

# Mundo Maya: From Cancún to City of Culture. World Heritage in Post-colonial Mesoamerica

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Mexico has traded on its world heritage since the first inscriptions in the late 1980s, both to widen its domestic tourism offer of the coastal resorts of Acapulco, Huatalco, Puerto Vallarta, to North American and long-haul European visitors, and to promote a version of Mexicanidad to its own peoples. Since joining the NAFTA, presaging a more 'open' global economy, heritage and tourism have become twin but unequal elements in the country's economic development strategy. The promotion of the Mundo Maya linking heritage sites of pre-Colombian civilisations with the all-inclusive Mayan Riviera resorts of Cancún and Cozumel, has extended tourism development to the south-east and bordering countries. However, residual Mayan communities still inhabit these areas and service the resorts, but less so the heritage sites. The spatial relationship between these sites, city hubs and city resorts, is therefore explored from the perspective of international, national and regional policy towards heritage and tourism, and the fourth world communities whose inheritance is 'on offer'.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism, Mexico, world heritage, resorts, community

## Introduction

Mesoamerican civilization, like its art, is a complex of forms brought to life through a strange but coherent logic: the logic of correspondence and analogy. The history of these people, whether dealing with politics or war, is expressed, or rather manifested, in rituals and symbols. Like the conch shell, its history is both an object and a symbol, a screaming sculpture. Mesoamerican culture can be seen as an immense and dramatic ritual. The subject of this ritual, repeated incessantly in myriad variations, is none other than the myth of origins: creation/destruction/creation/destruction/creation... the abolishing of linear, sequential time: the myth (history) is repeated again and again, eternal as the days and nights, years and eons, planets and constellations. (O. Paz, cited in Cambiassi, 1997)

The following article considers the evolution and operation of (World) heritage sites in *Mesoamerica*, in particular the constructed *Mundo Maya* in the Yucatan/Quintana Roo region of south-eastern Mexico. This is considered from the perspective of Mexico's regional and national political economy in the post-NAFTA era. It examines the power relations between indigenous and state/dominant groups; and the marketing of Mayan living and monumental heritage as part of a 'hub and spoke' tourism trail, and as iconic symbols used to promote *Mexicanidad* ('Mexicanness') to visitors and to Mexicans. The relationship between city and resort hubs and the heritage sites themselves is assessed in terms of tour operator and hotel provision, and regional promotion and

place-making. World Heritage Site (WHS) status and impacts are therefore considered in terms of both the geopolitics of heritage site promotion, and the *fourth world* communities whose collective heritage is used for symbolic economic purposes, but who are marginalised in its interpretation and governance. The research on which this paper is based also draws on a larger group international comparative study of world heritage sites in the context of the political, physical and symbolic economies which drive their touristic and cultural formation, under a theme of *Development and Diversity: Social Exclusion and Economic Development*. This theme is also consonant, at least superficially, with a recent World Bank/UNESCO programme *Culture and Sustainable Development*, which seeks to develop a cultural agenda and criteria for development through heritage and tourism (Evans, 2001; World Bank, 1998a).

The attention now paid to heritage sites, monuments and patrimony has transformed this cultural aspect of late-20th-century society from that of benign, specialist and parochial concern to one of international focus, trade and debate. This arises due to the increased interest in conservation and preservation; the universalist effects of globalisation (Wallerstein, 1992); conflicts and environmental impacts (heritage 'at risk'); issues of identity, community development and social exclusion; and the economic benefits and costs of tourism. As Von Droste once pleaded, 'mass tourism risks loving heritage to death' (Von Droste, 1994, cited in Evans, 2001: 83) with heritage-based tourism a mixed blessing. The designation and institutionalisation of world heritage sites and monuments transforms their role as both economic and symbolic capital 'assets' with 'the complex inter-relationship between conservation and visitation that WHS status implies' (Shackley, 1998: 204). As UNESCO maintained over 25 years ago: 'it would be a mistake to assume that the (WHS) List is simply an ever-expanding tourist's guide to hundreds of wonders in the modern world' (1972). In reality, however, world heritage sites and 'wonders' have become just that – 'must see' symbolic attractions in cultural tours, itineraries, tour operator and tourist board marketing, with World Heritage Site award the equivalent of a Michelin Guide 3-star rating (Molstad, 1993).

This attention has been directed at the built ('cultural') and natural heritage, with the support of conservation through public and private (corporate and philanthropic) organisations. However, little consideration or study has been made by these same institutions of the social and cultural impacts of the twin effects of tourism and heritage development (Getty Conservation Institute, 1999). This is not surprising – dealing with inert physical and natural resources is a relatively uncontroversial activity, notwithstanding resource allocation issues and the pressures for modern development, as well as aesthetic and conservation arguments. Reconciling community and human concerns is, however, more complex, challenging and ultimately political – people answer back, 'heritage' is often contested and not fixed, and consensus may not easily be achievable.

As Shackley (1998: 205) also observes: 'The possession of a WHS and the development of cultural tourism can create a (spurious) image of long-term stability and the basis for establishing a national identity, or may become the focus for a new nationalism'. Heritage can therefore be a tool in political and ethnic assertion. It can be discarded (e.g. Lenin Museum); subjected to terrorist attack (e.g. Borobudur, Indonesia; Bamiyan Valley Buddhas, Afghanistan),

appropriated (e.g. Jerusalem's old city 'in danger' status proposed by Jordan, but not Israel); or as in the *Mundo Maya* case discussed here, used as a tool in tourism development and dispersion. Underlying the issue of social impacts are therefore the dialectical aspects of power and identity, which are played out in this case between the 'particular' and the 'universal' (Evans, 2002a; Wallerstein, 1992). These are manifested through local governance and governmentality – notably over land-use access, control, and subsidiarity; local amenities and protected sites coexisting with, or crowded out, by tourist usage and facilities; distributive costs and benefits – i.e. to whom do the benefits of heritage tourism and development flow, and who bears the costs: are they equitable? Finally, the issue of sustainability – *economic*, in a fickle international tourism market; *environmental* in terms of fragile sites, structures and ecology; and *cultural* in terms of identity and diversity and therefore representation and control over the management and access to these heritage sites and sacred places.

### **Culture and Sustainable Development**

The renewed interest now afforded heritage sites and monuments can be gauged by a recent initiative by the World Bank, in collaboration with UNESCO and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) entitled *Culture and Sustainable Development* (World Bank, 1998b). This programme seeks to develop a cultural agenda as part of the Bank's project development and financing assessment of projects in developing countries and post-conflict areas, particularly where heritage and 'at risk' monuments are located. As an indication of the Bank's involvement (and influence), heritage sites currently receiving finance as part of development programmes include amongst others: Angkor; Bethlehem; Bali; Spanish Town, Jamaica and Old Havana, Cuba (World Bank, 1998b). Intervention in Mexican cultural heritage includes a Bank programme to support sustainable management through the involvement of local communities and the creation of links between communities, government and the private sector. This includes 'expansion of successful community-based models for the conservation management of cultural sites; and the financing of small-scale programmes and activities which preserve and build upon living cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge and artisans products' (World Bank, 1998b: 7). No examples or funding of these initiatives are listed or provided by the Bank. Examples in Mexican locations such as Oaxaca (world heritage 'city'), tend to be limited to urban crafts markets and limited trading outside of heritage sites (e.g. Monte Alban and Mitla, Oaxaca – Evans, 1994b, 1999).

This programme is significant for two reasons. Firstly the Bank had lowered the profile of its involvement with tourism in the 1970s, following the short-lived establishment of a Tourism Project Department in 1967. However, by 1977 \$345 million had been committed by the Bank to tourism projects: 40% in Africa, 29% in Latin America and the Caribbean. The financing of tourism had therefore continued but not within a tourism policy framework, with projects arising through Environment, Urban Renewal, Regional and the newly established Cultural Heritage department. Examples include Petra, Jordan; Georgia; and cultural heritage developments in St Petersburg and Butrint, Albania – all World Heritage Sites (Evans, 2001). Secondly, the return to tourism as a mainstream

economic development sector in the guise of 'heritage' sought to reconcile the issues of community and economic development within countries undergoing reconstruction. It was also to respond to criticism of the Bank's previous disregard for the cultural/heritage dimension to development impacts, including notions of identity and diversity. From the Bank's position, this cultural development dimension to its lending policy is comparable with the adoption of environmental impact assessment and sustainable development criteria a decade earlier. In practice, however, this promotion of heritage and tourism development is focused on high profile 'cultural capitals' and urban heritage sites, locations where indigenous communities have largely been displaced over a long period of colonisation, and most recently, post-industrial gentrification. In South America and the Caribbean this includes Quito, Ecuador, Havana and other colonial heritage sites which are still intact or at least salvageable (Serageldin, 1999).

The collaboration with UNESCO and the WTO therefore reflects the acceptance that heritage conservation, tourism and economic regeneration are mutually supportive and viable strategies for development. The Bank's aim in developing a cultural component to its development finance programme is thus to:

Address the economic opportunities and requirements to mainstream investments in cultural heritage and the living arts . . . [giving] attention to questions of equity, social inclusion, the opportunities to redress conditions of poverty. Central to the Bank is the exploration of the crucial importance of a cultural base for national development, as well as for such diverse issues as tourism, investment in cultural activities and the essential role of culture in education. (World Bank, 1998a: 1)

How the Bank's profile and capability – this after all is a bank, staffed predominantly by bankers and experts such as engineers and environmental scientists – could deliver and evaluate such intervention, is not clear. Like World Heritage development, delegation and liaison with national government agencies is a prerequisite. Where these same agencies are part of the social exclusion, land-use conflict and ethnic-cleansing problems, such partnerships are unlikely to be effective. They are more likely to reinforce socio-economic divides and the exclusion of indigenous communities, especially from land access and ownership – key factors in heritage sites and adjoining lands.

### **Cultural Tourism – the Cultural Component of Globalisation?**

In Europe – West and East – cultural, or more accurately 'heritage' tourism is a prime and growing component of international and intra-regional visitor activity (Richards, 1996), as well as domestic tourism. Most visits to heritage sites are in fact undertaken by nationals (Prentice, 1993), until an area, whether city or resort-based, becomes primarily tourist-dependent. Heritage sites that fall within this trap inevitably move from their national/historical status to tourist zone, and crowd out local and citizen access, whether by price, carrying capacity or quality of experience ('authenticity', alternative site interpretations). World Heritage Site applications are often made by governments in order to manage this transition (e.g. Maritime Greenwich – Evans & Smith, 2000), but this is often either too late, or part of a tourism rather than heritage planning process. This

trend is accelerated by Europeans and other Westerners taking long-haul trips seeking cultural and heritage experience further afield, and one driver of eclecticism and the 'global village' (MacCannell, 1996). The relationship between 'residents' in historic areas and cultural tourist activity is complex, but an observation is that few (if any) residents inhabit the core historic centres and few of the workers who service the tourist and cultural facilities, who are drawn typically from a peripheral and urban fringe zone. Conservation, property gentrification (including tourist hotels) and corporate investment in architectural heritage has ensured that there are very few living communities in the touristic centres of Venice, Florence, or fashionable museum quarters of London, Paris and Madrid. One effect of this sterilisation of cultural heritage areas is the lack of regular (or authentic) exchange between host and guest, the absence of community amenities and a largely faceless and privatised built environment – the historic and cultural quarter as 'theseum' (Batten, 1993). The tourist generator countries and industry therefore export this phenomenon, with self-interest and having shown little resistance in their own countries outside of the conservation of the heritage fabric and immediate environs.

Compared with Europe, where regional development programmes have long supported heritage and cultural tourism (Evans, 1994b), in developing countries resources are meagre relative to need, with cultural sites neglected and even subject to destruction and looting (e.g. Angkor, Cambodia). Annually about US\$3m is made available by UNESCO's World Heritage Fund, mainly to Lesser Developed and Low Income Countries, to finance technical assistance to state organisations requesting help to prepare their nomination proposals, or to develop conservation projects. This averages \$2,500 per WHS. At the same time LDCs and emerging and post-conflict nation-states look to tourism as a prime economic source of hard currency and 'invisible' [sic] trade, with low entry costs compared with manufacturing and high-tech industrial investment. It is no surprise therefore that development aid and finance agencies are active in supporting government initiatives in conservation and infrastructure improvement (e.g. roads, hotels) with the heritage tourism economy and multiplier effects the prime rationale and source of payback of loans and access by the West. The extent to which local communities, living heritage and identity are considered in master planning and infrastructure projects, as raised by the recent *Culture and Development* initiatives outlined above, is difficult to determine, but nonetheless by its absence it is hard to defend. An infrastructure-conservation approach to heritage development, which has been the norm since the 1972 World Heritage Convention, seems ill equipped to place social and cultural diversity and impacts into the cost-benefit equations. It is unable to reconcile the very real conflicts and tensions between State intervention and compliance with international agency criteria, and local/regional governance and community concerns.

### **Tourism in Mexico – from Kan Kun to Ki-huic**

The Yucatan coast developed in the late 1800s from the cactus-derived sisal ('green gold') trade, which was a short-lived international export product used as a textile material before industrial production replaced this in Europe. Colonial style haciendas (now converting to speciality hotels) dot the flat, limestone

landscape from this period. In 1921 Fernando Barbachano Peon convinced a group of passengers to disembark from their ship and tour the Yucatan with him. He is considered to be the country's travel industry pioneer, paralleling Thomas Cook in Britain, and Fred Harvey in South West USA. Harvey first used native American women to ride the trains as exotica, stopping at craft souvenir stalls en route or even for two to three day 'Indian Detours' (Sweet, 1989). Today the Barbachano family operate hotel lodges (hotel, bungalows, haciendas) under the *Mayaland Resort* company at Uxmal and Chichen-Itza, only a short walk from the entrances to these world heritage sites. Fifty years later, a two-hour drive away to the Caribbean coast, an almost surgical approach to the first wave of resort development had 'created' [sic] Cancún.

Once virtually uninhabited, the area was computer-selected because of its near-perfect climate, peerless white-sand beaches, proximity to major populations (USA and Canada) and its pre-Colombian archaeological sites. (Evans, 1994b)

Not just scientific selection – the then Mexican President and international financiers (in)famously flew over potential coastal sites which were 'virtually uninhabited' where the previously occupied island of Cozumel, offshore Cancún, had apparently: 'Despite considerable development, managed to retain much of its charm from years gone by' (Mexicana, 1992: 3). Once a sacred place for the Mayans and for their descendants and a pilgrimage location for centuries, there are in fact several archaeological sites on *Kan Kun* island (Mayan for 'nest of vipers'), now home to all-inclusives, 200 hotels and a cruise ship terminal. From the first state-led phase of resort development, Cancún received 100,000 visitors in 1975 (75% nationals, 25% foreign), its first year of operation. Between 1975 and 1984 arrivals grew by 38% per year, representing one-tenth of Mexico's foreign tourists, and by 1989 it had become the single most popular destination, dislodging the Mexico City region, Acapulco and the traditional hispanic tourism centres of Guadalajara and Monterrey (Clancy, 2001).

By 1978 Mexico had become the developing country with the highest number of foreign affiliated hotel rooms, and by 1987 71% of the top two classes of hotels in Mexico were tied to foreign chains (Scheidler, 1988, cited in Clancy, 1998: 13). This did not, however, reflect an ultra-liberal free market position. In a country which had since its independence maintained several nationalised industries (e.g. petroleum, airlines) until the pre-NAFTA 1990s, Mexican state intervention in tourism has been one of strong investment incentives and state financing through FONATUR and supply-led hotel and resort expansion. The choice of this region also met government objectives of minimising a perceived threat from left wing and imported political influence from less stable Central American states. In 1991 Cancún received 1.9m visitors, of which 75% were foreigners, and today it is the biggest resort in Mexico and accounts for 30% of Mexico's foreign exchange from tourism. The growth in cruise visitors, which increased by 80% in the early 1990s, is also set to increase further with the development of a cruise ship terminal adjacent to downtown Cozumel island, offshore Cancún, part-financed by the World Bank. This will attract third and fourth generation ships carrying from 750 to 2,500 passengers. The World Bank's assessment of this development stressed local support because of the jobs that would arise. No

social, cultural or heritage factors were cited or considered, despite the wide area on which this major infrastructure project will impact.

The Mayan and Pacific coastal resorts contain over 40% of Mexico's 5-star hotels and receive 46% of foreign tourists and 54% of the country's foreign exchange earnings (*Observer*, 2003). Cancún had its profile raised again in 2003, as 'host' to the fifth Ministerial Summit of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Occupying 7,500 hotel rooms, 10,000 trade ministers and delegates had almost free reign of the resort, and the opportunity to swim with one of 36 dolphins imported from the Solomon Islands for this occasion.

Despite its reliance on foreign operators, Mexican companies have started to buy-back into hotel ownership and enter into international alliances, as its post-NAFTA status allows access to intra-regional and global markets and finance. However, as a result of its highly concentrated resort-led growth and a differentiated tourist market, by the late 1980s state officials were actively attempting to diversify attractions, promoting colonial cities and the Mayan Route (Clancy, 2001) – areas and cultural assets which had previously been ignored. The first World Heritage Site inscriptions in Mexico were not in fact achieved until 1987. The recent inscription of colonial towns in central Mexico (Hidalgo, Morelia, San Miguel d'Allende) reflect this trend towards more urban heritage tourism (and its European roots<sup>2</sup>), with the economies of scale and access they provide, in contrast to the many Mayan and other pre-Columbian sites that remain unlisted and undervisited.

Heritage tourism in Mexico is now therefore a key element in its tourism strategy, which had become over-reliant on US day visitors (98% of visitors and over 85% of overnight tourists come from North America); and on tourists to all-inclusive resorts (e.g. Cancún, Huatalco, Puerto Vallarta); and in response to the growth in cultural tourists from Europe and other regions. Cultural tourism and crafts-based production for both domestic, inter-regional as well as international markets therefore offer a more sustainable development route than the classic tourist resort lifecycle. Growth in arrivals are in large part accelerated by repeated currency devaluations, both pre- and post-NAFTA membership. In terms of arrivals from the USA and Canada, these increased by an annual average of 8% and 6% respectively during the immediate post-NAFTA years (1994–7) compared with 4% and –6% in the pre-NAFTA period (1987–93) (Smith & Pizam, 1998). The volatile tourism flows therefore reflect the currency crises and over-dependence on North America as both tourist generator, lender (via the World Bank and IMF) and capital investor. Hotel occupancy rates have also remained largely static, although hotel expansion has been achieved with over 10% more bedrooms over this period. Cancún has been the exception, consistently with the highest occupancy rate of 72%. However, the *sun, sea and sand* offer alone has, as elsewhere, begun to wane in Cancún, even with the promotion of sports tourism (e.g. scuba diving), and most tourism packages now include trips to the archaeological zones of the ancient Mayan sites of Chichen Itza, Tulum and Uxmal.

Given its peripheral location, migrant labour has served this expanding resort, mainly Mayan workers from villages and small towns on the peninsula. The pull of the tourism labour market has seen migration firstly to Merida, the capital city, where Indians worked in low-pay hospitality jobs. Through this exposure many learned some Spanish and began to wear Western dress and

sometimes English words were added to their vocabulary. With these skills Mayans travelled to Cancún, 'their final destination and the mythic site of a new life' (Hiernaux-Nicolas, 1999: 136). Today, nine miles from this narrow spit of land, where the lagoons, coral reefs and wetlands are no longer, a sprawling settlement has grown to over 300,000 people since the 1970s, 40% living without piped water or sewerage, and earning an average of \$10 a day.

### World Heritage Sites

The wedding cake outline of the Mayan ruins contrasts sharply with the humble thatch and adobe dwellings of the present Indians, descendants of the ancient builders. These were people who developed a calendar, a system of numbers utilising the abstraction zero, the first writing system in the Americas, and agriculture based on an accurate knowledge of astronomy and the seasons. (Lane, 1963: 82)

Chichen Itza was the major site of the post-classic Maya period. Settlers appeared as early as 300 BC with evidence of urban planning in AD 750. By AD 900 Chichen was a thriving metropolis of an estimated 50,000 people. The city was inexplicably abandoned in 1250 (theories range from famine, over-farming, disease to invasion), and was later reoccupied by descendants of the original settlers, only to be taken over by a Mexican tribe, probably the Toltecs, who superimposed its own culture and architecture. Prior to the Spanish conquests, sacred stones had been used by locals for building, to be followed by looting for the erection of churches. These sites were 'discovered' by European explorers from England and France (French archaeologists exploded some temples in search of objects and internal routes). The English artist, Catherwood, captured the beauty of the Mayan architecture with exotic and peasant scenes in a series of romanticised lithographs. This brought the image of the Mayan pyramids emerging from the Yucatan jungle, to a *Grand Touring* audience in Britain (early ships between the Yucatan and Europe expanded on the back of the sisal trade and an emerging merchant class). The American archaeologist J. Eric Thompson also put these sites on the map by the late 1800s, with Mexican explorers also extending their knowledge and access to the numerous ruins from the 1930s onwards. In the first sub-aquatic recovery mission in the waterhole (*Cenote*) at Chichen Itza led by Edward Thompson in 1904, the treasure trove included 30,000 pieces. Attempts to bring back major stone carvings to the US were blocked but many items reside in museums outside of Mexico (the British Museum opened its sponsored Mexico gallery in the mid-1990s). State (national and regional) museums proudly display their collections of pre-Columbian art and remnants, not least in the National Museum of Anthropology in Chapultepec Park, Mexico City which opened in 1964. These collections promote the sense of heritage and Mexicanness, which has been state policy since the Revolution. It exhorts artists and intellectuals to make better citizens and strengthen control over the populace, by promoting a new *mexicanidad* both to visitors and residents, but this effectively breaks the physical link and access of Mayans and other Indian communities to their own inheritance. Located in regional cities, they are beyond the reach geographically and financially (all



charge entry) and present no opportunity for interpretation or curation by *indigenas*.

Chichen Itza was inscribed by UNESCO in 1988 – the first Mexican sites were inscribed in 1987 such as Palenque and Oaxaca/Monte Alban – whilst Uxmal was not inscribed until 1996. This Puuc site flourished from AD 770 to AD 900 and, unlike Chichen, was never a ‘lost’ city (reports of its existence are dated as early as 1557, 15 years after the conquest of the Yucatan). The Puuc route links a cluster of Mayan sites a few kilometres apart (Kabah, Sayil, Xlapak and Labna). Other Mayan sites, including the oldest known of Dzibilchaltun, Mayapan, dot the province, but are not World Heritage Sites, an indication of both the arbitrary nature of inscription and limited conservation and site management resources. A heritage plan incorporating the whole historic region would serve as a more comprehensive approach than being left to the tourism marketing of the *Mundo Maya* and artificial Mayan route. The concentration of Mayan and other native Indian communities in the highlands of Chiapas, Yucatan and Oaxaca regions, and in neighbouring Guatemala, reflect the long-standing exodus south, away from encroaching urbanisation and political and land exclusion, as much as any post-colonial notion of *Mayaland*.

Here, as in other cultural (e.g. museums) and heritage sites, entry is charged for and controlled by state bodies who are staffed largely by *Ladinos*. Local Mayans and crafts traders can be found here and in ruins such as Mitla or Monte Alban, Oaxaca and who are tolerated as informal guides, but outside of the museum-system (and payroll) itself. The Mayans, whose descendants still inhabit this region (Davies, 1990), work as hotel staff and waiters, but are completely marginalised in the protection, interpretation and exploitation of the heritage sites and artefacts – the economic benefits from their inherited culture are effectively denied them. Guides are non-local university-educated Hispanics (Cheong & Miller, 2000). Mayan images, superimposed on heritage sites, adorn tour operator brochures to ‘Latin America’ and government agency logos and communications, and show smiling Indian faces and colourful crafts, but the reality is often the reverse in the heritage sites themselves. For example, in an attempt to exploit the heightened millennium market, Mayaland Resorts (1999) packaged the *Mayan Millennium* in which tourists would ‘Receive the Millennium surrounded by the magic and mystic of the renown civilisation, The Mayas!’ For a week at both Chichen Itza and Uxmal WHS, with an itinerary starting and finishing at Cancún and Cozumel resorts, the package included experiencing an archaeological excavation. On New Year’s Eve a ritual was performed supposedly by a X-meen or Mayan High Priest (in fact an actor), who bid farewell to the old millennium, followed by a gourmet dinner and Light and Sound Show. The Judao-Christian calendar and new millennium had no relevance to the Mayan community, who had developed its own accurate calendar and astrological system long beforehand. The ‘Light and Sound’ show in fact takes place throughout the year at both sites and is produced by floodlights cemented into the ‘protected’ structures. Run twice daily, once in Spanish, once in English, it is in effect a laser show beamed over the pyramids (on the summer solstice this event attracts over 80,000 visitors).

Questions of ownership, access and management of heritage sites and collections, although increasingly raised by indigenous groups and their vocal leaders, seldom feature in tourism promotion and planning or in strategies for commu-

nity and local economic development. In sacred sites around Mexico, their access and exploitation has been institutionalised along Western lines. This is hardly surprising given that both finance and conservation expertise (and financial assistance) is from Europe and North America (EU grant aid, for example under the Lôme Convention, is conditional upon European member state input, i.e. Western experts). As Nasution observes:

To restore their traditional culture and grand monuments, [the] first local heritage advocates . . . turned to former colonists for advice . . . but who misunderstood the complexities of cities that are not just living, but teeming with life . . . their local counterparts and cultural aficionados sometimes failed to translate the ideas of urban rehabilitation into local realities. (Nasution, 1998: 28)

### Resort-city Hub – ‘City of Culture’

Merida, the Yucatan provincial capital, is known as the ‘white city’ and was the former Mayan city of *Itza* prior to the Spanish conquest. The city centre was destined for the Europeans/Creoles, whilst to the west of the city two suburbs were to be occupied by Mayans, and one to the east the Atzcapotzcalco Indians who were brought into the city by the Spanish invaders. Later a northern suburb was created to house the ‘negroes and half breeds’. These suburbs, small townships, had their own native authority and representative town council under an Indian chief appointed by the regional governor. As exhibited in *Cuidad Museum*, Merida 1999, the centre in time gave over to the encroachment of these ‘suburbs’ which grew outwards taking their indigenous residents further from the centre, which as a result lost its geometric street layout and spacious form. Merida was designated the first *Americas City of Culture* in 2000, emulating the *European City of Culture* award first hosted by Athens in 1985. Whose cultures were being celebrated in this designation again was a question that was simply not asked (Evans, 2003), the indigenous communities and the layers of settlement were not communicated, nor celebrated in this festival year.

Merida also serves as the city hub linking the all-inclusive tourist enclaves of Cancún in the neighbouring Quintana Roo region and the intermediary heritage sites. They are largely accessed by visitors as part of day trips from these coastal resorts or from the city, served by fast road links (journey time one to two hours). The heritage sites suffer the day trip phenomenon familiar to many western urban heritage sites, from Athens (Acropolis), London (Tower of London, Westminster Abbey), Edinburgh Castle, to the historic quarters of Bath and Québec city (Evans, 2002a). It is little wonder that Westminster does not use the UNESCO logo in its marketing and introduced dual-priced entry for ‘non-worshipping’ visitors (Evans, 1998; Foster, 2001). This distinction is not of concern in Mexico – all entry is paid for, not once but twice. On queuing for entry to Chichen Itza for instance, the visitor passes two ticket attendants standing inches from one another. One issues a ticket from the heritage conservation body, the other from the tourist board. This apparent lack of joined up government also belies any trust and accountability (or cross-subsidy) between the tourism and heritage agencies. It is no surprise that museum and heritage agencies are under financial and managerial siege from the state government, unlike the more favoured tourism ministry, which dominates this power struggle.

## Community

Finally, the question arises of who is the community with a claim to heritage sites and their environs. The notion of 'community' can be considered in terms of four following uses (Urry, in Richards & Hall, 2000: 3):

- (1) The idea of community as belonging to a specific topographical location.
- (2) As defining a particular local social system.
- (3) In terms of feeling of *communitas* or togetherness.
- (4) As an ideology, often hiding the power relations, which inevitably underlie communities.

The living Mayan community met all four of these tests, although *communitas* is the most hidden and fragmented today (if it were otherwise this would be perceived as a threat by the state). As Richards and Hall point out, Lash and Urry (1994) and others (e.g. Sassen, 1991) have argued that the place-based notion of community is re-emerging as a vehicle for:

rooting individuals and societies in a climate of economic restructuring and growing social, cultural and political uncertainty. As political, social and economic structures based on the nation-state begin to be questioned, so local communities have come to be seen as essential building blocks in the 'new sociations' and political alliances . . . In this view local communities are seen as the essential receivers and transmitters of the forces of globalisation . . . (but also) the seat of resistance against the threatened homogenisation or globalisation. (Richards & Hall, 2000: 2–3)

The assertion of ethnic rights and a global 'voice' can also transcend national control, where:

An ironically reinforcing bond between local identities and international normative patterns leaves the state on the sideline . . . Thus, ethnic groups have secured, at least theoretically, international support in their jockeying for cultural recognition and political influence. (Jacobsen, 2000: 22)

However, for the residual and marginalised 'fourth world' communities located and displaced in *Mundo Maya*, this opportunity for mediation and Foucauldian resistance appears both hollow and sentimental. Edensor, writing on the exemplar World Heritage Site Taj Mahal, puts it more realistically: 'the processes of blending culture and capital have become increasingly dis-embedded from localities and become the provenance of an international class, who displace the paternalistic control exercised by local agents' (Edensor, 1998: 11), a view echoed most recently by Eagleton: 'The problem at the moment is that the rich have mobility while the poor have locality. Or rather, the poor have locality until the rich get their hands on it' (Eagleton, 2003: 22).

## Conclusion

What this example illustrates is that on the one hand the interpretation and 'ownership' of heritage should not be taken for granted or imposed from the outside, whilst on the other, notions of universalist heritage and 'rights' of (tourist) access to such monuments and sites are problematic, even imperialist.

There is the absence of genuine local community and cultural involvement in heritage site management and in some cases interpretation. The approach of private and public agencies and the tourism development process itself has followed a pattern of commodification. Most seriously, it perpetuates a system in which national authorities and power groups (including heritage intermediaries) effectively collude in international agency and corporate foundation programmes and development aid, using the dualistic heritage tourism and conservation rationale for intervention. A greater impact on patrimony would certainly be achieved by a more equitable distribution to a larger number and range of heritage sites and monuments. This would have the effect of both benefiting more local communities and heritage assets and in time spreading tourism activity over a more diverse area – a more sustainable and *Wise Use of Heritage* than is currently the case (Evans, 1999). Lord Rothschild, former chairman of the Heritage Lottery Board in the UK, remarked in 1998 that a 'Global Heritage Lottery' might be established to distribute heritage and conservation funds more widely – the present situation highly skewed winners and losers scenario – not so fantastic a proposition when one considers that Lotteries gross over US\$100 billion worldwide each year and the Heritage Lottery alone has distributed £1.7 billion to over 7500 projects in the UK (Evans, 2002b).

As Shackley advocates, greater application of heritage and tourism management planning, and the imposition of pricing mechanisms are also needed:

Large visitor numbers, poor interpretation, little available information, crowds, congestion and pollution affect the quality of that experience, a quality which can unfortunately only be maintained at a high cost. (Shackley, 1998: 205)

Who draws up, implements and enforces such plans and controls (e.g. pricing) is an equally important question. One must start with the inheritors and resident communities who have often stewarded heritage sites, but who are typically losers in the master planning process, and in the land-use and development aid distribution. The World Heritage Convention established a formal obligation for states to adopt a general policy, which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community (Article 5a). It is up to each member state, however, to define these 'properties of outstanding universal value' (Article 1). There are few cases of such community planning (and management) in practice and examples of cultural resources within which museums and heritage sites play an important part in the regeneration of communities (see e.g. Newman & Maclean, 1998: 149). The definition and delineation of who the community and constituency of a site are, also fails to reflect the displaced or those to whom heritage attaches but who may no longer be resident, or who may even be excluded from the locality itself. In Mexico a highly displaced community, including economic, political and racial migrants / refugees, also generates a highly mobile diaspora of family, friends, ethnic and tribal groups. They take advantage of low cost road travel by bus and coach, and arterial links such as the Pan-American Highway, which served to bring tourism to central and southern America before the growth of air travel.

Community involvement and cultural democracy may therefore need to extend to the displaced and disempowered and engage fair trading approaches

to heritage tourism (Evans, 2000; Evans & Cleverdon, 2000). In contrast to Mexico, for instance, pueblos in New Mexico retain resident control: some are closed to visitors, whilst others employ native tour guides and indigenous-managed tourist facilities ranging from ski-ing and gaming resorts to game-tours, crafts centres and museums (Evans, 1994a, 2000). It is also clear from the heritage tourism process that greater consideration of heritage education and awareness is needed, in some cases more so than in the conservation and heritage fabric itself. Without community involvement and a sense of ownership and pride in locally based heritage (and all cultural heritage sites have a *locale*), any investment is likely to be wasted and may create resentment of the more subtle but nonetheless destructive practice of heritage development. These magnificent structures, silent tributes to the Maya's vast knowledge of astronomy and the ability of their engineers, force us to meditate on the destruction of the Amerindian civilisations, initiated on a large scale by the Spanish Conquistadors and clergy of the great 'civilising' empires of Europe. As Cambiassi (1997: 23) reminds us: 'This destruction continues even today in the form of exploitation and denial of the cultural identity of the descendants of the Maya and other Amerindian civilizations'.

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### Notes

1. *Ki-huic* (Mayan for 'Market'). The Maya World Tourism Ki-Huic is held bi-annually, serving the Mundo Maya region (Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize). A travel trade market with a crafts Mayan World Fair attached, it is held in the Convention and Exposition Yucatan Siglo XXI Center, Merida City (Ki-Huic Turistico, 1999).
2. As Ashworth claimed: 'You cannot sell *your* heritage to tourists: you can only sell *their* heritage back to them in your locality. The unfamiliar is sellable only through the familiar' (1994: 2).

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