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Que Salgamos más Adelante: Identity, Community, and the Desire for Development in Oaxaca, Mexico

Lori Klivak
Syracuse University

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how the desire to *salir adelante*, to improve oneself and one's community, motivates townspeople to participate in development projects that promise to support and strengthen their pueblo. More specifically, I examine the material, social, and moral dimensions of progress and development, and the various ways indigenous people claim their place in the modern world. I am interested in the ways Zapotec people in Oaxaca, Mexico engage with development strategies and make them amenable to their own cultural practices and values. I am likewise interested in the extent to which the skills, habits, orientations and identities generated through development initiatives may contribute to the production of politicized forms of ethnic attachment in the struggle for indigenous rights.

I explore two very distinct arenas through which residents have pursued a better life. The first – community-based ecotourism – is a conventional, state-sponsored initiative that exemplifies current trends in participatory development. The second arena – the Seventh-day Adventist Church – is a more unexpected example of an organized effort to intervene in the lives of poor and marginalized people. It is an effort that seeks to advance a notion of progress and change, albeit in much smaller, less hegemonic, and profoundly spiritually ways.

Rather than rely on conventional economic or instrumentalist measures in my analysis of these two distinct but complementary groups, I elaborate on an alternative set of criteria for evaluating efforts to pursue a better life. These criteria speak to the broader social, cultural, moral and emotional fields within which these interventions take place, and include: the valorization of indigenous identity; support for the practices and values of reciprocity and service that make community; fulfillment of spiritual duties in the quest for salvation; and attention to

personal achievement, such as the cultivation of habits and dispositions that strengthen community participation.

My research builds on current discussions about the moral dimensions of development, the link between development and the production of local identity, and the value of the community-studies approach in an era of hyper mobility and globalization. By re-enmeshing community in place, I provide an analysis of how, why, and where people form meaningful, intimate, and actionable bonds, as well as the limits to identity-based solidarity and action. I find that residents' engagements with community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church both complement and strengthen local, pueblo-oriented identities. At the same time, they also exacerbate already-existing structural factors that challenge the rise of region-wide ethnic solidarities.

QUE SALGAMOS MÁS ADELANTE: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND THE DESIRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN OAXACA, MEXICO

by

Lori Coppola Klivak

B.A., Colgate University, 1998
M.A., CUNY Hunter College, 2004

Dissertation

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – In Pursuit of a Better Life.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Right to Stay Home	4
Context.....	10
Between Mestizaje and Multiculturalism – Being indigenous in Mexico	10
Describing the Research Setting.....	13
On the Rise of Protestantism and the Growth of Ecotourism.....	17
Local Identity and Zapotec Solidarity.....	20
Theory.....	22
Morality, Agency, and Spirituality in Development.....	22
Development with Morality	22
Agency, Participation and Empowerment in Community-based Ecotourism	26
Religion and Development	28
Ethnicity and Organized Change	31
The Work of Community.....	35
Comparative Themes: Exchange, Place, Body.....	41
Methods.....	44
Outline of Chapters.....	48
Chapter 2 – Histories of Progress: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Community-based Ecotourism in Perspective.....	50
Part 1 – The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez.....	50
The Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.....	52

The SDA Church in Mexico – A church for the marginalized	56
The Growth and Impact of the SDA Church in Benito Juárez	58
Adventism in Benito Juárez Today	62
Part 2 – Community-based Ecotourism in Santa Marta Latuvi	67
Development and the Roots of Ecotourism	69
Organizing Ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados	72
Ecotourism in Mexico	76
The Growth of Ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados	79
Ecotourism Development in Latuvi	83
Economic Impact of Ecotourism in Latuvi	85
Conclusion	89
Chapter 3 - “Walking with God”: Adventism, Leadership and Community Engagement	92
Tension and Harmony in Village Life	97
The Funeral of Señora Maximina	97
On Harmony and the Shared Experience of Conversion	102
Examining the Ethos of Engagement	106
The Role of Bible Study in Adventist Practice	108
Learning to Lead	111
History, Place, and the Impact of the Adventist Church	126
“We used to sleep on the floor”	126
Changes in Alcohol Consumption	131
Women, Youth, and Democracy	135
Religious Freedom	140

Conclusion	142
Chapter 4 – Local Community, Global Unity: Understanding Ethnicity in the Adventist Church	146
Introduction.....	146
Self-Identification in the Adventist Church and Beyond.....	146
Progress and Tradition in the Pueblo	152
Cleanliness and Godliness	152
Closer to Nature	158
Ethnicity, Unity, and the Possibilities for Solidarity	168
One Body in Christ	168
The End of Days and the Role of Social Justice.....	174
Conclusion	176
Chapter 5 - Zapotec Hospitality	180
Introduction.....	180
Understanding Hospitality	182
Affirmation, Transgression, and Ambivalence.....	183
Strange Encounters, Scale-Shifting, and the Meanings of Hospitality in the Modern World	186
Hospitality and the Morality of Exchange.....	189
A Welcoming Pueblo	192
A Promise of Welcome.....	192
Where Hospitality Happens	193
Everyday Forms of Welcoming.....	198

Seeing like a Host	202
Greetings	203
Responsible Citizens	203
A Changing Sense of Place	205
Hospitality and the Ethics of Giving	208
Balanced Reciprocity and the Role of Status	208
<i>Convivir</i> and <i>Intercambio</i>	210
Imagining Equality	214
The Limits of Hospitality	217
Transgressive Guests	217
Unwilling Hosts	221
Conclusion	224
Chapter 6 - Between Ecotourism and the Everyday: The Role of Culture Brokers in Community- based Ecotourism	228
Introduction	228
Culture Brokers	231
Quality in Service: The Art of Brokering Tourism	235
Talking to Strangers	241
Technology	246
Housekeeping	251
Routes	254
Culture Brokers, Unruly Citizens, and the Politics of Ecotourism	258
No Solo es las Cabañas	260

Voluntary Service, Paid Labor and the Real Value of Tourism Work	265
Community-based Ecotourism and the Production of Community	269
Distribution of Knowledge in Community-based Ecotourism	274
New Forms of Participation	276
Changing Roles for Women.....	276
A Challenge to Municipal Power.....	280
Conclusion	282
Chapter 7 – Conclusion.....	285
Defining Progress and A Better Life	285
Exchange.....	287
Place.....	291
Body.....	294
Contributions and Suggestions for Future Research.....	296
The Strength of Local Identity	297
Re-examining The Work of Community	301
Community Service, Identity and Ecotourism.....	301
Adventists Building Community	305
Toward Zapotec Solidarity	307
References.....	310
Curriculum Vita	329

List of Figures

Figure 1 View of Latuvi from the forest, December 2008	5
Figure 2 Map of Oaxaca state, Mexico. Copyright Tony Burton; all rights reserved	15
Figure 3 Map of Pueblos Mancomunados, District of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, Mex. sierranorte.org.mx. 15	
Figure 4 Adventist Church in Benito Juárez, May 2009	60
Figure 5 Small group bible study during the Escuela Sabática, September 2008	64
Figure 6 Latuvi in the early morning, before the fog has lifted, January 2009	68
Figure 7 Map of ecotourism trails in Pueblos Mancomunados, www.sierranorte.org.mx	75
Figure 8 A Sabbath School teacher leads a lesson on Josiah, July 2008	94
Figure 9 A group of Adventist children learn about Josiah, July 2008	95
Figure 10 Two women lead the Escuela Sabática, October 2008.....	125
Figure 11 Celebrating the Día del Niño Adventista in Benito Juárez, October 2008.....	138
Figure 12 A well-built fogón, in an Adventist household in Benito Juárez, September 2008 ...	154
Figure 13 The anthropologist's husband with a latuvense woman in her plum orchard, posing for a promotional photo for a photographer from SECTUR, April 2009.....	193
Figure 14 The cabañas in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009.....	196
Figure 15 Alternate view of the cabañas in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009 ..	196
Figure 16 A moss-covered tree near Latuvi's ecotourism office, before a fence was built, October 2007.....	229
Figure 17 Latuvi's ecotourism workers relaxing at the end of the day, April 2009.....	248
Figure 18 Inside an ecotourism cabaña in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, May 2009	253
Figure 19 A guide from Latuvi leading a hike out of town, March 2009.....	256

Figure 20 The ecotourism office in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009 261

Chapter 1 – In Pursuit of a Better Life

Introduction

Señora Victoria lives in a quiet corner in the outskirts of Latuvi, surrounded by the plum and apple orchards she planted with her late husband during the early years of their marriage. We sat together in the cool morning air on the shady side of her adobe home as she told me about her family life, about the year she spent cleaning cabañas for the community-owned ecotourism project, and about how the delayed rains would push back the season’s corn planting till May. As we talked, the chickens softly scratched and squawked in their nearby coop. Our conversation soon turned to communal service, and the range of ways people support their pueblo. I asked her to explain to me why it is important to villagers to participate in their community. “Well,” she responded, “we feel proud when we support our *pueblo*, when we help out the community, *a que salgamos más adelante*.”

The desire to *salir adelante*, to move forward, to make progress, to make life better, was a common refrain in my conversations with people in Latuvi, and in the nearby town of Benito Juárez. People understood themselves to be peasants of simple means and Zapotec heritage, who worked hard with the tools at hand – and in deeply communal ways – to create a better way of life for their families and their neighbors. A number of phrases captured this same sentiment, including *vivir mejor* (to live better) and *avanzar* (to advance). But “salir adelante”, more than those other terms, captures the grit and determination required to face the challenges and hardships of pueblo life, as when someone says *tengo que salir adelante* (I have to keep going) despite the problems they face.

This dissertation examines how this desire to “salir adelante” motivates townspeople to participate in development projects that promise to support and strengthen their pueblo. More specifically, I examine the material, social and moral dimensions of progress and development, and the various ways indigenous people claim their place in the modern world. I am interested in the ways Zapotec people in Oaxaca, Mexico engage with development strategies and make them amenable to their own cultural practices and values. I explore two very distinct arenas through which residents in two rural, indigenous pueblos have pursued a better life. The first – community-based ecotourism – is a conventional, state-sponsored initiative that exemplifies current trends in participatory development. The second arena – the Seventh-day Adventist Church – is a more unexpected example of an organized effort to intervene in the lives of poor and marginalized people. It is an effort that seeks to advance a notion of progress and change, albeit in much smaller, less hegemonic, and profoundly spiritually ways.

Though very different, community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church share similar social space and address similar sets of practices in the name of progress and the achievement of a better life. By examining these two efforts side by side, this dissertation contributes to recent scholarship that expands the conversation about positive development outcomes beyond typical measures of economic growth or the expansion of infrastructure. I examine alternative criteria for evaluating efforts to pursue a better life. These criteria speak to the broader social, cultural, moral and emotional fields within which these interventions take place, and include: the valorization of indigenous identity; support for the practices and values of reciprocity and service that make community; fulfillment of spiritual duties in the quest for salvation; and attention to personal achievement, such as the cultivation of habits and dispositions that strengthen community participation. Finally, I link the conversation

to indigenous social movements, to examine the ways that the skills, knowledge, and habits formed through development initiatives (both the secular and spiritual kinds) may contribute to the struggle for indigenous rights in Oaxaca.

Throughout my research, I frequently confronted the complexities and local contours of this desire for a better life, and especially of the desire to accomplish that life in a place-based way. In other words, while people were attracted to some of the securities, conveniences, and opportunities for personal betterment that modernity has to offer, many were highly committed to carving out their “better life” in their beloved pueblos. In an attempt to honor this desire, this dissertation examines what people do within their own spheres of influence – with networks, habits, knowledge, dispositions, skills, ideals, and commitments developed in relationship to those spheres – to imagine and enact change and morally grounded progress in their community.

My research builds on current discussions about the moral dimensions of development, the link between development and the production of local identity, and the value of the community-studies approach in an era of hyper mobility and globalization. By re-enmeshing community in place, I provide an analysis of how, why, and where people form meaningful, intimate, and actionable bonds, as well as the limits to identity-based solidarity and action. I find that residents’ engagements with community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church ground the experience of progress and modernity in locally salient codes of authority, service, reciprocity, and place-attachment, as well as local values related to personal betterment in the name of communal participation. While ecotourism and Adventism both complement and strengthen local, pueblo-oriented identities, they also exacerbate already-existing structural factors that challenge the rise of region-wide ethnic solidarities. These include the impact of the

funding model and capitalist-orientation of ecotourism, which encourages competition between pueblos, and the influence of Adventist eschatology in building a cause for social justice.

The Right to Stay Home

One day in mid April, as the dry season neared its close, I set out on the dusty road leading south from the center of Latuvi to the distant barrio of El Manantial. The cool night had long since given way to the hot day, and the sun's strengthening rays were tempered here and there by drifting clouds in the cerulean sky. For several weeks, people had been eagerly anticipating the arrival of the first substantial rains and readying work parties to plant corn in the *milpas* (small agricultural plots) once the ground was wet. Until that time, they waited patiently while occasional, short-lived showers drove pockmarks into the dusty roads, elevating the scent of dampened earth into the air. Logging activities in the mountains had intensified, with the knowledge that the strong rains of June, July and August would make the work too dangerous and the mountain roads impassable.

After walking for nearly an hour, I arrived at the entrance to El Manantial. The barrio is small; only about a dozen families live here, compared with the nearly 70 households in the center of the village. Many families have moved to the center of town to have better access to municipal services like schools, running water, and the health clinic. Families who choose to stay in these disperse barrios trade long walks to the town center for easy access to the agricultural fields that surround their homes. Some households continue to farm on ranches deeper into the forest, carting supplies several miles along trails used by generations of *campesinos* or, more recently, in pick-ups on dirt roads cleared for logging, (though in general this type of farming is less common than it was a generation ago).



Figure 1 View of Latuvi from the forest, December 2008

From the entrance at the top of the road, the entire barrio swirled out in front of me like a large, steeply concaving cul-de-sac in the dead-end of a forested valley. Unlike the other neighborhoods of Latuvi, the microclimate of El Manantial (“the spring”) is appropriately more lush and wet and green. For several weeks in April, many households harvest peas, a crop unique to this corner of the town. On this particular day, the emerald plants filled in the dry patches of the landscape, and from a distance it was difficult to tell where the forest ended and the field began. Down the hill, Sr. Mateo¹ was broadcasting traditional Mexican *banda* music from his store, and the recordings filled the open air of the barrio’s caldron-like landscape. I followed the music down the winding road, around the tree-lined bend, till I reached Sr. Mateo’s store. As I entered the wooden building, I greeted Sr. Mateo in Zapotec, “Padiusi!”. He answered back in his worn, high-pitched voice, “Padiusi!” as we shook hands. A small, slight man, he walked delicately to a set of white plastic chairs, his bad back the result of a lifetime spent working in his fields. Our interview lazed out over the course of the next two hours, as we

¹ I have given pseudonyms to all community members, unless otherwise noted.

were regularly interrupted by a steady trickle of customers, men and women on their way home from the field and chores, picking up a few necessities or to share a quick drink.

At one point, our conversation turned to migration. Sr. Mateo never lived outside the pueblo, but several of his six children worked in Los Angeles before returning to Latuvi. “When my children told me they were leaving”, he said, “I told them, sincerely, ‘Go, then, and see for yourself if there really is something better than what we have here.’ That’s how people learn to appreciate that it is better here. When they migrate, sometimes they suffer a lot, it’s hard to find food. But here, frankly, no one dies of hunger. Here, the land is productive. So long as it rains, we are fine.” Sr. Mateo’s words echoed a set of concerns I heard over and over again in Latuvi, and in the neighboring pueblo Benito Juárez. On the one hand, people are drawn to leave the pueblo, chasing the promise of a better life. They desire the chance to earn more money, access modern goods, and secure a better education and a less arduous future for their children. Life in the pueblo is difficult; money is scarce, schooling and health care limited. Most families live hand-to-mouth, hoping this year’s crop of corn will be good enough to provide a year’s worth of tortillas, that no one falls ill, or if they do, that there will be sufficient waged labor to earn the extra pesos to cover the bills. When there is work, it is usually physically demanding: plowing or harvesting a field, washing clothes or cleaning house in the city, felling trees in the forest, building a house. Families must make sacrifices to fulfill their obligations to the pueblo, forfeiting the labor of one adult member of the household every 2 or 3 years to serve a *cargo*, a mandatory but unpaid civil service position. For these reasons and more, people choose to leave the pueblo, and the rate of migration has increased steadily in Latuvi and Benito Juárez in the past two decades.

Yet, many people return. For those who have come home, and for those who have

chosen to not leave in the first place, there is a strong sense that pueblo life is dignified and worthy. There is always something to eat, wild greens in the fields, dried corn from a previous harvest, eggs from the chickens, beans in storage, squash and potatoes in abundance. And if your food supplies come up short one day, a relative or neighbor can be called upon to help see you through. Land is free, a right conferred to all citizens of the town. Residents also have access to resources in the forest – wild mushrooms, herbs, firewood, and game. The air is clean and the water piped in directly from a mountain spring. In other words, pueblo life is a secure, if far from lavish life. And for those who prefer a peasant lifestyle to an urban one, pueblo life is easier. In the city, I was often told, you must earn money to pay for rent and food. Your time and your labor are not your own. You are always in a rush, no time for a meal with family or a visit with friends. You do not know your neighbors, and there is no one to turn to during hard times. The air is hot and dirty, the streets crowded, the people unfriendly, even dangerous. The food, processed and packaged, is unsatisfying and unhealthy.

For some, then, pueblo life is a good life. These people desire strong community and actively commit to building and sustaining one. Despite this strong sense of value about Zapotec way of life, people in Latuvi and Benito Juárez did not invest their hopes and precious energy into collective action or political organizing. I must admit, when I began my research, I fully expected to encounter people articulating a robust and self-conscious attachment to “indigenous identity”. Particularly so at a moment in history when indigenous activists have made such inroads in effecting multicultural legislation, development priorities, and the human rights agenda. The state of Oaxaca itself is brimming with activities designed to raise consciousness about indigenous issues. In the mid-1990s, Oaxaca became the first state in the nation to legislate multicultural governance. The state is a hotbed of NGO activity, and organizations are

drawn to the region's cultural and environmental diversity alike. Pueblos throughout the state – including those neighboring Benito Juárez – actively promote themselves under the framework of indigeneity, organizing for the right to traditional government, economies, and languages, vying for development, and generally asserting their rights to difference.

Instead, I found that *rancheros* and *latuenses* generally had little understanding of or solidarity with the indigenous rights movement. Rather than being a proud, self-conscious, politicized identity, “Indigenous” was more commonly used derisively and applied to other “less modern” people. And while people repeatedly pushed back against my attempts to label them indigenous, it was not a neat rejection. In everyday spaces, people seemed to connect more easily with a cluster of quotidian practices normally associated with indigeness, such as attachments to land, livelihood, and food. It was clear that some elements of “indigeness” were more agreeable than others. Rather than joining movements and mobilizations, residents seek to improve their lives and defend their “right to stay home” (Bacon 2008) in large part through conventional structures of state-sponsored development. Some are including a vision of the religious in their struggle. They seek their better life in a situated and place-based way – they want to stay in the pueblo. Being-in-the-pueblo and being-in-community is profoundly important, as a set of affective ties, as well as a material basis for family and social life.

By comparing the Seventh-day Adventist Church and community-based ecotourism – two distinct projects that nevertheless share the goal of fundamentally altering the community – I show the limits and possibilities of both. I examine development as a set of practices, resources, discourse, and ideas; in other words, development is a toolkit with which people actively defend and (re)produce their community. My examination of the specific, day-to-day ways Zapotec people engage in these projects focuses on a core set of questions. How do people in Benito

Juarez and Santa Marta Latuvi define progress, modernity, and a “better life”? To what extent and in what ways are residents able to make their projects amenable to these local needs and desires? What roles do “community” and “ethnic identity” – as moral codes of conduct, deeply felt attachments, and clusters of practice – play as residents define their needs and craft development that is accountable to those needs? To what extent do rancheros and latuvenses derive a sense of dignity, value, self- and communal-worth, and empowerment through their interactions with secular and religiously based development? And finally, what are the forces associated with a morally accountable development that strengthen or weaken ties to indigenous organizing and the generation of proud, self-conscious indigenous identities?

When I initially designed this research, I had intended to analyze the question of identity formation and whether and to what extent each project might be encouraging its own unique articulation of indigenusness. In the field, I quickly found that people were largely unconcerned with and unconnected to the larger conversations and actions on indigenous rights. What I did find was that people had a lot to say about their own pueblo as a place that has managed to *salir adelante*. They believed themselves to be a collection of people ready and willing to engage with development. Their sense of community identity and value was tied to their understandings of themselves as having progressed.

In Benito Juárez specifically, I found that these notions of progress and development were particularly important for Seventh-day Adventists, who claimed that their religion has provided a unique set of material, personal, and spiritual tools by which they had made life better in their pueblo. This experience prompted me to seriously consider Adventism as a form of development, as a coordinated and intentional effort to affect change, to progress, and to achieve a better life. It also allowed me to provide a detailed – and I hope sensitive – exploration of what

it means to be Adventist in Oaxaca. While many studies take on the issue of conversion and religious change, they tend to do so within a change-rupture-withdrawal paradigm, rather than seeing Protestantism as a nuanced and multi-faceted expression of the contemporary indigenous experience. Many of these same studies tend to paint “Protestantism” with a broad stroke, rather than exploring the peculiarities of particular denominations; among those that are denomination-specific, there is very little treatment of Seventh-day Adventism.

While it does not always provide a neat comparison, examining Adventism alongside community-based ecotourism has prompted me to consider the role of “inner transformation” (Ter Haar 2011a) as a indicator of development success, and to seek other broader, non-economic ways that people address, value, and achieve the promise of development. Although it was not obvious to me in the field, these experiences with development – as uniquely Adventist and uniquely ecotourism-based – appear to have quite a bit to do with the possibilities and limits of indigenous organizing in Oaxaca, as these projects at times strengthen and at times weaken already-existing patterns of ethnicity. Comparing Adventism and ecotourism has allowed me, unexpectedly, to flesh out the contours of these dynamics in a much more contextualized and particular way than I had imagined possible at the start of my study.

Context

Between Mestizaje and Multiculturalism – Being indigenous in Mexico

Following the Mexican Revolution, nation building in Mexico depended on the ideology of *mestizaje*, the racial mixing of Spanish and Indian into one *mestizo* (mixed) race. According to this ideology, while indigenous blood contributed to the ‘cosmic race’, indigenous cultural practices were considered a hindrance to modernization. From the 1930s until around the 1980s, Mexico

attempted to resolve this “Indian problem” through development interventions, primarily in the form of educational and economic projects designed to fully incorporate its indigenous peoples into the modern nation (Hewitt de Alcántara 1984). Mestizaje had the simultaneous effects of glorifying the historical contributions of Indians while undervaluing the lives of contemporary indigenous people (Bonfil Batalla 1996; Mallon 1995).

Over the past several decades, however, being indigenous in Mexico has taken on new political and social meanings. Strong social movements, such as COCEI on the Isthmus of Oaxaca (Campbell 1994; Rubin 1997) and the Zapatistas in Chiapas (Collier and Quaratiello 2005), and the more recent uprisings of the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, or APPO (Stephen 2013) have brought indigenous people’s concerns to national and international attention. A growing transnational human rights discourse (Niezen 1993; Niezen 2003), including the 1989 passage of the International Labor Organization’s Resolution 169 defining the rights of indigenous peoples, has continued to pressure the Mexican government to recognize the “multicultural”, rather than homogenous and mestizo, nature of its citizenry.

The history of ethnic relations in Oaxaca is further complicated by its large indigenous population and its long-standing, single-party rule. Oaxaca has one of the highest indigenous populations in Mexico – 37% of Oaxaqueños speak an indigenous language, compared to 7% nationwide (INEGI 2000)². Since the 1920s, Oaxaca’s single-party dominated government has sought to control this population and repress demands for autonomy through violence and propaganda on the one hand, and cultural celebrations of the state’s ethnic diversity on the other. More recently, however, the state has attempted to control indigenous people through multicultural

² However, language ability is not the definitive marker of identity, and so this number does not account for those who identify as Zapotec without speaking a related dialect, nor does it account for those who consider themselves – or are considered to be – Zapotec by virtue of geography, economy, or political policy.

legislative initiatives recognizing indigenous cultural identities and rights (Hale 2002; Smith 2007). Most notably, in 1995 Oaxaca granted indigenous municipalities the right to elect their authorities according to traditional law (Muñoz 2005a; Muñoz 2005b).

While these legislative changes may have the potential to strengthen indigenous political mobilizing, demands for autonomy, and positive group image (Eisenstadt 2007; Poole 2007), the fact that they have coincided with a deepening of neoliberal economic and political reform throughout Mexico, most notably the decision to end agrarian reform, raises cautionary flags. Hale (2002) has argued that the simultaneous withdrawal of the welfare state under neoliberalism and the legislation of multiculturalism selectively incorporates ethnic recognition in order to safeguard the state's dominant position by structuring the space of cultural rights activism and by legitimizing "acceptable" claims to rights and resources while ignoring others. Similarly, Overmyer-Velázquez (2007; 2010) claims that neoliberal reform in Mexico has established an opportunity structure that privileges articulations of *certain kinds* of Indians by making funds available to communities willing to "do for themselves". This image of self-reliant indigenous citizen seeking local, autonomous development has weakened indigenous leaders and activist ability to speak beyond community needs and to fully participate in national-level politics.

The above discussion highlights the ways in which indigenous people in Mexico, and particularly in Oaxaca, are contradictorily positioned by the historical projects of mestizaje and the more recent projects of neoliberal multiculturalism. Similar mestizaje/multicultural dynamics exist throughout Latin America, with similarly uneven and ambiguous effects (Hale 1996; Nelson 1999; Sanjinés C. 2004). The pushes and pulls of these competing projects, as they work along a continuum between eradicating and extolling ethnic difference, significantly impact the lives of contemporary indigenous peoples. It is no small wonder that in communities such as

Latuvi and Benito Juárez, where indigenous ethnicity and memory are bound up in the myth of mestizaje, people express ambivalence over the value of indigenous identity (Gould 1998).

Describing the Research Setting

The pueblos that are the focus of my research – Santa Marta Latuvi and Benito Juárez – are part of a cooperative of eight Zapotec pueblos called Pueblos Mancomunados³. Pueblos Mancomunados is located in the northern mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, approximately an hour and half drive along a paved highway from the city of Oaxaca. The combined population of these towns is just over 4000, with individual towns ranging in size from 150 to 1150 people. The common property regime was formed five centuries ago, when the three earliest settlements – Santa Catarina Lachatao, San Miguel Amatlán, and Santa María Yavesía – banded together to protect their land and trade routes against encroachment from neighboring towns, other would-be settlers, and the Spanish. By the mid 1800s, people established settlements farther south, to seek out new agricultural land and further protect trade. The current municipal structure is largely dependent on these early settlement patterns. There are three municipalities within Pueblos Mancomunados:

	Municipio #1	Municipio #2	Municipio #3
<i>Cabecera</i>	Lachatao	Amatlán	Yavesía
<i>Agencia Municipal</i>	Latuvi	Cuajimoloyas	-----
<i>Agencia Policía</i>	Benito Juárez La Nevería	Llano Grande	-----

³ Locally, people use commonly refer to “Pueblos Mancomunados” as either *los mancomunados* or *el mancomún*. I use all three phrases interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

Genealogy and settlement history are reflected in these municipal structures; for example, people of Latuvi recognize that their first settlers moved from Lachatao, and the people of La Nevería from Latuvi.

Though they have shared a forested land-base since pre-Columbian times, the towns of Pueblos Mancomunados formally organized as a Community Forest Enterprise in the mid-1970s, in order to reclaim forest resources from government-owned logging concessions. These concessions appropriated the financial benefits of logging from local communities and contributed to processes of deforestation that negatively impacted local agricultural livelihoods (López-Arzola 2005). Today, Pueblos Mancomunados develops local employment opportunities through the sustainable use of its forest resources – the organization maintains a lumber mill, several small mines, and a plant to bottle spring water and dehydrate local fruits and other produce. This organizing is not without contention, however; most notably, in the early 1990s dissenters from Yavesía attempted to force action that would dissolve el mancomún (Mitchell 2005:81), actions that were ongoing at the time of my research. It was often suggested to me that Yavesía was the least culturally and economically involved pueblo in el mancomún.

Proponents of community forest management in Mexico, such as that practiced by Pueblos Mancomunados, consider this form of land tenure to be a positive alternative to deforestation; such proponents further argue that community forest management has the potential to boost Mexico's forest production and overall competitive strength in the marketplace (Bray, et al. 2005:7). Oaxaca maintains a range of ecosystems and vegetation and boasts the largest diversity of plants and animals in Mexico (Chapela 2005:92-93); community forestry management in Oaxaca has assumed a leading role in modeling how local and indigenous

communities can best assume direct stewardship of their forested resources (López-Arzola 2005:111).



Figure 2 Map of Oaxaca state, Mexico. Copyright Tony Burton; all rights reserved

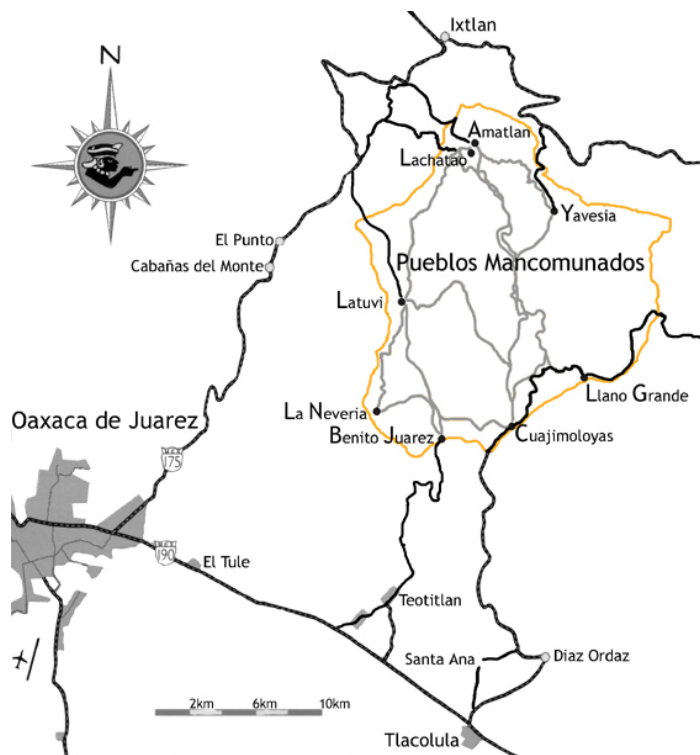


Figure 3 Map of Pueblos Mancomunados, District of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, Mex. sierranorte.org.mx

Zapotec is the largest of Oaxaca's 14 indigenous language groups, and it spreads across much of the central valley, northern and southern highlands, and isthmus region. Although they share similar linguistic origins, Zapotec people are an extremely heterogeneous group: local languages are often unintelligible to other neighboring and regional towns, dress is distinctive to village, and agricultural practices are extremely localized⁴.

Oaxaca is a mountainous state, with high peaks and sharp cliffs, and only a few valleys; soil and climate conditions vary widely. In the Zapotec communities in the northern mountains, as throughout much of Mexico, the main subsistence crops are maize, squash and beans. Slash and burn remains an important agricultural technology (Mathews 2005); agricultural production here is almost exclusively for subsistence, though small quantities of surplus produce may be sold to local stores or restaurants, or at the market. Very few haciendas were ever established in this region. As a result, lands occupied by indigenous communities that have been maintained continuously since pre-Columbian times remain communal property to this day, and have not been as affected by the post-Revolutionary *ejido* land reforms as other states, such as in neighboring Chiapas (Stephen 1998).

Municipal governments are commonly based in the civil-religious hierarchy, or *cargo*, a system of local level self-governance instituted by Colonial Spanish rule among indigenous communities in Mexico. Civil positions, ranging from mayor to police chief to school custodian, are filled on a voluntary basis, and cargo holders are not paid for their labor. The successful completion of duties brings the office holder a measure of prestige and respect among the community.

⁴ For ethnographic discussions of Zapotec economic, political, and religious life, see Gonzalez (2001), and Nader (1969, 1990), and Stephen (2005).

On the Rise of Protestantism and the Growth of Ecotourism

Over the past few decades, Protestantism has expanded by leaps and bounds throughout Latin America, a region that was once – as recently as forty years ago, even – almost completely Catholic. According to one estimate, Protestant churches represented nearly 15% of the total Latin American population in 2007, with significantly higher estimates in specific countries (30% in Guatemala, for example) (Steigenga and Cleary 2007:3). In Mexico, growth has been slower, but still significant, particularly in the past few decades – in 2000, 7.3% of the population identified as a follower of a “non-Catholic biblical religion” (Gross 2003:481). Throughout the Mesoamerican region, Evangelical missions have been particularly successful among the poor, and significantly in rural, indigenous regions (Dow 2001a). In Oaxaca, the most indigenous state in Mexico and one of the poorest, the rate of conversion has been faster than elsewhere in the country (Gross 2003:482).

The Adventists Church has enjoyed a level of success in Mexico, though it is far from the most popular of Protestant denominations, and is completely absent from a full third of the nation's 2443 municipalities. Rather than being widespread, Adventist conversion tends to happen in clusters in small, rural regions among the poor and indigenous. Very little research exists on Adventism in Mexico, despite its long history in the country (Castañeda Seijas 2004:17). This is true of Adventism globally, with the exception of the Pacific region (Keller 2005:46). Benito Juárez is an ideal place to address this gap, as it exemplifies many of the trends in Mexican Adventism. It is a rural, indigenous village with a medium-high level of marginalization, with approximately 400 residents, 25% of whom participate in the Adventist Church. My research offers a perspective on the peculiarities of this faith within the larger

Protestant diversity in Mexico. There is much popular and scholarly debate concerning the impact of conversion on pueblo life; unlike much of this literature, which sees disruption, conflict, and withdrawal, Adventists in Benito Juárez appear to be committed and engaged members of their pueblo. In the chapters that follow, I explore the peculiarities of Adventism that make it appear so amenable to community life.

In the early 1990s, Pueblos Mancomunados began an ecotourism project, promoting travel that furthers its larger goals to conserve the local environment and improve the welfare of local people. The original idea for the ecotourism project was presented by an affiliate of the Oaxaca Department of Tourism interested in expanding the state's tourism infrastructure. Ecotourism projects that prioritize environmental conservation and sustainable standards of living are considered particularly important models for economic development, to the extent that they create local jobs in rural areas and support the basic needs and dignified lifestyles of local populations (Barkin 2003).

Ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados is owned and operated for and by the pueblos themselves, and supports a range of employment opportunities: project coordinators; expedition guides; maids to clean tourist cabanas; restaurants to feed tourists; farmers who sell food to restaurants that feed tourists; and community members who give demonstrations of local food production, healing, and agricultural techniques to tourists. Each town decides for itself the extent to which it will participate in the project, according to local decision-making practices. If tourism authorities wish to build a new cabana or to add horseback riding to the list of activities available for tourists, all members of the town must be convinced it is the right step to take. In my discussion of community-based ecotourism, I focus on the role of cargo service as a

mechanism that grounds community development in the moral and cultural codes of the pueblo, and the relationship between ecotourism service and the production of local identity.

Both pueblos discussed in this study – Latuvi and Benito Juárez – have community owned and operated ecotourism projects. But only Benito Juárez has an active Seventh-day Adventist congregation. I had initially intended to study community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist church in Benito Juárez, as two projects that thematized “development”, albeit in profoundly different ways. I wondered to what extent each project promoted its own, distinctive way of being indigenous, and I expected that by studying them side-by-side in the same town, I would be able to flesh out the particularities of each project and how they related to members’ self-identifications. I soon learned that the ecotourism project in Benito Juárez was facing a delicate transition in light of concerns over mismanagement by the long-term coordinator and his staff. People were unwilling to speak with me in detail about the project, and I eventually decided to drop the ecotourism focus in Benito Juárez and concentrate solely on the Adventist Church.

Despite sharing common social and physical space, there is no institutional connection between the Adventist church and the ecotourism project in Benito Juárez. Adventists are citizens of the pueblo, and participate fully in town hall meetings, where they discuss and vote important issues of town management and governance; this includes appointing ecotourism staff (some of whom may from time to time be their fellow Adventists) and making decisions about the nature and direction of the ecotourism project. Beyond their capacity as citizens, however, Adventists have not taken a noticeable interest in ecotourism – they are not more likely to serve cargos, for example, and the church has made no formal attempts to support the project. During bible study and sermons, I did observe an ideological or discursive connection to ecotourism. As

I will discuss in Chapter 4, Adventists value their pueblo as a place closer-to-nature that likewise puts them in greater contact with the wonder and glory of God, and they occasionally commented that tourists similarly valued the pueblo. Adventists are also quick to point out that one of their own, a native-born teacher named Perfecto Mecinas who was raised in Oaxaca City but returned to the pueblo as the head schoolteacher for a few years in the early 1960s (see Chapter 2), was responsible for forging a friendship with an influential government agent, a friendship out of which emerged the original idea and the institutional support to develop ecotourism in the community. Again, it is important to note that the Adventist Church proper was not involved in developing ecotourism, and it did not offer any support to the initiative.

Local Identity and Zapotec Solidarity

Throughout the chapters that follow, I elaborate on the question of how, and why, certain labels of ethnic identity resonate with people in Latuvi and Benito Juárez, with a particularly focused discussion in Chapter 4 and in the Conclusion. Among rural, indigenous pueblos throughout Oaxaca, the strongest identity markers tend to be local and community-based (Mathews 2011; Mendoza Zuany 2008; Mendoza Zuany 2014; Nagengast and Kearney 1990; Stephen 1996). In other words, the most salient form of group identity tends to focus on the place of origin, the pueblo, rather than linguistic group (“zapoteco”), or region (“serrano”), or pan-ethnic identity (“indígena”). The deep colonial history of atomization, along with more contemporary political and economic arrangements, have firmly entrenched this orientation (Stephen 1996). Among Zapotecs in the Sierra Norte specifically – the region to which Pueblos Mancomunados belongs – the lack of robust organizing around issues of indigenous rights may

be dependent on this proclivity towards community-oriented identity (Mendoza Zuany 2008; Mendoza Zuany 2014).

I am interested in the relationship between this kind of locally oriented identity and the ways pueblos seek resources and implement development, as well as the potential for broad-scale organizing along ethnic lines. Mendoza Zuany points out that this trend in pueblo-based identity precludes solidarity building and hampers the struggle for indigenous rights (2008; 2014). To address this problem, indigenous activists and intellectuals from the region have developed the concept of *comunalidad*, a term that captures the essence of community-based social organization and way of life (Martínez Luna 1993; Martínez Luna 2003; Rendón Monzón 2004). They are attempting to build definitions of indigenusness based on shared regional communal practices related to service, citizenship and celebration, rather than ethnicity, for the purposes of solidarity building "to obtain the support of Indigenist policies and to become integrated into the debate on indigenous rights since the 1990s (Mendoza Zuany 2014:48)". By prioritizing these "daily cultural practices", indigenous leaders are "trying to capture the least politically visible part of 'indigenusness' occurring on the ground" (Mendoza Zuany 2014:48).

Though I would not go so far as Mendoza Zuany in saying that there is no ethnic identity in the Sierra Norte, I do concur that local forms of identity dominate in Benito Juárez and Latuvi, and that a regional sense of belonging – and an associated organizing effort for autonomy, development, or rights – is largely absent. This is particularly important, as the daily cultural practices indigenous activists and intellectuals are attempting to capture and harness for political ends are constantly shifting, at least in part as a result of the development initiatives communities seek, including community-based ecotourism. My study also addresses this question through the lens of religious pluralism, as Adventist practice appears to both complement community

orientations as well as further weaken the formation of some extra-local solidarities.

Theory

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the ways indigenous people visualize and enact change in their communities. I take a broad view on development, as a product and process of secular modernity that also has profound moral, cultural and spiritual dimensions, all of which inform and motivate the pursuit of a “better life”. I am also interested in examining development “success” beyond conventional, instrumentalist measures such as improved economics or infrastructure. This includes the attainment of new habits, skills, and dispositions; fulfillment of social obligations; strengthened communal relations; improved sense of pride and dignity in the self and in the local; gender parity; inner transformation; and salvation. Such an analysis requires an understanding of agency and the factors that constrain and enable indigenous people to choose and participate in their interventions. It requires attention to the ways that indigenous communities, places and identities are historically constituted and locally negotiated through development efforts. Finally, it requires a discussion of the extent to which indigenous people may be empowered to scale-up the practices and sentiments of community and ethnicity that they achieve (at least in part) through development into actionable bonds and a source of political agency.

Morality, Agency, and Spirituality in Development

Development with Morality

In the chapters that follow, I examine the range of ways residents experience development, and particularly the day-to-day ways by which they make their community-based

projects amenable to local codes of morality, conduct and ways of being in the world. My analysis is guided by recent scholarship that calls for a nuanced approach to study of development, and the specific ways that local organizations and communities manage these complex power relations (Edelman 1999; Gow 2008; Perreault 2001; Perreault 2003a; Robins 2003; Scott 1998). I am specifically interested in the ways development beneficiaries and citizens creatively enact their agency as they deal with the state and development interventions (Edelman 1999; Robins 2003; Scott 1998). Following Perreault (2003a) I see development as a diverse and highly contested process, and I seek to attend to the ways actors on the ground mediate and contest development interventions.

In my own analysis of the on-the-ground realities of development, I am particularly influenced by David Gow (2008), whose research takes seriously the ways that indigenous people actually desire development and hold out for the promises of modernity. These people work firmly within the structures and discourses made available through state-sponsored development. They want to engage with the state, but on new terms, struggling in the process to change the ways social power, success, accountability, citizenship, and a better life are defined, practiced and achieved (see also Harvey 1998; Krell Rivera 2012; Overmyer-Velázquez 2010).

Gow's research focuses on efforts to relocate Nasa communities in Colombia following devastating earthquakes in 1994. Despite natural disasters, persistent violence, and long-standing political and economic marginalization, the Nasa continue to struggle, demanding social justice, recognition, inclusion, respect, and a redistribution of the country's productive resources. According to Gow, the Nasa's struggle is guided by a "moral imagination": "an imagination that not only has some clear ideas about what is right and wrong but also some creative ideas about how these ideals may be realized (15)." The Nasa use their moral imagination to at least three

ends: 1) as a standard by which they can hold the state accountable to local norms concerning justice, authority, and the proper distribution of resources; 2) to engage creatively with the development process and to seek avenues that provide for a morally and culturally grounded development; and 3) and to (re)produce – locally and regionally – a shared sense of belonging and solidarity to their cause. Like Gow, my own research examines the moral dimensions of development – alongside material and political change – in order to provide a richer and more accurate way of assessing the limits and possibilities of development. This approach is particularly useful for appreciating local agency, and the extent to which people may desire development and modernity, albeit in grounded ways.

In order to talk about development, I use the concept “salir adelante”, which means literally to move forward or to make progress. People in Latuvi and Benito Juárez often used this phrase when talking about overcoming a personal hardship or set-back in their lives, as in “tenía que salir adelante”, I had to keep going. It is a phrase that, to my ear, captures the true grit and determination needed to face the hardships and challenges of pueblo life. It was also often used in discussions about intentional, organized change in the pueblo, as a justification or motivation for participating in development. As such, it also captures the deeply communal nature of development in pueblos like Latuvi and Benito Juárez. Residents give of their time and their talents in order that the *pueblo salga adelante*, so that the pueblo may progress.

But salir adelante is about much more than progress and change in the Western sense of the words. It certainly resonates with other ideas like development, modernity, civilization, and progress – but it cannot be reduced to any of these. It is development in a much more expanded and holistic sense, and it includes dimensions that are moral, spiritual, interpersonal, cultural, and personal, in addition to the economic and material. It indexes an approach to change that is

profoundly local, where the justifications and motivations for change are place-based and culturally embedded; they are “indigenous” in the sense that they are tied to the moral and cultural practices that emerge from particular localities.

It is not, however, a concept that evokes radical alterity. There is such a political project, espoused by Mexican activist and writer Gustavo Esteva (Esteva 2009) and others (Acosta and Martínez 2009; Gudnyas 2011; Walsh 2010) working within the framework of *buen vivir* (‘a state of living well’), which seeks an expanded and heterogeneous approach to defining and achieving a good life beyond the dictates of western-style development (Esteva 2003). In the case of *salir adelante*, modernity and that state are not shunned, but are welcomed and desirable elements. The state is expected to play a role in providing resources to the pueblo. The logic that guides the desire for change is deeply modern, for the criteria is not simply to do “well”, to fulfill one’s obligations (social, spiritual, personal, familial), but to do “better”. This requires introspection and categorization, an understanding of the self and the community as discrete parts that can be measured against external criteria and are amenable to change.

Salir adelante is a holistic approach to understanding the work of development, the always striving, always reaching ways people work within their own spheres of influence to attain a better, more modern, healthy, comfortable, spiritually satisfying, personal fulfilling life. For all its modern sensibilities, it is also an approach to development that is unequivocally communal. It includes a vision of the community, not as a dot on the map, but as a collection of processes and practices of place – including relations of land and nature; practices of citizenship; a sense of history, and particularly an understanding of a shared sense of justice/injustice vis-à-vis that history; and the workings of a higher power, the cosmic ordering of things, and the

responsibilities that bind the sacred to the earthly – that tie a collection of people to a locality in an enduring way (Escobar 2008).

Agency, Participation and Empowerment in Community-based Ecotourism

As I attend to the question of local experience and the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of development, I pay particular attention to issues of agency, participation, and empowerment. The contemporary trend toward community-centered and participant-driven approaches to development, of which community-based ecotourism is an example, claims to be more sensitive to these local-level issues. The approach was brought to the mainstream by Robert Chambers (1983; 1997), who emphasized the importance of allowing people to articulate their own concerns, to identify their own needs and resources according to locally meaningful criteria, and to be empowered to implement their own solutions. Rather than allowing outside “experts” to carry out the process on behalf of local people, Chambers argued that the role of the development expert is to facilitate discussion, elicit ideas, and mediate interventions. In some guise or another, most contemporary development interventions subscribe to – or at the very least, pay lip service to – a commitment to participation and community (Vincent 2012:50), claiming that it leads to better outcomes, including stronger economy and greater incorporation into western modernity. In its more radical and transformative guise, community-centered development has the potential to support people in their struggle to “act otherwise” (Giddens 1984), insofar as engagement of local people according to their own needs and desires, be they material, cultural, or spiritual, avoids assumptions of a monolithic path to change or progress (Bhattacharyya 1995).

Community-based ecotourism has become a particularly popular approach to community-

centered development in recent years (Butcher 2007). Tourism has long been heralded as a premier tool for nation-building and economic growth in Latin America and throughout the developing world (Babb 2011; Berger 2006). As environmentalists, tourists, and scholars, among others, have increasingly raised concerns about the exploitative tendencies of conventional tourism, attention has turned to a wave of alternative forms of travel such as ecotourism that impact the environment less and are more respectful of local people and lifeways (Honey 2008). This industry shift has dovetailed with the rise in community-based development strategies described above. Ecotourism fulfills what Jim Butcher refers to as the “neopopulist themes” that characterize participation-based development interventions currently in vogue (2007:3).

Despite the purported commitment to agency, participation and empowerment, scholars have raised a number of important critiques regarding the on-the-ground realities of this community-centered approach. For example, Susan Vincent (2012) warns that development agents’ often ambiguous and romanticized notions of “community” may further exacerbate inequalities. Such was the case in the Peruvian Andes, where agents’ confusions regarding the value of waged labor vs. “free” communal service meant that the poorest residents gave a greater proportion of their “free labor” to infrastructure projects. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (2001) go so far as to refer to the superficial and uncritical adoption of the community-centered model as “tyrannical”, as it often fails to adequately account for structural features such as power, history or local-level politics that shape participants’ ability to choose their interventions and actively engage in addressing their needs. While Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (Hickey and Mohan 2005) are more optimistic of the participatory approach, they likewise warn that agency and participation are highly contextual and contested fields of social action, and they call for research

that takes into account structural factors that shape participation, the historical and material constitution of identity and experience (Bebbington 2000), and the range of ways people seek and enact empowerment (see also Mohan and Hickey 2005). Similar concerns circulate about community-based ecotourism (Butcher 2007; Butcher 2010). With their valorization of “community” and their feel-good message of conservationism, such projects often obscure the unequal power relations that characterize these encounters, while providing very few actual benefits. In such projects, Jim Butcher argues, “community participation arguably becomes about participating in modifying the terms of one’s poverty” (2010:204).

These critiques guide my own concerns throughout the chapters that follow, particularly as they relate to the nature of individual and communal action; the form, content and application of empowerment; the social, spiritual, and economic costs and rewards of participation; and the structural, historical, and political factors that enable or constrain participation. In my presentation of community-based ecotourism in Benito Juárez, I explore to what extent and in what ways residents engage with their project, exercise their agency to affect the content and direction of ecotourism, and make it amenable to local values. I also examine how engagement in ecotourism may increase residents’ ability to act in and affect their community, as well as some of the factors that limit or exclude participation. I also bring this perspective to bear on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in order to achieve a broad discussion about the desired goals of development.

Religion and Development

In order to be more fully attentive to the range of ways residents visualize and enact change in their community, I analyze Seventh-day Adventist practice as an intentional, if

unexpected, form of development. Rarely do development scholars or practitioners consider the relationship between religion and development. Most assume that progress “has long since replaced God as the icon of our age (Peet and Hartwick 2009:1).” However, as recent scholarship on the subject makes clear, the two are more closely related than is generally acknowledged (Bornstein 2003; DeTemple 2005; DeTemple 2012; Furniss 2012; Jones and Petersen 2013; Kaplan 2009; Noy 2009; Occhipinti 2005; Ter Haar 2011b), both in the way they occupy similar social spaces and in their ability to provide a vision – and the relevant skills and motivations – for transforming the world.

The roots of this divide between the secular and the religious are old and deep. During the Conquest of the New World, progress, advancement and civilization were approached simultaneously as secular and religious projects (DeTemple 2006:9-19). By the Colonial period, however, the Catholic Church’s emphasis on education and early capitalist agriculture prioritized rational, scientific thinking over the religious as the hallmark of western modernity. The Enlightenment finally disentangled these spheres, making “Development” a purely rational endeavor most properly conducted by the state, while relegating religious and spiritual pursuits to the realm of “Tradition”.

Jill DeTemple (2005) offers an alternative interpretation of the relationship between religion, development and modernity. Despite the discourse of development as a rational endeavor of the secular state, the Enlightenment actually marked the beginning of development’s “double life” as a modernity-granting institution of the state that was nevertheless “encamped in Christian discourses of divine will (15).” In her study of Christian development initiatives in Ecuador, DeTemple (2005) roots out the contours of development’s double life. She argues that, on the ground, people often experience development and religion as complementary and even

interlinked sets of goals, practices, and moralities. In the chapters that follow, I heed DeTemple's call to take seriously the lived experience of religion as I account for what people do religiously in the spaces of development.

Religion and development share more than a common history. As Gerrie Ter Haar points out in her edited volume on the subject (2011a), each provides a vision for transforming the world. They differ, however, in the arena of social life through which each seeks to realize that transformation. As Ter Haar explains:

“From a religious perspective, the transformation of individuals, or *inner transformation*, is deemed a necessary condition for transforming society and the world as a whole. From a professional development perspective, on the other hand, it is primarily the *external environment*, or the arrangements made for the provision of material resources, that constitutes the site of transformation (2011a:5, emphasis added).”

Ter Haar and the other contributors to the edited volume advocate for an “integral development”, an approach to progress and change which takes seriously the role of inner transformation and allows local people to utilize their religious and spiritual resources in the pursuit of a better life. In the debate for better development, these are the arenas of consciousness and experience that are most ignored, despite the critical role they play in bringing about social transformation in everyday life (see also Jones and Petersen 2013). For these reasons, I examine the ways Adventists draw on their religious practice as a source of motivation for engaging with their community and actively seeking ways to improve their personal and communal lives.

My approach to religion and development draws on these insights. I am interested in the ways that religion and development inhabit and transform the same social spaces, and the extent to which people experience them as connected processes. To be clear, I do not consider the actions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez to be a form of “Development”, at least not in the same way that community-based ecotourism is. Rather, I see it as an on-the-

ground expression⁵ of how one group of people set out to affect change in their community, with intention, reflection, and dedication, with an explicit goal of progress and the achievement of a “better life”. Exploring religion alongside community-based ecotourism is consistent with the overall goals of this dissertation, to identify local values and understandings of progress and change, and the networks and avenues by which people feel empowered to enact their visions of community. I see it as another step towards achieving a development that is morally grounded and accountable (Gow 2008). It is also the most genuine way I personally can explore what I experienced in Latuvi and Benito Juárez, as people desire development’s promise of a better life, but are skeptical of top-down approaches and are struggling instead for more nuanced approaches to change that are accountable to their own economic, social, communal and spiritual visions.

Ethnicity and Organized Change

A second way that I explore how residents visualize and enact change in their community is by analyzing the relationship between ethnic identity and development. I want to understand how participants construct, contest and deploy identity as they engage with – or resist – interventions. I also want to know more about the ways development resonates with local identity, as both discourse and practice, and how that degree of fit might relate to the ways people experience agency, participation and empowerment.

⁵ I stop short of calling it an “authentic” expression of the desire for progress and change. As Jones and Peterson (2013:41) points out, the assertion that religiously-motivated or sponsored development is more “authentic” and therefore a better alternative to conventional interventions continues to assume that religion is still “outside” development.

To address these themes, I turn to the fields of ethnicity studies to explain in a more nuanced way agency, collectivity, and organized change. Ethnic identity refers to a sense of solidarity and group belonging on account of shared descent, language, religion, social memory, cultural practice, and territorial attachment (Sokolovskii and Tishkov 2002). My research starts from the position that ethnic identities are contextual, processual, and relational, and that the ways in which these social identities are formed and experienced plays a crucial role in political organizing. Ethnicities are neither natural nor invented; they draw on historical memory and contemporary experience to explain a group's common relationship to social power or historical events (Barth 1969; Comaroff 1987; Williams 1989). Said differently, ethnicity is a process of "being-made", referring to the political economies that structure social life, and "self-making", referring to the ways individuals interpret, recast, and mobilize these categories (Ong 2003). Although global and transnational processes play an ever-expanding role in the production of ethnic difference (Appadurai 1990; Kearney 1991, 1996), the framework of the state (Nelson 1999) maintains a hegemonic role (Karam 2007), and continues to be a central concern in ethnicity studies (Hale 2002; Martínez Novo 2006).

Though my research provides a view of these larger structures of power that frame ethnic identity, the ethnography speaks more directly to practices of self-making, the ways in which local actors respond to and carve out their own spaces of meaning within particular structures of power. To this end, I draw on theories of identity formation that focus on the ways individuals construct their identities through long-term, day to day relationships and activities (Bourdieu 1977; Holland 1998). Cultural artifacts, such as language, dress, and ritual, used in everyday practice play an important role in telling individuals about who they are and who they ought to be. But identity is more than just knowledge of an ascribed social position; it also involves the active assumption of

that position as it is inflected by contextual, day-to-day experiences with artifacts and other social actors. I am further concerned with the subjective experiences of these ethnic identities as they are constructed in the day-to-day. This includes the “ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects (Ortner 2006:31).” Paying close attention to these forms of consciousness as they are grounded in culturally and historically specific structures of knowledge and power sheds light on local agency and efficacy within dominant structures of power (Ortner 2006:34).

For decades, critics of identity politics have argued that strongly felt identities such as ethnicities are pathological attachments hindering rational action, encouraging separatism, and endangering democracy (Alcoff 2006). Against these claims, feminist and minority scholars argue that identities are necessarily collective, rather than individualizing, are grounded in communal histories structured by political economies of power, and can be generative, expansive, and empowering (Alcoff, et al. 2006; Hall 1988). These identities play a central role in collective action, as activists “frame” their movement agendas according to the values and ideas they perceive to be most relevant to their causes (Goffman 1974). Yet these frames run the risk of marginalizing constituents as much as they bring them into the fold, as the frames may fail to resonate or else actively turn people off from the cause (Snow, et al. 1986; Tarrow 1994), thus limiting the potential of the movement (Burdick 1998).

Similar dynamics may be at play in development, where the ability of any particular project to gain legitimacy, attract participants, and achieve some measure of success and sustainability, may relate as much to the practical and mechanical aspects of the intervention as it does to its ability to resonate on a cultural, emotional or moral level with the targeted population. This discussion circles back to David Gow’s work in Colombia and the moral dimensions of

development (2008). Citing James Jasper's seminal book "The Art of Moral Protest" (1997), Gow claims that culture, morality and emotion are at the heart of the Nasa's collective pursuit for a better life, whether through state-sponsored development or in political action with other indigenous groups. These are the fields through which people can imagine a better world and forge creative strategies to achieve their visions. These are also the basis upon which alternative criteria for success and failure can be built, both in development and social movements. Criteria include group belonging, solidarity, personal achievement, or the valorization of cultural practices and worldviews.

The literature on social movements and identity politics – and specifically the field of indigenous organizing – points to a second set of issues relevant to my study. Much of the scholarship on indigenous organizing focuses on such issues as the role of indigenous intellectuals in building movements (Laurie, et al. 2005; Rappaport 2005; Warren 1998), the deployment of representations of indigeneity to garner resources across scales (Conklin and Graham 1995; Rogers 1996), and the ways movements negotiate these scales to achieve political presence and voice (Carroll and Bebbington 2000; Perreault 2003b). However, this focus on extra-community politics may inadvertently over-privilege the agendas and knowledge claims of community leaders and intellectuals (Feinberg 2006; Martínez Novo 2006; Warren 1998), failing to account for the broader social fields that shape and contest movement ideologies (Burdick 1998; Edelman 2001), the ways the experience, skills, and knowledge that support movements develop prior to and alongside campaigns (Stephen 2006), especially coming out of the religious arena (Steigenga and Cleary 2007), or the ways in which the discourses of indigenous elites may mask the on-the-ground diversity in self-identification (Perreault 2001). For these reasons, my research explores everyday expressions of ethnic identity, with attention to the specific forces

that strengthen or weaken ties to politicized indigenous identity, as a way further broadening our understanding of how people on-the-ground visualize and pursue a better life.

The Work of Community

A final goal of this dissertation is to examine the nitty-gritty work involved in building community, as a set of affective ties and concrete practices that obligate people to one another, form the bedrock of shared social and moral worlds, and motivate action at a variety of scales. This kind of community study was once the stock and trade of anthropological inquiry, and served as the base from which the discipline grew its methodological and theoretical keystones (Amit and Rapport 2002:14-15; Blackshaw 2010:5-7). In Mexico, community study was deeply implicated in the twin projects of development and nation building after the Revolution (1910). Mexican anthropologists used the tools of their discipline – including Robert Redfield’s highly influential theories on village life and the folk-urban continuum (Redfield 1941) – to aid state efforts to integrate rural, indigenous people into the folds of modern society (Hewitt de Alcántara 1984).

By the 1960s and 70s, critics began to call into question some of the basic tenants of the community studies approach (Amit & Rapport 2002). From the field of peasant studies came the awareness that such micro-level analysis too often over-emphasizes cultural issues, while remaining blind to structural factors and their relationships to daily life (see Geertz 1961). Scholars in the emerging field of ethnic and urban studies questioned the assumption that a given collection of people necessarily share a single, homogenized form of culture (Barth 1969; Cohen 1985; Goodenough 1971; 1976; Hannerz 1969). But the true disruption of the community method came in the 1980s and 90s, as new forms of mobility in an increasingly globalized world

appeared to render the study of face-to-face, small-scale society useless, if not altogether untenable. Sparked by the works of Benedict Anderson (1991) and Arjun Appadurai (1996), scholarship turned instead to the movement of ideas, influence, capital, and power into, out of, and across geographic space, and the ungrounded networks and “imaginary” linkages that arose as a result of the modern condition of mobility (Amit and Rapport 2002:17). Alongside this came a growing critique of “culture” (Clifford and Marcus 1986), a re-evaluation of the presumed relationship between people and places (Gupta and Ferguson 1997), and concerns over the imposition of western, orientaling constructs of social life (Starn 1994).

Yet community, as the lived experience of emplaced social relationships and obligations (Escobar 2008), continues to have ideological and material consequences for people in places like Laturvi and Benito Juárez, not only in their day-to-day routines but also for the ways they construct identity (Degnen 2005; Gray 2002; Jenkins 2002) and collectively imagine and enact change (Amit and Rapport 2002; Curtis 2008; Rappaport 1995). As Jennifer Curtis adeptly illustrates in her research on Belfast in the 1970s (2008), people’s emotional and physical connections to their neighborhoods can be profound sources of political agency. Using Raymond William’s notion of “structures of feeling” (1977), Curtis describes how residents used memories and stories about their neighborhoods to create embodied and emplaced knowledge about their community, which they then deployed in organized resistance to state plans to rebuild and integrate violence-torn neighborhoods. Likewise, Vered Amit (2002) argues that even among apparently unbounded transnational groups and “imagined” communities, tangible forms of sociality such as personal networks and real-time social groups form the bedrock of community identity, out of which collections of people can be mobilized into action. These patterns and practices of community are of special importance to marginalized groups like

indigenous pueblos, who often practice highly structured forms of communal obligation and service. As Susan Vincent points out (2012:164), such practices can mitigate modernity by acting as a safety net against the insecurities of the modern economy, as well as by making development initiatives more amenable to local values that govern authority, decision-making and inter-personal relations (see also Cohen 1999; Stephen and Dow 1990a).

In an eloquent defense of the community studies approach, June Nash advocates that only by taking seriously the insiders' view of community can we fully appreciate the "ethnographic diversity that underlay what [is] glossed as 'indigenous pueblos' (Nash 2001:40)".

Anthropologists, she continues, are uniquely positioned to support indigenous peoples' attempts to defend their way of life:

As indigenous people attempt to define the ethnic basis for autonomy at a regional level, they are establishing the authenticity of their claims by reference to the collective basis in communities with a majority of people speaking an indigenous language and sharing collective traditions. Community studies will attain a new significance as evidential support for their claims to distinctive ethnic identity. With cumulative knowledge of the broader landscape in which the communities are located, anthropologists can take advantage of the ethnographies to situate the separate histories of each locality in the global context of change that is engulfing the region (2001:40-41).

With this in mind, my research investigates community as a form of affective and embodied knowledge about place as well as a collection of concrete social practices and obligations, in order to better understand how latuvenses and rancheros construct development that is respectful of local agency, morality, and identity. This approach to re-enmeshes community in place brings analytical and theoretical rigor to the study of how, why, and *where* people form meaningful, intimate, actionable bonds. It also allows for a more textured appreciation and understanding of the lived realities of "community". While acknowledging the validity and utility of critiques of community-centered studies, this approach takes seriously the materiality of social life that is

lived in connection, the ways that it is grounded in – and often bounded by – place, and the intimate connections that make commensality possible (Escobar 2001; Escobar 2008).

In Latuvi and Benito Juárez, I examine two specific sites through which the work of community gets done. The first is the cargo system, the set of unpaid, rotating positions that organize and support the civil and religious life of the pueblo. Citizens of a pueblo are appointed by general assembly to serve posts, or cargos, in either the Catholic Church (to maintain the cult of saints) or to manage the civil affairs of the town (public works projects, mayor, school and health clinic committee, etc.). Generally speaking, offices are ranked according to level of responsibility and authority, in what is often called an *escalera*, or staircase. Throughout their lifetime, citizens “climb” the escalera by adequately completing the duties of each successive office, gaining prestige and status in the community as they work their way to the “top”. Cargo service is a material, moral and discursive set of practices deeply connected to the production and maintenance of community. As Jeffrey Cohen points out, these structures of cooperation and community “play an important role in self-defense and self-definition as a community makes and remakes itself as a social entity over time” (1999:14). Participation in the cargo system is an important way that residents reproduce and experience local identity, as a social bond as well as a set of practices that define and produce personhood and agency (Magazine 2012). Cargo service can contribute to heightened and even politicized expressions of indigenous or Zapotec identity. For example, in Juchitán, a Zapotec town in the Isthmus of Oaxaca, kin-*compadrazgo* networks used to organize fiestas (a form of ritual cargo service) were critical in building ethnic solidarity that fueled COCEI (Isthmus Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students), a major political opposition movement (Rubin 1997; Stephen 1990). In the chapters that follow, I likewise investigate the relationship between cargo service and the production and expression of

local identity, particularly as it is articulated through service in projects for community development.

The second site through which I examine the work of community is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The question of withdrawal from community life has been a central concern in research on Protestant conversion in rural villages throughout Mexico and Central America (Dow 2005; Gross 2003; Marroquín Zaleta 1995; Montes García 1995; Ramírez Gómez 1991; Ramírez Gómez 1995; Redfield 1950). On one side of the debate are those who claim that conversion disrupts communal life and indigenous identity. Protestants reject the cult of saints and refuse to serve religious cargos, upending the traditional authority-granting institution of the town (Bastian 1985; Dow 2001a; Nutini 2000; Villa Rojas 1990) and challenging notions about wealth and reciprocity (Dow 2005). Conversion likewise removes people from the economic networks supported by the cargo system, potentially making them more amenable to participation in the capitalist economy (Annis 1987). Indigenous activists have also been wary about the effects of Protestant conversion, expressing similar concerns that Protestantism fundamentally alters converts relationship to the community, as well as warning that Evangelicals are harbingers of North American political and economic influence in Latin America (Samson 2007:16). In Mexico specifically, activists in the 1970s and 80s charged that Protestant missionaries (and especially those involved in the controversial Summer Institute of Linguistics, which worked for decades to translate the bible into indigenous dialects), divided communities and put up roadblocks to indigenous political organizing (McIntyre 2012).

On the other side of the debate are those who claim that conversion may not necessarily be as disruptive to indigenous social life as previously assumed, and that indigenous and Protestant worldviews may have more in common than initially recognized. Among the Maya in

Belize, Cook (2001) found that Protestantism offers a mechanism for maintaining traditional social and political forms. Similarly, Adams (2001) argues that Q'eqchi' Maya of Guatemala appropriate Protestant theology and practice to support their own indigenous models of discourse and personal development. Gallaher (2007) found that Protestant missionaries in Oaxaca actually encouraged converts to hold on to traditional customs they once required them to relinquish, such as village fiestas or their native languages. In the Sierra Juárez, in a village neighboring Benito Juárez, Gross (2003) found that the introduction of Protestantism has had little impact on communal practices such as cargo or tequio (public works parties) service, and is generally attributed with reducing alcoholism and corruption.

In his study of Maya Evangelicals in Guatemala, C. Mathews Samson (2007) argues that we should move past the conflict/continuity dichotomy, and instead appreciate Protestantism as a way of life for indigenous communities:

In the competing fields of discourse surrounding colonialism and postcolonialism, it simply will not do to continue to view second- or third-generation Mesoamerican evangelicals as victims of imposition from the West or of some North American conspiracy. Evangelicalism is now woven into the fabric of quite possibly the majority of Guatemala's Maya communities. It exists alongside an ethnic identity embodied in language and other aspects of Maya culture and cosmology, within the very being of people who consider themselves both Maya and evangelical. This is one of the realities that any anthropology moving in the direction of dialogue and collaboration with people in divergent circumstances, even with people on different sides of community conflict, needs to take into account (Samson 2007:20).

Like Samson, I approach Protestantism as a way of life in Benito Juárez, a place, like the Mayan communities in Guatemala, that is home to second and third and even fourth generation Adventists. "Conversion" no longer adequately summarizes their experience with religion. I do not wish to gloss over the divisions and difference that Protestantism presents, particularly to the extent that Adventism encourages an orientation toward a religious community "that transcends boundaries of ethnicity, language and geography (Samson 2007:21)". But neither would it be

appropriate to dismiss the degrees of continuity, as “personal identity and community are endowed with new meanings” (Samson 2007:21). What is more, the rupture-withdrawal-division critique potentially undermines the “real work” of community, to the extent that it assumes a core form of community that exists outside of context, struggle, and change. Instead, my research addresses Adventism as one of the ways community gets done in twenty-first century indigenous Mexico.

Comparative Themes: Exchange, Place, Body

While this introduction frames the dissertation within the literature on development, community belonging, ethnic identity, and collective action, the chapters that follow engage more deeply with tourism and religion as everyday experiences that are bound up in the social, political, and economic realities of pueblo life. I pay particular attention to the ways these experiences resonate with cultural and moral fields: leadership and accountability; reciprocity and service; expectations surrounding encounters between strangers; the connections between history, memory, and place in the pueblo; the patterned production of habits, skills and dispositions. My goal is to provide an account of local agency and experience, the extent to which people engage creatively and in fulfilling ways to achieve a “better life” with the tools at hand.

Throughout the dissertation, I explore several key themes. Focusing on these themes allows me to more clearly compare and contrast community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist church. I briefly introduce them here, and return to them again in the conclusion. Each of these themes addresses a different aspect of the production and experience of community and ethnicity (the first two directly, and the third in an indirect manner) and the ways in which

the difficult work of community (as emplaced networks of obligation and dependency) gets done. They are all-important aspects of the production of ethnic identity, and are produced and reproduced out of the articulation of development and local agency.

The first theme is exchange. Exchange relationships permeate social life, and all manner of things, from animate to inanimate, material to supernatural, are involved. In indigenous pueblos throughout Oaxaca, it is specifically balanced reciprocity – the expectation that a thing, service, or honor given will be returned in kind – that is central to social life. Reciprocity governs an array of social practices, from the creation of mutual-work agreements for agricultural tasks, to the provision of goods and labor for ceremonial purposes (*guelaguetza*), to the obligation to faithfully and dutifully serve cargos (*desempeñar bien su cargo*). Alicia Barabas (2006) refers to this as an “ethics of giving” (*la ética del don*), a moral code that defines the nature of proper behavior through the appropriate and adequate provision and repayment of goods and services. In communities like Latuvi and Benito Juárez, these exchanges are responsible for producing and reproducing a range of relationships upon which social life is based, including kinship, friendship, and relations with the divine. Failure to sufficiently repay a debt can lead to serious social and supernatural sanctions, including public shame, a loss of status, bad luck or illness. The ethics of giving, Barabas concludes, is “one of the primary pillars of ritual efficacy and fluid social relations (153)”, and is responsible for maintaining and reproducing social equilibrium and the natural order of things.

In the chapters that follow, I explore a range of relationships that depend on the expectation of balanced reciprocity. I am interested in the material practices of these exchanges, as well as the moral codes that govern them; exchange as both a material and moral act are fundamental to the experience of community life in Benito Juárez and Latuvi. These exchanges

address actions that are profoundly local, such as the proper use of authority, the criteria for good service to the pueblo, or the correct way to practice citizenship. They likewise touch on broad issues of proper social behavior, including what is right and wrong in one's dealings with their fellow human beings, regardless of their place of origin.

Second, I explore the role of place. I take a culturalist approach to place, and am interested in the ways people talk about the locations they inhabit. Such discourses are more than descriptive; they are also implicated in processes of identity formation, particularly as groups of people construct and reproduce group boundaries, memories, and future orientations (Burdick 2013). Following Escobar (2008:30), I define place as the “engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed” (see also Escobar 2001). Echoing my earlier discussion on community, Escobar's concern with place contends with recent scholarly debates that turn attention to globalization, movement, and rootlessness. These debates equate globalization with “space, capital, and the capacity to transform”, while the local “is associated with place, labor, tradition, and hence with what will inevitably give way to more powerful forces (30).” To address this asymmetry, Escobar argues that we “get back into place” (Casey 1993), attending to the “continued vitality of place,” along with its capacity to generate and transform culture, nature and the economy.

The third theme is the body. As residents engage with ecotourism and Adventism, they gain new skills and knowledge about self and the world, which in turn inform the construction of new habits, orientations, dispositions, and comportments of self-in-the-world. These new skills and habits form part of their *habitus* – Bourdieu's notion of “systems of durable, transposable

dispositions”, or the internalization of the structures of past experiences that conditions present and future actions and orientations (Bourdieu 1977:72). This patterned internalization of rules, schemes and models form the practical meanings of culture, including bodily and embodied experience (MacPhee 2004). I examine community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist church as two such “structuring structures” that encourage new knowledge about and comportment of the (empowered) body, for example as “community leader”, “host”, or “culture broker”. I am further interested in the extent to which these habits and dispositions may be transferrable to other arenas of social life, and especially to the realm of collective action.

Methods

I first learned about Pueblos Mancomunados in 2005, while attending a Spanish language school in Oaxaca City. I had travelled to the pueblos as an ecotourist for a two day hiking excursion, and was immediately drawn in by the project, the landscape, and the way of life I encountered. I spent a total of ten weeks over the next two summers conducting preliminary research on community-based ecotourism, hiking to each of the pueblos, getting to know tourism staff and town residents, learning about administration and community engagement, and familiarizing myself with life in the pueblos. My original project focused on the relationship between indigenous identity, development, and revitalization, and the gap I perceived between the discourse of tourism leaders and the everyday experiences of residents. On the one hand, the tourism staff I met with expressed their desire that ecotourism both support the local economy and revitalize indigenous culture and identity. Yet none of the townspeople I spoke with felt that revitalization was a necessary or desirable goal, and they certainly did not understand ecotourism to be anything but an economic activity. I grounded my research in scholarship on indigenous

rights movements, and intended to contribute to understandings of the ways the movements' organizing frames attracted or failed to resonate with the everyday lives of indigenous people on the ground (Burdick 1998). I also designed a comparative element to the research, and intended to study local work cooperatives and the Seventh-day Adventist church, to understand whether and to what extent different or hybrid notions of Zapotec identity and revitalization might be fomenting out of these other arenas of social life.

Not long into my twelve-month dissertation fieldwork, in the summer of 2008, it became clear to me that the goal of cultural revitalization was not as widespread among the ecotourism staff as I had originally understood it to be. Rather, most of the pueblos were focused on an economic and business oriented approach to ecotourism, and were spending their time deeply involved in the day-to-day of operating their projects – caring for tourists, improving infrastructure, increasing human capacity – at the expense of pueblo outreach or education on issues of culture and identity. There were also no active work cooperatives at the time of my fieldwork, and so I dropped that element of the research.

My decisions about which towns to study were based on a number of factors, including demographics, municipal structures, and the personal networks I developed in the earliest stages of research. Five of the eight pueblos in Pueblos Mancomunados were not well suited for my research: La Nevería and Llano Grande had very small populations (approx. 100 people each); Lachatao and Amatlán were not yet actively developing ecotourism; and Yavesía was attempting to secede from the communal property. Of the remaining three towns – Benito Juárez, Cuajimoloyas, and Latuvi – Latuvi was a natural choice. It had a robust ecotourism project, a relatively large population (approx. 600 people), and was considered to be among the most

traditional pueblos in el mancomún⁶. Benito Juárez and Cuajimoloyas were equal in many ways. They were the sites of the only two Adventist churches in the Pueblos Mancomunados. They were both among the earliest and most ardent adopters of ecotourism, and each received a high proportion of the cooperative's tourists. And compared to Latuvi, they were both perceived to be "less indigenous" than other villages in el mancomún⁷. I chose Benito Juárez because of its close connections to Latuvi. They are in the same municipality, many people in Benito Juárez trace their ancestry to Latuvi, and there is a high rate of inter-marriage between the two pueblos. This political and social fluidity provided continuity and stability to my research. Finally, several families in these two villages offered me their hospitality and expertise early in my research. They were absolutely critical to my ability to gain permission from authorities, develop rapport with residents, and generally feel comfortable and secure in my research. In many ways, their early acts of welcoming established the perspectives and interests that have guided all stages of my project.

I split my time in half between the two pueblos – June through November in Benito Juárez and December through May in Latuvi. My primary methods were participant observation and open-ended interviews. I attended dozens of Adventist worship services, participated in home Bible study sessions, and joined social events hosted by the church. I also conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-four Adventists. To recruit participants, I posted a sign-up sheet in the church, then approached other members individually in order to achieve a sample representative of age and gender. Similarly, I spent long hours with the tourism staff in Latuvi

⁶ Locally, people cited language as the main marker of Zapotec identity and tradition. According to the national census, in 2000 nearly 60% of residents in Latuvi were bilingual Zapotec-Spanish speakers (INEGI 2000).

⁷ According to the national census, in 2000 approximately 25% people in Benito Juárez were bilingual Zapotec-Spanish speakers, compared with 8% in Cuajimoloyas (INEGI 2000).

(and to a lesser degree in Benito Juárez), observing their interactions with tourists and learning about administration, food preparation, and housekeeping. I also accompanied hikes, and attended several regional training events and planning meetings. I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-four current and former ecotourism workers, a sample representative of age and gender. To gain a broader picture of social and familial life in the pueblos, I lived (with my husband) in family homes, sharing in meals, leisure, work, and celebrations. I also conducted interviews with ten “non-participants”, residents who were not Adventists and/or had never participated formally in ecotourism. Finally, I interviewed twenty-four “experts”, including state tourism and development agents, pastors, prominent and respected elders in Pueblos Mancomunados, and professional tourism guides. All 246 fieldnotes entries and 126 interview transcripts were coded using HyperRESEARCH, a qualitative research analysis tool.

It was impossible to equitably reciprocate the gifts of time and knowledge I received during my fieldwork. While in Latuvi, I helped the ecotourism staff with word processing tasks, occasionally served as an interpreter for non-Spanish speaking tourists, and, when asked, gave my opinions – as a tourist and an academic – about the project. In Benito Juárez, there was no real opportunity to provide similar institutional support; though I often felt that my seriousness during Adventist worship and the respect I gave to the church’s message of good Christian living and salvation were received in kind. My husband volunteered in the middle schools to support their existing English-language instruction, and together we hosted English classes for interested residents.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 presents the histories of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez and the community-based ecotourism project in Latuvi. I contextualize these projects within both recent local history and broader fields of power and influence, to highlight the ways that development and change – and their resultant forms of community – require collaboration and negotiation between stakeholders at multiple scales. I also draw attention to the historical processes that frame residents’ ability to choose and actively participate in development. The chapter further provides an important primer for understanding the ways people understand and desire progress.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez. In Chapter 3, I explore Adventists’ commitment to serve the pueblo. I examine the ways in which Adventist practice generates value about self and community, along with a set of skills, knowledge, and habits that members use in the pursuit of personal, spiritual, and community development. This chapter also highlights the ways development and religion occupy similar social spaces, as Adventists locate their church as central to the pueblo’s history of progress and change. Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship between Adventist practice and indigenous ethnicity, and the extent to which Adventism can allow for the construction of a proud Zapotec identity.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine community-based ecotourism in Santa Marta Latuvi. Chapter 5 focuses on the community-at-large and the dynamics of welcoming the world’s leisure and adventure travelers to the pueblo. I examine the act of hospitality as a form of balanced reciprocity – the moral obligation to give and receive that makes the project legible and provides a framework through which residents can experience its value beyond purely economic or

instrumentalist terms. Chapter 6 explores the day-to-day work of community-based ecotourism. I examine tourism work as a form of mediation. Staff act as culture brokers for tourists, making the pueblo a knowable and welcoming place. They also mediate the tourism experience for their fellow townspeople, not only translating tourism for the community-at-large but also negotiating the demands of development agencies alongside locally embedded values that regulate the worthiness and ultimately the success of ecotourism.

In the concluding chapter, I return to the themes of exchange, place, and body, to compare and contrast Adventism and ecotourism as morally grounded and locally accountable projects for change. *Lativenses* and *rancheros* desire forms of development that attend to the role of inner transformation in the attainment of a better life; that are grounded in the practices, orientations, and functions of community, including service, reciprocity, and the moral codes of leadership and authority; and that provide opportunities to connect with people outside the geographic boundaries of the pueblo in meaningful and equitable ways. I draw on these values and desires in order to connect my research to broader themes in the literature on development, identity formation, and indigenous organizing. I pay particular attention to the limits and possibilities for community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventism to contribute to current efforts to build regional ethnic solidarity in Oaxaca.

Chapter 2 – Histories of Progress: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Community-based Ecotourism in Perspective

Part 1 – The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez

Cutberto Mecinas⁸ is a gregarious man, with a thunderous but gentle voice and an amused and crooked smile. In his late sixties, his hair is now all grey but his eyes are young and bright. He takes his time when he walks, moving his thick arms and legs delicately but purposefully. His body has been conditioned by years of work in the fields growing corn, potatoes, and flowers in the *milpas* (small agricultural plots) he inherited from his father and now shares with his son. His advancing age keeps him in the fields surrounding his home, allowing him ample time to dote on his three young grandsons, playing with trucks in the dirt terrace outside the adobe house that is now sheltering its fourth generation of Mecinas. It also affords him greater time to devote to the intellectual and spiritual pursuits of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Cutberto enjoys reading the Bible, studying Adventist literature, and mounting his own search for passages that reveal the truth of God's plan, past, present and future. Once, while on bed rest after a nasty fall off a ladder, he happened upon a copy of the historical novel *The Last of the Mohicans*⁹; the book inspired him to contemplate the divine origins of his indigenous ancestors, and to note the biblical passages that bear witness to his ancestors' role in God's plan for the world.

⁸ Throughout this chapter, I use people's real names, unless otherwise indicated. I chose to use real names, rather than pseudonyms, because the histories of these projects and the people involved are public and wide-spread knowledge.

⁹ *The Last of the Mohicans*, by James Fennimore Cooper (1826) is a fictionalized account of French relations with Native North Americans during the French and Indian War (1754-1763).

This curiosity and academic approach to religion is something Cutberto shares in common with his late father, Fausto Mecinas, whose own spiritual inquisitiveness played a central role in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez in the early 1950s. Like his neighbors in the tiny, fledgling settlement then known simply as *el rancho* (a few years later, formally incorporated as the town of Benito Juárez), Sr. Fausto was born and raised Catholic - *muy fiel*, his son told me, *very faithful*. At the time, el rancho did not have a formal structure for Catholic worship, and most people would have practiced a folk Catholicism: a mixture of Zapotec and Catholic worldviews and rituals that inform the meanings and rhythms of daily life and major life events such as marriages, births, and deaths (Nader 1969).

But by the time the Adventist missionary visited his home in 1950, Sr. Fausto had already left the Catholic faith. A few years earlier, in 1944, he had traveled to the US as a *bracero*, a migrant guest worker contracted to work in the US during World War II. It was during this trip that he became a Baptist, and when he returned to his rancho, he did something, his family says, he had not been encouraged to do as a Catholic – he studied the Bible. And so, when the Adventist missionary Antonio Navarro came to Sr. Fausto’s home, collecting contributions for his church’s disaster relief efforts, he found a sympathetic ear. The two men began to talk, and Antonio asked a question that would define the future religious life of Sr. Fausto, his family, and his rancho: *Which day has God commanded we keep holy?* Sr. Fausto responded, *Sunday. Sunday is the day of rest.*

As a Seventh-day Adventist, the missionary believed that Saturday was the true Sabbath, the seventh day of Creation, the day to abstain from work and devote instead to spiritual

matters¹⁰. No doubt prepared for this response, Antonio challenged Sr. Fausto to find all the lines in the Bible that say Sunday is the day of rest. In three weeks, Antonio would return, equally prepared with lines that state Saturday is the true Sabbath. Sr. Fausto did his homework as assigned, and when Antonio returned, he presented the missionary with a dozen lines of proof. Antonio, for his part, came equipped with hundreds of citations indicating that Saturday is God's chosen holy day. Antonio pointed to a Bible passage, *Here are the Ten Commandments, and here it says that they were written in a stone with God's own finger. It is written by our God that we should keep Saturday holy.* This was all the proof Sr. Fausto needed, and from that moment on, he was an Adventist.

The Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The church that Sr. Fausto helped usher in to Benito Juárez was born nearly a century earlier in the United States. During the first part of the nineteenth century, orthodox Protestant clergy, fearing that rapid industrialization was promoting vices and lax morality, began preaching about love, freedom from sin, and salvation (Jordan 1988:21-23). This short-lived movement – known as the Great Revival – inspired a host of apocalyptic preachers, among them Calvinist Baptist William Miller (Knight 1994; Rowe 2008). Miller gained a following when he predicted the Second Coming of Christ would happen on October 22, 1844. Though Miller's predictions did not come true – what came to be known as the “Great Disappointment” – they did provide the bedrock for the future founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Jordan 1988:36-37). Ellen G. White (1827-1915), who was 13 and a partial invalid when her family joined the Millerite movement, found great strength and solace in Miller's teachings (Jordan

¹⁰ For details on the Saturday Sabbath, see (Hoekema 1963:95-96).

1988:43-48). She became an ardent follower, and despite her fragility, participated with great fervor in prayer meetings. A few weeks after the Great Disappointment, at the age of 17, Ellen experienced the first of what would become a lifetime of divine visions. In these visions, God told of His plans for the founding of His true church on earth, in preparation for Christ's true Second Coming. God called on Ellen to be a messenger and to share her visions with others. A small following of Millerites coalesced around Ellen, holding in common their personal conviction in the apocalypse, their intellectual pursuit of the truth through detailed and intensive Bible study, and their faith in the divinity of Ellen's visions¹¹. They officially founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1860 (Jordan 1988:66). After the Bible, Ellen's visions and subsequent writings have become the most important source of spiritual leadership for the Church (Keller 2005:45).

Based on the Bible and Ellen's writings, the Adventist Church has outlined its core doctrine, known as the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventists¹². Though Adventists in Benito Juárez are familiar with this core set of principles, there are several beliefs that are particularly resonant with them, and that members return to regularly in their worship and daily practice. These beliefs can be roughly grouped into three categories¹³. The first pertains to the End of Days. Adventists believe unwaveringly in the Second Coming of Christ; it is not a matter of *if* Christ returns, but *when*. In our modern era, as throughout history, the forces of good and evil (God and Satan, respectively) are waging an epic battle – known as the Great Controversy – for control of the universe and all of humanity. Satan, the origin of sin and the great tempter,

¹¹ For more on Ellen G. White's life and work, see Numbers (1976).

¹² "28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists", The Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on June 15, 2015, <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>.

¹³ For a similar discussion concerning Adventists in Madagascar, see Keller (2005:46-47).

will eventually lose to the God of love. When that happens, Christ will return and the faithful will be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven, while Satan and all the unrighteous shall be destroyed¹⁴. Satan is an active and present force in daily life, and he is often identified as the source of hardship and misdirection from the path to salvation.

The second set of core beliefs establish mandates for good Christian living and what members must do to be counted among the righteous at the millennium. Adventists believe that the Bible is the literal and infallible revelation of God's will. The Bible contains all one needs to know to achieve salvation, and it should be studied daily in an effort to ascertain its truths. Adventists are called to observe Saturday as the Holy Day, and to abstain from all work so that they may attend worship and Bible study at the church. Adventists believe that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and are called to healthful living through the avoidance of meat, tobacco, caffeine, and alcohol, as well as to follow the food taboos outlined in Leviticus. In Benito Juárez, these practices are particularly significant as they publicly and habitually distinguish Adventists from the dominant Catholic population. As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, these practices are often the source of tension between the two groups, for example when Adventists refuse to drink at funerals or to participate in town affairs on Saturdays¹⁵.

A final set of beliefs pertains to the dignity and value of each member of the church. Adventists believe that all people are equal in Christ, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or age, and that God has bestowed upon each of them unique gifts, to be used in the service of

¹⁴ For more on SDA eschatology, see (Mead and Hill 1995:33-37).

¹⁵ Another important mandate is the call to care for the blessings of the earth and its resources – this is particularly resonant in the pueblo, where people depend on such resources, whether in the form of crops or lumber, for survival. They show their acknowledgement and gratefulness for God's bounty through the practice of tithing – offerings of 10% of a household's income – to support the work of missionaries in spreading God's word and growing His church. The church in Benito Juárez takes great pride in its rate of tithing and, despite the low monetary wealth, the town has been recognized as a regional leader in rates of tithing.

the church and for the good of humanity. As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, this final teaching is particularly powerful in Benito Juárez, considering the historically marginalized status of indigenous people in Mexico; it is equally powerful for women in town, whose public participation in the pueblo is traditionally overlooked or actively discouraged.

Urged on by Ellen White's visions, the early Adventist leaders felt compelled to spread the teachings and benefits of their fledgling church around the world. They believed ardently that, having received the truth about God's design for humanity, it was their duty to warn the world and prepare its people for the judgment and millennium¹⁶. Mission work began first in Europe in the 1870s (Damsteegt 1977:271-293; Jordan 1988:79-89). By 1903, the church's 80,000 members could be found on nearly every continent in the world (Keller 2005:45; Pfeiffer 1985:18). At the time of the Church's hundredth anniversary, in 1963, membership had grown to one and a half million people in 13,856 churches (Viera-Rossano 1993:293). Currently, the SDA Church has 18.1 million baptized members; more than 85% live in the global south, with 5.9 million in Central and South America and another 6.8 million in Africa¹⁷.

In addition to founding congregations, the early Church established a number of hospitals, clinics, and institutes of higher learning. The early leaders reasoned that by caring for the sick, they could facilitate their evangelizing mission while satisfying the mandate to promote healthy lifestyles (Jordan 1988:112). They likewise promoted their Church by establishing colleges to prepare teachers, clergy and nurses, and later by building elementary and secondary schools (Jordan 1988:102). Today, the global mission continues its medical, educational, and

¹⁶ Biblical passages that mandate evangelization include 3 Mt 3: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight", and 24 Mt 14: "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come". See Jordan (1988).

¹⁷ "SDA 2014 Annual Statistics Report", Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on August 8, 2014, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2014.pdf>.

outreach programs through its support of 614 health care institutions, 7,842 educational institutions and primary schools, and 63 publishing houses¹⁸.

The SDA Church in Mexico – A church for the marginalized

In the early 1890s, the Adventist Church began to establish itself throughout Central and South America¹⁹. The first lay missionaries arrived in Mexico at this time, in Guadalajara. By 1894, they had founded a clinic, a school, and the country's first Adventist congregation (Viera-Rossano 1993:298)²⁰. Missionaries founded the country's second congregation in Mexico City in 1899 (de la Torre and Castañeda 2007:62). From there, the church spread both to the north and the south, making its way to Oaxaca and neighboring Chiapas in 1913/1914, for a total of 15 congregations nationwide (Salazar Escarpulli 1997:47). In the 30s, 40s and 50s, the church established a number of educational and medical institutions in the country, among them the Universidad de Montemorelos (1942), the Montemorelos Hospital and Sanatorium (1946), and the Universidad Linda Vista in Chiapas (1957) (de la Torre and Castañeda 2007:62). Through the second half of the twentieth century, membership grew substantially, from 25,000 members in 193 churches in 1960, to 339,000 members in 1028 churches in 1990 (Viera-Rossano 1993:298). Membership continues to grow; according to the most recent reports, membership

¹⁸ "SDA 2014 Annual Statistics report", Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on August 8, 2014, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2014.pdf>.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of SDA expansion in Latin America, see Greenleaf (1992; 2011) and Viera-Rossano (1993). For Mexico, see Salazar Escarpulli (1997) and Castañeda Seijas (2004; 2007). For Costa Rica, see Rubio Montálban (2002) and Garcia-Marenko (1978). For Peru, see Arando de los Rios (1978).

²⁰ According to Salazar (1997), mission work in Guadalajara was not a spontaneous lay movement, but rather was initiated by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; Salazar also reports that these missionaries established a hospital, not a clinic, in the city in 1899 (not 1894).

had swelled to 723,000 faithful in 2012²¹. Regionally speaking, the Adventist Church in Mexico has enjoyed a high level of missionary success. Mexico belongs to the Inter-American Division (IAD) of the global church (one of 13 such Divisions), along with the nations of Central America, the Caribbean, and the northern coast of South America. Together, these nations host one out of every five Adventists worldwide, for a total of 3.4 million believers; Mexico itself has the highest population of members in the Division (723,000 believers in 2012)²².

Despite the church's success in Mexico, the Adventist population is not widespread; in fact, it is completely absent from a full one-third of the nation's 2443 municipalities. But what it lacks in breadth it makes up for in depth: 54 municipalities host an Adventist population of 10% or higher, and in 9 of those, Adventism is the majority religion (de la Torre and Castañeda 2007:65). What's more, the overwhelming majority of Mexico's Adventists – a full 80% – are concentrated in the southeastern states of Chiapas, Veracruz, Tabasco, and Oaxaca. Six of the 9 Adventist-majority municipalities are located in Chiapas, and the other 3 are in Oaxaca. The Adventist Church is the only non-Catholic religious group in the nation to exhibit such “territorial hegemony” (de la Torre and Castañeda 2007:65).

The southeast of Mexico, where the Adventist Church enjoys its most robust engagement, is also the poorest and most indigenous region of the country. Nearly half of the nation's indigenous-speaking population lives in Chiapas, Veracruz, Tabasco and Oaxaca (INEGI 2009:4). In this region, there is a high correlation between marginalization, indigeneity and Adventist conversion. Of the 9 municipalities in this region with an Adventist-majority

²¹“2014 Annual Statistics Report”, Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on August 8, 2014, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2014.pdf>.

²²“2014 Annual Statistics Report”, Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on August 8, 2014, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2014.pdf>.

population, all have “high” or “very high” levels of marginalization, and 6 have an indigenous population of 50% or greater. In Oaxaca alone, 70% of Adventists live in localities of 2500 people or less (INEGI 2011:166). Nationwide, the majority of Adventists (53%) live in rural areas of less than 2500 inhabitants, while only 20% live in large cities. It is safe to conclude that, in Mexico, Adventism is predominately characterized by rural-ness, indigeneity, and marginalization (de la Torre and Castañeda 2007:65).

The SDA Church has a long history of evangelizing Latin America’s indigenous people. By far the most famous of these missions was organized by Ana and Ferdinand Stahl, who worked together from 1910 through the 1930s in Bolivia and Peru (Greenleaf 1992:115-120). They are best known for their mission at Lake Titicaca, where they ran a school, administered to the sick, and baptized new members. This work inspired missionaries throughout Central and South America, who followed the Stahls' model as they evangelized underprivileged and “uncivilized” peoples of the continent (Greenleaf 1992:343). In Mexico, small and poor but dedicated pockets of newly baptized indigenous Adventists sprung up across the country, mostly notably around the city of Tehuantepec, in the eastern part of Oaxaca, where membership grew so rapidly during the 1920s that it quickly exceeded the total Mexican Adventist population. Thanks to this work among indigenous people, by 1930, southern Mexico had the highest concentration of Adventists in the country (Greenleaf 1992:341-343).

The Growth and Impact of the SDA Church in Benito Juárez

By the time Antonio Navarro visited Sr. Fausto in Benito Juárez, the Adventist Church had a forty-year history of evangelization in Oaxaca. Together with a second missionary named Josué Fernandez, Antonio returned periodically to observe the Sabbath and study the Bible with

Sr. Fausto and his family. The missionaries depended on Sr. Fausto to reach out to his neighbors, who also gathered to worship and study. The missionaries taught their converts the basic doctrines of the church – most notably, the importance of keeping the Saturday Sabbath and how to prepare themselves, mind and body, for the imminent second coming of Christ. In accordance with the Church’s model of evangelization through the promotion of healthy living, Bible study sessions were often accompanied by lessons on domestic hygiene and food preparation and consumption. As in other indigenous missions (Castañeda Seijas 2007) the missionaries taught the new congregants to cook on raised fires, to eat on tables, and to sleep in beds. They instructed them to dig pits for latrines and to build coops for their chickens, who would otherwise have sheltered overnight in a corner of the one-room family house. They taught about the vices of tobacco and alcohol, and of eating meat, and particularly pork. Today, congregants’ memory of their church’s founding in town is intricately linked to the introduction of these new personal habits and technologies of the home (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Sr. Fausto’s first convert was a neighbor named Inés Quero. Sra. Inés is credited with having converted a number of people to the Adventist Church, including several of her children and siblings, as well as some of her in-laws and their families. Her husband, Filimón Cruz, was a devout Catholic who regularly served as a sacristan in the regional church. Initially, his wife’s participation in the Adventist church angered him, and he tried to prevent her from attending Bible study sessions. In time, however, Sr. Filimón converted, and eventually evangelized several other family members, including a son-in-law in the nearby town of Carrizal²³. Despite these gains, membership in the fledgling congregation remained small through the 1950s and

²³ Today, Carrizal has an active Adventist congregation whose members continue to have strong religious and familial ties with Benito Juárez.

60s. Of the approximately 50 households that comprised Benito Juárez at that time, several expressed some interest in the new church, attending meetings and even hosting a few study sessions in their own homes; most of these families, however, did not convert. Only four households – about a dozen adults and a dozen children – comprised the bulk of the membership through the first decade. At first, the converts gathered quietly in their homes and fields to worship and study. In 1963, Sra. Ines' brother Casimero Quero donated a small adobe house near the center of town to serve as an official meeting house. Adventists continue to meet on this same site to this day, though the original house was torn down and a proper church built in the mid-1970s.



Figure 4 Adventist Church in Benito Juárez, May 2009

For those who chose the SDA church, life was difficult. One elderly couple remembered being socially ostracized, and vandals targeted their property:

Husband: The people with whom we got along well continued to speak to us, but there were other families that didn't, um, they didn't want to have anything to do with us... There were some people who were mean to us, right? They pulled up some plants and,, But they didn't go farther than that, it didn't get so bad that anyone hit anyone, or got hurt, no.

Wife: Which plant? They pulled up a bit of something [in my brother's field] –

H: A potato plant.

W: Oh, yes, potato. They went and pulled it up.

Another elderly woman recalled that her family was treated poorly, and even violently, because of their association with the new church:

Well, it was burdensome for us because [the others] didn't believe. Many people didn't even want to look at us. There came a time when they wanted to kick us out of here. There was a meeting and the town authorities called out a list of who was Adventist and who wasn't. They kicked us out of here. They didn't want us to be here anymore. But [the *autoridades*] went to Lachatao to report to the [municipal president], and the president explained to them that, well, everyone is free to have whatever religion they want. He helped us.

Conversion also caused tension within families and extended kin networks; siblings disowned one another, parents argued with their children, godparents relinquished their responsibilities.

This was particularly true when women participated in Adventist activities against the wishes of their male heads of house. An elderly woman told me about the time she and her husband took her sister to a neighboring town to be baptized:

We brought my sister with us, but my father didn't know. My father was a drunkard. We brought my sister there to be baptized, and my late father became angry, he became very angry. Maybe it was in the evening, when we left for Cuajimoloyas, we thought it would only take a moment to baptize us, and we would spend the night there. But we arrived at night, and we didn't leave for the river till the next day, and we went far out to be baptized. When we arrived [home again] my father hit the roof.

In some cases, the women were persistent. In time, their confidence in the truth and righteousness of this new religion won over their husbands and fathers. Others, however, acquiesced to the will of their husbands and stopped attending the new congregation.

Adventism in Benito Juárez Today

At the time of this study, in 2008, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez had grown to approximately 100 members (about 25% of the total population). Of that, a core group of about 70 women, men and children actively participated in the church's bible study, worship, and social events on a regular basis. As in its earliest days in the 1950s and 60s, the Adventist faith has continued to disperse along family lines through both blood and marriage, a common phenomenon in the region (Sandstrom 2001:274). The early converts and their direct descendants now constitute approximately two thirds of the active membership. Based on my own surveys in the pueblo, 90% of the church's members were either born to an Adventist family, or else joined as a young child when a parent converted. The remaining members either converted upon marrying an Adventist, or else came to the church through the influence of a family member (an uncle or a cousin, for example) or friend. Family connections are dense, and most members belong to one of only four extended families. Adventist membership has a strong geographic component as well, and Adventists live in all but one of Benito Juárez's four *barrios*, the neighborhood of La Nevería. This is due to the dense kin networks combined with general, pueblo-wide patterns of inheritance that tend to keep extended families living as neighbors.

Two-thirds of the adult members (defined as 16 years and older) are women; in the pueblo-at-large, the female population is about 50%.²⁴ Almost without exception, Adventist families depend on subsistence agriculture (corn) to form the bedrock of their household economies. As is common in Benito Juárez, many sell flowers, potatoes, and fruit as well. A few families are involved in the communal lumber business, contracting with el mancomún-

²⁴ For a discussion of the role of women in conversion in Latin America, as well as for a discussion on the role of familial ties in conversion and apostasy, see Gross (2012).

owned mill to haul lumber from the local forest for processing. As is common in town, Adventists are self-employed, with the exception of a part-time mason, a domestic worker, and three young adults who work part-time at the community lumber mill.

There are two cornerstones to regular Adventist practice in Benito Juárez: daily bible study and Saturday worship. The faithful are called to study and meditate on biblical teachings every day, and the worldwide Church publishes study aides to facilitate this endeavor. These materials are distributed directly to the congregations through the local district office. In Benito Juárez, families gather to share the day's lesson when they can, often in the morning before breakfast, or in the evening as the day ends. Participants may take turns reading from the manual or the Bible, or there may be an unofficial and regular leader who moderates the session. Lessons ask questions on a weekly theme, encourage members to search the Bible for answers, and provide passages for memorization. Daily study sessions may include prayer or song; they may last a few short minutes, or linger on, depending on the day and the interest²⁵. This daily habit not only anchors Adventists' religious practice; in Benito Juárez, it is a self-conscious and often-cited point of distinction Adventists make between themselves as "people who have books in the house and read" and their non-Adventist neighbors, who they claim do not.

On Saturdays, Adventists are called to abstain from work and spend the day in study and worship at the church. It is a long day: three hours of activities in the morning, and another two hours in the afternoon, with a break in between when members return home to lunch. The first two hours of the morning are dedicated to the *Escuela Sabática*, the Sabbath School, which includes a lesson led by the escuela director, followed by small group study to review and discuss the week's daily study sessions. During this time, children under the age of about 16

²⁵ For more on the role of Bible Study in Adventist religious practice, see Keller (2005).

leave the main sanctuary and split up into classes to participate in age-appropriate, bible-related activities. The final morning hour is the *Culto Divino*, the Worship Service, which is led by one of several senior members of the church and includes hymns, stories about the struggles and successes of Adventists from around the world, and a sermon. The afternoon session is organized and led by members of the *Asociación Jóvenes*, the Youth Association (typically unmarried members above the age of 16), and includes readings, songs, and games that test the congregation's knowledge of bible lessons and verses. On any given Saturday, between 20-30 adults and 15-20 children participate in the Escuela Sabática, while 20-30 members of mixed ages attends the Asociación Jóvenes. In addition to the Saturday activities, the church hosts regular services on Wednesday and Sunday evenings, and on Fridays at sundown to welcome the Sabbath. These services last about an hour, with around a dozen people in attendance on average.



Figure 5 Small group bible study during the Escuela Sabática, September 2008

These services, as well as the general management of the church, are organized entirely by lay members in Benito Juárez, and in similar churches throughout the district. There is one ordained Adventist pastor responsible for about 20, mostly rural, churches; he visits them all on a

regular basis to share in their study and worship and to provide guidance as needed. For the most part, however, it is the lay members who drive and maintain their congregations. Such is the hallmark of the Adventist Church throughout Latin America, where the historical growth in membership has greatly outpaced the growth in trained missionaries and pastors, often at a rate of 4 to 1 (Greenleaf 1992:425-33; Viera-Rossano 1993:180-82). In the place of trained spiritual leaders, lay people have stepped forward to grow and sustain the church, proselytizing to neighbors and friends, leading Sabbath Schools and Bible study groups, preaching at worship, and caring for the day-to-day organizational needs of their congregations. Adventists believe that each member is uniquely endowed with God-given talents, and that those talents are to be used to nurture and sustain the local church. In the Benito Juárez church, every woman, man, youth, and child is called upon to serve posts, or *cargos*; cargos are voted on by the congregation and rotate annually. Cargos include church elder (at the time of my research, an exclusively male position), director of the Escuela Sabática, teachers for the children's Escuela (often, though not exclusively women), director of the youth group, secretary, and treasurer. In 2009, there were 33 elected positions.

Adventists in Benito Juárez have managed a relatively comfortable accommodation for their religious beliefs and practice, on a political, if not a social level. Most significantly, Adventists are not required to support the town's Catholic Church. Having been well educated by their church on Mexican laws requiring the separation of church and state, Adventists successfully petitioned the town to divorce civil and religious activities. Today, each individual church maintains its own affairs, independent of the political life of the pueblo. By comparison, in the neighboring town of Latuvi, as in many pueblos throughout the region, serving a cargo in the Catholic Church is mandatory, regardless of one's own affiliations. And, unlike many of its

neighbors, the annual fiesta in Benito Juárez is secular, rather than religious. In fact, the town does not have an official patron saint; the town's name itself is completely secular, having been named after Mexico's first indigenous president, who was born in a nearby town and whose most notable achievements include legislating the separation of church and state in the 1870s. There are also no mandatory town activities on Saturdays, the Adventist day of rest, such as assemblies or *tequios* (public works projects, for example to fix a road or a school). Such events can be held on Sundays, as Catholics don't object to doing community service on their own day of rest.

One explanation for these accommodations may be the relative youth of the town and the historical happenstance that brought the Adventist church to the pueblo during its "youth". Though people have settled in the area for generations, the town was formally incorporated in the late 1960s. In effect, the church and the pueblo have grown up together. Interestingly, there was no actual chapel for Catholic worship when residents applied to become an *agencia municipal* (an official satellite village in a larger municipality). As one of the requirements in the application was that the pueblo has a church, the Adventist church was used to fulfill the criteria.

The insistence on a separation between church and state in the pueblo is by no means a declaration of withdrawal from community life. On the contrary, Adventists have a strong ethos of involvement in community affairs, and have a track record of respected local leadership. Adventists are regularly appointed to the highest political offices in the pueblo and in el mancomún. There is, of course, social tension between Adventists and their non-Adventist neighbors. This usually manifests itself in the form of side comments that affirm the unity and harmony in the pueblo. The question of tensions and engagement are the subject of Chapter 4.

Part 2 – Community-based Ecotourism in Santa Marta Latuvi

Santa Marta Latuvi sits 8,052 feet above sea level, perched atop one of a series of sharply peaked ridgelines that makes waves across this patch of the Sierra Norte. An easy 90-minute drive south down winding dirt roads and paved highways connects Latuvi to the thickly populated and economically dominant urban centers of the Oaxacan Valley. Yet the village and its approximately 600 residents are sheltered on all sides by a living fortress of trees and fields. The pine-oak forests that blanket Latuvi’s mountains are lush in the rainy months, and punctuated by the earthen-hued milpas in the dry season. Early in the mornings, the valleys between these ridges often fill with pools of thick, billowy white fog, lending the name “Cloud Forest” to this pocket of the Sierra Juárez. After sunrise, as the land begins to warm again, the milky clouds disintegrate, revealing the village’s seven dispersed neighborhoods. These *barrios* radiate out and down from the village center, each occupying its own distinct microclimate in the nooks and crannies of the forested landscape.

For generations, the residents of Latuvi have transformed this prized piece of the forest²⁶ into a productive landscape – felling trees to make homes or sell lumber for wages; clearing small patches of land to grow corn, squash, beans, and potatoes in the rich black soil; tending to wild herbs or edible mushroom patches in the fringe woods and deep forests of Pueblos Mancomunados. More recently, latuvenses have been engaged in a new form of natural resource extraction – they have turned their forests, the centuries-old trails and ancient vistas, into an

²⁶ According to the The World Wildlife Fund, the Sierra Juárez is an important conservation region, owing to its high content of endemic and endangered plant and animal species, as well as a unique floral composition. “Southern North America: Southern Mexico”, The World Wildlife Fund, accessed September, 2015, <http://www.worldwildlife.org/ecoregions/nt0308>. Conservation of the forest cover and soil is also critical, given the forests location at the headwaters of the Papaloapan watershed, one of Mexico’s most important rivers for hydropower and agricultural irrigation (Poe 2009:26).

ecotourism destination. They have opened their homes, streets, and milpas to visitors from around the world, offering them a chance to experience their foods and their hospitality, to hear their local dialect, to take their pictures and exchange a greeting or two. In return, the people of Latuvi have been promised new economic opportunities, an alternative to migration, and the chance to showcase and strengthen local life and customs.



Figure 6 Latuvi in the early morning, before the fog has lifted, January 2009

Latuvenses did not come by this decision lightly. While Benito Juárez and several other villages in el mancomún were cautiously embracing tourism development, latuvenses were cautiously waiting, observing its impact and potential. It took a number of years for the *asamblea* to finally agree to begin ecotourism development. Nor did ecotourism appear out of a vacuum; it arose out of an articulation of the unique meanderings of local history and the development priorities of the neoliberal state (leaving alone for the time being the desires of a global touring class). Ecotourism is likewise bound up in the history and priorities of *Pueblos Mancomunados*; Latuvi works in coordination with its neighbors in el mancomún to provide a network of tourism services to interested ecotravelers. Much like the founding of the Adventist

Church, the arrival of ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados is regarded and retold by residents in mythical tones. It is likewise tied up in memories of and desires for development and progress, and intricately linked to carefully cultivated and highly valued connections with “outsiders” (missionaries of a secular nature). To fully appreciate the symbolic and material weight of ecotourism locally, it is necessary to understand how the project first arrived in el mancomún, in Latuvi’s southern neighbor, Benito Juárez.

Development and the Roots of Ecotourism

In 1994, the town of Benito Juárez, in collaboration with the state’s Secretaría de Turismo (Department of Tourism), built a Tourist *Yu’u*²⁷, a dormitory style hostel. The director of tourism, an architect named Martin Ruiz Camino, had been developing a small network of *yu’us* in some of the more popular tourist destinations throughout the Valley of Oaxaca. Normally, tourists would secure lodging in Oaxaca City and venture out on day trips to visit archaeological sites or artisanal villages across the valley. Martin’s vision was to help pueblos with significant cultural and historical – or in the case of Benito Juárez, natural – resources to capture greater revenue from tourism by providing travelers with the option of staying in town (Corbett and Robles Garcia 1994; Robles Garcia 1996). The *yu’u* in Benito Juárez was the first and only one built outside the valley.

The relationship between Benito Juárez and Martin predates the *yu’u* project by nearly thirty years. At that time, the young Martin, then the regional director for CAPFCE (Comité Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas, a federal school construction program), was charged with building a new schoolroom in the village. The village teacher, a

²⁷ *Yu’u* is the Zapotec for “house”.

young man from the pueblo named Perfecto Mecinas, and the mayor, Constantino Hernández Cruz, traveled to Oaxaca to present a proposal to CAPFCE. They sat, waiting for hours, but were never granted a meeting. A few days later, Profesor Perfecto presided as the master of ceremony at the inauguration of a school building in a neighboring pueblo. Martin was also in attendance, and after the ceremony, the two men met for the first time. Perfecto recalled the meeting for me:

When I arrived at the table, here at my right was a young white man, wearing a honey-colored leather jacket. “Are you really a teacher?” he asked me. You see, I had started the ceremony with the words of Victor Hugo, *He who opens a school door, closes a prison*. This caught his attention. “Where do you work?” he asked. “Three hours from here,” I replied, “Who are you?” He told me he was the director of CAPFCE. “So young?” I said. He became defensive, and I told him, “The thing I admire is that you have learned at such a young age the vices of the old. Because the old public officials arrive at their office, close the door, arrange their clothes, tidy their nails, scratch themselves, the secretary brings them a coffee. Meanwhile, the people waiting outside are squirming because they haven’t eaten a thing all morning and no one is paying any attention to them. I was in your office on Saturday. Fulano came in, Sultano came in to see you, but your people cut us off. They let others pass but they wouldn’t let me pass with my mayor. That is why I say to you, so young and already with the vices of the old.”

When Perfecto finished, Martin took out a business card. On the back he wrote: *The carrier of this card, Perfecto Mecinas Contreras, is my good friend. He is coming to speak with me. Let him pass through the doors.* Perfecto and the mayor returned to Martin’s office the following Saturday. Upon their arrival, Martin gathered all his employees and told them, “This man’s name is Perfecto. He is here with his mayor. They have come on pueblo business; they are not here to ask for ask for a handout. Starting today, no one has the right to prevent them from seeing me.”

Martin and Perfecto became friends. When Perfecto needed to see Martin, he went to his home, and was received by his family as a guest. Perfecto was often invited to eat at Martin’s home – a gesture that is not lost on the people of Benito Juárez. The simple act of

sharing food demonstrates and cements trust and respect; that an influential government employee, an educated, middle class white man was willing to share food in his own home with an indigenous person carried tremendous weight in the pueblo. (In contrast, a member of my host family often told me, in mixed tones of hurt and disgust, a story about Japanese businessmen who once visited the village to learn about their orchards. When one businessman was given a local apple to eat, he looked at the apple with revulsion, returned the offering, and wiped his “soiled” hands on his pants.)

After the new school building was completed, Martin continued to help the pueblo with other development projects. In the early 70s, the pueblo asked Martin for help with a new municipal building, and he sent them a young architect named Socorro Velázquez. In addition to designing the municipal building, Martin gave Socorro permission to institute a number of projects to improve the standard of living in Benito Juárez. Socorro built orchards and encouraged the farmers to grow a wider variety of vegetables; she organized a region-wide cooperative called Altos de Oaxaca that distributed and sold local produce and other food goods; she started a Montessori-style kindergarten; and she taught people to build *fogones*, enclosed cooking hearths that conserve firewood and improve health by piping smoke out through the roof. Though several of these initiatives have since run their course (years later, the kindergarten building was renovated into the Tourist Yu’u), people continue to maintain their orchards and build fogones. In fact, fogones are perhaps the most significant symbolic and material form of development in the eyes of residents, and they regularly reference the use of fogones as the thing

that makes Benito Juárez more advanced than the neighboring pueblos²⁸.

For his part, Martin remained a trusted advisor and valuable asset, linking the pueblo to much-needed but often difficult to obtain government resources. In return, the pueblo honors and celebrates Martin. In 1968, the pueblo named him an *hijo predilecto* (favored son); they made him an honorary citizen and named the principle street in town after him. Each August, the town organizes a fiesta to celebrate his birthday, complete with a banquet, hired music, and a short program performed by the school.

Organizing Ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados

When Benito Juárez built their Tourist Yu'u in 1994, Latuvi and the other pueblos in el mancomún took notice, and some chatter arose about the possibility of extending tourism offerings throughout the communal property. Once again, Architect Martin was called on for help. Martin asked his son Pablo Ruiz LaValle, an airline pilot with a self-described love of nature and hiking, to take a two-week trip to Pueblos Mancomunados, to gain a better understanding of what people wanted from tourism and what el mancomún might have to offer. During his stay, Pablo refused repeated offers to be chauffeured from town to town, and instead insisted that he walk the forest trails, the social and economic arterials that have served el mancomún for centuries. His experiences during this initial journey greatly impressed him. He explained to me in an interview:

What I saw in those two weeks I was up there, well, it is an extraordinary world, don't you think? For me, it was like peering into a different way of understanding life, seeing people who were so generous, so well organized, with a well-

²⁸ Based on casual observations and conversations, fogones are used in neighboring pueblos, but tend to be less common and less skillfully made. Outside the region of the Sierra Juárez, fogones are uncommon. During my time in Oaxaca, I saw posters encouraging their use, suggesting the technology is not widespread.

established sense of community, and with a sense of also belonging to the earth and a philosophy of self-sufficiency.

Pablo met with the authorities and elders in the various villages, and they shared with him their vision to build hotels, swimming pools, and tennis courts – in short, to replicate their understanding of conventional tourism as it existed in major tourism centers like Oaxaca City. For Pablo, however, the tourism potential of el mancomún lay in its ability to offer the exact opposite of such services, and to instead allow travelers the opportunity to connect with nature and indigenous culture:

I explained to them that there are different kinds of tourists, and that the kind of tourist I had in mind were people who liked to live in a local community, who liked to walk and be in touch with nature, and that these tourists don't need anything other than what was already here: hospitality and a desire to welcome tourists, well-established hiking trails, clean air, and a sense of security. In short, I told them, you have everything you need to do this.

The kind of tourism Pablo was imagining for Pueblos Mancomunados was part of an emerging trend called community-based ecotourism. Ecotourism itself – a form of travel that seeks to conserve the environment while improving the lives of local people²⁹ - had grown up during the 70s and 80s (Honey 2010:442-44). During that time, many developing nations who had clung to the economic hopes that the tourism industry peddled, were instead seeing 50% or more of the profits from tourism “leak” to the more powerful nations and private corporations that controlled tourism development, capital, and access to tourists. These nations, along with a growing contingent of tourists, began seeking new kinds of travel that would allow a greater share of profits to stay locally. The Tourist Yu'u project that Architect Martin initiated in the Valley of Oaxaca is one

²⁹ “What is Ecotourism?”, The International Ecotourism Society, accessed on October 27, 2014, <https://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism>.

such response. At the same time, the environmental movement was raising awareness about the need to conserve the world's rainforests and other important natural resources. Ecotourism addressed both of these needs, and quickly became a highly praised development alternative, that could replace non-sustainable extractive activities like logging and poaching and provide high profit yields to host nations and communities (Barkin 2003).

Pablo was proposing a very specific kind of ecotourism that was based in, and run by and for individual communities. In its ideal form, community-based ecotourism places tourists and locals in direct, and often sustained contact with one another. Tourists travel "off the beaten track" in search of experiences that are both socially responsible and culturally rich. The majority, if not all, the money they spend stays in local hands, directly impacting the families and communities with whom they interact. Their visits are "low impact", meaning they do not significantly tax or consume local resources (water, electricity), the natural and built environments are not dramatically altered to accommodate them, and they are respectful of local culture. Ideally, locals have a direct say in the kinds of amenities offered, the future direction of the project, and the investment of profits.

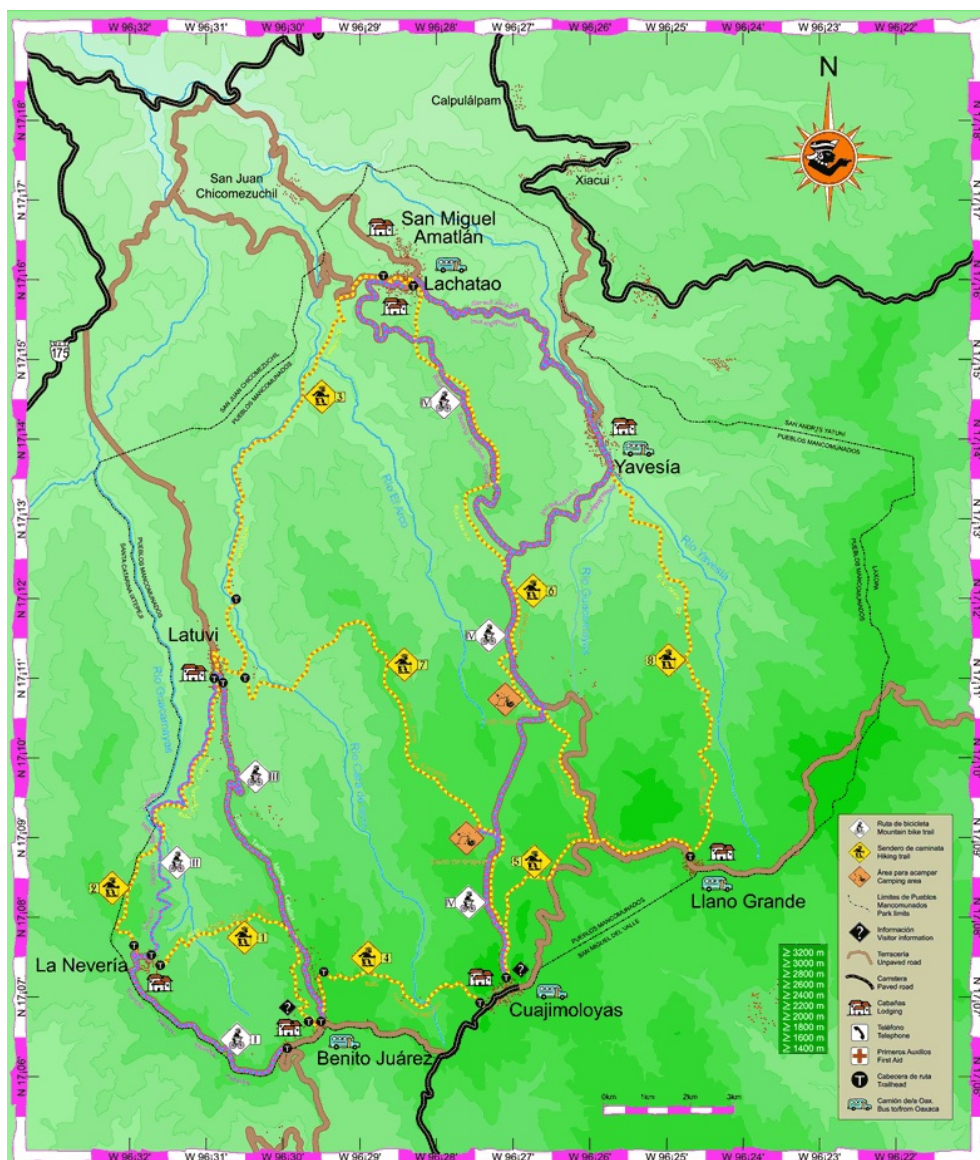


Figure 7 Map of ecotourism trails in Pueblos Mancomunados, www.sierranorte.org.mx

As these new forms of responsible travel grew, so did the availability of funding for community projects. Pablo – as his father before him – became a key figure in linking Pueblos Mancomunados to a number of significant funding sources. In 1998, Pablo helped secure a start-up grant from the Canadian Embassy in Mexico for CA\$10,000 (MX\$8,000). The embassy originally requested that they develop a regional ecotourism project that would include other towns in the Sierra Juárez. This was attempted with Ixtlán and Ixtepeji, but the politics of such regional cooperation were too challenging (in Pablo’s words, there was too much competition

between the pueblos), and they returned to the original idea of working only in Pueblos Mancomunados. In 1999, Pablo helped secure a US\$50,000 grant from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), an organization connected with the North American Free Trade Agreement that is charged with addressing regional environmental concerns. As a testament to the growing popularity of ecotourism as a conservation and development strategy, the CEC's grant program that year focused on promoting ecotourism throughout Canada, the US and Mexico. Pueblos Mancomunados used some of the funds to establish a tourism office in Oaxaca City; the remaining funds were used to print maps, train local guides, and build a few simple wooden cabins with outdoor toilets and showers. During this time, they named their new communal tourism endeavor Expediciones Sierra Norte.

Ecotourism in Mexico

Around this same time, the Mexican government also turned its attention to growing its ecotourism offerings. Tourism has long been an important piece of the political and economic climate in Mexico. In the early twentieth century, in the wake of the Revolutionary War, tourism development played a significant role in nation-building (Berger 2006). Revolutionary elites turned to tourism to build a modern Mexican state, improve the national economy, participate in modern capitalism, build a skilled labor force, and improve its image with the US. Tourism apparatus such as museums became political mechanisms of the state, charged with the task of portraying the nation's past and solidifying a national citizenry (Castañeda 1996). Since this period, tourism has been seen as a patriotic and profitable industry in Mexico, and the national tourism board has invested heavily in developing and promoting tourism to its sandy beaches, archeological monuments, colonial cities, and bustling markets.

Following the global movement towards more responsible, nature-based travel, the Mexican state began expanding its infrastructure to include a wide array of “alternative” tourism: offerings that drew tourists to out-of-the-way places, to hike, camp, raft, and bike in the outdoors while meeting rural culture in its own backyard. Community-based ecotourism is one of the more prominent forms of this “new” tourism, and has been heralded as an important strategy for preserving nature (and culture) while at the same time bringing development in the form of tourism dollars to the nation’s poorest regions (Barkin 2003). An array of government agencies has joined forces in their excitement over its potential. In addition to state and federal Secretarías de Turismo (Secretary of Tourism, SECTUR), non-tourism offices have enthusiastically and heavily invested in ecotourism and other forms of adventure tourism, including the Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (the Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources, SEMARNAT) and the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Pueblos, CDI).

Community-based ecotourism has become an important piece of the rural development model in Oaxaca. The Sierra Juárez region where Pueblos Mancomunados is located has been particularly targeted for community-based ecotourism development. The government officials I spoke with cited this region as “good for tourism”: the mountainous landscapes host an abundance of floral and faunal diversity, the autonomous villages are well organized, and the people preserve the linguistic, agricultural, culinary and environmental practices of their Zapotec ancestors. An unspoken justification may also be the accessibility of this “out-of-the-way” region; many of the pueblos are connected by easily traversed dirt roads to a major paved highway that runs north from Oaxaca City. Similarly unspoken is the fact that, in a state of

highly marginalized rural pueblos, the villages of the Sierra Juárez are classified as only “moderately” marginalized (CONAPO 2011). They occupy a kind of “goldilocks zone”: not too poor, with well-preserved forests, accessible roads, and just the right amount of culture. Of the villages in the Sierra Juárez, Pueblos Mancomunados is often singled out as having an exemplary project, with its centuries-old commitment to inter-pueblo cooperation, its network of trails through well-preserved forests, and its proven ability to provide a quality tourism experience.

Starting in mid-2000, two government agencies in Oaxaca – the Secretaría de Turismo (SECTUR) and the Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI) – began funding community-based ecotourism development in earnest. The roots of these projects may stretch back to as early as the 1980s, with government projects designed to support community-based businesses involved in natural resource extraction³⁰. Architect Martín’s Tourism Yu’u project in the Oaxacan Valley and Benito Juárez in the mid-1990s is also an important precursor to the community-based ecotourism movement. In the late 1990s and early 2000, SECTUR was in the research and planning stages of ecotourism development. In 2005, SECTUR began to fund alternative, nature-based tourism; grants were provided to both community and small-scale private tourism projects. Between 2005 and 2008, the agency invested approximately MX\$70 million (US\$5.4 million) in the construction of ecotourism infrastructure in the state³¹. Around half that money went to 13 community-based projects in the Sierra Juárez, with additional funds given to 12 trout farms and 15 small-scale, private businesses in the region. For its part, Pueblos Mancomunados received around MX\$10 million (US\$770,000) during this time. The CDI began

³⁰ Ingeniero Carlos Gutiérrez (Director de Desarrollo, SECTUR Oaxaca), in discussion with the author, May 18, 2009.

³¹ SECTUR-Oax also funded tourism promotion and worker training, for a total state-wide investment of around MX\$100 million (US\$7.7 million). Source: Ingeniero Carlos Gutiérrez (Director de Desarrollo, SECTUR-Oaxaca), in discussion with the author, May 18, 2009.

to offer its own funds for ecotourism development in 2006; unlike SECTUR, funding from the CDI has been limited to community-based projects in indigenous pueblos. Between 2006 and 2008, CDI invested approximately MX\$80 million (US\$6 million) in alternative tourism in 32 localities in Oaxaca. Around 60% of that money has gone to 18 communities in the Sierra Juárez.

The Growth of Ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados

Pablo was asked to help coordinate Pueblos Mancomunados' new ecotourism project, which he did on a voluntary basis for nearly three years. His wife, Adriana, also became involved in the new project. Of the eight towns in el mancomún, Benito Juárez, Cuajimoloyas and Llano Grande were initially the most enthusiastic about developing tourism; over the course of the next few years, one by one, the other towns joined, as well³².

In 2001, Pablo and a group of guides from Expediciones Sierra Norte attended an ecotourism convention in Mexico City. The guides, all indigenous people from el mancomún, described their attendance at the convention as an important turning point, the moment when they understood that not only was their project going to be successful, but that they truly had something unique in the tourism market. One early tourism coordinator told me:

At that time, we didn't realize what we were doing. But others noticed, and they told us it was an outstanding project...First, because we came as eight pueblos working together, but each one with its own committee. Second, because the very same people from the very same pueblos were administering their own business...[and] that there are many businesses that still haven't decided what

³² The differing levels of participation in tourism reflect long-standing tensions and contemporary politics in el mancomún. At the time of my research, Lachatao's tourism walked a line between being independently operated and working together with el mancomún. Yavesía, which has been attempting to secede from el mancomún for several decades, was developing a completely independent project.

they want to do, but that our ideas, our vision was well established. So, that is how we realized that we were truly doing a good job.

As discussed above, at the time of this convention, Mexican tourism was dominated by conventional forms of travel: sand and sun, hotels and restaurants, and above all, major capital investment. That indigenous people from marginalized communities could organize and implement an ecotourism project for themselves, with little capital investment and no formal training, was a remarkable thing. The guides who attended the conference felt a great sense of pride in this recognition and in their growing accomplishments. As another attendee recalled, “We saw that, yes, we could succeed at this.”

This self-reliant, David-and-Goliath tone is reminiscent of another important stage in Pueblos Mancomunados history. In the 70s, el mancomún physically and at times violently removed an international logging company to regain control of their forest resources and started a community owned logging business in its place. They were often told that *indios* (a derogatory term for indigenous people) without formal business training, and in most cases with little more than an elementary school education, would not be able to run such a business. Despite their critics, the logging business succeeded; today, Pueblos Mancomunados is considered a flagship community forest enterprise in Mexico. As with the logging business, the communities persevered with tourism. Expediciones Sierra Norte quickly gained exposure and visitors. They were written about, and continue to be included in, such backpacking guidebook staples as the Lonely Planet and Let’s Go. In 2002, they were named “Best Ecotourism Destination” by the travel magazine Conde Nast Traveler. Expediciones Sierra Norte is widely considered the first community-based ecotourism project in Oaxaca, and is often credited with being at the forefront of the boom in community- and nature-based tourism that followed.

Around this same time, Pablo and Adriana removed themselves from the project leadership. They wished to turn the project over completely to the hands of the community, and allow it to grow into a more self-sufficient business. They also understood that, with the impending increase in government involvement in community-based ecotourism, a very different future lay in wait for Expediciones Sierra Norte. Agencies like SECTUR and CDI were likely to have strict conditions for funding and were unlikely to tolerate the involvement of “outsiders”. Pablo and Adrianna also feared that, given the government’s very different priorities for and understandings about tourism, the project was about to take a turn away from their humble vision and towards a more intensified business model.

With Pablo’s encouragement, the pueblos held a communal meeting and agreed to officially incorporate ecotourism into its already existing community forest enterprise (CFE)³³. In Pueblos Mancomunados, the CFE is charged with developing local employment opportunities through the sustainable use of its forest resources - the organization maintains a lumber mill, several small mines, and a plant to bottle spring water and dehydrate local fruits and mushrooms. Ecotourism was now a part of this infrastructure. That ecotourism is managed at the level of el mancomún alongside the lumber business and other extractive industries, with the pueblos once again working together to successfully to manage their own affairs, is a source of tremendous pride. It also provides a unifying and marketable identity for ecotourism. When people talk about

³³ The CFE is an official government designation dating back to the 1980s that aims to return resource management and extraction to the hands of local communities. This form of land tenure is thought to significantly reduce deforestation (López-Arzola 2005), as well as boost Mexico’s forest production and overall competitive strength in the marketplace (Bray, et al. 2005:7).

their project, from informal conversations with me to formal presentations at conferences and other meetings, they focus heavily on the organizational capacity of the project. At formal events, such as tourism conventions or meetings with funding agencies, leaders commonly emphasize the history of el mancomún, its other successful businesses, and the organizational structure of ecotourism, such as how they take reservations, clean cabanas, or attend to client needs.

Expediciones Sierra Norte has expanded considerably since 2000, and a wide range of workers – some paid, others serving cargos – now attend to its day-to-day needs. These positions include project coordinators, expedition guides, maids to clean tourist cabanas, cooks, farmers to sell food to restaurants, and community members to give demonstrations on local food production, healing, and agricultural techniques. Each town in el mancomún decides for itself the extent to which it will participate in the project, which services it will offer, and how the profits will be used. Likewise, the towns each decide for themselves how best to manage ecotourism. In some pueblos, posts are filled by cargo and rotate on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. This is especially true for guides and housekeepers, though it is increasingly common for these cargo-holders to be remunerated for their services (guides may get part or all of the hiking fee paid by tourists; housekeepers can earn a per diem). Pueblos have also hired full-time coordinators, local men considered particularly adept at managing tourism who work for years at a time (one coordinator held his position for 10 years) in order to better grow the project. There is constant experimentation and readjustment in these practices as townspeople continue to build their own knowledge and expectations about tourism.

Though my account of the history of community-based ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados has focused largely on the town of Benito Juárez, my research on ecotourism

was conducted in Santa Marta Latuvi. I had originally planned to explore tourism in both towns, but found research in Benito Juárez to be challenging. After almost 15 years of tourism development, the project was experiencing an important and delicate transition. Accusations of misdeeds on the part of the long-term coordinator and his staff had left many people in town feeling ambiguously about the proper role and future of ecotourism, and many were uncomfortable talking to me about the project. The *asamblea* had decided to return tourism management to an unpaid cargo, at the same time that the state, and particularly SECTUR, was increasing pressure to hire full-time staff; in fact, SECTUR refused to provide more funding unless the town chose a more business-like model. For these reasons, I chose to split my research focus by town: ecotourism in Latuvi and Adventism in Benito Juárez.

Ecotourism Development in Latuvi

Latuvi began to formally develop its tourism project in 1999, five years after Benito Juárez opened its *yu'u*. At first, residents were skeptical of the merits of ecotourism. Having little experience as tourists themselves, they failed to understand what their pueblo had to offer world travelers. Perhaps, residents wondered, tourists would try to attack them, rob their homes, or kidnap their children. Maybe tourists would damage their property and forest or bring disease. Pablo Ruiz LaValle visited Latuvi, and explained that tourists would respect residents and their property. Tourists would appreciate how well latuvenses have cared for their forest, and they would pay for the right to hike their mountains and stay in their homes. Pablo's promises of respect and income – combined with latuvenses' own observations of ecotourism success in Benito Juárez – lessened residents' fears, and the *asamblea* voted to begin a community tourism project.

In 1999, the town converted a former clinic into an 18-bed hostel. Tourism grew slowly but steadily, and in 2001 the town received a MX\$380,000 (US\$29,000) grant from the Secretaría del Desarrollo Rural (Department of Rural Development) to construct a two-room cabaña. The years 2005-2006 marked a period of significant growth for the project, as various state offices had begun to make community-based ecotourism a funding priority and were now investing heavily in similar projects throughout the state. During these two years, the town added three new cabañas, an office building, a large storage shed, and a dedicated sewage system, with a total of MX\$1.06 million (US\$81,000) from the state tourism board (SECTUR) and another MX\$1.5 million (US\$115,500) from the Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples).

The administration of the project has adapted as it has grown. During the first four years, from 1999-2003, the project was run by town-appointed, voluntary cargo posts. Four men (two coordinators and two guides) were elected to serve two-year positions³⁴. In 2003, the asamblea added a housekeeping position to the cargo roster, with all appointees continuing to serve two-year positions. In 2006, as the infrastructure expanded, the number of visitors nearly doubled from the previous year. The workload proved too great for one housekeeper, and the coordinator successfully petitioned the asamblea to change the housekeeper to a one-year service post. In 2007, this same coordinator, who was now at the end of his two-year service and who believed deeply in tourism's potential, initiated a second change in the projects administration: he convinced the asamblea to appoint himself, a housekeeper, and two guides as paid, full-time staff. The project administration continued in this way through to the end of my research period

³⁴ In Latuvi, cargos are typically one-year positions.

in 2009, though finding full-time guides to employ was difficult and so the post reverted to cargo in 2008 (guides were remunerated per hike).

Community-based ecotourism has become a part of everyday life in Latuvi. Though only a core group of people attends to the regular administration of the project, residents reported a high level of satisfaction and pride in their project (see Chapter 5). When I asked people to relate the history of ecotourism in their pueblo, they often disparaged themselves and their pueblo, characterizing themselves as fearful, close-minded, over-protective and ignorant. For a while, this tone colored my own interpretation of the project. In hindsight, I think that perspective undervalues the pueblo's power and right to construct a locally relevant and morally accountable development. The carefulness with which latuvenses approached ecotourism is more accurately a statement about the process of community development initiatives and the real dynamics of "participation" and "power". Residents resisted a new form of development because they didn't understand it. They took their time and waited for proof that ecotourism was safe, environmentally friendly, and profitable. Benito Juárez may have been more primed to accept ecotourism early on because of their connection to the architect Martin Ruiz Camino, and their trust in his advice and guidance. Latuvi didn't have these same links; they stood their ground and protected their pueblo. In general, the slow pace of ecotourism roll out in Latuvi – much to the displeasure of state funding and development agencies – may be a local strategy to control the terms of development.

Economic Impact of Ecotourism in Latuvi

One of the stated goals of ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados is to bolster the local economy by creating jobs and providing revenue to the towns. Because my own interests in

ecotourism lay in understanding the non-economic dimensions of this form of development, I do not have strong data on its economic impact. I do have sufficient information to provide some perspective on the kinds of economic benefits it provides, as well as the distribution of those benefits. Overall, community-based ecotourism has had a modest economic impact in Latuvi. I say modest, but not insignificant. In a town with few opportunities for waged labor, every little bit counts. In fact, it is my impression that ecotourism complements already-existing patterns of economic diversification, where households rely on a mixture of year-round subsistence and occasional waged activities to support their economic needs. It is even possible – though I cannot substantiate it – that one of the reasons ecotourism has remained “small scale” is because of this pattern of mixed economic activity.

In 2008, Latuvi recorded 1020 visitors: 339 domestic and 683 international. Domestic tourists were highly likely to have visited the pueblo for a day trip. They would have paid a MX\$150 access fee directly to the Latuvi office and may have taken at least one meal from a local restaurant (MX\$25-45 per plate). International tourists, on the other hand, were almost exclusively staying one to two nights in Latuvi as they hiked their way through el mancomún. They would have paid the MX\$150 access fee – which they likely split as a group – directly to the main office in Oaxaca when they made their reservations. They would sleep four to a room in a MX\$450 per night cabaña (a shared expense), and eat their meals in one of the two comedores in town, with a visit to one of the pueblo’s two trout farms for a special meal. They would have also split the guide fee, MX\$120 per day. As a community-owned venture, 100% of the profits earned stay in the towns. The access and accommodation fees, as well as charges from equipment rentals (bikes, tents), were placed in town coffers. Restaurants and trout farms

were privately owned and did not share their earnings with the town; guides were given the full fee paid for their services.

Based on this information, I can conservatively estimate that in 2008 Latuvi's ecotourism project generated MX\$115,000 (US\$8,855) in revenue, from which it paid MX\$65,000 (US\$5,000) in wages to its full-time coordinator and full-time housekeeper. After paying other program costs, such as electricity, water, and general maintenance and upkeep, the profit would go to the community coffers, where the general assembly would decide whether to reinvest the profits in ecotourism, or, more likely, to spend the money to offset the cost of a town infrastructure project (such as fixing a road) or a fiesta. Households are often called upon to *cooperar*, to contribute, 100 pesos or more to pay for such activities; in this way, ecotourism projects directly benefited households by helping alleviate some of the cost burden of citizenship.

In addition to generating communal funds, ecotourism created wages directly for individuals and families. In 2008, a guide leading two hikes a week would have earned MX\$12,400 (US\$955), while the coordinator earned MX\$39,000 (US\$3,000) and the housekeeper earned MX\$26,000 (US\$2,000). A family owning a comedor or trout farm may have earned MX\$20,000 (US\$1,540) or more, before accounting for expenditures. Beyond these "formal" ecotourism staff, the project provided variable, but no less welcome, income for a number of households, including people who provided produce, meat and tortillas to the comedores, and households that sold goods (apples, potatoes, bread, tortillas) to interested tourists. During peak seasons, additional guides were hired to lead excursions, and housekeepers were hired to clean the cabañas. The project also contracted directly with residents who own horses to take tourists on horseback (though this did not happen often). To the best of my

calculating, during the first 10 years of the project, about 7% of latuvenses (30 people) earned wages from tourism in this way³⁵.

Construction of the cabañas also generated some waged local labor. Grant proposals stipulated that workers would receive wages for their labor, but the pueblo decided to do the work in part in tequio and in part wage labor; I do not know what was done with the funds that were saved through “free” communal labor. About 50 people were employed in the making of the cabañas, including drivers to haul the wood, masons, carpenters, and other unskilled laborers. While there was a preference for keeping labor local, there was debate in the *asamblea* regarding the value and efficiency of local labor. For example, during the construction of one cabaña, the town employed a local mason, who was paid MX\$80,000 (US\$6,000) for about 4 months of work. During the construction of another cabaña, the town hired a group of 4 workers – a mason and 3 unskilled laborers – from outside the pueblo. This group completed their work in 2 weeks, and were paid a total of MX\$35,000 (US\$2,700). There was also a preference for sourcing local materials, when possible. The rocks, wood, adobe, furniture, and windows were sourced in the community, on pueblo lands or through Pueblos Mancomunados lumber and furniture businesses. The flooring, glass, and roofing material were purchased outside the community. In total, the coordinator estimated that about 75% of the grant money received to build the cabañas stayed in the community (either in Latuvi or mancomunados-wide).

Ecotourism has also raised the visibility of Latuvi on a regional scale, resulting in increased development funds. For example, in July 2008, Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz visited Latuvi (I was told that a resident’s cousin was close to the governor); the governor was pleased

³⁵ By way of comparison, Pueblos Mancomunados’ communally owned lumber business employs dozens of full-time workers on a year-round basis.

with ecotourism's progress, and he made new funds available to Latuvi, to pave the main road in concrete and to hire a new doctor for the clinic.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the historical factors that have motivated townspeople to engage in Seventh-day Adventism and community-based ecotourism. Throughout this discussion, I have highlighted the relationships by which development and change took place. Residents valued, and continue to value, development that happens in and through relationships. In their conversations with me, people regularly presented a narrative of development that was deeply personalized. Residents located the beginnings of Adventism and ecotourism in intimate relationships, between Fausto Mecinas and the missionary Antonio Navarro, and between Perfecto Mecinas and Martin Ruiz Camino; from these core friendships, enduring networks of progress and change have unfolded. These relationships lent legitimacy to the new projects; they were key to gaining converts, as new members reached out to kin and neighbors behind closed doors and in hidden fields, and they help explain Latuvi's long wait to adopt ecotourism. By using the language of friendship, trust, and responsibility in their discussions about the histories of these projects, residents are also demonstrating their desire to engage in development that is personalized and familiar. These narratives illustrate a key feature of residents' approach to development, and their desire to engage in projects for change that are morally grounded. In the chapters that follow, I discuss in greater detail how residents hold these projects accountable to local standards of communal service, leadership, and authority, and the implications for the production of local identity.

I have also provided a backdrop for understanding the ways Seventh-day Adventism and Community-based ecotourism contribute, in different ways, to the production of local identity, and particularly identity that is place-based. Adventists derive a tremendous amount of pride in the work of the early missionaries; for them, their church has played a direct role in constructing Benito Juárez as a “modern pueblo”, with hygienic kitchens, healthy bodies, and open-minded and forward thinking residents willing to embrace change. Community-based ecotourism likewise calls on residents to embrace change, but in a way that places a high value on the local as close-to-nature, and residents as the proper guardians of the forest. Pablo identified the pueblo as “already ready” to receive tourists, by virtue of its pristine forests, networks of prehispanic trails, its residents ready to welcome visitors. While this call to adopt ecotourism plays on tropes of antiquity, ruralness, and peasant lifeways – tropes that resonate deeply with characterization of the Indian in Mexico – it does not require or even attempt to encourage residents to understand themselves as self-consciously “indigenous”.

These histories of the Adventist Church and ecotourism also demonstrate the dynamic between development, the body, and local identity. From its earliest days in Benito Juárez, the Adventist Church has called its members to adopt new habits of the body and the mind, to reflect on received ways of comporting oneself, to evaluate one’s behaviors and surroundings, and to adopt new ways of being-in-the-world. The mind is engaged in the intellectual pursuit of religious life, the body is a temple of God, and the self is a site of progress, transformation, and salvation. Ecotourism also compels participants to view their bodies in new and professionalized ways – from revaluing what it means to be an *indio*, once a title of derision and now a desirable category of difference, to adopting new skills and habits related to welcoming and caring for tourists. In the chapters that follow, I continue to discuss how these development projects

encourage habits of the body, as a way of understanding more deeply the benefits and limits of these distinct approaches to achieving a better life, and the particular forms of local identity encouraged through such a pursuit.

Chapter 3 - “Walking with God”: Adventism, Leadership and Community Engagement

Six-year-old Anita lived with her mother in the center of town, next door to my host family’s house. Early one morning, I caught sight of her while glancing across the small cornfield that separates the two homes. She was leaning out a second floor window, screaming the lyrics to a song she learned the past week during the Adventist Church’s Summer Bible Camp. Anita was wholly committed to her performance – her eyes were shut tight, her mouth strained open, and her black pigtails bounced along with the recording, adding emphasis to an already-superlative recital. She repeated the same two songs, over, and over, and over again. First, she shouted out the Bible Camp’s theme song -

*Un vencedor será
En esta guerra espiritual
Si aprendo a utilizar
Las Armas de Mis Héroes Preferidos*

I will be victorious
In this spiritual warfare
If I learn to use
The Weapons of My Favorite Heroes

During the weeklong camp, the children had been learning about biblical figures (aka the “favorite heroes”) who, at a very young age, had served God in an exemplary fashion. Anita then provided us with an example of one such hero, in a soaring rendition – I can only speculate how many people heard her in that open-aired mountain pueblo – of a song about the Old Testament story of Josiah, an eight-year-old boy who became king and valiantly guided his heathen kingdom back to God and His law -

*Josías, Josías, puso a Dios en primer lugar
Josías, Josías solo a Dios quería honrar.
Sonaron trompetas en el lugar para adorar a Dios
Con júbilo el pueblo cantó y lloró y a Dios obedeció.*

Josiah, Josiah, he put God first
 Josiah, Josiah, he wanted to honor God alone.
 His people sounded their trumpets to worship God
 They sang and cried with joy and they obeyed God.

The lesson of Josiah was not simply that he obeyed God; he was a successful leader to his people *because* he ruled according to God’s laws. Earlier that week, I had joined a classroom of seven- and eight-year-olds as they were presented with this same story. Using a felt-covered story board as a prop, the teacher told the children how the young Josiah discovered the Ten Commandments – God’s holy, but forgotten, law – hidden in a temple, and restored them as the law of the land. The teacher then asked her students, who were the same age as Josiah, to imagine being put in charge of their pueblo, to deal with the problems and responsibilities the *agente* (mayor) manages. The children laughed at the suggestion. As the lesson came to an end, the teacher asked her students if, at their age, they would be able to lead their church. Again, the children laughed, but the teacher was serious and insisted, “Yes, you could do it. You all can do great things, so long as you walk with God.”

This vignette illustrates two features of Adventist practice central to this chapter. The first is that Seventh-day Adventists learn a range of skills and knowledge through their participation in the church. Activities such as Bible study and discussion, Sabbath school, formal worship, and lifestyle workshops cultivate new abilities and provide Adventists with a heightened sense of empowerment. Anita’s song is one such example of the ways children are encouraged to internalize moral lessons from the Bible; these are just some of the tools (or “weapons”) the children will need, as their teacher encouraged, to walk with God. Second, Adventists in Benito Juárez believe they are called to serve, to use the critical skills and knowledge they develop through participation in the church in their spiritual *and* secular lives.

Each person, regardless of age or gender, has a right and a responsibility to participate. To truly walk with God, Adventists must use their divine talents and practiced abilities not only in the service of God but also in the service of their community. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which Adventist practice generates values about self and community, as well as a set of skills, knowledge and habits that members use in the pursuit of personal, spiritual, and community development. This chapter also highlights the ways development and religion occupy similar social spaces, as Adventists locate their church as central to the pueblo's history of progress and change.



Figure 8 A Sabbath School teacher leads a lesson on Josiah, July 2008



Figure 9 A group of Adventist children learn about Josiah, July 2008

The importance of studying Adventism as a form of community engagement and development was made clear for me just a few days after the Summer Bible Camp. I had a meeting to discuss my research with the head of the *bienes comunales*, the community governing board) charged with managing the forest resources of Pueblos Mancomunados. As our meeting began, the official slipped on his reading glasses and reviewed the four page proposal I brought for him, explaining my interest in the ways various groups in el mancomún have organized to strengthen their community. He took his time, lingering on each page while absent-mindedly arranging the previous one over and behind the staple. When he finished, he pulled off his glasses, flipped to page three, and pointed to the section that explained my interest in Seventh-day Adventists. “Here”, he gestured, “you say that you want to study the Adventist Church. But, you ought to know that their ideas are in contrast to community life.” His comment caught me off-guard; it was the first time anyone had presented me with a direct criticism of the Adventist Church. His comment also came on the heels of my experience at the Summer Bible Camp, where I had witnessed children being taught that community service was part and parcel of their call to Christian living. Up until that moment, I had taken for granted Adventists’ desire

to be active and productive members of their community. Interestingly – and naively, perhaps – the question of Adventist withdrawal from community life wasn't even a part of my research design. Quite the opposite, I had chosen to work with Adventists because I understood them to be a group of people deeply interested in community life, who were producing and enacting a vision for their community based on their church's teachings of a proper Christian life.

Protestantism is generally considered to be antithetical to indigenous identity and community life. Yet I have found that Adventists in Benito Juárez take great interest in their pueblo, from improving basic living conditions to strengthening practices of community government. This commitment, what I call an *ethos of engagement*, is a central feature of Adventist practice in Benito Juárez. The call to serve is particularly resonant in a village such as this, where community service regulates the economic, social and political rhythms of the town and provides individuals and households with status, authority, and respect. Though conversion does require some kinds of withdrawal from traditional communal life, it does not mean a complete denial of local life ways. Adventists in Benito Juárez are still *rancheros* (nickname for inhabitants of this pueblo), and they still express a deep commitment and attachment to the pueblo's past, present and future. Examining Adventist's ethos of engagement provides a useful lens for viewing this complexity. In some regards, commitment to the Adventist church requires members to turn their backs on aspects long considered foundational, if not sacred to community life – for example, relinquishing godparent ties or refusing to honor the ancestors. In other respects, however, Adventism calls believers to be active and engaged members of their community. Being good citizens is a central element of Adventists' identity in Benito Juárez. As they walk with God, Adventists develop skills and knowledge that generate value about themselves and motivate their behavior in the pueblo. They likewise produce a version of

history – and the future – that places themselves soundly at the center of their pueblo's progress and development.

Tension and Harmony in Village Life

The Funeral of Señora Maximina

Before examining the why's and how's of Adventist engagement in secular aspects of pueblo life, I first address the question of tension and conflict. Regardless of their commitment to civic duty, Adventists must remove themselves from some of the pueblo's most significant traditions, including ones that regulate relations between the living and the dead. The following story, about the funeral of a well-respected, elderly woman named Maximina, illustrates some of the tensions and social confusions brought about by religious change. For the most part, Adventists have negotiated a comfortable accommodation for their church, owing in large part to their continued participation in events that do not directly contradict their religious beliefs. Yet, as the story will show, social events in an indigenous pueblo in rural Mexico do not always clearly demarcate boundaries between religious and secular, and in those moments the fault lines created by conversion become visible. Life cycle rituals bring religious differences into stark relief, as Protestants feel obliged to attend family fiestas, yet seek ways to clearly define their separateness and extra-community ties (Buechler 1980:272-82). Also visible is a deeply ingrained commitment to an ideology of harmony (Nader 1990), a preference for social interactions that emphasize respect, deference, cooperation, and communalism. It is in large part the desire for harmonious relations, coupled with Adventists' need to express their unique spiritual views, that defines the shared experience of conversion in Benito Juárez.

Funerals are significant events in the spiritual and social lives of Zapotec villages. In the worldview of folk Catholicism, a proper wake and funeral ensures that the deceased's soul will pass on to the world of the dead. The souls of the departed are admitted back to the community of the living every November 1st, known as the *Día de los Muertos*, or the Day of the Dead. The funeral ritual is the symbolic and effective link between the communities of the living and the dead, and reproduces the worldview that life is cyclical (El Guindi 1986). Socially, funerals reinforce the bonds and obligations of kinship and community, both through godparent ties and through a system of exchanges known as *guelaguetza*, which provide for the material necessities of the ritual (Barabas 2006:162-164). In the case of Sra. Maximina, family members and close friends spent a full day or more preparing for the funeral: women cooked enormous quantities of food to feed crowds of people for the two-day event, while men re-organized the house to accommodate visitors during the wake, setting up chairs and tables for the feast, hanging tarps and building fires to protect from the cold mountain elements. Guests, honoring the *guelaguetza* tradition and repaying old debts, brought tortillas, rice, soda, bread, poultry, and vegetables to contribute to the feast.

For Seventh-day Adventists, when a person dies, their body and soul wait in a state of mindless slumber until the Second Coming of Christ. At that time, the righteous will be granted eternal life in the Kingdom of God, while the sinful will be cast off with Satan to die a final death³⁶. Adventists in Benito Juárez do not honor the Cult of the Dead, and they do not believe that the souls of the departed return on the Day of the Dead. The ritual acts of mourning and burial no longer function to link the living with the dead; life is not cyclical but rather linear.

³⁶ "Fundamental Beliefs", General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accessed on April 27, 2012, <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

However, an Adventist funeral in Benito Juárez does not necessarily shed the social functions described above, and Adventist and Catholic kin and neighbors still gather and reproduce bonds of cooperation and obligation to carry out the ritual (Barabas 2006:266).

Sra. Maximina was a respected elder, a member of one of the first families to settle in Benito Juárez nearly a century ago, and a practicing Seventh-day Adventist. Owing to her deteriorating health, she had spent the last few years of her life in Oaxaca City, but several of her children and their families continued to live in the center of town. Wakes are normally private affairs, attended by close family members and friends (Barabas 2006: 184). This funeral was special, and more public than most. Given her family's status, non-kin also came from neighboring towns to pay their respects, and a number of families made the hour and a half journey up the mountain from Oaxaca City to be in attendance. To further honor her family, the funeral procession included a brief ceremony in the town square, officiated by the mayor (who also happened to be raised in an Adventist family, but was not himself a practicing member) . While the deceased was an Adventist, many attendees, including some of her children, were not. The wake brought together a broad array of Catholics and Adventists to share a semi-public, profoundly spiritual ritual. And though they "shared" the ritual, Catholics and Adventists attached very different meanings to their actions.

The evening wake took place at the home of Sra. Maximina's son, an Adventist who lived at the center of town. Guests arrived and were greeted in the home's central patio before making their way to a front room of the house, to pay their respects at the deceased's coffin and to add their own offerings of flowers or candles to the altar. Several *calabasas* (squash) had been cut in half and placed on the floor surrounding the coffin, to absorb *cangrena*, germs (*microbios*) associated with death. The two Adventists sitting next to me assured me that this was not a

Catholic tradition, but a true fact that dead bodies harbor bacteria, and the calabasa are used to purify the air and protect the living. A dozen or so rows of wooden benches, borrowed from the Adventist church, faced the coffin, with more lining the walls of the room. Some guests found a seat here, while others returned to the patio to eat and drink, help in the kitchen, and socialize. By the time the service started at 9pm, the majority of people seated with the coffin were Adventists. Several women, who had been busying themselves for the better part of the past half hour riffling through their Adventist hymnals, began to sing. They led the singing for close to an hour, and when they appeared to have exhausted their list, others in the room took turns choosing more songs. Most people joined in the hymns; even those visibly saddened still attempted to sing, and those who couldn't muster the words moved their lips silently with the lyrics. My own voice, unaccustomed to so much singing, quickly tired and grew sore, reducing itself before long to a barely audible whisper.

Catholics believe that singing over the body of the deceased the night before the funeral protects it from malevolent spirits and ensures that it is properly received into the world of the dead. Adventists, on the other hand, believe their job is to protect and console the living, not the dead. To them, the deceased body and soul will wait, in a state of mindless slumber, until the Second Coming of Christ. There is nothing to be done for it, there is no passage to ensure, no soul to protect from malevolence. Songs and sermons are an opportunity to evangelize, to spread God's message to the non-believers at the wake (aka the Catholics).

At one point during the singing, a man appeared at the doorway from the patio holding a full bottle of mezcal and a stack of plastic cups. His unsteady gait suggested that he had taken his share of mezcal as he distributed it to others in the patio. He paused at the doorway for a moment to take in the scene, then swaggered in and walked straight towards one of Sra.

Maximina's sons. Before he closed in, the son looked at him severely and wagged a finger, warning him not to continue. The man stopped and looked puzzled, either unaware or unconcerned that the Adventists in the room would not partake in the drinking ritual. The son repeated his signal, and the man turned and left, leaving the Adventists to their uninterrupted song.

After the first round of singing, an anciano from the Adventist church stood and gave a sermon concerning the true meaning of death. He told me later that he had taken great care in choosing the best place to stand while delivering his sermon. Out in the patio seemed efficacious, as this is where the Catholics – the intended audience – were congregated. He finally settled on a place inside, but near the door to the patio, so as to be with the coffin but still audible to the Catholics. I later learned that this had the unintended consequence of preventing new guests from entering the room and visiting the coffin, which angered some people. Though the purpose of the sermon was to reach out to and console the Catholic mourners, it actually amplified the distance – spiritual and spatial – between the two groups.

The burial was held the next morning at the pueblo's graveyard. An anciano from the Adventist church, a relative from Oaxaca, gave a sermon to the mixed crowd of more than 100 people. He spoke about the two roads that are available to us in this world – the narrower, more difficult road that is the way of God, and the wider, easier road. The implications of this sermon, which would have been grasped by those in attendance, was that the former road was the one taken up by Adventists, while the later, the path of Satan, was the one of Catholics and non-Sabbath keepers. A half hour or so into the sermon, some women standing near me looked up at the darkening sky and quietly commented that it was going to rain. A few minutes later, a very large crowd of people closest to the road turned and left the cemetery. Slowly, over the next few

minutes, more and more people trickled away, leaving no more than half the original crowd, and mostly Adventists.

With the exodus nearly complete, a voice called out from the back of the crowd, asking permission to interrupt. An old man emerged from the crowd. As he began to speak, the Adventist woman standing next to me glanced my way with a faint smile, then quickly turned back. I whispered to ask her who was this man, why was he interrupting, but she did not acknowledge my question. The man – who I later learned was an active member of the Catholic Church – spoke, his weak voice straining to reach the open-aired crowd, “This is the first time I am hearing an explanation of the New Testament. I know that we have much in common, and I hope that, in the near future, we will have one church in our pueblo, the Catholic Church.” I looked for some sign of annoyance or frustration from anyone in the crowd, but did not perceive any. I began to doubt whether I had interpreted this interruption correctly. The anciano said nothing more, and another Adventist gave the final prayer.

On Harmony and the Shared Experience of Conversion

Zapotec people practice what scholars refer to as a “harmony ideology”, where social interactions emphasize respect, deference, cooperation, and communalism (Chiñas 1973; Nader 1990; Selby 1974). Differences are often voiced with painstaking respect and in ways that highlight the similarities of the opinions. People go to great lengths to avoid direct disagreement or conflict³⁷. The interruption at the funeral was a noteworthy event that took a lot of energy –

³⁷ Someone once declined my request for an interview so respectfully and positively that I actually thought I had been given permission; several times, people who did not want to be interviewed would accept my request, but then artfully and repeatedly avoid the meeting, passing the time serving tea and talking about the weather, or else being out of the house all-together at our arranged time.

and likely some mezcal – to break the social norm of harmony. The abrupt, straightforward, and contradictory nature of the comments would have been considered antisocial and deviant. I only heard it spoken of once, the next morning around my host family’s kitchen table. The tone of the conversation was more amusement than outrage. The fact that the conflict was so quickly forgotten speaks to the desire to maintain a sense of community in the face of great change.

The preference for harmony, cooperation, and above all respect, is strongly reflected in Catholics’ comments about Adventists. Overwhelmingly, Catholics focus on Adventists’ continued cargo and *tequio* service (communal work party), good-neighborliness, shared heritage (*we all have the same blood in our veins*) and reverence of the same God. Several Catholics gently critiqued Adventists’ work ethic by reflecting on their own unwillingness to refrain from working on Saturdays. One woman suggested that, because Adventists spend a lot of time in their church, they have less time for other, more “traditional” activities. By and large, Catholics did not voice concern about Adventists’ withdrawal from such aspects of social life as drinking, fiesta-sponsorship, or godparent ties.

Only a few people offered direct criticisms. One Catholic complained that the evangelizing mission of the Adventist Church was disrespectful and judgmental, and he questioned the motivations of people who converted so that they could marry an Adventist. For his part, however, he assured me that he respected Adventists and welcomed them into his home, so long as they respected him. Another Catholic woman told me that Adventists were adulterers, gossips, and bad parents, and that they had negatively impacted traditional pueblo life. Hers, however, was an uncharacteristically harsh and un-conciliatory commentary, with no aspirations of harmony or respect. It is possible – and perhaps likely – that other Catholics shared her

opinions; what is unusual is that she spoke them so openly to me, a relative stranger and a known guest in the home of an Adventist family.

For their part, Adventists claim that relations between themselves and Catholics are unstrained and conflict-free. Several Adventists spoke at length about the easy and hospitable relations they have with their Catholic neighbors. Recent converts reported experiencing very little backlash from close friends and family, and those that did explained that the tensions eased with time. As with Catholics, Adventists preferred to highlight the harmonious elements of their relationships. Everyone is free to choose his or her path, I was told, so long as there is respect. Some tensions did make themselves manifest in the form of gossip; for example, one Adventist told me that Catholics think Adventists are witches³⁸; another told me that Catholics think keeping the Sabbath impoverishes Adventists, while their supposed preference for white corn makes them lazy³⁹. Adventist complaints about Catholics were fairly boilerplate: Catholics drink too much, which in turn affects family life and the ability to serve the pueblo, and they don't read the Bible.

Adventists are quite diverse in their willingness to participate in non-religious elements of pueblo life. As will be discussed at length below, all Adventists I spoke with were eager to fulfill cargo service and to participate in *asambleas*, even rearranging church activities to accommodate such obligations. Adventists would not participate in dances when alcohol was

³⁸ A generation ago, belief in witchcraft was common (Kearney 1972; Nader 1969). During my research, I did not witness people expressing a persistent concern for these practices. In fact, this was one of only a few times witchcraft was mentioned to me. It is possible I did not see witchcraft because I did not ask many questions about it. To the extent that Adventists did speak about witchcraft – which was not very much – they quickly dismissed it as the work of the devil, and stated their own faith in God protects them from such maladies (Castañeda Seijas 2004).

³⁹ I was unable to substantiate these claims; in my observations, Adventists were no more or less impoverished than their neighbors, and there was no preference for white, yellow, or blue corn. Instead, I take this as one example in a range of quiet misconceptions non-Adventists hold about Adventists that contribute to the on-going, low-level but significant social distance between these two groups.

present, as happens at weddings and fiestas. However, there were mixed feelings over whether it is appropriate to participate in traditional *bailes*, or folkloric dances performed during national holidays and other public events. For example, during the Independence Day celebration organized by the elementary and middle schools, a few Adventist families did not give their children permission to participate in the baile, while others felt that, as the event was hosted by the school and did not include alcohol, there was no harm in letting their own children dance. None of the Adventists I spoke participate in *compadrazgo*, the system of godparent ties and obligations⁴⁰. Although Adventists do not honor the Cult of the Dead, one family did allow a child to bring food for the school's Day of the Dead altar, so as not to make things difficult for the child.

Adventists practice traditional medicine, though they make distinctions between “good” and “bad” forms of healing. Tía Margarita, an elderly Adventist who hosted me during my time in Benito Juárez, was a respected *curandera* (healer). She was regularly visited by Catholics and Adventists alike, who often came to the house during breakfast. I watched Tía Margarita treat children (and anthropologists) suffering from diarrhea and fever with herbal teas, ointments, and *trueno*, pinching the skin around the abdomen to release trapped air. Once, I was present when she treated someone for *susto*, an illness caused by fright. She healed, she told me, in *el nombre de Dios*, in God's name, and attributed the efficacy of the treatment to His intervention. Another Adventist told me that, with some treatments, such as the use of herbs, there is a logical and observable connection between the herb and the ailment – using *poleo* tea to calm an upset

⁴⁰ In contrast, Sault (2001) found that, among Zapotec in the Valley of Oaxaca, many Protestant women continued to honor their *compadrazgo* (godparent) ties, probably because it offered them a level of status and power unavailable to them in their Protestant churches.

stomach, for example. These are God-given treatments. Other treatments, such rubbing an egg on a person cursed by the evil eye, have no logical connection, and are the trickery of the Devil.

Despite the efforts of both Adventists and Catholics to portray an atmosphere of harmony, respect, and cooperation, often their words seemed to me to belie an underlying tension. The arrival of the Adventist missionaries to Benito Juárez in the 1950s sparked a fair amount of social discord, and at times outright violence (see Chapter 2). Townspeople attempted to oust an Adventist-owned corn mill. People seen carrying Bibles were attacked on the street. Catholics threatened to burn the converts' meeting place. Men beat their wives and children if they attended Adventist services. Adventists were expelled from the pueblo for a time. If today, more than 50 years later, it is true that such conflict and violence has ceased (and I believe that it has), the memory of violence and wrongdoing persists, particularly in the accounts of elders, whose assurances of harmony often struck me to be as much hopeful as they were factual. The lingering tensions of conversion appeared to have found a voice, however briefly, during the funeral of Sra. Maximina. From the disagreements over where to give the sermon during the evening wake, to the spectacle at the graveyard, there are rifts, impassible and emotional, between these two groups.

Examining the Ethos of Engagement

Adventists believe it is their duty as Christians to serve their pueblo. This was the message of Josiah, as it was presented to the children during the Summer Bible Camp – that one day God would call upon them to serve their pueblo, and it would be their responsibility to answer the call and use their God-given talents for the betterment of their community. This same message was repeated during the baptism ceremony of a young man named Jorge, one drizzly

and cold October evening. Before submerging the initiate into the icy waters of the baptismal font – the water, like the church, was not heated – the visiting pastor asked the congregation, “What are the changes that will take place in this man’s life once he is baptized?” With barely a pause, the pastor answered his own question, “When there is a tequio, he should be the first in line, because now he knows Christ and he ought to be an example for the community.” Good citizenship, the pastor preached, is a logical extension of the call to Christ.

In a subsequent conversation, the pastor elaborated on his theme, telling me that the Adventist church places a strong emphasis on one’s responsibility toward the community:

As far as I have seen, it seems to me that the contribution of the church to the development of the community has been positive, owing to the emphasis we place on an Adventist Christian being a good parent, a good spouse, a good citizen, that they ought to take care that their home and their community is prospering... The Bible says ‘The sons of God should be the heads and not the tails’; that is, they ought to always be at the front... [T]he church teaches that everything is for God, and God gives us blessings if we put ourselves to work, and we work honestly and trust in Him.

The pastor was referring to 28 Deuteronomy 13: “The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom” (NIV⁴¹). There are at least two possible ways to interpret “head/top” and “tail/bottom”. One is in terms of the body and its literal functions – the head/top as the site of thought and rationality and associated with cleanliness, as opposed to the tail/bottom, which is associated with elimination and dirt. By following Gods commands, the believer will live a clean and virtuous life and be blessed by God.

⁴¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not officially sanction a version of the Bible, though “essentially literal” versions are preferred. These are word-for-word translations that preserve the form and structure of Hebrew and Greek (“Choosing a Bible Translation”, Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on November 9, 2015, <http://www.adventist.org/en/spirituality/bible-study/article/go/0/choosing-a-bible-translation/>). I have chosen to use the New International Version when providing quotations in English; this is a literal translation that uses modern phrasing, as compared to the more popular but linguistically antiquated King James Version. While in Benito Juárez, my host family gave me a Reina-Valera Version, which is the one I refer to for Spanish citations.

The other meaning, which the pastor employed, is more symbolic – that the head/top goes before the tail/bottom, and it is the job of the head/top to lead. In the original verse, the ability to lead is an outcome of following God’s commandments. But the pastor flipped it around, making the “honest” work of leadership an obligation, a requirement of proper Christian living, through which one earns God’s blessings. For Adventists, the ultimate blessing is salvation, to be counted among the righteous at the Second Coming of Christ.

To achieve blessings on earth and in the afterlife, the pastor explained, the Adventist Church provides its members with tools that enable them to be good spouses, parents, and citizens. Adventists are not simply called to be shining examples of good Christian living, however. It is their responsibility to use the skills and knowledge gained through the church to be leaders and ensure that their community prospers. They must get involved. They must put themselves to work. This interpretation dovetails neatly with the commitment to communal service that is so central to social life in Benito Juárez, where one’s standing is directly attributed to service, and respect is granted to those citizens who carry out their cargo appointments well. In this section, I examine one important site through which Adventists hone their skills as leaders – Bible study groups.

The Role of Bible Study in Adventist Practice

Regular, intensive, and critical Bible study is part of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the Adventist Church. It is a faith movement built upon the premise that the Bible holds fundamental truths, written by human hands through divine inspiration (Jordan 1988). The Bible is neither metaphor nor mythology – it is history and prophecy, an account of how the world came to be and an explanation of things to come. The Bible is the word of God, a direct

expression of His will. The same is true for the writings of the prophetess Elena White, which are considered sacred, divinely inspired texts, written at the formation of the Adventist Church. The founders of the Church believed that detailed and committed study of these texts would uncover God's true plan and provide humanity with a roadmap for achieving salvation.

In her study of Seventh Day Adventists in Madagascar, Eva Keller (2005) describes Adventist Bible study as highly intellectual in nature. Study guides encourage members, through a sequence of semi-open ended and reflexive questions, to engage with texts in a dialectical and Socratic fashion and on a personal level. Bible study is a *learning process*, through which members hunt down biblical truths by drawing on their detailed knowledge of the Bible and Adventist doctrine. Any emphasis on memorization of key verses is not an end in itself, but a means for allowing members to be engaged and flexible in their intellectual journey toward understanding biblical truths. For it is only through a deep understanding God's will – and not merely faith in his deeds – that Adventists may achieve salvation⁴². Keller emphasizes that this dynamic process of accessing biblical truths inspires church members on an intellectual level. The process of study and intellectual engagement is at the core of their commitment to Adventism.

Drawing on Keller's insights, I am interested in the intellectual nature of Adventist practice in Benito Juárez. Keller's study, however, is focused entirely on the religious arena, and the role that Bible study plays in maintaining Adventists' commitment to their new faith. For my

⁴² Belief Number 1, "Holy Scriptures", of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs reads: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history". (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.). "28 Fundamental Beliefs", Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on November 9, 2015, <https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28beliefs-web-2015.pdf>.

part, I am interested in Adventism as a form of social practice both in religious and secular life. In his study of American Evangelicalism, James Bielo (2009) argues that group Bible study is a social process by which participants not only produce knowledge about self and the world, but also generate and habitualize dispositions – inclinations of action, thought, embodiment, interpretation, belief, intention, and speech. The knowledge and dispositions produced through Bible study, in turn, inform action outside the study session: “what happens in Bible study is destined not to stay in Bible study but most certainly informs the logic and decision making of participants as they leave the group setting to be mothers, fathers, spouses, bosses, workers, and citizens” (Bielo 2009:11). While Bielo provides a fine-grained analysis of the linguistic and discursive nature of Bible study in its context, Kevin Lewis O’Neill’s study of neo-Pentecostal Christians in postwar Guatemala details how believers turn religiously-oriented knowledge and disposition into action (2010). Urban mega-churches “provide a morality with which congregants constitute themselves as citizens (and perform their citizenship) through Christian practices, such as prayer, fasting, and examination of conscience... In cities such as postwar Guatemala City, Christianity has become central to citizenship's very construction, practice, and performance” (3).

For Adventists in Benito Juárez, religious practice is both morally and intellectually stimulating, and they approach Bible study with a tenacity and zeal similar to that described by Keller. Through their study, they produce knowledge about the world and cultivate dispositions through which they approach their place in the world⁴³. In my study, I refer to these dispositions

⁴³ Unlike the American Evangelists described by Bielo, Adventists in Benito Juárez do not possess a verbatim recall of biblical passages, nor do they habitually quote verses; their knowledge of the Bible, while thorough, is also more generalized and less profuse. As will be shown in the vignette below, they tend to paraphrase from histories, stories and lessons. It is also worth noting that, unlike the neo-Pentecostal’s in O’Neill’s study, Adventists in Benito Juárez

as “skills”, such as public speaking and critical thinking, abilities that have a direct bearing on their current and future roles as citizens in the pueblo.

Learning to Lead

Saturdays are a big day for Seventh-day Adventists. In Benito Juárez, celebrating the Sabbath is an all-day affair⁴⁴. Members gather other evenings throughout the week for prayer meetings: Wednesdays, Fridays at sundown to welcome the Sabbath, and Sundays. But on Saturdays, they honor their day of rest with a full day of lessons, study, song, skits, sermons and games. The *Escuela Sabática* (Sabbath School) runs from 9am to 11am. Children go to classrooms in the church annex, and adults stay in the church. Using standardized materials provided by the World Church and by Regional Divisions, members lead themselves in lessons, skits, and songs. These activities reflect on a weekly theme, such as women’s roles in the church, family life, health, interpersonal relationships, and building a personal relationship with God. From 11 am to noon, adults and children gather for the *Culto Divino* (Worship Service), a formalized, intergenerational service. After a break for lunch, members return for a two-hour program organized and led entirely by teens and young adults in the *Asociación Jóvenes* (Youth Association). Throughout the day, there is a strong emphasis on personal growth, physical health, and world-awareness, as well as the importance of using the Bible to ground one’s faith and knowledge of self and the world, as a way of preparing for the Second Coming of Christ.

Sabbath activities, like all other activities in this church, are organized and executed by

aren’t militant in their application of the moral framework produced through the religious arena. Rather, and perhaps owing at least in part to the careful negotiation of allegiances they must perform in the pueblo, I found that Adventists played down the religious foundations that motivated action in the secular life.

⁴⁴ Individual churches are permitted to determine the nature and length of their Sabbath activities.

local members. There is no ordained minister located at the church; rather, one pastor is assigned to approximately 20 such small churches in the district, and he makes his rounds on a regular basis. In a structure that echoes the cargo system that organizes political life in the pueblo, members elect each other to serve a set of annually rotating cargos⁴⁵. Positions include Elder, Deacon and Deaconess, Treasurer, Clerk, Music Coordinator, and committee positions for ministries that focus on issues such as the family, women, youth, and health. This structure puts into practice one of the core beliefs of the Adventist Church – that each person is uniquely endowed with God-given talents, and has a responsibility to put those spiritual gifts to work in their church⁴⁶.

One important cargo position in Benito Juárez is that of *célula* (small group) leader. During the Escuela Sabática, adult members break into células to review and discuss the week's home Bible study lessons. Células are made up of approximately half a dozen people, usually as groups of married couples. One person is chosen from the group to serve as leader. Leaders serve for one year, at which time the groups are reorganized and new leaders are chosen. While

⁴⁵ This is not unique to Benito Juárez. The SDA church highly values the individual freedom of its pastors and lay members to identify the needs and guide the spiritual and organizational life of their churches. At the same time, the Church values order, rule and discipline. To that end, the Worldwide Church provides a Church Manual, which outlines rules and codes of conduct relating to church governance and the role of its officers. "Church Manual", Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on November 9, 2015, <http://www.adventist.org/en/information/church-manual/>.

⁴⁶ Belief number 17, "Spiritual Gifts and Ministries", of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs: "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called by God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)". "28 Fundamental Beliefs", Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on November 9, 2015, <https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28beliefs-web-2015.pdf>.

the form, content, and goals of each individual célula is essentially the same, the dynamics of each can vary greatly depending at least in part on the make-up the group. When células are comprised primarily of elder couples, traditional patterns of aged and gendered hierarchies can persist, as when a male leader speaks at length at his group, providing few questions and little opportunity for discussion; when discussion does happen in such a group, it is primarily between the men. Groups made up of young and middle aged adult couples tend to be more dynamic, as leaders offer comments or questions on the week's lessons that can animate the group and generate lively banter. In such groups, women tend to participate confidently and as frequently as their husbands.

Below, I present one such célula, which was led by a young woman and included a lively and inclusive round of discussion. Indeed, it was one of the more engaging and animated células I attended, and though I don't think it is an outlier, I do think it is an ideal type, as it exemplifies a number of dynamics Adventists in Benito Juárez hold in high regard. It is also an excellent example of how Adventist social practice provides opportunities for members to cultivate skills and develop knowledge that they put to use in their secular life, including public speaking, critical thinking, gender empowerment, and cosmopolitan sensibilities.

For the final half hour of the Escuela Sabática, the thirty-four attendees arranged themselves into their células. I joined the group that was led by Ruth, a third-generation Adventist in her early 20s. The other members of the group were Ruth's new husband Jorge, who converted just before their recent marriage; Ruth's grandmother, Margarita (Ruth's grandfather Benito was normally in this group, as well, but was out of town on pueblo business); Ángel and María, a couple in their mid-thirties; and María's mother Edith, who was visiting for

the weekend. We sat huddled together in two pews, with Ruth standing to face us. Jorge started the session by taking attendance, asking each in turn to account for their Bible study that week, as well as any charity or evangelizing they may have performed. Then Ruth took the lead, her back leaning casually on the pew behind her and her study guide in hand.

Ruth invited us to recite the week's verse for memorizing. Slowly, and with more than a few long glances at our guide books for help, we spoke together the verse: "Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men" (Rom 5:18). The trespass refers to Adam and Eve's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, which caused all humankind to be born into sin; the righteous act is Jesus' death on the cross, which opened the doors of heaven and created a path away from sinful nature and toward eternal salvation. The theme for the week, Ruth reminded us, was Sin, and then she read from the first day's lesson, which editorialized on the deteriorating state of affairs in our world. *The solid optimism of former generations that everything in the world will get better and better no longer rings true today*⁴⁷. Ruth stopped reading after this first line, and, dropping her book by her side, said, "It's so true. Everyday things are getting worse."

Ángel jumped in to share something he read recently, about a state in Mexico where police were using genetic testing to catch criminals. The chief of police had promised they would now be able to solve every crime. "And up till now, it's true. They have solved every case. But there isn't less crime! Things aren't getting better."

⁴⁷ "Walking the Walk: The Christian Life", Lesson 6, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, April-June 2009, accessed on November 9, 2015, <http://ssnet.org/study-guides/lesson-archives/>. Adventists in Benito Juárez used the Spanish version of this guide book; here and throughout the chapter I quote from the English version, whose content is identical to the Spanish.

Ruth shook her head in an exasperated manner, “No, they aren’t better.” And then, with certainty in her voice, she added, “But *we* know that things are not going to change.”

Ruth reopened her study guide and finished reading the opening section, which continued to outline the perils of our time. From the Cold War to recent acts of terrorism. Global warming and the depletion of natural resources. Crime. Immorality. Poverty. The list went on.

When Ruth finished reading, Ángel again jumped in. “Science,” he told us, “will not be able to change all of these things. I have seen myself, among the people I work with, that there isn’t *el respeto* (respect) like there used to be. I see many men working together with their sons. The sons speak to their fathers as if they were any old person.”

Tía Margarita interjected unhappily, “As if it were his brother.”

“Worse!” Ángel said, looking seriously at Tía Margarita.

María added, “Those sons use *tú* (you, informal) with their fathers. Or their fathers call their sons *buey* (dude).”

Tía Margarita disapproved. “Or the sons call their fathers that.”

Ángel continued, “I asked one young man I was working with whether he had finished middle school. And he told me he had completed high school! And I asked myself, what good did it do?”

“He’d be better off a donkey!” Tía Margarita said, laughing heartily. Pleased with her joke, she turned to repeat it to me, “Better off a donkey, I say!”

I laughed along with Tía Margarita, but Ángel kept things serious. “That’s why I said that science, studying, they don’t do any good. An educated son thinks he has the right to speak to his father that way⁴⁸.”

Ruth entered the discussion again, shaking her head as she said matter-of-factly, “Well, sin exists. It came from Adam and Eve. And *we* know that you can’t get rid of it.”

Ángel told a story from his time as a migrant worker in Los Angeles. He and some friends went to Las Vegas, where they saw a casino that only allowed married people to enter. If you weren’t married, there was a judge to perform the ceremony for you, and to divorce you before you left. It was all legal, he said. There was a general amused and self-righteous muffle in the group. Tía Margarita asked what happened to people who didn’t want to get divorced. Ángel guessed that they just stayed married, since according to Nevada state law (“Las Vegas is in Nevada, right?” he confirmed with me quickly) they were legally married. “But,” he concluded, “this is not God’s law. This is not how God commanded it.”

Ruth took a turn, and in an excited and self-assured voice, she said, “But the law for us is God’s Law.”

Animated, Ángel said, “And others say that, in order to not break the law [by getting a divorce], I won’t get married. I will stay in a common law marriage (*union libre*).” He exchanged self-satisfied looks with Ruth, and then reminded us about another lesson from that week, on “the sin of omission,” or the sin of not doing something you know you ought to do. “The world is falling apart,” he concluded.

⁴⁸ This is not an anti-education stance, but rather a reflection on the state of the world. Ángel sees the breakdown of familial relations and the absence of respect as another example that “everyday things are getting worse”, and that the End of Days is near. It is also a statement that education without religion is not sufficient to achieve a proper, moral life.

María shook her head and mumbled to herself in a low voice. Ruth spoke over her, “It just keeps getting worse.”

Ruth brought our focus back to the study guide. “Monday’s lesson tells us that there are two types of sin.” As she looked through her book to find the reference, Ángel attempted to correct her, politely suggesting that he thought it was actually a little later in the week. But Ruth shook her head assuredly, “No, it’s right here,” and she opened her book to show him the page, then summarized the points of the lesson for us.

María shared a story she once heard, about a husband who was always turning his head to look at other women. The wife spoke with her pastor and told him she wanted to put blinders on her husband, like you would on a horse. The pastor told her it wouldn’t matter, because this kind of sin – a sin of thought – is something you carry around with you always. You can’t rid yourself of it. Ruth nodded as María spoke, and then brought us back to the lesson again, “That is why it says here that there are two types of sin. Sin of omission and sin of thought.”

Speaking for the first time, María’s mother Edith added, “There are sins that are more obvious.” Ángel thought that this was the lesson from Wednesday. He began to search for it, but Ruth found it more quickly. Directing us to Tuesday’s lesson, she began to read to us about the distinction some theologians make between the sins we commit and the sinful nature we possess. Barely finishing this first sentence, she rolled her eyes at us and gestured ironically, “But...”

María picked up on her meaning, “But, I don’t say, ‘Poor me, there’s nothing I can do about it.’”

A dialogue between Ruth, María, Ángel and Jorge ensued. Their speech was rapid and I didn’t catch it all, but they were debating the extent to which one is to blame for their sins: is sin

simply a part of human nature, or is there something people can do about it? After a few minutes of debate, Ángel said, “Yes, it's true that we are born in sin. But if we decide not to participate in sin, we gain a lot. Each of us is one piece in a puzzle of sin. For example, if there is a robbery, it isn't done by one person. It is done by a group. Or adultery isn't committed by one person, there are always two. I think that there is a direct line to Eden, that's where sin was born. I think we are in the middle of a circle, and the only line we can take to get out is with Jesus, with God's grace.” He told us about a recent conversation he had with a young co-worker. He asked the young man what he wanted with his life, but the co-worker shrugged off the question. “I told him, ‘Do you know why I asked you this? Because you are still young and you have time to decide where you want to go. But if you don't decide, the time will come when others will decide for you.’”

María said, “It is for us to decide whether we accept God's sacrifice.”

Jorge responded, “We need to be ahead of this. We need to decide if we are going to be sinners or not.”

As the célula session came to an end, Ruth took the final word. “That is why we have to know, if we accept God, that we live in sin and we will sin, but...” She nodded her head as her voice trailed off, leaving us to complete her final thought for her.

As this vignette demonstrates, small group Bible study can be an inclusive and relatively non-hierarchical space that cultivates – and validates – leadership and participation. As the group leader, Ruth had to fulfill a number of responsibilities. She had to be prepared to cogently summarize main ideas from the week's lessons and be ready to recall and accurately cite them as needed. She had to provide open-ended reflections and probing questions that invited comments

and debate from the group, and bring the group back to the text by creating links to key themes developed through the discussion. She had to give everyone in the group space to voice their ideas and questions, and validate their contributions with return comments. Above all, she had to comport herself as a leader. She had to stand in front of a coed and intergenerational group, have concrete knowledge of significant church doctrine, and speak clearly and persuasively about it. She demonstrated her readiness in several exchanges with Ángel, a more senior and male member of the célula. When Ángel (gently) contradicted her memory of the lesson, she did not defer to him, but stood her ground and proved her point. Her performance was even more exemplary considering her social status in the group. First, she was the youngest member of the célula, who, until her recent marriage, had been a single mother to a three-year-old boy. Second, her husband was in the group. Women often defer to their husbands in public; this is often, though not universally true for Adventists, too. However, Ruth grew up in the church and was spiritually “senior” to her husband, himself a recent convert. Third, María and Ángel had been Adventists for most of their adult lives, and both regularly took on important roles in the church; at the time of this study group, Ángel was serving as the Director of the Escuela Sabática. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Ruth was leading her grandparents, who were among the first converts and were respected elders in the pueblo and the church alike⁴⁹.

The other members of the célula also demonstrated a number of important skills. They each critically analyzed the week’s lessons, applied them to everyday life, and critiqued their society according to the framework provided by the lesson. They listened to each other, acknowledged contributions, and built on points raised previously to develop their own positions.

⁴⁹ On the day of my observation, Ruth’s grandfather was absent. Unfortunately, due to my research schedule at the time, I did not have the opportunity to join the group with him in attendance. He was a passionate and loquacious man, and I do not doubt that his presence would have altered the dynamic of the study group.

Each had a role to play in creating a space in which all could contribute: Ángel, despite being the most senior member that day, the most accustomed to public speaking, and the most dominant contributor to the discussion, was careful to not overstep his bounds. Everyone else did his or her part by contributing, at least once; even I was given space to speak. Though the others may have been accustomed to speaking and being heard, Tía Margarita's contribution was especially noteworthy. I had studied with her many times in her home and in church, and had considered her to be a passive participant, who was inclined to join in reciting a verse but never read from the text and rarely engaged in the discussion. On this day, she struck me as particularly animated, perhaps owing in part to the absence of her husband and her status as the eldest member of the group.

These are the skills Adventists were referring to when they told me, time and again, that their members were particularly competent citizens and leaders. During interviews, they regularly told me that being Adventist – and particularly the act of Bible study, of examining and understanding God's will and internalizing it as a means to achieve salvation – made them *better* citizens and leaders than their non-Adventist neighbors. For example, Jorge, the recently-converted and newly-married member of the célula described above, told me that he first became interested in the Adventist Church because he saw the way it changed people's lives and ways of thinking. As a Catholic, he explained, he didn't learn anything in church, "because, well, you arrive and you sit down and only the priest knows what he is saying the entire mass." In comparison, at the Adventist church, he told me, you learn how to prepare yourself to be a leader in the pueblo:

Before, I didn't know, I couldn't stand up in front of three or four people and speak. Instead, it made us afraid, it made us feel nervous, who knows how it made us feel. But here in the Adventist church, we practice this. You have to speak with two, three, or four people at a time. For example, in our célula, you

have to speak with four, five people, and little by little you begin to develop and to understand and to speak, right? And I think it makes you better.

Like Jorge, other Adventists pointed to Bible study as a crucial difference between themselves and their Catholic neighbors. It was not simply that the former reads the Bible and the latter do not. It was the fact that the Bible was read, spoken about and debated. It is not the private act of reading and knowing the Bible (though this is important as well); it is the communal act of sharing one's knowledge in study sessions or at the church, of recalling lessons and reflecting on their meanings, of exercising that knowledge, and of publically speaking it. Through this process, Adventists develop the ability to critically evaluate topics and speak persuasively about them.

This perspective was echoed in a conversation with Samuel, a 41-year-old man who grew up in a Catholic household but converted to Adventism in his early 20s. I asked Samuel why he decided to become involved in the Adventist church. He told me, "Well, it's because studying the bible and all that, you notice...what you ought to do, how you should live, how you should be. And so, that is what made me decide to participate in the church." For Samuel, the act of Bible study and discussion combined with the actual content of that study are critical. Later in our conversation he built on this point when he discussed the impact of the Adventist church on the pueblo at large:

Samuel: [A]s a citizen you have a little more understanding of how the pueblo can develop...on account of the knowledge one has in the church. Ángel For example, sometimes the church has a Health Week seminar, and that's where we learn how to live, how to behave with your family, how to behave in society, how to be-

LK: And when you go to an asamblea, you carry this knowledge with you?

S: Exactly. So when you go to the general asamblea, at the level of the pueblo, then you have this vision, this idea about how to progress.

For Adventists in Benito Juárez, the act of reading sacred texts is transformative. As members read, discuss, and debate these texts, they develop critical thinking and public speaking skills, and they gain practical knowledge on how to improve things like health and social relations. With these skills in tow, members of the church claim that they feel emboldened to act in their pueblo.

When people elect their fellow townspeople to serve cargos, they make assessments based on previous service and perceived ability. Depending on the cargo, individuals may be required to communicate effectively with government officials, write letters, keep financial records, moderate disputes in the community, manage fiesta activities, or lead workshops at the clinic. It is generally understood that people have different talents and abilities, and that the pueblo will elect each person accordingly. Not everyone will be elected to the highest offices. Respect is accorded to people who adequately fulfill the requirements of their cargo. Being elected to the highest offices, however, is a sign of confidence and respect; satisfactorily fulfilling those posts, in turn, affords an even greater level of prestige.

Unfortunately, I did not collect statements from non-Adventists about their perceptions regarding the leadership abilities of Adventists. It is fair to say, however, that if Adventists were considered to be bad leaders, or if the pueblo wished to sanction them for social deviance, as a general rule they would not be elected to the highest offices. This had not happened – since the introduction of the Adventist church in the 1950s, men who have converted have continued to serve as mayor and other high-ranking cargos. During my fieldwork, 8 of the 10 *caracterizados* (a group of men who counsel the village authorities) in Benito Juárez were Adventists⁵⁰.

Mancomún-wide, Adventists were likewise appointed to significant leadership roles. In La

⁵⁰ I was told that one or two were not “active members”, but they had studied the Bible (*conocen la biblia*).

Nevería, a town of about 100 people with a handful of Adventists, the mayor during my fieldwork was a member of the SDA church. Also during my fieldwork, in the neighboring town of Cuajimoloyas – a larger town with an active SDA church comparable to Benito Juárez – two of the authorities were Adventists. As a further testament to the status of Adventists, all four men from Benito Juárez who have been appointed comisariado have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The comisariado, who is charged with overseeing the management of communal lands, is appointed by an asamblea attended by members from all 8 towns in el mancomún.

There are limits to the ways Adventists can act religiously in their secular life. As was seen at the funeral of Sra. Maximina, there is an underlying social tension in the village. Perhaps owing to this tension and the memory of violence and persecution during the early years of conversion (see Chapter 2), Adventists avoid acting “religiously” in interactions with non-Adventists. They often told me that, when working with non-Adventists on pueblo business (serving a cargo, for example), non-Adventists preempt evangelical tendencies by proactively stating that religious matters were off-topic. In asambleas, Adventists do not import Biblical language or rational, nor do they speak expressly on behalf of their church. They do not consciously or literally articulate their position as Adventists. They do not quote the Bible or reference last week’s study group discussion. In an extreme example, one woman told me that her husband stopped attending the church the year he was elected to serve as mayor. That year, the other elected authorities were also Adventists. “To avoid problems,” she told me, “to not create conflict, he decided it was better he didn’t go.” I did not fully understand the rationale, nor could I prompt her to offer another explanation. Suffice it to say that, as the highest authority in the pueblo that year, and despite the fact that his fellow autoridades were Adventists,

he felt he needed to downplay his religiousness to better serve his pueblo and maintain peaceful relations.

There are also limits to the ways women are empowered to act in the pueblo, in ways that reflect long-standing gender dynamics in pueblo life. Take for example my conversation with Lucía, a woman in her early 40s who was raised in the Adventist Church. At the time of my research, she and another 40-something woman co-directed the Escuela Sabática. During an interview, I asked Lucía whether she felt differently participating in the church than when she had to participate in the asamblea.

Lucía: Well, no – you feel better participating in the church.

LK: Why?

Lucía: Because you're more confident, and you don't say what you think, but rather you say what you study in the church. You are a mouthpiece for what you study.

For Lucía, studying the sacred texts conditions her mind and her words to be in sync with the will of God. When she acts according to the church's teachings (studying the Bible, healthful living, evangelizing) she becomes a mouthpiece for God, as if His truth is literally emanating from her mouth, and she is a vessel. Lucía drew copiously on this authority in her role as co-director of the Escuela Sabática, where she was responsible for leading all adult members of the church – men and women. On Saturday mornings, she would stand before the congregation for an entire hour. She would give a twenty-minute lesson from a standard Escuela Sabática guide book, at times reading verbatim from the lesson plan but often generously ad-libbing from her own experiences and impressions of social and family life. She then played mistress of ceremony, inviting members to come forward to share songs and readings. Much of her work was done behind the scenes, developing lesson plans and props, or quietly recruiting members to

fill various roles in the service, mindful to rotate her requests so that everyone had the opportunity to participate. All this she did with the skill and confidence of a person who knows her contributions and abilities are highly valued.



Figure 10 Two women lead the Escuela Sabática, October 2008

And yet, there is a clear limit for Lucía; the authority she derives from Bible study has value in the church, but not in the pueblo, where participation, respect, and authority are still gender-bound. Her example speaks to the traditional gender dynamics of pueblo life as well as the messiness and incompleteness of empowerment. At the same time, Adventist women reported to me that their religious practice did at times embolden them to participate more actively in the pueblo. For example, several Adventist women told me they felt empowered to speak publically in the asamblea and voice their opinions when appropriate. I will return to this point later in the chapter, to explore claims about the impact of the Adventist church on leadership and democracy in the pueblo.

History, Place, and the Impact of the Adventist Church

Adventists believe very strongly that their presence in Benito Juárez has contributed positively to pueblo life. Few, if any of these contributions are directly religious. When asked directly about the impact of the church⁵¹, Adventists never discussed the number of souls that have been saved or growing church attendance. Instead, Adventists focused on concrete changes related to the betterment of social life in general, such as the improvement of public health and the strengthening of local democratic practices. Their historical narratives situate the Adventist church at the center of progress and development in Benito Juárez, revealing an underlying concern for the well being of their community and the centrality that the notion of “good citizenship” plays in Adventist identity.

“We used to sleep on the floor”

There are several well-worn narratives that Adventists deploy to reflect on their impact on the pueblo. The first has to do with improvements to health and hygiene. As discussed in Chapter 2, Adventists take responsibility for such changes to household practices as eating on tables, cooking on raised fires, sleeping in beds, and using latrines. According Adventists’ personal social history, evangelicals who arrived in Benito Juárez in the early 1950s introduced these practices to the pueblo. These teachings were consistent with Adventist doctrine on health reform, and were widely used by missionaries as tangible proof of the benefits of Adventist lifestyle. As the number of converts slowly grew, the teachings on health and hygiene spread.

⁵¹ In open-ended interviews, I regularly asked Adventists “Do you think the Adventist church has changed the pueblo?”.

This narrative of progress and development is central to the identity of Adventist's in Benito Juárez, as religious and secular actors. It contributes directly to their sense of themselves as active and open-minded citizens, who are ahead of the curve when it comes to learning about, accepting, and implementing change that contributes directly to the well being of their community.

One example of this is found in the story of Perfecto Mecinas. Profesor Perfecto, as he is almost ubiquitously known today, was born in the pueblo in 1931. He moved to Oaxaca City as a young boy to work and gain an education, and he returned to the pueblo the mid-50s to work as head teacher. Though he only spent a few years as teacher before transferring to another pueblo, he has maintained close ties to the town, keeping a home and farm land, and participating actively in town affairs. Today, he is among the most respected ancianos of the pueblo. He has been appointed to high-level governing positions in Pueblos Mancomunados, and has taken advantage of his connections as an educator to advocate for the town's development. In 2008 the Ford Foundation recognized him as a Leader of Social Justice; he donated the prize money from his award (250,000 pesos) to the pueblo to renovate the clinic.

When he was appointed head teacher in Benito Juárez in 1956 – the same time that Adventist missionaries were spreading their doctrine of clean living – Profesor Perfecto was just completing the teacher certification process with the federal Secretaría de Educación Pública. As part of the credentialing process, he authored a plan to improve living conditions in the pueblo. The plan, which was adopted by the town asamblea, included eating on tables, sleeping on beds, cooking on raised fires, and using outdoor latrines. Perfecto explained these activities to me during an interview:

Perfecto: Look, the houses were huge, made out of wood, and in the middle [on the ground] was the cooking fire...and around it, the same room served as kitchen,

dining room, and bedroom. And at times the chickens didn't have a house to live in, so in the corner you would improvise with some sticks and that's where the chickens slept. But early you would sweep up the filth, throw down some cinder, and the house would come back to life. I didn't like this very much, and so that is why in 1956, 1957, I set out to improve the houses. If the houses were big, then they needed to have two rooms, even if there was one for the parents and another for the children, and then a little kitchen, so that everything wasn't so disordered. And later, we set out to build latrines, those holes in the ground with a little house over it to answer the call of nature.

LK: Because before that, people went out in the open-

Perfecto: They went out in the open on the ground, in the open air, and the animals, the chickens would come and eat it up, and then you would live with the animals. In order to avoid this, it was necessary to speak with the families, to explain to them. Some became angry, but it wasn't my fault. I was sent there as a teacher and I had to require it.

In the 1940s and 50s, the public education system in Mexico was used as a vehicle for constructing a unified national identity and a modern citizenry fit to participate in the growing capitalist economy. Teachers were at the front lines of this effort, particularly in rural and indigenous regions where the school was often the only representative of the national government. As part of their training, teachers were instructed to engage in non-educational activities that addressed social improvement and national integration. This included campaigns that addressed hygiene, public health and alcoholism (Sigüenza Orozco 2007:198). Profesor Perfecto's plan to improve the basic living conditions of the pueblo was in line with this effort.

Profesor Perfecto is also a Seventh-day Adventist. His mother, Marcelina Contreras, was among the first to join the church, and she has been credited with converting a number of her family members, growing church membership exponentially. Though he was not living in the pueblo at the time that the missionaries arrived, he was influenced nonetheless by their message, having begun his own course of Bible study a few years before returning to Benito Juárez. Profesor Perfecto credits the church with creating an environment in the pueblo that was

conducive to the plan he introduced through his authority as head teacher. Some people were angry with him for his changes, but not the Adventists:

Perfecto: Because the gospel advises that you live cleanly. A Christian has to live in a healthy environment. So it agreed with what the school was promoting.

LK: That is interesting to me, as well – it was happening at the same time.

Perfecto: At the same time. It helped – the school made the proposal and the members of the church said, “Okay, we are going to do it.” They took up the fight. We coincided, we coincided. There was the campaign against liquor, and sure there are two or three people still who drink, you can count them with one hand...And so, in certain lifestyle habits – living well, living orderly – the church helped a lot with this question.

Lori: Even though not everyone participated in the Adventist church?

Perfecto: Even though it wasn’t everyone.

In Profesor Perfecto’s words, the presence of the Adventist Church primed townspeople to accept the school’s reforms.

Adventists view this moment as critical to the expansion of their work in the pueblo, as an important moment when their vision was applied to the public sphere. They give Profesor Perfecto credit for extending the reach of the church to the pueblo at large, albeit in a concealed manner. For example, Soledad, an elderly woman who was among the first converts and is Perfecto’s sister-in-law, explained the connection to me during an interview. I asked her whether the changes in domestic hygiene experienced throughout the pueblo during this time were the result of the Adventist mission or if some other factors may have been at play.

Soledad: It was because of the church. The teacher was my husband’s brother. He also required people to make tables and *fogones* (raised hearths). That’s why I say it was because of the church.

LK: He had started reading the Bible (*conoció el evangelio*) at that same time.

S: Yes. He was reading the Bible and he was the teacher.

Elena, another elderly woman and among the first converts, told me that these changes to hygiene and other domestic habits, including a decreased consumption of meat, earned the pueblo a reputation in the region.

The pastor told us to live cleanly, because the spirit of God dwells in every home, but with cleanliness. There shouldn't be filth here and there. It should be a very special place...that's why there was a joke, other villages would say that in Benito Juárez they eat grass on tables (*en mesa comen hierba*). That is to say, we are eating on tables, but only very simple things. They didn't understand the value of eating vegetables...they made fun of us, as if we didn't understand, we didn't know how to live. But later on, they realized that they were the ones who were doing it wrong.

Elena's comments introduce another dimension of Adventists' development narrative: that the pueblo is distinctive regionally as an early adaptor of change. This sense of open-mindedness and a penchant for forward thinking is an important point of pride among rancheros, who distinguish themselves regionally as innovators of change. This is true regardless of religious affiliation. What is significant here is that Adventists locate the motivation for change in their church's doctrine of clean living.

Perhaps not surprisingly, non-Adventists do not credit the Adventist church as the source of these changes in the pueblo. Instead, they attribute these changes to the work of two state agents: Martín Ruíz Camino, who befriended the pueblo in the 1970s when he was sent to build a new school house, and who later helped introduce ecotourism (see Chapter 2); and Zocorro Velásquez, a young architect who was sent by Martín to work on a number of key development projects in the pueblo, including the building of fogones and orchards, the introduction of a Montessori-style kindergarten, and the creation of a region-wide produce distribution cooperative. These projects are an important piece of the development puzzle in Benito Juárez, and contribute to a sense of regional superiority in the pueblo. Adventists likewise recognize their importance, and Martín and Perfecto have a close relationship; Adventists simply do not

credit them as the primary change agents. They do claim that the presence of their church primed the pueblo to accept the changes that Martín and Zocorro offered.

Changes in Alcohol Consumption

When asked about their effect on the town, Adventists also regularly talked about their influence over the consumption of alcohol. The Adventist Church advocates for temperance, in keeping with their broader teachings on the relationship between physical health and salvation (Viera-Rossano 1993:376)⁵². These teachings come into direct conflict with drinking patterns in the pueblo, where alcohol consumption is an important part of social and ritual life and is embedded in notions of reciprocity and proper social behavior (Kearney 1972:96-109; Nader 1969:355). When all are drinking, no one person is in a position to take advantage of another; a refusal to drink can insult the host and generate distrust among the other guests present (Kearney 1972:76-77).

During my time in neighboring Latuvi, where only two of the approximately 150 households have converted to Adventism, I regularly encountered people, and mostly men, drinking beer or *pulque* (lightly fermented cactus juice) at corner stores as they made their way

⁵² Belief number 22, “Christian Behavior”, of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs: “We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2.)”. “28 Fundamental Beliefs”, Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed on November 9, 2015, <https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28beliefs-web-2015.pdf>.

to or from the fields, or to quench their thirst throughout a daylong *asamblea*. I lived with Catholic families, where it was normal to honor a special guest with a *copita* (a shot of mezcal) or a bottle of beer. On cold mornings, the men of the household would indulge themselves in a quick *copita* before heading out to work in field or forest. Some households brought their homemade pulque to the field to quench their thirst as they labored. At Catholic fiestas in town, people drank beer and passed bottles of mezcal for toasting. Two households that made their own pulque and its more powerful brethren, *tepache*, were regular stops for tourists visiting the ecotourism *caban*as.

In Benito Juárez, where approximately 25% of the population is Adventist, I had the opposite experience. Of all the Adventist teachings on proper diet, the restrictions on alcohol seemed to be paramount among converts. For example, though Adventists themselves told me that they eat very little meat, junk food, or caffeinated beverage, I was regularly served chicken, beef, coffee, soda, and sugar-laden tea at Adventist homes, and I observed plenty of Adventist children eating candy, chips, and packaged sweet breads. It is possible that Adventists eat more vegetables and consume less soda than their non-Adventist neighbors; it is almost certain that they spend more time learning about why they shouldn't include meat, caffeine and junk food in their diet. Yet, the disconnect between ideal teachings on proper food and actual practice was rarely noted or reflected upon, at least in my presence. When it came to alcohol, however, I never once saw or heard of an Adventist drinking (I don't doubt it happened, but I was never personally made aware of it).

I bore witness to a litany of testimonies regarding prior drinking habits and the power of faith and divine intervention in quitting such vices. Excessive drinking, and the incidences of domestic violence that often followed, played a central role in people's individual conversion

stories⁵³; people were careful to include stories of their own, their husband's, or their father's (stories focused on men's transgressions, while making no reference to women's drinking habits) deliverance from alcohol as a welcome outcome of conversion. Adventists made a clear distinction between themselves as "non-drinkers", or at least as people who have overcome drinking problems, and other, often Catholic, drinkers. People who drink, I was told, *no se mejoran*, don't improve themselves. Adventists told me that their lives improved dramatically as a result of their abstinence: they worked harder, their families' economic situations improved, they stopped beating their wives, their children thrived, and they became more active in church and secular affairs.

Alcohol consumption also plays an important role in Adventists' understanding of their place in their community. Conversations about alcohol revealed a concern over the public image and health of the pueblo. It is not simply that people improve their personal lives when they give up drinking; they do their duty as citizens by making Benito Juárez a better place. The following quotes illustrate this point; each is a direct response to my query regarding the impact of the church on pueblo life:

"[W]hen I began to participate in the church, we talked about cleanliness, or that we shouldn't drink or smoke, and so during that time ... everyone, for example my friends or people I knew, there were a lot of people who drank, you know? And sometimes you would see someone drunk in the street. And so this was one of the goals of the church, to inform people, to publicize that you shouldn't do that, that it's not good. Why? Because it endangers your health. And so, from what I remember from that date on, yes, it has improved the town. Little by little, but yes, it's making the town better" (40-year-old male).

Before, there were a lot of corner stores where people could get drunk, they could

⁵³ Excessive alcohol consumption, and the violence it generated, is a common justification for conversion in the Sierra Juárez (Gross 2012), as heavy drinkers look to opt out of the "drinking complex" (Kearney 1972:108). Similar relationships between alcoholism and conversion have been observed in other regions in Latin America. See, for example, Buechler and Buechler (1978).

drink a lot, and walk around at night, and now, thank God everyone is giving that up” (41-year-old male).

“In Benito Juárez you don’t hear about there being townspeople thrown around in the street. In Latuvi, [drunks] are here, they are there. This is what you realize, that the gospel has made things better” (80-year-old female).

Together, these quotes paint an image of Benito Juárez, during the early years of the Adventist Church, as a place with corner stores serving beer and mezcal in abundance and the streets littered with revelers too inebriated to complete their journeys home. Today, there is very little public drinking in Benito Juárez. I was never once offered a drink, and rarely did I see anyone – Adventist, Catholic, or otherwise – drink in my presence. Adventists often told me that, unlike in neighboring towns like Latuvi, people in Benito Juárez don’t drink. As noted above, however, in other contexts Adventists often referred to Catholics as drunks, whose drinking habits hold them back in life. Rather than taking the comment about rancheros “not drinking” at face value, their comments seemed to me to reveal a general concern that drinking not be done in public, in the streets and corner stores, or while serving a cargo. Benito Juárez, I was being told, is a place of order and progress, whose citizens, thanks to the blessings of the Adventist Church, are not contaminated by the vice of *public* drunkenness. When Adventists claim responsibility for the “dry” pueblo, or for changing standards of basic living conditions, they create a history for the village that places their church at the center of the town’s development⁵⁴. They also constructed

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, I did not speak with many Catholics about this issue. When comparing Benito Juárez to neighboring towns like Latuvi, a few Catholics did tell me that people in Benito Juárez “don’t drink”, but they did not connect the practice to the Adventist church. In his study from the neighboring town of Ixtepeji, Kearney notes that Catholics, who opposed the presence of the Seventh-day Adventist church in their town, “when pointing out the undesirable results of drinking, often mention that abstinence is a good feature of the [Adventist] religion (Kearney 1972:108).” Other factors may also contribute to a desire to decrease public drunkenness. For example, in the neighboring town of Santa Ana del Valle, Cohen found that townspeople supported an effort to ban public drinking, as the village “would look more attractive to tourists if inebriated villagers were not evident (Cohen 1999:142).” It is possible, given the prominence of ecotourism in Benito Juárez, that Catholics’ statements that no one drinks in the pueblo served to improve the image of the pueblo in the eyes of visitors (like myself).

a sense of Benito Juárez as a place that is better than its neighbors.

Women, Youth, and Democracy

Adventists also claim that their presence has strengthened leadership and made the pueblo a more inclusive and participatory democracy, particularly with regard to women's participation in pueblo politics. In many indigenous towns throughout Oaxaca that are governed by *usos y costumbres*, or traditional law, women do not participate in local government. They do not attend *asambleas*, they do not publicly voice their opinions or vote, and they are not elected to serve the high-level cargo positions (Dalton 2003:242)⁵⁵. In Latuvi, for example, only widows and single mothers attend *asambleas*; the election of cargo positions for women (ex: school cafeteria work) is held in a secondary *asamblea* attended only by women and the town's male authorities. In towns such as this, women tend to derive power, prestige and authority through their domestic, ritual, or economic roles (Chiñas 1973; Mathews 1985; Stephen 1991).

In Benito Juárez, however, all married women and single mothers are required to attend *asambleas*. They are invited to offer their opinions during debate and discussion, and they vote alongside men to decide on issues of town management and to appoint cargo holders. It is not a system of gender parity by any means – women rarely speak up in the *asambleas*, and at the time of my research they continued to be excluded from the top positions. But it is a considerable improvement. During *asambleas* I attended in Latuvi, when a woman needed to participate actively in a meeting – cargo holders presenting an end-of-the-year report on their committee's work, for example – men whistled suggestively at her as she passed to the front of the room,

⁵⁵ A 2013 news article reported that, of the 417 pueblos in Oaxaca governed by *usos y costumbres*, 90 prohibited women from participating in *asambleas*, voting, or running for office (Rodríguez 2013).

freely corrected her when she fumbled or misspoke, and even laughed openly at her errors⁵⁶. I did not witness this kind of behavior in Benito Juárez. Several women in Benito Juárez told me that, though it was difficult to bring oneself to stand and offer an opinion during an *asamblea*, they understood it was their right and their duty, and would do so if the issue was of particular importance to them. Women's participation in town politics was a point of some pride for all *rancheros*, particularly when comparing themselves to their fellow towns in *Pueblos Mancomunados*. I was once told that young men from neighboring towns often come to Benito Juárez to look for a bride, because the women here are brighter and more valued.

If you ask an Adventist about this difference in women's participation, you will likely be told that their church is responsible. They claim that, in the church, women's opinions and participation have always been valued. Women study sacred texts alongside men, lead services, and attend educational seminars. Women develop critical thinking and public speaking skills. They gain practical skills related to church management, such as keeping the treasury or running the youth education program. They learn about emotional and physical health, positive family relations, equal rights, and religious freedom. Above all, they learn about their own worth in the eyes of God, and they refuse to be treated less by their *pueblo*. As one Adventist man told me:

Over time, we have noticed that the women of our church participate more in *pueblo* life...Because the women develop themselves as teachers, because of the training they have always received, they go and get trained for this, that, and the other thing, and so they know the plans, they know a lot of things. And for the same reasons, for example, a woman who has been a treasurer in the church can easily become treasurer of the *pueblo*, if necessary. Why? Because here they get involved...

⁵⁶ Once, I arrived at an *asamblea* just before it had started and the attendees had already taken their seats. As I passed by the men's side to join the women on their side of the room, several men whistled at me. I immediately heard several voices quickly hush the men, but I was too self-conscious to raise my eyes and inspect what was going on. I never heard anyone correct a cat-call directed at a female towns person at an *asamblea*.

Some Adventists claim that their church's stance on women's participation influenced the pueblo to begin including women in the *asambleas*; other Adventists stated that women have always attended *asambleas*. I tried, to no avail, to trace the history of women's participation in the *asamblea*; given that the Adventist church was established during the same decade that the pueblo was formally incorporated, it is difficult to disentangle their histories. Regardless, Adventists report that their women are more vocal in town meetings, and when they are in positions to cooperate with or even lead other women – as when they serve cargos with other women on the school committee or attend educational meetings at the clinic – that they have better ideas than their Catholic neighbors. Still, though women's participation may be more valued than in neighboring pueblos, women have not yet been elected to the highest offices in either the Adventist church or in the pueblo.

Adventists believe that they are better at preparing youth to serve the pueblo, as well. In comments that echo the above discussion on gender participation, Adventists claim that their attention to critical thinking, public speaking, and the worth of all individuals prepares their youth to actively and confidently take up their citizenship duties when they come of age⁵⁷. During church services, children often perform skits and songs in front of the congregation. On Saturdays, during the more formal worship hour that follows the *Escuela Sabática*, children announce the hymns to be sung, and older youth may be invited to give sermons. Later in the day, after a lunch break, teenagers and young adults in the Youth Association organize and direct a two-hour afternoon service, which includes lectures and Bible games. The Youth Association's program is attended by adults and children alike and is considered an important

⁵⁷ In Benito Juárez, young men begin attending *asambleas* and are elected to cargos one year after they graduate middle school, usually at the age of 18. Young women begin to formally participate when they get married or give birth to their first child, whichever comes first.

part of the religious education program. Children and youth may also be elected to serve on church committees. For example, a seven-person committee that was convened to oversee the nomination of new cargo holders included two young adults and two older children; I was told that such committees should be representative of age and gender, as well as the families that comprise the larger church membership. Adventists claim that the attention they give to their youth teaches them to speak up without fear, to be better readers and more critical thinkers, which in turn makes them brighter students, and, eventually, engaged citizens. They also claim that their children learn to greet adults properly – with a handshake and a salutation – and are generally more respectful.



Figure 11 Celebrating the Día del Niño Adventista in Benito Juárez, October 2008

There are other, more subtle ways the Adventist church may be impacting town government. Outside the public arena, Adventism may be influencing some of the more intimate practices of citizenship, such as respect for authority, cooperation and neighborliness, and the meanings that citizens attach to their service. For example, some Adventists claimed that their church cultivates a heightened respect for authority; being appointed a high-level cargo is a God-given privilege and responsibility that is conferred as a result of “good” Christian living. If

someone manages the affairs of the pueblo well, God will continue to grant them the opportunity to lead.

Similarly, Adventism may influence the ways in which fellow citizens respect one another and cooperate during times of service. Rosa, a mother of three who converted when she married an Adventist, told me about the time she had a cargo position in the school cafeteria. Of the five other women with whom she worked, two also attended the Adventist church, another woman had studied the Bible, and the other two were her cousins. The year passed quickly, she said, because all the women worked well together; they all had different jobs to do in the kitchen, they took turns with the menu, and they respected each other's contributions. Because they had studied the Bible, they knew how to speak to each other kindly. They also started their day with prayer, and invited the non-Adventists to join them. In contrast, she told me, her only other cargo was a difficult experience. The women – all non-Adventists – didn't work well together and they often harshly criticized each other's work. Rosa was pregnant at the time, and one day late in her pregnancy she asked her fellow cargo holders for permission to stay home because she wasn't feeling well. The women told her no, "We are serving a cargo, they told me, and if you have to die to get here, so be it." That night, Rosa gave birth to her son.

Rosa's story illustrates how Adventists draw strength from their religious practice when they fulfill their duties as citizens. Her story, and others like hers that reflect on the abilities of Adventists to serve as leaders, admittedly strike a self-congratulatory tone. They likewise erase any tensions or conflicts that exist in these settings, regardless of the likeminded-ness of the participants. It is difficult for me to assess whether and to what extent women's and youth empowerment, or factors like respect for authority or better interpersonal skills, that are cultivated and highly valued by Adventists are transferable to roles outside the church. I also do

not have good data on Catholics opinions of Adventists as citizens. But the robustness of these claims is remarkable, and I believe speaks to the regard Adventists hold for public service and leadership.

Religious Freedom

Finally, Adventists claim that their church has strengthened democracy by insisting on the separation of church and state. Though the Mexican state has been a constitutionally secular society since the 1870s, the Catholic Church has dominated politics in indigenous pueblos through the civil-religious hierarchy (Stephen and Dow 1990a). Adventists in Benito Juárez have had to fight the civil-religious hierarchy on several fronts in order to secure their place in the community. The pueblo has agreed to not call tequios or asambleas on Saturdays, or if they do, Adventists will not be sanctioned for non-participation. The pueblo has also eliminated mandatory religious service from the cargo system; Catholics gather amongst themselves to organize their church's needs, and Adventists are not required to fulfill cargos in the service of that church⁵⁸. Similarly, the town's fiesta is a secular event that does not honor a patron saint but rather focuses its activities on non-religious events such as a public dance and a regional basketball tournament. Early in the 1980s, when Catholics in town began organizing to build a chapel (up until that time, there was no formal worship space), Adventists defeated a petition to donate public land to the project. They argued that, as the pueblo had not donated land for the

⁵⁸ The splitting apart of the civil and religious hierarchies is commonplace, and is a result of larger patterns of state interference that seek to limit the autonomy of indigenous pueblos (Chance 1990). In the many of these cases, the religious hierarchy is strengthened as a result of the split; yet in Benito Juárez, it appears that the civil hierarchy may be gaining strength at the expense of the religious hierarchy.

Adventist church, it could not rightfully do so for the Catholic Church, and they insisted that only people who hadn't signed the petition be allowed to vote on the matter.

For Adventists, commitment to a secular pueblo is as much tied to religious need as it is in honor of the town's namesake, President Benito Juárez. President Juárez, an iconic figure in the history of Mexico (Weeks 1987) who was born in the neighboring village of Guelatao and served as the nation's first and only indigenous president, from 1858-1872. His reforms dramatically reduced the power of the Catholic Church – until that time the exclusive religion of the Mexican state – and legislated the separation of church and state. President Juárez welcomed Protestantism, which he said would “force Indians to read rather than wasting savings on prayer candles for the Saints” (Sierra 2006:546; quoted in McIntyre 2012:8)⁵⁹. In the Sierra Juárez – the region of the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca named in honor of the president's birthplace – Juárez's image presides over town squares and municipal offices, his quotes decorate the walls of schools, and young children recite poems written about him. People express a great affinity to the nation's only “Indigenous President”, highlighting his humble birth (his lack of adequate clothing and his diet of beans and wild field greens), his Zapotec roots (he was illiterate and monolingual Zapotec until he moved to Oaxaca City at age 12), and his rise to greatness. His history was often offered to me as proof of the dignity of indigenous people.

But for Adventists specifically, the allure of President Juárez lies in his efforts to decrease the power of the Catholic Church in Mexico. As one Adventist explained to me:

Here in Benito Juárez, politics and religion don't mix. We take as our foundation the words of President Juárez, “Respect for the right of others is peace” (*el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz*). So, if I respect your rights, you can be affiliated with whatever party you believe in, you can believe in what you believe

⁵⁹ For a discussion of President Juárez's influence on the introduction of Protestant missions to Mexico, see (McIntyre 2012:7-9).

in, or in whom you want, and as long as I don't intervene in this right we won't have problems. We are carrying out exactly what President Juárez said. And, the other thing that we do to respect the right of others is that our community is named Benito Juárez. If that great man President Juárez separated the Church from the state, it wouldn't be right that a pueblo that carries his name should mix those two things. As a result, the Catholic Church lives independently in the community, and the Adventist church also acts independently in the community. Religious issues don't get mixed up in the *asamblea*.

President Juárez, I was told, was a man of God – he learned to read by studying the Bible, and he ascended to power by the grace of God. His personal life and political career provide Adventists with a powerful mythology upon which to base their own struggles to maintain a secular pueblo government.

Conclusion

As Protestant churches continue to win converts throughout Mesoamerica, with particular success in rural indigenous villages just like Benito Juárez (Dow and Sandstrom 2001), scholars have noted prolifically that conversion often appears to precipitate a withdrawal from traditional community life (Dow 2005; Gross 2003; Marroquín Zaleta 1995; Montes García 1995; Ramírez Gómez 1991; Ramírez Gómez 1995; Redfield 1950). In my own research, by comparison, I have found Adventists to be among the most engaged and committed citizens in the pueblo. Despite the need to withdraw from traditional elements of social life dictated by Catholicism, Adventists in Benito Juárez make a concerted effort to participate in the secular elements of the pueblo, and believe very strongly that their presence has benefited political and domestic life. Bible study and other religious activities encourage Adventists to adopt knowledge, habits, and dispositions that have a direct bearing on their participation in pueblo life. According to members, their religious practice generates a sense of empowerment and authority, an understanding of self as leader and as valued and capable participant, and an expectation that the

self and the group will lead. Their claims and self-reflections highlight the ways that leadership is a bodily practice, involving voice, body language, physical orientation vis-à-vis the group (where one is positioned during a study session, for example), mental discipline (the ability to make arguments, explain lessons, etc.), and expectations about comportment according to factors like gender and age.

Adventists also construct historical narratives that place themselves at the center of progress and development in the town, in ways that legitimize their presence as crucial, rather than marginal, to pueblo life. Members claim that Benito Juárez is better off because of their church, that they have made the pueblo safer, healthier, and more hygienic, as well as more inclusive and democratic. There is an element of regional difference making in this discourse, as well. Such comparisons are a standard feature of intercommunity relations in the region (Kearney 1972:24-26). Townspeople, regardless of their religious affiliation, took advantage of any opportunity to list for me the virtues of their pueblo as compared to their neighbors in the Sierra Juárez: that Benito Juárez is a cleaner and safer place to live, that they have taken advantage of opportunities to advance themselves, that they were the first pueblo to introduce community-based ecotourism, and that they have close ties to influential people like Martín Ruíz Camino and Zocorro Velasco. Adventists legitimize their presence in the pueblo in similar ways, essentially claiming that the pueblo has been able to rise above its neighbors because it counts open-minded, forward thinking, civically engaged – in short, more developed – Adventists among its ranks.

My findings corroborate what a small but growing collection of scholars is beginning to notice: that conversion may not necessarily be as disruptive to indigenous social life as previously assumed. For example, in the Sierra Juárez, in a village neighboring Benito Juárez,

Gross (2003) found that the introduction of Protestantism has had little impact on collective communal practices such as cargo or tequio, and is generally attributed with reducing alcoholism and corruption. Yet Gross still interpreted conversion in a negative light, characterizing it as a complete break with the past – including one’s spiritual and social ties – that comes with a profound social cost, leaving converts socially marginalized and vulnerable. He also described converts as being more “individualistic”, owing at least in part to Protestantism’s emphasis on a personal connection with God as well as the mandate to reject many Catholic-based customs, and in stronger solidarity with their church than with their pueblo.

That I did not also find such marginalization and individualism in Benito Juárez only testifies to the complexity of these issues. More importantly, it highlights the need to move beyond the rupture-withdrawal-conflict paradigm when discussing religious change in indigenous communities. In this chapter, I discussed the ways Adventism in Benito Juárez promotes values, skills, habits, and even forms of progress and development, that are directed toward the betterment of the collective, as opposed to being focused on the well-being of any one individual or household. Adventists believe that they are called to use the wisdom, leadership skills, and technical expertise of modern living in the service of their pueblo. In the next chapter, I continue this discussion with an analysis of the ways Adventism articulates with ethnicity, as it deepens and reshapes the meaning of local identity for its practitioners.

In some ways, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has provided a fairly traditional path to development, to the extent that it encouraged new converts to be early adopters of Western technologies of home and hygiene: cooking on raised fires, eating on tables, sleeping in beds (sometimes in rooms separated from children), relocating poultry and livestock to outdoor pens, building latrines. What is significant about this particular path to progress, however, is the moral

and spiritual dimensions of the mandate to improve. People seek to become more developed so that they may live in accordance with God's will, and in return may achieve Salvation. To this end, they have not only adapted their household arrangements and technologies (which, admittedly, so did their non-Adventist neighbors, but through different means and perhaps a little later on), but also their habits of mind and the very comportment of their bodies. As they attend bible study and learn to view the world through a critical lens; as they adopt new attitudes about the healthy body and achieve sobriety; as they assume the authoritative posture and voice of leader, they likewise learn to see themselves as "more developed", as having *salido mas adelante*, as having achieved a better kind of life, than their non-Adventist neighbors.

While the religious motivation behind the call to *salir mas adelante* is unique to Adventists, the role of inner transformation as a desired facet of development is not. As will be shown in the chapters on community-based ecotourism (Chapters 5 and 6), Adventists and non-Adventists alike are drawn to forms of development that resonate with them on moral, emotional, and personal levels. Like Adventists, people engaged in community-based ecotourism actively seek to ground this project in their own values governing service, leadership, reciprocity, and interpersonal relations; and they obfuscate or outright reject initiatives that attempt to change, too quickly or too profoundly, some of the most fundamental elements of their communal arrangements. Similarly, ecotourism workers are drawn to aspects of the tourism encounter that provide them with opportunities to grow and develop on a personal level, obtaining new job skills, new knowledge about the world, and new access to status and prestige.

Chapter 4 – Local Community, Global Unity: Understanding Ethnicity in the Adventist Church

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine constructions of identity and difference among members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benito Juárez. I outline the specific discursive practices and theological commitments that contribute to non-religious dimension of local identity. When Adventists talk about their pueblo, and the impact their church has had on it, their speech is saturated with themes of modernity and progress; Adventists' pueblo-based identity is intimately linked to their understanding of themselves as "more developed", on account of their unique religious practice. What's more, they locate their church's doctrine on clean living as central to the construction of Benito Juárez as a modern pueblo. On the other hand, their discourse about the environment – from the forests that surround their pueblo to the agricultural fields that support their way of life – is much more traditional. They construct a sense of the pueblo and its environs as valuable because they are outside destructive, alienating, and exploitative grips of modern capitalist production, which ultimately aids their endeavors for healthy Christian living. At the same time, the Church's peculiar eschatology and its doctrine of unity, which calls all members to be one in the body of Christ informs Adventists sense of ethno-racial difference and social justice, in ways that may impede solidarity building along those lines.

Self-Identification in the Adventist Church and Beyond

One of the many questions I asked during each and every open-ended interview with Adventists, and ecotourism workers, was "How do you identify yourself?" During my earliest

weeks of fieldwork, I presented the question in a fairly straightforward manner, without much context or even a neat segue from the previous topic of discussion. And more often than not, my question was received with silence and a blank stare, followed by uncomfortable attempts to give a “correct” response, as if answering a question on an exam. It was not that people didn’t have a sense of who they were or with whom they belonged; the problem of course was in my framing of the question, and my assumption that they could objectify their sense of self and produce it in the neat context of the interview.

I quickly learned to warm up the discussion by asking whether the interviewee was familiar with term *indígena* (indigenous). I approached this task knowing full well that “indigenous” is an ambiguous, inexact, heavily loaded, and highly contested term (de la Cadena and Starn 2007b). There is of course nothing natural, original, or authentic about being “indigenous”. The term was first used during the colonial era, as a tool of power welded to control the encounters of colonialism, to objectify and rule the Other (Pratt 2007). Its common usage today indexes, at the very least, a shared claim to historical injustice at the hands of colonial powers, patterns that continue to the present day (Canessa 2012:69). Use of the term also often indexes a very specific set of legal and political articulations of the global and the local, as international governing bodies, NGOs, states, activists, and indigenous people themselves strive to address and redress these longstanding asymmetries (de la Cadena and Starn 2007a).

It is one of the interesting, and important, curiosities of this new global indigeneity that some of the very people who fulfill the external criteria of being indigenous do not themselves adopt the term. In fact, as Andrew Canessa (2012) points out in his sensitive account of indigenous identity and lifeways in Bolivia, indigenous people may positively reject the term.

The ways they understand themselves as a people, as connected to land, history, and community through their relationship with the ancestors and the spirit world, has little to do with marches or banners, with progressive politics or globalization. Such agendas are important, and Canessa does not ignore or dismiss their significance; he is however concerned about the ways they may “deny a voice to those people who are unable or unwilling to articulate their identities in public domain, whose identities and allegiances, moreover, are often taken for granted by indigenous politicians and scholars of indigenous movements alike. Such a perspective raises questions not only about indigenous politics but also about the very nature of indigenous identity” (Canessa 2012:4-5).

My goal in asking direct questions about terms of identity, including *indigena*, resonates with Canessa’s concerns. I am interested in examining how people broadly considered to be indigenous (according to objective criteria at least) themselves understand, interpret, and engage with these categories; particularly in an historical moment dominated by ethnodevelopment schemes and marked by rapid global religious change. My own methodology for approaching this question was to engage people in a direct conversation about these terms of identity. My goal was not to pinpointing a stable identity; I do not see identity as an absolute category, nor did I expect people to be able to articulate in the artificial context of a tape recorded interview precise terms that quantify the essence of their existence as complex gendered, racialized, ethnic, classed, and aged individuals. When I asked people “how do you identify yourself”, I was interested in the relative strength or weakness of the response to particular terms, the general set of comments, ideas, and concerns each term evoked, and the patterns that emerged across my interviews in relation to these terms.

Most people I spoke to were familiar with the term *indígena*, and were able to provide me with a definition, though again people often appeared concerned to give me the “right” answer. I encouraged them to provide their best understanding, assuring them that there was no “right” or “wrong” answer, and that the word was complex and open to interpretation. From there, I was able to cultivate a conversation about self-identification, drawing in other terms like *zapoteco*, *serrano*, or *campesino*. Our conversations were at times halting and tentative; at best, they were matter-of-fact. Rarely did they produce any emotion, excitement, or lengthy conversation⁶⁰. Latuvenses and rancheros, on the whole, did not possess a robust language with which to articulate their sentiments of identity and belonging. All of this – the multiple understandings of *indígena* and other categories, their straightforward description of self-identification, and the overall lack of emotional connection to the conversation – were highly revealing. Whatever local identity is, it is clearly not something people about in terms of a self-conscious, politicized project connected, as for example connected to new forms of global indigeneity.

A little more than half of the twenty-two Adventists I interviewed defined “indigenous” in negative terms – dirty, illiterate, lacking infrastructure, uncivilized – and as an historical condition from which they themselves and their pueblo has progressed. One man admitted he did not know what the term meant. Most Adventists self-identified as either *serrano* (“from the sierra”) or *zapoteco*, or *del pueblo* (“from the pueblo”) – while each of these terms is territorial and recognizes a connection to a place, or a people of a particular place, *zapoteco* carries the added weight of language, customs, and ancestry. Only four Adventists – three elder men and another middle-aged man – identified positively, unequivocally, and proudly as being

⁶⁰ It is also possible that the term *indígena*, and the related term *indio*, provoked negative emotions, and even shame, owing to the terms’ associations with marginalization, poverty, and backwardness, which further supports my claim that there is a lack of positive and proud indigenous identity.

indigenous. All were highly articulate and motivated actors in the church and in the pueblo; two of them spoke at length about their experiences with migration as having raised their consciousness about indigenous identity. Another elder woman also self-identified as indigenous, but her response was fairly neutral and lacked the emotional quality of the others. Another small cluster of people gave responses that were non-local and non-ethnic: a young unmarried man and a middle-aged woman both identified as “adventista”; a middle-aged man referred to himself as “americano”; and a young woman who was born in the pueblo, but was raised in Oaxaca and returned upon marrying a ranchero, called herself “oaxaqueña”.

I asked the same question in my interviews with people participating in ecotourism (23). Like Adventists, about half of ecotourism participants defined “indigenous” in negative terms, and did not apply it to themselves. Again, like the Adventists, these same people referred to themselves as “serrano” or “zapoteco”. Three people admitted they were unsure what the term meant. Unlike Adventists, however, *eleven* ecotourism workers identified themselves as “indigenous”; among them were three unmarried youth, whose responses were among the most proud and robust. A final two ecotourism workers used non-local, non-ethnic categories: an elder woman called herself *mexicana* and an elder man called himself *campesino* (a class distinction, “farmer” or “peasant”).

I also interviewed nine people unaffiliated with Adventism or ecotourism. Repeating the trend, about half described “indigenous” in negative terms. Of the remaining half, most admitted they were not familiar with the term or did not know what it meant. Across these two groups, a subset declined to self-identify, claiming simply that they did not know or did not understand; another four preferred serrano/zapoteco/del pueblo; and a final elder woman called herself a

campesina. A final, middle-aged man considered himself indigenous and Zapotec⁶¹. Though the numbers are small, these responses do suggest that participating in either the Adventist Church or ecotourism may increase exposure to and formation of particular forms of identity and consciousness.

Two absolute constants emerged from these interviews, irrespective of affiliation, age, or life experience. The first is that no one spoke of being zapotec or serrano or del pueblo in negative terms. The second is that no one identified as *mestizo* (“mixed”).

My own findings corroborate what other scholars have found in Oaxaca: that among rural, indigenous pueblos, the strongest identity markers tend to be local and community-based, and that, in general, there is no robust articulation of being “indigenous” in a way that connects with larger projects for political or cultural change (Mathews 2011; Mendoza Zuany 2008; Mendoza Zuany 2014; Nagengast and Kearney 1990; Stephen 1996). But I did find that in addition to a focus on place of origin, latuenses and rancheros also viewed themselves in regional (serrano) and ethnic (zapoteco) terms. Also importantly, I found that a significant cluster of people did identify themselves as “indígena” in proud, if not politicized ways. Finally, among Adventists, I found that people were as likely as not to self-identity in ways that implied a heightened consciousness about belonging to a group beyond the pueblo: as a member of a worldwide church (adventista), as a resident of an politically, economically, and historically connected hemisphere (americano), and as a member of a dispersed group of people who occupy a similar structural position vis-à-vis the nation (indígena). In the discussion that follows, I will

⁶¹ I also administered a baseline survey to 29 households in Latuvi. In the survey, I read a short list of common identity categories, and asked people to respond yes or no to each term. Without controlling for religious affiliation or ecotourism involvement, the survey results also reveal a strong preference for “zapoteco” and “serrano” over “indígena”.

illuminate some of the peculiarities of Adventist practice that may encourage these trends, including the relationship between modernity, development and nature; teachings on personal and communal responsibility; and understandings of ethno-racial difference and social justice.

Progress and Tradition in the Pueblo

There are two distinct narratives in the Adventist Church concerning the value of the pueblo. In the first, technology and progress are central to Adventists' understandings of proper Christian living and are essential to achieving salvation. Adventists construct for themselves a history that places their church at the center of development in Benito Juárez, thus justifying their existence in the pueblo. In this narrative, Adventism is responsible for the pueblo's regional distinctiveness, a distinctiveness that rests on its level of modernity and progress. In the second narrative, the pueblo is distinctive because of its proximity to nature, and being from an "out of the way" and less developed place is desirable. In this narrative, progress and technology impede proper physical and spiritual health. The pueblo-in-nature is a God-given refuge from the maladies of modern life and the ideal spot for communicating with God and contemplating his presence and grandeur.

Cleanliness and Godliness

As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the Adventist missionaries who first began evangelizing in Benito Juárez in the 1950s brought with them a set of instructions to improve family health and hygiene through modifications to diet and household living. The missionaries taught new believers that adhering to God's will and preparing oneself for the Second Coming was as much

a physical project as it was spiritual. Today, these health reforms play an important role in the story Adventists tell themselves about who they are and what their role is in pueblo life.

One prominent example is the introduction of the *fogón*, a fully enclosed, wood-burning cooking stove made of brick and cement. The fogón is a vast improvement over the traditional method of cooking on an open fire on a dirt floor. Not only does it require less wood and reduce contact with food contaminants on the floor, it also boasts an exhaust pipe, which greatly minimizes the amount of smoke and soot in the kitchen. In the 1970s, a development agent named Socorro Velasco introduced the fogón to Benito Juárez, and it has since become a powerful symbol of development in the pueblo. Residents claim a degree of regional expertise in their ability to construct them; indeed, most of the fogones I saw in the village were well built, and to my knowledge every home had one. In Latuvi, by comparison, while most homes also had a fogón, many were ramshackle with uneven walls and inefficient exhaust pipes, as residents there did not receive the same training as rancheros.



Figure 12 A well-built fogón, in an Adventist household in Benito Juárez, September 2008

Adventists claim that, on account of their own reforms, Socorro recognized Benito Juárez as a town that was willing to work hard to in the name of progress (*salir adelante*)⁶². One Adventist explained to me that the first missionaries evangelized the head teacher, Perfecto Mecinas, who in turn used the legitimacy of his post to instruct the pueblo on the principles of clean living⁶³. “And so this is what Socorro Velasco saw, that’s why she said, ‘This is a pueblo that is improving, it is a pueblo that is moving forward’. And so she also did her bit. Socorro Velasco was the one who gave us the idea for the *fogones*.” Other members made similar

⁶² To be clear, the Adventists I spoke with rarely, if ever, use the words “modern” “modernity”, “development”, or “progress”; those are terms I import to the discussion. Rather, Adventists tend to use *salir adelante*, to better things, literally “to move forward”. The local term has strong connotations of “progress” as a unilinear movement toward a more advanced state of being.

⁶³ According to his own account of this time, Profesor Perfecto began studying the bible while in Oaxaca, just before moving back to Benito Juárez.

elisions, seamlessly incorporating secular forms of development into their own social ontology, an elision that is extremely common in the missionary context (DeTemple 2005). This is particularly true in relationship to the home, which both religion and development consider a basic building block of society. Even more so for kitchens, locations in which development and religion alike imagine and produce discourses about proper living, especially as it is related to cleanliness, purity, and nutrition.

In Benito Juárez, these elisions of religion and development, and the subsequent presentation of modernity and progress, are fundamental to the conversion experience as it is remembered by the faithful, and they serve at least two ends. First, Adventists justify their own existence in the pueblo, as the ones directly or indirectly responsible for the introduction of new practices of home and hygiene. Second, they establish proof of the veracity of their religious beliefs, as their own spiritually based efforts to achieve a better life predated the state's initiatives. It is important to note, however, that Adventists do not aspire to be modern as an end in and of itself, but rather for the purpose of achieving salvation. Adventists believe that the Second Coming is imminent, that Jesus Christ will return to Earth, if not in their own lifetime then certainly in their children's. Altering their household technology by sleeping on a raised bed or eliminating soot from their kitchens in turn helps them to live in better harmony with God and His laws, ultimately preparing themselves, body and soul, for eternal salvation. Tools used to achieve better health and hygiene simultaneously become literal, tangible tools for achieving salvation.

In much the same way that Adventists in Benito Juárez use this narrative of reform to mark themselves as a "modern" pueblo, as a town working to improve and advance itself, they

also use it to create a distinction between themselves and other, less “modern” pueblos. As one member told me:

In the Valley, still to this day, many towns still don't have latrines. Go yourself to some of the homes; they still put their plates on the floor. Go yourself to the Mixe region. Hmm. It's terrible in the Mixe, because everything is on the floor. The Adventist Church is struggling to make things better and to have a different life. We still haven't achieved it, we're still behind, you might say, but we are moving along, improving things, we go day by day.

The Mixe is a region in northeastern Oaxaca, about a four-hour drive from the central valley.

Though I didn't quite make it to the Mixe, as suggested, I did visit a Zapotec town called Yalálag, just bordering the region. I went with a small group of church members from Benito Juárez, to attend a two-day, district wide Adventist meeting. Adventists and other residents of Benito Juárez categorize Yalálag as a “far away place”, more marginalized and *indio* than themselves. People often commented to me that the Zapotec dialect spoken in Yalálag was unintelligible to that of Benito Juárez. The characterization clearly marked it as a place geographically and culturally distant, where people speak a strange dialect and live their lives close to the ground, a place so far away from my companions' own righteous and progressive existence.

My companions had taken care in preparing me for my first visit to this region, telling me about the warm dry air, the persistent biting flies, the strange dialect, and the unique style of tortillas. The Yalálag reunion was held at a local church member's home. The owners were in the process of converting their house from old adobe to modern cement and brick, and the dust from their construction amplified the effects of the dry climate. Guests arrived at a steady pace, and members of the host congregation seated them at a long dining table in the center of the home's large central patio. A set of cooking fires lay on the ground on one side of the patio, churning grey smoke and ash into the air. Women and young girls busied themselves around

these fires, deftly pressing balls of bright yellow dough into enormous tortillas with the palms of their hands. Women used their bare fingers to flip the tortillas over the cooking fires, and then collected the finished ones into brightly embroidered cloth napkins to be served to the diners. From the enclosed kitchen at the other side of the patio, another set of women served hot plates of food and jugs of sticky-sweet *agua limón* (lemonade).

We clustered ourselves at the far end of the table, and were each immediately presented with a dish of rice and tomatoes, a napkin of fresh tortillas, and a bowl of *agua limón*. The spread of food attracted an army of flies, who buzzed greedily among the plates. One of my companions seemed particularly concerned by the flies. He kept watch over the communal tortilla stack, rearranging the napkin when a fellow diner failed to properly replace it. A few minutes into our meal, he raised his bowl of lemonade to his mouth, but then stopped short, and, glancing about to ensure his hosts weren't watching, he twisted himself around and chucked his drink out onto the wall behind him. It was only upon our return home that I learned the motivation for this strange breach of etiquette. "It was so hot," I heard him tell his wife. Then he shuddered and scrunched up his nose, adding, "There were so many flies," one of which landed in his *agua*. The presence of the fly had prompted him to do something I rarely witnessed during my time in the field – he rejected food.

There are other ethnographic examples linking Protestant practice to a heightened sense of and desire for progress in Oaxaca (Gross 2003; McIntyre 2012). As Holly Worthen demonstrates in her study from Yatzachi (Worthen 2012), Protestant missionaries inculcated a strong value for education and personal betterment, which had profound effects on the pueblo-at-large. This orientation toward progress and modernity made the pueblo distinctive in the region. Prominent Mexican anthropologist Julio de la Fuente (de la Fuente 1977) characterized Yatzachi

as a pueblo that viewed “success and progress not as the accumulation of goods (land or animals), but as the acquirement of knowledge – the cultivation of mind” (Worthen 2012:72-73). What’s more, though the influence of the missionaries challenged some key aspects of communal practice as tied to the power of the Catholic Church, it complemented and in some case reshaped other communal practices, particularly those tied to communal land and labor.

Though Adventists in Benito Juárez have not acquired similar access to formal education through their relations with missionaries and in their continued religious practice, they have encouraged a heightened pursuit for personal betterment. They likewise view progress and the attainment of a “better life” through the cultivation of skills and habits – public speaking, critical thinking and leadership (Chapter 3), new knowledge that leads to improved domestic technology and hygiene – rather than the accumulation of goods. And finally, although Adventism has influenced the overall power of the Catholic Church in Benito Juárez by insisting on the separation of church and civic affairs in the *asamblea* (Chapter 2), it has strengthened and reshaped other forms of communality related to citizenship and participation in the civic life of the pueblo (Chapter 3).

Closer to Nature

While Adventists glorify their contributions to the progress and development of their pueblo, they also highly value their proximity to nature. Cleanliness and order may be godly, but living in a forest has its advantages, too. Adventists reflect on the theme of nature through songs, bible study, Sabbath School lessons, and during church services and sermons. The reflections are rooted in Genesis, the first book of the bible, which relates the story of how God created the world, the heavens, the earth, and all the creatures that walk upon it. Children learn

these stories at an early age; nature often appears in age-appropriate ways, through songs, crafts and fables, as a tangible lesson on the unimaginable power of their Creator. Daily home bible study materials also frequently reflect on nature as God’s creation and as a manifestation of his love for humanity.

Take for example a lesson I participated in with my host family, Tío Benito and Tía Margarita, both respected elders in the church. During the warmer months, when the sun shone strong in the clear blue sky, we often sat on a bench in the garden, just outside the kitchen doorway. Below us dipped a small, dense field of *cartucho* – large calla lilies – that were harvested and sold weekly to a regional vendor. Beyond the field, majestic pine trees towered high, guarding the boundary between the mountain pueblo above and the valley below. On this particular day, however, the cold, damp air of the rainy season kept us confined to the kitchen, huddled near the fogón where Tía Margarita prepared our breakfast. Tío Benito carried in his reading glasses and a stack of books – a bible, a book of daily meditations, and a bible study guide – and joined my husband and me at the long wooden table. Tía Margarita stopped her cooking for the moment and arranged a chair by the fogón. After a short prayer, Tío Benito opened his book of meditations and read to us the opening bible passage:

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars
which you set into place – What is man, that you should be mindful of him, or the
son of man that you should care for him? (8 Psalm 3-4)

He continued reading the first paragraph – *There are people who have made the works of God their object of study and admiration* – but then stopped suddenly, as was his habit, to insert his personal reflection on the matter. Glasses off and looking up and away, he spoke to all of us and none of us at the same time. “How does the bee know that there is honey far away?” he asked rhetorically. “Because the queen shows him.” He explained how the queen does a dance with

her wings, and he imitated the motions of the dance with his own hands up at the sides of his body. “And, there are guards at the entrances to the hives, and if one of the bees is lazy and doesn’t return with its honey, they kill it. How does man know this?” He picked up his glasses again and continued reading, “*Unfortunately, many people do these studies based on doubt.*” Tío Benito looked away from his book for a moment, clucked his teeth, and murmured half to himself, “That’s right, they don’t believe.”

Tío Benito fell into a deeper reflection now and, having removed his glasses once again, he told us, “Before, we did what we pleased in the mountains, and we would chop down a tree just to kill a squirrel. Now we don’t do that anymore, because we know that the trees are what absorb the water. It makes you think a lot.” He continued reading from the lesson, which told us that while many people study creation and nature to find reasons to reject God, they lose out on the opportunity to admire God’s work. *Every flower, every leaf, every animal, however wild, testifies to the creative work of God.* Tío Benito paused again to reflect, “What would happen if we didn’t see the flowers? God knows how unsightly that would be.”

Tío Benito continued with the second paragraph, which described the author's visit to Maryland and his wonder at the changing seasons: “*We were pleased in the spring when everything woke from its winter dream, as if revived by the Lord’s breath.*” Tío Benito added, “After the spring when there is rain, everything is green. There are many people who don’t respect this, as if it were easy. One day, those who kill, those who cut down the trees are going to destroy the planet.” He then led us through to the final section of the meditation, which explained that nature is an expression of God’s grace, but it is not a deity in and of itself. Tío Benito stopped one last time, “Many people worship nature. But who made it? God. We should worship God and respect nature.”

This particular meditation, and Tío Benito's own comments on it, reveals a lot about the ways Adventists learn about and practice their place in nature. Nature is God's creation, His gift to humanity, and the essence of His love. Adventists are taught to meditate on God's love for them by contemplating the majesty and mystery of the natural world. Being in nature, among objects that are the embodiment of God's love, brings humans into closer contact with God himself. Being in nature – seeing the stars at night, the waves on the beach, or the song bird in the tree – reminds humans of the divine origins of nature, and of themselves. It also reminds them of their special place in the order of the natural world and of their call to respectfully rule over and make use of it.

Nature is not only a setting within which to experience God's love and majesty. It is also a vehicle for communicating God's plan, and a shelter from the uncertainties of life. For example, an abuelita in her late 80s, whose husband, Sr. Fausto, was the first the convert to Adventism in the early 1950s, spoke to me at length about how knowledge of nature-as-God's-love helped her to mitigate the pressures of religious conflict within the community. In those early years, the townspeople tried to run newly converted families out of town. A young woman came to this abuelita to ask for her advice:

Why are you afraid, I told her, if we are in good hands. If the Lord allows it, then they will kick us out. He knows how it will go. We are secure in the arms of our good God, who made this world, who made the sun appear, who gave us the air that we breathe. These things I understand. I didn't go to school, but I see the trees, I feel the air, I feel the warmth. God made this world, it was good when it came from His hands. Why are you afraid, I told her. Then you are not secure in the things of God.

Seeing the natural world reminded the old woman that God is powerful and that he has a plan for her life. Her faith in God is empirical, rather than intellectual. She was raised in a monolingual Zapotec home, and found the Spanish-language school too challenging and violent (teachers beat

students if they spoke Zapotec) to attend. Today, she is bi-lingual, but illiterate; her trust in God is based on her senses, the things she sees and feels in the natural world that surrounds her mountain home. If God was able to plan for the creation of that natural world, her logic goes, then surely he has a plan for her life, and for the community of followers that live in her village.

This abuelita spoke of nature in poetic and benign terms; other Adventists found similar strength and reassurance of God's plan through nature in its more menacing and hazardous forms. One young man, a third generation Adventist in his early 20s, told me that because he was an Adventist, he was well prepared to weather God's literal and figurative storms. "So, if all of a sudden there is an earthquake or a hurricane or, or some supernatural event," he told me, "it's not news to us. That's the advantage to being the church." Earthquakes, floods, storms, and other natural disasters are considered precursors to the End of Days. While non-Adventists view these events as terrible, Adventists who "know" God's plan understand that these disasters herald the Second Coming of Christ. While they do not take joy in the destruction, Adventists do take comfort in knowing that at the End of Days, they will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

While living in a forested pueblo provides ample opportunity to contemplate the power and glory of God, it also provides the material circumstances with which to live out a good Christian lifestyle. The relationship between pueblo life and healthy living was often raised during sermons and discussions in the Church. For example, in late September 2008, the congregation held a weeklong set of focused reflections on physical health and wellbeing. The event kicked off during Sabbath School, during which time a young college student named Laura gave a sermon to the congregation. Laura attended a college in a town nearby, and returned to the pueblo most weekends to participate in the church services and to attend to her duties as the church's Director of Health. When the time for the sermon came, Laura crossed the cement floor

of the small raised altar, took her place behind a simple wooden podium, and placed her notes on top of its white linen cover. She began her sermon with a surprising fact, “When a human being is born, the body has the capacity to live 120 years. How many of us want to live 120 years?” Though I suspected the question was intended to entice, the abuelita next to me adamantly shook her head no. Her objection went unnoticed, and Laura continued, “We all have the right to live as many years as we can.” To illustrate, she presented us with the details of a study conducted with a group of people living in the Pakistani Himalayas. In this part of the world, Laura explained, people regularly live to be 130-140 years old. She then gave us a list of “secrets”, uncovered by the study, which make this population so much healthier than the average. Despite her initial rejections, the old woman at my side pulled out a scrap of paper from her hymnal and began to take some notes.

The secrets, it turned out, related to the simple, pre-technology lifestyle of these remarkable people from the Himalayas. The air they breathe is pure and fresh, unlike the contaminated air found in developed and advanced countries. “If we go to Oaxaca City,” Laura told us, “sometimes we can see the grey air around the mountains.” Someone in the congregation joked out loud that we should all go to the *mirador*, the old watchtower set on the highest point of the town and a popular destination in the community’s ecotourism project. Laura continued, telling us about the importance of walking in the open air: “We give thanks to God because he gave us such a beautiful place, where there are trees to clean the air.”

The Himalayans spend a lot of time in the sun, which, Laura explained, makes their bones strong, aids in the production of vitamins, in the absorption of calcium, and in attacking certain microorganisms. “It is important that the sun touches us,” she told us. “The book here suggests fifteen minutes a day, perhaps while we are waiting for a bus to go shopping. But that

is in the city. Here we can wash dishes outside, or do other chores in the sun.” The Himalayans also exercised a lot, regularly walking great distances every day to work in their fields. “Here,” Laura scorned, “we have traded in our donkeys for trucks. But in our pueblo, where we have such beautiful trails, there is no excuse for not exercising.” Another benefit of the Himalayans’ limited access to technology was that they slept more: “There is no electricity, no light, no television,” she explained. “When the sun goes down, they go to bed. They get plenty of rest.” Finally, the Himalayans, like in Benito Juárez, live close to their water source and are able to drink lots of fresh water.

Throughout her sermon, Laura built a utopian image of a place where a remarkable group of centenarians live in a pristine environment according to the natural rhythms of the day, unimpeded by the trappings of the modern world. As her story unfolded she took care to construct parallels with her own mountain pueblo and its capacity to cultivate optimal health. As in the Himalayas, there is fresh air, clean water, and a landscape and lifestyle conducive to exercise. In her rendering, Benito Juárez is just pre-modern enough, just far enough away from the modern world, to support a good and godly life.

The following day, a middle-aged woman named Elena spoke on the importance of eating well. At one point, she focused on the benefits of a traditional pueblo diet, as compared to the modern, fast food diet often found in places like the US. “Before, what was the food of our ancestors like?” An abuelita recited a list of foods, “White *atole* (a warm drink made from corn), salsa, potatoes.” Elena continued, “I remember my father’s little ranch in the forest. I think it was like Laura told us yesterday, in that other country, in China? There wasn’t electricity. They would drink *atole* and eat seeds for breakfast, maybe some *guías* (squash blossoms) for lunch. We didn’t know anything about diabetes, or high blood pressure. Here in the pueblo, we have

the opportunity to eat vegetables.” After naming some local vegetables, Elena asked, “How many know about the *mora* herb?” The abuelita next to me nodded her head in recognition, while Elena described that it is a bitter herb that turns sweet after it is boiled.

In this example, the pueblo-in-nature is of special importance because of its access to healthy foods. While some of the foods that Elena discussed are the product of agricultural labor, others, such as hierba mora are gathered in the wild, from natural surroundings. Elena also introduced another theme that was central to Adventists’ understanding of the value of their pueblo-in-the-mountain; that is, the healthy, natural pueblo as the antithesis of a modern, urban lifestyle. Stories in the bible often construct nature in contrast with the built environment. In these stories, God’s heavenly kingdom, where Adventists will spend eternity at the End of Days, is comprised of a city surrounded by flower-laden fields and lush, verdant forests. In this most perfect form, the built and natural environments exist in harmonious complementarity. Outside of this paradise, however, the two environments are in sharp contrast with one-another. While nature (as discussed above) represents God’s power and grace, cities represent the worst of human thought and deed. In nature, people meditate in God’s presence; in cities, they turn their backs on, and even conspire against God. In nature, God’s actions towards humans are benevolent and generous; in the city God retaliates against them with vengeful wrath. The story of the Tower of Babel (12 Gen) illustrates this dichotomy. During the time when the whole world spoke the same language, men settled in a valley and, having learned how to make bricks, decided build a city and a tall tower, and so make a name for themselves. Their social organization and technical skill concerned God; fearing they would no longer heed to his will, he confused their language, and they could no longer communicate with one another. In this story,

the built environment – the tower and the city – is a symbol of human kind’s hubris, the belief that human knowledge and technical skill can overcome the will of God.

Adventists regularly deployed this imagery of the wicked city and the righteous pueblo-in-nature. One man told me about his family’s decision to return back to the pueblo after a short-term migration to Oaxaca City. They found city life was too difficult and too stressful for them. They returned to Benito Juárez after only eight months. We spoke in his home, following an evening service at the church; the service’s leader had spoken about the recent HINI/swine flu epidemic, which was causing great consternation in places like Oaxaca and Mexico City.

Thankfully, God gave us the privilege to return here again, because in some way God told us, ‘Flee to the mountains’. That is, don’t get involved in a place with so much corruption, so much evil, so much disease. And so, thankfully God opened our eyes, he opened our minds to return here again, and be happy here, because here, like they said a little while ago up there in the service, this illness that is coming from the flu (the Swine Flu), well, you don’t see that here.”

The belief in the pueblo as God’s chosen refuge has been further strengthened by a constellation of modern experiences, one of which is the increased rate of migration. Another is the arrival of ecotourism. Most people, regardless of their religious affiliation, recognize that tourists appreciate the quiet, clean air, and abundant foliage of their mountain pueblo, especially compared with the hectic, modern lives residents presume all tourists lead. But Adventists equate tourists’ desire to visit their pueblo as proof of the veracity of the Bible, and the certainty of Christ’s Second Coming. One man told me how it was important to be in nature, to communicate with God and meditate on his power and love. He commented about the loud music that people often play at their houses. “But when the tourists come,” he said, “this isn’t what they want to hear. One day, the bible says, everyone who lives in the city is going to leave for the mountains.”

Through bible study, Adventists are encouraged to objectify nature: nature is a “gift” to humanity; the essence of God’s love; a thing to be respected and cared for; a setting in which to experience God’s plan for humanity and through which God sets in motion the events of the Apocalypse; a material resource with which to achieve healthy Christian living. Compare this to Catholic Zapotec in the Sierra Norte, for whom nature is animate and personified. In his study on agricultural practices (among Catholics) in Talea, Roberto González writes: “[The earth] feels the metal blade of a plow, the burning of swidden plots, and the plucking of its fruits. She is therefore entitled to a portion of what she gives, lest she become angry. This is why even today many Taleans first pour a bit of *mezcal* on the ground before taking a drink. If upset, the earth might capture the soul of a human offender” (González 1998:134). The earth is populated by spirits, as well, each with an essence and the power to act unto itself, capable of inflicting harm or revenge.

Such objectification of nature is not a given outcome of Protestant practice among indigenous people. For some, such as the Q’eqchi’ Maya Protestants in Guatemala, the mountains continue to be inhabited by a pantheon of spirits, who have been known to possess Protestant women, induce trance-like states, and communicate their wishes, such as ordering women to hand grind their corn rather than using motorized mills (Adams 2001). The continued belief in the animate power and subjectivity of the earth and its dwellers may at least in part be a function of denominational affiliation. In her study of Adventists in Madagascar, Eva Keller notes that, while Adventists no longer worship the spirits and supernatural beings of their ancestors, they do not deny their existence. Rather than allowing them legitimate existence in their own right, Adventists perceive them to be the work of Satan, instruments of his mission to mislead and ruin humanity (Keller 2005:176-178).

It is important to note that, while Adventists may learn to experience nature in new ways, their views of nature also reaffirm the value of the pueblo as a place in nature. And this happens in ways that are likewise grounded in some of the most fundamental aspects of the communal experience, namely the role of subsistence agriculture and the networks of reciprocity and material aid that these arrangements support.

Ethnicity, Unity, and the Possibilities for Solidarity

Adventist teachings on unity, salvation, and personal responsibility add another dimension to this complex story of the relationship between Adventist practice and the construction of local identity. These teachings, perhaps more than the ones discussed above, are instructive for understanding the possibilities and limits for building solidarity along the lines of ethnicity and difference.

One Body in Christ

The body figures prominently in the denomination's founding principle of salvation, as well as its teachings on the very nature of God and His relationship to mankind (Douglas 1993; Numbers 1976). Adventists believe that the body is sacred, created in God's own image, and that it is the dwelling place of God's eternal Spirit. When Jesus Christ returns to earth to abolish evil and begin his thousand-year reign of peace, the righteous will be saved, body and soul. Unlike many other Christian traditions that conceptualize the mortal body as distinct from the immortal soul, Adventists consider the two to be fundamentally linked, and both are objects of salvation. Adventists also believe in a personal God who is present in their lives and desires an engaged and enduring relationship with them. There is a direct link between their daily actions and this

relationship to Him. Adventists also profess a doctrine of unity in the body of Christ, which states that all are equal in Christ, and that “distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us⁶⁴.” In this section, I explore how members in Benito Juárez experience this call to equality. Given their experiences as a racialized and marginalized group, narratives on equality are useful sites through which people push back against everyday forms of discrimination while imagining for themselves a world free of inequality and injustice.

In early September 2008, the Bible study guide dedicated a week to exploring the roles women occupy in biblical history. This set of lessons provide a focused reflection on Adventist thinking on difference; or perhaps more aptly, Adventist rejection of difference. For example, the first lesson highlighted the unequal treatment that women experienced under traditional Jewish law, and the efforts made by Jesus to break with these customs. By the end of the lesson, however, the focus was much broader, prompting readers to consider all forms of discrimination. Readers were reminded of the words of the apostle Paul – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (3 Gal 28) – then prompted to reflect on their own experiences with prejudice. The lesson asks, “What kinds of prejudice do you still have against other groups of people? How can you recognize these prejudices? And, more importantly, why should you overcome them?”

While appearing to educate Adventists on the historical marginalization of women in the Bible, the lesson has the effect of both building up and then flattening consciousness around a particular location of difference. Women become interchangeable with all mal-treated groups of

⁶⁴ Belief #14 of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. www.adventist.org Accessed October 2015.

people. Taken as a whole, the week's lessons on women are not necessarily or even primarily meant to raise awareness about the social roles of women, but rather to provide an opportunity to reflect on the value each person has before God and as an active member of the church. The focus is clearly on the undesirability of discriminatory practices, in so far as they impede progress toward the stated ideal, the spiritual perfection of rising above earthly difference. In raising a discussion about difference, the Adventist teaching simultaneously dismantles any opportunity for solidarity building among disadvantaged groups, any opportunity to use that position of difference to build community or empowerment. The text draws a line between the social act of difference and discrimination on the one hand, and the godly act of seeing past difference on the other. The lesson is universal because it addresses people as Adventists, not as women or men, calling them to rise up past the hindrances of their earthly bodies and the forms of discrimination and inequality they inspire. This is not to say that specific forms of difference are inconsequential. The doctrine does not refuse to see difference; it simply denies that those differences matter. The job of the believer is to struggle in the face of such adversity, at times through it or in spite of it, to prepare oneself for the Second Coming and to be judged among the righteous.

Similar to the lesson on gender, in conversations people readily interchanged one form of difference for another. Take for example the following statement from Ángel, a 35 year-old husband and father of two, who grew up in the Adventist church and whose own young family was among the most active in the congregation at the time of my research. During an interview, while discussing the role of women in the church, Ángel told me:

In the church you begin to treat as equal – a woman, a man and a child all have the same value. Because there isn't one person greater than the others, we are all at the same level. Perhaps a child won't have completely developed his mental

ability, but he is a person. And so a child can think about a problem according to his ability. The same thing for an adult.

Ángel is a kind and respectful man – I do not think he was claiming that women are like children. I think, rather, that he has internalized his church's official doctrine that all forms of difference are equal, there is no one difference greater than the other. Hence his easy movement within the frame of equality and difference from talking about women and their right to participate to talking about children, and the ways they are both valued in God's community.

Adventists construct a similar narrative of rejection when discussing ethno-racial differences. They often make vague but intentional reference to the passage from Paul, cited above – that in God there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ. To this, however, they frequently add markers of ethnicity, race and class – *no hay color* (there is no skin color), *no hay alto o bajo* (there is no high or low, referring to both social and physical stature), *todos somos iguales*, we are all the same.

Consider the following conversation with 22 year-old Gabriel, a third generation Adventist and a leader in the church's Youth Association. He is a confident and charismatic speaker and a talented singer. He participates regularly in regional programs for Adventist youth, and those experiences often ground his strikingly mature perspective on matters of faith and religion. During our interview, I asked Gabriel to reflect on his own identity. After rejecting "indigenous" as a term of lost custom and marginality, Gabriel settled on "Adventist",

Lori Klivak: So, you could say that you identify more with your religion?

Gabriel: Ah, yeah, maybe that would be easier, because within the church there is no color, there is no size, there isn't anything. That's how I identify myself.

LK: Mhmm, there's no size-

G: There's no stature.

The reference to size and stature is instructive. Within the racial geography of Mexico, oaxaqueños are classified as “short”, and diminutive terms such as *chaparritos* (“short little people”) or *oaxaquitos* (“little oaxacans”) are often employed to distinguish and insult. Gabriel’s inclusion of this marker of difference made the Adventist doctrine of unity relevant in his own life in a personal and physical way, and gave voice, however subtly and transiently, to his own experiences with discrimination. He then drew on his involvement in the regional Youth Association to explain the church’s ideal vision of identity:

For example, in the events that we have, there’s a group from the Dominican Republic, where some have darker skin than we do. There they are practically considered black. But it would have to be someone, you might say someone who had a different vision, who would call them “black”, maybe, I don’t know, as a way of creating difference. But knowing that those of us in the church don’t perceive difference, there is no difference, and so they feel okay.

There is something subtle in Gabriel’s construction of equality that seems to move beyond official doctrine. It is something that was also echoed in conversations I had with other Adventists, and particularly when our conversations began to edge around personal experiences with discrimination. As the Church states it, difference should not be divisive; the church does not claim that differences don’t exist, and it often uses examples of difference as teachable moments. As the doctrine is remembered and enacted by believers, however, it is cast slightly differently – that, within the Church, people don’t even *see* those differences. It is like an act of imagining another earthly experience with another social order, one in which there is no race, no skin color, no difference, and all are one in Christ.

My attempts to encourage Adventists to think through experiences of discrimination in their own lives were often thwarted by this construction of equality. People did not wish to reproduce those experiences for me, but rather to focus on their own ability to overcome

difference, as Gabriel did above. When I asked people whether they had ever experienced discrimination on account of being from a pueblo, they often told me there were no grounds for such treatment, that we all have the same blood in our veins. While I never believed that people did not experience discrimination, I accepted their use of religious doctrine to reconstruct the social order.

However much Adventists may have refused to dwell on it, they did experience regular discrimination in their everyday lives on account of their ethno-racial status. Interestingly, it was often out of these tidy narratives of equality that opportunities arose to give voice to actual experiences of discrimination; even as it was practiced within the church itself. During one morning Bible study with my host family, we discussed the time the apostle Peter did not want to eat with uncircumcised men, believing it to be a violation of Mosaic law (Acts 11). We were then asked to reflect on times in our own lives when we do not want to associate with “certain people”, not only in our social lives, but in the church itself. Tío Benito, my host and an anciano in the church, told us:

It's true. For example, there are people in the city who are well dressed, who are prepared, who have studied a lot and preach. And when they meet someone humble, a peasant who is also going to preach, they look down on them, thinking they can't do it as well.

Tío Benito has been a member of the Adventist church for more than forty years. He has traveled throughout the state to evangelize and to represent his congregation at regional meetings. No doubt he has rubbed elbows with many smooth-talking, well-dressed, urban Adventists during his travels, and has seen and experienced for himself the contemptuous and dismissive looks he referred to during our study session. The Bible lesson provides Tío the opportunity to give voice to a negative experience, while at the same time reaffirming his value

as a person in Christ and reminding him to strive to move his own spiritual and physical self beyond such negativity and discrimination.

The End of Days and the Role of Social Justice

This doctrine of equality is consistent with the Church's position on social justice. Adventism is a premillennial religion, which means it believes that Christ's Second Coming will initiate a thousand year reign of peace, or the "millennium". In the Adventist view, the elimination of social injustices, such as poverty or racism, is not a precondition to the Second Coming. By comparison, postmillennial groups such as Baptists believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth only after humans themselves have achieved a thousand years of peace and justice. For Adventists, the hope for social reform, including an end to discrimination, rests in the "thereafter", not the "here and now". As Doug Morgan explains, "the hope of the world lies not in social reform, but in Christ alone. It stresses what God will do, not what we have accomplished" (1990:19).

Adventists are not called to rise up and fight against injustice. God alone is the final judge, the ultimate authority, who will decide the fates of those who commit evils in this world. The call to action is a much quieter one; rather than upending structural injustices, Adventists are instructed to share their blessings with the world through service and mission work, including a focus on health care and education. When Adventists do engage in acts of humanitarianism, they strive to reach individuals, spreading the message of salvation and redemption. Adventists believe that both the body and the soul are objects of redemption (as opposed to body being perishable but the soul immortal). Thus, the focus on vegetarianism and temperance, of caring for one's body. "Adventist theology accepts the position that redemption includes man as a

whole. Because of that, the redemption and transformation of the body is an integral part of the divine work of salvation” (Viera-Rossano 1993:376). Thus, missionary work aims to improve the physical and spiritual well being of communities and individuals. Historically, the worldwide Adventist church has taken the clear position that ending social injustice and inequality is not its priority. When the church has worked to affect systemic change – temperance, for example, or in development work through the Adventist Development Relief Agency – it has been for the purpose of achieving these principals of healthy body, mind and soul.

Adventists did take a strong stand to denounce slavery in the US in the mid-1800s. Ellen White, the prophetess whose visions and writings largely spurred the Adventist movement, wrote that the laws of men cannot conflict with the laws of God, namely the divine law that all are created equal. Even in such a case, however, their call was not to rebellion or aggressive social action. God alone is the final judge, the ultimate authority, who will decide the fates of those who commit social evils in this world (Viera-Rossano 1993:370). Even still, Adventists are not to sit and wait, arms crossed, for Christ’s coming; rather, they are called to serve humanity, to “share the blessings of the Kingdom of God here and now in the form of health, education, social improvement and the general betterment of society” (Viera-Rossano 1993:376).

In Benito Juárez, Adventists’ approach to issues of inequality, injustice, and persecution closely followed these “official” lines. Sermons, readings, and discussions during bible study and formal worship often reflected on themes of suffering, devastation, and persecution (usually religious persecution waged against Adventists). But the discussions always circled back to the End of Days, and the belief that hunger, violence, destruction from climate change are all signs

from God that the end is nigh. The responsibility of the believer is to prepare her or himself for the Second Coming, as well as to share the knowledge about achieving Salvation with the world.

Once during my stay in Benito Juárez, a man from Oaxaca whose family was originally from the pueblo came to visit the church to lead an afternoon of song and worship. In between songs, he shared what he had heard about environmental changes in the pueblo and its forests. “They say that the trees are plagued, that the potatoes won’t grow because the earth is contaminated. God made everything perfect, but we have changed things. We don’t have much time left, because Christ is coming soon, all the signs are pointing to it. We have to share the Word of God with our community.” This singer interpreted environmental change as having been caused by human hands. The Adventists’ job was not to rally around the cause of conservation or reforestation, but to evangelize and be living models of the life of Christ. And, rather than pointing to any condition of marginalization that makes people in the pueblo more susceptible to environmental injustice, the singer accepted these changes as the march of time, the fate of humanity, the path to Christ. All suffering is constructed this way; as the regional pastor once told me, blindness, death, even the pain of childbirth, they are all conditions of being human, and are all precursors to salvation.

Conclusion

In his analysis of the rise of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America, Alan Sandstrom (Sandstrom 2001) posits that being a *hermano*, a Protestant, has become a kind of “third ethnicity”, an alternative identity to Indian or mestizo, and one that further fragments Mesoamerican communities (Samson 2007:133). I also found that Adventist teachings on unity and salvation likewise show that Protestantism encourages an identity-orientation beyond the

local and along other-than ethno-racial lines – the “Adventists”, “American”, and “Oaxaqueño” . Adventists reject attempts to classify themselves as bound by difference, they aspire to their church’s doctrine of unity, and they identify deeply with cosmopolitan, post-ethnic, and celestial kinds of belonging.

But it is a complex picture, and I’m not convinced that my data quite bears out Sandstrom’s theory. Remember that a majority of Adventists identified as “serrano” or “zapoteco”, identities that have clear local, communal, and ancestral connotations. Being Adventist in Benito Juárez does not preclude local attachment, but it does reshape it, adding new meanings to the ways people organize a home, for example, or relate to nature. Adventists see the pueblo as highly valuable precisely because it supports their attempts to lead healthy Christian lifestyles, outside the trappings of the modern world. This narrative is saturated with a sense of tradition – the foods their ancestors ate, the daily routines they kept, the clean air they breathed. The scarcity of “indígenas” in my survey – particularly as compared with people who have participated in ecotourism – is perhaps most indicative of the impact of Adventist teachings and practice, as it speaks to the ways membership discourages people from connecting to politically oriented forms of identity.

Andrea Althoff found similar dynamics among Maya Pentecostals in Guatemala (Althoff 2014). While official Pentecostal discourse emphasizes spirituality over political action in ways that disguises actually existing ethnic divides in the region, on the ground Pentecostalism empowers Mayan ethnicity, albeit in indirect ways. The churches Althoff studied are ethnically homogenous, and as such they “provide the flock with non-discriminatory spaces in which members can build their own organizational structures and are able to link biblical self-interpretations with their cultural background” (Althoff 2014:364). However, while

Pentecostalism does foster a strong sense of Mayan ethnicity, these remain locally oriented identities that do not translate into political action.

C. Mathews Samson found a more varied situation among Maya Presbyterians in Guatemala (2007). Like Althoff, Samson argues that Presbyterianism offers both continuity – as community is endowed with new and strengthened meanings – as well as rupture.

Evangelicalism “represents a reconfiguration of the notion of community in the direction of another horizon of interest” (21). He continues that this horizon:

links adherents to the evangelical faith in a new community of *hermanos y hermanas* (brothers and sisters) who have their eyes focused on a more universal frame of reference involving spiritual goods and resources that originate in other contexts and simultaneously integrate people spiritually into a community transcending boundaries of ethnicity, language, and geography, embracing all those with similar beliefs. (Samson 2007:21)

Samson’s findings differ from Althoffs, and my own, however, in the extent to which Protestantism can encourage political action. Samson studied two regions, both afflicted with violence and repression, both with influential Presbyteries, but only in one pueblo did an activist evangelical agenda and identity emerge, at least in part related to the ways ministers reached out to international networks to respond to instances of violence.

All of which speaks to the complex ways religious change not only affects local identities, but also variously encourages or precludes political action. For Adventists in Benito Juárez, the strengths and weaknesses of local vs. non-local identities have a lot to do with the ways they understand progress and a better life, and the ways they understand themselves to be “more developed” than their non-Adventist neighbors. Adventists have constructed a sense of themselves as uniquely responsible for the level of progress achieved in the pueblo – this includes the influences of their doctrine on clean living, their commitment to refraining from drinking alcohol, and as discussed in the previous chapter, the high value they place on self-

reflection and personal betterment. While this social history reinforces the value of local identity, the spiritual motivation to improve the material and cultural life of the pueblo is the same one that compels Adventists to think of themselves as beyond the limits of ethno-racial difference. Hence, I believe, the weak association among Adventists with the label indígena. By comparison, participants in community-based ecotourism, for whom local identity markers are equally salient, are significantly more likely to self-identify as indígena as well, a label with broader ethnic, if not political connotations. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, this increased resonance with indígena is likely related to a number of dynamics unique to the ecotourism experience, including the intimate experience of playing host to the world's leisure travelers, a more intense experience with state-sponsored development, and the economic nature of hospitality, all of which may increase exposure to and positive experiences with ethnic labels.

Chapter 5 - Zapotec Hospitality

Introduction

Early in my fieldwork, I stopped in to visit Lucía in the two-room adobe house she shared with her daughter and young grandson. It was mid-morning, and Lucía was making tortillas, a ritual she, like the majority of women in her town, performed several times a week. Lucía skillfully alternated her attention between flattening *masa* dough in the square metal press and carefully rotating tortillas on the hot clay griddle. A finished stack of warm, blue tortillas sat on a colorful hand-embroidered *servilleta* on the table beside her. As I made myself comfortable in a nearby chair, Lucía retrieved a hot tortilla from the stove and offered it to me. Without thinking much of it – I had just eaten a very large breakfast, and wasn't feeling the least bit hungry – I casually refused, barely raising my eyes to meet hers, and reached instead for my notebook and pencil. Lucía stopped, arrested only for a moment by my nonchalance (truthfully, I was too busy thumbing through my notebook to pay much attention), before the blank look of practiced repetition returned and she continued to work on her tortillas. I realized my error too late. I hadn't yet developed an appreciation for a fresh-from-the-griddle tortilla, simply adorned with a sprinkle of salt or a dab of spicy salsa, itself patiently ground in a worn stone mortar. Lucía was unselfconsciously proud of this tortilla, the food she had been preparing for decades for her family and was now offering to me, her guest, a relative stranger in her home, a tourist and student from the US. This perfect tortilla, a food that would sustain, perhaps even delight and impress me, and I wasn't the least bit interested.

Had I accepted the tortilla, I would have sent a very powerful message to Lucía: as a guest in her home, I valued and would adhere to her codes of conduct and ways of being in the world. By accepting her simple act of hospitality, I would have conferred a measure of status

and authority to her and her household; especially so considering my privilege as a white woman from the US whose economic and political capital allowed me access to advanced study and legitimate travel. Instead, my refusal called into question the worthiness and trustworthiness of her food. In that moment, I was not only ungenerous with my appetite, but with my ability to bestow honor and respect, as well. Rather than strengthening and confirming our growing friendship, my transgression unsteadied a little the grounds upon which our connection was being built, casting me instead as an unknown and, by extension, potentially dangerous stranger.

Hospitality is fraught with these kinds of productive tensions, where encounters between strangers take place on the “knife-edge between suspicion and trust” (Candea and Da Col 2012:5). It is unstable ground – sometimes empowering, enjoyable, and enlightening, while other times fraught with transgression, fear, and danger. Despite the ambiguities inherent in these encounters, many people in Latuvi seek to have relations with tourists and tourism, and residents often derive a great deal of satisfaction from their participation in community-based ecotourism. This chapter explores these conditions of hospitality, as Zapotec people play host to the world.

The first part of this chapter explores the literature on hospitality, with attention paid to the structuring and transformative nature of hosting, the unevenness of encounters between strangers in an increasingly mobile world, and the tensions inherent in the commercialization of hospitality. The second section explains some of the general work of hosting in Latuvi, as it is done by residents who work formally for tourism as well as those who experience tourism encounters through their everyday activities in the pueblo. The final three sections explore in detail the cultural and moral frameworks through which latuvenses approach tourism, tourists, and the work of hosting as they attempt to bring meaning to their social relations with the

strangers who arrive at their doorsteps. I examine the social rituals and institutions through which residents approach the work of hosting; the notions of exchange and balanced reciprocity that guide residents' face-to-face interactions with tourists; and the ideas about correct behavior and activity that lead to conflict and transgression. I conclude with a discussion of the possibilities and limits of community-based ecotourism as a strategy for positive social change as seen through the lens of hospitality.

Understanding Hospitality

The moral obligation to host is historically deep and culturally widespread⁶⁵. Acts of hospitality are governed by culturally-based codes that regulate encounters between hosts and guests: how to serve and accept food, what will be offered, the parts of the home the guest will have access to, the activities of the guest, and so on. As cultural practices, the meanings of hospitable acts are deep and diverse, and hospitality is implicated in a range of social activities. It touches on issues of kinship and belonging, on the sustenance and coerciveness of food, on the rights and regulations of personhood, on divinity and danger, on power and consent. It is a phenomenon with implications across a variety of scales, from interpersonal relations within and between homes, to contacts between humans and the supernatural, to citizenship and definitions of belonging within and across nation-states.

In this section, I discuss the nature and function of hospitality. Practices of hosting and being hosted are structuring events, with the power to create alliances, confer status, and confirm identity. At the same time, moments of hospitality are laden with mystery and danger, and encounters between hosts and guests have the potential to unsettle or undo social arrangements.

⁶⁵ For a review of the literature on hospitality in anthropology, see Candea and Da Col (2012).

Hospitality works within the tension created by these two extremes. Increasingly, discourses and practices of hospitality bring meaning to encounters between strangers in a globalized world fraught with uneven mobilities.

Affirmation, Transgression, and Ambivalence

In his review on anthropology's contribution to the study of hospitality⁶⁶, Selwyn (2000) claims the main function of hospitality is to affirm, regenerate, or transform social relationships. Hospitality, he states, is second only to marriage in its ability to grow, reproduce and renew society. Selwyn provides a number ethnographic examples to illustrate this point: hunter-gatherer bands that are formed around the offering of food (Tanaka 1980; Woodburn 1968); feasting systems in Papua New Guinea that consolidate and affirm alliances between groups (Chagnon 1992; Strathern 1984); peaceful relations among pastoralists that are worked out through acts and networks of hospitality (Gluckman 1973); acts of hospitality that create political alliances and allegiances between patrons and clients in central India (Mayer 1960). Selwyn concludes that the act of hosting and being hosted converts "strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends into better friends, outsiders into insiders, non-kin into kin" (2000:19).

In addition to their potential for forging alliances and affiliations, successful acts of hospitality can also generate and confirm honor and status. "Good" guests defer to the codes of the host, and in so doing, they affirm the moral authority of the host household. Derrida writes that acts of hospitality depend on this premise, "that the Other is welcome to the extent that he adjusts to the *chez soi*, to the home, ...that he respects the order of the house" (2000:97-98;

⁶⁶ In the context of tourism studies writ-large, research on hospitality tends to be dominated by economic-, business-, and service-minded perspectives.

quoted in Molz and Gibson 2007a:12). Status and authority may be contextual, or they may be transferred to other realms of social life outside the moments of hosting.

Selwyn (2000:27-28) illustrates this give and take through a discussion of Mary Douglas's seminal work on Jewish food laws (Douglas 1970). Jewish food laws are concerned with creating groups of acceptable and unacceptable food. Likewise, the act of sharing "acceptable" foods creates acceptable groups of people: proper Jews eat acceptable foods. In this way, sharing food affirms a common identity, binding hosts to guests, to their families, and to the wider community who share the same code. Guests who do not share the code (non-Jews) are welcome to the table so long as they agree to accept the food rules, and therefore symbolically accept the (situational) moral authority of the host. All acts of hospitality possess this same potential – to create group boundaries and to produce, define and affirm the status of the host.

Hospitality is also riddled with ironies and inconsistencies, and many elements of the encounter beg their opposites. Hospitality calls into play both suspicion and trust, and guest and the host are ultimately at each other's mercy (Candea and Da Col 2012:5)⁶⁷. This is true, for example, depending on the nature of the guest, and particularly when the guest is a stranger. Often, strangers are made welcome, to the extent that their incongruity and mystery echoes the "presence of the divine" (Candea and Da Col 2012:6; see also Pitt-Rivers 1968:20). Ancient Greeks, for example, believed that strangers were accompanied by Zeus, and therefore themselves touched by divinity (Harcort 1952)⁶⁸. In such cases, by pleasing a guest the host

⁶⁷ Here, Candea and da Col claim that the guest is at the mercy of the host, but it seems to me to work both ways.

⁶⁸ In ancient Greek texts, the word *xenos* (guest-friend, host, stranger, foreigner) was used to capture the ambiguity of the traveler as stranger to be welcomed in the spirit of friendship.

secures divine favors and creates bonds outside the domestic sphere (Candea and Da Col 2012:7). On the other hand, the stranger can pose a danger to the host (Candea and Da Col 2012:13): one may be obligated to play unwilling host to ghosts (Delaplace 2012); run the risk of attracting unwelcome ghosts with the generous hospitality extended to a welcome guest (Humphrey 2012); or induce soul-loss as a result of accepting the invitations of a supernatural being (Viveiros de Castro 2012).

And so, just as hospitality can lend itself to positive encounters, it may also lead to acts of hostility and transgression (Selwyn 2000:20). This may, as just discussed, depend on the nature and willingness of the guest or the host. Or, it may depend on the material dimensions present in spaces of hosting. Hospitality is deeply sensual – the smells of food, the use of perfume, visual markers, sound, warmth, and light/darkness all heighten and even define the experience of hospitality (Andrews, et al. 2007). Following Ortner’s own insights into the coercive nature of food (1978), Candea and da Col conclude that food itself is a manipulating substance, “capable of reducing or enhancing the distance between the parties involved” (2012:9). For example, alcohol, which possesses both liberating and polluting properties, can create closeness or distance, intimacy or offense (Humphrey 2012). Finally, hospitality’s relationship to transgression and excess may depend on the tensions inherent in the commercial domain, where the purchasing of hospitality allows guests freedoms undreamed of in the domestic sphere (Lashley 2000:12). (I return to the theme of hospitality and commercialization below.)

The symbolic and structural work of hospitality is possible precisely because of these contradictions. Julian Pitt-Rivers, responsible for one of the first attempts to define the nature and function of hospitality, has written that “the law of hospitality is founded on ambivalence” (1977:107). Acts of hospitality require the actors involved to hold all the potentials and

possibilities – the affirmations and negations of honor, the blessings and dangers of the guest, the sustenance and excess of food and drink, and so on – in balance at the same time.

Strange Encounters, Scale-Shifting, and the Meanings of Hospitality in the Modern World

Much of the above-cited work on hospitality is concerned with the host-guest relationship as it exists between people who, generally speaking, occupy similar cultural space. Hosts and guests, it might be said, are “known unknowns”. Recent work on hospitality draws out some of these essential characteristics of hosting (and “guesting”) to consider the peculiarities and asymmetries of relations between groups of people who occupy very different cultural spaces and places in the modern world.

In their introduction to their edited volume “Mobilizing Hospitality” (2007b), Jennie Germann Molz and Sarah Gibson explore the ways that discourses and practices of hospitality are evoked in a range of modern mobilities, from globalization and tourism to migration and asylum. They seek to reflect critically on the “ethical implications, including the limits and possibilities, of social relations between people in an increasingly mobile and globalized world” (2007a:1). Mobility, they argue, is one of the hallmarks of the modern age. Given the pervasiveness of digital technologies, even those who do not travel can be “imaginatively or virtually mobilized” by the Internet and other forms of communication (see also Bauman 1998; Morley 2000; Tomlinson 1999; Urry 2000). At the same time, communities are “internally globalized” and “cosmopolitanized” by tourism and migration (see Beck 2000; Massey 1994). Such diverse forms of travel and movement-in-place make social life a series of ‘strange encounters’ (Ahmed 2000), bringing the “provocative dilemma of hospitality – how do we welcome the stranger? – urgently back to centre stage” (Molz and Gibson 2007a:2).

In a modern world of hyper-mobility and strange encounters, hospitality is often deployed as a “scale-shifting” metaphor, where the language of hospitality connects the home to other levels of social organization, such as the larger community or the nation-state (Candea and Da Col 2012:14-15), and expectations for domestic hospitality guide the treatment of tourists (Herzfeld 1987), migrants (Molz and Gibson 2007a:8-10), spacecraft (Battaglia 2012), and even disease-carrying insects (Kelly 2012). Of particular importance to this chapter is Michael Herzfeld’s observation that the ambiguous and scale-shifting nature of hospitality “allows skilled social actors to draw sometimes unexpected degrees of agency from the irony that ritualistic manners and affectations of intimacy both make possible” (Herzfeld 2012:210). In his own research on Greek tourism (Herzfeld 1987), Herzfeld finds that European travelers are often portrayed as being dependent on the generosity of their Greek hosts. Such depictions allow Greeks to discursively subvert their own status vis-à-vis their more powerful European neighbors, a move Herzfeld refers to as the “moral englobing of political asymmetry” (86).

This chapter reflects similar concerns, as I examine the implications, limits and possibilities of encounters between strangers in the context of community-based ecotourism. This is particularly apt given the context within which Latuvi and its neighbors have agreed to play host to the world’s tourists. In Santa Marta Latuvi, community-based ecotourism is often equated with economic development. Residents understand the project in terms of its potential to provide income to families and revenue to the town, modest gains that many hope will help stay the tide of migration. For these residents, community-based ecotourism’s other goals – cultural revitalization and environmental conservation – are secondary, though usually still present, concerns. The primary justification for playing host to the world’s tourists is the need to strengthen the local economy and increase the availability of waged activities. Residents want to

help their neighbors and kin stay put, to provide for their families by working where they are, rather than moving themselves to distant places in pursuit of a livelihood. Through tourism, they hope to protect their loved ones from the often dangerous and unjust conditions of migrant labor.

The decision to play host is a direct response to latuvenses complex experience with mobility, beginning with colonization and continuing with contemporary patterns of migration. So that their kin and neighbors may quit their travels, they have welcomed strangers to their homes, agreeing to feed, shelter and entertain those who travel for leisure, rather than for labor. This is the irony of hospitality in community-based ecotourism, that the antidote to one kind of mobility is the welcoming of another. For as guest workers, latuvenses regularly find themselves in dangerous and unjust situations, but as hosts they are promised respect, stability, and a measure of equality, thus flipping prevailing geospatial power asymmetries, if only for a moment. Hospitality is rife with this type of productive tension, with the ability to reverse, reinvent, and transform social relations.

In this chapter, I draw on the above insights to consider the ways residents engage with community-based ecotourism. Heeding Bianchi's call for a nuanced examination of the relationship between tourism, political economy, and place (2003), I am interested in the ways acts of hospitality become opportunities for locals to create new knowledge about and relationships with the people and objects of global capitalism, while firmly rooting those engagements in the framework of everyday life. At the same time I use the lens of hospitality as a "diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod 1990), a setting through which strangers – guests and especially hosts – learn something about themselves and each other and about broader relations of power in a mobile world. The categorization of strangers, attempts to create or collapse difference through the medium of food, reactions to transgression and excess, and the

construction of a moral economy of tourism are all central to the experience of being a host community.

Hospitality and the Morality of Exchange

Before moving to the ethnography of hospitality in Latuvi, I want to briefly consider the question of hospitality and commercialization. Most people I spoke with in Latuvi believe that community-based ecotourism is good for their pueblo. At first blush, this acceptance appears to be a simple question of profit motivation: two-thirds of residents cited economic gain – wages for families and revenue for the town – as the most important benefit of the ecotourism project in Latuvi. The literature on tourism corroborates this perspective, and economic gain is regularly cited as the dominant justification for tourism development around the world (Gmelch 2012; Smith and Brent 2001). Similarly, in Oaxaca, representatives from government funding agencies frequently told me that improved local economies drove their desire to develop community-based ecotourism throughout the state.

For much of the history of tourism studies, scholars have cast a negative light on the question of profit motivation and the commercializing effects of tourism development. MacCannell's seminal work on tourism's relationship to modernity and tradition (MacCannell 1999) proliferated anxieties over authenticity and cultural invention in the tourism setting. The commonplace assumption has been that host communities' desire for economic gain necessarily dominates tourism relations, leading to the corruption and eventual disappearance of distinctively local places and cultures (Greenwood 1977; Trask 2001).

Yet economic anthropologists have for some time recognized that the introduction of money does not necessarily trump other culturally embedded values that regulate exchange

(Parry and Bloch 1989). For their part, tourism scholars are increasingly exploring the non-monetized dimensions of commercialized exchange in the tourism setting. For example, Adam Kaul (2010) found that musicians in County Clare, Ireland continue to rely on traditional strategies of seniority and communalism to organize music sessions, despite being paid to perform for tourists in pubs where such performances were previously not remunerated. In the more specific context of hospitality, where the symbols of generosity and altruism rule, tensions can arise in the monetized and non-monetized dimensions of host-guest relations. As Lashley (2000:14) points out, travelers may make assumptions about the nature of the tourism relationship based on their own market-oriented perspectives – presuming for example that the exchange of money for services marks the end of the exchange – while hosts, for their part, may approach the arrangement with a sense of reciprocity that links acts of hospitality to other arenas of social life. Similarly, Selwyn (2000:35) notes that the rules and principles of hospitality stand at one remove from the principles and procedures of the market place, and he warns against erasing the analytical line between culturally grounded acts of hospitality on the one hand and pure market exchange on the other.

Latuvi's community-based ecotourism project is an excellent setting for exploring these dimensions of monetized and non-monetized exchange in tourism. Especially so considering latuvenses assertion that economic gain is the primary benefit of the project, a perception which appears to contradict ecotourism's actual economic impact in the pueblo. To the best of my calculating, during the first 10 years of the project, only about 7% of latuvenses actually earned wages from tourism, and most of these people worked only infrequently or at most part-time⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ During my research, four people – one coordinator, one housekeeper, and two guides – were serving full-time positions; these people were appointed by the *asamblea*, they carried out the day-to-day operations of the project,

And although some of the revenue generated was given to the town for public works or to help fund fiestas, most of the profit – in years when a profit was made – was reinvested back into the project. And so, despite the chorus of voices assuring me that improved economics justifies the existence of ecotourism, something additional had to be motivating latuvenses to welcome the world's leisure travelers and adventure seekers to their pueblo.

This is not to minimize the economic value of ecotourism in Latuvi; in a town with limited opportunities for waged labor, any chance to earn a few pesos counts for a lot. It seems unlikely, however, that economic impact alone is sufficient to explain townspeople's awareness of or sensitivity to tourism. Rather, there are a number of everyday activities through which community members approach tourism relations, both in dealings with their fellow townspeople and with the travelers they welcome to their pueblo. These activities are embedded in non-tourism arenas of social life that are regulated by non-monetized forms of exchange. At times, the introduction of money complicates these locally salient exchange practices, while at other times it is completely beside the point⁷⁰.

and they were paid for their work. Two families owned and operated comedores in the center of town, while two other families ran trout farms on the outskirts of the pueblo. In each of these restaurants, two family members managed the majority of the work, with other family members lending support as needed. Another group of people provided services to guests on a much more irregular basis. This included people who were hired to guide hikes, loan horses to tourists, clean the cabañas, work in the comedores, give food demonstrations, perform healing rituals, and accommodate tourists in their homes. Between 1999 and 2008, approximately 30 people participated in tourism on a daily basis (comedor/trout farm owners, guides, coordinators, and housekeepers), 15 of whom served unpaid cargos. Another 15-20 people worked part-time or less; this does not include the handful of families who sold produce and other goods to the restaurants, or storeowners who benefited from the presence of tourists. All told, during the first ten years of the project, around 7% of Latuvi's population received any kind of income from tourism, and for most of those people the income was occasional and irregular.

⁷⁰ As Stephen (2005:51) warns, I do not wish to romanticize exchange practices in Latuvi. Though they are outside monetary exchange, power and self-interest are still present; as survival strategies, non-monetized exchange can and does result in the accumulation of prestige and influence.

A Welcoming Pueblo

A Promise of Welcome

The main office of Expediciones Sierra Norte – the community-owned travel agency located in the city of Oaxaca that coordinates ecotourism in Pueblos Mancomunados – is abundantly decorated with colorful posters and glossy photos advertising the cultural, natural, and gastronomic adventures awaiting tourists. One prominent photo shows a tourist riding a bicycle on a dirt road surrounded by fields. The tourist has stopped riding for a moment in order to greet (or be greeted by) an elderly campesino with whom he has crossed paths. In another photo, three latuvenses are returning from their fields: a man leading a donkey, its saddle hung with bulging sacks, a woman with her arms full of long-stemmed flowers, and an elderly woman walking behind. Smaller photos show off a variety of plants found in the forests of el mancomún, orchids and cacti. A series of large posters hang from high on the walls, each dedicated to the offerings of one town or another. Key images repeat themselves throughout these posters: waterfalls and streams, plates of food and bowls of hot drinks, horses and bikes for riding, bowls of local fruit, tourism cabañas, and jewel-toned sunsets touching down on mountain vistas. Together, the images evoke simultaneous tones of adventure and relaxation: mountain bikes and hazy sunsets, zip-lines and tranquil streams. They also evoke feelings of distance and proximity, difference and familiarity: subsistence agriculturalists of simple means and warm smiles, living and working in rural settings in the foregrounds of open dirt roads and forested vistas, beckoning modern globetrotters with plates of hot food, bowls of fresh fruit, and beds turned down for the night.



Figure 13 The anthropologist's husband with a latuense woman in her plum orchard, posing for a promotional photo for a photographer from SECTUR, April 2009

Home and nature are central to community-based ecotourism in Latuvi. Images of adobe cabañas and food-laden tables, of forest trails and harvest-ready fields, are used in promotional materials to attract the attention of travelers and welcome them to the pueblo. Home and nature are also the settings where tourists spend the majority of their time interacting with their Zapotec hosts, eating and sleeping in homes or home-like settings, and making excursions into the forest. In this section, I discuss the kinds of hospitality offered to tourists in Latuvi and the settings in which this hospitality takes place. I also consider the ways in which residents attempt to make strangers feel “at home” in the pueblo, and connect these to everyday forms of welcoming practiced by townspeople in non-tourism contexts.

Where Hospitality Happens

Ecotourists are, by definition, interested in spending time in nature. Because Latuvi is surrounded by forest, arriving in the pueblo itself can define a visit, satisfying the desire to be “in nature”. Many tourists, however, wish to deepen their contact with the natural world and choose to make some kind of an excursion into the forest. International tourists tend to prefer day-long

hikes along the network of trails that connect the pueblos of el mancomún, while domestic tourists, generally arriving in their cars, drive to accessible points of interest such as waterfalls, watch towers, or trout farms. Tourists also have the option to ride on horseback or bicycle, though hiking and driving are the most popular forms of transportation.

Despite the focus on being in the forest, much of the job of hosting ecotourists takes place in the pueblo proper. Occasionally, this happens in the private homes of individual residents. Tourists may spend an afternoon in a kitchen learning how to make bread, tortillas, or fruit preserves. They may visit the home of a *pulque* maker, who will offer a taste of this lightly fermented drink while explaining how he made it from the nectar of the maguey plant. They may be taken to the home of a *curandera* for a massage and traditional sweat bath. Tourists can also request a homestay, to receive food and lodging from a local family, and generally spend some time learning about life and work in the village.

More often, however, the day-to-day work of hospitality happens in tourist cabañas and *comedores* (restaurants), in spaces specifically designated for tourists and run by residents with some skill and expertise in hosting (see Chapter 6). To accommodate tourists, Latuvi has built eight cabañas and one dormitory-style hostel in the center of town, for a total of 53 beds. There are two small privately owned comedores in the center of town, each operated out of the owners' homes, which serve popular local dishes while catering to tourists' often-sensitive tummies. There are also two privately owned trout farms located in different barrios outside the town-center. Tourists hiking to town often stop for a plate of *trucha empapelada* (trout cooked in a foil packet) before completing the final 30-minute uphill trek to the cabañas. For many tourists

arriving by car from the valley, the trout farm can be the main destination, and families will make the journey as part of a relaxing day in the country⁷¹.

Latuvi's tourist cabañas have been built in the image of a traditional Zapotec home, complete with adobe brick walls and red clay tiled roofs. As the construction of these cabañas was supported through government funds – primarily from SECTUR and CDI – their design is relatively standardized, and more or less identical tourist cabañas appear in ecotourism communities throughout the Sierra Juárez. Though they are built in the *style* of vernacular houses, their form represents an idealized “traditional” home and, perhaps not surprisingly, they share little in common with real homes in the pueblo. They are devoid of most of the technologies of a functioning home: there are no metates for grinding or fogones for cooking; there are no chicken coops or vegetable gardens outside. Instead, they are built for leisure, with a degree of luxury in mind, and as such contain a number of items not found in everyday homes: chimineas warm the room in place of the cooking stove; the beds are laden with hotel-quality linens and fluffy pillows; terra cotta tiles on the floor and shellacked adobe walls minimize dust and dirt; craft-made doors and curtained windows keep out the cold; indoor bathrooms boast a constant supply of hot water.

⁷¹ At the time of this research, there were several other options for food and lodging in Latuvi: one family had built their own small guest cabaña with government funding they had secured on their own; another family had opened their kitchen as a comedor; and the owner of a well-established comedor was building a new trout farm. However, none of these establishments participated significantly in tourism during my fieldwork – the cabañas had only received one or two groups of guests, I never saw any tourists eating in the comedor, and the trout farm was still under construction when I completed my research.



Figure 14 The cabañas in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009



Figure 15 Alternate view of the cabañas in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009

Moreover, the materials used to build the cabañas – adobe brick and red clay roof tiles⁷² – are considered by many residents to be impractical choices for modern homes. Instead, those building new homes today often choose cement bricks for walls and sheets of corrugated metal

⁷² In the past, red clay roof tiles would only have been available to residents in more affluent towns. Instead, latuvenses would have covered their homes with *tejamanil*, thin, layered sheets of hand-spliced wood.

for roofs. These “modern” materials must be purchased, as opposed to traditional materials that can be made by hand using local resources. They represent an increased availability of money, often in the form of remittances from the pueblos’ substantial migrant population⁷³. Migrants wishing to demonstrate success, garner new status, contribute to their families back home, and perhaps even hold on to a fantasy of homecoming, send money for the explicit purpose of building a *casa de materiales*, a home made of purchased materials.⁷⁴

That tourists should seek lodging in traditionally styled adobe dwellings is a reversal of local ideals on proper modern dwellings. At the same time that pueblo residents aspire to construct modern houses built by and for convenience, tourists have given symbolic and economic weight to humble, rustic indigenous abodes. Even so, latuvenses generally consider their cabañas to be modern and forward-looking. When I asked people in Latuvi about the benefits of ecotourism in their community, a common response was: *Yes, ecotourism benefits our community. Look – we have many cabañas now*. Cabañas are material proof that the project functions, that there are significant funds – whether through profits or through government grants – to grow the tourism infrastructure, and that the town’s project merits such investment. Local comité members are often judged on their ability to build a cabaña; one coordinator shared with

⁷³ A community census conducted in 2002 found that nearly 35% of Latuvi’s population was living in the US or elsewhere in Mexico.

⁷⁴ Despite these preferences, most homes in the Latuvi are made out of adobe, as most residents do not have the resources to invest in home construction. Interestingly, adobe bricks may be experiencing a bit of a renaissance. Several people, including some young residents, claimed to prefer the climate-controlling properties of adobe; I suspect, but could not confirm, that the use of adobe in the ecotourism cabañas may also be contributing to a re-valuing of the adobe bricks. During my research, one trout farm decided to replace the corrugated metal roof covering its outdoor dining area with the traditional *tejamanil*, thin sheets of hand-spliced wood. The owners cut down a tree in the forest near their home and hired an anciano to splice the wood. The owners told me that it felt like the right thing to do, to use materials from the pueblo and build a roof the way it used to be done. The skill is dying out, the man they hired was one of only two left in the pueblo who knew how to build such roofs. They hoped they might convince their son to learn the trade and help revive its use.

me his fears that the *asamblea* would remove him from his position because of the difficulties he was experiencing in acquiring funds for a new building project.

Cabañas are material and symbolic representations of “progress”. They indicate the actual investment of government funds in the *pueblo*. But they also represent the attainment of an ideal state, to the extent that the *cabañas* are sanitized, luxurious, practically non-functioning versions of adobe homes. As simulacra of functioning homes, ecotourism *cabañas* symbolically represent *pueblo* hospitality. They send an invitation to participate in local life, a welcoming to the spaces and rituals of the Zapotec “home”: to share food, be given shelter, and to generally participate in and gain knowledge of local culture. They are also no-go zones for locals – residents who have not worked in tourism have also likely never been inside a *cabaña*. Despite these limits, residents find other ways to interact with tourists and welcome them into their *pueblo*.

Everyday Forms of Welcoming

In addition to the home and home-like settings described above, hosts interact with strangers in a variety of public spaces, as well. In *Latuvi*, guests are invited to make themselves “at home” in the *pueblo*; they are free to walk roads, buy snacks and drinks in the stores, purchase local produce, tortillas, and bread from individual households, visit the church, and participate in fiestas, all the while interacting with their Zapotec hosts. These interactions and exchanges convert the entire *pueblo*, its roads, fields, and forests, into sites of hospitality, too.

Most residents I spoke with felt invested in the task of being a good host, even if they had never participated formally in the ecotourism project (as a guide, administrator, housekeeper, cook, etc.). One of the most important ways residents demonstrate their hospitality is by greeting

tourists they meet on the roads outside their homes, as they work in their fields and orchards, or walk along the trails in the forest. These interactions are often quite brief, with little more than a *Buenos días*, a nod and a smile⁷⁵. But sometimes, when visitors speak Spanish, residents might pause for a more drawn out exchange, asking questions about the tourists' travels, their impressions of the pueblo, or even about the tourists' lives at home. Storeowners might share facts about the pueblo or offer impromptu lessons in Zapotec while tourists rest to drink a soda.

These greetings and happenstance exchanges are an important part of the social fabric of the town. Traditionally, proper public greetings are part of the broader system of respect that underlines social relations and the accumulation of authority in Zapotec villages (Stephen 2005:48). More elaborate demonstrations of respect, such as kissing a godparents hands, have fallen out of practice, but generally speaking people are expected to offer a few moments of *saludos* (greetings), especially when meeting an older relative or a respected anciano. Overall, *saludos* are considered good manners, and an everyday way of practicing proper behavior towards one's fellow townspeople, of both demonstrating you are well-mannered and that you respect and recognize the value of the other person. Children are taught from a young age to offer a verbal greeting and a handshake when they meet an adult⁷⁶. The first Zapotec phrases I was taught were for greetings – *padiusi* for “good day”, *cal-i diu, compa* for “where are you going, friend?” My copious use of these greetings satisfied and delighted many village elders.

⁷⁵ Many tourists speak at least some Spanish, but a good number do not. Residents, as a rule, do not speak English or another foreign language. At the time of my research, state funding agencies did not provide language training to tourism workers. I address the issue of language barriers in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁷⁶ Adventists were particularly conscious of this activity, often boasting to me that, when it came to greeting people, their youth were better mannered than non-Adventists.

People often cited this practice of giving saludos as central to the identity of the pueblo, especially when comparing it to the city, a place where no one says hello to passersby⁷⁷.

As it is practiced locally, this system of greetings is not a form of hospitality – these are exchanges that people have outside the home, as they make their way through the village on various errands and excursions. But, in extending the reach of this practice to include tourists, they have the effect of converting all the spaces of the pueblo into potential sites of hospitality. They invite the tourist to partake in the intimacies of everyday life. Much like the photos at the tourism office in Oaxaca promise, these greetings tell the tourist, you are welcome here to walk our roads and enjoy our forests, to rest in our homes and share the food at our tables. Here, you will be safe, you will find comfort and friendship. You will be treated like one of us. Indeed, residents frequently identified this practice of greeting strangers as one of the most important ways they could support ecotourism. With a smile and a few kind words, residents feel they are contributing to the appearance of their pueblo as a safe and welcoming place for tourists.

Once in a while, residents may actually invite tourists to be guests in their own homes. People who live on town roads that double as hiking routes told me stories about inviting rain-soaked tourists into their warm kitchens for a hot cup of coffee and a plate of warm beans, or of providing a refreshing cup of *agua de calabaza* (a sweetened squash drink) on a hot afternoon. In Zapotec villages, as throughout rural Mexico, the humble act of offering a warm tortilla, a cup of hot *atole*, a plate of black beans, or whatever other food is on hand, is a pervasive and fundamental act of hospitality. A visitor entering a kitchen will be offered some kind of food, and refusal is not an option. A great song and dance may ensue, to the tune of “I just ate” and “I

⁷⁷ One man told me about the time he moved to Mexico City. When he would offer a “hello” or “good morning” to people he passed on the street, no one returned his greeting. “After a while, I realized that you are separated from everyone else in Mexico City. You walk alone, and you know what you are going to do, but no one else cares.”

couldn't", and a final "Okay, but just a little". These performances address a number of social and cultural concerns. They fulfill reciprocal obligations: the guest has offered her time and company, the host provides sustenance and refreshment in return. They are an opportunity for the host to demonstrate her competency in producing food that is both delicious and free from malady (the folk and western varieties). Such hospitality is also a setting for information gathering: to gossip, to share town news, to discuss family needs or arrange a work party. Offering and accepting food displays a wealth of information about a person's emotional state, as well (Kearney 1972). Zapotec people believe that negative emotions such as envy or anger can inflict harm on oneself and others. Playing host and guest allows each the opportunity to sit face to face for a short while, to learn more about the other's emotional state, and, if necessary, protect oneself from potential harm.

When a townspeople invites a tourist into his home, the act of hospitality fulfills many of these same roles. Residents feel honored that the tourist has come to their pueblo, and wish to repay the visit with a small gift of food. Residents derive a great deal of satisfaction in supporting ecotourism and in displaying their skill at hosting. They also derive a great deal of pleasure in teaching tourists about their pueblo and in learning about tourists' lives in return. These opportunities to share company will be discussed again in detail later in the chapter. In this way, bit by bit, greeting by greeting, the job of hosting has become an everyday experience. Gradually, residents have adjusted their activities to accommodate the needs and desires of tourists. In the next section, I discuss in greater detail the mechanisms by which this sensitization to the tourism experience happens in Latuvi.

Seeing like a Host

It is often the case that communities engaged in the work of hosting begin to adjust their perceptions of themselves as a result of their experiences with tourism. Reflecting on her long-term fieldwork in Greece, Margaret Kenna considers briefly the ways in which locals began to see themselves through tourists' eyes. Kenna writes that "[t]he Anafiot villagers were now looking at the island landscape, and areas of the village, as if they were themselves tourists, evaluating their own surroundings in ways that they had not done before, as an 'object of consumption rather than merely production (Bianchi 2003:19)'" (Kenna 2010:xviii). Similarly, Amanda Stronza (2010) writes of the relationship between tourism and identity in a mixed-ethnicity community in the Peruvian Amazon. Through their experiences with tourism, these locals began to attach new meanings to identity markers like "mestizo" and "native".

In the examples from Kenna and Stronza, locals have learned to see like tourists, to evaluate themselves, their identities, their social institutions and their natural surroundings according to the desires of the people who visit them. In the following section, I consider the ways that people in Latuvi learn to see like *hosts*, to actively amend their activities in the pueblo as they welcome the world's leisure travelers. This analytical shift – from seeing "like a tourist" to seeing "like a host" – allows for a deeper consideration of the mechanisms by which such transformations take place. I explore a range of social activities, from casual conversations between friends to town meetings to the services organized by the health clinic, by which residents lend their consent to the work of hosting. I also discuss some of the ways in which tourism colors people's appreciation for the forest, their knowledge of local geography, and even their experiences of history and memory, as the job of being a welcoming pueblo becomes an everyday experience for residents of Latuvi.

Greetings

One such mechanism of consent has already been discussed – the practice of offering saludos to tourists. Through these greeting rituals, residents lend their support to the ecotourism project by inviting travelers to be at home in their pueblo. They actively participate in cultivating a sense of place for the pueblo, and specifically of the pueblo as safe and secure, where – unlike the city – tourists can walk freely without fear of harm. I often experienced this concern for the appearance of safety when I hiked on my own. Residents I met along the way, pausing for a moment in their orchards or returning home with a load of firewood, and knowing me only as a tourist, frequently assured me that in Latuvi there were no drugs, no crime, and no fighting; that here everyone respected one another; and that I, as a tourist, had nothing to fear. These greetings also provide residents with the opportunity to learn more about tourism. Simple questions such as “Where are you headed?”, “Where have you been?”, or “Are you enjoying your stay?” generate responses that help latuvenses know which places in the pueblo are most frequented and most valued by travelers, and whether the tourism workers are adequately addressing tourists need and satisfying their interests. These interactions can also be personally satisfying for residents, to the extent that they affirm a sense of value about the pueblo and its people.

Responsible Citizens

A second, and crucial mechanism by which residents consent to the work of hosting is through their capacity as *ciudadanos* (citizens) and their participation in town-wide *asambleas*

(town meetings)⁷⁸. Asambleas are important events in the social and political life of the town, when *ciudadanos* gather to learn news about town governance and development, offer feedback, propose ideas, and generally be active in town politics. Decisions are arrived at by consensus; though individual members may disagree with a plan of action, everyone defers to the will of the *asamblea* and consents to adhere to its directives. The *asamblea* is considered the ultimate authority – as the collective voice and will of the citizens of the town, the *asamblea* confers legitimacy to development projects like ecotourism. And because most people do not get to be guides or housekeepers, do not attend training sessions or even set foot inside the *cabanas*, *asambleas* are crucial sites through which they can own and care for tourism. Residents learn about the goings-on of the project, as when the coordinator gives a report on revenue and expenditures. Residents vote on large-scale issues, such as who will serve *cargos* as guides or whether and where to build a new *cabaña*. For example, during the planning stages of construction on the *cabañas*, the *asamblea* voted to locate the buildings in the center of town, as opposed to the outskirts, so as to keep a better eye on tourists. Residents can also provide input, ask questions, and offer criticisms. During one *asamblea* I attended, a man rose and asked that someone from the Health Committee check on an empty adobe structure down the hill from the town square. The small building was on the main road through town, and it had had a foul smell for a few months. “Lots of people pass by there,” he explained, “tourists pass by, and it has smelled badly for months.” In all these ways – in making decisions, gaining information and

⁷⁸ In *Latuvi*, men and unmarried woman, including widows and single mothers, over the age of 18 are expected to attend *asambleas* and serve *cargos*; married women serve *cargos* but do not attend *asambleas*, the idea being that only one person from every family needs to be present. In *Benito Juárez*, by comparison, married women and single mothers attend *asambleas*, while women who are single and childless are exempt from attendance and from serving *cargos*, regardless of their age.

providing feedback during assemblies – ciudadanos actively participate in the work of hosting tourists.

Another way latuvenses engage in the job of welcoming tourists is through their participation in initiatives organized by the health clinic. Though the clinic is federally funded and staffed, it functions in many ways like an institution that belongs to the pueblo. For example, the asamblea appoints people to serve cargos in the clinic, to attend to the general care and maintenance of the building or to serve as community outreach educators. Similarly, participation in the clinic is considered a basic responsibility of citizenship, and ciudadanos are expected to support the clinic's efforts to improve the overall health of the pueblo. Efforts that relate to public hygiene – litter-free streets, recycling programs, dogs that are vaccinated and tied-up, properly penned poultry and livestock – dovetail with the need to present an image to ecotourists of a clean and tidy pueblo. And though these projects pre-date tourism, town officials, tourism coordinators and health workers recognize that the presence of tourists lends an additional degree of legitimacy and necessity to these efforts. In the minds of residents, these efforts belong simultaneously to the clinic and to tourism. They regularly cited efforts to keep litter off the streets, fields and trails as one of the most important benefits of tourism in the pueblo, and a significant way in which they could each support and promote tourism.

A Changing Sense of Place

Finally, latuvenses make hosting an everyday activity in the ways they speak about and experience place. As they learn to see themselves through the lens of tourism and to be more intentional in their role as hosts, residents have amended their activities in the forest, creating zones for tourists to hike and separate zones for local work such as arriving at farms, collecting

mushrooms, or hunting. This accommodation, which residents consented to through the authority of the *asamblea*, has fundamentally altered a centuries-old relationship with the forest. The main trail used in tourism – the *Camino Real* – is part of a larger pre-Hispanic trade route of the same name that connects the central valleys of Oaxaca to the Gulf of Mexico. In more recent history, these trails have been used by *el mancomún* as social, economic, and political thoroughfares. Today, however, they are widely considered to belong to tourism and to tourists, as residents agree to perform their activities on peripheral trails whenever possible⁷⁹.

Not only do residents physically interact with the landscape differently, but the way they talk about, remember, and name the land has shifted, too. In Zapotec communities throughout the Sierra Juárez, people talk about the land in a deeply social and historical way (Aquino Centeno 2006; Poe 2009). Landmarks such as fields or waterfalls are known as much if not more for the people who worked them or their relationships to historic or supernatural events, than they are for their geographic location. Talking about the land in this way links the speaker to the community and a socially constructed memory of the past. These speech acts are also everyday attempts to make sense of large-scale economic and political change (Aquino Centeno 2006), including the arrival of adventure travelers in need of hosting. Take for example a young guide who speaks affectionately and at length about his recently deceased grandfather as he leads a group of tourists past his *abuelo*'s old cornfield. This guide is performing the cultural act of experiencing the land as a set of social relations. But he does so in the context of tourism, re-creating the social references by which the land is known and experienced to include the work of community-based ecotourism and the presence of tourists.

⁷⁹ As more residents are able to purchase cars and trucks, people increasingly drive to their fields or to neighboring towns, rendering these trails even less useful.

I witnessed these elisions in everyday contexts, as well, as community members made tourism a part of their regular experience of place. Once, after spending a day in the forest with two elder women, we all stopped at a store to have a drink and rest a bit. The women told the storeowner, himself a respected town elder, that they had taken me to see a spring in the forest. The three then discussed amongst themselves the various details of the route, making note of whose parcels of land were passed along the way. One woman wondered if they were referring to a hilly trail she frequently walked as a young girl to get to her family's field. The storeowner recognized the route and told her, "No, not that one. It's the one the tourists use." "Oh, I see," she responded thoughtfully, "That trails is for tourists now." For children growing up in the pueblo today, tourism is basic to their understanding of place, as common and usual a marker as hills, waterfalls, or people's names. One afternoon I accompanied a young boy and his grandmother to their terreno to feed and water the family's oxen. While the abuela tended to the animals, the boy and I sat at the edge of the field, the trail to Lachatao directly behind us and a yellow trail marker hung to a tree over our heads. The boy studied the sign for a while, then described other places in the pueblo that had these signs, and the different designs each bore. On another day, a little girl expressed her concern that I might get lost on my way to her family's field because there weren't any yellow signs to mark the way. I suggested that perhaps she could be my guide and lead me to the terreno.

There are of course limits to the kind and degree of welcoming latuvenes are willing to extend to tourists. Despite the appearance of an open and hospitable pueblo, there are a number of activities residents do not allow tourists to see or experience. Some of these limits are borne out of local anxieties over the mal-intent of tourists or the worthiness of local cuisine. Others are attempts to reconcile the conservation-minded expectations of tourists with residents' use of

forest resources for subsistence and commercial purposes. I return to these issues in the final section of the chapter. First, I explore some of the motivations behind latuvenses' decision to be a welcoming pueblo. I have already discussed above *how* a pueblo and its people learn to “see like a host”, and the mechanisms of consent by which this sensitization happens. But, *why* would residents be interested in hosting travelers in the first place, and *what* do they expect to gain from all that work?

Hospitality and the Ethics of Giving

Balanced Reciprocity and the Role of Status

I was frequently the recipient of hospitality during my fieldwork. Sometimes I was an invited guest, having been asked to a home with my husband to share a meal and some good company. Many other times, however, I obliged people to host me, having knocked on their door unexpectedly for some research purpose or another. Whenever I was welcomed into a home (and there were times when I was turned away), I could expect to be offered a drink and perhaps a small bite to eat. And, as I learned so clearly after my visit with Lucía, I always accepted the offer. As time went on, I even learned to anticipate it, and ceased wondering how I would have breakfast when out on an early morning research errand. Often, at the end of these more impromptu visits, I was also given a parting gift – a loaf of bread, a bag of nuts, a few pieces of fruit, a crocheted doily. Once, a woman sent her daughter to deliver me the tortillas I “forgot” to take when I left their home. I learned to take care when complimenting something in a home, lest my host insist I take it with me. I received these gifts with much gratitude, if not a slight pang of guilt. Many of the items offered were purchased goods, rather than things

produced within the home. Knowing that my hosts had very limited access to waged labor made the gifts all the more dear to me.

As one abuelita explained it to me, these gifts were to “thank me for my visit.” This notion of repayment is deeply rooted in the social fabric of indigenous pueblos throughout Oaxaca. Balanced reciprocity governs an array of social practices, from the creation of mutual-work agreements for agricultural tasks, to the provision of goods and labor for ceremonial purposes (*guelaguetza*), to the obligation to faithfully and dutifully serve cargos (*desempeñar bien su cargo*). Alicia Barabas (2006) refers to this as an “ethics of giving” (*la ética del don*), a moral code that defines the nature of proper behavior through the appropriate and adequate provision and repayment of goods and services. In communities like Latuvi, this ethics of giving permeates social structure, and failure to sufficiently repay a debt can lead to serious social and supernatural sanctions, including public shame, a loss of status, bad luck or illness. The ethics of giving, Barabas concludes, is “one of the primary pillars of ritual efficacy and fluid social relations” (153), and is responsible for maintaining and reproducing social equilibrium and the natural order of things⁸⁰.

Though I was aware of the importance of balanced reciprocity, it took me some time to fully understand and appreciate the desire to repay me for my visit. For a long time, I considered myself the debtor, that I had been the one to take – time and a bite to eat, as well as data for my research. Worst of all, having no home of my own in the pueblo, I could never repay my perceived debt. I was a consummate guest, an anthropologist-traveler who was only capable of being hosted (Candea and Da Col 2012:3). I calculated the exchange in rational economic terms

⁸⁰ “[É]l buen cumplimiento de la *ética del don* es uno de los principales soportes de la eficacia ritual y de las relaciones sociales fluidas (Barabas 2006: 153).”

– the cost of the things given, the time taken away from productive activities, and so on. I came to learn, however, that Zapotec hospitality reckoned things much differently, in terms of the value of time and goods as well as who the debtor was in the first place. Through my time, my attention, and my deference to the moral authority of my host, I had conferred a measure of honor and prestige to my host and her household. I had brought the gift of status to my host. And because I had no home of my own, no way of receiving a guest, my host had no way of reciprocating the gift of status that a return visit could have bestowed to me. And so, to maintain balance in our relationship and avoid the appearance of misdeed, I was given a parting gift instead.

This ethics of giving, this nature and pace of hosting and being hosted, and this impulse to receive and repay gifts is central to latuvenses everyday experience of ecotourism, and it manifests itself in a number of ways.

Convivir and Intercambio

Latuvenses place a high value on spending time together. The word *convivir* (lit. “to live together”) is used to describe a range of ways of being together with extended family and friends outside the normal daily routine, from picnics to birthday parties to weddings. Convivios don’t happen often, which make them all the more appreciated when they do. People use “convivir” to describe the nature of friendship and neighborliness, too – that one household *convive mucho* (gets along well with and spends time with) another, or that in a small pueblo like Latuvi, one must *convivir con* (get along with) most people. The premium placed on getting along and being together (with or without the notion of celebration), is central to social organization in small, non-centralized pueblos like Latuvi (Nader 1990). The ties of friendship and kinship that are

forged within these spaces of togetherness reproduce solidarity and social control, without which community life would not be possible.

People used this notion of “convivir” when speaking with me about ecotourism, as well. Residents appreciated the opportunity to convivir with people from around the world. Guides, of course, had extended opportunities to interact with tourists on hikes, for a few hours or sometimes over the course of a few days. I witnessed many leisurely chats between guides and hikers as they walked along the forested paths or shared a bite to eat while resting next to a quiet stream. Residents who did not work in tourism had similar interactions with tourists in the course of their everyday lives. Tourists wandering past homes or through terrenos might ask for directions, a bite to eat, or a place to pitch a tent, allowing both parties time to spend together, ask and answer questions about home or work, food or world politics. As the ecotourism infrastructure grows, however, these informal requests for hospitality are becoming less common.

My own host family in Benito Juárez had a particularly impressionable everyday encounter with tourism. It was during the town-wide Independence Day celebration, and Tío Benito had gone to the town plaza for a flag-lowering ceremony. The ecotourism office is about 100 yards up the road, and a few curious tourists had wandered over to watch the middle school drum core beat out the national anthem while the color guard marched the flag around the square. Among the tourists was a thirty-something man from Austria. He struck up a conversation with Tío Benito, and the two chatted for a half hour or so. They talked about the pueblo, its political system, its love for basketball, and the ways that birth control was changing family size. When Tío Benito returned from the plaza for our evening *cena*, he told his wife, Tía Margarita, about his encounter. “He found our pueblo on the Internet,” he explained. Tía

Margarita was fixing our tea at the hearth. “He found our little *rancho* on the Internet!” she squealed with wonder and surprise. The next morning at breakfast, Tío Benito told us that he dreamt he was walking in the mountains in Austria, visiting the tourist’s home village.

I do not know whether other residents dreamt of their encounters with tourists; I do know that many did derive a great deal of satisfaction and pride from these meetings. This desire to connect with strangers at least partially stems from the framework of togetherness and harmony captured by the concept of “convivir”. It is not surprising, then, that many people used the language of friendship to describe connections they have made with tourists. One woman told me about the time two women passed by her house in the rainy season. “Come in, I told them, so that you don’t get wet. They came in gladly, and I didn’t even know that we would become friends.” Another man told me that, though he had never worked in tourism, he should like to be a guide one day. “If you are a guide, well then, you get to talk, you get to know more people. You make friends, right?” And though these connections were often temporary and contextual, the sentiments of pleasure and mutuality evoked by residents when remembering a particular meeting with a tourist are unmistakable.

These friendly encounters with strangers often become safe spaces for learning about people and places around the world. Evoking the concept of balanced reciprocity, residents emphasized the importance of *intercambio* (exchange; swapping; interchange) in their encounters with tourists. They placed a high value on learning from tourists in exchange for hosting them in their pueblo, their fields, and their forests, for sharing their way of life with these strangers-turned-friends. Tío Benito and Tía Margarita, an elderly couple who have never owned a cell phone, let alone a computer, learned about the power of the internet to make their “little rancho” visible in a digital world. Residents learn about the names of currency in other

countries, about life in a busy city, or about Spaniards' growing interest in organic foods. In Switzerland, one tourist told his guide, trees don't grow above 1800 meters (unlike in Latuvi, where trees flourish at 3000 meters and counting). A German tourist spoke about her love of gospel music to a young guide who had no previous exposure to the genre. For my part, I taught people to make oatmeal raisin cookies, showed pictures of my house in Syracuse buried under several feet of snow, and explained about pizza and maple syrup.

These moments of *convivio* and *intercambio*, of friendliness, mutuality and exchange, are not limited to sharing knowledge about distinctly different ways of being in the world. Residents also learn something new about themselves and their pueblo. Through these exchanges, residents learn to “see like a tourist” and to reflect on the value of their pueblo in new ways. Tourists often compare the landscape of the pueblo – its beautiful flowers, clean air and water, abundant forest coverage – to their own experiences with urbanization, pollution, and deforestation. Such comments place pueblo life in a new perspective for residents. Even the significance of the tourists' journey, the choice to visit an out-of-the-way town full of humble campesinos and limited tourism amenities, is not lost on residents.

Residents also learn to revalorize traditional practices of food production and consumption. Take for example the time I visited Petra, a middle-aged woman who lives with her husband and the youngest two of their ten children on a small ranch in the outskirts of town. Petra was in her tidy adobe kitchen with one of her older daughters, herself having just arrived for a visit. The two were seated at the table, snacking on toasted pumpkin seeds. Petra pulled out a chair for me and I joined their leisurely conversation. After a short while, Petra asked me, “Do you drink *pulque*?” I told her I did, and she served me a glass of the mildly fermented maguey (agave) juice. “You see,” she explained, “we don't drink soda. We make our own

pulque instead. We bring it with us when we work in *el campo*.” We continued to chat – the three of us in Spanish, Petra and her daughter in Zapotec – while Petra prepared some black beans for us to eat. After our snack, Petra’s sister arrived, and greeted us each in turn with a *padiusi* or a *buenas tardes* as she found a seat at the table. With a half-glance in my direction, Petra told her sister, “Our home may be humble, but we treat our visitors well.”

To a certain extent, Petra’s declaration that her hospitality makes up for what her home lacks is an acknowledgment of the unevenness of the tourism encounter. The tourists who come to her pueblo have access to economic, social, and political resources that are out of reach for her family and neighbors. Curiosities and anxieties surrounding these meetings often make themselves manifest in uncertainties about food, with residents doubting whether tourists’ cosmopolitan palettes and sensitive stomachs will tolerate “humble” pueblo fare. Petra’s query about whether I drank pulque was as much question as it was statement, by which she was protecting her pride and providing me an out, in the likelihood that her homemade drink was either uninteresting or perhaps even unfamiliar to me. By accepting her drink, I sent a clear message that her food was indeed “good enough” for me. Later, when the beans were served, Petra did not ask whether I wanted any; it was simply assumed that I would join the family. In accepting Petra’s offerings, I confirmed the value and dignity of pueblo hospitality.

Imagining Equality

Like Tío Benito’s dream of hiking in Austria, many residents engaged with tourism on an imaginative, and even emotional level, as a way of connecting with the experiences of their migrant family members. One anciano told me it was good that people visited his pueblo from other countries, because his own townspeople were also living abroad. Another anciano asked

me about my parents and how often I spoke with them while I was in Mexico. “You never stop thinking about your children,” he said. An anciana told me about a time during the rainy season when she invited three tourists into her home. It was during the early days of ecotourism, before there were cabañas or even a comité to administer the project, and the backpackers were looking for a place to eat. “Come in,” she told them, “and I will give you what I can.” She made them each a cup of mint tea and a plate of beans. “There’s always some beans,” she explained. She lit a charcoal fire so that they could warm and dry themselves. When they were ready to leave, they asked what they owed her. “Nothing, nothing,” she told them. “My own children are far away, and I hope that God provides food for them, too.”

In these examples, latuvenses express a desire for balanced reciprocity, that each party share something of value and receive something valuable in return, whether it be a tangible good such as food or an intangible resource like a deeper knowledge of what life is like abroad. The emphasis on balance, however, betrays the actual inequalities inherent in these encounters. Latuvenses seek to learn from tourists because, for most of them, education beyond the middle school level is out of reach. And while the differential access to education tends to go unspoken, residents do occasionally articulate their lack of privilege when it comes to safe and easy travel. One anciano spoke to this directly when he told me, “Perhaps if one day we had had the opportunity to obtain documents, we probably would have gone to the United States. But for lack of this resource we can’t, because we are stuck in a fence, we are stuck in a net, and so what can we do? We can’t go there easily, but it is because we lack *papelitos*.” He followed up his assessment with a hopeful sentiment by saying, “That’s why, for me, I see ecotourism as a good thing, because, like I said, look at who I am talking to. If this industry didn’t exist, you wouldn’t have come here, right?” Indeed, I very likely would not. On another occasion, this same man

told me “How good it is to share, you from your country and me from mine, in this world that God created.”

Guests arriving, sharing time and place, receiving hospitality and reciprocating knowledge and ideas. Hosts seeing, hearing, and breaking bread with strangers, mobile bodies who represent other places, other cultural arrangements, other kinds of access to resources and power; imaginatively inserting themselves into and making embodied connections with a world from which they are often marginalized and disadvantaged. These are the spaces carved out by hospitality, in which the structures of everyday life are suspended and perhaps even realigned, and through which some residents glean moments of equality. One woman told me that ecotourism was a “great miracle”, that we are all already united by the love of God that we carry inside us, and that tourism allows us to also be united in person. Another man said that “we are all human beings, perhaps we are a little more brown skinned, but we are the same, and we should share, *convivir*, talk to each other.” Only a few people articulated a vision of tourism that was this spiritual and poetic, but I suspect they captured a sentiment of hoped-for equality that many of their fellow townspeople also carry.

The question I posed at the beginning of this section – what do latuvenes gain from hosting world travelers and adventure seekers? – might be the wrong one to ask. For many, the benefits of ecotourism do not lie in what is *gained* but rather what is *exchanged*, and the degree of reciprocity and balance that can be achieved. The same ethics of giving that informs so much of social life in Latuvi – from the regulation of interpersonal relations and proper social behavior to the provision of goods and services for celebrations – is applied to townspeople’s encounters with strangers. Through the spaces of *convivio*, in sharing time and friendship, hosts and guests exchange details about home, community and country. Each is provided the opportunity to

connect in imaginative and embodied ways with the Other. In exchange for their hospitality, tourists give their hosts a new perspective on home, and a link to family far away. And through these encounters and a sentiment of shared humanity, comes the opportunity to reimagine the very structure of global inequality that, ironically, made the meetings possible in the first place.

The Limits of Hospitality

Perhaps not surprisingly, the desire to interact with strangers is not ubiquitous. As unknown entities, strangers are as likely to bring danger to their hosts as they are goodwill. Hospitality, as was noted earlier, takes place on the “knife-edge” between suspicion and trust (Candea and Da Col 2012:5), and hospitality is closely linked to its opposites, hostility and transgression (Selwyn 2000:20). Thus in Latuvi, alongside sentiments of friendship and shared humanity, residents express fears over the mal-intent of tourists. They are quite specific about which visitors are “good” and which are not, in ways that express the tensions inherent in commercialized hospitality. And, through formal agreements and everyday acts of aversion, residents create “buffer zones” (Fagence 2001) that divert tourists from certain aspects of local life. Even those who count themselves among ecotourism’s most staunch supporters can act in ways that are not conducive to the image of a conservation-minded pueblo.

Transgressive Guests

When community-based ecotourism was first proposed to the citizens of Latuvi, in the late 1990s, people were skeptical. They had no previous experience with ecotourism, and didn’t understand why tourists would want to come visit their pueblo. After all, they didn’t have hotels, or beaches, or tennis courts, or archeological sites...all the things they understood tourism to be.

And from this lack of understanding came worry. Would the visitors steal things from residents' homes? Would they bring diseases? Would they attack and rob them? Would they kidnap their children? Much of residents' knowledge of outsiders comes from their experiences in the city, which most consider to be dangerous, dirty, and full of unfriendly faces waiting for the chance to harm or take advantage of them. Strangers are potent beings, capable of physical and psychological harm. They can rob and cheat, they can pass on unknown diseases, use witchcraft or give you the evil eye. Parents often discipline young children by telling them that strangers – *roba chicas* – kidnap children who misbehave.

With time, increased exposure to tourists, and a growing knowledge of their needs and desires, residents' fears and uncertainties relaxed. Few people claim that they have these same worries today. One woman who occasionally sold her marmalade at the tourism office told me that sometimes her neighbors or friends would tell her to take care, that tourists might carry diseases. Several non-tourism workers said they didn't like it when tourists take their picture without asking permission first. A woman told me a particularly worrisome story about a stranger who approached her daughter as the girl walked home from school, asking for directions to the watchtower. The stranger grabbed the girl by the sweater, but she broke free and ran home. After that, the woman told her family "We aren't going to indulge tourists any more. Before, they would say to us, *take us to the watch-tower*, and they would give us a tip, but after this, we won't do it anymore."

Aside from these few examples, latuvenes generally claim that they now have good feelings about – and positive experiences with – tourists. The previous sections of this chapter attest to that. Concerns still exist, however. But rather than a generalized fear of the unknown dimensions of encounters with strangers, latuvenes have become quite specific in their

misgivings. Experience has generated detailed knowledge – and stereotypes – about tourists’ activities, preferences, and shortcomings. Complaints, concerns, and misgivings about the transgressions of their guests depend largely on nationality and the perceived differences between domestic and international tourists

Around the time of my fieldwork, approximately one-third of the tourists to Latuvi were from Mexico⁸¹. Tourism workers have a list of complaints regarding the comportment – and transgressions – of domestic tourists. Guides told me that, in general, domestic tourists are not usually curious about nature and pueblo life. They are prone to litter, leaving things like food wrappers and cigarette butts behind in the forest. They like to pick flowers and plants from the forest – roots and all – to bring back to their homes. According to housekeepers, domestic tourists tend to be messy in the cabañas, blackening their bright white towels (which are washed by hand) with soot from the fireplace, leaving disheveled piles of linens on the beds, and filling the rooms with the smell of stale cigarette smoke. All agreed that domestic tourists are more aggressive (*agresivo*), demanding (*exigente*), and particular (*especial*) than their international counterparts. They are more likely to complain about the temperature (too cold) and pressure (too slow) of water in the shower, shortage of towels or blankets, or the presence of spiders in the room. They are more likely to request special amenities, such as televisions or refrigerators (neither of which are available). Workers suggested that domestic tourists might feel more entitled to behave this way because they are paying to be in the pueblo. One coordinator said,

⁸¹ In 2008, 1020 tourists visited Latuvi: 339 from Mexico, 205 from the US and Canada, 450 from Europe and Australia, 4 from Latin America, and 22 from other countries. By comparison, the neighboring village of Benito Juárez experiences significantly more domestic tourism: in 2007, of the 1878 arriving tourists, 1542 were from Mexico, 122 from the US and Canada, 211 from Europe and Australia, 1 from Latin America, and 2 from other countries. (Sources: village tourism offices)

“They think because they pay, that we are their slaves. Sometimes they want things cheaper.” At times, the sense of entitlement may come from being Mexican, and believing they shouldn’t have to pay at all for what is “theirs”.

In comparison, workers described international tourists as curious, polite, accommodating, and respectful. Workers often expressed a preference for foreign tourists over domestic ones, which goes to show how far people have come in their understanding and acceptance of strangers to their pueblo. However, some uncertainties and doubts about foreigners still linger, and make themselves manifest through interactions involving food. Workers and non-workers alike agreed that foreigners eat differently than latuvenses. Though international travelers tend to be curious about *comida típica* (traditional food), their stomachs are sensitive to the cuisine, and they avoid food that is spicy or prepared with too much grease. There is also a widespread assumption that foreigners are vegetarians and that they prioritize healthy eating.

Often, locals seemed to take the food preferences of their international visitors in stride. Yet, my own experiences with being hosted betrayed a sense of unease over the question of food. There is danger inherent in these transactions – just as accepting food can be affirming, rejecting it can bring devaluation or insult. As locals learn to view their cuisine through the eyes of tourists, they have become sensitive and somewhat protective, at times withholding, withdrawing, or at least tentatively offering food to strangers.

Most families I visited, whether or not they were serving me a meal, asked questions about the kinds of foods foreigners eat. And after the encounter with Lucía that I described at the beginning of this chapter, I was extremely careful to reassure my hosts that I did eat, and enjoyed eating, local foods. Once, while my husband and I were wandering through an outer

barrio, a woman invited in for lunch. She immediately second-guessed herself as she half asked, half stated to us, “But you don’t eat tortillas, do you?” Similarly, our host family initially struggled to believe that we would not require special food. Inez, the *mamá de la casa*, almost declined the proposal to host us at all, based on this concern. Several weeks and dozens of meals later, Inez would still occasionally remark with a mix of amazement and satisfaction, “You really do eat everything, don’t you?” When I hung around the tourism office in the evenings, someone usually offered to make tea. I occasionally declined the offer with what I considered to be a polite, *no, gracias*. Sometime toward the middle of my stay, the coordinator, with whom I had developed a close relationship, told me that I was too quick to turn down these offers, and that it sometimes hurt his feelings a little. “You should say something more,” he instructed, “like ‘*Thank you, I’ll have some in a little while. I’m not very thirsty right now.*’” His instructions were a reminder of the fragile border between honor and transgression, and that even a careful and experienced visitor can still unwittingly upend or offend.

Unwilling Hosts

Residents have developed strategies for dealing with the uncertainties and dangers of hosting. Some of these strategies involve policing: encouraging tourists to hire guides for their hikes, so as to educate visitors about good behavior in the pueblo and forest; building cabañas in the town center, to more easily attend to – and monitor – tourists. More often, however, these strategies involve aversion and avoidance. Residents not wishing to interact with tourists can choose trails that tourists don’t use when they needed to be in the forest. In the neighboring village of La Nevería, a tiny pueblo of approximately 100 people, residents decided to locate their cabañas in a field just outside of town, so as to minimize tourists’ impact on residents’ daily

lives. In the comedores, women learned new recipes that accommodated travelers' palettes. The most extreme example of such a menu change took place in 2009, in the community-owned *comedor* in Benito Juárez. Encargadas posted a sign in the window that read "We sell hamburgers, hot dogs, and microwave popcorn⁸²." This was the first and only time I saw such foods served in a comedor.

There are also limits to latuvenses willingness to host. At times, the needs and desires of tourists come into direct conflict with daily life, placing constraints on residents' movements and activities and policing their values and knowledge. Many of these conflicts have to do with notions about the proper use of natural resources. Residents use the forest for their livelihoods. Many of these activities are small-scale and highly sustainable: gathering fallen sticks and branches for firewood, collecting mushrooms and culinary herbs for cooking or medicinal herbs for home remedies, planting small terrenos with corn, potatoes or squash. These activities seem to align neatly with ecotourists' own ideas about natural resource use; tourists often ask about these activities, and guides proudly describe them to their attentive audiences.

But there are a number of other activities that are rarely, if ever, discussed with or seen by tourists. For example, el mancomún owns and operates a community-owned logging business; this community forest enterprise model, which is likewise followed by many other indigenous villages in the Sierra Juárez, is widely considered to be a highly-sustainable form of resource extraction that is respectful of local culture and is beneficial to local economies (Bray, et al. 2005; Charnley and Poe 2007; López-Arzola 2005; Mitchell 2005; Mitchell 2006). Yet, in my experience, guides almost never spoke about logging. When they did, they emphasized el

⁸² The woman appointed to serve as *presidente del comedor* that year had spent 25 years in Los Angeles. I never had the chance to speak with her, but other residents told me she believed tourists preferred these convenience foods to *comida típica*.

mancomún's efforts to fight a recent infestation of pine bark beetle, which involved cutting down and removing infected trees⁸³. In the words of one guide to his tourists, "we don't just cut down any tree." In the context of ecotourism, then, conservation, the desire to clean up (*sanear*) and preserve the forest, justified logging⁸⁴.

Unlike logging, which can be neatly rationalized under a framework of conservation or sustainability, other activities fall decidedly outside the purview of ecotourism. These activities were usually kept out of sight of tourists. When they were made visible, they were usually qualified as things that "we used to do, but not anymore". For example, a few households in Latuvi make charcoal, a process that involves clearing a piece of land and burning the wood in a pit with a slow, smothering fire. As charcoal production is now strictly regulated by the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), they must do so in a clandestine manner. I only once heard this activity mentioned in the context of ecotourism, when a guide briefly explained to his group that a certain dilapidated house on the side of the road was the site of a *former* charcoal business. Likewise, guides told their hikers as they passed by the entrance to an abandoned mine that el mancomún *used to* extract gold and silver from the mountain, but for environmental reasons no longer did. Absent from this narrative was any mention of the then-current negotiations with a Canadian company to potentially re-open the mines.

⁸³ For a discussion of the inter-community politics of the *saneamiento* (clean-up), see Poe (2009).

⁸⁴ It is likely that logging was "out of sight" to tourists because it only happened in pine forests, while hiking happened in "cloud forests" (Mathews 2011:223).

Sometimes, tourists witnessed firsthand activities they judged to be out of sync with the image of an ecotourism destination: a campesino carrying a gun, apparently on his way to hunt⁸⁵; someone returning from the forest with a bundle of orchids strapped to his back⁸⁶; a captured and caged eagle being kept at a trout farm. One private travel agent who regularly organized excursions to el mancomún told me he believed that residents shouldn't use tourism trails when they hunt. Though he admitted that residents have the right to hunt for their subsistence, encountering armed men returning from the forest carrying game, he thought, was inconsistent with the image and goals of ecotourism. Another travel agent wrote to the mayor after encountering a man who had collected orchids from the forest. The mayor, in turn, read the letter to the asamblea, as a reminder that productive activities such as this one should be done out of sight, on trails other than the ones used by tourists.

Conclusion

The cultural imperative to host is widespread, and the results of are nothing short of magic (Candea and Da Col 2012). Hospitality provides the liminal spaces for reaffirming, realigning, or dismantling social relationships. The rules of hosting and guest-ing confer honor and status and confirm identity. At the same time, moments of hospitality are laden with mystery and danger, and encounters between hosts and guests have the potential to unsettle relations. The phenomenon of hospitality has implications across a variety of scales, from

⁸⁵ Technically, hunting is prohibited, though it is an open secret that many still do hunt animals like deer and squirrel. Populations for both of these animals are quite low in el mancomún; I cannot recall ever seeing either of these animals during my stay, though I know that I ate their meat on at least two occasions.

⁸⁶ Tourists place a high value on orchid sightings. Unlike deer and squirrel, however, I was never given any reason to believe that orchids are scarce. Residents are permitted to gather orchids freely, and they are used as decorations for holiday celebrations.

interpersonal relations within and between homes to definitions of belonging across nation-states. Through these encounters exists the potential for strangers to learn something new about themselves and each other and about broader relations of power in a mobile world.

For these reasons, many people in Latuvi find community-based ecotourism to be a worthwhile and enjoyable endeavor. Their sense of satisfaction with the project extends beyond simple calculations of economic impact or financial gain. Most residents, it seems, consider the value of tourism and their encounters with tourists in local salient terms of exchange and balanced reciprocity. Receiving and giving are valued – the exchange of a greeting or a bite to eat, the gift of time and presence and new perspectives on the value of local places and spaces, the opportunity to learn about different ways of being in the world through which residents imagine and hope for equality. The symbolic and scalar implications of ecotourism should not be ignored. Through their hospitality, latuvenses are given a rare opportunity to enter into relationship with cosmopolitan strangers in reverse, as the geopolitical underdog becomes the host who holds, however fleeting, a position of power and authority, and who controls access to the desirable goods of tourism.

Through their encounters with hospitality, latuvenses being to actualize the promise of development, not as economic gain or an improvement in their material livelihoods (though that does exist), but as *saliendo adelante*, as movement towards a better life. This includes opportunities to rebuild a sense of dignity and status regarding their forest home and the foods they eat; to relate to and exchange with strangers and leisure travellers on equal footing as they give *saludos* and share spaces of *intercambio* and *convivio*; to strengthen communal practices of service and participation; and to augment the built environment of the pueblo to include “modern” tourism infrastructure and amenities. In many ways, the heightened sense of being

“developed” that results from the ecotourism encounter parallels the experience of Adventists. In both cases, participation in development provides both groups with the tools by which they not only move toward a better life, but can also look back at themselves to see a people who are achieving development, broadly defined.

To the extent that ecotourism solidifies a renewed sense of value about the people and places of the pueblo, it contributes significantly to the production of local identity. It strengthens, or at the very least complements, communal practices like reciprocity, service in *tequios* (communal work parties, for example to clean up litter in town), and consensus building in *asambleas* (as people weigh in on the management of the project). It also affirms local understandings of proper social behavior through the simple but significant act of exchanging greetings. Through these practices, residents ground ecotourism in their own moral and cultural universe, while making sense of the goals of the project and the needs of the tourist. And, just as Seventh-day Adventism provides members with tools that increase their ability to participate in pueblo life, so too does ecotourism strengthen latuvenses ability to participate in their community development. In many ways, the informal practices that take place on the margins of ecotourism are among the most meaningful. In this way, ecotourism could complement an agenda for economically and culturally supporting indigenous people. And, to the extent that it encourages a positive sense of indigenous people and places, it could likewise support the agenda of activists seeking ways to foment a sense of ethnic solidarity in the region.

At the same time, as I will discuss at length in Chapter 6, the formal practices of tourism work may actually weaken the degree of connection between residents and the project. The need to provide quality service to a sophisticated class of world travelers has encouraged tourism workers to develop a highly specialized set of tourism skills, in the process making knowledge

about the needs of the project inaccessible to most community members, thereby decreasing participation. These dynamics of professionalization and competition may also impede the project of solidarity building in the region. As ecotourism pits pueblos against one another in the struggle to attract tourist dollars, it may be exacerbating already-existing divisions among pueblos.

Chapter 6 - Between Ecotourism and the Everyday: The Role of Culture Brokers in Community-based Ecotourism

Introduction

Toward the end of our stay in Latuvi, my husband and I were walking to the tourism office with the tourism coordinator, Miguel, and a guide named Oscar. Just before we reached the office, it started to rain, and we all took shelter under the cover of a small house on the side of the road. The homeowners' primary residence was in the outskirts of the pueblo; they used this house when they needed to be in town, to have lunch during an *asamblea* or to catch an early morning bus to Oaxaca. I knew the property well, as it boasted an attractive tree with Spanish moss-festooned branches and a wildly crooked trunk entirely colonized by small flowering cacti. Tourists were often drawn to the tree, as I was, and guides took advantage of its presence, along with the property's other nearby plants, to offer their first lessons on local fauna.

On this particular day, the property owners were clearing away brush and plants along the road to make way for an 8-foot high wire fence that would completely enclose their land. Some rose bushes and *nopal* (prickly pear) were neatly trimmed to encourage new growth. But others, including a large cluster of a *siempre vive*, a medicinal succulent, were cut down to the ground. They had also placed one fence post directly up the side of the crooked tree, so that the wire fence would lie alongside its trunk. The owners later told me that they needed the fence to protect their property from passersby who were inclined to litter and make a mess of their land. I was not able to get more details from them, and don't know whether they meant townspeople or tourists; suffice it to say that they were either unaware or unconcerned about the role their parcel of land played in the tourism experience.



Figure 16 A moss-covered tree near Latuvi's ecotourism office, before a fence was built, October 2007

After about ten minutes, the rain let up and we continued our walk to the office. When we arrived, I immediately asked Miguel and Oscar what they thought of the fence. Scrunching up his face in disgust, Miguel said, “We don’t think they should do it. It’s going to look like a chicken coop.” Oscar added, “They are going to cut down the siempre vive, and everything else.” My husband asked whether they would chop down the tree, too. Oscar speculated, “Yes, but they have to get permission first, and the authorities won’t allow it⁸⁷.” I asked why they didn’t want them to build the fence, “Is it because it is ugly, or for conservation reasons?” Oscar answered, “Yes, because of conservation. Because we pass by with tourists and we explain everything we see – the nopal, everything.” “So, it’s like it’s part of your route?” I asked. Oscar nodded eagerly, “Yes, there is a lot of information there.”

This chapter explores the politics of community-based ecotourism, particularly as they relate to the day-to-day work of organizing and executing a successful ecotourism business. As

⁸⁷ Residents are entitled to make use of el mancomún’s natural resources. As a conservation measure, and to prevent people from interfering with the community-owned lumber business, they are required to get permission from the village authorities before felling any trees in the pueblo.

discussed in Chapter 5, many people in Latuvi support community-based ecotourism – they strive to the best of their abilities to make their pueblo a welcoming place, and the imaginative landscape of tourism encounters contributes to a positive sense of self and place. Yet, despite such support and interest, tourism workers often complained to me that their fellow townspeople didn't fully understand or appreciate what was needed to create and sustain a successful ecotourism project in their community. Building a wire fence around a feature of the pueblo landscape that was both highly visible to and valued by tourists is one example of this gap in understanding. In the brief moments it would take to point out and explain the different plants, guides were also taking advantage of an early opportunity to demonstrate their expertise in local fauna, glean a sense of the visitors' language abilities, ascertain what other features may be of interest, and generally establish rapport with their tourists. There would certainly be other opportunities the guides could learn to take advantage of further along the route. In my own observations of these excursions, however, the fact that this particular tree and surrounding plants were a few hundred feet from the office provided an almost immediate platform for guides to establish the pace of their hikes. Aspects of the job such as these were relatively invisible to average townspeople.

To be fair, that the property owners may not have recognized the role that their plants played in the tourism experience is not at all surprising. Average townspeople live their lives well outside the day-to-day operations of tourism, and though many have a story to tell about a pleasant chance encounter with a foreigner, or recall ecotourism-related discussions and votes in the *asamblea*, I found that most have little understanding of the nature and scope of ecotourism work, or the broader objectives of the project. At the same time, however, through their role as citizens and their collective power enacted in the *asamblea*, these same townspeople played a key

role in shaping ecotourism. Oscar's assertion that village authorities would not allow the property owners to cut down the tree is a testament to the authority of the *asamblea*. At times, the *asamblea* would assent to guidelines prescribed by state tourism and development agencies, even adjusting core community institutions to meet the terms offered by the state. At other times, however, the *pueblo* would recast and even undermine state efforts in order to align ecotourism more neatly with community needs and decision-making practices.

This chapter explores the dynamics of community service and accountability in community-based ecotourism through the lens of tourism workers. I examine tourism work as a form of mediation, as local tourism workers act as brokers between tourists and Zapotec cultural practices, and between state and local governments. Being a mediator requires locals to master a wide array of skills, including cultural translation, computer literacy, and facilities management, that are often not fully visible to or appreciated by the *pueblo*. At the same time, workers are fully accountable to the *pueblo*, and are judged by standard notions of service, cooperation, and status. Exploring these two arenas of tourism work – the day-to-day necessities of the job and the broader social field within which that job takes place – reveals details about the possibilities and limits of community-based ecotourism as a change project.

Culture Brokers

At the time of my research, *Latuvi* was operating a hybrid staffing system for its community-based ecotourism project. The coordinator and housekeeper were both paid, full-time employees, while the two guides were appointed by the *asamblea* to serve *cargos*. Unlike

other cargo positions in town, however, these guides were remunerated after each hike⁸⁸.

Additional people were hired on an occasional basis during busy periods to lead hikes and help clean the cabañas. The two comedores and two trout farms in town were family-owned and operated. In 2005, the coordinator, Miguel, had petitioned the *asamblea* to allow him to continue as a full-time employee when his two-year cargo appointment ended. Prior to that time, all positions, including housekeeper, were two-year, unpaid cargo appointments.

Miguel took on a tremendous responsibility when he took the lead of the project as a paid employee. He did so because he believed in the potential of the project and felt strongly that such continuity and accountability were best for its growth. He represents a small group of people throughout *el mancomún* who have dedicated themselves to ecotourism by pushing their towns to adapt the traditional cargo system to the needs of a for-profit business venture, and by taking it upon themselves to acquire the skills needed to strengthen the project. They have also endeavored to recruit other like-minded and adept people to work alongside them, people who believe similarly in tourism's potential, who understand themselves to have the unique set of skills and traits needed to accomplish tourism work, and who believe they have the ability to strengthen and grow the community project.

In the tourism literature, people like Miguel are referred to as “culture brokers”, men and women whose job it is to mediate the tourism experience for visitors. Culture brokers are often members of a local community, who through happenstance or interest have been given the unique opportunity “to know, to move and live in and between two cultures⁸⁹” (Smith 2001:276).

⁸⁸ *Mancomún*-wide, a group of tourists paid M\$120 (approx. US\$10) for a day's hike. In *Latuvi*, this fee was given directly to the guide who led the hike.

⁸⁹ As Chambers (2010:32) points out, a range of non-local people – including those involved with travel agencies, governments, hotels, travel writing and tourism planning – will also have a hand in mediating the tourism

Culture brokers are responsible for selecting and translating activities and cultural traits they believe will be most interesting to tourists (Smith 2001:277). These on-the-ground brokers act as cross-cultural mediators between tourists and the local community, maintaining one foot in two somewhat distinct worlds. They are, almost by definition, accountable to a number of stakeholders, including tourists, their local community and, in the case of ecotourism, the local environment, as well as their state and national governments and other agencies that provide support in the form of training, funding, infrastructure and promotion (Black and Weiler 2005:25).

Globally, there is an increasing focus by international and national agencies on training culture brokers, with the goal of providing high quality, and highly standardized, tourism services (Black and Weiler 2005). In Indonesia, for example, tour guides are required to receive formal training and licensing by the national government authority, as well as maintain certification in a professional organization and adhere to rules of conduct promoted by local authorities (Salazar 2008:135). Training and certification requirements were much less stringent for ecotourism in Oaxaca at the time of my research. The main funding agencies – the Department of Tourism (Secretaría de Turismo, SECTUR) and the Commission for the Development of Indigenous Pueblos (Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, CDI) – provided training for housekeepers, guides, restaurateurs, and administrators. Pueblos receiving support were expected to participate in the training workshops, and some long-term culture brokers, such as Miguel, had received a good deal of training. At the same time, because of the high rollover of personnel due to cargo appointments, others had little to no outside

experience. Despite the fact that many of these non-local brokers will never encounter or interact directly with tourists, they nonetheless play an important role in organizing the tourism experience.

training, and instead received informal, on-the-job training from their more experienced co-workers.

Despite the demands of the job and the unevenness in training to meet those demands, many people I spoke with found the work of culture broker highly satisfying⁹⁰. They enjoyed meeting people from around the world, learning about visitors' lives, and showing off the natural beauty, history, and cultural heritage of their pueblo. Many also enjoyed attending training workshops, when they were offered, and appreciated the opportunity to learn new things. Surprisingly, however, few of these people chose to continue working in ecotourism, even on a part-time basis, once their cargo appointments ended. I was also frequently told, and especially by those working beyond their cargo appointments, that most people in the pueblo had no idea what the day-to-day work of tourism required: the long and unpredictable hours greeting visitors and attending to their needs, the back-breaking work of cleaning and preparing lodging, the demands of organizing finances, garnering funding, and maintaining facilities. They felt their work was unappreciated and taken-for-granted.

In this chapter, I explore the day-to-day work of brokering community-based ecotourism. I focus on the mundane, even banal details of tourism work, because these nitty-gritty experiences shed light on the strengths and challenges of ecotourism as a project for change. These brokers are situated at the interface between the state and the community (Mathews 2011:214). They must negotiate political and economic change desired by the state alongside community goals to achieve development that is culturally grounded and morally accountable. In the process, they must develop a range of personal and professional skills that will allow them

⁹⁰ For a vivid account of the range of ways in which workers find tourism work engaging and satisfying, see Gmelch (2012).

to work effectively with state agents, attend to community needs, and deliver a world-class ecotourism experience to visitors. A detailed exploration of the role of culture broker, within both the tourism and the community settings, provides a textured appreciation for the strengths and limitation of community-based ecotourism.

Quality in Service: The Art of Brokering Tourism

Miguel invited me to join him and Carmen, the housekeeper, for the second day of a three-day training session in Oaxaca. The course, “Quality in Service” was being offered by SECTUR. Carmen had attended by herself the first day. She had enjoyed the day, and said that the facilitator was good at keeping people’s attention. Miguel could not attend the first day because he had had other business to attend to in the pueblo. The two planned to go together, without me, for the third day.

In order to arrive on time at the hotel in Oaxaca, we left Latuvi at 6:30 am. Miguel had arranged for someone to drive us the 20-minute journey on the dirt road from the pueblo center to the paved highway. Once there, we were fortunate to catch a bus right away, and we arrived in Oaxaca about an hour later. We had breakfast at a nearby market, then walked the short distance to the hotel where the course was being held. The session started at 9 am, and we arrived a few minutes late. Carmen quickly signed in and joined the session, leaving Miguel and me in the lobby. Miguel needed to register, and he needed to ask permission for me to observe the training. The woman at the sign-in desk was unsure about me, and she went to find someone to approve my attendance. A moment later, a tall, light-skinned woman in a yellow SECTUR-embroidered shirt came into the lobby. She approached Miguel with an authoritative posture – she literally towered over him in her high-heeled sandals - and shook her head (I thought I heard

her cluck her tongue, but wasn't sure). "Miguel, Miguel" she reproached. "Why didn't you come yesterday?" Miguel, who at this point was looking toward the ground with slightly hunched shoulders, offered her a half-response about other obligations. She cut him off, and in the same reproachful tone asked, "And are you going to come tomorrow?" Miguel nodded, "Yes." Satisfied with their exchange, she agreed to let me observe the session. I quickly lifted my own gaze and half-hunched shoulders, and we left the lobby to find our seats in the conference room⁹¹.

Inside, we found a group of about 50 people standing around a large U-shaped table. The facilitator, Nancy, was leading the group in a rhythmic chant, a variation of a call-and-response. For each word that Nancy said, the group was instructed to make a different motion. *Hola*, and everyone placed their hands on their ears. *¿Cómo estás?*, and they crossed their arms at the chest. *Buenos días*, and hands clapped in front of chests. *Bienvenidos*, and hands dropped to hips. A final clap marked the end of the chant, and then the whole thing started again from the top. Nancy led the group in this chant for a few minutes, then instructed everyone to close their eyes and do it as a group and without prompting. The group continued in this way for about 15 minutes. At first, Miguel and I stayed seated against the wall, but after a while I convinced him to stand and we joined the exercise.

As we led ourselves, eyes closed, Nancy paced the center of the room. Once we had established a stable rhythm, she began to speak over us. "Concentration, quality, and perfection of movement are of vital importance for achieving quality in service. You need to have good

⁹¹ I am 5'7", and I felt dominated by this woman's presence; Miguel is a few inches shorter than me. Later that day, when we were back at in Latuvi, Miguel joked about this exchange. "She scolded me! And she tried to place conditions on my attendance!" Through his joking he made it clear that he was not happy with having been treated that way. I told him that I also felt small next to her, that I didn't stand up straight. He thought this was funny that I also felt scolded by her.

coordination to do your work well. The phone is ringing, you are writing up a bill and attending to a tourist at the counter, all at the same time. We do many things all at once. Quality in service means repetition, repetition, repetition.” As she paced the room, she refined our movements, giving us more specific instructions about exactly how to place our hands on our ears or keep our elbows tucked in to our sides when we clapped. She began to talk faster and faster, interrupting our train of thought as she demonstrated the importance of concentration and practice in doing a good job amidst distraction.

To complete the exercise, Nancy had us return to our seats and write out detailed instructions for the steps of the chant and its movements. She called on a participant to read what he had written. “Hands extended,” he said, “gently touching your ears.” Nancy followed the instructions, but left her elbows sticking way out the sides and her hands pointed backwards. The attendee quickly amended his instructions, adding that the elbows should be towards the body. Nancy adjusted her elbows as he spoke, demonstrating for the group the importance of specificity in movement.

Next, Nancy had the group divide up according to job description – hotel workers on one side of the room, restaurant employees on another, and guides with telemarketers towards the back. I joined Miguel to form a group of three ecotourism guides and one telemarketer; we were the only such group, and everyone else present was either a receptionist, housekeeper, waiter, or cook. Once the groups settled, Nancy continued her instructions. “In order to deliver a product, you need to have quality-service procedures. And you need to know exactly what it is you are selling. For example, in the hotel industry, what are you selling?” Someone from the hotel group answered “Rest”. “Yes,” she agreed, “things need to be very comfortable. How do you provide this?” People offered various answers, that the room be painted a peaceful color, that the

lighting be low and calm, that noises be limited, that the bed be comfortable. Nancy turned next to the restaurant group, “How do you provide good service?” Again, a variety of quick responses were offered: in the flavor and presentation of the food, the attitude of the server, through proper hygiene, appropriate décor, and reasonable pricing.

Finally, Nancy turned to our group with the same question. The owner of a mountain bike tourism agency attempted a response. Unlike the others in the room who offered concise answers, this man took his time. He explained, in detail, about the genre of adventure tourism, how their clients want exercise and to see attractions beyond conventional tourism (the genre in which all but a handful of attendees worked). During the minute or so this guide spoke, Nancy stood in front of him, motionless and expressionless. When he finished, she did not respond to his answer, but turned instead to a hotel worker and asked, “What do guides sell?” “They sell information. They sell culture.” Nancy took up her pace again, saying, “Guides don’t sell attractions. Those are already there. In tourism, we sell the moment. Guides sell recreation (*diversión*).” During a later activity, Nancy elicited responses from most groups, but not ours; I couldn’t help but feel reprimanded, that our group had much to learn and little to contribute.

The rest of the morning continued in a similar manner, with Nancy heavily emphasizing the roles of specificity, intention, and repetition in providing quality service. Staff must know their job descriptions, the product they are selling, and the procedures for delivering it. Nothing should be left to chance. A waitress has steps to follow, starting with the way she prepares herself at home for her shift; she dresses in her uniform, not a in a mini-skirt with bright red lipstick. Servers should know their menus inside and out, and be able to provide recommendations. Receptionists should practice their scripts for explaining room sizes and pricing. Quality service depends on organization, too. Start the workday by making a to-do list.

“And when the list is done, I can tell myself, ‘Wow, I did all that in six hours, and I still have two hours left in my shift, so there is time to do some extra work’.” To learn to be well organized at work, we should be organized in our personal lives, as well. “Wake up at the same time every day. At 6:00 am on the dot.” Wear your uniform, so that everyone is the same. International businesses like Starbucks, Hilton, and the Marriott, all started out small and arrived at their success through organization and discipline.

After the course, I asked Miguel to compare this workshop to others he had attended. For example, was it common for most of the attendees to be employed by conventional tourism in Oaxaca City? “No, not all of them,” he said. “There have been courses for community-based projects. Even so, they aren’t all that different, because they all focus on the business aspects of tourism.” I commented on the pace of the workshop, that Nancy spoke quickly and didn’t allow people much time to respond to her questions. Echoing the theme of the day, he responded “That’s because she is the trainer. I have to know my client.” A person who knows his role well shouldn’t need time to think; the responses should be automatic. Nancy was conditioning them to provide a more precise and standardized service. I said, “But you already know everything, right? You have attended so many of these courses.” Miguel laughed, “Yes, but it is difficult for us to be organized. For example, what am I going to do if Carmen gets sick? Who will clean?” The course was important to him, he explained, because it taught him the value of formalizing and recording the specific responsibilities for each of their positions.

This workshop demonstrates the broader logic of tourism management and standardized service that governs the state’s approach to tourism work. It is also the style to which many long-term workers like Miguel and Carmen aspire. The aesthetic that governs “good tourism

work”⁹², as presented by Nancy, seeks to inform a range of actions and activities. It governs workers’ bodies, disciplining their physical comportment and their presentation of self through dress and hygiene. It affects their movement through time and space, requiring efficiency in the workday and conservation in movement. It idealizes a technological and highly organized approach to work. Also instructive is Nancy’s selective acknowledgement or dismissal of participants’ knowledge, patterns of speech, and ideas about how to relate to tourists. There is a craft to catering to tourists’ needs and desires, and to delivering appropriate and adequate service.

This standard of quality in service is, of course, an ideal. My goal is not to demonstrate the extent to which community tourism workers have internalized this logic, but rather to explore how the logic informs their day-to-day activities in ecotourism. Through the vignettes that follow, I explore a range of tourism roles, paying attention to the ways this focus on quality service informs workers’ understandings of their job responsibilities, their standards for good work, their estimations of which skills matter most, and their endeavors to hone these skills.

I also explore some of the roadblocks to achieving these standards. During the training course described above, geographic distance played a major role. We arrived late, despite our early departure, because we lived in the periphery and were reliant on public transportation. Two attendees from a neighboring village arrived at 11; they were the only ones to arrive later than us. The distance also meant the Miguel could not simultaneously attend to his duties in the pueblo and his responsibilities to SECTUR. Different notions of time also inform these dynamics. In the pueblo, the day is not so structured, and start times are only generally adhered

⁹² For a discussion of the role of “aesthetic labor” in the hospitality industry, see Nickson and Warhurst (2007).

to⁹³. People do not try to maximize their labor, nor do they adhere to an 8-hour workday. That is not to say that there isn't a rhythm to the day, or that people aren't busy; men and especially women keep a routine to their days, and I rarely saw people idle. But Nancy's laws of maximization and efficiency do not apply to their daily lives. In the vignettes that follow, other roadblocks include language barriers, ideas about strangers, computer literacy, access to technology, training in business administration and office management, and the physical demands of tourism work. While community tourism workers have access to training through state agencies such as SECTUR and CDI, much of the practical learning takes place on the job, as workers attempt to navigate the demands of state bureaucracies and a sophisticated global tourism market. Few of these skills are acquired through the regular rhythms of pueblo life – in homes and schools, through non-tourism cargo service, or at churches – but rather require a special kind of seriousness and enthusiasm on the part of the community workers.

Talking to Strangers

Fernanda was born and raised in Latuvi. When she turned 16, she moved to Oaxaca to attend high school (Latuvi has an elementary and middle school only), then worked for a year as a kindergarten teacher. In 2004, when she was 20, Fernanda was hired to work for Expediciones Sierra Norte, the umbrella organization that coordinates ecotourism in the towns of Pueblos Mancomunados. The office is located in Oaxaca City, and Fernanda's job was to provide information to tourists, organize reservations, and offer administrative support for the overall project and to the individual ecotourism committees in each participating pueblo.

⁹³ As a further testament to these sometimes very different notions of time, Oaxaca City observes a Day Light Savings, while the Sierra Juárez does not.

I first met Fernanda in 2005 when, as a tourist myself, I visited the office to make my own reservations for a two-day hike in el mancomún. During the years that I got to know her, Fernanda displayed a calm control over the office, ever knowledgeable and competent in accomplishing her task, despite her young age. During the work day, Fernanda was a constant buzz of administrative activity, answering phone calls and emails, attending to tourists who stopped by to learn about hiking and accommodations, editing PowerPoint files to be used for funding presentations or in tourism workshops, and helping coordinators manage ledgers and other administrative duties. Though she did not speak English beyond a few key words related to tourism activities, she adeptly fielded questions from the many backpackers and students who likewise spoke limited Spanish beyond a few key travel-related terms.

Fernanda did not enter her post with this confidence and skill; she knew even less English, had no training in office work, no knowledge about ecotourism, and no experience in cultural translation. As she explained to me during an interview in 2008:

The first year that I worked in ecotourism, the three or four months when I began, I said to myself, “How can I explain to the costumers what is el mancomún? Which routes are available? How am I going to organize their visit?”. Sometimes I made a mistake with a reservation, but I also learned quickly. Mostly, though, it was the English. How could I manage in English if I don’t speak English? I had to find a way to buy myself a dictionary, and prepare myself word by word...I told myself, well, I’m going to try to learn English the best I can to help the costumers. And now, well, I can’t carry out a long conversation, but at least I can understand what the costumers ask me and I can express myself more or less, and make them understand what they need to know. But, when I started, I didn’t know much more than, “Hello. How can I help you?” And then they would ask me about the altitude or how long a hike was or how difficult it was, and I stood there silently. What do I say to them? What did they ask me? But now, little by little by little. And I know that I have more English to learn, but at least I know how to attend to the costumers from the moment they arrive.

Fernanda’s concern for the language gap and its effects on her ability to attend to tourists’ needs was expressed in very similar ways by many community tourism workers. Tourists from

non-Spanish speaking countries comprise a significant, and impressionable, percentage of visitors to el mancomún⁹⁴. At the same time, community tourism workers are highly unlikely to speak any English, the de facto lingua franca for most international travelers. In fact, during the four-year span of my research in Pueblos Mancomunados, I met only one worker who knew English⁹⁵. The limited training these workers receive likewise does not include language courses. Few people have the resources to pursue second-language studies; even Fernanda, who lived in the city throughout the week and earned a modest income, would not have had the time or money to attend classes. To my knowledge, there was no effort on the part of the state to subsidize English language lessons for people working in community-based ecotourism.

Instead, community workers are compelled to develop a range of strategies to overcome the language gap. They learn to rely heavily on body language, as well as on the senses of sight and taste. Pointing at objects is a favorite way to start. Clothing can be used to talk about colors. Leaves from medicinal plants encountered on hikes can be picked and smelled, while indicating with gestures the body part or malady they treat. Tourists can be brought into the comedor kitchens to taste food heating on the stove. Workers pick up key words and phrases in English. They learn to anticipate commonly asked questions and prepare succinct responses in Spanish, easily understood by Spanish-language learners. To the extent that workers can develop these non-verbal skills, the language barrier does not seem to limit or impact visitors' experiences. In fact, these challenges are often treated as charming idiosyncrasies that feed into tourists' desires

⁹⁴ Tourists' demographics vary widely from town to town. Domestic tourists are far more likely to visit pueblos they can easily access by car from the paved highways, sometimes outnumbering international tourists by as much as 4 to 1. Generally, the reverse is true for pueblos located farther away from the paved highways, to which international tourists are more likely to hike.

⁹⁵ This man was originally from Oaxaca, but moved to Benito Juárez with his white, US-born wife. As a condition of their residence, he and his wife were made full citizens of the town and are required to serve cargos.

to experience difference. On the other hand, when workers do not develop these skills, the tourism experience can be far less fulfilling, for workers and guests alike. I have witnessed and been told about many hikes, often lead by young men serving cargos or hired to work sporadically during peak seasons, that were conducted almost entirely in silence, with guides offering information only in response to a direct question from a hiker.

Fernanda shared with me another anxiety she had to overcome when she began tourism work – a paralyzing fear of strangers, and specifically of people with light skin. It took her time to get used to being in the city and being around different kinds of people, because of her experiences as a child:

When I was a little girl, when I saw a light-skinned person (*una persona güera*), especially if he had blue or green eyes, I would get nauseas and faint. I couldn't look at people from other countries. Something about their gaze (*su vista*). It was very strange because it didn't happen with everyone. But this passed by the time I was in elementary or middle school... Still, I wondered [when I started working in tourism], how can I talk to a stranger, someone who isn't like me (*no es mi persona, no es mi gente*)? But little by little, I got used to it.

Though she didn't make the connection herself, Fernanda's fear of strangers was very likely due to a legend about *robachicas*, wanderers who steal children if they misbehave or do not obey their parents. I learned about robachicas early in my fieldwork, when I asked townspeople about their initial reactions to the ecotourism project. People were leery of strangers, and children thought tourists were robachicas. As one woman explained:

The thing is, back then, we didn't understand and people were afraid. Lets just say that when they saw a light-skinned man, you could say a "gringo", they didn't like it. The children would say that it was a robachica, someone who would come to steal children. It's just that we weren't used to having tourism (*no teníamos convivencia con el turismo*), we didn't have a good understanding of what tourism was. If someone saw a man, a bearded, light-skinned man, maybe he was a little dirty, he didn't have a backpack, just a little blanket to cover himself, well, all the kids would hide. Once, we saw someone up above the school and all the children ran up there saying, "We are going to see the robachica!" Well, it wasn't a robachica, it was a tourist walking by, that's all.

Many people told me that townspeople were afraid and uncertain about the arrival of strangers to their village. Though they didn't always racialize strangers in the way Fernanda did, they did wonder whether tourists – Mexicans, gringos, or otherwise – were coming to do harm, to steal their belongings or somehow take advantage of them. Over time, everyone insisted, these fears abated, and today villagers mostly understand and welcome tourists⁹⁶.

Doing tourism work for the community – and doing it well – meant that Fernanda, and many of her colleagues, submit themselves to a process of profound personal growth and development. The very act of talking with strangers and welcoming them to the community requires many to move well outside their comfort zones. For those who manage the transition, there appear to be some rewards. As Fernanda explained:

Little by little, I began to notice that the thing [tourists] are most interested in is to learn the customs, the traditions of a community, to see nature. For me, for us, we go past a tree or a waterfall every day, and it doesn't even interest us. But, there are a lot of people who come and want to see a waterfall or something else in the pueblo, and they are astonished by it. Why don't we take the same interest in these things? But, little by little, I've come to realize that what we are missing is that we don't value what we have.

For many, working in tourism means learning to be a culture broker. It may even mean learning to “see like a tourist” – to understand one's home through the lens of the tourism experience, and perhaps even begin to rearrange the experience of community to appeal to the tourist gaze. It is a process of profound personal growth and development, and

⁹⁶ As a light-skinned, blue-eyed foreigner myself, I inspired a similar fear in small children on several occasions. Once, at public event, I was seated on a bench next to a woman whose small child wanted to join her. The boy stopped dead in his tracks when he realized he would first have to pass in front of me. His mother beckoned him to her, but he was left immobile, exchanging looks of terror with me and desperate glances with his mother. I found a seat a few rows back, and the relieved boy finally joined his mother on the bench. Another time, during a church service, a young mother sitting next to me told her fidgety 2-year-old daughter that I would kidnap her if she didn't sit still. The mother then tried to make me an accomplice in the charade. “She is going to carry you away in her *rebozo* (shawl), aren't you?”. The girl looked at me wide-eyed, but I made a silly face and shook my head no.

workers must take the initiative to gain new skills, such as speaking English or administering an office, and to alter their sense of self and place as they interact with strangers who place new value on the pueblo and its cultural forms.

Technology

At the time of my research in Latuvi, Miguel had been serving as tourism coordinator for nearly four years. In 2005, he was elected by the *asamblea* to serve a two-year, unpaid cargo as treasurer of the ecotourism project. In 2007, he petitioned the *asamblea* to hire him full-time to continue leading the project, a position he held until 2012. During his tenure, he was required to perform a wide array of tasks: expert guide, housekeeper, bicycle repairperson, book keeper, grant writer, foreperson, boss, secretary, visionary leader, and pueblo spokesperson. Miguel's gregarious nature, attention to detail, and overall professionalism served him equally well in town *asambleas*, on hikes, and in state offices. I spent many hours with Miguel in the ecotourism office, helping with basic administrative tasks, borrowing electricity to power my laptop, and generally learning about the daily rhythms of tourism work. He was one of my most important research relationships, and eagerly answered my many questions on topics ranging from domestic life to religion to regional politics.

Miguel's eagerness to develop ecotourism in Latuvi grew out of a genuine attachment to and love for his natal pueblo. After completing middle school, Miguel moved to Mexico City for two years to work, but quickly returned home. He married, started a family, and began to move through the ranks of communal service, first in an entry-level cargo at the primary school, then

two more lower mid-level secretary positions⁹⁷. Through these previous positions, Miguel learned about the workings of local politics and how to communicate effectively with state agencies on the behalf of his pueblo. However, he gained little knowledge of the day-to-day operations of tourism. For this, he had to attend a number of training sessions hosted by various state agencies involved in tourism development, to learn, among other things, basic computer literacy, the art of interpreting forest trails, first aid and emergency procedures, accounting, and hotel administration.

I spent many evenings in Latuvi in the tourism office. Tourism workers often gathered in the office at this time, having completed their respective duties for the day; the cabañas had been cleaned, administrative runs to Oaxaca completed, and tourists returned safely from the forest. As the day ended, the workers came here to relax together for a few moments – they would joke about the days’ activities, receive their assignments for the following day, attend to tourists’ last minute needs, and generally enjoy each others’ company before returning home for a late evening meal.

⁹⁷ Once, secretary posts were reserved for men well on their way to advancing through the cargo ranks. Today, young men with post-middle school education or migration experience are considered well-suited for these positions, owing to their computer literacy and perceived ability to converse effectively with “outsiders”, such as state agents and development workers (Cohen 1999; Mathews 1985).



Figure 17 Latuvi's ecotourism workers relaxing at the end of the day, April 2009

One evening, I found Miguel sitting at the computer with Carmen, the housekeeper. They had the reservations book out on the table, and Miguel had a spreadsheet open on the computer. They were logging information about the tourists who had visited Latuvi in January – where they came from, how many nights they stayed, and which activities they had done. Each month, SECTUR required them to send in this report, to aid with the agency’s promotional efforts. If they didn’t do it, Miguel explained, someone from SECTUR would come to visit the town, “to see if we are doing things properly, because they are the ones who have trained us, they have given us funding.” They used to create the reports by hand; Miguel would read from the ledger and Carmen would write down the totals. Now that SECTUR had provided them with an Excel spreadsheet, and given that Carmen didn’t know how to use the computer, they were doing it the other way around. Miguel’s computer literacy was functional, but quite limited, and basic word processing tasks such as entering data or formatting bullets frustrated him. Given the demands of state funding agencies such as SECTUR, he had little choice but to stick with it, regardless of how long the work took or how many other tasks had to be put on hold. Still, he had developed some confidence and was eager to experiment and learn. When the report was

finished, Miguel asked me to accompany him to the internet café across the street, so that he could email the document to SECTUR. “I am going to Oaxaca tomorrow,” he told me, “but perhaps I ought to send it by email now. I have to practice, right?” At the café – a cluster of three computers, a telephone, and a fax machine set up in the backroom of a store – I helped him open the internet browser, find Hotmail, sign in to his account, attach the file, and hit send. He was a little familiar with the process, but I still had to help him through the steps. When we finished, I assured him that next time he would likely be able to do it all on his own.

A few evenings later, we were joined in the office by a private tourism guide named Joe. Joe was born in the US but lived in Oaxaca and worked for a tourism agency that regularly brought hikers to el mancomún. I had just finished helping Miguel with another spreadsheet, one that had been vexing him for some time (“It is so quick for you,” Miguel marveled as I typed in the data. “I just get frustrated.”). Carmen sat on a couch with a pile of knitting in her lap. At some point, the conversation turned to Latuvi’s web presence. Joe opened the discussion by suggesting that every town in el mancomún have its own website, each one linking to the main website managed by the Expediciones Sierra Norte office in Oaxaca. Miguel and I had discussed this in the past, and without realizing it at the time, I began to engage Joe on Miguel’s behalf. “Who is going to make it?” I said to Joe, half joking. Joe thought they could easily find a student to do the work. I replied, “But then no one knows how to make the changes, or they have to pay someone.” I explained the idea my husband and I had presented to Miguel, to create a blog that would be easier to maintain than a formal website. Joe didn’t press any further, having remembered that true purpose of his visit was to find extra toilet paper for his tourists, not create an action plan to develop Latuvi’s web presence.

After Joe left, Miguel confided in me, “These are the things I don’t understand. There are so many different kinds of things. Blogs. Web pages.” He was sitting on the couch, and he threw his hands up to his temples and pushed his head back. “And then, someone comes and says that they can make a web page, but they charge a lot of money. Then I go and talk to another web designer, and they charge a different amount. And I don’t understand what the difference is.” He told me someone had just updated the main website for Expediciones Sierra Norte, “but he did it according to his own ideas.” The tourism comité and the town coordinators decided they would have to sit down and review the site, “so that we know what it says and we can say what we want to say on the site.”

While children and adolescents in Latuvi have increasing access to technology and are quickly developing computer literacy, most adults in the pueblo find themselves at a disadvantage in a world saturated by media and technology. This is aptly demonstrated by my own missteps in speaking on behalf of Miguel when discussing Latuvi’s internet presence, as well as the comité’s response to the changes made to their website. To the extent that workers like Miguel are able to develop confidence and minimal computer literacy, the expectation that they digitally produce monthly statements, funding proposals, or conference presentations is a tremendous burden on their already over-taxed workload. This steep learning curve has overwhelmed some community workers, while others just manage to keep their heads above water, at times aided by younger, more technologically savvy workers such as Fernanda.

Local notions of work and time management also come into play here. People in Latuvi are always busy at some chore or another – working in their own *milpa* (small agricultural plot) or in the fields of a friend or relative, fixing a piece of furniture, collecting firewood, caring for children, feeding poultry and livestock, preparing a hot meal three times a day. The list goes on.

They do so at their own steady, but not hectic, pace. They have a general idea of what they would like to accomplish, but they are also flexible in their expectations. A task not completed today (because of, say, an unexpected visit from an anthropologist) can always be attended to tomorrow. When I spoke with people about my own home life, and that I lived in an urban area, they often commented about these differences in the pace of life. Things are so hectic in the city, they would say. People don't even have time to sit down for a hot meal in the morning. By contrast, in the pueblo, things are more relaxed. And, they would quickly emphasize, in the pueblo, each person is their own boss. They choose the hour of work and which tasks to address. The tourism industry, on the other hand, emphasizes punctuality and standardization. As Nancy stressed during the training session in Oaxaca, efficiency, organization, and multi-tasking are the name of the game. Tourism is a business, Miguel had reminded me that day, and his job was to serve his guests. His job was also to serve the demands of his funding agencies, which meant learning new technologies and time management skills.

Housekeeping

I found Carmen outside the utility closet late in the morning. I had hoped to snag her for an interview, but it was clear that more pressing issues required her attention. A group of tourists had just arrived on an early-morning hike from a neighboring pueblo, and Carmen was rushing to clean their cabaña. A few yards away, a woman from the group lazed in a hammock. I offered to help Carmen – though I really had no housekeeping experience – and she readily accepted. We started with the double bed. Carmen laid out a crisp white sheet and instructed me to tuck it in tightly to cover the mattress. We spread a second sheet on top as a blanket. After a few minutes, the tourist joined us in the cabaña, and suddenly, Carmen was hosting a mini bed-

making workshop. She spread out a thick flannel blanket and explained to us the correct way to turn down the covers. Starting from left side, she pulled down the sheet and the blanket together at an angle that ended at the exact middle of the bed. I did the same on my side, and Carmen came around to inspect my work. “A little bit wider,” she said, and reached to pull the edge with a practiced tug, then smoothed her palms across the blanket to finish.

Next came the bedspread, and with a *-flick-* of her wrists, Carmen quickly spread the tan, hotel-quality quilt over the bed in a single motion. We smoothed out the quilt, then moved to the head of the bed. Carmen pulled back the quilt by about two and a half feet, placed a pillow on top of this folded section, and motioned for me to do the same. Then, silently, Carmen instructed me to gently roll back the bedspread so that the pillows flipped over to the top of the bed. The quilt now met the headboard perfectly, and the pillows were tightly tucked underneath. The tourist and I practically squealed with delight, and I said to Carmen, with equal parts amazement and respect, “I always wondered how you made the pillows so perfectly. Now I know!” The tourist nodded from the from the foot of the bed, “The secret is out!”

With shining eyes and a barely contained smile, Carmen informed us proudly, “Now, the towels.” She picked up a white bath towel and began to fold it in a rosette. I copied her movements with the second towel. Carmen asked the tourist how many people were in her group. There were three. And how many were women? Two. Carmen retrieved a third towel and began to fold it the shape of a shirt. I asked her, “Does it matter to you if the tourists are women or men?” Carmen nodded her head yes. She asked the tourist where everyone would be sleeping, then placed the towels on the beds accordingly.



Figure 18 Inside an ecotourism cabaña in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, May 2009

Housekeeping is a detail-oriented job, and as she so adeptly demonstrated during this impromptu bed-making workshop, Carmen was very good at it. In addition to her housekeeping duties, she also often helped Miguel with administrative tasks such as bookkeeping or managing the guides while he was away. Carmen told me that she enjoyed the work, and she appreciated the opportunity to meet people and learn new things at the courses she occasionally attended. But her work was also exhausting and physically demanding. Bathrooms had to be scrubbed, fireplaces cleaned of their soot, and floors swept and mopped. Tending to the beds was the most time consuming activities of all, and most of the work was done by hand. Making the beds was easy, compared to laundering the linens. Carmen pre-soaked the linens in large buckets, moved them to a mechanized drum to agitate them, placed them back in buckets to rinse, then rung them all out by hand. She hung the sheets on lines to dry in the sun. At the end of the day, once they had dried, she would bring them into an unused room to neatly fold and stack them before storing them in the linen closet. Sometimes Miguel would help her with this final task. To accomplish her work, Carmen would arrive at breakfast and stay till sundown. She was hired to work five days per week; in reality, she was at the cabañas six or seven, particularly during the

busier seasons. She was paid M\$100 per day for her work⁹⁸. She tried on various occasions to recruit other women to help, spending a few days to train them; despite the opportunity to earn much-needed cash, most of these women declined future invitations to work. One woman told her it was too much work, and the work never seemed to end.

Routes

Oscar and I arrived at the tourism office at the same time, at 8am. The tourists were ready to go by 8:15. Oscar would be leading these two women – a retiree from Nova Scotia and her thirty-something Mexican translator – on the 15 kilometer hike from Latuvi to Lachatao. The trail, called the Camino Real, is part of a longer, pre-Hispanic trade route by the same name, linking the central valleys of Oaxaca to the Gulf of Mexico. Oscar was chosen by his fellow latuvenses to serve a one-year cargo as a tourism guide; on days such as today, when he lead a hike, he received the full M\$120 fee the tourists were charged for his service⁹⁹. He was an eager and enthusiastic guide, who found great joy in meeting tourists and displaying his knowledge of local flora and fauna. He had worked for a number of years doing odd jobs for a weaver in the nearby weaving village of Teotitlán del Valle, including collecting wild plants that were used to dye wool, and he regularly demonstrated his knowledge of these plants during his hikes.

As we made our way out of the center of town toward the trailhead, the translator let Oscar know that her companion was interested in bird watching and learning about plants.

“That’s fine,” Oscar replied. “I brought my binoculars.” He pulled the binoculars out of his

⁹⁸ Miguel was paid M\$150 per day, the equivalent to a wage someone would expect to be paid for a day of farm work.

⁹⁹ In some towns, this fee was kept as profit by the tourism office, and guides did not receive any remuneration for their services.

backpack and looped them around his head. A few minutes later, he spotted a bird in a nearby orchard. He pointed the bird out to the tourist and handed her the binoculars for a closer look. A little later on in the hike, Oscar noticed another bird, and passed around the binoculars. “It’s called a *cara blanca*,” he informed us. “In Zapotec, it’s call *unalá*¹⁰⁰.”

During an early downhill descent toward the river, Oscar stopped to point out a dried flower at the side of the trail, used by weavers in the valley to dye their yarn. When fresh, he explained, the flower produces a yellow dye, while the dried plant yields a grey one. Throughout the hike, Oscar paused to provide similar kinds of information about the plants in the forest: there was *cola de caballo* (horsetail) for an upset stomach; *laurel* (bay leaf) for cooking; *árnica* to cure bruises; *siempre viva* (a type of succulent) to revive a baby’s appetite; *oreja de elefante* (“elephant ear”) for cataracts. Later in the day, I overheard the tourist sharing her experience with another woman who had completed the same trail that day, but with a different guide. “You’re lucky to have someone to explain all these things to you,” the second tourist confided. “We requested it, but we didn’t get it. My nephew just graduated from agriculture school, and he wanted to learn about all these things.” The nephew, who had joined the conversation, asked whether Oscar was a botanist. The tourist I had accompanied laughed and said, “No, he’s a Zapotec!”

During the hike, Oscar also stopped a number of times to point out features of the trail and explain their significance in the history and contemporary social life of the pueblo. There was the field at the side of the small river where the pueblo sometimes hosts a fiesta. Piles of rocks and boulders piled on that same river, brought in a few years earlier by a hurricane that

¹⁰⁰ In the absence of a Spanish-Sierra Zapotec dictionary (which, to my knowledge, does not exist), and given that the dialect is a spoken, rather than written one, I have recorded Zapotec words phonetically with the help of native speakers, as well as by my own ear as needed.

decimated the trout population. A metal trash can on the outskirts of the pueblo, installed by the Health Committee to reduce litter. Ancient markings carved into boulders by traders, and by townspeople fleeing the Spanish during La Conquista. The dirt road leading the final two kilometers uphill to Lachatao, built to service the mines – “I made these roads”, he told the tourists proudly.



Figure 19 A guide from Latuvi leading a hike out of town, March 2009

Oscar was also attentive to the physical needs of the tourists. A kilometer into the hike, he stopped us at a trail marker and outlined the features of our fifteen-kilometer hike, explaining which parts were the most strenuous and which were the most leisurely. After walking along the river for a while, he pointed out the best place to collect fresh drinking water. At the trail's halfway point, he stopped for an unhurried lunchtime rest, sharing food and conversation with the group. Oscar seemed particularly skilled at pacing the hike, so that we all walked comfortably despite some of the more difficult terrain. Somehow, it seemed he was even able to manage the distance we each kept from one another, about three or four feet apart, so that we had some independence in exploration while still being close enough to hear one another and know when he was about to teach us something. That such spacing might be by design and not by

accident occurred to me during our lunch break, when we were passed by the other group on the same trail that day. This second group (with the agriculture school graduate) was being led by a young, less experienced guide, who was serving his first cargo for his pueblo. The young guide came by first and at a brisk pace, much faster than what we had been walking. He was leading a horse carrying the tourists' packs. A young woman was close behind him, followed almost a full minute later by two middle-aged women, and, another several minutes later, by a young man walking swiftly, apparently trying to catch up with the group. When they had all passed, Oscar commented disapprovingly that the horse was soaked with sweat, and that he himself would never lead a group in such a hurried manner.

In general, the best community guides have all acquired skills similar to the ones Oscar demonstrated on this hike. Such guides express a genuine appreciation of and eagerness for tourism work. They speak competently about features of the landscape and of pueblo life in general, with little to no prompting on the part of the tourist. No doubt, such guides have developed a narrative for their hikes, cobbled together through repetition and experience, and as a result are able to anticipate the interests and abilities of their clients. This includes the regular, and somewhat strategic, insertion of Zapotec words and phrases, to the consistent delight of both tourists and residents who happen to be passing by. Gaining this level of professionalism can be an elusive task for many who are appointed to serve these cargos¹⁰¹. Less experienced, younger, and/or less interested guides tend to walk at a great distance from the group, rarely speak unless spoken to first, and separate themselves from the group during rest stops. Even experienced guides can flounder when it comes to anticipating tourists' needs, and provide information or explain details only when directly asked to.

¹⁰¹ During my research, guides were almost always serving cargos, rather than having been hired as full-time staff.

Through these vignettes, I have attempted to illustrate the range of skills and knowledge that community tourism workers are expected to acquire in order to provide quality services to a global tourism market. But crafting a pleasant experience for tourists and working with state development agencies is only one half of the job of brokering tourism. Tourism workers must also liaise effectively with their community, address the needs of the pueblo and adhere to local structures of service and accountability.

Culture Brokers, Unruly Citizens, and the Politics of Ecotourism

In his study of community forestry in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca, Andrew Mathews (2011) explores the acts of negotiation between the community and state agencies that coproduce knowledge about the forest. Rather than being imposed by fiat or internalized as a result of projects of governmentality, knowledge about the forest is created and made credible through mundane acts such as marking and cutting down trees, filing paperwork, producing management plans, and presenting reports at community meetings. Actors from every arena of social life, from state agents to senior community leaders to community foresters to everyday citizens, use their technical and political skill and savvy to critique, contest, assent, and especially to hold each other accountable for their actions. Relevant to this chapter is Mathews' discussion of the participation of the community as critical to this process. Many residents have worked in the logging business, as professional foresters, as loggers, as sawmill operators. They are knowledgeable about the logging industry and best-management practices, and they are able to reliably call into question the actions of their appointed leaders. By tracing "small-scale, far

away, and insignificant details” such as burning diseased trees or mapping forest stands, Mathews shows how “unruly” residents are capable of remaking and undermining larger systems of knowledge and power (233).

Also important for this chapter is Mathews’ consideration of the cargo system and the ideology of harmony through which residents contextualize knowledge into locally salient terms that govern communal service and the moral accountability of cargo holders. Mathews refers to cargo offices as the “location of struggles over the control of communal institutions and the implementation of community development projects” (214). The individuals who occupy these offices are at the “interface between state and community”, and they must mediate the interests of both parties through their technical skill as well as their ability to successfully ally themselves with key actors in state agencies and with powerful and influential members of the community. In assessing office holders’ success, residents consider their practical accomplishments as they manage the responsibilities of their post, the efficacy of their external alliances in garnering resources for the community (while not appearing to be “too close” to these agents), and the strength of their internal alliances with influential community members that lends credibility to their actions. Residents also take seriously cargo-holders’ attention to maintaining harmony and building consensus, of working together despite internal factions for the benefit of the whole community. Residents’ insistence that their pueblo is a harmonious place is an articulation of an ideal, rather than a social fact, that is deployed in an effort to make cargo holders morally accountable (230).

Though it doesn’t have the same institutional history as community forestry, community-based ecotourism is a development project that depends on many of these same processes to achieve credibility, authority and accountability. Cargo holders and full-time staff (who are

judged by the same standards of moral accountability as cargo holders) are the linchpins between the state and the community, and bear the burden of brokering the demands of funding agencies and the needs of pueblo residents. I have already discussed many of the mundane acts of tourism work, from producing occupancy reports to making beds to maintaining the pace of a hike. I now turn to the community setting, to explore the relationship between tourism work and the values of service, cooperation, and accountability that structure social life in the pueblo. I consider ecotourism as a political act, where tourism workers serve on the front lines of negotiations between the state and “unruly” residents (Mathews 2011) striving to keep ecotourism amenable to local standards of success and moral accountability.

No Solo es las Cabañas

The ecotourism office in Latuvi is a handsome adobe structure set in the middle of town, kitty corner from the town hall, that was built expressly for the purpose of receiving guests and administering to tourism duties. Though its exterior was designed to mimic vernacular architecture, inside the office bears little resemblance to a functioning home. Linoleum floors have replaced hard packed dirt; red clay tiles decorate the roofs, where less expensive corrugated metal is more commonly used. The interior walls have been sealed with a clear varnish, eliminating the dust normally associated with exposed adobe brick, while giving the walls a bright, polished finish. Large glass windows, complete with stained and varnished wooden frames, provide ample warmth and light for the two-room building. The main room serves as a gathering space, where tourists can sit on couches (a rare household commodity) to rest after a hike, rearrange their packs, or wait for the next adventure to begin. A set of indoor bathrooms – a men’s room and a ladies’ – flank this sitting room, and include full plumbing to accommodate

flushing toilets, hot showers, and sinks, luxuries typically found only in modern, concrete homes. The second room, the main office space, is lined with additional sofas as well as a set of desks and a desktop computer (a technology absent in all but two of the more than one hundred homes I visited).



Figure 20 The ecotourism office in Latuvi. Photo courtesy of SECTUR, April 2009

The tourist cabañas are located directly behind the office, on a descending terraced hill that provides a breathtaking view of the milpas below and the rippling pine-oak forest beyond. Though largely made of rustic, locally sourced materials, the cabañas provide a subtle luxury that often surprises backpackers and other eco-tourists. Cobblestoned walkways lead to tiled patios that guide visitors through well-crafted wooden doors and into sparse but comfortable accommodations. Rooms include wood-framed beds with hotel-quality linens, windows dressed with artisanal curtains, terra cotta fireplaces, and private bathrooms with hot showers and flushing toilets.

One afternoon, while I was visiting in the office, the mayor paid Miguel a visit. The mayor had been sworn in a short week and a half earlier, and he was now eager for a tour of the cabañas.

I stayed behind in the office with Carmen and Joe (the American guide working for a private tourism agency in Oaxaca). When the tour was over, Miguel rejoined us in the office and the agente returned to the town hall. “The thing is,” Miguel told us, in a slightly scandalized voice, “last year’s agente never came to see the cabañas.” “Never?” I shot back, in an equally scandalized tone. Miguel laughed this time, “No!” I shared with the group what many people in the pueblo had told me, that they had never visited the cabañas, either. Miguel said that many tourists have asked them whether they had spent a night in the cabañas. Joe and I both jumped on the idea, trying to convince them that, from a management perspective, it would be useful to know what it is like to stay in the cabañas. “For example,” Joe offered, “they say that you should sleep in every guest room in your house, so you can know if the beds are comfortable.” Finally, Miguel put an end to the lighthearted discussion, “You know, the thing is that the pueblo would never agree to us making personal use of tourism things. In La Nevería (a neighboring town), the tourism workers aren’t even allowed to use the bicycles, though we use them here all the time.”

In some ways, such segregation between residents (including its appointed officials) and the spaces of ecotourism is quite remarkable. The office and cabañas are located in the center of town, kitty corner from the agencia, on a main road used daily by residents on their way to the clinic, the schools, the store, town hall, or to make social visits. Ecotourism is a project of and for the pueblo, with major planning decisions approved by the asamblea and profits put to use in town development. Several of the cabañas themselves were built by residents, some of whom were hired as wage laborers, while others performed *tequios* (communal labor). During construction of the office, each household agreed to donate adobe bricks, formed and dried in their individual milpas. As soil content varies from one milpa to the next, the bricks range in

color from tanned and greenish grey to ruddy orange, creating a subtle mosaic on the office walls that bears silent witness to the communal nature of the project. Externally, these ecotourism buildings have become a part of the residents' everyday experience of place and a reminder of the social work involved in creating this kind of community. Yet, their internal spaces and activities are largely unknown to the general population.

Considering the amount of specialized work that goes into providing a quality tourism experience to a sophisticated global touring class, however, such divides become less remarkable. The growth in Latuvi's tourism infrastructure alone illustrates this point. This tiny town of approximately 600 inhabitants welcomes roughly double its population in tourists annually. Depending on the season and the fiesta calendar, visitors can come at a trickle or a rush, at times filling the 53 beds to capacity. The town's office and four cabañas were built over a five-year period, starting in 2003, with funding from the Secretaría de Desarrollo Rural (in 2003), SECTUR (in 2005 and 2006), and the CDI (in 2006), with a total of M\$2,940,000 (approx. US\$161,000) invested. For tourism workers like Miguel, overseeing this expansion was an enormous task – compiling grant proposals and impact assessments, managing personnel and overseeing construction, maintaining the budget and accounting for expenditures.

For many townspeople, the presence of the cabañas is a testament to the success of their community project. *Yes, ecotourism benefits our community*, I was often told. *Look – we have many cabañas now*. Cabañas are material proof that the project functions, that there are significant funds – whether through profits or through government grants – to grow the tourism infrastructure, and that the town's project merits such investment. In villages throughout Pueblos Mancomunados, ecotourism comité members are often judged on their ability to build a cabaña; one coordinator shared with me his fears that the *asamblea* would remove him from his

position because of the difficulties he was experiencing in acquiring funds for a new building project.

Miguel and other tourism coordinators were often critical of the ways in which cabañas were equated with tourism progress and success. Once, a delegation from a pueblo in northern Oaxaca toured Latuvi's facilities, looking for advice on beginning their own project. When the delegation swooned at Latuvi's cabañas, Miguel was quick to point out the long road they had gone down to get to where they were that day. "Even now [ten years into the project]," Miguel told me, "there are people who don't get involved, people who live their own lives, work in their fields, and don't take much interest in ecotourism. That's why I told them, ecotourism isn't just about cabañas (*el ecoturismo no solo es las cabañas*)."

Miguel understood that a successful project not only has first-rate facilities and a well-trained staff to adequately mediate visitor's experiences in the pueblo. For the project to function, tourism workers must be attentive culture brokers who mediate the tourism experience for their fellow townspeople, as well. They must educate residents about the activities and benefits of tourism and forge connections between the residents and the project. Just as importantly, they must remain attentive to community needs and desires, follow local decision-making practices, and conform to norms governing the accumulation and use of authority and status.

In a way, the cabañas themselves are responsible for much of the work of mediation, to the extent that they physically and symbolically represent local culture and community: they were built by communal work parties and local skilled laborers who were paid for their work, they mimic vernacular homes, and are adorned with local artisanal goods. Their modern amenities make them a safe and comforting place from which to experience difference (Molz 2007). The cabañas are also an important site through which residents engage with tourism.

Many residents contributed to their construction, by donating bricks made in their own fields, by participating in tequios, or by contracting their labor. Through their participation in the *asamblea*, residents oversee the management of the *cabañas*, voting to approve major expansions and investments and defining the terms of staffing. Yet their knowledge and participation is always partial and incomplete, whether through lack of access to the facilities or a lapse in oversight on the part of their elected officials. Even so, residents hold the facilities and their staff accountable to local notions of service, authority, and status. And, just as the *cabañas* themselves mix and mingle categories of local and modern, so too do the realities and necessities of the work of community-based ecotourism play creatively with ideals governing community service and accountability, generating new avenues for participation and the accumulation of status. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to these issues, to explore the broader social field within which community-based ecotourism takes place.

Voluntary Service, Paid Labor and the Real Value of Tourism Work

In pueblos throughout Mesoamerica, positions from mayor to school cafeteria worker are filled by citizens on a voluntary and rotating basis. All citizens are obligated to serve these cargos, and appointments are made through open votes during community-wide *asambleas*. In his study of Zapotec social life, Jeffrey Cohen (1999) demonstrates the ways in which the cargo system reflects and reproduces fundamental moral and material practices of community. It is a status-building institution – a job well done affords a measure of prestige to the office holder, which translates into other arenas of social life. In rotating the time-consuming and unpaid cargos, all members of the community share in the burden of maintaining the village, reflecting and reproducing the value of reciprocity and service. Cargos service brings together people from

across the pueblo – wealthy and poor, high and low status – creating cross-linkages that produce community solidarity and mediate social tensions. The cargo system is also an important institution for negotiating state-local relations. By holding leaders accountable to local values of reciprocity and status, the cargo system disallows the blatant accumulation and abuse of power. And, to the extent that affairs are managed locally, the cargo system plays a direct role in resisting state intervention.

When Latuvi originally adopted ecotourism in the late 1990s, project management was incorporated into the cargo system, and people elected their fellow citizens to be tourism guides, coordinators, secretaries, and housekeepers. However, at the time of my research, about 10 years into the project, state agencies had begun to grow weary of this form of local management. The regular staff turnover inherent in cargo service meant that the state was constantly training new staff, which drained resources. The state also argued that such turnover greatly limited the success of community-based ecotourism, since there was no time to build institutional memory or to encourage competent and motivated individuals to curate long-term plans for the growth of the project. Agencies began to push back, pressuring the pueblo to convert cargo positions to full-time staff. At times, the state even held future funding hostage until changes were made to staffing procedures.

In interviews, state agents from CDI and SECTUR involved in ecotourism development expressed their abiding respect for indigenous culture and autonomy, while still defending the need to alter traditional decision-making practices to better accommodate what they considered to be the primary goals of community-based ecotourism. For example, the Assistant Deputy of Operations for CDI in Oaxaca told me his agency believed strongly that indigenous pueblos were capable of managing their own development funds, that they respected community decision-

making practices, and that they encouraged pueblos to determine their own development needs and priorities. At the same time, however, he argued that the funds provided for ecotourism were best used to generate employment opportunities, rather than unpaid cargo positions, because paying people would ensure a quality tourism experience:

Normally, with our development projects, we seek to create paid jobs, not cargos. Why? In some regions, for example, the projects fail because [they are staffed by unpaid cargo]. When you don't pay someone, your economic activity is going to fail. Ecotourism is profitable, and people have to accept the idea of a paid cargo. So, we are talking about creating jobs, paid employment through economic activity.

In a similar conversation, the Director of Development for SECTUR in Oaxaca told me that the cargo system was a valuable institution, but one that was more appropriate for what he labeled the “social development” of a pueblo – to address issues such as education, health, transportation, or agriculture. Ecotourism, on the other hand, was an economic activity that cargo service was ill suited to manage. According to the Director, treating ecotourism as an economic activity with paid staff would in turn support the community’s efforts to care for the environment, create alternatives to migration, and conserve their culture. In general, my conversations with state agents revealed a strong bias against the use of local decision-making practices to manage for-profit community development. While these agents paid lip service to respecting indigenous culture, they largely considered the cargo system to be antiquated and out of step with a modern economy. In other words, the state was using ecotourism as a way to both define permitted cultural forms and to assign territories for their practice – cargo was “good” for local needs, but inappropriate for the state and international economic stage.

In many ways, Latuvi residents were convinced by this ecotourism-as-business logic, and for the most part they accepted the terms offered by the state. They agreed to allow Miguel to continue as a full-time, paid coordinator. Though he was not technically “up” for re-selection

each year, he was required to submit a report in front of the *asamblea* annually, and was held accountable for the year's proceedings. Were his management deemed insufficient, he would be removed from his post. Miguel was also allowed to hire a full-time housekeeper. Together, these two carried much of the institutional knowledge of the project, attending courses when available and training other staff as needed. They also bore the burden of the project's success. Finally, the *pueblo* agreed to provide the two cargo-serving guides with small remuneration for their services. On the days that cargo-holding guides led a hike, they were given the full fee paid by the tourists; during the time of my research (2008-09), this was M\$120 (approx. US\$10).

Many residents told me that paying tourism workers – cargo holders and full-time staff alike – was the best way to ensure that they did a good job. It was also valid since tourism work generated income: for family-operated restaurants and the people who supply them goods; for occasional workers hired to supplement labor during peak seasons; and for the *pueblo-at-large*, as profits made from lodging, entrance and equipment fees that weren't redirected to ecotourism were used to offset the costs of small development projects (road improvement, for example) and annual fiestas. Remunerating cargo-holders was a recognition of the skills and knowledge needed to perform tourism work, an incentive to do a good job and improve the project, and a hope that ex-cargo holders would continue to participate in the project as fill-in guides during peak seasons.

Despite the apparent agreement between state agencies and the residents of *Latuvi* that ecotourism be run as a business, with at least some full-time, paid staff, there is quite a bit of distance between the ways in which the two parties understood the role of ecotourism in the community. The comments made by the state agents reveal their belief that tourism, as a modern economic activity, can be managed outside the regular social and political obligations that

characterize community life. From the state's perspective, the business of ecotourism can complement and serve the social and cultural needs of the pueblo, but it is not part and parcel of those needs. However, residents viewed the economic needs of the pueblo alongside its social and political needs, and they did not disassociate the two. Residents continued to subject ecotourism workers – whether serving cargo appointments or filling full-time waged posts – to the same standards of service as all other cargo appointees. Latuenses expected more from ecotourism than profits; they expected workers to comport themselves according to the norms governing good service. In so doing, as I discuss in the next section, ecotourism is positioned to support the construction and reproduction of community.

Community-based Ecotourism and the Production of Community

In his study of community life, Jeffrey Cohen argues that cooperation and service are “key symbols” of Zapotec social life (1999). Following Ortner (1973), Cohen writes that “cooperation elaborates experience, orders knowledge, summarizes and grounds meaning, and orients social action” (6). Far from being an archaic institution that locks the community into traditional patterns of social relations, structures of cooperation are flexible strategies through which the community addresses and adapts to change. “Members of the community invent new ways of cooperating and reorient traditional relationships to meet new needs, even as they participate in traditional forms of association and in the process, rebuild community as a social entity” (6). Cohen considers cooperation as a form of *habitus*, a “durable, transposable disposition” (Bourdieu 1977) that frames and motivates action, and serves as a rubric through which residents evaluate behavior in a rapidly changing world. “In this respect, cooperation becomes a framework for the mediation of ongoing social and economic change. Reciprocal ties

and their historical development (whether real or simply perceived) become structures through which the community is defended against the impact of global capitalism” (9).

Others have written specifically about the cargo system as a cooperative structure¹⁰² that mediates economic, social, and political change (Chance 1990; Mathews 2004; Stephen and Dow 1990b; Zenno 2007). I see community-based ecotourism as one such form of change.

Examining the role of tourism workers, and the expectations of service and accountability placed on them by the pueblo, provides some details about the everyday ways that residents make sense of these changes, particularly in light of state demands that the community run ecotourism with a business- and profit-oriented logic. Residents’ consent to pay tourism workers tells only part of the story; being the “unruly” subjects (Mathews 2011) that they are, latuvenses need to make ecotourism amenable to their own social needs, recasting the state’s economic development project to contribute to the generation and reproduction of their community on their own terms, as well. This is particularly evident in residents’ negotiation of the status of tourism work and the criteria for good service by office holders.

As a status-building institution, the cargo system outlines a more or less clear trajectory from “low status” or entry level cargos up to “high status” ones. Low status cargos are generally appointed to youth just beginning their service or to residents who have served previous cargos but do not demonstrate leadership potential. As residents age, gain experience and skills, and accumulate the respect and trust of their fellow ciudadanos, they are appointed to “higher” cargos of increasing responsibility. Conversely, when the pueblo judges that an appointee has

¹⁰² Other forms of cooperation include *guelaguetza* (reciprocal exchange between households in fiestas, rituals, and agricultural labor), *tequio* (communal work parties), and *compadrazgo* (godparent-godchild ties).

done a poor job in a previous appointment, a resident may be elected to a “lower” cargo; such demotion results in a loss of social status, as well as other kinds of social sanction.

At the time of my research, it was not clear where on this trajectory laid tourism work. Between 1999 and 2009, the pueblo elected as guides either youth just beginning their service, or men in their 30s and 40s who had not yet, or likely would not gain the status to serve higher cargos¹⁰³. This suggests that being a guide was seen as a low-level cargo. However, the work is much more difficult than other entry-level cargos, which take place under the watchful eye of experienced office-holders and do not require contact with people outside the pueblo. Tourism guides, on the other hand, are on their own with tourists for large portions of their day, and must possess a level of eagerness and maturity noted earlier.

As for positions on the comité (coordinators, treasurers, secretaries), these were typically appointed to men who had achieved mid-ranged status. Again, however, the actual requirements of the work are somewhat out of step with other parallel cargos. At the mid-level, men are typically appointed to cargos of greater responsibility that require an increased time-commitment, and, in many cases, they have an opportunity to experience first-hand how to negotiate with authorities outside the pueblo (at the municipal or state level, for example); but they are still like apprentices in a sense, and are learning from men with even more experience who hold positions of even higher respect in the pueblo. In tourism, by comparison, the comité must see to the day-to-day operations of the project and negotiate regularly with state bureaucracies alone, a set of responsibilities usually associated with senior-level cargo positions¹⁰⁴. Twice, however, men

¹⁰³ Nonetheless, these middle-aged men were often well-suited to tourism work. They had perspective on the history of the pueblo and pride in its cultural practices, eager to attend to tourists, and satisfied with the personal and professional rewards of the work.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of the cargo duties and their relationship to state forestry bureaucracies, see Mathews (2011).

who were appointed as coordinators had previously served the highest cargos in the pueblo, including mayor, judge, and chief of police. This may have been a recognition on the part of the *asamblea* of the range of skills and responsibilities needed to carry out the tourism cargo well. It is also possible that these two men were being sanctioned for inadequate service during one of these previous cargos, though no one ever suggested this to me.

One long-term tourism worker told me she felt the pueblo did not give enough consideration to who they elected to fill tourism positions. “If there are two people nominated for mayor,” she told me “they elect the one who has more initiative or is better able to resolve situations. But I haven’t seen this in ecotourism. They just elect whoever is available.” In my own interviews, I was unable to solicit good details from residents regarding what it might take to be a good tourism worker, beyond a capacity to talk to tourists. Instead, most of what I know about residents’ criteria for adequate service in a tourism role comes from critiques leveled at former workers. Money matters were paramount, and *comité* members were expected to demonstrate the vision and administrative capacity to garner and properly manage funds with honesty and integrity. Some *comité* members were criticized for not getting funding for new building projects, while some others who had been at the helm for a few years and had overseen numerous building projects had aroused suspicions that they were “too close” to state agents, and were perhaps pocketing money. *Comité* members were expected to turn in a profit to the *asamblea* at the end of each year; but when one *comité* turned in too much, they were accused of not investing sufficiently in facilities maintenance. One coordinator was found to be illiterate and was removed from his post after two months of service. For their part, guides were expected to show initiative. When one guide only reported to the *cabañas* on days he was scheduled to

lead a hike (and receive compensation), thus neglecting unremunerated responsibilities such as cutting the grass or chopping firewood, the coordinator threatened to report him to the *asamblea*.

For their part, Miguel and Carmen also felt the pressure of conventions of status and sanction. Both regularly expressed to me their concerns that the *pueblo* may not approve of their work – that the *cabañas* may not be well maintained, that there may not have been enough funding garnered, or worse, that they might be accused of misconduct on account of their rare mixed gender working relationship. Should any of these perceptions have arisen, the *asamblea* would not have hesitated to remove them from their positions, an action that would have conferred shame and a significant loss of status on themselves and their families. Miguel felt particularly scrutinized by the *pueblo*, on account of other personal matters that had stressed his family's social standing. He considered his tourism work as an opportunity to rebuild community trust and demonstrate his family's commitment to the *pueblo*.

After a time, I began to understand that residents could not tell me directly what criteria mattered for good tourism service, nor could they articulate exactly what the status of cargo service was, because they didn't yet know. They were still learning about tourism and negotiating the terms of the positions. This became even more clear to me when I realized that when a *pueblo* had a negative experience with tourism, the *asamblea* often did an about face and tried out a completely different tact. For example, in several *pueblos*, when the full-time, long-term coordinators were each accused of receiving too much personal gain from tourism (one of pocketing money, the other of only bringing tourists to his family's restaurant), the *asambleas* went back to managing tourism through annual, rotating cargos.

These processes of negotiating the terms of cargo work or of worker accountability are about much more than what is good business. Knowing who is "right" for an office, and where

on the status hierarchy that office sits, are important elements of the institution that holds the social life of the community together. Cargo service matters because it contributes directly to social standing. Accountability is about much more than whether one is allowed to keep their job. Just as good service contributes positively to social standing, poor service can cause emotional and social hardship, even marginalization or illness. Some people find the hardship so great that they choose to leave the pueblo, rather than endure social sanction. As pueblo residents negotiate the terms of tourism-related offices, they are also learning about and adapting to new economic opportunities, new forms of participatory development, and new kinds of mobility in a rapidly globalizing world. The tourism workers serving these posts, and their standings in the community, are on the front lines as residents make sense of these changes.

Distribution of Knowledge in Community-based Ecotourism

There are, however, limits in the extent to which residents can hold tourism workers accountable. As noted earlier, most members of the community – including the mayor – had never set foot inside the cabañas. Residents displayed limited knowledge of the range of technical and interpersonal skills needed to deliver a world-class tourism product to a sophisticated tourism market. Because very few people work in ecotourism at one time, the core base of residents with tourism experience grows very slowly; with the increased trend toward long-term employment, away from annually rotating cargo appointments, that pace may slow down even more.

In his study of community forestry, Andrew Mathews (2011) found that residents' widespread participation in the forestry industry, and the resultant knowledge about forestry technology and science, contributed directly to the pueblo's high degree of accountability.

Because many people in town had worked for the community industry, they had personal and professional knowledge that they could use to question the decisions of senior leaders and hold them to a high standard. And because the community industry is several decades old, and the pueblo uses communal funds to educate young men in forestry science, that expertise is historically deep and technically rich. Community-based ecotourism, by comparison, is a small project that requires the work of a half-dozen or so people at a time, unlike forestry that employs hundreds. Community-based ecotourism in Latuvi was begun in the late-90s, and so does not have the legacy of forestry on its side, either. The lack of distribution of knowledge about the inner-workings of ecotourism may limit the extent to which residents can reliably question workers' decisions or hold them accountable to their outcomes.

But the example of forestry also shows that employment does not necessarily remove a project from community control – in fact, it can enhance it, as the incentive to be paid for a job well done leads to greater degrees of professionalization, which in turn can be used to enhance or critique decision-making. And, for the time being, though latuvenses do not have a wide base of experience in ecotourism *work*, they do have a number of other kinds of experience that parallel and support the project. As shown in the previous chapter, they have an intimate relationship with tourists and a desire to welcome visitors to their village. Latuvi also has a long history of success in community forestry, and it has participated with the other villages in el mancomún in a community forestry enterprise similar to the one described by Mathews. Though it is outside the parameters of this discussion to provide details on forestry, suffice it to say that residents of Latuvi have a high level of bureaucratic competency as a result of their own long and successful history of logging (López-Arzola 2005; Mitchell 2005; Poe 2009). In fact, Latuvi (and the other villages in el mancomún) borrow heavily on the legacy of forestry to build credibility in their

ecotourism project. They consider themselves – and are considered by state agencies – to be well organized, proactive, and forward thinking. To an extent, residents seem to borrow on that institutional competency when evaluating ecotourism, as well. But, they do not know the day-to-day work of ecotourism, which may limit current success of the project as they negotiate the status of tourism work and the criteria for adequate service.

New Forms of Participation

Changing Roles for Women

In addition to supporting traditional pathways for accumulating status, ecotourism work may be promoting new forms of participation, especially for women. Unlike men, women's formal participation in town politics is quite limited. In Latuvi, as in most towns in the region, married women do not attend *asambleas*. Benito Juárez is a rarity, in that all married women and mothers are required to attend; even there, however, women are at pains to speak up. For example, a woman who had worked as a full-time waged housekeeper for ten years, rose during an *asamblea* and timidly requested that her fellow *ciudadanos* grant her a raise, from M\$80 a day to M\$100. Though the *asamblea* voted in her favor, many (especially women) criticized the request. Women also serve significantly fewer *cargos* than men. By the time she retires from community service at age 50, a woman may have served only two or three *cargos*, as opposed to a man who will have been appointed to a position every third or fourth year and will have easily served ten or more times before retiring at age 60.

I chose to highlight the work of Fernanda and Carmen because I found their participation in tourism to be so exceptional. Overwhelmingly, men were the face of tourism in Latuvi and throughout to towns of *Pueblos Mancomunados*, and indeed throughout the entire region of the

Sierra Juárez. Women's formal contribution to the community ecotourism projects was largely limited to housekeeping and restaurant work. I knew of three female guides, though only personally met one; I did not know of any women coordinators. Given this gender disparity, Fernanda and Carmen stood out as women whose work was highly visible and absolutely essential to the everyday function of ecotourism. More importantly, ecotourism work provided these women the opportunity to participate in pueblo life in ways that would not have otherwise been open to them.

At the time of my research, Fernanda was an unmarried woman with no children. She lived in Oaxaca during the week and came most weekends to Latuvi to be with her family. She did not participate actively in Latuvi politics: she did not attend *asambleas*, she did not have voting rights, and she was not considered a *ciudadana*. Yet she had a very strong sense of her duty to her pueblo, of the role her own job played in maintaining cooperation and unity among the pueblos of el mancomún, and her part in elevating the status of her community on the national and international stage. In other words, Fernanda was given an opportunity to participate visibly and meaningfully in her pueblo's development in a way that was not open to most other unmarried women. In terms of personal growth and development, Fernanda was given the opportunity to travel and attend conferences throughout Mexico. Early during my research tenure, she gave a presentation at a conference focused on the role of women in ecotourism. When she returned from the conference, she told me how she spoke about ecotourism in el mancomún, gave advice to the other women present, and grew in her own appreciation for the successes of her community's project.

When I left the field, Fernanda was engaged to a young man from Benito Juárez. She had left her job with Expediciones Sierra Norte and was planning to move to Benito Juárez

following the wedding, raise a family, and contribute to the household economy of her in-laws. Though she was leaving tourism work, she would be entering a new stage of community participation. In Benito Juárez, unlike in Latuvi, married women attend the *asamblea*, have voting rights, and are elected to cargos on a regular basis. Because many educated women choose not to return to pueblo life, Fernanda will have a unique set of skills to offer the community. The cargos generally available to women in Benito Juárez tend to reproduce domestic roles – preparing and serving food in the community restaurant or school, or doing educational outreach at the clinic on domestic hygiene, nutrition, food safety, and family health. However, as rates of migration increase and fewer men are available to serve, women throughout Oaxaca are slowly being elected to high-ranking cargos, including municipal president (Dalton 2003). Fernanda's family in Latuvi is very well respected (her work in ecotourism no doubt contributed to this status; and the status contributed to her being appointed in the first place), and her father and uncles have served the highest cargos. She was marrying into a respected family, and her fiancé was already proving himself to be a committed and reliable *ciudadano*, having served as the *secretario* during the year of their engagement. I have every reason to believe that, in the future, when Benito Juárez joins its neighbors in electing women to high-ranking cargos, Fernanda will be considered among the most qualified candidates.

Carmen also had a unique experience in community-based ecotourism. Carmen was a single mother. She lived with her teenage son (who also worked part-time as a tourism guide), her parents, and a sister in the center of town. Another son, in his early twenties, had migrated to Veracruz. Carmen's wages – M\$100 (approximately US\$10) – were an important source of steady income to her family, and helped to pay for her teenage son to attend high school in Oaxaca City. As a group, single mothers and their children are among the most vulnerable

people in the pueblo. Most single mothers struggle to find employment in the cash-strapped community. Carmen was truly exceptional, in that she had both stable employment and a job she found meaningful and satisfying. As evidenced from the earlier vignette, she took great pride in her job well done. She enjoyed attending training workshops and learning new skills. She seemed to respect the work, and took seriously the responsibility given to her by her pueblo to maintain the tourism facilities.

Unlike other housekeepers I had met, Carmen did a range of tasks beyond cleaning and caring for the cabañas. As a paid employee, she was on site daily. When Miguel was away from the office – as he often was, seeing to administrative tasks in the city or filling in as a guide – Carmen became *de facto* the person in charge. She was regularly called upon, while in the middle of cleaning a cabaña, to attend to arriving visitors. Often, when her housekeeping duties were done for the day, she would sit in the office, answer occasional phone calls, and assign duties to idle guides. Because she lived within sight of the cabañas, the next plot over and down the hill, she would even be called away from home on a rare late morning or lunchtime break to attend to one issue or another at the office. She was the unequivocal backbone of Latuvi's ecotourism project. In my experience, it was rare for any woman – in ecotourism or otherwise – to have such responsibilities outside the home.

For his part, Miguel openly and confidently depended on Carmen's partnership, sharing his ideas and seeking her advice, especially with respect to staffing concerns. And he reciprocated by regularly helping her fold linens. One quiet twilight evening I watched them fold bed sheets together, and marveled at the habitual rhythm of their routine. Wordlessly, they grasped at opposite ends of the clean white sheet and, in mirrored motions, brought their respective corners together. As they stepped to each other to double the sheet, Miguel held the

corners while Carmen slid her fingers down to reach the folded edge. They stepped apart again to repeat their steps until the sheet was too small for two, when Carmen took it herself and completed the task. They continued in this way until all the sheets were stacked neatly on the bed, after which we all retired to the office for a light evening snack of tea and sweet bread. For Carmen and Miguel, becoming tourism workers blurred the lines of traditional gender roles, creating new opportunities for women's participation in community politics and development.

A Challenge to Municipal Power

Tourism work may also be promoting new kinds of participation and power structures between villages themselves. Traditionally, the state distributes development resources at the municipal level; in other words, funds are given to the *cabecera*, the main town in a municipality, who is then responsible for distributing funds to its *agencias* and *policías*, or satellite villages. Under this scheme, Latuvi, an *agencia*, and Benito Juárez, a *policía*, would both receive funds through Lachatao, the *cabecera* for their municipality. Generally speaking, people in the *agencias* and *policías* are highly suspicious of the *municipios*, who they claim keep most of the money for themselves. Also, the *municipios* have a high level of out-migration, and of professionals who stay involved in *pueblo* politics, so there is some mistrust and class-based tension, as *agencias* and *policías* feel that municipal heads are always trying to tell them what to do.

Ecotourism shakes up these traditional hierarchies. Though at times state agencies like SECTUR and CDI provide funds to *agencias* and *policías* through the *cabeceras*, they also work directly with the satellite *pueblos* to develop individual town projects. This promotes a level of competition between towns that might ordinarily be working together to access funds and attract

tourists. When ecotourism was first developed, it was meant to be a mancomún-wide project – labeled Expediciones Sierra Norte – in order to take advantage of the villages’ centuries-old organization, resources sharing practices, and network of trails. At the time of my research, the towns were just beginning to recognize that state funding practices were threatening what they considered to be one of their greatest resources – the solidarity and cooperation provided by el mancomún.

Yet, the individual towns stood a lot to gain from the competition for tourism resources. This was particularly true for the *agencias* and *policías*. They were the first to embrace ecotourism development, and, at the time of my research, had more visibility, higher tourist rates, more physical development, and more human capacity and institutional knowledge than their more powerful *cabeceras*. For the most part, they were dealing directly with state agencies in the management of their projects – to petition for funds, develop publicity material, access training, and so on. Through promotional materials – print and television media, trade materials, highway signs, t-shirts and key chains – the satellite *pueblos* were gaining attention and recognition on their own terms, and were branding themselves as entities outside the traditional structures of the municipalities or el mancomún. For their part, the *cabeceras* were beginning to take note of the benefits of tourism development, and were eagerly playing catch-up.

Much of this competition and acquisition of resources seems to have been driven directly by the requirement to professionalize tourism work. Tourism work has provided a platform for men, often in their 30s and 40s, and generally of mid-status with promising leadership potential, to gain a level of independent control over their communities’ ecotourism projects. With this specialized knowledge comes an increased level of respect and influence in the community. Many of these men have either served repeated tourism cargos or else petitioned their

communities to hire them full-time to oversee the management and growth of their projects. These project leaders – from the *policías* and *agencias*, though increasingly from the *cabeceras* – meet regularly to discuss issues related to tourism; often their encounters take place informally after a hike or during a chance meeting at a state office. In short, ecotourism work offers a new set of networks, knowledge, and coveted resources with which less powerful villages – and their aspiring leaders – can politic inside larger hierarchies of power.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the role of culture brokers in community-based ecotourism. In order to meet the demands of state development agencies and the needs of the global tourism market, tourism workers must develop a range of personal and professional skills, including computer literacy, cross-cultural communication, office administration, time management, interpretation of natural and cultural settings, and facilities maintenance. Brokers who have successfully adopted these skills find tourism work highly satisfying as they develop new attitudes and dispositions about the world, and a new sense of their own place in it. Successful tourism work can also lead to greater status in the community. Workers who conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, liaise effectively with state agents to garner resources, appropriately care for tourists and facilities, and communicate with citizens through the *asamblea* are afforded a measure of prestige that reflects positively on their families and translates to other arenas of social life. In this way, community-based ecotourism contributes to the overall generation and reproduction of community. Tourism work may additionally provide new avenues for participation and the accumulation of status, particularly for women who have been historically marginalized in the realm of public politics in the *pueblo*. On a regional scale,

tourism is raising the visibility of small villages, and potentially increasing their access to resources.

Following Mathews' insights concerning the roles of community service and accountability in the production of development knowledge and practice (2011), I have examined tourism work as a process of negotiation between the state and the community. As tourism brokers accumulate skills needed to successfully mediate the tourism experience, they must also attend to local moral frameworks of service, status, and accountability. The mundane acts of tourism work – greeting strangers, filing visitor reports, folding linens, conducting hikes at an appropriate pace – become acts of translation between broader shifts in mobilities, economic agendas, and political logic on the one hand, and the symbolic, practical and moral frameworks that govern pueblo life on the other. These acts of translation highlight the ways in which communities assent to and complicate state attempts to govern autonomous pueblos. The logic of economic development and the need to pay skilled workers resonates with townspeople, who desire a more robust local economy that benefits the pueblo-at-large. But the criteria for success that townspeople apply to ecotourism are not only, or even mostly profit-driven. Tourism workers must conduct themselves according to locally salient rules of service and accountability. When workers violate those rules – in real or perceived ways – the pueblo may choose to take steps that could undermine the viability of the project, such as returning paid, full-time positions to annually rotating cargos, at the expense of institutional knowledge, motivated stewardship, and visionary leadership.

By focusing on the day-to-day work of tourism, and the kinds of skills, habits and dispositions ecotourism workers adopt as they successfully and meaningfully execute their tasks, I have created a portrait of ecotourism as a form of development that reaches beyond measures of

access to income or increased material livelihoods. Though these are important, equally valued are the ways that ecotourism encourages participants to grow and change on a personal and professional level. I was encouraged to explore this dimension of ecotourism as a result of my experience with Adventists in Benito Juárez, for whom “inner transformation” (Ter Haar 2011a), and specifically adopting the habits and comportment (the *habitus*) of leadership as a means to Salvation, is both a mark of and motivation for *saliendo adelante*, progressing toward a better life. Similarly, ecotourism workers appear to be drawn to the project because it allows them the tools to achieve a better life on a personal level, which in turn directly affects their ability to participate in the pueblo so that all may succeed at progress.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

Defining Progress and A Better Life

The unfolding of community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be seen as a result of the push and pull between attempts by external actors to create Pueblos Mancomunados as a “modern space of thought and action” (Escobar 2008:31) on the one hand, and local desires to create progress that is morally accountable on the other. Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed the ways these projects encourage residents to see themselves as having achieved a degree of development and a better life, particularly vis-à-vis their neighboring towns. These projects also encourage residents to develop a set of skills, habits, and orientations that residents use to reinforce their participation and reinvest in their communities. Finally, these understandings of self and community as having *salido adelante*, as having progressed, are in many ways project-specific; by looking at the Adventist Church and community-based ecotourism side-by-side, I have analyzed their distinctive patterns of ethnic identity formation and the implications of these processes on larger project of solidarity building, as local activists and intellectuals organize around an agenda for indigenous rights.

My examination of the specific, day-to-day ways Zapotec people engage in these projects has focused on a core set of questions. How do people in Benito Juarez and Santa Marta Latuvi define progress, modernity, and a “better life”? What are their goals for development? To what extent and in what ways are residents able to make their projects amenable to these local needs and desires? What roles do “community” and “ethnic identity” – as moral codes of conduct, deeply felt attachments, and clusters of practice – play as residents define their needs and craft development that is accountable to those needs? To what extent do rancheros and latuvenses

derive a sense of dignity, value, self- and communal-worth, and empowerment through their interactions with secular and religiously based development? And finally, what are the forces associated with development that strengthen or weaken ties to indigenous organizing and the generation of proud, self-conscious indigenous identities?

In order to pull together the diverse material presented in this dissertation, and in an attempt to more fully compare and contrast community-based ecotourism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I return to the three themes – exchange, place and body – that I outlined in the introduction. In anticipation of the discussion, at least three values emerge as central to “successful” development. Together, they speak to the importance of broadening the scope of development desires and impacts beyond economic or instrumentalist measures. The first value relates to the role of inner transformation in the attainment of a “better life”. Conventionally speaking, the “inner” arenas of consciousness and experience fall into the religious camp, where changing consciousness is the key to transforming society. Yet inner transformation emerged as central to the experience of ecotourism work, as well, and people frequently cited the new perspectives, skills, habits, and even friendships gained through tourism encounters as central to the project’s value. Secondly, Zapotec people desire development that appreciates, rather than dismantles, the practices, orientations, and functions of community, including service, reciprocity, and the moral codes of leadership and authority. In both of these projects, people learn to see themselves as having achieved a degree of development and a better life. Through their involvement in the Adventist Church and ecotourism, residents not only gain a new sense of themselves and their pueblo as “more developed”, they also gain skills and tools by which they can contribute to the ongoing development and progress of their communities, which in turn leads to a high degree of satisfaction with the initiatives. Finally, people desire the opportunity

to meaningfully – and equitably – connect with people outside the geographic boundaries of the pueblo, from hosting missionaries to greeting ecotourists, to learning about things like congregations, cuisine, health practices, and labor conditions around the world.

Exchange

In Zapotec pueblos, reciprocity plays a dominant role in social life, structuring value and action at all levels (Barabas 2006). Jeffrey Cohen (1999) writes that formal exchange practices – sponsoring godchildren, providing goods for a fiesta, serving cargos – are the main sites of socially significant action in the pueblo, linking individuals and households in mutually dependent networks (Nader 1990). The respect and authority accumulated through successful exchanges is transferred to other arenas of social life, making any exercise of power in the pueblo intimate and accountable to local systems of morality. Reciprocal exchange practices are important in the construction of group identity, as residents develop a sense of themselves in opposition to other populations. Reciprocity is also important in resistance to state power, as the morally accountable use of authority buffers the accumulation of coercive state power.

When Zapotecs convert to Adventism, they betray many of these moral codes of reciprocity. They do not sponsor godchildren. They will not serve posts in the Catholic Church. They even break the codes of hospitality by refusing to consume alcohol. At the same time, they double-down on their public service, striving to be among the most engaged and committed citizens – and leaders – in the pueblo. They perceive their very existence in the pueblo as an act of service, believing that their church's teachings on good Christian living (which share historical and social space with state-sponsored development) have improved domestic hygiene and personal health, strengthened families, and contributed to the pueblo's overall image as

forward-thinking, open-minded, and an ideal site for initiatives such as community-based ecotourism.

There is an enduring debate in the literature on Protestantism in Mexico concerning the extent to which conversion disorganizes community life in indigenous pueblos. Speaking in broad strokes, many have argued that Protestantism, as a religious practice that promotes individual access to the divine, likewise encourages an orientation away from traditional subsistence and communal structures of indigenous life and towards capitalist accumulation and the attainment of a modern lifestyle (Dow 2001b). Yet my own research suggests that conversion does not have to be a zero-sum game, and that being Protestant is not necessarily or always at odds with communal life. The Adventists in my study envision progress as deeply communal; that while the path to salvation is personal betterment, it must include improving the lot of one's neighbors as well. I return to this question of conversion and the individual versus the communal below.

Community-based ecotourism is predicated on a number of exchange-based relationships. At its most capitalistic, it requires that tourists be willing to pay money for tourism services, including lodging, food, and excursions into the forest. It is from this vantage that ecotourism is most disappointing. The economic impact of ecotourism is small (though not insignificant), and the impersonal nature of purely market-oriented hospitality subjects Zapotecs to the transgressions of their guests, including the improper use of facilities or refusal to pay for services. They may even learn to be ashamed about important material and cultural practices. For example, tourism workers avoid discussing the community logging business, a major source of labor in el mancomún, and residents perform subsistence activities such as hunting game or gathering orchids on non-tourism trails, so as to avoid presenting an anti-conservation image.

When the goals of ecotourism are purely market-oriented, and paying tourists shun these activities, residents and ecotourism staff may, too. Yet, when viewed as a form of hospitality beyond maximization and the accumulation of wages and profits, community-based ecotourism becomes a profoundly satisfying, creative and successful endeavor. It is precisely the kind of small-scale, slow-growth venture that Kevin Meethan argues is a more appropriate and achievable goal of tourism development, to the extent that the economic piece is integrated into the larger social setting and resonates with a broad range of local values and needs (Meethan 2001:62).

In many ways, community-based ecotourism is a powerful tool through which Zapotec people can create for themselves a modernity that is morally grounded and that contributes to a positive group identity. This is particularly true in the margins of the official project, where everyday residents are able to engage with tourists, exchange greetings and reciprocate the honor and pride bestowed by the visit. These encounters may be face-to-face, intimate, and prolonged, or they may be more imaginative in nature. The honor and pride may be personal, but more often it is collective, as when residents begin to see their pueblo and their culture in new ways. The spontaneity here is key; that outside the formal arrangements of hosting and guesting and beyond the bureaucratic mandates of the state, people greet and get to know the strangers at their doorsteps. In these moments, they may glimpse a sense of their shared humanity or address the indignities and injustices perpetrated by the conditions of modern mobility and migration. This may take the form of an abuelita who imagines God will repay her own small offering of food and shelter to rain-soaked tourists by finding her migrant children a hospitable welcome in a foreign land. Or, it may be found in the words of an anciano expressing his pleasure that

travelers come to learn from his home, and he from them, while his own marginalized status prevents him from obtaining the *papelitos*, the legal documents to do the same.

Community-based ecotourism is also connected to notions of reciprocity that guide communal service. Everyday residents perceive the simple act of greeting a tourist on the street as a way of repaying the debt of service they owe to the pueblo. Likewise, performing the duties of citizenship – attending *asambleas* to become informed about the project, provide feedback to the tourism staff and make decisions about tourism's development and future, as well as participating in hygiene initiatives sponsored by the health clinic – craft ecotourism as a profoundly local project, and one that supports the very structures of reciprocity and cooperation upon which community life is built and reproduced. Those residents who are appointed to serve ecotourism cargo positions are uniquely implicated in this task. They are situated at the location of struggle between local and state needs (Mathews 2011), simultaneously performing according to state standards while being held accountable to local criteria for leadership and the adequate fulfillment of service to the pueblo.

Despite my focus on the non-economic dimensions of community-based ecotourism, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is no getting around the fact that ecotourism is a for-profit venture, designed to improve earning potential and overall boost the local economy. As such, community-based ecotourism very clearly encourages market-oriented perspectives and stresses certain features of community life to act accordingly, such as encouraging the expansion of waged labor in practices with previously non-monetized exchange values such as cargo service. As I discuss below, ecotourism also encourages workers to govern themselves according to capitalist logics of efficiency, time management, and conservation of movement. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on the other hand, I did not observe that religious practice had a marked

impact on the economic landscape of the town. While Protestantism has been credited with ushering in capitalist market oriented logic (Annis 1987), I did not observe any marked difference in wealth, consumption habits, or labor practices. There is also no clear class differentiated going on in Benito Juárez – though Adventists who move from the pueblo to the city may be experiencing class mobility. Admittedly, my research did not focus clearly on economic issues, and future research can address some of these gaps.

Place

When Adventists talk about their pueblo, and the impact their church has had on it, their speech is saturated with themes of modernity and progress. They see themselves as central to the construction of Benito Juárez as a modern pueblo. According to their narratives, they are responsible for new technologies of the home, including raising activities such as eating and sleeping off the floor (thus separating human/culture/rational action from animal/nature/irrational action), and creating separate spaces for cooking, sleeping and sheltering animals (further driving a divide between culture and nature). They are also responsible for tempering alcohol consumption, thus ridding their streets and corner stores of the ungodly, erratic, and animalistic exploits of drunks.

At the same time, their discourse about the environment – from the forests that surround their pueblo to the agricultural fields that support their way of life – is much more traditional. They construct a sense of the pueblo and its environs as valuable because they are outside destructive, alienating, and exploitative grips of modern capitalist production. As a pueblo-in-the-forest, they have access to clean water and fresh air, they can support their families by gathering from the forest and cultivating subsistence crops. Pueblo life brings them closer to

God and to their own salvation; they experience His power through the beauty of the environment, while the subsistence- and nature-based economy aids their endeavors for healthy Christian living. At the same time, they triangulate their appreciation for their pueblo-in-the-forest with copious, if carefully selected, references to science.

Community-based ecotourism uses similar tropes to valorize the places of the pueblo. The pueblo is presented as a welcoming place, where warm and friendly Zapotec people will greet you as they walk to their fields, invite you in for a cup of hot *atole* and a warm plate of beans, and heal your tired body with a traditional sweat bath. The surrounding forest, babbling streams, exotic plants and nestled paths will de-stress and excite you. At the end of the day, you can rest in a traditional (looking) adobe home. The warm people, safe streets and relaxing environs are the antidote to the hectic, contaminated, and impersonal conditions of modern living (MacCannell 1999). In many ways, the version of place offered through ecotourism is quite problematic. The pleasure, excitement and relaxation of travel are dependent on the liminal nature of tourism, of leisured activity that is always out-of-time and out-of-structure (Graburn 2004). The image of a pueblo that is quaint, quiet, and close-to-nature further exacerbates the out-of-time quality of that welcoming. It exemplifies Escobar's critique about the ways "places" are perceived as necessarily more traditional and only capable of being acted on by global forces (2001; 2008).

Yet Escobar's caution also points to an alternative interpretation, a way of flipping the asymmetry around and finding the generative and transformative capacity of place. For example, through these practices of welcoming, residents begin to see their pueblo through the eyes of the tourist, attaching new value to the places they inhabit and a new sense of dignity and pride in being indigenous. Ecotourism also contributes to processes of historical memory, as

residents incorporate tourism into the ways they talk about and name places. These speech acts are also everyday attempts to make sense of large-scale economic and political change. The difference between “place” as active and “place” as passive may have to do with the agency of residents themselves; the formal image of Latuvi as ecotourism destination is often produced by state tourism and development agents, or by leaders attending to promotional needs, while the everyday practices of welcoming are performed in more spontaneous ways by residents in the more informal spaces of tourism encounters.

Understanding the ways residents approach these encounters through the moral framework of reciprocity sheds further light on the transformative potential of ecotourism. When tourists visit Zapotec pueblos, eat tortillas and beans, exchange pleasantries on the street, and generally share in the spaces of hospitality, they are bestowing a great honor on their hosts. And though that honor does not transfer outside the pueblo, it does contribute to the accumulation of prestige and authority within the political and social spaces of the village. What is more, Zapotecs use the conversations they have with tourists, the knowledge they gain about life in other countries, and the sense of common humanity they derive therein, to imaginatively connect with their kin and neighbors in far-away and unknown places. They learn about the kinds of vegetation that grows at similar altitudes in the places where their loved ones have migrated, or of the kinds of foods – cookies, pizza, or sandwiches – they may be eating there. They may even use these encounters to imaginatively or discursively realign the asymmetries of geopolitical power, as historically marginalized people and places play host to the world’s leisure travelers.

Body

The body is an important locus of progress and development in the Seventh-day Adventist church and in community-based ecotourism. Adventists and tourism workers alike learn about new knowledge and skills that are internalized into new habits, orientations, compartments and dispositions. This project-based *habitus* resonates with the moral codes, affectations, and practices of community and ethnicity. It also speaks to the larger goals of state development and to local ideas about and desires for progress and the attainment of a “better life”. Throughout the dissertation, I have paid attention to the everyday ways that individual actors have negotiated and become the sites of negotiation over the demands of these two arenas.

In the Adventist Church, the metaphorical call to “walk with God” (Chapter 3) implies body, movement and physical companionship along the path to salvation. Members are “one body in Christ”, and the Church is the “hands and feet”¹⁰⁵. Similarly, the body is referred to as the temple of the Holy Spirit; by caring for their bodies through diet, exercise, and mental discipline (as well as proper domestic hygiene), Adventists allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, to recreate in them the character of Jesus, and to think, feel and act in harmony with God’s will.

All this body-work, the discipline and intentionality required to accomplish a good Christian life and attain salvation, is more than metaphorical. As Adventists strive to bear witness to God’s love and redemption, they internalize and embody these frameworks. As discussed at length in Chapter 3, this call to unity in Christ is made manifest in what can be called a “habitus of leadership”. The teachings of the Church – combined with the practices of service and communalism of the pueblo – create a “structuring structure” that inform

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/> (accessed on October 10, 2015).

expectations about who and *how* Adventists will be in their community. Being a good Christian means being willing and able to stand up and lead – in Bible study and in the asamblea. The practice of Bible study is a significant site through which Adventists strengthen and perform the specific skills needed to lead: from assuming an authoritative posture, to speaking clearly and knowledgably, to welcoming diverse participation. These practices of leadership are highly embodied, involving posture, voice, and movement. Importantly, these bodies are gendered and aged, and the hierarchies of each matter a great deal both in the church and in the pueblo.

Adventists inhabit a confidence about their practical knowledge on a range of issues (the bible, health, world news, family well-being), their worth as human beings, and their skill as participants and leaders – which translates in concrete ways into how they conduct themselves in public, from indoctrinating their youth to perform proper greetings or lead services, to empowering women to expand their participation during cargo service and asambleas. Religious practice also informs Adventists' sense of racial and ethnic difference (Chapter 4), their claims to not see difference, and their expectations that they will be treated as equals in this world and the next.

In community-based ecotourism, the body is the site of new habits of professionalization, including maximization of time, perfection of movement, performance of authoritative knowledge, and an engagement in cosmopolitanism¹⁰⁶. As culture brokers, they are like bodies with two faces – they must embody pueblo life and culture for tourists and the state, and they must represent the needs, desires and demands of tourists and the state for their fellow *ciudadanos*. This requires the adoption of a range of skills and knowledge. Some of these are

¹⁰⁶ Here, I seek to index the ways ecotourism requires local staff to be able to speak and relate to, serve, and even project a sense of being on a level playing field with a wide range of people from diverse economic, geographic, and linguistic locations.

related to voice: how to speak with strangers (often in spite of possible deep-seated fears and anxieties over the dangers inherent in greeting and hosting a stranger), or how to speak with authority and expertise on issues of Zapotec life, the business of tourism, and the art of negotiating development resources. Some relate to the movement and performance of the whole body: multi-tasking; precise bed-making and linen-folding techniques; the pacing of a hike. Each of these is also simultaneously a habit of mind and thought, to think of oneself as a competent and authoritative expert in the art of culture brokerage and the work of tourism, and to believe oneself to be a body with value that possesses and is in contact with the desired goods of tourism. Given the context of race relations in Mexico and the historical marginalization and assimilation of indigenous people, this re-valuation of the body is significant, if imperfect.

Contributions and Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined the ways residents of neighboring Zapotec villages in Oaxaca, Mexico define and experience development, progress, and a “better life”. My discussions have focused on the on-the-ground and day-to-day minutia of this engagement, including the dynamics of communal service, the centrality of balanced reciprocity in relations between neighbors and guests, the value of personal betterment, and the cultivation of habits and dispositions that strengthen community participation. My goal has been to operationalize the specific and complex ways indigenous people engage with development, make it accountable to their own cultural and moral universe, and strive to put it to use. I have likewise focused on assessing factors related to development practice that contribute to processes of identity formation. My analysis contributes to a number of broader themes that are of great concern to scholars, activists, and development workers: 1) the nature of local identity and the forces that

strengthen or weaken ties to politicized indigenous identity; 2) the importance of place-based research that investigates the real work of community, including the roles of communal service and religious change, and 3) the way forward for harnessing diverse notions of community into a single political project in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca. In this final section, I discuss my contributions to each of these themes, as well as raise questions to suggest future research agendas.

The Strength of Local Identity

When I began my research in Pueblos Mancomunados, I fully expected residents would express a strong attachment to indigenous and/or Zapotec identity. The question was not whether residents would consider themselves to be indigenous, but rather how they deployed their presumed “indigenusness” to garner development resources, and perhaps even seek out solidarity with other pueblos in the movement for greater rights, dignity and resources. My interests, and biases, clearly stemmed from the abundant scholarship on global indigenous and human rights movements, as well as the ample attention paid to the dynamics of neoliberal multicultural development. My assumptions were further supported by the history of indigenous mobilizations in Oaxaca and throughout southern Mexico, the economic incentive presented by tourism to self-consciously identify as indigenous, and the long-standing history of cooperation and a shared sense of purpose between the pueblos of el mancomún.

Lynn Stephen reminds us that ethnicity is a complex, creative and fluid process, articulated out of specific political, economic and social contexts from the past and present, between groups of people and more powerful actors, as well as between ethnic groups themselves (Stephen 1996). In Mexico, the ways in which indigenous people experience and

express their ethnicity is tied to the project of nation-building, where the *indio* is contradictorily exalted as the bearer of national history and the roadblock to national progress and development (Nagengast and Kearney 1990). It should be of no surprise, then, when indigenous people fail to connect with a politicized form of indigenous identity. For example, Judith Friedlander concluded that “being Indian” was more meaningful and desirable to the Mexican state than it was to Indians themselves, who were painfully aware of their inferior status and wished to distance themselves from the ethnic marker altogether (Friedlander 2006). And in Oaxaca specifically, colonial and post-colonial patterns of political and economic fragmentation have contributed to a “community-based orientation” of ethnic identity, and a “high level of very localized allegiance and sense of ethnic attachment” (Stephen 1996:20). In the Sierra Norte region specifically, while some communities do move beyond locality to develop broader notions of regional ethnic solidarity (Faudree 2013; Wortham 2013), it is also common to find pueblos where people continue to identify more strongly with the local, as mediated through very specific experiences with state actors like the federal forestry bureaucracy (Mathews 2011), or through the process of building local autonomy (Mendoza Zuany 2008). Tom Perreault (2001) found similar dynamics in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where communities whose contact with indigenous organizing was largely confined to the local, rather than regional or national scale, likewise tended to identify according to locally-oriented and subsistence based identities, rather than with broad ethno-territorial discourses.

In my own research, I have observed several specific forces that appear to reinforce these patterns of community-oriented attachment and belonging, at the expense of building solidarity with and political consciousness about indigenous identity. First, as Stephen noted above, the municipal landscape in Oaxaca is highly fragmented; the state has approximately 570 municipal

seats, or the equivalent of about half of all municipalities in the nation. Not only does this fracture attachment, but it also affects the distribution of material resources. Typically, state and federal funding is awarded to the municipal head, whose authorities are then charged with allocating funds further down the line to satellite villages. These patterns of resource distribution have generated distrust among satellite villages like Latuvi and Benito Juárez, who claim that the municipal authorities are corrupt and take a disproportionate share of the funds. As discussed in Chapter 6, community-based ecotourism shakes up these hierarchies, as state funding agencies are more likely to work directly with satellite villages, providing them with the tools to advance their own interests without the intervention of the more powerful municipal heads. In other words, the competition for development funds directed towards community-based ecotourism exacerbates the long-standing tension between municipios and satellite villages by providing the latter with new access to state agencies and the resources they control.

The capitalist model further exacerbates these dynamics, placing pueblos in direct competition with one another, both to obtain precious funding from the state and to attract the attention of tourists. For the first few years, the villages of Pueblos Mancomunados worked together to develop their tourism infrastructure (see Chapter 2). But, as individuals from particular towns became more skilled at tourism work and the politics of promoting their pueblos (Chapter 6), the projects in the pueblos began to atomize. And, as state funding agencies became more involved in organizing promotional materials and pushing their own agendas, the pueblos began to lose sight of their common purpose. At the time of my research, it was not unusual to find brochures for specific pueblos with no mention whatsoever of Pueblos Mancomunados or Expediciones Sierra Norte, the umbrella organization under which tourism in el mancomún

operated. Thus, one very tangible result of the capitalist model of ecotourism-as-development has been to further atomize pueblos as economic, political, and ethnic actors.

A third factor reinforcing patterns of community-oriented identity is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While religious practice can contribute to heightened consciousness about identity-based issues (Burdick 1998; Burdick 2013; Steigenga and Cleary 2007), this does not appear to be the case among Adventists in Benito Juárez. Adventists' own peculiar religious doctrine and eschatology, while promoting a deep sense of attachment and obligation to the pueblo, may likewise prevent any outward-looking orientations related to a shared ethno-racial experience. The doctrine of equality, which states that all are equal in the eyes of God, clearly impedes the ability to grow a sense of solidarity along ethnic lines. Adventist eschatology also limits the degree to which members feel compelled to act socially or politically in the name of indigenous rights. Adventists believe that suffering and injustice are an inherent quality of the human condition, and that only with the Second Coming of Christ will peace and prosperity reign. The Second Coming does not depend on people's ability to eliminate social injustices, such as the denial of indigenous or human rights. The call to action is a much quieter one; rather than upending structural injustices, Adventists are instructed to share their blessings with the world through service and mission work, including a focus on health care and education, as a way of preparing themselves for the Second Coming. This inward-looking orientation, as Kevin O'Neill discovered among neo-Pentecostals Guatemala City (2010), precludes acknowledgement of other causes to suffering, including the larger material and historical structures responsible for poverty, racism, and violence. In such contexts, forms of citizenship based on Adventist, or neo-Pentecostal, ideals at once motivate some forms of solidarity (along the lines of shared

spirituality, for example), while profoundly limiting the potential to build a shared understanding of structural injustice.

Re-examining The Work of Community

Another goal of this dissertation has been to examine the nitty-gritty work involved in building community, as a set of affective ties and concrete practices that obligate people to one another, form the bedrock of shared social and moral worlds, and motivate action at a variety of scales. One of the ways that community “gets done” in Benito Juárez and Latuvi is through cargo service. Cargo service emerged as a category of action that was of profound importance to my informants; so much of residents’ engagement in development, progress, and the attainment of a better life circled back to participation in these formal structures of community participation. For Adventists, the inner transformation required to achieve salvation includes a vision of good citizenship, of obtaining habits, dispositions and skills that directly contribute to one’s ability to *desempeñar bien su cargo*, to perform cargo duties well, and when called upon to be a leader. For community-based ecotourism, the cargo system is arguably more directly implicated, as a central feature of the project’s daily operations as well as a core mechanism by which residents are able to comprehend and contribute to the development of their community.

Community Service, Identity and Ecotourism

My main contribution to the study of the cargo system in Mesoamerica is quite simply that cargo service continues to be a salient feature of pueblo life in Oaxaca. In the past few decades, the cargo system has been of decreasing interest to scholars, a dramatic turn away from a subject that was once considered a “gatekeeping” (Appadurai 1986) topic in Mesoamerican

anthropology (Magazine 2012:41). While this is at least partially a reflection of broader disciplinary trends, it is also true that, in many parts of Mexico, the cargo system has weakened dramatically and no longer maintains a central role in pueblo life (Cancian 1992). Yet, other recent studies from Zapotec villages in Oaxaca (Cohen 1999; Stephen 1991; Stephen 2005) corroborate my own finding, suggesting that the strength or decline of the cargo may be related to region-specific factors, such as the degree of incorporation into the capitalist economy or the dynamics of state-level politics and governance, as well as the strength or weakness of community-oriented identity, as discussed above. While my own study is not equipped to speak fully to the question of *why* cargo systems persist, future research on this topic might attend to the relationship between state-sponsored development initiatives and the formal structures of communal service, particularly when the attainment and implementation of resources depends so heavily on the cargo system, as is the case with community-based ecotourism. This question of how, why, and under what conditions the cargo system persists is directly relevant to current discussions on indigenous autonomy, as pueblos throughout the hemisphere increasingly utilize these practices of local governance and decision making to claim political space (Stephen 2013) or defend their rights to resources and livelihood strategies (Perreault 2008).

Attention to the cargo system also addresses my interest in the relationship between specific development initiatives and the production of local identity. As Jeffrey Cohen demonstrates, these structures of cooperation and community “play an important role in self-defense and self-definition as a community makes and remakes itself as a social entity over time” (1999:14). In other words, participation in the cargo system is an important way that residents reproduce and experience local identity. Because community-based ecotourism has been incorporated into the cargo system in Latuvi – albeit in a hybrid fashion – it likewise contributes

to the production and experience of local identity. Tourism work, whether in a true cargo appointment that may or may not be remunerated, or in a full-time, salaried position, is measured by the same moral standards of reciprocity, service, and accountability as other cargo posts. These standards define and reproduce notions about what it means to belong to the community, and the responsibilities each resident has to support and sustain the pueblo. And, as ecotourism workers welcome travelers to their mountain pueblo, they attach new value to the places they inhabit and a new sense of dignity and pride in being indigenous.

At the onset of this research, I was curious to learn whether cargo service in community-based ecotourism might contribute to a self-conscious, even politicized version of indigenous or Zapotec identity. This was the case in Juchitán, a Zapotec town in the Isthmus of Oaxaca, where kin-*compadrazgo* networks used to organize fiestas (a form of ritual cargo service) were critical in building ethnic solidarity that fueled COCEI (Isthmus Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students), a major political opposition movement involved in local politics (Rubin 1997; Stephen 1990). Community-based ecotourism seemed an especially promising arena to explore this question, considering the way that tourism frequently promotes heightened, if not essentialized, expressions of ethnicity, in ways that can likewise be implicated in civil-religious service, as Lynn Stephen found in the Oaxacan weaving village of Teotitlán del Valle (2005). Yet, this politicized sense of “being Indigenous” or “being Zapotec” did not materialize in Latuvi. In his study of forestry in the nearby Zapotec village of Ixtlán, Andrew Mathews (2011) found that being indigenous did not resonate with residents, who were more likely to express their collective identity in terms related to their experiences with logging. Following Tania Li (2000), Mathews suggests that the degree to which politicized expressions of ethnicity resonate locally is

largely a result of their specific relations with outside state and non-state institutions (Mathews 2011:213).

Robert Magazine proposes an alternative way for thinking about the relationship between cargo service and local identity. The majority of past and contemporary studies of the cargo system – my own included – analyze cargo as a system involved in the production and maintenance of community and ethnic identity. In his own study from a highland village in Central Mexico, Magazine (2012) proposes that we set aside questions of ethnicity, community and “indigeneity”, and instead appreciate the cargo as a tool implicated in the production of self and personhood. In his unique and experimental study, Magazine theorizes that when townspeople serve cargos, their goal is not to produce “things”, such as the fiesta or the even the community; such concerns belong to anthropologists, government agents, and development workers. Instead, residents seek to set in motion the action of others. It is this action, the participation in communal life, which makes an individual a proper and knowable social actor. In other words, cargo service generates active subjects.

Magazine’s study raises a number of questions to be brought to bear on future research into the relationship between community-based ecotourism and cargo service. For example, in discussion about the notion of a “better life” in indigenous Mexico, I have largely assumed that the goal of development is the maintenance of a strong and viable community. An alternative approach might ask, to what extent are notions of well-being and a better life equally, if not more, tied to the quality of personhood and the production of proper social beings, and in what ways does ecotourism cargo service meet these goals? Magazine’s focus on personhood and social being also raises questions about the capitalist nature of tourism cargo service. For example, to what extent does the mandate to professionalize tourism work, and the subsequent

focus on the cultivation of new habits of body, mind, and time, alter tourism workers' understandings of self and personhood? And, in what ways might the articulation of "community" as an object of and for consumption affect the ways residents understand the desired outcomes of cargo service?

Adventists Building Community

A prominent discussion in the literature on Protestant conversion globally is the degree to which conversion necessitates a "complete break" with the past, as converts are called to renounce ties to the ancestors, rituals, and social ties of their pre-conversion life (Engelke 2004; Engelke 2010; Meyer 1998). A second, and closely connected theme revolves around the extent to which conversion encourages individualization at the cost of communal-orientations (see for example Annis 1987). Indigenous activists have likewise been wary about the effects of Protestant conversion, on similar grounds that Protestantism fundamentally alters converts relationship to the community (McIntyre 2012).

A recent collection of scholarship looks beyond this dichotomy, seeking instead to appreciate the complex ways that Protestantism reshapes the meanings of community, at times orienting adherents' toward concerns of celestial or even individual importance (Althoff 2014; Gros 1999; McIntyre 2012; Samson 2007). Speaking specifically to the charges of Protestantism as a form of neo-colonialism imposed upon indigenous people in Guatemala, Samson persuasively argues:

In the competing fields of discourse surrounding colonialism and postcolonialism, it simply will not do to continue to view second- or third-generation Mesoamerican evangelicals as victims of imposition from the West or of some North American conspiracy. Evangelicalism is now woven into the fabric of quite possibly the majority of Guatemala's Maya communities. It exists alongside an ethnic identity embodied in language and other aspects of Maya culture and

cosmology, within the very being of people who consider themselves both Maya and evangelical. This is one of the realities that any anthropology moving in the direction of dialogue and collaboration with people in divergent circumstances, even with people on different sides of community conflict, needs to take into account. (Samson 2007:20)

Similarly, my account of religious change in Benito Juárez takes seriously the presence of Adventists as active and embedded members of the community, who continue to desire the affective attachments and social arrangements of pueblo life, in ways nonetheless that reshape the meanings of community.

Being Adventist in Benito Juárez does set the membership apart from the population at large, at the expense of weakening certain features of community, particularly those tied to the rituals and power of the Catholic Church. These arrangements have a long history of adaptation, and even imposition (Chance and Taylor 1985), that should not be lost in the current discussion on religious change in Mexico and Mesoamerica. But Adventism also strengthens community, investing these arrangements and practices with new meanings along the way. Cargo service is given the added weight of religious obligation in the quest for Salvation. Missionaries brought new ideas about organizing the home, abstaining from alcohol, and eating healthy foods, that have bolstered the pueblo's sense of itself and its history. Teachings about nature strengthen understandings of place and add legitimacy to the value of the pueblo as a place-in-nature.

Instruction on the dignity of every person supports increased participation by women and youth.

While Adventism has become an important additional mechanism by which the work of community gets done, both in strengthened communal practices and contributing to the formation of positive local identity, it does have important implications for the limits of regional solidarity building in the Sierra Norte, as discussed above. At the same time, Adventism does encourage non-local orientations beyond those marked by ethno-racial difference, including a

sense of the common plight of other spiritually, economically, and socially marginalized Adventists throughout the world. I have more to say about the implications of these dynamics in the next section.

Toward Zapotec Solidarity

In response to the historically deep, geographically widespread and structurally complex pattern of pueblo-based identity in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca, indigenous activists and intellectuals have initiated a political project they call *comunalidad*. Holly Worthen (Worthen 2012:13-16) provides an excellent overview of the main features of *comunalidad*, as elaborated by Floriberto Díaz Gomez (Cardoso Jimenez and Robles Hernandez 2007), Jaime Martínez Luna (1993; 2003; Martínez Luna 2010), and Juan José Rendón Monzón (2004). *Comunalidad* is a characterization of the core features that animate and solidify pueblo life. One “essence” of *comunalidad* is collectively held land, which foment a shared sense of physical space, as well as a sense of place as imbued with history, memory, and spiritual relations with life-giving forces. Another essence is collective labor – *tequio* and *cargo* – the physical means by which belonging is constructed. A third is the *fiesta*, an event that simultaneously depends on and celebrates mutual support, as well as town culture and the values of reciprocity and hard work. Each of these features in turn forms the foundation upon which the pueblo builds its self-determination and distinctive form of communal governance (*asambleas*). In articulating this project, activist-intellectuals seek to define indigenusness based on politically invisible but communally salient practices, as a way of attracting state development resources as well as integrating themselves into the indigenous rights debate (Mendoza Zuany 2014).

My research points to additional “invisible” values and practices to be kept in mind when considering the project of solidarity building in the Sierra Norte. By exploring local desires for and engagement with development and the pursuit of a better life, I have argued that the strength of social practices oriented toward the maintenance of the community does not preclude a desire for development and progress. This is particularly true with regard to the habits, knowledge and dispositions that encourage self-reflection and personal-betterment – learning to critically evaluate society and personal responsibility through the lens of Adventist eschatology, gaining skills in housekeeping, accounting and time management as an ecotourism worker. This category of personal betterment arose as one of the most fulfilling and satisfying aspects of participation in each organization, particularly when they lead to very concrete skills that have improved peoples’ ability to participate more fully in the social life of the pueblo. As the discourse of *comunalidad* seeks to harness the essence of community attachment, it is important to keep in mind the ways in which people may likewise be oriented toward the modern. In some instances, as with Adventists (a significant population that is nevertheless often presumed to be unsympathetic to the cause of indigenous organizing), it is possible that a denial of the role of modernity and progress may actively deter large groups of *serranos* from participating in a project of *comunalidad*, to the extent that personal betterment is such a central – though not mutually exclusive – aspect of Zapotec Adventist identity.

A second and related point that arises from my research again deals with the question of religious change and the potential degree of resonance between Adventists and indigenous organizing. My research suggests that while Adventism precludes solidarity building on the basis of shared ethno-racial identity, it does not divert attention away from the value of the local; nor does it preclude all kinds of non-local organizing, simply the kind that is based on ethno-

racial difference. In fact, the structure of the Adventist Church in southern Mexico encourages Adventists to build solidarity with other Adventists, to share stories about their spiritual struggles at regional gatherings, to learn about issues of religious freedom and how to legally combat persecution at formal workshops, and to gain skills to improve the material and social conditions of family life through classes and bible lessons. Adventists also learn about the plight of other spiritually, economically, and socially marginalized Adventists throughout the world in magazines and bible study material distributed at the Conference level. Because my research was place-based, I did not examine these extra-local attachments, but future research can sort out the details of these spiritually based forms of solidarity. It would be particularly useful to look for patterns in changes to the material livelihoods of marginalized people that may result from these attachments, as well as the ripple effects on their broader communities. Such an agenda would complement the goals of this dissertation, to identify and understand alternative criteria for progress and the attainment of a “better life” that are generated through participation in diverse development projects, and to connect those understandings to the work of social movement organizing. Recognizing these specific ways that Protestantism, and ecotourism, connect with and resist specific forms of solidarity and group belonging can aid activists in the difficult work of generating alternative frames to coalesce solidarity and further the cause of social justice.

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2007 *Multiculturalism, Identity, and the Articulation of Citizenship: The "Indian Question" Now*. *Latin American Research Review* 42(1):238-251.

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 1984 *A Line of Power*. London: Tavistock.
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 1980 *The San: Hunter Gatherers of the Kalahari*. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press.
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- 2001 *Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture*. In *Native American Voices: A Reader*. S. Lobo and S. Talbot, eds. Pp. 393-401. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
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- 1993 *Los Adventistas del septimo dia en America latina: Sus comienzos; su crecimiento; sus desafios*. D.Missiology diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission.
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- 1990 *Etnografía Tzetzal de Chiapas: Modalidades de una cosmovisión prehispanica*. Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico: Gobierno del Estado para el Fomento a la Investigación y Difusión de la Cultura.
- Vincent, Susan
- 2012 *Dimensions of Development: History, Community, and Change in Allpachico, Peru*. In *Anthropological horizons*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
- 2012 *Immanence and Fear: Stranger-Events and Subjects in Amazonia*. *HUA: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1):27-44.
- Walsh, Catherine
- 2010 *Development as Buen Vivir: Institutional Arrangements and (De)Colonial Entanglements*. *Development* 53(1):15-21.
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- 1987 *The Juárez Myth in Mexico*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Williams, Brackette F.
- 1989 *A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18:401-444.
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- Woodburn, James

- 1968 Stability and Flexibility in Hazda Residential Groups. *In* Man the Hunter. R.B.L.a.I. Devore, ed. Chicago: Aldine.
- Wortham, Erica Cusi
- 2013 Indigenous Media in Mexico: Culture, Community, and the State. Durham, NC: Duke.
- Worthen, Holly Michelle
- 2012 The presence of absence: Indigenous migration, a ghost town, and the remaking of gendered communal systems in Oaxaca, Mexico. Ph.D., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Zenno, Miho
- 2007 El Sistema de Cargos como Mecanismo para Mejorar la Vida Rural en la Sociedad Urbanizada. *In* Ciudadanías Diferenciadas en un Estado Multicultural: Los usos y costumbres en Oaxaca. J. Hernández-Díaz, ed. Pp. 347-67. Oaxaca, Méx: Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca.

Curriculum Vita

Lori Coppola Klivak

EDUCATION

PhD, Cultural Anthropology, Syracuse University, May 2015 Fall 2004 – present
Dissertation: Que Salgamos más Adelante: Identity, Community, and the Desire for Development in Oaxaca, Mexico
Advisor: John Burdick PhD, Professor of Anthropology

MA, Cultural Anthropology, CUNY Hunter College, January 2004
Advisor: Susan Lees PhD, Professor of Anthropology

BA, Classical Studies (Biology minor), Colgate University, May 1998

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Community; development; social movements; indigenous identity; tourism; religion; social change; Mexico; U.S.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

Que Salgamos más Adelante: Identity, Community, and the Desire for Development in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Syracuse University, Doctoral Dissertation. July 2006; September – October 2007; June 2008 – May 2009. Oaxaca, Mexico

Long-term ethnographic study examining community development in indigenous communities, to understand the relationship between development, identity, and collective action

The Rochester Public Market: Dynamics of an Urban Marketplace CUNY Hunter College, Masters Thesis. January – May 2003. Rochester, NY

Fieldwork and ethnography exploring the relationship between community and public space in an urban ethnic public marketplace

Market Spaces, Community Places CUNY Hunter College, Class Project. Fall 2002.

Fieldwork and ethnography examining the theoretical implications of the construct of community in an urban public marketplace

BetterBuildings.com Project for Public Spaces, New York, NY. Internship. Summer 2002 Fieldwork examining the use of amenities at urban public buildings; supported the development of a website designed to improve the function and utilization of public space

The Social Geography of Eruv Communities CUNY Hunter College. Summer 2002
Case study of the geographic and social boundaries of urban Jewish communities designed to support Susan Lee's research on Eruv communities

Shelter from the Storm CUNY Hunter College, Class Project. Spring 2002
Multi-media geographic, ethnographic, and historical study of how a major event shapes public space

GRANTS AND FUNDING

Wenner-Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Grant (\$18,000) Grant for doctoral research in Oaxaca, Mexico. June 2008-May2009

Claudia De Lys Scholarship in Cultural Anthropology (Declined) Anthropology Department, Syracuse University. Funding granted for Spring 2008 dissertation research

Dean's Award for Summer Research (\$1800) Anthropology Department, Syracuse University. Summer 2007

Maxwell School Roscoe-Martin Fund for Research (\$1000) Maxwell School, Syracuse University. May 2007

Goekjian/PLACA Summer Research Grant (\$2178) Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Summer 2006

Creative Grant for Summer Research (\$1100) Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Summer 2006

Syracuse University Summer Fellowship (\$700) Graduate School, Syracuse University. Summer 2005

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND INVITED LECTURES

An Ethos of Engagement: Conversion, Indigeneity and Organized Change in Oaxaca, Mexico Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies. Ithaca, NY. April 18, 2015

Ecotourism and the *Indio Permitido*: Local Control in the Era of Multicultural Governance Paper presented at the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. Washington DC. May 29 – June 1, 2013

Between Organizing and the Everyday: Interpretations and Formations of Rural Identities in Oaxaca, Mexico Paper presented at the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. San Francisco, California. May 23-26, 2012

“We have *la naturaleza*”: **Environmental Identities, Social Organizing, and the Production of Place** Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association. Montreal, Canada. November 20, 2011

Constructing Community through Ecotourism Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association. New Orleans, LA. November 17, 2010

Ecoturismo, Inversión Estatal, y la Memoria Social en la Sierra Juárez. Paper presented at the El Octavo Simposio Internacional de Estudios Oaxaqueños. Oaxaca, Mexico. June 25-27, 2009

La dinámica local del desarrollo comunitario en la Sierra Juárez. Invited lecture at the Universidad de la Sierra Juárez. Oaxaca, Mexico. February 11, 2009

Cultura, Identidad, y Naturaleza en el Desarrollo Comunitario de la Sierra Juárez Invited lecture at the Universidad de la Sierra Juárez. Oaxaca, Mexico. February 11, 2009

“Zapotec Tourism”: **The Community Politics of Indigenous Organizing and Ethnic Revival in Southern Mexico.** Brown Bag Presentation for Program on Latin America and the Caribbean, Maxwell School, Syracuse University. February 21, 2007

Round Table Discussant and Organizer Conference on Indigenous Cartography, Cornell University, March 2006

APPOINTMENTS AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University. Fall 2013
The Anthropology of Tourism

Teaching Assistant Robert Rubinstein PhD, Professor of Anthropology and International Relations, Syracuse University. Spring 2012
Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Graduate Assistant Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University. Fall 2011

Assistant Director Program on Latin America and the Caribbean, The Moynihan Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. September 2009-May 2011

Adjunct Lecturer Department of Anthropology, Utica College. Spring 2008
Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
Anthropology of Native North America

Teaching Associate Future Professoriate Program, Department of Anthropology,
 Syracuse University. August 2006-May 2007

Teaching Fellow TA Program of the Graduate School, Syracuse University. August
 2006-May 2007

Instructor TA Program of the Graduate School, Syracuse University. August 2006-May
 2007
English 610: Oral Communication in Teaching

Teaching Assistant Susan Goode-Null PhD, Assistant Professor of Anthropology,
 Syracuse University. Spring 2006
Introduction to Biological Anthropology

Teaching Assistant A.H. Peter Castro PhD, Associate Professor of Anthropology,
 Syracuse University. Fall 2005
Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Teaching Assistant Susan Goode-Null PhD, Assistant Professor of Anthropology,
 Syracuse University. Spring 2005
Introduction to Biological Anthropology

Teaching Assistant Maureen Trudelle Schwarz PhD, Associate Professor of
 Anthropology, Syracuse University. Fall 2004
Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

SERVICE

Reviewer Maxwell Review. Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse
 University. Spring 2006, Spring 2007

Anthropology Graduate Student Organization Syracuse University. Member Fall
 2004-Spring 2016

- **President** 2006-2007 Academic Year
- **Faculty Representative** 2005-06 Academic Year

Graduate Student Organization Senator Graduate School, Syracuse University. Fall
 2005-Spring 2007