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PH. D. Thesis

**The Use of Mayan Rainforests for Ecotourism Development:
An empowerment approach for local communities**

Presented for Doctor of Philosophy

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Submitted November 2012

STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

The work in this thesis is entirely my own and have been assisted and improved with feedback from my advisory team at James Cook University. In particular, my principal supervisor, Prof. Bruce Prideaux, and my former supervisor Dr. Heather Zeppel who have assisted me with the structure of my research and also helped me with issues related to the edition of my thesis, to the point of getting a journal paper published, a contribution with a book chapter, and three peer-reviewed papers of international conferences I attended in Australia, Brazil and Mexico.

This research was financed by the Mexican Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) and supplemented with funds from the School of Business and the Graduate Research School of James Cook University who facilitated fieldwork and the attendance of conferences related with my research. Additionally, a doctoral completion fund from James Cook University assisted me in writing and getting this Ph.D. thesis finished. Furthermore, assistance from James Cook University's staff, in particular from the School of Business in Cairns and in Townsville, and from the Graduate Research School helped in many ways to get this thesis completed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Chapter 1 Introduction to Research	3
1.1 Background to Research	5
1.2 Literature Review	9
1.3 Research Problem and Objectives	10
1.4 Limitations	11
1.5 Justification for Research	13
1.6 Methodology	15
1.7 Definitions	18
1.7.1 Empowerment	19
1.7.2 Sustainable Tourism Development	21
1.7.3 Community-Based Ecotourism	22
1.7.4 Ecotourism	23
1.7.5 Indigenous Tourism	24
1.8 Thesis Outline	25
1.9 Summary	26
Chapter 2 Literature Review	27
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Empowerment	29
2.2.1 Introduction	29
2.2.2 The Concept of Empowerment	30
2.2.3 Ecotourism and Empowerment of Local Communities	33
2.3 Sustainable Tourism Development	36
2.3.1 Introduction	36
2.3.2 The Concept of Sustainable Tourism Development	37
2.4 Community-Based Tourism	42
2.4.1 Introduction	42
2.4.2 The Concept of Community-Based Tourism	43
2.5 Ecotourism	47
2.5.1 Introduction	47
2.5.2 The Concept of Ecotourism	49
2.6 Indigenous Ecotourism	53
2.6.1 Introduction	53
2.6.2 The Concept of Indigenous Ecotourism	53
2.7 Tourism in Mayan Areas	57
2.7.1 Introduction	57
2.8 Chapter Discussion and Conclusion	62
Chapter 3 Methodology	65
3.1 Introduction	65
3.2 Research Paradigms	66
3.2.1 Critical Theory	68
3.2.2 Other Paradigms	69
3.3 Paradigm Selection	70
3.4 Research Framework	72
3.5 Research Methods	75

3.5.1 Qualitative Research	75
3.6 Research Design.....	76
3.6.1 Stage One	79
3.6.2 Stage Two	81
3.6.3 Stage Three.....	82
3.7 Study Protocols and Ethical Considerations.....	86
3.8 Rationale and Justification	88
Chapter 4 Case Study One: El Naranjo	90
4.1 Introduction.....	90
4.2 Research Context.....	91
4.2.1 Mexican Tourism Policy Context	92
4.2.2 Palenque World Heritage Site	94
4.2.3 El Naranjo Village	95
4.2 Limitations.....	97
4.3 Results.....	98
4.5 Chapter Discussion and Conclusion	102
Chapter 5 Case Study Two: Coba	107
5.1 Introduction.....	107
5.2 Research Context.....	108
5.3 Limitations.....	112
5.4 Results.....	112
5.5 Chapter Discussion.....	119
5.6 Chapter Conclusion	122
Chapter 6 Case Study Three: Uaxactun	124
6.2 Research Context.....	124
6.2.1 Political Context in the Study Site	127
6.2.2 Uaxactun	131
6.3 Results.....	138
6.4 Chapter Discussion.....	145
6.5 Chapter Conclusion	151
Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusions.....	153
7.1 Introduction.....	153
7.2 Thesis Purpose	158
7.2.1 Accomplishment of Objective One.....	158
7.2.2 Accomplishment of Objective Two.....	161
7.2.3 Accomplishment of Objective Three	174
7.2.4 Accomplishment of Objective Four	181
7.2.5 Accomplishment of Objective Five	182
7.3 Conclusions.....	186
References.....	193

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Framework to determine the impacts of ecotourism initiatives on local communities	35
Table 2.2 Indigenous tourism defined.....	55
Table 3.1 Empowerment framework base don Scheyvens (2002)	74
Table 3.2 Key stakeholders interviewed	79
Table 3.3 Interview format for villagers	80
Table 3.4 Types of focus groups in each village	81
Table 3.5 Checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment	84
Table 4.1 Stakeholders’ perspectives of Mayan indigenous ecotourism participation in Palenque, Mexico.....	98
Table 4.2 Stakeholders’ perspectives about indigenous ecotourism empowerment in Palenque, Mexico.....	100
Table 5.1 Stakeholders’ perspectives of Mayan indigenous ecotourism participation in Coba, Mexico	113
Table 5.2 Stakeholders’ perspectives on indigenous ecotourism empowerment in Coba, Mexico	114
Table 6.1 Stakeholders’ perspectives of community-based ecotourism participation in Uaxactun.....	138
6.2 Stakeholders’ perspectives about community empowerment of ecotourism in Uaxactun.....	140

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework: The wheel of empowerment.....	28
Figure 3.1 Outline of the research design.....	78
Figure 4.1 Palenque World Heritage area	95
Figure 4.2 Map of Palenque area	96
Figure 4.3 El Naranjo village	97
Figure 4.4 The wheel of empowerment in El Naranjo	102
Figure 5.1 Location of Coba	109
Figure 5.2 A local guide inside a cenote	111
Figure 5.3 The wheel of empowerment in the community of Coba, Mexico	116
Figure 5.4 The pyramid of Nohoch Mul in the Archaeological Site of Coba.....	118
Figure 6.1 Location of Uaxactun in Guatemala.....	132
Figure 6.2 A girl from Uaxactun	134
Figure 6.3 Stars at Uaxactun Archaeological Site.....	136
Figure 6.4 The wheel of empowerment in Uaxactun.....	143

ABSTRACT

Scholars who have addressed issues related to community-based ecotourism have observed that the top-down approach to ecotourism development has often resulted in communities having limited power to have their voice heard or exercise choice in its implementation. Using an empowerment approach to community-based ecotourism this thesis investigated the ability of ecotourism to act as an agent for empowerment. The study looks at a possible role for ecotourism to act as an empowering activity in three communities in the Mayan rainforest of Mesoamerica in terms of economic, psychological, social, political, and environmental gains. In a parallel manner, internal and external participation from ecotourism stakeholders was assessed in each study setting, as they are important agents in empowering communities to engage in ecotourism. Indicators of empowerment were identified from the literature and used to develop three research instruments used over three stages based on qualitative research methods.

Stage one centered on conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with a range of actors including tour operators, government officials, representatives from NGOs and leader members of each community. Stage two consisted of focus groups with villagers from the three communities. From the results of stages one and two a comprehensive list of empowerment indicators was developed using feedback from participants. In the third stage the level of empowerment in each community was assessed using a list of 60 criteria developed in the first two stages.

This thesis introduces *the wheel of empowerment* to visually portray the level of ecotourism empowerment in a given community. The results showed that only one of the three communities exhibited a positive trend towards ecotourism empowerment. In the other two study settings, results indicated a trend towards disempowerment due to a lack of tourism activity on-site and the associated lack of power influenced from outside the community, but also from inside. This latter finding contests previous assumptions that communities may be considered as homogenous groups where individuals think and act in the same way. One of the interesting findings was that both disempowered communities were located next to a World Heritage Site and protected natural area, but lacked tourists, tourism services, and access to the community by paved road. It appeared from this study that although government is a necessary

stakeholder by providing legislation and resources and implementing policies that foster ecotourism development, the private sector through its ability to connect guests and hosts is paramount. As this study shown, empowerment in ecotourism cannot be achieved in the absence of tourists and therefore, ecotourism needs to be practical and not just theoretical if local communities are to become empowered through ecotourism. Although virtually no assistance has been provided by NGOs in two of the three communities studied, the third has participated with NGO programs for more than a decade. In that community ecotourism was not on NGO agendas until recently when several NGOs began to cover this gap through knowledge transfer about ecotourism to the community.

This research should be of assistance to local and multinational NGOs wishing to promote sustainable development and ecotourism projects. Additionally, it should help in guiding the governments of Mexico and Guatemala to foster ecotourism in the Mayan rainforest with local communities. Moreover, this research has the potential to establish a reference point for tour operators interested in promoting community-based ecotourism development. Finally, this research has built on previous research and provides a new technique for assessing empowerment particularly at community level.

This study has covered a gap in the literature on community-based tourism in which empowerment has been addressed in a way that failed to provide an instrument to assess the level of empowerment in ecotourism. In this research, a checklist of indicators based on an empowerment framework helped to develop a *wheel of empowerment*, which visually portrays the level of empowerment in a given community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

This thesis examines stakeholders' perspectives towards sustainable community-based ecotourism development and empowerment in three villages in the Mayan Area. Interest in this area of research will focus on the process and the extent to which local communities are able to participate in the development of tourism in Mexico and Guatemala, and whether or not this activity has been empowering for them. A few detailed studies have been published that critically review the involvement of government agencies, the private sector and NGOs in developing ecotourism ventures with traditional communities. For example Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell (1999) reviewed several approaches to assess stakeholders that have potential for application in tourism planning research and practice, involving ten municipalities in Alagoas State in North-east Brazil. More recently Nault and Stapleton (2011) conducted interviews with key stakeholders to describe and analyze the difficulties in establishing community participation and ecotourism implementation.

Research about empowerment has generated a large literature in a number of fields. In education, for example, Apple (1995) used an approach of empowerment for teachers in the management of schools and universities, and for empowering students. The field of nursing has examined empowerment of nurses within the total health system, and empowerment of patients as contributing to their recovery (Gibson 1991). Business management has also adopted empowerment in terms of devolution of authority and decision-making from top level executives to workers on the factory floor (Jones & Davies 1991). Criminologists also draw upon empowerment as a solution to part of the problem related to crime activities from disadvantaged ethnic minorities (Cuneen 1992; Hazlehurst 1993; Smandych, Lincoln & Wilson 1995). Other areas of minorities' studies, such as the women's movement (Minkler & Cox 1980; Wheeler & Chinn 1989) and the Black Power movement (Minkler & Cox 1980) have adopted empowerment advocacy to counter perceived discrimination and advance their perceived rights.

Approaches of empowerment in tourism research have also been addressed. For instance Hjalager (2001) acknowledged the importance of tourism certification policies

in empowering tourists and the role of tourists in a gradual improvement of quality. Niininen, Buhalis and March (2007) studied the implications of information communication technology in the travel industry as a means of empowering tourists. However, most of the approaches of empowerment in tourism are focused on the development of local communities. For instance, Scheyvens (2002) refers to empowerment as a process that helps people to have some control over ecotourism initiatives in their area. Timothy (2002) argued that resident involvement in tourism decision-making will give traditionally under-represented groups a voice and opportunities to afford to break free. Sofield (2003) considered that a meaningful transfer of power and resources to communities has yet to be implemented as a fundamental component of tourism development. Cole (2006) considered that the process of empowerment relies on transferring knowledge to the community and found that communities in Indonesia that are not benefiting economically from ecotourism are passively participating, whereas communities with significant income from tourism are better organized and participate in tourism planning. Other related papers included indigenous property rights in tourism (Johnston, 2003) and empowering women through ecotourism (Scheyvens, 2000). Although a few studies assessed empowerment through indigenous control and ownership of ecotourism ventures (e.g. Zeppel, 2006; Nepal 2004; and Colvin 1994) none have adopted an integrated approach of empowerment where stakeholders' participation influences the empowerment of local communities. The rationale of this thesis draws on providing a mean to graphically assess empowerment based on qualitative research. The wheel of empowerment tests a set of indicators assessed in a Likert scale based on the analysis of qualitative data from key stakeholders. As Chapter 2 will show, only a few studies have considered the whole stakeholders network that has to do with the development of community-based ecotourism but non of them tested empowerment. This thesis will fill this gap by providing and by assessing stakeholder's participation in indigenous ecotourism and empowerment in three traditional villages located in the Mayan Rainforest.

Understanding the scope of action of each ecotourism stakeholder in the Mayan area and assessing empowerment of local communities through tourism will reveal if the goal for indigenous ecotourism has been reached, drawing on their own perspectives.

In particular, this study assessed the community empowerment in three Mayan villages testing a set of indicators initially identified in the literature, and analyzed the role of stakeholders in the development of indigenous ecotourism. This analysis is approached from a bottom-up perspective where the communities should benefit and sustainable development should be fostered with this activity. Two of the villages were located in Mexico and the third one in Guatemala. The rationale for the selection of the communities will be detailed in Chapter 3.

Although a number of scholars have argued that ecotourism success depends partly in non-economic benefits such as local participation (Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler & Schelhas, 2003), non-economic changes can be difficult to measure, quantify, and evaluate systematically across sites or over time, in part because they are often expressed in qualitative or context-specific narratives that defy easy ranking or comparison (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). This research offers a way to rank indicators of empowerment based on the qualitative research instrument termed *the wheel of empowerment* which gives a visual representation of empowerment based on 60 indicators.

As suggested by Akama (1996), for a local community to be empowered, it should decide the way in which ecotourism takes place in their community, and the extent of involvement in this activity and thus benefits can be shared among different stakeholders. The conceptual framework adopted to assess empowerment in the Mayan villages studied was adapted from the empowerment framework proposed by Scheyvens (2002) who characterized empowerment in terms of economic, psychological, social, and political benefits. This model accounts for local community involvement and control over ecotourism or other ventures but does not include the environment figure. This thesis adds an environmental dimension of empowerment to Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework.

1.1 Background to Research

Over the last decades tourism has become one of the world's fastest growing industries and can be an important constituent of a country's economy to the point of currently providing 260 million of direct and indirect jobs (which represents about one in every 11 jobs in the world) and 6.6 trillion dollars (9.1%) of the world's Gross

Domestic Product (WTTC 2013). Additionally, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) also forecasted contribution to direct GDP in 2013 to grow by 3.1%, compared to 3.2% in 2012. Travel & Tourism is again forecast to outpace growth of the total global economy (2.4%) in 2013. Visitor exports growth is forecast to slow from 4.7% in 2012 to 3.1%, with domestic Travel & Tourism spending forecast to grow by 3.2%, a marginally better outturn than 2012. Total Travel & Tourism employment is projected to expand by 4.4 million jobs in 2013.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Mexico received 15.5 percent of all tourist arrivals to the Americas in 1999, but because of cheap labor and prices, it only received 6.4 percent of all tourism receipts. In contrast, the US received 39.5 percent of arrivals, but made 60.6 percent of receipts. In 1990, Mexico hosted 16.7 million international visitors, ranked eighth in the world for tourist arrivals and earned US \$5,467 million. By 1999, Mexico ranked seventh among all nations with its 20.2 million tourists, and benefited from earnings of US \$ 7.9 billion (UNWTO, 2000). However, recent data from UNWTO shows that Mexico is no longer ranked in the top 10 countries for international arrivals. In 2012, Mexico received 23.4 million international tourists accounting for 12.7 billion dollars (UNWTO 2013).

While Mexico hosts some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, ecotourism is just beginning to emerge as an alternative to the dominant traditional tourism sector based on beach resorts. A study done by the Mexican Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR) reported that foreign tourists spent US\$ 51.2 million dollars on ecotourism activities during 2000, which included adventure tourism and nature tourism as well (Cornejo, 2004).

In a similar fashion, tourism is a large and growing industry vital to the economy of Guatemala. Compared with 1990 when the country earned US\$ 185 million (Smithsonian Institute, na) in 2011 tourism in Guatemala generated an income of US\$ 1.35 billion dollars from almost 2 million international arrivals into the country (INGUAT, 2011).

The *Selva Maya* has one of the world's richest sources of biodiversity (CEPF 2006) and comprises the Southern states of Mexico (Campeche, Quintana Roo and Chiapas) and the Peten in Guatemala and Belize, with an extension of 500,000 km² which represents the second biggest rainforest complex in the Occidental Hemisphere (Barbosa-Polanco,

Ofelia-Medina, Escalona-Segura & Bello-Baltazar 2010). It is home to a large number of Mayan villages and owes its significance to its biodiversity and water resources, and to its cultural and scenic heritage. The region has been identified by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) as the second most important of 25 hotspots in the world for species diversity and endemism (CEPF 2004).

Historically, the Maya Rainforest covered most of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, Belize, Northern Guatemala and Western Honduras (Juska & Koenig, 2006). Today, remnants of the forest are protected by a number of areas and five Biosphere Reserves (Montes Azules, Calakmul, Maya, Sian Ka'an, and Chiquibul). The governments and residents of the region rely heavily on forest products and services to provide income and employment. Timber and renewable non-timber products, such as xate, gum, and allspice, have been staples of the local economies for the past several decades (Gretzinger 1998). At the beginning of the 20th Century, this region was interconnected by camping sites for people who worked in the gum extraction called *chicle* camps used for the exploitation of chewing gum (*chicle* is the Mayan word for chewing gum). Despite pressure from population increased industrial development, the Maya Rainforest has designated over 20 protected areas in the past 30 years. The largest of these protected areas is the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in Guatemala. Amongst many areas of interest attracting people to visit and conduct research in the area is the project for jaguar monitoring and protection. The tourism industry has flourished in the region in part due to the excavation of many of the region's ancient Mayan artifacts and the unique juxtaposition of the ruins with vibrant and endangered forest ecosystems (Juska & Koenig, 2006).

The Maya Rainforest is home to a large number of indigenous villages. Estimates for the number of indigenous people in Latin America vary between 28 and 43 million (Hall & Patrinos 2005), and Mexico has the largest population with approximately 60 ethnic groups. The exact number is unknown due to a lack of agreement on a definition, the steady cultural impacts and globalization. Indigenous people in Mexico normally live in community-owned lands that they use in a variety of ways for their livelihoods. This system of communal lands is known as *ejido* and is the most basic unit of village government in the country.

In Guatemala 41% of the population identified themselves as indigenous in 2001 (Hall & Patrinos 2005) and 71% claimed to have an indigenous mother tongue. This placed Guatemala as the second country with highest percentage of indigenous population in Latin America after Bolivia, and most of its indigenous peoples are of Mayan descent. For traditional communities, achieving sustainable ecotourism depends on asserting legal rights, indigenous control of land and resources, geographic location, funding or business support and developing effective links with the wider tourism industry (Zeppel, 2006). For many indigenous peoples, controlled ecotourism is seen as a way of achieving cultural, political, environmental and economic sustainability for the community (Sofield, 1993; Butler & Hinch, 2007; Zeppel, 2006; Epler Wood, 1999a; Mbaiwa, 2005; Notzke, 2006). In most cases, indigenous ecotourism involves “tourism that is based on indigenous knowledge systems and values, promoting customary practices and livelihoods” (Johnston 2000, p.91). As Pi-Sunyer, Thomas and Daltabuit (2001) mentioned, the indigenous Maya have occupied Mesoamerica for several thousand years, working the land as slash-and-burn (*milpa*) horticulturists, sustained by a diet of maize, beans, squash, and garden vegetables. The surrounding forest provided them with game animals, and wood and thatch for fuel and housing. In a review by Zeppel (2006), most of the indigenous ecotourism ventures were relatively new enterprise established with funding support from conservation and development NGOs, aid agencies and other foreign donors. Hence, the commercial sustainability of many indigenous ecotourism ventures may be in doubt after this aid funding ends (Honey, 2003). Ecotourism ventures provide a means to preserve natural resources and make a living in some tribal areas. Joint ventures involve formal business contracts or exclusive operating agreements between indigenous communities or tribal councils and non-indigenous tourism businesses. In joint venture agreements, the outside operator is responsible for marketing, bringing tourists, a guide and most transport, with the indigenous groups hosting and entertaining visitors. Alternatively, the outside company obtains a long-term lease on indigenous land, builds tourist facilities and employs local people. The tour operator pays a lease rental fee and percentage of profits to the indigenous groups owning or claiming the land. Indigenous people also develop ecotourism ventures in partnership with NGOs, national park agencies, government tourism bureaus, indigenous organizations, development agencies,

university researchers and other local communities (Fennell, 2003). These joint ventures or community based ecotourism programs provide an economic alternative to logging and agriculture, support indigenous land claims and commitment to conservation, and strengthen indigenous culture (Wesche & Drumm, 1999; de Bont & Janssen, 2002).

One of the pioneer efforts to promote the Mayan rainforest for ecotourism was an agreement signed in 1992 by the governments of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize and Mexico to join forces in the promotion of international tourism in the region. This elaborated and costly project called the Maya World promised the visitor “something for all tastes” (Brown, 1999). They united sponsorship of a large-scale tourist promotion in the Maya areas of their respective countries. The project was initiated in 1988 to facilitate suitable mechanisms that allow for the effective marketing of tourism products in regional and international markets.

An official map produced in 1992 was a detailed cartographic presentation of the project highlighting highways and towns and attributing importance according to what they offer the visitor: infrastructural places (gas stations, hotels, airstrips, airport and ferries); recreational places (beaches, fishing sites, snorkel sites and dive sites); ecological places (caves, volcanoes, waterfalls and biosphere reserves); and cultural places (where the visitor will find archaeological sites, colonial architecture, handicrafts and museums). For Momsen (2003) ecotourism with its emphasis on cultural and environmental protection was the basis of the Mundo Maya project which acts as a counterpoint to the mass tourism found in Cancun.

1.2 Literature Review

The relevant literature reviewed for this thesis was divided in sections which focused on key studies on empowerment in the field of tourism, studies on community-based ecotourism throughout the world, studies in the Mayan area about ecotourism, studies relevant to the case studies and studies about stakeholders’ participation in ecotourism. The literature review will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2 and will show that the majority of the papers reviewed made use of qualitative research using similar methods. Of these, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observations were the most frequently used methods to collect data and opinions on

community-based tourism. This thesis used case studies as a research strategy. Most of the literature reviewed pointed to the problems of adopting a top-down approach when dealing with indigenous ecotourism.

This thesis identifies the extent of empowerment or disempowerment in three Mayan villages based on a set of indicators while it traces the main stakeholder's scope of action and relevance in the development of ecotourism in traditional communities as an economic alternative for sustainable development in Mayan territories in Mexico and Guatemala.

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

Community-based ecotourism empowerment is the result of a process where communities gain control and power over tourism ventures and develop sustainable livelihoods through internal and external factors, namely stakeholders in ecotourism. This research addresses *the extent to which communities living in the Mayan rainforest are empowered or disempowered to participate in ecotourism and how this is related with the participation of a range of ecotourism stakeholders.*

The thesis concludes that the empowerment in Mayan villages is affected by a lack of involvement of governments, NGOs and indigenous marketable tourism products, along with the extent of knowledge and participation in tourism from local communities. To assess the level of empowerment in Mayan villages, a modified version of Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework was employed. Specifically, Scheyvens' (2002) four dimensions were expanded to five by adding an environmental empowerment dimension.

The issues raised in this thesis revolve around the extent that *indigenous ecotourism in Mayan villages is driven by the scale of involvement of different stakeholders, resulting in the empowerment of local communities, which in turn determines the degree of sustainable ecotourism development possible by the community.*

To explore the problem, five objectives were developed based on gaps identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The following objectives were pursued:

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** To identify the key external and internal ecotourism stakeholders in the Mayan rainforest of Mexico and Guatemala.

- **OBJECTIVE 2:** To assess external and internal stakeholders' participation on ecotourism in three Mayan communities.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** To understand the extent of the contribution of different stakeholders (i.e. government agencies, tour operators, NGOs and communities) in empowering community tourism in three communities inhabiting Mayan territories.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** To develop and test a method of assessing empowerment at the village level.
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** To assess empowerment through the factors affecting the ability of local communities to engage in ecotourism in Mayan territories.

The results of this research have significant implications for government policies related to ecotourism with traditional communities in protected landscapes in both countries. There are also relevant implications for the approaches that NGOs have taken to promote sustainable development in indigenous communities. There are some implications on the side of the supply and demand for indigenous ecotourism products. An understanding of the role of empowerment of local communities in the process of indigenous ecotourism development will highlight deficiencies in the existing development practices in indigenous lands and assist stakeholders to improve the way in which indigenous ecotourism is being developed through implementation of guidelines and policies for this activity. On an international scale, a clearer understanding of the relationship between stakeholders' involvement in indigenous tourism and the empowerment of local communities will encourage better practices for the sustainable development of tourism. The implications of these questions are examined in a subsequent chapter.

1.4 Limitations

This study used three case studies consisting in traditional villages living in the Mayan rainforest to assess the degree of empowerment in ecotourism. According to Hartley (2004) case studies are useful where it is important to understand how the organizational and environmental context is having an impact on or influencing social process. With regards to the case studies selected, the study was limited by the opinions of those of the stakeholders in indigenous tourism that were keen in

participate in this research, relying on their capacity of being objective and providing unbiased information. However, there were cases in which stakeholders didn't want to participate or cases when it became hard to identify key stakeholders. These facts were amongst the main limitations in the scope of this thesis research.

One of the roles of social scientists is to continually seek ways to improve full participation of all stakeholders and also to identify barriers to collaboration. While there is abundant research showing how "participation" is often far from participatory and representative (e.g. Cooke & Kothari 2001; Nelson & Wright 1995; Stonich 2000; Woost 1997) stakeholder participation and community-based natural resource management continue to be emphasized by international lending institutions, governmental offices, and NGOs involved in natural resource management planning and development initiatives. Although most of the key stakeholders identified in this thesis participated in the research either in face-to-face interviews or in the focus groups, a few key stakeholders invited to participate didn't show interest in getting involved and in these cases an interview or a focus groups was precluded. Moreover, some potential stakeholders were hard to identify. Participation in tourism planning in destinations can be limited to collecting the opinions of stakeholders to provide fuller information for public sector planners, and this can be a largely one-way consultation process when there is little direct dialogue between the stakeholders and planners. This can occur when the opinions of stakeholders are collected using self-completion questionnaires, focus group interviews, drop-in centers and telephone surveys (Marien & Pizam, 1997). It is likely to be less complex to collect people's opinions than to involve them in direct dialogue with public sector planners or to seek negotiation and consensus-building through collaborative planning. However, the one-way collection of stakeholder opinions (often of many individuals) can provide valuable information for decision-making in collaborative working groups often involving only a few individuals (Simmons, 1994; Yuksel, Bramwell & Yuksel 1999). Stakeholders can also be consulted at several stages in the planning process so that it becomes an iterative two-way planning process. Since there are hundreds of Mayan communities in Southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador, it becomes almost impossible to build a detailed spreadsheet of the extent of empowerment through ecotourism in the Mayan area. This task would also be irrelevant if we consider that most of Mayan communities do

not rely on tourism as an alternative livelihood and yet many have little understanding about the tourism industry. On the other hand, a significant number of Mayan villages are worth investigating for the purposes of this thesis given the growth in ecotourism and indigenous participation during the past decade. For reasons such as limited money, limited time, and limited human resources available, the thesis relied on three key case studies to bring an understanding of the factors that affect the empowerment of local communities when indigenous ecotourism is carried out as an alternative livelihood.

Although there is a large and growing literature on empowerment and ecotourism, the literature available in the study area is limited, considering that a significant amount of data collected regarding indigenous ecotourism many times stays at a bachelor or postgraduate thesis research local level, and do not reach a peer-reviewed level to make it more accessible for researchers around the world. Although a few studies such as Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell (1999) and Hernandez Cruz, Bello Baltazar, Montoya Gomez and Estrada Lugo (2005) assessed stakeholders participation, there is a big area of research yet to be handle in terms of indigenous ecotourism and assessment of empowerment.

Another limitation in this thesis was the Maya language considering that two out of the three communities researched speak Maya as their first tongue and Spanish is their second language. Verbal contact with the communities, including application of formal and informal interviews, and focus groups were conducted in Spanish which may have slightly altered opinions from villagers.

1.5 Justification for Research

Only a few detailed studies have been published that critically review the involvement of government agencies, the private sector and NGOs in ecotourism development. Rowat and Engelhardt (2007), for example, described the stakeholder driven process involving governmental agencies, conservation organizations, and dive and boat tour operators that instigated a national wide whale shark monitoring network for ecotourism development. Likewise, Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell (1999) reviewed approaches to identify the stakeholders who are affected by a tourism project and who might participate in collaborative tourism planning. They found that varied stakeholders

had participated in the planning process, but there was only limited participation by the private sector and environmental NGOs.

Funds for community-based ecotourism are becoming more common in the international agendas, with a special focus on developing countries. For instance, in Southern Mexico Mayan farmers have participated actively in government development programs as beneficiaries and part of a client labor force, but with very limited influence in decision making. After repeated failures, government policy makers are now attempting to consolidate a new regional economic base founded on tourism, with an ecotourism focus for the “low productivity” rural sector. However, only a few examples of success of ecotourism in rural Mayan indigenous lands have been reflected in an increased economic income from visitations to the community, along with an increased environmental awareness, and social stability which can be summarized as empowerment. For example Timothy (2007) examined the processes involved in community empowerment through scales and types of empowerment pertaining to the growth and development of tourism concluding that power struggles continue to affect the most disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic and racial minorities, women and the poor. In the same token, Sofield (2003) found that without empowerment tourism development at the level of community will have difficulty in achieving sustainability. Indigenous ecotourism also demands local capacity-building and participation, along with proportional use of natural resources, and tourism facilities to empower local communities.

A way to achieve natural resources conservation and preserve cultural values through community-based ecotourism is rapidly growing in developing countries. In the study area, the current Mayan legacy, archaeological sites, tropical rainforests, biological endemism, longest underground rivers network in the world, and the second world’s biggest reef barrier constitute the heritage. In these Mayan communities, cultural and natural sites are promoted for tourism but at the same time conservation can potentially be promoted. Ecotourism can generate income, improve community welfare, and preserve the environment (Ashley & Garaland 1998). Ideally, indigenous ecotourism will conserve natural areas, maintain indigenous lifestyles and provide social and economic benefits for indigenous communities. Nevertheless, indigenous ecotourism also operates within a broader framework of economic, political, cultural

and environmental factors that affect sustainability and community empowerment (Stronza & Gordillo 2008). The challenge is for governments, institutions, NGOs and aid groups to support and provide legal and technical assistance for indigenous groups developing ecotourism ventures. Further marketing support and effective linkages with the commercial tourism industry are also required to develop indigenous ecotourism (Zeppel, 2006). A few studies have acknowledged the importance of NGO participation in the Mayan Area, such as Sundberg (1998) who examined discourses about environmental degradation, power structures engaged in implementing conservation measures, and emerging landscapes in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala. Likewise Juska and Koenig (2006) revealed that ecotourism initiatives rarely succeed in achieving the dual goals of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. However these studies do not have an ecotourism approach associated to participation from NGOs.

The research presented in this thesis will assist Mexican and Guatemalan governments develop an understanding of significant topics on why indigenous ecotourism has had limited success in the Mayan Area and identifies the gaps within the Mexican and Guatemalan government's structure in funding operation, policy making, and inter-department participation that need to be attended for the improvement of this activity. In the same way, the study provides a basis of information of sustainable development NGOs supporting Mayan indigenous ecotourism and the hindrances for their success in fostering sustainable development through this activity. On the other hand, it may be an interesting tool for tourism entrepreneurs to explore new business alternatives in the tourism industry while using the "sustainable" label. This research provides Mayan tourism stakeholders with better negotiation skills during the course of the fieldwork, while it offers a better understanding on why only a few Mayan indigenous communities have empowered towards a sustainable development through indigenous ecotourism. Additionally, this research will contribute to academic understanding by providing innovative and authentic research from a tourism-led community empowerment perspective that has not been outlined before in the Mayan Area.

1.6 Methodology

According to Prideaux (2000) tourism is such a complex phenomenon that its systematic study requires the adoption of a research methodology which is both capable of identifying the complex web of relationships between the many elements involved and concurrently, is able to rationalize and simplify these links into a number of relationships and components that can be studied individually or as a group. The critical research paradigm underlies the structure of this research because it is driven by the study of social structures, freedom and oppression, and power and control (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). According to Merriam (1991) the knowledge produced from a critical research paradigm can change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment by search of a participatory research. Guba and Lincoln (2005) stated that researches using critical theory are trained using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand empowerment and liberation. The use of the critical research paradigm in tourism research means that the interests or needs of minority groups will be identified and data collected in order to open up or improve the provision of tourism opportunities, experiences and services for those minority groups (Jennings, 2010).

In this thesis, qualitative research methods have been used to evaluate and compare community-based tourism development and empowerment on three Mayan communities around the archaeological sites of Palenque and Coba in Mexico, and Tikal in Guatemala. These Mayan villages are El Naranjo, Coba and Uaxactun, and were selected based on its proximity to major Mayan archaeological sites for tourism visitation and because they are associated to environments that have a degree of protection. Interestingly, two out of the three study sites have been declared World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The study relies on an adapted version of the ecotourism empowerment framework developed by Scheyvens (2002) because it is presented as a way of determining whether or not communities are engaging in tourism in ways which ultimately benefit them. This includes economic, social, psychological and political empowerment. A fifth aspect of environmental empowerment was also tested in this study to understand the facts that lead a community to have a degree of protection over their natural sources, and to implement development projects in a sustainable way.

Qualitative research provided feedback from key stakeholders in each study site, including participant observation, focus groups with villagers, and face-to-face interviews with government officers, tour operator managers, NGO consultants, and community leaders. The research then used the feedback from qualitative research to rank a checklist of 60 indicators of empowerment and disempowerment with a 5 point Likert scale (from very empowering = 5 to very disempowering = 1).

While other authors (e.g. Koch, de Beer & Elliffe, 1998; Cole, 2006; Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed & Mc Alpine, 2006) have tested empowerment approaches to tourism in other regions of the world none of them has explicitly tested the Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework. However, Farrelly (2011) used Scheyvens' framework to test the social and political aspects of empowerment. The majority of the papers reviewed made use of qualitative research using similar methods. Of these, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observations were the most often used to collect data and opinions on community-based tourism (Cole 2006; Stronza & Gordillo 2008; Garcia-Frapolli, Toledo & Martinez-Allier 2008; Mason & Beard 2008; Himberg 2004).

Data collection and fieldwork research started on May 2009 and finished in October 2010. Participant observation in the study area was focused on tourist flows, community involvement with tourism, livelihood activities, and environmental conservation. Participant observation often entails the researcher becoming resident in a community for several months and observing the normal daily lives of its members (Pratt & Loizos, 1992).

The research design was divided in three stages. In stage one, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in ecotourism for each community. Main themes about empowerment and stakeholders' participation were selected to conduct focus groups with village members of the three communities during stage two. With the results from stage two, a checklist of empowerment indicators was developed and assessed using the *wheel of empowerment*.

During stage one, government stakeholders from ministries involved with community-based ecotourism development programs at a national level were interviewed in Mexico City and Guatemala City, as well as at the study site. Semi structured face-to-face interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders in Palenque, Coba and Tikal.

Six semi structured face-to-face interviews were conducted in Mexico City with government officials, and five were conducted in Palenque Mexico including government authorities, one tour operator manager, one ecotourism NGO consultant, and the community sheriff from the Mayan community of El Naranjo. For the case study of Coba, six face-to-face interviews were conducted and included key government agents, a tour operator director, an NGO consultant, an interview with a staff member from a volunteer abroad company, and the community sheriff. For the case study of Uaxactun, six face-to-face interviews were conducted in Guatemala City and the Peten in Guatemala, which included three NGOs consultants, a tour operator director, a government agent and community leaders.

In stage two, three focus groups made up to 10 community members included local tour guides, handcrafters, and a group of embroiderers' women in Palenque. Similarly, three focus groups interviews made up of five to ten community members were held in Coba and included tour guides, a new community-managed ecotourism and adventure project, and a local-administrated tour cooperative. In the same token, three focus groups interviews were held in the community of Uaxactun with tour guides, handcrafter women cooperative, and with facilitators for tourist accommodation. These results were assessed through analysis of themes on community empowerment and tourism participation to determine the stakeholders' views on community empowerment, and on indigenous tourism participation. Overall, 25 interviews and nine focus groups were conducted in this thesis and involved about 100 people.

In stage three, a checklist of economic, psychological, social political and environmental indicators of empowerment was ranked based on the interviews conducted with stakeholders and on the focus groups conducted with Mayan villagers. Using a 5-pointed Likert scale (from *very empowering*=5 to *very disempowering*=1) the results are presented in a *wheel of empowerment* chart that shows the level of ecotourism empowerment in each community. Involvement of the communities in tourism is necessary for them to get environmentally empowered, that is, to care about their natural resources, guaranteeing an economic welfare for the communities and conservation of the environment.

1.7 Definitions

This section provides definitions of some keywords in this study. First, empowerment is the central term or concept as this thesis presents a way to assess the degree of empowerment at a village level. Many authors have addressed empowerment in different areas of research included tourism, where it became an important aspect in community-based ecotourism development. Although Sofield (2003) has pointed to a lack of a clear definition of empowerment, a number of papers were found to address empowerment with similar points of views of what the meaning of empowerment is. Other terms defined in this section include sustainable tourism development, community-based ecotourism development, ecotourism, and indigenous ecotourism. The last three concepts point to a sustainable tourism development.

For Sofield (2003) empowerment of local communities is the way to achieve sustainable tourism development. This sustainable tourism development can be achieved through ecotourism, which is another key term in this study, but it lacks the social component on its development. Community-based ecotourism and Indigenous ecotourism are addressed alternately in this research, as they pursue the same goals, but one is specific to indigenous communities. In this research two of the three communities studied were indigenous communities and the third was partly indigenous and partly non-indigenous. The following sections present a number of definitions to each of the key terms mentioned above and identify the definition adopted in this research.

1.7.1 Empowerment

According to Sofield (2003) the lack of a clear definition of empowerment has resulted in a proliferation of usage where different authors define the term in the context of their professional experience or a particular situation. An easy definition of empowerment can be found in the Collins English Dictionary (2012) where empowerment is defined as “the giving or delegation of power and authority or as the giving of an ability; enablement or permission”. However, a number of authors have addressed the relationship of empowerment and community-based ecotourism in a profounder manner.

For Timothy (2007), empowerment is both a condition (or capacity) and a process whereby authority to act, choice of actions, and control over decisions and resources lie

in the hands of destination community members rather than central government authorities, and sometimes, from multinational companies and external investors. Simmons and Parsons have a summary definition of empowerment as “the process of enabling persons to master their environment and achieve self-determination through individual, interpersonal change, or change of social structures affecting the life and behavior of an individual” (1983, p.199).

When located within the discourse of community development, it is connected to concepts of self-help, equity, cooperation, participation and networking. These concepts, particularly participation in the process of decision making, is a vital part of empowerment since it makes people more confident, strengthens their self-esteem, widens their knowledge and enables them to develop new skills.

The concept of empowerment by and of communities is at once a process and an outcome whose benefits become evident in economic, psychological, social and political sphere. In the same token, Rappaport (1984) pointed out that because empowerment is a process it is difficult to operationalize and no single measure can capture it adequately. However, each measurement, intervention, and description in a particular context adds to the understanding of the construct. Other authors have credited empowerment as the capacity of individuals or groups to determine their own affairs; it is a process to help people to exert control over factors that affect their lives (Scheyvens 1999). Empowering indigenous communities in tourism depends on direct and indirect benefits such as enhancing control of the management of ecotourism through traditional tribal and legal recognition of individual and collective rights to ancestral lands (UNWTO, 2005). Scheyvens (2002) built a framework around four dimensions of empowerment: economic, psychological, social and political. The lasting economic gains of tourism are signs of economic empowerment. Psychological empowerment comes from self-esteem and pride in cultural traditions. Social empowerment results from increased community cohesion and development, and political empowerment comes from tourism decision-making and local control. The community’s non-economic benefits that boost chances for conservation include new skills and broader experiences in managing people and projects, strengthened abilities to negotiate with outsiders, and expanded circles of contacts and support for community efforts. This model accounts for local community involvement and control

over ecotourism or other ventures. Others have considered them as facets of social capital that help strengthen local institutions for resource management (Jones 2005; Pretty & Smith 2003).

Aspects of these definitions of empowerment are central in this study. For instance, Timothy's (2007, p.200) considerations of "control over decisions and resources from the destination community members" are central in the way empowerment is addressed in this study. In a similar way, Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework points out to the key aspects of empowerment for local community involvement and control over tourism ventures. This thesis relies on both author's contribution to understand empowerment at the community level which is central in this thesis.

1.7.2 Sustainable Tourism Development

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2005) considered that sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Butler (1993) defines sustainable development in relation to tourism as:

Tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exist to such a degree that it prohibits successful development and well-being of other activities and programmes. (Butler, 1993, p.29).

Butler's definition will be regarded in this thesis when the term sustainable tourism development is used. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising other awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

Sustainable development perspectives began to be applied in tourism studies as part of the 1970s critique of the impacts of the industry, especially those on the natural environment. Sustainable tourism is a sub-branch of sustainable development that was put on the world agenda with the publication of the Brundtland report (WCED,

1987). This report focused on environmental issues and, as a result, sociocultural issues have thus been given secondary attention (Pearce, 1995). The UNWTO (1998) has also developed a group of indicators for sustainable tourism development focused on ecological aspects. Sustainable tourism was eventually coined and generally regarded as a subset of alternative tourism. The term “has come to represent and encompass a set of principles, policy prescriptions, and management methods which chart a path for tourism development such that a destination area’s environmental resource base (including natural, built and cultural features) is protected for future development” (Hunter 1997, p.850).

Sustainable tourism has been defined as a type of development that “connects tourists and providers of tourist facilities and services with advocates of environmental protection and community residents and their leaders who desire a better quality of life” (McIntre, Hetherington & Inskip, 1993, p.16). According to Wahab and Pigram (1998, p.283), sustainable tourism requires that “the planning, development and operation of tourism should be cross-sectional and integrated, involving various government departments, public and private sector companies, community groups and experts, thus providing the widest possible safeguards for success”.

1.7.3 Community-Based Ecotourism

Recognizing a “need to promote both the quality of life of people and the conservation of resources” (Scheyvens 1999, p.46) community-based ecotourism can be defined as a “form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community” (WWF 2001, p.2).

Active participation means that communities have access to information of the pros and cons of tourism development, and are directly involved in planning for and managing tourism in line with their own interests and resources. Active participation, whereby communities have some degree of control over, as well as sharing equitably in the benefits of tourism, was seen as more likely to lead to empowerment than passive forms of participation (Scheyvens, 2002). Constraints to the active participation of communities in tourism ventures include lack of proprietorship over land and natural resources, lack of appropriate skills and knowledge, lack of capital,

and community's heterogeneity. Communities should also be involved in monitoring and evaluating tourism projects over time. Although the rhetoric suggests that there is much support for community-based ecotourism ventures, in practice it is difficult to find good examples of this.

According to Hall (1996), community-based tourism centers on the involvement of the host community in planning and maintaining tourism development in order to create a more sustainable industry. However, the majority of literature has a brief content highlighting the fact that tourism will be more successful if the residents are supportive (Laws, 1995; Stabler, 1997; Jamieson, 1997). Especially in ethnic communities with traditional cultures, residents must be active participants and beneficiaries of tourism, not simply cultural curiosities put on display by outside agents (Mitchell, 2003). As mentioned by Sewell & Phillips (1979) public participation may lead to community control through degree of citizen involvement, equity in participation, and efficiency of participation.

However, community participation is a concept subject to much interpretation, although considered essential in sustainable tourism. Likewise, Pearce (1992) suggest that community-based tourism delivers local control of development, consensus-based decision making and an equitable flow of benefits to all affected by the industry.

1.7.4 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is perhaps the option most frequently touted for its potential to sustain rural livelihoods (Honey, 2003), catalyze new development (Weaver, 1998), renew cultural pride (Epler Wood, 2002), empower local peoples (Scheyvens, 1999), and protect biodiversity (Christ, Hillel, Matus & Sweeting, 2003). Ceballos-Lascurain has been often credited with coining the term in 1983 arguing that "true ecotourism can be one of the most powerful tools for protecting the environment" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996 p.24). His definition incorporates both the nature of the tourism as well as the impacts of this on local environments and populations:

Ecotourism is environmentally responsible, enlightening travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996, p.24).

This thesis relied in Ceballos-Lascurain's definition when it came to ecotourism. Ecotourism motivates many rural communities by the promise of potential economic benefits such as jobs, new business opportunities and skill development, as well as the chance to secure greater control over natural resource utilization in their areas (Ashley & Roe 1998). Conversely, Cater (1993, p.85) stated that a very real danger exists in viewing ecotourism as the universal panacea, and the ecotourists as "some magic breed, mitigating all tourism's ills". When business is the main driving force behind ecotourism it is not surprising that the ventures which emerge may serve to alienate, rather than benefit local communities (Scheyvens, 1999). Therefore, there is a need for an approach to ecotourism which starts from the needs, concerns and welfare of local host communities.

1.7.5 Indigenous ecotourism

According to Butler and Hinch (2007) indigenous tourism refers to tourism activities in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. However the term indigenous ecotourism is rather uncommon in the literature as many authors tend to dissociate the concepts of ecotourism and indigenous tourism. There have been other authors that have also contested these views such as Buultjens, Gale, and White (2011) who critically investigated the disassociation of both terms.

This thesis addressed ecotourism and indigenous tourism as an integrated term, and relies on a few studies explained in detail in Chapter 2. The aspects of indigenous ecotourism considered in this thesis are based in three key authors. For instance, Nepal (2004) referred to indigenous ecotourism as constructing potential for capacity building to plan and develop ecotourism in traditional communities. Similarly, Zeppel (2006) considered that indigenous ecotourism occurs when the community develops ecotourism projects on indigenous lands and territories. Colvin (1994) referred indigenous ecotourism to a model completely operated by an indigenous community in Ecuador's Amazon Basin.

The term indigenous ecotourism is particularly relevant to two of the three case studies investigated in this thesis as they share Mayan indigenous backgrounds. In these case studies, the aspects of indigenous ecotourism considered by the authors

mentioned above, in particular Nepal (2004), were the basis of the definition of indigenous tourism used in this thesis.

1.8 Thesis Outline

The Chapter 1 outlines the background to the research, the literature reviewed, research questions and objectives, limitations, methodology, and definitions adopted in building this thesis.

The Chapter 2 will describe in detail the literature underlying this thesis. The literature review is presented in sections that are central to the context of this research and include aims, methods, and findings from the literature consulted during this thesis research. Additionally, the literature review is discussed altogether at the end of the chapter.

The Chapter 3 discusses and justifies the methodology employed in this thesis. The use of qualitative research methods and case studies approach is outlined, along with the paradigm selection, and research design developed to conduct research.

The Chapter 4 addresses the first case study in Palenque, Mexico. This chapter covers an historical background about tourism from a local Mayan village named El Naranjo, which adjoins Palenque World Heritage Site and reports the implications of stakeholders' participation in successfully attaining empowerment. Results are presented and then discussed at the end of the chapter.

The Chapter 5 follows the structure of the first case study in Chapter 4 and addresses the second case in Mexico, namely Coba. This Mayan village is not too far from Cancun, which is a major world tourism destination. Like in Chapter 4 the implications of stakeholders' participation with this community in achieving empowerment are also discussed.

The Chapter 6 follows the first and second case studies investigated in this thesis. The community addressed in this chapter is called Uaxactun and is located near Tikal World Heritage Site in Guatemala. This chapter covers an historical background about tourism involvement from a village living over an ancient Mayan ruins inside a Biosphere Reserve, and also the implications of stakeholders' participation in achieving empowerment.

The Chapter 7 discusses and compares the differences between the three cases studied and highlights the outcomes raised from this research and the lessons learned. This chapter addresses the objectives of the thesis across the three case studies investigated providing a detailed discussion about the findings, and a final conclusion to this research.

1.9 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to establish the framework for the study of community-based ecotourism and empowerment of local communities in following chapters. It introduced the research problem about *the degree of participation from stakeholders in ecotourism as determinants of the extent of empowerment in traditional villages who inhabit in Maya territories close to major archaeological sites for tourism attraction in Mexico and Guatemala*. In the same way, the study settings had a degree of government protection such as an archaeological park, a national park and a biosphere reserve.

The following chapters explore the question and conclude that stakeholders' participation is a key factor in the development of community-based ecotourism through the empowerment of local communities. Findings from this thesis suggest that an empowered community can achieve sustainable development through ecotourism, and that more research has to be done to assist scholars, policy makers, aid donors, private sector and local communities in developing indigenous ecotourism.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the concepts that are central to this research and also offers a detailed description of the literature reviewed associated to every concept discussed, summarizing the aims, methods, major findings, and study settings if any. An overall discussion of the literature review is presented at the end of the chapter.

This thesis is centered in how to assess empowerment through ecotourism in Mayan villages in the rainforest of Mexico and Guatemala based on perspectives from key stakeholders. The study used an adapted empowerment framework as a tool to assess the economic, psychological, social, political, and environmental benefits of local communities from community-based ecotourism in the Mayan area, and the implication of stakeholders' participation as empowering agents. For these reasons the literature selected for review followed six major areas of research: (1) empowerment, (2) sustainable tourism development, (3) community-based ecotourism, (4) ecotourism, (5) indigenous ecotourism, and (6) tourism topics in the Mayan rainforest. Although the scope of the concepts mentioned above many times overlaps amongst them, for example community-based tourism and indigenous ecotourism, in this chapter they are organized in sections but a number of studies in each section addressed more than one of the concepts categorized above.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the fundamental sets of factors that relate to the development of community-based ecotourism. In the context of traditional Mayan villages the term indigenous ecotourism would be used instead of community-based tourism. The tourism industry in the upper set displays its main stakeholders. For the purpose of this study, tour operators were considered key stakeholders from the tourism industry set. In the right set the wilderness is represented by government, local communities, and NGOs which usually have a type of involvement with natural settings. The left set is made up of the community, in this case named Indigenous people. Tourism stakeholders from the community consisted in community leaders, tourism cooperatives, and community landowners. Overlying the indigenous people

set is a wheel containing five empowerment dimensions through ecotourism. This consideration emerged since communities are believed to develop more sustainable if they are empowered through participation in ecotourism. For instance, Sofield (2003) argued that without empowerment, sustainable tourism development is difficult to attain by local communities. As mentioned above, let us consider in Figure 2.1 the empowerment dimensions as an inner wheel of the indigenous people set. The wheel of empowerment spins on its own axis around the indigenous people set. The economic empowerment is a subset of the interaction between the tourism industry and the indigenous people.

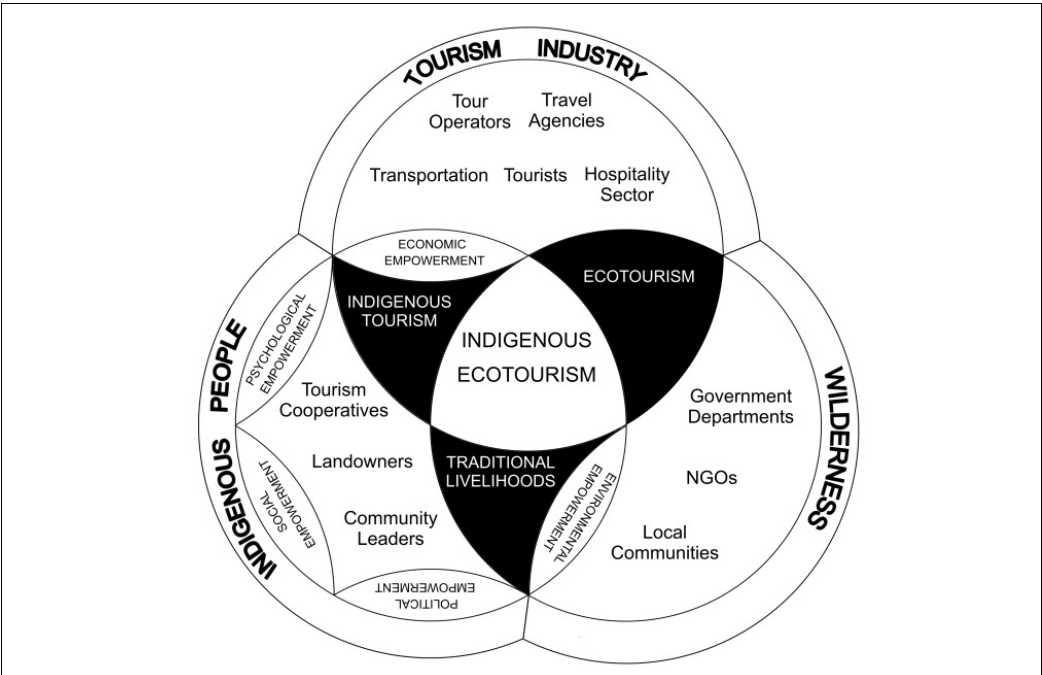


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework- *The Wheel of Empowerment*

Likewise, environmental empowerment is a subset of the interaction between indigenous people and the wilderness where they exist. With the empowerment wheel in motion, psychological, social, and political empowerment is not only influenced by the tourism industry stakeholders and by the wilderness stakeholders, but also by the internal stakeholders itself. The core of the diagram shows the interaction between the three sets and has been named indigenous ecotourism in consideration to the Mayan communities addressed in this thesis. However, the diagram allows for swapping the name to a broader involvement of local communities, when instead of having indigenous people as the focus of any study, non-indigenous traditional or local communities are taken into account and

therefore, instead of calling the core of the diagram indigenous ecotourism, it would be called community-based ecotourism. Both concepts point to a sustainable tourism development when there are local communities involved. At last, the subsets in black surrounding indigenous ecotourism represent the activities that are the result of the sets' interaction. Firstly, ecotourism is a subset of the tourism industry and the wilderness, for example tourism in National Parks. Indigenous tourism is a subset of indigenous people and the tourism industry. The concept of indigenous tourism regards just cultural products and services for tourists offered by original communities, but disregards the natural context associated to the place where they live. The traditional livelihoods are the result of the interaction between indigenous people set and their wilderness, which has no tourism influence.

The concept of indigenous ecotourism in the core of the diagram offers a *holistic* view integrating the three scopes that constitutes this activity and is central in this thesis as the communities studied inhabit traditional landscapes of ancient Maya influence. Two of the three communities this thesis investigated are indigenous Mayans while the third one is made up of a mix of Mayans with other non-Mayans inhabitants.

2.2 Empowerment

2.2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the concept of empowerment, followed by a description of studies that have expanded its understanding and that are relevant to this research. Firstly, Scheyvens (1999) presents a framework to assess empowerment with local communities, and this is the basis of the framework used in this thesis. On the other hand, Koch, De Beer and Eliffe (1998) proposed three ways to promote maximum community empowerment and participation in the tourism sector from two spatial development initiatives in South Africa, a region where there is a rich mixture of relatively undisturbed beaches and coral reefs, natural resources and protected wildlife reserves, and a rich cultural heritage. This place has the potential to become a globally competitive destination for tourism but the local communities are affected by the political and economic apartheid that reflects on significant underutilization of the natural environment potential. Based on a long-term study of a remote

community in Eastern Indonesia Cole (2006), in a similar fashion, explores the reasons why the villagers' participation remains passive and discusses how action research can be used to help empower research subjects. These studies show different approaches to empowerment in relation to ecotourism, and will be described and discussed later in this section. Together, these studies added up to build the checklist of indicators used to analyze empowerment in the three villages this thesis investigated.

2.2.2 The Concept of Empowerment

Issues relating to the concept of empowerment have been investigated by researchers from a number of disciplines including human geography (Howitt, 2001), community psychology (Banyard & LaPlant 2002), health studies (Peterson & Reid 2003), education and women's studies (Parpart, Rai, & Staudt 2003), management (Terblanche 2003), and community-based development (Mansuri & Rao 2003). In the social sciences, for example, empowerment has been analyzed in human development, women rights, and poverty and inequality (Argawal, 2010; UNRISD, 2010). Empowerment is a process that describes the means by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and gain control over their lives (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998), fosters self-confidence and self-esteem (Friedman 1992), and maximizes power by sharing it with the collective (Parpart, Rai, & Staudt 2003). From a tourism perspective Sofield (2003) stated that empowerment is the most effective way in which a community can develop tourism in a sustainable way and as a consequence enhances the chances of successful tourism ventures.

France (1997, p.149) defined empowerment as "a process through which individuals, households, local groups, communities, regions and nations shape their own lives and the kind of society in which they live". Other authors agree that the process of community-level collective action empowers local actors and establishes more democratic decision making (e.g., Fung & Wright, 2003; Heller, Harilal & Chaudhuri, 2007). Current approaches favor decentralization, broad-based citizen participation, the use of local knowledge, and collaboration among a diverse set of actors from the community, civil society, state, and private sector. Empowerment is a process to help people to exert control over factors that affect their lives (Di Castri, 2003;

Scheyvens 1999). Empowering indigenous communities in tourism depends on direct and indirect benefits such as enhancing control of the management of ecotourism through traditional tribal and legal recognition of individual and collective rights to ancestral lands (UNWTO, 2005). Scheyvens (1999) has approached the concept of empowerment through ecotourism to explain how local communities can ultimately benefit from tourism activity. Scheyvens (2002) built a framework around four dimensions of empowerment: economic, psychological, social and political. Lasting economic gains of tourism are signs of economic empowerment. Psychological empowerment comes from self-esteem and pride in cultural traditions. Social empowerment results from increased community cohesion and development, and political empowerment comes from tourism decision-making and local control. While Gurung, Buckley, Castley and Jennings (2008) acknowledged the community's non-economic benefits that boost opportunities for conservation, including new skills and broader experiences in managing people and projects, strengthened abilities to negotiate with outsiders and expanded circles of contacts and support for community efforts, Scheyvens (1999) has characterized these benefits as community empowerment, although an environmental approach does not figure in her framework. This model account for local community involvement and control over ecotourism ventures. Other authors have considered them as facets of social capital that help strengthen local institutions for resource management (Jones 2005; Pretty & Smith 2003).

However, to be successful, communities require further social and political empowerment through training in managerial skills and use of trust funds, direct resource ownership and more input in land use or wildlife quotas allocated to tourism (Mbaiwa, 2005). Successful community-based ecotourism requires the empowerment of community members through local participation, control of and decision-making in tourism, employment, training opportunities and increased entrepreneurial activities by local people. However, true active participation or empowerment has received little attention in the tourism development literature (Sofield, 2003; Warburton, 1998). Botes and Van Rensburg (2000) have argued that community participation is essential in development and that the public have a right to participate in planning. Moreover, it is often essential to secure funding

(Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Active participation is nevertheless frequently constrained by a community's lack of information and knowledge.

While it can be argued that all communities participate to a certain degree, such as by sharing a despoiled environment, receiving menial jobs or getting a percentage of gate fees to a national park, community participation is about active participation and empowerment (Cole 2006). On the other hand, involvement in planning is likely to result in more appropriate decisions and greater motivation on the part of the local people (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 1993). Tosun and Timothy (2003, p.10) considered that "empowerment is a way of gaining knowledge that may arm a community to challenge outside an elitist interest" and argued that the local community is more likely to know what will work and what will not in local conditions. According to Zeppel (2006), empowerment also requires building local capacity to participate in tourism such as basic tourism awareness courses along with training in languages, business and operational skills.

For Fennell (2003, p.159), the process of empowerment involves local people "holding with the will, resources and opportunity to make decisions within the community". Similarly, Akama (1996) suggested that for a local community to be empowered, it should decide the way in which ecotourism takes place in their own communities, and the extent of involvement in this activity, and thus benefits can be shared among different stakeholders.

While many studies of empowerment reported in the tourism literature have focused on developing countries and local communities, a small number have focused on the role of tourists. Issues examined include the importance of tourism certification policies in empowering tourists and the role tourists can play in encouraging gradual improvement in quality (Hjalager 2001) and how information communication technology in the travel industry has become a means for empowering tourists (Niininen, Buhalis & March 2007).

The majority of research into empowerment has focused on the development of local communities. For instance, in her study Scheyvens (2002) refers to empowerment as a process that helps communities gain control over ecotourism initiatives in their area. In another study Timothy (2002) argued that resident involvement in tourism decision-

making affords traditionally under-represented groups a voice and opportunities to break free of the constraints usually imposed on them.

In a study of communities in Indonesia Cole (2006) noted that the process of empowerment relies on transferring knowledge to the community and found that many of the communities that had failed to derive economic benefit from ecotourism were passive participants. Conversely, communities that were active participants generally had greater tourism derived incomes, were better organized and participated in tourism planning. While acknowledging the role of tourism as an agent for transfer of power, Sofield (2003) found that in a number of countries in the South Pacific a meaningful transfer of power and resources to communities has yet to be implemented as a fundamental component of tourism development.

Other investigations into empowerment have included local decision-making practices and issues of community members living in a Heritage Park in Fiji (Farrelly 2011) and the challenges that are associated with the transformation of contemporary tourism economy and ownership in South Africa (Rogerson 2004). Farrelly's (2011) paper identified a lack of formal education and perceptions of weak leadership from locals which contributed to an inability for community members to make fully informed decisions in community-based ecotourism leaving them politically disempowered. Similarly, Rogerson (2004) found that the main obstacle to meeting government objectives for promoting economic empowerment of the owners of small tourism firms was the lack of training in marketing tourism products. In an examination of empowerment in tourism destination communities Timothy (2007) found that power struggles continue to affect the most disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic and racial minorities, women and the poor.

Collectively, these studies point to a number of issues related to empowerment, however there has been little work undertaken into issues related to empowerment/disempowerment of various stakeholders within existing communities and to the authority given to communities by external authorities to make decisions and take control of ecotourism ventures.

2.2.3 Ecotourism and Empowerment of Local Communities

This is a journal paper from Scheyvens (1999) who sorted to understand how ecotourism ventures impact on the lives of people living in and around the environments which ecotourists frequent and draws on the premise that ecotourism should promote both conservation and development at a local level. From a development perspective, success in ecotourism ventures will only occur when local communities have some measure of control over them and if the benefits emerging from ecotourism activities are shared equitably.

Table 2.1 shows Scheyvens' (1999) framework. Based on Friedmann's (1992) writing on economic empowerment, Scheyvens (1999) presents an empowerment framework, as a suitable mechanism for aiding analysis of the social, economic, psychological and political impacts of ecotourism on local communities.

An empowerment framework has been devised in this thesis to provide a mechanism with which the effectiveness of ecotourism initiatives, in terms of their impacts on local communities, can be determined. This is the framework where this thesis is based on, although it has been modified to include an environmental category as it will be shown in the following chapters.

Economic empowerment considers, for example, concerns that may arise over inequity in the spread of economic benefits. Psychological empowerment regards the promotion of a group's sense of self-esteem and wellbeing (Mansperger, 1995). Ecotourism which is sensitive to cultural norms and builds respect for local traditions can, therefore, be empowering for local people.

A community which is, for example, optimistic about the future, has faith in the abilities of its residents, is relatively self-reliant and demonstrates pride in traditions and culture can be said to be psychologically powerful. Social empowerment occurs when a community's sense of cohesion and integrity has been confirmed or strengthened by an activity such as ecotourism. Political empowerment occurs when community's voices and concerns should guide the development of any ecotourism project from the feasibility stage through to its implementation. It also occurs when decision-making processes involve different social groups within a community.

The framework presented by Scheyvens (1999) is particularly pertinent for this thesis as it offers a way to assess empowerment through the extent to which indigenous people, or other disadvantaged groups, are benefiting from ecotourism.

Table 2.1 Framework to determine the impacts of ecotourism initiatives on local communities. Scheyvens (1999).

	Signs of empowerment	Signs of disempowerment
Economic Empowerment	Ecotourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (e.g. improved water systems, houses made of more permanent materials).	Ecotourism merely results in small, spasmodic cash gains for a local community. Most profits go to local elites, outside operators, government agencies, etc. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from ecotourism, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits because they lack capital and/or appropriate skills.
Psychological Empowerment	Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. Increasing confidence of community members leads them to seek out further education and training opportunities. Access to employment and cash leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g. women, youths.	Many people have not shared in the benefits of ecotourism, yet they may face hardships because of reduced access to the resources of a protected area. They are thus confused, frustrated, disinterested or disillusioned with the initiative
Social Empowerment	Ecotourism maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful ecotourism venture. Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g., to build schools or improve roads	Disharmony and social decay. Many in the community take on outside values and lose respect for traditional culture and for elders. Disadvantaged groups (e.g. women) bear the brunt of problems associated with the ecotourism initiative and fail to share equitably in its benefits. Rather than cooperating, individuals, families, ethnic or socioeconomic groups compete with each other for the perceived benefits of ecotourism. Resentment and jealousy are commonplace.
Political Empowerment	The community's political structure, which fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups, provides a forum through which people can raise questions relating to the ecotourism venture and have their concerns dealt with. Agencies initiating or implementing the ecotourism venture seek out the opinions of community groups (including special interest groups of women, youths and other socially disadvantaged groups) and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies e.g. the Wildlife Park Board.	The community has an autocratic and/or self-interested leadership. Agencies initiating or implementing the ecotourism venture treat communities as passive beneficiaries, failing to involve them in decision-making. Thus the majority of community members feel they have little or no say over whether the ecotourism initiative operates or the way in which it operates.

Scheyvens' (1999) is, in fact, fundamental to this research as it is the basis of the model used in this thesis. Additionally, this framework has been considered for other authors to assess empowerment (e.g. Farrelly 2011) although it has not been addressed in any depth. Although this thesis adopted an empowerment framework based on Scheyvens (1999), a new dimension of environmental empowerment was

added to her framework as it lacks the environmental aspect where communities normally are attached to. Additionally, a new way to assess the modified empowerment framework using a checklist of indicators to create the *wheel of empowerment* is also an addition to the framework.

Like Scheyvens' research, there are a number of authors who have addressed empowerment in ecotourism. For example the study conducted by Koch, De Beer and Elliffe (1998) showed that communities benefiting from major tourism development projects must be given the opportunity to have their say at a relatively early stage in the process. This means that they should be empowered by being presented with the real alternatives, that the awareness of different groupings is essential, and that income distribution is central to the whole process. Similarly, a study by Cole (2006) found that villagers felt empowered to speak out against the government and to raise ideas and issues in a public forum. It is an attempt of knowledge transfer to the villagers in terms of understanding, control, and development of tourism. One finding was that the government officials thought that the villagers should be responsible for keeping the villages clean. While there was no political empowerment, the psychological empowerment they gained can be regarded as an important first step in that direction. Additionally, the production of a code of conduct came up from the first tourism forum organized in 2003. Altogether, these studies helped to develop a checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment which were the raw material to build the research instruments used to assess empowerment in this thesis.

2.3 Sustainable Tourism Development

2.3.1 Introduction

This section discusses first the concept of sustainable tourism. Previous studies reviewed in this section include the study by Kandelaars (2000) who assessed sustainability of tourism in Cancun, Mexico, and the surrounding populated areas with a modeling software package, using three hypothetic scenarios. On the other hand Ko (2005) developed a procedure for assessing tourism sustainability in terms of system quality and proposed a model for the assessment of tourism sustainability. Fraser, Dougil, Mabee, Reed and Mc Alpine (2006) used three case study settings to

evaluate the impact of participatory processes on sustainability indicator identification. These were Western Canada, Botswana and the island states of Guernsey in the United Kingdom. Additionally, Avila-Foucat (2002) evaluated how sustainable a community-based ecotourism project has developed in Ventanilla, a small community in the Pacific shores of Mexico that attracts tourists interested to visit a protected site for sea turtle nesting, and a mangrove lagoon with crocodiles and birds.

These studies were selected to identify a number of ways in which studies about tourism with special interest in the same region have been addressed and particularly because they provide a means to identify and measure indicators of sustainable tourism development. The major outcomes from these studies are discussed at the end of this section.

2.3.2 The Concept of Sustainable Tourism Development

The concept of sustainable tourism arguably become part of broader concerns over the carrying capacity of land for human use from the late 1950s on with issues of biophysical and social carrying capacity becoming a significant focus for tourism research as a result of the influence of outdoor recreation studies (Mitchell 1989). As part of the 1970s critique of the impacts of the industry, sustainable development perspectives began to be applied in tourism studies, especially those on the natural environment.

The concept of sustainability first came to public attention with the publication of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in March 1980 (IUCN 1980). The WCS was prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Education Programme (UNEP) the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). However, it should be noted that tourism only received extremely limited coverage in the WCS (Gössling, Hall, Lane & Weaver, 2008).

The term sustainable development became popularized by the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 entitled *Our*

Common Future, commonly referred to as the Brundtland report. According to the WCED (1987, p.43) sustainable development is development which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Since then, there has been a substantial body of literature emerging on the concept of sustainable development. However, it is notable that tourism was only briefly mentioned in the Brundtland report. Building on the momentum that this concept generated in broad-based fora such as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, *sustainable tourism* quickly emerged as both a principle and objective of tourism organizations, business and academics.

In 1998, the UNWTO developed a set of indicators for sustainable tourism development focused on ecological aspects (UNWTO 1998). Sustainable tourism was eventually coined and generally regarded as a subset of alternative tourism. The term “has come to represent and encompass a set of principles, policy prescriptions, and management methods which chart a path for tourism development such that a destination area’s environmental resource base (including natural, built and cultural features) is protected for future development” (Hunter 1997, p.850). Also, sustainable tourism has been defined as a type of development that “connects tourists and providers of tourist facilities and services with advocates of environmental protection and community residents and their leaders who desire a better quality of life” (McIntyre, Heatherington & Inskip 1993, p.16).

Butler’s (1993) often cited definition of sustainable tourism refers to developed and maintained in an area (community and environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes. There is thus a need to rethink indicators in general, to consider aspects of scale (local, national and global) location, and whether an indicator informs about relative or absolute sustainability.

The environmental consequences of the large-scale resort approach to tourism in many developing countries were highlighted with numerous cases of destruction ecosystems and overuse of finite resources such as the draining of mangrove

swamps to allow construction of buildings and raw sewage flowing from hotels into waterways (Scheyvens, 2002).

As emphasized by the sustainable livelihoods approach, rural households cannot depend on agricultural production as the sole source of income but have to explore additional options. One of the best ways in which tourism can both conserve nature and improve local livelihoods is through community approaches to natural resource management (Ashley, 2000). In this way, a community may identify tourism as just one strategy for development utilizing their natural resources. The potential for a positive relationship between tourism and conservation has also been noted (Hall 1998), as tourists are clearly attracted by pristine and attractive natural environments.

Some tourism academics (e.g. Middleton & Hawkins, 1998, p.247) even argue that “sustainability in tourism is generally an aspiration or goal, rather than a measurable or achievable objective”. Mowforth and Munt (1998) consider that tourism should contribute to sustainable development at the local, regional, and national level. Hunter (1997) argues that sustainable tourism literature is too “tourism-centric” and found that 17% of articles belonging to seven edited collections on sustainable tourism dealt with community issues.

Yet, although some approaching consensus has been attained with respect to the basic principle of sustainable tourism, implementation in an era of climate change concern is a far more confounding matter, reflecting sustainable development’s status as an “essentially contested concept” susceptible to multiple interpretations depending on the “values and ideologies of various stakeholders” (Hall 1998, p.13).

As argued by Lane (2009), research in sustainable tourism is as much an art as a science because researchers need to reflect on, use and analyze skills from both the arts and the sciences. Tourism sustainability scientists from a range of disciplines have pointed to a reconsideration of a new sustainable tourism paradigm from various perspectives, particularly in the light of new developments associated with climate change (Gössling, Hall, Lane & Weaver, 2008). In the context of climate change, there are already calls by UNWTO and other industry organizations not to focus mitigation action on aviation, the most important tourism sub-sector in terms

of emissions, in order to not potentially deprive developing countries of their opportunities to economic growth.

The aviation sector in particular has become a test case for sustainable transport developments. For instance, trips by rail and bus/coach account for about 34 percent of all tourist journeys, causing 13 percent of all CO₂ emissions. In contrast, long-haul trips by air account for 2.7 percent of all tourist trips, but are responsible for 17 percent of emissions. Individual trips can cause emissions with a factor 1,000 difference: from close to zero (a holiday by bicycle and tent) to more than 10 t of CO₂ (a journey to Antarctica) (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO 2008). As unabated climate change would increase risks for tourism, particularly in tropical destinations, mitigation and adaptation should be seen as a combined process in which destinations, businesses, tourism organizations and scientists can work together.

Notwithstanding the importance of indicators in the development of more sustainable tourism, there has so far not been any distinction of relative and absolute perspectives on sustainability. This may largely be a result of the notion that sustainability is a process without an ultimate goal, or as stated by Farrell and Twinning-Ward (2004, p.275), "sustainability must be conceived as a transition, journey or path, rather than an end point or an achievable goal". Indeed, this would seem to apply to all socio-cultural aspects of tourism, as it is impossible to define one single sustainable "end state" society from a socio-cultural point of view, particularly in the absence of any knowledge on future generations' perspectives on sustainability. Even with regard to environmental aspects, it is clear that sustainability currently refers to the transition from a resource-intense, non-renewable society to one that is dematerializing, re-using resources, or using renewable resources. However, it may also be argued that the notion of sustainability as a transitory process is one of the greatest inherent weaknesses of the sustainability concept.

While a tourism system satisfies the needs of tourists in such a way as to provide appropriate returns to producers and maintain the system, an innovation system generates innovations and appropriately transfers them. Tourism and innovation is appropriate for social-ecological systems to the extent to which they enhance a system's capacity to deal with change and continue to develop. This is also referred

to as resilience, which is a term that is increasingly used interchangeably with sustainability.

According to Ko (2005) if sustainable development is one of the tourism industry's major contemporary objectives, then the industry must be able to measure its performance as well as the impacts in this area. Tourism planners need to translate tourism indicators, which stakeholders want to measure into a measurable form. Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed and Mc Alpine (2006) have examined three situations where external agencies brought stakeholders together. In this study community input has been used to identify and choose sustainability indicators based on three case studies which represented a wide range of experiences in how participatory processes structured around identifying and monitoring sustainability indicators may affect environmental management. Both studies were important to this thesis as they provided understanding in how to obtain and measure indicators. For Ko (2005), one barrier to sustainability assessment is the lack of an acceptable analysis method but fails in provide information on how to obtain the indicators to be measured. Conversely, Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed and Mc Alpine (2006) argued the participatory methods generate long and comprehensive lists of indicators. The authors found that the process of selecting indicators empowered communities, since each individual's knowledge increased by sharing and evaluating the community's knowledge in focus groups, and providing feedback from empirical testing of indicators. Although it was important in all three cases to establish a clear framework to facilitate a multi-stakeholder processes to choose indicators, this in no way guarantees that environmental management will change.

The studies mentioned provided a basis for using and testing indicators, however other studies were selected from the literature as they showed different ways in how to structure tourism research. These studies have addressed the challenges of achieving sustainable development of tourism using different approaches. For instance, Kandelaars (2000) software simulations forecasted what will happen in a mass-tourism destination like Cancun, if non-sustainable practices of tourism are to occur. According to Kandelaars (2000) the tourism sector must emphasize the attractiveness of the region for tourism by stimulating and promoting ecotourism. In a different study Avila-Foucat (2002) provided a set of recommendations that

includes activities involving children and women, a code of ethics for tourists, market studies, incentives promoting sustainable community projects, encouragement of carrying capacity values in co-ordination with other institutions, improvement in the quality and uniformity of the information given by the tour guides, and an integrated coastal zone management program for the region. According to Avila-Foucat (2002), community-based ecotourism management in Ventanilla is moving towards sustainability because of the economic benefits in the community from tourism, the equitable benefit sharing between cooperative members, the socio-political organization, and because members from the cooperative are aware about environmental impacts and are interested in defining the carrying capacity of the area.

2.4 Community-Based Tourism

2.4.1 Introduction

This section discusses the concept of community-based tourism, followed by a number of studies identified in the literature, starting with the study by Ashley and Garland (1994) who addressed community-based tourism development in Namibia. The studies in this section helped to identify indicators of empowerment and disempowerment that are normally not referred as such. For instance, Mitchell (2003) examined the socioeconomic aspects of tourism in two Andean communities in Peru. Similarly, Stronza and Gordillo (2008) studied three Amazon community-based ecotourism projects in the region of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Community members in each site share profits and are also engaged in determining the direction and future of tourism in the region. In these sites, the eco-lodges are located far from the village centers and it takes 1-5 hours by motorized canoe, or several days of walking through the forest. On the other hand, Forstner (2004) analyzed the role of intermediary institutions in marketing community-based tourism ventures in developing countries. In a study conducted in Port Douglas, Australia, Blackstock (2005) critically assessed community-based tourism in this beach town and tourism destination in Far North Queensland which was transformed from a small fishing village with less than 200 inhabitants in the 1970s to an international resort destination. In contrast, Kontogeorgopolus (2005) consent the viability of

community-based ecotourism in the island province of Phuket and Ao Phangnga Marine National Park in Southern Thailand. Phuket is currently a typical mass tourism resort destination, and features the crowded beaches, pollution, high-rise hotels, and water shortages. In a study not related with tourism, Mason and Beard (2008) analyzed the relationship between community-based planning and poverty in Oaxaca, Mexico.

2.4.2 The Concept of Community-Based Tourism

The roots of community-based ecotourism derive from the concept of community development, a small-scale, locally oriented, and holistic approach to economic growth and social change (Horwich, Murray, Saqui, Lyon & Godfrey 1993; Lynn, 1992; Woodley, 1993). Politically, it encourages autonomy, sovereignty, decision-making power, local participation, and community control over the initiation and direction of development projects (Timothy, 1999). In terms of economy, community development cultivates sustainable and rewarding employment that is made available to all members of a community. Economic benefits are distributed widely and equitably, while remaining in the hands of locals rather than of outside individuals or corporations (Khan, 1997; Wallace & Pierce, 1996). Social cohesion, harmony, and cooperation enable and enhance individual self-reliance, pride and hope for the future (Ross & Wall, 1999). Community development encourages conservation, environmental education, and the sustainable use of natural resources (De Haas, 2002; Vincent & Thompson, 2002). Community involvement in management and conservation activities encourages local conservation commitment.

The community-based management concept has developed in an attempt to improve the integration between various sectors and society. This has been defined as sharing responsibilities and authority in the management process between governments and communities (Avila-Foucat 2002). Community development can also be defined as “building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect” (Gilchrist, 2003, p.22).

Community-based ecotourism management is growing in order to join community management and ecotourism goals. Successful community-based ecotourism case

studies show that the main challenges are minimization of impacts, benefit sharing equity, and integrated national policies for rural development (Avila-Foucat 2002).

As suggested by Scheyvens (2002), local communities should have the opportunity to be fully and actively involved in ecotourism, as would happen if they were involved in all four of the levels of community participation, i.e. information sharing or awareness, consultation, decision-making and initiating action. Scheyvens (2002) analyzed existing ecotourism ventures or planning for future ventures in viewing them from the perspective of community empowerment, however, the level of community participation needs to be critically assessed.

Participation in ownership and management is a noneconomic benefit that is discussed often in case studies but seldom measured in direct relation to conservation, with a few notable exceptions. Scheyvens (1999) has argued that participation is linked with conservation because ecotourism ventures are more likely to lead to stewardship when locals gain some measure of control and share equitably in the benefits.

Despite potential limitations including problems associated with defining the “local” community, overcoming existing inequalities, and gaining community consensus, community-based tourism offers the possibility of greater local control and participation (Murphy, 1985). However, community based tourism is often presented as a way of ensuring the long-term survival of a profitable tourism industry rather than empowering local residents. Additionally, communities are treated very often as just one more component in tourism planning and management. The adoption of models of protected area management in developing countries has led to serious conflicts with local people due to their exclusion in decision-making processes, which have ultimately threatened their livelihoods (Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997; Roper, 2000; Stevens, 1997). Local communities are often presented as homogeneous blocks, without considering the power struggles or competing values, and external constraints to local control are normally ignored. Community-based tourism combines the services delivered by different community members through joint planning and management, seeking to spread the benefits among different households. Healy (1994), for example, observed that more opportunities for entry by the poor are possible in a local handicraft industry than with capital-intensive

tourism such as transport, pointing out that artisans obtain cash income while remaining in the rural setting, allowing the producer to work during slack periods between other tasks, and tending to be equitable by providing a cash return for women, children, the handicapped, and the elderly. On the other hand, Brandon (1996) feels that non-cohesive communities have little decision-making input and decisions made usually favor the needs of the tourist and the operator/owner of the site.

Although the community-based tourism paradigm assumes shared interests and a consensus of the preferred tourism outcomes, this conceptualization of community ignores how “community” groups can act out of self-interest rather than for collective good (Ireland, 1993) leading to outcomes that build exclusive “club capital” rather than inclusive social capital (Winter, 2000). For Ashley and Garaland (1994) an enterprise run by a community or joint venture is more likely to diversify the tourism product through cultural and ethical appeal. It also makes greater contribution to the long term sustainability of tourism, which depends on natural resources and public support. A community enterprise can generate similar benefits to a joint venture lodge but on a smaller scale. However, for Stronza and Gordillo (2008) the belief that community-based ecotourism could be a remedy for solving the problems of nature conservation and local development is questionable because the linkage between tourism income and natural conservation has not been confirmed and most of ecotourism literature has failed to provide evidence about this problem. Joint ventures are more likely to promote resource conservation and welfare at the same time, and therefore they are more capable to achieve much greater increases in community incomes, skills and empowerment. In these partnerships, indigenous communities link their knowledge, land, labor and social capital with the investment capital, business acumen, and managerial experience of outside tour operators and environmental NGOs (Ashley & Jones, 2001). Forstner (2004) argued that, instead of pursuing individual support strategies, it is rather necessary that local communities develop combined approaches of marketing assistance depending on location, tourism resources and existing organizational structures. Similar findings were encountered by Mason and Beard (2008) who showed how participation in state-sponsored programs have helped alleviate the material manifestations of poverty, at

the same time more radical forms of planning are capable of addressing the structural causes of poverty. Some of the most powerful explanatory characteristics were past success in collective efforts, strong social networks and trust. Although political opportunities, obstacles, and threats played significant roles, when these factors were combined with other characteristics such as patterns of out-migration or a history of successful collective action, they generated distinct outcomes across the case study communities. All three communities were successfully engaging in community-based planning to reduce poverty in terms of basic human needs.

While Blackstock (2005) concluded that with the industry domain growing over more communities, a critical and emancipatory approach to tourism has become essential, Kontogeorgopoulos (2005) pointed out that the goals of community-based ecotourism are readily valuable and attainable. Ashley and Garland (1994) stressed the need of a good government policy for promoting community-based ecotourism in Namibia and argued that tourism skills and institutional development, empowerment and equitable distribution of benefits are vital for improved welfare and resource conservation (and hence for sustainability of tourism). The appropriate form of community involvement should be decided locally and government policy should aim to encourage flexible and dynamic developments. The financial and institutional viability of these community tourism enterprises is not always secure. They can generally be enhanced or constrained by a number of factors which are influenced by government policy.

Although communities exist in larger political systems and often lack the capacity to control broader economic effects, communities with stronger networks and social capital may be better prepared to overcome these political challenges (Stronza & Gordillo 2008). Substantial community involvement has seemed to foster greater levels of trust, leadership, and organization expanding social capital in each site. However, examples on community-based tourism have shown how mismanagement on the part of a former coordinator have seen some communities benefit more than others, and this has led to frustration among community groups. That means that community-based tourism networks not only have the potential for inter-community exchange but also run the risk of conflicts (Forstner, 2004). Similarly, Mitchell (2003) stressed the need of supporting local tourism champions, incorporating alternative

forms of indigenous and community knowledge and maximizing local input whenever feasible. Increased individualism and materialism may erode community harmony and weaken local control of tourism. Both internal and external forces to the community can also negatively affect local control of tourism.

2.2 Ecotourism

2.5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the concept of ecotourism and then discussed previous studies with relevance to this thesis. For instance Lopez-Espinosa (2002) evaluated tour operators in a protected natural area of La Paz, Baja California Sur, in Mexico, based on ecotourism principles. Most current ecotourism activities in La Paz bay include sea kayaking, scuba diving, nature cruises (including sailing) and day tour rides. A similar study conducted by Cardenas-Torres, Enriquez-Andrade and Rodriguez-Dowdell (2007) evaluated how ecotourism may affect the behavior of whale sharks in Bahia de Los Angeles, Baja California, Mexico. The presence of whale sharks within this bay represents an opportunity for the economic development of the local community. Whale shark conservation efforts were initiated by a group of local tour operators of Bahia de Los Angeles in response to a request for a marina. The groups requested a study of the current status of whale shark population from the Reserve of the Islands of the Gulf of California. A small ecotourism industry has been developing in the last few years and activities include whale shark observation aboard small boats, snorkeling, photography and video-recording. Some local tour operators also complement their sport fishing trips with whale shark observation. The number of people interested in observing whale sharks is increasing and the current regulation schemes may be inadequate. Additionally, there are a considerable number of tourists observing whale sharks independently in this way, without hiring local tour operators. The bay is one of the very few known and accessible places around the world where whale sharks congregate on a regular and predictable basis.

Garcia-Frapolli, Toledo and Martinez-Alier (2008) investigated a case study of indigenous appropriation of nature within the *House of Spider Monkeys and Jaguars* protected natural area in Southern Mexico where three communities are located.

Although these communities have been established for less than 50 years, all the community members are of Yucatec Maya ancestry, form part of the larger Yucatec Maya culture and largely follow its traditional practices. Endangered species such as jaguars, pumas, black howler monkeys and spider monkeys have been reported in the area. Community-based biodiversity conservation in the area began in 1979 when the Mexican Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) declared an archaeological zone around an ancient (700-1100 A.D.) settlement at Punta Laguna, which included a prohibition on productive activities within the zone. The Yucatan peninsula has experienced the implementation and promotion of development programs that have shaped economically and ecologically the region over the last 40 years. Among these programs, tourist development is nowadays the principal catalyst of social, economic and ecological changes in the region. Based on a specialization rationale, all these programs have historically clashed with traditional Yucatec Maya management of natural resources.

In a different study, Himberg (2004) identified pros and cons in community-based ecotourism in Taita Hills, Southeastern Kenya. This site has been classified as one of the world's 25 most important biodiversity hotspots attracting thousands of tourists to the parks every year. However, local communities develop small-scale farming for their own needs, which has been threatening the site due to logging. The Forest Department led for many decades a forest policy that replaced the indigenous tree species by exotic species. Currently, three types of forests are found in the Taita Hills: planted forests, indigenous forests and sacred forests called *figis*. The sizes of the remaining indigenous forests are very small and they are partly disturbed. Communities' attitude towards conservation has improved through the formation of a Community Environment Committee, which now has the responsibility of ensuring sustainable forest utilization.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Gurung, Buckley, Castley and Jennings (2008) examined the role of mountain communities in the promotion of ecotourism in Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) in Western Nepal. The ACA was the first community-based protected area established in Nepal which brought about innovative strategies for achieving biodiversity conservation through social harmony.

The region is the most popular destination for environmentally sustainable tourism in Nepal receiving half of the county's total trekking tourists.

2.5.2 The Concept of Ecotourism

By investigating 21 definitions of ecotourism, Shibasaki and Nagata (2005) pointed out that the definitions tend to be influenced by the character of organizations which make the definitions. For example, conservationists such as environmental NGOs tend to make more restrictive definitions, requiring sustainable management of tourism as one of the components of ecotourism. Similarly, in the industry and government sectors, ecotourism is often treated as the synonym of "nature-based tourism" (Buckley, 1994). However, ecotourism is considered a viable option in the search for sustainable production activities in local rural communities that confront a gradual deterioration of their natural resources and a reduction in activities oriented towards self-subsistence (Hernandez-Cruz, Bello-Baltazar, Montoya-Gomez, & Estrada-Lugo 2005). Governments view it as a promising option in promoting economic development and conservation in protected areas of developing countries.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world and within the industry ecotourism is the fastest growing sector. The demands of increasingly affluent consumers for "remote", "natural" and "exotic" environments have created an upsurge in ecotourism ventures, particularly in developing countries. By introducing an immediate and potentially lucrative source of revenue, the growth of ecotourism throughout the developing world has acted as an incentive for communities to protect and preserve natural areas (Salam, Beveridge & Lindsay, 2000; Sekercioglu, 2002; Yamagiwa, 2003). Many proponents of ecotourism have agreed on the idea that a greater proportion of tourism benefits should go directly to the peoples and places featured in the brochures, websites, and guidebooks (Weaver, 1998). Benefits have figured most prominently in conservationists' discussions of ecotourism. Bovarnick and Gupta (2003) argued that locals are likely to earn incentives for protecting natural environment, but only if they receive a substantial portion of these benefits. An environmentally unfriendly or economically unsuccessful ecotourism tends to prevail in many developing countries, questioning the validity of its original concept.

Empowerment of communities through ecotourism means that they are not just share equitably in the benefits of ecotourism, but actually have some control over ecotourism activities in their area. Some communities have secured control over ecotourism through gaining the right to manage natural resources, including wildlife on their communal lands (Scheyvens, 2002). All definitions of ecotourism emphasize that it must take place in natural areas, which could include state managed protected areas, private land and communal land (Himberg 2004). The key criteria for ecotourism are: the activity must be environmentally and culturally sensitive, must directly benefit conservation and local people who in turn have an incentive for conservation and must be self-sustaining within the context of the natural and cultural habitats in which it takes place (Goodwin 1996 p.282). According to Hammit and Symmonds (2001), the primary objective of ecotourism management is to conserve the natural and cultural diversity while secondarily providing an acceptable level of tourism or recreation.

Ecotourism is for restricted amounts of nature-orientated travelers, not for masses. Small-scale ecotourism should offer jobs for the villagers and knowledge about biodiversity conservation could be shared with all participating in the projects, i.e. the professionals, the host communities and the visitors. However, though ecotourism stands apart from mass, conventional tourism by its small scale, sustainable activities and greater local involvement, it often falls short in promoting the interests of host communities throughout the developing world (Campbell, 1999; Cochrane, 1996). In an attempt to differentiate between forms of ecotourism that advance the needs and concerns of local communities and those that simply take place in natural areas, several researchers have begun to employ the term “community-based ecotourism” (Belsky, 1999; Fitton, 1996; Timothy & White, 1999). The capacity building of local people in tourism is one challenge as no business is economically or ecologically sustainable in the long run without proper management. If cooperating with outside investors, communities ought to strive towards a tourist agreement allowing them to control and benefit from tourism.

According to Johnston (2000), there are some key differences between industry definitions of ecotourism and indigenous views of ecotourism. Ecotourism motivates many rural communities by the promise of potential economic benefits such as jobs, new business opportunities and skill development, as well as the chance to secure

greater control over natural resource utilization in their areas (Ashley & Roe, 1998). When business is the main driving force behind ecotourism it is not surprising that the ventures which emerge may serve to alienate, rather than benefit local communities (Scheyvens, 1999). Therefore, there is a need for an approach to ecotourism which starts from the needs, concerns and welfare of local host communities.

A community-based approach to ecotourism, as suggested in Scheyvens (1999) empowerment framework, recognizes the need to promote both the quality of life of people and the conservation resources. In New Zealand, for example, Maori communities are using ecotourism as a means of sustainability, utilizing physical resources at their disposal in a way which can provide employment options (Scheyvens, 2002). While ecotourism rhetoric suggests that there is much support for community-based ecotourism ventures, it is difficult to find successful cases of this in practice. A useful way to understand responsible community-based ecotourism is to approach it from a development perspective, which considers social, environmental and economic goals, and questions how ecotourism can meet the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards both in the short and long term (Cater 1993). Community-based approaches to ecotourism need to acknowledge the importance of social dimensions of the tourism experience, rather than primarily focusing on environmental or economic impacts. As income is often insufficient for or can even work against conservation and development, other kinds of benefits may be especially critical.

According to Lopez-Espinosa (2002) there have been no studies that assessed if ecotourism activities in protected areas are achieving the goals and expectations of national and local authorities. Additionally, few studies have attempted to characterize sustainable ecotourism and positive examples of ecotourism are still rare (Himberg 2004).

Ecotourism is not something local communities or NGOs can blindly implement as an effective way of biodiversity conservation and local development. Whether ecotourism is going to be successful is entirely case by case. Therefore, region-specific assessment of potential impact of ecotourism on the community, in terms of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural effects should be conducted before introducing ecotourism. It is also important for all stakeholders to be informed of all potential

benefits and risks before the implementation. Himberg (2004) argues that community-based ecotourism in Taita Hills, when carefully planned and managed, could be one opportunity for Kenya to diversify its tourism product supply and for forest-adjacent communities to gain tangible benefits on a sustainable basis from forests. The goal of the Kenya Tourist Development Cooperation is empowering communities to participate in tourism by collateral loans. Tighter collaboration is important between the different level stakeholders working for conservation and development.

Although a number of scholars have argued that success in ecotourism depends partly in non-economic benefits such as local participation (Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, & Schelhas, 2003), for Stronza and Gordillo (2008), non-economic changes can be difficult to measure, quantify, and evaluate systematically across sites or over time, in part because they are often expressed in qualitative or context-specific narratives that defy easy ranking or comparison). Similarly, in a study that pointed out the failure of development planners and policy makers, Garcia-Frapolli, Toledo and Martinez-Alier (2008) concluded that public policies should foster the Yucatec Maya diversified system of production (including alternative economic activities), which has proven to be effective and flexible enough for managing the biodiversity of an area that is and has been constantly changing. Garcia-Frapolli, Toledo and Martinez-Alier (2008) considered that incorporation of some alternative economic activities, like ecotourism and their intensification through the support of government programs are threatening some of the community's traditional activities.

On the other hand Lopez-Espinosa (2002) argued that the role that ecotourism can play as a conservation strategy in protected areas depends on the strategies designed by managers so that tour operators share the costs and benefits of environmental services. Ecotourism activities have not met the expectations of the protected area managers, and the Mexican government and the owners of the areas concerned have been paying the costs of conservation, while tour operators have taken the benefits. Though tourists often pay a lot for their eco-expeditions, many tour operators have been reluctant to share the returns with local communities (Landell-Mills & Porras, 2002). A study conducted in a similar setting by Cardenas-Torres, Enriquez-Andrade and Rodriguez-Dowdell (2007) argued that community-based projects are important

for long-term conservation and found that the main threat for whale sharks is a lack of protection of their habitat.

2.3 Indigenous Ecotourism

2.6.1 Introduction

This section discusses the concept of indigenous ecotourism. Since two of the three case studies investigated in this thesis are indigenous communities, an approach to the concept of indigenous ecotourism became necessary. The literature about indigenous ecotourism is limited and includes Zeppel (2006) who takes into account the environmental, cultural and economic impacts of indigenous ecotourism ventures in tribal areas of developing countries in the world. In these countries, ecotourism ventures for indigenous peoples are mainly implemented with the help of specific NGOs. Zeppel (2006) provides insights of indigenous ecotourism as a new field of study within the disciplines of tourism, community development, natural resource management and conservation and indigenous studies in developing countries. In a similar way Nepal (2004) also analyzed perspectives of ecotourism development with communities in First Nation's communities in British Columbia (BC), Canada and defined them as indigenous ecotourism. The economic reality in many First Nations communities in BC is that the majority is unemployed, lacks education and trade skills, and has low self-esteem and limited knowledge of the outside world, making them vulnerable when choosing to leave the life of a reserve. The earliest study this section included was Colvin (1994) who reported a model of indigenous ecotourism completely operated by an indigenous community in Ecuador's Amazon Basin.

2.6.2 The Concept of Indigenous Ecotourism

The term indigenous ecotourism has emerged since the mid-1990s to describe community ecotourism projects developed on indigenous lands and territories (Zeppel, 2006). Indigenous tourism refers to tourism activities in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction (Butler & Hinch, 2007). The factor of control is a key in any discussion of development. Indigenous ecotourism is defined as "nature-based

attractions or tours owned by indigenous people and also indigenous interpretation of the natural and cultural environment including wildlife” (Zeppel 2003, p.56).

While indigenous ecotourism is a relatively small field of research, a number of themes have emerged including the significance of economic, political, cultural and environmental aspects of the operation of indigenous tourism. In an examination of ecotourism and indigenous tourism certified enterprises, Buultjens, Gale, and White (2011) addressed concerns about the dissociation of these two concepts and considered that cooperation between indigenous tourism and ecotourism sectors would maximize the potential to provide substantial competitive advantages for the Australian tourism industry. Similarly, a study by Whitford and Ruhanen (2010) found that almost all policies for indigenous tourism lacked the rigor and depth required in achieving sustainable tourism development.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines indigenous communities, peoples and nations as those having “a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, are distinct from other settler groups and want to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity” (UNDP 2004, p.2). This historical continuity is based on occupation of ancestral lands, common ancestry, cultural practices and language. Indigenous people are also often economically and culturally marginalized and often live in extreme poverty. They make up almost a half of the world’s 900 million extremely poor rural peoples (IFAD, 2003). They often have a subsistence economy and rely on natural resources for food and cash. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) stated that indigenous peoples comprise five per cent of the world’s population but embody 80% of the world’s cultural diversity. They are estimated to occupy 20% of the world’s land surface but nurture 80% of the world’s biodiversity on ancestral lands and territories (UNCSD, 2002). According to Johnston (2003) one of the main challenges facing indigenous leadership today is to educate community members as to how rights are defined and the best avenues and tools for protecting them. The slow process of undertaking this type of community education, and of networking with other communities to learn more about the nature of tourism, is frequently capitalized on by tourism developers.

A variety of terms are used in the literature to describe the different groups that fall under the indigenous concept. A sampling of terminology includes Indian (Csargo, 1988; Hollinshead, 1992), Aboriginal (Altman, 1989; Altman & Finalyson, 1993; Parker, 1993) native (Tourism Canada, 1988), indigenous (Ryan & Aicken, 2005) and first nations (Reid, 1993). In certain contexts broader terms such as cultural (Robinson & Boniface, 1999) and ethnic (Swain, 1993) tourism have also been used to encompass the indigenous tourism dimensions in whole or in part. One of the limitations of this definition is that culture is dynamic and while the UNDP definition emphasizes tradition, it must also be recognized that there is an ever-changing contemporary dimension to these groups that does not invalidate their indigenous status although it may complicate it (Butler & Hinch, 2007).

Table 2.2 shows a way to identify genuine indigenous ecotourism taking into account indigenous control over tourism and if the indigenous thematic is part of tourism activity. Butler and Hinch (2007) argued that although indigenous tourism remains as a small tourism niche, dependent on mainstream tourism elements for access to and from markets, it has been increasing importance to many indigenous communities as a supplementary form of income and perhaps as one form of economic and cultural empowerment.

Table 2.2 Indigenous tourism defined (Hinch and Butler, 1996, p.10)

		INDIGENOUS CONTROL	
		LOW	HIGH
INDIGENOUS THEME	PRESENT	Culture dispossessed	Culture controlled
	ABSENT	Non- indigenous tourism	Diversified indigenous

Achieving sustainable tourism on indigenous territories depends on several key factors such as land ownership, community control of tourism, government support for tourism development, restricted access to indigenous homelands and reclaiming natural or cultural resources utilized for tourism (Zeppel, 1998). Through the 1990s, indigenous tourism has developed into a new visitor market segment featured on

indigenous ownership and management of tourism facilities (Getz & Jamieson, 1997; Zeppel, 1998; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Notzke, 2006). Indigenous tourism ventures, including ecotourism on traditional lands, have mainly occurred since the 1990s (Zeppel, 1998, 2001, 2003; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Notzke, 2006). The concept of aboriginal or indigenous tourism in Australia has been defined as a tourism product which is either aboriginal owned or part owned, employs aboriginal people, or provides consenting contact with aboriginal people, culture or land.

According to Colvin (1994), for indigenous ecotourism programmes to compete successfully with established tour operators, there needs to be a regional plan and policies governing relations with outside travel agents. The market for this specialized segment of the ecotourism industry is limited.

Ecotourism will not work for every threatened forest. There must be a diversification of sustainable activities, whether it is extractive reserves or butterfly farms. And where local people are involved, they must participate fully and gain equitable benefits (Colvin 1994).

Since the publication of *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (Hinch & Butler, 1996), interest in indigenous tourism development issues has increased significantly. Although indigenous tourism literature is not rare, very few studies have addressed the concept of indigenous ecotourism. Zeppel (2006) has concurred that most published research on ecotourism provides a non-indigenous perspective and argued that key factors for the sustainable development of indigenous ecotourism ventures on tribal lands and protected areas are: securing land tenure, funding or technical support from NGOs, foreign donors and government agencies for community-based ecotourism and links with the private tourism industry.

Marketing of indigenous ecotourism ventures and sites is mainly undertaken by NGOs promoting ecotourism, community tourism or rural tourism in developing countries. Nepal (2004) found in remote communities located in North and Central British Columbia that the development of ecotourism is seen as an integral aspect of the process towards indigenous control, self-reliance and improvement of social and economic conditions. Ecotourism has been heralded as an alternative, sustainable development initiative. Nepal (2004) argued that the greatest challenge lies in bringing

together sound practices of the past with the constraints and realities of the present in a manner that allows the community to prosper in the most desirable manner.

2.7 Tourism in Mayan Areas

2.7.1 Introduction

This section provides literature that relates with the Mayan Area in any of the concepts discussed previously in this chapter, and that are relevant to the case studies of this research. This region is home to many small, traditional Maya communities who live of combinations of agriculture, forest management, and occasional labor migration to bigger tourism destinations such as Cancun in Mexico. Additionally, the biodiverse semi-humid tropical forests, traditional lifestyles and archaeological ruins found on many community lands are now seen as commodities that can be sold to tourists.

Starting with Hernandez-Cruz, Bello-Baltazar, Montoya-Gomez and Estrada-Lugo (2005) who analyzed social and economic adjustment processes related to the introduction of ecotourism in a community of the Lacandon rainforest in Mexico, the studies in this section are important to build this thesis as they were able to provide information about the background and contexts of the three case studies. Additionally, these studies provide insights on the methodology used in this thesis. For instance, in a recent study Pinkus-Rendon (2010) reflected about the social and political process linked to the environmental transformations in a Protected Natural Area in Tabasco, Mexico, where natural landscapes are the main attractions to develop ecotourism in the Municipality of Tenosique. Likewise, the PhD thesis by Garcia-Frapolli (2003) also analyzed the context of a Protected Natural Area, but in the Yucatan peninsula, Mexico. State governments' discourses in Mexico underpin that the economic and social development can be reached through sustainable development of ecotourism, which is an instrument to combat poverty and enhance population's life quality. For example, in a study conducted in Quintana Roo, Juarez (2002) focused on Mayan perspectives to describe the process of ecological degradation and rise of the tourism industry in the Municipality of Tulum, and found that while modernization and changes have certainly brought many benefits, these changes also positioned Mayas as a structurally and ideologically inferior class of humans. Also in Quintana Roo, Carballo-Sandoval (2005) analyzed the chances of coexistence of a model of ecotourism

development within a model of mass tourism development, and Meyer-Arendt (2009) addressed the development plans that created a cruise tourism destination in Quintana Roo, Mexico. After successfully packaging the Riviera Maya and the Costa Maya, local state tourism officials have now focused on the traditional Maya area of Central Quintana Roo which they have proposed packaging as the Provincia Maya. A pioneer study in the region is authored by Pi-Sunyer, Thomas and Daltaubuit (2001) who conducted extensive fieldwork with communities in Quintana Roo, Mexico, to understand and document the role of tourism as an agent of rapid cultural change. Other studies conducted in the Yucatan Peninsula included Barbosa-Polanco, Ofelia-Molina, Escalona-Segura and Bello-Baltazar (2010) who analyzed the changes in the social organization for the management of natural resources by considering the introduction of ecotourism with communities in the three states of the Yucatan peninsula. On the other hand, Klein and Lawver (2007) designed a course in community-based ecotourism for landscape architecture students that included three weeks travel and service-learning projects in Yucatan, Mexico.

Three studies in Guatemala were important to consider as they relate with one of the communities investigated in this thesis. One of these studies was conducted by Shoka (2006) who used choice experiments as a method to find tourists' willingness to pay in Uaxactun, Guatemala. In a similar study, Hearne and Santos (2005) presented an analysis of tourists and local preferences towards nature-based tourism development in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala. On the other hand, Monterroso (2006) analyzed the incidence of environmental policies on the ability of local groups to establish rules, arrangements and laws regarding the use of natural resources and construction of social capital in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala.

Valuable information to build the background of the case studies selected in this research came from the studies cited previously. A few of these studies were published in Spanish but were important to identify previous literature that added value to the objectives of this thesis. Additionally, all studies documented in this section address tourism in one way or another.

Community-based ecotourism that is long-term planned can be an alternative which complements traditional productive activities in the Mayan Area since it is a non-extractive activity that promotes conservation and increase in life quality that requires

different elements to occur. For Barbosa-Polanco, Ofelia-Molina, Escalona-Segura and Bello-Baltazar (2010) Chacchoben has become an example of community-based tourism and receive groups for the exchange of experiences. Especially in the state of Quintana Roo, tourism has greatly influenced the lives of the inhabitants of the community. This influence has positive and negative implications for the social, economic and ecological dimensions. Biodiversity conservation has a variety of approaches and is based on the recognition that biodiversity is not entirely a scientific matter. The term has gone beyond the exclusivity of the scientific scenario and has entered the domains of political and social debates. Traditionally, protected natural areas have been a crucial component of conservation strategies but have often failed to meet local needs (Klooster & Masera, 2000). According to The Mexican Act LGEEPA, protected natural areas have to be managed through a well-defined plan. This plan should be designed with stakeholders' perspectives and with the objective that the use of natural resources within the protected natural areas should be planned and managed by local people in a participatory manner. According to Cornwall (2003), participation, empowerment and inclusion have become new development key words. Communities in the Yucatan Peninsula have experience in managing community enterprises, such as forest enterprises and the establishment of ecotourism enterprises is not a foreign concept. The dynamics and organization of community forest enterprises provide a potential model for the success of community-based ecotourism enterprises in Central Quintana Roo. Barbosa-Polanco, Ofelia-Molina, Escalona-Segura and Bello-Baltazar (2010) contributed to understand at a local level the insertion of a new activity and the changes produced in the organization for the management of natural resources.

For Horwich and Lyon (1999) ecotourism is a mechanism that can potentially provide an economic complement for the rural inhabitants, thus preventing land abandonment and subsequent rural-urban and international migration. However, Garcia-Frapolli (2003) concluded that the theoretical virtuous circle of biodiversity conservation with traditional agroecological techniques and alternative economic activities has not been able to create sustainable development outcomes. Instead, it has produced a lot of social disruption almost to the point of community disintegration. A lack of local management and local appropriation of monetary earnings leaves social sustainability

an open question. It is not clear whether higher income obtained from ecotourism leads local people to invest their money in biodiversity conservation. In some cases, people invest on other activities such as enlarging agricultural fields, which can threaten biodiversity. Even though local people have an incentive to participate in preservation activities, such positive effect on biodiversity conservation might be offset by the increase of demographic pressure caused by outsiders attracted by the economic success of ecotourism. In a similar way, the study by Juarez (2002) pointed out the impacts of tourism in Tulum where those who were middle-aged and older had personally experienced radical changes in lifestyle and often chatted about the adversities of the old days. They recalled simple lives and struggles with health problems, droughts, shortages of food and the elders' having to rely on last choice foods that were eaten during years of drought. Meyer-Arendt (2009) also addressed the coastal management plan put together by University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Centre in cooperation with USAID, NGOs and local governments and universities (especially the University of Quintana Roo, in Chetumal). For Meyer-Arendt (2009) this plan altered the direction of tourism development along the Costa Maya. Among the outcomes of the management plan were that FONATUR will grant a concession to develop a cruise ship port (including an airport and small city for tourism workers) immediately north of Majahual, to be called Nuevo Majahual. The Xcalak Reefs National Park was established along with a low-density zoning guideline to conserve fishing resources which included limiting structures to two stories in height in outlying areas and extending paved roads and electricity throughout the region.

In a study about political ecology, Monterroso (2006) found that the communities have a lack of information of national and local policies when it comes to conservation projects. The existence of grants with secure tenancy of the cooperatives is a step forward to push government to implement this type of projects. There must be political and legal competence to fulfill with the commitments and economic and social ability to their implementation.

According to Hearne and Santos (2005) feasibility of nature-based tourism in the Petén is dependent not only upon the natural beauty and unique species that can be encountered in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, but also upon the accessibility of the area, the available services, the sense of security that is provided to tourists, the

availability of complementary tourist and recreational activities and the affordability of travel. Similarly, Pinkus-Rendon (2010) found that the conflicts and general deficiencies related with changes in the communal social organization of any community dedicated to ecotourism are a lack of participation and unequal economic distribution. On the other hand, Martinez-Balleste, Martorell and Caballero (2006) found that the rapid expansion of the tourism industry and the trend for younger generations to abandon agriculture have led to an increasingly widespread loss of the traditional knowledge of Yucatec Maya *sabal* palm management. According to Hernandez-Cruz, Bello-Baltazar, Montoya-Gomez and Estrada-Lugo (2005), many ecotourism projects in Chiapas and Mexico are being planned and developed without any previous studies, impact assessments, or even consultation with the local communities where they are to be established. A study of social and environmental impacts is essential before such projects can proceed, and above all, the local community must be actively involved in their planning and establishment. More research is necessary on social and environmental effects so that more effective guidelines can be developed and utilized by local communities and in policy making.

According to Pi-Sunyer, Thomas and Daltabuit (2001), development plans often justify tourism projects by assuming that the benefits will be widely distributed by means of direct and indirect employment in the industry and backward and forward linkages to other sectors of the economy, particularly to agriculture. This is an unlikely scenario in an area such as Quintana Roo where Mayan shifting cultivators, subsisting in a difficult environment, produce few items required by foreign visitors. Where cultural differences between visitors and hosts are marked, as in Quintana Roo, tourists may overwhelm and destroy local cultures or may protect them by providing a market.

Today, the tourist industry in Quintana Roo is entering a second phase. Having achieved large scale mass tourism by advertising the state's "Caribbean attractions" of sun, sand and sea, Quintana Roo is trying to rejuvenate its tourism industry by foregrounding its "Mexican cultural attractions" of archaeology, indigenous women in colorful costumes and the animals and plants of the thinly-populated rural areas. Such ecotourism attracts fewer people than the mass tourism of Cancun but may be more profitable.

2.8 Chapter Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed studies from major areas of research and a discussion of concepts has been presented. Literature on empowerment, sustainable tourism development, community-based tourism, ecotourism, indigenous ecotourism and studies in the Mayan area constituted this review. Other sources of information of secondary relevance are not mentioned here, but were reviewed. The concepts explained in this chapter relate to the central part of this thesis, which is to assess the extent that ecotourism is a good activity in empowering indigenous communities in the Mayan rainforest of Central America, and what does stakeholders participation in ecotourism entail in terms of local empowerment.

Key studies throughout the literature were reviewed. Some of these studies draw on a theoretical framework based on literature reviewed rather than in a field study, or on information that came up from studies in the past (e.g. Scheyvens 1999; Ko 2005). Case studies in this review included local communities from North to South America (e.g. Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador), Africa (e.g. Namibia, Kenya and South Africa), South Asia (e.g. Nepal, Thailand and Indonesia) and Australia. The studies reviewed were organized within six main categories, i.e. empowerment, sustainable tourism development, community-based tourism, ecotourism, indigenous ecotourism and studies in Mayan sites. The majority of the articles reviewed assessed components of more than one of these categories in a single document, or under the same research framework. Although they mean different things, the concepts explained in this review are all related and it is just the approach within which the study takes place what allows to use one category from another one.

Ecotourism involves the assessment of the natural environment that may be focused in specific flora or fauna species or in a more complex system such as a tropical forest reserve, where the natural environment could either be endangered or protected through tourism activities. Examples of ecotourism articles reviewed are Cardenas-Torres, Enriquez-Andrade and Rodriguez-Dowdell (2007) which focused in the good practices of ecotourism to ensure safe interaction with whale sharks in Baja California, Mexico, and Himberg (2004), who focused in the promotion of a tropical forest system (Taita Hills) to ecotourism activities in Southern Kenya, where political and local involvement have threatened the long-term existence of this natural

resource. On the other hand, community-based tourism draws on community involvement in tourism development through active participation process. The concept of sustainable development discussed in this review relies in three big dimensions: the economic dimension, the environmental dimension and the social dimension. As a dynamic system, tourism development has many times failed in being sustainable. In order to keep the system sustainable it is necessary to be equilibrated by these dimensions as much as possible. In this sense, community-based tourism and ecotourism can be considered as sub categories of sustainable tourism development since they are able to fill these three dimensions together. Finally, the empowerment concept was discussed in the review because it has recurrently been considered in the literature as the base of community development in the last years, although just a few studies have been focused on empowerment through tourism. Scheyvens (2002) built a framework of four levels of empowerment where economic, psychological, social and political indicators can be applied to assess empowerment or disempowerment through tourism. While other authors (e.g. Koch, de Beer & Elliffe 1998; Cole, 2006; Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed & Mc Alpine 2006) have tested empowerment approaches to tourism in other regions of the world none of them has explicitly tested the Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework. This framework is the basis for the development of this Ph.D. research. Empowerment is proposed as the most effective way in which a community can develop tourism in a sustainable way and enhance the chances of tourism ventures' success (Sofield, 2003). As mentioned by Cole (2006), the process of empowerment relies on transferring knowledge to the community. In the same token, Koch, de Beer and Elliffe (1998) proposed three different scenarios to promote maximum community empowerment and community's active participation in tourism, based on the political models in achieving economic justice in South Africa. Empowerment is a concept much related with community-based tourism in the literature. This has been proposed to be achieved drawing on active participation and knowledge transfer.

Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed and Mc Alpine (2006) argued that input from community in designing research by mean of the identification of indicators have empowered communities. The literature reviewed was the source where the

indicators used in this thesis were selected from. Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed and Mc Alpine (2006) showed the relative success in getting input from communities in the creation of sustainability indicators at a local, regional and national level, and how this process can also be empowering for the host communities. Some authors have proposed different ways in how to find and assess indicators in a comprehensible way such as the paper by Ko (2005) who formulated a theoretical framework to evaluate tourism sustainability, although no input from communities was proposed in the identification of indicators.

Different perspectives have come up from stakeholders to address the main and most common causes of failure or success in the development of community-based tourism in a sustainable way. Most of the articles reviewed came from tourism journals (e.g. *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, and *Annals of Tourism Research*), from environmental journals (e.g. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, *Fisheries Research*, and *Biodiversity & Conservation*), and from development journals (e.g. *Development Policy Review*, *Community Development Journal* and *Journal of Education and Research*).

Altogether, this chapter constitutes the body of knowledge where this thesis research leans on, and it will serve as a rationale of the methodology selected that is explained in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses a number of choices in selecting an appropriate methodology when conducting research into social sciences, particularly into tourism research. A methodology is a model entailing theoretical principles and also a framework that provides guidelines about how research is done in the context of a particular paradigm (Sarantakos 1998). The methodology selected for the purpose of this study is highlighted and justified where appropriate.

The first issue to be addressed in this chapter is the paradigm selection. A paradigm can be seen as the philosophical ground underlying any research. According to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) a methodology is the complementary set of guidelines for conducting research within the overlying paradigmatic view of the world. Once a paradigm has been selected it follows that the use of a research framework and the selection of research methods and research instruments must suit the premises of the paradigm selected. Research methods are embedded in assumptions about ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to the worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their knowledge (Schwandt 2007, p. 190). According to Jamal and Everett (2004) for analytical philosophers studying ontology, the focus is typically on the task of formulating an inventory of the things that exist in the universe. On the other hand, epistemology has to do with the nature and conditions of knowledge. It is the relationship between what we know and what we see. The methods are the specific tools of data collection and analysis a researcher will use to gather information on the collection and analysis. These considerations are discussed further in this chapter and have been justified by similar previous studies cited in Chapter 2.

This research investigated aspects of empowerment in three traditional villages living within the Maya Rainforests of Mexico and Guatemala. The implications of obtaining and using indicators of empowerment in this study and the advantages of engaging stakeholders in the study are also discussed later, as well as the advantages of using three case studies.

3.2 Research Paradigms

According to Guba (1990) a paradigm is the overlying view of the way the world works based on a basic set of beliefs that guides action. Thomas Kuhn (1962) brought the meaning of paradigm in his essay *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Reflecting on the historical development of the sciences, Kuhn refuted the traditional understanding of the sciences as a cumulative and linear progression of new acquisitions and advocated for a “scientific revolution” because a reorientation in the discipline occurs that consist of “a displacement of the conceptual network through which scientists view the world” (Kuhn 1962, p.102). This conceptual framework is what Kuhn calls a paradigm. Without a paradigm a science lacks orientations and criteria of choice (Corbetta 2003).

The term ‘*paradigm*’ has been interpreted in many ways. According to Gummeson (1991) as many as 22 interpretations of Kuhn’s (1962) original use of the term have been identified. Fundamentally, paradigms represent a worldview or “value window” through which things are seen and known (Jamal & Hollinshead 2001). This ‘methodological matrix’ forms an intellectual envelope that contains numerous unstated assumptions.

According to Jennings (2010) the majority of tourism research textbooks do not address the theoretical paradigms that underpin tourism research. The main paradigms discussed in this chapter are positivism, a critical theory orientation and an interpretive social sciences approach, while post-positivism, a postmodern approach and a chaos theory orientation are discussed at a lower scale as they also add up to the understanding of paradigms but they are not critical in this thesis. Understanding paradigms will ensure the maintenance of coherence between the approach being adopted for data collected in this study and the subsequent construction of “knowledge” from data.

In the past the dominant paradigm of social sciences research was positivism. Positivism views the world or reality as very organized or structured and based on rules that guide actions in both the natural and the social world (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Rigorous data is produced through scientific research and value data produced by studies that can be replicated (Merriam, 1991). A positivist research seeks to find cause-and-effect linkages that can build into a better understanding of the field.

Positivists believe there is only one truth or reality and knowledge is the understanding and control over nature. Only the researcher has a voice and any effort to include the voice of the participants would impact objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For positivist researchers, the social reality exists outside the individual. The social reality is objectively understandable which means that every social object, beginning with the individual, was analytically defined on the basis of a range of attributes and properties known as variables (Corbetta, 2003).

Over time, other paradigms have arisen challenging this view, such as the interpretive social sciences paradigm and the critical theory paradigm. In interpretivism, also known as constructivism, realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them. According to Guba (1990 p.27) “our individual personal reality, the way we think life is, and the part we are to play in it, is self-created”. The meaning is constructed based on our interactions with our surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It uses hermeneutics (interpretation, for example, recognition and explanation of metaphors) and compares and contrasts dialectics which means resolving disagreements through rational discussion (Guba, 1996). “Realities are taken to exist in the form of multiple mental constructions that are socially and experientially based, local and specific, and dependent for their form and content of the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27). Constructivist formulation mandates training in political action if participants do not understand political systems (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The insider’s view, or the “emic perspective”, allows for the identification of multiple realities (Fetterman 1989) since the views of all social actors are taken into account and are equally valued.

One of the clearest ways in which the paradigmatic controversies can be demonstrated is to compare positivist and post-positivist adherents, who view action as a form of contamination of research results and process, and the critical theorists and interpretivists who see action on research results as a meaningful and important outcome of inquiry processes. As noted by Bryman (2012), while the world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not mean anything to molecules, atoms and electrons, the observational field of the social scientist, the social reality, has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting and thinking within it.

Interpretivists and critical researchers desire participants to take an increasingly active role in nominating questions of interest for any inquiry and in designing outlets for findings to be shared more widely within and outside the community. All stakeholder views, perspectives, values, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text. Omission of stakeholder or participant voices reflects a form of bias. The importance of selecting stakeholders was critical in this study and is discussed further in this chapter.

3.2.1 Critical Theory

The critical theory searches for participatory research, which empowers the oppressed and supports social transformation and revolution (Merriam, 1991). For critical theorists, the aim or inquiry is to find the social power structure in an attempt to discover the truth as it relates to social power struggles (Giroux, 1982; Merriam, 1991). According to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) the methodology used in critical research normally stimulates oppressed people to rationally scrutinize all aspects of their lives to reorder their collective existence on the basis of the understanding it provides, which will ultimately change social policy and practice (Fay, 1987). Knowledge is viewed as “subjective, emancipator and productive of fundamental social change” (Merriam, 1991, p. 53). Critical theory researchers seek data that can be transformative and useful in imparting social justice (Giroux, 1982). The data are created with the intent of producing social change and imparting a social justice that leads to equal rights for all (Giroux, 1982). The researcher serves as an activist and a transformative intellectual and seeks to change existing education as well as other social institutions’ policies and practice (Bernal, 2002). Control can be shared by the researcher and the subject, and ultimately the subject can have a say in how the research is conducted (Bernal, 2002). The researcher has a voice, but also imparts the voice of the subjects by becoming sensitive to the views of others (Bernal, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Jennings (2010) critical research portrays the world as being complex and organized by both overt and hidden power structures. The social world is perceived as being orchestrated by people and institutions in power positions who try to maintain the status quo and subsequently their positions of power. The research process

involves interactions between the researcher and the minority groups being studied and the relation is a subjective one. In the end, the findings of the researcher should empower the minority group to effect social change to improve its social circumstances. During the course of data collection, the researcher may experience conflict with those in power positions and their willingness to divulge information or to make changes. The critical researcher tries to get below the surface and understand the social setting from the position of a person in the minority group being studied. The research process takes time because the researcher has to become immersed in the host community and gain acceptance within the community.

3.2.2 Other paradigms

Along with the paradigms considered above, there are a number of other paradigms that have been proposed in the literature included, but not limited to postpositivism, postmodernism, and chaos theory. While there are similarities between postpositivism and chaos theory in which both attempt to be as statistically accurate in their interpretation of reality as possible in a technical and very quantitative way (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), the postmodernist paradigm, on the other hand, is extremely subjective and the researcher is also an actor in the research process. For postpositivists reality cannot fully attain but can approximate it. Like in positivism, data can be analyzed and studied using statistical tests to get as close as possible to reality, based on statistical confidence level and objectivity in data produced through inquiry. Postpositivist researchers can find useful information even if data are incomplete and contain hidden values. On the other hand the postmodern paradigm uses relationships to foundations of truth where knowledge is tentative, multifaceted, and not necessarily rational (Kilgore, 2001). The postmodernist researcher describes their experience and the resultant "knowledge" as but one view of the social world. In opposition to the postpositivists belief of a single reality where knowledge is an attempt to approximate to it and get as close to truth as possible, postmodernism breaks down boundaries between disciplinary areas and investigations and the research findings can be presented in a variety of genres apart from scientific research reports or scientific articles (Richardson, 1994). For example, genres such as novels, films and dramatic representations may be used.

The conceptualization of chaos theory is attributed to the meteorologist Edward Lorenz who, when trying to repeat a weather pattern simulation in 1961, discovered that changing the number of decimal points in an equation that would generate the simulation altered the results of the sequences or patterns. His discovery is known as the “butterfly effect” which can be explained as follows:

The flapping of a single butterfly’s wing today produces a tiny change in the state of the atmosphere. Over a period of time, what the atmosphere actually does diverges from what it would have done. Literature relating to chaos theory is more extensive in the natural sciences and artificial intelligence areas than within the social sciences. Chaos theory is applied using metaphoric dimensions within the social science areas. A frequently used definition of chaos theory is “the qualitative study of unstable aperiodic behavior in deterministic nonlinear dynamical systems” (Donahue 1999, p. 1). The relationship is still based on scientific experiments and mathematical equations as the keystone to scientific inquiry, but chaos theory uses fractal geometry that focuses on non-linear, non-integral systems and descriptive algorithms (Donahue 1999, p. 4). Within the social sciences, “nonlinear dynamics raise questions about how we bring order to what we observe and chaos theory offers a new set of metaphors for thinking about what we observe, how we observe, and what we know as a result of our observations (Jennings, 2010).

3.3 Paradigm Selection

The most suitable paradigm for the purpose of this thesis was selected based on the research problem and objectives described in Chapter 1. Because the degree of ecotourism empowerment of traditional communities living in the Mayan Rainforest was central in this study, the critical research paradigm was selected as the most suitable choice. Following the “commandments” of critical research, including getting stakeholders’ views to build this research was essential to analyze not just empowerment but involvement from ecotourism stakeholders that have led to empowerment or disempowerment in the communities studied. As Jennings (2010) noted, the outcome of scientific research using a critical research approach is essentially to effect change in the conditions of those being studied. According to Jamal and Everett (2004) adopting a critical approach requires the researcher to view

natural area destinations as politically, economically and culturally contested spaces. It facilitates an analysis of how various interests play out in the nature-based domain, and how nature is socially “constructed” to suit these interests.

The critical school’s roots go back to 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany, where a group at the Institute of Social Research began the development of a body of work that effectively critiqued modern society by linking Marxian, Weberian and other sociological theories (Jamal & Everett 2004). Behind this body of work were the members of what came to be known as the Frankfurt School, a group that included Max Horkeheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and, later, Jurgen Habermas. Habermas’ (1978) work suggest that to the extent that critical research and practical interests are excluded from activities such as interpretation and cultural appreciation, alternative meanings and narratives may remain suppressed, thereby inhibiting the emancipatory potential of national parks as protected places of nature, enabling meaningful interactions between visitors, locals and “the Others” of the natural world (Berman, 1981).

Critical knowledge valorizes the human capacity for self-reflection, critical apprehension and rational action. It permits more sophisticated investigations of issues such as environmental justice and indigenous cultural relationships with the land. According to Jamal and Everett (2004) the critical researcher has to pay close attention to the interrelationships between the global and the local. Adopting a critical research paradigm and approach enables the researcher to oppose “one-dimensional” packaging of nature and seek a careful interrogation of the phenomenon of tourism itself. It necessitates being critically reflexive and action-oriented towards re-conceptualizing what it means to be positioned in this area of study, and how one’s research actions and assumptions affect the natural and social world.

The critical theory paradigm has synergies with the interpretive social sciences paradigm. Both are grounded in real-world settings and view people as thinking and acting persons rather than as people following defined rules and procedures. Like the critical theorists, constructivists are trained in history, values of altruism, empowerment and liberation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196). However, the critical theory differs from the interpretive social sciences paradigm as the former focuses on oppressed, subjugated or exploited groups and works to champion their cause

(Jennings 2010). In this study, the Mayan communities represented these disadvantaged groups that the critical research deals with. While the critical theorists attempt to get involved in their research to change the power structure, constructivism researchers attempt to gain increased knowledge regarding their study and subjects by interpreting how the subjects perceive and interact within a social context. Interpretivism is more reflective versus critical theory's desire for immediate results. In critical research validity is found in the ability of the knowledge to become transformative according to the findings of the experiences of the subjects. The subjects' voice must be present in the research.

According to Jennings (2010) while a positivist paradigm applied to tourism research predicates the explanation of a tourism behavior, event or phenomenon being based on causal relationships, the use of the critical theory paradigm in tourism research means that the interests or needs of minority groups, such as indigenous people, will be identified and data collected to open up or improve the provision of tourism opportunities, experiences and services for those minority groups. The researcher would be required to champion the cause of the host community to facilitate change and empower the host community. The findings would be particular to the location being studied and would not be considered as being representative of other locations. As in the critical research paradigm, the use of the interpretive social sciences paradigm in tourism research offered an alternative to be used in this study. It means that the researcher has to become an "insider" and subsequently experience the phenomena, or become one of the social actors within the tourism system being studied, for example, by becoming a customer in the various sectors of the hospitality industry, and supplementing this participant observation with in-depth interviews of other consumers. Upon other paradigms, for example a chaos theory approach enables the tourism system to be analyzed as a dynamic system rather than a steady state or predictable system.

3.4 Research Framework

A central question that must be addressed by researchers contemplating new research is the decision to either apply existing theory to solve a problem, or if existing theory is inadequate, develop a new theory. The answer lies in the ability of existing theory to

offer answers or yield solutions to the problems being investigated or tested. If existing theory is deficient, developing a new theory is a suitable pathway to pursue in the quest for solutions. The decision to either rely on existing theory or develop new theory will also point to the most appropriate research framework to be adopted, as well as in determining the preferred research methods. A framework is a matrix based method for ordering and synthesizing data (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003). This framework is then applied to the data, which are organized initially into core themes, and the data are then displayed in terms of subthemes within the matrix and for each case. Adoption of a specific framework as the basis for research depends on the type of research conducted as well as the aims of the research.

This thesis used an empowerment framework to guide the research and to analyze the data collected in a systematic way. This framework is an adaptation of Scheyvens' (2002) framework that considered four dimensions of empowerment where economic, psychological, social, and political indicators are applied to assess empowerment or disempowerment in ecotourism (Table 3.1). As presented in Chapter 2, Scheyvens (2002) empowerment framework assessed ecotourism in terms that ultimately benefit local communities. Benefits towards environment conservation were not considered in Scheyvens' (2002) framework, and this study provides a modified framework incorporating an environmental dimension, because in the cases studied the Mayan communities have property rights or have control over the natural resources where they live. A community environmentally empowered in ecotourism has knowledge and commitment for biodiversity conservation, promotes low impact ecotourism activities and use of eco-efficiencies, encourages wildlife and nature protection for tourism, has environmental policies and management plans for ecotourism, and gets funds for environmental education and training in ecotourism conservation projects or research activities.

Other authors have also addressed empowerment in the tourism context. For instance Koch, de Beer and Ellife (1998) proposed three scenarios to promote maximum community empowerment and community's active participation in tourism. Cole (2006) considered that the process of empowerment relies on transferring knowledge to the community. Although recent studies have tested aspects of Scheyvens' empowerment framework including Farrelly (2011) who assessed local decision-

making practices and issues of empowerment in a community living in a Heritage Park in Fiji, none of them has explicitly tested it. This study will do so by ranking the categories or dimensions of empowerment to visually display the level of empowerment in each community, based on the empowerment framework used in this research.

Table 3.1 Empowerment Framework based on Scheyvens’ (2002).

	Very empowering (5 points Likert scale)	Very disempowering (1 point Likert scale)
Economic Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide community control of economic resources from tourism • Must economically benefit local communities directly from tourism developments in the short, medium, and long term period • Tourism earnings kept within the local economy and at a household/community level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most tourism profits go to non-community organizations e.g. outside operators • Local communities are minimally and indirectly benefited from tourism developments • Most tourism profits go to local elites
Psychological Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of group self-esteem and wellbeing through tourism • Feeling of being able to assume new roles and engage in more activities beyond the household • Pride in traditions and culture through tourism recognition of their uniqueness and value of their culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of community interests in tourism development • Fear to lose control over local planning and decision making in tourism • Inferiority feeling about their way of life and culture
Social Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism maintains or enhances the local equilibrium • Communities participate and share in the wealth of the tourism industry • Local community control on tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism causes disharmony and social decay • Community’s competition and conflict for the perceived benefits of tourism • Local power structures and control relationships
Political Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community’s political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups • Full communal responsibilities and tourism services ownership • Appropriate institutions for training in tourism finances and technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autocratic and/or self-interested leadership in tourism • Private-operated or government-operated tourism services ownership • Lack of institutional capacity to develop skills and training in tourism
Environmental Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low impact ecotourism activities and the existence of local ecotourism management plans and use of eco efficiencies • Environmental education and communal areas for local protection • Habitat rehabilitation for tourism i.e. reforestation, nursery plants, orchards, fire brigades and monitoring of communal areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of control of ecotourism towards environment protection • A lack of awareness about impacts from tourism to the environment and a lack of know how in mitigating them • Unsustainable use of natural resources i.e. logging, hunting and littering

Source: Scheyvens (2002); Stronza & Gordillo (2008); Cole (2006); Sofield (2003); Timothy (2007); Hernandez-Cruz, et al. (2005); Garcia-Frapolli, et al. (2008)

Ecotourism empowerment in the literature draws on collective action and knowledge transfer, facilitating control and ownership in tourism ventures. As considered before, empowerment showed that it is an effective way in which a community can develop tourism in a sustainable way and enhance the chances of tourism ventures success. To

assess stakeholders' participation in ecotourism and the empowerment of indigenous communities in the Mayan rainforest, the present study relies on a modified research framework proposal that facilitates assessing the empowerment of indigenous communities in ecotourism as a means for developing sustainable livelihoods.

3.5 Research Methods

Traditional methods of research have centered around qualitative or quantitative approaches and in some cases a mix of both. These methods are extensively documented and widely used in social science research, although quantitative methods have dominated (Walle 1997:524). Over the years, quantitative research along with its epistemological and ontological foundations has been the focus of a great deal of criticism, particularly from exponents and spokespersons of qualitative research when reflecting on the different critical points that have been proffered. Many methods of quantitative research rely heavily on administering research instruments to subjects (such as structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires) or on controlling situations to determine their effects (such as in experiments).

On the other hand, quantitative researchers sometimes criticize qualitative research as being too impressionistic and subjective. They usually mean that qualitative findings rely too much on the researcher's often unsystematic views about what is significant and important, and also upon the close personal relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied. According to Bryman (2012) rather than a statistical criteria, what is decisive in considering the generalizability of the findings of qualitative research is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data.

3.5.1 Qualitative Research

According to Ryan (1995) qualitative research is concerned with the subjective component of research and can be a useful source of new ideas, insights and perspectives. Adams and White (1994) list a range of qualitative research methods and state that qualitative research should employ some logic of inquiry such as grounded theory to guide research activity. Absence of logic of inquiry may prevent

discovery, reduce methodological rigor, and prevent the development of empirically grounded theory that may contribute to both knowledge development and use.

Qualitative research is often characterized as being soft social science, interested in 'mushy' processes and dealing with inadequate evidence verses hard-nosed, data driven, outcome-orientated, scientific results (Yin 1993). While qualitative data cannot be readily converted into numerical values, it can be represented by categorical data, by perceptual and attitudinal dimensions and real-life events. Empirical evidence can be represented by cells filled with words instead of numbers. During this thesis research into ecotourism empowerment in three case studies, a range of qualitative methods were selected including face-to-face interviews, focus groups and participant observation. Additionally the use of indicators was selected as the strategy of the research.

3.6 Research Design

This thesis research was designed in three stages to assess the level of empowerment or disempowerment in three local communities living in the Mayan rainforests of Mexico and Guatemala. Qualitative research methods offered the most suitable choice in assessing economic, psychological, social, political and environmental dimensions of empowerment because they were important in building a final checklist of indicators of empowerment/disempowerment to be ranked, offering a visual perspective of the overall empowerment outline for each community.

Selecting three case studies in this thesis had methodological implications. In a review of books about organizational research methods, Fitzgerald and Dopson (2009) found that case-study designs were undervalued. Most of the books reviewed devote little attention or discussion to case studies. The idea of case studies evolved from its origins in psychology and medicine, and then to single units, events, groups or organizations. According to Buchanan (2012) the case study approach is a research design and not a method. Under this premise, a case study involves the collection of empirical data from multiple sources to explore an identified unit of analysis, such as an organization, part of an organization or a division or group and the characteristics of its context. Yin (1994) noted that a high quality case study is characterized by rigorous thinking,

sufficient presentation of evidence to reach appropriate conclusions, and careful consideration of alternative explanations of the evidence.

In this thesis, the case studies shared similar contexts. For instance, they are located nearby Maya Archaeological Sites acknowledged for its tourism potential. Additionally, these communities have control or a degree of control on the forest resources in their territories. Moreover, the three case studies are influenced by an area with a degree of protection, i.e. Archaeological Site, National Park and Biosphere Reserve. Two of these protected landscapes are also labeled as World Heritage Sites as it will be explained in the following chapters. These communities are from Maya ancestry although members from one of them are not all indigenous.

According to Bryman (2012) while quantitative interviews are typically inflexible, because of the need to standardize the way in which each interviewee is dealt with, qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews. Based in Bryman's (2012) considerations, qualitative research instruments were the most suitable to fit into this study characteristics.

Many of the studies cited in Chapter 2 used qualitative research methods to assess aspects of empowerment, sustainable development of tourism, and community-based ecotourism which are relevant to this study. Of these, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation were the most frequently used research instruments to collect data and opinions on community-based tourism. For example, Stronza and Gordillo (2008) used ethnographic data, semi-structured household and face-to-face interviews in three communities in the Amazon region of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia to build a holistic and participatory framework for assessing the ways in which communities are affected by ecotourism. Garcia-Frapolli, Toledo and Martinez-Alier (2008) used participant observation, informal semi-structured interviews and life-history interviews to analyze how the implementation of traditional activities adapts to the increasing influence of ecotourism in three Mayan communities in Southeastern Mexico. Mason and Beard (2008) used in-depth interviews, informal interviews and direct observations to analyze the relationship between community-based planning and poverty in three case studies in Oaxaca, Mexico; Cole (2006) used interviews of

officials and tourists, participant observation, and focus groups with community members to examine how tourism can be part of community empowerment in three communities in Eastern Indonesia. On the other hand Stronza and Gordillo (2008), Himberg (2004), and Cole (2006) showed that focus groups are a good way to involve the community in workshops, and transferring knowledge at the same time the research information is collected. Although some studies drew on a theoretical framework based on literature reviewed rather than in a field study, or on information that came up from studies in the past (e.g. Scheyvens 1999; Ko 2005; Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed & Mc Alpine 2006), most of these studies used three case studies consisting in local communities in different parts of the world. Following this same strategy, this thesis has also selected three case studies represented by local communities living in the Mayan rainforests of Mexico and Guatemala.

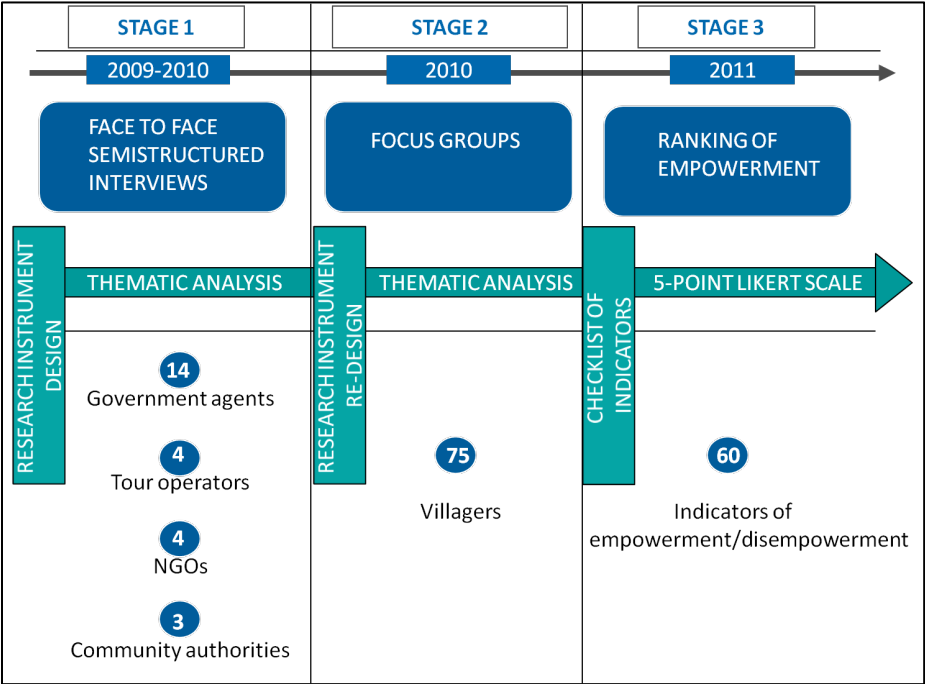


Figure 3.1. Outline of the Research Design

Figure 3.1 shows a diagram of the three-staged research design. Based on qualitative research methods the research design used three research instruments: stage one consisted in conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders inside and outside the communities, stage two consisted in conducting focus groups with villager members who have already an interest in ecotourism and stage three consisted in ranking indicators of empowerment/disempowerment.

3.6.1 Stage One

Stage 1 included face-to-face interviews with internal and external key ecotourism stakeholders for three traditional communities living in the Mayan rainforest. Stage one was conducted from May 2009 to March 2010 in both countries. In the case studies in Mexico, interviews were conducted in Mexico City, Palenque, Cancun, Playa del Carmen and Chetumal. In the case study in Guatemala, interviews were conducted in Guatemala City, Flores and Santa Elena. Additionally, one face-to-face interview was conducted in El Naranjo, Coba, and Uaxactun case studies with the main authority of each community.

Table 3.2. Key stakeholders interviewed.

STAGE 1. FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS	Case Study 1 EL NARANJO	Case Study 2 COBA	Case Study 3 UAXACTUN
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS	INTERVIEWS IN MEXICO CITY WITH NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS		INTERVIEWS WITH NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN GUATEMALA
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SECTUR - Director of the Mexican Program for Alternative Tourism 2. CDI- Director of the Program of Alternative Tourism in Indigenous Zones 3. CONANP- Director of the Mexican Program of Tourism in Protected Natural Areas 4. SEMARNAT-General Director of Environmental, Urban and Tourism Foment 5. FONAES – General Director of Marketing and Support for Enterprises 6. INAH – Director of Cultural Tourism 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. INAH – Director of INAH in Quintana Roo 13. INAH – Director of Excavations in Coba 14. UNAM – Community Based Tourism Scholar 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. IDAHEH-Technical Sub-Director of the General Direction of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Guatemala 20. INGUAT-Representative in Flores
Tour Operators	9. Palenque Tour Services	15. Alltournative 16. Global Vision Intl.	21. Ecotourism & Adventure Specialists
NGOs	10. Razonatura	17. Kanche	22. Balam 23. Counterpart 24. AECID
Local leaders	11. El Naranjo community sheriff	18. Coba community commissioner	25. Local leader member of OMYC and owner of a tourism lodge in the community.

The research instrument consisted in a semi-structured interview that was conducted in a personal (face-to-face) way that included questions about empowerment in the researched communities and about stakeholders' participation in ecotourism, i.e. tour

operators and travel agencies, community authorities, government officers and NGO consultants. Key stakeholders that participated in this stage of the research are outlined in Table 3.2.

The interview design drew on the literature review cited in Chapter 2 where indicators of empowerment and disempowerment were identified. The results from the interviews were analyzed and key themes about empowerment were identified and used to develop a new interview which was the research instrument used in the next stage to conduct focus groups with village members in each community. The resulting interview protocol from stage one to be applied in stage two was as follows:

Table 3.3 Interview Format for Villagers

<p>Section A: Socio-demographic Survey</p> <p>Gender Age What languages do you speak? Are you from Mayan descent? What level of education do you have? How long have you lived in El Naranjo? What is your activity and / or paid job in the community? Which cooperatives do you belong to in the community? How many people live in your home?</p> <p>Section B: Tourism</p> <p>Are you involved with tourism? When did villagers started to involve in tourism? Who are the stakeholders in community-based tourism in El Naranjo? Are there any tourism stakeholders missing in the community? How are stakeholders supporting tourism in the community? What are your perspectives on the development of tourism in your community?</p> <p>Section C: Economic empowerment</p> <p>Has El Naranjo received economic benefits from tourism? How do you think tourism has benefited El Naranjo? Does tourism revenues distribute equally in the community? Has tourism benefited economically most homes in the village? What is the most profitable activity in the community? What type of indirect economic benefits has tourism brought to El Naranjo?</p> <p>Section D: Psychological empowerment</p> <p>Are people from the community enthusiastic in participating in tourism? Do you think tourism is a good activity to make a living in the community? Do you have confidence to work in tourism? Are you proud of showing Mayan culture and natural wonders to visitors? How do you feel since the community started to engage with tourism? Are you optimistic with tourism growth in the community?</p> <p>Section E: Social empowerment</p> <p>What kind of activities are most of households in El Naranjo involved with? How do you feel tourism has changed social cohesion in the community? Do you think there are conflicts associated to tourism in the village?</p>

Do you think opportunities to involve in tourism are the same to all members?
 Has tourism brought better organization to the community?
 Are most of community members benefited from tourism?

Section F: Political empowerment

Are cooperatives' projects related with community-based ecotourism?
 How are stakeholders taking into account El Naranjo for tourism development?
 Do you have decision-making in tourism?
 How many issues related with tourism are discussed during the community assemblies?
 Has the community negotiated tourism projects with tour operators, government departments or NGOs?
 What type of community policies are related with tourism in El Naranjo?

Section G: Environmental empowerment

Are there environmental impacts from tourism in the community?
 Are you involved with hunting, logging or agriculture?
 Do you think protecting the environment will attract tourists to the community?
 Will the community support nature conservation for tourism purposes?
 Have you noticed changes from the community to support tourism that help the environment?
 What type of community policies are related with conservation?

3.6.2 Stage Two

Stage two consisted in conducting focus groups with villagers from each community. In the first case study 30 people participated in the focus groups. From them ten were woman and 20 were men. Two focus groups were conducted in the community and one in the archaeological site of Palenque. In Coba 26 villagers (21 men and five women) participated in one of then three focus groups conducted in the community. In the third case study 29 members from Uaxactun participated in one of the focus groups organized. They were 17 woman and 12 men. Overall 85 people participated in the focus groups conducted in the three communities. Table 3.3 shows the groups that participated in the focus groups. The focus groups lasted from 1 to 1.5 hours each.

Table 3.4 Types of focus groups in each village

Case Study 1 El Naranjo	Case Study 2 Coba	Case Study 3 Uaxactun
1. Tour Guide Cooperative (12 men)	4. Zip-lining Joint Venture (4 men and 3 women)	7. Tourism Cooperative (6 men and 3 women)
2. Handcrafts Cooperative (8 men)	5. Tour Guides Cooperative (13 men)	8. Craftswomen organization (10 women)
3. Embroiderer (10 Women)	6. The Mayan Calendar Organization CECIJEMA (4 men 2 women)	9. Members from OMYC (5 men and 5 women)

Using a new semi-structured interview format that was based on the analysis of themes resulted from Stage 1, covering same main inquiries about empowerment and stakeholders' participation but with more specific aspects and detailed examples for the understanding of local communities.

Both Stage 1 and 2 interviews were previously tested with tourism postgraduate students in English and in Spanish before they were conducted with the participants. Two of the three communities investigated speak Spanish as their second tongue which may have caused misunderstanding of the interview questions. Applying a questionnaire in Spanish to these communities was one of the limitations this research came across as the investigator lacked knowledge of Mayan tongues. Bearing this in mind the second questionnaire meant to be very clear for the interviewees and additionally most of them had good understanding of Spanish as it is the official tongue spoken in Mexico, where these communities are located. Table 3.3 shows the organizations that participate in the focus groups from the three communities. With the analysis of results from Stage 2, a set of 60 indicators of empowerment/disempowerment were refined to rank the level of empowerment against disempowerment in each community.

3.6.3 Stage Three

The research instrument in Stage 3 consisted in a checklist of indicators of empowerment versus indicators of disempowerment based on the analysis of results from Stage 2. Using a Likert scale from 1=very disempowered to 5=very empowered, stage three consisted in ranking every indicator in each dimension to build *a wheel of empowerment* that visually displays the overall ranking for each community and also for every empowerment dimension.

According to Frasser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed & Mc Alpine (2006) the modern environmental management literature stresses the need for community involvement to identify indicators to monitor progress towards sustainable development and environmental management goals. Consequently, local community participation has been considered an essential step to ensure that tourism development is sustainable. Development research and projects remain constrained by the need for quantifiable and "objectively verifiable indicators" that allow regions to be compared (Bell &

Morse, 2003). However, the level of perception or attitude of stakeholders can provide information to measure the quality of the indicators for sustainable tourism development (Ko, 2005). For Bell & Morse (1999) the methods for choosing sustainability indicators to measure progress towards (or away from) social and environmental goals abound in both the academic and practitioner literature. Local input is necessary to ensure that indicators accurately measure what is locally important. Regular community input should also ensure indicators evolve over time as circumstances change (Carruthers & Tinning, 2003). These range from situations where development experts and environmental managers simply choose what they see as the most relevant indicators, to participatory processes to help communities identify their own indicators. However, the methods used to collect, interpret and display data must be easily and effectively used by local communities so all stakeholders can participate in the process.

The process of engaging people to select key indicators provides a valuable opportunity for community empowerment and education. For Ko (2005) the study of perceptions of main stakeholders is the main scaling mode to rank indicators. Perception study is already used widely in many areas to measure the socio-economic impacts of tourism and the quality of service and products. Progress towards sustainable tourism development can be then measured. A standard is needed to measure the progress towards (or regress away from) sustainable tourism development. Qualitative or quantitative data can be used to produce information for the standard. The level of tourism sustainability can be then presented by assessing the sustainability of individual indicators, using the data-gathering methods with a 5-point rating scale.

Participation of various stakeholders is one of the most important components for the achievement of sustainable tourism development (WCED, 1987). Therefore, the sustainable indicators should be developed based on the perceptions of local residents, tourists and environmental experts/groups, regarding the sustainability of a tourist destination. "Local people often have clear ideas of their own about what is sustainable from their own perspective and in their own terms without an expert's view" (Bell & Morse 1999, p.80). The checklist of indicators used in this thesis to rank the level of empowerment in each community is presented in the following table:

Table 3.5 Checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment

ECONOMIC INDICATORS EMPOWERMENT (5)* VS DISEMPOWERMENT (1)	
E1. Wide community control of economic resources from tourism VS Most tourism profits go to non-community organizations e.g. outside operators	<input type="checkbox"/>
E2. Profits are invested in community-based tourism management VS Lack of capital, experience and skills keeps them in economical apartheid	<input type="checkbox"/>
E3. Gross sales and profits of tourism-related businesses VS No opportunities for micro enterprise earnings from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
E4. Must economically benefit local communities directly from tourism developments in the short, medium, and long term period VS Local communities are minimally and indirectly benefited from tourism developments	<input type="checkbox"/>
E5. Significant boost to local economic activity VS No visible signs of improvements (e.g. schools) from the cash earned into the local community economy from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
E6. Poverty reduction from tourism VS Livelihood worsen after tourism development	<input type="checkbox"/>
E7. Jobs generation and earnings from tourism VS No job expectations from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
E8. Tourism earnings kept within the local economy and at a household/community level VS Most tourism profits go to local elites	<input type="checkbox"/>
E9. Economic benefits from tourism are distributed widely in the community VS Economic benefits from tourism are minimally received at a household level	<input type="checkbox"/>
E10. Tourism revenue share VS Economic benefit's leakage from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
PSYCHOLOGICAL INDICATORS EMPOWERMENT (5) VS DISEMPOWERMENT (1)	
P1. Promotion of group self-esteem and well-being through tourism VS Loss of community interests in tourism development	<input type="checkbox"/>
P2. Increased status of individual community members through tourism, especially for those traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g. youths and women VS Many people do not share in the benefits of tourism and are thus confused, frustrated, uninterested or disillusioned with the initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>
P3. Improved trust and confidence through tourism (e.g. faith in the abilities of its residents) VS Lack of confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>
P4. Commitment and capacity building in tourism VS Lack of interest and organization in tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
P5. Feeling of being able to assume new roles and engage in more activities beyond the household VS Fear to lose control over local planning and decision making in tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
P6. Raise ideas and issues about tourism VS Lack of confidence in tourism-related government initiatives and grants	<input type="checkbox"/>
P7. Increased self-awareness and self-reliance from tourism VS Low self-esteem and personal growth from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
P8. Optimistic about the future of tourism VS Tourism is a threat for the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
P9. Gain confidence to talk with tourism donors VS Lack confidence to talk with tourism donors	<input type="checkbox"/>
P10. Pride in traditions and culture through tourism recognition of their uniqueness and value of their culture VS Inferiority feeling about their way of life and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11. Use of local knowledge (traditions, medicine, language) in tourism VS Many in the community take on	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Likert Scale (5-1). 5=strongly empowering, 4=somewhat empowering, 3=neutral, 2=somewhat disempowering, 1=strongly disempowering

outside values and lose respect for traditional culture and for their elders	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12. Community understanding tourists and tourism processes VS Lack of community knowledge about tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOCIAL INDICATORS EMPOWERMENT (5) VS DISEMPOWERMENT (1)	
S1. Tourism maintains or enhances the local equilibrium VS Tourism causes disharmony and social decay	<input type="checkbox"/>
S2. Community's sense of cohesion, unity, harmony and integrity improved from tourism VS Social problems and tensions (e.g. leaving the family) increased through tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S3. Friendliness, honesty and professionalism through tourism VS Losing connections and lack of communication with the community through tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S4. Communities participate and share in the wealth of the tourism industry VS Community's competition and conflict for the perceived benefits of tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S5. Community integration and organization for tourism(collective action) VS Trend towards individualism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S6. Cooperation VS Jealousy and resentment with co-workers. Self-interest actions rather than collective goods	<input type="checkbox"/>
S7. Local community control on tourism VS Local power structures and control relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>
S8. Capacity-building at community level for tourism VS Low degree of community support for tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S9. On-going assessment of social benefits from tourism VS Social benefits remain unclear	<input type="checkbox"/>
S10. Improved social welfare (e.g. social justice and mutual respect) VS Social exclusion from tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
S11. Division of roles in tourism operation VS Shift from communal and familial relations to ones of business and hierarchy in tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
POLITICAL INDICATORS EMPOWERMENT (5) VS DISEMPOWERMENT (1)	
PO1. Community's political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups VS Autocratic and/or self-interested leadership in tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO2. Full control and responsibility in decision making in tourism VS Participation remains passive	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO3. Maximize local input in tourism planning, particularly early in the process VS No opportunities to participate in tourism management and planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO4. Full communal responsibilities and tourism services ownership VS Private-operated or government-operated tourism services ownership	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO5. Agencies participating in tourism ventures seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups (including special interest groups of women, youths and other socially disadvantaged groups) VS Agencies fail to involve local community in decision-making so the majority of community members feel they have little or no say over how tourism operates	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO6. Lease agreement or management contract to operate tourism facilities developed by the community VS Minimum commercial development and community involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO7. Appropriate institutions for training in tourism finances and technical skills VS Lack of institutional capacity to develop skills and training in tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO8. Self-sustaining operation in tourism through administrative capacity. Development of entrepreneurial skills through information and understanding of tourism VS Lack of information and knowledge about managing tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
PO9. Degree of influence in tourism decision-making. Communities' capacity to negotiate terms and conditions with outsiders, and expanded circle of contacts VS Community remains passive and they are not	<input type="checkbox"/>

interested to negotiate terms and conditions for tourism.

PO10. Establishment of community rights over resources and revenues, awareness of the value of their community assets (culture, heritage, cuisine and lifestyle) for tourism **VS** Tourism revenues are normally not managed by the community.

PO11. Sharing responsibilities and authority in the management process between governments and communities **VS** Lack of communication or community involvement in tourism planning

PO12. Community ownership of forests and land rights **VS** Land tenure is normally not clear

ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS EMPOWERMENT (5) VS DISEMPOWERMENT (1)

EN1. Environmental education in tourism VS No environmental education in tourism

EN2. Knowledge about biodiversity conservation. Awareness of environmental impacts **VS** Poor appreciation of the benefits of contemporary conservation practices from tourism

EN3. Rubbish management **VS** litter not collected from tourism

EN4. Community conservation area and monitoring of environment VS No community control of conservation area for tourism

EN5. Natural environment utilized for tourism **VS** Significant underutilization of the natural environment potential for tourism

EN6. Improve environmental practices (minimization of impacts) **VS** Little improvement of environmental practices for tourism

EN7. Commitment for conservation **VS** Do not support conservation for tourism

EN8. Environmental policies **VS** No environmental policies for tourism

EN9. Carrying capacity standards set by the communities for tourism activities **VS** No standards

EN10. Profits from tourism invested in monitoring, conservation projects, or research **VS** No conservation projects or research

EN11. Habitat rehabilitation for tourism VS Unsustainable use of natural resources

EN12. Biodiversity protection. Encouraging wildlife and nature conservation for tourism **VS** Lack of community support of voluntary hunting and logging bans for conservation

EN13. Funds for conservation **VS** No funds for conservation

EN14. Actions, motivation, understanding and commitment for conservation areas within the community **VS** No community roles and contributions in conservation for tourism

EN15. Good community management of conservation areas for tourism **VS** Community mismanagement of conservation areas

Source:

Ashley & Garland (1994); Blackstock (2005); Cardenas-Torres, et al. (2007); Cole (2006); Forstner (2004); Avila-Foucat (2002); Koch, et al (1998); Kontogeorgopoulos (2005); Lopez-Espinosa (2002); Mason & Beard (2008); Mitchell & Eagles (2001); Mitchell (2003); Scheyvens (1999); Scheyvens (2002); Stronza & Gordillo (2008); Gurung, et al. (2008).

3.7 Study Protocols and Ethical Considerations

This thesis followed James Cook University's research protocols to conduct field research involving humans. First, a formal letter from James Cook University asking for

permission to conduct research in Mexico and in Guatemala was sent to the relevant government authorities in both countries, where the objectives, timeframe and activities to be conducted were highlighted. The letter also served as an introduction of the researcher and stated that the work was a Ph.D. research from James Cook University, Australia. Once permission was granted, arrangements were made to conduct 18-month fieldwork in both countries. A human research ethics application was submitted to James Cook University before the fieldwork commenced and a human research ethics final report was submitted after the fieldwork was conducted, highlighting how the interviews and focus groups took place and that there were no secondary effects arising from these research methods.

There were no secondary effects produced on the people that participated in this study. An informed consent form was provided and signed by every individual that participated in the focus groups and in the face-to-face interviews. Signed authorization from all interviewees in the study was a requirement to participate, and a previous e-mail of invitation was sent to all stakeholders, excepting members of the three communities, who were hard to contact by this mean and instead they were invited in a personal way. E-mails were sent from the researcher's James Cook University account, and this introductory e-mail many times was enough to sort an interview out, however in few cases government officials requested a formal letter of invitation from JCU signed by the researcher. Most of the face-to-face interviews were conducted in the stakeholders' offices and in the case of Mayan villagers these research instruments were conducted in their villages. The focus groups within the two Mexican Mayan communities included Maya-Tzeltal villagers in the first case study and Maya-Yucatec in the second one. In the third case study the villagers were both indigenous Maya-Q'eqchi' and non-indigenous inhabitants. One of the three groups in Palenque were women and two were men. In Coba, one group included men and women, and the other two groups were men. In Uaxactun, there was one group made up of women, and the other two groups were mixed men and women. The interviewees received a briefing that explained what the study was about, how long were the interviews going to last for, what this research entailed, and that the name of the interviewee was not going to be used if he/she wouldn't want to, and that in case the interview was recorded, it was going to be just for the purpose of the study. From

the initial approaches made to key individuals and their organizations, there was no objection raised concerning participation in the research.

3.8 Rationale and Justification

This thesis compared the level of ecotourism empowerment in three case studies based on stakeholders participation. This helped to understand the influence of national and local institutional structures and policies in the level of community engagement in tourism and citizen empowerment. Additionally the three case studies in this thesis portray communities with a lot of potential to offer tourism services and products and an opportunity to assess if ecotourism is an empowerment activity for them, which represents a gap in the literature. The communities studied share some similarities. They are located nearby, or in an area with a degree of protection. For instance, in the case study of Coba, an archaeological park has been declared since the early 1970s. In the case study of El Naranjo, the decree of Palenque archaeological park near the community has existed for more than 50 years and more recently, in the early 1980s, Palenque received the decree of National Park and also was credited as a World Heritage. The case study of Uaxactun is the one of a community that lives legally inside a Biosphere Reserve, and close to Tikal National Park which is also a protected archaeological site and World Heritage Park in Guatemala. Additionally, this third community lives in an area covered by Mayan temples belonging to an archaeological site where the community takes its name.

However, these ancient sacred places are threatened responding to different pressures. Local communities living in these settings are familiarized with tourism because they live near major Mayan archaeological sites and tourism destinations for archaeology, nature and culture. However, they have different levels of involvement with tourism as it is not a traditional activity for them, and the interest to participate in this activity varies not just between these communities but also between its members. Assessing the level of empowerment will allow identifying the impacts of tourism over local communities, following the premises of sustainable development of ecotourism where local communities should have a say and be involved in decision-making on its development.

There are international goals set by UNESCO for Biosphere Reserves which establishes development activities where ecotourism is included. This is particularly relevant to the case study of Uaxactun in Guatemala. Additionally, for the two communities in Mexico, there is a Mexican policy framework where assistance to develop ecotourism activities in indigenous territories has been growing over the past decade.

There is a lack of literature about the impacts of ecotourism on traditional communities living in the Mayan rainforest, and although there is a growing interest in ecotourism as an area of research, many studies end up as a thesis document written in Spanish, or in Spanish-written journals, but the English-written, peer-reviewed literature about the combination of the areas of research this thesis address is limited.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY ONE: EL NARANJO

4.1 Introduction

Indigenous ecotourism in the Mayan rainforest has not received a great deal of attention in the literature. This case study examines a number of issues related to the level of empowerment in a Mayan village located near Palenque World Heritage site in Southern Mexico. As mentioned previously in this thesis, indigenous ecotourism is a class of tourism that relates to the development of ecotourism products and experiences by indigenous communities. The location of many Mayan communities in forested regions offers the Mayan rainforest considerable scope for the development of ecotourism experiences along the lined espoused above. In Mexico, indigenous Mayan communities have control of more than 50% of the Mayan rainforests (INEGI, 2007) and governmental policies and funds for community-owned indigenous ecotourism ventures have become more common over the last decade. These two factors have provided new opportunities for indigenous participation in ecotourism.

One of the many issues confronting indigenous communities interested in participating in the tourism economy is empowerment. As Timothy (2007) noted, empowerment refers to the ability of local communities to have the authority to act, exercise a choice of actions, and have control over decisions and resources. Empowerment of this nature has two elements, it may facilitate involvement in agreed upon activities or alternatively it can mean exclusion from activities that elements of the community may not wish to engage in. The ability for members of communities to participate in ecotourism ventures is however limited by the extent that ecotourism is accepted as a replacement for traditional activities. Even where there is agreement for participation in ecotourism ventures the ultimate success of such ventures depends to a large extent on the level of involvement of external stakeholders including tour operators, government agencies and wholesalers (Nault & Stapleton 2011).

This chapter examines aspects of empowerment in El Naranjo, an indigenous Mayan community in Mexico, with a specific focus on issues that have arisen as some community members have sort to become involved in ecotourism while others have resisted this initiative. As explained in Chapter 3 an adapted empowerment framework

was used to assess community empowerment and its relationship with stakeholders' participation by collecting the views of internal and external stakeholders in indigenous ecotourism. Using a checklist of empowerment indicators the study developed a wheel of empowerment tool that can be used to graphically illustrate and compare levels of empowerment/disempowerment in local communities.

4.2 Research Context

The *Selva Maya* is one of the largest remaining zones of tropical forest in Latin America, covering an area that include southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Western Honduras and is home to a large number of indigenous Mayan communities. The ancient Mayan of this region left their modern descendants a valuable legacy of archaeology, culture and nature which now provides the raw material for the creation of a world class ecotourism experience and the potential to develop the region's most sustainable industry (Primack, Bray, Galleti & Ponciano 1998). Mexico's indigenous Mayan communities living in this region have communal property rights and control of their land. Under this system, many Mayan communities have adopted an unsustainable approach to the use of communal lands based on hunting, excessive logging, cattle grazing and cropping. In recent decades the growth in tourism in the Mayan region has afforded interested communities the opportunity to engage in ecotourism as an alternative to traditional livelihoods.

Scholars from a number of disciplines have investigated aspects of Maya society, including traditional and contemporary environmental management practices (Barrera-Basols & Toledo 2005) and social adaptation to ecotourism (Hernandez-Cruz, Bello-Baltazar, Montoya-Gomez & Estrada-Lugo, 2005). Interest in these practices arises from the fact that Mayas inhabit a fragile ecological zone, and base their natural resources management strategies on centuries of accumulated experience (Faust, 2001). In addition to these discipline based studies, there is an emerging body of research into aspects of Mayan ecotourism activity. From a tourism perspective, a number of studies have focused on problems of the top down approach where ecotourism has been portrayed as an agent of sustainable development for local communities. For example, in a study of Mayan communities surrounding Cancun, Torres and Momsen (2005) found that ecotourism has failed to stimulate balanced

regional development. Other studies have investigated issues such as social and economic adjustment processes and the degree to which communities have been able to derive economic benefits from ecotourism. In Mexico, Hernandez-Cruz, Bello-Baltazar, Montoya-Gomez and Estrada-Lugo (2005) examined these issues after the introduction of ecotourism in a Mayan village in the Lacandon rainforest, finding that the community was able to develop new forms of organization and recognize the need for a collective rather than individualistic approach to economic resource management. Cone (1995) examined the lives of two Maya craftswomen of Chiapas, Mexico and how they have responded to opportunities created by tourism. The findings indicated that the relationship they had with outsiders paved their way to a relatively economic independence, and to their role as innovators in transforming local craft objects into items suitable in the world market.

A number of studies have also investigated aspects of Mayan ecotourism in Belize. In a study of issues related to community-based ecotourism development in the Garifuna region, Timothy and White (1999) found that the goals for sustainable tourism were met by villages that were members of an indigenous ecotourism association. In another study Lindberg, Enriquez and Sproule (1996) evaluated the extent to which tourism generated financial support for protected area management and generated local economic benefits and support for conservation, finding that while tourism generated financial support for protected areas it also generated negative ecological and social impacts which were difficult to evaluate in financial terms. In an examination of how the commoditization of culture for tourism affected traditional practices in a Maya village adjacent to the most-visited Mayan ruins in Belize, Medina (2003) found that tourism may present new possibilities for locals to claim Mayan identity and culture.

4.2.1 Mexican Tourism Policy Context

Tourism is Mexico's third most important economic activity and in 2009 generated USD\$ 11.3 billion in income (SECTUR 2010). Ecotourism is seen by the Federal government as an area where there is potential for further growth. However as one key government interviewee noted, "ecotourism has not boomed in Mexico as it has done in other countries. The efforts must be focused on key communities to offer high quality

services regarding the attractiveness and diversification of tourism products, and then be able to increase the visitor fees for conservation of natural and cultural areas". One reason given for the failure of ecotourism to make a more substantial contribution has been that Federal funds given to state governments for support to indigenous ecotourism ventures have been reallocated at state level to other uses. In response the Federal government has instituted a policy requirement that communities interested in ecotourism ventures must apply to the federal government via a signed community agreement (*Acta de Asamblea*).

Engagement by Mayan communities in tourism activities has been encouraged by a growing number of governmental agencies as well as conservation NGOs and academic institutions (SECTUR, 2007). Since 2001 the Mexican government has fostered the creation of communal projects in rural and indigenous communities that incorporate a range of activities including adventure, observation of wild flora and fauna and rural tourism. As part of this policy, government agencies have granted assistance for marketing, infrastructure development including lodges, restaurants and equipment, technical assistance and for capacity building in local communities. A few indigenous communities have created their own tourism cooperatives and received assistance from conservation NGOs, private tour operators and from government programs.

In 2007 the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR) announced a national agreement that sought to link existing programs and resources to boost strategies that promote conservation and rational use of natural resources and development of indigenous and rural communities to enhance the profitability of existing tourism enterprises (SECTUR 2007). As a result, ecotourism projects have received increased interest from a range of stakeholders including government agencies, indigenous communities, private investors and conservation NGOs.

NGOs are a potential source of funding for communities interested in ecotourism ventures and may apply for federal funding to support them. While Mexican conservation NGOs have supported indigenous ecotourism projects in a number of areas in Mexico this has not been the case in the State of Chiapas. Instead there has been a focus on social aid and environmental conservation. For example *Acajungla*, an NGO based in Palenque, has funded a rainforest restoration project that has also sought to reintroduce wild fauna into the park. *Razonatura*, another Mexican NGO has

attempted to undertake training to certify informal tour guides but has been hampered by the misallocation of funding for indigenous ecotourism by the state government of Chiapas. In relation to this issue one federal government interviewee in Mexico City stated that state governments often put impediments in the way of funding schemes that are designed to promote indigenous ecotourism. On this matter the interviewee concluded that “although the Mexican government has been fostering transparency as a public policy, state governments use bureaucratic delays to reduce transparency and to hide the reallocation of these funds for other purposes. A similar situation was encountered in a study conducted by Koch, de Beer & Ellife (1998) where communities in South Africa are reported to have failed to receive the full benefits of earnings from craft sales that should have been passed to them by the state.

4.2.2 Palenque World Heritage Site

The research reported on in this case study was undertaken in El Naranjo, a Maya community located in the vicinity of the Palenque World Heritage Site (WHS) in the state of Chiapas (see Figure 4.1). In terms of visitation, the Palenque WHS is the third most significant archaeological site in Mexico and attracts around 650,000 visitors per annum. It contains some of the finest architecture, sculpture and relief carvings that the Maya produced and its major archaeological remains date back to 400 A.D. The archaeological site and surrounding area was declared as the National Park of Palenque in 1981. The Mexican Commission for Protected Natural Areas (CONANP) manages the natural resources of the park and operates programs with three local indigenous communities located within the park’s zone of influence. An archaeological site of 330 ha within the Park is controlled by the Mexican Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) which is responsible for both excavations and tourism activities within this part of the WHS site (Barnhart, 1998). The overall WHS encompasses 1771 ha of land about 600 ha of which consist of primary rainforest. An additional 300 ha consists of secondary growth vegetation in different stages of regeneration with the remaining area consisting of introduced pasturelands.

The region has 241 species of trees (Diaz Gallegos, 1996) and elevation that ranges from 150 to 500 m above sea level. The average annual precipitation is 2,200 mm and the mean annual temperature is 26°C. To the north, the park is surrounded by flat pasture

lands owned by cattle-ranchers and in the south the park is bounded by the North Chiapas Mountain Range. The small city of Palenque is located 6 km northeast of the park and has a population of approximately 110,000 persons (INEGI 2010).



Figure 4.1 Palenque World Heritage.

Palenque WHS has been targeted by the Mexican government for development as its newest *Integrally Planned Centre* for tourism. According to the Mexican Fund for Tourism Foment agency (FONATUR), an investment of USD\$ 120 million is required to complete the development. The plan was designed to boost visitors by 300% by the end of the decade, attract large scale investment and increase accessibility through the construction of an international airport and a modern highway from Palenque to other tourism destinations within the state (FONATUR 2008).

4.2.3 El Naranjo Village

This chapter focuses on El Naranjo, a Mayan community located five km uphill from the pyramids of Palenque at an altitude of 232 m above sea level (see Fig. 4.2). The *ejido* (the smallest unit of village government in Mexico) of El Naranjo has a population of 490 inhabitants (INEGI, 2010) and families have an average of 6 members (range 4 to 12). The village was established in 1945 by *tzeltal* Mayans who migrated from Yajalon (a Mayan municipality further southwest in the state) and it is relatively self-sustaining through agriculture, house farming, cattle grazing, hunting, and more recently through

tourism. Decision making for the community is undertaken by the community's 72 landowners who can vote on decisions concerning the governance of the community. Many of the older landowners are not keen on undertaking ecotourism ventures, preferring instead to pursue traditional agricultural and hunting practices.

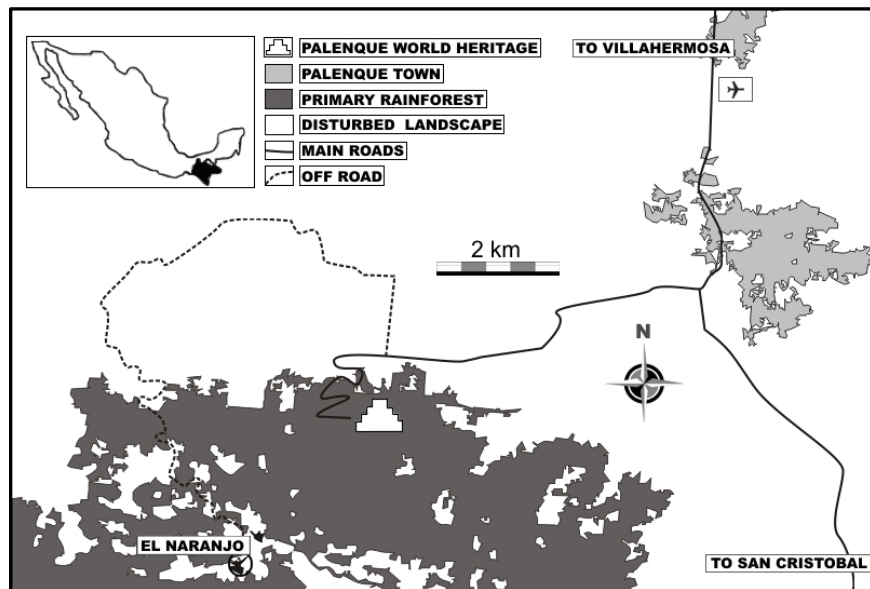


Figure 4.2 Map of Palenque Area.

Over the past 20 years, many community members have found employment in tourism which has become the main and for many households the only income generator. Virtually all direct involvement between community members and tourists occurs at the pyramid site. Very few tourists visit the village because of access issues. The footpath that connected the archaeological park with El Naranjo was closed by INAH in the mid-2000s due to security issues and tourists are no longer allowed to use the path. Although there is a 12 km four wheel drive road from the archaeological site to the community, private tour operators do not undertake indigenous ecotourism activities in the community. In the early 1990s members from the community started to visit the park to sell handcrafts but they were initially barred by guards. The anti-government Zapatista movement that emerged in the state of Chiapas in 1994 represented a symbol of unity for many Mayan communities and an opportunity to reclaim indigenous control over their resources. Members of El Naranjo community took advantage of this situation to sell handcrafts inside the pyramids site. At the beginning of the Zapatista movement, the INAH in Palenque requested the Mexican army to provide guards because the community was threatening to take control of the archaeological site. "One time these army elements saw us through the jungle while we were approaching to the

pyramids, and opened fire threatening us. We ran out immediately” declared one of the community leaders from El Naranjo.



Figure 4.3 El Naranjo Village

Although members from the community now have an agreement with INAH in Palenque to sell handicraft, it remains an informal activity because Mexican government policy does not to allow activities of this nature inside archaeological sites.

While the majority of El Naranjo’s residents work in tourism-related activities at least part time, there are no tourism businesses locate in the community. Tourism related employment includes a group of artisans who produce handicrafts for sale at the pyramids as well as group of women trained by CONANP who embroider traditional costumes and accessories. SECTUR has accredited a small group of tour guides from El Naranjo to operate in Palenque. Another group that has not received formal training offers informal tour guiding services. There are also a number of indigenous micro businesses that sell water and snacks outside the park. A few villagers have also been hired by INAH to support archaeological excavations and maintenance or by CONANP as park rangers, security and in ticket sales. Despite the significance of the tourism industry as a source of employment for the community, El Naranjo elders continue to be reluctant to support new ventures into indigenous ecotourism activities.

4.3 Limitations

In any study of this nature, access to some key stakeholders is not always possible. For example the director of Palenque archaeological site (INAH staff) was identified by the principal author as a key stakeholder. Due to bureaucratic delays a formal interview was not able to be held with the director of Palenque archaeological site, but as an alternative, an informal interview was conducted. A further problem encountered was difficulty in obtaining signed permission from the community sheriff to conduct interviews with members of the community. This was eventually overcome but as a result not all eligible members were able to be interviewed. Finally, the principal researcher was unable to converse with community members in their Maya *tzeltal* tongue. Thus Spanish, which is the second language in the community, was used.

4.4 Results

Stages one and two were designed to determine stakeholders’ participation in tourism and views on community empowerment. Table 4.1 illustrates the results in relation to stakeholders’ participation in tourism while results related to community empowerment are illustrated in Table 4.2. A compilation of the opinions of eight government representatives interviewed is presented in the first column in both tables. Government respondents included two key government authorities in Palenque (SECTUR and CONANP) and six from a range of Federal Ministries that have programs for the development of indigenous ecotourism in their agendas i.e. SECTUR, The Mexican Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), CONANP, The Mexican Fund for Support Solidarity Enterprises (FONAES), and INAH. Responses from other interviewees including an NGO consultant and the manager of a local tour operator company are summarized respectively in the second and third column of the tables. Opinions from the sheriff of the community in El Naranjo and from 45 villagers (tour guides, handcrafters, and embroiderers) are synthesized in the fourth column.

Table 4.1. Stakeholders’ perspectives of Mayan indigenous ecotourism participation in Palenque, Mexico

	Government Authorities	NGO Consultant	Tour Operator Manager	Mayan Indigenous Leaders & Community Members
	Almost ten Mexican government programs can financially assist El Naranjo for the elaboration and performance of projects related with ecotourism. CONANP provides economic and training	There is a lack of capacity for INAH to incorporate local activities and to promote local involvement	Initially, tourism in Palenque was not encouraged by FONATUR. Once Palenque was partially	The community sheriff thinks that “FONATUR’s <i>Integrally Planned Tourism Centre</i> in Palenque will affect the community since the government doesn’t take the

<p>G o v e r n m e n t</p>	<p>facilities to develop indigenous ecotourism ventures in Palenque. The strategy for conservation is “work with the people to preserve, and preserve for the people” said the director of CONANP in Palenque. The funds are as a function of the community’s desires. CONANP also supports research studies in the park, and manages international funds. A few environmental management projects led by CONANP for Palenque Park have needed collaboration from INAH, but INAH hasn’t showed interest in these initiatives. SECTUR Palenque should advice and facilitate capacity-building in projects related with tourism for local communities and focus on promotion of the archaeological site as a tourism destination, but it has very little scope of action.</p>	<p>with tourism in Palenque. It has minimal involvement with indigenous communities and doesn’t have a management plan for tourism related activities within the WHS.</p>	<p>excavated and tourism visitation commenced, INAH wanted to segregate the community, it didn’t want them to be politically together due to claims for land rights over the pyramids of Palenque.</p>	<p>community into account” said a villager. However, CONANP and local government are working in a couple of sustainable development projects and provided training to the community. INAH’s policies have caused clashes between villagers and park guards because they do not allow craft sales. There is limited assistance from government agencies in the area. “We want to request Palenque government to pave our roads” a villager mentioned. In the past, tourists used to come walking from the pyramids to the community but INAH blocked the rear access that connected the pyramids with the community citing tourism security concerns.</p>
<p>N G O s</p>	<p>There are no NGOs supporting ecotourism initiatives in Palenque that the government interviewees knew of. “Many times NGOs act as the performers of national or international financial aid for sustainable development programs in indigenous communities, including ecotourism” a government official expressed. The challenge for NGOs is to transfer knowledge in ecotourism and to create awareness about the community resources for tourism. NGOs have integrated stakeholders and have been involved with ecotourism in other communities in Chiapas.</p>	<p>NGOs have provided infrastructure and training (capacity-building and managerial skills) in different parts of the Mayan rainforest. However, there is a lack of NGOs implementing ecotourism projects in Palenque. “Our guides’ accreditation project is the pioneer in the area” said the consultant.</p>	<p>In other areas of Chiapas, NGOs have provided infrastructure and capacity-building. In Palenque, no efforts from NGOs have been perceived.</p>	<p>Today, there is an NGO involved with a project to formalize tour guides in the community, but this has just been recently. No NGOs have visited the community for the development of projects such as ecotourism. “We really expect the work this NGO is doing can lead to better organization in our village, otherwise, we will feel that we lose the time in the workshops we participate” said the villager. They also look forward to receive assistance from funding institutions and aid donors to better develop and participate in ecotourism.</p>
<p>T o u r O p e r a t o r s</p>	<p>There is minimal collaboration or no negotiation between local communities and private enterprises. Tour operators are not interested in developing multiple sites for tours. Travel agencies that market destinations are the link with the supply. Partnerships between tour operators and indigenous communities for ecotourism projects have led to positive results in other communities in Chiapas. Tour operators are normally narrow-minded in Palenque and just look for the short-termed economic benefit. They do not care about</p>	<p>There are no tour operators in Palenque. All of them are transportation companies who hire local tour guides in the visited sites. Tourists then buy crafts; however, they go regularly with the cheapest deal. Two enterprises tried to develop ecotourism</p>	<p>A number of prearranged tours from national or international travel agencies bring large groups of tourists to Palenque. However, tour operators promote 1-day tours and much tourism don’t overnight in Palenque. Other visitors come in local tours or are</p>	<p>Tour operators are not participating directly in the community. They are not taking the community into account for ecotourism. On the other hand, elders in the community do not like tourism and believe that the community will be affected with the tourism arrival because “they leave rubbish” said the sheriff. Many elders grow mainly tomato, manioc, and pumpkin. “They grow everything, that’s why they don’t feel the need to go to work at the pyramids or to</p>

environmental or cultural impacts of tourism. They pay minimal fees for conservation and generate income at the expense on impacts on the environment.	ventures in Palenque in the past, but they closed down.	independent travelers.	negotiate with tour operators” concluded the sheriff.
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Table 4.2. Stakeholders’ perspectives about indigenous ecotourism empowerment in Palenque

	Government Authorities	NGO Consultant	Tour Operator Manager	Mayan Indigenous Leaders & Community Members
E c n o m i c	The economic benefits for El Naranjo come from offering tour guided services and selling handcrafts. Now there are concrete houses in the community and some people have invested in cargo trucks. According to the Tourism Delegate in Palenque “there are no studies and no records from SECTUR about the economic benefits from tourism for local communities”.	Profits are at a family level and come from tour guidance and craft sales. There are local businesses in the community developed from money earned in tourism such as convenience stores, and truck transportation to Palenque.	All the economic income in this community comes from tourism. Before tourism existed there was no cash economy system there. There is money in El Naranjo to hire people to crop the land. Many have improved their lifestyle.	Almost all revenue in the community comes from tourism. Today, many of the jobs in the farms associated with the community are funded by money derived from tourism. As a result the community has better rural development. However, some families still rely almost entirely on crops and cattle.
P s y c h o l o g i c a l	They are not very keen to participate in ecotourism, excepting for selling retail handcrafts to tourists. They no longer wear traditional costumes, and do not have many traditional festivities. However, they are proud of being Mayans and the new generation feels that tourism is the way of the future. Many youngsters have come from a situation of marginalization and have studied in Palenque town. They strive to get what they want.	The people from El Naranjo involved in tourism feel better than before they were participating in tourism. Although youngsters are optimistic, their perspectives differ from those of the elders who “don’t feel they can participate in tourism” said the consultant.	Before obtaining accreditation to guide, the former informal guides started to offer tour guidance services with fear. Now that they are accredited, they have a feeling of being productive in tourism and they feel more enthusiastic and more optimistic in tourism for make a living.	The current community sheriff and most of the leaders are not keen on tourism involvement. “If the community has had control over entrance fees, or over one of FONATUR’s new projects for Palenque, the community will like to participate” said the sheriff. Youngsters and some other people are interested in tourism. A few others prefer to continue working in farming and cattle raising.
S o c i a l	They have organized in groups as tour guides. Income has benefited families, not community groups. However, they are still developing as an <i>ejido</i> . In the ruins of Palenque, there are rivalries between the legal and illegal guides. Illegal guides, seeking for legalization, are from this community. “It is urgent to train and formalize this group for tour guidance”.	An <i>ejido</i> is an example of social organization. However, there are differences in opinion between a number of villagers with regards to involvement in tourism, and the reluctance of leaders to participate in tourism has make tourism development a slow process	They are grouping in cooperatives and some of them have joined to syndicates, considered as “groups of power” for tour guiding. There is competition in the community for the wealth of tourism with a low level of jealousy.	There are domestic problems in El Naranjo because some parents want their children to work on the farm rather than being involved in tourism. However it has achieved a good level of social cohesion because they can’t find tourism involvement opportunities in a different way. “When El Naranjo came together, INAH had to grant a space for us in the park to sell our handcrafts” said a villager.
P o l i t	The groups and the initiatives emerge from the <i>Assembly</i> . Some of them have learnt how to follow procedures to receive government assistance. Some organized groups of handcrafts	Some members from the community act as leaders representing the interests of organized groups and they have a say in	People in El Naranjo are starting to be more involved in administrative issues to develop	Young people involved in tour guiding and crafts sales are becoming better organized to capitalize on the opportunities offered by being involved in tourism. The previous sheriff

i c a l	sellers have emerged along with the FONATUR's <i>Integrally Planned Centre in Palenque</i> . Although other ecotourism centers in Chiapas are managed by local communities, leaders in El Naranjo hardly visualize a community-based ecotourism project.	external bodies such as institutions or organizations. However, many do not have administrative capacity for a major involvement in tourism.	negotiation skills and access to government funds and assistance from NGOs. However, they have no skills to negotiate with tour operators to promote tourism.	from El Naranjo is keen on encouraging tourism initiatives for the community and is leading a group of informal guides trying to gain accreditation from SECTUR in Chiapas, but "SECTUR hasn't facilitated us the opportunity to do our job legally" said the ex-sheriff.
E n v i r o n m e n t a l	The earnings from tourism have helped the environment in El Naranjo in the way that the labor energy of youngsters, who could be the new loggers for cropping areas and cattle grazing, have been converted to tourism. El Naranjo has received funds and training from CONANP for environmental protection, and other government funds to promote agriculture in their lands.	There are internal rules in the community for rubbish clean ups and for not littering. They have a communal natural reserve and nowadays they are more aware about the potential of their natural resources for ecotourism.	They are now confident and aware about natural resources, and they are oriented towards the development of nature-based tourism.	A number of people used to hunt at night, but now the community has a ban for hunting and logging. There are also clean policies for the community. The tour guides have a nature and culture oriented speech when they are guiding. "We persuade tourists to follow good practices for tourism in terms of environmental education while they are visiting the park", said a villager. The <i>Assembly</i> work together with environment related governmental projects.

Figure 4.4 illustrates the results of the assessment of empowerment/disempowerment indicators using *a wheel of empowerment*. Adoption of this technique allows also comparison of the level of empowerment/disempowerment between communities. The upper wheel in figure 4.4 shows a linear fit as a mean of all the indicators measured. The overall mean for all dimensions was 2.25 points indicating that community empowerment through indigenous ecotourism has not been achieved. The values illustrated in this chart are subjective and relied on interpretation of a range of data that this thesis gathered through participant observation, interviews with stakeholders and the results of focus groups with villagers. Of the five dimensions assessed, the highest score was for the psychological dimension with a mean of 3.2 points. This indicates a neutral situation of empowerment (neither empowered nor disempowered). There were differences in how tourism was perceived in El Naranjo with younger members of the community showing a far higher level of participation than the community's elders. The social dimension mean of 2.4 indicates that the community is somewhat disempowered due to the tension between younger members of the community seeking to develop a greater level of engagement in ecotourism and older members of the community who are reluctant to become more closely engaged in ecotourism activity. The environmental dimension mean of 2.2

indicates that the community is somewhat environmentally disempowered in relation to tourism activities. The economic and political dimensions had the lowest scores averaging 1.7 points in each case, indicating disempowerment in relation to income derived from tourism and in decision-making related to tourism issues.

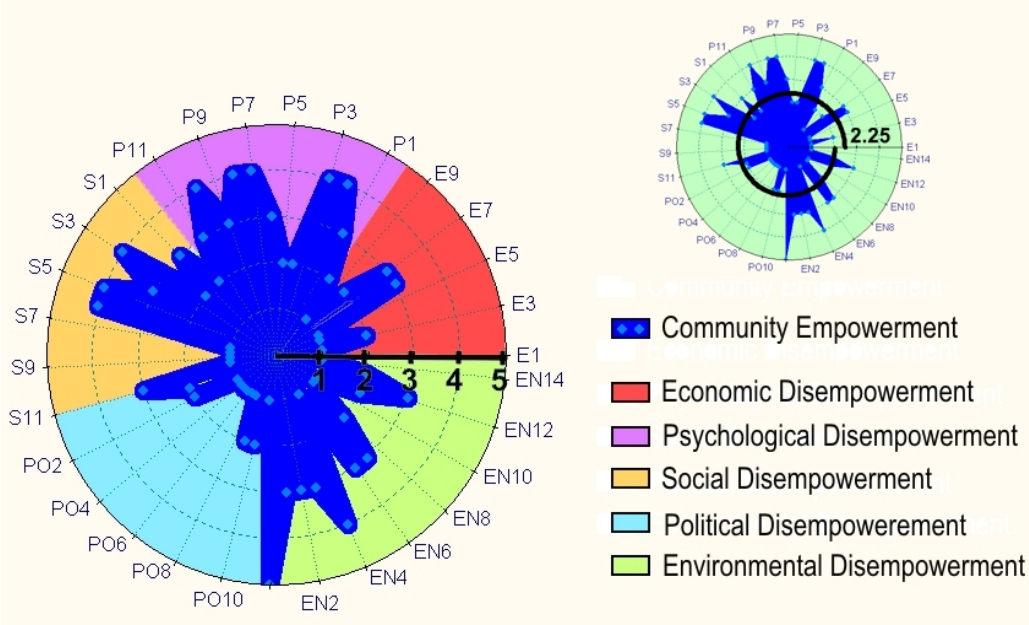


Figure 4.4 The Wheel of Empowerment in El Naranjo

There is passive participation in tourism since younger members of the community do not have a voice in community decision-making. This has resulted in slow economic growth from ecotourism. Collectively, the results over the five dimensions indicate that in general younger members of the community feel disempowered in relation to their desire to more fully engagement in ecotourism. This finding indicates that empowerment may be both external to the community as well as internal.

4.5 Chapter Discussion and Conclusion

This research builds on previous studies into indigenous ecotourism and offers a new approach to assessing the relationship between stakeholders’ participation in indigenous ecotourism and empowerment of local communities. Based on an enhanced version of the framework suggested by Scheyvens (2002), levels of empowerment/disempowerment were measured using a 60 item evaluative checklist based on economic, psychological, social, political and environmental dimensions.

The study found that it was possible to measure empowerment and displayed a visual representation of it, as demonstrated by the *wheel of empowerment* in Figure 4.4 The research also found that empowerment is a multidimensional process that includes both external empowerment that enables a community to exercise control over its affairs and internal empowerment where various sectors of the community are either empowered or disempowered to peruse actions that they wish to engage in. Further, the results indicate the need for greater consideration of empowerment at the village and project levels if successful indigenous ecotourism is to occur. It was also apparent that empowerment required broad community participation in decision making.

In the case of El Naranjo, the reluctance of the village elders to participate in ecotourism has precluded members of the community interested in developing ecotourism ventures from gaining federal funding. This situation has arisen because of the belief by many members of the older generation, including village elders, that if they do not use their land for farming or domestic livestock it will be resumed by the government and converted into a protected area. A statement by El Naranjo's Community Sheriff typifies this fear: "the elders are not interested in tourism, they are growing maize, tomato, beans and pumpkin; they don't need tourism".

Despite this view, the number of community members participating in tourism is increasing and at the time this paper was written about half the residents of the village are involved at least part time in the tourism industry. Participation ranges from the provision of guide services to working at Palenque WHS, making and selling handcrafts and paid job in tourism services. Greater participation in the tourism industry and ecotourism in particular is hampered by the attitude of the village elders, the lack of training the community has in providing collective services such as an ecolodge, for example, and the current focus on individual rather than community participation in the provision of tourism related services. Despite these problems, there is a growing interest in increasing the level of participation in the tourism industry by the community's younger generation. This sector of the community is more aware of the benefits of tourism in general and recently has become interested in ecotourism and is prepared to increase their level of participation as an alternative to traditional activities such as farming. However because of the structure of community governance where

only landholders have voting rights in community decisions, younger community members are largely ignored and disempowered.

As Nault and Stapleton (2011) observed, long-term viable community-based ecotourism development requires close collaboration and sustained support from trusted community leaders and from knowledgeable and committed outside stakeholders. For example, while INAH has managed the archaeological site for more than 50 years, it has done little to involve local communities. As one government official from INAH stated, “ecotourism is a term in which I don’t believe and I have serious doubts on the benefits that eventually represent for communities”. Although more than 500,000 tourists visit Palenque each year, INAH is essentially an academic jurisdiction. Conversely, CONANP’s administration of Palenque started in 2004 and a few of their programs involved participation by local communities. This appears to indicate that INAH’s interest is limited to issues concerning research and archaeological protection, and therefore there is an administrative gap in terms of tourism management inside INAH’s protected area.

Local tour operators and travel agencies offer tours to the site via a jungle walk, and visit *Misol ha* and *Agua Azul* waterfalls as part of a one day tour to Palenque. Most tour operators in the region are locally owned and many started as transport companies that provided local passenger services in cities such as Palenque and San Cristobal. Some of the operators have developed itineraries that offer specific ecotourism experiences, many lack marketing skills and there has been little effort by operators to develop profit sharing arrangements with local Mayan communities. While local communities benefit by selling handcrafts and providing guiding services, they generally have little influence in the manner that the tourism industry operates in Palenque region and can in most cases be described as lacking empowerment.

Compared to the level of support given by the federal authorities to ecotourism, there has been very little support from international, national or local NGOs in Palenque. Multinational NGOs such as World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) and Conservation International (CI) have supported ecotourism projects in other areas of Mexico (e.g. the monarch butterfly project in Michoacan and Escudo Jaguar in Chiapas) but not in Palenque. One of the main national conservation donors, the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation (FMCN) has assisted many ecotourism projects in Protected Natural Areas

(PNAs) across the country but Palenque was not included in the FMCN priority zones for funding. In recent years, *Acajungla* has commenced promoting on-site visits and funded the development of an ecopark (*Aluxes*) in Palenque, however there has been no specific effort made to involve local indigenous Mayans. A Mexican conservation NGO has recently approached the El Naranjo community to assist with training but the results of this approach were not known at the time this paper was written.

In this study, it was apparent that the failure to establish indigenous tourism ventures was a direct result of the community leadership failing to recognize the potential offered by ecotourism and discouraging a significant part of the community from participating in ecotourism ventures. In effect, while the community had the requisite power to become involved in ecotourism it did not use this power to facilitate the development of ecotourism ventures effectively disempowering those sectors of the community that were interested in ecotourism. In part it appears that the reticence of the community leadership to encourage ecotourism ventures was based on a lack of understanding of ecotourism and the benefits it can bring, and a belief that tourism in general did not generate significant economic returns.

The reluctance of the community leadership to sanction projects designed to establish ecotourism ventures has parallels to the findings of research undertaken by Mason and Beard (2008) who found that communities have refused to become involved in projects coordinated by government programs due to time and resource-consuming concerns, fear of losing control over local planning and decision making, and lack of confidence in government initiatives and grants which many communities associated with political support in exchange money. In the case of El Naranjo, ecotourism is a concept that many of the community barely understand and in most cases equate with tourism which in their experience provides jobs but not a great deal of economic benefits. In a similar way, Stronza and Gordillo (2008) found that indigenous communities living in the Amazon rainforest acknowledged the economic benefits of ecotourism associated with participation because it offered a steady and predictable monthly income.

This situation has emerged in part because of the requirement that communities interested in ecotourism ventures must apply to the federal government for funding via a signed community agreement, and in part because NGOs have not been actively involved in promoting the benefits of ecotourism. According to Dahles and Keune

(2002), issues that have affected indigenous ecotourism include low visitation rates, security, lack of basic tourism infrastructure, little name area recognition for remote areas and continued dependency on funding, staff training and marketing support from environmental NGOs and industry partners. Further, Hall and Boyd (2005) have argued that local communities often suffer from a lack of effective political and economic control over major decisions that affect their well-being. Until there is a change in attitude by the village elders of El Naranjo towards tourism in general and ecotourism in particular it will be difficult to build involvement beyond its present level resulting in continued disempowerment of part of the village community.

While there is a growing body of research into Mayan ecotourism issues, there remains a major gap in identification of the role of empowerment as an underlying issue in allowing Mayan people to take advantage of opportunities to develop their own ecotourism ventures. This chapter has addressed this gap in the literature and its value lies in testing an empowerment framework and acknowledging the importance of stakeholders in the process of local empowerment. It affirms extant knowledge about empowerment in an indigenous community surrounding a World Heritage Park in the Mayan rainforest of Mexico. It is apparent that the conservation of natural areas and preservation of indigenous cultural values is an important outcome if it can be achieved from the participation of local communities in a form that adds value to their lives. However, the success of indigenous ecotourism also depends on community empowerment which should in turn trigger participation. Empowerment is achieved once villagers are aware of the essence of ecotourism, have built capacities and negotiation skills to participate in tourism, and have a common will to participate in tourism and to protect the environment on which they depend.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY TWO: COBA

5.1 Introduction

One of the many issues confronting indigenous communities is empowerment that allows development of sustainable livelihoods. Indigenous communities living in the Mayan rainforest in Mexico have property rights and control of the land, and as a result many have developed an unsustainable system of hunting, excessive logging, cattle grazing and cropping. Indigenous ecotourism is considered an alternative to traditional livelihoods and capable of achieving sustainable development in Mayan communities. However, participation of local communities in ecotourism is limited by the extent of community empowerment and success in achieving indigenous controlled ecotourism depends on stakeholder's participation.

Indigenous ecotourism empowerment in the literature draws on collective action and knowledge transfer, facilitating control and ownership in tourism ventures. The empowerment concept has been discussed because it is an effective way in which a community can develop tourism in a sustainable way and enhance the chances of tourism ventures success. To assess stakeholders' participation in ecotourism and the empowerment of indigenous communities in the Mayan rainforest, the present study relies on a modified research framework proposal that facilitates assessing the empowerment of indigenous communities in ecotourism as a means for developing sustainable livelihoods.

The concept of indigenous ecotourism is relatively new and has not been addressed in any depth in the literature. It raises aspects of capacity-building and ownership over ecotourism projects, although a softer sense of the concept considers any type of involvement from traditional communities with ecotourism.

This chapter assessed the level of empowerment in Coba, a Mayan village surrounding a major archaeological site and tourism attraction in Mexico. Additionally, this chapter provides information on the agents capable of facilitating success of indigenous ecotourism development in the Mayan rainforest and provides a way to assess empowerment in traditional communities using a holistic approach of dimensions that affects local participation in ecotourism.

5.2 Research Context

Tourism has long been a major source of foreign exchange for Mexico. In 1967 the Mexican Tourism Foment (FONATUR), which had been concentrated on the Pacific Coast and in Central Mexico, was extended to the Yucatan peninsula. The coastal village of Cancun, with a population of 600 inhabitants in the 1960s, has become one of the world's leading tourism destinations attracting 25-28 percent of Mexico's tourism (Momsen 2003). In the past this region was a frontier zone largely inhabited by marginalized indigenous people who lived by subsistence cultivation and by collecting and smuggling chewing gum. The advent of large scale tourism in the early 1970s ended the isolation of the region.

In 1939, during an official tour to the then territory of Quintana Roo, President Lazaro Cardenas made it a point to assure the Maya villagers that the government would not grant land concessions to private companies. Ten years later, in 1950, the total population of the territory still numbered only 26,967 inhabitants and Cancun was a village of only 600 persons. Until the advent of mass tourism in the early 1970s, Quintana Roo remained pretty much what it had been for centuries; an extensive region with very low population indigenous enclaves along the coast. Quintana Roo became a zone of refuge, first for Mayans fleeing from Spanish control, and later for Maya villagers equally disinclined to come under Mexican rule. The 1847 native uprising in Yucatan known as the Caste War, and the many smaller insurrections that followed, further isolated the region.

Mayas' lives began to change dramatically when, in 1971 the megaresort area of Cancun was built as a consortium of government and private entities, creating a tourist boom and leading to Quintana Roo's statehood in 1974. Since then, global tourism has become a major force in many local Maya economies. The region has become one of the main tourism destinations of the country. According to Daltaubuit and Pi-Sunyer (1990) Quintana Roo remained one of the most inaccessible locations in Mexico, an economic and political frontier where the institutions of the state were minimally represented. People were reluctant to fill roles designed for them by the politically powerful. Specifically, they recognized that for them the drama of modernization seldom offered more than the lowest paid (and generally uncertain) wage labor.

The most significant changes in the community organization for the use of natural resources started in the 1980s with the community forest-based management. Before this time the big logging companies like *Maderas Industriales de Quintana Roo* were in charge of forest management, and the *ejidatarios* were just laborers from these enterprises. While tourism has clearly been the engine of economic and social transformation in Quintana Roo, from the beginning it was linked to official development plans responding to national, rather than local, initiatives and priorities (Pi-Sunyer, Thomas & Daltabuit 2001). Many of today's tourists are attracted by the cheapness of Cancun, come on package holidays and spend very little money in Mexico. The continuing growth suggest that tourism in Cancun has not yet reached the stage of stagnation, but mass tourism is already bringing many problems of environmental degradation and devaluation of the attractions of the resort.



Figure 5.1 Location of Coba. Source: Mapas de Mexico.

Coba is located 132 km Southwest from Cancun, and 45 km west from the Caribbean beaches of Tulum (Fig. 5.1). In terms of visitation, Coba attracts around 400,000 visitors every year. The Mexican Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) controls research excavations and tourism activities on the archaeological heritage. The

government declared the archaeological site in 1974 covering an area of 40 km², although the area conditioned for tourist visitation is only 2 km². Sinkholes randomly connected to a huge underground river network across the Yucatan peninsula, known as *cenotes*, were the main source of water for Yucatec-Mayans including Coba. Two lakes, rarely found in the Yucatan peninsula, surrounded by rainforest and by the community also constitute the landscape in the archaeological site of Coba. In addition to the environmental attributes of rainforest and underground rivers across the Yucatan peninsula, the Yucatec-Mayans preserve unique traditions that have been an “add-on” in the promotion of ecotourism.

For centuries, the Archaeological Site of Coba remained abandoned. Explorations in the Mayan rainforest conducted by the Carnegie Institute of Science led to the publication of the first monograph of Coba in the early 1930s. In the early 1940s Coba repopulated with a small group of families coming from two Yucatec-Mayan towns in the state of Yucatan, i.e. Kanxoc and Tixhualtun. These pioneer families arrived to Coba to extract the sap of *Manilkara zapota* tree to fabricate *chicle* (the Mayan word for chewing gum) for commercial purposes. This was one of the main and almost only economic sustain for Mayans living in the Yucatan peninsula. Coba used to be a very small community far from bigger populations, with a system of farming agriculture and hunting for self-consumption, and an economy based on *chicle* and charcoal production for commercialization. Since the development of Cancun as an *Integral Planned Centre* in the early 1970s by FONATUR, INAH started excavations in Coba and opened the site for public visitations.

Since the late 1970s, Coba has become an important tourist destination. Busloads of tourists arrive daily and make their way to the archaeological remains and the surrounding rainforest. The presence of visitors stimulated the making of handicrafts and the opening of small stores, while the development of the ruins into a destination for adventure tourism led to a greater interest in ethnic tourism (Pi-Sunyer, Thomas & Daltaubuit 2001). The ecotourism literature promises that tour visits can protect the social, cultural and psychological characteristics of the local communities.

The *ejido* Coba has an extension of about 90 km² and includes the land where the archaeological site is located. A national census in 2010 accounted for 1,278 Mayans living in Coba, belonging to 435 families (INEGI 2010). Only 133 people from 90 families

are *ejidatarios*, which means they have land rights. Charcoal and *chicle* production are no longer profitable activities in Coba as tourism has taken over the economic sustain. Most of the community is involved in tourism, while a few elders are involved with agriculture and apiculture, and hunting is virtually no longer practiced by village members in Coba. In the past, all the land owned by the *ejido* was for common use. With the advent of tourism in Coba, the local Mayans were spectators of the tourism activity, excepting a few staff members hired by INAH for ticket sales and maintenance. With the time they started to involve more actively in tourism by opening stores for selling crafts they brought from Cancun and towns around Chichen Itza to sell them at the entrance of the park.



Figure 5.2 A local guide inside a *cenote*. Photo: Yibrán Aragón.

Afterwards, the community agreed with INAH to build a car parking lot for the archaeological site which will allow the community to get an income from car parking fees. Towards the end of 1990s the community had built capacities to interact directly with tourism, such as learning English and Spanish, and learning about the archaeological site for tour guiding purposes.

In 1998, a group of 13 people requested training from INAH for a tour guide certification. An archaeologist from INAH gave the course and they were certified by the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR) for tour guiding. Since then, they formed a body of tour guides which today has 34 members affiliated to a national syndicate of tour guides. A

tourist boom in Coba assisted by tour operator companies led the community to the promotion of more collective business. So far, they also offer visitations to swim into two *cenotes* and they have established a joint-venture with a foreign company to do a couple of alternative tourism activities in Coba, i.e. a zip lining and a Mayan night show.

In the last decade the community started to parcel out their lands for selling purposes. This has been rapidly increasing as the tourism potential grows in the area, especially since a public bidding for the construction of a new international airport in Tulum was announced by the Ministry of Communications and Transport in Mexico (SCT).

5.3 Limitations

In any study of the nature, access to key stakeholders is important but not always possible. In this study a group from the community of Coba in charge of running a bicycle and tricycle tourism transportation cooperative within the park was identified as a key stakeholder group, however a lack of interest in participating precluded a formal focus groups interview. A second problem encountered was the difficulty in obtaining the views of NGOs as just one was identified of being involved in indigenous ecotourism with communities nearby, but not in Coba.

5.4 Results

Government and community views on ecotourism participation showed that tour operators and travel agencies have been facilitating ecotourism activities in Coba, creating an empowering panorama in the community. A few government programs have financially assisted Coba for ecotourism implementation and members from the community are participating in different ways in ecotourism as a response of the economic benefits from tourists and from government assistance to promote tourism. Conversely, there is no evidence of NGOs involvement with this community in tourism-related programs.

Table 5.1 shows what the key stakeholders interviewed thought were the ways in which external and internal stakeholders are participating to develop ecotourism in Coba. Similarly, Table 5.2 shows the level of empowerment in the community of Coba, based on the interviews with key stakeholders' in ecotourism.

Table 5.1 Stakeholders' perspectives of Mayan indigenous ecotourism participation in Coba, Mexico

	Government Authorities	NGO	Tour Operator	Community
G o v e r n m e n t	<p>Many governmental institutions provide financial assistance for indigenous ecotourism across the country. Funds are granted for the elaboration and performance of ecotourism projects when the proposal draws on the community's interest to participate in tourism, and when there is potential for sustainable development from tourism. For instance SEDESOL have half-financed a community restaurant in Coba with the other half invested from the community. CONAFOR have financed them for environmental protection, and dispose funds for tourism. CDI is also actively supporting communities in Quintana Roo for the development of indigenous ecotourism.</p> <p>INAH is a key governmental institution regarding tourism in Coba because they manage the archaeological site however, INAH is a research institution, "we belong to the Ministry of Public Education, not to SECTUR, but we do things for tourists to have a more orderly and clean area inside the park."</p>	<p>During the last 5 years, the Mexican government has given impressive financial support and promotion to ecotourism through their public agendas. However, there are no policies governing indigenous ecotourism as such. There are initiatives such as SECTUR Act 133 for sustainable development of tourism, and a few handbooks of good practices of ecotourism issued by government departments, but there are no policies regulating fair trade in ecotourism, for example, and for environmental and social impacts associated to ecotourism development.</p>	<p>Government has improved road infrastructure since 2007 virtually in all access to Coba including Tulum, Coba, Valladolid and Nuevo Xcan. The INAH did major restorations in the Coba park during 2009. However, according to a tour operator manager "the state and federal governments including SECTUR and INAH should provide greater participation in social, cultural and recreational services for both visitors and residents of this area". And she continued, "I believe that minimizing environmental impact is in the hands of tour operators, SEMARNAT and the local government".</p>	<p>The municipality of Tulum have taken Coba into account and "we have now better roads and services in Coba". There is a "Hall of Culture" that gives workshops about Mayan mathematics, roots and traditions like Maya medicine, and crafts elaboration has been supported with funds from local government. "We have a good relationship with INAH and have benefited from federal government programs for tourism. However, "INAH has remained very separate from the community and it has been very strict too", said the commissioner.</p>
N G O s	<p>Environmental NGOs in Mexico have supplied the lack of schooling and education in rural communities, but this has created a dependency on them too.</p> <p>INAH doesn't work with NGOs. "I don't know of NGOs in Coba. There are several in the state of Quintana Roo though.</p> <p>"There are well-intentioned NGOs, but others act like bandits, who don't know the community and come with the intention to take money by getting funds from governmental institutions and leave them stranded" said an archaeologist from INAH.</p> <p>The challenge for NGOs is the transfer of knowledge and awareness about community resources for tourism. NGOs integrate stakeholders and charge for that. Some are oriented in ecotourism. NGOs have been the pioneers trying to benefit communities from ecotourism.</p>	<p>The UNDP have funded ecotourism projects through local NGOs in Quintana Roo. No knowledge of NGOs in Coba. Some NGOs in the state market Mayan non-tourism products. An NGO consultant said that "we started working with rural communities in the North Coba corridor known as Punta Laguna-Holbox, we get into ecotourism by looking for alternatives of community development. Through a participatory workshop we were looking for elements of sustainable development and we opted for ecotourism" she concluded.</p>	<p>Environmental NGOs help to minimize impacts from developmental activities, but "we have no work with NGOs. I have no knowledge of any NGOs working in the area" said the owner of the tour operator.</p>	<p>Very few NGO consultants have approached to the Assembly of Coba but they have been disregarded. The community hasn't found NGO proposals relevant to the community. To date, there isn't NGO participation in Coba. However, independent consultants in Coba have facilitated the establishment of a community-owned and operated restaurant, and to develop alternative tourism.</p>

T o u r O p e r a t o r s	<p>There are economic ties, because tour operators take the tourists and the community put the land use. Sometimes tour operators rent <i>ejido</i> land. Cuba have benefited a lot from tour operators and most of the tourists in Cuba come with an organized tour. However travel agencies are not interested in many other sites as products to market. Results have been positive when the tour operators associate with indigenous communities. However, tour operators do not pay a fee for conservation and are the ones that impact more on the environment and who make money from it. "Tour operators are very important stakeholders who should get closer to INAH" said a staff member from INAH. A few tour operators have created exclusivity with various communities and that seems very wrong.</p>	<p>There are complex issues of fair business with the industry. Tour operators are quite aggressive. They are important players, but their commitment with sustainable development has been very discrete. Tour operators contribute with a minimum generation of revenue for communities, with most of the earnings for them. However, joint-ventures have fairer agreements between both.</p>	<p>Tour operators are promoting the visit to the archaeological site of Cuba. However, they are impacting the environment especially when visiting cenotes in Cuba. "Our company is cooperating in every way possible to provide sustainable and equitable socio-economic benefits" said a tour operator manager. Other tour operators are a link with agents from developed countries which want to do a fair and participatory tourism in developing countries.</p>	<p>Tourism cannot be compared to what it was ten years ago in Cuba. Previously, tourists left more earnings to the community. Now there are more tourists but tour operators put their people in specific stores and have individual agreements. However, with the joint-ventures established in Cuba, the community is getting more revenue and better fair trades with tour operators.</p>
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Table 5.2 Stakeholders' perspectives on indigenous ecotourism empowerment in Cuba, Mexico.

	Government	NGO	Tour Operator	Community
E c o n o m i c	<p>Most of the people in Cuba make a living from tourism now. Not all people benefit at the same level but those who already had a better social position when tourism started have benefited more. They started to get earnings by craft sales and by charging a car parking fee outside from the pyramids, now there are community business and joint ventures.</p>	<p>There is much tourism activity in Cuba. In other communities around Cuba, tourism is a complementary economic activity to its traditional activities, and it is being a slow process. But in Cuba most of the people's economy rely on tourism</p>	<p>There is a definitive economic benefit for Cuba villagers. They distribute income and responsibilities of the ecotourism operation, although the level of participation, scope of economic benefits and consensus with the residents of Cuba varies with each tour operator.</p>	<p>Tourism has generated local jobs and economic aspiration all the community. People no longer need to go far outside the <i>ejido</i> to work for support economically their families. "We administer tourism revenues from at least 5 different tourism cooperatives" said the commissioner. The money raised from tourism activities in the community is not divided between <i>ejidatarios</i> though.</p>
P s y c h o l o g i c a l	<p>Cuba is very keen to participate in tourism-related activities and is already involved with tourism. They are very optimistic about the tourism potential for the community. At all family levels, people in Cuba want their children to learn about tourism for their future. However, they participate as they get a benefit, but not always participate with other stakeholders like INAH.</p>	<p>All communities are looking for development potential; tourism is a way that they are now looking like the most viable. In Cuba tourism has strongly influenced locals to become part of this activity.</p>	<p>Indeed they already participate in tourism and are happy to receive more tourism because they are industry partnerships already. With the new airport project in Tulum, their expectations on tourism have growth exponentially.</p>	<p>The community is enthusiastic about tourism as they see a chance to improve their economy. Factors such as the global crisis, swine flu and hurricanes that have affected the local economy, has revealed that "there is patience to face the adversity" said a leader of Cuba. Today, at least 50% of the minute points discussed in the community assembly are related to tourism.</p>
	<p>It should be competition and it is more likely when</p>	<p>The community is more organized and</p>	<p>The director from the tour company</p>	<p>Tourism has brought greater cohesion in the community.</p>

S o c i a l	<p>there is an economic issue. There has been social disruption from tourism. The families with one or more ejidatarios are those who benefit more, and many times they have changed their social relationships, even within the familiar core. They have cohesion amongst them, but they do not abide INAHs decisions within the archaeological park, sometimes they want to log trees and want to impose their will.</p>	<p>has more cohesion because tourism is an economic activity that requires these elements. On the other hand, they have eroded their cultural values by marketing them as part of the product. They also have jealousy with non-tourists outsiders such as foreign tour guides.</p>	<p>mentioned that he has no knowledge of social problems in Cuba. The people of Cuba and adjacent communities are well organized in ejidos and rural production companies, and have shared responsibilities and benefits equally to collaborate in ecotourism projects. However, he concluded, "tourism can give rise to social problems everywhere".</p>	<p>Conflicts are seen rarely. Working committees have been formed in Cuba. However, the guards from the archaeological park believe that the community have experienced despaired economic revenue and have changed in attitude and in familiar relationships. Many have forgotten their roots. They have become more ambitious, although something positive is that it has created competition.</p>
P o l i t i c a l	<p>They've started to create joint ventures with tour operators and have negotiated support from governmental financial institutions. The <i>ejido</i> handles many tourism business in Cuba. However, they haven't respected all decisions the INAH have taken inside the park. "Last issue we had with the <i>ejido</i> was a decision to restrict access to the highest pyramid in Cuba due to archaeological impact from tourism, but the <i>ejidatarios</i> went very upset and threatened to close the road access to Cuba. In the end, we ended up reopening the access" said a staff from INAH.</p>	<p>The <i>ejido</i> is a strong core where decisions are democratic for the community. They know they have political power, but that doesn't mean they always take the best decisions. After more than 20 years of success with tourism income, Mayans from Cuba are nowadays more aware about tourism and have built capacities and have improved their management and negotiation skills.</p>	<p>The <i>ejido</i> of Cuba has a strong influence in the local business including tourism. "They handle the usufruct of the cenotes in the area and have invested to improve the recreational offer of Cuba". In addition to the union of local tour guides in Cuba, they operate the car parking, run the bike and trike's transport business inside the archaeological park, charge a fee to swim in cenotes, have a zip line and a community restaurant.</p>	<p>The Assembly is becoming willingly and enthusiastically to negotiate ecotourism activities with foreign partners, as they have done it in the last few years when they created a joint-venture to run a zip line across the lake Cuba. "We have a great interest to continue negotiating new projects" said the commissioner. Some people have improved negotiation skills with travel agencies to create arrangements to receive people in their handcraft stores. "We need more training in business and hand in hand action with other stakeholders" a local leader.</p>
E n v i r o n m e n t a l	<p>People within the community are aware of their natural environment, but changes towards cropland abandonment have been noticed since they are spending more time to make a living in any activity related to tourism. "They know their environment has tourism potential".</p>	<p>They see the environment and their culture today as a way to market it for tourism; however, a shift in the meaning of these traditional elements is eroding identity in Cuba.</p>	<p>The environment is less threatened since they shift to ecotourism from their traditional activities. They are no longer hunting, logging or doing extensive agriculture.</p>	<p>People in Cuba have stopped to hunt and logging is banned in the community to support ecotourism. "We have learned from government programs and from ecotourism to develop more sustainable and to keep our environment in a cleaner way", a tour guide mentioned.</p>

Many tour operators of the region offer tours to Cuba and most of the tourists in Cuba come with an organized 1-day tour, mainly from Cancun, Playa del Carmen and Tulum. "Every day a tour operator or travel agency is promoting a new tour including visitation to Cuba" mentioned a manager from *Alltournative*, one of the pioneer ecotourism

companies promoting Coba. An increased number of tourists have triggered participation from the community because they feel attracted by the monetary income.

The community of Coba has its own tourism cooperatives totally operated by *ejidatarios*. These include a tour to swim in *cenotes*, the bicycle rentals and tricycle transportation inside the archaeological park, a restaurant and a number of crafts stores. Earnings from car park fees for visitors also go into the community. In the past five years the community has gained skills to negotiate with entrepreneurs interested in developing ecotourism activities in Coba. In 2009 a couple of joint-ventures were established between the community and foreign investors, i.e. a zip line tower across the lake Coba and a cultural night show. Although several conservation NGOs in the region are working with Mayan communities and promoting environmental protection there are no NGOs assisting with training or ecotourism implementation in Coba.

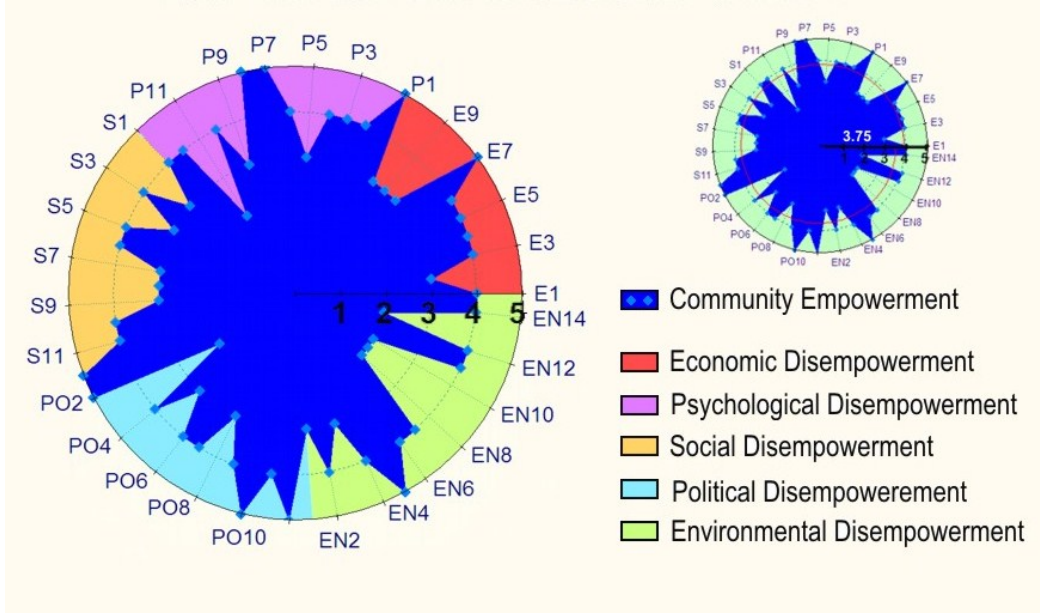


Figure 5.3 The wheel of empowerment in the community of Coba, Mexico.

Figure 5.3 shows the tested levels of empowerment for the community of Coba. The mean values in each dimension are similarly showing a trend towards empowerment although a few indicators of disempowerment were identified in this analysis, with an overall mean value for ecotourism empowerment in Coba of 3.7 points based on the 5-point Likert scale (*very empowering=5 to very disempowering=1*)

Political empowerment scored highest with a mean of 4 points. As every *ejido* in Mexico, issues raised by the community including tourism-related ones, are discussed

and voted during the *ejido* assemblies. Today, they have negotiation skills to make contracts with foreign enterprises that want to encourage the creation of joint-ventures in Coba. A villager expressed that “we are happy to negotiate with outside entrepreneurs for the creation of new joint ventures, such as hotels and canoes, or other activities like courses in ecotourism, cooking and training in hotels and restaurant services”, although a few ecotourism project’s proposals from NGOs and from private companies have been rejected by the community.

Before INAH’s decree for Coba Archaeological Site, the *ejido* lands contained a big portion of the main yet unexcavated pyramids. In the 1970s when the boundaries of Coba were mapped and settled by INAH, an agreement with the *ejidatarios* underpinned that an exchange of hectares within the archaeological zone would give them in turn the same amount of land elsewhere around the archaeological site. This agreement was endorsed by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (SRA). However, the new generation of *ejidatarios* is now giving no credit stating that this is an old agreement signed from people that are no longer *ejidatarios*. A decade ago, the *ejido* asked INAH for permission to start running the bicycle and tricycle transportation cooperative inside the park and although this was not authorized, the cooperative has been on for one decade. The dispute about land rights between INAH and the community in Coba still continues. “The *ejidatarios* from Coba are very rude, once they threatened to block the roads” said a government official from INAH.

Followed by political empowerment, the psychological empowerment scored 3.9 points on average. Approximately 90% of Coba’s population work in tourism-related activities at least part-time, and they feel optimistic about the future of tourism in their village, and are keen in participate and learn more about tourism. These indicators of psychological empowerment were observed in many villagers of Coba who have also opted to improve their education level to become more participative in tourism. However, a lack of equality in the opportunities brought from tourism has also resulted in behavioral and attitude changes to others in the community.

The economic empowerment obtained a mean of 3.7 points. Tourism in Coba has been creating jobs and revenue in the community for years. “Today, people in Coba do not need to work outside the community”, said a Mayan leader. Profits from a community restaurant, from bicycle rental and tricycle transportation, from fees associated with

swimming in *cenotes* and from car parking are the main money incomes from tourism in the community. Some families in Coba that own handcraft stores, small restaurants or offer crocodile visitation also benefit economically from tourism. Most of the income from tourism is re-invested in the community to enhance quality of tourism services. Although there are economic profits for most of the community, and for people from other towns that come to work into Coba, the economic revenue from tourism cooperatives is for the *ejidatarios* because they have land rights of communal lands.

The social empowerment scored 3.5 points on average. Tourism activities in Coba have brought better social organization and relationship among families in Coba. However, relationships of trust and confidence are not always present since the existing groups of power who control decisions within the community are not always supported by other *ejidatarios*. Family earnings from tourism have also eroded domestic relationships through problems of drug addiction and alcoholism in the community.

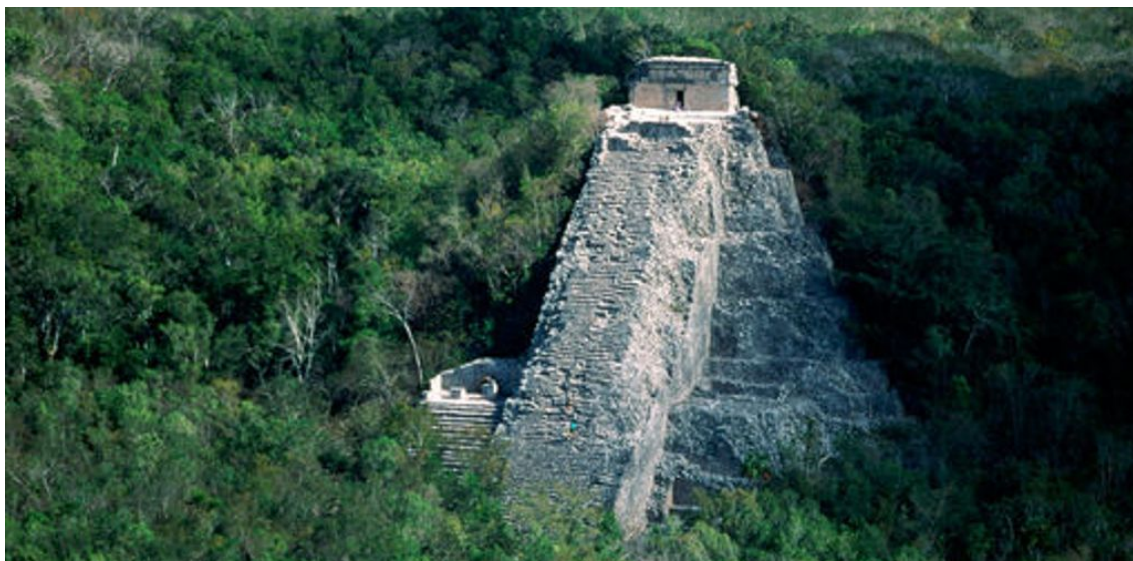


Figure 5.4 The pyramid of Nohoch Mul in the Archaeological Site of Coba. From: Viajes x el Mundo.

The lowest score was for environmental empowerment with a mean of 3.4 points. In terms of the environment, logging and hunting have been banned for ecotourism. This community has participated with government programs that have financially assisted them to preserve their natural environment from fires, littering and for nursery plants and reforestation. However, a decrease in availability of hunting animals in the rainforest has been noticed from the locals and although the community is nowadays

better aware about their environment, special attention is needed regarding unsustainable practices of tourism in the community.

Overall, results indicate that local participation in tourism in this village has stood out through a direct involvement in tourism, bringing economic profits and negotiation skills which have significantly empowered this Mayan village. NGOs have not participated in the local tourism development but tour operators and travel agencies have boosted local involvement in tourism and a few government programs have financially assisted the community to promote tourism in the community.

5.5 Chapter Discussion

Many Latin American countries have policies for indigenous ecotourism integrating nature and culture but most village ecotourism projects rely on funding and support from conservation NGOs and other foreign aid (Dahles & Keune 2002). In Coba, indigenous ecotourism stakeholders are agents of sustainable development through a process of local empowerment in ecotourism. Tour operators and travel agencies are important because they bring most of the tourists that visit the community. However, they have been more interested in the economic benefits from tourism than in supporting sustainable livelihoods in Coba. "Revenues stayed at a community level in the beginning, but now most of the tour operators have agreements with specific crafts shops. Besides, many tour operators are no longer hiring local tour guides since they bring their own ones" said a Mayan interviewee. Instead, when private companies associated with indigenous communities and created joint-ventures, trends towards empowerment were noticed in the community. A government official from the Mexican Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP) pointed out that "profits from tourism are associated to environmental impacts and tour operators do not pay fees for conservation".

Following the *International Year of Ecotourism* in 2002, the Mexican government has fostered the creation of communal projects in rural and indigenous communities that incorporate a range of activities including adventure, observation of wild flora and fauna and rural tourism. As part of this policy, government agencies have granted assistance for promotion, for infrastructure development including lodges, restaurants and equipment, and for technical assistance and capacity building in local

communities. Although these programs have many times failed in creating tourism demand, in Coba tour operators provide hundreds of tourists every day to the community. The construction of the highway linking Coba with the coast not only put this interior village on the tourist itinerary but was chiefly responsible for bringing it into the orbit of powerful market forces.

The INAH is a key government institution with regards to the study site and according to a key informant from this institution, the land tenure in Coba is a problem that still on, and INAH cannot do a good decree of this archaeological site. In the archaeological site of Coba, the land belongs to the ejido, but archaeological monuments belong to the nation. "This is a dispute every week in Coba because sometimes the villagers say they want to cut trees that are within the ejido" she mentioned. Another problem encountered was pointed out by the same informant: "A year ago we decided to close access to the highest pyramid because we thought it was facing conservation problems and this made a strong dispute with the community". And she finished, "It is a cordial relationship with the community but sometimes it is complex".

As mentioned by an official from INAH, "to date, INAH's federal law has huge gaps that do not allow us to act appropriately". Although INAH has designed plans for archaeological management in some of their sites in Mexico, "archaeological management plans have no legal basis unlike management plans for Protected Natural Areas managed by CONANP. It's okay to have a list of intentions, but we have no legal power to go with the *ejido* and ask them to comply with a legal way", she concluded.

National and multinational NGOs have stimulated the process of empowerment in local communities through the promotion of tourism committees within communities and the transfer of knowledge and capacity-building in ecotourism. Mexican NGOs have supported a few indigenous ecotourism projects such as *Pronatura*, *Amigos de Sian Kaan* and *Kanche* that worked together with Mayan communities in Punta Laguna, Punta Allen and Holbox in the state of Quintana Roo. In Coba, NGOs have been disregarded because "they haven't brought relevant proposals to the community" mentioned a Mayan leader. Although a lack of confidence from the community was noticed with ecotourism proposals from external organizations, a couple of independent consultants have facilitated the establishment of a community-owned and operated restaurant, and the development of alternative tourism.

The assessment of the checklist of indicators placed Coba as a community empowered in ecotourism based on the results from the five-dimensioned empowerment framework proposed in this study. As noted by a Mayan leader “the gain with tourism is that it has created many jobs. People no longer need to go far outside the *ejido*, now they can support the family”. The community of Coba has changed a lot. Before, “we used to get everything from the crops, there was no buying dependency, and people used to hunt and to bring corn from the crops for doing tortillas” said a villager. The only money spend was to buy sugar, salt and clothes.

Mayan indigenous communities have collective land grants and control of more than 50% of the rainforests in the Mayan area of Mexico indicating an empowering condition of the political dimension, and in Coba the community has also gained negotiation skills in ecotourism. Staff from the zip line joint venture says that “we provide security for this activity. We want our customers to understand that we are trained for this and therefore provide the feeling of safeness to do the activity”.

However, this is not the case in other communities of the region, although many have increased interest and participation in tourism-related activities. A previous study conducted by Stronza and Gordillo (2008) found that most of the respondents interviewed in three communities of the Amazon region of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, acknowledged the economic benefit of ecotourism associated with participation because it offers steady and predictable monthly income. In a similar way this case study shown that, in the past, people needed to go to look for a job in Tulum or Playa del Carmen, but now the tourism industry allows people to stay in the community. In fact, there are people from other communities coming to work to Coba. Tourism has also allowed people to study and increment their educational level. Tourism has made people to change a lot, but also have caused all these benefits.”

As a result of the economic benefits from tourism and the political power the community has, more participation and social relationships have strengthened through collective action in ecotourism activities. For instance, revenue is invested in needs, and when someone is sick, the *ejido* supports with funds from tourism. "The profits are also reinvested in payments, employees, assets, etc." a Mayan villager mentioned.

In terms of environmental empowerment, there is a community decree of environmental protection towards the development of ecotourism activities. A villager

said that “I don’t think that tourism represent a big risk to the environment in Coba”. The community has implemented rules to minimize the impacts. Tourism has given jobs to people that worked in the crops and this has reduced logging for charcoal production and forest clearing for cultivation. Today just the elders work in the crops.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This research builds on previous research conducted in indigenous ecotourism and offers an integrated approach to assess the relationship between stakeholders’ participation in indigenous ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities, particularly in the Mayan rainforest of the Yucatan Peninsula. Community-based ecotourism that is long-term planned can be an alternative which complements traditional productive activities since it is a non-extractive activity that promotes conservation and increase in life quality that requires different elements to occur. As mentioned by Carballo-Sandoval (2005) many peripheral communities can receive significant benefits since ecotourism relies in a big extent in mass tourism infrastructure i.e. big resorts, airports and travel agencies.

It is apparent that the conservation of natural areas and preservation of indigenous cultural values is an important outcome if it can be achieved from the participation of local communities in a form that adds value to their lives. However the success of indigenous ecotourism also depends on community empowerment which should in turn trigger participation. The evidence from this research indicates that empowerment is achieved once villagers attain economic benefits, are aware of the essence of ecotourism, have built capacities and negotiation skills to participate in tourism, and have a common will to participate in tourism and to protect the environment on which they depend. Today, the tourism industry in Quintana Roo is entering a second phase. Having achieved large scale mass tourism by advertising the state’s “Caribbean attractions” of sun, sand and sea, Quintana Roo is trying to rejuvenate its tourism industry by foregrounding its “Mexican cultural attractions” of archaeology, indigenous women in colorful costumes and the animals and plants of the thinly-populated rural areas. Such ecotourism attracts fewer people than the mass tourism of Cancun but may be more profitable.

The revised model based on Scheyvens' (2002) recognizes the critical role of empowerment and also supports the inclusion of the environmental dimension. Further, the results of this research indicate the need for greater consideration of empowerment at the village and project levels if successful indigenous ecotourism is to occur.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY THREE: UAXACTUN

6.1 Introduction

Community-based ecotourism in protected landscapes has been documented before in the literature, however very few studies have examined aspects of ecotourism with traditional communities living within a major area of protection such as a Biosphere Reserve. This case study analyses the level of empowerment in a community located in the vicinity of Tikal World Heritage Park in Guatemala, and assesses how external stakeholders have influenced in the power the community has gained, or not, to develop a sustainable activity aligned with the goals of the reserve for sustainable development, such as ecotourism.

In contrast to the former case studies, this community has a different political context and also it is not strictly an indigenous community although almost one half of the village are of Mayan descent. However, there are similitudes with the previous case studies since the settings are fairly similar, consisting of a community living nearby an important tourism destination for Maya archaeology, culture and nature. In the same token, this case study is framed under a policy of land concession within a Biosphere Reserve, bearing a number of National Parks and other protected environments. However an important difference compared to the previous two case studies in Mexico is that this community does not own the land but rather has a concession to make the most of it through sustainable activities. This degree of protection will be an important consideration to contrast with the previous two case studies in Mexico, since one of them addresses a community living next to a National Park, whereas the other one lives next to a protected archaeological park. Additionally, a good comparison can be made between two of the three case studies which are located next to a World Heritage Park, i.e. Palenque in Mexico and Tikal in Guatemala.

6.2 Research Context

The Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in Northern Petén Guatemala is the largest swath of lowland rainforest North of the Amazon basin and covers over 1.6 million ha (CONAP 1996). It is the largest protected area contained in one country in Central

America. Together with the adjacent Calakmul and Montes Azules Biosphere Reserves in Mexico and the Rio Bravo Natural Reserve in Belize, over 4 million ha of forest cover are protected. The MBR occupies the northern 40% of the department of Petén with its Northeast end, Tres Banderas, bordering with Mexico and Belize. Because of its relative isolation and its size, the MBR is rich in biodiversity with a variety of flora, fauna and endemic species unique to the region (Hearne & Santos 2005). It is estimated that 2,500 archaeological sites occur in the Petén, perhaps half in the MBR (Smithsonian Institute, nd). It is located at an altitude between 200-400 m above the sea level and with a mean annual temperature of 23° C.

The MBR contains more than 300 species of useful trees (CONAP 1990), and a few of them have been particularly important in the local economy through its sustainable, non-extractive use. The *chicle* tree (*Manilkara zapota*) gets its name from the Mayan word used to name the chewing gum. The chewing gum was a product exported for long time to the U.S. before it started to be a synthetic product. The fruits from this tree are called *chicozapotes* and are also consumed in the region. The xate (*Chamaedorea spp.*) is a palm tree that has taken over the gum tree as the most profitable of the non-timber resources of the forest in the region. Allspice (*Pimenta dioica*) is a little dried aromatic fruit from a mid-canopy tree used in the international cuisine for seasoning. The fresh leaves are also used for infusions. A potentially important forest resource is Ramón (*Brosimum alicastrum*) a common tree occasionally up to 30 m tall, which may have been nurtured by the Maya. The seeds were an important food source in pre-Columbian times, but present human consumption is quite low (Smithsonian Institute, nd). It is an important refuge for many animal species such as howler monkey, ocelot, margay cat, jaguar, puma, tapir, harpy eagle, macaws, crocodiles, iguana, breaded lizard and boa constrictor although many species are considered threatened.

The MBR was established in 1990 under the authority of the Guatemalan Council of Protected Areas (CONAP). Its creation was a policy response to concerns about increasing deforestation in the Peten (Shriar, 2002). Since 1990 international development agencies and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The World

Conservation Society, Care, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International, have supported efforts to manage the area and preserve its natural resources.

Typically, a Biosphere Reserve contains a core zone, a multiple-use zone, and a buffer zone. In the latter two, human populations are permitted to engage in appropriate land-use practices. In the MBR, the core or nuclear zone represents 50% of the forest cover and is dedicated to nature conservation, archaeological preservation, scientific research and tourism, and is to remain free of human inhabitation and use (Sundberg 1998). There are seven core areas, including four national parks that exhibit both natural and cultural attractions, and three biotopes that are strictly wildlife reserves. Together they contain 750,000 ha of protected area. Among the core sites is the world famous Tikal National Park, which was designated a mixed cultural and natural World Heritage Site in 1979 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This is the focal point of the majority of Peten's tourism, bringing over 180,000 national and international tourists to the MBR every year (UNESCO 2006). As a result, tourism is the single largest income producer for the MBR, bringing in US\$ 50 million each year.

The Multiple Use Zone (MUZ) is composed of nearly 850,000 ha of inhabited tropical forest, and is dedicated to sustainable land use practices that complement nature conservation for the residents who subsist on some combination of farming and forest product extraction. A small percentage of residents are also employed by the tourism industry. The MUZ is used for sustainable extraction of mostly non-timber products including xate palms, chewing gum, allspice, pita (*Aechmea magdalenae*) and bayal (*Desmoncus spp*). The communities living within the MUZ have integral grants which allow people the use and management of timber and other resources provided they are framed in a land management plan and are consistent with the objectives of the MBR. To ensure efficient resource management, communities receive concessional technical assistance and initial support from NGOs. To date, more than 50% of the MUZ is assigned to land concessions for 15 communal groups through 25-year leases where the villagers are entitled to engage in sustainable activities of forest extraction, controlled logging and hunting, and ecotourism within the land concession area. Next to the MBR's southern boundary is a wide buffer zone of about 25,000 ha. The

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) established forests councils to incentive conservation activities on the buffering zone.

Tourism is a large and growing industry vital to the economy of Guatemala. Compared with 1990 when the country earned US\$ 185 million (Simthsonian Institute, na), in 2011 tourism in Guatemala generated an income of US \$ 1.35 billion dollars from almost 2 million international arrivals into the country (INGUAT, 2011). However, this sum represented a decrease of 2.3% compared to 2010.

Tourism in Peten's Northern Guatemala started to increase in 1970 when an all-weather road opened the Central Petén to Southern Guatemala. Agricultural expansion and logging are the major reasons for forest loss. Although logging permits within the MBR were revoked in March 1991, some residents are illegally cutting, for example, mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) for construction or exporting wood to Belize and Mexico for income.

6.2.1 Political Context in the Study Site

Starting in 1954 with a US-backed coup against the left-wing Guatemalan dictatorship, the country experienced a 40-year succession of varying military and civilian rule (EIU 2005). In 1962 the ruling party initiated a development program that created the Peten Promotion and Development Association (FYDEP). The stated goal of the FYDEP was to explore ways to incorporate the economic and social features of the remote Department of Peten more effectively with the rest of the country and to increase the social welfare of its residents (Ponciano 1998). In 1969, the FYDEP conducted an inventory of the forest of Petén and found that 96% of the department was covered with primary forests. This finding led the FYDEP and the government to encourage industrial logging in the region as a means of creating income (Ponciano 1998). This commercial logging and rapid colonization that started in the early 1970's is said to have resulted in more than 50% of the Peten's forest being cleared by the mid-1990s (Sever & Irwin 2003).

To address economic and environmental needs together, the UNESCO developed the Biosphere Reserve model as an alternative to the National Park. It was designed initially to encourage the scientific study of environmental problems and to create a global network of nature preserves within which environmental change could be

monitored. The model was celebrated as an ideal solution to environmental degradation and poverty in developed countries (Sundberg 1998). For instance, the MBR in Guatemala was created to balance environmental protection with the needs of a growing population that increasingly relied on natural resources for subsistence (Sundberg 1998), and to combine the goals of conservation, scientific investigation and sustainable economic development (UNESCO 2006). The mission was not to exclude people from the protected areas, but to identify ways in which people and nature can co-exist for the benefit of both (Nations, 1999). According to USAID (2005), the specific goal of the MBR was to improve the long-term economic well-being of Guatemala's population through the rational management of the natural resources.

To assist in the implementation, the USAID and the Guatemalan government signed an agreement in 1990 creating the MBR Project. The project was initiated with US\$ 10.5 million from USAID and US\$ 11.6 million in counterpart funding from NGOs and the Guatemalan government. In 1997, funding reached approximately US\$ 45 million. The reserve encompasses a vast forest with rich cultural and ecological histories. Once home to sophisticated lowland Maya civilizations, the region currently is prized for its scientific and aesthetic qualities (Sundberg 1998).

In 1992, the Master Plan of the MBR establishing the inviolability of the core areas and the possibility of using renewable natural resources in the MUZ under the legal figure of forest concessions was approved. In addition to CONAP, the National Commission on the Environment (CONAMA), the Anthropology and History Institute (IDAEH), and the Guatemalan Tourism Institute (INGUAT) are responsible for the administration of the MBR. The Guatemalan Army occasionally gets involved in the reserve management when situations of violence or disobedience occur (RARE 2001). Together, members of these organizations hold positions on the MBR Coordinating Committee, which was formed in order to ensure coordination between their activities (Juska & Koenig 2006).

A number of NGOs, private firms and community groups have also participated in the park's administration. According to Sundberg (1998), it was designed around three components and accompanying NGOs: strengthening the reserve's management via The Nature Conservancy; environmental education via the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) International; and creating economic alternatives via

Conservation International. Other NGOs also participated in other capacities such as the Centro Maya/Rodale Institute, in forest management.

NGOs in the MBR have more recently focused in specific advising topics of management and marketing of products, and in capacity-building in topics of entrepreneurial administration (Monterroso 2006). They tend to privilege, or favor, a particular species complex. For instance, ProPeten promotes natural forestry management, featuring more efficient propagation and collection of three non-timber forest products in particular, i.e. xate, chicle, and allspice. Recently ProPeten has promoted hiking excursions into the MBR with some lodging in local communities (Hearne & Santos 2005).

The USAID has provided funding for several of the NGOs operating in the region. More recently, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has become the most active international NGO in the region with a field office in Flores, the Peten's Capital, serving as a hub for its field workers. Through support from USAID, WCS assist CONAP with monitoring of the reserve's ecological integrity. WCS researches conduct surveys of wide-ranging species to quantify the impact of threats in the region. WCS has also supported the village of Uaxactun's efforts to attain and manage a forest concession dedicated to sustainable forest management and conservation. WCS's activities in Uaxactun include planning and monitoring the sustainable extraction of non-timber forest resources, training local people in field research, firefighting and vigilance skills, and monitoring populations of key wildlife species (WCS 2006).

Similarly, Conservation International (CI) has focused mainly on ecotourism development in the Western half of the MBR. The organization has worked to develop two tourism routes: El Mirador Trail (with the community of Carmelita) and the Scarlet Macaw Trail. CI has also helped to establish local NGOs such as ProPeten, Fondo para el Desarrollo Sustentable del Petén, Eco Maya, and Alianza Verde. CI is a contributing partner to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

According to Juska and Koenig (2006) the Nature Conservancy is currently working with IDAEH to develop a new master plan for Tikal that will take into account the current and future situation of the park. It works closely with *Defensores de la Naturaleza*, a local NGO partly responsible for managing the Sierra del Lacandon National Park in the Western region of the reserve.

CARE International has been working in Guatemala for several decades, focusing on improving the living conditions of poor and marginalized populations. They operate in the buffer zone of the reserve and its goal is to stabilize and prevent further incursions into the reserve. The primary aim of CARE is to diffuse an agroforestry package throughout the buffer zone.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) initiative addresses issues of biodiversity and endangered species as they relate to the entire Maya Rainforest. The Rainforest Alliance coordinates the Certified Sustainable Products Alliance. The project developed by Rainforest Alliance's Smart Wood program was designed to cause minimal damage in the MBR. The Tropical Agronomy Centre of Research and Education of Guatemala (CATIE), on the other hand, specialized in the sustainable harvesting of cedar, mahogany, and valuable secondary species. CATIE directed the first community-forestry concession to be granted in the MBR. The project was funded by Sweden, Norway and Denmark (Sundberg 1998).

According to Carrera, Morales and Galvez (nd) forest concessions within the MUZ are not limited to forest management of timber. They also promote the wise and sustainable use of non-timber resources and agricultural activities based on a land management plan including tourism and other important activities for community development that are compatible with the objectives of the MBR. Guatemala's first community land concessions were granted in 2000 to five communities in the MBR, including Uaxactun. Today, the Guatemalan concession system has become a model for other Latin American nations with valuable natural resources and increasing pressure from population growth and in-migration.

Governmental and non-governmental institutions most frequently link Peten's dramatic landscape change to the influx of migrant farmers (Sundberg 1998). Guatemala's prolonged civil war, which ended in December 1996, displaced some 2 million people, thousands of whom fled to Mexico. In their attempts to escape the violence, a number of communities made the lowland forests their hiding place.

Although invasions, deforestation, illegal logging, intensive hunting and looting of archaeological monuments have been significantly reduced due to the control and monitoring, Sundberg (1998) noted that commercial logging, cattle ranching, oil exploration, illegal drug plantings, roads and agriculture have brought deforestation.

The highest clearing rates are along the Western road to the Mexican border. According to Sundberg (1998) each week hundreds of migrants stream into the Petén and every day the protected areas are increasingly threatened by the invasion of landless peasants. The USAID (1990) estimated that 250 colonists, mostly landless poor, arrive every day into the Peten (USAID 1990). They also warned that slash-and-burn agriculture is currently deforesting approximately 40,000 hectares per year. As a result of these factors, primary forests are projected to disappear within thirty years (Sundberg 1998).

Although ecotourism has been proposed as an alternative for the production of timber to diminish forest pressure and to generate sources of income, the economic benefits are much lower compared with those from forest management. However, this alternative is constantly encouraged to generate sources of employment, especially for women participation (Monterroso 2006). Ecotourism is now an alternative choice in the MBR to take over controlled logging and hunting activities already practiced within a legal framework of self-sustain activities within the reserve. This case study focuses in Uaxactun, one of the five communities living within the MBR with potential to develop ecotourism considering its proximity to Tikal World Heritage and the set of natural and cultural wonders it has to offer. This Chapter will investigate the potential of developing ecotourism in Uaxactun based on a down-top perspective, which means that the potential the community has to develop ecotourism is based in the level of empowerment it has.

6.2.2 Uaxactun

Uaxactun is a village located in an area of Mayan archaeological settlements from which the community takes its name. It is located 23 km North of Tikal within the MUZ of the reserve (Figure 6.1). Tikal National Park is a UNESCO designated World Heritage site and protected area that shelters ancient Maya temples and a wealth of ecological treasures (RARE 2006). It has 572 km² of extension and is located in the southern part of the MBR. Tikal Park draws 15% of the tourists who visit the country. The community of Uaxactun has the largest rainforest concession within the reserve with 83,558 ha where almost all still covered by primary forest. Most of the people in Uaxactun live from the collection and sale of non-timber products such as the xate and allspice. The

xate is a palm mainly used ornamentally and it is exported primarily to the Netherlands producing US\$ 4-6 million annually (Smithsonian Institute, nd). The allspice is also exported mainly to Europe generating annually around about \$US 400,000.

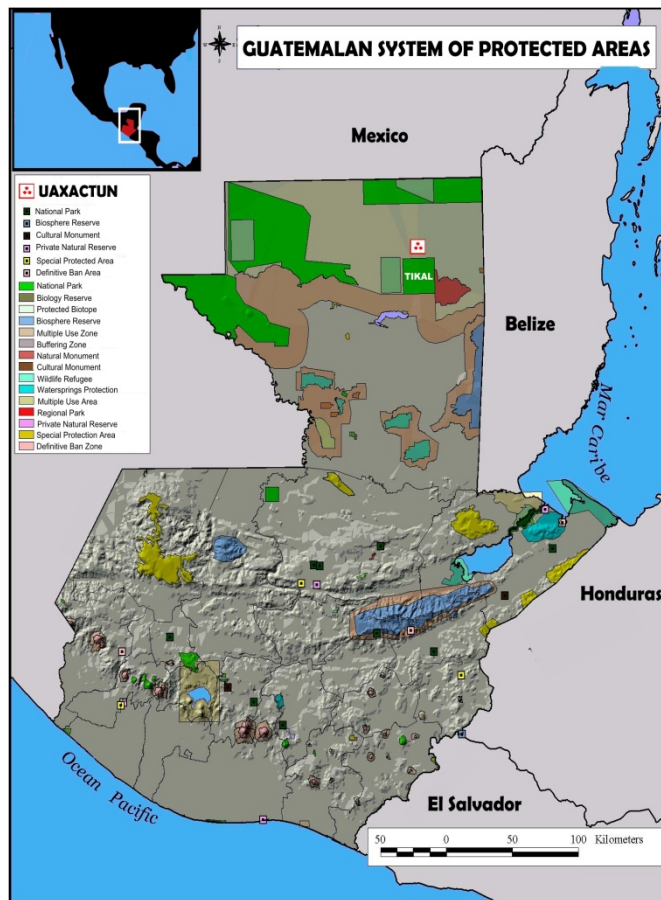


Figure 6.1 Location of Uaxactun in Guatemala. Source: Centre for Monitoring and Evaluation.

CONAP

The population of Uaxactun is approximately 850 people consisting of about 140 families. At least half of the population come from other departments of Guatemala, and most of the people are *ladinos* (a term used in Guatemala to describe a mix of Maya with Spanish colonialists) and speak Spanish as their first tongue. The indigenous Mayans of Guatemala and Mexico, except the Itzaes and Lacandons are mixed with the cultures of Central Mexico. With Spanish colonization, the Maya Itzaes from the Peten area in Guatemala migrated northwards and settled on the Mexican side where the State of Chiapas is located and today these Mayans are known as the Lacandons. Although very few Itzaes stayed in the Peten, there are two communities living southwards off Tikal National Park, i.e. San Andres and San Jose. There are several Q'eqchi' Maya residents in Uaxactun who speak Q'eqchi'i (one of 23 Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala) as well as Spanish.

Uaxactun was originally founded as a base camp to allow gum harvesters access to more remote areas of the forest. However, it has historically been isolated from other communities due to its remote location in the jungle and lack of serviceable roads (Juska & Koenig 2006). Uaxactun consisted of a small group of people who settled in the area in the early 20th century to work in the gum industry. It was initially a gum camp called Bambonal, and then it was renamed San Leandro, and later in 1916 the American archaeologist Silvanus Morley explored the archaeological site and called it Uaxactun (*Uaxac*-eight, and *tun*-rock) based on a Mayan inscription he found during his exploration. From 1920-1923 the Carnegie Institute did explorations that caused destruction in the archaeological site by dynamiting and looting parts. For then, Uaxactun was the first archaeological site of the lowlands of Peten that was explored, and the pottery found there became the basis for studying the ceramics of the Maya Area.

The extraction of gum became the main economic activity in the area for more than 50 years and it was one of the first products Uaxactun exported. The Northern area of the Peten in Guatemala is distinguished by trees containing higher grade gum. There were many contractors who took up to 200-300 men into the forest and used mules to carry their supplies. The main gum importer was Wrigley's Company which made the landing strip in Uaxactun to export chewing gum from Guatemala in the early 20th Century. First, Wrigley's began to buy gum in a few communities included Uaxactun, Carmelita and Dos Lagunas. All these communities worked with the gum extraction while Wrigley's hired the chicle workers and paid them directly. Wrigley's later decided to operate from the U.S. and negotiated with local contractors who brought people to the jungle to obtain the gum, feed them, give them gear to climb the trees and collect the gum, process it and then put it at the Santa Elena airport to be exported to the U.S. Nowadays USA synthesizes its own gum and exports to Japan continue in a lower scale. Before planes started to land in Uaxactun, the gum was taken to the community of El Remate approximately 50 km south from Uaxactun by means of mules. From El Remate, the gum was transported through canoes to the airport of Santa Elena, on the other end of the Peten Itza Lake. Later on a landstrip was opened in Uaxactun. "In Uaxactun we knew the planes before we knew the cars, we used to play where the aircrafts landed, there were no roads to Uaxactun" said a local. In those days, the

planes went back and forth three or four times a day, there was a lot of chewing gum to export. "The flight plane used to charge us US\$ 5 for going to Santa Elena, or US\$ 10 for taking us to Guatemala City", says Neria, a leader woman who believes that the planes started to land in Uaxactun in the 1920s. This improvised system of air transportation stopped working in 1981 when synthetic gum became more commercial.

In 1981 FYDEP built the airport of Flores, and in 1984 built an off-road to Uaxactun. At that time there was almost no tourism infrastructure. There was just one hotel at the entrance of Tikal archaeological site, the Tikal Inn. Before 1984 tourists that visited Uaxactun arrived by plane because there was no road to Uaxactun.



Figure 6.2 A girl from Uaxactun. Photo: Wu Wei *Going with the flow*.

Today, the exploitation of non-timber forest products in Uaxactun is complemented with ecotourism. Uaxactun is a gateway to other large remote archaeological areas such as El Mirador, El Tzotz, Nakbeh, Naxtun, Dos Lagunas, San Bartolo, Xultún and El Cedro. From Uaxactun it is possible to get to El Mirador by mule. First, by car to Yucatan camp for 3 hours, from there walking and by mules to Leontina camp to overnight there, then a two and a half hours walk towards Nakbeh, and then the next point is El Mirador, four and a half hours further. A Mayan tour guide and leader from Uaxactun explains that "Uaxactun is not only an archaeological site, it's got flora and fauna, many places to visit, it is also a well-known site around the world". Uaxactun is the entrance to the MBR. Women and girls make cornhusk dolls, which they sell to

tourists in Uaxactun and Tikal National Park. Forest vines are collected and woven into wicker-like furniture for sale in tourist centers. Although some people also hunt for game meat, engage in slash and burn agriculture, known as *milpa*, and cut down forest trees for hardwood, these activities are only for subsistence and therefore their magnitude is small.

Less than 5% of the community of Uaxactun works in the archaeological site of Tikal. Most of the people in Uaxactun work with the extraction of the xate palm leaves. Today, young people are almost no involved in the gum extraction and parents bring their children to collect the xate instead, although some prefer their children to study and avoid the risks of walking in the jungle. In addition to the local people who are employed as guides, cooks and scouts, the entire community benefits from the fees associated with sport hunting, a project developed by WCS. Each hunter was charged US\$ 1,450 for the first turkey killed, and had the option to pay an additional US\$ 700 to bag a second turkey. According to Juska and Koenig (2006) in 2005 hunting generated US\$ 28,000 for the community.

Uaxactun belongs to the municipality of Flores and is governed internally by the Organization for Management and Conservation (OMYC), created in 2000. The OMYC is a society consisting of approximately 250-300 partners who have the document of concession of Uaxactun. Members attend meetings and have voice and vote. In addition to profits generated from sales of timber and non-timber forest products, the OMYC pays a salary to the people who work in this activity such as loggers, a group of forest control and surveillance, and guardians. Prior to the founding of the OMYC, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International, together with CONAP gave advice to Uaxactun. The forest concession in Uaxactun enables usage of the 400 ha of precious woods like cedar, mahogany, black cabagge-bark (*Lonchocarpus castilloi*) every year and this is the main economic input for Uaxactun. To have the forest concession for a period of 25 years, Uaxactun has to pay US\$ 2,500 to CONAP every year.

There is little infrastructure in Uaxactun and public services are limited. For example electricity is produced by in-house generators and some households cannot afford it. Although some people pump water into tanks, houses with no electricity need to carry water on pots. There isn't also a public waste disposal service and garbage is becoming

a threat in the community. Also, people in need of health care or specialty items must go to Flores, Peten's regional capital, or the neighboring towns of San Benito and Santa Elena, all of which are 80 km South of Uaxactun. Since the road was opened in 1984, bus transportation from Uaxactun to Santa Elena has consisted in just one bus operating every day from 6:00 am from Uaxactun to 1:00 pm from Flores to the village. It takes one hour from Uaxactun to Tikal through a four-wheel drive road and two hours from Tikal to Santa Elena by paved road.

Tourism services in Uaxactun are not many, but include one tourists lodge called "El Chiclero", two little restaurants that operate when a group books beforehand, and the tourism coordination which consists of nine people who are certified as local tour guides for guiding in Tikal or Uaxactun archaeological sites. There is also a group of craftswomen consisting of 29 women from the community, who offer their crafts to tourists in Tikal and Uaxactun. They make dolls using maize husks, turkey feathers and an umbrella made from mushroom. The feathers of the umbrella are from pheasant in dyed colors. They make single dolls or with babies, with men, with hats and guitars.



Figure 6.3 Stars at Uaxactun Archaeological Site. Photo: Al Argueta. Courtesy: No Limit Expeditions

According to local authorities, in 2010 the community of Uaxactun hosted an equinox festival for its first time, which attracted approximately 1,500 tourists into the community, most of them from across Guatemala. This was the first time Uaxactun gathered such a number of tourists during a weekend. The rest of the year tourism comes in small numbers to the community. Eighty percent of the people who visit Uaxactun does not overnight or consume services in the community. They normally do

a 1-day trip visit to the archaeological site of Uaxactun, have their own lunch there and leave the community to overnight in Flores, El Remate or Tikal. The fee charged to visit the archaeological site doesn't go into the community and is managed by IDAEH. Overall, about 1,000 tourists visit Uaxactun in one year, from which on average just a 20% of them consume products and services or overnight in the community.

6.3 Results

With the information from face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and participant observations conducted with key stakeholders of ecotourism in Uaxactun, Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 were generated to understand first, the stakeholders' views about participation of external stakeholders in ecotourism development in Uaxactun, and second, to assess the level of empowerment of the local community in tourism. Both tables present the main findings of a thorough thematic analysis from the research instruments mentioned above.

Figure 6.4 shows the level of empowerment for the community of Uaxactun. The overall empowerment ranked 2.6 points, which means that the community of Uaxactun has failed to achieve empowerment for ecotourism development as just a few members will to involve in this activity

Individually, all the dimensions of empowerment ranked in a negative way in terms of empowerment in ecotourism, excepting the environmental dimension which scored in a positive way. For instance, the lowest score was for the economic empowerment which ranked 1.8 points meaning that that the community is well disempowered about ecotourism based on economic benefits. There is virtually no economic revenue from tourism for the community of Uaxactun. Tourism is scarce and just a handful of their visitors consume services that directly benefit the community. Most of them come in an organized 1-day visit to the archaeological site of Uaxactun and then leave the village making no revenue to the community.

The entrance fee for the Archaeological Site of Uaxactun is controlled by IDAEH and not by the community. Along the minimal earnings from tourists in Uaxactun, a few people from the village have a paid job in Tikal Park which indirectly generates economic benefits in the community, but they fall in a minimal scale.

Table 6.1 Stakeholders' perspectives of community-based ecotourism participation in Uaxactun.

	Government Authority	NGO Consultants	Tour Operator Manager	Mayan Indigenous Leaders & Community Members
G o v e r n m e n t	<p>The IDAEH restores structures, conducts archaeological research, and provide maintenance to archaeological sites in Guatemala.</p> <p>The Committee for Self-Tourism Management has funds from INGUAT. They planned to launch the brand "Petén" as a destination including archaeological sites, lakes and transportation. CONAP is a regulator and must monitor infrastructure projects of community use within the MBR. They don't support with funds, however, they created a fund to generate several activities throughout the year, but the tourism program was very recent.</p>	<p>IDAEH only has presence in the administration of the archaeological site of Tikal, but the archaeological site of Uaxactun receives almost no maintenance. An NGO managed to get authorization from IDAEH to approve the information kiosk in Uaxactun and to enable other tourism trails in Tikal Park.</p> <p>INGUAT promotes all major destinations but has nothing of presence in Uaxactun. However, two years ago INGUAT authorized that any institution or organization that would like to train communities with tourism related skills would be able to do it, "this was a great achievement for our NGO" said a consultant from <i>Balam</i>.</p> <p>CONAP is only in charge of forest protection and doesn't have funds for communities. It has a department of ecotourism but it doesn't act in Uaxactun. "They don't really work in tourism" he mentioned. A few years ago CONAP produced a <i>Handbook of Ecotourism Management Tools for PNAs</i>.</p>	<p>A key stakeholder from the private sector in Guatemala thinks that "public institutions in Guatemala have a period of learning, and once they learn they are already worn, and then a new government comes for the next six years and for then, they can no longer do anything". However, "the IDAEH makes miracles with no money, but INGUAT is very bureaucratic and CONAP isn't useful" she thinks. In Guatemala there are conservation laws for protected areas governed by CONAP, but they aren't related to tourism.</p> <p>"Tourism is not a priority for the Guatemalan government and therefore it is not worth talking about them" she continued. "It's different in Mexico where there are public policies. In Guatemala everything is to be done, in Mexico there is some path already traced, here in Guatemala there is no company or bank who provide seed capital to communities". The Ministry of Communications hasn't fixed the road which "diminishes the visit of tourists". Since it was built in 1984, the road to Uaxactun is still the same. It's repaired every year but rain makes it mud and sinks.</p>	<p>IDAEH hasn't lately looked after the archaeological site of Uaxactun which has been very abandoned. There are 8 groups of structures and there are only four employees. IDAEH in Tikal allows people to sell crafts only in their stalls at the entrance of the pyramids.</p> <p>The pyramids need more attention, interpretative trails. "We need the government to provide greater community involvement", said a villager. INGUAT is only focused in promoting Tikal; "they do practically nothing" expressed a leader of Uaxactun. Tikal Park's workers receive training by the INGUAT and courses are given every one or two months, but there haven't been courses in Uaxactun.</p> <p>CONAP doesn't care much about their sites although recently they made a guide for Protected Areas in Guatemala with tourism potential. They almost not get involved with Uaxactun. A long time ago they used to, but not anymore.</p> <p>The government is not taking the issue of security into account. It hasn't provided infrastructure. The road to Uaxactun is a problem because in rainy season vehicles can't get to Uaxactun except by four wheel drive.</p> <p>"There is no security for tourists" expressed an inhabitant.</p>
N G O s	<p>Some NGOs such as <i>Balam</i> and <i>Counterpart</i> promote tourism as a legal alternative for income in Uaxactun since there is an archaeological site in the community.</p>	<p>USAID has several projects in Guatemala and one of them is Alliance for Community-based Tourism that is ran by <i>Counterpart</i> with the aim of improving the local economy through tourism as an alternative to traditional methods of development, allowing</p>	<p>The NGOs are investing money, but "in ecotourism they work badly" considered a key agent from the private sector of ecotourism in Guatemala. "The <i>AECID</i> promised projects in the communities but in terms of ecotourism, nothing, this is the theme less clear they've had" she continued. "CI is a very important NGO because</p>	<p>In the past, courses and training workshops given by the NGOs in Uaxactun were focused on the conservation of natural resources but not in ecotourism. NGOs have recently begun to support Uaxactun in tourism issues. Uaxactun is also one of the Guatemalan villages benefited by <i>Eurosolar</i> to have computers and internet service, and satellite phone equipment. "This is good for everyone" said</p>

<p>They seek to improve the living standard of the people. <i>Counterpart</i> gives economical support to micro-entrepreneurs with a complementary credit. They also give advice to tourism companies to improve its image (logos, websites and flyers). The Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) argued to change the path to Tikal to go through the other side of the Peten Itza lake, allowing tourism circulation to be slower, by visiting Mayan communities on the way. They elaborated a draft school workshop of blacksmithing, masonry, forest rangers, and a heritage-related one. ACOFOP has promoted the creation of a visitors' center in the entrance of Uaxactun.</p>	<p>the preservation of the environment. <i>Counterpart</i> has a working agreement with <i>Balam</i> where the latter is responsible for conducting the field work in the local communities. Both NGOs have led ecotourism workshops in Uaxactun. "We work transversally to avoid repeating efforts" explains a consultant from <i>Counterpart</i>. <i>Balam</i> works to strengthen the Tourism Commission of Uaxactun and develops environmental impact studies for the tourist infrastructure. <i>Rainforest Alliance</i> and <i>Counterpart</i> made a "Handbook of good tourism practices". According to a consultant, the AECID's vision is "to combat poverty and to preserve the environment, recognizing tourism as a source of development". ACOFOP, together with some NGOs is beginning to support tourism communities with training and promotion. For example, they organized together with <i>Balam</i> and the community the equinox festival in Uaxactun. They receive grants from the World Bank, the central government and from multinational NGOs. ACOFOP have supported with infrastructure, capacity-building, product design and market positioning in Uaxactun.</p>	<p>they started conservation projects in Uaxactun, but in tourism, terrible also" she added. "WCS is not an NGO that has tourism programs, WCS carried out monitoring with birds and jaguars at Uaxactun, but that they are promoting ecotourism, not really". And she continued, "the work from NGOs hasn't been perceived here and they normally are worried about their subsistence rather than preserving natural resources. "Uaxactun has bad influences from NGOs because they create false expectations and they are not contributing for the community to improve themselves", she continued. "Where I've seen the most success is when communities have taken the initiative by themselves" she added. However, "the <i>Association for the Development of the Maya World</i> which is our branch NGO provides the archaeological parks with necessary assistance in issues of forest fires, trash, and appropriate eco efficiencies", she concluded. This NGO has a project for recycling trash in El Mirador Park because "we've to take out the trash in this site when we take tourists there". On the other hand, another key interviewee considered that NGOs have been participatory in Uaxactun and that "the community has also good intention to participate" he mentioned. For example, the first equinox festival in Uaxactun was organized in 2010. There was a show of the ancient ball game, <i>Balam</i> and <i>ACOFOP</i> participated with support given by the Foundation for the Development of Guatemala (FUNDESAG) and <i>Counterpart</i>.</p>	<p>one interviewee. <i>Balam</i> has been very supportive with Uaxactun. Last year they donated US\$ 4,000 to the community. They trained nine community tour guides last year with no cost for the community. The tourism training courses included English, first aid, and Mayan culture. They also paid the process to obtain the guiding license. "<i>Balam</i> and <i>Counterpart</i> are supporting us" a villager expressed. <i>Counterpart</i> designed the menu of "El Chiclero" restaurant in Uaxactun. In 2010 CI gave an incentive of US\$ 45,000 for the conservation of natural resources in the community. "People are getting awareness for not doing massive agriculture", said a leader. The WCS offered that for every dollar coming into the OMYC account from non-timber forest resources, they would double it. "WCS has been very supportive at Uaxactun and this has helped us to have nowadays more than US\$40,000 in our account" said a village leader. WCS also pays for school TV teachers, and for jaguar monitors. They mainly support in rural development issues, but they haven't participated much in tourism. A few years ago, <i>Rainforest Alliance</i> gave economic aid to the community with which they furnished the crafts house that the craftswomen association has. <i>ARCAS</i> had strength in Uaxactun in the past but not anymore. In the mid-1990s they trained artisans in Uaxactun and helped to form a local association for crafts sales. They taught them to make t-shirts with designs of jaguars, toucans, macaws, etc. and gave training on vegetable garden produce. In the early 1990s the AECID gave training to the community for doing Wicker nursery which is the prime material to do chairs, baskets, dolls, and little hats that the craft sellers produce.</p>
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<p>T o u r O p e r a t o r s</p>	<p>Tour operators play an important role because tourists demand tourism to be sustainable. However, they don't promote the site of Uaxactun. They only provide verbal information to tourists who request it. "Few of them make an effort to minimize the environmental impacts but there are others that really need a call of attention" said a government official.</p>	<p>Very few tour operators promote Uaxactun. An NGO consultant considers that some tour operators do promote Uaxactun, but is very expensive due to the road conditions. Some hotels and travel agents recommend tourists not to go to Uaxactun as "there is nothing to eat and there is nowhere to stay" said a consultant. Travel agencies make little promotion although the craftswomen give their product brochures to them for promotion. So far there are no impacts of tourism in Uaxactun because there is almost no tourism that visits the community.</p>	<p>A key agent from the company <i>Ecotourism and Adventure Specialists</i> thinks that "we should seek to give employment to the natives of San Andres and San Jose because they are the real Maya Itza" and continued "I liked the guided tour in Tikal to be conducted by local Mayans to show their heritage but there was not so much preparation on them". "Some of our customers become our allies on the issue of conservation", explained, "what I put in this cases is my energy and contacts, everything is a circle of friends, customers who become donors, and colleagues who provide services that come to realize that the aid is real, disinterested, to the people in need" concluded.</p>	<p>Some hotels do not recommend Uaxactun visitations due to a lack of services, and there are no information brochures with this regards in Flores, where the majority of tourists that visit Tikal stay. A company that works with French tourism in Guatemala takes people to Uaxactun for breakfast, but this is very sporadic. People keen in working with tourism in Uaxactun have to go to Tikal to get involved with any service, such as tour guiding. "What we want is that people stay in the community and buy something" said a tour guide. For some tour operators of Flores that lead people to Tikal it is not profitable to go to Uaxactun, in addition they receive commission from the local guides for hire guiding services in Tikal.</p>
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Table 6.2 Stakeholders' perspectives about community empowerment of ecotourism in Uaxactun

	Government Authorities	NGO Consultant	Tour Operator Owner	Mayan Indigenous Leaders & Community Members
<p>E c o n o m i c</p>	<p>Tourism in Uaxactun brings direct and indirect economic benefits but on a small scale. Direct benefits come from tour guiding and crafts sales in Tikal and in a much lower scale in Uaxactun. Also from people that offer minor tourism services in the village. Indirect benefits come from the people involved in tourism that spend money into the community.</p>	<p>Currently the economic benefit hasn't been transcendental due to a lack of tourism in Uaxactun. Additionally, there is a lack of basic infrastructure in the village including water, paved road and sanitary services. "We are working on that" said a consultant. During the equinox festival 2010 in Uaxactun, people from the community were involved for parking services, cleaning, park rangers, etc. and the people realized that tourism creates economic income.</p>	<p>Very few people in Uaxactun benefit economically from tourism except those working in Tikal Park because there are almost no tourists that visit Uaxactun. However, the day of the spring equinox 2010 all hotels in Flores were booked. Many of the visitors to the equinox festival stayed in Uaxactun too. This brought economic revenue to the community.</p>	<p>Uaxactun hasn't economically benefited from tourism yet because it is scarce and "only provides revenue to survive and there is no jobs for most of the community". The economic benefits come from tour guiding, handcrafting and hospitality services from two small family owned restaurants and one visitors lodge. There are nine local guides in the community and a group of craftswomen is made up of 29 people. They sell their products in Tikal and the money they save from sales is for the benefit of the association. "Now we can support our children with school supplies" said a local housewife.</p>

P s y c h o l o g i c a l	Some villagers on their own initiative have sought to get involved in tourism. For example, there is a tourist lodge in Uaxactun. Some enthusiasts in the community considered that tourism is the best alternative for conservation and development; they believe that tourism is the future and have confidence in working in tourism, but it is only a small sector of the population.	They want to work in tourism but are a little discouraged because they don't get many tourists in the community. However, some already realized that tourism causes long-term benefits. With the equinox festival the tourism commission in Uaxactun hired many local people. In particular, the tourism association and the craftswomen that sell dolls want to participate in tourism.	The community wants to participate in tourism. They have gradually realized that the effort it entails to involve in tourism is worthwhile. Some of them later want to be architects, doctors and not guides or boatmen.	There is little work with tourism in Uaxactun, and people are not very enthusiastic, "it is difficult to involve the majority; we talk about tourism with them" said Tono, a local tour guide. People don't want to leave the harvest of xate, allspice and gum" he added. "People are up to daily income, they have no option for other activities", he finished. The community considers the place worth to visit because of its characteristics and is happy to get tourists. "In Uaxactun we like tourism because it is a benefit to the community. The Maya culture is the best culture in the hemisphere," said a guide. The craftswomen group is happy to work with tourism because they can have income, but they consider that a minority want to engage in tourism due to previous disappointments from working with government.
S o c i a l	Social cohesion has not been changed by tourism. There is a group that wants to participate in tourism and another who doesn't understand the process of it. People are not trained in tourism and for this reason they are not well organized.	There are conflicts but they aren't big. Tourism hasn't changed the social cohesion in Uaxactun. The craftswomen cooperative divides the work evenly among its colleagues.	Tourism doesn't generate conflicts, except when some no longer want to live in their community. Poverty is what causes problems because they find no opportunities. With regards to tourism, the community is not well organized.	Tourism doesn't share the economic benefits to the rest of the community. Social cohesion in Uaxactun remains the same. There is no competition for tourism. "In other communities they have this problem", said a villager. In the committees the revenues from tourism are equitably shared. There is competition for dolls sales from craftswomen with another pirate group that also sell haphazardly. This problem has been on for ten years.
P o l i t i c a l	The OMYC is the organization that governs Uaxactun and its tourism coordination was recently created. The OMYC has a Board of Directors and the community is part of the organization but not everyone has paid work in the organization. In Uaxactun, the land belongs to the government of Guatemala because they are within a protected area. Residents cannot purchase or sell this land.	There is a lack of people prepared for tourism in Uaxactun. Although some people attend tourism meetings from NGOs, almost no issues regarding tourism are raised during OMYC assemblies. They focus on forestry issues mainly, and in regulations. According to a consultant "Uaxactun didn't want to manage a tourism project with funds from the World Bank, while other communities did". Uaxactun was not decided for tourism but for the production of xate. Craftswomen have their	The guides from Uaxactun are already certified from INGUAT to guide at a local level. There are some cases of guides in Uaxactun that have excelled. "If there wouldn't be a leader woman like Neria in Uaxactun, there would be nothing in Uaxactun", said the entrepreneur. During the assemblies in Uaxactun members only talk about tourism when there is a subject about it, but hardly refer to tourism.	In 2000 the community requested that the forest concession should be granted to the community since otherwise it would be granted to industrial timber companies. In the meetings held "I asked that the concession would be devoted to conservation, but the CONAP didn't authorize it" explains Neria, leader of Uaxactun. "I wanted Uaxactun to be a scientific concession, for world research about flora and fauna, and for studying the forest non-timber products from which we have lived all our lives" she continued. The Uaxactun concession speaks about the timber because it brings money, and since tourism is a long-term activity, they are not interested on it. Community meetings refer to tourism only when there is a subject to be treated, and is rarely mentioned. However, the coordination of tourism was recently created in the community.

		own rules for not harassing the tourists.		
Environ	<p>The secondary settlers of Uaxactun were always against the creation of a conservation area in Uaxactun. They opted for a forest concession.</p> <p>There are tourists who carry food and leave garbage without consuming services in Uaxactun. This has made the villagers to be conscious in tourism and guides tell tourists what they can and cannot do.</p>	<p>The community is involved in conservation activities such as "cleaning trains", where the community members are invited in collaboration with the local elementary school. In the past, logging was forbidden but once the OMYC was created, logging was allowed in a controlled manner. The agricultural area is also controlled. Immoderate hunting of deer has made that jaguar populations are now attacking livestock. Tourism can be combined with conservation if a good management and conservation plan is developed.</p>	<p>Neria created the eco school for children in Uaxactun. Being in the MUZ of the reserve, hunting can be practiced, but the community supports conservation. They are collaborating with tourism unknowingly because the forest gives them food so they take care of it.</p>	<p>In Uaxactun there is subsistence hunting mainly of deer, tepezcuintle, pheasant, cocorita, wild turkey and jabali. Uaxactun still has more than 95% of forest cover. "I started to teach children in school the love for trees and animals", now many eyes around the world are in Uaxactun as a sustainable community. "It's what we want, that people are protecting the forest", said Neria.</p> <p>Hunting is allowed because it is a multi-purpose area. There are specific hunting bans but it is allowed to hunt for subsistence.</p> <p>The tourism coordination of Uaxactun hardly goes out to hunt. There is a regulation that says what to do and what not to do inside Protected Areas. Uaxactun also has its internal rules.</p>

For a leader of Uaxactun, community-based ecotourism should mean that the community will get profits from tourism and that most of the stakeholders involved will benefit. "Mainly the economic benefit is the one we all aspire for. Another kind of benefit is not going to fill us", said a local tour guide. However, the people that work in the tourism coordination of Uaxactun rely in other activities for self-sustain as they cannot make a living from tourism. A craftswoman said: "We need more tourists, it would be good to have more tourism in the community since there would be more benefits, and we would sell more crafts".

Following economic empowerment, the political empowerment ranked 2 points meaning that Uaxactun is disempowered politically in ecotourism. Although good governance in Uaxactun's forest concession is noticeable, the OMYC is more concentrated in timber exploitation and most of the organization prefers this activity over any other one, included ecotourism. A commission formed by members from Uaxactun requested communication services to the government and NGOs. "Now we will at least have some communication because the truth is that we are out of communication, the government do not allow infrastructure for communication such

as electricity, phone or internet because we are inside the reserve", said a villager from Uaxactun.

The psychological empowerment ranked 2.4 points on average indicating a degree of disempowerment. Although a few leaders are convinced that tourism is a long-term project worth to rely on, the majority of the community is not enthusiastic to participate in tourism. Tourism looks like a long term project out of their control and they already make a living from other forest-related activities, such as harvesting xate. "I see that tourism doesn't thrive with so many things to show to the world, we have an oxygen-generating rainforest" said Neria who opened a tourism lodge in the community in 1992. About 85% of the community is dedicated to the collection of xate or allspice, about 30% do agriculture and just a few people, representing about five to ten per cent of the community are dedicated to tourism.

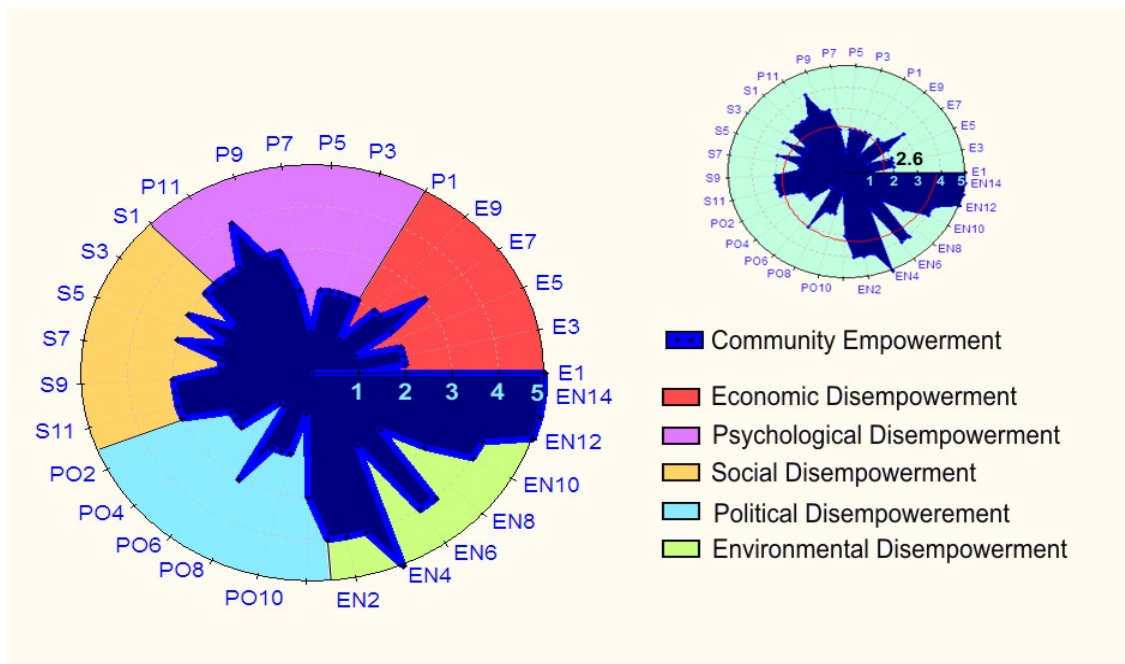


Figure 6.4 The *wheel of empowerment* in Uaxactun

For a local tour guide, community-based tourism means "to have people trained in the tourism services, to have influx of tourism, to have the community involved, and to have a government that supports with promotion". And she continued, "it is necessary to promote not just Uaxactun but all its surroundings inside the MBR". A leader craftswoman also added: "At the beginning I was very enthusiast to get involved in tourism, but with the course of the years my enthusiasm diminished due to a lack of tourists, a lack of promotion, a lack of safe transportation, a lack of communication

means, but I don't lose hope, I believe that in 2012 promotion will be better" she finished.

A few leaders are optimistic about the future of tourism. "Uaxactun has tourism potential", thinks a tour guide. The Mayan culture has contributed to science in many areas such as architecture, medicine, astronomy and dentistry "Uaxactun is a box of surprises. It is a very large site" he added. However, the majority in Uaxactun are not enthusiastic of working in tourism as they don't see the economic benefits.

Similarly, the social empowerment ranked 2.6 points on average, indicating a neutral effect of tourism with a trend to disempowerment, in the social dimension of empowerment in Uaxactun. Although a number of people are organized in cooperatives in one way or another. A cooperative is an association of people within the community with specific goals with the aim of creating profits that will be equally divided amongst its members. An example of a cooperative is the tourism organization in Uaxactun which is of recent creation. "This is the first tourism organization in Uaxactun" said a local tour guide. One of the achievements of the organization was to train nine community guides backed up with certification by the INGUAT, they are local guides and were trained with first aid, basic English, and to provide guidance for tourists" said a leader of the organization. For the craftswomen organization, there has been competition from a pirate group that produces dolls and sells them in an immoderate way to tourism. "The kids from the other group sell dolls to tourists and therefore tourists end up not getting into the handcrafts house in Uaxactun" expressed Bertha, a leader from the craftswomen association.

The only dimension of empowerment that ranked in a positive way was the environmental dimension which scored 4 points standing for a community with environmental powers for ecotourism development. Most of the people is aware about the implications of unsustainable practices as they live inside a Biosphere Reserve, thanks to most of the training and benefits the community received from NGOs. One of the problems the community has encountered is the garbage left by tourists in Uaxactun. An NGO consultant perceived that tourists do not take their garbage off the community as they bring their own food, and leave the garbage in the community. In a different manner, a craftswoman thinks that garbage is not a problem in the community because "there are rubbish bins and tourists do not leave garbage".

“We do recommendations for tourists about what to do and what not to do, because Uaxactun supports the environmental protection”, said a tour guide from the community.

As expressed by a leader from Uaxactun, “my achievement was that the forest concession which allows logging of valuable timbers within the community covered an area of just 400 ha of rainforest per year because there were people in the community who wanted to use 1,000 ha per year”. Although the OMYC log trees for economic sustain, some believe that this activity does not cause environmental impacts. “The trees are going to die in one way or another, we have to use them” mentioned a villager. “I think that the money we get for and from conservation, we deserve it because after 100 years of existence, this community have almost preserved everything”, said Neria.

The findings in this case study point out to a lack of external and internal stakeholders’ involvement in ecotourism in particular because the economic benefits it can potentially bring have not been boosted and there are not many tourists that visit the community. Additionally, a long war has left many communities dispersed in Guatemala and living in the apartheid. International assistance has needed to cover government gaps to encourage protection of endangered landscapes and development of local communities. Overall, the findings show that although there is a strong commitment for conservation, the community is disempowered in ecotourism due to a number of reasons that include a lack of tourists in the community, which means that there are no substantial revenues from tourism and that it is a casual activity for the minority who involve in it. Despite training from NGOs is notorious in the area and that many have assisted Uaxactun with training and conservation projects, their agendas have barely addressed ecotourism until recently. Additionally, a lack of government involvement keeps Uaxactun in the apartheid.

6.4 Chapter Discussion

In Uaxactun there is a lack of interest in ecotourism from external and internal stakeholders which has resulted in that the community lacks training and skills to deal with ecotourism. An NGO consultant mentioned that external factors such as a lack of government support have hindered ecotourism development “there is a lack of good

road accesses, a lack of promotion of local destinations, and there are also internal factors such as unloyal competition, service skills, and infrastructure". Likewise, a tour guide thinks that there is a lack of government participation and that Tikal must give maintenance to Uaxactun because with the entrance fee for Tikal, the entrance fee to Uaxactun is included, and if tourists go straight to Uaxactun they have to pay US\$ 3 to IDAEH. Tikal Park charges US\$ 18.90 for tourists and for locals US\$ 3. Another tour guide also noted that "there is a lack of promotion and the road access needs to be improved". Promotion from INGUAT and from travel agencies and tour operators disregard visiting Uaxactun. For example, the book guides recommend going to Uaxactun just during summer because of the road floods, unless going by four wheel drive.

According to Monterroso (2006) previous experiences with timber management, the assistance from NGOs and CONAP, and the facility in creating short-term revenues make the forest management the best choice for the productive specialization, but also the origin of collective interests and disagreements. One of the apparent findings in this study is that most of the community of Uaxactun is not interested in ecotourism because there is a weak belief that it will bring more benefits than the logging industry. Shoka (2006) found that ecotourism is not as easy an option as it seems in Uaxactun although villagers have come to be interested in ecotourism. Currently, whether ecotourism will be able to make a profit is unknown.

Many tours to various Maya ruins are already being offered by travel agencies in Flores and all over the world, making the Petén tourism industry very competitive (Shoka 2006). If such a strategy does not bring regular income flow to the community, villagers would be unwilling to shift to work for ecotourism from current non-timber forest products extraction. Today, tourism is a daily activity in Tikal but not for the people that live in Uaxactun. Most tour operators refuse to offer tours to Uaxactun arguing that they are not cost-effective. Transportation companies based in Flores offer Tikal as the main attraction of the area. They attend daily demand that comes from tourism that visits the region, and many also work as outsourcing operators for other destination management companies abroad which sell tours into the region. However, transportation companies are normally locally-owned and since they are not big corporations their capacity to create ecotourism products is limited and moreover,

they don't have good linkages with overseas wholesalers. One of the reasons why visiting Uaxactun becomes more expensive for transportation companies is the road from Tikal to Uaxactun that has not been paved. In rainy season it is not possible to get into Uaxactun except by four-wheel drive. There is one company offering four-wheel-drive tours to Uaxactun at the moment which makes an interesting ecotourism product reducing wearing costs and maintenance associated to transportation. An NGO consultant interviewed said that for the case of Uaxactun tour operators are almost not participating, "they say there are no elements to promote it".

One of the industry's key informants in this study was the owner of *Ecotourism & Adventure Specialists*, which is a destination management company founded in 1997. It is based in Guatemala City and markets "flag destinations" of the Mayan world through adventure ecotourism web sites for each destination. For example, they have a helicopter tour to El Mirador in the North part of the MBR which takes 25 minutes from Flores. As she mentioned, "when I started to work in tourism, the word ecotourism didn't exist. The friendships that I made with the local people influenced in the community to preserve a natural area". The company's owner believes that "with this company eco-tourism really works because I have involved with the human part of development". They created a set of interesting products in the mid-1980s when there was nothing of tourism infrastructure in the MBR. However, this company brings very small numbers of tourists to Uaxactun because it is an up-market ecotourism company.

Currently, the community of Uaxactun offers no tourism on its own although it has the first known Maya astronomical observatory in Guatemala and some Maya ruins considered to be tourism attractions. Almost all tours to Uaxactun are day trips offered by travel agencies outside the community and most of them are based in Flores. The tour prices to Uaxactun depend on the number of people who join the tour since just a few tourists want to visit there. There is an entrance fee for tourists who want to go to visit Uaxactun but there is not revenue for villagers. It follows that the number of tourists visiting Uaxactun has to increase, so that the community can get profitable tourism constantly, but this would not be an easy task because internal stakeholders from the community don't take ecotourism into account and have been more interested in the profits from logging.

The IDAHE is an institution that has created jobs for local people derived from tourism visitation to the archaeological site of Tikal. There are about 40 people from Uaxactun who work in Tikal including tour guides, craftswomen and other people who have paid job in the archaeological site. Other ten members work with tourism-related activities in Uaxactun. Overall, less than a hundred people from Uaxactun are involved in tourism. Tour guidance and crafts sales in the park are under control as there are no pirate guides in Tikal and there is a chief who assigns guided tours to registered guides. Similarly, illegal crafts sales within the archaeological site are controlled and there are no vendors inside the park. Most of the crafts are sold in the premises at the entrance of Tikal. Along the established local crafts, there are women from Uaxactun who sale handmade dolls in Tikal. The craftswomen association rotates for the sale of dolls, so they don't go every day. On the other hand, the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism (INGUAT) promotes and monitors the quality of the tourism service within Tikal archaeological site. A consultant from Balam said that a government institution (INTECAP) which is in charge of training and certifications, works closely with INGUAT which authorizes tourism training. Balam covered a gap from INTECAP in terms of tour guides certification, which includes paying instructors and transferring knowledge and skills for tour guiding.

The community of Uaxactun represents no more than 15% of the total population in the reserve. The Guatemalan Law of Protected Areas entitles Uaxactun to establish and use resources because it is located within the MUZ and is subject to levies for permanency. According to Shoka (2006) CONAP imposed cheaper concession fees to Uaxactun in exchange of asking Uaxactun villagers to monitor poaching and looting because producing concession rents is a big challenge for the community. Another problem encountered is that since the processes that allow taking advantage of the park are long, locals are devoted to loot archaeological sites.

NGOs should encourage participation in ecotourism by training activities in the community and by connecting tour operators and local services with international travel agencies. Another important aspect is that they have the ability to provide infrastructure development from donor agencies. Sundberg (1998) noted that other problems arise when NGOs are unable to provide follow-up assistance due to a lack of financing or a shift in priorities or when, for example, the infrastructure for an

ecotourism camp may be in place, but the individuals need more training. As noted by a key stakeholder "It's hard to keep a tourism organization running, there isn't a monthly fund to survive and there is no time available for management. Rarely have community priorities coincided with NGO agendas. As mentioned by Sundberg (1998), projects are driven by the desires of each NGO's constituency, which comprises donors and members, but not local people. As a result, projects are designed before they reach local communities, satisfying donor requirements and/or membership tastes. Although NGOs claim to engage the most current theories on community participation in their relationships with people, most projects are announced to, not negotiated with, target populations. This evidence the typical top-down approach from multinational NGOs that work with local communities, which normally satisfy international needs, but not what communities believe it is important for their self-sustain. A community leader mentioned that from 2000 to date, many NGOs have come to Uaxactun to give training to the community "but the money the NGOs get for development and conservation often doesn't reach the communities".

Successful experiences between NGOs and communities within the MBR have been described in the literature. For instance, Rare International supported in founding Conservation Tours Tikal (CTT) which is a local sustainable tourism operator that provides visitors with a variety of ways to experience the beauty of Tikal without harming the local environment. It is a community-based ecotourism business that offers a variety of outdoor activities in and around Guatemala's Tikal National Park. The business now employs 19 families of three surrounding communities and in 2005 hosted 363 adventurers from around the world. As mentioned by RARE (2006) being nature guides have apart them from being hunters or archaeological pieces' sackers. They realized that ecotourism would have more benefits. They have also been involved in cleaning up campaigns in local watersheds and environmental education programs.

A similar example is the project developed by Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program designed to cause minimal damage to the forest, while protecting the environment (Rainforest Alliance 2006). In 2004, Uaxactun harvest consisted of just 309 trees, but despite the low rate of harvest, the community earned a relatively significant profit. Rainforest Alliance (2006) attributes this to the fact that Uaxactun owns a sawmill, enabling the community to fill special orders, such as cuts of

mahogany for Gibson Guitars, a company whose instruments are increasingly crafted using wood only from SmartWood-certified forestry operations. Funds from Uaxactun's sustainable forestry industry have been used to pay concession rents, provide emergency funds for community members in need of medical care, and improve local education by hiring a high-school level teacher and paying for students to attend computer classes on the weekend (Rainforest Alliance 2006). The Rainforest Alliance helped community connecting xate directly with a buyer in the U.S. The first of the monthly xate shipments began in July 2005 (Juska & Koenig 2006). This situation, along with the suggestion by WCS to introduce ecotourism to Uaxactun, has led to the creation of "Ecoguias", the organization which started with an intention to develop ecotourism in Uaxactun (Shoka 2006). Today some members of Ecoguias are training to be tour guides, and they are interested in offering multi-day tours such as jungle trekking.

Sundberg's (1998) study critically examined how NGOs excluded communities in the beginning, however, during the past ten years multinational NGOs have handed over part of their duties in the area to local NGOs. As Sundberg (1998) pointed out, the reserve was created without any substantive participation of local officials and communities, and their authority was eclipsed by CONAP, international NGOs and other new institutions. At times USAID and NGOs have taken over, or at least facilitated CONAP's work. As a consultant from Balam pointed out, "the only way to preserve natural resources is through involving local communities into tourism". People are looking for "experiential" tourism, which means the coexistence with local communities. Balam pretends to involve all families in community-based tourism. All the community was invited to participate in taking tour guiding courses, and the importance of being certified was explained. "This is for every product, just like the xate exported to USA is certified" mentioned another NGO consultant.

In a previous study, Flores-Marroquin (2010) found that travel agencies argued that Uaxactun is not organized for tourism, "there are women selling dolls to tourists following them, and putting pressure on them to buy a craft". Shoka (2006) mentioned that the community of Uaxactun does not benefit from tourism yet. A key stakeholder from the private sector mentioned that "a community with leaders interested in the community is a community with future". Another NGO consultant said that

disagreement among community members is one of the biggest obstacles to develop community-based ecotourism in Uaxactun. Most of the households in Uaxactun have been invited to participate in ecotourism workshops conducted by Balam but just a few people participate. While a few members are very interested in ecotourism, most of the community prefers to involve in forest activities, particularly in controlled logging and in extraction of non-timber products.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

Ecotourism in Uaxactun is an activity with potential to sustain livelihoods in the community in a more environmental-friendly way compared to logging, which is currently the main source of income. However, being in the middle of MBR, careful assessment must be conducted with respect to economic, environmental and socio-cultural impact before actually introducing ecotourism. Ecotourism should not be blindly implemented in the village given the controversy within the community about involving in tourism. According to Shoka (2006), villagers in Uaxactun are faced with a need for another means of income which could be in part, taken over by ecotourism. Community-based tourism in Uaxactun should mean that local families were involved and that tourism activity become a significant part of the community's daily life where the communities benefit economically through the services they facilitate, which allow them to improve their life quality. However, to achieve these goals of community-based tourism, empowerment in ecotourism is indispensable. In the case of Uaxactun, just a few members are empowered in ecotourism and if the whole community would share their points of view then ecotourism empowerment would have scored higher. Likewise, a weak governmental framework for ecotourism development in the country and a lack of ecotourism operators in the region keeps this activity in low priority for the community.

Although a number of multinational NGOs have developed training and research programs in Uaxactun, ecotourism activity remained apart from their agendas until recently, excepting for a couple of projects developed by the WCS cited in this chapter. Although the community had received training about environmental protection and sustainable use of rainforest's plants, training in ecotourism just started a few years ago, and it has been developed in a very slow motioned way. Additionally, at least one

half of the community avoids participating in ecotourism activities and they rather prefer to log the forest. One of the reasons of this situation that this study is limited to discuss is the fact that at least one half of the community are secondary settlers. They are not natives from the region and they started to come to the Peten region of Guatemala to log the forest. Many of them settled during the 1970s in communities inside the MBR included Uaxactun. These formerly migrants in Uaxactun who are members of the OMYC are those who do not welcome ecotourism.

A number of academic institutions from around the world have conducted research in Uaxactun, for example the University of Michigan has conducted research in Uaxactun for long time ago about archaeology and with biodiversity of the area. The Carnegie Institute was one of the pioneer American institutions in Uaxactun and developed an excavation project in Uaxactun from 1924-1937. The things they had found were a landmark to the archaeological history of Uaxactun. The University of Miami (Novak, Main, Sunquist & Labisky 2005) have documented aspects of life activities with jaguar populations in Uaxactun. Additionally two Master theses about ecotourism in Uaxactun (Shoka 2006; Juska & Koenning 2006) from the University of Michigan add up to the ecotourism research conducted in Uaxactun.

CHAPTER 7

THESIS DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has focused on assessing empowerment in three villages located nearby archaeological sites in Mexico and Guatemala. Sharing similar contexts of Mayan rainforest and indigenous descent, these Mayan villages can potentially play a role in ecotourism development as they are settled close to major archaeological sites with an important volume of tourism visitation. Together with the degree of economic, psychological, social, political and environmental empowerment investigated in these communities, the influence that stakeholders participation has on empowering local communities in ecotourism was also the center of discussion in this chapter. Although some concluding points and aspects of each case study have been discussed previously, in this chapter the discussion goes across the three case studies and an overall thesis conclusion offers insights to ecotourism stakeholders on how to proceed when ecotourism is on stake.

A new method to assess empowerment was developed and tested in this thesis relying on a checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment that initially were identified in the literature and further developed through the research instruments detailed in Chapter 3. Based on opinions about stakeholders' participation and opinions about empowerment, this research introduced the wheel of empowerment, which offers a way to assess empowerment in any given community. No previous studies were identified that explained in detail the way in which empowerment was assessed and failed in consider ecotourism stakeholders as agents of empowerment.

The first case study presented in this thesis was the community of El Naranjo. This community is located in the Mexican State of Chiapas, 13 km off the Archaeological Site of Palenque through a 4 wheel drive road, but there is a walking path approximately five kilometers long that connects the archaeological site with the village. Palenque is also a National Park and was labeled World Heritage Park in the early 1980s. It is the third most visited archaeological site in Mexico and receives on average over 500,000 tourists every year. Although there are a number of varied lodging facilities, a large number of tourists that visit Palenque come in tour buses of

prearranged 7-day to 1-month long circuits across the country and do not overnight in the area. However, for those who overnight in Palenque town the archaeological site is located 6 km from Palenque town and there is a growing number of tourism lodges off town located next to Palenque National Park, whereas about four lodges located inside the National Park, next to the Archaeological site, have been warned by CONANP about the property land rights inside protected areas and will eventually be indemnified and removed.

The second case study investigated in this thesis was Coba in the State of Quintana Roo, also in Mexico. Coba is a village located 3 hours driving from Cancun, through two possible routes. One is a 174 km long way through a State highway that goes from North to South across the State of Quintana Roo connecting Caribbean-shore destinations that the State has to offer. Once this highway intersects with Tulum town, an interstate road going from Tulum to Valladolid eventually leads to the intersection that gets to Coba. This interstate road has received maintenance and improvements during the mid-2000s. In fact, there have been many communication and transportation improvements in this area, and a new international airport for Tulum has been on stake for a few years and it is likely to proceed during the new right-wing sexennial government in Mexico. There is a shorter way in distance to get to Coba from Cancun. This is via the Interstate highway Cancun-Merida through which eventually leads to the road intersection Nuevo Durango-Coba. Although in a lower scale compared to the area where Tulum is located, this area of the State of Quintana Roo has also been improving communication and transport systems for tourism development and many Mayan communities overthere are now experiencing an “ecotourism awakening”. Due to Cancun’s importance as a tourism destination worldwide, most of the State has experienced an increased rate of development and does not seem to curb in the foreseeable future. In the long run, this became an important consideration in this thesis as Cancun is the major tourism destination in the country. Due to its proximity with Belize and Guatemala, Cancun also plays an important role in tourism influx to these countries.

There is an important archaeological site in Coba and the village surrounds the Western side of it. Before the site was declared an archaeological site in the 1970s, the grounds where the archaeological site is located were used by villagers for crop

cultivation. The road that gets into this archaeological site is a paved road that goes across the North side of the community of Coba, which every day sees hundreds of tourists coming into the community. The proximity this community has to the Mayan archaeological site, along with the relative proximity it has to Cancun, resulted in notable differences with the other two communities studied in this thesis, particularly when it came to local empowerment in ecotourism. Although Coba receives a number of tourists slightly lower than Palenque, normally below 500,000 tourists per year, tourism involvement from this community is well bigger than in El Naranjo community where members from the community interested in this activity have to walk 5 kilometers to the archaeological site, or take transportation for 45 minutes to get to Palenque Archaeological Site as virtually no tourists visit the community.

The third community investigated in this thesis was Uaxactun, a village located within the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Northern Guatemala. This community is located over an ancient Mayan astronomical observatory named Uaxactun, which also gives the name to the community. The community of Uaxactun is located 21 km North from Tikal Archaeological Park. Like in the first case study, Tikal was also branded as a World Heritage Park in the late 1970s and is one of the most important archaeological sites of the Maya World in terms of its archaeological value. However, the number of tourists that Tikal receives every year is well below the two other sites in Mexico. Tikal receives on average less than 250,000 tourists per year, which equals about half the number of tourists who visit Coba or Palenque in Mexico. In a similar fashion to the first case study, members from Uaxactun that will to involve in tourism need to go to Tikal as just a small number of tourists visit the community of Uaxactun. However, the number of tourists who visit Uaxactun compared to El Naranjo is much bigger. It takes on average about one hour to get from Uaxactun to Tikal through a 4 wheel drive road. The island town of Flores captures most of the tourists that visit the region. Most of the visitors to Tikal and Uaxactun overnight in Flores, which is located 64 km far from Tikal, or about one hour driving from Flores through a paved road, and 87 km far from Uaxactun or about 2 hours driving through the same paved road to Tikal and from there through a four-wheel drive road.

Archaeological sites in Mexico and Guatemala have long time attracted interest of all sort of visitors, but it was not until the early 1970s that these sites started to gain

importance as tourism destinations from the Mexican government perspective. Starting with ceremonial visitations from other Mayan communities, archaeological sites have been visited by post-Hispanic and contemporary Mayans for religious purposes for example, sorcerers or healers who used to be elder Mayas who had traditional knowledge of the forest. The Mayas were one of the indigenous groups that resisted most of the Spanish regime; however the ancient religion was transformed with input from Christianity brought by Spaniards first, and nowadays by other Evangelist religions. In the mid-19th Century, pioneer expeditions by an English and an American explorers lead to the first drawings of many Mayan archaeological sites of the region. Throughout the 20th Century, the first archaeological sites in Mexico and Guatemala started to be excavated for research purposes. During the 20th century's second half many archaeological sites were already opened for public visitation, and with the time the number of tourists started to increase, and schools started to incorporate a one day-class to visit an archaeological site of the region as part of the subjects that address pre-Hispanic Mexican History in many junior high schools across the country. As tourism raised interest in the public sector, more archaeological sites were excavated to increase the offer of archaeological destinations for tourism and to increase archaeological research. Today, there are still many important unexcavated archaeological sites in both countries whereas a big number already welcomes tourism visitation.

Along with the relationship between the community's proximity to major archaeological centers and empowerment in ecotourism of the local communities, it is important to highlight the importance of internal and external stakeholders. Since ecotourism is not a traditional activity for these communities, there was an initial lack of knowledge about what this activity entailed. Eventually, ecotourism has represented an opportunity for a number of villagers in these communities. The process in how this ecotourism opportunities were presented to these communities vary between them. Under this scope, main ecotourism stakeholders were identified in this thesis. On one hand the government sector is in charge of providing public services such as communications and transport systems. But in a more specific way, this thesis looked at government programs focused on the development of ecotourism in both countries. Additionally, government institutions in charge of managing Archaeological Sites and

Protected Natural Areas were identified as key government stakeholders in this thesis. On the other hand, tour operators assisted by travel agencies marketing community-based tourism products in these three regions of the Maya rainforest were identified too. Also, NGOs working with these communities were identified as key stakeholders in ecotourism, as they have the potential to transfer knowledge and invest funds for conservation programs with an emphasis on tourism promotion. The stakeholders mentioned above represent most of the set of opportunities a traditional community will initially have to become involved in ecotourism. Once tourism becomes a daily activity for villagers, a number of members will start to explore what the opportunities in tourism are about. However, members from the same community may differ in the way they see ecotourism. These study showed that when community leaders disregarded tourism from their community agendas as an alternative of sustainable development, such as in the case study of El Naranjo and Uaxactun, the level of empowerment the community had was lower, compared to the community of Coba, where ecotourism is taking over traditional activities, and is showing a trend towards empowerment in the community. In Coba, local leaders and most of the community are keen in working in the tourism industry.

Although the three case studies were selected because they shared similar locations, involvement of external and internal stakeholders varied in each community. The findings shown that internal stakeholders, or in other words community members that already play a role in ecotourism from El Naranjo and Uaxactun had similarities with trends to disempowerment in ecotourism, while in Coba a trend towards empowerment indicates that there is a relationship between the degree of participation of community members in ecotourism, and the overall level of empowerment scored.

Although there were similarities between internal stakeholders in two of the three communities investigated, regarding external stakeholders they differed between them. While Uaxactun has on its vicinity Tikal National Park, there is almost no government participation on ecotourism development, whereas in Palenque, a little bit more action from government departments is readily to assist the community of El Naranjo. Although the community of Uaxactun has been targeted for a number of multinational and Guatemalan NGOs, in the two case studies in Mexico it was hard to

find any. Additionally, involvement from tour operators and from the community of Coba differed from the case studies of Uaxactun and Palenque, where there is a lack of interest from tour operators to market these communities and community leaders prefer to engage in non-tourism activities.

This thesis has developed a workable assessment framework and a methodology to look at empowerment in developing remote areas. As shown in Chapter 3, to gain understanding about empowerment in the communities studied in this thesis, a three-staged research design was used to further develop a checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment. Every stage provided a re-defined version of the indicators previously identified in the literature. In the first stage, feedback about indicators of empowerment and disempowerment came from key stakeholders in ecotourism interviewed, and a new interview guide was redesigned to conduct focus groups in stage two with village members of the three communities who already had a type of involvement with tourism. With input from village members, a final checklist of indicators of empowerment was contrasted against their opposite side of disempowerment and each indicator was ranked through a Likert scale from five meaning very empowering to one meaning very disempowering. The overall result of empowerment is displayed in a polar chart termed *the wheel of empowerment*. In the following sections of this chapter, the case studies are compared and discussed while conclusions are pointed based on the thesis' objectives across the three case studies.

7.2 Thesis Purpose

This thesis developed five objectives to understand the extent to which external and internal stakeholders participate in ecotourism and how this relates to the degree of empowerment of local communities. The analysis of the results and discussion points detailed in the three previous chapters are addressed in the following sections of this chapter according to each of the objectives of this thesis.

7.2.1 Accomplishment of Objective One

The first objective developed in this thesis was *to identify the key external and internal ecotourism stakeholders in the Mayan rainforest of Mexico and Guatemala*. According to Forstner (2004) community-based tourism ventures as small-scale providers of

tourism services may face problems similar to those of other rural producers. They generally face a number of constraints that may prevent them from accessing markets, while possessing only limited power to overcome them. They therefore depend on other institutions that may facilitate access to markets. These institutions are represented by private companies, membership organizations, public sector institutions and non-governmental organizations. A number of studies discussed in Chapter 2, including Forstner (2004), looked at involvement of stakeholders in ecotourism. In the same token, this thesis regarded four sets of stakeholders, i.e. the private sector, the public sector, the NGOs and the host communities. However, the marketing of their tourism products remains one major problem for a couple of these communities. Moreover, members of host communities and their visitors often have extremely different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and they do not share the same values and lifestyles.

Private companies are typically tour operators who combine different tourism services to create new products, and travel agencies whose main function is the sale of different tourism products. These institutions can provide different forms of assistance depending on their expertise and position related to the tourism market. Efforts of community-based tourism associations to target either tourists or private companies as intermediaries are strengthened by a range of promotional activities, such as participation in trade fairs and the distribution of promotional material. In contrast to the private sector, community-based tourism organizations usually do not have the necessary resources for providing additional financial support for the community projects. However, they might attempt to promote alternative sources of income. From the private sector, this thesis identified four tour operators as key stakeholders to gain understanding on empowerment in ecotourism with the communities investigated in this thesis.

Regarding the public sector, a focus on CBT has appeared only recently in tourism policy frameworks. Governments may follow the goal of orientating the national tourism sector towards diversifying the national tourism product. A crucial function of public institutions is the design of a supportive policy framework. This may encompass tenure regulations that allow communities to use natural resources, to plan the use of land that incorporates community interests, tourism standards that take into account

the capacity of community-based tourism enterprises as well as tourism licensing schemes that are accessible to local service providers (Ashley & Roe, 1998). One example is the policy of Protected Natural Areas in Mexico and Guatemala that has become the main instrument for conserving biodiversity. Established in territories representing a variety of ecosystems and cultural diversity, the history of Protected Natural Areas in Mexico moved from a centralized rationale that created a lot of conflicts over the use of natural resources, to a policy framework that include local communities in their management plans. Although the administration of PNAs in Mexico by CONANP moved to a more participative strategy of environmental management, the administration of protected archaeological landscapes by INAH still follows its institutional grassroots of archaeological research established more than 50 years ago. In Guatemala, a similar framework of Protected Natural Areas has been administered by CONAP since the early 1990s. Additionally, like INAH in Mexico IDAEH protects and conducts research in archaeological sites of Guatemala. However, the lack of policy implementation in Guatemala could also be a result of insufficient capacity at government level which has been taken over by NGOs.

On the other hand, non-profit institutions co-operating with communities can give advice on the design of tourism programmes and the adequate delivery of tourism services. To achieve the latter, training of community members is an essential component of support programmes. In terms of capacity-building at community level, NGOs appear to have a clear advantage. Ashley and Roe (1998) pointed out that several NGOs assisted Namibian communities in developing local tourism products by providing business advice, loans and training opportunities and promoting joint ventures with the private sector. Development organizations appear to have more expertise in exploring alternative livelihood options than other marketing intermediaries. Conversely, small, locally operating NGOs may face difficulties in securing the necessary resources for providing extensive marketing support and may depend to a large extent on donor funding. Compared with private tourism companies, non-profit institutions tend to have less expertise in business development and tourism marketing. Even though NGOs appear to show a relatively high degree of responsiveness to community needs, their values and priorities may

sometimes conflict with the interests of communities and the economic viability of CBT ventures.

In Mexico, the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature is the main Mexican donor to fund conservation projects in protected natural sites of the country. However, they have priority areas for funding and Palenque is not part of them. However, there are a number of governmental institutions that can fund ecotourism related projects with rural or indigenous communities in Mexico. In Guatemala, other multinational NGOs are supporting Guatemalan Government such as WWF and Conservation International, which are aiding Guatemalan decision-makers and local communities by promoting low-impact tourism and developing markets for sustainably harvested products. Similarly, The Nature Conservancy prepared technical studies on 14 areas of protection in the Petén to secure their status as National Parks and has established a Conservation Data Center in cooperation with the Universidad de San Carlos (Smithsonian Institute, nd).

Although external stakeholders are important in the process of community-based ecotourism, especially tourists and stakeholders from the tourism industry, participation of the host communities resulted to be paramount. Although for the three communities studied in this thesis tourism is not something unknown, there were differences in the degree of participation between and within them. Internal ecotourism stakeholders were identified to be those who involve in tourism in one way or another. However, members from these communities with the potential of preventing the community from participating in tourism were also identified as internal stakeholders. These aspects are going to be explained in detail in the following sections of this chapter.

7.2.2 Accomplishment of Objective 2.

Once key stakeholders were identified for each community, the second objective was *to assess external and internal stakeholders' participation on ecotourism in three Mayan communities.*

According to Ceballos-Lascurain (1998) very little have been done to promote the ecotourism appeal in Mexico at the international level. Guatemala has an even lower motioned development of ecotourism. Both countries have an extraordinary amount

of natural and socio-cultural attractions and a rich variety of archaeological vestiges that belonged to pre-colonial societies, colonial cities and traditional towns, and a very representative culinary art. Given the geographic location of these countries and their proximity to USA, in particular Mexico, they should be in the main position as an overseas ecotourism destination for the Americans.

From the government perspective, there are differences between how Guatemala and Mexico have adopted policies for sustainable tourism development. While in Mexico a number of federal government departments have put ecotourism in the public agenda and have powers to fund projects of sustainable development of tourism with local communities across the country, in Guatemala this scenario does not exist. For example, the Mexican Commission for the Development of Indigenous Groups (CDI) launched in 2006 the Program of Alternative Tourism in Indigenous Areas of the country, where every year fund a number of communities selected through a bidding type of contest. A community selected for support in ecotourism from CDI can receive up to US\$ 110,000 per year for specific projects. Similarly, the Mexican Forest Commission (CONAFOR) also added ecotourism on their agenda and have funded projects with up to US\$ 110,000 too. In the same way the Mexican Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) can fund with up to US\$ 110,000 to support community-based ecotourism projects. For instance, SEDESOL funded a community restaurant in Coba, which is managed and owned by the community. CONANP is also funding ecotourism projects with similar amount of money with communities around Protected Natural Areas. Although the list is not limited to the mentioned institutions, they represent some of the most important ones funding ecotourism projects across the country. In addition to the federal funds, there are other funds that come from State governments in Mexico to support tourism projects with disadvantaged communities but these funds are of minor scale compared to federal funds and are normally half-assisted by the federal government. Therefore, both communities in Mexico shared a similar array of government opportunities for indigenous communities across the country, if they will to get involved in ecotourism.

Another aspect of government involvement occurs at the level of protecting natural and archaeological sites with an emphasis of tourism promotion. In this scenario, there were similarities between the three case studies of this thesis where archaeological

sites are managed by similar research institutions of archaeology in each country. INAH protects and conducts archaeological research in many archaeological sites of the country including Coba and Palenque, whereas IDAEH with similar jurisdictions protects and researches the archaeological heritage in Guatemala. Although the three communities are outside the area of archaeological protection, their relative closeness to these archaeological tourism centers have impacts on the community that in this study are assessed in terms of ecotourism empowerment. Although these archaeological institutions were present in the three archaeological sites of the three case studies, they have similar powers of archaeological management and research, but aspects of local involvement and tourism management are not part of their agendas.

According to Jamal & Everett (2004) many national parks and natural areas are conveniently situated near population and tourist centers and can easily attract visitors and expenditures. However other natural areas, especially remote areas that are rich in biodiversity, have not been developed for tourism and do not receive tourist expenditures. In this thesis the community of El Naranjo and Uaxactun were located close to Palenque and Tikal National Parks respectively. The former is administered by CONANP in Mexico and the latter by CONAP in Guatemala. Both are equivalent institutions but CONAP in Guatemala does not seem to work with similar budgets and expertise compared to CONANP in Mexico. Both Tikal National Park and the community of Uaxactun are located inside a bigger area of conservation, namely the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, which is also administered by CONAP. However, the MBR is cooperatively administered. Although the lead agency is CONAP other key participants include IDAEH and the Center of Conservation Studies and the academic unit of the Universidad de San Carlos of Guatemala which is responsible for promoting field research and conservation of renewable resources. The MBR is among the key sites in The Nature Conservancy plans in peril campaign, to build a conservation infrastructure and secure long-term funding to sustain local management of the protected areas and integrate them into local economies. The USAID Maya Resource Management project is offering financial and technical assistance to CONAP to manage the resources of the MBR more sustainably.

According to Sundberg (1998) to ensure that biosphere reserves become models of sustainable development in action their management plans are to include a system of integrated rural development projects. Governments are not always capable of financing the type of projects needed to meet the model's conservation and development goals. In Latin America, countries have adopted structural adjustment programs outlined by international lending institutions. Despite the tourism potential and considerable support from international donors and NGOs, the infrastructure of the MBR has not been developed to receive nature-based tourists. Currently 12% of Guatemala's tourism visits the MBR. As mentioned by Hearne and Santos (2005) the development of the MBR's ecotourism potential should become a priority for CONAP, especially since much of the area remains isolated and in designated biological reserves. By the time this thesis' fieldwork was conducted, the ecotourism department of CONAP in charge of the MBR administration had been desert for six months. Compared to CONANP in Mexico, CONAP in Guatemala seemed to be an institution quite more limited to address ecotourism. According to Carrera, Morales and Galvez (nd) CONAP granted *Industrial Management Units* to local processing industries of wood, but unlike the dealer community concessions, the industry concessions allowed the use of timber resources only. The industrial concessions must have a ruler association to ensure the good performance of it. It is clear that the concession process is still nascent and still remains to consolidate. However, it has exceeded expectations compared to other schemes that do not permit the participation of communities. In the case of Uaxactun in Guatemala, CONAP has been assisted by multinational NGOs to provide training to the communities inside the MBR, but they normally didn't include ecotourism in their agenda. On the other hand, in the case of Palenque National Park the community of El Naranjo, along with two other local communities in the area have received training and support by CONANP, and have funded small community projects indirectly related to tourism.

In the case of Coba, there is no influence from CONANP although there is a small Protected Natural Area 20 km North from Coba, known as Punta Laguna. Additionally, 30 miles East from Coba, the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve protects 1.3 million acres of rainforest that have provided a number of resources for generations of indigenous Maya. The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, located in the central part of the State of

Quintana Roo, with an extension of 5,230 km² represents a destination that can be converted in a key ecotourism destination for the development of this part of the state. In the same way, there are other Protected Natural Areas in the state such as the Marine National Parks of Cancun, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, the Biosphere Reserve of Isla Contoy and Holbox, Arrecifes del Banco Chinchorro, La Poza and Xcalak in the southern part of the state.

Another important government stakeholder for the three villages investigated was the Ministry of Tourism in Mexico which has a focus on promoting tourism in the country, with an emphasis on the marketing sector of strategic destinations. Ecotourism has been increasingly targeted by this Mexican institution in the last years. However, SECTUR legislate for tourism in Mexico and, through FONATUR, it has promoted almost only megadestinations with little promotion of a few local destinations. For instance, with regards to the two case studies in Mexico, SECTUR promotes archaeology (the Mayan pyramids), nature (the Maya rainforest) and culture (the Mayan traditions such as customs and handcrafts) but they rarely have promoted local communities. El Naranjo has no promotion from SECTUR whereas Coba is promoted by travel agencies and tour operators, which leaves no gaps for State and local Tourism Departments to fill, but given the importance that the area of Coba has gain in terms of tourism demand has some promotion from this government tourism departments related to Coba.

According to Juarez (2002) the FONATUR project of Cancun in Quintana Roo in the late 1960s significantly impacted the traditional inhabitants of the region. These people were Yucatec-Mayans living in a number of villages across the Yucatan Peninsula in Quintana Roo. For instance, Tulum was a small *pueblo* during most of the 20th century with a handful of families bordered by gum camps, cattle ranches, and coconut plantations relying primarily on forest resources especially hunting and slash and burn production of maize and other foods. Mayan houses were normally *palapas* made of wooden walls and palm-thatch roof. During the tourist era, foreigners intensified their expropriation of Maya lands and natural resources and began to dominate local political, economic, and cultural practices, and quickly outnumbered local Mayas (Juarez 2002). Tulum grew from a handful of extended families in 1986 to over 2000

people in 1990. The population quadrupled between 1980 and 1990. As of 2000, Tulum is estimated to have at least 120,000 residents.

According to New York Times (2001) 90% of Mexico's tourism was to coastal resorts and Quintana Roo captured about one-third of all foreign tourist expenditures (SEDETUR 2001). In fact, Quintana Roo had the highest growing rate in Mexico since 1970 and is the world's 12th highest tourism earner. Today, many tourists are attracted by the cheapness of Cancun, come on package holidays and spend very little money in Mexico. According to Momsen (2003) the continuing growth suggest that tourism in Cancun has not yet reached the stage of stagnation, but mass tourism is already bringing many problems of environmental degradation and devaluation of the attractions of the resort. Although in 2008 FONATUR also announced an Integral Planned Center in Palenque, there is an overwhelming difference compared to the FONATUR project of Cancun.

In the case of Guatemala, INGUAT is an institution with similar jurisdictions to SECTUR in Mexico. However, INGUAT in Guatemala has a more limited budget and promotes a smaller number of tourism destinations than SECTUR in Mexico. Tikal is one of the most important tourism destinations in Guatemala and is well promoted by INGUAT. However, in a similar way to the communities investigated in Mexico INGUAT does not promote Uaxactun excepting the equinox festival which has been celebrated for three consecutive years in the community with promotion from this institution.

Another scenario of ecotourism opportunities are brought by communications and transport systems which are under government control. In the case of Mexico, the Ministry of Communications and Transports is in charge of developing, improving and maintaining transportation and communication systems. In the case of Guatemala, the Ministry of Communication and Infrastructure have similar jurisdictions. Because distance to archaeological sites was one of the factors identified influencing in the chances the communities have to increase tourism demand in their communities, access to this communities represented an important factor indirectly related to community empowerment. However this scenario of opportunities was not considered within the key stakeholders of ecotourism in the three case studies investigated in this thesis.

Although government stakeholders in ecotourism may facilitate community-based ecotourism development, they are not indispensable for successful community-based tourism development. Conversely, tourists and local communities are of paramount importance. Tourists were not considered key stakeholders in terms of assessing empowerment in local communities. Instead, four tour operators were identified as key stakeholders from the tourism industry, which has also been regarded in this thesis as the private sector. In the first case study, a local tour operator called *Palenque Tour Services* was interviewed. Despite FONATUR Integral Planned Center for Palenque was announced in 2008, tourism development in the region does not seem to be growing as announced by Mexican authorities. It was hard to find a key tour operator involved in ecotourism activities in the region. However, a local tour operator was selected to fill this gap since the manager of the company interviewed has been a tour guide in Palenque for long time. Participation from the private sector in Palenque has not shown so far any interest to involve people from El Naranjo in tourism activities, apart from a few village members that can speak Spanish fluently and may find a job in the tourism industry earning minimum wages. With regards to tour operators in the area, they are not focused in exploring new activities to promote community-based tourism. Its tours are limited mainly to three sites: Palenque Archaeological Site to visit the pyramids and visitation to Agua Azul and Misol-Ha waterfalls but these types of companies do not promote community involvement. They are very basic and limited transportation companies. Compared to El Naranjo village in Palenque, with the community of Uaxactun occurs something similar with regards to tour operators. Most of them are small transportation companies based in Flores that have limited capacity to promote tourism. A few of them may have a basic webpage, but they are not big tour companies or corporations. However, there is one Guatemalan-based destination management company called *Ecotourism & Adventure Specialists* this thesis found as a key tour operator stakeholder for Uaxactun. This company sells up-market tours not just in the country of Guatemala, but also promotes destinations in Honduras and in the Southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Additionally, they are extending to South America and started to market Peru. As this thesis found, this company have a big commitment with nature conservation and community-based tourism development. The company owner is a well acknowledged person for her involvement with tourism

in the country of Guatemala. In Uaxactun, people involved in tourism know the owner of the company as she has taken tourists to Uaxactun to do 4-5 days trips in the jungle, with the base camp in Uaxactun. Although her company was founded in 1997, she has been involved in ecotourism in the region since the early 1980s when she was fostering ecotourism activities around Tikal Archaeological Site. However, her company takes a small number of tourists to the community and earnings for the community are at the level of selling their local tour services to the groups that this company brings to the community. There is another ecotourism company called *No Limit Expeditions* that operates Land Rover tours from USA to Mexico and Central America. Uaxactun is one of the villages (or more precisely archaeological sites) this company promotes. As with the Guatemalan tour company interviewed, this American company provides very few numbers of tourists every year to the community of Uaxactun. Because this company operates from the US and the budget for this thesis was limited, an interview with a key stakeholder from this company was precluded.

In the case of Coba, tourism has been growing in a much faster rate compared to Palenque and Tikal since the beginning of the 21st Century. This study conducted an informal interview with the owner of the ecotourism company called *Alltournative*. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was also conducted with one of the managers of the company. This company started with a high budget and an outstanding ecotourism project which was pioneer in the region, involving three one-day tour packages to visit three Mayan communities located near Coba for ecotourism and adventure activities. The three packages this company offered included visitation to the pyramids of Coba. This company, along with other inbound tourism companies started to increase tourism visitation to the Archaeological Site of Coba in the late 1990s, and therefore increased development and tourism awareness in the local community of Coba due to its proximity with the archaeological site. During high season, this company used to bring over 200 visitors to Coba every day. With the growing of ecotourism companies in the region, the supply side has been more competitive and has increased ecotourism products in the region. The growing of *Alltournative* as an ecotourism empire, which became a Corporation in 2005, started to curb towards the end of the decade.

Another type of non-government opportunities for a community to be involved in tourism is through participation of NGOs. However, as with the government opportunities provided for community-based ecotourism, the opportunities that NGOs provide are not indispensable for local communities to develop community-based ecotourism. NGOs are commanded to fill government gaps mainly in developing countries. Although four NGO consultants were interviewed in this thesis, with regards to the two communities in Mexico identifying NGOs was hard. Besides, ecotourism is not something NGOs are commonly addressing in Mexico, but there were two identified that were as much relevant as possible to the case studies. External stakeholders that have approached to El Naranjo in Palenque are very few and have consisted in local government delegates who visit the community for political proselytism and also to offer economic support to foster agriculture in the community. Also, staff of CONANP visits the community in a regular basis. However, it is very rare that tourists visit El Naranjo and there are no tourism facilities in the community. Additionally, no NGO consultants visited the community before, and fieldwork conducted in this community showed that hardly any villager interviewed knew what an NGO was. However, a Mexican NGO named *Razonatura* was found to be on the process of one State government bidding for the implementation of a course to certify local tour guides in Palenque. The consultant interviewed from this NGO had previous informal chats in the archaeological site with a few non-certified tour guides from two local communities including El Naranjo who offer tour guided services in Palenque Archaeological Site. Participation from this NGO with the community stayed at an informal level with the community but most of the work the NGO did was centered in designing a course to certify tour guides. However, implementing this course was not possible because the bidding was cancelled by the State government through an informal letter leaving serious doubts on the honesty of this government department in carrying out biddings. With the community of Coba, a similar NGO scenario to Palenque was encountered but with evident differences. There were no NGOs identified to be working with the community of Coba in any aspect, including tourism. However, another Mexican NGO named *Kanche* was giving training in ecotourism to 10 communities located over the road that connects Coba with Nuevo Durango, but Coba was not included in this program by the NGO as tourism development in Coba is quite

bigger compared to these smaller communities. This NGO was identified as a key NGO as it is hard to find an ecotourism focus coming from NGO projects. In fact, training in ecotourism was a result of a series of workshops conducted by *Kanche* with these communities. Together with the NGO consultants from *Kanche*, these communities led to the conclusion that ecotourism was the best alternative of development. Compared to the two case studies in Mexico, in the context of Guatemala multinational NGOs have been very participatory across the country including in the village of Uaxactun. However, it was evident that in the three case studies ecotourism has been relatively new in their agendas. In Uaxactun multinational NGOs have been very participative since the Maya Biosphere Reserve was established in the early 1990s. WWF, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International supervised and developed sustainable development programs with the communities inside the reserve including Uaxactun. Additionally, other multinational NGOs such as The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECID) and other European donors assisted with training and implementation programs with the community. NGOs have played a very important role in community development and conservation in Guatemala. A number of multinational NGOs such as WCS and Rainforest Alliance have linked Uaxactun with the demand side to export, for example, precious woods logged in a sustainable way, or by connecting xate, allspice and chewing gum extracted from the forest with international wholesalers. This has resulted in an increase of income to the community reflected in Guatemala's xate industry which employs an estimated number of 4,000 harvesters in the Petén and provides an average of US\$ 127 per month to the families involved (Manzanero 1999). Similarly, allspice has been the most lucrative non-timber resource in the Petén, employing approximately 1,000 harvesters and providing them with a net income of US\$ 336 per month. Exports of chewing gum to Japan generate benefits to 1,000 to 3,000 families in the Petén. Japan is the major chewing gum market for Guatemala, providing local families in Peten with an estimated US\$ 227 per month (Manzanero 1999).

However, the first records of an NGO participating with ecotourism in Uaxactun comes from WCS which in 2005 trained ecotour guides in the village and eventually led to the creation of the first ecotour guides organization in Uaxactun. Since then, a couple of NGOs funded with support from USAID and WCS were identified to be very

participative with ecotourism support with the community of Uaxactun. These NGOs are *Counterpart* and *Balam* which work hand in hand. *Counterpart* designs the projects that *Balam* conducts on the field, which have a focus on training in ecotourism. However, this support is almost entirely training support, as they do not focus on linking the community with the demand side.

Once the role that external stakeholders played in ecotourism with these communities was identified, identifying the role that internal stakeholders played in ecotourism threw critical results. As mentioned above, community participation, namely internal stakeholders in ecotourism, along with the demand side, namely tourists, are paramount in the development of community-based tourism. Although the community governance in the three case studies was similar, most of the aspects related to community involvement in tourism were found to differ between them. Even governance in each community differed when it came to ecotourism participation. Although the two communities investigated in Mexico follow the same legal indigenous rights and responsibilities, the response from the community leaders to ecotourism, namely *ejidatarios* or assembly members, differed between them. While leaders from El Naranjo are not keen in bringing tourism into the assembly discussions, tourism issues can take almost one half of the time in a typical assembly in Coba. In Uaxactun the terms under which the community is legally established vary from the case studies in Mexico, but the governance in this community has been similar to the Mexican case studies since the Organization of Management and Conservation (OMyC) was established in Uaxactun in 2000 by CONAP. The OMyC is governed by community leaders of Uaxactun and members of the organization but at least half of them are non-indigenous immigrants that fled from the Guatemalan civil war to Peten from the 1970s to the 1990s. In the MBR about half of the migrant population are *ladinos*, people of mixed indigenous and European descent. The second major ethnic group that has migrated to the Petén are Q'eqchi', spurred by large-scale development and changes in land values in the Alta and Baja Verapaz and Izabal Departments, immediately south of the Petén. The immigrants are primarily subsistence farmers and small-scale ranchers, although most families rely on a variety of livelihood strategies. In opposition to the traditional inhabitants that also lead the community, the foreign leaders have always been prone to logging activities for economic sustain and when

the OMyC was created, this was decisive in converting it in the sustainable forest use company of the community inclined to log trees and harvest plants of economic interest for the community. In spite of a few members from the community enthusiastic to raise the ecotourism importance in sustainable development during the assemblies, like in the case study of El Naranjo, during the assemblies in Uaxactun, ecotourism is disregarded by the majority of community leaders.

At the level of tourism organizations, namely cooperatives, the composition of tourism-related organizations were similar in the three communities. For example, in the three case studies there was a local tour guide organization, although the one in Palenque has not received government training and certification to guide legally in the archaeological site. The local tour guides in Coba are organized at the level of a syndicate. There are 24 local tour guides associated to the syndicate of guides of Coba which is a branch of the Mexican Syndicate of Tour Guides. In the tour guide industry in Mexico, this national syndicate is a lobby group of power that represents tour guides across the country. Syndicates in Mexico do not hold any good reputation. Let us consider the following instance; besides the informal, local tour guides in Palenque, there is a syndicate of tour guides formed by certified tour guides. Most of the members of the syndicate of tour guides in Palenque, including the leader, are not locals as just three villagers from El Naranjo have been able to join the syndicate and are certified tour guides. Along with the problems associated with conflicts between these two groups, the syndicate of tour guides in Palenque has scammed the non-certified indigenous group of tour guides by charging them money to join the syndicate and to later aspire to be certified tour guides through the official course requested by SECTUR in Mexico. Every tour guide in Mexico has to take a course authorized by SECTUR to be certified and to be allowed to guide. In the end, the syndicate of Palenque didn't bring such a course to the community and never turned the money back to these informal guides. By the same time, the syndicate sent an official letter to CONANP in Palenque stating that they knew an NGO was interested in bringing a tour guide course to the community and that CONANP was going to fund. The letter requested CONANP to reconsider organizing such a project which will affect the interests of the already exceeded amount of tour guides in Palenque. With regards to Uaxactun, a group of ecoguides were trained in Uaxactun by WCS in 2005 and one of

the current organizations involved with tourism was the Uaxactun's tourism organization, made up of nine tour guides, trained by the NGO *Balam* and certified by INGUAT. Additionally, tour guide issues outside archaeological sites in Guatemala are much more organized than in Mexico. In Mexico, the syndicate as a group of power has caused many issues across the country.

A second group of people involved with tourism in Palenque and Uaxactun was made up of embroiderer women in El Naranjo, trained by CONANP to create Mayan design in modern women costumes and accessories such as dresses and bags. They are offering their products to tourists in Palenque. Additionally, there is a group of handcrafters made up of members from El Naranjo and its neighboring community Lopez Mateos who sell their products inside the archaeological site of Palenque. Although many are just intermediaries, a number of them are real handcrafters. In Uaxactun, a group of craftswomen make dolls with organic elements from the rainforest to sell to tourists. Additionally, other handcrafters produce wooden furniture from plants and trees from the rainforest. Compared to Uaxactun and El Naranjo, in Coba the role that villagers are playing in tourism is at a higher level of understanding of tourism, its products and services. Most of the community in Coba speaks now fluent Spanish and some members speak English and other languages too. There are tour guides, for example, that speak up to four languages. There are joint-ventures in Coba which are initiatives from the community and from a third party, which in this case was a tour operator company from Playa del Carmen who negotiated with the community to install a zip line in Coba to promote community-based ecotourism and to perform night shows for tourism using local settings and involving members from the community. In these two joint-ventures, the community receives 50% of the earnings with the other 50% belonging to the third party. Additionally, there are a number of handcrafts shops outside the Archaeological Site of Coba. Although most of the owners of these shops are from Coba, they are just intermediaries with the products they offer for tourism, which most of them come from the State of Yucatan. The parking lot outside the Archaeological Site of Coba is also managed by the community. The community promotes ecotourism to swim in two *cenotes* located in the community. This has been a significant community initiative in terms of income generation. Additionally, an important group from Coba working with tourism identified in this thesis was the push

tricycles known as *bicitaxis* in Coba, who offer push bike transportation throughout the archaeological site, or rent single push bicycles for tourists to visit Coba. Although an invitation to participate in this thesis was extended to this group, they rejected it. Interestingly, this group is not just an organization but a syndicate too.

There is an evident higher participation in tourism from Coba villagers than from villagers from El Naranjo and Uaxactun. Although there is a good number of youngsters in El Naranjo enthusiastic in tourism, their opportunities to participate are very limited due to the leader's attitude to tourism from this community. However, there was more participation in tourism from El Naranjo when it was compared to the case study in Uaxactun, where just a small number of people involve in tourism and it remains a secondary activity for most of the community.

7.2.3 Accomplishment of Objective 3

Following the analysis of stakeholders' participation on ecotourism in the three villages investigated, the third objective in this thesis was *to understand the extent of the contribution of different stakeholders in empowering community tourism in three communities inhabiting Mayan territories*. In particular, this section will focus on external stakeholders, whereas the influence from internal stakeholders on ecotourism empowerment will be addressed in one of the following sections.

The public sector, namely Guatemalan and Mexican governments, can play an important role in empowering local communities in ecotourism through training and funding community-based tourism projects. In Mexico, government funds are readily available to support local communities from a number of federal departments. For example, in the case study of Coba, SEDESOL funded a restaurant with US\$ 110,000 which is managed and owned by the community. This example indicates that ecotourism powers are transferred to the community by, first, negotiating with them which is an aspect of political empowerment, and then manage and own the restaurant which have economic, psychological and social empowering implications too. Similarly, in El Naranjo CONANP invested about US\$ 10,000 in training a group of embroiderers. CONANP, however, has not funded more ecotourism projects in El Naranjo because the community leaders are not interested in tourism. The training program has given a number of women from the community an alternative activity to

make a living. Again, this type of government participation has been empowering to the community. In the case study of Uaxactun in Guatemala, there has been no government funds invested in the community. In fact, there are no Guatemalan programs funding community-based ecotourism projects in the country. This lack of government support with Guatemalan communities has been taken over by multinational NGOs in some regions of the country, including the Maya Biosphere Reserve where the community of Uaxactun is located.

There is another level of government involvement with tourism in the three villages investigated in this thesis. There are natural and archaeological areas visited by large number of tourists throughout the year. In the three case studies there is an archaeological site protected and managed by similar institutions of Anthropology in both countries. While there has not been dialogue between INAH and El Naranjo to establish a better organized system of selling crafts and offer tour guided services in the Archaeological Site of Palenque, in the case study of Coba, INAH has set a line of dialogue with the community. However, in both cases the relationship between INAH and the communities has not been an easy one. Particularly in COBAH, INAH took control of the community grounds where the archaeological site was located. Actually, in both INAH Palenque and Coba, there have been a number of issues of which some of them have already been addressed in the case study chapters. For instance the director of Palenque Archaeological Site has long been directing this and a few other archaeological sites of the area. Although the relationship between INAH and the community is a peaceful one, it has a history of disruptions. This leads to disempowerment in the political and psychological dimensions of empowerment, and even in the social and economic aspects of empowerment. Similarly, in Coba INAH has disregarded the community from tourism participation. In the late 1990s the syndicate of push-bicycle taxies requested INAH to allow them renting bicycles inside the archaeological site which INAH rejected. Although this could be seen as disempowerment, the community got organized and imposed their will in the archaeological park and settled their bicycle rental boot. Today, this activity is economically and socially empowering to the community. The fact that the community took decision over tourism was politically empowering for them. However, the way in how INAH participates in the tourism process in both communities is disempowering.

In the case study of Guatemala, IDAEH manages the archaeological site of Tikal and Uaxactun. IDAEH is an institution with similar jurisdictions in Guatemala, but compared to INAH in Mexico, IDAEH works with small budgets, normally co-assisted by American archaeological research, and compared to INAH in Mexico, seems to work more participative and fostering community development. Additionally, conflicts between IDAHE and communities in Guatemala were not encountered in this thesis and the archaeological sites do not seem to face problems related to illegal and tour guides and handcrafters inside their archaeological sites. Although it could not be considered that IDAEH is empowering local communities in Guatemala to involve in ecotourism, they are at least not disempowering them.

Besides archaeological protection, two of the three communities were influenced by a natural area of protection. In el Naranjo, CONANP protects the Palenque National Park and develops conservation programs with three communities surrounding it including El Naranjo. As previously mentioned, CONANP has funded small projects with the community that indirectly relate with tourism. In this research, CONANP showed commitment with sustainable development with local communities as a strategy of conservation. The way CONANP is participating with local communities in Mexico indicates that it has been empowering to the community, particularly in the environmental and social aspects of empowerment where training programs that entailed social organization from the community were carried out. In the case study of Uaxactun there is a Biosphere Reserve surrounding the community and also a National Park. Both areas of protection are managed by CONAP in Guatemala although there are other institutions that support CONANP in the MBR management. Unlike the case study of El Naranjo, CONAP does not involve with Uaxactun and does not fund programs in the community. Although CONAP has similar powers to CONANP in Mexico, in Guatemala CONAP does not seem to promote ecotourism as there are no programs from this institution identified in Uaxactun and this thesis could not find an ecotourism stakeholders from CONAP. A lack of participation from CONAP has been neither empowering nor disempowering to the community. However, according to Sundberg (1998) the creation of the MBR was approached in a top-down manner, omitting participation or input from residents living within the Multiple-Use Zones. Sundberg (1998) argued that CONAP omitted the communities in their management

plan for a number of reasons, some of which include the urgency of the deforestation problem, and the perception (by NGO and government staff) that community members had a limited understanding of conservation and a limited ability to participate in decision making processes. Furthermore, it is also thought that CONAP made little effort to educate residents about their new rights and restrictions once the reserve was officially established. According to Jamal and Everett (2004) without participatory opportunities in decision-making and governance of the park's economic and ecological well-being, practical knowledge (e.g. local and indigenous knowledge in this instance) risks becoming marginalized in park management. Life-world rationalization results when the interests and well-being of the local residents living in and around the park are excluded or delegitimized by technical interests. Likewise Hearne and Santos (2005) pointed that the MBR was created without any substantive consultation of the local population. A lack of community involvement fostered by CONAP was disempowering to the community of Uaxactun. NGOs and MBR managers implemented conservation programs without considering the development plans for the state of Petén. The promotion of ecotourism is among the priorities that CONAP has established in the MBR Master Plan, but there is not a visible commitment from Guatemalan government with ecotourism in this reserve. Moreover, efforts by NGOs to develop ecotourism attractions are not coordinated with Guatemala's Tourism Institute (INGUAT), which is often expected to provide inputs such as training.

Both countries have a government institution with tourism promotion powers. In Mexico, SECTUR is in charge of promoting and investing in tourism but most of these investments have been injected in *sun and sea* destinations of the country. According to Daltaubuit, Cisneros, Vazquez and Santillan (2000) several ecotourism projects within the Mundo Maya Project managed by private enterprises didn't allow participation of local villages. In 1976 FONATUR built a hotel concession from Club Med in Coba, without taking into account the group interests. This was politically and economically disempowering. Later these groups found their own strategies to incorporate to the tourism activity. The FONATUR project for Cancun was underwritten by the Mexican government with a total initial investment amount of US\$ 70 million, some US\$ 30 million came from the Inter American Development Bank and a further US\$ 20 million from private, mostly foreign investors. For Brown (1999) the identification of a target

tourist market, and the packaging of a “world” or cultural landscape for sale to the market, which excludes Maya people from the decision processes represents the appropriation of cultural spaces and will have devastating impacts on the indigenous peoples and cultures of the region. Today, the Maya of Coba are familiar with modern tourism and some of the performers were born and lived in urban Cancun. Thus, the villagers’ understanding of representation and indigenous experience was very complex. Similarly, in the mid-1990s, the government of Quintana Roo announced plans for the Costa Maya that included the construction of 30,000 hotel rooms along the entire coastal reach from Punta Pulticub to Xcalak. Community leaders in Xcalak, who saw fishing and ecotourism as more proper sustainable activities, were upset that they were not consulted about these development plans. They contacted the NGO Amigos de Sian Ka’an, who in turn asked the University of Rhode Island’s Coastal Resources Centre to help develop a strategy for development of low-impact tourism.

Community-based tourism is a growing, but very small sector from the tourism industry compared to beach megaresort destinations that the country can offer. In this token, no involvement from SECTUR can stand out of being empowering in the two case studies investigated in Mexico. In a similar fashion, INGUAT in Guatemala is an equivalent institution to SECTUR in Mexico with similar powers but smaller budgets INGUAT in Guatemala promotes a number of main destinations of the country included Tikal. However, Uaxactun is just starting to bring the attention of this institution as there is an ancient Mayan observatory in the community. With support from INGUAT and from local NGOs, the community has organized an equinox festival for the last three years, which has brought hundreds of tourists to the community and has been an empowering activity for local people.

With regards to the private sector, the level of empowerment that tour operators contributed with the communities investigated varied, although there were some similarities between El Naranjo and Uaxactun where almost no tour operators promote these villages. Conversely, one important ecotourism operator out of many that promote tourism in Coba was identified as a key stakeholder in ecotourism with regards to this community. A growing number of them actually offer ecotourism activities in the community and foster community-based ecotourism activities. Coba now co-owns some ecotourism products and services in the village through

partnerships or joint-ventures with tour operator companies. Participation from the private sector in Coba, in particular from ecotourism companies such as Alltournative is showing that the private sector has been highly important in empowering this village in terms of economic revenue and political power to negotiate and transfer skills to the community. Additionally, social, psychological and environmental empowerment are also fostered. Now, villagers from Coba participate in many of the economic activities in Cancun. However, the beaches, hotels, diving, bars, restaurants, airport, rental jeeps and shopping, which attract tourism are not accessible to the native Mayas while the jobs, selling opportunities, most educational and health facilities, and the type of commerce that attracts the local Maya, are emphatically not attractions to the outsider. They are invited to be actors at the level of workers in the construction and service industries. They are disadvantaged in this new Maya World, even though the underpinnings of the new landscape were taken from the locally produced, original Maya landscape. From this perspective, tourism has been psychologically disempowering. However, the case study of Coba showed that the volume of tourists the community receives, associated to the economic benefits, have demonstrated a trend towards empowerment in most of the dimensions assessed.

The negative impacts of mass tourism on local ecosystems are highly evident in Mexico. For example, in the resort of Cancun development has resulted in contamination of the Nichupte Lagoon system, destruction of coral reefs and mangroves, loss of wildlife and uncontrolled urban growth. Conversely, Weaver (2001) mentioned that a model of ecotourism development could exist within a mass tourism destination. In this way, many peripheral communities can receive significant benefits since ecotourism relies in a big extent in mass tourism infrastructure i.e. big resorts, airports and travel agencies. In Mexico SECTUR reported that there are approximately 442 private ecotourism and adventure tourism operators throughout the country. However, there are only 15 registered community ecotourism enterprises.

With regards to El Naranjo and Uaxactun, they share a scenario that is not empowering. Although a small number of tourists visit Uaxactun every year, in El Naranjo a lack of tourists is associated to a lack of services in the community, or vice versa. Although a couple of ecotourism companies were identified as key stakeholders in Uaxactun, the number of tourists and associated benefits they can offer to the

community are limited, to a point of involve a small number of villagers in this activity in a temporary basis. In both cases a lack of tour operators involving with these communities was associated to a lack of economic, psychological and political empowerment.

There are a number of NGOs and international donors participating in both countries and some of them have addressed issues of community-based ecotourism as part of their sustainable development agendas. For instance USAID invested nearly US\$ 20 million in the MBR in the first three years after its creation (Getzinger 1998). These funds were used to contract three additional organizations to implement the work: The Nature Conservancy to enhance the reserve's management; CARE International to develop and perform environmental education initiatives; and Conservation International to encourage economic alternatives to forest degrading practices (USAID 1998). According to Lindberg (2001) the World Bank similarly added small programmes for community-based initiatives to its funding mechanisms. While this form of assistance has been traditionally characterized by large-scale projects and a lack of local participation in the planning process, there now appears to be a shift towards small and medium-sized businesses, greater emphasis on environmental and social issues, and community participation at the planning stage. With similar intentions, the German government invested US\$ 14 million to develop a master plan for the Petén, focusing on a program to conserve the buffer zone to the South of the MBR (Getzinger 1998). Since the biosphere's inception, a number of international NGOs have contributed to conservation efforts. Some NGOs in the region have had purely environmentally interests, while others have fought for human rights and increased income for MBR communities, sometimes at the expense of natural resources. The degree of involvement from NGOs in the case study of Uaxactun is highly important when it comes to environmental empowerment in the community. Uaxactun has participated in a number of training programs from different NGOs, from which a few of them have addressed ecotourism issues such as WCS, Balam and Counterpart. Additionally, this type of training has fostered social and political organization which are indicators of empowerment. In the case studies in Mexico, the NGO scenario differs from the one in Uaxactun. According to Juska and Koenig (2006) the various NGOs in the region have not been effectively coordinated, and have not created

comprehensive plan for the promotion of natural and human resources in the reserve. Because of the discrepancies in NGO agendas and the ensuing conflicts that have arisen, several NGOs that were previously involved in the MBR have since scaled down their operations or have left the region.

On the other hand, a lack of NGOs participating with the community of El Naranjo indicates a lack of empowerment coming from NGOs in this community. Similarly, in Coba there are no NGOs working with the community which indicates a lack of empowerment attributed to NGOs. However, this thesis identified a Mexican NGO working with 10 communities located nearby Coba, providing training and skills to involve in tourism which can be seen as a good example of political, psychological and environmental aspects of ecotourism empowerment transferred from this NGO to these communities.

This section has assessed the level of external stakeholders' participation in terms of empowerment to further assess the whole level of empowerment of each community investigated in this thesis. To do so, a method to assess empowerment was developed in this thesis through a three-staged research design. Finally, indicators of empowerment and disempowerment were ranked in each community and the overall level of empowerment was compared through the wheel of empowerment in each community.

7.2.4 Accomplishment of Objective 4

A core component of assessment in this thesis was empowerment of local communities to engage with ecotourism which has been in part addressed in the previous section. The fourth objective in this thesis was *to develop and test a method of assessing empowerment at the village level*. Most of the important issues regarding this objective have been explained in the methodology chapter of this thesis. The three-staged research design in this thesis allowed to, first, identify indicators of empowerment in ecotourism from the literature and then use them to create an initial interview guide to conduct face-to-face interviews with government stakeholders. A thematic analysis on key issues of empowerment from the interviews conducted in stage one allowed to re-design the interview guide that was conducted during the focus groups with villagers from the three communities during stage two. Results from

face-to-face interviews and focus groups were analyzed and key themes of empowerment were identified and used to develop a checklist of indicators of empowerment and disempowerment that were to be ranked in stage three through a Likert scale from 5-very empowering to 1-very disempowering. Based on an adapted framework to assess empowerment in ecotourism, this thesis offered a way to visualize the extent to which ecotourism has been an empowering activity to the community through five dimensions of empowerment. A checklist of indicators of empowerment developed initially from the literature and then from feedback from experts and community members interested in tourism offers a way to rank indicators of empowerment and disempowerment based on feedback from stakeholders identified in earlier stages. The *wheel of empowerment* then displays the level of empowerment in each community, which is discussed and compared between the three communities in the following section.

7.2.5 Accomplishment of Objective 5

To accomplish the fifth objective of this research, it was necessary to achieve the four previous objectives as they helped *to assess empowerment through the factors affecting the ability of local communities to engage in ecotourism in Mayan territories*.

In overall, ecotourism resulted to be an empowering activity in Coba, whereas ecotourism in Uaxactun and El Naranjo resulted to be disempowering. Tourism activity has triggered development for the Mexican Caribbean region since it creates employments, investments, revenues, services infrastructure and economic development that this sector produces.

Economic benefits were significant in most of the households in Coba and most of the villagers participate directly or indirectly in tourism-related activities. Although there are problems associated to profits from tourism, with regards to economic empowerment it showed that tourism is a highly important activity to the community.

In contrast, economic empowerment in Uaxactun remains in a low degree as there are no many tourists who visit the community. A lack of tourists in the community resulted in a lack of economic empowerment to a significant extent and most of the community have no foreseeable expectations from tourism income which keeps them psychologically and politically disempowered in ecotourism as they don't have any

hope in tourism and therefore it is an activity normally not addressed during the community assemblies. Although El Naranjo receives the smallest number of tourists from the three communities investigated, earnings from tourism-related activities are more significant compared to Uaxactun, and at least one half of the community have a degree of participation in this activity. Earnings from tourism have also fostered psychological, social, political and environmental empowerment with members of the community as they feel they can play a role in tourism if they are organized. However, leaders from the community who are not interested in tourism have a degree of influence in the level of empowerment the community has. Because leaders from the community had remained reluctant to participate in tourism this activity has not been empowering and, in fact resulted in the most disempowered community out of the three communities investigated. One consideration that needs to be made is the disguise of economic benefits associated to tourism in large beach resorts areas which have offered many communities small sums of money, irresistible to most fishermen, to construct hotels and create private beaches that later exclude these same communities that once owned the land. For example, the Riviera Maya is indeed not "Maya" in the sense of cultural preservation when one examines the fact that most Mayas involved in the Riviera Maya mass tourism circuit are not the ones receiving direct financial benefits through high ranking or managerial positions. The economic, cultural and ecological marginality of Mexican indigenous groups makes them prime candidates for what MacCannell (1992) has called the encounter between the postmoderns and the ex-primitives.

With regards to the psychological dimension, the level of empowerment was similar in El Naranjo and in Uaxactun showing no trends to empowerment as most of the issues discussed during the community assemblies are not related to tourism. Although there is a bigger number of villagers from El Naranjo that involves in tourism and are psychologically empowered, leaders from both communities are not as interested in tourism as leaders from the community of Coba, which place them on a disempowering panorama in terms of empowerment. Instead, psychological empowerment in Coba scored high as most of the people will to participate in tourism and make a living from it.

The social empowerment was high in Coba and there are a number of tourism-related organizations in the community. Compared to El Naranjo and Uaxactun, the social organization that tourism has produced in the community is more important in Coba since the number of tourists the community receives is bigger. However, El Naranjo and Uaxactun also showed trends towards social empowerment since there are tourism-related organizations formed by members from both communities. However, one of the aspects that social empowerment addressed was the distribution of earnings within each community. Also, in a major scale Pi-Sunyer, Thomas and Daltabuit (2001) found that the benefits of tourism have been very unevenly distributed. Local communities had heard messages of “economic development” and “progress” from the media and visiting politicians, but the type of language jargon always seemed remote, not really directed at them. According to Barbosa-Polanco, Molina, Escalona-Segura and Bello-Baltazar (2010) the most significant changes in community organization started in the 1980s with the community-based forest management, before this time the big logging companies like *Maderas Industriales de Quintana Roo* were in charge of using forest resources and the villagers were just laborers from these enterprises.

In terms of political empowerment, the two communities in Mexico share an historical framework of land rights for people who used to settle in pristine environments. This policy was removed from the *Mexican Constitution Act of 1917*, through an amendment that passed during the early 1990s. During the mid-19th century “Caste War” of Yucatan (1847-1901), indigenous Maya struggles for autonomy and independence resulted in one of the longest and most successful indigenous resistance movements in the Americas (Juarez 2002). These Mayas elaborated new forms of social organization and military, political, religious and cultural practices centered on the crosses, which ultimately became the heart of culturally distinct customs and identities. Land rights can be seen as an indicator of political empowerment, and also of environmental empowerment, whether it is for tourism purposes or not. This type of political empowerment had implications on the overall empowerment of the communities studied in this thesis. For example, in the current Mexican policy framework, a number of government departments can fund ecotourism projects but depend on community’s initiatives and through a signed agreement from the

community assembly, the funds may be facilitated to a given community. However, in the case study of El Naranjo, the reluctance from leaders of the community to get involved in tourism has not made these funds relevant in this community. Although most of the same government funds are available in Coba, the community has already been supported from SEDESOL to build the community-owned restaurant in Coba, which has politically and economically empowered the community. Most of the leaders from the village of Coba are keen to participate and negotiate tourism projects with external stakeholders. However, as they know their stakeholder condition, a number of projects from external stakeholders have been rejected by the assembly. Political and social empowerment in Coba can also be indicated by the decision of the syndicate of push-bicycle taxis in Coba which even when INAH did not authorize the community to run this activity, it is a successful product in the community today.

The political empowerment in Uaxactun and El Naranjo shared similar aspects that differed from Coba. Leaders from these two communities almost do not raise tourism issues during their community assemblies indicating political disempowerment in ecotourism. This aspect of empowerment can be confusing with the political empowerment that a community may have which is not related to tourism. In other words, the fact that the community does not like to participate in tourism which may implicate a lack of negotiation skills and capacity-building associated to decision making in the community, does not mean that the community has no political power. It means that the community has no political power in ecotourism. To be granted a land concession, local associations are required to provide CONAP with evidence of the majority's support for a concession, an environmental impact study and a 25-year harvest plan detailing how many trees will be cut and in which locations. Communities must also be well organized internally, and be represented by an NGO (of their choice) which will provide and transfer the technical skills needed to satisfy additional government requirements, including the production and implementation of annual work plans and master plans, the ability to manage the concession's finances and monitor forest resource use and the adherence to MBR rules and regulations. It should be noted that there was no forest clearing observed in the National Parks, including Tikal, El Mirador, Rio Azul and Dos Lagunas in the 1990s. This emphasizes the fact that

logging is reasonably controlled in protected areas and essentially all deforestation that occurred through the 1990's was within the Multiple-Use Zone of the MBR.

An addition to the empowerment framework used in this thesis was the environmental dimension of empowerment. Environmental empowerment was considered important as the communities investigated in this thesis have land rights and can rely in ecotourism as an alternative to preserve the environment. Uaxactun seemed to be more empowered environmentally compared to the two communities in Mexico. It is likely that the NGOs that have trained Uaxactun in conservation programs have already empowered environmentally the community, and therefore tourism is also seen as a sustainable development activity that triggers conservation. In the case study of El Naranjo the community has set their own rules towards conservation and has received training in conservation activities from CONANP. Although Palenque National Park is a rainforest remnant fragmented and isolated from other major rainforest reserves in the area, conservation efforts from CONANP have indicated that involving the community in training programs has an effect on environmental empowerment in the community. In Coba no government area of protection was identified influencing the village. The community of Coba had for long time incorporated hunting and some logging on their subsistence activities. However, ecotourism has taken over these activities and has reduced the threat of unsustainable forest activities. The environmental empowerment is associated to the extent of economic benefits that ecotourism bring to the community. They now have a commitment for conservation because it adds value to the ecotourism experience, which therefore is related to profits. In conclusion, the three communities indicated that environmental empowerment is achievable and it is related to the extent that ecotourism brings economic benefits, which means that economic empowerment can trigger environmental empowerment and therefore, the Maya rainforest will be preserved in their communities.

7.3 Conclusions

The villages investigated in this thesis are framed under a scheme of land protection for environmental and archaeological conservation. The old-school of Protected Natural Areas in Mexico has moved to a more participatory process of environmental

management in Protected Natural Areas. However, the administration of Archaeological Sites had long time a focus on archaeological research only, without any powers to incorporate local communities. While in Guatemala IDAEH works in a similar way to INAH, in Mexico CONANP is an institution that does not face the limitations of CONAP in Guatemala in terms of funding and expertise. For this reason, international donors and multinational NGOs have targeted many communities in Guatemala which somehow differs from the Mexican scenario. Additionally, sustainable development in biosphere reserves involves balancing four complex and dynamic phenomena: the state, NGOs, local communities and the environment. The state is responsible for their creation and protection; NGOs implement conservation and development projects. It follows that the people who inhabit a place should have the opportunity to participate in negotiations about land use and the meaning of landscapes.

Ecotourism in traditional villages living in the Mayan Rainforest has failed to achieve its goals of social development associated to conservation because the revenue generator or the demand side, namely tourists, occurs in a low rate within the scope of local communities. Additionally, there are a number of reasons why the private sector remains focused in just a handful of traditional communities living in the Mayan rainforest to promote community-based tourism. Most communities are not cost-effective for tour operators to visit as their location increase logistic expenses and time. This study shown that the community with better road access resulted with a bigger tourism demand and more empowered compared with the other two villages where access was limited to a 4 wheel drive road. This agrees with the International Fund for Agricultural Development which in its Rural Poverty Report listed a number of obstacles for small farmers. Among the main problems mentioned were the distance from markets, lack of roads and communications infrastructure, lack of market information and business skills, as well as a lack of political power on the part of small farmers to influence the terms upon which they participate in the market (IFAD 2001). However, increase in transportation infrastructure has been contested in public planning due to the impacts associated with accessibility to remote areas. For example Pi-Sunyer, Thomas and Daltabuit (2001) pointed out that the construction of the highway linking Coba with Tulum not only put this interior village on the tourist

itinerary but was chiefly responsible for bringing it into the orbit of powerful market forces. While tourism has clearly been the engine of economic and social transformation in Quintana Roo, from the beginning it was linked to official development plans responding to national, rather than local, initiatives and priorities with regards to the MBR. According to UNESCO (2005) increase in road infrastructure has also increased the ease and attractiveness of immigrating to the MBR. In the MBR access through roads enabled migration and attracted interest from logging and oil extraction operations. As of the mid-1990s, the annual growing rate in the region was nearly 10%, of which 6.6% stemmed from immigration. Juska and Koenig (2006) also pointed out that deforestation in the MBR directly correlates with roadways and considered that although oil extraction activity has been halted, it is still under pressure as the Guatemalan government continues to seek out petroleum extraction opportunities in the area. While small and poorly maintained access roads are plentiful in the MBR and already threaten the environment, at least one proposed highway construction project is currently threatening to multiply access within the reserve and severely increase the threats to wildlife and human populations within it. Communities are left with few resources to develop their own tourism infrastructure or create other income generating activities.

Distance from markets should not be measured only in physical terms. In tourism marketing, it may also refer to some form of socially and culturally determined distance between rural service providers and their markets. In the context of tourism, the market may be considered as representing the (potential) buyers of a product, which reflects the dominant thinking in marketing literature (Kotler, 1991). A lack of adequate roads connecting urban centers with community-based tourism ventures discourages tourists from visiting the sites and from buying the tourism products. Another reason on why tour operators do not involve in tourism is that most of the local tour operators are not visionaries, concentrated in the current demand, instead of trying to take advantage of the new opportunities to market.

Compared to the other two case studies, tourism demand in Coba has also resulted in a more prepared and organized community for tourism. Additionally, this village is settled in the surroundings of Coba Archaeological Site. Conversely, in the other two communities investigated, there was a lack of paved roads to connect the community

to major tourism towns such as Palenque in Mexico and Flores in Guatemala. Additionally, these two communities differed from Coba in that they were a few kilometers far from the Archaeological Sites of Palenque and Tikal, which represent the centers of tourism attraction in these areas.

In an effort to track the process of ecotourism in local communities, this thesis has concluded that in a typical scenario of ecotourism development the first actor is the government by developing policies and legislation to, for example, recognize communities land rights, protect natural landscapes and declare national parks or archaeological sites. Additionally, the government establishes the legal framework through regulations and administration. Another government sector provides communication and transport systems, e.g. roads, airports and public services. Without the above mentioned features, development of ecotourism is unlikely to be successful, although not impossible.

In a second stage, tourists had started to visit some communities and tour operators commenced to promote ecotourism with a few communities. Tourism involvement is, together with local communities' involvement, paramount in community-based development.

By training and funding community projects, NGOs have involved with communities filling government gaps in terms of achieving sustainable development including ecotourism. According to Ashley and Garland (1994) for community tourism producers, the opportunity to start small with very basic facilities is essential. Communities depend on access to information about advantages and disadvantages of various approaches of community-based tourism development. NGOs could transmit this knowledge, thus, they need to get aware first. Many NGOs focus on income-generation, enterprise development, or use of agricultural land and are not aware of tourism potential. There are many stakeholders involved in community tourism potential and they all have the possibility to benefit or prejudice it. Efforts should be made to coordinate community-level training initiatives with other government and NGO training programmes, and with the guide training program planned by the tourism private sector. Strong community institutions should be seen as a critical component in the link between tourism development and the national objectives.

Toward this end, government and NGOs should continue to cooperate closely to develop community tourism enterprises.

On a different note, NGOs and government constitute the theoretical part of ecotourism, because they normally focus on leaving the setting ready once tourism starts to arrive. However, NGOs and government departments are normally not responsible of tackling the demand side, except from the Ministry of Tourism in Mexico through the Council of Tourism Promotion, and in Guatemala through the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism. Although theory is important, in the case of community-based ecotourism the practical part, where there is a real influx of tourists looking for services in, or near the community is essential for a community to get empowered in ecotourism.

NGOs and government programs have failed to involve local communities in tourism, although Mexico has more practical understanding of how to involve local communities in tourism when it is compared to Guatemala. After the Mexican Revolution, the *Mexican Constitution Act of 1917* established land rights for organized groups of Mexicans. Similarly, once the Peace Agreements that officially ended Guatemala's civil war were signed in 1996, the government has been required to provide land tenure to all Guatemalans including Guatemalan refugees that had previously fled to Mexico and Belize. These land rights, along with all the aspects previously discussed before, have concluding implications on ecotourism empowerment and the framework used in this thesis offers an opportunity to assess components of empowerment and disempowerment with villages in other settings.

As this thesis shown, empowering local communities is important when it comes to sustainable development of ecotourism. The villages investigated showed three scenarios of empowerment in ecotourism and interesting conclusions have been pointed out previously. Ecotourism resulted to be an activity with trends towards empowerment in Coba whereas in the other two communities there was a trend to disempowerment. Although El Naranjo is not a community empowered in ecotourism, the ejido Emiliano Zapata, for example, has begun an ecotourism project that provides hiking trails through the Montes Azules Biosphere reserve with local guides. The community is located near Lake Miramar southeast of Ocosingo. The ejido offers traditional style communal houses and local camp areas for travelers. Travelers can

explore caves, archaeological sites and hiking through the tropical rainforest. The ejido also sells local handicrafts in order to provide financial resources for the protection and conservation of the Lacandon rainforest.

The influence that the private sector has on ecotourism empowerment in the village investigated is paramount if communities are to be empowered. The relationship between the number of tourists that visit the community and the level of community empowerment in ecotourism indicated that the tourism industry can play an important role in community-based ecotourism developments.

Environmental empowerment was an addition to the framework used in this thesis to assess empowerment in the case studies investigated. This can be facilitated by external stakeholders through training in conservation programs and sustainable development. However, according to Sundberg (1998) a number of NGOs have flocked in under the guise of providing the social services that local governments cannot deliver, and they are now commonly regarded by international donors and governments as a means of filling gaps in public programmes opened up as the state withdraws from different development activities. They have earned reputation for being efficient because they operate on smaller budgets and tend to make the best use of available resources. Furthermore, the NGOs have been denominated vehicles of development, democracy and empowerment at the grassroots due to their participatory approach at the community level.

The issues raised in this thesis have revolved around the extent that *indigenous ecotourism in Mayan villages is driven by the scale of involvement of different stakeholders, resulting in the empowerment of local communities, which in turn should determine the degree of sustainable ecotourism development possible by the community*. However, further research needs to be conducted to confirm the relationship between ecotourism empowerment in a given community with the degree of sustainable development achieved. Additionally, it is important to trace other aspects that have facilitated or hampered the empowerment of local communities in ecotourism such as the marketing sector of tourism to better-understand the demand side behavior in one hand, but to also understand the supply side where communities have to have adaptation strategies to become involved in ecotourism as this is not a traditional activity for them. Another interesting aspect that needs to be further

researched is how community empowerment that has not been driven by ecotourism has, in fact, the potential to limit chances for ecotourism development in any community. This power awareness has many times been led to reluctance from community leaders to become involved in tourism activities since there is a belief that this activity would be a someone else's business or that it will dispose them from their lands. Additionally, future research using the *wheel of empowerment* will allow researchers to prove its effectiveness.

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