 2017). These success stories are the exception to the rule. More often than not, ecotourism ventures in developing countries exclude local people from wilderness spaces and tourism’s benefits. In doing so, state governments often lack the funding, enforcement, and political will to conserve and manage large, newly created swathes of vital ecosystems or protected lands that often are subjected to illicit occupation and security threats (Davis & Wali 1994; Das and Chatterjee 2015). In order for successful case studies to be implemented elsewhere and achieve long term sustainability, Indigenous peoples and rural settlers need legal recognition from national governments of their land rights as well as international assistance and financial support to undertake these initiatives (Davis & Wali 1994, Neto 2003).

Haller and Galvin’s (2008) study of the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve in Peru and the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania comparatively analyzed local involvement in conservation movements and foreseeable tourism ventures that would emerge from such conservation. In both cases, Indigenous people were forcibly removed from the lands

that these reserves would later encompass, and today, local participation in conservation differs. In Peru, Indigenous leaders align themselves with powerful international NGOs to levy claims and rights over their lands, while efforts to promote conservation remain secondary goals. In the future, Indigenous leaders could profit from promoting participatory forms of conservation, but inclination to do so and cooperation with outside funding sources remains to be seen (Haller and Galvin 2008). Meanwhile, in Tanzania, local groups participate in park outreach projects and monitor game meat quotas from tourist hunting expeditions, but ultimately it is the state and NGO groups that define levels of participation through the implementation of measures that largely exclude the local communities. These communities largely work as impoverished subsistence farmers or hunters, and thus, the lack of economic benefits has increased discontent between them, the state, and NGOs with many community members distrusting the park managers and facilitators while continuing to view local wildlife as either a food source or potentially destructive towards crops and lives (Haller and Galvin 2008). From these studies that Indigenous participation in promoting or benefitting from conservation may be due to underlying historical displacement, lack of willingness from locals to participate, NGOS and government agencies quasi control over the ventures, and differing agendas for both natives and ecotourism operations (Haller and Galvin 2008).

When examining access to resources and financial benefits, Hunt et al. (2015) noted that just one third of ecolodges within the communities of Puerto Jimenez and Drake's Bay on the Osa Peninsula were locally owned. Nevertheless, locals employed within these ventures earned monthly salaries that were significantly higher than other employment opportunities, such as mining, cattle ranching, fishing, and agriculture,

would offer (Lapeyre 2010; Mbaiwa & Stronza 2010; Hunt et al 2015). Furthermore, with their new incomes and levels of training, locals could now access new opportunities elsewhere if they so choose. This study helps to reiterate the necessity for community involvement, local initiative, and local control within the conservation and ecotourism process. It demonstrates that exclusion of locals from remote, protected areas does not stop them from gathering resources for sustenance or income, which ultimately earns them less than being involved in a service-led industry like ecotourism (Macleod 2001; Mbaiwa & Stronza 2010; Hunt et al 2015).

Rather than “fortress conservation” that pursues environmental preservation through prohibiting sustainable land uses by locals (Brockington 2002), sustainable resource extraction and land use by residents or neighbors of protected areas are necessary to allow local populations to reap the benefits from ecotourism and conservation practices, while allowing for more organized regulation and cooperative oversight in managing resource extraction and potential threats to protected areas (Macleod 2001; West et al. 2006). Taken together, this literature demonstrates that successful ecotourism ventures are often defined by the degree of co-management by government entities and Indigenous natives’ access to resources within protected areas (Davis & Wali 1994; Macleod 2001; West et al. 2006; Haller and Galvin 2008; Horton 2009; Das and Chatterjee 2015), and local or community participation and leadership ultimately resulting in access to financial benefits (West and Carrier 2004; Horton 2009; Mbaiwa & Stronza 2010; Hunt et al. 2015; Devine 2017).

Ecotourism Strategies within Guatemala

In regard to studies based on tourism in Guatemala, researchers C. LaPan et al. (2016) state that tourism within this country has long been defined by a trickle of budget travelers and cultural tourists seeking to learn about Maya culture. The tourism industry in San Juan la Laguna in particular grew in large response to the reduction in coffee prices during the early 2000s (LaPan et al. 2016). In fact, according to author Sarah Lyon (2013) a coffee tourism project was one of the first established ecotourism initiatives within the country, owing in large part to financial support from the Guatemalan National Coffee Association (ANACAFE) and the Peace Corps. As a means of adapting to dropping prices, the operation committed itself to serving Fair Trade organically grown coffee while providing enthusiasts with unique tours of the harvesting and farming operations. Throughout the farming and harvesting demonstrations, stories orientated towards not only the rich history, economic, and cultural importance of the drink, but also critical explanations of the unique geographic and climatic characteristics that distinguish the operation's coffee from other beans, a concept referred to as coffee terroir (Lyon 2013).

However, one of the main issues regarding this new form of agritourism lies in farming cooperatives' inability to increase demand through greater promotion and advertising due to a lack of capital and interest amongst tour guides. One strategy, that was proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to overcome this issue, was to create a regional agrotourism networking board that would incorporate not just coffee, but also bananas, chocolate, and other tropical produce into a single entity that adopted similar strategies within their operations and hopefully boost tourism revenues (Lyon

2013). This has been met with controversy by cooperatives within Guatemala and abroad, due to many cooperative workers and farmers seeing this leading to increased competition within the agricultural sector, while community members outside of the cooperative view this practice as further alienating them from the economic incentives and benefits that only cooperative members will be able to extract (Lyon 2013).

In the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala, an area popular with European and American backpackers, all businesses in the community of San Juan la Laguna are managed by cooperatives that are run by San Juan residents and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who emphasize economic incentives through community engagement for a common purpose (LaPan et al. 2016, Devine 2017). LaPan et al. (2016) conducted thirty interviews in the communities of San Juan la Laguna and San Pedro la Laguna that were designed to cover aspects of economic development, working in the tourism industry, and how tourists were perceived in both communities. The findings revealed that greater exchange of ideas through tourism interactions were a positive benefit to both communities, but environmental conservation was rarely mentioned as a potential benefit from increased tourism in the area. Furthermore, in San Juan, the lack of hotels meant that many individuals resided with families during the duration of their stay and as such, many San Juan residents stated that greater and more abundant opportunities for economic development, income, and jobs resulted from tourism, especially at the community and familial scale (LaPan et al. 2016). In San Pedro, many participants cited that increased tourism has led to greater consumption of alcohol and drugs that could negatively impact the youth of the two communities, while increased physical altercations erupting from negligent behavior also threatened

community well-being (LaPan et al. 2016). The authors conclude that more research is needed regarding the specific day to day activities and economic strategies that promote and influence positive business initiatives, the actual economic figures that are derived from such ventures, as well as a greater focus towards environmental concerns and efforts to promote conservation (LaPan et al. 2016).

This project contributes to the literature regarding the necessity for private or public investment, consideration, and mediation, as well as the integration of people and natural spaces, by focusing on an underexamined region in Guatemala, the Petén Maya Biosphere Reserve. Furthermore, as the analysis suggests, while Uaxactún possesses untapped tourism potential, one of the greatest challenges to development stems largely from decisions made outside the community. I contribute to this literature, an understanding of how national and global tourism development visions of the MBR, which exclude community residents, remains the largest threat to national security, economic development, and usufruct land rights within the Global South.

IV. METHODS

The methods employed within this are largely situated within qualitative research methodologies. Additionally, due to the time constraints, season, and lack of economic data, which I further outline in the limitations, this study can also be viewed as a short-term ethnography project. As the name suggests, short term ethnographies are limited by a time frame consisting of weeks and months, rather than years, that include participation and observation of the subjects' lives in order to answer proposed research questions (Pink and Morgan 2013). To achieve a greater broad-based context in order to answer my research questions, I employed participatory observations and conducted interviews that aimed to represent five perspectives on tourism development based on their investment and relations to the tourism industry. These multiple perspectives include the tourist provider perspective (Management and Conservation Organization of Uaxactún OMYC) guides and workers), the lodging and restaurant owner perspective, private tour company perspective, the tourist perspective, and the aligned or unaligned mediator perspective (ACOFOP and the Guatemala Institute of Tourism (INGUAT) representatives.

Unlike much of the previous research I have read thus far, methodologies within ecotourism or alternative tourism research often exclude critical perspectives and voices. The primary interview and survey subjects questioned throughout the literature typically revolve around academic, NGO, or governmental entities. Meanwhile, tourist perspectives and the perspectives of those who work directly or indirectly within tourism by providing the resources, accommodations, and services that tourists often desire or

need, are not sought, undervalued, or not considered as possible limitations. Building upon feminist epistemologies, which emphasize and invoke empathy and openness to dialogue, these methods of gathering research argue that knowledge is partial and situated, and thus research containing multiple perspective provides the best insight. To attain the strongest knowledge or closest examination of truth, it is imperative that everyone speaks from their own partial perspective (Harding 1991, Hill Collins 2000, Torres 2018). While employing similar tactics during the interview process, it is then crucial for the researcher to situate themselves into a larger context of discussion and knowledge, regarding the phenomena they are studying and interrelation of ideas and findings that emerge while interviewing their subjects (Harding 1991, Hill Collins 2000, Torres 2018).

Data Collection

The nature of my interview questions was due in large part to my broad research questions: What past tourism development approaches have been implemented in Uaxactún, and what are the successes and benefits of these strategies? What are the community's current strategies and most marketable tourism products? What factors are preventing or hindering growth within the archeology and community tourism sectors in Uaxactún?

To better frame and contextualize these questions, I engaged in two weeks of fieldwork within Uaxactún Guatemala, which consisted of 16 interviews with residents and one tourist family, which ultimately provided feedback regarding their insights on the history, improvements, drawbacks, benefits, and current potential for tourism

development within the community. I also conducted an interview with a family of tourists from the state of Georgia, regarding their experiences and feedback towards ecotourism in the village. After gaining these insights, I participated in community workshops, meetings, and training sessions at the OMYC offices in hopes of assisting with the coordination, planning, and expanding of their services while fostering greater communication and unified advocacy amongst varying tourism and cooperative projects in Uaxactún. Simultaneously, I conducted participant observations through several archaeological and forestry tours provided by OMYC and the patrons of the El Chiclero Hotel and Museum to gain further insight into day to day tourism operations.

Later, in Flores the department capital of Petén, I conducted two weeks of archival research and interviews at the headquarters of ACOFOP, and interviews with three private transportation companies and representatives at the INGUAT offices in Flores. Regarding these interviews, I inquired about the various outside organizational support, knowledge, and promotion that they garnered for Uaxactún's tourism industry and forestry concession model. Five semi structured interviews were conducted with ACOFOP members, three with managers of private tour companies, and one with a representative of INGUAT were all gathered during my time in Flores. I also gathered and analyzed content analyses of marketing materials, provided by these three entities as well as the OMYC offices and patrons of the EL Chiclero Hotel. The bulk of these materials included brochures and guidebooks which provided maps and visitor information that marketed tourism experiences and services within Uaxactún. OMYC also directed me to their most recent promotional medium, their website,

<http://visituaxactun.com/>, which provided the greatest detail regarding the activities, accommodations, and experiences one can participate in while visiting the village.

Data Analysis

Upon returning from Guatemala, I first transcribed and then translated the 25 interviews from Spanish to English. Next, I implemented open coding methods with the data gathered from my interviews, along with my four weeks of field notes regarding participant observations and outside conversations pertaining to tourism development in Uaxactún and Guatemala as a whole. Open coding is a form of inductive research methodologies that strives not to focus on one particular problem or factor associated with the data, but rather evaluates and organizes the data into categories and patterns that are uncovered and interrelated throughout the data (Cope 2010). From my open coding, I then developed grounded theory, a method of empirical scrutiny and precision that analyzes patterns which were prevalent and interconnected throughout the data (Charmaz 2008). Through this implementation of open coding and grounded theory, I was able to uncover unforeseeable and often overlooked challenges to tourism development that existed within Uaxactún. These methods of data analysis also further enabled me to uncover an overall consensus regarding Uaxactún's historical patterns of tourism and its current, most marketable products and services. Similar coding and grounded theory implementation were also used to analyze the content of my fieldnotes which I took daily, as well as the online and hard copy media gathered.

Limitations

For this project, limitations included the time frame, the season, the lack of economic data, and the significant lack of tourism perspectives. Despite my short field work, which lasted four weeks during the off-travel season in Central America, the methods implemented within this study provided a comprehensive way of deducing similar, frequently mentioned answers to my research questions across a small, yet diverse data set. Regarding the gathering of hard economic data, this restriction is also due once again to the short time frame which inhibited me from having the time to develop the survey instrument or, more importantly, build enough personal rapport with my interview subjects to ask them financial details like personal salaries and expenditures. Additionally, the extensiveness of interview subjects who possessed varying degrees of interest and stake within tourism, provided a clearer, more concise analysis of the history, challenges, and current potential that influences tourism development within Uaxactún. Furthermore, it is crucial to point out that my one interview with a tourist family in Uaxactún helped emphasize several of the structural limitations that inhibit further developing tourism within the village, which will be explained further in the following section discussing results. For example, the tourists cited a greater number of interconnected hiking trails and investment in archeological excavation that could serve as possible solutions to garnering more tourism numbers. However, upon further inquiry, it was revealed that since they purchased private transportation to the village, they were unaware of OMYC's existence or that it offers biking excursions and multi day trekking tours around Uaxactún and to other nearby Mayan sites. Meanwhile, excavation of Uaxactún and surrounding archeology sites was

already underway for several years by a team from Slovakia, who spent most of their time deep in the rainforests conducting their work. These frameworks are excusable, however, since it was the family's first time at the village and they only spent a few hours touring Uaxactún's archeology sites. Through data collection and analyses consisting of interviewing a manifold set of interview subjects, cross analyzing historical and marketing materials, and participating in the tourism services, I argue that his study can be replicated in future short-term scholastic research projects by those seeking to understand the tourism development paradox.

V. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Analyzing the past successes, challenges, current opportunities for tourists, who participate in community led tourism yields many insights into improving livelihoods, conservation initiatives, and securing land rights. With the formation of the Management and Conservation Organization (OMYC), Uaxactún has made great strides in integrating community forestry and community-based tourism initiatives, particularly during the community's Equinox Festival. Yet, the potential of the site remains untapped. This section first explains the history of tourism in the community as well as the benefits associated with ecotourism initiatives and alternative forestry in Uaxactún. The following section discusses current tourism promotion, marketable products, and organization. Lastly, I discuss these practical dynamics in relation to larger socio-political structures that largely encompass a lack of interest in and prioritization for community tourism by the Guatemalan government and, relatedly, the ongoing threats of large-scale traditional tourism in the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

Past Tourism Development Approaches in Uaxactún

Isolated in the Petén jungle, the village of Uaxactún beckons to the intrepid traveler and archaeological savant alike. More than likely, each one has either come here on a whim or seeks to explore the road beyond in an effort to escape a path well worn by ferries of tourist shuttles, security officers, and assemblies of all too eager guides. On a good day, one without torrents of tropical rain, and based upon punctual transportation (both of which are rare blessings south of the U.S. border, especially during summer months), the commute from Tikal takes an hour and a half along an unpaved dirt road

bound by impenetrable jungle on both sides. For those who wish to deviate from their itineraries slightly and take the extra steps to embark on the road less traveled, Uaxactún boasts a fascinating history and an intimate, enlightening glimpse into a forest community whose economic livelihood is derived from non-traditional forestry products and nature-based tourism.

Creation of Community Tourism

In the year 2000, the community attained a 200,000 acre forest concession, the largest in Central America, that would be managed by the Conservation and Management Organization, an NGO more commonly referred to as OMYC. Led by a board of directors that consists of six individuals elected by the community, OMYC oversees the management of the forest concession, all tourism activities, and the economic investments within Uaxactún (Juska and Koenig 2006). OMYC also works closely with the Community Councils of Urban and Rural Development (COCODES) which consists of eight individuals who make decisions regarding village issues such as trash collection, law enforcement, and other issues of concern (Juska and Koenig 2006). In 2000, community members and OMYC leadership established a Tourism Commission Board within OMYC with funding from organizations such as ACOFOP, Cuatro Balam, CONAP, and others. OMYC guide salaries are two to three times higher than those who work in traditional agriculture and small-scale timber operations within the community. Members also receive training and education regarding the archaeological history, flora, fauna, and history as well as vitality of non-traditional forestry products (Juska and Koenig 2006).

Currently, the majority of Uaxactún's 200 families, are employed in the extraction of non-timber forest products. Today *xate* palm employs 90-95% of the community and forms the economic backbone of the community with pimienta, ramon, and to a lesser extent *chicle*, being sold in international markets as well (Juska and Koenig 2006). Uaxactún has worked with trained foresters to develop a management plan that restricts logging to one-third of the concession, with the majority of the concession remaining solely for the harvest of non-traditional forestry products (NTFPs) (Juska and Koenig 2006, Fortmann 2014). This protocol of mitigating timber harvesting has facilitated minimal damage to the forest while promoting environmental protection. According to Mirna España, OMYC's Governing Tourism Commission Board which today consists of 50 members was inspired in part by realizing the advantages they had as a unique forestry concession whose primary focus was on alternative plant harvesting.

Benefits of Community Tourism

Regarding the successes of integrating tourism alongside forestry conservation initiatives, it is imperative to view tourism as a vital economic supplement to non-traditional forestry products (NTFP) harvesting within the tropics. For many, tourism allows them to continue their livelihoods, but also ensures essential economic benefits that are both widespread and far reaching. According to Melvin Barrientos, President and Legal Representative of the Management and Conservation Organization of Uaxactún (OMYC), incomes affect Uaxactún both directly and indirectly. He states "Tourism benefits our guides directly while also providing direct benefits to restaurants and store owners. It also indirectly benefits those not involved in tourism since they are

able to gain money from tourists or fellow community members involved in tourism who buy goods from them. They in turn use the money to buy better food and potable water” (interview, July 24, 2019). Tourists who visit Uaxactún more often than not will patronize the restaurants in the village after their tours, and if they are staying longer, will purchase packaged food, toiletries, souvenirs, and fresh produce such as avocados, bananas, papayas, plantains, or peppers along with street food from several vendors that own shops or patrol town selling their artisanal products.

The benefits of tourism have been most visible as they pertain to uplifting women from traditional gender roles and assisting them in earning their own incomes. During my time in Uaxactún, I witnessed firsthand the daily routines of many of the villagers. Most men awoke early, had breakfast, and left to tend their *milpas* (corn plots) or harvest *xate* between 6 and 7 AM. This would continue until about 3 to 5 PM. Meanwhile the children attended school, when the school was open, which was not as consistent as one would imagine, from 7:30 to 12:00 pm and 1:00-2:00 pm. When boys became old enough, they would assist their fathers in the field or begin work in the *Bodega de Xate* (The Xate Grocery). Girls would also participate in *Bodega de Xate* or assist their mothers with the family garden, food preparation, or in their stores and restaurants. Throughout many other parts of Guatemala, women often work in the home or the marketplace where they are highly valued as cooks, farmers, domestic cleaners, and textile crafters.

Within Latin America, a patriarchal form of masculinity, known as *machismo*, underlies much of the gender equality and relations that have been defined since the time of Spanish rule. *Machismo* is attributed to men who exhibit bouts of chivalry, and

cavalier bravery, while being viewed as honorable and cool-headed with strong devotions of love, time, and attention to their families (Franz 2012, De Mente 1998). However, the darker side also manifests itself through flamboyant boasting, brash confrontations, high rates of physical violence against women, and the encouragement of possessing several mistresses even within the confines of marriage. Women often have limited or little say in their spouses' personal affairs, several are subjugated to beatings and sexual assault, and some are encouraged to be submissive and tolerant of even the most violent aspects of male behavior (Franz 2012, De Mente 1998). As Gloria Espina, the head of ACOFOP Commission for Community Tourism, states "*machismo* threatens the equality of social benefits and rights being unequal within Guatemala." In Uaxactún, many women actively participate in the community's economy, resulting in the village being viewed as a model of advancing gender equality. Many of the women who I interviewed worked as community guides, owned the stores and restaurants within the village, and even supervised the shipments, tasks, and organization of the *Bodega de Xate*, which employed the vast majority of the village. They served prominent roles as members of OMYC and during community meetings, were allowed to voice their opinions and ideas in improving tourism and community life.

The Rainforest Alliance also coordinated training sessions with ACOFOP that taught women to organize and negotiate better prices for *ramon* nut and *xate* palm that were often four times higher than individual sale (Rainforest Alliance 2018). The Rainforest Alliance further states, "Other programs offered to the community include business planning, enterprise administration, productive efficiency, diversification, and value-added processing (such as on-site primary processing, mill layout and controls,

quality control); markets (identifying target markets, creating marketing materials, linking producers to buyers); finance (accessing loans, management, and repayment); and policy (supporting government and civil society to design and implement policies benefiting community forestry” (Rainforest Alliance 2018). Many residents teach one another local artisan craftsmanship and collaborate together in order to share promotional ideas. One idea that stemmed from this training and collaboration, has been the selling of locally crafted corn husk dolls. Adorned with dried flowers, beads, and an assortment of colors, the dolls are routinely sold by women within Uaxactún and at Tikal National Park as well. The dolls (see Figure 3) have become a charming advertisement campaign that many throughout Guatemala now associate with the village.



FIGURE 3: Corn Doll Artisan Products. Source: Jennifer Devine (April 18, 2020)

Due to the fact that Uaxactún's tourism sector is part of the larger land rights and management model of community forestry, it is critical to understand the economic benefits for the forest concession more broadly. Benefits from being part of a forest concession include salaried wages and education as well as farming and hunting rights. Members of the community associations, especially in long term communities that were the first to be established, like Uaxactún, have experienced significant wage increases of approximately \$1,000 USD since their inception (Bocci Fortmann Sohngen Milian 2018). Medical expenses, transportation during medical emergencies, and educational costs that include computer classes are all covered under the concession (Juska and Koneig 2006). Even Uaxactún's relatively small-scale timber extraction activities, which is limited to less than one tree per hectare as per the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), has assisted in funding the construction of the only school within a fifty-mile radius and scholarships for students to study abroad (Rainforest Alliance 2018). Additionally, the village has access to a sawmill and kilns, and directly sells its timber to businesses such as guitar makers in the United States (Bocci et al. 2018, Fortmann 2014, Rainforest Alliance 2018). Many of the villagers who engage in subsistence agriculture are allowed to plant and harvest crops such as corn, beans, bananas, and plantains in permanent areas, designated by CONAP, that comprise of less than 2 percent of the concession. These areas emphasize small scale crop rotation that leaves the majority of the fields fallow for several years allowing the acidic rainforest soils to replenish themselves and maintain fertility (Alvarez and French 2006, Fortmann 2014). To satisfy protein needs and offset the expensive costs of buying chicken, members of the community are allowed to hunt deer, ocellated turkey, paca, and

curassow birds for personal consumption (Alvarez and French 2006 Juska and Koenig 2006).

Meanwhile, OMYC provides formal guidance and education regarding Maya history and archaeology. A group known as *EcoGuías* (Ecoguides) was recognized by OMYC in 2004, and serves as a collaborative interest group to the organization. Consisting of over 25 members, the majority of which are girls between the ages of 13-22, guides must be enrolled in training courses and then pass a series of 14 exams to receive INGUAT certification (Juska and Koenig 2006). The long-term goals of the collaboration are to offer multi-day excursions to remote Mayan archeology sites such as Nakbe, Rio Azul, and El Mirador, while training and maintaining a small, yet robust group of highly knowledgeable community leaders that can provide an intimate understanding of the village to tourists.

Current Marketing Strategies and (Potential) Tourism Products

The next section discusses the current marketing strategies and promotional potential for the products and services that Uaxactún currently provides to tourists. I argue that a market exists for the type of experience that staying in Uaxactún provides. For tourists looking for more than sand, sea, and all-inclusive resorts, travelling to Uaxactún allows them to witness a rural Guatemalan village in all its solitary uniqueness, if for only a few days. Visitors can visit several Maya archeological sites by bicycle or multi day treks, examine numerous Preclassic and Classic artifacts uncovered and restored within the area, and learn the community's efforts in balancing sustainable forestry practices with economic livelihoods. For travelers seeking these experiences and

wishing to glimpse a little known, if all too often neglected facet of Guatemalan life, while being surrounded by tropical forests, Uaxactún is a perfect fit.

Upon arrival at Uaxactún, I immediately came to grips with the poverty characterizing the village which is representative of rural areas across Guatemala. It appears as if all time and the world beyond have long since forgotten this hamlet at the end of the road. If staying for a prolonged period, however, travelers will temporarily confine these notions to the innermost recesses of their mind, and quickly discover the immense hospitality and hope that their hosts and neighbors have for the future. Homestays welcome weary souls with water and pimento tea as they discuss matters of farm productivity, the chance of rain, their colorful portrayals of government, and U.S. relations as they pertain to Central American immigration. Daughters routinely sell *atol de elote* (a hominy corn porridge) and *tamalito de elote* (sweet tamales). For the village, each sunrise brings an insurmountable uncertainty of whether enough food will be collected or if today will finally welcome an extended torrent of rain that will rejuvenate the dry milpas and family gardens, and help replenish an ever-decreasing water supply. Villagers do not have access to running water, in the modern sense, having to rely on rainwater catchment or collection from the putrid, shrinking watering holes called *bajos*. Additionally, electricity and showers were luxuries that only my hotel, El Chiclero, could provide, and only at during certain times during the day, so as to not overheat the generator. Despite such adversity and hardship, from the time the villagers rose to the time they retired to their *hamacas*, many invoked a sense of respect and love for the blessings that their forest environment provides them. The villagers constantly cite inspiration and cheerfulness as attitudes that arise from the verdant plant and

abundant animal life that surrounds them or from the surrounding archeology sites which remind them of the ancestors who came before and whose voices still echo to them, the new stewards of the rainforest.

OMYC Marketing Campaigns

Currently, OMYC assumes all marketing through their own promotional medium, the website <http://visituaxactun.com/>. On the website video, the village is described as “The place that marks time, a small community of authentic people surrounded by jungle and ancestral temples who strive to prepare fresh, natural flavors and believe that one always has time to learn and to teach” (Visituaxactun.com 2016). Among the images shown are several tourists exploring the temples with a local guide, corn husk dolls being crafted, tortillas being prepared from scratch, and various shots of local fauna including toucans and spider monkeys. The website strongly emphasizes the idea of experiencing a glimpse into rural Petén culture while learning about local livelihoods and artisanal crafts. Meanwhile, the visitor will be transfixed by the sights and sounds of the rainforest that are everywhere. In the village, brochures are procured from the OMYC office further describing the archaeological sites, forestry products, and biodiversity of the village and even include a detailed visitors map.

To expand their marketing, Uaxactún has appealed to both INGUAT and private tour companies to hand out brochures and feature information on their websites. Unfortunately, INGUAT only posts videos and provides marketing brochures about Uaxactún during the time of the Equinox Festival, once a year in late March. Also, outside of Uaxactún itself, only one private company, the Tourism Commission Office of

the Carmelita Cooperative, another community forest concession, located in Flores, possessed brochures and detailed information on traveling to Uaxactún. In order to address the absence of promotion and visitors, OMYC planned the first of several *intercambios* (exchange of ideas) in late July in San Pedro la Laguna, with the prominent cooperative ecotourism guide company, *Rupalaj Kistalin* (translate to English). *Rupalaj Kistalin* is based out of San Juan la Laguna on the shores of Lake Atitlán and consists of 17 guides who live in the community and take patrons on numerous tours that are meant to protect the community's cultural heritage, flora, and fauna while educating tourists about their community and environment. These tours include demonstrations of the Maya corn planting ceremony, hikes to nearby vistas and archaeological sites, and tours of coffee cooperatives, organic medicinal gardens, art galleries, an apiary, cacao production demonstrations, and backstrap weaving textile demonstrations. According to Juan Ariel Pop Sanchez, the President of OMYC's Tourism Commission, "We hope to learn from the initiatives in San Juan La Laguna and replicate them here in Uaxactún. We view *Rupalaj Kistalin* as a similar model of tourism development in regards to community owned and managed cultural and eco tours" (interview, July 25, 2019). He and other representatives of OMYC claimed that the hiking tours and maize planting tour offered by *Rupalaj Kistalin* could be expanded upon and incorporated within Uaxactún's tourism framework.

Chicle and Xate Harvesting Demonstration

Owing to the history of the community and its reliance on NTFPs, two of the most highly marketable, potential tourism products include community tour demonstrations that explain the history, importance, and harvesting of *chicle* and *xate*. *Chicle*, the white

resin used to make chewing gum that initially put Uaxactún on the map, is harvested from the *sapodilla* tree using few tools and bold climbing abilities. During the tourism demonstration, I observed the *chiclero* explained how he had been working in the industry for 40 years as he carefully placed his gear on the forest floor in front of us. Crampons that cover his boots, a long coil of rope for back support, and a machete... that is all.



FIGURE 4 (Left): *Chicle* Demonstration.

Source: Cody Silveira (July 27, 2019)

FIGURE 5 (Right): OMYC Guide Explaining *Xate* Production.

Source: Cody Silveira (July 27, 2019)

Before ascending a chosen *sapodilla* tree, he taps the trunk then makes a small cut near the base. A bright pink inner bark is revealed as the tree begins bleeding what locals call “white gold.” He then nails a bag below the incision while carefully placing a leaf to

act as a funneling agent from the incision to the bag. Since the creation of a synthetic alternative, *chicle* now has taken a much smaller role in Uaxactún's economy. Our *chiclero* tour guide explained that he would not cut anymore of the trees because he did not want to severely damage them during a time when *chicle* production is low and the season has not commenced. This did not stop him from wrapping the rope coil around the tree and then his back as he proceeded to lean backwards and scale 30 feet up the trunk. From his dangling leaned position amidst the canopy he shouted down, "To climb one of the tallest trees in the tropics one must scale 40 meters sometimes!" Not only must the machete incisions be precise so as to not damage the tree or waste any of the precious sap, but it is imperative that the *chiclero* avoids seriously injuring himself from a wild swing or a false step that could result in a catastrophic freefall.

Regarding *xate* palm harvesting in Uaxactún, three species of understory palms of the genus *Chaemadore*: *xate hembra*, *xate macho*, and *cola de pescado* serve as the primary NTFP industry of the village. These tropical palms are cultivated throughout the Central American tropics for a variety of uses including flower bouquets, fruit parcels, edible arrangements, and most commonly, as the palms used during Catholic Palm Sunday processions. The palms are highly sought after for their market reliability and the fact that they retain its green hue for up to two months. Additionally, the palms grow year-round throughout the Central American rainforests, and only the best leaves from each palm, free of any blemishes, mushrooms, and holes, are picked. On the *xate* tour, tourists learn about the sustainable extraction of the product and visit all sites of collection and production as part of community and ecotourism activities (see Figure 4). In the *Bodega de Xate*, the leaves are then tied together and bundled in packages of 30

before being shipped off to the U.S. I was informed that Miami was the primary port of call for Uaxactún's *xate*. The harvesting of this unique plant is village wide industry requiring men to harvest and transport the crop to the *Bodega de Xate* while women select, wrap, and ship the leaves each day from the facility. The community has achieved sustainable extraction of this palm through its selective harvesting and replanting efforts which have resulted in a continuous industry and heightened environmental stewardship amongst the villagers.

Biking and Trekking Tours

Table 1: OMYC GUIDED TOURS			
Name	Prices	Length	Includes:
Bicycle Tour: Tikal-Uaxactún- Tikal	\$190 for 1 person \$239 for 2 people \$339 for 4 people \$436 for 6 people	1 day	Guide Lunch Bicycle Vehicle Transport at End
Bicycle Tour: Uaxactún and Mirador Cerro de la Mula	\$116 per person	1 day	Guide Bicycle

Table 1 Continued			
Culture and Biodiversity Tour: Uaxactún	\$103 for 1 person \$62 for 2 people \$42 for 4 people \$35 for 6 people	1 day	Guide All Meals
Uaxactún: Past and Present Tour	\$194 for 1 person \$119 for 2 people \$81 for 4 people \$68 for 6 people	2 days 1 night	Guide All meals and accommodations
Uaxactún-Tikal Tour: 1 day	\$132 for 1 person \$152 for 2 people \$160 for any additional people	1 day	Guide Entrance Fees Transportation
Tikal- Uaxactún- Tikal	\$76 for 1 person \$83 for 2 people \$97 for 4 people \$111 for 6 people	1 day	Transportation Entrance Fees

Table 1 Continued			
Uaxactún-Tikal Tour	\$160 for 1 person \$169 for 2 people \$186 for 4 people \$195 for 6 people	2 days, 1 night	Guide Transportation All meals and accommodations
Uaxactún-Rio Azul-Nacthun Tour	\$256 per person \$1,538 for 6 people	3 days, 2 nights	Guide Transportation All Meals Shared Tents
Uaxactún-Nakbe-Mirador Tour 6 days 5 nights	\$410 per person \$2460 for 6 people	6 days 5 nights	Guide Transportation All Meals Shared Tents
Uaxactún- El Zotz-Tikal Tour	\$258 per person \$1549 for 6 people	3 days, 2 nights	Guide Transportation Entrance Fees All Meals Shared Tents

For the solo traveler, the multi-day treks may seem expensive, but upon further inquiry, it is revealed that OMYC requires at least a four-person minimum in order to run these tours. By compounding the prices across more people, these tours become highly conducive and quite reasonable for backpacking groups to take advantage of during their time in Uaxactún. It is also worth noting that the bicycle tours to Tikal and Cerro de la Mula, transit along several miles of unpaved road, through thick rainforest which harbors thousands of endemic plant and animal species. If greater promotion and awareness of the availability of these tours were provided to visitors outside the community or even in Flores, the potential for attracting small groups of budget outdoor recreation enthusiasts would justify keeping the profits reasonable and instill initiative to expand similar tours for similar clientele.

Festival of the Equinox

The Festival of the Equinox, which is Uaxactún's most popular tourist attraction, was first broadcasted to a wider audience when OMYC and its Tourism Board, several NGOS, including Association Balam, Rainforest Alliance, and ACOFOP, began a large promotional advertisement campaign in the form of television commercials and brochures to instill interest in the event. Held every March 21 since 2010, the festival attracts several thousand national and international tourists to the village to witness the sunrise at Site E. Built in the Pre-Classic period around 700BC, Site E contains an astronomical observatory, consisting of three temples that were constructed in accordance with the movements of the direct sunrise at particular days of the year. In the thick underbrush of the Petén forests, the Maya, absent of the conveniences of the wheel, beasts of burden, and dynamite, constructed these temples out of slabs of porous,

congruent limestone. Under casual examination, much of the underlying karst topography resembles one large contiguous plate, whose separation for ancient building materials confounds easy answers. During the equinoxes at Uaxactún, the ceremony that held highest precedence was the annual spring planting and autumnal harvesting of the most sacred of crops, maize. Existing in four varieties, red, blue, yellow, and white, this often-overlooked pod kernel is the most widely grown vegetable worldwide, contributing billions of dollars to global agribusiness. To the Maya, maize was not just a staple crop, but divinely sacred and believed to be the first material utilized by the gods to craft early humans (Thompson 2005). To observe the movements of the sun, the Maya constructed an astronomical observatory at Uaxactún consisting of three temples (See Figure 6).

The sunrise occurs over the centermost structure during both equinoxes, thus ushering in the sun's gradual assurance of either prolonged toil or a longer siesta. Every spring equinox, the temples still relay to the villagers when to plant their mother seeds and then once again, during the autumnal equinox, to return to harvest them. Without modern technology these astronomical temples were based purely off of naked-eye

observations and daily calculations. The splendor of such architectural achievement and the annual spring equinox remain Uaxactún's largest and most organized event.



FIGURE 6: Uaxactun's Preclassic Maya Observatory. Source: Cody Silveira (July 29, 2019).

Despite encompassing Uaxactún's single largest tourist attraction, the event is still overshadowed by other nearby sites and cannot reap the vast sums of wealth that were originally predicted. Of primary emphasis is the fact that OMYC, ACOFOP, and Association Balam are the only organizations that work directly with the community, and as such, are routinely tasked with organizing and putting on the event each year. Unfortunately, the organizations are largely understaffed and underfunded for such a task, especially due to the sheer numbers that descend upon the tiny village. Accommodations often become overbooked with the majority of tourists being focused to choose to camp or shorten their stay. Nevertheless, for two to three days, the community becomes alive with tourists who partake in locally prepared cuisine, listen to

marimba music, witness traditional dance troupes, tour the archeology sites, inject money into the village's artisanal industries, listen to *xate* and *chicle* demonstrations, and observe renditions of the celebrated Maya Ball game, *Pok ta Tok*. This event greatly provides large amounts of financial capital to the community, but due to the infrequency of the event (occurring as it does, only once per year) lack of accommodations, and adequate support for the community to plan and prepare for the event, the event's true potential, popularity, and subsequent profits are short lived.

El Chiclero Museum

Another little known and highly underrated tourism service in Uaxactún is a museum hosted at El Chiclero Hotel and owned and managed by Neria Herrera. The collection consists of a vast array of Classic and Pre-Classic Mayan artifacts including pottery, statues, and even jewelry. Throughout the 1970s – 1980s, a period infamously remembered by residents of the Petén as the *fiebre de saqueo*, the sacking fever, tomb raiders and thieves would steal artifacts such as vases, jade, and pottery from miscellaneous sites and sell them for profit (Devine 2013). To combat this, Neria, her brother Tono, and Neria's late husband, who at the time were employed as *chicleros*, hired other gum harvesters working in the forest to find vessels, plates, pots, and other artifacts and bring them to Uaxactún. Tono, Neria, and her husband recovered 95 pieces during the *fiebre de saqueo*, and soon an idea was conceived for the establishment of a worthy place to display these rare artifacts.



FIGURE 7: Artifacts at the Chicleros Worker's Museum. Source: Cody Silveira (July 29, 2020).

In 1995, a Master's student of Museumology named Sofia Pareades advised Doña Neria to register her collection of 95 pieces with the Guatemala Institute of Archaeology and History. Through Sofia and Gloria's efforts, The Chicleros Museum opened on December 9, 1995 with 95 of its pieces officially documented and registered with the formal institution (Devine 2013). From then on, the *chicleros* and others would continue to donate various artifacts they would find thus inhibiting further looting of archaeological sites. As a token of gratitude, honey, pounds of beans, and tortillas were given to the *chicleros* who provided Tono and Neria with artifacts. The museum currently possesses 576 registered pieces. Unlike any museum that I have ever previously visited, the owners allow patrons to physically examine and intimately interact with the artifacts while demonstrating how to properly handle them. Tono and Neria also possessed intimate knowledge of the artifacts' uses and artistic motifs within Maya society. Despite this rare experience, I was only able to view a small sample of the

collection while staying in Uaxactún. The vast majority of the collection, in all its extravagance and splendor, had to be kept in large plastic containers and stored in a separate room. According to Neria, a friend of hers in the United States has been attempting to acquire funding to construct an actual building that will house the entirety of these artifacts on display, but this project has been “in the works” for many years now. As of now, little signs of infrastructural updates and improvements seem feasible or pursuable in the near future.

Challenges and Barriers to Ecotourism in Uaxactún

Greater Promotional Involvement

Of greatest imperative to making tourism a viable economic supplement to timber extraction and NTFPs like *xate* and *ramon*, is the need for greater promotion of Uaxactún as an ecotourist destination. During the creation of the forest concession in 2000, agreements between INGUAT and Uaxactún were established giving promotional responsibilities to INGUAT, however to this day, the organization fails to uphold this promise. Unfortunately, promoting agencies and private companies in both Tikal and Flores have also expressed disinterest in working with Uaxactún to conceptualize broader advertisement and promotion campaigns. Both INGUAT and private companies believe that their efforts and allotted funds have not assisted in altering the present absence of tourists who visit the village due to a perceived lack of activities and accommodations. In addition, utilizing OMYC led guiding services versus outside tour companies, has become difficult with many of these companies bypassing the usage of local guides and only contributing to the restaurants for an afternoon.

Simultaneously, INGUAT has failed to adequately support Uaxactún's marketing campaigns year round, and has instead chosen to focus its attention to other more lucrative, emerging tourism destinations. According to Kathleen Aquart Orellana, an INGUAT representative from Region VIII Petén who is critical of the lack of investment, "At the moment, INGUAT certified tour guiding companies based out of Flores are solely interested in promoting tours to El Mirador, Tikal, and Yaxhá. These sites possess a greater "wow factor" and are much larger sites than Uaxactún" (interview July 29, 2019). Although Uaxactún does possess the potential to attract significantly larger tourism numbers, its activities and conservation initiatives remain little-known outside the community due to brochures and a website in need of updated information reflective of tour availability and prices.

Security Issues and Travel Advisories

Typically, foreigners who hear of Guatemala via the news or the classroom, are often relayed stories of poverty, the War on Drugs, rapid deforestation, and the migrant crisis. Guatemala has received negative press coverage in the United States and abroad, which is further emphasized when one delves into the current crime statistics. According to the Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), Guatemala experienced a murder rate of 22 murders per 100,000 in 2018, which is approximately four times higher than the United States. OSAC also reports that violent crime in Guatemala is slightly down from previous years and that crimes against tourists are comparatively rare. They cite that in 2018, 2.4 million registered tourists visited the country and there were only 195 recorded instances of crimes, the majority of which were robberies (OSAC 2019). Despite the unlikelihood of tourists being victims of crime, the

United States Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs has issued a travel advisory for the country since February 18, 2019. The advisory lists several departments, including the Petén where Uaxactún is located, as areas where armed robbery and murder are common and gang activity, such as extortion, violent street crime, and narcotics trafficking, is widespread. It is advised that tourists who visit the country do not use public transportation and states that local police may be unwilling or ineffective in responding to and processing crimes (Travel.State.Gov 2019).

In Uaxactún, the majority of the villagers do believe security is a nationwide issue that threatens tourism development as a whole. Although INGUAT agrees to assist OMYC with any security concerns that may arise, they have done little if anything to support the organization. Currently in the village, internet and satellite phones are not connected all the time, leading to longer response times for security forces. According to Neria Herrera, owner of the *El Chiclero* Hotel and Museum, “Yes, in Uaxactún there is an obligation to have security in the community for the people that come here and the tourists that come. There are people that always do what they want to do. It is the obligation of the government to protect and ensure the safety of its citizens as well as the tourists” (interview, August 3, 2019). Nevertheless, the only real security provided by the government is a small convoy of heavily armed security guards from Tikal who visit Uaxactún’s ruins once every few weeks and, sometimes, even less frequently than that. Upon departing from the village, I learned that a group of Slovak archaeologists had some of their food and equipment stolen from them in the middle of the night.

More often than not, common sense, practical thinking, and abstaining from excessive amounts of alcohol or refraining from purchasing and consuming illegal drugs

allows travelers to fully enjoy their travel experience. The U.S. State Department provides a wealth of information to advise travelers on steps to take when abroad, that when contemplated briefly, are not unlike the normal precautions one might take in their home country. For example, visitors to Guatemala are advised to not carry large sums of cash on your person and to always use ATMs in reputable locations such as banks or grocery stores. Additionally, one should not drive or travel long distances at night and reconsider accompanying strangers in their vehicles to unknown locations. In short, security is an issue that negatively affects tourism development because insecurity affects every dynamic of life in Guatemala. However, providing regular tourism micro-bus transportation from Flores to Uaxactún at least twice a day would address many of the security concerns and dangers tourists face, which are often the result of taking unfamiliar, irregular public transport.

Road Condition and Accessibility

Another problem further inhibiting tourism growth in Uaxactún is restricted access due to the condition of the road connecting the village to Flores and the inefficiency of public transportation. Currently, there is only one road that connects Uaxactún to the outside world, and at its present condition, can only accommodate vehicles with 4x4 wheel drive. During periods of intense rain, the road becomes difficult to pass due to the levels of mud that accumulate. When the road is passable and tourists arrive at Uaxactún, OMYC charges an entrance fee to the archeology site, but the fee price varies and is sometimes not even collected at all. In my case, I found out several days later from an outside guide that such a fee even existed. Additionally, OMYC, in past years, has repeatedly voted against paving the access road for fear that the a paved

road would result in animal and driver deaths. More recently though, OMYC and members of the community have expressed interest in paving the road despite this concern, believing it would allow easier access to medical facilities in Flores and ultimately increase tourism revenues (Juska and Koenig 2006).

Despite the road quality, the public bus runs daily service between Flores and Uaxactún, however, it only picks passengers up at 7:00 am in Flores and returns from the village at 5:30 in the evening. In 2018, collaborations with several public bus agencies to establish a mini-bus pilot plan that would expand pick up and drop off times between Flores and Uaxactún in the morning and afternoon failed to come to fruition. One agency did agree to the plan, but then retracted its agreement explaining that its company would only bring one or two tourists at a time, which the community disagreed to because such small-scale tourism did not allow the community to cover their costs. Today, tourists without accommodations, or who only plan on visiting the village for the day, must ultimately resort to purchasing private transportation from one of many tour companies based out of Flores. These companies charge anywhere from \$78 to over \$100 USD for a single trip which includes a private guide who works for the company. Many in Uaxactún agree that the public bus needs to run more frequently than just in the mornings and late afternoons. The lack of transportation not only affects tourists, who typically feel rushed during their brief early morning or afternoon tours, but also create a detriment to villagers who need to commute to the urban area during emergencies or to conduct business.

Salary Discrepancies and Guide Experience

Another challenge of concern into making tourism a viable economic sector in Uaxactún lies within discrepancies in the quality of the guide services and the infrequent accruelement of salaries. *EcoGuias* is not taken very seriously outside of the organization due to the age restrictions and subsequent perceived inexperience. Despite the positive impacts of training villagers within Uaxactún to become licensed and knowledgeable guides, the benefits could be more equitable and consistent. As part of the forestry concession agreements, government issued salaries are sometimes delayed or largely absent from both parties. Meanwhile, the money tour guides collect from their tours and demonstrations is often appropriated upwards in order to pay concession rent fees, taxes, or social services. This situation with salary payments prohibits community members from earning a consistent living from tourism, and much of the community, even those working within OMYC, often live in poverty while paying taxes. If the *xateros* and other community members are lucky they will receive 150 to 300 quetzales during a tourism demonstration. In dollar amounts this equates to approximately \$19-\$40 dollars a day.

Desire for Multilingual Guides

One overlooked and often difficult to inherently solve facet of tourism development involves the absence of multilingual guides within the community, especially those that speak English. In 2019, travelers from the United States consisted of 35% of all inbound arrivals, far surpassing Guatemala's closest neighbors, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico (WTTC 2020). Many national parks, guiding services, and accommodations have realized the importance of learning English to better

accommodate and educate their guests and as a result either hire only bilingual guides or include free English lessons for all of their employees. In the case of Uaxactún, an English teacher visited the community for 6 months and taught English to the guides and OMYC representatives, but like in many other cases around the country, retention levels and length of English teaching services remain significantly low. A villager named Rolando España helped put this into perspective when he said “Learning English can be an advantage or disadvantage, for a guide of the community. I have spoken to many tourists that speak five or six languages and they always ask me how many languages I personally know. I have spoken to tourists that know English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese. There are people that know a lot. I only know Spanish” (interview July 28, 2019). Although the citizens of the United States embody a large percentage of Guatemala’s tourism industry, tourists from throughout Europe have consistently ranked second or third in number of arrivals (WTTC 2020). With that being said, English has become a secondary language taught throughout the world, a quarter of Earth’s population speak it, and now as it stands, asserts itself as the third most spoken language on Earth and the global language of business, a phenomena that I argue will continue to greatly impact community based ecotourism promotion and development for years to come.

Necessity for Greater Variety of Accommodations and Restaurants

An issue severely limiting overnight stays and larger tourism numbers is the greater necessity for more accommodations and restaurants. Reyes David De Leon Cambranes, a social promoter of ACOFOP and biologist stated “If there are students or biologists who want to go to the forest to investigate, they have to have accommodations

with all their services and food provided” (interview, July 24, 2019). Additionally, the tourist family I interviewed, believed that more accommodations with running water and electricity could attract several high school or college student study abroad groups to spend several weeks in the community, studying history and archaeology. Currently, visitors who wish to stay at least one night in Uaxactún have the choice between El Chiclero Hotel, Posada Aldana, Hospedaje Eben-Ezer, El Campamento Campsites, and Don Elfido’s Bungalows. Although this may seem like an extensive list, only El Chiclero Hotel provides private bathrooms, electricity, showers, two meals per day, and laundry service. Additionally, El Chiclero Hotel and Aldana’s Lodge are the only lodgings that can accommodate twenty to thirty guests while the other more rustic campsite, hostel, and bungalow can only accommodate six to eight guests. If one is not staying at El Chiclero or visiting Uaxactún for an afternoon, they have a choice between two restaurants: El Comedor Imperial and El Comedor Uaxactún. Both *comedor* (diner) establishments serve as typical dining experiences found within many rural villages throughout Guatemala in that menus are not provided and the availability of meat and certain produce can vary by restaurant and time of year.

Battle for Development of El Mirador Basin

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to community and ecotourism in Uaxactún lies not in the community itself, but rather on how the community’s tourism activities relate (or not) to the Guatemalan state and private sector’s plans for national tourism development. The community forest concessions which give Uaxactún residents control over forestry, tourism, and all economic activities in their concession are seen by many in the government and private sector as a barrier to large scale tourism development of the

area. In this section, I conclude by arguing that one of the greatest challenges to community tourism development in Uaxactún is competing interests in the government and private sector to develop the Maya Biosphere focusing on archaeology, ecotourism, and the El Mirador archaeological site that exclude MBR communities. As outlined in the historical section of this project, the territorial battles between forest concessionaires, like people from Uaxactún, and outside interests over tourism development came to a head in the year 2000 when the integrity of community concessions and the land rights of foresters were severely threatened by a presidential decree that expanded the borders of the Mirador-Rio Azul National Park into the forest concessions of Uaxactún and Carmelita (Devine 2018, Clipston 2019). This threat continues today and manifests itself within government and private sector interests disinvesting in community tourism as they choose to pursue larger economic and territorial ambitions.

Most recently, in 2020, a bill known as S.3131 has been introduced to the United States Senate to invigorate justification for yet another massive conservation project in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, only this time the effects will reach far beyond Guatemala's national boundaries. Dr. Richard Hansen's Foundation for Anthropological Research and Environmental Studies (FARES) and its associates initiated the bill who have successfully lobbied The Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security and Conservation Partnership to senators Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, Tom Udall of New Mexico, and Jim Risch of Idaho (Clipston 2020). Introduced on December 19, 2019, the bill's funding would be through donations to FARES who claim the development project will serve as both a deterrent to narcotics trafficking, corruption, petroleum extraction, palm oil interests, and mass undocumented migration while initiating poverty alleviation,

conservation, and large tourism revenues (Clipston 2020). This project would include hundreds of miles of hiking trails, a 31-mile rail network that connects nine archaeological sites, museums, visitors centers, restaurants, water collection facilities, a collection of privately managed hotels, and armed rangers that are all prepared to accommodate and protect unprecedented numbers of tourists (Clipston 2019).

It is worth mentioning, if the bill is passed, that Dr. Hansen's project will gain 1158 miles of land to be designated as a Wilderness Area which will extend into the forest concession and neighboring Mexico (Clipston 2019, Clipston 2020). This classification will severely restrict human activities and virtually halt all sustainable forestry practices that have been in place since the beginning of the 21st century (Devine 2018, Clipston 2019). Additionally, FARES and its partners possess no formal agreements with the governments of both Mexico or Guatemala who already have conservation laws and institutions in place to manage the Maya Biosphere Reserve and its multitude of Mayan sites (Clipston 2020). Currently under debate in Congress, the Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security & Conservation Partnership Act, if passed, will use U.S. taxpayer money to fund the conservation vision of Dr. Hansen and his colleagues and jeopardize the conservation model and livelihoods of community foresters. The project threatens the land rights and to impoverish approximately 26,000 inhabitants. This bill would negatively impact security by threatening the community forest concessions whose members' work deters the spread of illicit industries and land grabbing by outside actors (Clipston 2019).

To address the paradox of a lack of tourism development in Uaxactún despite its proximity to the World Heritage Site of Tikal, this project has evaluated the history,

benefits, successes, and challenges of past development strategies, as well as contemporary tourism products and marketing strategies in Uaxactún's tourism sector. Through interviews, participant observations, and archival research, I have identified the benefits for developing community tourism in Uaxactún as improving gender relations and employment opportunities for women, strengthening land rights, providing educational and medical services, instilling cooperative based marketing programs, and raising incomes. I further outlined the community's current strategies and most marketable tourism products as *xate* palm and *chicle* gum demonstrations, biking and trekking tours to Uaxactún and other ruins, the Festival of the Equinox, and the El Chiclero Museum. Finally, the factors that are the most influential in preventing or hindering growth within the archeology and community tourism sectors in Uaxactún are a lack of promotional initiatives, security, and transportation complications. Further issues hindering development include salary discrepancies, a desire for more multilingual guides, and a need for more accommodations and restaurants. However, the largest challenge to community and ecotourism development is the potential threat that would eliminate the forestry concession model that protects Uaxactún residents' land rights. If these land rights are relinquished, the villagers' roles as managers and decisions in any future tourism development that occurs in their 83,000 hectare forest concession, which neighbors the grand Maya archeology site of El Mirador in the Mirador-Rio Azul National Park, would disappear, raising questions on the future of conservation within the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

For forest communities like Uaxactún, tourism was never intended to be the focus of economic development. Tourism itself is a service industry that fluctuates based on time of year, current national security, and broader global-political relations as they pertain to conservation and land management. The community's forestry contract was meant first and foremost to secure land rights for the community if they agreed to practice non-timber sustainable harvesting practices and implement conservation initiatives, such as tree replanting efforts and limited timber extraction. Milsa Jualip, a Uaxactún tourism promoter explained, "It all comes down to whether or not we extend our forestry concession. If it does not get renewed, all of us in the community would have to work for the state in tourism, but this means the state must invest in more tourism services to employ those who live here and do not work in tourism. Since we are a model of forestry concession, this would be taken away and with it, many who directly benefit from working as a part of the concession" (interview July 23, 2019). This Uaxcatun resident speaks for many of the villagers who face a precarious, uncertain future if their concession is not renewed in 2025.

Although the first forest concession of Carmelita was renewed in 2020, the best hopes for Uaxactún and the other forestry concessions are to continuously lobby the government and prove that their model of joint forestry and supplemented ecotourism initiatives can alleviate poverty, serve as a buffer to illicit and private industries, influence environmental conservation activism, and educate the public on both the history and vitality of the community and its Mayan ruins. This will prove even more difficult in the coming months as the Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security & Conservation

Partnership Act remains up for debate in the U.S. Congress while private interests continue to envision large scale development as a solution to many of the problems facing the Mirador Basin. Meanwhile, INGUAT and the Guatemalan government's current tourism development initiatives remain primarily focused on the promotion and investment within larger archaeological sites, while villages like Uaxactún remain overlooked and seen as barriers to those goals. According to David Salguero, a Tourism Promoter for ACOFOP, "It is that our government does not care about the communities to allow them to grow and develop socially and economically. If the concessions are terminated it is better for the government because they will be able to take more land and they will gain more from tourism attractions without thinking about the impact on the forest communities" (interview, July 16, 2019). For Uaxactún, an improvement within its marketing sector combined with investments in increased public transportation as well as accommodation upgrades, may be the most viable solutions to attracting more tourists to the village. If completed, Uaxactún can then appeal to the Guatemalan government that its legally binding forest concessions should be renewed, while its unique model, which emphasizes NTFP harvesting, ecotourism, and conservation can exist without the eviction of large groups of people, and be looked upon by future tourism development initiatives both inside and outside Guatemala as worthy of replication.

REFERENCES

- Allen L. William. (August 1996). Emerging Mexico: A Special Issue. "National Geographic," 190 (2).
- Alvarez Marina and Lorcan French. (2006). *Planning for Ecotourism in Uaxactún*. (Masters Thesis). The University of Michigan. Retrieved March 3, 2020 from <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/49234>.
- Argueta, Al. *Moon Guatemala*. Berkeley, California: Avalon a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015.
- Bocci, C., Fortmann, L., Sohngen, B., & Milian, B. (2018). "The impact of community forest concessions on income: an analysis of communities in the Maya Biosphere Reserve". *World Development*, 107, 10-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.02.011>
- Brockington, D. Dan. *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve*. Bloomington Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2002.
- Buckley, Ralf, and Peter Mason. "Neat Trends: Current Issues in Nature, Eco- and Adventure Tourism." *International Journal of Tourism Research* 2, no. 6 (2000): 437-444.
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.libproxy.txstate.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=1c38d87b-03c6-4c55-8fb8-0382d60524c9%40sessionmgr104>
- Charmaz, K. (2008). "Grounded theory methods in social justice research." In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds), *Handbook of Emergent Methods*., New York: pp. 155-172.
- Clipston, Teena. *JUNGLE THEME PARK THREATENS CONSERVATION EFFORTS Forestry Concessions vs. the Wilderness Area proposal*. October 26, 2019. Maya Biosphere Watch. <https://mayabiospherewatch.com/jungle-theme-park-threatens-conservation-efforts/>
- Clipston, Teena. *The Emperor has no clothes: Archaeologist Richard D. Hansen and what they don't know in Washington*. February 2, 2020. TeenaClipston.com. <https://teenacipston.com/richard-d-hansen-and-what-they-dont-know-in-washington/>
- Coe, D. Michael and Stephen D. Houston. *The Maya: Ancient Peoples and Places*, 9th edition, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015.
- Cope, M. (2010). "Coding transcripts and diaries," in N. Clifford, S. French, and G. Valentine, eds. *Key Methods in Geography*, 2nd ed., London: Sage, pp. 440- 452

- Das Madhumita and Bani Chatterjee. 2015. "Ecotourism: A panacea or a predicament?" ScienceDirect Tourism Management Perspectives, 14:1, 1-14, https://ac.els-cdn.com/S2211973615000185/1-s2.0-S2211973615000185-main.pdf?_tid=c66911e4-0674-47b8-af4e-a090c014d9da&acdnat=1543183886_3d357231c9d32aa2ae7bff1ec346f280
- Davis, Shelton H., and Alaka Wali. "Indigenous Land Tenure and Tropical Forest Management in Latin America." *Ambio* 23, no. 8 (1994): 485-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314265>.
- De Mente Lafayette Boyé. *There's a Word for It in Mexico*. Chicago: NTC Publishing, 1996.
- Devine, Jennifer. (2013). *Tourism and Territory in the Mayan World*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Berkeley. Retrieved April 6, 2019 from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5727x51w>.
- Devine, Jennifer. 2016. "Colonizing Space and Commodifying Place: Tourism's Violent Geographies." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 1-18, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2016.1226849
- Devine, Jennifer. 2016. "Contesting Global Heritage in the Chicle Workers' Museum." *Latin America Research Review* 51(3):101-122, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2016.0036>
- Devine, Jennifer A. 2017. "Politics of Post-War Tourism in Guatemala: Contested Identities, Histories, and Futures." *L'Espace Politique* 1(28): 1-21 <https://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/3723>
- Devine, Jennifer. 2018. "Community forest concessionaires: resisting green grabs and producing political subjects in Guatemala." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 566-584, DOI: DOI:10.1080/03066150.2016.1215305
- Division de Desarrollo Agexport. (2016, May 19). *Uaxactun - the place that stamps time* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWkEv7mh0UA&feature=emb_title
- Document of the Inter-American Development Bank Multilateral Investment Fund. *GUATEMALA ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF A TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE NORTHERN CLUSTER OF THE CUATRO BALAM AREA IN PETÉN*. 2009: <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=EZSHARE-1268968091-208>
- Donohoe, H. M., and R. D. Needham. "Ecotourism: The Evolving Contemporary Definition." *Journal of Ecotourism* 5, no. 3 (2006): 192-210.

- Finger-Stich, A. (2003). Community concessions and certification in the Maya Biosphere Reserve. In E. Meidinger, C. Elliott, & G. Oesten (Eds.), *Social and political dimensions of forest certification*. Remagen-Oberwinter: Kessel.
- Fletcher, Robert. *Romancing the Wild: Cultural Dimensions of Ecotourism*. Duke, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Fortmann K. Lea. (2014). *Assessing Factors that Contribute to Reduced Deforestation and Successful Community Forest Management in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve*. (Doctoral dissertation). The Ohio State University. Retrieved March 3, 2020 from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1406206364&disposition=inline.
- Franz Carl and Lorena Havens. *The People's Guide to Mexico*. Berkeley, California: Avalon a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2012.
- Garrett E. Wilbur. (October 1989). La Ruta Maya. "National Geographic," 176 (4), 424-505.
- GDT Consultores en Turismo. (2010). *Plan de desarrollo del producto turístico para el cluster norter del area Cuatro Balam, Petén*. Programa BID/FOMIN: Definición y Gestión de un Destino Turístico en el Cluster Norte del Area Cuatro Balam en Petén. Programa BID/FOMIN.
- Haller, T., Galvin, M., Meroka, P., Alca, J., & Alvarez, A. 2008. "Who Gains From Community Conservation? Intended and Unintended Costs and Benefits of Participative Approaches in Peru and Tanzania." *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 17(2), 118–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1070496508316853>
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). "Black Feminist Epistemology," *Black Feminist Thought*. New York, Routledge: pp. 251- 271.
- Inter-American Development Bank. *Central America After Hurricane Mitch: The Challenge of Turning a Disaster into an Opportunity* Inter American Development Bank Report. 2000. https://web.archive.org/web/20051219114814/http://www.iadb.org/regions/re2/consultative_group/backgroundunder2.htm
- Juska Claudette and Cynthia Koenig. (2006). *PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN UAXACTUN, GUATEMALA*. (Masters Thesis). The University of Michigan. Retrieved March 3, 2020 from <http://erblegacy.snre.umich.edu/Research/Student-Research/PracticumUaxactun.pdf>
- LaPan, C., Morais D.B., Barbieri, C. and Wallace, T. 2016. Power, Altruism and Communitarian Tourism: A Comparative Study. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* 14 (4) 889-906.

- Koeppel, Dan. *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit That Changed the World*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009.
- Lawson, Victoria. *Making Development Geography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Lyon, Sarah. "Coffee Tourism and Community Development in Guatemala." *Human Organization* 72, no. 3 (2013): 188-98. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44148712>
- Macleod, D. V. L. 2001. "Parks or People? National Parks and the Case of Del Este, Dominican Republic." *Progress in Development Studies* 1 (3): 221-235. doi:10.1191/146499301701571462. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/218138983>.
- Mbaiwa E. Joseph & Amanda L. Stronza. 2010. "The effects of tourism development on rural livelihoods in the Okavango Delta, Botswana." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18:5, 635-656, DOI: 10.1080/09669581003653500
- Mohan, Giles and Kristian Stokke. 2000. " Participatory Development and Empowerment: The Dangers of Localism." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2 247-268. <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/stable/pdf/3993419.pdf?refreqid%3Dexcelior%253A5acddc89a51104adcef4e8250879330a>
- Mowforth, Martin and Ian Munt. *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World*, 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Nations, J. D. *The Maya tropical forest: People, parks, & ancient cities*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996.
- Neto, Frederico. 2003. "A new approach to sustainable tourism development: Moving Beyond Environmental Protection." *Natural Resources Forum*. 27. 212 - 222. 10.1111/1477-8947.00056.
- Paige, J. M. *Coffee and power: Revolution and the rise of democracy in Central America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pellecer Robles, G. *Petén, FYDEP y yo: Historia de Petén*. Guatemala City: Ediciones Litoprologia, 2010.
- Rainforest Alliance. August 16, 2018. *Community: The Secret to Stopping Deforestation in Guatemala*. <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/articles/community-the-secret-to-stopping-deforestation-in-guatemala> (March 5, 2020).

- Recovery of Historical Memory Project (REHMI). *Recovery of historical memory project: The official report of the human rights office, archdiocese of Guatemala*. New York: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Schlesinger Stephen and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005.
- Schwartz, N. B. *Forest society: A social history of Petén, Guatemala*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.
- Sharer Robert J. *The Ancient Maya*. 6th edition. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Sharpley, Richard. 2000. "Tourism and Sustainable Development: Exploring the Theoretical Divide, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*." 8:1, 1-19, DOI: 10.1080/09669580008667346
- Smith K. Melanie. *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*. London, Routledge, 2003.
- Sundberg, J. *Conservation encounters: NGOs, local people, and changing landscapes*. (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Texas, Austin, 1998.
- Thompson, E.J. "The Meaning of Maize for the Maya." pp. 86-91 in *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Gilbert Joseph and Timothy Henderson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Torres Maria Rebecca (2018) A crisis of rights and responsibility: feminist geopolitical perspectives on Latin American refugees and migrants, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25:1, 13-36, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2017.1414036
- Travel.State.gov U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs. 2020. *Guatemala International Travel Information*.
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Guatemala.html> (March 5, 2020).
- United States Department of State Overseas Advisory Security Council. February 28, 2019. *Guatemala 2019 Crime and Safety Report*.
<https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/5f31517e-62bb-4f2c-8956-15f4aeaab930> (March 5, 2020).
- Valladares, Danilo. Guatemala Halts Widely Praised Maya Biosphere Reserve Initiative. May 29, 2012: TierraAmerica Environment and Development.
<http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/05/guatemala-halts-widely-praised-maya-biosphere-reserve-initiative/>

West, Paige, and James G Carrier. "Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting Away from it all?" *Current anthropology* 45, no. 4 (2004): 483-498.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/422082>

West, Paige, James Igoe, and Dan Brockington. 2006. "Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35:1 251-277.
<https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/stable/pdf/25064924.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A94a120f61a896e411d8bf16430ad119d>

World Travel and Tourism Council. *Economic Impact Report 2020 Country / Region DATA*: World Travel and Tourism Council. <https://wttc.org/en-us/Research/Economic-Impact>