

Zapaturismo in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico:
Marketplace capitalism meets revolutionary tourism

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Abstract

The EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) resistance in Chiapas, Mexico remade the image of San Cristóbal from a quaint tourist destination to a location of adventure and social revolution. The Zapatista, and their ideas of Zapatismo, according to some North American social activists, was a keystone movement facing off against the pressures of neo-liberal capitalism. One of the most notable contributions has been the stimulation of an overwhelming rise in international solidarity actors to the area. These factors along with a proximity to popular Maya archaeological sites, a high population of Indigenous Maya, and pivotal Spanish history reflected in colonial architecture, combine to lure international tourists to the area. My intention for this project is to examine the confluence of tourist and host as they together set a tourist market based on many things, but in particular on the ongoing Zapatista revolution and how this social movement has become an invitation to perform as activists and humanitarians, as well as tourists.

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For Travis



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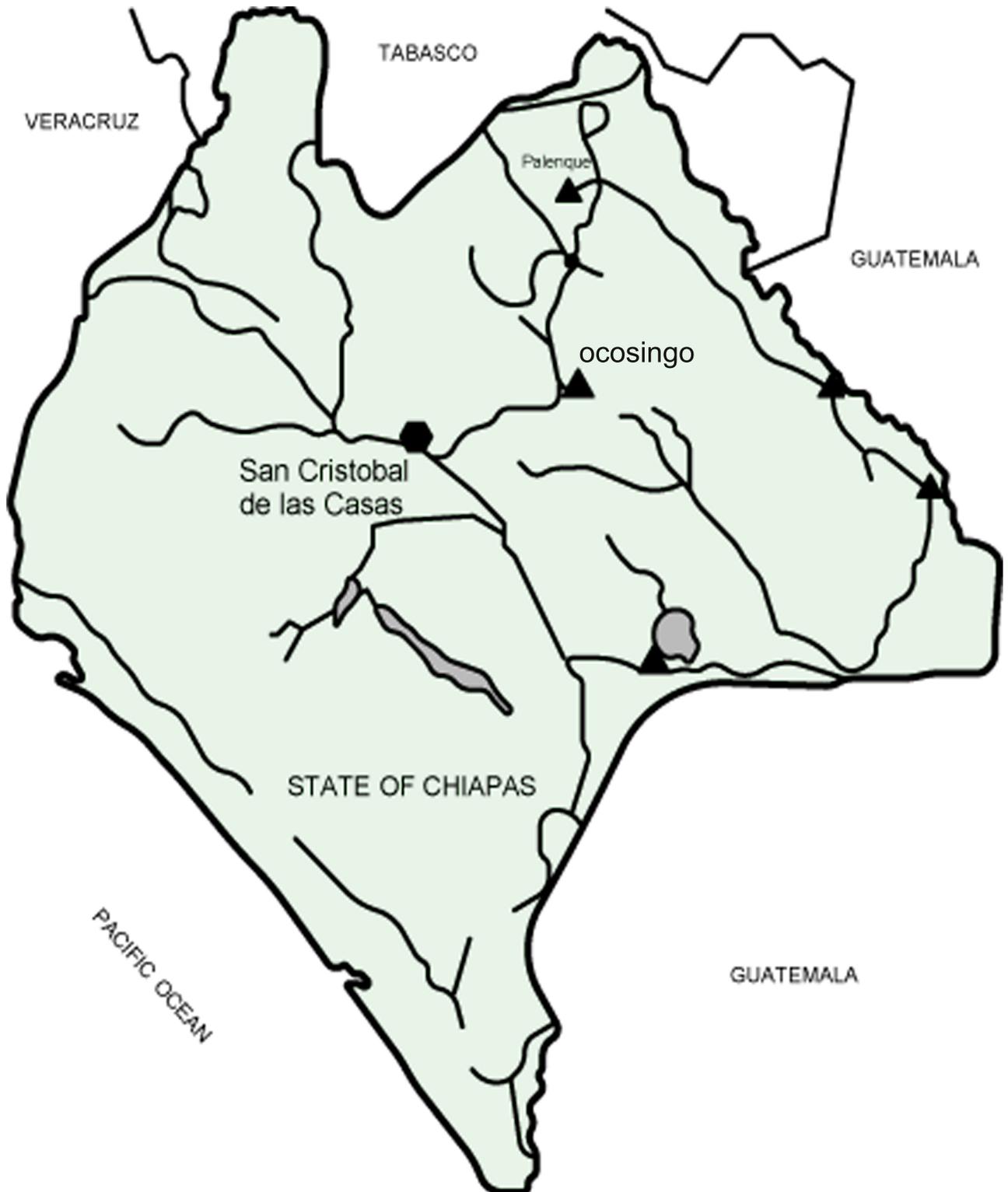
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All photos were taken by author, unless other wise mentioned

Map of Chiapas, and the geographical position of the City of San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico.



Chapter 1

This Place Called Jovel: an introduction

The city of Real de Chiapa was founded in 1528 (Secretaria de Turismo 2004). After several name changes, it became known as San Cristóbal de las Casas in honour of the first bishop of the area, Fray Bartolome de Las Casa. But, for those who speak ta bats'i k'op (the real tongue), this high valley dwelling is known as Jovel—place in the clouds.

In August 2006 I came here to examine the social relations of tourism taking place in what I designated an activist-tourist zone. In San Cristóbal, Chiapas, Mexico, ideology and activism coalesce into a mix of Zapatista revolutionary discourse and an “alternative” tourist market economy. This area, including areas outside the city, was once the focal point of the Zapatista guerrilla war. Since then it has developed into a new centre of tourist exchange, one where revolutionary political-cultural consciousness and nostalgia for civil activism reinforces and stimulates the production and consumption of souvenirs, t-shirts, and tours.

Tourism is not unfamiliar in the city of San Cristóbal (van den Berghe 1994); however, in this thesis I explore the mutual influence of the Zapatista movement and tourist traffic. I examine how the Zapatista revolution reshaped this industry and how tourists, and other visitors, influenced the movement. I argue that the rebellion had important effects on the activities of tourists and the commercial growth of San Cristóbal de las Casas. One of the most interesting consequences of the 1994 rebellion in Chiapas is a form of “tourism” inspired by the revolutionary movement and entwined with the history of conflict and Indigenous¹ struggles—which I have here identified as “zaturismo.”

In my investigation of what has been called “zaturismo”, I explore the linked phenomena of “conflict tourism” (Adams 2003; Aleng 2002; Babb 2004; Ness 2005), and the globalization² of revolutionary politics through international tourism. Whether in the context of an armed rebellion, or as part of a larger social movement, the EZLN became a

powerful symbol and example for anti-capitalists, anarchists, and other socialist grassroots movements in various parts of the world. This attracted a large number of politically conscious tourists to the historic location of San Cristóbal.

In this thesis, I address the following major questions: 1) How exactly is San Cristóbal, with its recent history of guerrilla rebellion, constructed as an international tourist destination by travellers and locals? 2) How does the possibility of engaging in activism and political risk create a popular image of the locale? 3) Is international “activist tourism” part of the process of promotion of local Zapatista communities and the city of San Cristóbal? I conducted my field research in August 2006-January 2007. I set out to address these questions by drawing on observations, participation, and interviews with members of the San Cristóbal community (including permanent and temporary residents) and with short-term visitors and tourists.

The city of San Cristóbal is placed high in the interior mountain range of Mexico’s most southern state of Chiapas. Rising over 2100 meters above sea level, the city is hidden most September mornings by a mantle of low cloud. When the sun breaks through, it hits the painted walls and radiant colours fill the crisp thin air. When the sun does shine, it does so without fatigue, and the heat can be piercing. The average high temperature from May to August is 33^oC. However, during the rainy season I am forced to navigate the ancient cobbled streets of the central city as they filled as rivers, I walk the narrow stone sidewalks made dangerously slippery by the torrential downpour. Not far from the city, pine forest hills thicketed with bracken ferns enclose the valley. Populated with all the features of a tropical cloud mountain ecosystem, lichens and bryophytes cling to gnarled branches while humming birds suck the nectar of their flowers. Skipping the large gravel pits that adorns one entrance to the city, and the ever-expanding shanty housing projects which cluster around

the other, it was easy for me see how so many visitors are swept up by the romance of the location, and why the state and federal governments designate it a *pueblo magico* (a magical city).³ The passion of the mountains, the vibrant hues of crafted goods in store windows and, of course, the sprit of the people are all attractive features for tourism.

I regard tourism as a process that can alter micro economic systems and change local social-political climates. Many tourism studies (Alneng 2002; Burner 1996; Urry 1990; van den Berghe 1994) investigate mostly Western leisure tourists who seek the “exotic” in the developing world. The participants in this project, in some way, challenge normative definitions of tourism and raise questions about the differences between “tourism” and everyday modes of engagement in foreign places. Therefore, my references to tourists as “visitors” and as “travellers” (most of who are international) will ultimately serve to make a comment on the fluid category of a “tourist”. I specifically focus my analytical and ethnographic sights on the relations involving international visitors who travelled to San Cristóbal. These tourists act in the capacity of peace observers, volunteers and solidarity activists interacting with local businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Zapatista civil society and the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army Emiliano Zapata, EZLN).

My use of the terms *zapatourist* and *zapatourismo* raised mixed approval. The sentiments of these terms varied from skepticism, to distain, to a self-assured light humour about it all. It was sometimes difficult to tell how people would react given its multiple interpretations. The term *zapatourist* was first used by conservative residents to denigrate the interference by the leftist activists that poured into the city the months and years after the uprising. As revolutionary symbols appeared on t-shirts and postcards many in the solidarity movement used this unfavorable implication to describe the commoditized products of a social movement

and those that bought them as disingenuous hangers-on. When I met Alex he had been traveling for a few months and his unkempt dusty brown hair provided credibility of his low-budget, down-to-earthness. A negative reputation associated with the word has been handed down and passed along over the years as exemplified by this statement made by Alex: "And then I thought I'd be kind of embarrassed to be here and be one of the zapatourists and know nothing about it."

But there is no doubt that the terms are catchy and have been taken up by others to define a local phenomenon. Doing a quick internet search of the term *zapatourist* I came across numerous postings and the list grows every day. New York Times reporter, Julia Preston (1996) used the term *Zapatour* to describe the involvement of international leftist reporters, humanitarian, and celebrities alike, who came to the area of San Cristóbal as supporters of the EZLN. She identified herself as a Zapatista tourist at the 1996 Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neo-Liberalism. Preston (1996) quoted Marcos as saying of the visitors to Realidad: "If this is tourism, someone ought to give these tourists a medal.... I don't think they had much fun, with the mud and the sun and the army helicopters overhead". If this is tourism, then what kind of tourism is it?

Though conflict exists in areas where tourism is an established industry, such as Bali and Egypt, and there has been little attention in the anthropological literature about an industry that is created by the presence of (previous) conflict. Florence Babb's (2004) article on Sandalista tourists stands as an important work in the study of conflict tourism. Situated in Nicaragua, Babb's work presents two key features relevant to my study in Chiapas, Mexico. 1) How the historical influx of American leftists contributed to the social transformation of Latin America, and 2) How a post-Sandinista government found a comfortable selected memory of past rebellion for tourism, functioning to commoditize the past.

In a similar vein, Kathleen Adams (2003) has described the emergence of “danger-zone tourism” following in the wake of urban unrest. She explores how tourists have searched out resistance movements in Indonesia, East Timor and other south Asian countries. While Indonesia suffered an overall drop in tourism, after years of negative attention, a new form of tourism emerged in the aftermath of civil unrest and negative repression. It seems that the scars of terror in Dilli, East Timor “have drawn the international media and international curiosity-seekers” (Adams 2003:56). Aside from these and a few other writings of revolutions and war as tourist phenomena (Alnegn 2002; Noy 2004), there is sparse literature about activism as part of a touristic endeavour. While chapter two reviews some specific literature on conflict tourism/humanitarian tourism, the overall scarcity of comment could be due to the obscure type of tourism produced by the presence of conflict, or perhaps because of its unsanctioned status in official circuits.

Through my ethnographic study, I bring to light the details of the global reach of the Zapatista movement and how it creates and recreates the local tourist industry based on the desire of the visitor to view or engage in social revolution. Both current worldwide political and economic relations and the conditions of modernity create symptoms of poverty in Chiapas. These features paradoxically and simultaneously provide the means to fight those symptoms. The use of unofficial or alternative broadcasting expressions, such as web blogs, pirate radio, and indie media, made Zapatismo popular with other non-Mexican anti-neoliberal activists and intellectuals. The global circulation of Zapatista literature and images raises questions about the implications of the nostalgic and romantic allure of revolutions in the twenty first century. Similar to the Che Guevara merchandise such as t-shirts, handbags, mugs and bumper stickers sold worldwide (and outside of Cuba), the face of “Subcommandante Marcos” is a recognizable currency for a growing social justice

movement that includes labour, peasants/indigenous peoples, and tourist/activists in Latin America. “Zapaturistas” not only take part in the local economic and social atmosphere, they also co-create the opening of a new “capitalist market”—a market searching out autonomous control of labour, resources, and image. Though the Zapatista movement spins an unsanctioned tourist industry, some businesses have accepted and even embraced social activism and civil rebellion as part of tourism in the area. It is important, then, to examine the social, cultural and economic factors at play between national and international visitors and the local communities.

Reciprocity between foreign actors (tourists, peace observers, volunteers) and local actors (vendors, activists, expatriates) inspires and shapes an Indigenous insurgence to act within a larger international anti-neo-liberal resistance movement. In turn this relationship affects the ability of Zapatista communities to achieve a localized cultural and political autonomy. Though it is the subject of much interest, it is not always easy to illustrate the direct connections between the implementation of global neo-liberal restructuring policies and the effects on the daily practices of families in the sparsely populated hills and valleys of Chiapas. Nor are the challenges or changes to national and international laws always clearly traced back to grassroots movements or local actors. Since the anthropological project essentially is to comment on the interaction between societal structures and personal agency (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003; Xavier and Rosaldo 2002), this study does not overlook specific conditions and processes in favour of grand theory, nor does it dismiss the structural factors of overarching political and economic systems on peoples’ daily lives (Yashar 2005). Instead, I try to take advantage of the “productive” (Frohlick 2006:88) collision of both local and global scales at this location. Zapatismo, as a social movement, exemplifies the symbiotic relation of the new global economy and grassroots politics. This place called Jovel

is a site where larger structural forces and personal agency are porous partners for the fluid movements of goods, ideas, and people—what (Appadurai 1997) refers to as “ethnoscapes.” The term “ethnoscapes” acknowledges that limiting factors among actors, such as financial ability, access to government documents, language, and contrasting ideologies create unequal flows across state borders. By paying attention to interactions that take place at locations of international exchange, these limiting factors and disjuncture between actors can be revealed.

I provide here a glimpse into a larger world of complex international and intercultural relationships that serve to create an activist network. The people involved in these exchanges became the focus of this study. I interviewed visitors who were involved (or wanted to be involved) with the Zapatista movement in some capacity. I also became acquainted with permanent residents who provide such an experience: local tour operators, shop owners and vendors selling Zapatista and Indigenous produced goods, and members of operating non-governmental organizations. This thesis is the product of a journey I took with members of this nebulous “community.”

On a general level, I locate this thesis amongst the writings of new social movement research, including transnationalizing social movements, and amongst tourism studies dealing explicitly with conflict. I explore the ways in which people from various backgrounds have developed relationships in the context of “tourism” and “conflict.” I do so, however, with an awareness of the limitations of levels of analysis. Lila Abu-Lughod (2000:265) asked “what [do we do] with cultural forms that have no obvious and simple community and are only ever part of people’s complex lives?” Although her reference is media studies of Arab television and national identity, she speaks to the problems faced trying to comprehend and represent ongoing living processes from a necessarily limited

perspective. With this in mind, I concentrate on a few selected relationships central to the mutual construction of activism through tourism, and tourism as a site of activism.

What was uncovered in the process of searching out the people at this intersection was the subtle confusion of the typologies of tourism. One common comparison, and familiar example, is use of the terms *traveller* vs. *tourist*. Usually, the tourist type, portrayed as camera totting and culturally uneducated, is contrasted to the independent, spend-thrift, well-informed traveller. When I was twenty-four years old and “backpacking” Europe, I carried such perceptions and would indulge in adamant self reference as a *traveller*. Chaim Noy (2004:79), however, maintains that backpackers should be regarded as a “variety within, rather than outside, mass tourism” due to their practice of creating a collective culture of travel routes and travel narratives. Given the familiarity of routes along Mexico’s southern Maya homeland by such traveller’s manuals as *Lonely Planet* and *Lets’ Go* I would agree.

An early encounter with Joan⁴ also made me re-evaluate these terms of *tourism* and *travel*. She was a slight stature American woman, who had travelled alone in Mexico numerous times before, but this was her first venture south of Oaxaca. Our discussion about tourism was so unexpected that it helped shape my exploration of tourists as members of communities acting out daily rituals. At first, her casual self reference as “tourist” mixed common stereotypes so frequently I thought her viewpoints contradictory. Near the end of our conversation, she became self reflective and also began to wonder about her positioning and choice of reference to tourism as mass travel.

Joan: I just was trying to think of what tourism is here. When I think of tourist I think of shopping, I don’t think of people coming here just to see the town and I think of tourist because I like shopping—this is not right either. Like where you stay and where you eat and all that it helps the tourism here.

Ginna: Did it change your idea of tourism?

Joan: Oh ya, I travelled a lot. I don’t know. I mean I always like to say I’m traveller not a tourist. And I hope to think that.

Ginna: The distinction being?

Joan: It's all in my head, I think. Because I take pictures, I think tourists are the people who wear local hats, who go and buy the local hats, and taking the pictures and stand out like a sore thumb. But that maybe me as well [she pauses with a sigh] I don't know. I always said I hope I am a traveller not a tourist. But I think I may be a tourist. I think I hope in my eyes I hope I am not. And I also travel very lonely uncertain roads; I don't stay in the hotels. Like yesterday when I was in Chamula. Like, I don't care to be a tourist. I mean I'm a frick'n tourist here. I didn't want to take the tour bus and have all the people come on at the same time, everyone go into the same little market store and buy all the stock. And then move on to the next one and they are all bartering. I didn't want to be apart of that. I want to do my own thing.

Uncertain what to call herself, tourist or traveller, Joan tried to organize categories: tourists are cameras, shopping, hotels, and buses, and travellers pass lonely roads, and do their own thing. Yet she performed several of both categories.

Equally, I saw the lines blurr between researcher and tourist. Joan identified as tourist/traveller, but also as researcher working on a project of documentation. Where did I situate *myself*? I was also documenting, collecting stories as tourists collect souvenirs. Tim Edensor (1998) includes anthropologists as tourists because of their habit of collecting. "Like colonizers and tourists, ethnographers tend to objectify and spectacularise what they find" (Edensor 1998:2). Stephanie Hom Cary (2004:2) also sees the tourist and ethnographer as gatherers of experience "and though the tourist is rewarded with photos and souvenirs, they both leave with stories." Edward Bruner (1996:166) is clear about the "faded binaries" between tourism and ethnography. For these reasons I chose to treat *visitor*, *tourist*, *traveller*, even ethnographer, as partners in the same project.

The six months I spent touring and studying in southern Mexico presented me opportunities to learn about the politics of the Zapatistas at an intimate and active level, and become involved with the roles of international volunteers and activists. Like me, many visitors came to see and experience this place for themselves. My enterprise as researcher is

then quite similar to the tourists I discuss in Chapter four who endeavour to “learn while traveling.” For many, the rationale for coming involves searching out life enriching experiences (Hom Cary 2004; Noy 2004), including practicing and participating in a social justice movement like Zapatismo. Some, like the Cuban-American university professor, Elena, came looking outside the academy for “what is so important for the future of our world.” Engaged and emotional, she pounded her fist on the table in emphasis during our conversation. “I came to learn about the social movements that are happening in Latin America. To give me—I don’t know—to celebrate them, to understand them more. To know the truth, that there is a future in them [social movements]. The countries of Latin America will be able to confront, and say we are not afraid.” Just as it was for Elena, this investigation was for many other tourists a labour of love and dedication as they worked or volunteered while on “vacation.” For the most part, these volunteers/activists/tourists were well-connected to a network of solidarity groups spanning across borders, but grounded at “home.” Some groups, such as the Italian *¡Ya Basta!*, show a strong presence in Chiapas. Others, like *¡Dost jel!*, are smaller groups whose members come solo or two at a time.

First time visiting backpackers/activists/volunteers from Europe and North America hold certain assumptions about residents of San Cristóbal and the Zapatistas and act and respond in accordance. In certain areas they hope to engage with locals as they tour autonomous villages, attend local cultural forums, and visit markets selling revolutionary paraphernalia. Zapatista communities, foreign activists and associated tourism industry workers have their own particular interest in the area regarding use of space, current events, the revolution, and indigenous culture. At times foreign and indigenous activists have diverging opinions about how the revolution should be executed, and local disputes over political involvement have been expressed. At times these opinions are in conflict and at

times they coincide, producing the current site of San Cristóbal as a place of action and activism, which plays out in specific kinds of relationships between various local and non-local actors. I will address the co-production of San Cristóbal and surrounding area as a place of activism through the performances by these various actors.

In this thesis, I follow the multiple meanings of Zapatismo from its historical foundation as an indigenous social movement, to object of desire for foreign activists, to an international model of grassroots autonomy. Chapter two addresses the theories and literature of activist anthropology I use to position myself and participants of this project, as well as the details of my research methods, acknowledging the complexities of a politically charged ethnographic field. I review the literature on conflict and tourism and apply them to Chiapas. In Chapter three, I set the scene for this ethnographic study within a historical context that includes political, ethnic, and religious relations in the area that gave rise to the Zapatista Indigenous revolution and social movement. I describe the area, with its history of conflict, as an emerging “revolutionary tourist zone.” This rebellion is situated in the context of recent global networking and the tourists that added themselves to the mix.

I present the principal findings in Chapters four, five, and six. In Chapter four I look to the reasons participants have for coming to the area and their ability to see the inevitability of their involvement. Relationships in tourism are personal, and for many zapatourists the risk of travel is to be rewarded with an enriching experience. Chapter five takes a peek into Zapatismo and its relation to the commerce of tourism enacted locally, as well as Zapatista attempts to integrate into a complex global system. As a way of locating a Zapatista response to a tourist market economy, I draw on examples of local projects which demonstrate the possibility of a self-determined economy. As well, I take a walk through the market of revolutionary paraphernalia and speak with tourist about their attitudes towards

the commercial aspects of the struggle. Zapatismo as a marketable product is seen in many different, and at times, contentious ways.

Chapter six deals with those players that sit at the junction of international, national and local relations, in other words, those actors who help to facilitate the interface of political and social action in the city and surrounding areas. This provides a closer look at those people that share spaces of activism and tourism. From the local activities of worldwide networks, to outreach programs that develop at the community level, I relate those exchanges involving foreign tourist and the developed practice of internationalizing Zapatismo. Chapter seven concludes the thesis with a summary of thoughts on Zapatismo as a revolutionary experience enacted in local activist-tourist sites.

This study, which began with personal interests and my personal history, highlights my own, sometimes difficult, mix positions. My mixed Mexican/Canadian heritage has called me back to Mexico in a curious role. When I introduced myself as Mexican—Chiapaneca no less—my fair skin, pronunciation, and grammatical errors marked me as as a foreigner (understandably since most of my life was outside of Mexico). Yet, owing to my official citizenship, I was one of the few “visitors” who could freely participate in politics without the fear of being deported.

The politics of dissent are delicate and sometimes dangerous in a former war zone. While my privilege as economically independent, foreign educated, multi-ethnic woman granted me access to certain defined spaces, I was denied access to others. When a group of reporters and activists gathered to cover the one year celebration of an uprising of political prisoners inside the high-security federal penitentiary, La Amate, I was one visitor who was denied access to the jail, a right granted to all Mexican citizens. Because my Mexican passport indicates a Canadian birth place, authorities on that day defined me as not the

“right kind” of Mexican. Perhaps this was a convenient red-flag to restrict what I assume the authorities knew to be a subversive protest. This dismissal clearly remarked on my uncertain citizenship and personal identity. The intricacy of citizenship is a familiar dilemma with both foreigners looking to gain the proper documents to perform their activities and stay, and with Indigenous peoples who have long been denied common national rights.

My “halfie” (Abu-Lughod 1991) positionality placed me in this realm of ambiguous treatment, marked openly throughout this thesis. The multiple roles I played were a crucial factor in the development of my investigation. As feminist activist and researcher, Canadian and Mexican national, I negotiated my place within a network of friends, family, and Zapatista organizations. Like many of the research participants, I was actively involved in this particular movement. My position as a “researcher” requires me to be discrete about most activities, locations, and contacts, but my identity as Mexican activist at times called for a loud and vocal voice. Identifying with one or both legal nationalities, a complicated hybrid ethnicity, at times led to confusion. I address these difficult terrains in the next chapter; however, it is important that I unambiguously state that my personal interest in new social



Figure1: Tourist in transit.

movements was indeed part of the reasoning for me to take on this project.

The impetus of this project came from my desire to know more about the potential for social justice movements to travel and for travel to facilitate participation in social movements. The Zapatista movement is, in part, a concept practiced at this particularly location, and in part an international

platform for voicing and modeling autonomous rights and self-governance. Transported by the power of human imagination, ideas birthed in the remote hills of Chiapas have moved, gained momentum, and found new meanings with a mobile international and mostly non-aboriginal crowd. Equally, it is important to see the Zapatista cause and its local actors as global subjects. The rhetoric used by Zapatistas in speeches, “jungle communiqués”, and other public notices are words that engage international dialogue. They call out in solidarity with other oppressed groups and invite the world to observe and at times participate in sharing forums. It is this shared space that I will discuss in the coming pages; whether it is for social activism or for leisure, or in this case both.

Chapter 2

Activist Ethnography/Activist Tourism: theory and methods



Figure 3: Road Block, August 26, 2006.

The painted banner furlled open across the road. On the banner were the images of prison bars, hands of *campesinos* that reach for freedom and words calling for justice.¹ The road block was organized in San Cristóbal as a protest to support and bring attention to the political prisoners of Atenco.² The Zapatistas were calling for a national day of protest, and the local blockade was organized at a particular location where the highway dips into city and connects with the main bus and transport terminals. I thought I would check it out. A gathering had begun including local residents, Mexican nationals, as well as foreigners. Placards and banners were lifted above the traffic, and pamphlets handed out to the stopped vehicles. The organizers were also discussing the role of the “internationalists”. They suggested that it was in the best interest of the foreigners to be seen solely as observers. Any active engagement in the protest would lead to problems with the police and possible deportation. When I was approached, I mentioned my official Mexican status and was promptly handed one end of the banner. “Oh well then, we didn’t know.”

But this apology did not completely resolve my internal contradictions. In what capacity was I there? Observing researcher, engaged international activist, Mexican protester, Canadian student or international tourist? The practice of what Shannon Speed (2006:70-71) has called a “critically engaged activist research” and the ethical issues surrounding subject/object relationship met me head on many times, as I was dealing with an academic research project complicated by matters of personal political interests.

In this chapter I review the ethnographic project at its base, as a personal/political endeavour, and suggest a model of activism as its methodology. Personal involvement is not a new concept to feminist scholars, whose activist work becomes the grounding for theory, and a practical development of ethical working relations with participants. In the first part of this chapter, I mean to explore feminist objectivist claims and challenge an object/subject dichotomy by claiming an activist ethnographic project. I speak to the key difficulties I faced when dealing with a project that lives on in a complex and ever changing political and social atmosphere. Theory and methods are closely related, and though the two will be discussed with some separation for clarity, I hope to highlight the threads that weave between them. In the section addressing my methods, I explain how these theories have informed my project design and implementation. Finally, I situate this study amongst works by authors interested in the correlation of tourism with conflict and political struggles; aspects demonstrated in the spaces of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

2.1 Activism + Research = militant ethnography

I started this project because of a personal connection and interest in the politics of Chiapas. Constructing this research around my feminist politics, my Mexican heritage, and my tourist experiences, I wanted to find a situation that could address such personal searches as well as find my academic space. Like other visitors to the area, exemplified in this thesis, I

came with a project of intended involvement. I recognized myself as an active, political, self-interested participant. I aligned myself with a nebulous community of activists and merged into a neo-Zapatista network (a term used by Levya Solanos (1998) to define a network that includes solidarity organizations directly, or indirectly, supporting the Zapatista movement). With my personal activism on display and a critical engagement with a political research project, I approach this thesis as an example of an activist or militant³ ethnography.

An activist researcher/anthropologist/scholar affirms an explicit political position within the project of her study. Though discussed under various names; as activist research by Charles Hale (2006) and Shanon Speed (2006), barefoot or militant anthropology proposed by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995), or a militant ethnography by Jeffrey Juris (2007), the fundamentals of their projects are noticeable similar. First is the use of the self as a research tool through deep involvement. Juris' (2006:164) active and engaged or "militant" involvement with an activist community became a fused relationship "between ethnography and political action" which allowed for an embodied understanding of the functions of the activist community he came to study. Second, research is used to make a positive contribution to a shared political goal *with* the participants. For Speed (2006:70-71) activist research provides a "practical and ethical approach" to research as findings allowing for shared knowledge production. I equate both these notions with my own understandings of feminist literature. Feminist literature, which has the personal as the starting point of a political engagement, acknowledges the situated nature of knowledge production.

My decision to practice activist research and write from the perspective of a *compañera* (comrade) was influenced by my understanding of feminist objectivity (also discussed as feminist standpoint theory). Feminist objectivity is about "...limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to

become answerable for what we learn how to see...” (Haraway 1988:583). Donna Haraway’s comments are reflective of the practices of activist research. To be answerable is to take a locatable position with all its faults, limitations and compromises. Locating my position in activist scholarship practices was sharing a political position in solidarity with the “objects” of study. This practice blurred roles of researched and researcher and merged interests in the production of knowledge—essentially breaking the subject/object dichotomy. As I conducted interviews, I was often met with questions about the Zapatistas, how to contact them, what was the current status of their work, and why the communities were closed. In trying to answer, I grew aware that the interview process can be a means of information *sharing*. I also realized, because of my growing involvement, that I was also the subject of my research (Juris 2007:165). I locate my position as both an activist and activist researcher, as tourist and a tourist researcher.

As this project manifested into a political journey engaged with the struggles of Mexico’s anarchist and leftist communities, I found myself following an established model of activist ethnography. My alignment with a community of activists meant that I lent my words to independent media, volunteered time to local non-governmental organizations and gave my presence to Zapatista communities. I shared with them a common goal of action against neo-liberalism and other forms of oppression. Jeff Juris (2007:165) knows this model well as he puts his physical body quite literally on the line—the line of “mass direct action”—and his voice behind the organization he “researched.” Hale (2006:98) calls this approach a “profoundly generative scholarly understanding.” According to Hale (2006:98), activist ethnographers work toward a “mutual recognition” of sympathetic understanding and challenge established knowledges through cultural critique. As I researched activist-

tourists (defined broadly as those involved in social justice movements overseas), my mode of practice called for an overt explanation of my role as activist-ethnographer.

I recognized that it would be a difficult project when I decided to study the rebellious politics of a contentious Indigenous rights movement. Working in a mixed *Ladino* and Indigenous peoples' space, as a *Kashlan* (non-aboriginal) researcher I was aware and respectful of the power dynamics buried into the politics of the area. One fear in this project was that I would step in and create, or recreate, existing disparities between those who exercise control over the rights to knowledges and those who struggle for them. Equally, I was attentive to recreating stereotypes that reiterate those disparities. My feminist teachers taught awareness in passing judgments on who held power or what it meant to each player. For example, Indigenous Maya women surprised the ruling elite and their own communities when their combined voices challenged the status quo in spite of the risks (Nash 2001; Stephen 2005).

Knowing that this subaltern can speak through the mechanism of their community's governance; or projects of Indigenous media, like the film and video organization, Promedios; and the official radio of the EZLN, Radio Insurgentes, allowed me to move beyond the paralyzing task of trying to appropriately represent Indigenous Other's voices. When I learnt this lesson, I felt more comfortable with my project within the whole of the movement. Specifically, I accepted that the difficulties of communication with Indigenous peoples would show in sparse representation in the thesis. I accepted the same with respect to my starting knowledge of social movement theory as it pertains to an anarchist clandestine organization. What I could gain is included. I pursued, instead, alternative avenues of rebellion as found in tourist exchanges.

Jeffery Juris (2007) and Uri Gordon (2007) acknowledge a wider scope of the organic intellectual. Academic activists working for, or within, a social movement are joined by legions of self promoting activists who generate anarchist theory. For Juris (2007:172), the collective practices of ethnography “provide the tools for ongoing activist (self-)reflection and decision making.” Gordon (2007:280) suggests that “both the people whose ideas and practises are examined and the people who are formulating theory on their basis must be involved in the process of theorizing.” Many of the participants in this study did their own theorizing by questioning my interview questions, and engaging in a high level of reflection on their answers. Recall Joan, the American photographer, and her statement about tourism—“I just try to think of what tourism is here.” Together, Joan and I dialogued for an understanding of what tourism meant to this place. Such collective ethnographic reflection and analysis, advocated by activist anthropologists, helped in the co-creation of this shared body of knowledge (Smith 1999; Marcus 1988).

On my way home I regularly passed by the writing on the wall reminding me “El revolucionario actúa, no habla!” It said to me. “A revolutionary acts—does not speak!” or as in my case, does not only engage in writing about injustices. I tried to bridge that dilemma by acting, and writing/speaking. As an activist researcher, my position is explicit, at times

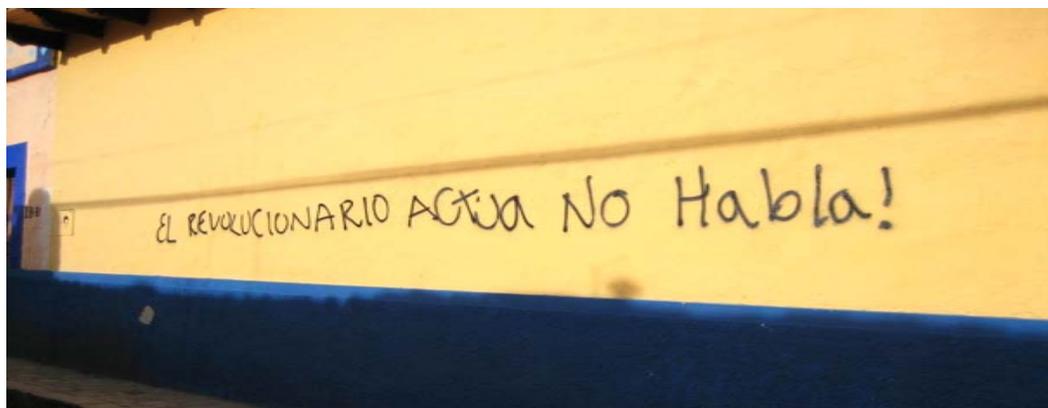


Figure 4: Political graffiti is common in San Cristóbal.

unapologetic, combining political interests with an academic issue related to that interest.

There maybe a disjuncture in my actions, between actions in the “field” and “writing-up” my activism for a hierarchical institution; in order to improve this project’s outcome such tensions and contradictions should be identified and confronted directly (Hale 2006).

Concerns about how a purposeful alignment affected my research and consequently the findings presented in this thesis are therefore address presently.

2.2 The local and the location: participant observation

A general understanding of participant observation as a research method is the use of our body’s senses and our experiences as a mechanism of understanding. We are “investigator and instrument” (Watson 1999:4) keeping a constant self-conscious reflection of cultural critique (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:36; Schensul et al. 1999:71). The dilemmas of this positioning as both local participant of different projects and observer at various locations are overt when enacting the roles of activist and academic. However, acting as activist participant and academic observer demonstrated only some of the contradictions. I felt others coming from my mixed heritage and mixed roles. My leftist alignment (and Mexican citizenship) allowed me intimate access, while simultaneously restricted me from others. In this section I recount the places I went and the things I did, and how my mixed roles provided both confusion and gifts.

With my mixed identity came a mix of roles of practices. I place myself as foreign tourist, student researcher, and Mexican with family relations⁴ in the area—one that carried the experience of previous exploration of the area, and the newness of a shift in perspectives. I participated in those same activities of “exploration” and “self awareness” that a tourist experiences as a backpacker through the area. However, trotting around with a personal computer marked me apart from the long-term budget backpacker and aligned me

with other visitors, volunteers and expatriates that came prepared to do some “work.” In this climate, tourist, traveller, and researcher are titles of performances which easily change. As such there are tensions in the work.

In total, I spent seven months in Mexico; six in Chiapas, with time divided between San Cristóbal (a description of the city follows in Chapter three) and other locations. My decision to conduct research in the San Cristóbal area was based on a historical significance of rebellion in the area, and a practical assessment of the city as a hub of NGO activity, as well as having a history of ethnic tourism. As one of the participants said about the city, “...one of the main reasons I came to San Cristóbal was because I heard that it was a huge centre of the Zapatista rebel movement.” And as many before me and many after, I join the long stream of tourists, activists, and travellers that came to get closer look.

Originally, I planned to spend most of my time between the city and my family’s home on the coast. However, the investigation of the tourism industry, as tied to a world wide activist network, took me to other locations. Along with my residence in the city of San Cristóbal, I spent time in Zapatista communities and with Zapatista outreach endeavours. When it became clear to me that the means by which to get a better understanding of Zapatista communities was to place myself in their daily conversations and living conditions, I committed two weeks in the capacity of International Peace Observer for the Human Rights and Indigenous Rights organization Fray Bartolome de las Casas (Frayba). I was afforded the opportunity to partake in conversations with residents and other *campamentistas* (peace camp observers) that came to this settlement in the Grijalva valley of Chiapas.

Founded on a reclaimed cattle ranch by local Tzeltal and highland Tzotzil refugees, this village of about 20 families, less than 170 kms away, was an eight hour journey routed through the city of Ocosingo. I also attended the very public gathering of Zapatista Peoples

and Peoples of the World which took place December 30 to January 3, 2006. I had the opportunity to tour through five of Mexico's northern states (Durango, Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California del Norte and del Sur) on the Zapatista's 2006 counter election tour they call *La Otra Campaña* (the Other Campaign), commonly referred to as *La Otra*. This was the latest attempt to move the EZLN outward. It was a national platform established to hear the grievances of communities. On this tour I acted in the capacity of journalist for independent media. My time at these locations was an opportunity to connect to a larger system of anti-neo-liberal organizations and believe it makes this project a fuller description of the variations of Zapatismo as seen from diverse areas and perspectives.

Though my alignment with an anti-neo-liberal movement and leftist local actors led me to the great opportunities mentioned above, it also compromised my access to others, a point to consider when reviewing the information presenting in this thesis. My choice of research subject and participation with a leftist community was read simultaneously as a vote of confidence from some and as suspicious from others. When I tried to arrange an interview with a senior resident and property owner, a matriarch of a conservative established family, I was met with a polite "yes" by her daughter. However, after her repeated avoidance to finalize a date and time, I finally let the subject go. I believe that the daughter, who had been present at daily conversations of politics and the state around the supper table, saw my alignment as possibly adversarial and my research as potentially confrontational toward her mother.

Another complication of direct participation and alignment with various actors was the concern over the right to information. Though I had reached an understanding with those I volunteered for (like Frayba and Narco News), there were certain conversations, and information gained from being "inside" which I felt (or was told) were off limits to reporting

here. Sitting to one side of a political alignment might gain me access to certain information, but that same access required some compromises. In my opinion, these compromises are part of my obligation to protect the safety of informants by way of protecting their information. Therefore, I report here on my experiences with certain organizations or communities, unless indicated through interviews. If in any case I felt that consent was left somewhat ambiguous, I refer to reports which come from official and general statements made by elected spokespersons of the communities and my own experiences.

At first I watched, then I sat-in on those daily activities, gradually I became more involved with the activist community of San Cristóbal through personal endeavours and the research project. I participated in a road-block, marched with students, and lent my voice to independent media. In this way my political position can be read as public. Negotiating an alignment (participation as an activist) with sourcing information (observations as academic property) is sometimes consumed by conflict (Hale 2006). The difficulty is making both one project. Anthropologists' specialized training in cultural analysis prepares us to make "a contribution not just to our theoretical understanding of social dynamics but also to concrete political objectives on the ground" (Speed 2006:71). By taking the concept of the "native" ethnographer, who "blurs the subject/object distinction" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:33), one step further to the point of self interested militant ethnographer I have blurred further the roles of participant and observer .

2.3 Sharing Narratives: information and interviews

Besides the deep emersion of participant observer, the other element for an activist project is the shared construction of political goal through a process of mutual dialogue. Therefore, my second method of gathering information was an analysis of narratives, which also serves to circumvent privileging the author as reporter, as witness (Kurklick 1997:63).

Narratives transmit both meaning (content) and sentiment (context). For this reason narratives are essential to ethnographic analysis, as well as a major part of the tourist experience (Elsrud 2001; Fullagar 2002; Glani-Moutafi 2000; Hom Cary 2004; Noy 2004). The story takes prominence in ethnography as experience turns into text (Chatterjee 2002). It is also a means to transmit information amongst travellers, between visitors, and residence, and exchange personal histories. The interview presents the best opportunity for listening to these personal histories and an occasion for sharing.

Here I will focus on the interview as one form of narrative. I initiated short and longer in-depth, open ended interviews with travellers, visitors, part-time residents, and those who are hosts to these visitors (A list and description of some of these participants is given in Appendix 1). Hosts included tour agents, exchange programs, solidarity movements and NGO's, as well as local businesses, cultural forums and bars/night spots. I define in-depth as exploring a topic in detail, and open-ended as an openness to receive "any and all relevant responses" (Schensul et al. 1999:121) and not ask for responses from preconceived series of choices. Participants were given the opportunity to speak their mind openly and freely while I tried for the most part to limit my role during the interview to engaged listener and recorder. A total of 24 people participated in formal interviews; 17 were in-depth, taking over 45 minutes, the remainder represent more casual one-time encounters.

Part of this investigation seeks dialogue with international travellers who come to the area expecting experiences (to varying extents) of revolution. For the most part, these tourists were young and educated, and could afford to travel for long periods without working. However, I tried not to limit the scope of participants to preconceived notions of what an activist tourist looks like or acts like. Indeed, I met and interviewed Elena who was well over 40 and planned and traveled alone and Nui who was in a very vicarious position

economically as he worked his way across southern Mexico as an illegal street vender. Since my concern is to reach beyond assumptions of tourists and tourism, I had to deal with the issue of how to pick out a “tourist” without resorting to stereotypes.

Pierre van de Berghe (1994:5) describes his own dilemma distinguishing a tourist; “what is clear, however, is that it is not objective behavior by itself that defines tourist status. Certain actions... provide clues as to whether a person is a tourist or not, but they do not define the tourist.” Following this example, I located zapatourists by engaging in similar actions. For example, I went to a numbers of “cultural forums” which showed Zapatista documentaries. Going to these films allowed me to contact others and share in a common experience. Five of the principle interviews with tourists came from these encounters. These cultural forums proved to be successful places for on-site interviews, as they also served meals or coffees, and had a welcoming atmosphere and provided a mutually agreeable space.

It is important to note that I did not restrict the narrative to the tourist. Those who receive visitors construct San Cristóbal as a living space, a tourist destination, and as a location of contention. Host participants included vendors, tour guides, local business owners, and members of Zapatista communities. They too have voices to be heard. Local actors are part of the multiple construction of the city’s image. Along with ten participants that I categorized⁵ as tourists according to focus or themes of the discussion, and two participants I identify as NGO volunteers,⁶ I conducted seven separate in-depth, open-ended interviews with 12 residents. I felt these participants could lend their perspectives on how multinational and transnational involvement is received by different actors in the city of San Cristóbal and the impact of activist tourism at a local level.

Since I focused my project toward Zapatista political relations and tourism, I include conversations with Zapatista spokespersons and vendors/producers. Though important to

analysis, a full survey of Zapatista⁷ voices is beyond the scope of this thesis. Complicating the issue of inclusion are matters of distrust and cultural distance. The history of San Cristóbal, as with many places in the state of Chiapas, and around Mexico, includes systematic discrimination and ethnic persecution. Many of Indigenous vendors were reluctant to speak with me past a quick conversation, add to this a long history of being a “studied” community and trying to gain the confidence of Indigenous participants is a daunting task for any new researcher. As it is with tourists taking photos without permission, the intrusion of the gaze is pervasive among Indigenous communities and peoples. Not wanting my “gaze” to recreate the subject as an object of study, I limited my involvement to what I perceived was invitation.

One issue that affected both tourist/visitor and resident host was security. As an activist and academic, I was dealing with security issues surrounding a semi-clandestine political project. This was most obvious when dealing with the Sociedad Cooperativas (cooperative societies) Mujeres por la Dignidad SCL and Xulum Chon de la Zona Altos de Chiapas, both Zapatista associations. Setting up an interview with the women meant formal letters to the Zapatista Juntas de Buen Gobierno (councils of good government). Speaking about tourist interactions and a few personal comments was permitted, but further permission was needed if I wanted to inquire about official Zapatista policy.

Contrary to my assumptions about a highly publicized space, public political discussions were kept mostly familiar or private. When I sat down to talk with Elena, the state election was fresh on everyone’s mind, but not on everyone’s lips.

It is not that easy for me to have a discussion with people. In Cuba, if you say what do you think of, not Fidel necessarily, but what do you think of this...? They are eager to speak of politics, and speaking of these things is acceptable in Cuba. Here I think that no one talks about this, like if I say “and what do you think of the new elections?” Yes I was scared to ask [sic], because for me it was not something

that the people were comfortable speaking about. ... It is how I grew up. It's part of life. You cannot separate politics from the social situation of personal life.

Her personal curiosity was tempered by suspicion and secrecy which surrounds many conversations in this area. I adapted my approach to accommodate the participant's comfort level. Many were not prepared to sign paper documents (like my informed consent form), or have the interview recorded (a practice useful for transcribing). Instead, agreements were verbal and I took notes rather than record the interviews. What remained unsaid during an interview was also cause for analysis. In a politically charged environment that has the potential to compromise personal safety, I realized that much was left appropriately undisclosed. Even with my promises of anonymity and the implementation of pseudonyms the risk for some was too great. The consequence of all this was that some people refused to be interviewed, people spoke often "off record", and would not speak at all on some topics.

Of those who did participate, I found many to be as interested to learn about my project, as I was of theirs. It was curious to hear about other aspects of a global reaching movement. Like Juris' (2007:173) collective reflection and analysis, we were engaged in debates about Zapatismo's practices and logic around the world. Often during an interview I became a source of information: where was the Enlace Civil office? Why were communities closed, and when were they going to open? What was the latest on the Zapatistas? An exchange of information at this level was more obviously activist in practice, and helps to illustrate how subject/object and researcher/and the researched are not mutually exclusive. However, co-operative construction of knowledges becomes notably more difficult when moving ethnography from method to writing. Where possible I reviewed interviews with participants. I acknowledge, however, that I act as the main interpreter and final editor.

When analysing interviews, I became aware that language adds confusion as much as it can clarify meaning. My proficiency in English and Spanish allowed me to communicate with

Meztizo locals, Spanish speaking indigenous peoples, and Spanish and English speaking tourists. English or Spanish (sometimes a mixture of both) was spoken according to the comfort level for the participant, and for matters of clarification. As expected, interviews with unilingual Tzotzil or Tzeltal speakers were either unfeasible or at best problematic. The majority of native language speakers with a working knowledge of Spanish were men. It is no surprise then that negotiating language issues took on significant meaning in establishing a relationship. Language transmits information about aspects of social context. “As a social process, language functions to construct individual identity and social relationships between people and systems of knowledge and beliefs” (McCormack 2000:287).

2.4 Red Alert and the closure of communities

The small town of San Salvador Atenco, in the state of Mexico, was the site of the police repression on May 3-4, 2006. After the People’s Front in Defence of the Land (FPDT) came to the support of the flower vendors of Texcoco, police began a series of home searches and arrests, taking many to jail where reports of beatings and rape were later documented. A 14-year-old boy died from the injuries incurred during his arrest (Belmont 2006). Adherents to *La Otra Campaña* received the news seriously. Sending an aggressive force to Atenco, as far as the EZLN were concerned, was an attack on the movement in solidarity. Only a few days before the FPDT had committed publicly to *La Otra*. The response of all the Zapatistas communities was to call a “red alert.”

Red alert marks a time where formal relations are suspended between the Zapatista communities and the communities of NGOs and other volunteers. After the May oppression, communities closed their gates and visitors were evicted. An atmosphere of silence fell over most overt dealings. The popular site of Oventic closed its shops, cafeterias,

and tours. Behind the gates the Zapatista communities continued to work and plan daily activities without the now common foreign presence. This closure took six months.

2.5 When conflict and tourism meet in the literature

I have chosen to specifically review the literature where conflict, war, and rebellion are intertwined with tourism. The ways we see these interactions unfold are: conflict because of tourism, conflict in tourist spaces, and tourism because of conflict. The growing body of literature which focuses on conflict in tourism, or because of tourism, contributes to a study of the “darker side” of tourist locations as places of displacement and trauma. As an example of this first framework, I draw heavily on Sally Ann Ness (2004) as she describes tension written on the touristic landscape, and mention Patricia Goldstone’s 2001 report which speaks to the efforts of governments and business to make locations safe for tourist investment. The second framework is about tourism and its attraction *to* conflict. Various studies from Torun Elsrud (2001), Victor Alneng (2002), and Florence Babb (2004) look into an emerging market for conflict tourism as the desired contrast to safety and the apparent predictability of planned tours. This review situates zapaturismo in a wider social phenomenon where conflict and tourism intersect in different places of the world today.

An attack at Pearl Farm Beach Resort, on the southern Philippine Island of Samal, was a kind of violence that revealed the explosive response to a darker side of tourism (Ness 2004). Based on the premise that tourist locations are embedded with inequity (symbolic and otherwise), these disparities can trigger “locational violence.” This violence is “perpetrated primarily against a certain kind of ‘where’ in addition to, or even in opposition to, certain sorts of ‘whose’” (Ness 2004:119). Tourists who woke up New Year’s Day to the occupation of San Cristóbal did so as the general public were reminded of the tensions that exist in the area. Though the attack was directed at the Mexican government (the “who” in this

situation) for its participation in a neo-liberal agenda, it was enacted on the spaces of disputed lands and resources of the area (the where).

Ness opens her discussion of violence arising from tourism with details of the 2001 attack on the resort, but regards this attack as only one manifestation of disjuncture. The other disjuncture she discusses is the more subtle act of displacing lived experience from the scene. This displacement of lived experiences from the land is a symptom of what Marc Auge (1995) conceptualizes as non-place. Conversely, his definition of *anthropological place* is a place created through personal investment. What makes tourist landscapes open to the production of non-place, according to Ness, is that “in the course of tourism development, the pre-existing place and its embedded intentionalities—its emplacements, both potential and historical—are rendered consumable” (2005:120). For Ness, the trouble is the transformation of lived experiences to consumable products. An example of “material transformation” (Ness 2005:210) from San Cristóbal would be the historical residence of Diego de Mazariegos. Once the home of a Spanish colonist, it is now a commodity for passing travellers. The house is now a hotel. Another example is the well visited church in Chamula, a mainly Tzotzil village 17 km from San Cristóbal. Here we see what Ness might call the “scenic rendering of a location” (2005:210). Known on the tour circuit for its unique layout and its melange of Catholicism and pre-Hispanic practices, the church becomes a viewing area for ethnic tourism. The visitor (non-local) is charged a small entrance fee. By asking for even a small amount of payment, does this act transform the church from a place of prayer into a living museum? My question is rhetorical. Indeed both intentions are practiced on this spot, but the potential for contention is highlighted.

Confrontation is possible when a place carries mixed intentions (as does San Cristóbal) and tourist use is promoted at the expense of the residence, and/or when limited local

resources (food and land) are disproportionately appropriated for the comfort of the visitor. The displacement of original practices is particularly distressing and potentially injurious for those more familiar with the pre-touristic setting (Ness 2005). In the following example from Goa, India, confrontation was the result of years of infrastructure preference for tourism.

“Don’t come to Goa!” was the message greeting the flight at Dabolim airport in India November 1987. The members of Jagrut Goenkaranchi Fouz (JGF) handed out leaflets to the German tourist on the charter flight demonstrating their resistance to the expansion of luxury tourism in Goa (Weber 1989). The protester’s grievances included the lack of control over the profits, the confiscation of traditional land, the widening disparities in poverty, and the redirection and revaluing of basic elements such as water and energy (Weber 1989). Their last statement was the most direct; “India has millions of very poor people. Your super-rich lifestyle is vulgar and a derision of the poor” (O’Grady 1990:55). Members of the JGF were eventually arrested after they used cow dung and fish guts to emphasize their point. Which led to another protest, this one to protest against their treatment as criminals while tourists were given state protection to reach the hotels (O’Grady 1990:55).

The seriousness of this scenario was reinforced when I heard echoes of these kinds of concerns over the detrimental impacts of tourism on Mexico’s poor. On one occasion, I heard the frustration voiced by a youth from Tijuana. In this city, he told the gathered crowd, many young locals are harassed and beaten by police just for being on the street late at night while white American spring-break tourists perpetrate numerous abuses while on vacation (author’s notes, October 18, 2006). The misdirected administration of protection and persecution is a reoccurring complaint from residents whose presence intersects with the tourist industry. This form of targeted erasure of local lived actions favours an abstract interpretation of place presented in tourist landscapes (Ness 2005). In the case of the Samal

Island when local peoples were restricted from fishing in the field of view of the visitors at the resort, the act not only displaced a way of sustainability but tried to erase “traces of human practice” in favour of a “purified abstraction” of essential elements of water, sky and land (Ness 2005:122).

While on tour with *La Otra*, I heard similar examples from various communities that dot the coastline of Mexico. These complaints dealt with the use of land and sea as leisure locations at the expense of the primary resident’s needs and best interests. In Sinaloa—along with other issues that include the lack of public access to social security, systemic harassment and the absence of proper sanitation—small scale fishing villages risk losing sustainable living practices in order to create spaces for large commercial fishers and new resorts. Towns such as Escuinapa are “economically neglected” in favor of developing large scale resort projects, such as Stairs to the Sea, geared toward the recreation needs of southern Californian boaters (Bricker 2006). Those who study the effects of the rapid introduction of large-scale tourist development by outside investors in an already poorly developed region recognize a pattern of disproportionate benefits and harms, and thus “institutionalizing structural underdevelopment” (Cohen 1984:384).

One response to conflict in tourism is the imposition of safety, at least the appearance of safety, in order to secure tourist spaces. Given the potential to tap into one of the world’s largest markets, governments have an interest in preserving tranquility and the appearance of travel safety. Once called the democratization of travel, tourism expansion is seen as a vehicle for stabilization based on the assertion that foreign influences—currency and ideologies—reduce disparities. Goldstone (2001) recognizes the political role that mass tourism plays in national policies. Her book (more a history of politics in tourism rather than a history of political tourism) gives examples of a state’s willingness to open a climate of

foreign control over areas of the tourist industry. Cuba, Ireland, and locations in the Middle East are examined as locations that have invested in reworking their unstable image of revolutions and political unrest for the purpose of attracting tourists and their wallets.

The second framework for tourism and conflict is what Adams (2003) argues in *Global Cities, Terror and Tourism: The Ambivalent Allure of the Urban Jungle*, that the conditions of an ever present danger is just the experience that “danger-zone tourist” are looking for.

Southeastern Asian cities, such as Dili, Indonesia, are cities where political resistance, war and revolution are a part of the backpacker experience. In this case, and different from what Goldstone applies, what sells is the experience of moving through these places with the knowledge that there is some danger present. Alneng (2002), Babb (2004), and Adams (2003) demonstrate the diversity of perspectives of tourists in search of conflict. From the ramblings of western youth in Vietnam searching out ideals of a movie version of the Vietnam War (Alneng 2002), to those seeking to become involved with the political direction of a foreign country (Babb 2004), these tourist’s experiences break from conventional ideas of leisure tourism as a restful endeavor, and ask us to rethink the question: What is a “tourist”?

In his article *What the Fuck is a Vietnam?: Touristic Phantasms and the Popcolonization of the Vietnam War*, Alneng (2002) writes about a tourist industry created by a famous war. Present-day backpackers to this Vietnam/Vietnam War do so with vivid role play. Tourists visiting sites such as Hamburger Hill and the Cu Chi tunnels understand that the war is over, but are reluctant to let go of performing a historical war made famous by books and movies.

Although today’s Vietnam is at peace, the tour industry serves up the country’s war history by “innocently turning former battlefields into tourist attractions” (Alneng 2002:479). So while the young American traveller seeks adventure in the repopularized G-I bars, “he does

so with some sense that it is at least partly a cinematic adventure that he finds” (Alnegn 2002). Thus the historical war, mixed with a newly (re)invented cinematic history, allows the tourist, turned actor, to fulfill adventurous desires without the same consequences.

For few other tourists, the allure is risk and physical danger. When visiting the website Come Back Alive.com a laughing skull welcomes the viewer to browse information and “safety tips.” Robert Young Pelton (2008), who authored the publication *World's Most Dangerous Places*, fills the web pages with accounts of his own war-zones adventures and dangerous routes, and then he passes along tips to the intended audience of professionals, adventurers, and travellers of high-risk areas. Of Mexico, he says, “Mexico is filled with extremes. Whether you want the coke-dusted lifestyle of the rich and famous on the Mexican Riviera, or like to shop for .45 caliber ammo behind the saloon in Sonora, Mexico has a little danger for everyone” (Pelton 2008). A quick note was listed about Chiapas specifying the issue of the Zapatistas. One Italian motorcycle tour group blogged about “*Turisti Rivoluzionari*” (anonymous), and though a sense of adventure is presented by heavy tattooed men with a companion pit-bull, the page also included the more common affairs of shopping and the Maya Riviera.

Conflict tourism as an experience might entail searching out danger and risk, for thrills or for something more intimate. Conflict tourism in San Cristóbal, I argue, might have more to do with the construction of nostalgic revolution as Alnegn’s (2002) Vietnam/Vietnam War or Babb's Nicaraguan adventure than with Adam’s (2003) focus on the experience of danger. However, where tourists in Alnegn’s (2002) study are intrigued by cinematic ideas of the south Asian past, those first “Sandalistas” (Babb 2004) of 1970 were expressly activist.

2.6 Internationalizing activism

Above I mentioned how this project was linked to my political activism against neo-liberal injustices and for an anarchist project of imagined possibilities. I shared this goal with the majority of participants in this project. Of the 24 formal interviews conducted, only two people did not have an explicit political project related to their stay in San Cristóbal, and that includes the residence, tour operators and business owners. My stay introduced me to numerous others whose involvement with anti-neo-liberal projects was part of their reasons for being in the area. The Zapatistas have forced the world to take notice of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, and this international attention maintains its presence through solidarity networks forming activist tourism. I will discuss this concept further in Chapter six, but it is worth mentioning at this point how the process of internationalizing Zapatismo brings zapatourists to San Cristóbal de las Casas.

New social movements, like Zapatismo, demonstrate a purposeful shift away from the vanguard old-left, and a focus on class as the singular structural struggle, and toward a radical reimagining of the democratic processes by multiple participants (Conway 2004). Widening the examination of struggle allows movements to make and maintain connections of solidarity. Tarrow and McAdam's (2005:127) general pattern of internationalizing a new social movement from a localized collective action is described as a shift in scale which occurs when "...information concerning the initial action reaches a distant group, which, having defined itself as sufficiently similar to the initial insurgents (*attribution of similarity*), engages in similar action (*emulation*), leading ultimately to *coordinated action* between the two sites." What is important here are the sentiments of similarity which becomes the base of solidarity in action and results in a multi-sited network approach. This model of networking has led Ronfeldt et al. (1998) to prefer the term "netwar" when discussing Zapatistas tactics

of solidarity support and action. Netwar is defined as a coordinated approach to conflict involving multiple organizations working from a system of information exchange.

The first criterion for solidarity in new social movements is the identification of identity in politics. New social movements dislocate class as “the fundamental axis of oppression” (Day 2005:69) while opening the structure of struggle to “Othered” situated membership of society. Post-colonial critiques of hierarchical structures in revolution pointed to Eurocentric and racist exclusionary flaws, while feminists of the 1970s and 1980s similarly showed a male bias to power and importantly, injected the personal side of politics (Smith 1989). An invitation to struggle *with* Zapatista’s in Chiapas is then coordinated through concerns for issues as women’s rights, environmental, and land issues, all within an anti-capitalist framework. This creates affinities through differences.

Addressing the internationalization of local social movements does not imply an evenly distributed globalized movement. Tarrow and McAdam (2005:123) point out that most participants of international social movements are part of intranational groups working on local issues, who then band together to form coalitions with international causes, not dissolving national based organizations. Transnational social movements are locally based movements that participate in cross-border struggles with some sense of common purpose or oppressors creating transnational connections. This was eloquently stated by Janez, professor and solidarity tourist, during our interview.

Janez: The point is we have that collective that we are a part of—that I am a part of. We try to maintain a communication with the movements in Latin American, so we try. We are from a small country with even smaller groups. Every now and then, a few guys come here and after that we maintain those networks and try to write.

Ginna: What kind of Latin American groups?

Janez: Mainly Zapatista, but these groups are so networked that when you talk about Zapatista you should talk about piqueteros⁸ [organized protesters in Argentina], you should talk about other movements. So it is kind of overlapping.

The Zapatista movement as a transnational movement exhibits practices of shifting levels of action, which I will equate with the successful workings of a network. Solidarity is created through the empathetic identification with other actors who share similar political identities, similar oppressor, or similar situation. Together they build a solidarity network and create connection of information and face to face encounters. This we see in the presence of zapatourists in San Cristóbal, a location of civil activism.

2.7 Summary

This project brings together the personal and political endeavours of different actors (including myself as a subject of my own study). Negotiating a political project was both exciting for me and fraught with difficulties and conundrums. But it was the richness of my experiences that enable me to write my convictions for an activist academic approach. Taking this mode of research and representation I have come to recognize that all subjects of an investigation project—researcher and researched—are transformed by the experience as well as being agents of change, and so realize this as a joint project.

Chapter 3

A History of Relations: the ethnographic setting

Well today is the day that I have resolved to count as day one. Though truth be told the events of research are sequential and never really have a start or definitive end date. For the purposes of this research trip let's just say that today I found my first months stay.

I am staying at number xx on Ejercito Nacional (National Army Ave.): how's that for irony? The house has basically been converted into a rooming house for visiting students and teachers. After all that time searching I found this place quite by reading a posting on a street corner. There are about ten of us. Most have their rooms downstairs; I think my room is an extra one, because it is upstairs. But I found that it will work for me, better than the other options in a few regards. One, the price. I pay by the month and not per day. At the hostels right now, because it is high season, all the rates are per night. Here I pay xxx pesos a month and then for xxx pesos I get three meals a day. At first I was going to cook for myself, but I think this makes more sense in terms of time and so on. I can still cook if I want to and use the kitchen, but decided to include the option to eat prepared meals. So for xxx dollars this month I get a place to stay and food. The down sides are, well, I was looking at staying at a hostel one of which had wi-fi included in the price. I thought the hostel would be easier to meet people and chat. But, just walking around today, yesterday and the day before, there is no end to the amount of tourist right now. I think I should be able to meet people if I just get out there. I can already feel that anthropological shyness. That guilt about having to pry into peoples lives. The kind of shyness I feel about taking photos in public. I have mentioned this to you before. I think that most male anthropologist or photographers for that matter don't experience the same hesitation.

Back to the house. I have one month. After which I can change places. The month of September is no longer high season so I maybe able to find another dig that suit my studies more. Until then, I am for tonight, satisfied with this. There were many more options to fit into today. For example, I was invited to stay with my cousin.Sounds like a homey thing to do. Something like a grounding. Not just a bunch of tourist talk all the time. There might be more to this town than the tourists right? Not always for the purposes of my investigations, but at least for the stability of my life that at the moment seems more unstable and more up in the air than it has been in the last while. Perhaps it is the kind of flexibility that is at the same time desired by some and rejected by others as being far too suspicious.

Excerpts from author's letter, July 31 2006

I arrived in San Cristóbal with my uncle and aunt accompanying me to find a place. As they drove off that evening, I sat alone in my new room and tried to absorb the situation. What had I gotten myself into? What was my place here? Over the next few months I would come to learn about San Cristóbal and the political history of the area through my own lived experience. As I set out to discover the industry of tourism and its relation to the rebellion, I would see this relational history expressed in the practices of social spaces and hear the discourses of the city. This chapter is an attempt to describe this setting.

My objective for this chapter is to provide background information regarding the “field.” Beyond traditional representations of mapping out an ethnographic field site, tracking local family genealogies, and translating exotic words, I wanted to add my description, in dialogue, with the literature that considers ethnographic places as unbounded, complex, and as multilayered settings (Marcus 1988; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In this chapter, I map out social terrains, trace the genealogy of the EZLN history, and listen to the multiple discussions of the field. Instead of conceptualizing the field as clearly bounded,



Figure 5: Stages of life mural at the Casa de Cacao.

I paint a picture of San Cristóbal with porous definitions of cultural spaces and complex layers of relational history. Conflict and cooperation are forces that create the long political history of Chiapas and organizations founded from such forces included visitors to the area for decades before the 1994 uprising. I argue that the external visitors played a role in the development of the revolution and the direction of dialogues. The last fifty years of tourism and the more recent involvement of tourist activists to this area should be seen as another form of “outsider”/“insider” relation.

Videos that surfaced on major news channels in the early days after the 1994 uprising, of armed Indigenous rebels and Mexican army, suspended the area’s image as an idyllic colonial

setting, and unmasked the complexities of political unrest and ethnic disparities. While this latest violence threatened the growing tourist trade (Pitts 1996), the city of San Cristóbal added another layer of intrigue as international actors travelled to the area interested in this place as a location of ongoing conflict and the allure of participating in the newest of social rebellions.

3.1 Rising to Revolt: a brief history of intergalactic¹ relations.

When different cultural groups come into contact the process of acculturation can play out under a range of conditions. Cultural elements may be exchanged under conditions of mutual respect where all groups are enriched in the process or they can be imposed by violent means from a dominant culture, resulting in the impoverishment of one of the cultures.

Gilbreth 1997:33

The EZLN attracted much attention through its outreach strategies. Their use of multiple media forms and direct calls for participation led to the presence of many thousands of visitors in remote communities in the canyons and rustic camps in the hills. Here I examine the history of the EZLN focusing on relationships, both contentious and complimentary, between those from “here” and “elsewhere.” This is by no means a complete history,² but rather an overview of a political movement that attracted people of various backgrounds. I hope to highlight how a predominately Indigenous population with their history of oppression and rebellion combined Maoist-Marxist influences with Protestant and Catholic liberation theology, and more recently, queer rights and a nascent feminist movement provided the conditions for an expansive arena of dialogue for alternative ways of being that is the base of Zapatismo.

Years of Indigenous struggle inscribe Southern Mexico as a site of violent resistance to colonial rule (Rus 1983; Womack 1999). San Cristóbal de la Casas, as the historical colonial capital of the area and currently an important administrative centre, has seen its share of

targeted locational disturbances.³ Though much of the literature frames the 1994 uprising as reaction to NAFTA, the rebellion was “five hundred years in the making”—a popular reference to the ongoing processes of ethnic subjugation and expropriation. Collier and Quaratiello (1994:54) write that the portrayal of the Zapatistas as a group of exploited peasants “pushed to the breaking point” is a misleading interpretation of the events. A closer historical reading shows a well organized group planning revolution for over a decade. True, what caught the eyes of national and international observers was the element of surprise—a fantastic show of counter-force on the eve of the implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Yet, for those active in resistance movements at the time, the EZLN was the *latest* force to shout *¡Ya Basta!*⁴ to years of oppressive political and economic policies, to the “death sentence” of years of colonialist repression, and the expropriation of land, resources, and self-determination. In this section I mention a few of the key movements and actors that played a role in the formation of what transpired the eve of January 1, 1994, and the creation of networks of activist that now monitor the situation.

Chiapas is a setting rich in natural resources and ethnic diversity. The availability of land, water, timber, and the possibility of converting these into a livelihood drew many people to the area. Seven distinct language groups are recognized as settling in this area: Chol speaking Lacandónes lived in the eastern lowland jungle; Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Tojolabal lived to the north and east of the highland Ciudad Real (present day San Cristóbal); Mames along the western coastal mountains; and the distinct Chiapanec of the Grijalva river valley who spoke a non-Maya language Zoque (Collier and Quaratiello 1994; Gilbreth 1997). The first colonists to the area also saw the possibility of riches and imposed a system of exploitation and servitude that turned into years of struggle for the resident populations. War and resistance created a patchwork of colonial residences and administrations across

Chiapas. The eastern *selva* (jungle) was all but cleared of the Indigenous peoples that called themselves Lacandónes, while other Indigenous communities were resettled to the north and western foothills to serve as labour for the colonial ranchers (Collier and Quaratiello 1994:19). The introduction of cattle ranches and *cafeteras* (coffee plantations) to the temperate foothills, plantations in the Soconusco lowlands, and the extraction of precious woods from the *selva* displaced many Indigenous populations for labour and land. Implications from forced resettlement policies, land expropriations and whole scale migration continued to remap Chiapas for centuries.

One of the key discussions in the construction of Zapatismo is the contested—at times ambiguous—identity of the movement. I have already spoken of the pluri-ethnic make-up of the state of Chiapas. This is reflected in the multiple nations represented in the EZLN (Nash 2001). Perhaps one of the most prominent dilemmas of framing identity is the distinction of the movement as a class or ethnic struggle. This debate stems from the ongoing analysis of power structures in Mexico. Barbara Margolies (1975) states that Mexican hierarchy is based on the beliefs that ethnic traditions lead to a system of “backwardness” and that poverty is rooted in ritual practices. Van den Berghe (1994) pointed out that what remains in San Cristóbal is essentially a colonial structure with a conservative elite and a hierarchical class *and* ethnic structure. Both authors agree that non-Indigenous external forces have created the conditions in which the “Indian” identity is constructed, and consequently becomes justification for further oppression. One way this discrimination played out was in the uneven implementation of three important articles of the 1917 constitution; Carranza’s law abolishing debt servitude, Article 27 (nationalization of all lands, water and resources) and the provisions of agrarian reform (meant to redistribute land after the revolution to the peasant).

Womack (1999) states that the 1910 revolution was least of all for the Indians,⁵ however, those articles outlined in the 1917 constitution had a substantial effect on Indigenous communities. “Freeing” labour concerned both highland estate owners, who controlled most Indigenous labour through the inheritance of the *encomienda* (colonial Spanish feudal system), and the lowland plantation owners, who relied on that labour. The threat of losing labour was a catalyst for these historically opposed groups to align themselves in defence of their positions (Collier and Quaratiello 1994:28). As with the late nineteenth century Caste War,⁶ the two fractions of power put aside their differences to recognise their common interest (Higgins 2004). They gathered support from skeptical Indigenous communities who saw the northerners as untrustworthy “saint-burners”⁷ (Higgins 2004) and from peasants pressured to joining the cause (Collier and Quaratiello 1994). By 1920 conservatives succeeded in installing a counter-revolutionary governor Fernando Ruiz and his *Mapache* (raccoon) militia to rule over a post-revolutionary Chiapas.⁸ Not until 1936 did the state see some socialist policies take shape.

Land reform and redistribution programs that started with Emiliano Zapata’s declaration for “land and liberty” began in earnest in the 1950s and reshaped Chiapas’ ethno-cultural map. Mass migration of highland Maya (Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chole and Tojolabal) into the eastern lands repopulated areas previously appropriated from some of those same Indigenous groups.⁹ For a time, opening up these spaces maintained peace and retained “peasant loyalty” (Collier and Quaratiello 1994:30) to the state. However, between the resettled highland Maya, *campesinos* from other states who began to move into the area in 1968 and the greater reach of cattle ranchers that established themselves in the 1930s, space became ever more precious. Though rich in diversity, the land under the canopy can sustain only light cultivation before farmers need to move on to other plots. Exacerbating tensions,

the government implemented the 1978 bio-reserve giving exclusive rights to a small group of Yucatec-Maya who adopted the name of the areas former residence the Lacandones. Then in 1992, prompted by the pressures of world trading syndicates, President Salinas “amended” Article 27 and brought about the privatization of *ejidos* (communal, mostly agrarian land) and a halt to processing all current and future land claims. Agrarian reform ended. However, such changes marked the surge of a new resistance in the formation of the EZLN.

Though land issues are a prominent protest and are at the base of other grievances, there were other social factors working in Chiapas in the 1970s. The presence of other organizations in the area formed a dialogical influence on local conflict and resolve. Student protests, Central American solidarity leagues, as well as the various church missions opened spaces and conditions for resistance in conjunction with five hundred years of Indigenous struggle (Glibreth 1997, Ronfeldt et al. 1998). My overview of historical activism follows Glibreth’s 1997 analysis of a collaborative effort when addressing issues faced by land reform advocates, religious missionaries, and Marxist academics.

Joint history making processes are not always transparent to all parties and at times play out as adversarial interests. Collier and Quaratiello (1994) suggest that it took some time for Mexico’s political old left—concerned with class based labour struggles—to understand the importance of Indigenous peoples in creating a social movement. The old left regarded “traditional societies” as inherently backward and regressive. Doubtful that peasants engaged in peripheral capitalist subsistence could participate in a class based struggle for political action, many organizers rejected a Maoist movement forming in Mexico (Collier and Quaratiello 1994). The ongoing debate over class vs. ethnicity identity denied an easy “fit” of this large population into a category for rebellion.

By 1970-80 agrarian land reform advocates began organizing non-governmental unions from the seeds of discontent of Mexico's Indigenous groups. Some of the most active organizations in the area were the OCEZ (Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization), whose primary concern was land reform; then there was the CIOAC (Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Indians), who saw peasants as rural proletariat to be organized as labour. The Union de Uniones and its splinter group ARIC are also familiar names to this date. Some of these groups, too closely aligned with the state, were accused of selling out to gain influence and credit (Collier and Quaratiello 1994). A split in these organizations eventually led to some taking up arms, and became the recruiting grounds for the EZLN (Ronfeldt et al. 1998).

One group rose at this time believing that working within the system could never change the system and that only an armed revolution could shift power. The FLN (*Fuerza de Liberación Nacional*, National Liberation Force) made up of students¹⁰ and intellectuals, sent its guerrillas over the nation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹ Decidedly Marxist in ideology, their long-term goal was to overthrow the bourgeoisie and set up a socialist system. In practice, they hoped to unite the struggles of urban proletariat with rural peasants and Indigenous peoples under a centralized political-military structure (Glibreth 1997). But the members of the FLN had much to learn from the people they came to "liberate." The Indigenous peoples insisted on a decentralized system of command which used community consultation as the primary decision making process (Nash 2001; Ronfeldt et al. 1998). What transpired from this amalgamation was the formation of a military hierarchy (the EZLN) that answered to the people through the CCRI (*Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena*, Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee) as the ultimate collective leadership and voice of the Zapatista civil bases of support (Glibreth 1997; Ronfeldt et al. 1998).

Another layer of conflict and cooperation is found in the history of religious involvement in the area. As the debate between class and ethnicity, or peasant versus labourer framed organizations, evangelical zeal of both Protestant and Catholic missionaries also shaped the ways through which communities participated and importantly framed the discussion for Indigenous rights. The first Bishop of Chiapas is commonly referred to as an advocate for Indigenous peoples. At the Spanish court in 1550, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, argued against the practice of slavery in the Spanish territories, claiming that all peoples were equal in capacity to reason. His legacy was solidified centuries later when the city was renamed in his honour. No doubt the Catholic Church influenced its power throughout Latin America. However, in the 1930s Protestant churches gained substantial inroads in this area aided by an anti-clerical government of the time. Promising and delivering more participation in the church for women and children, literacy programs, and no demands for religious taxes or expenditures on major cargos this church succeeded in converting many communities in the south and eastern Chiapas.¹² Evangelical missionaries worked to create an atmosphere of egalitarian participation in religious and civic society and by doing so forged a bond of affinity across ethnic, language, and regional differences (Nash 2001; Gilbreth 1997).

Recognizing the presence of evangelical missionaries, the Catholic Church took on its own project of proselytising. Reaching out to more remote regions, Bishop Samuel Ruiz took on a program of empowering Indigenous churches. Changes made in Vatican II (1962) lay the foundations for the Church's new relation with the poor. For the Diocese of San Cristóbal this meant a program that acknowledged Indigenous peoples as "the subject of their lives" (Ruiz as quoted in Womack 1999:23), where the lay apostle was responsible for their own catechist and where *pozol* (corn beverage) and *tortilla* (corn flat bread) were the

appropriate substitutes for bread and wine (Gilbreth 1997). This new church of the poor, with preferred structures for Indigenous communities, issued such statements and strategies which are reflected in the later day EZLN organization. For example, localized administration was the goal and work was to be communitarian and reflective (Womack 1999). The Bishop's involvement facilitated many Indigenous communities through a *toma de conciencia* (to take cognizance). This "taking of cognizance" was the understanding that Indigenous peoples had the capacity and the need to question and gain consciousness about conditions they found themselves in. This included a direct challenge to the ways things had always been and the naturalization of ethnic discrimination.

Perhaps the most successful event that raised the consciousness and profile of Chiapas' Indigenous population was the Indian Congress of 1974, organized by the Diocese of Bishop Ruiz at the request of the state government. Noted as a seminal turning point for Indigenous peasant movements, the gathering was a bottom-up approach to problem solving. Ruiz's leadership in areas of Indigenous rights and human rights became a deciding factor for diplomatic relations during tense times and mediation of the San Andres Accords (which were never ratified). The presence of the Church, and particularly the Diocese of San Cristóbal, ensured someone was watching. Bishop Samuel Ruiz established the Centro de Derechos Humanos (Centre for Human Rights Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, Frayba) which stands as one of the most important links facilitating the visitations of solidarity workers with members of Indigenous communities.

At the time of the uprising, NGOs in the area were focused on Indigenous rights and human rights issues, and included Central American solidarity groups and anti-NAFTA organizations. When fighting broke out, they were joined quickly by other NGO members and independents who came from across the nation and around the world. Together they

understood that a civil presence was key for the safety of the communities. I had the opportunity to discuss this history with Oscar, who came to the area over ten years ago from central Mexico and now works at the NGO that sends peace observers to communities under the BriCO (Brigadas Civiles de Observación) program¹³.

The first brigades had much experience, though at that time they were not like the brigades, but more like human shields. They [the people/activists] came from a history of rebellions in other [Central American] countries, and were not using neutral words such as peace observers, but directly alienated themselves with the movement. They were at just as much risk as the town. They carried little weight when it came to an international profile. Later came the more organized coalition of NGOs and the International Committee for the Peace Council.¹⁴ They were the first organization. They were well informed to action with the towns. When the discussion began to become an international one, the international help turn to neutral speak.

Ronfeldt et al. (1998:23) goes so far as to state that it was the presence of the NGOs who changed the framework from an armed guerrilla insurgency to an information netwar.¹⁵ While the NGO's have played the largest part in getting the word out, it is important to know they did so at the invitation and request of the EZLN and the civil communities of the Zapatistas. And that early communiqués from the army also called out for civilian support.

I argue that national and international activists formed an intimate part of Zapatismo, rather than appearing as an influence *after* the Zapatista uprising. However, more frequent visits, larger numbers, as well as their prominent use of media and political theatrics draw increasing attention. These tourists, as activists, come lured by the possibility of participating directly in events in Zapatista territory, or around the peripheries of a larger global movement. Particularly for this study, transnational interactions are an important focus through which to frame the local context of a struggle that became an international affair.

While addressing traditional land struggles by evoking the spirit of Zapata and labour sentiments of other Latin American revolutions by naming this a “national liberation army,”

the EZLN also appeals to other movements such as women's rights and queer pride. By including multiple forms of discrimination, the Zapatista movement is able to gain wider support. While attending the *encuentro* (encounter) at Oventic in December 2006-January 2007, I noticed tabled discussions for women's issues, the environment, and the arts. As Chiapaneca women fight against patriarchy in communities their cause is carried empathetically to women's health initiatives in New York City or to Veracruz with a collective that provides shelter and legal aid for women at risk. At that same meeting I was left with a grand impression of a young activist. Without saying a word the dancer's painted, naked body pressed through the crowd gathered on that cold night. Armed with a simple poem and eloquent movement, he called for equality as an Indigenous man, as a gay man, as an artist. He used his body as a tool of resistance. On the *Otra Compañía*, as we toured through northern Mexico, I saw a wide range of people attend meetings and rallies. As Delegado Zero spoke of autonomy for Indigenous peoples, the discussion was joined by other concerns. These concerns included: women's rights, age discrimination, and the inclusion of gay, lesbian and transgender identities and his fondness for the punk movement.

When it comes to naming the EZLN as a grassroots movement under one possible identity there is no—nor should there be—easy fit. Are primary concerns more about land or labour rights? In Mexico, peasants have also been regarded as labour. At the time of the CIOAC's foundation many of the farmers who had small *milpas* (farming plots) in the highlands supplement their subsistence as wage earners on coffee estates or lowland plantations (Collier and Quaratiello 1994). From Marx to Mao, Catholic or Protestant, this mixed recruitment is the multiple faces of the EZLN which is its ability to discuss various issues to different populations. As one solidarity tourist mentioned, "the point of Zapatismo is to go beyond political declarations about colours, colour politics and party politics." As

the EZLN puts forth invitations to national and interstellar supporters over the years, these visitors have come and gone, sometimes pushed out and some have stayed.

3.2 Translating discourses of the field

As an example of how multiple players form a non-static network of activist resistance, I point out the uses of different discursive languages I encountered in my study. The literature of the Zapatistas, as well as their international adherents, over the last fourteen years demonstrates the ever shifting representation of the movement and the complex relationship between local Indigenous practices and non-Indigenous western ideologies.

The First Declaration of the National Zapatista Liberation Army, projected from the captured government buildings of San Cristóbal, proclaim a national revolutionary project seeking to disrupt government. Within days the dialectical process with civil society redirected this guerrilla army to act on peaceful civil reforms. More recently, the Sixth Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle (Enlace Zapatista 2005) corresponds to a new resistance literature, with words such as neo-liberalism, globalization, privatization, capital, and capitalism appearing repeatedly in the text. Such use of language points to an engaged dialogue with international networks of resistance while remaining Indigenous in its identity.

Though the movement does indeed identify as pluralistic, different ideas and ideologies embedded in language can cause fissures. Words which I have come to naturalize in my speech—words such as *gender*, *environmentalism*, *capitalism*, *liberalism*, as well as all types of prefixes such as *anti-*, *neo-*, and *post-* are not evenly defined. While academics and foreign activists continue to use such language, there is reason to be cautious of the discourse that comes from those same institutions of western ideologies that an Indigenous movement seeks to oppose. Nash (2001) points out how the Zapatista defined essential terms for themselves when addressing the nation in 1994. The communiqué defined words such as

justice, liberty and democracy to reflect an “indigenous reality” (Nash 2001:23). The use of language as framing mechanisms for a group’s legal claim has been mentioned by other activist anthropologists (Gilbreth 1997; Speed 2006; Hale 2006; Nash 2001). Hale’s (2006) experience with the Awas Tingni shows how political framing through language can present a dilemma when a group can no longer choose the language or conditions of their struggle.

3.3 Turismo in San Cristóbal de las Casas

Along with an aggressive history of conflict and resistance, colonialism and rebellion, San Cristóbal de las Casas has another history of the Westerner: the tourist. Victorian scholars traveled to the area intrigued by botanical richness, a wealth of Pre-Columbian architecture, and “a people” who were thought to be the lost links to a great cultural mystery. The famous first *posada* (guest house) for intellectuals, La Casa Na Bolom, still carries on its tradition as a research centre/guest house, now also a museum with rates of US\$ 140 for a suite with king size bed and Jacuzzi tub. Its focus, now as it was then, is research and preservation of the neighbouring Lacandon jungle and its people. The area hosted Harvard anthropologists and other intellectuals whose work blurred the distinction between social sciences and “serious tourism”—a term used by Granburn and Barthel-Bouchier (2001:152) to describe intellectual as well as spiritual explorers. Then, as now, the presumed reward for enduring the distance and hardship of travel is the achievement of enriching and unique experiences.

Searching “natural beauty” and “unique encounters” fits well with the marketing of southern Mexico. Visitors are shown the “pure nature” of the high mountain air, the beauty of baroque facades and the “welcoming Maya” of today (Secretaría de Turismo 2004). Ethnic tourism plays particularly well to the image of the adventurer by using similar forms of discourse. As Moscardo and Pearce (1999:416) explain, the practice of ethnic tourism is

travel with the intension of observing the cultural expressions and lifestyles of “exotic people.” These communities are held as examples of the authentic and the untouched, the primitive and the pure. Indigenous peoples of San Cristóbal area are said to provide all this.

After falling deeply in love with Mexico three years ago, Maranella now lives in San Cristóbal and makes her profession as a tour guide/operator for a Belgium company. Her excursions (of which there are several types) are geared toward what she calls “cultural exchange.” Like others in the industry, she works to provide “unique backstage access” (MacCannell 1976) and “life altering experiences” (Elsrud 2001; Noy 2004). One example is her tour focused on families.

We go to different indigenous communities where the children do activities and *manualidades* (crafts) with the local children. From this encounter, many times a consciousness awakens. On return, the rich Belgium children start to recognise all that they have toys to spare to send them to Mexico. On the other hand, the indigenous child feels valorized because the visiting Belgium family demonstrates a grand interest in their culture and traditions, moreover they [the Belgium family] want to learn about them. At the same time, we see *un rescate* (a resurgence) in some customs that are being lost in San Cristobal. Like the crafts of different barrios.

Pierre van den Berghe’s 1994 study, “Quest for the Other,” reconstructs the history of tourism in San Cristóbal in three main waves. The first were the affluent adventures—to this I add western intellectuals—followed by *turismo pobre*¹⁶ (poor tourism) beginning in the late sixties, and third, backpack tourism. Each wave, he suggests, surged over the other without distinct beginning or end, each with increasing numbers, and each group drawn to the area for unique experiences of engagement. Van den Berghe’s book lends insight into the attraction of San Cristóbal as a site of ethnic tourism, and valuable observations about the processes of change brought about by the presence of tourists. However, van den Berghe’s book was published in the year of the notable uprising in the city of San Cristóbal, an act that would forever change the way media, politicians, and tourists would come to see

the city. By 2006, when I meet Maranella, the gregarious tour operator, those changes in tourism were as obvious to her as they were to me.

...the majority are conventional tourists that come with an organized tour from their country of origin and only pass one day in San Cristóbal to go to Agua Azul and Palenque...almost all do the same. ... then there are many backpackers. Some travel in Latina America for few months. Many times they stay more time in San Cris. It is an attraction for young travellers (20-30 years old). Finally, there are many foreigners that come for political reasons. They are the activists that want to live and know more about Zapatismo. They visit the Caracoles, write for the free press, etc. Many live for a few months [here]. Many of them already supported, before their arrival to Chiapas....

How then do we, as tourist researchers, begin to assess the Zapatista movement as a global tourist phenomenon? What is it about this representative struggle—bound in the area's history—that resonates with communities and individuals around the world? This movement, like many other grassroots Third and Fourth world rebellions, responds to expansionist transnational late-capitalism. There is a collective and popular discontent with emerging neo-liberal economic systems of transnational corporations supported by the local oligarchy. The Zapatistas have imagined alternative governance that inspires and connects with other such international social movements (Sword 2007; Olesen 2004, 2005).

Understanding Zapatismo beyond the local political and military response to national politics, Xochitl Leyva Solano (1998) proposes that a New Zapatista Movement (NZM) involves a diversity of actors including the armed forces (the EZLN), the civil society of Zapatista communities and governments (previously the political wing *Frente Zapatista Liberation Nacional*, and now the Caracoles as the seats of council), as well as a host of prominent international sympathizers. Leyva Solano refers to those organizations supporting the demands of the Zapatistas as neo-Zapatista networks or organizations (Swords 2007). This convergence constitutes a newly imagined community that acts over web broadcasting, poetic communiqués, and spectacular rallies. These expressions make

Zapatismo popular with—and transferable to—other anti-capitalist counter-neo-liberal Indigenous rights activists and intellectuals. What results is a dialectic response. A global system of resistance strengthens local struggles which “at the same time influences and is influenced by the global political system” (Leyva Solano 1998:49). Foreign support, economics, and media brought attention to an otherwise nationally neglected piece of property. Creating a possible audience through tourism is another way to reach out.

When I visited San Cristóbal in 1995, one year after the Zapatista uprising, there were already mini-Marcos dolls being sold alongside the popular staple of Maya textiles. Over the last decade, a slow rise in local art and tourist souvenirs with a notable Zapatista flair is testimony to the popularity of this theme amongst visitors and a significant economic aspect of the general tourist trade. A more thorough analysis of the commercial practices surrounding the Zapatista movement will be explored in Chapter five, but it is important to touch upon the appeal of the uprising for a cottage tourist industry. These local goods reflect an unofficial theme of tourism in the area which builds on previous images of pretty colonial buildings and Maya ethnicity. My subsequent visits to the area resulted in an awareness of such financial forces that commercialize the Zapatista movement. The cry *¡Ya Basta!* fills gift stores, and images of ski-masked men and women are printed onto posters, postcards, and t-shirts. Meanwhile community development projects, weaving co-ops, and Indigenous media use the same images to mark their resistance. All these projects led to the creation of a tourist market that is not sanctioned or promoted by the government; nevertheless, these images of the Zapatista are a vibrant business. And while various meanings are ascribed to these items, from the daily commercial practice of making a living, to the way foreign visitors align themselves and demonstrate their solidarity; in zapaturismo

we see the overt signs of revolution as commodity for consumption, as well as an outlet for political expression.

3.4 Mapping

It is suggested that a new student ethnographer locate the field of study with maps and map making (Kutsche 1998). But how do I draw lines around relational spaces of a political study? Instead I will take the reader on a tour of the city with its differentially mapped spaces of the commercial assemblage. This way I hope to emphasize the political and ethnic/racial stratification of the city, as well as the gendered divisions of labour. My description of the area therefore concerns the segregated and hierarchical spaces of commerce in San Cristóbal to illustrate how race, class and gender shape commercial spaces and capitalist relationships in the contested area of tourism.

Tourism shaped the working character of San Cristóbal for over fifty years (van den Berghe 1994). As previously described, this part of Chiapas is known nationally and internationally as a vacation spot and a place of commerce and trade with a mostly Indigenous artist based community. Van den Berghe (1994) and Moreno and Littrell (2001) note that the control of the tourism industry, including the control of images and resources, falls mainly to non-Indigenous intermediates. While Indigenous women set up woven wool shawls, knitted hats and gloves and embroidered blouses on cut plastic tarps dropped on the street, established non-Indigenous owners of stores, restaurants, and cafes rent commercial spaces, an overhead that Indigenous producers of “craft” goods could hardly afford.

The fact that many Indigenous vendors are relegated to street commerce without legal permission is not lost on one long-time San Cristóbal resident who remembers—in the not too distant past—the way that Indigenous pedestrians were expected to give up the elevated sidewalk to the “pale faces” and use the flooded streets. While this is *less* common now, long

standing adherence to white supremacy and patriarchy has marked the city's other social spaces. The city's tourism industry is commercially divided by gender, ethnicity and class. Indigenous and the poor—a distinction in Mexico that mostly means one in the same—work ephemeral areas of the city's tourist zones, while established colonial families occupy old properties now converted to luxury hotels, restaurants, or fine boutiques.

Indigenous vendors are usually found occupying the streetscape of San Cristóbal. Whether in stands, outdoor markets, or as ambulatory vendors, interactions with visitors take place in non-permanent settings that are flexible and transient. I would meet up with the same few boys with their basket of pottered animals (local and fantastical). Walking into coffee shops and restaurants, they “interrupted” my interviews numerous times with hard



sales tactics. With knotted belts and bands of coloured string bracelets slung over arms, they take the same pedestrian streams as tourists between the central city plaza, including the municipal building and the cathedral, and the

Figure 6: Street vendor with key chains and belts.

Santo Domingo Church, where the main textile market is located. Here, the market space is dominated by Indigenous people sitting behind mounds of weavings. The possibility of direct contact with aboriginal merchants is irresistible for tourists who have come searching for the “authentic.”

By defining San Cristóbal as a political landscape shaped by ethnic and gendered relationships I am able to see the inequities of lived spaces. These glaring inequalities are associated with the main cause of the Zapatista struggle for an alternative political process

that “linked class analyses to struggles against ethnic-racial and gendered inequalities” (Mora 2007:2). The interest these struggle of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, played out in tourist settings, is attracting to yet another type of tourist: a global social activist.

3.5 Summary

As emphasis on local small-scale communities turns to questions that concern large scale global systems, the difficulty for ethnography is to raise the “human question” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003:153). And what is this but a study of systems of ideas and people through tourism and social movements? Tourism and activism are described above—although in somewhat separate histories—as historical relationships. What is noted in this discussion, and what I hope to further in this thesis, is the engagement of the two in one social space. The examples of discursive spaces and social spaces given in this chapter will be expanded on in the following pages. They are examples of the placement of a movement that is both local and international, and how politics is socially enacted. Instead of cutting off the flow of tourists to this area, the presence of a large activist network opened more forms of visitation.

As I walk back from the Santo Domingo market, where textile and tourist souvenirs are



Figure 7: The municipal market

the main attraction, along with the possibility of interaction with the Indigenous vendors, I take the long way home. Up the hill and behind the church, I walk into the narrow alleys of a different sort of market. I come to buy fresh ginger and dried spices, ripe avocados and

sharp limes. Past the spice sellers, and down another alley section of this living market, then a right turn at the corner where the women stand with speckled feathered chickens resting on their arm, I come to buy sweet, strong scented flowers for my room. My familiarity with this maze of alleyways makes me feel “at home.”

The city has a way of doing that. After a few days, Joan felt this too. She mentioned to me “when I come back from my trips I feel already at home here. And I walk into my seven dollar a night place and it is so easy and comfortable.” Perhaps it was her outgoing nature, her casualness about encounters, or her persistence for discovery, which made her feel at ease. Perhaps it was the way this tourist town has inadvertently and/or specifically become the site of many tastes, because of its position as “host” city. There is a little for everyone packed into the small city of about 150 000, including more than a few traditional Italian restaurants, French cuisine, African dance classes, a dharma centre and tea house, a newly opened jazz club that on occasions has been know to fly in musicians from New York, and the not so popular, but still available, sushi dinner. My first hope for routine, grounding and stability was achieved by quick integration and by the facilities available to me. However, the complex relation between peoples and politics lies under the skin of comfort.

Chapter 4

Rebellions and Relations: the story of conflict tourism

On an August day in 2006, I was sitting at the plaza on the stepped concrete base that holds the historic stone cross. It is a popular meeting spot and general loitering area. And I was doing both. I checked out the scene making notes in my book and hoping to create a “chance encounter” with a “research subject:” the illusive political tourist. From this vantage point I watched the interaction between tourists and the indigenous vendors that follow the tourists. I watched the children swarm around any visitor who took an interest in the belts or woven goods they carried. At times the vendors, children and adult women alike, rested on the steps of the main cathedral. Unable to resist the tableau, the stealthily tourist would position their cameras to capture this image of San Cristóbal. This is hard to do. Hands quickly cover faces, and the vendors shift their positions away from lenses.

That day the scene turned from the daily tourist/local interaction to that of political protest. The large square in front of the main cathedral—called the Plaza de Paz (Square of Peace)—is a gathering spot for many political, as well as social events. This event was a march organized by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD) to protest the controversial 2006 elections. Shouts and slogans accompanied the yellow flags. The loud, angry voices and additional colour stopped most of the activity in the square and I was left watching the procession. Some tourist cameras that were positioned on the vendors and cathedral were redirected to the protest. In the scramble I saw a very tall blond man taking multiple photos with focused intent. I approached him, thinking to myself that this man was obviously a political tourist.

It turns out his photography was just another form of documenting his journey, he did not know why there was a protest, or even about the federal election. When I asked him

about the Zapatistas he referred to a vague passage from his guide book about the legendary 1910 revolutionary leader. What I thought was a politicized tourist, because of this place and his actions, was not ultimately a helpful indication. How then would I identify a zapatourist?

These types of encounters taught me to listen first to what participants had to say, and avoid passing judgments. As I listened to narratives of self-discovery and risk I heard many negotiations of activism and tourism in a conflict zone. I examine here three themes of these conversations: passing through, seeking adventure, and seeking information or some form of personal enrichment. Included in this analysis are the rich complications of categorizing individuals who do many things, and/or are critically reflective of their own actions.

4.1 "just ordinary tourists": what tourists say about travel

Scholars of tourist studies attempt to define the parameter of their study by defining the tourist. Inevitably the definitions are diverse. Yet, however varied the definitions, there will always be challenges to these typologies, especially with emergence of tourist niches and the subsequent study of these niches. By using terms such as zapatourist or tourist-activist, I am not advocating the creation of new categories for tourism studies, just looking to explore other possibilities of what a tourist is or does—to essentially disturb some of the assumptions embedded in the early explorations of tourism.

Tourist literature includes a mass of research that focuses on tourists as socioeconomic actors (Kim and Littrell 2001; Moreno and Littrell 2001). Where people go, how long they stay, what they buy, and how much is spent, are questions which focus on tourist's socioeconomic background and spending behaviours. Such studies measure tourist's "satisfaction" to help formulate more popular programs of administration. The tourist as non-economic being was a more recent investigation as sociologists began to report on the tourist as a "sociocultural being and a physical being" (Graburn and Bathel-Bouchier 2001).

Reports from sociology and anthropology that included the perceptions and attitudes (MacCannell 1976), desires (Pearce and Moscardo 1986), and personal decision-making of tourists (Elsrud 2001) begin to circulate concepts of what a tourist is by what the tourist thinks as well as what the tourist spends. If tourism, as Babb (204:542) suggests, is “a set of cultural practices that are under constant negotiation,” then the experience and an analytical reflection on these experiences are important markers of who tourists are. Julia Harrison (2001) and Chaim Noy (2004) developed an understanding of these cultural practices through the narratives of the tourist or “pleasure seeker” practitioner. With a model taken from Janice A. Radway’s 1991 romance readers, Harrison analyzed a selected group of tourist listening to what the tourist experience signified to them, and how they invested their experiences with meaning. For Noy (2004:83), the narrative is crucial for understanding long-term backpackers, because “in telling stories about themselves people simultaneously describe and construct who they are and how their various experiences accumulate to form a sensible, intelligible, and communicable story of identity/biography.” Noy sees in these stories the creation of personal and communal identity.

My own analysis of the people that embody this study is similar to Harrison’s involved listening to the dialogue of what “being a tourist” meant to them. Bren described his tourist identity as unavoidable. “It is not possible not to be a tourist. I am white and going to get a different price at the market. And this is something you can’t change.” Meanwhile, Joan described to me what *obvious tourism* was. “Florence, Italy is obvious tourism. Where it’s just crammed down your throat. Where you can’t walk down the streets without running into a tourist.” At times, some participants upheld stereotypes of tourism, yet *as* tourists they were also involved in changing the ideas of what tourism is and who tourist are. Such contradictions led me to re-examine my own definitions in favour of complexity.

Early academic literature did not do much to broaden popular images or stereotypes. Smith's 1989 definition of tourism is problematic for studies such as this one. In it she states that a tourist is "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing change" (1989:1). In this work I question if tourists are not at times also part-time residents, that leisure is the primary goal of touring, and that volunteering or that non wage labour while on "vacation" is not work. This definition does, however, point to long standing questions like: What is the desired effect and change that tourists are looking for through their experiences?

4.2 "only passing though": stop over tourism

San Cristóbal is en route between two tourist hot spots in southern Mexico—Oaxaca and the blue seas of the Caribbean coast. A destination in a complete package of destinations, it stands to receive continuously more visitors as ground and air transportation improve. The creation of a new highway and new airport at Chiapa de Corzo makes getting to this once remote mountain city possible for greater numbers. "Why did you come here?" I asked the blond boy from the protest. "Basically it is through my guide book. It just sounds charming and sounds like there is something there to see," he admitted. With limited time (a two day stop over) and a limited knowledge of the area (historically or politically), his main objective was to "see," and enjoy the pleasure of *being here*.

A great proportion of tourists to the area are charter tourists. They are those most familiarly identified with mass tourism. Servicio Internacional para la Paz (International Service for Peace) or SIPAZ worker, Margot, describes them.

... there are those buses with people, much older, that come really without knowing nothing more than what is in their package and have four hours to discover San Cristóbal. And they are going to be fascinated and probably going to identify with the faces of the indigenous. And value the attention to these dolls [Zapatista effigies], but are not going to *know* [my emphasis]. So this is ethnic tourism orientated to the view, or what the Mexican government wants them to see.

Having lived in the city for ten years now, and deeply involved with the human rights network, Margot expresses scepticism toward tourism promoted by the state. This disdain is echoed by other tourist participants I interviewed, they searched out an experience other than what state sanctioned tourism offered. For example, Anna and Javier came to the area with some expectation of what “rich” experiences they were looking for and that did not include the comfortable leisure touring that is promoted in most glossy brochures. They were looking “to know Mexico” through firsthand experience.

Attempting to strengthen the “right” type of tourism in the area (the living cultures program like the Ruta Maya, or catering to an American appeal of the sun/surf of the Maya Riviera), the state tourist department does not promote or sanction the Zapatista-tourist activities. However, many in the area rely on the influx of foreign dollars that come from this unofficial tourist infrastructure making apparent the possible contradiction in official and unofficial sentiment of San Cristóbal’s international reputation.

Of course, not all tourists who are “just” passing through are unaware of the situation of the Zapatistas or uninterested in pursuing more information. A self-proclaimed Mexican anarchist was “only passing through.” As I was strolling around the textile market of Santa Domingo plaza I caught glimpse of a youthful Mexican boy. What caught my eye was his t-shirt: a wood-block print showing an interned corpse connected to a growing tree of life through an elaborate root system. Intrigued by its symbolism, I approached him to chat. He told me he had a few hours before his bus was leaving for the coast. Coming from Mexico City, he visited the city for the first time, and chose the stop-over to wander the streets. He admitted the need to return to get a deeper understanding of the place and the current political situation. “At least one week” he says with no sense of irony. When I meet with

Joan at the corner café she carried with her magazine clippings with current news stories, and told me about a recently bought a book about the Zapatistas, both meant to provide her a fuller understanding of the situation.

4.3 “you know, Romancing the Stone?”: tourists seeking adventure

Goldstone’s (2001), like Feifer’s (1986), discussion about western motivations for travel starts with travel as a matter of profession, from warriors to merchants explores. Except for those rare cases (Feifer 1986:3), it was not until the eighteenth century and the Grand Tour that a European elite (predominantly male) emerged as travelling for the sake of adventure, education, and entertainment. Then after the Second World War, innovations in transit, a growing economic prosperity and increased leisure time allowed middle-class Europeans and Americans to join the ranks of travellers en mass (Goldstone 2001:3). It is this group who, according to Smiths’ definition, enjoy tourism as a personal displacement from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from the mundane routine of class worker to spectacular experiences of the adventurous. Adventure and its counterpart, the authentic experiences, are subjects of interest for tourists, the tour industry, and those who study them.

Introducing adventure narratives means introducing narratives of danger/risk as well as discussions around authentic experiences. The theme of adventure is not only noticed by Smith’s leisure class but frequently mentioned by long-term independent backpackers as narratives of risk and danger (Adams 2003; Alneng 2002; Elsrud 2001; Hom Cary 2004). Escaping the mundane becomes the motivation for searching out the vanishing “authentic” (McCannell 1976). Tied together, the two related themes are contextualized with different expressions of the tourist experience. The varied ways that adventure can be accomplished opens up the study of tourism to the more subtle forms of visitor/local interaction, such as searching an engagement with ethnic locals as a form of ethnic tourism or participating in

risky behavior as personal enrichment. Tourists, according to McCannell, are motivated to search out authentic experiences in those locations of imagined purity, and remoteness. Not surprisingly, the more “remote” travels yield the more “authentic” experience. In the context of tourism in Chiapas, the implication is especially experienced through ethnic exchanges and eco-tours. For those traveling for politics, it is the still living revolutionary practices of the Zapatistas which is alluring (this theme of searching the vanishing authentic continues to appear throughout this thesis).

Authenticity, however, is complicated by idiosyncratic definitions and the notion of the post-tourist (Feifer 1998; Urry 1990) who knowingly participate in “un-authentic” or “stage-authenticity.” According to Edensor (1998:3), conceiving of authentic is an interpretation of “negotiated properties” not “object property.” What is authentic, and what is not, is a question tourists decide for themselves; however, I will now discuss some general patterns in the narratives of the participants in this study.

One narrative of an authentic experience was the discovery of a “true” or “real” Mexico in remote settings not “contaminated” by western infrastructures. As participants from the Canary Islands (one of Spain’s 17 autonomous communities) explained to me, one of the reasons for coming to this location was to “know a Mexico more real, more distinct” compared to a resort area. “We could go to Cancun; it would be more expensive, but less rich.” Three of the ten tourist participants interviewed made a direct comparison to the atmosphere of Cancun, as being less “real.” It was overall quite common to hear similar sentiments about seeking engagement with local or “real” people as a reason for travelling to the more remote areas. Encounters with “locals” were more authentic when the exchange took place away from “tourist” enclaves (such as Cancun or even San Cristóbal). Better yet was an exchange located at dwelling spaces. As tour operator, Maranella, commented

“When it is possible we eat and stay with the local people.” This is what she believes makes her tours special and attractive. “More than a nice holiday, I try to provide an encounter between cultures. The most important thing for me in this work is a balance between the desires of the visitors and the expectations of the local people. The local peoples are essential for me; they are the ones who *nos acogen* (shelter us),” and literally do in her tours.

What passes for “traditional” in the popular imagination is also a marker of authenticity. Maya women dressed in traditional weaves, temples recovered from the jungle, classic colonial architecture, and masked Zapatistas are the popular images of Chiapas and San Cristóbal. Its imagined remoteness and lesser known history is a decidedly added attraction for non-conventional travellers. Joan’s desire for an authentic experience included: “experiencing little villages and the people and the way they live, and I like getting out of the main tourism part. I love going to Chamula, they do have the tour busses that go, but they leave at 9:30, so I got there at seven before they all got there.” And then adds in the next breath... “Which I am a tourist as well.”

A tourist yet not a tourist; setting herself apart from “main tourism,” or mass tourism, was important. In the following longer quote from the same conversation I had with Joan, she described the difference.

Ginna: So you have been to other places in Mexico, now why here?

Joan: I have heard a lot about it. I just knew that it was much more indigenous than other places. I really thought I would see a lot more chickens on the bus. Which I have not seen, and I am a little disappointed about that. I guess people say it is in Oaxaca which is where I have been already. It definitely is more indigenous, but I thought it was going to be a lot more, I thought the busses were more... did you see the movie *Romancing the Stone*? That is what I thought it was going to be these old buses with chickens everywhere going up the mountains. And it maybe out in the jungle area. But that is what drew me here- *Romancing the Stone*, Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner.

Admittedly, this trip was part of her photo assignment—which brings up the difficult classification of tourists who also work while on vacation. However, my point is to highlight the participant's desires to engage with the exotic as her reason for coming. "Out there" the mysteries of the jungle and Indigenous locals await discovery. She came to capture this experience and turn it into art. And yet like Alneng's (2002) backpackers, it is art, more specifically film, which has influenced Joan's first expectation.

In order to peel away the layers of the more subtle influences of adventure and risk in travel narratives, I turn to the work of Torun Elsrud (2001) and Chaim Noy (2004). Both authors examine the role risk/adventure as authentic experiences play in creating and recreating tourist identities. Of particular interest to Elsrud (2001), as she immerses herself with western long-term backpackers in south East Asia, are the narratives of pushing boundaries, boundaries in tourism which have usually included the risk of war and conflict. Risky is rewarding. In step with these authors, I searched tourist narratives of danger being used as a catalyst for personal growth and change for the tourist.

I first thought that through this study I would come across those few that came with the intention to get involved militarily, or put themselves in a potentially violent situation. With an interest in themes of adventure and danger, I asked about issues surrounding safety. I wanted to hear from those tourists with some previous knowledge of the conflict about the potential for violence. To my surprise many answered that they felt quite safe here, and hardly mentioned the political situation as a source of concern. Others interpreted the question in ways I had not anticipated. Below are two participants (both American nationals) who spoke on these points. Joan, apparently well-travelled, compared her stay in Ocosingo to Cambodia, both places with previous bloodshed. Hesitant to imagine safety in the jungle, her sense of comfort is encompassed by the facilities of a city.

Ginna: You mentioned Ocosingo, which was one of the areas taken over in 1994—a site of the rebellion. Does it say anything about that in your book?

Joan: Ya [reads from her book]. ... “saw the bloodiest fighting during the 1994 Zapatista rebellion with 50 rebels killed here.” Funny because I didn’t feel, because sometimes I can get a little unnerved. Like when I was in Cambodia, I always felt like the Khemer Rouge was never too far away. After seeing these documentaries I don’t have any interest in going to the jungle here. Only because it makes me a little nervous, but I felt very comfortable in Ocosingo. Because it is nice and there are some restaurants, it was easy to feel comfortable there. I didn’t feel like that took place there.

In our second interview, I was more direct about the question. Again her answer was a comparison, this time with the safety of Mexico City, and a concern for civil crime.

Ginna: So you feel comfortable and safe here?

Joan: The other morning I took a 7:00 am bus in the morning, and I had to leave the hotel at 6:30 and it was still dark and I feel completely safe walking up to the highway, which I don’t think I would say the same for Mexico City. Ya, I felt very safe here. There does not seem to be any crime here, or intimidation. Which is sort of nice. Especially as a single woman travelling. Comfortable for me is being able to sit in the plaza on the bench reading and being able to relax. If I am not comfortable I will go to the village look around, and document. Which is what I did yesterday. I was in [Amatenango] for 15 minutes and I bought stuff. I was just not comfortable. Where Ocosingo I was. And then walk around. There were more people there. [pause] I should I pride myself with supporting the tourist industry.

Alex had a similar response to compare civil crime to the notorious Mexico City, but when asked about the stability of political situation he makes his position clear.

Ginna: So your mom was concerned about your safety? Were you ever concerned about your safety?

Alex: Not really. There were moments when I took a shuttle here from Quetzaltenango today, where I think we would slow down for a speed bump, and I would be asleep, but I would be like “is the bus being taken over? Stopped and are we going to have to pay money?” I would happily pay money to the rebels. I am way more worried about being robbed in Mexico City than in Chiapas. And I just generally don’t think there is so much you can do to prevent that stuff from happening.

Ginna: So the idea of safety here is about being robbed and not so much about political situation. About being caught in a political situation.

Alex: I think that watching footage from that movie if that did... and probably if there was a demonstration that would be cool I would like to go. Some of those turned very scary, and I am sure if I was there I would be very scared. But no, not

really. I think my mom said something about kidnapping. But there is just some point where she is just being a mother. And I mean—come on.

Perhaps his background working with labour organizations provided him with a comfortable location in the sphere of political activism. The allure of political activism was possibly a risky activity, but not something to stop him from participating. Equally, it was not something he consciously searched out. In some instances the subject of risk became one of risk avoidance. As Joan tried to maintain her status as independent “single woman” traveller, she makes decisions on safety.

...and now that I learn more about the Zapatistas I don't want to go into the jungle because, I feel a little more vulnerable. But my first day here, I wanted to do that and that and that. But, now I learn more about them I just don't need to put myself in a situation that makes me more vulnerable. Putting myself in the jungle where they are probably located or training. And, especially being alone as a single woman. I would probably be a bit nervous going into the jungle here—now that I have learnt so much more—the first day I probably would have, not knowing.

When it came to political activism and the possibility of serious confrontation that comes with getting involved, the response from engaged tourists—like the above young political organizer from California—was to view this place as not actively dangerous. Alex noted no impending danger. Perhaps expecting to see more visible signs of rebellion, beyond the graffiti, he speaks about what a rebel or activist city would look like.

So I liked it, but ah, I mean it was funny I was walking down the street in the morning going “I must of missed something.” Like you wouldn't really know, like I haven't seen anything with the exception of those little dolls that they sell with ski masks.

And I don't really know how the situation has ended, if it's ended, or not. But it seems like there is a lot of complacency in the street these days.

When I met a couple before a Zapatista documentary at Kinoki (one of the cultural forums/coffee shops that showed such films on a regular basis) they made it clear to me that they felt no danger here anymore, “not like Oaxaca...” The news of an awesome

protest by the multi-affiliate grassroots movement APPO, and perhaps compounded by the May closure of communities, drew focus away from the status of political development in Chiapas. The couple, Javier and Anna, who came with intent to “get involved,” bluntly asked, “what has happened in the past year with the Zapatista?” With the communities out of communications there was an overall sense that political activity was down to dormant. Such a time of silence was observed in 2003. Uma just arrived from Europe to join the team at SIPAZ. She tells her story of arrival over cups of tea. She speaks Spanish well, but carries her accent from her European home.

When I got here this omnipresent Zapatismo was very far away.There were no *encuentros* or *comunicados* or anything. You get here at a time when there was a conflict to learn it all, and then there is a time of silence. But you learn too that time of the Indigenous peoples is different than for us. One to two years of silence is nothing. For someone that comes here to work for one year it is something like desperate. I did not see one activity, not one Zapatista, no march, nothing that showed the head of the conflict.

Even when an independent traveller to San Cristóbal seeks out engagement in adventure and the guarantee of security is not expressly sought, contrary to my original estimates there was little discussion of actively courting danger. Not seeking out danger, but not immobilized by the worry of safety either—these tourists have other concerns in mind. My first impressions were wrong. I then had to reconsider what consciousness drew zapatourist to an area of recent rebellion and found there was a more subtle engagement of risk and attraction to a social movement enacted in this place as expressed by Alex when he said “if there was a demonstration that would be cool.”

4.4 “to learn for ourselves”: searching personal development

Self-enrichment through personal experience was one repeated narrative amongst the tourist I interviewed. Learning and experiencing though “cultural exchange” stood as one of the more popular discourses, and for those who identified with some activist agenda the

notions of personal, conscious learning was important. A few even went so far as to express a sense of duty or justice as reason for their endeavors. This conscious engagement, was for some, the difference which set them apart from “mass tourism,” but I argue that these visitors also confused labels through their multiple actions and intentions.

“One of the reasons I came here—to learn Spanish—was to do organizing work in California when I get back.” With an eye to leftist examples of organization, Alex’s work back home was part of the purpose for the trip. His work with Mexican and Latina speakers in the United States was the impetus to learn a language. However, his political tendencies set an itinerary to specific areas of Latin America. Coming to San Cristóbal, the young American labour activist tells me it was the “Zapatista heritage” that made this stop attractive, only to discover that the location was not what he was expecting.

San Cristóbal, it wasn’t like a main centre of any movement, it was just occupied for a while, which was sort of a big thing for the Zapatista movement. But I still wanted to come because, like I said, I had friends that had come and told me it was a really interesting place. And I think a lot of reason I thought that was because of the Zapatista heritage of it, you know. And then when I got here today I was actually really surprised. Because you can’t tell that any movement has been going on here. It is a pretty gentrified place, and it seems very touristy, but very cute, a nice town too.

When it comes to experiencing social activism San Cristóbal has become the destination. Tied closely to the reputation of the Zapatistas’ international invitations, this city plays hosts to tourist seeking an activist engagement. For Elena, the Cuban-American professor whose voice we heard in Chapter one, the goal to experience first-hand the lived history of Latin American social movements made this area a launching point for the rest of her trip—an ambitious trip of Latin American politics and social activism. “If I think, I am starting in Mexico. Which are the places that most interest me? I think of San Cristóbal.” She elaborates “what is happening in Latin America politically, socially, it is very important for

the future of our world. I am very happy, content, proud that the people of Latin America are saying to the United States—*¡ya basta!*”

Before arriving in Chiapas, Alex had made previous journey to the south to acquire such first-hand political information. “I went ... to Guatemala, and they have this horrible history of struggle been going on. So I was learning a little bit about that. And I was living in a city that was predominantly Indigenous. And so that legacy is there.” However, he found the city divided into closed communities which limited his learning more about the political and social aspects of Indigenous struggles. More disheartening was the lingering question of an overtly party atmosphere that he did not take kindly to.

It seems that the world of tourist and residence are really far apart in Guatemala, at least in my experience. And so I am trying to think of the people that I talk to and the places that I learned about these things and it’s mostly these lectures or guest speakers that are run for predominantly for tourists. I don’t know if it’s whether good tourism like eco tourism as it’s called and we’re learning important stuff, or is it just marketing a part of the country that tourists are interested in these days.

And he is right. There is an interest to learn the “other’s” cultures and politics.

For those socially conscious tourists who were planning to educate themselves about the current political status of San Cristóbal, there were opportunities—despite the sometimes difficult first encounters. Brought on by some memory or inkling of the revolution from its 1994 beginnings, many of the participants I interviewed wanted to be informed or engaged with this history (in the making). As Janez, introduced in Chapter two, stated, “It is impossible not to know about the Zapatistas. I would have liked to come directly.” Having to wait thirteen years for his first visit, he was eager to learn as much as he could regardless of the community closures. In fact, we met at a Zapatista documentary showing at Kinoki. Getting more information could also be attending a visiting lecture about Fair Trade Zapatista coffee routes in Europe at Tierra Adentro, yet another coffee

shop/meeting place. For those who are willing to tread into the Caracoles, Zapatistas regularly host many student researchers, independent volunteers, and international NGO workers. I have witnessed many forms of learning and these actions are examples of how visitors become involved with the local history.

My impression was that there was an overall genuine interest in learning about the local political situation from the tourists as they travelled through. Moscardo and Pearce (1999:419) tag this group as sensitive “to impacts” they have on the local population and aware of their responsibly in contact situations. For Elena, this meant embarking on a tour of the “social situation” and truth seeking.

This for me is an important place to start because of all I have read about the Zapatistas and the revolution. Until you are here it is difficult to understand and it is still difficult for me to understand. The film last night was difficult because it was complicated... but the papers don't say the truth. And to know the truth you need to study it, so I am trying to understand and watch all the movies I can, read all the papers, speak with people. ... this is my focus I think. The social situation, human rights, the political situation and social movements [we both laugh at the grandness of the program]. Yes, it is a lot.

Some visitor's grand expectations are subdued by an understanding of the larger processes at work. For Janez and Sabina, the couple representing the Slovenian organization *Dost Je!*, the excitement of being here was quickly put into perspective by a realization of their poor communication skills moderated by the complication of Red Alert.

Janez: We didn't come here with big expectations. No, we just came here to learn—try to see things firsthand. Try to learn for ourselves. Many people, actors think they can help here. Maybe we can, in a small way. But we have our obligations to our communities in our countries. You can be an activist here in Chiapas, but when you come back to Europe or to United States you are the ordinary consumer, ordinary obedient citizen. No, no, we try to spread knowledge that is the most fascinating thing about the Zapatista that I learnt from them, not from my professors from university and so on. So it is kind of my moral duty to help.

This concern for redirecting some of the expectations of Zapatourists was directly echoed by Oscar, from the Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de Las Casas or Frayba, the main NGO that receives volunteer to the Brico program—a program that places human rights observers in communities with some history of tension or potential for confrontation.

We don't need the outside to do our work. Now what is needed is more movement [on an international and national level]. That people will still come is clear. Direct intervention however is not needed. So the focus is on education of the conditions. That the visitors learn from the communities and not that the community learns from the outsiders. Learning from the communities they way they work, how problems are solved.

“Learning from the communities” is an exchange that is sought by tourists and community alike: one way this is accomplished is through a broker (Chapter six will examine this relation of brokerage in more detail). I have established the context of San Cristóbal as one where tourism and revolution have a strong and strange relationship. This relationship raised the interest of tourist and consequently of tour operators, and opened a new format of dialogue with the Zapatista community themselves. I want to introduce this convergence of internationalism with the Zapatista bases of support as an active engagement that demonstrates, at one level, knowledge and use of global politics while maintaining local actions, indigenous identity, and the struggle for indigenous rights. I would like to propose that these indigenous communities be re-imagined as sites of intense exchange practices and purposeful ventures to create global connections.

Through the brokerage of tour operations, tourists are offered an experience of personal engagement with the Zapatista. Mexican Solidarity Network (MSN) and Global Exchange are two organizations that focus on the cultural exchange as tourism. The *reality tours* of Global Exchange are based on the “idea that travel can be educational, fun, and

positively influence international affairs” (Global Exchange 2008). MSN offers language immersion programs, and a hands-on approach to learning Mexico’s grassroots movements to aid an international alliance “important in the struggle for democracy, sovereignty, and economic and political justice” (Mexican Solidarity Network 2006). Alex recounts, “My friend that spent time here, studied at a language school run by the Zapatista rebels, but rather than the initial 'I give the book to him' they teach 'give me rights please.' Like, they teach you with their methodology.” His reference to *methodology* highlights the importance of gaining a deep understanding as part of cultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through tourism. Such organizations, therefore promise a level of engagement that reaches beyond a philosophy of tourism as “commercialized hospitality” (Cohen 1984:374) to stress other types of visitor/local relations.

I spoke with two separate smaller tour operators, who also stressed the importance of learning as an exchange process. Angela, a local Mexican women working in resistance for twelve years, mentioned numerous times in the interview the intention of cooperation. In her experience, many of the middle-class tourists who came with the “consciousness of resistance” came knowing they wanted to “help,” and it was her impression that more importantly they “also must learn.” Angela deals specifically and exclusively with solidarity tourists and works closely with a local American expat to organize what I can only describe here as “learning tours.” The other tour operator, Maranella, now deals in conjunction with an established travel company in Europe who sends small groups of up to fifteen to Mexico. Maranella warned me, “Here, *everyone* says they work alternative tourism, which is not true.” It was important for her to demonstrate was her solidarity with local communities. After running independently the year before, she takes pride in her close connection to the local

peoples and local economy. “The money we earn from visits go to NGOs, groups of women, artists, schools, and local projects.”

Eco-tourism, sustainable tourism and alternative tourism are terms that can be found attached to many travel brochures. Academics also employ such terms to distinguish particular forms of travel, or invent new ones to make their point. Adams (2003) uses the term danger-tourist to pinpoint a rarely examined population of travellers. I have tried a similar tactic by introducing the terms zapatourist and zapaturismo for this thesis. However, labels can be applied non-discriminately and with various effects.

Ginna: So you came explicitly with the idea of distributing the cash [to the Zapatista communities]?

Janez: No....

Sabina:and also kind of tourist.

Janez: We are here for a few days, we are flexible. We’ll see.

Sabina: Maybe some tourist attractions. We are planning to go to Palenque.

Ginna: From here, and then back?

Sabina: Because if we are here it is smart to see something.

Janez: And it does not rain in the afternoon.

Ginna: So where are some of the places that you have been to?

Janez: Oh, just here, just around the city

Sabina: It is an interesting city. Yesterday we were at the centre for Maya medicine.

Janez: Ordinary tourist.

Sabina: It is interesting to see how they cure with Pepsi cola. We are just soaking up the atmosphere.

With the communities’ closure, Janez and Sabina sounded open to reorganize their trip and making the best of it. With a sense of limitation, they were quite willing to include themselves with the “ordinary tourist” that came to visit well know archaeological ruins, hot springs, and other tourist diversions. As an example of activist-tourists in solidarity with the Zapatista cause, or what I am calling Zapatourists, the Slovenian social activists-cum-tourists disrupted many categorizations. What is the distinction between “just soaking up the

atmosphere” while visiting the popular sights, and experiential learning? Though he clearly means to indicate that they were engaging in different types of tourist performances, the “*kind of tourist (my emphasis)*” self-designation demonstrated again that there is no easy way to predict what a tourist is or does.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the narratives which exemplify various forms of host/guest



Figure 8: Announcing zapaturismo events of spaces.

relations in the area. Though marketing tourism in an area of conflict for some individuals and organizations is a risky endeavour, for others it only makes sense. Solidarity tours are one example of a niche that fills the visitors desire to engage with an Indigenous peoples grassroots movement. This particular movement specifically invites outside actors to learn from, and participate in, a wider social movement. Such an invitation is not appreciated by all, and as a consequence there is contentious sharing

Mexican law specifically prohibits foreign participation in national politics. However, Nui, the Basque national, demonstrated how deeply a foreigner can involve himself under the radar of security forces. When the situation in Oaxaca became a personal risk, he was advised to leave the city by the teacher’s union that supported his stay. Travelling without a visa for over a year, maintaining income by selling t-shirts on the street without a licence, and becoming personally involved with a highly organized leftist union, Nui shows how it is possible to be everything but a common definition of a “tourist.” The problem for singular

focused, hierarchical organizations, such as PPF, or other military forces acting on behalf of the state, is that applying for a “tourist visa” does not stop activists from other countries from coming, and "tourist" remains an ambiguous designation on the ground.

In the next chapter I look closer into one of these areas of contentious dialogue and examine the popular discourse surrounding the role of commerce in what is claimed an anti-capitalist movement.

Chapter 5

Selling the Revolution: exemplifying the role of commerce in an anti-capitalist movement

The afternoon sun broke through the wide spaces between the roughly milled boards. This hall was built for meetings such as these and could hold an audience of up to two hundred. Up at the front, seated at the long table were, five Zapatistas representing the five houses of government. Representatives and audience gathered under this roof to discuss new forms of commerce in resistance. Now was the time to open the floor to discussion. The first up was a man wearing a round wide brimmed hat sporting a feather. His face was familiar to me from art events in the city. He stepped up to the front of the hall with a bag over his shoulder. He approached the representatives' table and turned to the audience seated in the hall. Without a word he opened his bag, and removed with theatrical flourish, water bottles of Ciel, Coca Cola, and a colourful assortment of flavoured pop, placing them ostentatiously on the front table. He was making a point. The revolutionary indigenous movement had allowed the traffic of goods—the goods that he had placed on the table for all of us to see—produced by the same neo-liberal regime that was the root cause of their suffering. In his address to the gathering, he was asking us to consider the hypocrisy in this. His question: Was this not a betrayal of the fundamental principles of the Revolution?

One masked representative answered quickly, “Estamos en un proceso de concientización. Se consume la Coca Cola y se piensa que puede dejar de usar, o que la Coca Cola pase a ser de nosotros. Vamos a ir dando pasos para dejar (We are in a process of consciousness. One consumes Coca Cola and one thinks that you can stop using it, or that Coca Cola stops being ours. We are going through steps to leave it).” This scene went to the heart of the practical problems and contradictions facing the revolutionary movement: How

do indigenous communities reconcile the tourist economy supplying visiting activists, or their fellow traveller, without becoming dependent on centralized, capital-intensive systems of production?

Revolutionary “authenticity” is a major preoccupation for many dedicated zapatourists, both Mexican and foreign. For them, every good purchased, no matter how small, carries moral and political implications that could potentially compromise the spirit, if not the integrity, of the Indigenous peoples’ movement. This begs the question: is the revolution for sale? How does the material economy of an Indigenous peoples’ movement interact with a political-cultural economy? How is the Zapatista credo of an anti-global capitalism shape, alter or “compromise” indigenous participation in Zapaturismo? What are the material and symbolic consequences for daily social, political, and economic practices of revolutionary communities? What are the casualties of the process of commoditization? If the revolution is for sale, who is selling and who is buying?

Bourdieu (1977), Mauss (1990), and more recently Miller (1998) stress the consumption of objects as symbolic exchanges. Defined as commoditization through the process of consumption, tourist goods and services are valorized apart from their use value (Cohen 1988). When it comes to the commerce of tourist art, Cohen (1993), Swain (1993), and Kim and Littrell (2001) have all researched the exchange of such commodities for symbolic value. Swain (1993) specifically outlines the commoditization of ethnicity through the ethnic arts as they are sold on the market for consumption by others across ethnic boundaries. These readings act as a point of departure for the issues I wish to address in this chapter. Kim and Littrell (2001:639) divide the study of tourist products in two areas. The first, explores the production of such souvenirs and the impact of “product commercialization on artisans' products and their lives,” while the second, researches the tourist as consumers of

such souvenirs. Here I touch on both symbolic production (re/production of self-identity and community structure) and symbolic consumption (charity and solidarity) of these items in a market that sells a revolution.

In this chapter, I examine different perspectives of symbolic exchanges seen through the frame of tangible goods, from coffee and weaving, from “ethnic arts souvenirs” (Swain 1993:34), to cheeky Zapatista chic. Commercial practices, one of the most prevalent and noticeable exchanges between tourists and local residences, between indigenous and intermediate and purchaser, were always important matters of discussion for the participants. These discussions were presented to me as personal dilemmas, or as key contradictions of the revolution, and by others (such as vendors and cooperative members) as opportunities to better engage with local and world wide commercial practices.

I approach some of these dilemmas through an examination of three economic practices. The first section addresses Zapatista coffee trade and weaving cooperatives as sources of production which challenge current modes of capital while proposing new methods of doing “business.” These activities are materially important, representing a major source of income for highland indigenous families and communities, and figure symbolically as sources of self identity and politically as visible slogan for revolution. This is complicated by the Zapatista’s at times touchy relationships with intermediate business operators and/or internationalists from so called developed nations who purchase these products.

The second and third economic practices, the consumption of tourist art and revolutionary souvenirs, will be addressed in relation to each other. Tourist art is defined as art and craft production for an external audience “typically unfamiliar with the culture and aesthetic criteria of the producer’s society” (Cohen 1993:1). I argue that the “external” audience that I worked with—in this case visiting activists and independent travellers—

differentiate themselves from mass tourism by proclaiming, and acting out, a consciousness about local political history and systems of exploitation through their spending. They also demonstrate an awareness of the possible cooptation of imagery by “non-authentic” actors. The comments made about tourist art are similar to those expressed about revolutionary souvenirs. In a market that trades in imagery, Zapatourists have various opinions as to the validity of commoditization of “trinkets” that are marked by iconographic symbols. In some cases they impress upon other tourists a moral discourse about the validation of shopping.

5.1 More than just good coffee: Zapatismo’s new commerce

You can always count on a good cup of coffee in the city of San Cristóbal. And for many of the solidarity motivated visitors that pass through this area of Chiapas a cup of organic fair-trade Zapatista coffee is always on order. In a city made popular by its touristic promotion and famous by Indigenous rebellion, coffee can be a marker of ethics and ethnicity. In many ways coffee has its own ideological global currents. Coffee is a value-laden product that travels amazing distances, demanding of connoisseurs’ knowledge of the product and practices from places around the globe. Coffee in this area of Chiapas can quite literally aspire to be the means of a social revolution. Increasingly, trade in bananas, coffee, and cocoa are coming under the scrutiny of fair-trade. It is within this dialogue for ecological and socially responsible products that the Zapatista coffee producers are hoping to seize their markets. Importantly for Zapatista coffee farmers, there is a growing practice in the West that combines social practice with consumer ethics.

In the words of one Zapatista representing the Caracol of Oventic, the goal is “To create a society of coffee producers with the focus to export directly to other countries and this way get a better price for the product, because we can't keep offering our work at low prices with the intermediates...it is for this reason *compañeras* that produce their coffee, to sell, saw the

necessity to form a cooperative.” These *coyotes* (the term for intermediate traders) take advantage of a lack of transport or language disparities to turn a profit.

Like the business of tourism, trade in coffee is a global commercial relationship. A comparison of these commercial practises illustrates the ways that Indigenous Zapatistas are attempting to control of the means of production, reproduction, and distribution of self-image, global relations, political authority, and economic stability to the world beyond. Forms of symbolic social exchange systems are immersed in the trade of Zapatistas coffee and weaving, as they are in forms of solidarity tourism. The official statement of resistance through trade and commerce is stated in the revolutionary army’s Sixth Declaration.

... And we are also going to make an agreement with the women’s crafts cooperatives in order to send a good number of *bordados* [hand-woven textiles], embroidered pieces, to the Europes which are perhaps not yet Union, and perhaps we’ll also send some organic coffee from the zapatista cooperatives, so that they can sell it and get a little money for their struggle. And, if it isn’t sold, then they can always have a little cup of coffee and talk about the anti-neo-liberal struggle, and if it’s a bit cold then they can cover themselves up with the zapatista *bordados*, which do indeed resist quite well being laundered by hand and by rocks, and, besides, they don’t run in the wash.

Enlace Zapatista 2005

Such a statement harkens back to autonomous revolutionary principles for the right to dignified labour practices, but highlights the potential for solidarity through trade. Instead of rejecting “capitalism” per se, the Zapatista are strategizing new forms of commerce which functions within a framework of fair market exchange for the benefit of the community. By partaking in coffee production and sales, the commercialization of traditional textiles, and the overall involvement of tourism, Zapatista communities are again challenging the neo-liberal practice of profits over people.

Coffee can become a symbol of solidarity, and its production another way foreign tourists involve themselves.

Alex: And I then I had a friend, who was working on a coffee plantation, I think was in Chiapas. She was doing study abroad program learning about fair trade and learning about what that means. I just remember getting these emails from here about Chiapas and San Cristóbal.

Elena: I spoke with a student. She was the one who came here. She worked at an organic *finca*—this program WWOOF [willing workers on organic farms]. In San Cristóbal and later in Guatemala. She told me: you *have* to go.

In these statements there is an overt link between the productions of coffee and tourism. Farming as a form of involved tourism; study programs or work programs. The production of these objects (coffee, *bordados*, etc.) demonstrates a purposeful rethinking and reclaiming of labour markets as a strategy of building solidarity through tourism.

As a young teen I remember driving the mountain roads of Chiapas, past indigenous families labouring heavy sacks of raw coffee beans up to the grand coffee estates. As a general rule my family would trip up to the highlands to escape the heat of our own coastal town and gawk at the grand houses of previous owners. Historically many plantation owners were foreigners, German for the most part, some from the United States, investing in affordable land and taking clear advantage of the abundance of cheap indigenous labour (Gilbreth 1997, Womack 1999). State policy encouraged conforming the indigenous peoples into an available mobile agricultural labour force. Retaking control of land and labour in the highlands might prove to make coffee production an economic viability for those that use to labour under duress. However, claiming an autonomous and a socially just relationship within a neo-liberal capitalist market is fraught with complexities and contradictions.

An attachment to foreign markets—and, by extension, foreign aid or charity—raises the eyebrows of many visitors and NGO workers, and cynicism in some members of the communities themselves. In conversations, I have heard this skepticism play out in terms reminiscent of Dependency theory—where history is the unfolding relation between two

systems, one of developed nations, the other developing (Kearney 1995). Dependency, the way Bren explained it, is an uncertain reliance on foreign funds.

I heard of stories where the people asked for money. I heard a case when the volunteers paid for an operation of a child. I think this is something beautiful, but when [the towns people] know that it is possible that [the volunteers] were going to pay for others, they are going to *brotar* (gush forth). I think there are many people who give the indigenous people money or other things to be kind, but the effect is that they now know they can get money.

When I met Bren, he had just arrived (three weeks previously) in the city. He was thin and tall, soft spoken with fair skin, but made the effort to be friendly and active. At times I would see him riding around town on his old ten-speed bicycle. In recounting this story he was personalizing the no-gift policy of the NGO where he volunteers. In the NGO's "guide-book" for community volunteers, rule number nine states, "it is not permitted to lavish gifts to people in the community (this includes taking candy or balloons to the children, etc.), just as making promise of material help can create false expectation in the people" (CDH Fray 2005:8). It was made clear during my training sessions, that promises made, and then broken, by solidarity workers crossed the line of trust that aligns them with the government's unfulfilled services to those same communities. It is also seen as interference with local economies. The "gift" is seen as having an underlying social cost.

With so many well intentioned volunteers coming into communities the desire to provide aid is common. But as community clinics sit empty of medicine and the paint peels from the walls, it is easy to slip into a skepticism based on the outsourcing of funding for community projects. Years ago the Red Cross came and constructed this building and posted their plaque on the door, but the community still has no electricity to refrigerate volatile medicines. "Where is the funding now?" I ask myself, as I visit a rural Zapatista community in the central valleys of Chiapas.

“NGOs come with money as investments and face different political or religious and ideology in the movement. They must also learn.” These are the teachings of Angela, an independent tour operator who deals specifically with solidarity tours. She is a strong spoken independent woman with a commanding presence. She is well connected with this city’s leftist community and I have observed her ability to call up favours with grace and ease. With much personal history behind her, she explains to me what seems to be an ideological disconnect between visitors and communities.

For example they bring medicines that don’t even work here. They need to know what are the needs of the community and not what they think they need. The trouble with the funds of NGOs is they impose a system of work/organization and this is not cooperation but colonial thinking. One of the risks of the zapatourist [her choice of words, not mine] is that they can break the movement with their good will.

The dilemma of the infusion of foreign funding as altruistic donations or financial crutch is an issue for many different actors as they chose to handle it in different ways. Frayba eliminated the gift through policy, and Angela also warns against altruistic quagmires. This question of financial independence was raised by the communities back in 1994 when the Zapatistas decided to resist any Mexican government programs (Swords 2007), to this day they extend their caution to those who still come. Later in this chapter the voices of other participants mention trade and gifting as a show of sympathy or solidarity.

5.2 Weaving as feminized labour’s symbols and struggles

Coffee and textiles are products that evoke Chiapas’ colonial heritage—an image which can be mediated by intermediates (Moreno and Littrell 2001, van den Berghe 1994). Along with the rights to control land and labour resources (clearly identified as Marxist class struggle), Indigenous peoples of Chiapas also struggle with “wider social dynamics” (Berger 2001:152). Recognising and respecting differences in ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities, announces a new post-Marxist or “third wave” revolutionary movement.

Acknowledgment of such markers of identity can be the tipping point between Chiapas' patriarchal colonial past and its potential for a post-colonial future. Weaving cooperatives of Indigenous women for Indigenous women are the grounds by which issues of labour and identity play out through the struggle of class, ethnicity and gender in a market set for tourism.

Like the coffee cooperatives of the highland producers, the principal premise for organizing the weavers is economic security. And like the *cafeteras*, the means by which to do so is to restore power to the producers allowing them to determine the "nature of their participation in global markets" (Stephens 2005:255). Engaged in tasks that have long been excluded from economic figures, women's artisan production now draws considerable attention in a tourist market. After listening to women who are involved with weaving co-ops, I agree with Stephen (2005), that income gained by women not only increases their family security, it also influences their collective participation in matters of community voice. I add that the search for "authentic" ethnic goods places women's skills and labour as valued commodities by souvenir hunters (Moreno and Littrell 2001).

Unfortunately, as Cohen (1993:2) suggests, "production is significantly influenced by intermediaries" when there is a separation of the producers from consumers (those geographical or cultural) and vice versa. Thus intermediaries stand to make profit from unconnected producers and unknowing consumers. This seems to be the understanding in the above quote by the Zapatista who raised the problem of the *coyote* handler. It is also resolved by the act of forming egalitarian co-ops. The weavers' cooperatives are a direct attempt to bypass local merchant's control of the textile industry. In these instances it is not the case that "indigenous peoples realize little of the significant revenues that commodities [from ethnic art production] can generate" as Blundell has stated in Moreno and Littrell

(2001:660). I found that those involved with foreigner interaction in San Cristóbal demonstrated a full understanding of revenues that have been made from their circumstance and how current power structures maintain it. Women have begun to break such cycles through innovative income strategies that combine an assertion of indigenous skill and identity markers with new forms of organization.

As well as being a highly visible marking of ethnicity (and as is the case in Mexico of class/race), textile production is a strongly gendered phenomenon. Weaving and embroidery in this area has an ancient association as a feminine task. Together, “gender divisions of labour in the ethnic arts market impact indigenous communities as the income generated by ethnic arts affects gender relations” (Swain 1993:33). Commenting on the production, distribution, and consumption of identity markers associated with ethnicity and gender, such as traditional textiles, I move now to discuss how identity symbols are sold as commercial products and how women in the tourist market of San Cristóbal stand to disrupt male positions as citizens of the public sphere or on the front line of monetary exchange.

Women in weaving cooperatives gain the right to decide production output, design, and public relations/education, even when doing so disturbs the status quo and embedded power relations. The work done by June Nash (2001) and Lynn Stephen (2005) are some of the clearest examples of women artisans benefiting from the organization of co-ops. The findings of Stephens and Nash point to women’s formal organizations in an ethnic arts market, like pottery and weaving. A recognition of gendered skills and knowledge as a potential source of income in their own communities and beyond “results not only in a greater economic return to the particular weaver who produced a textile, but also makes the work of the weavers visible to consumers and generates a sense of recognition and respect for each weaver both within the community and outside” (Stephen 2005: 254). In other

words, women's abilities have proven profitable in an ethnic tourist market. As Stephen (2005: 254) has shown, it also means that women "gain political and cultural rights in their community and in the global market as independent artisans" all the while pioneering "a new era in gender relations."

The underlying issue here is of autonomous control of self image. These cooperatives are a way for women to reclaim the right to control their means of production; including the production of identity. My interest in identity markers (symbols of ethnicity and gender as well as political symbols of revolution) is how they are used by a tourist industry as promotion and under whose authority are such markers are used.

While many see the rise of co-ops as a thoroughly positive step in the direction of democratizing the public realm, it is also noted that such shifting of "traditional" roles has raised other concerns for the women. First, is the sometimes dangerous struggle for equality and recognition, and second, is the effects of labour alienation. Stephen (2005), Swords (2007), and Nash (2001) have all documented the risks for women who participate in overtly political actions, or are seen to be political through their involvement with organizing co-ops. For example, Nash (2001) has documented assassinations and death threats aimed at women who challenged male authority. Swords (2007:88) noted in her study that women were pressured to act according to patriarchal rule and dropped out of the collective "when they could not challenge their husband's demands." At the Encuentro de los Pueblos Zapatista con los Pueblos del Mundo, I heard clearly from one of the woman representing the Zapatista communities what this costs her. "We stay in the house because we have to work and we work alone. When we work [in public positions] they laugh at us, but there are those of us that have fought despite all this."

It is important to realize that the creation of these collectives, though they place the fruits of labor back in the producer's hands and encourage a public life for indigenous women, are a reminder of how women are yet again asked to add extra work to their day to maintain the family. Angela reminds me during our interview that once the family was able to provide for themselves, but now added income is needed to provide for even the basics. "The change in [subsistence] status and the amount of money needed means they have things that need to be paid for. The change of values means extra work. Is this advancement?" These projects serve as a reminder of an uneasy entrance into a capitalism system and how it pulls on the fabric of a culture. Where once the women wove for themselves, now they sell their weaving and commercialize their labor for a tourist market.

My interview with the women of the two co-ops that shared a space in Tierra Adentro (a cultural forum and café) hit on some of these concerns.¹ The store, a room off to the side, behind the service bar of the café, has a simple sign announcing the names of the two cooperatives- Mujeres por la Dignidad and Xulum Chon. This space was an economic solution to the closure of the community stores during red alert. Regularly, there were five women who occupy the store at one time. From the 450 women who are the community members of the Mujeres por la Dignidad co-op only a few are obligated by the community to come to the city. This represents a sacrifice, because they left their families and comfortable settings for an apartment in the "unfriendly" city. One of the women, grey hair thin and braided, sat on the reed mats and spoke in Tzotzil. She mentioned that she preferred the country and was not accustomed to living in the city and that the hours were long and mostly uneventful. Her sentiment was acknowledged by the soft "ums" of the other women. It was as if they had agreed to carry the burden "*para la familia*" (for the family).

Though there was always one woman present that had some working knowledge of Spanish, my dialogue with the women was limited. My conversations were interpreted through basic Spanish; my lack of Tzotzil was a noticeable barrier.² This left me waiting at times for a sparse and broken translation—at times no translation transpired. I had to practice patience. My experience with the interview process highlights the limited conversations between these Maya women and customers that might take place in this setting. For those wishing to make contact with the elusive Zapatista, this might not be the place. It was clear that language was one barrier, however politics could be another. Protocol limited my questions to those about the position of the store in relation to tourism; I was steered away from more personal information, and conversations about the politics of their lives. Getting this far required letters to the co-op’s council and the community’s Junta government. Any further interaction required more formal meetings.

During my subsequent informal visits I observed that the interactions taking place at this location were predominantly commercial: questions about prices and types of materials.



Fig 9: Photo by Pedro Valtierra.

A frequent question by shoppers was if this place was “just a store” or a cooperative? These sorts of statements indicate the level of knowledge, or at least association, that indigenous women weavers have as being organized.

I wrote in my field notebook: “For reasons I am still trying to figure out, I am somewhat uncomfortable approaching Indigenous women. These women, Zapatista women, clearly are somewhat more daunting [than *ladino* women].” Reviewing my statement I see how my impression of Indigenous women, specifically Zapatista women, arises from a complicated position they hold in the general

imagination. These women break with the figure of the “victim” to become fighters and take control. Much like the imagery brought to us by Pedro Valtierra that captured a moment in the struggle when women from the communities were portrayed as the strength of resistance. The photograph shows young women pushing back armed soldiers. It is one of the movement’s most emotional moments captured on film and now widely distributed through EZLN solidarity websites and by tourist postcards alike.

5.3 The sellable revolution

Hiding from the rain in the alcove of the cathedral’s side door we sit and wait. My two companions are both under seven years old. They are the children that sell the pieces of art that San Cristóbal is known for. For now the children hang their knotted string bracelets and belts on the knobs of the massive door. Out of the rain a man in a Steelers football jacket approaches. “¿Tienes llaveros? ¿Tienes llaveros de Marcos?” -Do you have Marcos key chains, he asks.

“No” answers Mari. “Si” answers the other. She grabs at the dolls that rest on the steps. Quite a bit larger than a keychain. This is the mounted version of Marcos and Ramona. But he did ask for Marcos. Perhaps she understands the exchange value of one Zapatista trinket for another.

“No” answers Mari again. And then looks to the man and states quite harshly “I had some before and you would not buy them.” Her face is wrinkled for a moment and she shares her displeasure and frustration then turns her attention back to the drawing she is working on.

The man turns, not finding what he has come for and heads back into the soft and constant rain to search out a pocket size Marcos to keep his keys guarded.

I ask her why she is so harsh. She only repeats “I had some before and he did not want to buy them then.”

We continue to wait out the rain, draw, and pass the time in the shelter of the church.

Author’s notes, October 3 2006

During a walk through the textile market at the Santo Domingo plaza, I saw thirty-seven stalls selling tiny effigies of revolutionary soldiers equipped with wooden guns, nine with the black balaclavas, and fifteen that sold iconic images of the “secular saints”—Che, Marcos, and Zapata mounted on t-shirts. The proliferation of these products is what some of the participants referred to as the continued commercialization of revolution; the apparent abuse of “revolutionary merchandise.” However, when I visited Zapatista communities I noticed

the same imagery was just as prevalent. What appears on t-shirts and caps also appears on the doors and outer walls of homes of autonomous communities: the picture of Che, a star atop his beret, the face of Stalin “with no sense of irony” (Higgins as quoted by Norget 2007) on school walls, and Marcos painted by anonymous hands. Maybe the question to ask is not about the use of the images, but about its sale as “tourist art.”

In his introduction to a special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, that deals directly with the production and marketing of tourist art, Cohen (1993) paraphrases concerns posed in tourism research (and mirrored by tourist participants in this study): Is such artistry a helpful alternative income or exploitation, a source of revitalization, innovation or degeneration? Such points of view paint tourism either as a force of preservation (Cohen 1993) or destruction of ethnic cultures (van den Berg 1994). These discussions—“the positive and negative consequences of contact fostered by the ethnic tourism” (Moscardo and Pearce 1999)—are predicated on concerns for preserving “authenticity.” I will examine the consumption of tourist art, drawing on studies of ethnic art before discussing the sale of revolutionary merchandise, art and souvenirs. When it comes to comparing the literature on ethnic tourism to the findings of an activist tourism the same two principles seem to arise: a self-awareness of tourist’s impact on local population and questions of authenticity.

Urry (1990) and Feifer’s (1985), among others, cite the emergence of the tourist with a heightened sensitivity toward their outsider condition and impacts local environs, recognizing this they “can stop struggling against it” (Feifer 1985:270) and embody a “playful ironic” attitude (Rojek 1997:62). Consider the following discussion I had with Alex, the university educated labour organizer from the United States.

Ginna: And this is [X’s] brochure. And it is there. I mean I try to be critical. ... they talk about ecological impact and cultural exchange, so again it plays to these sensitivities.

Alex: It is sort of the Post-tourism, or like, you see a lot of restaurants that sell organic foods, or local, or fair trade. And that is becoming the new Indian village. I am seeing a slow shift to that. And I mean is that great? In one sense that is amazing. That is awesome. But you are still using some token to attract someone. But maybe my beef is just with advertising. And that is pretty hard core.

Alex's criticism is reflexive. As he engages in a critical ethnographic assessment of current tourism, he is able to identify "post-tourism" as the trend toward a socially engaged tourism, and yet be critical of its possible "tokenism." For Harrison (2001:160), such self-awareness is symptomatic of a curious self-loathing that "we generally seem to exhibit in relation to 'ourselves' in the context of discussions of tourism." I raise this point to reiterate the importance of recognizing how most of the tourists I spoke to in this study had a strong concern for the positive or negative consequences of their actions and presence. Such consciousness to the settings around them becomes political when part of the tourist experience encompasses activism and revolution as a primary reason for being there.

When it comes to the moral dilemmas attached to consuming ethnic products, Joan puts it best, "sometimes I am buying things just to help them out. I mean I bought *so much* stuff, and I am buying it just because I feel they need it more than I do. But I am not bartering at all. Even in the markets where you are expected to do that. They tell me how much and I give it to them." In this narrative of a shopping experience she expresses her desire to extend good will through payment. Later in the interview she says, "I bought a bunch of stuff from the women in there, because I felt like it was going to a good cause. There are three women who sit—not in the museum part—where the store was, and I bought a few wares from them. Things I don't even need, but I just want to support them." Through commercial transactions she is able to justify her charity: Buying something you don't even need in order to help out someone less fortunate than you. However, disguising charity is not always so successful. When two small boys, ages four and six, walked into the

café to hawk fantastical animals fashioned in pottery, Sabina said to me, “It is very hard to say no. Especially [to] kids. If you want to give everybody something, it is just you run out of money in the day.” This statement sounded more like the discourse I have heard about panhandling than about bartering for a product of art.

Bourdieu’s (1977) work on gift giving is useful to examine this empathic consumption by post-tourists. Though the transaction is commercial, expressed is the intent of gifting. Even when items are being bought and sold, the purchase can mask yet another transaction: in this case one of support, charity, or sympathy. According to Bourdieu (1977:171), “the giver’s undeclared calculation must reckon with the receiver’s undeclared calculation, and hence satisfy his expectations without appearing to know what they are.” Though in recounting the experience Joan speaks of exchange of goods for currency, she does little to hide her feelings of charity. The exchange, in order to be altruistic, must be (mis)recognized as a fairly, if not equally, traded purchase.

5.4 Good marketing or solidarity?

With tourists spending a major portion of their total vacation budget on shopping (Kim and Littrell 2001), it is no surprise that the local Indigenous craft and souvenir market is busy most days. There are an assortment of locally crafted products alongside imported Guatemalan textiles and fabrics from as far away as India. As I pass the many stalls, questions of tourist influence on “traditional” art and the “preservation” of “authenticity” swirl in the mist of bright colours and bold designs. Though much can be written about tourist’s social, cultural, and economic impacts on the city’s landscape, and its people, I narrow the discussion to the concerns presented by participants about the influences of tourism on local markets and the authenticity of the Zapatista movement. I compare studies in ethnic tourist art to the participant’s own sentiments and found that these participants had

divided opinions and concerns about authentic products, fair trading practices, and producing and controlling revolutionary images for sale in the markets.

Socially conscious visitors, as zapatourists maintain to be, demonstrate concern for maintaining authenticity, usually described as a concern that traditional peoples not change their ways, or avoid corruption by the influences of Western ways. One of the members of the SIPAZ office, made an insightful comment on the reasons for the popularity of this Indigenous rebellion. Margot has spent over ten years as a resident of San Cristóbal and is familiar with its popular discourse of idealizing the revolution and assigning value to Indigenous societies that are supposed to hold the key to autonomous traditions. She does so while discussing “value” and ideas that “sell.”

Why do they still sell t-shirts of the Sup, of Che, of these little dolls?³ Because there is an attractive part. So what is the part that calls attention to people? I think for politicized people it started with selling the adventure of Rousseau of 1800; of the good Indian. This is the first sale; the part of adventure and nature as human, that does not correspond to reality. What sells later is the part of Zapatista unconformity; the part for the international population of rebellion, of *el pueblo rebelde* (rebel people), the part of the *searching*. That [they] still have this knowledge preserved which we have lost in our societies... Part of what is valued is the idealization of what we have lost in western society and individualism as a trap. Zapatismo rescues a way of working particularly autonomous, not only here but in other places from Latin America.

This comment points to an attraction to the nostalgic. Many western tourists come searching the “uncorrupted” third and fourth world. Locally in San Cristóbal, this search for purity can be found/purchased by tours of “Indian” villages on horseback.

This revolutionary movement aligns its literature with other movements that oppose or criticize neo-liberal practices such as free trade and “globalization,” and sees *capitalism* as “the few who have great wealth”... and the “exploitation of the workers, which means they exploit the workers and take out all the profits they can” (Enlace Zapatista 2005). However,

I have found that many tourists (burdened with good intentions) imagine these statements as a dismissal to all forms of commercialism as sources of corruption.

Prior to the revolution, the types of questions asked by anthropologists and sociologists studying the trade in tourist art were concerned with the preservation or innovation of ethnic identity. Now a distinctive social revolution in the area has added interest to questions of revolutionary authentic and preservation. The concerns posed by van den Berghe in 1994 are echoed in the voices of the participants in 2006-2007 as concerns for keeping revolutionary purity and authenticity. The opinions vary from disdain, a carefully placed skepticism for the emergence of arts developed, an inevitable shrug, to the acknowledgement of financial need and embracement of new practices. In all it is the “response to the new opportunities offered by the tourist market” (Cohen 1993:2), in this case, a commercial market for a post 1994 San Cristóbal that struggles with the moral authority over revolutionary paraphernalia that I review here.

Having spent time in India, Alex spoke about the “contamination” of the local craft market with imports and foreign products. “I secretly bit my thumb all the time at the bastardisation of Indian culture, because that’s everywhere. They are selling Indian bags in the market over there and saying they are Mexican.” This disturbed him. For those who come searching the expressions of the living Maya,⁴ what they expect to see (and to buy) is something distinctly Mayan. An underlying concern for Alex was the fear of being taken advantage of for lack of knowledge, or of being seen as an ignorant consumer. Tourists like Alex desire something explicitly authentic; and knowing what is authentic—and conversely what is not—is the desired status for an informed and conscious tourist. Despite the reference to Feifer’s “post-tourist”—where an awareness of the “unauthentic” or “staged” authenticity can be forgiven and at times even embraced—a politically conscious consumer

and tourist tries to fulfil their own expectations of knowledge, of fair exchange, and expresses disdain for being seen by local vendors as unknowing consumers. The equality of a market transaction, as perceived by the socially conscious buyer, is when both receiver and giver are open about the details of production and sales. Deception and charity are both factors that can obscure the equality of an exchange.

The response from producers and vendors is to provide the information tourists seek and, by doing so, increase cash value of their products. For example, many co-ops include a detailed list on the price tag to validate, and authenticate, the purchase for ethnic tourists (Cohen 1993; Moreno and Littrell 2001). Workers are given names, and labour hours given prominence, these are combined with other attributes such as material, design motives or location, and function. Let me draw again on the example of the Zapatista women's weaving cooperative. Buying from a "legitimate" source counts, so stores publicly name themselves so, for example Nemi Zapata. Others are known to be Zapatista through the display of identifiable markers such as the red star, or using Tzotzil language names. The *presence* of the women weaving as they tend the store, designs displaying the red star, Tzotzil names on the walls of a Zapa-friendly cultural forum—all translates to an idea that Zapatista can be consumed. Equally, the wrong information can devalue the item. I was once told not to buy little Marcos key chains from the sellers from Chamula because they were in fact Pristas (community members who support the former national ruling party the PRI).

The potential of commercial tourist goods to be symbols of solidarity or contentious items for fashionista hipsters is evident in San Cristóbal. This negotiation of meaning is manifest in the discourse surrounding tourist art as ethnic art or revolutionary nick-nacks. How and what you buy can align you. This was clearly the case for Joan.

There is a store that sells these great little paintings that would be perfect in my house. Then they have these Zapatista ones. I would love them if they were

something else. They are kind of cool, but is that something that I want to encourage? I don't know if I want to glorify it by having it in my house. ... but my concern was that I don't want to buy it because I agree with it. Because I don't know if I do or not.

I guess I they are glorifying in the fact that they sell it everywhere. Like they want you to buy and support this movement.

When I asked Alex about his personal preferences to display solidarity, the young American solidarity worker associated with agrarian workers of California said:

To say if this is worth me wearing this shirt? There [are] so many players. Who sold that shirt? Probably someone who is Mexican. So then is he a part of the problem? Well, it is like, well maybe, he doesn't have enough money, because the government is fucked up, and he can't get a job. So then it is the government ... there is just so many things to point a finger at.

He speaks to the complex relations in the current and countercurrents of capital. For him, a show of fashion or solidarity is more than just that, there is a capitalist system that complicates the meanings behind wearing revolutionary slogans. When it comes to the commercialization of images there is no singular fault to be laid; for Alex the whole system is corrupted. For him this systemic corruption negates the purpose of wearing the shirt.

Apart from assigning meaning to what to wear or what to buy, the solidarity tourist also dispenses the common tourist/ethnographic narrative of "being there" to such objects. In a "being there" narrative, taking a piece of authenticity home with you might be something worn, dangling from your hip, or hanging on your wall. Kim and Littrell (2001) discuss Gordon's five categories of tourist souvenirs. Two of them work well to place the piece, and by extension, the owner "there" in retrospect. One is the "Marker"—a good which usually has no reference to the place besides an inscription. This best describes t-shirt sales with Zapata's face, a revolutionary slogan, the letters EZLN stitched or pressed, or a simple red star. The other souvenir type is the symbolic shorthand. This object "evokes a

message” (Kim and Littrell 2001:640) about the place it was made or made to represent. Locally this is called *typico* (typical) and implies a hand crafted quality, whether it is food, dress, even dance. Cristina, a volunteer at Frayba said to me during an interview: “To buy something typical, or in this case, what is typical is the image that says, as symbol, where you were.” Her co-volunteer Bren cuts in. “Sometime I have seen people dressed completely in indigenous clothing. I don’t like it. It’s a little bit too much!” Though he has only been in San Cristóbal for about three weeks at the time of the interview, he was more cynical about those who “adorned” themselves in any mode of slogans or the popular typical dress (and by this he is referring to indigenous textile production). His sentiment is echoed by a local bar owner, Alejandro. He sees many people come in to the establishment wearing the ribbons and weavings of indigenous women. All outward signs of “being there/ being here” or as some have stated “going native.” In a conservative city, a style of dress does mark you, and not always in ways that are beneficial with regards to social status. There was a time, the Doña tells me, that wearing something *typico* marked tourists as a Zapatista sympathizer, or at least a friend to indigenous rights movements. Such a distinction attracted unwanted attention from the local law authorities.

For Cristina, the history student turned NGO volunteer, placing herself here and then extending it home was not only an “inevitable” part of being a tourist, but also a naturalized part of tourist locations. Her statement is an example of an acceptance model to the commercial or capitalistic endeavors of Zapatista or Indigenous producers who are struggling to make a wage as well as subsistence.

In my case it is inevitable when you are at a place you buy something that is typical independent if it is an image of a green mountain with flowers, or in this case, a *guerrero* (guerilla soldier) with a *palacato* (red handkerchief). ...I think it is inevitable to return to your country in a year, a month, or in a week with a symbol of where you have been. Afterwards to wonder “this money where does it go?” Or, “what does all this mean?” Or if it has some significance is something else. For me it seems good

that in the market the people commerce like this, because ... well it's a way of life, just like working on the *milpa* to harvest corn and sell it. If it goes well for them, for me it is stupendous. It's a form of exploitation—exploiting what is happening.

This statement reflects her acceptance of marketing revolutionary iconography. I am reminded of Angela's voice and her insight into the needs of Indigenous families to “buy” goods in peripheral capitalist economies. Next, Cristina mentions how she sees the fluidity of images and symbols in a commercialized market for revolutionary icons.

There are things that mix. For example, the image of Che, the image of Che presents itself and it's Cuban, *vale* (okay) it's the revolution, but it is distinct. I think also concepts begin to mix, turbidity comes from this. But that they commercialize with this I don't think that's bad, it seems good to me. I think what is worse that they commercialize with other types of things. Sex tourism would be worse. But that the images show up on caps and t-shirts—it doesn't bother me. I think it is inevitable.

These pieces of tourist art and the discussion about them are examples of how the images and concept of the Zapatista rebellion are a contested and negotiated project among different local players. One point of view regards the commercialization of such artifacts as ¡Ya basta! Balaclavas (full face ski masks) and revolution ballads sold on cassette tapes as demonstrative of an “inauthentic” tourist experience. However, Cohen (1988) suggests that authenticity should be understood as a negotiated practice. Objects that are handmade, locally produced, constructed of natural materials, and/or traditional designs all contribute to the details of “authentic” pieces, but these details are judged with various degrees of importance by different people in various circumstances (Moreno and Littrell 2001). For some, buying such pieces depict solidarity with the Mayan peoples, creating an insider status, while for others it might just be something pretty, something that makes for a great story.

Since multiple meanings are involved with the production of local art, it would be a generalization to say that the visitor's meanings trump all others. New products can, with time, become regarded as “authentic” representations by acquiring new meanings. Moreover,

different meanings “are not necessarily mutually exclusive but could be additive: new meaning maybe added to old ones, which preserve into new situation” (Cohen 1988:382). This can be seen in the shifting subject of the scaled-down figurines. Before 1994 the handicraft dolls were dressed in traditional textiles and colours and sold as miniature representations of the local ethnicity. Now, these dolls have diversified to represent Zapatista rebels, and are given official names: Marcos, Tacho, David and Ramona. Such variation: 1) illustrates the ingenuity of local producers not to remain stagnant in self-representation, 2) demonstrates the visitor’s ability to shift their own assumptions of what counts as a valid tourist commodity, and 3) exemplifies how authenticity itself is negotiated.

5.5 Summary

Piya Chatterjee’s (2004) role as activist academic amongst women tea producers in northern India says something about the relationships that marginalized communities have with “outside” or foreign financing and support. When Chatterjee became involved with setting up a clinic for the area, the tea producers decided against it because of an “awareness that such amounts of funding (particularly from abroad) would be open to both corruption and appropriation” (Chatterjee 2002:258). Her warning: To be wary of the attached prescriptions of capital that flowed through such transactions. Control of capital, including social capital such as literacy, symbolic icons, and controlling interest in theoretical political ideologies is a potentially compromising control over the whole project. Even simple “support,” like the practice of buying goods to support the individual, or buying the product to support the cause as a whole, is support that is scrutinized by others. In this chapter, my focus was on commercial exchanges between tourist and local. However, the exchange of currency for goods and services is also connected to symbolic exchanges, and the control of such exchanges (economic and symbolic) is a power struggle that involves the many.

Chapter 6

Networks and "Netwars:" strategies of exchange in Zapaturismo

They ran, faces covered, hands held in a chain, and surrounded the basket ball court: A human security line. All night they kept their positions until the end of the proceedings to commemorate the New Year's anniversary of the uprising. In ritual order, each act took focus, and was never hurried. Lengthy speeches turned into lengthy translations. But it stated directly on the program for the first Encounter of the Zapatista Communities with the People of the World (*Encuentro de los Pueblos Zapatista con los Pueblos del Mundo*) that all was to happen "in Zapatista time." This might have been just a reminder that the Zapatistas do not adhere to daylight savings time: "the hour of Fox." But, I think it had more to do with an intuitive sense of timing and process. People would lead the proceedings and not the clock.

Now the hour was incredibly late and after a full day of sitting in on the forums, taking notes, and reports, I felt like this anniversary celebration could last all night. And it did. By the time the final speaker passed the list, by the time the final translation echoed into the heavy cold fog, I was sitting on the ground, flashlight held in the vague direction of my reporting partner's pen and paper. Closing the ceremonies the Mexican national anthem followed the hymn of the EZLN and thousands of indigenous voices sang out accompanied by those supporters and adherents that knew the words.

Just when I thought it was all over, and I was on my way back to my tent, the dance started. In the fray, people from different nationalities, indigenous and non-indigenous, linking arms and swinging each other around; over there the *Cañada* (valley) representatives danced in pairs a fast paced shuffle, and over there was the sidestep swaying of the highlands. The dance continued, music permeating the thin nylon of the tent and into my swirling memories of the days.

The gatherings, like the one described above, held in the jungle valleys and the high hills of Chiapas are an embodiment of the social and political networks created by a local indigenous movement and by internationally intervening activists acting as together as part of a transnational social movement. A binary relationship is a key strategy of solidarity tourism as tourists hope to engage with the levels of a grassroots rebellion and Zapatistas organize to inform world wide through transnational solidarity participation. Answering the question posed at the beginning of the thesis—how a struggle that is local in conception becomes grounds for international contention—means returning to the premise of articulations of scales (see page 36). As Carla Freeman (2001:64) presses, it is from the vantage point of the local that integration originates. She maintains that successful theory and research understand participants as “enacting new modes of globalization” (Freeman 2001:1014) and not merely reacting to its effects. This chapter focuses on those sites in Chiapas where elements and essential practices of Zapatismo, as a new social movement, are kept connected through international solidarity tourism.

An aspect of "solidarity," according to a dictionary definition, might include some united or common aspect of interest, sympathy or aspiration on the part of a community (Shorter Oxford Dictionary). Though Olesen (2005:102) provides a more detailed breakdown of solidarity types, his basic definition hinges on a “shared perception of the interconnectedness of the world and humanity.” It was this concept of solidarity that was presented by the participants when I asked them about why they came or why they thought others came from abroad to be involved in a local Zapatista movement. It is also present in the operational mandates of human rights, indigenous rights NGOs and GROs (grassroots movements). The subject of solidarity will be addressed shortly and prove to thread through many conversations as I address different settings of contact between internationalists acting locally and local insurgents acting (trans)nationally.

Contact between international and local actors in most cases is made through a “broker”—a reference to the link between “previously unconnected social sites” (Tarrow and McAdam 2005:127). Brokers help navigate the distance between tourist and the representatives of the movement, because just coming to San Cristóbal does not guarantee interaction with the rebels. Despite some popular notions, there are few masked men running down the city streets. Brokers cultivate the possibility of connections, and make the space available for learning, speaking about, even hooking up with a Zapatista social circle. Cultural forms and meeting spaces, even the bar or a hostel can serve as a bridge. Some NGOs or solidarity tour organizers make it a specific business. However, those most prized exchanges occur through direct contact with Zapatista through outreach programs, like the *encuentros*, and the humanitarian visitations called *camapentos*. A special case in this research project was a historical tour called *La Otra*, which counts as a contact experience quite unlike others. This program made the Zapatista themselves zapatourists.

6.1 Solidarity tourism

Gallaher and Froehling (2002:92) state that the “ability of the Zapatista to survive is due in large part to their ability to cultivate links with other oppressed peoples across the world.” In other words, the power of solidarity is recognized for its potential to flow over state borders and to have influence on national or local politics. I do not negate restrictions to movement like those imposed at army check points in the southern states, poor transport routes to rural Zapatista communities, and the process of obtaining “proper” documents, to list a few hurdles; however, it is the cultivation of connections (physical and symbolic) that keeps the Zapatista struggle current in far reaching locations. An effective zapatourismo makes use of those connections both physical (sharing information) and symbolic (raising

the consciousness of solidarity) essential practices. This section addresses solidarity as symbolic exchange, and how it is formed by the participants in this study.



Figure 10: Backpacks piled high at the *Encuentro*

A network made up of diverse segments of the population might at first seem an unlikely mode of cooperation. However, socially and culturally distant actors may face common histories of resistance, or sense of oppression under imperial or neo-liberal policies; though it might take some time to find those attributes which are sufficiently similar.

Margot: The other *compañera*—the one from Greece—and what is the connection between Greece? ... Or some countries in Eastern Europe that only now have the cash to travel. ... And they come here. Then there are the countries that are small with economic problems, but in the end encounter that the problems are similar. For me, to think that a Kurd comes to San Cristóbal for tourism doesn't make sense.

But, Greek youth have proven themselves worthy of anarchist productions, and Kurdistan is facing its own call for self governance and autonomy. As one member of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) announced at the *encuentro* (2006-2007), it is a history of conquest and occupation and the struggle for autonomy in his land which is similar. This confession of mutual solidarity without dissolving difference (Olesen 2005:110) was met with great applause when he mentioned that a bridge in his own territory was build and named in honour of the late *Comandanta* Ramona.

Cristina's university studies and connections to an organization in Spain brought her to San Cristóbal. Now a volunteer at Frayba, Cristina does not include herself in this group of solidarity tourists, she says her visit had more to do with an interest in the historical context of the Zapatista movement in Mexican and global politics. However, she does propose reasons for *other tourist's* journey.

They are tourists that come to seek the history of Chiapas, or because they feel identified here. For example my country, almost always come from two places: from Catalonia or from the Basque Country. It is rare to encounter someone who is not from there, I am an exception. These two communities have a particular process of autonomy in Spain. In the Basque country we know the problem with ETA and this theme of wanting to be independent. And in Catalonia, though they are more pacifists, but still. So I think these tourist come called by this, because they feel identified with this "so I am going to Chiapas because there I will see something similar."

Seeing "something similar" may be the reflection of historical currents of other autonomous or anarchistic movements in other regions "leading some activists to read their own causes and ideologies into the Zapatista rebellion" (Stahler-Sholk 2007:194). Joan noticed an extremely high representation of Basques, Catalans, and Italians on the streets of San Cristóbal. "I am very surprised how many Europeans are here. This is definitely the most Europeans I have ever seen."

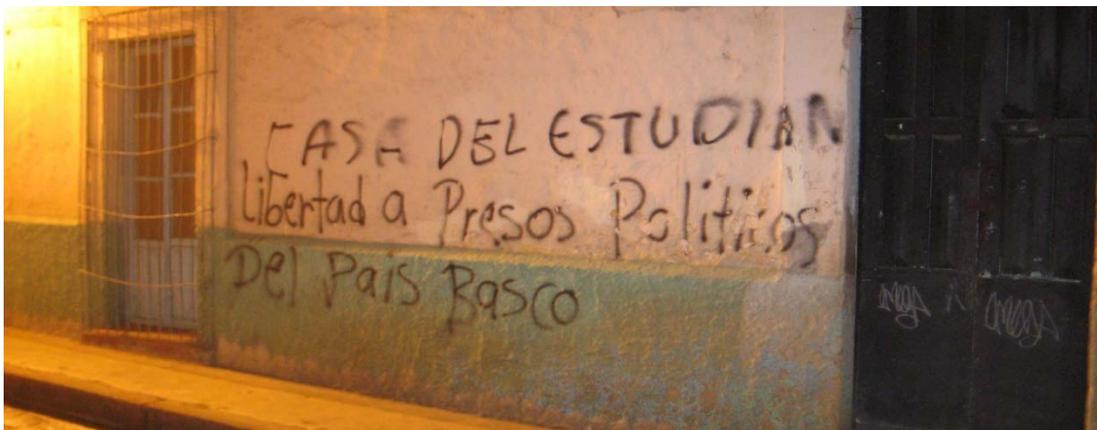


Figure 11: Solidarity for the Basques

An indication of solidarity shows that new social movements are movements that embrace the expressions of identity in politics. Such struggles denotes the participation of people as cultural identities “emerging from civil rights, feminist, and 'post-industrialist' identities” (Nash 2005:10) which includes other marginalized peoples movements such as “Red Power, anti-colonialism, gay and lesbian struggles” (Day 2005:4). During one conversation, Oscar mentioned to me, “Zapatismo is as much a cultural revolution as it is a political one.” Months later, during my interview with Janez the topic resurfaced.

Janez: The point of Zapatismo is to *go beyond political declarations* [my emphasis] about colours, colour politics

Ginna: Party politics?

Janez: And colour also. When you are in the movement there are lots of colours; the greens, the reds, the pinks. They go beyond that. They transcend all this. So that is the most fascinating thing about this. The political stance.

Ginna: Which makes it difficult to negotiate where they stand.

Janez: Their perception of time and space.

Ginna: And the way that they discuss within a group. They don't explicitly say environmental movement, feminist agenda.

Janez: ...they go beyond that.

For those who have been working with international volunteers and activist-tourists long term, there is also a sense of caution when proceeding with acceptance. Margot, who has been working with foreign activists visiting Chiapas, kept a healthy scepticism.

And I think finally that the attraction does not have much to do with the struggle, it could have to do with the nostalgic nature of the revolution. It could be that the more mature [people] of the revolution that noticed that the Berlin wall fall, see that there is a recreation of an armed movement. And this could be the other... I think that there are 10 thousand doors of Zapatismo. [pause] Have you read Harry Potter? In Harry Potter there is a mirror that you see in the mirror what you want to see. And this is what Zapatismo is sometimes. You can see what you are looking for.

I too have felt the pull of such romanticism, seeing in Zapatismo what I wanted, and the sting of embarrassment for falling into such a trap. I believe a true danger of such a self-delusional

habit is what Olesen (2005) identifies as “altruistic solidarity” or “substitution solidarity” (Waterman as noted in Olesen 2005:108): When one stands in for, or speaks for, the other. When it comes to privileged university students seeking the newest in social revolutionary practices, Zapatismo is a key rally. It is usually the First-World privileged who sees themselves as more fortunate or embodied to speak on behalf of the marginalized or poor. Spivak (1996) and Escobar (1995) explored extensively this concept in post-development theory. Spivak (1996) is highly sceptical of the contact positions between European and indigenous populations and sees the potential of the dominate to appropriate the voices of the Indegenous south acting on notions, that by way of their position, know what is best.

Walking a dried mud road through this valley, I argued with other *campamentistas* about the idea of preserving the “purity” of the Indian people. “Wouldn’t it be a shame,” another visitor asks me, “if the absolute beauty of this area (I agree) is destroyed by the onset of electricity and better transport facilities (I don’t agree)?” Conserving a lack of infrastructure is not an option, and far from being my decision. My personal aggravation at this sort of paternalistic enthusiasm is not easy to smother. But it seems we all have different ideas what is right for these villages. Non-interference is a more difficult road to walk when right and wrong remains a passionate judgment and confrontations subtle. Like the speaker who questioned the ethics of serving Coke products in autonomous zones, the EZLN’s revolutionary critics are those same invited guests of visiting solidarities. Those attending formal discussions of planning were plainly invited to participate in forming an “opened” discussion. But tension is present.

I felt this tension when, at another table, a question came from the floor about abortion. The response from the panel of Zapatistas was elusive. “Women don’t practice [abortion], nor do they search it out.” The practice, according to the representative, was neither

endorsed, nor condemned, but explained as an event that happened in situations that are best avoided or prevented. For some in attendance, including myself, this statement that abortions "happened" as matters of spontaneous circumstances was more than a little vague. Did women carry out abortions in their communities? If they did, who overlooked the process, and how available was it? It pointed to a subject that might still be off limits in some communities. With a host of self-proclaimed feminists in the crowd, I wondered how many others were disappointed by this answer. The statement left the Zapatista policy on abortion unclear despite years of standing behind the very progressive Women's Law of 1994, which states that women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.

Like tourists' concerns for their economic impact on local lives (Chapter four), or the expressed caution of Angela and Bren who see the pitfalls of solidarity expressed through material support (Chapter five), multicultural participation in matters of a movement's ideology invites possible conflict between representatives deciding the "right road" to follow. While Bren warns against building a culture of dependency, Angela worries about the dominance of western ideology and praxis over those of the Indigenous peoples when communities are asked to follow NGO mandates as requirements of the "gifts." In this chapter, keeping to its focus on symbolic solidarities, I raise the same concerns.

As solidarity tourists reach for further involvement in the Zapatista movement, Richard Stahler-Sholk (2007:194) warns, "outsiders in Zapatista communities inevitably reflect power imbalances in the two worlds." His concern is to avoid "substitutionism (acting and speaking for the other) which can reproduce existing inequalities" (Olesen 2005:108). What then is the role of the solidarity tourist, and who is involved with brokering this relation?

6.2 San Cristóbal and the business of Zapatista touring

I am sitting at the back of a darkened make-shift theatre. The list of movies, mostly political documentaries; the focus is Zapatista and a little Frida. The first show is a bit vacant, but outside the crowd waits for the

second film. The Puente is a cultural centre of sorts—café, textile gallery (aka) shop, art gallery, language school and the cinema. I watch the film as much for my own interest as way to meet others. The place fills in; couples and a few single viewers. I have my researcher eye on one, who earlier spoke in English to me.

Author's notes, August 18 2006

Many of the activist/tourists/human rights observers—in all zapatourists—make San Cristóbal a regular introduction to the area. The culture of rebellion and activism, with its modern image reflected in tourism, provides tourists with certified organic Zapatista java at the café, documentary movie nights, and night clubs that hang a red star or the moustached face of Emiliano Zapata over their doors. It was easy for me to be circumspect to the growing commercial aspects of San Cristóbal, which looks more like a never ending excuse for a good time, than a social movement of the revolutionary sort. As if it weren't any clearer, the locational contradictions are pointed out by a Mexican student. "They [zapatourists] argue over five pesos for an orange, but are willing to pay 20 for a beer." I sympathised with his comment, as I stumbled on many such contradictions. The perception of San Cristóbal as a city with a "fighting spirit," as one resident put it, is that "this city is a city of mobilization." Yet lavish spending of cash and time didn't conjure political mobilization in my mind.

The dance bar starts to fill at one or two in the morning. The crowd moving, touching, spilling drinks. Jumping from salsa to reggae, reggaeton¹ to hip-hop. From one minute to the next I fake my way through the steps unable to slide on the sticky floor splashed with the memories of an invented margarita.

I think on Margarita, the name of one of the towns taken by the Zapatistas in 1994. How many of these dancers, drinkers have made their way past the city to the town? How much of their time is spent in spending, making fast friends and casual drinking partners. The bars are the faces of many young tourists. Here it is a social movement of a different kind.

Author's notes, September 14 2006

I don't intend to present nightclubs and discotheques as camps for revolutionists (I shall get to the camps later in the chapter), but my interest in the articulation of tourism and revolution, as well as my own free time, lead me to these hot spots, and investigating business in the city eventually guided me to those who position themselves as brokers and

bridges. I asked my friend, a local tour operator, how she described her relations with tourists. “I am like *el intermediaria, el puente* (the intermediate, the bridge) between the tourists and the local peoples, I am an interpreter too.” Tarrow and McAdam (2005) see these connections as essential projects of producing multiple levels and locations of action. “At different points in the network, pairs of actors who would otherwise have had little or no connection to one another were connected by a third actor, with consequences for the behaviour of one or both of the pair” (Tarrow and McAdam 2005:141). Here I discuss this brokerage of connections made through businesses such as hostels, small group tour operations (solidarity or otherwise), cultural forums, and local watering holes, as part of the network that connects tourism with social activism. I also want to clarify that I am describing these business as *possible* points of connection to a social movement. If one is looking, these spaces open up as safe spaces of political dialogue and information.

For example, when I sat down with Alejandro, the co-owner of a popular bar, he came well prepared to share information and distribute names and contacts. He brought out a few of the magazines collected over the years. Publications with fantastic photos of militarized Zapatistas: *Contralínea Chiapas*, *Rebeldía* (some of the earlier editions), and special editions of *Progreso* and *La Jornada*. I was apparently not the only one that came in over the years looking for Zapatistas. For those stepping into the bar for the first time it would seem an obvious place to start asking. The owner literally displays his personal political history. Its original context as a pizza joint gets a little lost amongst the images of Cuban flags, Zapatista figures hanging from a mobile, and the mural of Villa and Zapata, what Alejandro describes as the “icons of Mexican history.” In many ways the bar itself is a reflection of the way I see this new tourism of San Cristóbal with its obvious homage to the revolution, both past and current, and its joyous celebration of art, colour, and a good time. A cheeky mix to be

sure. When it comes to the bar, and the bar owner, there is a careful playfulness when defining the face of a revolutionary in this city.

While they spoke openly with me, some participants were careful to choose their words and stayed away from labels or possible public alignment with the Zapatistas. When I asked if she was a Zapatista the Doña would only reply “I am vegetarian.” The Doña is a well-known figure in the city, with family ties to current and past social action. She wears her ethnic heritage proudly, so I was surprised when she took such a cautious position. Also cautious of labels, Alejandro told me that the bar’s interior speaks to his *personal* ideas of Mexico and revolution, as well as the social integrity of daily practices related to running his business. Despite the red star hanging over the business, he maintained that it was not an openly political business, and that it can’t be. To be openly political—by which I believe he means openly leftist—in business is to invite scrutiny from the conservatives of the municipality. “I don’t want to close” he told me, “we do better work when are open.” By this he was indicating his sense of responsibility to the economic welfare of the workers by keeping open a safe space.

Accepting the responsibility of the interlocour is a subject that provokes circumspection from all sides. In my interviews with local business owners and other long-term residents, they noted an aggressive and adversarial relation with the Municipal government and *coletos*—those families of San Cristóbal who claim inheritance to the city as descendants of the conquerors (Nash 2001:164). Expulsions of foreigners was common (and on mass) during peak times of tension. “In 1997-1998 it was hard. There was hardship in the town for the *campamentistas*,” the Doña tells me. She feels responsible for the social as well as physical space she creates at the posada. The connection of the hostel with its foreign activists guests

also called the attention of local police, who would come asking for a list of names of the guests and information about their stay.

While the attention gained by the Doña was political, the owner of the bar experienced a more subtle discrimination by local authorities. During our interview he mentioned the reputation that the clientele have in the offices of the municipality—that of drugged hippies and wandering backpackers looking for casual sexual encounters. Under the pretence of an anti-drug watch, he tells me, certain foreigners with traits of a non conventional lifestyle are routinely the target of harassment. The story is similar to the one told by the Doña where she explained that wearing something *typico* was also regarded as marking oneself in solidarity with Indigenous peoples' struggle.

On the other side of the conversation these Others have also been critical. Alejandro told me how he is criticized for not being revolutionary enough, for not providing a type of business that stops serving coca-cola, or for becoming too popular a business interested in profits over revolution. “It is only a bar, with images and icons of our culture,” Alejandro defends himself, “If this was the case I would have to take my shoes off.” He points to his name brand sneakers in jest. “Look” he says, “they look at us like “*fresas*.”² We are *fresa*, we are also *campesinos*, and *somos todos* (we are everything/everyone).”

6.3 Networks

I have written about San Cristóbal as a place where the platforms for local and international activism and tourism share the stage. I will now discuss those visible actors who serve as interlocutors in this endeavour—solidarity tour operators and the particular NGOs which operate in solidarity with a wider peace movement. With this discussion I hope to highlight how actors of a transnational network use *zapatismo* as a strategy to frame sentiments of solidarity and provide information and experiences as a resource for

mobilization. These actors include independent tour operators like Angela, larger operators like Global Exchange and Mexican Solidarity Network (MSN), and even NGOs and GROs, working with, or for, Zapatista communities and civil administrations.

What results from this coordinated effort by the Zapatistas, sympathetic tourists, and brokers is a unique, multiple stranded or webbed network. This well informed network had the ability to mobilize quickly against the Mexican army and Mexican government. The non-hierarchical “all channel network” (Ronfeldt et al. 1998) structure became its primary strategy for defence and offence. This is what Ronfeldt et al. (1998) called the Zapatista “netwar.” What started as a confrontation, involving armed conflict turning into a low intensity warfare, is countered by a movement of civil agents (social non-state and stateless actors) exchanging information in an “information-age social netwar” (Ronfeld et al. 1998:82). The transmission of information emerged as an early property of an internationalized Zapatista movement and remains a key principle for effective networking. NGOs, such as Frayba and Global Exchange, also operate on the bases that “*compartimos la vivencia*” (CDH Frayba 2005:2) (sharing the living experience) first hand is an important strategy in building solidarity and sourcing information to the wider network.

Though the numbers of visitors actually registered in these tours might be considered minimal, in comparison to the total number of recorded tourists entering the area, the endurance and regularity of these programs demonstrates a steady demand. Global Exchange started sponsoring “reality tours” in 2000. By 2005, Global Exchange was sending four tours a year to Chiapas, with an average of eight to ten people—sometimes double that amount—each trip. MSN sends similar numbers through their study abroad programs, many of which are located in Oventic, and San Cristóbal. Perhaps a more accurate account of the number of politically involved tourists comes from watching government reactions. In

1998, 144 foreign activist, were expelled from the area, most of whom likely entered with tourist visas (Olesen 2005:82). As the then President of Mexico Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (quoted in Urrutia 1998) said of the foreigners; “pero ojalá que no vengan desde antes con una agenda de lo que deben decir para hacer el juego a quienes alientan el turismo revolucionario, ¿o no creen ustedes?, porque vienen a hacer un turismo revolucionario (Hopefully, they will not come with a pre-arranged agenda regarding what they should say to play by the rules of those who encourage revolutionary tourism, don't you think?).” The obvious eludes him; admitting to revolutionary tourism would lead to a rejection at the boarder.

The heavy handed expulsions of 1998 accomplished what it tried to avoid; it raised international attention to the conflict and reinforced the call for the presence of human rights watch in the area (Olesen 2005). To quickly mend its negative image, the Mexican government showed it could make some accommodations to the way they would process and accept peace tourists. The already established FM3 visa application, which handles all temporary resident visas, from retired snow-birds, to temporary employed technical engineers, and general business visas, was modified to include the visitation rights of international peace observers. However, gaining such access is a test in persistence, fortitude, and bureaucratic savvy. This is why most visitors, like Maranella, choose to enter with a tourist card or visa³, making the ritual trip across the border to Guatemala to renew their stay. Others, like Uni, avoid the process altogether and risk deportation as he drifts undetected by the authorities.

6.4 Rebels and tourists

A most important aspect of creating an informative experience between visitor and local Zapatista community members, is the formation of personal exchanges—exchanges that take

place in the context of the daily functioning of communities and the extraordinary function of international gatherings.

The rain brought most everyone in, those other few stayed in their tent. I find my way to the auditorium that is filling with people as they lean against the walls protected by the small over hang. I nudge through the cluster at the door and with the heat of the bodies I shed my jacket and my sweater. Finding a seat, I am surrounded by black ski masks and red bandannas. In front of me the woman's embroidered blouse is subject for study, her long black hair emerges from the ski mask and falls down her back.

Author's notes, December 31 2006

And we also held international encuentros. In other words, we joined together to talk with persons from America and from Asia and from Europe and from Africa and from Oceania, and we learned of their struggles and their ways, and we said they were "intergalactic" encuentros, just to be silly and because we had also invited those from other planets, but it appeared as if they had not come, or perhaps they did come, but they did not make it clear.

EZLN 2005

Like a mountain Woodstocck the tents and tarps covered almost every patch of the muddy ground. The otherwise quiet community of Oventic now teemed with people. Over two thousand visitors from 42 different countries passed these gates, hosted by another two thousand more members of the Zapatista support bases. Imagine if the UN hosted a folk music festival, a teach-in, with a bit of rainbow party thrown in for the good vibes. This *encuentro* was billed as an introduction of sorts between the people of the world to the people of the communities of Zapatistas. After 13 years of media broadcasts, a number of conventions and *encuentros*, and thousands upon thousands of personal visits the Zapatista communities, the councils that represent their words, and their military are still hosting occasions for encounters. Though still dealing with shortages of power and long line ups for the pit toilets, organizers are increasingly adept at the mechanics of hosting four thousand visitors over for days. During these days Oventic transformed into a hub of connections.

Speaking from my own experience at the First Encounter of the Zapatista Communities with the People of the World, the discussions I heard involved a process of interrogation and self analysis. Many were speaking openly about possibilities, and allowing for open-ended debate. In short, a dialectic on topics such as women, land, health, commerce, and media and arts. These are what Jean Baudrillard (2003) has more specifically discussed as a “dialectical tension or critical movement” for critical social movements. The gatherings have also become important events for travelling transnational social activists. While participants attempt to transcend boundaries of partisan politics and build an infrastructure of alternatives, they also build a festival or carnival atmosphere.

“It was impossible to stop wondering if this was an event intended to give birth to *“another possible world”* or if it was a trip to the beach” (SIPAZ 2005). I read these comments on the SIPAZ blog: a personal report from one of the working members of the office who had attended the Fifth World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Her outward questioning of its carnival atmosphere struck a cord with me. When I mentioned reading the blog, she instantly remembered the smell of coco butter drifting on the southern heat.

... And the people that can pay the passage to Brazil are people of the north. To search of I don't know what. I guess they are living in Washington, New York and Paris, and you don't know where you will finally see these people opening the margins of struggle. I don't know, I was not looking for answers from them, why they came? What is your process of connection?

Do you know the example of Jesus in the temple? The truth, I too felt like that. [Her reference to selling the dolls of Chavis, and the overall commercial production that follows such events]

Along with the MSN language schools and programmed visits from Global Exchange, Oventic receives regular visits from all areas of the solidarity network. Its close proximity to San Cristóbal makes it a day trip for other interested parties, making it one of the more popular seats of Zapatista government. Other caracoles and farther communities are visited

less often by passing Zapatourists and host mostly non-governmental organizer or assigned volunteers, as well as the obligatory *campamentistas*—literally translated to campers. The probability of getting to these areas can be mediated through institutions like Frayba or by gaining approval by the Juntas directly. This is a newer process since the formation of the Caracoles. Uma watched this process transpire. “You have a way to get to the Zapatistas, before it was always by way of the organizations. With the caracoles the people can go, they don’t need so much the intermediate like you needed before.”

My own visitation to the valley community of Tzeltal and displaced Tzotzil Zapatistas was mediated through Frayba, and though my duties included documenting military activity and tensions with Prista and hostile non-Zapatista neighbours, I admit my need for the “experience” was a major factor in my decision to go. This land, tucked between the mountains with fertile slopes, clear water, and bountiful forests, was once a single ranch. But now the grand house stands as a mess of charred timbers while clay tiles dangle from the broken structure. In 1994, the Zapatistas gained this land from an absentee cattle rancher through a relatively non-violent takeover. Now an island of autonomy—the people protect what they have gained. This story was told to me by one who was there. I listen to his story over weak coffee as military trucks rumble by the single rubble road that leads down the valley.

It was through these encounters that I was able to hear about the tourist from their hosts. It is here that I learned that the rebellion had pushed together some curious relationships of “host and guests,” and that an understanding of who the Other was or where and why they came was not always clear. I was also told of the Italian who came for four years on his program to implement sustainable gardens of varieties of vegetables—tomatoes, and other culinary rarities. Now a defunct program, his impact was the stories he left in the community. On more than one occasion the children and some adults from the

village would ask me if I had heard any news from past visitors, their names remembered and their idiosyncrasies retold. Despite the comparatively low numbers, to the more popular seats of Zapatista governments, other rural indigenous communities also have hosted the world, and are well seasoned in tourism, even academic tourism.⁴ There is a popular joke: “How does an indigenous Chiapaneco introduce his family? This is my wife, my children and my anthropologist.”

Outside of the cities, like San Cristóbal, Cristina tells me “is very distinct.” “The treatment in community is kind. There is where you feel the *real beat* [my emphasis] of the people of Chiapas. And they are people who have suffered and so they see you as someone who worries for them” . These are the settings where tourists hope for the discovery of the different, but for the solidarity tourist they are also a chance to shed the “tourist” card and gain acceptance. We have heard from other participants, like Javier and Anna in Chapter four, about searching the “real Mexico” and the “richness” of those close personal experiences and exchanges with the Other. Creating the distinction from tourism is an idea that was presented at the start of this thesis and continues as I look at solidarity workers. Here Cristina feels the stigma of tourism. For her the important differentiation between the city and the communities is acceptance.

Because the people in the community are thankful for your presence, at least at the community where I was. And really they are very friendly with you. ... Mind you they look at you strange, because evidently they go to the river to wash with skirts and you go with underwear... this type of thing.

But it is not the same as San Cristóbal. In San Cristóbal you are a person with a camera with a distinct colour of skin that takes pictures and if you ask for a photo they are going to ask for payment; they are going to ask for pesos. But if you ask for pictures in community, it's because you are going to have the whole town there.

As a “solidarity worker” her impression of work and tourism were separated.

Because when you go to a community you don't go as a tourist—you go with a mission. As an observer, they know you need to do a report; also one always tries to

help them. For example the time I was there I helped the educational promoters, who are the teachers. And therefore they notice that you are there helping, others went to the milpa to cut maiz.

I too could take this view and distinguish traveller and tourist from the field worker, expecting that my “experience, obtained by staying a long time, learning the language well and participating in everyday life” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:31-32) authorizes my discourse. However, doing so would reinforce the tourist typecast marked by my accent, my “distinct colour of skin” and other practices of documentation. Also, I am reminded of the “and also kind of tourist” remark, and I can’t escape my own multiple and mixed motives for being here. The women at the SIPAZ office were familiar with this mixed agenda. They laid out the standard three week “vacation” of zapatourists: Work as agents for the networks as peace observers for two weeks, then take a week go to the hot beaches of the Mexican Rivera or tour the popular ruins of the peninsula.

6.5 La Otra Campaña and the Other zapatourist

La Otra Campaña was the EZLN’s opposing proposition to the 2006 federal election. It also demonstrated the outward bound alternative in revolutionary travel; an example of how a social revolution can travel in a literal sense. Reimagining the processes of national politics, the purpose of the tour was to link non partisan struggles and respond to “anti-capitalist national liberation struggles around the country” (Mora 2007:64). This traveling troop of EZLN representatives from the south were joined by a caravan of supporters, merchants, and journalists by the bus full (including myself). The caravan crossed state borders to demonstrate that this program of information and solidarity could gain support from father reaches of the nation.

Part of a *non*-electoral campaign, and part publicity, the tour moved about the nation listening to the disfranchised. *La Otra* was first proposed publicly in the Six Declaration of

the Lacandon Jungle, also referred to as the *Sexta*. This tour marked the fifth movement out of the protected autonomous communities of Chiapas (Ross 2005). This time, however, the focus was not solely on the plight of Indigenous Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, and Mame communities, it was on communities everywhere, addressing different concerns; loss of jobs, poor working conditions, age discrimination; as well as familiar grievances, loss of land title and restrictions on resources. At times the spectacle was a production with loud speakers and a stage, at times it was a table and chairs placed in the dirt allies of the neighbourhood, but always the speeches addressed situations of exploitation and discrimination and linked the causes with other issues in communities around the country. The goal:

perhaps we will find agreement between those of us who are simple and humble and, together, we will organize all over the country and reach agreement in our struggles, which are alone right now, separated from each other, and we will find something like a program that has what we all want, and a plan for how we are going to achieve the realization of that program, which is called the “national program of struggle.

EZLN 2005

An outward reach while maintaining an inward focus has been the strategy of late. A strong critique of the neo-liberal direction finds solidarity and support with “anti-globalization” organizations (many with “First World” resources) and attracts attention to the cause of those marginalized and effected peoples. Capturing the scope of parallel struggles in solidarity is a mechanism which I have written about here, as in Chapter four, but this time the visitation roles were reversed. This time the tourist searching connections was the EZLN representative and the hosts other Indigenous nations, leftist workers’ parties, or community centres. This time the intermediates—the brokers of information and communication—were following orders given by the touree, Delegato Zero (a.k.a Marcos).

On the bus, one of members from pirate Radio Pacheco read the highlights of the local paper aloud: "...in tow, a bus of dreadlocked men and women with too much under-arm hair." A criticism, I guess, of the image of the interfering "hippie" followers of, what much of the country still believes is an "Indian issue." Such critiques, sounding similar to those heard back in Chiapas of the solidarity tourist, was a clear distraction of the main the focus leading the caravan, a process of unification. Perhaps our (mostly) non-indigenous identities called too much attention to ourselves as the travellers, or our cameras and other recoding devices labeled us as carrying tourist status. Not that this wasn't a tour. It was. But it was also work, and activist exploration.

Though the election is finalized, *La Otra* has become an ongoing campaign. In true Zapatismo style, it spun satellite networks of support in Mexico and beyond like La Otra Montreal, Vancouver, and San Diego. Once again the ability of a touring activist solidarity can put an outbound message on the local agenda.

6.6 Summary

The popularity and stamina of the movement, embodied in Zapatismo, is the subject of many scholarly papers, news paper articles, books, and new media blogs. I saw the reaches of this grassroots movement as a hand drawn map pinned up in the schoolhouse of a rural Zapatista community; the map marked the volunteer's "home" towns across the globe. It was a colourful display of the links made with other aspects of a larger network of social movement around the globe. This has been accomplished over years by fostering lines of communication where information is exchanged and solidarity demonstrated. One important way that this has been done is through the visitations of solidarity tourists.

Chapter 7

STRATEGY AND SOLIDARITY: a conclusion

Only two nights ago some friends of mine were joking about me being a spy. Not surprisingly this “joke” hits close to the bone. In a town where political and ethnic tensions divide an otherwise tranquil façade, being a researcher/activist is a careful alignment. Here researcher could easily be converted to spy in the local language of social movements. I am left wondering about the spaces I occupy during my stay here. What is it that I am I doing here? My reasons for attending this little rally are complex and multiple. As an activist citizen of this country my presence has everything to do with participation in this movement. And as researcher I take mental notes to use later in my thesis... am I then a spy? Is my observation interfering with my participation? Or is it the other way around? Is my participation a hindrance to my observation?

Author's notes, October 2006

I found this entry as I was in the process of reviewing my field notes, listening again to recorded interviews, and sifting through my collection of books and journal articles. The question I posed to myself, I now answer with a third option. My mixed positions both hinder and bless. I take the time to describe a mixed position as participating activist, as observer, as well as tourist and national, because complicated roles and relationships continue to surface throughout the chapters as issues where labels are vague and messy. I hoped that by my taking this mixed position I was better able to understand others who also make difficult choices as they travel. Activist, academic, tourist, researcher, and ethnographer are positions that participants moved through. In this respect I share with others the fluid titles in this ethnography of grassroots politics and international shifting relations.

In the final pages of this thesis I set out to review the contribution of the many participants who allowed me a more personal look at the relations of a grassroots movement with an international knowledge network and solidarity based movement. I constructed this research through the frameworks of conflict tourism and revolutionary tourism as new terrains by which to further understand international political and cultural relations. This chapter concludes the thesis with those lessons in understanding Zapatismo as a shared idea that moves about, creating different (at times conflicting) aspects of the movement. As others

have looked at internationalizing Zapatismo (Berger 2001; Olesen 2004, 2005), I maintain that seeking understanding through face-to-face contact, like Zapaturismo, is yet another strategy for putting into practice a more effective transnational activist relationship between foreign internationals and local actors in tourist locations.

Many tourist destinations are constructed as safe spaces of leisure and relaxation; there are also niches of tourism catering to adventure seekers under titles of eco-tourism or adventure tourism, even sex tourism, but conflict and political turmoil are usually not constructed as tourist engagements. In Chapters two and three I lay out San Cristóbal with its history of conflicts and continuing political tensions as a tourist destination. Such tensions impact upon the results of the thesis. Questions cannot be answered for lack of evidence, as they require information still classified or interviews difficult to obtain, or details carefully guarded and identities kept confidential. The politics of this area has split families and created scores of internal refugees. Such are realities of dealing with a living project, one where lives are directly and immediately impacted by the release of certain knowledges. It is the presence of these conflicts that attracted me and other international peace workers, volunteers and vacationers alike. However, through in-depth open ended interviews and informal encounters with these same tourists, I found that it was actually the hope of changing, influencing or observing this conflict with the aims to improve the situation that brought these zapatourists here.

An overview of the formation of the EZLN, as explained in Chapter three, suggests that “inside” and “outside” activist groups mutually oriented the conditions of struggle in the area. For example, the militant Marxist students from the north learned the importance of organizing collectively, and Indigenous communities of the valleys and eastern jungles found a stronger voice in the self empowering practices of the churches. Like the first brigades to

the conflict grey zones, solidarity visitors continue to play a role in transmitting information and working at maintaining an observing presence.

Overt invitations from the EZLN, the popularity of the Zapatista model of autonomy, set against the beauty of Chiapas make the popularity of stopping in San Cristóbal an itinerary must for a rising segment of travellers—the international social movement tourist. An abundance of sources and well established networks have publicized this city to the world as a site of conflict and activism. Janez's first thoughts of Chiapas started as he listened to the story of the 1994 rebellion unfold on news radio, while Christina's history lessons captivated her interests, and others, like Alex and Elena, heard by word of mouth that this was the place to be. It was these international lines of communication and the created narrative of this city that bought Janez and the others here. It was these narratives that I was interested in listening to.

Chapter four highlighted the common themes that led to the events of travel. Most noticeably—for a study intended to focus on touring activist participation in social change—was the reinforcement of Noy's (2004) and Elsrud's (2001) theorizing tourist narratives of risk/adventure and self change. Seven of the ten non-residents interviewees came to learn or experience Zapatista history in Chiapas and were set for “pivotal moments in which their life-story changes” (Noy 2004:84). Enacting a pilgrimage of sorts, Janez and Sabina were already involved in Zapatista solidarity networks at home, but Chiapas was always a dream for them, one eventually realized after thirteen years. For other ambitious activist-tourists, like Elena, the American Fidelista, this trip was a life's project: “All my life I have worried because of what will happen to Cuba... I was raised in revolutionary Cuba. My parents took me from Cuba when I was nine years old. This I can't change. But all my life I have studied the revolution.” Now in her forties this trip was the ultimate personal research project to

visit all Latin American social movements. While these tourists were searching out such experiences, others had made their tour more permanent. I think of Margot, working with SIPAZ for over ten years, a job that she obviously loves. So strong is her passion for the subject that when she speaks she is sometimes hard keep up with. For Uma, coming to San Cristóbal was to change her life in many ways.

I think it is the most traditional way you could get to a job. I saw an announcement in a magazine [we laugh at the simplicity]. At this time I was not satisfied with the work that I was doing. ... I was at a time in my life that I was contemplating what I was going to do with my life, if I was going to continue or do something different. Then I saw the announcement and thought that this might be something good for me. ... And then I fell in love and then I stayed. [She married her love, and made this city her home.]

All staff members had come to make a change not only their own life's project but in a greater project of social change.

The popular image of San Cristóbal as a site for rebellion has a mixed reception. Using questions that address common expressions of commercialism in tourist markets and tourist's concerns for aspects of authenticity and impact, in Chapter five I investigate the conundrums of revolutionary tourism, and find a similarity in the types of conversations expressed in previous studies of ethnic tourism. I have placed before the reader examples of the opinions of capitalism, and highlighted those times when principles expose the conflicts in this Mexican grassroots organization. As an example, I discussed how, in buying or not buying Zapata t-shirts and Marco and Ramon key chains, participants claim the authority of the revolution. Likewise, Indigenous producers engage in self promotion through autonomous projects which articulate with one of the world's largest transnational capitalist markets—tourism. Whether through strict idealism of “anti-capitalism,” critiquing, or misunderstanding a new capitalist project introduced by the Zapatistas, a mixed reception of commercialism and capitalism surfaces in the context of material and symbolic exchange. A

taboo on the corporate oligarch Coca-Cola seem logical when its former executive, turned president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, is labelled by the EZLN as a major adversary to the political potential of these autonomous goals. But can the healing properties of the product used in serious ceremony be so quickly tossed aside as mere ethnographic curiosity for the sake of making it a symbol of an anti-capitalist project. The question of whether Zapatista communities should continue to sell Coca-Cola products is one illustration of the conflicts that arise from a solidarity movement made up of a large number of “outsiders,” who have their own ideas of what a revolution should sound, look, and taste like.

In Chapter six I raise the question of the role of foreign solidarity tourists acting from within the local setting. I proposed that this mobile community of activists leads to the rise of a particular tour industry attractive to individuals, business, and organizations. Publicized events, like the *encuentros*, are specifically billed as places where foreigners participate in framing the networks. Here, information is exchanged and solidarity meant to be reinforced. Organizations (non-governmental, grassroots, and clandestine) market and promote the experience through such events, and numerous spin-off merchandize and services come from the influx of visitor spending. I also proposed that these zapatourists are influencing members of an international network, what Leyva Solano has called a neo-Zapatista Network. When foreign members enact multiple definitions of Zapatismo it raises questions between solidarity and agency. What role do zapatourists play in the direction and strength of the local and international Zapatista movement? Do Zapatourists bolster or detract from local agency? I attempted to answer such questions through critical observation and conversations with those involved. What Olesen (2005:108) has called “substitution solidarity” was a warning I heard first from Angela. The outsiders might bring needed resources, but also brings outside ideas and systems that may not be well received,

implemented, or translated into the local traditional systems. This was exemplified in Chapter three with the conversion of those first Marxist students from the Mexico City. These contradictions and tensions show the complexities and difficulties the Indigenous movement faces in its drive for autonomy. Do foreign solidarity workers speak in compliance or raise their voice for the morality carried from home? In many ways this issue was mine as I framed my role somewhere between my duties as foreign academic writing and researching, and that of activist participating and working on the ground.

Tarrow and McAdam (2005:142) suggest one of the responses of a movement attempting to broaden itself is to “transform its image and goals... in order to sustain and solidify that support.” Zapatismo has responded as such and is redirected by an ongoing dialectic by multiple players. Such is encompassed in the expression “*preguntando caminamos*” (asking we walk); a principle of searching out a method of radical democracy rather than a vanguard predetermined goal. But, how much is the movement willing to transform its image, its values and its goals to find a collective common ground?

As zapatourists take part in meetings held by Zapatistas, hard questions are asked about the direction and content of the movement. I saw this tension when discussions at the *encuentro* in December 2006-January 2007 raised the subject of abortion. What exists are mixed sentiments of what zapatismo does and is. There is disjuncture between what the Zapatista Women’s Law states and what happens in those same communities under this law. And for the women, this is the ongoing struggle. In Chapter five I mentioned the empty clinic to exemplify a clash between two very different cultures of medicine, with completely different standards of expertise. Will indigenous peoples need to learn Western medical expertise to successfully run the Western clinic? Or will the Western builders of the clinic learn of medicine in this context of the valley Tzeltals. It is more than bricks, mortar and

instruments, when the infrastructure of solidarity shows. If we are to go beyond the limitations of Western aid then the issues are also about education and culture.

Infrastructure can be built relatively quickly, but it is much more difficult to come to grips with the problems of how capital-intensive medicine can be integrated into an autonomous Indigenous culture.

I argue finally, that Zapaturismo has shown us the chasms that exist in communication and ideologies. Simultaneously, I feel it has the potential to lead in demonstrating a strategy for bridging that gap. Taken seriously, and through long-term analysis, this study can prove fruitful in providing more information about these complex multi-layered interactions. I have laid out numerous examples where this is the case and have left it to you, the reader, to formulate some idea of the complexities involved.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1

- 1 Throughout my thesis the terms Indigenous and Indigenous peoples refer to the persons of many nations that live in this area of Chiapas, unless naming of a specific nation is needed. I am aware of other terms used in academics or colloquially (some of which carry discriminatory connotations). I mean no disrespect by choosing these terms.
- 2 John Ralston Saul's (2005) definition of globalization is one that best fits the common usage of the word. He links the word to the naturalized position of the market as a force that moves all other aspects, such as culture, medicine, technologies, and personal relationships.
- 3 A promotional program started in 2001 by the federal and state governments which note the city for its exceptional natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.
- 4 I have used pseudonyms throughout this thesis for all participants in order to protect their identity.

Chapter 2

- 1 Spanish term usually in reference to small plot farmers or peasant class.
- 2 The struggle for land is an issue that comes to the heart of Zapatista rebellion. The confrontation in Atenco was tied in solidarity to the movement started by the organization People's Front in Defence of the Land fighting against the sale of their land for the construction of an airport.
- 3 As militant implies a combative approach, I am careful not to associate violence in describing my own project. I am aware of some criticisms leveled at taking such a stance. 1) Such as the risks involved with assuming a moral high-ground. It is not easy to know what the right choice is, most conflict is not a dramatic encounter; political choices are more complicated (Kupper 1995:424). 2) True acknowledgement of militancy should be restricted to those who are at real risk. And a foreign anthropologist's intervention is limited by many factors. My intent is to use this term with the emotions of civil disobedience and a recognition of my position as *compañera* to the struggle, a term given to me by the people of Zapatista communities, which acknowledges my solidarity (even with outsider status) with a peoples who fight their war against oppression.
- 4 My family history is one of holding political positions with the PRI, a long standing oligarchy ruling party. My "investigations" sometimes became a source of suspicion on the side of the Zapatistas and a source of concern on the side of my family.
- 5 This was and continues to be a problematic description, because participants are not bound into discreet categories.
- 6 Though these two were also "visitors" with no plan to take up permanent residence, they saw themselves more rooted to the area through their work, and I acknowledge their presence as sitting between visitor and local.
- 7 As mentioned above, my consolation is the rise of self produced theorizations. I therefore leave it to the reader to search out those voices.
- 8 *Piqueteros* refers originally to organized groups of unemployed workers in Argentina who, facing the loss of their jobs in the early 1990s, began cutting roads—an action that in Argentina is labelled piquete. Now they are divided in several groups, and have acquired more relevance after the collapse of the national economy in 2001.

Chapter 3

- 1 This is a reference to the invitations put out by the EZLN for all to attend what was billed as an "intergalactic encounters."
- 2 For more detailed readings on the history of the EZLN before and after 1994 consult Harvey 1998, Collier and Quaratiello 1994, Ross 1994 and Gilbreth 1997

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- 3 The Virgin war of 1712, Caste war of Chamula, and numerous other violent engagements have erupted over conflicts of religious and political sovereignty.
 - 4 The cry of Enough! carries the sentiment of “enough without us.”
 - 5 The 1917 constitution applied no specific reference to Indigenous, First Nations, or Aboriginal peoples as gaining specific rights or protection (Womack 1999:8).
 - 6 Faced with a terror of the Indigenous rebellion and the institutionalized reversal of rule and power, liberal lowland ladinos responded to the panic of the highland conservative ladinos and sent an army to quell the revolt. What transpired was a massacre of thousands of Tzotzil and hundreds of ladinos.
 - 7 Quemasantios were anticlerical northerners said to burn the saints from the local village churches.
 - 8 Finqueros and Rancheros of Chiapas organized an independent counter-revolutionary army. Known for their nighttime movements and practice of stealing maiz, they were successful in holding off Carrancista forces and in continuing to “influence local rule” (Higgins 2004:118)
 - 9 Resettlement pattern would show years later in the plural ethnic make up of the Zapatista Army (Ronfeldt et al. 1998:27). Tzeltal communities settled predominately in the canyons of the municipality of Ocosingo. The invitation to settle would be extended years later to their EZLN Tzotzil brothers and sisters after 1994 after some highland communities came under attack from the Mexican army.
 - 10 Tlatelolco Square, 1986, was a deciding moment in the leftist student movements. When a peaceful political action was met with aggression causing many deaths, the left felt the government had betrayed them and their revolutionary principles. Some groups went underground and took a militant stand against the growing repression of speech.
 - 11 Governments sources knew of the FLN members dispatched to the southern reaches of Chiapas as early as 1973, and even led a raid on the camp in 1974 (Gilbreth 1997; Ronfeldt et al. 1998).
 - 12 Conversion was not without its casualties. Many rural Indigenous who turned to Protestantism did so against their community and were cast out, becoming religious refugees in their own state.
 - 13 All interviews conducted in Spanish have been translated for the ease of the reader. If specific words add meaning to the discussion they are included with translation.
 - 14 The council was established in November 1995, with twelve spiritual and religious leaders, among them the Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia.
 - 15 A "netwar" is described as a coordinated conflict involving multi-organizational networks working from a system of information exchange.
 - 16 This has more to do with the perception of the tourist as being unwilling to spend the money that locals perceive that they carry.

Chapter 4

- 1 Located in a converted colonial house, this space now is home to Zapatista cooperatives (such as Nail Ch'en), stores for community products (Nemi Zapata), as well as Zapatista support organizations. www.tierradentro.org.mx.
- 2 A Spanish language skill for older indigenous women is not as common as it is with men. Men are more bilingual because of the interactions in Spanish as the language of business.
- 3 A common nickname for Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is Delegato Zero
- 4 Secretaria de Turismo of Chiapas (2004) lists the Ruta Culturas Vivas as one of the principle attractions for the state. Listing Tsotsil and Tzeltal peoples as “los mayas actuales” (the actual Maya) and endorses a population “orgullosos descendientes de la cultura maya” (proudly descendent from the Maya culture).

Chapter 6

- 1 A newly popularized style of music that combines Latin American salsa and Caribbean reggae.

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- 2 *Fresa* (strawberry) is a specifically a Mexican slang referring to a stereotype of a social economic class—rich, young, and spoiled. The type is usually attached to a feminine gender.
- 3 Certain countries' citizens, like Canada, do not required a tourist visa, but enter with a tourist card granting visitation rights for up to 180 days, on officer's discretion at the point of entrance.
- 4 The Chiapas Harvard Project brought academics and graduate students to the area under the administration of Evon Z. Vogt.

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Appendix 1: List of Key Participants

Alejandro- A resettled *Chilango* (resident of Mexico City), Alejandro now co-owns and operates a popular bar/lounge. In his late thirties, with a young family, his vitality merges well with a laid-back staff and the clientele the establishment attracts. Though his main love is music, his political preference shows through the decor. However, politics for Alejandro is more than the standard Cuban flag pinned up in solidarity, it is also about fair labour practices.

Alex- A labour movement activist from the United States of America. His travel was directly inspired by his involvement with California's farm workers. In his mid twenties, the smoothed-face, university educated, American wore the experience of travel like a badge of honour. His self directed studies into leftist movements and critical thinking meant he could recount travel tales peppered with detailed analysis, and self reflection.

Angela- A resident and local business owner, Angela was one of the tour operators who specifically dealt with political tours to Chiapas. She kept strong contacts and had invaluable knowledge about the legal process of deportation and how to avoid it. In her mid fifties, Angela has spent years organizing tours from Europe and has travelled herself to Italy.

Bren- Despite his recent arrival in the city, he engaged quickly into his volunteer work at the Human Rights NGO, Frayba, and in the street life of the city, though he was careful to stay clear of the more commercial aspects of a tourist city.

Cristina- A university student from Spain, she was interested in the situation in Chiapas from the perspective that it was a noteworthy event in the history of Mexico. Her stay in San Cristobal was facilitated by acting as a volunteer for Frayba.

Elena- A passionate Fidelista, Elena took a one year leave of absence from her work at a northern American College to trip to the places she considered having a leftist revolution at work in the Americas. Though she was traveling independently, and with a flexible itinerary, her ambitions journey was something she had been planning for some time.

Janez- A professor in his mid-thirties, Janez was also involved with the Slovenia solidarity group Dos Jet! Accompanied by Sabina, they had come to deliver funds that their organization had raised back home. However, the closure of Zapatista communities during red alert meant that the money would remain undelivered and that their travel plans had to change.

Joan- Thirty-five years old and working as a photographer. Though she had been to Mexico on numerous other occasions on assignment, this project took her further south. Her candid speech and eagerness to share made her an invaluable participant.

Margot- A seasoned actor in international human rights activism. Her knowledgeable background with social movement theory and history made her well suited for the job, and her passion for the subject added a nervous excitement to her speech.

Maranella- Leaving Belgium and a teaching position, at the age of thirty-five, Maranella committed herself to making a new living in Mexico; her experience with tourism was her way to do that. Though her love of European chocolates, crepes, and espressos were never far from her lists of things to indulge in, she integrated comfortably to the daily chaos of Mexico, and her interest to know more about this place drew her to working with independent media and Zapatista/local politics.

Nui- This Basque national has been in Mexico for over eight months on an expired visa. Nui has made no plans to leave anytime soon, but intends to make his way to the Yucatan on the money he earns from selling t-shirts silk-screened with revolutionary slogans and images of Maya deities.

The Doña- Like many great elder teachers of the oral tradition, the Doña started off our interview with a story. Her propensity to teach has earned her further reputation as the “one to see” about Maya medicine and healing practices, in addition to her family’s name as leaders in leftist labour activism. Originally from San Cristobal, she left to live in self imposed exile for some years in Mexico City. A strict vegetarian, she lives a thoroughly political life, down to the politics of food. Her posada, the main, but modest, source of income is a favourite hospice for *campesinistas*.

Javier and Anna- As a couple, both Anna and Javier have experience with travelling on humanitarian grounds. One more trip to the Americas and this time they hoped to continue to “travel responsibly” and “to know a Mexico more real, more distinct.” For them, cultural exchange was a primary goal.

Uma- Her fair skin, and white blond hair, as well as her strong accented Spanish announced her “foreign” status. However, this is a deceiving title for she has been a local resident of the city, working with a human rights NGO since 2001.