

## THE POLITICS OF (NOT) BEING TOURABLE

THE POLITICS OF (NOT) BEING TOURABLE:  
LANDSCAPES, WORKERS, AND THE PRODUCTION OF TOURISTIC MOBILITY

By

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the importance of tourism and tourability to contemporary global politics. I argue that the global movement of tourists (declared by the UN World Tourism Organization as a ‘right to tour’) is made possible in part through what I call the production of tourability – the capacity of particular places, bodies, or experiences to be toured and to be seen as worthy of touring. Rather than a natural result of difference, tourability is a political process that involves contestations over what and who counts, how space should be organized, and how and what histories are told. I show that touristic movement is based on a specifically neoliberal mobility – a form of free movement that lays claim to ‘borderlessness’ and infinite access along lines eerily familiar to those claimed by contemporary capital – and use this to argue that the work of making places tourable is also designed in specific ways to facilitate this kind of movement. Thus, being tourable is part of the transnational politics of contemporary governance and is useful to constructing the boundaries of (in)appropriate movement.

At the same time, the continual expansion of tourism across the Global South has given ‘being tourable’ important economic and *political* stakes for life, subjectivity, and land. To understand the interweaving of these stakes and the transnational mobility being produced, I examine two sites where tourability has been thrown into question by those whose work produces it. The first is situated at the tri-border region of the Colombian Amazon on the shores between Brazil and Peru that has, in recent years, seen a boom of tourism development and visitors. This boom has largely operated on the neoliberal designs of movement and contemporary development that promote access to tourable places as an enactment of freedom. Against this backdrop, a story circulating in early 2011 highlighted the decision by members of Nazaret, an indigenous community along the river, to refuse tourists and tour companies entry. Taking up this small and messy act, I interrogate around this refusal to examine how touristic mobility is being made (im)possible in this small corner of the Amazon. The second site is a tour designed by the indigenous *Hñäb’ña* community of El Alberto, Mexico, that takes participants on a simulated border-crossing to experience, as so many of these community members have, what it is like to cross the U.S.-Mexico border as an undocumented migrant. Impressive, provocative, complex, and controversial, this tour throws into question both how mobilities are addressed within touristic sites and the creative potential of those who are toured to make use of its practices in ways that further other aims. Using concepts of work, landscapes, circulation, and friction, I explore both production and refusal to elaborate on the transnational politics of tourism as neither a panacea nor as an afterthought, but as a sticky, messy, and significant part of global political life.

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“Mobility creates the possibility of rights, yet rights are always claimed through struggle or through mobilization.”

-Claudia Aradau, Jef Huysmans, & Vicki Squire, “Act of European Citizenship”, 2010

“There is such a thing as ‘tourist rights’, but no one marches for them. And why should they? They’d just look like a bunch of fucking tourists.”

-American Stranger, 2008

## **Introduction: The Politics of (Not) Being Tourable**

This dissertation is about the importance of tourability to contemporary global politics. Specifically I look at how being (or not being) tourable shapes and makes (im)possible the global mobility of tourists. I use tourability as a grounding concept in this project to refer to the process of creating, working to perform or maintain, and governing both the capacity to tour particular sites and the worthiness of certain people, places, or experiences to be toured. If we know that not every place or every difference in the world can be (or is seen as worthy or acceptable to be) toured, what is the process through which these choices are made, by whom, and towards what ends? As the starting point for this dissertation, my research thus begins, empirically, by asking how tourability in a given place is produced. I say empirically because this is not a project about tourability in general, or that can address all the multiple ways people tour and are toured; rather, I use a detailed study of two sites, one in Mexico and the other in Colombia, to show the contested process of making places tourable while also suggesting what an analysis of mobility from the perspective of tourability might allow us to uncover. If, likewise, we know that for people to be able to travel, to be able to exercise their ‘right to tour’, there have to be places to visit, does the way these places are made tourable matter to the way tourists move, the aims towards which that movement is constructed, and the way experiences shape the selves travellers mold? What I hope to show is that tourability does indeed matter to these things. Seen in this way tourability can be politicized as a concept and a vantage point from which to understand the political economy of contemporary mobilities.

The central argument I make in this dissertation is that tourability – the capacity of particular places, bodies, or experiences, to be toured and to be seen as worthy of touring – is necessary to the declaration of a right to tour and to the mobility of tourists who travel the globe in search of fulfilling experiences and encounters with difference. These tourist rights are about what I call neoliberal mobility – a form of free movement that lays claim to borderlessness and infinite access along lines eerily familiar to those claimed by contemporary capital. Yet tourability, rather than the natural result of difference, is a political process that involves contestations over what and who counts, how space should be organized, how and what histories are told. Tourability is only produced in the messy and local encounters that decide or contest these questions; yet, my argument is that these encounters can be read as part of the transnational politics of mobility because it is the production of tourability that makes possible the movement of tourists. The tourist rights that no one marches for are thus secured in other ways: through a common discourse of freedom and cultural exchange, through the privileging of certain types of economic activity

over others, and through the work of being tourable. Tourist rights can also be made difficult by the actions, desires, and projects of those who are toured (or those who might refuse to be toured). By developing these arguments through a study of two touristic sites in the Global South (where the importance and impact of tourism have been and are increasingly dramatic), this dissertation exposes the transnational politics of tourability through both its governance within a neoliberal political-economy and the sometimes surprising things people do when presented with being toured.

In 2001 the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN WTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was adopted by the General Assembly. This document explicitly recognized touring as a human right and proposed ways to facilitate the extension of this right globally. To do so, however, the remainder of the document deals not with tourists but rather with how the production of tourable places can facilitate making touring accessible to all. This raises the question of what kind of mobility the production of tourability makes possible. Research on the production of touristic sites has long noted how these sites are caught up in circulations of particular representations of otherness, or nationalistic desires to present place and history in ways that facilitate certain images of who, what, or where the 'nation' or 'the community' is (Van den Berghe & Ochoa, 2000; Brunner, 2005; Wood, 1998). Others have explored how being tourable demands certain bodies at work, and the exclusion of others to fit both aesthetic expectations and demands for certain kinds of labour docility and flexibility (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008; Minca, 2010; Gregory, 2007). In a different vein, research on the movement of tourists has shown how that movement is structured, or culturally formed, making different value demands in and of the sites visited, whether it be for authenticity, luxury, hedonistic pleasure, or life-altering experience (Brown, 2013; Favero, 2007; Hollished, 2004; Urry, 2011). However, beyond these aims of tourability, I argue that the UN WTO has been particularly successful at embedding touring as a human right within the political-economic framework of market capitalism, and the development of neoliberal subjects. I elaborate this argument in Chapter 1. For now, in switching from the tourist to the toured in a declaration of touristic rights, the Global Code of Ethics reveals how the possibility to tour, and, more importantly, the possibility to declare touring a 'right', mobilizes the processes and politics of making places tourable to the political goals of what I call neoliberal mobility. In other words, the struggles in which the right to tour is claimed are the struggles of making places tourable. As the opening quotation suggests, this may be one of the main reasons no one has to march for tourist rights.

From this re-imagining of tourability and the claims to a right to tour it becomes possible to ask how and under what circumstances might the way tourability is produced challenge, resist, or make alternate claims about touristic movement. Throughout this dissertation, I make use of Anna Tsing's concept of friction to understand how transnational and global connectivity is made through what she calls 'encounters' (2005). This concept is particularly useful for drawing attention to the less than smooth ways global designs, projects, or concepts move through different places and times. For Tsing, friction is everywhere and is part of both resistance to *and* the realization of global processes. I also follow Mario Blaser (2004, p. 35) in suggesting that resistance does not necessarily have to



involve direct opposition to something, but rather actions that make the fulfillment of certain projects difficult, while potentially bringing others into possibility. In my argument, this is revealed in moments or alternatives that make the smooth enactment of touristic (as neoliberal) mobility and its attendant version of development difficult, though maybe not impossible. Unlike Tsing's concept of friction, which I detail more in subsequent chapters, Blaser's use of resistance refers to specific forms of friction that impede the realization of dominating projects. Through my study of tourism in El Alberto, Mexico and Leitica, Colombia, I show how refusing to be toured, or creating different ways to be tourable does more than challenge the way space and people are represented – they affect the possibilities for how tourists move, or are able to claim movement. (Not) being tourable is thus a key site in the transnational politics of global touristic movement.

I unpack the concept of tourability by looking at landscapes and workers. By landscapes, I mean both the aesthetic construction of a site and the human-non-human relations that Anna Tsing argues make up a landscape as a social-natural space (2005). I take a broad approach to defining workers as those who are part of tourable landscapes and produce the relations, experiences, and aesthetics of touristic movement. While these workers are also those who are 'toured', work becomes an important element of the way tourability exists in my particular sites of research. I originally adopted the term toured from Van den Berghe's (1994) term 'touree'; however, the language of work is important for recognizing the active participation in the creative production, and contestation, of touristic sites. These workers and the landscapes that form and are formed by their work, which more often than not refuse to be contained in a single 'place', are central to my analysis of tourability.

However, these workers and landscapes are also embedded in contemporary neoliberal politics. As I show throughout this dissertation, the production of tourability and the subjectivities and mobilities it facilitates are based in and reproductive of neoliberal governance, emphasizing the values of the market and entrepreneurial society. While some have argued that contemporary forms of tourism develop and provide space for the enactment of entrepreneurial subjectivity (Vrasti, 2012), I think it is also worth asking how this extends through contemporary forms of tourability and touristic work. The very development narratives through which tourism is promoted and structured, particularly in the Global South, are also embedded in the extractivist and the free-market politics of neoliberalism. In this context, and as I show through my research sites, the mobilities of tourists, largely privileged as part of neoliberal flows, run up against and interact with other, often more restricted mobilities, such as those of migrants, as well as challenges to dominant and extractivist modes of development.

### **Sites and Questions: Producing tourability at intersecting mobilities**

Although I sometimes speak about tourism in general, this dissertation takes aim more specifically at forms of tourism often seen as 'better' or more ethical. At the same time, I resist the trend in tourism studies to create lists and taxonomies of forms of touring to study (see Franklin & Crang, 2001) not only because this ignores continuities between them, but also because this privileges the details of new industry development over a political analysis

of tourism in contemporary global life. These ‘better’ forms of touring, called in various circles alternative, pro-poor, community-based, voluntourism, or ethical tourism (see Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Palacios, 2010; Shen et al., 2008; Hall, 2007), all share desires to make the encounter between tourist and toured more meaningful and less exploitative while spreading the benefits of tourism directly to communities in the Global South. In many ways, these forms of tourism development indicate a very positive move, one that makes it increasingly untenable to treat those who are toured as merely objects upon which development and the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry, 1991) fall. Yet these projects for making tourism better are also caught up in other projects and aims that make them, like all attempts at ‘ethical’ or ‘socially responsible’ market activities, dubious, complicated, or reproducing of power dynamics between those who help and those who are helped (see Vrasti, 2012; Lisle, 2008; Baptista, 2012).

There is something fruitful, however, in the ways these projects for improving the lives of the toured interact with attempt at making touring experiences (and tourists) better. The ground for exposing and analysing what it is that tourism does in the production of contemporary mobility is opened up in the interaction between improvement schemes that target the landscapes and subjectivities of the toured and projects for making tourists more conscientious participants in global cosmopolitanism or neoliberal capitalism. This intersection also makes it less possible to make simple statements about tourism as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ development. Instead, it reveals the softer and more subtle ways tourism is made out as the only available option for so many, and at the same time why those of us who travel are driven to care so much about these alternatives that conceal much of their violence in the idea that it is through this ‘better’ consumption that ‘we’ access freedom and our better selves.

I also suggest that the intersections between governance, development, and subjectivity are revealed in their most problematic ways in touristic sites within the Global South. Clearly tourism matters across a variety of places and contexts, and numerically the majority of tourism still ‘takes place’ so to speak between developed countries (Urry, 2011). As I explore in Chapter 2, this distinction between developed and developing is also limited for not taking account of those in affluent societies who cannot tour, and those in the Global South who are increasingly able and encouraged to tour as an enactment of global rights. Tourism remains, though, an attractive strategy for both large scale development and community-based projects and, in both these cases, has enormous impacts on the lives and livelihoods of people involved (Telfer, 2012). This is because tourism is frequently the only option available in contexts where neoliberal restructuring has decimated rural livelihoods. It is also because tourism often works alongside other projects for making land available for resource extraction, privatization, or the commodification of nature, efforts that are often more pronounced, and often have more devastating impacts because of weaker social policies and greater state subordination, in areas of the Global South.

It was for these reasons that I initially chose to focus my research in Latin America, as one region within broader North-South relations with which I was already familiar, both as an academic and personally. Although all regional identifications are porous and

heterogeneous, this region does have common experiences with neoliberalization, particularly in the form of privatization and free trade. As a region interlaced with colonial relations, the position and political claims of indigenous peoples, who are very often key players in the type of tourism I look at, have also been crucial to the forms of governance that have emerged. For many states, including Mexico and Colombia, recognition of multicultural or pluri-ethnic national identity within constitutional frameworks has been part of techniques to govern many of the claims for difference, land, and self-determination made by indigenous inhabitants. As I explain in Chapter 1, tourism development and the valorization of the quintessential ‘indigenous community’ as a tourable object, is enmeshed in these governance strategies.

Latin America is not unique here. Similar strategies for developing land and resources and mobilizing indigenous peoples in this process as tourable exist in many parts of Canada and elsewhere. It is also certainly the case that the Global South is not territorially bounded or circumscribed by state borders; it is a series of relations of subordination, exploitation, resistance, and multiplicity that is characterized by forms of power and expressions of difference that extend across the globe without being globally homogeneous. These relations exist in place and in context, and while many require a researcher like me to travel far from my own home, many more are much closer to my lived reality in the city where I work and the land from which I eat. Thus where I use the Global South to identify a particular concern for what tourism development does, I am not pointing to a particular territory or national identity, but rather to places where relations of power and domination are most profoundly felt. At the same time, I recognize Global South as a term that is as much political and strategic as it is theoretical, and thus I was motivated in this project to be mindful of the ongoing global political-economic subordination between North and South that makes life and possibility in places like Mexico and Colombia so different from North America or Europe.

The first part of my research journey started in 2007 when I heard a radio documentary about a tourism project in central Mexico called the *Caminata Nocturna*.<sup>1</sup> Run by member of the indigenous community of El Alberto, this project simulates an undocumented border crossing for visitors. It captured my attention as a curious mixture of adventure and political messaging that was unlike the ethnic-based tourism I was researching at the time. Although people I spoke to about it seemed perplexed by the ethics of turning something like migration in to a tourable experience, my first inclination was to wonder if this was the kind of project that could transform all the questions that I found so stagnant in the research on ethnic and ethical touring. It was not until February 2012, after I and my inclinations about the project had changed a great deal, that I finally had the opportunity to travel to the Valle del Mezquital in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo where the community of El Alberto is located and participate in this tour.

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<sup>1</sup> All non-English words, excluding the names of places, are italicized.

The *Caminata Nocturna* takes visitors on a night-time trek through the hills and riverbanks of the community to simulate crossing the U.S.-Mexico border as an undocumented migrant. Tourists, mostly from urban areas of Mexico, but also a smattering of curious international tourists and others like myself who have come to ask about how this project came to be, are led by guides through the dark, encountering border patrol guards, *cholos* (young gang-members who rob migrants during the crossing), drug-traffickers, and others as we scale our way over cliffs and down to the river in order to make it 'to the other side'. In the quiet hills of Hidalgo, the violence of the border zone is recreated and represented to tourists who struggle for hours to make it through the night, and, maybe, figure out what they are doing here in this small place. In the end, we are returned to the Gran Cañón, a large canyon cut into the hills that hosts campers and people staying in the rustic cabins, to watch the spectacle of torches. This marks the end of our journey that night (though the beginning, we are told, of a much longer journey) with each torch marking the hillside as a symbol of migrants who have not made it. All of this, the guides and other performers, the props (patrol cars and sirens, army fatigues worn by the border patrol), the firecrackers used to sound like gun-shots, the torches lit by young men who then come back across the canyon using the zip lines that tourists play with during the day, all is created, performed, and organized by the community members of El Alberto. And all of it, more than anything else, is based on their own experiences and stories of crossing the border, as the majority of them have, *de mojado*.

From when I first heard about this project to the time of my research, the *Caminata* stayed with me, appearing in the many mutations of key questions I wanted to ask about tourism. Ultimately, it was from thinking about the *Caminata* that I drew the central questions of this dissertation: how is tourability produced? What kinds of mobilities does this facilitate? What ways are these challenged by those who are toured? Because the *Caminata* seemed to be suggesting a way that touristic mobility might be facilitated differently, with very different political ends than the kind of superficial cosmopolitanism celebrated in ethnic and ethical touring, I wondered how the process of making something like undocumented migration tourable might reshape thinking about tourism and tourability.

Although the *Caminata* is a project created by the members of El Alberto, the Valle del Mezquital is also a place of comings and goings that embodies the transnational locality that makes a project like the *Caminata* possible. Though members of El Alberto are staunchly autonomous and avoid involving themselves in regional politics (at least not to the extent other communities in the region do), their lives, choices, and actions are shaped by a broader context. The landscapes that shape their lives extend beyond the Valle to the border region where they wait with others as migrants to cross through the desert and to the U.S. cities where they work, make homes, raise families, and organize cultural and religious groups while maintaining the ties of belonging that bind them with El Alberto. Thus an aim of this project was to understand El Alberto within this context, as a transnational place and the *Caminata* as a production that crosses borders.

In contrast, the choice of my second research site came quite suddenly from news stories I happened upon in 2011 about a decision by the community of Nazaret in the

Colombian Amazon to restrict access by tourists (see *The Guardian*, March 25, 2011; *The Daily Mail*, June 3, 2011). Again, my attention was piqued, this time not because it was such an unusual story, but because I thought about what it might mean for my question about how those who are toured shape the possibilities for global touristic movement. I travelled to Leticia, a small town deep in the Amazon border region between Colombia, Brazil, and Peru in June 2012. Leticia, the capital of the Colombian department of Amazonas, was a strange place to find myself, especially coming as I was from the arid hills of central Mexico. Nazaret is located just outside the city centre of Leticia which has become a key hub for tourists in recent years. Having been drawn to the region by stories of a blockade, what I found was also a complex picture of how tourism development was interacting with other mobilities. The tourism in Leticia hardly rises to the same level of creativity as the project in El Alberto, being as it is based largely on standard representations of the jungle, the river, animals, and indigenous people as cultural 'artefacts' of the forest. Leticia is, however, situated on a triple-border, one of several in South America that make up nodes in networks transporting goods and people. It has also been the site of multiple extractive projects that sought resources for transnational industries (most famously rubber, but also wood and fish, and today drugs and tourism). As a border region and as Colombia's only claim to the Amazon River, Leticia also remains a site of intervention in the name of state-building and securitization, while still being ignored and invisible in most images of Colombia. Drawn by stories of Nazaret's blockade, I ultimately chose to research in Leticia because, like El Alberto, it is a place full of comings and goings and marked by multiple borders and crossings.

The differences between these two sites mattered throughout the research process, and continue to matter in the analysis presented here. However, I situate them together both for what their differences can reveal about the production of tourability and for what they can tell us about how those who are toured intervene in the mobility of tourists. This comparison is useful because it reflects the multiple, indeterminate, and often surprising ways agency is revealed. Although this is not a comparative project in the traditional sense, putting the sites together, as I do most specifically in Chapters 5 and 6, was important not because they address all the same questions, but for the way their comparison reveals the politics and frictions of both sites as entwined in similar circulations of forms of governance, discourses of development, and people that have profound effects on the livelihoods available to those involved.

That said, the situation in Nazaret opened up its own question in the form of an ethical and political conundrum about access. How was I, as a research and also a tourist, going to research the challenge posed to touristic mobility by the closure of this site without disregarding the agency and authority of that very challenge by demanding (and expecting) access to the community? It was here that the language of 'attuning oneself' became of most value (Stewart, 1996; Squire, 2013). To attune oneself to something is not to know it completely, it is not to replicate the grasping narrative of touring that seeks more and further access to places and people; rather, attuning oneself is an intentional process of approaching something in a way that reveals certain knowledge about it, but always recognizes that 'it' cannot be grasped as a knowable thing. Thus rather than ask what the blockade *is* as a

political action, my question became what *effect* does inaccessibility, and the way in which this inaccessibility *appears*, have on touristic mobility.

Though these questions remained guides as I went into the field, I did not approach my research sites only looking for the things that fit within the frameworks of these questions. Rather, I spent time in each site developing a sense of place, trying to develop a feeling of dynamics and relationships that could guide me in uncovering the salient aspects of my questions for each place. In the spirit of ethnographic inquiry, I approached knowing that I did not already know what would matter in each site and knowing that what mattered in one place might not in another. For example, I did not know that understanding the circulation of representations about the *Caminata* would be so important to understanding both its production and performance and my own position as a researcher. Being accountable to this means that at times in my own writing I purposefully decentred the exciting narrative of this tour by displacing it for more detailed, and maybe seemingly mundane, accounts of the production of the landscape through which the tour is possible and which, I think, can be easily sidelined. Likewise, I did not realize that inaccessibility would present itself not only in the context of my decision about how to approach Nazaret, but also in my ultimately more encompassing decision not to participate in any tours to regional communities. I also did not know the way work, and conceptualizations of both work and service would shape the way engagement and contestations with tourability would play out in both sites. These are all themes that have become crucial parts of the analysis in this dissertation.

Before turning to a more detailed account of what my research looked like and an outline for the dissertation, I first want to situate this project within growing literature in International Relations (IR) interested in the study of tourism and the critical reframing of IR as a discipline towards mobility and the everyday.

### **Studying Tourism in International Relations**

Although my study draws from multiple disciplines and sources, it is set within an International Relations framework and, ultimately, makes most of its contribution to this field. Curiously, and unlike disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, or cultural studies, there is very little written within the disciplinary confines of International Relations, or even International Development Studies, about tourism (for some exceptions see below and Dunn, 2004; Germann Molz, 2005). This is fairly surprising given both how large the tourism industry is and how much tourism relies on inter-state relations, border and passport processes, and systems of government travel warnings. Often taken as merely an item on a list of processes that characterize ‘globalization’, tourism tends to be ignored despite being so intimately connected to diplomatic and economic relations. However, there have been attempts in recent years to ‘bring tourism in’ to the study of IR, fueled in part by increased emphasis on the everyday practices of global politics (see Enloe, 2004; Shapiro, 2008; Beier 2011) and the global political economy (Best & Paterson, 2010; Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007; Davies, 2006). This focus on the everyday draws attention to the way seemingly mundane or small activities actually constitute the relations or structures that are taken as ‘global’ or as sovereign power. Similarly, interest in agency as a concept and tool through which people

do this constitutive work, but also challenge, resist, reshape, or make difficult these projects (see Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Johnson, 2013; Hall, 2010; McNevin, 2007) has also provided grounding for studying such seemingly trivial or less-than-serious activities such as touring or being toured. Much like these other ‘new’ interests, the rise of ethnography as an accepted, though also contestable, methodology within IR (see Vrasti, 2008) has similarly pulled from other places to provide ways of inquiring about the world of global politics without the need to centre the state, the rational subject, or the economy as something not deeply embedded in sociality and politics. I owe a great deal to these literatures, not least to some of my disagreements with where they end up coming down, but the point here is not to delve into an exhaustive methodological debate. Rather, the themes, particularly the political economy of the everyday, are the grounding I have found useful for making sense of where this study sits.

Though not looking at tourism specifically, critical International Relations has benefitted from a particular study of the role of travellogues in constructing the modern conception of the world, national sovereignty, and otherness (see Beier, 2006; Guillaume, 2011; Shaw, 2008).<sup>2</sup> This is especially true of the travellogues written by Europeans of the ‘new world’ that symbolized the hallmarks of colonial encounter and presaged the expropriations of land, exploitation of labour, and colonization of bodies that was to follow. Travel, in the form of colonialism and exploration has come to shape a great deal of modern and sovereign identity, especially through opposition to its various others. The Americas is hardly unique here, Said (1978) wrote extensively about how this process of othering occurred through texts on the Middle East or Orient. Arguably, though, it was on the ground of the Americas that contemporary world order and sovereignty were fully formed, providing the basis for narratives of both the noble savage and the primitive who did not work the land and thus had no claim to it or to rights (see Mignolo, 1995).

Thus travel has also provided a metaphorical and conceptual basis for rethinking starting points, methodologies, and power within the study and practice of IR. Scholars like Inayatullah and Blaney (2003) have argued for travelling away from the confines of Eurocentric IR as a way to grapple with the intercultural production of global politics, but also reflect back on the making of these identities through the colonial and imperial productions of difference (see also Sajed, 2013; Tickner, 2003; Agathangelou & Ling 2009). This also reflects a growing concern in strands of critical IR, particularly within citizenship and migration studies, for using mobility rather than the stability of the state or the citizen as a starting point. The sense that now, people are on the move in ways that break the statist categories of IR analysis (without necessarily fully breaking sovereign power), has prompted scholars to ask about the ‘transversal spaces’ created in movement, or on which the state imposes supposed order, and has inspired a reinvigorated sense of the political and its possibilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Much of this work has been inspired by Tvetzen Todorov’s (1984) *The Conquest of America: The Question of the other* and Mary Louise Pratt’s (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*.

Soguk and Whitehall's essay is a central example of this move in which they argue to theorize IR in a way "so that migrants are understood to be central architects of multiple worlds instead of dangerous exceptions to one that is reified by some scholars of IR" (1999, p. 676). The emphasis on mobility has helped reframe questions of citizenship as something claimed by people on the move rather than granted to stable subjects in the confines of the state, an approach that also claims the political as the space of these acts rather than the sovereignty of states (Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Aradau & Huysmans, 2009; McNevin, 2013; Isin, 2008). While this literature remains mostly concerned with irregular or restricted forms of mobility, rather than that of tourists, the attention to rethinking global power and the political through mobility has provided important theoretical ground for taking up tourism through something other than the language of economic development (GDP, export economies) or state sovereignty. That is, I think a key question for a global political analysis of tourism is to ask what touristic *mobility* does in the way it is formed, the conditions of its possibility, and the ends towards which it is aimed.

Interest in travelogues has been taken up most explicitly in IR by Debbie Lisle (2006), whose work is important for setting many of the linkages made in this dissertation between the study of tourable places and transnational movement. Lisle argues that travel narratives are shaped by and also shape discourses of global relations and ways of understanding and rendering the world intelligible (2006). By challenging the claim that these things are only secondary to the 'big' political issues of IR, Lisle shows how, by actively producing discursive backdrops through which the world is understood and decisions are made (about who or what is valued, dangerous, other), travel narratives contribute to the 'world order' of these 'bigger' issues (ibid., p. 260-1). In a less compelling analysis of how travel shapes global political order and governing ideas of international relations, Julie Reeves has studied the histories of travel as cultural exchange in the formation of key international movements for peace (particularly as precursors to UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in which the UN WTO is housed) (2004). However, in doing so, she replicates the fatal dichotomy of much tourism research, as well as a dichotomy within much globalization literature between those on the move and those who 'stay in place'. In this schema, she holds that the 'tourist' and the 'native' represent two competing visions of culture and that the tourist is the one with access to the cosmopolitan sensibilities she celebrates (ibid.). As I argue below, this ignores not only how touristic mobility intersects with other mobile subjects, but also how the process of putting some 'in place' is in fact a requirement of the kind of mobility tourists are able to access. Understanding touristic movement through tourability as a condition of possibility allows us to see how multiple *transnational* subjectivities are being made in the production of touristic movement, all with different access to mobility but also with the possibilities to act politically in this circulation.

Lisle, whose work extends in multiple ways to think critically about tourism in global politics, has also studied connections between tourism and security in the war on terror (2013) and, with Bulley, the construction of hospitality as a city virtue for hosting the Olympics (2012). As I argue in this dissertation, the embedding of tourism within the political economic framework of capitalism is crucial, particularly as it comes to define the 'right to tour' as a particular kind of movement that represents freedom as the freedom of



the market. For Lisle, in the context of how touristic sites are made ‘safe’ from terrorism, she notes that being tourable also has the connotation of being worthy of protection from terrorism by being part of the non-terrorist cosmopolitan world of freedom (2013). Importantly, this security discourse remains enmeshed in capitalist economic order as the value of freedom that is secured is still largely derived from the free market values of neoliberalism.

Finally, Wanda Vrasti’s (2012) analysis of volunteer tourism has done a great deal to expand IR scholars’ understanding of the role of tourism in contemporary neoliberal governance. Key to her analysis is reposing inquiry into tourism away from the behaviour of tourists (the motivations, desires, or outcomes for individual volunteer tourists – or voluntourists), to asking what voluntourism *is* to the contemporary economy (ibid., p. 5). She argues that the value of voluntourism comes from the way it produces and reproduces the subjects necessary for the entrepreneurial economy of contemporary neoliberalism. Voluntourism, as a way of travelling whose form and practices do little to ‘help the other’, does a great deal to create the market-based and marketable self (ibid.). Using a mixture of Foucaultian archeology and ethnography, she looks at how this form of touring is tied up in contemporary forms of governmentality, thus circulating the material practices that make voluntourists into entrepreneurial subjects and volunteer development projects into sites of governmental production. In doing so, she links privileged mobility to the characteristics celebrated by the current economic order and makes the case that tourism can tell us something important about how that order is reproduced.

As Cynthia Enloe wrote in 1989,

tourism is not just about escaping work and drizzle; it is about power, increasingly internationalized power. That tourism is not discussed as seriously by conventional political commentators as oil or weaponry may tell us more about the ideological construction of ‘seriousness’ than about the politics of tourism. (p. 40)

“On the Beach”, a chapter in her ground-breaking book *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* set a tone for asking important questions about the effects of international travel, the role of women as producers and consumers of tourism, the histories of masculinity and femininity in travel, and the power relations of imperialism that made certain places exotically tourable and necessarily dependent on a tourism economy. Along with Malcolm Crick’s essay (also published in 1989), “Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences”, it provides some of the most fruitful analytical and conceptual groundwork for politicizing both tourism as a practice and the study of tourism. That little remains published within the realm of International Relations about tourism as such is likely an effect of this continuing lack of seriousness attached to the topic. Yet, it is also an effect of something neither Enloe nor Crick saw in 1989: the rise of tourism studies as a discipline of its own. I argue that this latter development has seriously hampered political analysis of tourism and made Enloe’s plea for taking tourism seriously *in IR* as important today, almost 30 years later.

Crang and Franklin (2001) argue that one of the key problems in contemporary tourism studies, which now includes university departments, dedicated journals, conferences, and many other trappings of academic disciplining, is its generally uncritical focus on the

industry itself as a problem to be analysed and reformed (see also Pritchard et al., 2007). Thus much tourism scholarship today sees its role as providing tools for the industry to manage itself better, from the less than appealing management literature that suggests how tourism employees can be monitored while at work, to even the critical reflections on ethical and pro-poor tourism that present ways these can be reformed. There are exceptions, including Raoul Bianchi's sophisticated political-economic analyses of tourism (2009) and, with Stephenson, his analysis of contemporary structures of inequality in citizenship and mobility (2013, and 2014). Others include Mosedale's edited collection on the political-economy of tourism (2011) and earlier theorizing about tourism in Kaur & Hutnyk (1997) and Adler (1989). However, the problem is no longer, as Crick identified, that tourism research seems incidental (tourism is certainly not understudied), but rather that the disciplining of tourism studies towards industry objectives or the liberal cosmopolitan mandates of UNESCO and the UN WTO leave little room for critical analysis of the relations of power, governing structures, political-economic imperatives, and acts of resistance, contestation, or uncertainty that challenge these.

It is here that I think a serious critical undertaking in global politics of the study of tourism could provide an important and necessary remedy for at least some of the problems created by the disciplining of tourism studies. Despite its general absence from critical IR, the conceptual and methodological frameworks above, among others, provide space for thinking about the role of tourism in contemporary global life. The general absence of larger political and political-economic questions about tourism in most tourism studies literature reveals the importance of placing these practices within the structures of global order and the negotiations or resistances to that order. As one example, political-economic analysis requires situating the practice of tourism, even in its alternative forms, within contemporary articulations of capitalism and their technocratization and depoliticization of collective life. As long as dominant analysis of tourism refuses to take the question of why it is possible, desirable, or acceptable to tour at all as a serious avenue for critical inquiry, as long as the majority of this analysis sees its main function to make the industry work better, as long as saying 'no' to tourism remains largely excluded as a political and empirical question, then I think tourism studies will continue to fail to provide the insights that will actually allow it to be taken seriously. What I aim to contribute here is a politicization of tourism within a transnational framework that builds on and I hope will continue to build ways for IR to take tourism seriously for the many things it tells us about contemporary global politics and life.

### **Methodologies and Methods: The perspective of tourability**

My research in Ixmiquilpan-El Alberto took place over 12 weeks from February to April 2012. During that time I spoke at length with over 40 people including community members (both people working in the park and others not directly involved), government officials, and tourists. In total I conducted 18 semi-formal interviews with 21 people as well as many more less structured extended informal conversations. With only a few exceptions, all my interviews and conversations were conducted in Spanish, as were all the tours I observed, and most of the documents I used. I participated in four *Caminatas*, three times as a tourist-participant, and once on a 'ride-along' with the border-patrol. Although I did not record any of the tours, I made extensive field notes following each recounting both what I

had experienced and how I had observed fellow tourists and community participants. I also spent many hours observing general park operations and talking with people. This included an extended stay in April during Semana Santa (Holy Week). I made trips to Pachuca, the state capital, where I spoke with government officials<sup>3</sup> and, both there and in Mexico City, spent time looking through relevant documents and policy material from SEDESOL, SECTUR<sup>4</sup>, and the *Comision Nacional de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas* (CDI). Because of my decision to live in Ixmiquilpan rather than El Alberto itself, and because of connections I made with other researchers in the area, I also had more opportunity to make visits to other communities in the municipality and develop a better understanding of the regional context of migration and tourism development.

Given a commitment to thinking about the everyday, my research methods in both sites rapidly moved away from documenting specifically quantifiable ‘sources’ of research to a focus on passing conversations, the way people engaged with me, and patterns and rhythms of our conversations (which could transmit as much as any particular words). In the process of figuring out how to do research in El Alberto, messiness and ‘attuning to mess’ (Squire, 2013) became crucial. Another key commitment of my research was to centre the analysis on those who are toured, more specifically on the production of their tourability. Turning away from the tourist was, for me, about understanding those who are toured as global actors, but it also resulted in particular decisions on my part not to actively seek out tourists as interview subjects. In El Alberto none of my interviews are with tourists although I did have more informal conversations with four fellow participants on the *Caminata*. This was partly a result of circumstance and partly an active decision because distinguishing space for tourist interviews was difficult and the large groups, as well as the fact that many visitors were still in high school, made approaching people challenging. However, as a tourist-participant on various *Caminatas*, I use my observation of others to reflect on tourist responses to the experience. In addition, I include an analysis of over 50 blog entries and articles published about the *Caminata* (in English, Spanish, and French) as a way of accessing touristic responses. I believe that the stories tourists would tell in the context of these posts and articles are not all that different from what would be said in an interview within a touristic space. Ultimately, though, it is the words and work of those who are toured from which I draw my analysis.

Following my research in Mexico, I travelled to Colombia, where I stayed from June to August 2012. In Leticia, I followed a similar approach, speaking to tourism operators, guides, government officials, local activists and NGO workers, and researchers in the region studying tourism. I spoke to over 30 people, conducting 15 semi-formal interviews with 18 people, and many other less formal conversations. In both Bogotá and Leticia I visited

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<sup>3</sup> All government officials I spoke to during my research in both Mexico and Colombia were either public servants or political appointees. Although I made these people aware that I was a student and explained my project, these conversations remained as informal conversations rather than semi-formal interviews.

<sup>4</sup> *Secretaria de Desarrollo Social* (Social Development Secretariat), and *Secretaria de Turismo* (Tourism Secretariat), respectively.

government agencies<sup>5</sup>, and read documents related to tourism policy, development and the region. I visited and spoke with people in Puerto Nariño, the municipality up river from Leticia that also receives many tourists, and spent a week in Iquitos, Peru, a 12 hour boat ride away, that is an entry point into the tourism circuit along the Amazon. As with El Alberto, this was important for me as a way to situate my site within the region and within the movement of people and things that characterize it. Again, I found speaking to tourists a challenging proposition in a place where most visitors were very transient and spread out, though I did have the opportunity to observe tourists in various settings. I also made use of blogs, websites, news articles and other publication sources to develop my analysis of the region's representation. However, my limited interaction with tourists was also the result of choosing not to participate in organized tours myself, something I discuss more below.

All interviews were semi-structured and open-ended meaning that I came to them with a set of questions pertaining to my research, but allowed the interview to be shaped by those participating. Questions generally focused on experiences with tourism, major changes people had seen, and what they thought of their work. However, these questions changed frequently and on the spot as things were brought up, or specific dynamics were revealed, and very often I did not have to ask much to elicit lengthy responses. I also invited participants to ask me questions which often prompted longer conversations and exchanges. Unless otherwise noted, all interviews were conducted in Spanish and then transcribed by me. Consent was obtained verbally after I explained my research project, the aims of my study, and on the understanding that people would not be identified by name or employer (with some noted exceptions). This process was also followed for conversations with government officials and NGO workers, though as I note it was difficult to do this in the 'right order' for other conversations. Though I did ask people at several points how they would like to be identified, most were not overly concerned as long as their names were not used. I use pseudonyms for those who participated in interviews, but I also made participants aware of the limits of concealing identities, particularly in small places where people know each other well. Most participants seemed comfortable with this, though a few did refuse my requests for an interview.

Although the methods and writing employed in this dissertation have ethnographic overtones, this study is not an ethnography of touristic sites. Rather, it is a political study of the circulation of touristic movement as a rights claim and as a practice through these sites where it encounters frictions, resistance, reimagining, and easy access. I privilege using multiple sites, and multiple levels for each sites' analysis along with comparisons not towards the aims of traditional theory building, but rather because I see this as a way to show the tensions and differences existing in this circulation, and to highlight very different types of responses. My aim is similar to Johnson's (2013, p. 67) whose study of borders and migration seeks to centre irregular migrants to give a different account of political subjectivity (see also McNevin, 2007; Hall, 2010). In the context of my research, I seek to

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<sup>5</sup> Including MinCIT, *Ministerio de Comercio, Industria, y Turismo*, MinAMBIENTE, *Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible*, and DAFEC, *Departamento Administrativo de Fomento Ecoturístico y Cultural*

situate the centre of analysis on the toured rather than the tourists specifically to understand those who are toured as important parts of politics of transnational mobility.

However, unlike Johnson who uses ethnographic practice towards understanding migration through the narratives of those ‘on the ground’ (ibid.), my attention in this study is not on subjectivities or narratives of the people I encountered, but rather on the contours and dynamics of tourability as a desire, a demand, a livelihood, a part of mundane life, and a powerful way global orders are reproduced. Similarly, I find helpful Vrasti’s argument that refusing to study ‘ourselves’ (as those who hold certain privileges) for the benefit of studying marginalized ‘others’ risks obscuring power and the silent centre against which the marginalized are drawn (2012, p. 23). While her study of voluntourism turns attention to the production of bourgeois subjects, I think there is also a way to analyse the mobility of these privileged subjectivities by turning as well to other conditions of their possibility. This is not because we need to understand the “impact on host communities” of this movement (ibid., p. 25), but because the work of the hosts is also productive of the subjectivities of bourgeois, cosmopolitan travellers and intervenes in and makes this production messy. At the same time, this by no means makes all these actors equal, and the inequality of their relations is also crucial to the analysis.

In other words, what I call here the perspective of tourability sits somewhere in between these aims to study ‘down’ or ‘up’. This is not to challenge these other projects as incomplete or naively assume that I can ‘get it all right’. My purpose is different, as all research purposes are, and, in my case, asks what we can learn about how touristic mobility works, what its costs are, and its political imagination from the vantage point of asking how things are made tourable rather than asking how people tour or how people experience the arrival of tourists.<sup>6</sup>

This perspective is also about refusing the language of periphery and core, or centre and margins, through which so much scholarship in IR and of transnationalism is written. Both El Alberto and Leticia are transnational places through which important movements take place, not least that of tourists. My aim here is precisely to discount this notion of the peripheral or marginal status of the toured by showing how privileged positions or claims do not have central homes, but rather are produced through multiple interactions including in ostensibly very local sites as they are peripheralized and made tourable. By refusing to see a ‘better tourism’ as the way forwards, I am also suggesting that it is not the tourist who holds all the promise or potential for critical political action. This does not mean that I think those who are toured automatically do – I do not want to romanticize the actions and claims of the

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<sup>6</sup> This methodological perspective has an important implication for my understanding of politics. Where I describe those who are toured as acting politically, I tend to focus on political contestation as it is visible to transnational mobility, or within the confines of dominant understandings of power and action. I do not theorize the political through the ontologies or cosmologies of the indigenous peoples involved and their understandings of how their own life projects are articulated and actualized – an absence that presents a limitation as well as a provocation for future research. This is especially true for my analysis of work and the refusal to be toured in Chapter 6. I am particularly grateful to Cristina Rojas for drawing my attention to this limitation in her provocative questions.

toured (and indeed, I am careful to be as honest towards their complexities as possible). Rather, I think it is worth asking what the politics of tourability can do, what are its potentialities, at the same time as asking what role(s) it serves. In the end, it may be that a politics of tourability does not lead us to a place for radical change, but here I agree with Vraști that if critical analysis is only about what has radical potential, we are going to miss out on a number of ways power instantiates and insinuates its way in our lives and practices.

Even as it is full of difficulties, power imbalances, and problems of translation research with people with whom you may not otherwise ever interact is an enlivening process. I remember leaving every interview I conducted with a sense of surprise at something that had been said. I was also struck at points where my position of power or authority was not as clear-cut as the simple analysis of researcher-researched dichotomy might suggest. The haphazard became a crucial part of my research process. Some of my best contacts in Leticia came one afternoon when I accidentally locked myself out of my hotel room. Others in Ixmiquilpan came from being pulled into the networks of researchers whose projects barely resembled my own. Yet in another instance an uncomfortable encounter forced me to rethink my whole approach in one place and re-create my circle of contacts around a new set of people. These and other kinds of everyday encounters with haphazard life reveal in themselves how complex the world of global politics is and the difficult analytical task of scholars to find ways to channel complexity into something that takes our understanding somewhere. This sense of “attuning to mess” as an activity that involves what Vicki Squire characterizes as an “intimate” relationship between theory and empirics (2013, p. 38), is something that became an important part of the analysis in this dissertation.

My research in El Alberto was both facilitated in surprising ways and immensely difficult for me. On arrival, I visited the park office to meet the administrator whom I had contacted a couple weeks before. She asked me questions about my work and my intentions and I was momentarily enlivened by the thought of being able to have conversations with people there about collaboration, about the possible usefulness of my work, and all the other great aims I had set out with for doing critical and engaged research. It was later that day that the panic set in as I became more aware of how I as a researcher was fitting into a much larger network of researchers, academics, journalists, government workers, and interested tourists who had all come to El Alberto to ‘learn about the *Caminata*’. As the days wore on that initial visit, I became aware that I was being shuttled through interviews with the ‘key people’ I needed to talk to, who played different roles on the *Caminata* and could tell me the story of its inception that I later came to learn was only one story among many. In the panic I became dismayed at the slim possibility it seemed to make meaningful connections and do politically engaged research. Over the course of the three months I lived in Ixmiquilpan, this feeling changed, and my relationships to people in the community developed and, in some cases, did become more involved. However, I was always unable to shake the weight of the people who had come before me. As these relationships changed I realized that I had shifted from being seen as a journalist to being an anthropologist. And because both journalists and anthropologists had been there before, in significant numbers, people knew exactly what to do with me in both roles (far better than I knew what to do with myself).

Though I eschewed both roles, and do not think of myself as either a journalist or an anthropologist, this continued to frame the way people understood and related to me.

On reflection, trying to cope with the frustration and anxiety of my research experience I realized what had been offered to me by the people of El Alberto. Through all the difficulties and discomforts of my research, I had been offered reflection on the transnational production of a tourable and a researchable site and a glimpse at the active and politically savvy role played by these people in the circulation of their own project. Although conversations centred far more on migration than they did on tourism, since everyone before me was more interested in this aspect, what I was offered was not insight into the struggles and experiences of migrants (though I certainly learned more about this), but rather into the struggles, frictions, and politics of making the migrant journey tourable. Among other things, they gave me concrete insight into the politics of telling stories, because of the effects story telling about the *Caminata* has had (something I detail in Chapter 5). These insights, which I hope to relay here in a way that remains as honest and responsive as possible, were only possible through the frustration of those long days and nights in El Alberto, and I am deeply grateful for them. They are also insights that have allowed me to think about my theorization as a response to messiness.

Research time in El Alberto, like other kinds of work time, is very punctuated and spontaneous. Many of my interviews and conversations were not scheduled, but rather happened spontaneously as people sitting by the park entrance, the store, or the grassy area felt like talking. For this reason, many of my interviews were not recorded, and some of my conversations went on for hours without the benefit of even a notepad or pen, meaning that I developed strategies for remembering what was said and frantically writing it out as soon as I could. Because of this I use fewer direct or lengthy quotations from El Alberto. As my research became so based on watching what people were doing, passing conversations, or interrupted interviews with people coming and going throughout, and the ‘formal interview’ became something of an exception, my analysis also shifting to questioning how the research itself was happening and what this set of relationships, interactions, and intermingling of work (both theirs and mine) said about the politics of mobility I was investigating.

The messiness of the research process appears in this dissertation in the distinction I make between what I call personal interviews and personal conversations. As people in El Alberto, who all knew who I was and why I was there, would approach me or just strike up a conversation in which they would often give me very personal details or want to talk at length about ‘what I wanted to know’, I struggled with how I would use this information. The Research Ethics Board process of how I had intended to ‘set up’ interviews became quite cumbersome to the way people wanted to interact with me. It became part of my practice then, to distinguish in my notes what had come from an informal interaction such as this and what had come from an interview, and approach using the former with care (i.e. I rarely quote directly from these conversations). This less exacting relationship between me and the people I spoke to translated into my experience in Leticia, though I had more opportunity to go through the formal process of setting up interviews. For my work in Leticia, I use personal conversations almost exclusively for conversations I had with other

researchers in the area, with most government officials (in both Leticia and Mexico), and with a few of my ongoing contacts with whom I spoke on multiple occasions outside an interview context.

In addition, I also came away from my experience in El Alberto with a different take on accountability in research than I had started with. I had come to ‘the field’ with the work of activist scholarship in my head that seeks to conduct research in ways connected to and in solidarity with the political struggles where it takes place, and actively at work to decolonize these methods in practice (Smith, 1999). In El Alberto I found that people did not want my participation in their struggles, and that they recognized the superficiality of these desires when expressed by researchers who have travelled thousands of miles from their own homes and contexts to which they will return. Rather than say I was an ally through my research, I have to acknowledge that I was not granted the status of ally by those with whom I spoke. My accountability now lies in my text, in what I write and what I use their insights for and towards.

In comparison to El Alberto, research in Leticia seemed rather banal. Although things were still haphazard, spontaneous, and full of observation, going to visit tour agencies and talking to operators and others involved in the industry was a much more straightforward proposition. This means I probably thought less about my own research in circulation, and that I was less worried about the politics of my own presence as I was interacting with people working around me. This also probably means I was less concerned about not being an ally. Yet I did end up making an important methodological choice early on in my stay not to participate in any guided tours of communities, a choice that impacted both the practicality of my study and my theorizing.

On arrival in Leticia I became immediately aware of the almost depressingly predictable modes of touring in the region where stereotypical representations of indigenous people living ‘in the jungle’ and stories of how guides and tourists would treat (and usually under-pay) people in these communities for the work they did were ubiquitous. Reading and listening to people talk about the problems with these representations and unequal practices, I began to see participating in the tours as participating in a system of exploitation that I did not feel could be justified by taking a critical perspective on them. Put simply, my ability to make a critical analysis of representations of indigenous communities did not outweigh the damage that I saw going on these tours doing. I realized that my role could be to ask something different. Thus I became far more intentional in my decision to focus less on how tourism represents in ways that could be done better and towards how access (as a ‘right’, or as a development imperative) circulates, is made possible, and mandates certain organizations of work, space, and mobility. Ultimately this remains a political decision based mostly in how I felt I could be responsive to the situation I had temporarily placed myself in and how I could respond to the ways being a tourist affects my methods and the political commitments of this project.

The banality of tourism in Leticia did, however, give me a place to start. More so than El Alberto, the situation in Leticia reveals the troubling neoliberal politics of contemporary



tourism development and the effects of claims to mobility that articulate tourism as a right. For this reason, my dissertation actually reverses the order of my research by beginning in the middle with my arrival in Leticia and my exposition of the situation there.

*Notes about terminology*

Before moving on to an overview of the dissertation itself, a couple notes about terminology are necessary. Although it meant that at times I was lost in discussions, or my thoughts or questions became lost in translation, one advantage I gained from doing research in a language not my own was being forced to learn words for what they meant to the people using them, rather than my own ingrained understanding. I have tried in the course of writing to stay as close to these meanings as I could, and as I could translate them through the realities of both sites. Any errors or convolutions in translation are my own.

That said, I make use of the term blockade to refer to the action in Nazaret preventing access by tourists. As I look at below, the actual terms of what this means, when it happened, how it is interpreted or even conceptualized are much messier. I initially used the term blockade as I saw it appear in news articles about the situation; however, in interviews or conversations, this was not a term others used. However, I keep the term because of its suggestion of very deliberate action while at the same time being wary of the way it can imply aggressiveness or, even, importance to that action. Whether this decision by people in Nazaret matters at all is an open question as are the different ways of conceptualizing it.

Finally, I use the term ‘touristic’ in this dissertation often in places where the word tourist might seem more appropriate. This is a deliberate choice on my part, though it also reflects common usage in current tourism studies scholarship. This move is important for me as it signals shifting away from the tourist herself as either the centre of study or as the object of critique towards the systems, patterns, assemblages, or circulations of touristic movement as something that captures both tourists and those who are toured. While tourists are certainly not without culpability in certain circumstances, and are certainly not without agency, I am not as interested in how bad or good tourists might affect the places they visit, and more in what problems, or possibilities, are created through touristic mobility. An example of the importance of this shift is thinking about the relationship between environmental degradation and tourism. One effect of the rise of alternative eco-touring, which was seen as a solution to the environmental destruction of mass tourism resorts, is that access is increasingly being pushed into more fragile and remote ecosystems as pure nature or unsullied environments (see Butcher, 2003; Bianchi, 2009). Because tourism development is usually seen as an obvious choice, attention is more often placed on how the practices of these eco-tourists can be made more responsible rather than the politics of the extensions of access. To only focus on managing the bad behaviour of tourists through the development of eco-tourism misses the way that (infinite) access as a condition of possibility of *touristic* movement shapes the lives and livelihoods of eco-systems and people. I also use the term touristic because I am not interested in understanding the problem through questions of guilt or culpability that tourists should or should not feel. The question for me is not to be indignant about what tourists do, but rather about what tourism does and what it makes possible.

## Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapters 1 and 2 I set out a framework for studying tourability as transnational politics and revealing the concept of freedom articulated through touristic mobility as part of neoliberal governance. In the following chapters I make use of what I have developed here to analyse the production of these two tourable sites. Much of the theoretical grounding for this analysis comes from Foucault's work on governmentality and its use by Nikolas Rose (1999), but this is also tempered by analysis of the continued importance of land and sovereignty in contemporary governance. I take up the conceptual language of Anna Tsing (2005) in her study of global connectivity (especially her concepts of friction and landscapes) to highlight ways to read the intricacies of how tourability is made within these governance projects. I also emphasize key insights from post-development studies scholars who have made use of Foucault's work but point to important methodological and empirical challenges for using this in the context of studying both the Global South and development politics in particular (see Ferguson, 2009; Blaser, 2009; Li, 2007).

Chapters 3 and 4 analyse the specifics of making tourability through my research sites. In Chapter 3, I look at how the Colombian Amazon is being made tourable in Leticia and in the context of the tri-border region. I argue that shifts in the landscape of conservation and the subjects of entrepreneurial development work to facilitate touristic movement in the region, while attempts to intervene in the terms of that movement make use of this context and reveal important ways those who are toured act transnationally. In Chapter 4, I shift the discussion from the facilitation of neoliberal touristic movement to the mobilization of touristic movement towards other ends, specifically in the development of the *Caminata Nocturna* as a project to make migrant experiences tourable. Like those contending with tourism development in Leticia, members of El Alberto are attempting to cope with shifts in the global economy, the politics of borders and security that create unequal access to mobility, and changes in tourism and development governance, but their responses reveal other opportunities opened by their situation.

Chapters 5 and 6 shift the focus away from the politics of the sites themselves by putting them together to analyse the politics of circulation. In Chapter 5, I look at a different aspect of the production of tourability: the circulation of travelling narratives. Specifically, I compare ways the *Caminata Nocturna* circulates in transnational media, tourist blogs, and other sources to the way stories of how community members of Nazaret rejected tourism circulated in some international media and within some of the tourism workers in the region. I use this to look at how concepts of tourability and mobility travel but also encounter frictions. Finally, in Chapter 6 I look at how the circulations of the global economy organize and are organized by the messy encounters in both sites. I examine how the labour of the toured is organized to facilitate touristic movement and produce life in the forest as a profitable resource. I also examine how different acts of working (or not working) and different understandings of service can challenge the political-economic circulations of tourability and pose difficulties for neoliberal touristic mobility.

## Chapter 1: A Transnational Politics of Tourability: Neoliberal mobility and market rationality in contemporary tourism

There is a sense that touring, as one way of crossing borders, provides the possibility for enacting freedom. This is the refrain heard from travel agencies, connoisseurs, and enthusiasts all over the world. There is also a sense, drawn from the experience of travelling or being travelled to, that this freedom that is not accessible to all is also related to enactments of power. Yet despite disdain often afforded ‘tourists’, by both travellers and non-travellers alike, the ability to tour remains highly valued, to the extent that it has been declared a global ‘right’ by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN WTO). What exactly this means and what it requires to be actualized is less clear, especially living as we do at a time when people’s movements are being restricted *or* facilitated in such complex and differentiated ways. Touring has increasingly become an activity that more people do each year, as travel that caters to more identities and tastes is marketed to more and more locations.<sup>7</sup> Yet, an effect of this that may go unremarked in a focus on the increasing practice of touring is that more and more people are, as a result, being toured. The ‘been-seens’, as they have been called, are everywhere (Wood, 1998). Studies of the lives and livelihoods of the ‘been-seens’ are nothing new and have helped elucidate their struggles to get by or their negotiations of how tourists have access to their space. But in a world where tourism is one of the few global industries to show continued growth since 2008, where facilitating tourism by reducing visa restrictions in a context where these restrictions are only being amplified for others on the move is a top priority, and where touring continues to be seen as the best way to achieve cultural understanding while being the actualization of freedom, I think it is worth asking what the relationship is between the lives and work of the toured and the *movement* of tourists. Put simply, what role do the ‘been-seens’ have in making possible the framing of touristic movement as a global right and what does claiming that right imply for their lives and work?

To answer these questions requires reframing tourability, those conditions, work, and performances that make it both possible and worth touring a given place, as part of a transnational rather than a local politics. I use the term transnational because it encompasses processes and relations far beyond the largely state and institution based politics of ‘international’. Like ‘global’, transnational refers to multiple border crossings and contexts, but unlike ‘global’ it does so without making what connects these into all-encompassing or singular processes. The transnational is both mobile and situated. Unlike the term global, which can have spatial connotations, the term transnational specifically foregrounds movement, interaction, and exchange.<sup>8</sup> What I present in this chapter is a way of reading the production of tourability as an often difficult encounter in specific contexts with the claims

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<sup>7</sup> For example: resort-tourism, cruise-tourism, alternative tourism, eco-ethnic tourism, city-tourism, dark-tourism, food-tourism, voluntourism, diaspora-tourism, sport-tourism, rural-tourism, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Many scholars use the global in ways quite similar to the way I use transnational (including Anna Tsing (2005), Himadeep Muppidi (2004), Walter Dignolo (2000) and others). However, I find that the term transnational captures these features better while not carrying much of the baggage that comes with the term global.

of touristic movement (claims to a right to tour, and also claims to a particular kind of development), and as an encounter through which the very possibility (and sometimes the impossibility) of transnational touristic movement is made. Thus rather than see the touristic site as a locale in which transnational actors (tourists, tour companies) operate, I propose seeing them as sites through which the global claims of these actors (to freedom through a particular kind of movement, a borderless world for capital and tourists, or development through market rationality) are produced. The touristic site, and tourability, thus becomes central to transnational touristic mobility rather than the end point to which that mobility is extended.

Along with a framework for reading tourability as transnational politics, this chapter and the next also analyse the articulation of freedom found in claims to touristic movement. Touring as freedom taps into particularly modern notions of freedom as mobility and the absence of restriction, yet is also related to neoliberalism as a specific form of government that governs *through* freedom (Rose, 1999). In this chapter I show how the freedom to cross borders, itself a claim that extends well beyond the arts of neoliberalism, is being specifically mobilized to govern both the conduct of those who access touring (or desire this access), and how touristic sites are produced to facilitate this freedom.

As I noted in the introduction, my analysis of tourism focuses most specifically on what are called ‘alternative’ forms of travel and touring. This focus is motivated by the ways community-based tourism is currently being promoted as a strategy for development in many parts of the Global South, the way it is seen as an answer to earlier critiques of mass tourism, and how it ostensibly provides a more just or more responsible way of touring (thereby providing a more just form of touristic movement). Voluntourism,<sup>9</sup> in particular, has captured much of this alternative attention. While there is much that I value in these projects, I remain sceptical of their intentions and effects and thus use my focus here to take a critical view of these alternative modes of touring for how they replicate and even advance a neoliberal politics of mobility.

I begin this chapter by situating the argument theoretically in discussions of freedom, tourability, governance, and development. Through this chapter and the next I lay out the framework for my analysis of the specific ways power operates in producing tourability (and touristic movement). In this first chapter, I build this framework through analysis of specific aspects of global tourism governance, especially the UN WTO, to illustrate their embedding in market rationality and neoliberal visions of borders and movement. The aim of this analysis is to show how freedom and touristic mobility are being defined through a particular

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<sup>9</sup> An amalgamation of the words volunteer and tourism, voluntourism developed as a popular alternative form of tourism in the first decade of this century. It emphasizes combining volunteer work, usually in small communities, in the Global South with travelling to the region. Briefly, its popularity grew as a means to allow tourists to ‘give back’ to the places they were travelling to; yet, as Vrasti (2012) notes, a key development in voluntourism is its use by participants on cv’s to make them more hireable. Although voluntourism is most often run by specific companies as a ‘package’ that tourists purchase, newer editions of travel guides, like Lonely Planet, have begun including suggestions for places people can volunteer as a way to ‘engage more’ and ‘give back’.

political-economic framework, one based on expansion and exploitation, but also on the engagement of subjects (at least certain subjects) in their own government. I expand on this latter point through an analysis of current pushes to include ‘participation’ as a key feature of contemporary alternative tourism development. In the following chapter I shift to looking at the neoliberal visions of borders and movement exemplified in the ‘borderless travel vision’ created and promoted by the UN WTO. I use this to begin looking at the messy encounters of producing tourability by revealing some not so smooth ways the UN WTO mandates translate in a place like Leticia. Importantly, tourability also entrenches and produces hierarchies both between tourists and toured and between those who are appropriately tourable and those who are not. In this second chapter I also trouble some of the standard analyses of power in tourism as a relationship of inequality between the Global North and the Global South by looking at how ‘domestic tourists’ in countries like Mexico and Colombia are being produced as subjects of the same freedom and yet caught in reproductions of global inequality. Finally, I begin a more detailed look at the relationship between tourability and the enactment and articulation of this freedom. Tourability, I argue, is only produced in messy encounters, through contestations over what counts and what does not, what should be seen and how work should be organized. In particular I use the example of the specific racializations of work and service that feature prominently in how tourable space is made and contested in Leticia. As a whole, these chapters introduce and set out the context for the politics of transnational mobility and tourism development in which people in Leticia, Colombia and El Alberto, Mexico are currently working.

### **Market Rationality and Tourism Development**

As a pervasive and expansive industry, tourism has been critiqued for its neo-colonial endeavours to occupy and control spaces scripted as ‘traditional’ or ‘other’ and for tapping into and redeploying our desires to explore, discover, and escape regardless of material consequences. Yet tourism has also been noted for its profound impacts on particularly modern forms of mobility (from the material developments of mobility, to the particularly modern sense of autonomy derived from travel, to novel experience of place, space, and time).<sup>10</sup> Indeed the global right to tour, officially articulated by the UN WTO but manifested repeatedly in popular discourse, emphasizes the right to free and unobstructed (touristic) movement and the tourist as empowered to choose from an array of destinations those that best fit with her/his self-actualization – what I shorthand as a neoliberal mobility of touring. This particular freedom to discover oneself through a plethora of choices is both highly deceptive and crucial to how power operates through tourism practices.

Freedom and choice are foundational to the contemporary logic of touring. The embedding of choice and self-discovery in the production of very specific subjectivities is present in a wide variety of contemporary touring. As Vrsti has noted, new modes of touring such as voluntourism can be read as strategies that intervene to produce tourists as entrepreneurial selves (selves better able to live in ways appropriate to market logic) (2010).

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<sup>10</sup> For example, see Urry, John. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Adler, J. (1989). Travel as performed art. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94(6), 1366-91; Augé, Marc. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London: Verso.

Here potential tourists are offered freedom to ‘work’ on themselves by working through their vacations in a way that obscures the governmental logic of producing the new subjects of neoliberal capitalism (socially conscious CEOs, voluntourists, among the others she highlights). At the same time, as Cornelissen argues, although tourists today are able to travel to farther and more remote places, what the ‘other’ looks like and how tourable places are presented for visitors has become increasingly standardized (2005). Similarly, Ioannides and Debbage have argued that a “premium on flexible” forms of organization, labour, and consumption in the context of the tourism industries has helped resolved some of the tensions between increasing interest in individually catered (non-touristy) forms of travel and the necessarily mass forms of production still involved (1997). The travel enterprise GAP Adventures (along with a plethora of other travel companies and promotions) presents a telling example here in their organization of flexible, individually stylized tours all neatly identified by style, service level, and physical difficulty, and their self-promotion as a ‘travel lifestyle experience and concept store’ rather than a travel/tourism agency. On this understanding, the contemporary tourist does not go out to visit the empire in a fit of patriotic fervour as in at least some forms of mass travel of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Enloe, 1989), but rather searches to fulfill the self (as spiritual being, as entrepreneur, as socially conscious consumer), flexible to the ever changing needs of that self or to the ever changing fashions of new, more self-fulfilling, or less travelled alternatives.

Yet, as has been shown, contemporary articulations of freedom through choice, consumption, and the market do not stand in opposition to regulation, but are historically situated in specific contemporary forms of governing that make use of a particular type of free subjectivity (Rose, 1999; Foucault, 1991 [1978]). Using Foucault’s study of governmentality, Nikolas Rose outlines a particular kind of free subject “compatible with the liberal arts of rule” which, in contemporary neoliberal governance (and in contrast to other forms of liberalism) is founded on autonomy and choice (1999, p. 63). Techniques of government, he argues, operate at a more subtle register than forms of domination by providing the tools for subjects to regulate themselves and providing the skills to self-actualize in appropriate ways through choice (especially through choices about consumption, but also through choices about self-discovery) (ibid.). Operating in spheres of life far removed from official ‘power’ (in the form of the state), government as ‘the conduct of conduct’ creates individuals who both value freedom as choice and are “*obliged to be free*” by being obliged to choose and have those choices seen as “realizations of the attributes of the choosing person” (ibid., p. 87, emphasis in original).

The emphasis on the creation of subjects or subjectivities that are suited to and able to enact this government upon themselves is a crucial distinction in Foucault’s analysis of neoliberalism from earlier forms of liberalism as *laissez-faire* (Magnusson, 2011, p. 95). While the latter focused on making the market free, and created a ‘mass society’ by extension, the former focuses on the “enterprise society” as one in which each individual is the free subject of their own actualization through the market (ibid.). Importantly, Rose distinguishes this freedom “as a formula of power” from the freedom enacted in resistance to power which, as he rightly points out, provides a powerful basis for saying ‘no’ to forms of rule (1999, p. 65). Crucial to contemporary government is thus how it attempts to capture and deploy an

articulation of freedom in the very governing process that often subordinates or obscures other statements of freedom. I suggest this subordination is crucial to understanding how freedom and choice are deployed within contemporary tourism both as means of conducting movement and as signals of ‘development’. While other freedoms are manifested through touristic movement, such as claims to political solidarity that have been made possible in particular moments, the freedom expressed through dominant forms of touring is deeply embedded in these neoliberal arts of government.

Thus, while I do not think that claims to touristic mobility can all be captured by neoliberalism (as the rationalization of conduct to the principles of market economics), I do agree with scholars like Rose that neoliberalism’s design of freedom is both powerful and pervasive in contemporary government. Beyond the freedom to choose as consumers, a particular style of freedom has come, I argue, to designate how movement itself is an expression of freedom and how those who move in these ways can be actualized. I refer to this as neoliberal touristic mobility. The conduct of our movement, as autonomous individuals whose freedom of mobility is defined negatively as the absence of restriction, is the positive content of its government. As Rose argues, government is deliberate action upon actions; “to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed. To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one’s own objectives” (1999, p. 4). The very freedom that is presupposed, the freedom to move, is what is acted upon in order to enable that movement to participate in the contemporary market-economy and the socially conscious and culturally tolerant skills it has incorporated. The claim to travel is transformed into the individual capacity to choose the style of movement and difference that can actualize this consumptive freedom so characteristic of market society. Although Rose and others who follow his framework have tended to focus attention on advanced liberal states as a geographically bounded region (i.e. the ‘West’, or North America and Western Europe), Rose himself only refers to this form of government as ‘advanced liberal’ (ibid., p. 84) which does not automatically imply its territorialisation. This is important because, as I look at in Chapter 2, similar techniques of governing touristic freedom are prominent features of ‘domestic’ tourism policies in places like Mexico and Colombia, linking these tourists to the same global processes of governing mobility through the conduct of touring. This is done especially along the lines of linking development to freedom, and specifically freedom to the freedom to move (as a tourist).

Making use of techniques of neoliberal governance, contemporary tourism development is written through the political-economic language of market rationality that evokes a borderless world for capital (and tourists). As studies of governmentality show, market rationality is a mode of governing political questions in terms of management and administration based on market-driven standards such as efficiency, productivity, and flexibility. It is a way of governing human life, “a governmentality that relies on market knowledge and calculations for a politics of subjection and subject-making that continually places in question the political existence of modern human beings” (Ong, 2006, p. 13). This rationality is historical and is the effect of strategies “to intervene, whether in thought, or in reality, upon a set of messy, local, regional, practical, political and other struggles in order to rationalize them according to a certain principle” (Rose, 1999). In the case of tourism, this

means the principles of the free market and the autonomous individual who is a free subject of that market. In this section I argue that the right to tour deploys such strategies in its attempt to capture desires for free movement around the world (a political claim that is much more profound than its neoliberal articulation would have it). At the same time, as with any technique of government, the right to tour is itself mobile – it exists in the time and space of its particular articulations and thus we can use the ‘right to tour’ as another way into the contentious politics that defy the smooth fluidity of neoliberal desires.

Touristic mobility is situated within a specifically liberalizing international governance structure made up of institutions such as the UN WTO, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and the various priorities and agreements made about tourism as one of the key concerns of the General Agreement on the Trade of Services (GATS). Both the UN WTO and the WTTC (the former of which has both state and private members, the latter only private/corporate members by invitation) adhere strictly to policies of liberalization such as private partnerships and reduction in tariffs (Hall, 2007). The UN WTO, by making most of its money off consultancies and project management rather than membership fees, also has a distinct interest in the promotion and expansion of tourism development (ibid.) that makes it much more an interested party rather than a governing or regulatory organization. In this context, market rationality filters into international mandates around tourism, such as UNESCO’s World Heritage designation that is increasingly seen as a ‘brand’ whose integrity and efficacy can be ‘managed’ through highly selective assessment processes (see Ryan & Silvantrö, 2009).

The declarations of the UN WTO hold some of the best examples for how economic rationality governs the political aims of tourism development. In a UN WTO commissioned policy paper on tourism and the goals of the G20<sup>11</sup>, Ian Goldin notes that beyond its positive impact on infrastructure and business, tourism “is also an increasing element in tax policy with visitors and domestic travellers representing important revenue sources and because visitors are not voters it represents a potential revenue source with a less obvious political downside” (2010, p. 17). Here it is not just important that tourists are capitalized on for tax revenue (how would that not be the case), but that the underlying feature of touristic movement is asserted as an economic effect, and an economic rationality for increasing access, that denies and also seeks to *actively* exclude any other motivations or rationalities for this movement (or possibilities for denying it). Governed by the principles of the market, tourism also becomes governed by its utility to the market which gives it its value and renders it a technical problem of management.

However, market rationality does not ‘step out’ of social and political tensions; as an art of government it attempts to rationalize and remedy these through the logics of market-based relations and strategies to ‘improve’ the ability of autonomous subjects of neoliberal

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<sup>11</sup> The UN WTO and the WTTC are increasingly putting pressure on the G20 to make tourism a priority for development goals. In this vein, the group launched the T.20 initiative which “is a Members driven Initiative born on the sidelines of the UN WTO General Assembly of 2009. It aims to promote the value of tourism as a driver of job creation, economic growth and development within the G20 process and advocate for policies which are supportive of tourism growth” (<http://t20.UNWTO.org/en>).



governance to exercise their freedom to choose. In this vein, Goldin also suggests that given the current economic crisis in the Global North, graduates in the North who are unable to find work can go work in ‘poorer countries’ in the South for a year in the tourism sector to then return to guaranteed positions (internships) in the North – a so-called ‘gap-and-trade’ programme (2010). As he suggests of these graduates who are unable to find work (and thus present a political problem in developed countries), “their knowledge, enthusiasm, eco-consciousness, vitality and skills...would be a massive boon to the nascent tourism sectors in the world’s poorest countries” (ibid., p. 32). Displacing other forms of knowledge or relationships to nature, we have a clear sense of the appropriate skills and sensibilities of making tourable spaces that also entrenches the mobility rights of those in the Global North to alleviate political-economic tension (an ironic twist on labour mobility under contemporary capitalism). So, for example, eco-consciousness here operates as technical knowledge that can be disseminated through a skill-sharing program, rather than one manifestation of a way of relating human subjectivity to nature (based on a human/nature dichotomy), that might conflict with other cosmologies. It is worth highlighting this particular proposal to show how the crisis in neoliberalism following the 2008 financial crisis, while engendering concern for the economic effects of these policies, has not been met with explicit challenges to neoliberalism as a form of *political* governance. That these techniques can be adapted to try and resolve their own negative impacts in technocratic ways is evidence of the effectiveness of market rationality (both in its flexibility, and in its elevation beyond political debate).

Likewise, the tourable subjectivities of this development are evaluated through similar market-based criteria. In his discussion of the benefits of tourism development, in which Goldin emphasizes the employment of youth and women and the ease of entry/access to this employment, he argues for “focused support for *skill development and capacity building* to improve the quality of delivery and service. Raising the capacity of human resources ensures that the tourism sector has access to the skills and hospitality services it needs to develop and grow” (ibid., p. 32). A less favourable reading of these capacities puts the relationship between work and governance differently. In a study of resort enclaves, Minca argues “life, culture and feeling are planned, managed, and put on display in detail, where workers matter not so much for what they do but more for what they represent, for how they perform what they do” (2010, p. 90). Similarly, aside from the fact that the employment of youth and women is often on very precarious terms, and set on very gendered assumptions and disciplinings of ‘service’ work (McDowell 2009), ‘capacity building’ operates as a particular stratification of which tourable subjects gain access to the ‘new’ economy and through which skills, while also subsuming subjectivity as ‘human resources’ to the needs of the industry.

More specifically, the market-logic of tourism development works to obscure the differentiated conditions of work and possibilities opened for those working in toured spaces. Goldin’s report goes on to say “once trained to tourism’s quality service level, people will be capable of filling many jobs as they become available across the entire economy. The extension and broadening of curriculum and the provision of on-line and language skills will be vital elements and will also help provide the quality service that tourists are increasingly expecting” (2010, p. 32). This operates on an assumption that tourism

development will inevitably lead to a broader economic development in the region or country in question – an assertion that is often not borne out as communities become reliant on a particular tourist sector and suffer economic hardship when that site is no longer a viable destination. Secondly, much like tourism development projects themselves, these particular skills such as language or on-line training are not evenly distributed and are usually reserved for guides, certain hotel service workers, or tour agency operators. This is important because guides are often in unique and interesting positions to challenge or refract touring narratives in their daily work (Valkonen, 2010). Yet while guiding is presented as a space for self-expression and development that mobilizes concepts of professionalism and entrepreneurialism through codes of conduct and certification programs (see Ap & Wong, 2001; Echtner, 1995; Wearing & McDonald, 2002), it is also a heavily managed and controlled form of labour that relies on personal traits and bodily performances to create the ‘authentic’ human interactions desired by, and produced for, visiting tourists. The skill-set required to do this valorizes a market subject that can be almost like a conscientious tourist (an entrepreneurial capitalist self), but not quite (still different enough to be recognized as part of the tourable landscape). At the same time, other jobs, in cleaning, food preparation, and transportation remain, but are not necessarily designed through the same appeals to self-betterment. They are the promise of mass employment in contexts where earning a living can be hard and precarious. Most of the cases made for tourism development present both promises, but the group of people who access the skills of guiding end up accessing something that is largely unattainable by the majority.

### **A Transnational Politics of Tourability**

The aim of this dissertation is not, however, to explicate these rationalities themselves, but rather to analyse the messy conditions of producing the possibilities of neoliberal touristic mobility. Tania Murray Li makes a useful methodological distinction between the rationalities of governmentality and the study of process which is far more messy, disjointed, and ultimately less conclusive than descriptions of the rationalities would imply (2007). While this concern features more prominently in the rest of this dissertation, keeping these broader rationalities in mind shows how governing the freedom to tour is made possible in part through governing how one can be made tourable and how tourability can be made useful in utilizing the movement of tourists.

By and large this requires tourable sites that do not overtly trouble the freedom of touring subjects in their production and do not overtly politicize their spaces of play by calling to attention, or to account, the operations of power at work that make *this* tourable instead of that or make *this* an appropriate mode of touring over others. To better understand these operations of power requires shifting away from the operations of power on tourists to how the condition of possibility for touring, that is, tourability, is being made. I say operations of power here to indicate that, although I use governmentality studies to understand the particular form of freedom being enacted through contemporary touring, making tourability results from a more complex interplay of forms of power – whether governmental, sovereign, disciplinary, etc. Governmental power, by emphasizing the conduct of conduct, is limited to a certain kind of process that often deflects analysis away from how struggles over land or the disciplining of bodies through violence, incarceration,

or forms of work that make these bodies docile (Ong, 2006) are necessary to making sites tourable. By asking both *how* specific tourability is made and how and to what ends it is made *appropriate*, I want to be deliberately less specific about what kinds of operations of power make touristic mobility possible.

A crucial distinction I take in my focus on the work of tourability is to posit that work as transnational politics. One reason I emphasize the transnational political activity of those who are toured is that, where political analysis of the toured happens, the emphasis tends to be on a politics of place: that is, the toured act as agents within the bounded locales of touristic sites, contesting how those sites are produced and visited or what counts as authenticity. Yet this view of the toured tends to replicate the kind of ‘putting in place’ that tourism narratives produce – the toured are in place in comparison to the transnationally mobile tourists, global travel companies, airlines, and businesses. To move away from this I follow Debbie Lisle and others who claim tourism as transnational or global political practice for the ways it produces our shared imaginations of place and relations (2006). However, I propose to go somewhat further. I suggest that the ability to posit difference in the world is mobilized as a justification for ‘going there’, thus producing an entitlement to travel and see that difference<sup>12</sup> for the very reason that it exists. This entitlement is part of articulating the very freedom to move and to choose where to go. Rather than question the realism of the touristic site, which I see as a rather fruitless critical position, my interest is in the work of tourability and to argue for its central role in making this entitlement to touristic movement (and all its attendant problems) possible.

That is, if tourability is a condition of possibility for a global ‘right to tour’, which characterizes a global imagination of cultural difference, appropriate uses of space, and the appropriate subjectivity of a mobile, cosmopolitan tourist, then the site-specific production of tourability *is* transnational politics. Place and place-making become transnationalized through the circulations and mobilities that it is part of. In other words, I want to approach those who ‘stay in place’ in order to be objects of the tour providing legitimation for the neoliberal mobility of global subjects as not just political within their place, but as agents within transnational politics – heavily disadvantaged and always in processes of being marginalized, but actors we need to take seriously in the *transnational* politics of tourism.

A helpful starting point here is the somewhat limited scholarship in tourism studies that makes use of a global commodity chains (GCC), also called global value chain (GVC) or global production networks (GPN), analysis. The GCC approach, originally developed in

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<sup>12</sup> I use difference broadly to try and capture the motivations predominantly found for experiential/ethnic-eco/community-based touring. I think difference could also be used to capture much of the ‘human capital’ desired and developed through voluntour experiences since it is precisely going elsewhere that furnishes the mundane work of this volunteering with its particular value. However, I want to avoid totalizing touristic desire in discourses of difference as that would be to underestimate the plurality of ways tourism operates and the effects it has. For instance, what is sometimes called diaspora or return-tourism operates on discourses of heritage and affiliation rather than alterity, though self-exploration and identity formation remain important. Therefore my argument here about difference is a preliminary way to tease out the particular problems posed by touristic mobilities claimed as right.

the 1990s as a framework within International Political Economy, highlights how the tourism ‘site’ is located and linked within the broader transnational organization of the industry as a series of networks that produce and facilitate possibilities of travel (Clancy, 1998). The site of the tour becomes a node or ‘touch down’ point in a broader production network which begins where the tourist purchases a flight or a packages tour, travels through a network of serviced connecting points such as airports, intermediary hotels, and then connects with a ‘local’ context (Wonders & Michalowski, 2001). These analyses emphasize in particular the relative lack of control of people living and working at the final point of ‘production’ in the chain in comparison to actors like airline companies, transnational corporations, and state tourism boards (Ochoa, 2008b). Despite its emphasis on ‘global actors’, what is interesting to me about the chain metaphor is that it refuses to disengage the touristic ‘place’ from its relations to other spaces and transnational circulations of capital as a point of production. The touristic ‘product’ only exists as the concomitant of networks of industries, services, and labour that give it shape and add value. Actor-network theory approaches to tourism have also emerged in this vein to understand tourism itself as an ‘ordering practice’ (Franklin, 2004) and the production of touristic sites through ‘modes of connection’ or as based in “mobile arrangements” producing “tourismsapes” (van der Duim et al., 2012).<sup>13</sup> Recent scholarship on tourism and work has also highlighted this production based approach in challenging analytical starting points (i.e. moving away from the tourist to those who work in the industry) for telling us something valuable about how tourism operates and is experienced, and indeed the changing nature of work in increasingly precarious, information and hospitality based conditions (see Veijola, 2010). However, the transnationalism of touring remains by and large situated in the movements of tourists, the circulation of representations, and the globalized industries of travel, hospitality, currency exchange, and border services.

Other problems with the commodity chain or value chain analysis include its tendency to fixate on a perceived cohesion of the production process and an almost teleological movement taking us from peripheral economies of primary production to the final point of the finished commodity (Pratt, 2008). Further, rather than developing a critical political analysis of capitalism, the commodity chain approach tends to depoliticize its Marxian heritage by presenting the commodity as an object that moves through various networks or circuits in production (rather than questions of alienation or appropriation), or by mapping industry organization with little critical attention to social/political relations (see Mosedale, 2006). In the case of tourism studies, this approach tends to focus on defining very specifically the exact contours of a touristic ‘product’, a challenging task where tourism intermingles with daily life and a discursive slip that fetishizes the touristic commodity as an object of analysis over the relations of work and labour. In almost the opposite way actor-network theory approaches aim to understand the touristic destination through contingent enactment (of visiting tourists). While these scholars ask how destinations ‘emerge’, “how they are made, by whom and from what” (Baerenholdt, 2012, p. 111), they see this process

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<sup>13</sup> van der Duim et al. describe tourismsapes as “multiple actor-networks transgressing different societies and regions and connecting systems of transport, accommodation and facilities, tourism resources, environments, technologies, people and organizations” (2012, p. 28).

as one of contingency. However, it remains very unclear how this analysis can help understand the structural relations that control how certain things become tourable, and the stakes involved for people in tourable places. In addition, the emphasis on ‘enactment’ remains largely concerned with touristic enactments of place through their temporary visits (van der Duim et al., 2012).

I find more fruitful examining these relations through the language of what Anna Tsing calls ‘frictions’. In contrast to theories of globalization that emphasized the unrestrained motion and universalizing of capitalism, democracy or other such ‘universals’, Tsing’s theoretical framework uses the metaphor of friction to analyse how universals are made, remade, mobilized, or circulated through “messy encounters”, specific collaborations, or the landscapes through which globalization is enacted (2005, p. 4-6). In her criticism of commodity chains, Tsing states, “global capitalism is made in the friction in these chains as divergent cultural economies are linked, *often awkwardly*.” (ibid., p. 51, emphasis added). These frictions can give commodity chains the illusion of cohesion, but starting with that illusion as the point of analysis tells us very little about how these circulations are made possible and the relations through which particular claims, particular forms of movement, and particular criteria of, for example, tourability are reproduced.

Importantly for Tsing, friction is a feature of all power, as much as it is about moments where universals get caught in scenarios where they are unaccepted. As she states, “friction is not synonymous with resistance. Hegemony is made as well as unmade with friction... Meanwhile, without even trying, friction gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power. Difference can disrupt, causing everyday malfunctions as well as unexpected cataclysms. Friction refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine” (2005, p. 6). Sometimes people do try to get in the way of this smooth operation, yet for Tsing this is not necessary as power is always either contending with or built through the lack of smoothness of everyday encounters. Touristic mobility and tourability can be analysed using this framework. Neither operates in the smooth, untroubled, ways that images of global hegemony or the unencumbered tourist flying around the world would have it appear. Tourability is a messy processes, and one through which categories of difference, universalizing norms of otherness, service, community, and the practice and possibilities of touristic movement are produced. Circulating stories of touristic sites can cause confusion about the limits of tourability. Concepts of service can intervene on other labour practices and histories to create the possibilities for receiving tourists at all. At the same time, other concepts of resistance as ‘getting in the way’ (Blaser, 2004) become important as the touristic freedom which circulates through the production of tourability is sometimes contested, or even denied.

### *Landscaping the Tourable*

Smoothing difference into identifiable and tourable sites is a central feature of the enactment of touristic mobility. In this way, tourable difference is incorporated in strategies of neoliberal governance through politics of multiculturalism and cultural recognition that satisfy the needs of the market and the subject-making aims of this governance. This multiculturalism is also intimately tied to land and to renderings of nature. Tourability

operates on a set of criteria that distinguish difference as representative or acceptable, or not. For example the tourable native who dresses in traditional costume can be seen as ‘representative’ in cultural and minimally political terms, while one who insists on sporting all the trappings of their ambiguous position within the (post)colonial nation-state calls attention to the insufficiency of colonialism’s master narratives. For Charles Hale, these distinctions, rather than degrading or vilifying all that is ‘other’, invest the *indio permitido* (the authorized indian) as a tool of what he calls neoliberal multiculturalism – a form of governance that can recognize limited forms of cultural difference and deploy these to make distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate ways of being different (2006). This form of governance has, since the early 1990s, been increasingly extended throughout Latin America in the form of constitutional recognition of pluri-ethnic nation-states and government policies directed at cultural recognition (Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2000). At the same time that multiculturalism appears in specific state policies or nation-making projects, it is also globalized through such things as the kinds of value statements about the importance of cultural discovery through touring or the types of skills with managing difference demanded in the global economy. While multiculturalism is under attack in parts of Europe and Canada, it remains important as a value within global business, travel and study abroad programs, and particularly in many countries in Latin America struggling with racial and ethnic inequality. It also remains important to the sense of touristic cosmopolitanism<sup>14</sup> derived from travel that is sensitive to cultural difference but also discerning of which difference is worthy of being consumed (Germann Molz, 2005).

Tourability is a useful tool in this form of governance because of its very effective depoliticization. The global salience of multiculturalism as governing strategy closes down political claims by shielding diversity from questions of privilege and “yield[ing] a powerful inoculation against more expansive demands” (Hale, 2006, p. 219). This is both precisely what is going on in much ‘cultural’ or ‘alternative’ tourism and where we can link tourism to other strategies of government. For example, for Hale, the Maya Movement in Guatemala which started with specific political intention, is currently caught in this particular paradox of recognition without political content. Concerned with the governmental operations of multiculturalism, scholars like Hale, but also Wendy Brown have effectively argued we need to be more attuned to the “normative framework” on which liberal multiculturalism operates (designating the liberal from the illiberal, the civilized from the barbaric), and how “its normative framework is rendered oblique almost to the point of invisibility” (Brown, 2006, p. 4). These normative distinctions can be used to designate some as objects of potential violence (for their lack of civility), where civility, acceptance of (limited) difference and, in the cases of those whose difference is ‘marked’ from a norm, the acceptable (limited) performance of that difference have all become measures of the development of liberal subjectivities.

In this dissertation, I understand the particular dynamics of this governance through the concept of landscapes, theorized in two different yet complementary ways. First, studies

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<sup>14</sup> Touristic is an important caveat here, as we will see below there are many other ways that people are able to claim cosmopolitan identities and resist the ‘putting in place’ that is such a strong feature of tourability.

of touristic sites note how the aesthetic demands of tourability create the basis of political decisions about what and who belongs or not. These play out in different ways in the case of “living history museums” which re-create history to fulfill certain aims (see Handler & Gable, 1997), in the case of constructing beach resorts through limiting which workers have access to permits in order to sanitize tourable space (see Gregory, 2007), to sites where modernity and tradition are deliberately separated in distinct spaces that retain aesthetics of a tourable past and a present full of services (see Van den Berghe & Ochoa, 2000; Brunner, 2005). In all these studies, the work of aestheticizing tourable space is presented as contested, requiring policing of what has (and does not have) a place, and also opportunities for resistance.

A second theorization of landscapes links these aestheticizations of difference to renderings of land and nature. For Anna Tsing, theorizations about aesthetics limit the landscape to only human intervention, while she is also interested in how human/non-human relations are shaped in space and shape the possibilities of that space (2005). Her approach is to see landscapes as social-natural spaces where both are constituted through their relations, not all of which can be controlled by human intervention and which require seeing place (and nature) as historical (*ibid.*, p. 174, 201; see also Escobar, 2008). Projects transform these landscapes by transforming relations including relationships to nature. This is particularly useful to understanding how conservation efforts intervene on landscapes, especially where conservation has become intimately tied to tourism and to the mobilization of ethnic and indigenous difference as both tourable and as able to participate in conservation. At the same time, these projects must also contend with how life in particular places has been shaped by the specificity of a landscape and how constructing ‘nature’ as a tourable aesthetic is situated within the social history of land use, production, or movement. Thus the linkage of eco-ethnic in alternative forms of touring could designate, rather than two separate spheres (nature and culture) that become tourable in the same location, the messy interaction and co-constitution of the two that projects to ‘make tourable’ intervene in.

Both ways of theorizing landscapes are also about work, a second crucial concept for this dissertation. The aesthetics of tourability involves both the work done to present and/or perform difference and the ways that working subjects are governed (as service employees, or to ensure that certain categories of race, class, or gender remain present or absent from the tourable space). Tsing also looks at the way work is done or has been changed in the forests of Borneo as part of the social-natural landscape (of development, exploitation, or conservation). In the context of touring, hostels provide a good example of how the organization of space and work is connected to the production of specific mobilities and mobile subjects. Often taken as sites that facilitate backpacking, as an alternative to mass-based touring, O’Reagan notes some of the same structures of space and work existing in hostels that we might expect in resorts:

hostels contain the comforts of a spatially coherent identity, connecting places together in an increasingly enclavic-scape across differing local contexts with a familiar architectural style, containing familiar comforts such as wifi internet, English speaking staff, security, live music, sociality, privacy – features that have become so

commonplace and familiar within hostels, that they are now only noticeable when missing. (2010, p. 95)

This, along with the common exclusion from hostels of locals as paying guests (*ibid.*), creates a racialized, semi-exclusive space of touring that serve to facilitate both a mode and objective of travel. For backpackers and other ‘independent’ travellers, authenticity as something sought for, is bound up in the means of travel (local transportation, hostel rather than hotel accommodations) as much as the ‘object’ of gaze, while other kinds of values are measured by tourists in the quality of hotels, the service available at resorts, or the quality and convenience of guided or packaged tours. Indeed work itself, as in the case of voluntourism, can become a means towards evaluating other qualities of tourability. Here, though, I am more interested in the work of tourability, as it becomes embedded in different landscapes but also connected to various transnational processes, specifically development, and the aims of touristic mobility.

These projects of landscaping are also indicative of tourability’s link to the politics of development. This is particularly the case in the Global South (though not exclusively) where tourism has long been a feature of state development policies. As in other aspects of governance, development has been deeply implicated in the pervasiveness of market rationality, characterized as an ‘anti-politics’ by James Ferguson for subsuming all political questions to the rule of expertise and to the values of the market (such as efficiency or productivity) (1990). These concerns, echoed by scholars like Li (2007) and Escobar (1995, 2008) are for how the current deployment of development frameworks both prohibit politics (in the sense of limiting spaces for contestation) and thinking politically (or structurally) about the issues at hand – for example the transformation of poverty into a technical object of intervention rather than a symptom of global political-economic inequalities that may require systemic transformation. Although the type of development thinking characteristic of grand development projects of modernity (and modernization), which include an emphasis on urbanization, resource extraction and exploitation remain features of contemporary projects (Escobar, 2008), other features, such as the emphasis on ‘social capital’, governing through community, and “improvement schemes” that attempt to intervene in the very subjectivities of those deemed ready for development have become more common (Li, 2007), particularly in what are termed ‘alternative’ development projects.

Tourism development is a popular option on both terms, as major development and infrastructure projects and as community empowering and improvement strategies. World Bank development loans speak to this popularity where 80% of the countries that qualify for poverty reduction strategy loans cite tourism development as one of their top priorities (Hawkins & Mann 2007, p. 353). Yet as much of the tourism management literature shows, it is also often presented as an ‘alternative’ to major resource extraction projects, providing the opportunity for conservation, and for community empowerment through training members of tourable communities in the entrepreneurial and service skills needed for dealing with tourists. Like the anti-politics of many poverty reduction schemes (Ferguson, 2009), tourism development depoliticizes the choice to make a site tourable by turning it into something that only needs to be managed. It also depoliticizes, by naturalizing, the specific



type of mobility (what I have called neoliberal mobility) on which contemporary tourism is based.

Tourability is thus not a separable process, but rather sits at the crosspoints of various governance strategies aimed at managing difference, land, nature, work, and development. The sites examined in this dissertation look at the specific ways this confluence plays out. Returning to Tsing, though, it would be too simple to see this process as an imposition of global tourism as a ‘discourse’, or touristic right as extending from the core to the periphery. Rather, tourism development happens in spaces and landscapes and often involves people for reasons that go well beyond economic development. Tourability, itself, becomes a marker of development for the subjects involved – through the skills, manners, habits, and connections tourable subjects can have access to. Tourism development provides the possibilities for both needed infrastructure development and something much more profound: access to the cosmopolitanism of global travel and to skills in demand in the contemporary economy such as service industry skills, English and other dominant language training, interpersonal skills, and knowledge of and capacity within global multicultural discourses. Those who can be toured, in a sense, move forward in a way those who are not cannot. Of course this ignores the fact that much of the work remains precarious and many workers remain marginalized (Vejola, 2010). It also ignores that there are those responsible for the production of tourability whose mobility, even in this sense, is restricted because development of these kinds of skill sets can make them untourable (extending them beyond the bounds of the ‘authorized indian’).

Li articulately describes these development projects as imbued with the “will to improve” (2007), as improvement upon the population but also in turn improvement upon the self that can both provide real material benefit and be quite enticing. Thus the motivations, intentions, desires, and claims of people who are toured are complex and often involve quite compelling promises of what tourism development can offer. At the same time, the majority of this development remains invested in the language of the right to tour and, as I show below, the right to tour, by being invested in neoliberal freedom, can only be claimed along the particular political-economic lines of market rationality.

Taking up market rationality and depoliticization in this way requires a couple caveats. Li (2007) makes another important distinction in her use of Foucault’s governmentality between techniques that *aim* at depoliticization and the effective achievement of depoliticization. Using the latter as the point of analysis, she argues, is misguided in that it frames depoliticization as closure rather than a process towards closure that very often does not work in the messy politics of daily practice (ibid.). I take this point seriously and so I think of the remainder of this chapter as drawing the contours of different strategies that, while not coherently ‘planned’, profoundly shape the debate and practice of tourism and tourism development in the Global South. Likewise Ferguson (2009) notes a needed distinction in uses of neoliberalism based on what he sees as a conflation of Foucault’s analysis of governmentality with all contemporary neoliberal techniques. Ferguson distinguishes between the arts of government that create the subjectivities of responsible market citizens and remade the state in the image of private enterprise (Foucault’s interest)

with the often brutal, explicit, and direct liberalization of markets. He argues that the latter can and do exist without the former rationality being a dominant feature (particularly, as he notes, in his study of African development) and makes the persuasive case that, while they can be linked, scholars need to be clear about which meaning of neoliberalism they are using (*ibid.*). While I use the neoliberal mobility of touring to refer to these rationalities in order to assess how the production of tourability facilitates the production of market subjects and the opening of landscapes to entrepreneurial relations, I see this as intertwined with other forms of neoliberalism, such as the liberalization of markets and the colonization of resources for capitalist exploitation. What I show through my study of El Alberto and Leticia are some of the ways tourism development unites these forms such that articulations of the ‘freedom’ of touristic movement become bound with the penetrations of free-market capitalism.

Building on these important distinctions, it also became apparent during my research that a governmentality approach to power would be insufficient to understand the exercise of power through tourism development. For the cases in this dissertation, but also elsewhere, tourism development is also deeply embedded in political struggles over land and the claims of states, indigenous communities, and others to land rights. The exercise of sovereign power over land and borders plays out in the sometimes violent displacement of inhabitants to make way for large resorts, as well less directly through conservation reserves such as the Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) areas of Southern Africa (Cornelissen, 2005). Widely used in South Africa as a strategy of the post-Apartheid state to redistribute land, the goals of CBNRM are aimed specifically at land use for tourism and conservation and so discourage claims for other kinds of usage, in many cases those made by indigenous communities (*ibid.*). Similar systems of conservation reserves exist in Colombia, and the Mexican state is increasingly using tourism development as a means to clear away political challenges posed to both its policies and its sovereignty, particularly in Chiapas. Tourism development thus provides various avenues for reorganizing land, delimiting the kinds of usage and claims that can be made, while also furnishing other forms of resistance not captured in a governmentality approach.

Thus through promises of globally demanded skills and appeals to improvement schemes, the terms of tourism development mold relations of and to work as certain kinds of skills become important to facilitating different kinds of touring. These relations of work intersect with claims about land and relations to nature that tie together strategies of multicultural recognition and ongoing processes of sovereignty and resource extraction. The production of tourability thus operates through and is mobilized within a variety of governing strategies that make and remake landscapes and subjects, while being part of the transnational circulation of tourists. While some of these strategies involve governmental processes, such as conservationist discourses that require different relationships to the ‘jungle’ in and around Leticia, or the need to train indigenous inhabitants to use the forest differently for their work as guides, sovereign and colonial power exercised on land remain just as important. In the case of Mexico, neoliberal restructuring and the development of NAFTA have transformed many rural landscapes from places of food subsistence to only valuable as tourable resources. At the same time, state violence is still deployed to make and clear tourable space, and to distinguish between those subjects who can be fitted into this

tourability and those who cannot, thereby silencing more radical demands or claims to territory.

### **The Promises of Tourism Development: Participation as a means to govern**

If voluntourism has taken over the debate about how to tour most ethically, ‘community participation’ has for quite some time been the watchword for ethical tourism development. Participation is a key plank in models of pro-poor tourism and a crucial category in the production of tourability, particularly for those tourists seeking more ‘authentic’ or ‘ethical’ encounters. It is also an interesting place to examine the intersecting projects I explored in the previous section. Generally speaking participation means designing mechanisms for members of toured communities to take on administrative decisions and roles about the management of their particular site. The fetish for participation has been criticized for its shallowness and its usefulness as a marketing ploy, in effect suggesting that the community that participates is more authentic than the objectified performances of mass-tourism past. Participation is also very useful towards the types of depoliticization that characterize neoliberal governance, as well as the needs for tourable sites that do not trouble or confront the ‘infinite access’ of touristic mobility. For Hall, this romanticization of communities in community-participation conceals the fact that communities rarely have the ability to say no to tourism development (2007). Similarly, and more broadly, Cornelissen argues that the liberalization mandates of organizations such as the UN WTO and the GATS agreement put land redistribution and empowerment through participation at risk as goals of alternative tourism development because non-discrimination clauses require open competition which has the potential to contradict proposals that would see specific communities have or maintain control of specific tourable sites (2005, p. 134). My impetus for analysing the participation framework of alternative tourism came, in part, for a confirmation during my research of how pervasive tourism as development is, and indeed how difficult saying ‘no’ seems to be.

While I agree with critiques of participation as a technique of government in contemporary development, I also agree with Mario Blaser that there is something genuine about the efforts to encourage participation. In a sense, the desire for participation is an effect of a very positive move: it has become somewhat untenable to *only* make the toured into objects. This is hardly the emancipation some of its supporters purport; rather, we might posit the shift as moving from disciplinary to more governmental interventions in the making of tourable subjects. Many, though not all, toured subjects are now encouraged to participate in the production of their tourability. Presented as a solution – if communities are participating, then tourism development will be more just – we are presented with the problem that the terms that define appropriate tourability and the political claim of the right to tour seem to be located elsewhere and outside the debate. This should be a very familiar problem; it is a key insight of much of the critical work on contemporary neoliberal governance. Governmentality, unlike discipline, operates by seeming to remove intervention and encouraging subjects to become the agents of their own regulation towards ends based on market rationality. As Blaser notes, in many contemporary development projects the assertion of autonomy (for NGOs, communities, etc.) is precisely this kind of “illogical

demand: promoting autonomous decision making while guaranteeing that none of those decision will challenge the predetermined boundaries of that autonomy” (2009, p. 449).

One way to see this is by looking at where participation happens. In the pro-poor, community participation models of tourism development, participation tends to be understood as particular or local, and within specific projects (Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Shen et al., 2008). Most of the concern about participation is quantity based – how many people are participating rather than what decisions they are participating in. People are usually only able to participate in broader debates about the trajectories and visions of tourism development by virtue of being already involved in a project (for example by being invited to regional conferences to present a particular tourism project). Those not seen as stakeholders (i.e. as having an already existing project or a potential touristic resource to develop) have little access to discussions about the merits, effects, or desirability of tourism development. ‘Participants’ are thus rationalized into the technical management of tourism development. More broadly, scholars like Harris have pointed to the World Bank in particular as promoting participation as ‘empowerment’ (relying on concepts like social or human capital that can be tapped) which excludes broader claims about distribution of resources (2001; see also Li, 2007). Morales González has suggested a distinction between ethnic tourism and indigenous tourism based on whether the communities and people involved are able to participate in the decision making and administration of their own touring site (2008). She argues for the participation of indigenous communities based on democratic governance (as an effect of indigenous control – thereby naturalizing a connection between ‘indigenous community’ and democracy and an unproblematic view of the ‘community’, something I return to in Chapter 3) and concern for the equitable distribution of benefits. However, as with so much of this scholarship, this equality is only relevant internally and says nothing about the role of this kind of ‘empowerment’ in challenging systemic inequalities or participating in defining the terms of what the development solution looks like.

I am not trying to conflate participation with agency writ large here – in fact, a key argument of this dissertation is that there are ways that people act, manipulate, transform and make alternative claims in tourism development that are not captured by this view of participation. Participation as conceptualized in alternative development is something else – it is the particular definition or delimitation of agency around particular terms that only allow certain kinds of claims to be advanced (empowering tourable subjectivity in the production of specific kinds of political actors). Again, Blaser argues that many contemporary development projects (and I would include much of alternative tourism development in this) work by defining a group as having a ‘problem’ (such as poverty) and then inviting them to administer a pre-determined solution (2009, p. 450). Freznel has highlighted this process in particular in the development of so-called ‘slum tourism’ that quite literally transforms sites of poverty into aesthetic objects that, through being toured, contribute to development and poverty alleviation (2012). That in many cases the designation of worthy tourable sites also operates through definitions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ indigeneity also underscores participation as a technique of neoliberal multiculturalism as governing strategy in many parts of Latin America (Hale, 2006).

The role of participation in the rationalization of tourability starts, at least in part, by naturalizing what a touristic resource is and obscuring how what counts as resource is determined. During a visit to the Hidalgo state capital, Pachuca, I met with a program director at the *Comisión de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI) (the institution largely responsible for promoting tourism development in indigenous communities in Mexico) who told me that because there is no profit in agriculture anymore for Mexico's (largely indigenous) *campesinos*, the only resources they have of value are 'touristic resources' in the form of nature (land) and culture. With no recognition of the trade and land policies enacted by the Mexican government that have contributed to this agricultural crisis, tourism development was simply presented as offering a solution by tapping into these now uniquely viable resources. This is as far as alternative or ethnic tourism development is concerned; the resort industry in Mexico is hardly shrinking and continues to cause enormous environmental problems and land displacements. Similarly, according to the *Procuraduría Agraria*<sup>15</sup> "there is still a large quantity of undeveloped potential touristic sites, the majority of which are found in the agrarian centres of the country, which brings us to consider the necessity of motivating this activity to generate currency resulting in the social development of the Mexican countryside" (n.d., p. 16, my translation). Tourism in Mexico is thus an important part of developing and capturing under-utilized land, and linked to the explicit abandoning of agrarian-based development. As stated in the same document, "today the great fortunes of the country and state policies in consequence, do not see in national agriculture the possibilities of secure investment, and for this reason they have abandoned it" (ibid., p. 58).

According to CDI, a 'touristic resource' is, quite simply, nature and culture. Once set, this framework for developing touristic resources counts participation as how to mobilize and administer that resource in ways that make it viable for the project aims. Understanding tourism through this process of identifying resources and their appropriate management obscures a simple and yet revealing problem. Touristic resources are not evenly distributed and thus defining what counts as touristic resource is, in part, determining who gets access and who does not, or, determining whose participation is going to be sought. This argument was raised in an evaluation of CDI's program PTAZI (*Programa de Turismo Alternativo en Zonas Indígenas*)<sup>16</sup> which noted that despite claims that PTAZI offers a 'rural solution' to indigenous poverty in Mexico, this really can only apply to those places determined to have these attractions (Palomino Villavicencio & López Pardo, 2007, p. 57). Indeed PTAZI's own criteria for selection for assistance include that the site have natural and cultural resources unique in the region, that it be located so as to be part of a tourism circuit, that it have a touristic offer that can differentiate itself on the national and international market, and that 30% of the project be directed by women (PTAZI, 2011). Presenting these differentiations as objective rather than the product of social structures and choices about what counts or what fits a particular imagination of tourability reflects what Blaser argues is the 'agent-less' framing of the terms of development (2009). The agent's, or what he calls the governing

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<sup>15</sup> This federal institution is responsible for administering the legal requirement of the Agrarian Reform Law in Mexico and deals locally with clarifications of title boundaries for indigenous communities and *ejidos*.

<sup>16</sup> Program for Alternative Tourism in Indigenous Zones

subject's, framework is present at the same time it is "absent from the space in which contention can emerge (i.e. community meetings, workshops, and so on)" giving the appearance of autonomy to the decisions taken in these spaces (ibid., p. 446). This 'frame' thus remains as the undisputed terrain on which participation is meant to take place – in this case that tourism development is good if managed correctly and that it is the undeniable substitute for collapsing rural economies that only have their cultures (and land) left to sell.

One result of this is that tourism development is presented as something everyone can have access to and yet decidedly cannot. It is increasingly the case that communities in the Colombian Amazon and in the municipality of Ixmiquilpan in Mexico are organizing to try and develop touristic sites to capitalize on the resources available and the number of tourists visiting. Gundhó, a small community in Ixmiquilpan of around 100 people, is one such example. On a visit with some acquaintances, I took a walk through their proposed tourist area which was going to include cabins, a small restaurant and a walking/cycling path. Fairly removed from the city centre and only serviced by one *combi* (bus) per day, Gundhó is a small place like so many others in the area where migration has been crucial for getting by. The desires for the project were huge, but the possibilities very restricted by the demands of what makes tourability – too far away without sufficient access, not enough land to make long enough trails, too much competition from other more established sites. In the context of Ixmiquilpan, exclusion from tourism as the rural solution can mean being left with few options outside migration or the limited sale of agricultural or artisan goods. However the broader implication of not being able to be tourable in contexts such as these, I think, is an exclusion from being seen as participating subjects (or within this language as stakeholders) in this development politics. As one step in this process, the naturalization of the conditions of tourability make it plausible to concern ourselves with how people participate only *after* tourable resources have been determined and thus only focus on questions of democracy, rights-claims, or inequality exclusively *within* this participatory process.

Yet simultaneous to constructing the possibility of participation as a means to self-govern, the 'outside', or those subjects and landscapes not governable in these ways remain important to the strategies of rule enacted through tourism development. Said differently, sovereign and disciplinary powers intermingle with these strategies of government to make appropriately tourable landscapes and to mobilize tourism towards sovereign ends. The case of Agua Azules in Chiapas in southern Mexico is but one example. Tourism development in the region has recently been expanded as part of the large-scale development project *Plan Puebla Panamá* (now *Proyecto Mesoamérica*) which is aimed at developing infrastructure and urbanizing the southern states of Mexico and Central America. Many of the largest touristic projects proposed, such as the ecotourism site around the *Agua Azul* waterfalls in San Sebastián de Bachajón are in fact proposed on lands reclaimed by the *Zapatistas* (EZLN) or *la Otra Campaña* as autonomous zones (Serna & Díaz, 2009). In the context where these movements have challenged state usurpation of indigenous territory and the effects of trade liberalization, tourism development has become a new means to remove those indigenous people from their land who do not fit into the cultural markers of the 'admissible indian'.

In Bachajón, a violent clash between indigenous community members supportive of the government and those belonging to *La Otra Campaña* in 2011 led to mass arrests and the ongoing detention of 5 members of *La Otra Campaña*. However the *Fray Bartolomé de las Casas* Human Right Centre which operates in the region argued that the dispute, which occurred on *ejido* land that forms the toll entrance to Aguas Azules, a popular tourist attraction in Chiapas, was incited by the government in order to justify state seizure of the lands for this eco-touristic site (Frayba, 2011). This argument is supported by a leaked consultancy presentation made to state officials in Chiapas about tourism development that stated: "The state and local government need to ensure that tourists that visit Chiapas and Palenque feel safe and protected. The *Zapatista* movement is still strongly associated with Chiapas...Many of those unfamiliar with the region still consider Chiapas to be unsafe... The state needs to protect the developers and hotel operators against the perception of political instability...Before attracting investments, the state must resolve land acquisition and access problems. The acquisition of lands adjacent to the waterfalls is vital..." (Upside Down World, 2011).<sup>17</sup> Underway in this document, and in the work of clearing tourable space that it implies, are dual processes of claiming territory for large development projects and designating the terms of appropriate indigeneity – that is, whose presence in the landscape is allowable to be properly tourable, and whose presence or claims represent a threat to that.

Similar to the arguments made by Charles Hale about neoliberal multiculturalism in Guatemala, scholarship on Mexico has noted the importance of a shift to multicultural recognition (especially through a pluri-ethnic constitution) that regulates indigenous subjects through the means of that recognition (Blackwell 2012). As Blackwell argues, at the same time that the *ejido* system was being dismantled in the 1990s to make way for free trade agreements with the U.S. and Canada, indigenous communities were being recognized as cultural entities, unique and vital to the state's identity, but in a way that did not strengthen the land claims being threatened by free trade and operated within a "cultural rights frame whose meaning and parameters are determined by the state" (ibid. p. 708). Building on her argument that this operates through forms of governmental power, I think it is important to distinguish that while land as right is sidelined in favour of cultural recognition, land remains a key site where state power operates to discipline indigenous peoples and curtail the forms of indigeneity allowable, while continuing to be a key site of resistance. What the processes underway in Chiapas show is how certain indigenous claims (especially those to land, or those that are anti-capitalist) are framed as outside 'tourability' while governments mobilize these distinctions in the practices of power that make tourability possible. This frames them as violent or obstructive and in the way of touristic development, and by extension in the way of touristic movement.

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<sup>17</sup> In April of 2013 a leader of *La Otra Campaña* in the region was assassinated outside his home in what the Human Rights Centre (Frayba) called a political assassination. As argued by media reports of the incident "the violence and repression united with legal and judicial decisions that denied the rights of *ejidatarios* [from San Sebastián de Bachajón]. The detention in 2011 and the expulsion of *ejidatarios* permitted the authorities to assume control of the collectively held lands on which they want to construct a tourist site that rivals sites like Cancún" (<http://www.cgchiapas.org/noticias/%E2%80%99Cseguimos-firmes%E2%80%99D-contra-proyecto-turistico-ejidatarios-bachajon>, June 14, 2013, my translation).

Likewise, the Mexican *Procuraduría Agraria* lists conflict over land ownership and situations where those who own or have rights to the land remain excluded from participating in the particular project as 'threats' to development (n.d., p. 63). They go on to cite tourism development as an important means of resolving land disputes and stabilizing the rights of indigenous land-holders at the same time that legislation maintains the ability of the state to expropriate lands for national interest, including for touristic development (ibid.). The risks listed also include “the existence of leaders of peasant (*campesino*) organizations that harm the effectiveness [operability] of the [touristic] projects” (ibid., my translation). In addition to a strategy of expropriation and displacement, contemporary rural development relies on strategies for bringing in the subjects of that development on terms that both encourage participation and define its terms – in this case defining disagreement to a project as a risk to the efficiency of the process rather than a political contestation. This is also about defining how relationships to land facilitate tourability or not, where the anti-capitalist claims to land and autonomy of the *Zapatistas* are seen to obstruct touristic mobility. This last point is key, as a central contention of my analysis here is that the politics of how these definitions are made, enforced, and contested, are transnational in the way they facilitate (or not) the model of touristic mobility and the enactment of neoliberal freedom. While the emphasis on participation certainly reflects shifts in the arrangement of forms of power, the conduct of participating subjects is interwoven with other subjugations as expropriation of land or the designation of ‘appropriate’ land use or forms of development become tools in designating who those participating subjects can even be.

Participation as a means to govern tourability can be understood in part through an analysis of governmental rule, but this is only one part of more complicated reconfiguration of landscapes involving various relations of power and strategies of rule. This reconfiguration also has deep roots in colonial histories, as seen in strategies of displacement of indigenous lands, but also in different strategies to produce workers. Similarly, the embedding of tourism development in the market rationality of neoliberal governance is only one part of this conceptualization of development. The rationality of this governance is also based, as I have said, on the articulation of free, autonomous individuals who are able to cross borders as part of choosing how they become self-actualized. Yet the question remains how touristic right links this freedom to the free market and how this shapes the contours of touristic mobility. I expand on this relationship in the following chapter by looking at the borderless world envisioned by the UN WTO before turning to the messy politics of producing tourability.



## **Chapter 2: ‘Borderless Travel Visions’: Constructing freedom as the ‘right to tour’**

This chapter turns to the question of what kinds of mobile subjects are intended by the right to tour and its claim to freedom, and on what premises the ‘borderless world’ imagined by touristic right is based. Although I begin with a somewhat lengthy analysis of the UN WTO’s declaration of the right to tour, the aim of this chapter is to first to sum up my presentation of the neoliberal design of touristic mobility and, second, to shift my analysis to the messy contexts of how this mobility is actualized in the production of tourability.

Critical theorization of borders provides important insight into how these are constructed and the mechanisms used to regulate, manage, or securitize them. However, scholarship on borders has also raised important questions about how subjectivities are formed through the process and experience of border crossing and the access to mobility. These latter analyses, while not necessarily reflecting on tourism as such provide valuable starting points to question what the freedom to travel means. In a paper that attempted to challenge some of the dominant statist contours of International Relations as a discipline, Soguk and Whitehall suggested positioning migrants as central to IR rather than as outliers to standard accounts of states-as-containers (1999). By their argument migrants, and others on the move, fragment and render sovereign territory “as a resource for transgression” (ibid., p. 685). Thus, rather than seeing borders as pre-constituting the sites of analysis (as states, or as citizens identified as stable subjectivities of those states), it is the movement of people constituting and fragmenting borders that, in part, shapes the world we analyse.

As in many of the analyses that take movement as a constituting practice, however, Soguk and Whitehead only make passing reference to what they call the ‘globetrotters’, a generic category used to capture those whose movement is made unproblematic by, and is often seen as mutually reinforcing to, the territorial claims of states. The movement of globetrotters is thus less interesting to an analysis trying to challenge the stranglehold of sovereignty. Yet while the movement of globetrotters may be more constituting than it is fragmenting, it warrants analysis for being neither that simple nor that politically unimportant. As Nyers and Rygiel state, “individuals and populations are constituted as certain types of subjects through the regulation of their movement and through their access to mobility as a resource, as well as their ability to make claims to rights to movement” (2012, p. 3). As a way of approaching the experience of increasingly restricted and irregularized movement in the constitution of political relations and agency, their argument opens a framework for seeing how ‘non-citizens’ can make use of their movement and claims to rights to become political subjects of different societies, or, as they put it ‘enact citizenship’ (ibid.). My aim in this chapter is to redirect, this proposition to ask how other claims to rights to movement are made possible, through such things as the work of tourability, and how this constitutes borders and hierarchies in who has access to mobility in less appealing ways.

On the one hand, this shift is helpful for making distinctions between different forms of movement and rights claims that have very different effects and foundations in order to shape more specific political judgements about the right to move. On the other hand, it also means looking at borders as multiply constituted in various transits. As Kalra and Purewal argue in their study of touring at the Indian-Pakistan border, different kinds of crossings (such as those of refugees or migrants as compared to predominantly Western tourists) shape the border as involving very different spatial and political relations (1999). This is hardly surprising, any perusal of global visa regulations clearly shows how mobility is differentiated in terms of race, nationality, gender, ability, etc. (see Mau, 2010). It does, however, suggest how claims for free movement, or access, even at the same border, can have vastly different consequences depending on how the border has been constituted for those making the claim. To put the question differently: is the borderless world imagined by the UN WTO the same as the one imagined and evoked by those mobilizing around ‘No Borders’? I argue not. The border is not actually the same at all, and while the claim to freedom to move as a tourist might merit support (and I certainly do think that travel has an importance for us far beyond the neoliberal articulations of the UN WTO), how the claim to touristic mobility is being made and the borderless world it imagines, are not politically in alignment with the re-imaginings of citizenship and transgressions of sovereignty sought by these other political movements or enactments.

To understand the freedom and the borderless world being celebrated in the right to tour requires first looking at how it is linked to the ‘freedom’ of global capital. The same liberal conceptualization of freedom (the absence of restriction) that has been used to design the flows of capital across borders is used to talk about how tourists should move around the world, as if and because touristic movement is just another vehicle for capital’s circulation. In fact it is not; just as capital mobility is not solely an economic project, neither is touristic mobility. But by using the same language, the freedom to tour becomes inextricably linked to the freedom of capital circulation (and accumulation).<sup>18</sup> This makes it possible for Ian Goldin to argue on behalf of the G20 and the UN WTO for “a concerted effort to reduce, simplify and modernize visa processes – the more so given rising security and immigration concerns which threaten to greatly increase the friction associated with border control and adversely impact tourism” (p.33).<sup>19</sup> These frictions disrupt the ‘borderless travel vision’ he goes on to advocate, one that can smooth over the restrictive practices that securitize other forms of mobility. In this way, touristic movement also becomes the ‘free’ movement that is outside government regulation in a way that allows conceptualizing touristic movement as outside the political sphere. This is the same logic

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<sup>18</sup> Bianchi (2014) makes a similar argument, contending that what has happened with the UNWTO and WTTC’s market based approach is the transformation of the right to travel (or to cross borders) into the ‘right to be a tourist’, circumscribing the meaning of this right to an act of consumption.

<sup>19</sup> A major priority of the UN WTO and the WTTC since 2010 has been to push for reductions in visa requirements for travel within the G20 countries in order to boost economic growth in this sector (see 2012 “The Impact of Visa Facilitation on Job Creation in the G20 Economies” which focuses exclusively on visa regulations for tourists). According to current data collected by these organizations, tourism has grown steadily in the years since the recession of 2008 with \$1.3 trillion USD in export earnings in 2012, and growing another 5% in arrivals (as measured by the UN WTO) in the first half of 2013 (<http://www2.UNWTO.org/>).

that places the movement of capital as the actualization of its freedom rather than a calculated project that is designed and secured through various practices. Touristic movement here becomes the epitome of appropriate transnational mobility, designed in the image of capital and aimed at fostering market subjects.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, produced in 1999 by the UN WTO and adopted by the General Assembly in 2001, puts it more starkly. In discussion of the role of multinational enterprises in tourism development it states “in exchange for their freedom to invest and trade which should be fully recognized, they should involve themselves in local development, avoiding, by the excessive repatriation of their profits of their induced imports, a reduction of their contribution to the economies in which they are established” (UN WTO 2000, Article 9). Those ‘waiting’ for development are again asked to have faith that these artificial persons can be bound to a code of conduct (as the hardly equitable ‘exchange’ they make for their freedom). This article also explicitly shows their corporate freedom as fundamental to the touristic freedom we want to enjoy. Article 8 of the Code argues that “administrative procedures relating to border crossings...should be adapted, so far as possible, so as to facilitate to the maximum freedom of travel and widespread access to international tourism” only to continue by saying “specific taxes and levies penalizing the tourism industry and undermining its competitiveness should be gradually phased out or corrected” (UN WTO, 2000).

Beyond the concern for tax restrictions on capital, the UN WTO has also worked to define freedom as the ability to tour (and its corollary, to send tourists), a freedom that I suggest is in fact founded on the responsibility to be tourable. In the preamble to the Code of Ethics, the UN WTO states the benefits of global travel as “contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”. The first part of this is not exceptionally new; travel has long been incorporated into international relations through practices of becoming more ‘cultured’ through culture (see Reeves, 2004). The second aspect of this statement, the linkage between touristic movement and human rights (particularly as fundamental human freedom), is where I think the particular governing logic of this freedom can be seen.

In addition to linking freedom with market liberalism, the linkage to this array of human rights connects travel with the potential dissemination of these ‘appropriate’ forms of liberty and movement to those ‘other’ parts of the world where they are perceived to be lacking. The freedom to move about, as one of these fundamental liberties that so many lack is here disembedded from the global inequality and privilege that makes movement for some possible. In other words, those who cannot travel are lacking in this freedom which can only be remedied through making the tourism of some universal for all. Thus there is an obligation built into this statement not only that, individually, tourists express a more just form of being in the world by being able to travel, but also that touring as a socio-political, collective practice becomes universal(izing) evidence of the appropriate cultural instilling of liberal human rights. In effect, the privilege to move is more than just desirable, or a symbol of status, it is a form of movement that marks progress and development. Importantly,

accessing the freedom to tour is promoted as much in the Global South as elsewhere, as I show below in certain campaigns around ‘domestic’ tourism in Mexico and Colombia that seek to foster touristic subjectivities amongst the growing middle-class.

The freedom to tour also produces an axis along which difference itself can be ordered. To examine this, we need to look at where the ‘right to tour’ locates its heritage. Article 7 of the Code of Ethics states “the universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d. of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” (UN WTO, 2000). In situating itself here, in a right that is historically situated in the labour movement and struggles against capitalist exploitation, the right to tour is disengaged from its own exploitative practices and expressed in terms of the ‘freedom’ that capitalist systems of production give workers (particularly by regulating a distinction between work and leisure and the privatization of free expression through leisure consumption). Although historically and in much of contemporary touring this distinction between leisure and work is fundamental, there are also ways that touring interacts with working life whether in the form of voluntourism, teaching English overseas, foreign language immersion, or other, more subtle ways that ‘being travelled’ provides a leg up in certain jobs or fields (see Lisle, 2008; Vrasti, 2012). Unlike others on the move (the migrant and the refugee are only the most obvious examples), whose mobility is taken as more contingent and less certain in its effects, touring is a mobility that seems always to promise the possibility of development ‘there’ (whether of the self, or of others) and return to ‘productive’ lives ‘here’, and, so the promise goes, even more productive lives *because* we have travelled.

As a particular kind of movement, touring thus produces particular demands on tourable places and subjects. The UN WTO Declaration affirms a ‘right’ to transportation, a ‘right’ against undue formalities and discriminations, and a ‘right’ to protection of tourists’ special and particular vulnerability as *foreigners*. These rights facilitate the form of movement as tourists. For some, this involves strategies to produce disembedded presence for tourists on the move and always on the path to leaving (such as the rapid day-tour, the guide-facilitated encounter). Other strategies include the securing and aestheticizing of space through the practices of tourism police who clear away ‘unwanted elements’ and restrict local access.. My contention is that this combination of rights claims made by touristic movement operates to construct a *hosting* responsibility that becomes embedded in the right to leisure.

In order to make the right to leisure into a right to tourism, the right to leisure cannot just be a negative right to time away from work. Because tourism is a particular kind of movement, it requires a particular facilitation of that movement and particular kinds of sites to visit (or communities to do volunteer work in). To make the right to tourism a right through the right to leisure, leisure has to be understood positively – that is, as demanding an affirmative responsibility to provide the means for its actualization. Put bluntly, if there were no places to tour, we would not be able to exercise our right to tour. This is very simple. But if touring is not just any kind of movement, then it is not just any kind of subject or

landscape that can be toured and this opens up an entire set of governing techniques for making what is tourable appropriate to the aims of the kind of movement that some claim as ‘right’ – as the exercise of freedom. The tourist on the move and searching for free passage across all borders enacts a very specific form of mobility that can be actualized in some places, but not others. And if this freedom is part of what it means to be developed, then it is not just being a tourist but also being tourable that is part of the contemporary stratifications of who or what counts as developed.

Producing what is appropriately tourable, what actualizes this freedom and helps imagine this borderless world is, however, not the smooth process these declarations might imply. The Global Code of Ethics has played a fairly significant role in Leticia in terms of how people undertake tourism development. In fact, the UN WTO sent a team of volunteers to the department of Amazonas in 2009 to produce a report on the touristic possibilities in the region which was then presented to the municipal government, enterprises, and ‘indigenous communities’ (though the extent of this last is unclear). The investigation of tourism, which lasted around three weeks, focused on the standardized visits to communities, interactions between tourists and animals (usually held in captivity for precisely this purpose), and the sale of artisan goods. This visit was part of a larger volunteer programme that the UN WTO runs sending volunteers from all over the world to touristic destinations in the Global South to explore and investigate the touristic possibilities of that site with the ultimate aim of “provid[ing] young professionals with the practical training in tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation and development” (UN WTO Volunteer Voices, 2011). These reports are delivered to so-called stake holders in these touristic sites, but information about the trips and findings are also circulated through the UN WTO and its affiliate members, which include travel companies, airlines, major advertising groups, consultancies firms, etc. Thus this volunteer work is also used in the circulation of sites as examples of ‘good’ tourability.

One volunteer writing about her experience in Leticia-Puerto Nariño describes the magic of this ‘paradise region’, the isolation of the indigenous communities that preserve their culture (and must continue to do so through the sustainable development of tourism), and the smiling happy faces of the children who may not have much, but are happy in their lives (ibid, p. 7). This volunteer goes on to state that despite the fact that people living in the *resguardos* around Leticia do not have money for or good access to health services, schools, gasoline, electricity, “the residents have enough to live on” because they fish and have their *chagras*<sup>20</sup> to grow food. In contrast, in my interviews it was precisely the way tourism development is pulling people away from their *chagras* and local food production that many note as the most serious risk of tourism development – leaving communities with little money and no local food to sustain themselves if tourism stops (as it has, in part, since flooding in 2012 closed the National Park entrance).

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<sup>20</sup> *Chagras* are small plots of subsistence farming used by indigenous and other rural community members to grow food.

The UN WTO's claims to be invested in sustainability and poverty alleviation also come up against how this is literally fitted into market conceptualizations of the product and productivity of 'tourability'. In an interview with Mariana, one of the women involved in the Puerto Nariño sustainable tourism project just up river from Leticia, she talked about meeting with the UN WTO representatives and volunteers. She noted that at this meeting the UN WTO representative has looked at what they had been doing in Puerto Nariño and declared the site to be a 'gold-mine' for tourism, encouraging the project team to do everything they could to encourage people to develop and work in tourism. Her shocked response was to insist "no, no it is not like that", that thinking in that way would leave people with nothing when tourists stopped coming and did not take into account the other things needed like food and security (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012). Reflecting on the histories of booms and busts in the Amazon region, she decried the notion that people should continue to be encouraged to put everything into the development of a single 'product' (for outside consumption), since they know and have experienced how unstable that is. In addition, the idea that someone from the UN WTO could come and say something like that and not understand the effect that would have on the sustainability of the communities (their ability to grow food, fish and hunt, sustain the educational practices that preserve cultural knowledge) was shocking to her. In a place where exploitation of resources by outsiders has such a long history and where its impacts continue to be felt in very real and very devastating ways, to refer to tourism as a gold-mine clearly reveals the political economy in which the Code of Ethics is entrenched but also the limits of its possibility to effectively articulate the meaning of tourism for this woman and others she works with. In contrast, her commitment to conceptualizing touring in relation to the other necessary forms of work that sustain life in this place reveal a different appreciation for these continuities and, I think, an important contestation of what these rights claims articulated through the UN WTO look like as they are enacted. That much of the work in Puerto Nariño continues to struggle against this interpretation (for example in valuing the maintenance of *chagras* for the production of food and knowledge rather than as part of a touristic 'product') is testament to some of the limits of the UN WTO to capture the entire imaginative space of tourability.

In other words, a framework for understanding the governmental logics of the right to tour is important because its rationality only comes into being in the very messy production of tourability. While powerful, its form is also shaped through the frictions of encounter. This story is not a grand one, and my point is not that it can be a building block for a different politics of tourism – far from it. The point is that the Code of Ethics looks like all kinds of things and tries to do all kinds of work, but in the end is at the mercy of everyday life and the knowledges and histories of spaces that can be mobilized to refuse particular visions of how that space should be governed and for what purpose. A blockade to refuse access to tourists, to create a border that cannot be crossed (and to refuse to do the work of tourability) as in the case of Nazaret is only one example of this. Others, like the complex mobilization of tourability in El Alberto to reveal the struggles of migrants do other things. As Tsing notes, circulating concepts or "schemes" that present as universals, such as the 'freedom' of touristic mobility and the 'economic rationality' of tourability, can only be "enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters" (2005, p. 1), where other claims,

desires, or rationalities come into play. Before I turn to a different desire mobilized in the production of tourable places, specifically performances of non-indigeneity, I complicate the picture of touristic subjectivities by looking at instances of the construction of ‘domestic tourists’ as governmental subjects in the Global South. Domestic tourism, in both Mexico and Colombia, taps into the claims for neoliberal freedom articulated in the right to tour, but also reveals certain frictions in the inequalities of access.

### **The Global Politics of Domestic Tourism: Global inequality and aspirations of neoliberal freedom**

Often overlooked in the study of tourism is the role played by tourists within countries that receive large numbers of international visitors. This is usually the result of analytical distinctions made between the so-called developed and developing world that emphasize the role that movement of tourists from developed countries has on sites and economies in the developing world (see Mowforth & Munt, 2008). It is also the result of needed analyses of the exploitative and neo-colonial elements of tourism practices. However, a problem I encountered during my own research, which began very much within this framework, was how to account for and find ways of analysing the predominantly ‘national’ tourists who visit El Alberto and Leticia. I found myself continually running up against the developed/developing dichotomy in a way that unhelpfully forced thinking about tourism in terms of spatial categories (such as Global North and South as territorially bounded) rather than as a relationship between differently mobile subjects. In the developed/developing dichotomy we are either first-worlders or third-worlders. But in terms of our mobilities and the inequalities on which these are founded, the distinctions are not so simple.

A more useful question, I think, that can also tease out more of the dynamics of race, class, gender, and other hierarchies is to ask what kind of movement do we have access to, and what kind of movement do we aspire to? Likewise, what kinds of strategies of movement are made available and smoothed out for different people and on what basis? If borders are made multiply in the ways different people on the move can make claims to crossing them, then the preconceived borders between North and South, developed tourist/developing toured are less fixed than might be imagined. These questions challenge assumptions that we already know who has access to what, or that we can geographically locate forms of privilege. This does not mean that all tourists, regardless of where they come from, are the same or have the same access or ease of travel. The distinctions between my experience as a tourist from Canada and the Mexican and Colombian tourists I met on my travels remain important. But so do other distinctions between subjectivities being fostered *within* the ‘developing world’ between those who are tourable (and not) and those who can become (global) tourists.

Domestic tourism at its most basic is defined as people travelling for leisure within the same country in which they reside. However, like other forms of touring, this simple definition obscures the various projects in which this movement has been and continues to be embedded. In her study of Mexican tourism development in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dina Berger notes how the design of touristic sites was fuelled by a sense that tourism (and tourability) could express the capacity to be modern (2006). An emphasis on having urban

Mexicans get to know their country better was combined at this juncture with changes in labour laws that mandated paid vacations (ibid.). She argues that tourism was key to reconstructing peace in the post-1917 Revolution period and especially to re-establishing better relations with the United States (ibid.). Additionally, a key promotional strategy around domestic tourism development in the late 1930s and 40s linked national tourism to patriotism, but also to values of freedom and democracy in the face of fascism in Europe. At the same time, she notes this was also a response to similar domestic tourism strategies in the United States which were seen as a threat to tourism in Mexico (ibid., p. 111).

Today, the subway stations in Mexico City are papered with large posters advertising eco/ethnic touring all over the country – usually celebrating the indigenous cultures living there for urban Mexicans to ‘explore’ rather than the modernity promised through state-led development or resort projects. In 2006 the Mexican government, through SECTUR (*Secretaría de Turismo*), launched a program called ‘*Un Turismo Para Todos*’ (A Tourism for Everyone) aimed at increasing the movement of Mexican nationals to touristic sites within the country. This program was designed to replace a previous program aimed at developing mass tourism. The emphasis in *Un Turismo para Todos* more centred on ‘sustainable’ and ‘accessible’ touristic development (the so-called ‘democratization’ of tourism). Similarly, several campaigns in Colombia have been aimed at encouraging domestic tourism, including “*Para Todo lo que Quieres Vivir, la Respuesta es Colombia*” launched in 2013 and “*Vive Colombia, Viaja para Ella*” in 2006<sup>21</sup> which focus on presenting Colombia as a ‘secure’ place for nationals to travel and the possibility to see in Colombia all the things tourists might be looking for elsewhere. As I explain in the following chapter, the arrival of the resort chain Decameron in Leticia in 2005 largely propelled the growth of domestic tourists visiting Amazonas. Of the close to 40,000 tourists visiting Leticia every year, over 30,000 of those are ‘domestic’ tourists from Andean and Coastal Colombia. In the case of El Alberto, the vast majority of tourists visiting the *balnearios* in Ixmiquilpan are middle class tourists from Mexico City, Queretaro and other major urban centres. In fact, it is probably safe to say that the only international tourists visiting the region in the past few years have been drawn by the *Caminata* as a project that has circulated well beyond the circulations of the *balnearios* (see Chapter 5). Much like previous campaigns, though, ‘*Un Turismo para Todos*’ is situated in a particular politics that speaks to the broader dynamics I have been outlining. As I argue below, these dynamics of domestic tourism produce new ‘developed subjectivities’ as well as new hierarchies of appropriate touristic behaviour that mobilizes the ‘freedom’ of neoliberal mobility in ways that continue to underline the global inequalities in which it is embedded.

According to SECTUR, only 38% of Mexican nationals can be said to ‘travel’ (in the touristic sense), and the goal of ‘*Un Turismo Para Todos*’ is to increase to 60% the number of Mexicans “able to enact their right to rest and leisure” (*Secretaría de Turismo*, 2011). At the same time, there is a decisive move away from older state-driven forms of tourism development to an emphasis on private enterprise and investment. As a development strategy, one of the key claims made is that “national tourists spend the most while travelling and for this reason they are the factor for promoting economic development in the regions

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<sup>21</sup> “For everything you want to live, the answer is Colombia”, and “Live Colombia, Travel for Her”



[states]” (ibid., 2011, p. 23, my translation). The considerations, however, go far beyond what tourism development does economically.

For example ‘*Un Turismo para Todos*’ emphasizes being able to tour as a marker of the growth of free time, thereby indicating development and modernization. In one sense, I think the desire to produce tourists is also a claim against the inequalities of a global system that is far more stringent about the movement of certain people over others.<sup>22</sup> ‘*Un Turismo Para Todos*’ begins with an appeal to the right to tour and to vacation time that locates its heritage in post-war France and the development of labour laws in advanced capitalist society. Much is made within tourism studies literature of tourism as the product of the industrial/post-industrial world – that system of production that allowed for free time and disposable income, along with transportation systems and technologies. It is almost by rote that scholars outline the history of touring as stemming from industrialization and the extension of free time through labour legislation.<sup>23</sup> On this reading, tourism becomes an inevitable outcome of a development process (progress) that, even in critical undertakings, is largely seen as an effect of other grander processes and the actualization of freedom understood as a universal value rather than a specific historic construction.

However, the program design also states that it is “committed to the fight against inequalities and against exclusion of all those who have a different culture, limited financial means or who live in developing countries” (*Secretaría de Turismo*, n.d., p. 7, my translation). Thus there is a dual claim going on here: on the one hand, being able to tour is an effect and marker of progress and on the other hand, actively developing touring capacity is part of a necessary struggle those in developing countries face in their exclusion from the neoliberal subjectivity that allows access to the type of travelled cosmopolitanism so valued by contemporary capitalism. At the same time a claim to more equal access to neoliberal subjectivity (through mobility) works to draw attention to these differentiations of access, less space is afforded to the implications of the types of subjectivities and work needed to make it possible. It also appeals to a neoliberal articulation of freedom as unfettered access and choice as the strategy through which subjects participate in their own self-government.

The particular kind of touring capacity that should be developed is also clearly outlined in ‘*Un Turismo Para Todos*’. As stated: “tourism for all should not be diluted to only the action of *doing* tourism, but rather the capacity to offer the possibility to *live* tourism as an authentic and global experience in a manner that contributes to the complete growth and development of the person [the self]” (*Secretaría de Turismo*, n.d., p. 7, emphasis in original, my translation). This provides tourists the opportunity to develop what they call emotional intelligence which “permits us to be adaptive and participate in a productive manner in daily

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<sup>22</sup> Bianchi (2014) has looked at policies of ‘social tourism’ that adopt the position that those who do not tour face barriers to full inclusion in society. This position, while addressing inequalities of access to mobility, also operates on the assumption that touristic movement is both good and a necessary feature of full membership or participation.

<sup>23</sup> Debbie Lisle (2010) provides an interesting alternative reading of tourism development as related to specific moral projects through the temperance movement and Victorian values that formed the basis of Thomas Cook’s early tours (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of this).

activities” (ibid.). These tourists are conscientious and self-aware, able to adapt and be flexible within a changing social and economic space. Importantly, it is this flexibility which allows people to be most productive and access the global economy. Mowforth and Munt also point to how what they call the “new affluent southerner” makes use of touring as a deployment of their class consumption, but also can mobilize touring to network with people from the North with similar interests and more resources (2008, p. 119). This last point is somewhat problematic because of the ways that domestic and international tourism are often quite segregated, but the overall production of a type of self-making through tourism is an important part of its appeal and an often missing piece of how tourism development recasts subjectivities in the Global South.

Yet along with promoting domestic tourism through the language of accessing freedom, global hierarchies between how tourists from different developmental contexts can access that freedom ‘correctly’ are also entrenched. Particularly during my research in Leticia, I noted a strong resistance to the arrival of Colombian tourists and judgements about their behaviour.<sup>24</sup> For many of the tourism workers I interviewed, Colombian tourists were the most undesirable of all. In fact the start of the tourism boom, viewed by many with great distaste, was frequently located in the drop in airline prices and the arrival of Decameron, both of which (along with national promotional campaigns) spurred an upsurge in the number of domestic arrivals.

In contrast, foreign tourists were almost always viewed positively; indeed comparisons were often drawn between Colombians and others (particularly Europeans) in terms of their environmental consciousness, cultural awareness, independent or critical capacity – overall, their ability to manage their consumption and their mobility appropriately. As Andrés, the manager of one tourism site along the highway put it, “now this middle class [in Colombia] has access to travel, but still doesn’t have the mentality of the middle class. When they travel they believe themselves to be part of the upper class and act accordingly, but without having, without being, they act like people with money without money” (Personal Interview, August 15, 2012, my translation). From Europe himself, he went on to talk about his annoyance at how Colombian tourists always want to show-off (as he put it) about their various trips around the country. Imagining challenging them, he said “so, are you going to enjoy your trip, or are you going to tell me about all your other trips, because if you want I can tell you about all the trips I have done that you have not and never will” (ibid.). In the same moment that he linked Colombian access to travel to their ability to enter into a global ‘class’ of tourists, he could differentiate them from himself (as a tourist and a business owner from Europe) for the manner in which they were unable to manage speaking appropriately about their mobility, while more seasoned travellers learn certain rules that govern these conversations. He was also able to make use of his own freedom to travel more widely than most Colombian tourists (Colombian nationals have an exceptionally difficult visa process

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<sup>24</sup> Because of the particularities of my research site, I was not able to see how this might be playing out in the context of Mexico. I am aware of taking some liberties here conflating processes between the two contexts, but my sense is that this is a more general trend in several regions of Latin America.

for most countries<sup>25</sup>) as a marker of his superiority and of their underdevelopment through their limited access to this freedom, obscuring how this access is also being restricted by global structures that script Colombian nationals as potential refugees or terrorists.

Similarly, one of the principle ways in which people in Leticia contest touristic movement is through desires for better, more conscientious tourists (lower quantity and higher quality, as it is often referred to). The ‘quality distinctions’ are drawn out on largely the same terms that exclude Colombian tourists above and privilege an image of a ‘fully developed’ cosmopolitan traveller. As Bianchi has noted, the tourism industry’s recent attention to ‘carrying capacity’, as a mechanism for regulating access to touristic sites and making tourism more ‘sustainable’, is based on specific value assumptions, such as the privileging of “low volume/high spending (quality) tourists” and obscures how this is embedded in the existing inequalities of access to tourism (as a privilege open to those who can afford it) (2009, p. 268). He notes particularly that the language of scarcity, increasingly used in tourism, can “serve to conceal underlying arrangements of power” (ibid.), a dynamic that plays out in the discursive links made between concerns about the environmental impacts of tourism in Leticia and the ‘poor quality’ behaviour of domestic tourists.

As I explore in Chapter 4, the Valle del Mezquital has a completely different relationship to urban centres in Mexico (especially Mexico City) than Leticia (Amazonas) does to Andean Colombia. The middle class subjects who tour the *Caminata* are also presented with a completely different (and potentially more potent) push-back against the claims of their mobility. While not being compared to foreign tourists, they are more openly confronted by other forms of mobility, particularly that of undocumented migrants. For example, Javier, one of the park workers I spoke to, noted that an aim he saw in the *Caminata* was to show students from Mexico City how they can cross the border and compete in the global economy because of their education, while those in El Alberto cannot (Personal Interview, February 10, 2012). At the same time the *Caminata* has also been criticized for the ways that it fuels a middle-class fetish for harrowing stories of migrant journeys and overly simplified appeals to social justice (Gordon, Dec 29, 2006). On paper, the *Caminata* can look like socially conscious voyeurism through which urban middle-class Mexicans can practice their own appropriate subjectivity by playing in illegality; however, its politics and ambiguity do ultimately make it much harder to capture within this story.

Importantly, none of the specific projects mentioned here should be read merely as national or state-making projects (though they certainly operate on those terms as well). ‘*Un Turismo Para Todos*’, and other such programs, are not iterations of dominance that come from above, but they *are* part of a transnational design of movement and its appropriate subjects. In looking at this program here, I am interested not in what it says ‘about Mexico’, but for what it tells us about contemporary articulations of freedom as movement and how this sits in rather contradictory ways with claims about global inequality. Although a very

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<sup>25</sup> According to the Visa Restriction Index in 2013, Colombia ranks in 65<sup>th</sup> place, alongside Oman, Sierre Leone, Tunisia, and Uganda for the ease of access nationals from these countries have to visas; Finland, Sweden, and the U.K. are all ranked 1<sup>st</sup> (<https://www.henleyglobal.com/>).

limited analysis of these dynamics, I suspect the dynamics of how touristic subjectivities within the Global South are being constructed and laying claim to neoliberal freedom, along with the re-articulations of global hierarchies between differently mobile subjects (even different tourists), are quite revealing. This puts so-called domestic tourists as much within the transnational politics of touristic mobility and tourability as the more often analysed global tourist. For the purposes of this dissertation, the frictions of domestic tourism reveal important iterations of but also tensions in neoliberal freedom and aspirations for its universality.

### **Whiteness in Tourable Places: Race, work, and performances of non-indigeneity<sup>26</sup>**

In the previous sections I have looked at how tourism development taps into desires for a certain kind of freedom, found in the self-actualizing, fluid mobility of travel. I have argued that these claims to freedom also require the production and productivity of tourable subjectivities and also combine with a particular rationalization of tourism development in ways that depoliticize the terms of that development. As a final point in this chapter I want to look at how a more differentiated view of tourable subjects provides insight into the racial dynamics of tourability through which the power to govern what counts as tourable and the neoliberal freedom of touristic movement are enacted. In particular I want to suggest that while racialized hierarchies inflect the ways people are able to access mobility (who gets to be a tourist and who is called on to be toured and how), race also plays an important role in differentiating tourable subjects and their power to shape tourable places. I use this as a way to introduce a concern with how work and relations of work in tourable places are shaped by the dynamics of local contexts and the circulations of transnational processes, a theme that carries through the remainder of this dissertation.

In critical studies of tourism, much is made of the various forms of whiteness that tourists perform or are able to perform through touring (Saldanha, 2007; Aitchison, 2001). But race and particularly performances of whiteness or non-indigeneity are important in the practice of being appropriately tourable, as I saw in both Leticia and Ixmiquilpan. That is, being able to be toured and offer tourism as being appropriately developed is also restricted by particular racial and colonial understandings of work, service, and difference.

Although this was something that came out during my time in Mexico, I was particularly struck by the mobilizations of race during my conversations with hostel managers and tour operators in Leticia. I started to notice a theme in conversations around racialized understandings of work. One of the most trenchant stereotypes about indigenous people in Leticia (those who are from the communities surrounding the city) is that they are lazy and do not like to work. In contrast, it is argued that Colombians from other urban centres of the country (or foreigners) – often referred to as *los blancos* (the white people) – come to Leticia with a work ethic that allows businesses to grow and tourism to develop. One way this works is to argue that to offer touristic services requires a particular kind of

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<sup>26</sup> I am using whiteness and non-indigeneity somewhat interchangeably here because of their contextual linking for tour guides in Leticia. These relations are also bound up in distinctions of class, rural/urban, and language, and a more detailed analysis of these distinctions would be necessary to make this argument in the Mexican context.

knowledge – knowledge of tourists, their needs, desires – that those who are racially other do not have. So, for example, in a discussion with Nicolás, a hostel owner, about what he called the populist desire to have indigenous communities run their own touring I was told:

so, now look at Chocó, look at the blacks in Chocó...we take them out of their hammocks, they spend all day in the hammock, *mambeando coca* and eating fish, and we look at these lazy blacks and we give them money so that they can have tourists and do what they want with the tourists. And the tourists are going to say that this is not what they expected. In contrast, we, we are justified because we know that we are selling a service, because we are not blacks or indigenous, we are different people. Since we know how to give service, it is justified to us [to run these services]. (Personal Interview, June 28 & 29, 2012, my translation)

In less overt ways, I heard the same type of argument made about the role of tour agencies in teaching the indigenous communities about the capacities they would need to receive tourists or about the ways they had to work to train their indigenous employees to show up on time, work consistently, and treat tourists in acceptable ways. This argument was predicated on being racially (called ‘culturally’) ‘closer’ to the tourists – a position from which intermediaries could both assert their power over the indigenous toured *and* their privileged access to the cosmopolitan subjectivity of tourists.

At the same time the pressure for indigenous people to be indigenous enough to be toured was also clear. Tour agencies visit communities up river like Macedonia and La Libertad precisely because people there ‘dress up’ for tourists in ways that are easily scripted as authentic difference. In the latter part of a joint interview at one family-run tour agency, the owner’s wife Ana asserted that

when I visit communities, or if I am a tourist, I want to go and see them living in malocas and eating traditional food, all the foods from here. But no, there when I arrive, they are living in modern houses that are very bad eating and drinking soft-drinks and cookies or rice, all the food of the city. And that is not different culture. That is the same culture as us and for this reason it is not worth it for tourists to see. They [tourists] come to visit other cultures and the only difference they see is the culture of misery. (Personal Interview, June 27, 2012, my translation)

As I became aware through the course of my stay, this is not an uncommon sentiment in Leticia – one that is mobilized in tourism to draw out and define distinctly appropriate tourable subjectivities. Strategies to cope or manage the various ‘displacements’ of the region play an important role here, but I am interested in how defining difference becomes the work and prerogative of these intermediaries as not only in a privileged position within the local tourism industry, but also as having access to knowledge of *what* that appropriate difference should look like.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The other side of this argument is that to be tourable, indigenous communities do have to fulfill certain ‘developed’ requirements, something that I talk about in Chapter 5 as it was revealed in conversations about the community of Nazaret’s decision to block tourists.

More than just an assertion of racialized stereotypes, these distinctions are also about a racialized distinction of work in the making of tourability. For several tour operators, many of the communities they visit with tourists are not ‘ready’ or ‘prepared’ to offer what tourists need; ‘they’ are more suited to offering artisan goods or taking tourists on walks in the jungle because that is what they ‘live’ every day. As Nicolás said in our discussion “I think it is one thing to be indigenous and have the capacity to teach the world what it is to be indigenous, and another thing is to have the capacity to be a tour operator” (Personal Interview, June 28 & 29, 2012, my translation). Or, for Samuel, a tour operator more critical of the way indigenous communities are ‘used’ by agencies in the city, “they show their culture, their territory, their way of life and in exchange receive very little” (Personal Interview, June 27, 2012, my translation). In these and other instances, an important distinction was being drawn between the *work* of intermediaries in servicing and facilitating the mobility of tourists and the *‘living’* of indigenous peoples that could then be shown or toured. Put simply, this latter was by and large not designated as work. Or to look like work, it had to fit the desires and needs of tourists.

For example, I heard some discussion of the difficulty of using local community guides for jungle walks because walking through the jungle is such a part of daily life that these guides will often not stop to point out interesting plants or give very detailed answers to questions – those very touristic demands for ‘knowing’ space and difference in recognizable and photographic ways. By training and certifying to do the latter, these people could then *work* as tour guides, seen as something more than ‘merely living’ the jungle. This training involves going to workshops and certification programs at SENA (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*)<sup>28</sup>, but also involves learning a particular way of talking about the jungle (vegetation and fauna, traditional medicines) that can be seen, at least in part, as constructing a totally different way of walking through and engaging with nature (Tobón & Ochoa, 2010, p. 53). While this shift is complex and important, what I often saw and heard in Leticia defined the difference as one between work and life – between insertion in the capitalist economy and an intuitive life closer to nature.

This understanding of work replicates similar colonial distinctions such as those that justified doctrines of *terra nullius* on the basis that working the land was the only thing that could signify ownership. It also captures *indigenista* ideas of the noble natives who live closer to nature and who simply *know* intuitively how to live in the environments in which they are situated. The problem in Leticia is that other forms of work necessary to the livelihoods of those living in the communities (maintaining *chagras*, hunting and fishing, household work) and the pressures ‘touristic work’ places on the time and space to do these others can be ignored because of the ways they are undervalued as unpaid or ‘cultural’ work. At the same time this puts pressure on people in these communities to ‘be indigenous enough,’ the work this takes is not taken at all seriously.

Reflecting on this dynamic in Leticia reveals two important things about the messy politics of producing tourability. First, I think it tells us more about how the intermediary

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<sup>28</sup> National Learning Service, the institution in Leticia which trains and certifies guides and other professionals.

position is produced and maintained, the racial strategies it mobilizes, and the way a performance of non-indigeneity could also be an important drive in the desires for tourability. In other words, being able to carve out this position is quite enticing. Being able to manage the business of tourism, as well as the tourists themselves are important skills and markers of development but also being able to distinguish these skills as ones that indigenous people are excluded from because of their culture (race) is useful in securing the position guides hold with tourists. Of course, nothing is this simple: there are other voices and responses, and even the positions of the tour operators are more complicated at times. But, I suspect these performances do more than we may think in making the ‘tourism option’ so attractive.

Second, though, it says something important about how race matters in tourism that may be overlooked by an emphasis on race relations between tourists and those toured. We hear repeatedly that one of the central aims of tourism is to promote friendship and understanding through cultural encounter. In effect, tourism is touted as an anti-racist strategy for combatting global cultural misunderstanding. The drive to promote a more ‘authentic’ possibility for understanding has been one of the key triggers in changing patterns of tourism (from moves from mass resort tourism to community based tourism, travel for leisure to voluntourism) (see Palacios, 2010 for a view of voluntourism as providing more authentic and meaningful affective encounters).<sup>29</sup> I would take issue with this assertion as far as tourists go regardless, but it is also the case that we can see ways that tourism development does nothing to combat racism between different tourable subjects. Tourism development in Leticia has hardly made anyone living in the city limits have a different opinion of those living in the communities – if anything it has reinforced or made worse the racial stereotypes of what the ‘indians’ are good for.

Thus, far from combatting racism, the governance of tourability can also make use of racializing strategies in the management of touristic sites and, in this example, the preservation of intermediary positions as a site of power. When tourism is promoted as building global understanding and as anti-racism this not only ignores how this ‘understanding’ or tolerance is based on a liberal articulation of difference (returning to the discussion of Wendy Brown), but also restricts a critical view once again to the tourists as the bearers and markers of who acts and what tourism does. Put simply, it only seems to matter if tourism is an anti-racist strategy for white people to become less racist; it does not seem to matter as far as everyone else is concerned. That we can sideline this aspect of the racial and colonial production of tourability to focus on how tourists get to develop their cosmopolitan awareness of difference (and focus on amending or reforming *their* racist practices as markers of global ‘progress’) speaks to how concealed certain racial power relations are in strategies of neoliberal multiculturalism and mobility. Ultimately, revealing some of the messiness of making tourability in places like Leticia can serve to redirect attention to the complex means through which power operates in facilitating touristic mobility – the costs, and the cautions of actualizing that movement.

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<sup>29</sup> In fact in relation to volunteer programs, he argues that the development aid goal is largely unattainable and that more focus should be placed on the cultural understanding goal as the main aim of voluntourism.

## Conclusion

These introductory chapters have been about setting out a framework for studying tourability as transnational politics and revealing the concept of freedom articulated through touristic mobility as part of neoliberal governance. In doing so, I have shown how rethinking tourability as bound up in transnational processes and as a condition of possibility for touristic movement allows for an analysis of the frictions and contested politics of making places tourable as central features of mobility. Through analysis of the UN WTO and governance of tourism development I have also shown how touristic freedom is being mobilized in the techniques of government that characterize contemporary neoliberal rule. Importantly, I think it is worth emphasizing again that this is not to say all manifestations or claims to freedom through touristic movement are merely enactments of this government; rather, my aim in highlighting the very specific form of freedom, and the very specific image of a ‘borderless world’ used by the UN WTO and others, is to distinguish, as Rose does, freedom as a “formula of power” and freedom as resistance (1999, p. 65).

The second central argument presented in these chapters is that the production of this freedom is only made possible in the messy encounters of producing tourable sites in which people challenge, negotiate, reshape, or reject the demands, expectations, or aims of tourability. In this chapter I introduced examples of this ‘messiness’, such as the racializations of work or the re-enactments of global hierarchies of inequality between first and third world tourists, as themes and as a method of analysis I carry forward in this dissertation. I develop this analysis in the following chapter in Leticia, Colombia, the second of the research sites I visited in 2012. As I noted in the introduction, I begin here because of the ways the organization of tourism in the region exemplifies many of the trends I have been looking at more generally here. Thus, while the situation is, of course, more complicated, Leticia provides a useful entry point to the production of tourability, before delving into some of the more creative ways tourability is being reimagined in a place like El Alberto.



### Chapter 3: Mobilities in the Colombian Amazon: Shifting borders, subjects, and landscapes in the production of a tourist destination

In early August of 2012 I was conducting interviews in and around Leticia, Colombia spending many days wandering from one place to another meeting people and asking for a few moments of their time. I had been told about Absalón on a few occasions and he seemed like a good person to talk to. Absalón and his family run a small ethno-eco tourism lodge (as they call it) that doubles as their home and lands in their community of Monilla Amena. From the highway where the *colectivo* drops you off at the side of the road it is a good 30-40 minute walk to reach the site. I had been there the week before and had spoken to some family members who told me to come back Saturday afternoon to meet with and interview Absalón. On my return trip on Saturday two young Spanish-speaking women got off the *colectivo* with me and started walking in the same direction towards *Monifue Amena* as the site is known. I hung back a ways and walked alone behind them so as not to arrive at the same time. As we walked in the hot afternoon sun, a truck came along behind me. The road consisted of two paved wheel paths, and since this was barely enough room for the truck itself, I stepped aside and let it pass. It stopped up ahead for the two young women and offered them a ride for the rest of the way they were going. They pulled away and I was left on my own. Further down the road, almost at *Monifue*, I encountered them again walking back the way we had come. They seemed confused and when they saw me they stopped me to ask if I knew where they could visit with the community here. It seemed somehow that they had not encountered *Monifue* and so I explained that was what they were looking for. They responded by saying ‘but we read in Lonely Planet that we could see three ethnicities here and share with them, see rituals and dances and such from the community, but we got to this ethno-eco tourism site and there was a satellite television and a man with a monkey sitting in a maloca watching the Olympics on a big screen TV. They told us it was a private house’.

Some months later, reading this story in my notes, I realized that it encapsulates all the expectations, entitlements, contestations, and negotiations going on in this corner of the Colombian Amazon. I don’t know why Absalón sent these women away; having just met him, I was too shy to ask. He greeted me warmly and sat and talked with me for over an hour, with the London Olympics playing in the background and the monkey (often) on my lap. I do know that *Monifue Amena* was built with funding from the *Posadas Turísticas* project, an initiative of the Colombian government to give communities and individuals funding to build lodging and the other things necessary for ethno-eco touring in their homes. Although it was meant as a community project, it failed to materialize as such and is now simply operated by one family that sees all the benefit from it. I also know that they primarily operate for school groups visiting from other parts of Colombia or elsewhere and that it is expensive and time consuming to put on a ‘show’ for random tourists who happen to stop by. They would probably not have been able to charge more than 20,000 pesos (about 10\$) for their efforts without risking being accused of ripping people off and so perhaps the women were sent away for this reason. Or maybe they just wanted to watch the Olympics. Whatever the reason, their small choice was enough to disrupt the tantalizing narratives of Lonely Planet which promises ethnicities and an enlarged world view on offer, and always

ready and waiting for any who arrive. For me the questions raised by this experience cut at the heart of this dissertation project: how are expectations about tourability constructed? On whose terms? How does simply going there entitle tourists to difference or their own self-fulfillment, both presented in ways easily understood? How do people make decisions about how they perform as toured and how do these decisions impact on the possibilities of touristic movement?

Leticia sits in the far south-east corner of Colombia, on the shores of the Amazon River along the border with Brazil and Peru. The Brazilian city of Tabatinga shares the land border with Leticia, while a short ways across the river you can visit the small Peruvian community of Santa Rosa. There are a variety of ways tourists end up in Leticia: some, including most of the Colombian tourists visiting the region, arrive by plane from Bogotá. Others arrive by boat from up river in Iquitos, Peru, or down river in Manaus, Brazil. The touristic circuit along the Amazon River is formed by Iquitos-Leticia-Manaus (and for those who want to go further, Belem do Pará) along which thousands move on journeys to discover this ‘wild’ and ‘unknown’ land. Within the border-region movement is not regulated by checkpoints and you do not require passports or visas to travel from one city to the other, though going further inland in any of the three countries will require documents. Although tourists can arrive from any of the three countries, the majority of tourists staying more than one night before catching the next boat out will stay in Leticia as it has more facilities than Santa Rosa (which is quite small) and tends to be more touristic than Tabatinga, whose economy is largely driven by the military and government presence.

Along with tourism, the border region is also a hub for the drug trade, among other types of licit and illicit products, which forms the main economic basis of the region outside of government and military jobs, or the formal and informal work associated with tourism. In addition to the flora and fauna of the region and ‘the river’ itself, which are key to its touristic appeal, the region is home to various indigenous groups, among them *Ticuna*, *Huitoto*, *Cocama* and *Yagua* people, whose communities and reserves (especially and increasingly on the Colombian side of the border) are seen as important elements of this touristic destination. Just north along the river from the municipality of Leticia is Puerto Nariño, the only other municipality in the Department of Amazonas. With about 2000 inhabitants, this small town is also an important part of the circuit as it was certified in 2012 as Colombia’s first, and only, sustainable tourism site. It is only accessible from Leticia and so relies on the touristic circuits and, increasingly, the major touring companies to bring and attract visitors. The town has banned the use of motorized vehicles, and even bicycles, so that its streets are quiet pedestrian walkways. It has also implemented a system of garbage and recycling disposal that leaves many in Leticia quite envious. In contrast, Leticia, a town of just under 40,000 is overflowing with motorbikes and, more recently, the arrival of more cars that contribute to noise and pollution as they meander through the poorly maintained and often treacherous streets.

Touristic movement has had a profound impact in Leticia and the tri-border region. In ways that differ from or build on previous forms of colonial intervention and economic development, I argue that tourism and the desires of touristic mobility are reshaping

landscapes and subjectivities in ways designed to facilitate what I have called ‘neoliberal movements’ of people and capital. I say designed to because, as we will see, these attempts often fail, or are reshaped through the particularity of histories and the contestation of people involved. Although I left my time in Leticia feeling weighted down by the intractability of it all and dismayed at the ease with which neoliberal development is replicated, those people whose work produces tourability need to be seen as transnational political agents whose negotiations reveal the complex politics of making landscapes, subjects, and the possibility of movement (as Absalón did, in his way).

When I arrived in Leticia it did not take long to realise that the type of touring I was encountering here was very different from what I had encountered in El Alberto, which is to say that it was much more familiar. I remember that the word that most prominently came to mind to explain the situation in the emails I was sending was ‘boring’. By boring I meant predictable, and by that I meant exactly the kind of images of jungle, animals, and indigenous people that fill stereotypes of what this kind of touring looks like. Here I saw signs advertising natives in ‘traditional’ clothes performing through ceremonies, dances, and the sale of artisan goods the expectations of what the ‘indigenous other’ should be. I saw photos of Kapax (also known as the ‘Colombian Tarzan’) wrestling with giant snakes. I was told, repeatedly, that I had to visit sites like the Isla de los Micos, Puerto Nariño, or the communities along the river, otherwise what was I going to say that I had done while I was in the Amazon? I also saw dozens of tour agencies and began to hear stories of how badly tour operators and guides treat the people in communities they visit, how poorly they are remunerated for their time, and how they put on shows for tourists that have little to do with their daily lives. It is largely for this reason that I am beginning my analysis here, in Leticia, and not at the beginning of my travels. Leticia, frustratingly, depressingly, is a very familiar story of neocolonial-neoliberal tourism. Yet there is more to it than that, and so what follows also weaves stories of some of the contestations over movement and, especially, touristic movement, that put forward challenges either to move otherwise or not move there at all.

Tourists are drawn to the region, currently in numbers that surpass yearly the population of Leticia itself, by the jungle, animals, the river, and the promise of authentic indigeneity. However, these are not things that interest me in and of themselves as a researcher, and they are not why I was drawn to the region. In March of 2011 as I was preparing to write my proposal for research, I quite randomly came across a news story about a *Ticuna* community near Leticia called Nazaret that had instituted a ban on tourists, enforced by armed community members who deter boats from stopping along the river (*The Guardian*, March 25, 2011). This story, it seemed, had erupted and circulated in specific international media sources at this particular moment, though by some reports it was in fact a much longer standing ban that tourists and tour operators had been failing to comply with, forcing the community to take this more direct action (*The Daily Mail*, June 3, 2011). The reported reasons for the ban, or the active blockade, included the disrespectful practices of tourists (leaving too much garbage, taking pictures without asking) and the fact that little of the money from tourism development was ending up in the community. Interestingly, another reported reason was that community members felt that tourists were asking overly

invasive questions about traditional medicines and knowledges that community members did not feel should be shared within a touristic encounter (a key challenge to the ways the ‘right to tour’ is articulated as ‘cultural access’ and an apolitical encounter that is not imbricated by power).

I was fascinated by this story for what it could mean or tell us about the participation of those who are toured in circuits of privilege and the moments of disrupting these circuits by reclaiming inaccessibility. Later, I also became interested in how this action might be understood as a refusal to do the *work* of producing tourability, that is, as both a blockade and a stoppage. In a transnational border zone shaped by various kinds of mobility, most of which are more politicized/policed (and generally considered more problematic for the state) than the movement of tourists I thought this kind of action might be coming at a particularly interesting moment. At the same time, this kind of response seems quite fitting to a narrative of ethical travel that declares that what we need in order to respond to this challenge is to institute a more moral or ethical way of ‘going there’. I saw some of this ethical language in the comments posted to articles about the blockade that chastise these ‘bad’ tourists in favour of other more responsible ways to travel, or narrowed the issue to a simplistic account of tradition in need of protection from modernity. This situation also raised all kinds of questions for me about access (touristic and research) and how people could respond to the desires to ‘grasp’ and ‘know’ by reclaiming certain terms of movement and access.

My impulse to go to Leticia was entirely initiated by this story, yet I did not approach naively assuming that the story that had appeared to me in international circulations would be what I would find there. And indeed, I was not disappointed because it was not. The effect of inaccessibility was not, as my political inclinations might desire, to make people rethink entirely the rights-claims of tourists. What I found was a much more confusing array of responses that represented the story of what had happened in Nazaret as untrue, misunderstood, anecdotal, political, authentic, or many other things. As I explore in Chapter 5, the stories of Nazaret did not *do* much in terms of the everyday practices of tourists, but the responses that were provoked by my questions about the event revealed various tensions for people working in tourism in their thinking about movement, touristic right, authenticity, and community. Rarely, though, was Nazaret brought up without my instigation, and rarely did the conversation about it last more than a few minutes of much longer interviews. In a sense, this pattern reflects the oscillation of presence and absence through which I experienced my initiating research interest during this time. Its location and subordination within broader dynamics, contradicting stories, or other concerns confirmed to me what I had suspected on setting out: that Leticia, sitting on the tri-border in a region where even the river moves too fast and breaks its banks from time to time, is a rich and revealing context in which to see how touristic mobility makes claims and is reshaping landscapes.

In the following chapter I start by sketching out some of the processes that shaped the tri-border region through resources extraction and colonial intervention and absence. I use this as a context from which to tell the two central stories of tourism development in Leticia. The first is the story of Amazonian entrepreneur, Mike Tsalikis (known in some American

press as Jungle Mike). His activities to open tourism in the 1970s and 80s set the stage for its redevelopment in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly with the arrival of the multinational resort company Decameron, the second big story of tourism in Leticia. The story of the arrival of Decameron reveals how practices of privatization in tourism are part of its contemporary governance, yet also, in this case, failed to create the self-governing subjects desired. Intermingled with these stories I analyse how touristic mobility is being performed, facilitated, and at times contested through the way tourable space is being produced and the types of subjectivities desired by capitalist rhetorics of conservation and entrepreneurialism. Using critical scholarship on development and conservation in Colombia, I argue that conservationist rhetorics mixed with national security projects in Colombia are attempting to reshape landscapes of the forest as safe and productive, and smooth out its 'weediness' in order to make the forest tourable on the terms of neoliberal mobility. I then reflect on the role of different 'tourism entrepreneurs' in Leticia and how their work facilitates touristic movement or is challenged. I end this chapter with an examination of what I call the developing uncertainties about touristic mobility in Leticia that reflect the difficult and messy 'encounters' of the discourses of neoliberal freedom and market rationality that I outlined in the previous chapters.

#### **'The border is different here': Absence and intervention in the Colombian Amazon**

Travelling up the Amazon from Leticia to Iquitos, Peru can be a bit complicated. The journey, which for many starts in Tabatinga, Brazil, even if you are actually staying in Colombia, begins around three in the morning and involves catching the rapid boat at the dock in Santa Rosa, Peru. The immigration check point there is open irregularly, and certainly not at three in the morning, and so you have to get your passport stamped the day before you leave (first at the airport in Leticia to say you have left Colombia and then at Santa Rosa to say you are entering Peru – despite the fact that you will then spend that night back in Colombia). On the way back it can be equally complicated, as I realized returning from Iquitos in late July. In the small boat-taxi that was taking me from the dock in Santa Rosa to Leticia, two fellow travellers heading on to Manaus in the following days became very worried about this and the fact that they were entering Colombia without the appropriate stamps. Our boat driver assured them they could get it done the next day (as I was going to), and that no one would care. They persisted, asking him to take them back to Peru because they had travelled extensively and knew that not having the right stamps can be a big problem at the border. He smiled, obviously accustomed to this. 'No' he said, 'the border is different here'.

The tri-border region, on the Colombian side called the Trapecio Amazónico (due to its odd shape, the result of bilateral agreements and international diplomatic efforts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), is unique in the way all complex border regions are. While we should be careful not to romanticize this difference as exceptional (there are plenty of borders in the world, and borders can be boring and mundane), like other border regions, the Trapecio is not a fixed or completely defined space, and this no less so for juridical borders. To give some sense of place, a backgrounder of sorts, my aim here is to give some accounts of the border as a site of intervention and absence. The play of absence and intervention was something that became prominent for me as I researched about and in Leticia from late June

to mid-August 2012. Hearing stories of different moments when focus on resources in the Amazon, or more recently with touring the ‘resource’ of the Amazon, have led to a pronouncement or intensification of the presence of state institutions and capital investment, coupled with consistent reflections on Leticia as an ‘island’, isolated and forgotten by the state or the outside world led me to reflect on how this interplay shaped my albeit temporary sense of this place. In the same way the presence and absence of Nazaret shaped my research, these stories are both meant as background setting to explain arguments to come, and travel notes on how the Trapecio appeared to me.

Leticia was originally founded in 1867 as a Peruvian port city along the Amazon River in that country’s department of Loreto. By the late 1920s the border region was reclassified such that Leticia became part of Colombian territory which now stretched to this important river access point and later the capital of the department of Amazonas. Further clarification of the border had to wait until 1932, however, when the town was occupied again by Peruvian forces sparking a war that ended with a much firmer border resolution that placed Leticia and the 120 kilometres of shoreline along the Amazon within Colombian jurisdiction. As a place only recently Colombian, the flexibility of the border and desires to make it firmer have been important aspects of Leticia’s landscape. Colombianization strategies in the 1930s and onwards replaced the Peruvianization strategies inhabitants had previously been subject to as migrants and indigenous people in the region changed nationalities (López Garcés, 2003). The work of making Colombianness was done especially by the Catholic church which has a strong presence, and long provided education in indigenous communities in the form of *internados*. Migration to the Amazon was encouraged by the state, along with the movement of troops and supplies as a means to fill the region with ‘Colombians’ and thus solidify claims to territory (ibid). Similarly, aspects of the Amazonian landscape, such as communal landholding and even the forest itself were seen as impediments to development and thus needing changed (Feijoo, 1994). More recently, people displaced from their land by state and non-state violence and the so-called war on drugs have been sent and/or encouraged to go to Leticia as a tranquil area, isolated from these problems. This image of tranquility, which is produced for tourists as well as prospective migrants, works, however, to erase other forms of violence that have shaped the landscape.

Booms of resources in the region have, importantly, all been about transnational processes of extraction and circulation. Additionally, the indigenous people affected were not uniquely ‘Colombian’, ‘Peruvian’, or ‘Brazilian’, but people inhabiting this region of Amazon across which, and across whose lives borders have cut in efforts to define and appropriate pieces. Another way to put it is to see regional history during and since the earliest colonizations as requiring indigenous peoples to live with and on mobile borders – between languages, administrations, racial and resource projects – and in the unstable borders between Spanish and Portuguese colonizers (Zárate Botía, 2003). As I show here, the presence or absence of the state in Leticia, or the presence or absence of Leticia in various states, has largely set the terms, though, of how these mobile borders have shaped life in the Trapecio.

The war with Peru was important for establishing the Colombian state's 'possession' of a small corner of the Amazon River. Although the river itself is estimated to be over six thousand kilometres long, Colombia can only claim possession to around 120 kilometres of shoreline. This access remains important for regional trade and for Colombia's inclusion in multilateral agreements that affect the Amazon Basin. 'The river', captured by the touristic imagination, is also an important draw for tourism marketing in the region and nationally. In the industry people note that Colombia is not a place tourists think of visiting to visit the Amazon, but Leticia's position between Iquitos and Manaus has made it part of an important touristic circuit, and has given the Ministry of Tourism a significant boasting opportunity.

Despite this, Leticia remains both absent and present within the nation. The region is little known and little represented in depictions of the nation, an absent and faraway place in the daily lives of Andean and Coastal Colombians. Historically people have also been seen as absent from the region, making it a blank space, a *terra nullius*, or a heart of darkness for colonization and civilizing missions. Its presence is fueled by an image as peripheral, as margin, as the space where daring colonizers went to explore, settle, and (hopefully) prosper. The peripheralization of the Amazon leads also to an analytic framework that sees Leticia as a faraway place, a remote part of Colombia that the state desperately stretches out to in an effort to touch and grasp. But its peripheralization is a deliberate process that has dictated how it belongs to the nation or how it enters into the sphere of politics or policy, not an essential condition. As a place through which various transnational processes move it is neither as remote nor as peripheral as we might think.

The Trapecio has never been without inhabitants, but neither can we essentialize these people as having lived in the same place forever. The three groups of indigenous people most commonly identified in Leticia are *Ticuna*, *Yagua*, and *Huitoto*, though there are many other names and places. Sometimes I heard people make claims that these ethnicities were not really 'from' Leticia, or that it is only the *Ticuna* who can claim to be from here as the rest were brought to work during the rubber boom. These claims, I would hazard, are based on desires to see indigenous belonging only in terms of stability and stasis, claims which fuel very touristic desires about indigenous people as authentic only through a lack of mobility. Movement and migration are said to always have been features of life in the region (Feijoo, 1994), yet these changed significantly with the impacts of colonial relations. Although on a much smaller scale than other parts of Latin America, the history of missions in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries had profound effect on indigenous people and how their communities and life ways were organized, especially through displacement and forced movement (Riano, 2003). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century other kinds of movement were being produced through the ongoing enslavement by Brazilian merchants looking for cheap labour and the burgeoning rubber industry controlled by the *Casa Araña* Company (operated by Peruvian merchants) and the British based Peruvian Amazon Company. The systems of forced labour and enslavement were devastating and meant that, for example, many *Ticuna* inhabitants remained separated and hidden by necessity in settlements (ibid., p. 43). Indeed for Riano the effects of the rubber industry produced the kinds of settlements and organization of people and communities in the region, including the river communities on the Peruvian side, which

historically were places of refuge for people trying to escape rubber traders (ibid., p. 47). She argues that the war between Peru and Colombia was largely driven by disputes over the rubber trade and over whom the indigenous labourers ‘belonged to’. The war itself similarly produced displacements where many inhabitants of river communities left and went further into the interior to avoid being drafted into either of the colonial armies (Feijoo, 1994).

Resource extraction was also important to other state-making processes such as the creation of formal national bodies to deal with natural resources and their ‘correct’ exploitation between 1919 and 1942 (Feijoo, 1994). Frontier expansion started slowly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became more rapid in the 20<sup>th</sup>, especially into the upper areas of the Amazon (Putumayo, Guaviare, Caquetá) where there was a heterogeneous movement of peasants without land, merchants, wealthy landowners, and cattle ranchers (Ortiz, 1984). The War of a Thousand Days between 1899 and 1902 was an important part of Amazonian expansion as it displaced thousands who then had to go in search of land or work. Ortiz also notes how certain policies such as mandating the use of paper money in transactions facilitated the rubber trade since “the only Colombians not touched by this economic policy were producers who sold in the export market, as they could exchange their goods for gold or foreign currency. Rubber extraction therefore became enticing, for the product attracted foreign buyers” (ibid., p. 207). However, as Zárate Botía points out, it may be faulty to put so much emphasis on these state practices as “the migratory and economic dynamic generated by the activities of the rubber trade overwhelmingly reduced the already weak capacity of the nation-states to control or direct, through policies or institutional presence, the process of border configuration in this part of the Amazon in the same way as the dynamics of territorial control generated by agents in the rubber economy” (2003, p. 301). By the end of the rubber boom in the 1920s little profit had made it from the Amazon to other regions of Colombia, a further type of spatial isolation, at the same time that missionary and government policy through the 1930s made large private land holdings in the Amazon possible and more common (Ortiz, 1984).

Although making Colombianness was an important project in the Trapecio, people also talk about a period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the state once again ignored this region of its territory, leaving it largely to the whims of other resource extractions. In the upper Amazon there was a significantly different context of settlement where in the 1960s and 70s, INCORA (*Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria*) worked to help colonists with demarcating boundaries, securing title, and giving credit to families to settle ‘new’ lands. SENA (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*), which now operates in Leticia and is responsible for accrediting guides working in the tourism industry, was also part of assisting *colonos* with loans for clearing pastureland and raising cattle (Ortiz, 1984). At the same time these processes replicated inequalities because poor peasants did not get access to the same kind of capital for development as larger agricultural groups, this was also done with reference to the Amazon region as “a virgin hinterland” (ibid., p. 216). Settlement plans worked by writing off or writing out any native inhabitants.

By the 1970s moves to ‘integrate’ indigenous people were on the rise with new missions and the invasion of fertile territories in the Amazon, mainly the lowlands. With the



increasing markets for animals, wood, and fish people turned to an incorporation of indigenous knowledges of the Amazon in hunting, fishing, and gathering wood to feed these markets (Feijoo, 1994). This was a continuing part of transforming indigenous people into exploited labour responsible for exploiting nature (a point I return to below in my discussion of how conservation is appearing as a narrative in tourism in Leticia). In conjunction with this, in 1975 a huge region of the Trapecio was designated as a National Natural Park (*Parque Nacional Natural Amacayacú* or PNNA) with its main entrance directly on the Amazon River close to the Isla de los Micos. According to Feijoo by the 1980s a new discourse developed that intervened in indigenous life by creating a system of reserves (resguardos and reservas indígenas) that adopted the idea that indigenous life was closer to nature and so the good care of the Amazon could be left to the experience and practices of indigenous peoples, at the same time good land was taken by colonists. Officials did not see a contradiction between the reserve system and the system of National Natural Parks being developed (hence the limited interest paid to the fact that many national parks contain indigenous reserves and resguardos *within* them, for example San Martín, Palmeras, and Mocagua in *Parque Nacional Natural Amacayacú*) (ibid.). In this context part of park mandates (particularly PNNA) has also been to strengthen and conserve indigenous forms of governance and community along the lines of the natural conservation of the area.

When people give a history of Leticia, they talk about cycles of booms and busts. Rubber, wood, fish, drugs, and tourism. All of these have been devastating in their own ways (though many might disagree with me about tourism here). The violences of the rubber industry were some of the worst, with mass enslavement and killing affecting thousands of *Ticuna*, *Huitoto*, *Yagua*, and others in the tri-border region (Micarelli, 2009). People also talk about the busts as a kind of reprieve and yet another kind of devastation. For example, Feijoo argues that with the decline of rubber, communities were faced with the challenges of re-establishing social relations that had been destroyed, a process that became fractured and difficult because of the various displacements and violences that had occurred (1994). These kinds of implications have also been felt in the drug trade (which I look at below) and in what for some is a bonanza in NGOs.

After the fish came the bonanza of the big intellectuals, from the universities who came and did investigations of all this culture. This was also about knowing all that we had. After all this came the bonanza of the NGOs, that divided us. NGOs go to work with one ethnicity or in one part of the department, or like an NGO I am in charge of this part, and another of this part, and so they divide us. (Personal Interview, August 3, 2012, my translation)

Beyond stories of labour, land, and resource exploitation other travellers appear as actors in the cycles of booms and busts.

The contradictions in the histories of movement in this region can be seen in the contemporary practices of ‘freely’ circulating movement felt for some all over Leticia while for others they are policed or stigmatized. You can cross the border between Leticia-Tabatinga-Santa Rosa without going through checkpoints or using passports and much of each economy relies on this movement. The freedom of movement at the border is also celebrated as an aspect of its tourability providing tourists the opportunity to visit all three

countries in one day (including two time zones). For some, like myself, it provides the opportunity to ‘visit Brazil’ without having to pay for a visa. However, borders are enforced through tourism in the way that specific distinctions are made in marketing and presentation between the three countries. For example, it is common to hear that tourists have the opportunity to try three different types of cooking, use three different types of money (although they are freely exchangeable across the tri-border), and hear three different types of music as these national distinctions have filtered into and worked to divide and distinguish the landscape. People also identify very clear distinctions between other nationalities, with a downward discrimination from Brazilians to Colombians, to Peruvians.

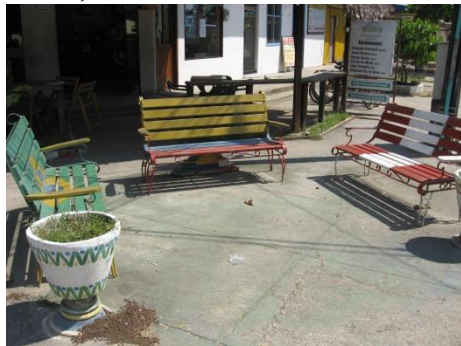


Photo: Commonly seen in central tourist areas of Leticia are benches painted with the three national flags (by the author).

Leticia has also become a hub of movement for people displaced in the interior not only because it is seen as a place of refuge, but also because of its proximity to a ‘better place’, Brazil. The perceived openness of the border provides the opportunity to claim asylum in Brazil where there are reportedly better schools and better services, though this of course does not always work out quite as smoothly (Moulin, 2007). My first trip to Tabatinga was on a night when the power had gone out in Leticia (a fairly common occurrence). We crossed the border on motorbike from the darkness of Leticia and my companion pointed to the city to ask what difference I saw, only to respond to his own question: “light!” As we drove down *Avenida de la Amistade*<sup>30</sup> he pointed to the schools and hospitals we went by, schools and hospitals everywhere in an effort to make Tabatinga a good place for Brazilians to come live and help secure the national border. The patterns of movement of people to the border region are thus greatly shaped by which side of the border they are coming from.

Similarly, people talk about Peruvians who cross the border to ‘take advantage’ of better services in Leticia because of the even more limited presence of the Peruvian state in Santa Rosa and surrounding areas. In recent years, dozens of Haitian migrants have also arrived in these border areas (along with the border region in Pucallpa, Peru) looking for a way into Brazil where they have been promised jobs in the booming economy (Personal Interview, July 6, 2012). Many of these people who arrived by a long and difficult boat journey had to continue on to Brazil where services are more readily accessible in places like

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<sup>30</sup> Friendship Avenue

Manaus (whereas the nearest services for refugees in Colombia are in Bogotá which is very difficult to get to). Displaced Colombians sent to Leticia are met with very limited housing, a high cost of living, and limited government services so that many have to turn to the *Pastoral Social* through the Catholic Church for assistance (ibid.). Most employment opportunities are informal, with the government, or, now, in the tourism industry and with little land and little way for the city to expand, making a living as a migrant in Leticia without capital is extremely difficult. The difference between how this borderzone appears for tourists and for others on the move is striking and reflects the very visible and daily experience of unequal mobilities (which is not just about the ability to move, but how that movement is facilitated or restricted).

Talking about displacement in Leticia one most frequently hears about the displacements from other parts of Colombia and the impact this movement is having on this small, enclosed city. However, there are other kinds of displacement underway that other voices point to. In particular, local indigenous organizations and those who work in or with people from the *resguardos* point to newer indigenous displacements that replicate previous patterns of forced movement or social upheaval during other colonial processes. There has been a significant migration of people from *resguardos* to the city in recent years due to lack of space on the limited *resguardos*, the loss of livelihood due to the bust in the drug trade, the draw of employment in tourism (for those who are able to attend SENA and become certified as guides or other hotel staff), or the desires to no longer ‘be indigenous’ because of the discrimination faced. As stated by Alberto, an indigenous organizer “who are the ones who belong here, it is the natives. Here there is a displacement, and not only here but in all the area of the triple frontier where people come from all over...and those who belong here are the ones who have problems, the ones who come here don’t have problems” (Personal Interview, August 3, 2012, my translation). These contradictions in the way people are viewing the impacts of these mobilities shape the kinds of responses made of the various claims to movement (such as the claims of refugees and migrants, or the claims to open and serviced touristic movement).

Leticia is a place of incongruences and ambivalences. It is a place of transit and flows and yet one that, at least for some, is “destined to be a small place” (Personal Interview, June 28 & 29, 2012). It is a place where people and things flow across borders, yet where the specificity of where you come from, how you get there, and which side of the border you arrive on matter greatly for how you access the borderzone. It is also a place where an ambivalence about its place in the national (all three national imaginations, though I focus on Colombia) and the global plays out. For Zárate Botía and del Pilar Trujillo it is indeed at the border where state presence makes some of its most obvious claims that the absence of coordination and overlapping authorities facilitate illicit trade (2010). Thus images and material organization of the space without laws are re-enforced alongside the increasing presence of ‘the state’ in its most obvious forms (the presence of a military base, an airforce base, a heavy police presence, and institutions like the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*) – that is, practices of sovereignty at the border. ‘The nation’ also becomes troubled in this case with the cross-border connections that facilitate businesses operated in multiple locations and languages as well as the movement of labour from one country to another where

informality becomes everyday practice (ibid.). The triple frontier is transnational by some accounts for the simple presence of three states, yet it can also be seen as transnational in the sense that it is a site of global interest, or a place whose being is not in relation to three bounded states, but to a series of transnational processes. As Ladino and Rey describe it “the tri-national frontier zone of Colombia-Brazil-Peru is part of a strategic zone for humanity and biodiversity, for tourism, for the connection between the oceans, for the presence of resources and minerals to the presence of indigenous communities that survive despite globalization, themes that are of interest to the developed world” (2010, p. 36, my translation). The triple frontier in this sense is not multilateral but global; interest in it extends beyond the bounds of any given state or government and claims can be made to it by anyone as part of our shared ‘global’ patrimony.

These kinds of global claims of rainforests and other such diverse places are both what Anna Tsing and others have pointed to as facilitating environmental movements and mobilization and yet only through their frictions with place as specific and social (2005). Similarly, the border region facilitates the movement of tourists and the mobilization of touristic right, yet again through the frictions of place, a place where the border is indeed different, but only insofar that all borders are different places. Telling these stories about Leticia and its history of interventions and absences is part of setting up the present context of tourism development, which I expand on in the following sections. It is also about understanding how to look well beyond how stereotypes are reinforced in tourism to understand its implications, the projects in which it is embedded, and to problematize its effects.

### **The Story, Part 1: 'Jungle Mike'**

I have argued that Leticia is a place of contradictions. Intervention has come in the form of resource extraction, border militarization, and the civilizing missions, both religious and otherwise, while absences have played out in the historical absence of the state, the rule of law, or Colombian-ness, and the absence of Leticia and the Amazon in the imagination of what Colombia is. For instance, Leticia has been and remains disconnected from the rest of the country; there is no highway connection to any city and the only way to get there other than by a lengthy and complicated river journey is to fly from Bogotá. However, this odd relationship has also meant that Leticia “appears as a faraway neighbourhood of Bogotá” which also leads many to describe it as more ‘cosmopolitan’ than other areas of the country (Palacio Castañeda, 2010, p. 47, my translation). Contemporary tourism development in the region operates in this confused space of intervention and absence, belonging and exclusion, which shapes how people travel there, what they expect or put up with in their journeys, and the work that is done to support these travellers. Two stories of intervention and absence help elucidate this.

The mythology of the rise of tourism in Leticia almost always begins with the story of Mike Tsalikis. He even receives a central role in the Lonely Planet story of Amazonas and Leticia (Lonely Planet, 2009). Mike Tsalikis, as the story goes, was an American entrepreneur (though a lot is also made of his Greek ancestry and so he is sometimes identified as the Greek-American who started it all) who came to Leticia and became a major

player in the regional drug trade. As a seemingly fitting way to remind us of the deepest stereotypes about Colombia, along with its painful histories, the story of touring Leticia starts with cocaine. Mike Tsalikis is also said to have trafficked birds, live animals, and skins of all kinds from the Amazon for sale elsewhere and amassed a fortune before he was arrested and extradited to the U.S. in the late 1980s to serve a 27 year sentence. In his time in Leticia he funded a great deal of the development of the town into what it is today and is credited with providing the funds for the building of the local hospital, the only in the region. Interestingly, in my last weeks in Leticia word was spreading of his recent return from the U.S. Although his property had been confiscated on his arrest and sold off by the Colombian state (more on this later), he came back to Leticia in August 2012.

Mike Tsalikis was also a tourist entrepreneur. Throughout the 1970s and 80s he owned the Isla de los Micos where tourists, mostly brought by him from North America and Europe, could see and play with hundreds of monkeys living ‘freely’ on the island. Along with his snake-wrestling for tourists he also ‘brought’ several *Yagua* families from Peru to settle in the community of Tucuchira and form part of the ethnicized tourist attraction he was developing out of the Isla de los Micos (Gallego, 2011). As this community began to receive very modest income from performing as tourist attractions, the story continues, more and more communities became interested in doing the same. Thus the contemporary touring performances in La Libertad, Macedonia, and elsewhere where community members dress in ‘traditional clothing’ and fulfill tourist expectations of dancing, artisan goods, and exotic animals to complement the ‘exotic’ natives, trace themselves back to the deliberate transnational movement of people in order to provide the appropriately model ‘Amazon Indian’ to consume.

Transnational trade in animals and skins, along with the global drug trade financed the roots of touring in Leticia linking these transnational movements together in a way that is ignored in the current presentation of tourism development as a ‘licit’ activity that can challenge these ‘former’ practices. In the absence of a state that could provide medical and other services in this remote region of the country, profits from the movement of people and things made these services possible, and made Tsalikis if not a hero at least a more sympathetic figure in the eyes of many. The very ability of Tsalikis to operate the trade and traffic he did was due to a perceived lack of control or absence of the state or forms of regulating these activities (Mejia, 2008, p. 90). In a place where people claim ‘the law does not reach’, a place people claim as ‘forgotten’ by the Colombian state, the movements and interventions of capital (and it is clear from this story that there may be little point in distinguishing the legitimate from the illicit in this regard) have operated in their own ways and set the stage for other forms of development that recently the Colombian government has become more interested in.

Of course Mike Tsalikis did not create travel to the Amazon or even to this region of the Amazon; he was himself drawn there by stories that already existed of the exotic lands along the world’s fastest river, many of which had been constructed in part by the early travelogues of adventurers. The stereotypes of the jungle he played on are long-standing and are deeply held and in a sense cherished both by foreigners and by Colombians from the

interior who know little about the Amazon region that comprises a good third of their country. And yet the idea of the ‘truth’ behind the stereotype is not necessarily any more important. As was expressed to me in one interview: “I don’t believe there is a region in the world that has as strong stereotypes as the Amazon...everyone knows it, everyone knows there is a river, jungle, anacondas, shamans, no? Indigenous people in loincloths and with feathers...and people when they come...they realize the reality is different...but the thing is, it doesn’t interest them” (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012, my translation).

These earlier absences have not been ‘filled in’ by an arriving state, but rather have interwoven with and been sites where the activities of the Colombian government and circulations of capital play out. After Tsalikis’ ‘fall’ in the 1980s, the first boom in tourism ended and was replaced some 10 years later with a desire to institutionalise tourism in the region. With the expropriation of Tsalikis’ properties in the late 80s, the PNNA administration took over management of the island and much of the touring. Although drug trafficking remains an important part of the tri-border economy, and indeed by some accounts is returning to its previous levels, there were some state interventions in the late 1990s that ‘cleaned-up’ the town and dealt blows to some of the major heads of the trade. The ‘clean up’ of Leticia is also called the bust of the cocaine boom for good reason. As in previous histories of booms and busts in the region, the loss of the cocaine industry meant the loss of jobs and capital for the town and communities. Many indigenous farmers had grown up with and put much of their energy into cocaine production/processing and faced a serious challenge to their livelihood. By other accounts I heard, one effect of the cocaine boom, which did not exist as intensely during other cycles, was the production of a mentality of being able to acquire large and easy profits, something many see as replicated in the mentality people have towards tourism currently. However the confluence of state intervention in the form of a heavy military presence in the town, including an air base constructed in 2010, continued drug trafficking, and an entrenched prison system remain important features of the current context.

In this context, tourism development is presented as a ‘legitimate’ alternative. In both Leticia and Puerto Nariño this has meant more municipal emphasis on tourism planning, a department-based tourism strategy through the new DAFEC office in Leticia,<sup>31</sup> streamlining, and professionalization (for example, in the enforcement of protocols that now require all guides to have completed training at SENA). For the director of DAFEC at the time of my research, this institutionalization was also about changing the mobility patterns of visitors. At the same time he talked about wanting to limit the numbers of tourists, and raise their ‘quality’, he also spoke about facilitating mobility through added airline traffic to and from Leticia (particularly by making links to Iquitos and maybe others like Panamá City<sup>32</sup>)

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<sup>31</sup> *Departamento Administrativo de Fomento de Ecoturismo y Cultura* in Amazonas, a departmental body which works with the municipalities to implement the national tourism strategy in Amazonas. They have been in operation in Leticia since 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Recently a flight has been created between Iquitos and Panama City which is heralded by some as crucial to expanding this touristic circuit, but also feared by others because it will probably mean even more tourists coming through Leticia. The reason for the route is also that historically the backpacker route through Central America stopped at Panama City and then, because backpacking in Colombia was considered too dangerous,

(Personal Conversation, June 2012). This, he argued, would mean tourists could avoid the longer (and more difficult to organize) boat trips up and down river which he described as ugly (though these trips are also a key tourism draw for the region). It is not insignificant that arriving through the airport is the easiest way for DAFEC to measure the number of visiting tourists (essentially to their planning). Similarly, only those who arrive via the airport are required to pay the (around \$15) entry fee to Leticia, an arrival tax that (supposedly) goes to the municipality to improve tourism infrastructure (though what actually happens to it has been the subject of much tension and speculation).

Despite this, I think it remains useful to look for the effects of the play of presence and absence in making this place tourable, rather than think that these institutionalizing efforts have guided development. In other parts of the country, Leticia continues to be known and reproduced as a place where people can make easy money, a place where at least some laws do not apply or do not get enforced the same way, a place where the free market can play more freely. Leticia has also been represented as a place of security and safety, both on account of more recent military presence (as highlighted and celebrated in Lonely Planet, for example) and because its isolation has meant limited involvement in the state and guerrilla violence that implicates so many Colombian lives and livelihoods. These factors have continued to encourage people from the interior to migrate to Leticia to make their livelihoods, now in the form of tourist agencies and tour operators, hostel and especially hotel developers. By all accounts, and despite all these municipal efforts, this has resulted in a tourism development that has been largely unplanned or has been driven by the desires of various mobile subjects and interests. Part of my contention in looking at the production of tourability in very broad terms throughout this dissertation is that we need to look beyond the official management of tourism to understand how tourable sites are produced. In this case, the management of the state seems secondary to the entrepreneurial efforts of developers (in the drug trade or otherwise) and the ways entitlements to travel demand continual opening of new spaces, and especially 'exotic' places to exploration.

### **Landscapes of Conservation and Democratic Security**

If travelling entitlements demand the continual opening of 'new' spaces to explore, the Amazon is one of the great frontiers of this. At least that is how the Colombian government, under President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010), framed its desire to open the Amazon for 'everyone'. It would be mistaken to see this only in national terms; the globalization of the Amazon which involves its production as a site of biodiversity for all humanity and as a global space that all can claim are important to how tourists lay claim to their rights to 'go there' and how entrepreneurs lay claim to setting up their businesses. The context for this in Leticia is specified by the way this 'opening' is interwoven with the national security strategy initiated by Uribe in 2003 called *Seguridad Democrática* (Democratic Security) that linked, in part, the kind of territorial opening and subject making of tourism with very specific state projects (Mejía, 2008). *Seguridad Democrática* has had profound effects

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people had to find ways to Quito, Ecuador, or Lima, Peru to start again from there. Linking Panama and Iquitos is seen as a way to allow more people (beyond just backpackers) to get directly to the Amazon and onto the Iquitos-Leticia-Manaus circuit.

across Colombia, not unsurprisingly having a great deal more to do with security than democracy. For Rojas, it has meant important shifts in the way citizenship is experienced with the criminalization of dissent and the insistence of a framework of a state fighting terrorism to understand the political violence in the country resulting in closures of political action and activism (2009). As one striking example of this, she notes that the Justice and Peace Law of 2005 classified paramilitaries as participating in political struggle which “made them eligible for such benefits as consideration for amnesty and pardon” while a crackdown on the ‘terrorist’ guerrilla fighters continued to deny their status as political (Rojas, 2009, p. 237). The most recent attempt at peace negotiations attest to this where President Juan Manuel Santos initially declared that the political and social demands of the FARC<sup>33</sup>, the very bases of their contestations, would not be permitted on the table for discussion under the guise of wanting ‘short’ and ‘pragmatic’ discussions aimed at ending armed conflict<sup>34</sup>. This strategy has also included ecotourism as one sector of development that would establish a “culture of legality and community development as a replacement for the illegal activities of illicit cultivation and drug-trafficking” (Mejia, 2008, p. 88, my translation). As I will look at more below, this interweaving means that ecotourism development is part of both strategies of territorial control through the ‘reclaiming’ of national space and governmental practices of remaking subjects as appropriate (and self-regulating).

In the context of tourism, part of this strategy was about affirming Colombia as a safe place to travel internationally, which through the early 2000s involved hosting UN WTO summits, securing a place on the UN WTO executive committee in 2009 (for the first time since 1993), and lobbying governments to remove their travel warnings against Colombia (as these play an enormous role in dissuading foreign visitors) (Personal Conversation, June 2012). Emphasizing the security of Colombia as a place for tourists is based on the idea of ‘reclaiming Colombia’ from violence, from the ‘terrorists’ (the label used since the early 2000s to describe guerrilla organizations, especially FARC), and from the general insecurity of lawlessness and a state that does not ‘reach’ far enough. Reclaiming has taken the form of intense militarization of rural areas along with the fumigation campaigns that poisoned crops, lands, and people in their attempts to curtail coca production. However, reclaiming Colombia has also taken the form of tourism development particularly through strategies aimed domestically at encouraging Colombians (the right ones, anyway) to move around their country, re-visit their summer homes, and explore the biodiversity and culture that characterizes the regions. Thus touring has developed alongside an increasing militarization of touristic corridors and sites in order to produce ‘safe’ national space through which law-abiding, middle-class Colombians and international travellers can move (Ojeda, 2012). Internationally, this strategy has appeared in the slogan “The only risk is wanting to stay”<sup>35</sup> that has circulated a ‘new’ image of Colombia as a safe, warm, friendly place to visit where risks have been minimized while also playing on not being ‘too touristy’ yet. Together these

<sup>33</sup> *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia

<sup>34</sup> <http://mexico.cnn.com/mundo/2012/09/29/el-presidente-de-colombia-plantela-participacion-de-las-farc-en-politica>. This position has since shifted and land restitution is a major issue in the 2014 Congressional Elections.

<sup>35</sup> This publicity started in 2006, has recently been replaced with the Colombia: Realismo Magico (Magical Realism) campaign.



strategies of facilitating appropriate movement combine practices of sovereignty with governmentality in the production of national territory and good populations while eliding concerns with land distribution and inequality that have formed the basis of so many of the violent claims against the state.

Changes made by the Uribe government also had profound effects on environmental policy and organization in Colombia. For some, these changes reflected a betrayal of the country's formerly strong environmental efforts while for others it was merely a continuation of the 'green washing' practices of the past in a more aggressive (and neoliberal) form (Personal Conversation, June, 2012; Cardenas, 2012). In 2003 environmental policy was restructured by collapsing development and environmental policy into one department, the *Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial* (Ministry of Environment, Housing, and Territorial Development) and since 2011 renamed the *Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible* (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development).<sup>36</sup> For many this indicated a weakening of environmental protection and its subordination to other economic strategies, and in particular its linking and subordination to the policies of *Seguridad Democrática* (Palacio Castañeda, 2010). More recently, the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, as well as the expansion of mining and resource extraction have seen the continuation of easing of environmental regulation, but also sparked massive resistance in the form of agricultural and urban based strikes and protests. However, as Palacio Castañeda points out, this is also clearly more than just a state action, it is part of and reflects broad inter and trans-national changes in government (often called the neoliberalization of states) which is reflected across many parts of the Global South in the specific and targeted transformations in the role of the state to facilitate the flow of capital in the form of foreign investment and transnational corporate development (2010). Rather than merely seeing this process as a reduction in state spending, development scholars argue that what is underway reflects a specific subordination of state-based planning or protections to the flexibilized market rationalities of contemporary capitalism and the neoliberal forms of governance that go along with them.

The mid-1990s and early 2000s saw important upheavals in regulatory frameworks and dominant discourses of development in Colombia and internationally. Particularly with the new Constitution in 1991, which adopted wider recognition of indigenous rights, and later *Ley 70* (in 1993) which recognized Afro-Colombian territorial rights on the Pacific coast, much of Colombian environmental and development policy has become intertwined with 'multicultural recognition'. This view of multiculturalism is both specific to Colombia and part of the trends towards this form of governance throughout much of Latin America that contrasts older models of national identity as white or mestizo with pluri-ethnic identities (Hale, 2006). Unlike other Andean countries where pluri-ethnic recognition has also led to certain changes in the organization of power (such as in Bolivia and Ecuador where the majority of the population identify as indigenous), the small and largely rural indigenous population of Colombia has tied this recognition to cultural and territorial rights; however,

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<sup>36</sup> The Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Ministry of Environment) was established in 1993 following the declarations of the UN Rio Summit on Environmental Sustainability.

despite being only 2% of the population, indigenous peoples in Colombia have rights to over a quarter of the national territory home to 80% of the natural resources (Rappaport, 2005). For Ng'weno, the multicultural recognition in Colombia plays out through two distinctions: a perceived racial distinction from the rest of the 'nation' and land as crucial to defining that distinction (2007a). As Jackson and Ramirez note, one of the elements necessary for state recognition of indigeneity is an ethnographic study to verify, among other things, "a common history as well as group cohesion, a deep-rooted affiliation with the ancestral territory'...and a distinct value system that distinguishes it from the rest of the Colombian population" (2009, p. 524).<sup>37</sup>

In the context of Leticia, where there are no recognized Afro-Colombian communities, the idea that land distinguishes racial difference is more obvious, though the process of producing ethnographic knowledge of 'legible' communities has been criticized for writing over difference through hegemonic categories. For communities, the process of state recognition involves producing a *Plan del Ordenamiento Territorial* (Plan of Territorial Ordering), a process developed out of colonial practice, but which has also been reappropriated in the region through claims from cultural and territorial recognition (Micarelli, 2009)<sup>38</sup>. Ng'weno also makes the argument that territorial recognition in much of the Global South can be thought of for what it does to re-claim territory for the nation, rather than devolution of territory. Thus multiculturalism is a way to re-inscribe relationships between citizens-states-territory; "because territory is the central element to this change within states, it is through the control of territory that the state is negotiated, fragmented, and extended, that politically salient constituencies are created, that communities participate as citizens, and that armed groups challenge both the state and what citizenship can be" (2007b, p. 21). Thus contemporary multicultural and neoliberal governance in Colombia, and more broadly in Latin America, is about attempts to make different subjectivities *within* and *through* different organizations and claims about territory.

The rhetoric of sustainability dominates current planning and policy statements for tourism in Colombia, with an emphasis on practices to make 'touristic products' greener and encourage more environmental consciousness in tourists. An international discourse of sustainable development (since the Brundtland report and the Rio Summit in 1992, and of course Rio+20 which took place in 2012) and 'green capitalism' have been seen to mix nicely with the kind of multicultural recognition currently dominant in much of Latin America. This recognition operates on viewing indigenous or Afro-descendant difference and territorial rights through their perceived status as stewards of nature (Cárdenas, 2012) or through a particular governing of what that difference can and cannot look like (Hale, 2006). In other words, appropriate difference can be recognized and incorporated as agents of 'green capitalism', while claims that extend too far or people who refuse a certain kind of

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<sup>37</sup> This creates important ambivalences and contradictions for Afro-Colombian recognition because the landlessness of Afro-Colombians makes them seen as having no culture because, as Ng'weno argues, the only culture not tied to the land in Colombia is national culture from which afro-Colombians are excluded (2007a).

<sup>38</sup> For many indigenous movements these claims have much more to do with land and autonomy than with the state-based discourses of multicultural recognition. Where I use multiculturalism here, I am referring to these discourses and to the ways the state governs difference through incorporation.

incorporation can be deemed 'bad' or 'unauthorized' (Hale, 2006).<sup>39</sup> Trends in sustainability have gone further in finding ways to produce indigenous subjects as agents of conservation through their life practices in the forest. These practices are thus situated in a confluence between autonomy and incorporation into capitalist projects.

For Rosebelinda Cárdenas, developing on Anna Tsing's concept of landscape, on the Pacific coast this has involved a "landscaping" project that shows multiculturalism as "a broad political project that reorganizes relations between people and nature by producing particular categories of difference" (2012, p. 312). This process produces nature in the form of resources to be managed, for example through the cataloguing of biodiversity (ibid., Escobar, 2008; see also Ng'weno, 2007b).<sup>40</sup> To reiterate, Anna Tsing defines landscapes as "the configuration of humans and nonhumans across a terrain" (2005, p.173). While this concept asks that we think about complex and diverse relations between the human and non-human world and their social and cultural production, it is not merely a scholarly production. For scholars and activists involved in indigenous peoples' struggles in Latin America, this is an ontological distinction, or a way of seeing the world that exists and has been drawn from indigenous peoples' worldviews (Blaser, 2014; de la Cadena, 2010). Social-natural worlds are thus central to projects of autonomy. At the same time, Cárdenas looks at landscaping projects as sites of intervention where states or capital try to reform landscapes toward particular ends. In the case of neoliberal multiculturalism, often 'the community' that is recognized in official multiculturalism also becomes an agent of environmental management. Cultural difference, territory, and relationships to nature are all joined and written simultaneously through these interwoven political projects and, in places like Leticia, in ways that also aestheticize tourable landscapes as objects of touristic gaze and spaces of movement.

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<sup>39</sup> Importantly, others have gone beyond this analysis to argue that a key problem with this governmental recognition is its invocation of 'cultural' difference that reduces difference to a series of practices or beliefs (Blaser, 2014; de la Cadena, 2010). In contrast, these scholars argue for a "political ontology" (Blaser, 2014) as a way to recognize difference as involving the multiplicities of worlds, rather than just a multiplicity of perspectives on *the* world. De la Cadena goes even further to argue that within progressive movements, the inability to recognize ontological difference limits how indigenous peoples' struggles are incorporated into broader movements or brought onto the national stage, particularly in the invocation of non-human entities as political actors (2010).

<sup>40</sup> These projects also underway along more aggressive, resource-extractive lines in Colombia. Although recognized indigenous territories are protected, it is only within national parks that the subsoil is protected from exploitation. The recent Ley Forestal is an example of how far the Uribe government tried to go in facilitating resource extraction and use legality to remake landscapes. Proposed in 2006, this law added the category of '*vuelo forestal*' to the legal-territorial categories of '*suelo*' (ground) and '*sub-suelo*' (sub-soil). The provision for the '*vuelo forestal*', which translates literally as 'flight' but could also be called ceiling, made the argument that the 'inbetween' space where the trees actually are could be distinguished from the ground, meaning that title to the soil was literally to be title to the soil, but the trees and everything else above a certain point would be available for private exploitation (Palacio Castañeda, 2010, 49). This attempt to remake the landscape by reframing how different groups could claim territory was struck down as unconstitutional but reflects the depth of the projects underway to facilitate capital mobility and resource extraction through reconceptualizations of territory and nature.

The situation in Leticia is of course very different from the Pacific Coast; however, a similar process of making space and difference legible can be seen in the application of the multicultural category of ‘community’. The indigenous community, territorially specific and ethnically cohesive, is a fundamental category of indigenous recognition in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America (Micarelli, 2009). As I was cautioned throughout my research, though, the concept of community as understood in the discourse of recognition is articulated much differently in this region. The lives of indigenous people in the region were characterized to me as involving movement through the forest and across the three borders for hunting, fishing, growing food, and maintaining family relations that are often more important to social organization than shared governance structures. Thus much of the work to create *resguardos* and *reservas* in the 1980s in the Trapecio was done through defining community boundaries, emplacing difference on the forest landscape, and defining ‘community’ governance through recognized leaders who then speak for the ‘community’. ‘The community’ is seen from the government’s perspective as the *cabildo*<sup>41</sup>, and thus it is in consultation with or on the authority of the *cabildo* that projects are proposed. From the tourist perspective ‘the community’ is seen as whoever seems indigenous enough to be recognized to represent ‘it’ as that thing that can be visited and from which experiences can be drawn.

However, using tourism as an example, people in the *resguardos* negotiate tourism as families developing links or agreements with particular agencies. Those not interested in working in tourism do not, but more to the point making an agreement with the leaders is no guarantee since another family could make their own agreement separately (Personal Conversation, June 2012). For some, this thinking about communities as unified entities is one of the main reasons so many government projects in the region have failed. More broadly, as a conceptual tool for governance, ‘community’ overwrites other relationships to space/place. For example I was told that for *Shipibo* in the Peruvian Amazon their word that is translated as pueblo or community by the state, researchers, and activists is more literally rendered “place without jungle” since settlements and homes can only be built where jungle has been cleared away, while the word used by Huitoto has more to do with family than bounded space or ethnicity (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012). In this sense, ‘community’ is challenged by and challenges other landscapes.

It is in this context of an environmental policy geared towards the productivity of nature, a security strategy aimed at reclaiming territory, and a multicultural strategy of recognizing ‘admissible’ forms of difference, that tourism development in Leticia deploys particular landscaping projects. Conservation, as a discourse and a set of material practices that intervene in lifeways and landscapes is an important site of these projects in Leticia. Ecotourism, the dominant mode of touring that is promoted in the region, is entwined through conservation policies and rhetorics with the development of subjectivities and relations to nature that, I argue, place particular burdens on indigenous people and practices as sites of intervention.

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<sup>41</sup> The administrative body of a reserve, headed by a council, or an individual sometimes referred to as a curaca.

*Working on the Subject of Conservation*

When tour operators, park employees, or those working on municipal touring strategies talk about the ‘work’ it takes to make tourism possible they refer to the work of transforming the mentality and daily practices of people who service tourists or ‘present’ their culture as tourable, sometimes combined under so-called ‘preparations to receive tourists’. These transformations should not be thought of in either wholly negative or wholly positive ways, but do involve working on subjects to have them as agents in facilitating the movement of tourists - for example building capacities to ‘understand’ tourists not just linguistically but sociologically and culturally, to respond punctually and professionally, to preserve their environment for consumption by tourists, and to understand their own culture as something that can be put ‘on offer’ to others in ways that will be enjoyed. Thus reclaiming Colombia is also about re-forming the subjects of this reclamation as those who tour or those who service tourism and are toured.



Photo: Road sign near the National Police Building in Leticia reading “Slow, Military Zone” (by the author).

Different landscaping projects that reformulate relationships between people and nature can be seen in the very ways tourism is talked about both officially and in everyday language. Official tourism documents produced by the municipal administration lay out charts listing reserves and resguardos with the potential touristic activities that could be undertaken in that space all under the heading “Inventory of Tourism Attractions (Tangible)” (*Alcaldía de Leticia*, 2008). In this typical touristic strategy space is imagined as isolated and contained products rather than dynamically connected and relationally experienced. In a different but related vein the kind of ‘placeness’ plotted out by this touristic strategy is also mobilized in contrast to the perceived non-placeness of global connectivity. In one Master Plan for a regional tourism bio-observatory (that was later scrapped due to political and funding problems) the authors reflect on Marc Augé’s concept of the non-place as a problem of contemporary life and make the case for the authenticity and placeness of the Amazon. To quote,

the tourist who chooses a destination like the Colombian Amazon is attracted by an imaginary that circulates around unexplored places, far away, with virgin nature, the fantasy is being one of the few who has been there. It is the complete opposite of a

‘non-place’. The objective of BOA [*Bio-Observatoria Amazónica*], with the experience offered to live and understand the Amazonian world is to be a ‘sí-lugar’ [a real place]. (Corpoamazonia, 2008, my translation)

Couched in the language of authenticity is a vision of ‘placeness’ defined through its consumability and the development of particular ‘resources’ that define its status as place (to visitors), which contrasts with articulations of place as embodied, or as “lived-in and deeply historical” (Escobar 2008, p.29).

From thinking about landscapes, Tsing develops the concept of social life as weedy, or a “patchwork naturalness” that moves beyond the distinct categories of developed terrain and conservation reserves to look at areas in-between. In her study of Meratus Dayaks in Borneo she argues

it would be easy to ignore them in a study that looked only for the indigenous wisdom of isolated tribes; they are not isolated, only exoticized and despised. It is not tempting to search here for some unique cosmology of nature. Instead, the practical relations of people and forest can tell us about the making of complex landscapes in which humans and diverse non-humans share space without clear demarcations of separate spheres. (2005, 174-5)

I did not research the practical relations of *Tikuna*, *Huitoto*, *Yagua*, or *Cocama* inhabitants of the Trapecio with the forest and so I am not using Tsing to set out an analysis of these landscapes. Rather, I think her concept of weediness is useful for thinking about how most of the communities around Leticia are situated in relations with both capitalist enterprise and indigenous relations to land and nature. Within touring narratives, this weediness becomes difficult, an object of disdain, or an object of management. Indigenous knowledge of the forest, its pathways and species is both modified to become touring knowledge and yet also maintained as part of daily life. In the confluence of security and conservation, this weedy relationship becomes a site of difficulty where national strategies and conservationist ideas of what is ‘good nature’ intermingle with practical lived relations in the forest.

The deep history of life and livelihood in the Trapecio have meant that relationships to land or how, particularly, indigenous people make use of their environments have been complicated and diverse (and deeply impacted by the various colonial processes of production and extraction). Knowledge of the forest was precisely the basis on which rubber production was maintained because only indigenous inhabitants who knew the forest well could find the rubber trees and extract the needed latex (before the rise of commercial rubber-tree plantations). These histories, the complex ways that this place is lived in, have more recently come into conflict with touristic and conservationist images of indigeneity which tend to search out the “noble savages” who care for the forest in ways that facilitate its consumption by eager travellers. This tends to be the conservation of forest in its ‘pristine’ or ‘virgin’ state – categories that have little reality in this place where the forest has long been in social and historical relations to its human inhabitants and visitors, but which mean a great deal in terms of how forests are made tourable. In large part in the Colombian Amazon state based discourses of conservationism are expressed through the work of the national parks and the Law of Tourism which requires coherent development under the direction of the national tourism strategy, meaning deploying this particular vision of

conservation (Carroll Janer, 2010). Similarly, Feijoo noted one of the key aspects of national park administration (in the Amazon, for example) was to find ways to offer alternatives that could change behaviour in communities away from destructive and extractive practices and towards seeing conservation as tied to their own livelihood (1994). However, rendering the state this way does not reflect the intermingling of various authorities and power relations through which conservation travels and is iterated.

One of the sites of contention where this has played out is in the use of *chagras*, small plots of land in the jungle that have been cleared, often through burning, but not always, and are used to cultivate food. Usually *chagras* belong to one family and because of the poor soil quality are rotated so that unused *chagras* are left for forest regrowth. However conflicts have arisen because the production of tourable space for many means limiting the visibility of *chagras* along touristic paths in the jungle, particularly in their fallow or burnt state. *Chagras* are disruptive to images of pristine nature, and particularly disruptive to environmental discourses against burning down the forest. This weediness of forest life and soil management disrupts aestheticized representations of the jungle as untouched wilderness (possibly) combined with the rows of plantains and yucca in small-plot cultivation. Indigenous knowledge and daily life are melded in touring practice, though, by the fact that the paths tourists are guided along are not new, they are the paths people use to do the daily work of cultivating, hunting, or gathering in the forest and so they naturally pass by places where these interactions are visible (Personal Conversation, June 2012). In some instances this has led tour operators or the major companies, like Decameron, to insist that *chagras* be moved away from the (now) touristic pathways through the forest. In other instances this had led to shocking realizations for tourists who see that life in the forest is not what they might have imagined (Carroll Janer, 2010). In this way, then, these competing landscapes are also conflicts over movement. How the forest is produced as either a pristine tourable object or a site of life changes how movement takes place. Importantly, in both cases the forest remains a social site of livelihood – it is only that in the former livelihood is based on the movement of tourists through a constructed landscape of tourability.

For many who consider themselves conservationists, tourism (and especially the demands of eco-tourism) provides mechanisms or means to transform the harmful uses of the environment that are often located in the practices of indigenous peoples, while they have also been criticized for doing so in ways that do not respect or understand these practices as part of indigenous life-ways. Certain contested opinions about hunting reflected this to me. On the one hand, some people I spoke to complained how tourists see people who hunt as not indigenous enough because they do not appear to be ‘in harmony’ enough with nature (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012). On the other hand, Valentina, one of the coordinators of a small privately owned conservation-eco-tourism site, described to me the work they had done to exclude practices of hunting and cutting down trees, on their property (which is across from an indigenous *resguardo*) in an effort to promote and ‘teach’ a conservationist culture and mentality to people living there because of what they had seen of the destructive effects of extractive practices (Personal Interview, July 17, 2012).

Before, well, they had all this area free to go through, and once it became a [private] reserve these activities were totally restricted. Well, it was difficult, but it has been a

positive process. So now we have no one from the community who enters to do these activities. It was a process that we had working with them, with lots of respect...and it has been positive because the guys who work here the majority are from the indigenous community...in any case they had to learn and they can't do anything because it is a private place. They can't get into trouble...So since they all got involved, they see that it is something positive for them, that things are going well, and we have good relations. No, well, there are some that at times don't like us, but for the majority yes. (ibid, my translation).

While the former position might tend towards a naturalization or romanticization of indigenous practices in the forest, seeing them as part of a benign good stewardship of nature, this second opposes conservation to lived practices in the jungle in a way that might discount weediness. This is not to say that hunting practices are or might not be environmentally damaging; their historical situation as part of extractive economies makes that unlikely. But in a sense the intense work that this coordinator describes is the work of smoothing out or pulling up these weeds for the purpose of pristine nature as a tourable and conservable object (and her invocation of the role of private property in this is worth noting).

At the same time that this concern for intervening in indigenous relations to the jungle exist, concerns about the effects of *colonos* (settlers) on the environment (and their relationship to the non-human) play out quite differently. As mentioned, Leticia has become a site of immigration not only for the tourism boom, but for the promises of easy business and relative security. As one park worker expressed to me:

in general a lot of people who come to the Amazon come here to live here or to make business here, not because it's the Amazon but because it's the only way you can have business, not because they would love to live in the forest. Because there's no conflict, there's less drugs, and there's financial opportunities. A lot of people say that the economic growth of this place is to cut down the forest and put cattle in...that's their vision of growth. (Personal Interview, August 8, 2012).

Despite this, the complaint I heard most often in relation to tourism development was the garbage that lines sidewalks, covers the city parks, and fills the river so that, during the dry months when the river level goes down, the bank is covered in mounds of it. Campaigns to get people to throw garbage in waste bins instead of the river are a municipal priority, and in everyday conversations I heard about the desire to teach children a culture of environmental consciousness by teaching them not to throw garbage on the ground or in the river. As I looked at in Chapter 2, this environmental consciousness is interwoven with racializations in which the whiteness (or first-worldness) of tourists is seemingly performed through throwing out garbage 'correctly' while tourists from Colombia and residents of Leticia (and even more so those from the communities who simply cannot 'manage consumption' as well) perform brownness (or third-worldness) in their inability to appreciate what a desirable tourable aesthetic is. This was most clearly expressed to me during a conversation I had on my way up river to Puerto Narino which holds the image of a pristine, aesthetically appealing place to many in Leticia. The man I was talking to pointed to the banks of garbage and said, almost embarrassed because he knew I was there studying



tourism, that this was just not what a touristic site should look like (Personal Conversation, July 2012). "*No arroje basura, conserve la naturaleza*" (don't throw garbage on the ground, conserve nature) was the conservationist refrain that dominated city space in Leticia.



Photo: Conservation sign posted in Parque Santander, Leticia (by the author).

What can be seen in these articulations of conservationist positions is how landscapes and relations are changed and shaped through this kind of work and the particular discourses of 'nature' that are taken up. Conservationism tends to mobilize practices based on a view of the human and the natural as separate and ignores or idealizes the social relations of particular natural spaces. But it also interacts and comes into contact with other landscapes, not merely as human activity on a natural environment, but the "social-natural landscape" produced in long-term historical and cultural relations to a lived environment. The nature that eco-tourism wants us to tour is more the product of human life than it might seem.

Further to this, what I think the discussion of conservation discourses in Leticia shows is how the focus on eco-tourism locates the discussion in the livelihoods of and work on indigenous people and their practices in the jungle. Although people are deeply concerned about how to regulate certain aesthetics of the city, especially the presence of garbage, when it comes to land and use of 'the jungle' much of the focus is on indigenous people as those who live in the forest are perceived to have a closer relationship to nature, or those whose labour in extractive industries now needs to be a site of intervention to save the forest. I think it is interesting how the rise of private *fincas* (landholdings) along the highway, and especially the destruction of the forest to make way for cattle ranching, is considered a problem at least to some, but not one that can be addressed by or is part of the eco-tourism discussion. Officially and in everyday speech the environment is already construed as something linked to state-based territorializations of indigeneity. Because eco-touring relies on a mix of nature and indigeneity, certain activities of white *colonos* that are transforming place and landscape do not feature as either part of what is lamented in the rise of tourism or as a site of intervention or management that eco-touring can or should address. Similarly, tourism developers produce tourability in their business savvy and entrepreneurialism and only in their interaction with the aesthetics of 'green space'. Thus the landscapes of tourable difference which interweave territory, cultural difference, and relations to nature, deeply based in colonial difference, place different demands on indigenous subjects. The difficulties of making life in the forest tourable show how weedy landscapes are produced through

mobilities and how landscaping projects work to try and facilitate other movements by smoothing these out. These are probably not always done with negative effects. But they are done in ways that make certain kinds of claims – about the types of relationships to nature called for in this neoliberal age and about how we actualize the right to tour.

### **The Story, Part 2: The Arrival of Decameron**

You cannot talk to anyone about tourism in Leticia without hearing about Decameron. The company is alternately reviled for bringing so many tourists to the city (since 2004 on a yearly basis the city sees more tourists than its population), criticized for encouraging a simplified and stereotypical view of the Amazon and its indigenous inhabitants that does not allow for any meaningful interaction, or, at times, celebrated for bringing a professionalism and service knowledge that was lacking before. Through its strategic links with Aviatour and Copa Airlines, Decameron was able to develop low cost all-inclusive vacation packages for Colombian travellers that usually involve a stay at the hotel in Leticia (on site previously operated by Mike Tsalikis), day trips to the Isla de los Micos, and Amacayacú (both concessions run by Decameron), and sometimes other excursions to Puerto Nariño, city tours of Leticia and Tabatinga, or visits with 'shamans'. Most of these are day trips so that people come back to the *Hotel Ticuna* (as the hotel in Leticia is called) to eat and sleep, thereby keeping most of the profits of this touring in the control of Decameron (much to the annoyance of many in Leticia).

The arrival of Decameron in Leticia is seen as a major changing point for tourism in the region. This was facilitated by Uribe as part of his strategy for opening up the Amazon. Decameron was seen as a useful partner because its reputation would attract more Colombians to visit the city – in other words, if Decameron is there, it must be safe and, more importantly, it must be a place worth visiting (Personal Conversation, June 2012). In partnership with the Uribe government, Decameron was able to take over and fill in much of the same spaces previously developed by Tsalikis. These all-inclusive trips come in the form of short family vacations, end of school or exam trips, or holidays for couples, but by all accounts the major effect has been the boom in domestic travellers to the region. Although Decameron and other major tour operators also market heavily to European travellers, by and large people tend to associate mass tourism with the arrival of domestic tourists with Decameron. The numbers speak to this, with over 30,000 domestic tourists arriving each year to a mere 6,000 international tourists, and the prejudice towards Colombian tourists reveals the way in which the global hierarchies of race, class, and nationality play out in the determinations of who the 'good' and 'bad' tourists are. As I indicated in Chapter 2, this prejudice comes in the form of deriding Colombian travellers for not being world-savvy enough or cosmopolitan enough, or environmentally conscious enough to travel 'well' as those from Europe do. Colombian tourists are also more easily derided for being racist, having stereotypes about the Amazon, being too lazy, or wanting too much luxury while on vacation.

In addition to the hotel, Decameron was selected as the partner to take over the PNNA tourist concession when it was privatized in the early 2000s. This was part of a privatization strategy whose aim was partly to allow the park staff to focus on the education

and biological-scientific work of the park, but was also driven by the changes in funding to parks and environmental conservation from the Uribe government. A less favourable reading of privatization tells the story more starkly as part of an overall strategy of marketization of nature and natural resources. For Palacio Castañeda “the scarce resources that the central State gave for environmental matters was heading for a complete deterioration of the infrastructure and, from this point of view, privatization presented itself as a success, particularly when it could include well-accommodated tourists, from the upper middle class and higher” (2010, p. 48). Palacio also claims that privatization had more to do with the security strategy than one might expect. As the Uribe government wanted to fumigate large parts of national parks which were argued to be major sites in the drug trade as part of the commitments of Plan Colombia, the European Union threatened to suspend financial aid to the parks system. Since the government was not in a position to make up for this loss of funding, privatization was also a perceived solution to the funding crisis precipitated by European qualms over fumigation (while, of course, allowing fumigation to continue) (ibid., p. 55). However, privatization as part of neoliberal governance is about more than the interests of capital or the state; it is about governing well and appearing to govern as little as possible in order to help produce self-regulating individuals. While it is certainly the case that Decameron has successfully adopted practices of facilitating the smooth mobility of tourists it has been strikingly unsuccessful in bringing in and managing communities it works with (including both in Leticia and in the surrounding *resguardos*).

For Decameron to take over the park concession they had to negotiate an agreement with the park administration. Previously, the park administration had asked the six communities adjacent to or within the park boundaries if they wanted to run the concession and those involved in the decision had said they were not prepared enough to do that. In 2005 the deal struck with Decameron was for a ten-year concession. This deal ensured that people from the six communities were still the ones offering most of the services, the food, and the labour so that Decameron had to use them to provide for tourists. No such agreement was made in Leticia where Decameron was given the lands for a hotel/resort, since there was no park administration or *resguardo* to negotiate with. The result has been that in the park there are conditions on Decameron which require that they hire local community members, but in the city they are not obligated to do so. This has allowed Decameron to import labour from the interior to work in the hotel rather than hire from the region, further limiting the economic benefits of tourism development, but also creating a decent level of resentment. Decameron purportedly tried to hire people from Leticia and the communities at first but could not negotiate the different habits of work and time that did not fit the model of professional, efficient service and further, did not feel inclined to do any of the work themselves of training these workers. Instead, they gave up and declared they could not work with ‘indians’ and simply imported already trained service workers from elsewhere.

In terms of the park itself, the effects of Decameron's concession have been dramatic. People speak with a sense of loss of the time before the concession when the park administration had a good basis for dialogue and participatory framework with all six of the communities to determine how things would be run as well as maintain the relations that

allow for household work such as maintaining *chagras* and childcare. Regardless of how realistic this view of the time before the concession may or may not be, the deal negotiated with Decameron has not worked out as envisioned. For example, a clause was put in the deal that requires Decameron to use labour and supplies from the communities themselves; so community members supply the concession with food, do all the maintenance work, and also provide the touring services that the concession operates. In fact, the contract states that aside from certain very specific services, Decameron has to use community members to run all tourism services such as guiding, tree climbing, boat operators, etc. (Personal Interview, Aug 8, 2012). However, what the contract does not do is stipulate *which* communities this labour should be drawn from; it does not stipulate that the labour should be distributed evenly and so what has happened is that one or two communities have benefitted predominantly from the jobs and service provision available for the simple reason that they are closest to the concession and thus Decameron does not have to worry about transportation times or costs for its workers (*ibid.*). Quite unsurprisingly this has raised tensions between communities and between them and the concession which is not seen to be providing the promised jobs. For those who are able to find work, this has become very consuming and has meant limited time for tending to *chagras* or childcare which also means needing to rely on the money earned at the concession to buy food. The results of this have been criticized for reflecting the inability of Decameron to respond appropriately to the cultural necessities of the communities it is working with and not understanding or working with the rhythms through which work is done in the Amazon (Personal Conversation, June 2012). As such, Decameron is charged with having broken many of the lines of trust and communication that existed between the park and the *resguardos* through its sole emphasis on selling as many tours as possible.

Although what is happening in Amacayacú clearly falls in line with the privatization mandates of neoliberal governance, it is harder to see in this scenario the production of the self-regulating subjectivities desired by this art of government. Put differently, it may be possible to argue that what is happening has been a failure of governmentality because subjects governing themselves along the lines of market rationality have not emerged, and indeed the tensions of Decameron's practices have forced the re-emergence of state institutions as arbitor. That is, for Argawal and others, dispersed rule is an important characteristic of governmentality as is the self-regulation inspired by perceived or imagined autonomy (2005). In contemporary development rhetoric and practice, 'communities' are encouraged to take on the daily work of managing their own development within the already determined bounds of what this looks like, and particularly along market driven lines (*ibid.*; Blaser, 2009). However, when the park was set to be privatized, the communities declined the offer of the concession because leaders said they would be able to prepare during the time of the concession to take over management, developing the capacities they would need to manage tourism appropriately; however, what I became aware of is that during this time the relationship between the communities and Decameron has been strained and the kind of preparation desired has not happened. Now that Decameron has pulled out of the Concession, another partner must be found to take their place. Thus the kinds of relations of dependence characteristic of older forms of colonial or paternalistic rule remain quite visible. In contrast, Argawal defines the kind of self-government popularised in

contemporary development as finding ways to have communities take on goals that facilitate the state's governing aims, but see them as their own: imagined autonomy is central to decentralized rule (2005, p. 197).

I raise this distinction because there has been a lot of negative feeling built up about Decameron and their work in the park which can actually be seen as a case of a failure to govern well, or a failure to put in place the possibility for rule through self-government well. We have to be careful, then, about the implied response in the search for a 'better partner' who can grow the capacities for self-governing if we do not also interrogate the terms or aims of that governing. I also raise the distinction for theoretical reasons. It is clear from this along with my discussion of privatization and land that there are all kinds of strategies of rule at work in this region - sovereign, governmental, disciplinary, or otherwise - and that it may be necessary to be agnostic in any analysis of how power relations are shaping the contemporary reality there (as anywhere).

Similarly, Decameron's labour practices in the city present a more confused view of how privatization affects neoliberal subjectivity. The 'model' of service of Decameron has certainly been held up as what work should look like in tourism and yet Decameron itself has been reluctant to actually intervene itself in how these subjects are made. Chapter 6 examines more these politics of work and service currently playing out in Leticia. In conjunction with the kinds of resentments building up in the communities, the flooding in early 2012 along this part of the Amazon was so severe that the park concession was forced to close (and as of this writing has not been able to reopen). For the communities most heavily involved in the park this has been a significant problem because people have not been able to work and make a livelihood and have also not been producing enough to sustain themselves without the park because of the demanding work schedule. Because they have not been able to make any money off the park, at the time of my research Decameron had reportedly been making noise about backing out of the concession before the 2015 end date to focus on the hotel in Leticia which is seen as the real source of their profits. As a result, the PNNA administration has had to step in and begin an expedited process trying to find another partner to take over the concession.

In 2013, with the park entrance still not open, Decameron pulled out of their concession. It is now up to the park administration to negotiate with another partner. If they are not able to, they risk losing the park infrastructure and reputation. Similarly Eduardo, a park worker, expressed to me the way park administrators have at times become implicated in the poor management of Decameron:

So for some indigenous people the *concesión* is the park and when they fail to do things that are, say, more just the image is that the park isn't doing enough for them. In real terms it's basically you're not giving us enough employment when you should as a national park. We've been having to explain that it's not our responsibility to hire them, and we just have to supervise. (Personal Interview, August 8, 2012)

While the relationships between PNNA, Decameron, and the communities are all more complex (see Carroll Janer, 2010; Ochoa, 2008a), it is clear that the work of facilitating

touristic movement can often be uneven and not about a single clear or overwhelming exercise of power. Governing through community development has not produced the desired effects in the park and has actually forced a re-involvement of the PNNA administration as the governing authority. Importantly, while the tensions produced have not necessarily led specifically to a rejection of tourism as a model for development, the failures of Decameron have, for some, revealed more blatantly problems associated with the process.

### **Touring Mobilities: Entrepreneurs, tourists, and travel guide writers**

Especially since the arrival of Decameron, what has been playing out in Leticia is not just a right to travel but a ‘right to entrepreneurship’ as part of the touristic mobility celebrated in the right to tour. The UN WTO Code of Ethics makes it very clear that tourism development should take place in a context of limited capital restrictions and open markets. Thus during boom times, when the new areas or markets are being explored and exposed to eager tourists, anyone with the right amount of capital should be able to start a business. This is exactly what has been happening in Leticia in the past decade. Longer standing agencies lament the way the number of tour operators has grown in ten years from 11 to over 60 (Personal Interview, June 27, 2012). These newer agencies are also seen as part of a boom in multinationals or large companies pushing out the smaller entrepreneurs (and their relationships with indigenous people which they claim were much better and more respectful). These older operators even distinguish the forms of movement they take in the jungle (as ‘artisanal’, haphazard, and able to take in the ‘jungle’ in its grandeur over time), as opposed to the mass tourism of Decameron and others which offer day trips on very rigid and defined schedules to see specific places (Personal Interview June 28 & 29, 2012).

I also heard stories of a new hotel construction underway on the shore of the river that would add another 300 beds in an exclusive, high-end venue. Purportedly the idea behind this hotel is to have charter flights come in bringing tourists from Medellín and Cali, thus bypassing the requisite commercial flights from Bogotá. As with many of the stories of large tourism operations, it is also rumoured that this hotel is financed through political corruption and drug trafficking (I do not doubt this is partially true, but I have no support to back up the claims). Although people were worried about the implications of this, I also heard most people joking that because the site had been so poorly selected (by someone who clearly did not know the region well enough) it was doomed to failure in the first flooding season. These outside interventions can thus be as much the site of ridicule as the antics of tourists searching for authentic ‘indians’. However, the sense is that in Leticia tourism is business to be made.

As I have noted already, Leticia as a site of movement and yet also imagined as a site of tranquility has meant people from all over the country coming to make their livelihood. The transnationalism of this movement is also visible, with the intermingling between Colombia and Brazil (and to a lesser extent Peru), but also the transnational entrepreneurs, usually former tourists who made decisions to stay or come back to provide services to other tourists. In Leticia there is a significant presence of people from Spain and other parts of Europe. In Iquitos, the transnational entrepreneurs are US expats who relive their hippy

days running hostels and, especially, *Ayahuasca* retreats. Whether or how much *leticianos* benefit from tourism development is something of a question. Some argue that people who work in tourism are all from ‘somewhere else’ and that *leticianos* do not find good work in tourism (Personal Conversation, July 2012). For others it depends, and more likely it is those who are identified as indigenous who have more trouble finding work. From my experience, I spoke to very few *leticiano* tour operators; most of the other strong self-identifications were from elsewhere in Colombia or Europe.

However another effect of all this movement has been that who is a *leticiano* is also up for grabs. I heard words like *colono* or *blanco* often used in confusing ways to describe people not from the region, or people who live in Leticia but are white. Others made a distinction between *blancos* and *colonos* as recent arrivals and *leticianos* as mixed-raced people who had lived there since previous booms. And yet I sensed that many, especially in the established older agencies, feel a deep attachment to Leticia. For one conservationist I spoke to, his environmental work had ‘won’ him the right to live in Leticia and if all his years working to conserve the forest were not enough to give him this right, no one could claim it either (Personal Conversation, July 2012). The transnational movements of tourists, workers, capital, and entrepreneurs among others thus also play out in these negotiations of identity and belonging.

People involved in tourism in Leticia talk about two different kinds of tourists – the backpackers and the mass tourists (*los mochileros* and *turistas de masa*). This distinction has become very important for how people evaluate the implications of tourism and reflect on their own desires for what visitors should be like. Although people use this distinction to make claims that it is the mass tourists (who largely arrived with the arrival of Decameron) whose presence and activity cause problems in Leticia, the neoliberal mobility of tourists is also produced through the movements of backpackers – tourism’s entrepreneurs extraordinaire. Backpackers who tour Leticia and the region play with the same sorts of desires and imaginings of the Amazon as the so-called ‘mass’ tourists. They come looking for adventure, for a jungle full of animals, for indigenous people who perform acceptable and expected roles as either backwards or noble savages. That they are willing to accept a somewhat reduced level of comfort in their consumption often makes them appear more responsible, more tolerant, more well-travelled and flexible, precisely the types of approved categories that neoliberal touring has molded into aims of its modes of governance.

I think this makes it worth pointing out that despite protestations to the contrary, backpacker narratives are part of, replicate, or inspire neoliberal forms of movement. What I mean by this is, again, those desires for movement that is unrestricted and ‘free’, but where freedom is based on choices between different things to consume through which we can express and actualize our ‘selves’. We also chose the things that are better to better ourselves, so the more authentic the indigenous life we can see, the more authentically we can experience it (i.e. outside the city, closer to nature, away from too many gawking tourists), the better our ‘selves’ can become. Neoliberal movement is movement that does not need to see borders the way others might because the borders of its movement have been circumscribed in its political content or in the aims to which it is put in motion. That

is, neoliberal movement appears free for the way that it can cross territorial borders but only *because* it is restricted in the way the world is seen as an infinitely traversable series of ‘products’ of difference, packaged as experiences that can be put together to make the entrepreneurial subjects of capitalism rather than re-make alternative political visions of the world.

Backpackers are entrepreneurs extraordinaire not only because they often are credited with ‘opening’ new sites and taking the risks that initiate tourability (going before the plumbing has been completed or when you still have to eat the way the locals do) but because what backpackers do and get from touring has become part of what even mass tourism offers. ‘Discovering new horizons’ or being able to ‘strengthen values and become environmentally conscious’ as cultural goals of touring have made their way into Decameron advertising.<sup>42</sup> In this sense many of the narratives of intrepid backpackers discovering the world and themselves have become part of neoliberal narratives of movement. Others have noted that the distinctiveness of the backpacker has been blurred somewhat by advancements in communications technology and social practice that mean that the image of the lone tourist who takes off for a year and maintains limited contact with family and friends no longer really applies. The image of the backpacker thus works less against the grain of mass capitalist production, and increasingly within the types of social-political-cultural projects contemporary tourism is embedded in.<sup>43</sup>

In Leticia, as in all touring of the Amazon, both backpackers and mass tourists come to see animals. Stories and images of great and terrifying anacondas, caimans, and jaguars, or the funny and cute monkeys, beautiful birds, and dolphins circulate as key stereotypes of what makes the Amazon (and what makes it worth touring). Animals have thus become a site of tension in Leticia over how touristic movement is facilitated. Many of the independent tour companies take tourists out on longer jungle treks to see if they can find animals; however, the popularity of trying to see animals has meant that it is becoming harder and harder to find them. As I was told by many tour operators, Lake Tarrapoto where tourists like to go to see the pink dolphins has become so overrun with boats every day that the dolphins are hardly ever there and they now have to offer the tours saying that you *may* get to see dolphins, but you don’t get your money back if not.

Yet animals are integral to the perceived authenticity of an Amazon experience, not the poorly maintained streets in Leticia, or the noise of the boat motors as tour operators and transporters work their daily livelihoods shuttling people back and forth. How do you write a meaningful blog post about the sound of motors? To facilitate this experience, then, many people in communities that receive tourists will go out and capture animals (jaguars, anacondas, sloths, monkeys) to hold in captivity at their homes and bring out when tourists come to visit. Many note the destructive and violent nature of this practice that takes animals from their habitat, as well as the problems this presents for keeping them fed, and

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.decameron.com/promosite/index.php/es/hoteles-decameron/hotel-decaloge-ticuna-amazonas>

<sup>43</sup> There are forms of touring in which this is not happening, or happening less, such as in highly affluent, very exclusive resorts, but for many of the most accessible forms of touring, learning and cultivating the self has become at least a feature if not a primary one.



yet also note that most tourists are happier having seen the animals than not and rarely ask questions about the implications. Indeed many tour operators or guides visit certain homes on the specific understanding that they can offer their tourists animals to see. In response to this, some people will capture animals because they know this will mean more visitors. In one interview an indigenous guide, Emilio, described the demands in which this practice is situated by saying “it’s like colonization. The whites came and made the indigenous people kill animals, and now it is tourism, they make the indigenous people *have* animals” (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012, my translation).

Images of dolphins, jaguars, anacondas, and caimans appear everywhere in Leticia, lining the streets in the form of wooden carvings or pictures on restaurant walls, or in the names of various hotels and hostels (Los Delphines, Anaconda Hotel, El Gran Caiman, etc). Yet this relationship to animals, as tourable objects that facilitate authentic experience, is also a site of contestation. In particular, Emilio talked about the efforts in Puerto Nariño to stop animal captivity by changing the terms of touristic movement – that is, by organizing to discourage tourists and especially guides from visiting communities that had animals. Part of his concern, as he explained was that “in our culture we keep animals sometimes as pets, but we have lost this cultural sense when it is done for tourism” (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012, my translation). By intervening in touristic movement and expectations he hoped to change the dynamics of how nature was being commodified and the relationships between indigenous people and nature being transformed through the obligations of making difference tourable. This kind of contestations may have small effects, but it is one example of how the terms of mobility are put in question in the way this ‘local’ effect of tourism is being challenged.

The work of other kinds of travel entrepreneurs creates expectations and experiences of the Amazon, as well as forms of entitlement. Travel guide writers play an important role in defining the tourability of a given site and setting up expectations while offering touristic performances to mimic (or maybe mock). Lonely Planet (LP) is only the most obvious of these, and, because of its ubiquity and popularity, the one that has received the most comprehensive analysis and criticism. What has surfaced in critical analysis of travel writing is the way that the kind of authority these writers are seen to have makes them important agents in shaping how the bounds of otherness and appropriate cultural difference are drawn (Lisle, 2008; Lindsay, 2010; Callahan, 2009). Crucially, liberal multicultural or cosmopolitan versions of difference are often the grounding for judgements about what is tourable and why we should tour. Touring is the activity that allows us to discover sites of otherness that may have many ‘problems’ such as poverty, inequality, racial hierarchies, histories of violence both exceptional and everyday, and these may even be discussed but in ways that do not implicate tourists in their reproductions (especially, in the case of LP, if you ‘travel right’ as an eco-conscious and responsible tourists). I think there is much to be said in the critiques of how travel guide representations filter and construct difference, but what also became apparent during my time in Leticia was how travel entitlements are produced in the very material production of guidebooks themselves.

I heard several stories about LP writers coming through Leticia and Iquitos in the time I was there. It seems that writers work to set up contacts with specific places (hotels, hostels, agencies) and then return periodically to do updated reviews. Because of the limited space in the book, each time they return there is an opportunity along with a struggle to either be one of the new places that gets included in the new edition or one of the old entries that manages to not get knocked out for something else. Although writers are not supposed to receive perks as such, the work does rely on personal relations and connections which means that people can expend a great deal of energy in pursuit of that seal of approval – the entry in LP. Because of the way that many tourists (historically backpackers, but increasingly the more ‘affluent’ crowds) rely on LP to make crucial decisions about where to stay, where to eat, and which tour guides to use, the stakes can be very high. And of course, the assumption goes, since everyone wants tourism everyone wants to be in Lonely Planet.

During my last few weeks in Leticia I heard a story about someone saying no to a Lonely Planet review. This was a site near Amacayacú Park that has received some tourists off and on, though the primary concern of the site is operating a sanctuary for monkeys. It should become clear soon why I deliberately am not giving more information about the site itself. A little while before I had been doing my research, the woman who runs the facility had been hosting a Lonely Planet researcher who later wrote to her to tell her how much he enjoyed the site and that it would be included in the next edition of LP Colombia. She responded with a polite email saying ‘no thanks,’ but they would rather not be in the guide because they are actually not interested in having that many and that kind of tourists visit. His response, as was paraphrased to me, was one of shock. He wrote to her saying that this was the first time he had heard anyone ask not to be included, but that it was his *job* to include the best places he visits in the book, and this was one of the best places, so they were *going* to be in the next edition (Personal Interview, August 8, 2012). The same story came up in an interview some days later where the hostel operator I was talking to told me how unfortunate it was that this site is so unknown and unvisited (Personal Interview, August 15, 2012). According to the index for the 2012 edition of Lonely Planet Colombia (published in September of that year), the site has been included (and though I doubt it, I do not know for sure if more went on in how this was negotiated).

Much like the story I opened this chapter with, I think a lot is revealed in this small interchange. In particular, the kind of entitlement that I have been talking about through which touristic movement is formed is also practiced through how assumptions are made about the desire to be in guidebooks. Moreover, it is interesting how the *work* of being a travel guide writer generates a certain sense of authority or entitlement to lay claim to what defines a touristic sites regardless of the desires of those working there. Even more surprising is how this story runs opposite to what is expected – it is not that this guide writer was exercising power through exclusion, but precisely through *inclusion* was reasserting the power relations of global mobility that demand openness and access for tourist. In other words, seeing it as his *job* to publicize places he liked visiting, this writer’s response both effaced the political nature of decisions to publish *this* site over another (by framing this publicity as obviously beneficial), and reproduced hierarchical divisions of labour where work in tourable places is subordinated to promotional activities often taken on by those

with more access to mobility and the circulation of knowledge. As I examine again in Chapter 6, this division of labour has important consequences for how people are able to receive benefits from tourism development as well as how they are able to define how tourable sites are represented and how land and space are used and accessed.

### **Developing Uncertainties about Touristic Movement**

The kinds of mobilities that make and are made possible by tourism are having major impacts in the tri-border region. In addition to the response of communities like Nazaret (which is not alone in rejecting tourism, though it is rare), other voices and other negotiations are taking place that expose some of the complexity but also the political problems of tourism and claims of touristic rights to move. Building on the issues I just raised, I use this last section to sketch out some of the different positions I heard during my research as a way to expand on how the situation in Leticia is embedded in the discourses and shifts outlined in the previous chapter. This sketch also sets up later examinations of claims about authenticity and the politics of (in)formality, and other aspects of work and service through which people engage in the transnational mobility of tourists.

Like the confluence of absence and intervention through which I saw Leticia, it was also expressed to me that tourism in the region is a mixture of attraction and mistrust, as much for the hosts as it is for the guests (Personal Conversation, August 2012). Importantly this means that communities neither fully embrace tourism and its potential nor, by and large, reject it outright, but negotiate feelings of desire and doubt about what tourism brings. When I spoke about the situation in Nazaret, it was through these kinds of mixed feelings that people situated, critiqued, or celebrated that community's decision to reject tourism. Ambiguous feelings about tourists and tourism abound. For example people speak about the dangers of losing cultural authenticity when people in communities send scouts along the river to warn them of arriving tourists so they can 'dress up' and bring out animals and goods to sell. At the same time, people express frustration at the same people from these communities for not knowing how to deal with tourists properly, for not being culturally 'advanced' enough to handle the intricacies of the business themselves. Likewise people fear the dangers of mass tourism that is not as sensitive, as cultured, as travelled and experienced to appreciate cultural difference and environmental protection at the same time they recognize the very strategic fact that tourists from Colombia ultimately purchase more than backpackers because they have more disposable income and are travelling shorter distances. The distance of Europe (both physical and its 'developmental' distance from this corner of the third world) is celebrated by those who want alternative tourism development and especially those smaller businesses that are seeing the encroachment of companies catering to mass tours. For these people, responsible tourism provides a cultural sensibility and the prudence that comes from saving for a big trip you *really* want to take. At the same time this distance is also a barrier that may not be as useful for communities or families who need to sell artisan goods in order to survive – especially, as is usually the case, when these goods are sold by those who make them for a very small price to distributors who then sell with a huge markup in the city.

One story I heard described this tension through the rumors of the *corta cabezas* (the head cutter) who travels in large boats with lights by night cutting the heads off fishermen or stealing their organs. The *corta cabeza*, a story that stretches through various parts of the Amazon region, or appears in other forms such as the ‘face eater’ in parts of Peru, has become most commonly associated with tourists or others ‘from elsewhere’ such as researchers or NGO workers. This story or rumour has circulated (mostly in Leticia within *Ticuna* communities) since about the 1970s and is associated with the rise and expansion of tourism. This circulation reached the extent that apparently in 2005 the President of ACITAM<sup>44</sup> wrote a letter to President Uribe asking him to address the human rights abuses being suffered by indigenous people at the hands of the *corta cabeza* (Cure Valdivieso, 2007).

This story reflects the play of feelings people have and have to negotiate when it comes to tourists: that they are both good and dangerous, good usually during the day when they want to buy artisan products, but dangerous at night or when they want other things. Cure Valdivieso provides an insightful analysis of the contours of this rumour, especially the complex connection between ‘gringos’ and *corta cabezas*; however, what I find interesting here is how this everyday rumour circulates in a way that provides a moment to make decisions about what kind of movement should be allowable and how people make claims about the type of risks they face as a result of this movement (ibid.). It is also worth noting the way mobility appears in the kinds of responses she got from people interviewed about the *corta cabeza* – on the one hand there were people whose mistrust of ‘gringos’ could be expressed as “an errant being, a stranger who is not from here but who travels all over” while others claimed these people with bad intentions came from far away specifically to take things (indeed the stories of the *corta cabeza* taking blood and organs parallels experiences of medical and biological research in the region where people have historically come to take blood and tissue samples) (ibid., p. 112, my translation). In particular these stories have circulated around the idea that the *Ticuna* body is healthy and the *corta cabeza* needs to come and take things from it because, despite all their technology, their bodies and spirits are not healthy and need remedies made from *Ticuna*. I would argue that this cuts very deep into mythologies of touring practice and, especially, the neoliberal discourses of self-fulfillment and authenticity on which contemporary voyages to the ‘hearts of darkness’ are founded. Thus rather than take these stories as merely myths, I think we can read them as narratives of the violences and mixed emotions produced in touristic movement that play out in the complex politics of attraction and mistrust.

For many tour operators regulating mobility in the region is also about negotiating feelings of attraction and mistrust; however, in this case the negotiation is limited by the market-based discourse through which tourism is understood. As the coordinator Valentina put it

it’s like I said, anyone can come and, I believe that the restriction could be in the economic because people, without discriminating, people who don’t have a lot of buying power don’t value things as much and are more, more, are those who, for

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<sup>44</sup> *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Trapecio Amazónico*, Association of Indigenous Cabildos of the Amazon Trapecio.

example, throw garbage in the river, who have less education about these things, and could do more damage to the surroundings. So, some economic restriction, that you know it is expensive, so that you value and know that you are going to find a really good place. (Personal Interview, July 17, 2012, my translation).

This comment reflects the difficult position many of those working in tourism in Leticia are facing trying to find ways to restrict touristic movement in a context of the depoliticizations of tourism development. Framing the political projects of tourism (the reshaping of landscapes and subjects to facilitate certain kinds of movement, for example) in technical economic terms means that how we make judgements about mobility and access likewise reassert categories of economic differentiation as a somehow more neutral terrain on which to make distinctions. Yet particularly raced or classed feelings of mistrust are apparent; economic restrictions do not just mean fewer tourists, they mean ‘better’ tourists.

By far the most common way I heard people express desires to contest the terms of tourism in the region was through the language of the UN WTO’s Code of Ethics. I heard desires to capture the movement of tourists in an effort to train them better, with often quite literal suggestions such as mandating reading materials on the plane for tourists or a contract they would have to sign on arrival. People expressed doubts about whether tourists should be able to come to Leticia without the appropriate knowledge of the Amazon and how to manage their conduct. Yet, much like the Code of Ethics itself, restricting movement more often turned into reversing the burden of work on those who provide or produce tourability to do so in sustainable or ethical ways, or do the work necessary to guide the good conduct of visiting tourists. I am not suggesting these are bad ideas, but they again obscure what is political about tourism under a banner of good ‘consumption’ (again, by looking at what good and bad tourists do, rather than what tourism and touristic mobility do). The kind of burden sharing in the Code of Ethics, emphasizing as it does the role of tourism providers to make touristic sites environmentally and ethically sustainable within the free market capitalist economy, also does not reflect on the inequalities within which providers and producers of tourism (especially in the Global South) are situated.

These responses are different, and are in many ways in tension with each other. Much like the messiness in which tourability is being produced, there is a messiness about how people are thinking through possible interventions or ways to challenge the arrival and demands of so many tourists. As I looked at in the previous chapters, things like the Code of Ethics and development discourses are shaping how these contestations can (and cannot) take place. In the context of Leticia, I see the desires for a certain kind of freedom and cosmopolitan subjectivities that are mobilized by and in tourism development that I looked at in Chapter 1 playing out in ways that shape the stakes people have in how they produce or contest tourability. In the chapter that follows I shift ground in the analysis to examine how tourability can be mobilized in ways that contest the terms and effects of contemporary neoliberal mobility while also making strategic use of certain openings in ‘alternative development’ discourse. As seen in this chapter, Leticia is a place that has long been shaped and impacted by transnational processes. Talking about tourism in this place tells us a lot about its local dynamics and impacts as another transnational process, but more importantly for me, it tells us about how subjectivities, landscapes, and the (im)possibilities for

movement are also made ‘at the site’ and in the negotiations of the ‘toured’ as transnational agents.

## Chapter 4: Migrant Stories as Tourable Experience: Claiming alternative visions of contemporary mobility

Like Leticia, El Alberto is a small place. Located in the hills just outside the city centre of Ixmiquilpan in the Valle del Mezquital in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo<sup>45</sup>, it is a rather unexpected place to find oneself as a tourist. El Alberto is one of around 120 communities and *ejidos* within the municipality of Ixmiquilpan, whose inhabitants are indigenous *Hñäbñu* (or *Otomí*<sup>46</sup>). The Valle del Mezquital is a largely rural and indigenous place (69% of people in Hidalgo live in communities of less than 2500 people, and 25% of the population of Ixmiquilpan are identified as indigenous) (Quezada Ramírez, 2008). It is a region that has been historically isolated and marginalized, and largely off the trail for even most adventurous international tourists. The indigenous community of El Alberto itself has a population estimated anywhere between one to two thousand inhabitants, though this number is uncertain because at any given time a majority of these people will be living and working outside the town, either in the urban centres of Mexico or, more frequently, in places like Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City. Outside of the small water park, or *balneario*, called EcoAlberto which consists of three pools, a shower area, and a small lawn area where people can pitch tents to spend the night and the Gran Cañón (a similarly small area by the river, seven kilometres from the water park), there is little in the visible landscape that could be said to draw tourists.

Yet on any given night during Semana Santa, or Holy Week, over two-hundred people can be seen participating in the *Caminata Nocturna* (or Night Trek) in which tourists spend the night in the hills of El Alberto on a simulated tour crossing the U.S.-Mexican border as undocumented migrants. The project is derived from the experiences many in the town have had as migrants and their desires to change the conditions both of their border crossing and the effects large-scale migration has on small places like El Alberto. Impressive, provocative, complex, and controversial, the project has earned El Alberto recognition, and a reputation, nationally and internationally and has circulated the voices of many of its inhabitants through the reporting that has been done on this small place. Situated in this contradiction between marginalization and transnationality, the project itself is full of contradictions, ambiguities, and alternate claims making it an interesting site for investigating some of the possibilities (and some of the problems) found in the process of making something like migrant stories into tourable experience.

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<sup>45</sup> The Valle del Mezquital is a region of the state of Hidalgo that contains several municipalities, including Ixmiquilpan and El Cardonal. Although the region is diverse and divided between lower and upper sub-regions, in this dissertation where I say Valle del Mezquital, I am usually referring to the upper region where Ixmiquilpan is located.

<sup>46</sup> *Otomí* is used sometimes to refer more generally to indigenous people in this region of Mexico; however, it has been challenged in recent years with the revival of the word *Hñäbñu* (used for both the people and the language) along with other names in other areas because *Otomí* is considered to have derogatory significance. *Hñäbñu* translates as ‘the people who speak through the nose’ to refer to the very nasal character of spoken *Hñäbñu*. Although *Otomí* is still used elsewhere as a self-identification or by governments or academics, in Ixmiquilpan *Hñäbñu* is used almost universally.

To this point, I have been looking at tourability as situated in particular projects of governance and sovereignty and have been arguing that tourability is invested in various projects that facilitate neoliberal mobility, organize land and resources, and define ways in which indigeneity and other ‘difference’ is made acceptable. I have also argued that this is a deeply contentious process and that touristic mobility and the mobilities that make it possible are only produced through the frictions of tourable sites where those involved often contest how this mobility is made possible. The *Caminata Nocturna* challenges me to pose different questions. Specifically, I ask what happens when other claims, or other kinds of political positions, are made through tourability? How does it become possible for people to make these claims, and to what effect? In this chapter, I provide some answers to these questions by examining how the *Caminata* project came about, the process of making migrant stories tourable, and what kinds of challenges or alternatives are posed (or not) through the performances of guiding tourists across a simulated border *de mojado*.

My argument in this chapter is that in the production and performance of the *Caminata*, people in El Alberto become transnational agents in the way they claim space to contest the terms of transnational movement, specifically the violence and injustice experienced by undocumented migrants. In contrast to Leticia, where the frictions of making sites tourable make those involved agents in the transnational politics of global touristic movement, the *Caminata* mobilizes touristic movement and making migration tourable towards the aims and strategies people in El Alberto are choosing to negotiate their condition as migrants and indigenous Mexicans in a neoliberal global economy. Where people in Leticia, like those in Nazaret who rejected tourism, are negotiating how to intervene in touristic movement to contest its consequences (along with the consequences of all the other forms of movement they have been part of), people in El Alberto are using touristic movement to strategize about the consequences of neoliberal restructuring and border securitization that shape their lives and ability to make a livelihood. Although situated in very different contexts, as I show below, to the extent that I am not sure the same kind of mobilization of tourability would be possible in Leticia, they are linked by the fact that people in both sites are attempting to cope with shifts in the global economy, the politics of borders and security that create unequal access to mobility, and changes in tourism and development governance.

My argument also specifies members of El Alberto as transnational *political* actors or subjects. While certain arguments about community-based tourism stress the importance of community control as the marker of a progressive alternative (Morales Gonzáles, 2008; Shen et al., 2008; Mitchell & Reid, 2001), I believe these only identify *one* political aspect of touring or tourability, the control of benefits, and over-emphasize the entrepreneurial capacity of tourable subjects as their mode for being political. At the same time those who designed and maintain the *Caminata* project are entrepreneurial, creating a site that has been marketed to great (business) success, the political action of this production comes, first, in the way members have mobilized tourability *otherwise*, to claim space and a right to re-present the border and their own subjectivity as undocumented migrants crossing it. This mobilization of tourability involves contesting their often inscribed status as ‘victims’ whose experiences can be told by others. In contrast, members of El Alberto use the project to enact their



capacity to tell *their* story about crossing the border and challenge how they are treated through both direct discussion of discrimination and through the performative enactment of the border patrol. This has also certainly included challenging the way the project is represented and circulated. Secondly, and linked to broader trends since the 1970s in the Valle del Mezquital, political subjectivity is being reimagined in the politicization of an indigenous migrant identity, manifested in the re-articulation of *Hñähñu* systems of governance and collective work and the use of ‘migrant’ as an identity that can supersede political and religious divisions, both features of how development of the *Caminata* project was made possible.

Although it has been called many things, I intentionally refuse to refer to the *Caminata* as any particular form of touring. It is a community based project, but developed through the experience and resources of transnational migration. It is political in its message and dialogue, yet it is not asking its participants to join in solidarity to a particular political struggle (see Moynagh, 2008). Its creators are wary of describing it as political, and it can just as easily be taken up as adventure or absurdism. It taps into desires for ethical and responsible touring, yet it does not follow the same patterns as certain kinds of ethical touring that distinguish work and pleasure (in the sense that ethical, and especially voluntourism, present work as an additive that makes pleasure more virtuous or responsible). The ‘work’ done by participants on the *Caminata* is not about building a road, helping out at a school, or giving vaccinations, work often used to justify the ‘ethicality’ of a trip with very little attention paid to how meaningful (or, more often meaningless) it is to the communities involved (Vrasti, 2012). The creators of the *Caminata* did not want to make travel more ethical by giving tourists the opportunity to work, they wanted to have tourists work hard in order to raise their awareness, provide them an experience from which to think differently, or encourage them not to cross the border. Thus, the *Caminata* defies easy categorization, part of what I find so unique and interesting about it, and why I think it opens up interesting questions about the possibilities of other claims through tourability.

I begin this chapter by situating the *Caminata* in the context of migration and tourism development in Mexico and the Valle del Mezquital. I then describe different stories of how the *Caminata* as an idea and a project was designed and particularly how experiences of the border were translated into this project. While crossing the border has been and continues to be a very marked experience for many in El Alberto, and the problems of family dislocation and loss of community structures are profoundly felt and articulated by many, I think it is also important that many people in El Alberto have also very self-consciously mobilized discourses about migration and global inequality based in their lived experience and in what I think is a very savvy understanding of the political debates in the current moment. I raise this as important to seeing them as political actors, rather than merely ‘suffering migrants’, able to strategize about their situation and make use of opportunities for community-based touring and growing interest in talking about the condition of migrants.

In the third section I return to the concept of landscapes raised in Chapter 1 to analyse the Valle through its three waters. The stories of these waters show how the landscape has been constructed, how it is made tourable and not tourable (and some of the contentions

around this), and how current transformations in the politicization of a migrant identity are part of making the *Caminata* project possible. From there, I briefly outline the importance of work and religion in the stories of transformation that fuel much of the narrative and performance of the *Caminata*, themes I pick up again in Chapter 6. Finally, I examine performances of the *Caminata* to look at how the tour itself makes claims about transnational mobility and inequality, challenges certain touristic expectations about access, and is potentially a limited space for performing solidarity or challenging gendered representations of migration. I end with the performance of the border patrol (*la migra*) to argue for how its uses of humour and seriousness create and embody critiques of power at the border and the terms of movement migrants experience.

### **Tourism and Migration in Mexico and the Valle del Mezquital**

Migration from communities in the Valle del Mezquital to the United States began in earnest in the 1980s, later than other areas of Mexico. There are only scattered accounts of people from the Valle having participated in the *Bracero* program in the 1930s, which is also a reason cited for why today the majority of migration from the area is undocumented (Quezada & Rivera, 2011). Prior to the 1980s, people migrated from the Valle to the big cities, like Mexico City, Monterrey, or later Guadalajara to work in construction or as domestic workers. This internal migration follows the structural pattern by which labour from the countryside, largely indigenous, formed the basis of urbanization and modernization in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Mexico (Fox, 2011). This history is coupled with longer standing forms of movement and displacement based on colonial practices of land transformation and the movement of labour to the mining areas of Hidalgo. However, when people in Ixmiquilpan talk about migration, they usually begin with the movements of the 1970s and 80s. In addition, Quezada Ramírez argues migration was also fueled by land conflicts between indigenous *campesinos* and small private land-holders that has been ongoing since the early 1970s involving local and national authorities as well as the army (2008, p. 131). It was also around the 1970s that increasing interest in the indigenous cultural heritage of Mexico, institutionalized through the intellectual and cultural projects of *indigenismo*, transformed the region from one seen merely as exemplary of poverty into a laboratory of sorts for *indigenista* scholars and activists, work that in part fomented much of the regional revival of indigenous political and community systems that have formed the basis for current transnational networks of support and belonging through which communities are connected across borders (ibid.; Schmitt & Crummett, 2004).<sup>47</sup>

By the 1982 debt crisis, in which the Mexican government was forced to default on its international debts, the development projects and investment that had provided so much work for migrants began to dry up. It was at this point, according to stories from El Alberto and elsewhere that people began to seriously look to crossing the U.S.-Mexican border in

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<sup>47</sup> Schmidt and Crummett look specifically at the organization of transnational community between Ixmiquilpan and Cleerwater Florida where many migrants from the region have worked for a long time. As a result of this movement, a *Hñäbñu* council has been established in Cleerwater. In contrast, most migrants from El Alberto end up working in Phoenix, Salt Lake City, or Las Vegas where they have also established networks and cross-border community connections, as well as maintaining connections through the two Pentecostal churches that also have branches in El Alberto.

search of work (Sarat, 2010; 2013). This change in migration was also situated within the broader agrarian crisis in Mexico marked by public policies explicitly designed to change the rural landscape from one of small, communal farming to more (nationally) profitable big agri-business, as well as those enacted to facilitate the adoption of the NAFTA in 1994 (Bartra, 2004). Through these policies, Bartra argues, including the constitutional changes to Article 27 which radically redesigned land-holding, the Mexican state attempted to move rural workers into urban employment, supposedly in growing industry and service. However, when these jobs did not materialize in the 1980s, the result were more workers moving into the informal labour sector in the cities, into *maquiladoras* along the border region, or attempting undocumented crossing (ibid., p. 23-4).

This neoliberal restructuring of the political-economy thus produced many of the conditions for increased migration from rural areas, and the increased 'indigenization' of Mexican migration across the border as the changes to land systems broke with many of redistributive aims of the 1917 Revolution (Fox, 2011). Central to the rural crisis was the opening and de-regulation of agricultural production which was meant to allow Mexican producers to 'compete', but in fact flooded the market with imported corn and other products from the United States (and Canada), so that the prices farmers could get for crops dropped dramatically (Mize & Swords, 2011, p. 195). Though a very incomplete history of migration trends to the United States (for a more detailed account see Mize & Swords, 2011), these structural changes are an important part of how migration became such a pronounced feature of life in the Valle del Mezquital and how the transnationalization of this place both made the *Caminata* possible and makes its political message all the more urgent.

Although many scholars have tended to focus on migration, community organizing, and resistance when it comes to indigenous migrants from Oaxaca, Chiapas, and other areas of southern Mexico (see Fox, 2011; Fox and Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Stephen, 2007; Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013), the effects of migration on the Valle del Mezquital have been equally devastating and have also provoked many different responses. Through the 1980s and 90s, migration from communities in Ixmiquilpan often reached 80-90% of the population, which left many towns with very few inhabitants and with fewer means to sustain life (Quezada & Rivera, 2011). People I spoke to in El Alberto, and people I have seen quoted in the many stories about the *Caminata*, use the term 'phantom town' (*un pueblo fantasma*) to describe these years when many left and few returned (Loyola, n.d.). I show below how stories of transformation and work told by people in El Alberto to negotiate and contest the transnational restructuring of their community inflect the *Caminata Nocturna* as a project of recovery. This story of recovery, however, is also situated in a broader context of rural development strategies in Mexico of which tourism is celebrated as an important part.

Tourism development has a much longer history in Mexico than it does in Colombia. Starting in earnest after WWII, and based in part on early movements of U.S. troops and their letter writing home (Boardman, 2010), tourism development has been a major part of Mexican development, especially in the form of resorts such as Acapulco in the 1950s, Cancún in the late 1960s, and more recently the highly exclusive resorts of Los Cabos in Baja California (Saragoza, 2010). Initially state-led, following the debt-crisis pushes came for

decentralized and deregulated tourism development of sites, usually through conditions on loans from such places as the Inter-American Development Bank (Wilson, 2008). Since the early 2000s, alternative or ecotourism has increasingly been placed within policy documents as a key sector in need of development and investment. The Plan for Tourism Development between 2001-2006 raised the profile of green tourism in the country and between those years, the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI) offered support to 24 indigenous communities or ejidos totaling 473 million pesos, with a major increase from 2005 to 2006 from \$22 million pesos (\$1.8 million CAD) to over \$127 million pesos (about \$10.5 million CAD), and from 69 proposals for support to 158 proposals across the country (López Pardo & Palomino Villavicencio, 2008, p. 44).

Parque EcoAlberto was one such project that received funding, largely through the support and connections with Xóchitl Gálvez Ruiz, then director of CDI. However, despite this, by and large tourism development in the country remains centred on major projects and resorts, including the infrastructure projects of the Palenque-Agua Azules highway in Chiapas. Likewise, alongside the 1992 changes to Article 27 of the constitution which now allows *ejido* lands to be sold privately, in April 2013 yet another change was made to allow non-nationals to purchase lands for non-commercial uses along 100 kilometres from the international border and 50 kilometres along the beaches, a move seen in part as meant to encourage the construction of summer homes by American or other international tourists (El Informador, July 8, 2013). This change is indicative of ongoing strategies by the Mexican state to make land available for tourists by restructuring land tenure policies that situated tourism development as part of projects not only for imagining how the nation can be represented, but also for dealing with social problems.

Scholars have noted the longstanding relationship between tourism development and migration in Mexico. Many of the state-sponsored resorts of the 1950s and 60s were built to provide employment in areas seen as most economically marginalized; these types of development projects were seen as increasingly crucial following the cancellation of the Bracero program in 1964, which left many without work, and the growing social unrest in the country through to 1968 (Clancy, 2001). Clancy also links the development of Cancún in Quintana Roo to nation-building aims and, especially, dealing with social tensions in the southern regions of Mexico, particularly along the Central American border (ibid.). Indeed, Cancún has been an important part of Mexican migration policies in that it was both built in part through migrant labour from Guatemala, and has been a site of internal migration from neighbouring states by people, dispossessed of land or unable to get by in small-scale agriculture (Castellanos, 2010). For Wilson, the particular resort ‘poles’ have also been constructed around attempts to divert internal migration away from overcrowded major cities, especially the Federal District, a strategy that has been largely successful (2008). Yet, Castellanos notes that where hotels may once have offered employment that provided some stability or a good livelihood, as more people continue to migrate to places like Cancún, the sheer number of workers along with global labour trends have meant that jobs have also become increasingly short contract based and precarious, along with their seasonal nature (2010).

In this context community-based tourism emerged as a substantially different option for ‘dealing with’ migration. For proponents, community-based tourism provides the economic options and the connection to place and community needed to halt the needs for migration (Piñar Álvarez, Nava Tablada, & Viñas Oliva, 2011). Based on the idea that rural, usually indigenous, communities will also have access to some kind of natural or cultural ‘resource’ that can be presented to tourists and that will be of interest to tourists (assumptions I critiqued in more detail in Chapter 1), this framework takes up a similar model to the ethnic touring seen in Leticia. These projects thus intervene on the rural landscape to remake it both as a place of supposed stability (for communities) and as an aesthetically tourable, and again profitable, place.

I want to be clear that my criticisms of these strategies are not meant to reject outright all the attempts at tourism development in rural communities, especially given the social, economic, emotional, and familial costs of migration. However, I do want to highlight the *Caminata Nocturna* as working strategically within this context, but making different, and I think politically more interesting, claims about what tourability can do. As I outline further below, this is also situated within the current development context of a region that is dependent on migrant remittances and labour. Those who created the *Caminata* made use of this framework and the desire to use community-based touring to break the flow of migration (and secured funding and support on these terms) while also creatively deploying it towards other claims. By making migration itself tourable, they challenged the categories of mobility and stasis through which so many tourable sites are designed (the mobility of the tourist juxtaposed to the toured who have been put ‘in place’ geographically, temporally, and in terms of the distinct markers of difference they perform). Yet they also make claims about the importance of place, land, and community, not for their aesthetic differences, but to encourage visitors to move forwards to make the country, and the world, a better place. The project has thus been very successful at tapping into current political trends and strategically carving out the possibility to do something different.

At the same time, the *Caminata* deals with the real, difficult, and often traumatic effects of migration for people and for the community. As particularly important to how the current experience of migration is performed, the *Caminata* also engages directly with the violence of border security and the possibility of death that has, in recent decades, become an especially pronounced aspect of migration.

Many of the older inhabitants of El Alberto speak about their journeys to the United States in the 1980s as ‘easy’, ‘tranquil’, and with few costs. Likewise, the possibility of return was also more easily available, meaning that many would travel back and forth across the border to work and maintain ties to their community. This, they lament, is gone, and the border has instead become a place of risk, enforcement, and the possibility of death.<sup>48</sup> For younger people in the town who are considering migrating, these risks loom large, as at least

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<sup>48</sup> Sarat (2010) reflects on the *Caminata* as a migrant response to this possibility of death, similar to the way conversion or other kinds of religious responses become important as ways of coping with the trauma migrants face.

one member of the town has died during a border crossing, and several have been injured or endured detention in increasingly crowded U.S. facilities. Border securitization over the last couple decades has radically reshaped the landscape of the border and the way people in El Alberto imagine and speak about their crossing. As has become apparent in the neoliberal politics of mobility, at the same time border crossing is facilitated for capital and for certain subjects such as tourists, borders are becoming increasingly securitized, with increased surveillance and restrictions of those not deemed permissible. As Andreas noted over a decade ago, shifting border policy in the United States rearticulated migrants (and drug-traffickers, and later terrorists to which they were inextricably linked) as a national security threat against which stronger enforcement in the form of more guards, walls, and surveillance became seen as both necessary and acceptable (2000).

Beyond the context of the United States, however, there are global trends in border management that reveal a great deal about the importance of mobility to the exercise of contemporary power. For others like Wendy Brown, the building of walls is symbolic of the state's desire to reassert legitimacy in the face of declining sovereignty, though not necessarily declining sovereign power, and thus sits paradoxically as an assertion of power and yet a symbol of weakness (2010). A more recent trend in border management is the shifting of borders or zones of border enforcement either outside the territory of the state (as in the case of Australian offshore detention facilities, for example) or 'within' the state. Strategies of securitization have expanded and extended to include the increased use of detention of would be migrants (often in the same facilities as other kinds of prisoners) either without or within the territorial borders (Coutin, 2010), and 'internal' border policing in the form of legislation such as Arizona's Bill S1070 which authorized municipal law enforcement to check the immigration status of people they suspect look like 'illegal immigrants'.

For migrants at the U.S.-Mexican border, since the mid 1980s the landscape of the border has shifted as the possibility of crossing near cities changed and pushed more people farther into the desert in order to cross, increasing the risks to life, but also the need for *polleros* (paid guides that take people across the border, sometimes called *coyotes*) (see also Doty, 2001; Weber, 2010). The landscape of the border has also shifted by becoming embedded in locations, practices, and agents farther away from the actual territorial border. Crossing in the desert has meant that migrants are more susceptible to violent confrontations with drug-traffickers and robbers (referred to as *cholos*), and are increasingly implicated in the ongoing violence between drug cartels. Although many see this violence as separate from the violence of border securitization, it is the insecurity of migrants through these policies and practices that largely contributes to their exploitation in other ways. It is also important not to understand the increasing securitization of migration as simply a struggle to prevent migrants from entering, but rather, as Coutin argues, as part of techniques of control that make people deportable and thus sources of labour that can be more easily exploited (2010). Although life on 'the other side' is not featured in the *Caminata* (in fact, it is almost eschewed) conditions of deportability along with the persistent presence of borders between race and language perpetuate the violence of the border as a territorial boundary in the daily lives of many migrants in El Alberto.

Along with these hardships at the border and working in the U.S., the journeys and work of migrants travelling from Ixmiquilpan have profoundly changed the region. In material terms, it has reshaped the things people have, or have access to, as returning migrants bring goods back with them or those at home buy things they could not have afforded before with remittances. It has also changed the architecture of the region, with large houses constructed in the styles of the American South-West appearing alongside the smaller, concrete or even wood and mud houses that people previously lived in. In El Alberto, the construction skills that many migrants have learned over the years have been put to use, as have the styles of the homes they construct for others in Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City, to remake the town and to construct the cabins, walkways, pools, waterslide areas, and eating areas of the park and the Gran Cañón (Sarat, 2013). Migration has changed the languages spoken in Ixmiquilpan, as more people learn English and perfect skills in Spanish, at the same time the need to enforce *Hñäbñu* governance structures as what links migrants and communities across borders has meant that some have had to (re)learn *Hñäbñu* in order to participate.<sup>49</sup> Migration is also part of daily life in ways that do not necessarily value distinctions between legal and illegal; in fact, identifying oneself as having crossed *de mojado*<sup>50</sup> was common in El Alberto and elsewhere. I met and spoke with people who identified as having worked as *polleros* who openly shared how they had taken people across the border, or expressed doubts about what they had done not because of concerns about the law or about the rightness or wrongness of borders, but because, in one man's terms, 'the children of those who crossed are not better off'. As I argue in Chapter 5, the way distinctions between legality and illegality matter less (or less definitively) for migrants in El Alberto presents a challenge for journalists and tourists who try and interpret the project and who largely revert to calling it a simulated "illegal border crossing".

For this and other reasons, migration in the Valle needs to be thought of in more complicated terms than merely the result of economic forces. To many, increasing migration in the region is not only about the need for work, but also a result of changing expectations for livelihood (Quezada & Rivera, 2011). Indeed in some of my interviews people were very critical about what they saw as unnecessary movement from El Alberto (Personal Interviews, March 19 and April 3, 2012). Yet, for others, the desires of migration are both about striving for development, and for personal fulfillment, as one man put it:

here we have enough to survive, so that you don't die of hunger, but not to go forwards in education for example. And the young people, they don't accept it here.

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<sup>49</sup> For example, the community assemblies in El Alberto are all held in *Hñäbñu* and I was told by at least one former *delegado* who had come back after years working in the United States to serve as his year of service that in order to take up the position he was required to learn *Hñäbñu* fluently. This is not universal, however, and there are other communities where *Hñäbñu* is not used.

<sup>50</sup> The term *mojado* (literally translated as 'wet') is used as the equivalent to the English 'wet-back'. *Cruzar de mojado* (to cross as a *mojado*) was a common way I heard crossing the border without documentation expressed. Although it can be used derogatorily, I also heard it used and taken on as a self-identification by many of the people I spoke to during my research in El Alberto. In this sense, I believe it was used less derogatorily and more as a way to distinguish the condition of undocumented-ness as an identity (one that is ubiquitous in the Valle del Mezquital). Particularly in the context of the *Caminata* I heard it invoked as the identity tourists would be asked to 'take on' in order to experience what being a *mojado* might mean.

They hear about how we went to the United States and they also want to know about the migration of their parents...The young people, they should know other places. Well, I went to the United States and the young people they should also go, because it is better to know more places. (Personal Interview, April 5, 2012, my translation)

Thus while the historical/structural context of migration and the border are important, the *Caminata* is also situated in a dynamic context where people do not merely understand themselves as victims of a brutal economic system but also as people striving for the kinds of self-fulfillments and freedoms they see being enacted by the many tourists and investigators who come to visit them. The violent reality of the border and the economic violence of neoliberal restructuring remain important to the *Caminata*, as do the stories of crossing told by migrants in El Alberto, but so too is the agency of the migrants who turn their stories into tourable experience to do so in their own, sometimes surprising, ways.

### **Migrant stories as Tourable Experience: Origin stories of the *Caminata Nocturna***

Within this context of migration and tourism, the *Caminata Nocturna* represents a unique approach to tourability and an interesting melding of different experiences of mobility that challenges and provokes visitors, those who hear about the project, and people in El Alberto themselves. Located in this place of comings and goings, and in response to the effects of large-scale migration, the project was designed to augment the already existing (but very small) *balneario*. In 2004, the first *Caminata* was run taking a handful of participants on an eight hour trek through the hills and fields of El Alberto with community members acting as *polleros* to simulate the dangers and emotional and physical work of crossing this heavily militarized border region. Since then, the project has grown to include the portrayal of border guards in trucks with sirens driving up and down the paved roads looking for migrants, drug-traffickers who waylay groups of migrants demanding their assistance taking drugs across the border, bands of *cholos*, and, in years past, groups of Native Americans whose territory migrants cross through on their journey. These performances are all enacted by members of El Alberto, many of whom are doing so without pay during their mandatory year of service, work which forms the core of their indigenous system of belonging. As stories about the *Caminata* have spread, so has its popularity, both within Mexico but also internationally drawing a still small but important stream of curious international tourists to El Alberto. As of 2012, treks could run with anywhere from 25 to a couple hundred people with over 70 people from El Alberto participating in each performance.

The *Caminata* has an origins story, or rather multiple stories, that speak to different desires and claims made through it. Like all origins stories, they are constructions; as Walker has reflected, any practice of tracing the point of origin “depends on where we think we are now” (1993, p. 27). Certain origin stories come to dominate, while others are obscured, forgotten, or subsumed. Origin stories, therefore, are as much part of the political projects of defining here and now whose voice is heard, whose experiences count, and where we can go from where we start. The origin stories of the *Caminata* are clearly not to be confused with the hegemonic claims made through stories of International Relations that Walker examines, but their differences certainly reveal different ideas about the project. Additionally, the constantly repeated, and, for some, dominating, story of the *Caminata* as a



community-developed project has also functioned strategically in building support and popularity.

Most commonly, when speaking to people working in the park, I was told that members of the community had designed the *Caminata* together and through assemblies that gathered the joint experiences of crossing the border to find a way to present this to visitors. The first tours, led in 2004, were thus produced through the same collective work as the current tours which are shaped and reshaped each year by those coming to work on their year of service in the park who bring with them different experiences of the border. To give one example of how this works to shift the contours of the tour, I had been aware of a segment of the *Caminata* that purportedly included an encounter with Native Americans from the O'odham reservation in Arizona through whose territory many migrants must cross. This encounter was said to fuse a mystical performance of indigeneity with a call to respect different caretakers of the land and borders, thus disrupting sovereign claims at the same time it played into many stereotypes of the 'savage indian'. However, this performance was not part of the tours in 2012 and I was told that it had been cut because of time constraints. During the meeting that takes place each year in which community members discuss how to produce the border during the tour, several people had noted their experiences with *cholos*, or the gangs of young, usually men, who travel along the borderzone robbing and often beating up migrants and their *polleros*. Given the limits of time, an encounter with the *cholos* was incorporated to replace the encounter with the Tohono O'odham. Another reason for this change was that the man who performed in this role returned to work in the United States and no one else was said to be interested in taking his place (Personal Interview, April 3, 2012). This shift, which reflects an additional shift in presenting the borderzone in its increasingly violent incarnations, is an important aspect of the production of the tour. Unlike much of the ethnic touring I looked at in Leticia, which focuses on identifying specific 'markers' of difference and consistently performing them, this shifting performance responds to the constant flux of both the border *and* how that border is experienced by those involved in performing it.

It was only later during my stay in El Alberto that I began to hear other stories of the tour and its development. In particular, I began meeting and talking to a small group of people who had come up with the original idea and had done the work of getting both institutional support to fund the project and build credibility and support for it within the town. For these people, getting others in the town on board with the idea had been hard work, and in many instances had almost failed (Personal Interview, April 3, 2012). From others in the region I heard of rumours that had spread in Ixmiquilpan that the project had been designed by 'outsiders', a rumour that was particularly fed by the fact that two members of the core group who developed the idea were not originally from El Alberto. These rumours also served to lay claim to the project as not a 'real' reflection of the town or its migrants' desires. For these individuals who had been involved in initiating the project, their success was largely based on the support they received from the *delegado* at the time who presented the idea to the community assembly and won over much needed support from others. Over time, these relations have strained, and now some of these creators feel that

they and their work have been forgotten and replaced as the project has become more popular (more toured) and, by extension, more accepted.

One effect of this popularity is in the length of time of the *Caminata* itself. In the beginning, so the stories go, the *Caminata* was a lengthy, difficult, and emotional journey that lasted up to eight hours. For Poncho, one of the creators from El Alberto and the original guide featured in many of the news reporting of the tour, the success of the *Caminata* came precisely from its intense demands on the mind and body that drained participants, often leaving them crying and better able to appreciate the meaning of the torches at the end which line the cliffs of the Gran Cañón to symbolize those migrants who have not made it across (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29, 2012).<sup>51</sup> Since then, the tour has been shortened to an average of three hours (though an ‘extreme’ version still exists that lasts four to five hours). For some this is the same as it ever was, in addition to making it accessible to more people; yet, for others this has had an impact on the type of experience and work tourists are able to do on themselves. In this, and other, ways the *Caminata* has always been caught up in disagreement, tension, and competing claims that lay out some of the complex choices involved in producing tourability. In this case, and as I look at later in Chapter 5, this story of the *Caminata* as a community project (and one that supposedly emerged largely without contention), has implications for how the project is produced as ethical or appropriate touring. This is also driven, I think, by the manner in which it was circulated and the expectations made of ‘alternative’ touring that often erase messier histories.

As I have said, the *Caminata* came out of the intensity of experiences people in El Alberto have had crossing the border, as well as a desire to change the landscape of a town where more people left than stayed. For many I spoke to, the border crossing was one of the most difficult things they had done, especially as it becomes increasingly dangerous. At the end of the *Caminata*, participants are taken, blindfolded, to the Gran Cañón where a spectacle of torches on the hillside is revealed, each torch signifying a life that has been lost, or a migrant who has not made it over. In 2008, the community of El Alberto lost its first inhabitant to an accident during a border crossing, though others bear marks of injuries sustained and at least one young man I met had recently returned from being held in detention for three months in Arizona and California.

In a more daily way, people talk about how hot it is and how little you are able to carry for the days it takes to cross the desert, something replicated in the tour when participants are advised and encouraged not to take anything with them (except maybe a bottle of water). The unexpected is an important part of the tour (as it is a reality for those who cross for the first time not knowing what it is really like), and so participants are not told anything about what will happen. Although controversies and contentions over how the *Caminata* is

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<sup>51</sup> I use Poncho’s guide-name here deliberately and with his permission. All the guides operate under assumed names, yet Poncho’s is the one that carries the most significance as the most widely known and as the intellectual originator of the idea of the *Caminata*. At the same time, he is a controversial figure whose name never came up in any interviews I did with current park workers. During my last tour, our guide referred to himself as Poncho, which could have been merely assuming this name stereotypically associated with Mexicans, or connecting himself in a way to the ‘original’ Poncho.

received have played out since its inception, these efforts at designing the tourist experience of migration are aimed, for many, at producing a simulation rather than a game or a show (Personal Conversation, February 2012). For Poncho, this simulation teaches not only through a presentation of information (as in a museum or in a guided presentation of indigenous culture) but through the physical work of the tourists themselves (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29, 2012).

The force and ‘realness’ of the *Caminata* comes not only from the experiences of migration, but also the ongoing presence of migration in daily life in El Alberto. This relates not only to how people will usually have to negotiate with at least one family member living in the United States or receiving and making use of remittances, but also how the border crossing itself persists for the town. Carlos, a park worker, telling me about his experiences crossing the border, which he described as *un sufrimiento* (a hardship), explained that

when we arrive there [in the United States], we don’t think about anything, what we think about is what are we going to do, look for work, talk to others...[we] forget, but we always carry the experience, and sometimes when you don’t have anything to do...you begin to think ah, the border was really difficult...Yes you try to forget, but when I am here [in Mexico] always, always yes I think [about it], yes it preoccupies us what is going to happen. It’s that you never, you can never imagine, all you know is that you have to put a lot of effort when you have the desire to get to the other side...we have to really want it, have lots of courage, a lot of strength to achieve this goal, this American Dream. (Personal Interview, March 3 & 4, 2012, my translation)

For him, the border exists differently when in the United States or Mexico, but its presence is important and, at least when in Mexico, requires thinking forwards to try and imagine what will happen or what it will cost to get across. Beyond suffering, the real possibilities of death shape the way people talk about the border. Members of an extended family who had lost a relative in the United States while her partner was in El Alberto completing his year of service spoke repeatedly about the hardship this had brought, especially for the young children who, having been born U.S. citizens, had a hard time leaving the U.S. to be with their father in El Alberto. Alongside these daily reminders of suffering and grief, the *Caminata* is itself a performance through which the border is enacted and brought into existence in the very ordinary, daily space of the town itself. I look at this more in Chapter 6 where I analyse the significance of the *Caminata* as a weekly, and sometimes daily, form of work to which people in El Alberto sometimes have a quite ambiguous relationship. Here I think it is important for understanding how the *Caminata* produces migrant experiences as tourable to underline the relationship this has to very real and very quotidian reflections on and experiences of the border and undocumented mobility.

This production is also drawn from its own circulating stories, reflecting another layer of how the U.S.-Mexican border exists as an imagined space that people make claims to through representations (though with very different circumstances and access) (Ortiz-Gonzalez, 2007). Not all of what happens on the *Caminata* has happened to its creators or performers. Until 2008, no one from El Alberto had died trying to cross the border, yet stories of death at the border filter into interviews and comments made during the tour or in conversations with media and researchers. Additionally, many of the experiences with *cholos*

or “*narcos*” (drugtraffickers) come not from personal realities, but from the stories heard in Tijuana, Nogales, or Ciudad Juárez while waiting to cross or from others met in the United States. Raúl, who performed as a *narco* during the tour, told me that he dressed up each time in clothes that looked something like what he imagined they would wear since he had never actually seen one of them himself (Personal Interview, March 3 & 4, 2012). I raise this not to disparage the tour or argue that it is less authentic for this reason, but rather to suggest that the migrants involved are also participating in the circulation of knowledge collected through interactions with others and brought together in a project that makes claims about global space and mobility and itself crosses borders as a story that is represented and that represents. Where people in Leticia act transnationally in the way they help produce and sometimes contest the terms of touristic movement through their work of making space tourable (or not), people in El Alberto are also participating in circulating transnational migrant knowledge through tourability in efforts that contest the unequal terms of migrant mobility and access to movement for those in indigenous communities in Mexico.

How discourses about the *Caminata* are circulated, however, has often not been in the control of those who create and perform it, and is a site where some of the most stark power relations in which this community is embedded play out. I speak about this more in Chapter 5, but suffice to say here that unfavourable accounts of the project have come from the Government of Hidalgo, a great deal of the American and Mexican reporting on the project, and an especially damaging and widely circulated criticism from Amnesty International which claimed that the project exploited the experiences of migrants (Kennedy, 2007). These responses are taken very seriously and challenged by many in the community, as in this community member’s comment:

...I can’t speak badly about governments, but the governments have thrashed this project, saying that we are *Hñäbñu* and we can’t do this because in the papers they have defamed us [saying] that we are defrauding money from tourists, when that is not the case. No, we are not defrauding money with this project, we are not working just for El Alberto or Ixmiquilpan, but for all of Latin America so that in other countries they can also work and rise up for themselves. (Personal Interview “David”, March 31 2012, my translation)

Others noted the ways in which the content and meaning of what they said and did were manipulated by people who did not understand that Spanish is not the first language of many members of the community. Indeed, most of the time people speak to each other in *Hñäbñu*, something that at least one man noted to me makes people uncomfortable but really is just their custom of how they speak to each other (Personal Interview, March 17, 2012). Indeed *Hñäbñu* is so important that often children raised in the United States will speak it fluently along with English before they learn Spanish. Older members of the community spoke to me about the intense work they had to go through to learn Spanish, and to this day on tours many times guides will apologize for not having the fluency of their participants. Language has long been, and continues to be an important aspect of discrimination in the Valle, and in Mexico more broadly where, despite pushes for bilingual education starting in the 1970s, non-Spanish languages and their speakers are targeted for discrimination and can have difficulty accessing services. For some in El Alberto, the work to access Spanish (and

later, for some, English) was about being able to speak and be seen politically as well as make themselves tourable. Two community members, when I asked whether there had been any change in how open people are to discussing migration, responded, rather, by reflecting on this ability to be heard:

before, no, we didn't talk a lot because we did not speak Spanish, it was pure *Hñäbñu*. When I was growing up, almost everyone spoke only *Hñäbñu*. And to go to school you needed to walk from 5 in the morning until 8 in the evening to come home. Thus, to learn Spanish was really difficult...The people here fought a lot to learn Spanish, and before for lack of Spanish and other things, Ixmiquilpan did not pay any attention to us, we were an isolated town, forgotten (Personal Interview, "Miguel" and "Antonio", April 22, 2012, my translation).

Efforts to learn Spanish reflected efforts to be able to be political actors in a context where citizenship and political subjectivity have long been associated with speaking this dominant language. Yet, it also reflects how the efforts to become 'tourable' have, for people in El Alberto, involved both working on themselves to be 'seen' as subjects and a process whereby becoming tourable has provided a platform from which to participate and engage in political debate. Importantly, and as reflected in the comment above, this has also been situated in the production of the isolated and 'essentially poor' landscape of the Valle del Mezquital as a space of quintessentially rural poverty and a place for development. I say the production of isolation because, as I will show in the following sections, both the 'poverty' of the region, largely seen as a natural condition of its land and people, and current strategies for development are the result of specific political-economic decisions and the actions of people as they strategize about how to get by.

### **Colonial and Tourable Landscapes: The three waters of the Valle**

The Valle del Mezquital is not a tri-border region; indeed, it appears on a map to be situated quite indisputably in the middle of Mexico. Yet, as I indicated before, this is a place produced through the process of transnational movement across multiple borders. In this sense, the Valle is a 'weedy' place (Tsing 2005) produced in the crossing and intermingling of local and transnational. Indeed the *Caminata* interweaves, through its performance on this terrain, the heart of rural Mexico with the border region as dually existing on this landscape. Returning to Tsing's concept of landscapes, I want to consider, as she does, the relations between human and non-human actions that create and maintain landscapes as something more than aesthetics as a human creation (2005). Confluences between how the land has been used and manipulated, its changes and resources, and the discursive representations of the people of this arid place have all shaped how the Valle del Mezquital is imagined as a tourable place, in a very different way than the landscapes of wild jungle and conservation have made Leticia. This has produced tensions over what kind of touring is possible in the Valle, but also the possibilities of a touristic project like the *Caminata*. This analysis sheds light on stories of the Valle that are so different from Leticia, while also complimenting my argument for how tourism is implicated and imbricated with various landscaping projects, both in the interests of states and capital and also by and for those living in this place and struggling to maintain autonomy.

In the arid climate of the Valle del Mezquital, water is an important and contentious resource. Yet how water has shaped life in the Valle is, rather than a natural condition of the land (or of nature), part of social processes that interact with the natural. In this section, I draw some of these relations and processes through stories of the three waters of the Valle: the black waters (*aguas negras*) of the Rio Tula; the hot waters (*aguas calientes*) of the *balnearios*; and, the cold waters (*aguas frias*) under the ground. My aim is to explain what kind of tourable place El Alberto is and how these conditions may have contributed to making a project like the *Caminata* possible.

### *Black Waters*

In her excellent book on the environmental history of the Valle del Mezquital, Elinor Melville looks at how the histories of conquest in central Mexico shaped the landscape of this place, and subsequently its incorporation as both productive and marginalized in the nation (1994).<sup>52</sup> She looks at how the once diverse and, particularly in the southern region of the Valle, lush landscape was made arid with the introduction of pastoralism (especially with sheep) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that changed the ecological makeup of the land and the settlement and agricultural practices of its inhabitants. Contrary to current, popular thinking about the Valle which sees it as poor, arid, with low soil quality and an ‘uncultured’ native population, pre-conquest the Valle del Mezquital was a rich agricultural area with a large and wealthy (in environmental and cultural rather than capitalist terms) population. As Melville states:

it was the European invasion itself that set in motion processes that transformed it into something often perceived as archetypical of the ‘naturally’ poor Mexican regions. The invaders did not succeed in Europeanizing this landscape, but their presence made it into something new and different. In the process the Otomí were displaced, alienated, and marginalized, their history and that of the region mystified. The Otomí are identified with the alien conquest landscape, not with the fertile, productive landscape of contact. Their skills as cultivators were forgotten, their reputation as eaters of beetles, bugs, and the fruit of the nopal cactus confirmed. (1994, p. 115)

Over time the poverty of peoples and land has been naturalized so that writing on the *Otomí* has long been laced with racism, degrading commentary, and images of them as a ‘primitive society’.

One critical aspect of this process was the designation of the Valle as a productive place on the arrival of the Spanish and thus a place good for raising and grazing sheep and goats, foreign species to the region but deemed to be markers of wealth and progress on Spanish and European terms (Melville, 1994). Once set in motion, grazing practices decimated the region, in particular its internal water system so that it no longer produced enough water to keep land and crops irrigated. At this point, Melville writes, it became a poor, arid land that was “fit only for sheep”. To change the landscape again, by the 1900s effluents from Mexico City had been diverted to flow into the Rio Tula which runs through the Valle. This increase in ‘water’ provided the means to irrigate crops and produce the food that has since then been used to supply the ever-growing needs of Mexico City itself. To

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<sup>52</sup> I am deeply grateful to Hayley Goodchild for suggesting this book and its analysis of environmental history to me.

this day the waters that flow from the City are largely untreated and the Rio Tula is said to be one of the most contaminated in the country with high levels of lead, arsenic, and mercury. As Mexico City grows and its food needs increase, the movement of untreated effluent to irrigate the crops that feed urban populations seems to be of little concern, though the smell of the river as it flows through Ixmiquilpan on a hot day tells another story.

Ixmiquilpan, which is farther to the north of the Valle, was not initially seen as a good place to graze sheep, being more arid; however, as water sources dried and landscapes changed to the south, sheep (and goats) were moved north. This was added to the already present mining in the surrounding areas which, combined with land usurpation to create *haciendas*, meant many *Hñäbñu* were displaced or migrated in search of work in either the mines or as labourers. Today sheep are everywhere in the Valle and water remains a problem in many parts where communities have to be creative about how to get potable water for growing and drinking. The arid landscape and the black water of the Rio Tula are markers both of deliberate colonial practices and choices that produced marginalization, along with the continuation of a relationship in which the Valle receives the wastes of urban development. Yet, this relationship also troubles the image of isolation as the Valle has long been central to colonial practice and continues to be deeply linked to urban growth.

The arid landscape ‘fit only for sheep’ and the black waters have also been produced through narratives about the inhabitants of this place, the *Otomís* (*Hñäbñu*). The poor soil quality, as I have said, was linked to an essentialized view of poverty and marginalization which wrote out the social production of this place through a separation of essential, natural conditions. This has also been replicated through the impoverishment in representations of *Hñäbñu* culture which has largely been associated with poverty, isolation, and a lack of the same ‘high’ cultural achievements of Aztecs and Toltecas who previously colonized the region. This does not lend the Valle to the same kind of tourable aesthetic as seen in Leticia, or even in other areas of Mexico where tourable indigeneity has been fostered and linked to other landscapes.

People who tour Ixmiquilpan think of it as a place to visit hot springs, to get cheap *pulque*, or maybe for *barbacoa*, but know little about the significance of the *Otomí* to Mexican history. People in Ixmiquilpan are working actively to reshape these perceptions through markets of artisan goods and an Indigenous Peoples’ Summit that was able to gather groups from across the Americas for a celebration of film, music, dance, and art in April 2012. Yet I suspect that this landscape, written through these colonial relations yet not overly saturated by touristic representations, may also have contributed to providing the space needed to develop a project like the *Caminata*. El Alberto remains a surprising place to find international or adventure tourists in Mexico, yet it is maybe less surprising considering how the possibilities for producing tourability end up being highly limited by expectations in more ‘obviously’ touristic places.

#### *Hot Waters*

Today the landscape of Ixmiquilpan is covered in large plastic waterslides and inflatable signs (along with the occasional dinosaurs). These are the water parks (or

*balnearios*) that are fed by the other waters of the Valle, the hot springs contained under the surface. There are dozens of parks, many along the highway leading into the city centre, some farther away like Parque EcoAlberto in El Alberto. Some, like Dios Padre, El Tephé, and El Tepathé can accommodate hundreds of visitors and are active every weekend and during the week long Semana Santa with tourists from Mexico City and elsewhere. All three are popularly known to people from Mexico City, and many come specifically looking for them. Others, like EcoAlberto, are smaller and less well known, but still receive visitors from the dozens of cars and vans of people who pass through the area looking for a place to go swimming with no clear destination in mind. Costs vary, but an entrance to El Tephé is around \$120 pesos (\$10 CAD) while EcoAlberto charges \$55 pesos (\$4.50 CAD). Many of the *balnearios* are community operations, either within indigenous communities or *ejidos*; however, there are also privately owned lands along the highway and elsewhere that operate their own *balnearios* such as Valle del Paraíso.

Given the importance of *balnearios* to regional tourism, the push to develop hot springs has become quite intense in recent years. The water is brought up every day at temperatures around 38 degrees Celsius to feed the pools and showers and then drained into the river, also untreated, once used. The process requires some time and investment. In El Alberto, the springs were discovered in 1985 and, as was explained by David and others, the people of the town decided that they could not just let it go to waste. So, through a collection of three pesos from every member in the town, called a *cooperación*, they were able to build a pool that people could use. Initially used by both men and women in the town for bathing, in the following year women objected to this open area and so the assembly agreed to build the showers, or *regaderas*, in an enclosed space, as they are today (Personal Interview March 31, 2012). It was during this time that people began noticing tourists passing through the municipality and so through more *cooperaciones*, members of El Alberto began creating the infrastructure needed to receive tourists. This process was described by David as one that owed a lot to the initial visits of tourists who told them “what was missing, such as washrooms, or areas with plenty of open space, areas with grass. The same tourists told us, they opened our eyes and from all of this, we began to act” (ibid., my translation). Eventually, they no longer had to use *cooperaciones* to fund these developments and began the process of reinvesting tourist earnings in the park itself. By the early 2000s when people began to start thinking about the *Caminata*, a second site at the Gran Cañón had been dug out and created to make a small camping area with two boats purchased for short excursions along the river.

Making use of the hot waters is not straightforward, as land boundaries are sometimes unclear and the colonial policies of the nation maintain ownership of subsoil rights.<sup>53</sup> El Alberto has also been embroiled for years in a land dispute with one of its neighbours, La Estancia, and, in addition to dispelling rumours about the *Caminata*, members of the park administration have also worked to maintain an image that these problems do not affect

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<sup>53</sup> Thus in El Alberto, as in other *balnearios*, at least two stickers or stamps will be posted: one from the health inspector to indicate that the waters meet health and safety standards, and the other from the *Comision Nacional de Agua* to indicate that the community has permission to use the hot waters for the commercial purposes they are.



EcoAlberto as a tourist site in any way.<sup>54</sup> Although direct competition over tourists might not be evident, other divisive systems play into how the hot waters and the land needed for their exploitation can be used.

Tourism in El Alberto has also changed relations to the hot waters themselves. Initially used as community baths, as touristic sites they now serve other purposes. Yet, the waters are still part of daily life beyond the daily work of making them tourable. Community members use the showers for daily bathing, and you will often see women come down with baskets of laundry in the evening when fewer tourists will be using them. Access to the hot waters is also a part of community belonging; only those community members in good standing for their participation in collective work may use the hot waters freely while others are forced to pay as any entrant to the park would. Although community members do not use the pools, at least not during tourist days (weekends and certain holiday weekdays), the shower area is messier, or to return to Anna Tsing, ‘weedier’ in how its use fits as part of the landscape. In the same building with the showers is the park’s general store where equipment is stored and where many workers come during the day to relax or take a break from the sun. This is also where participants gather to be taken to the start of the *Caminata*. In contrast to the more recognizable touristic landscape of the pool area with clear lines between park work and tourist leisure, the shower/store building’s messiness stands out for the way it makes these divisions more evident in the way they intermingle. The hot waters are tourable, but they are also a resource for daily domestic work and a site where community belonging can be enforced, a confluence presented in the different spatial organization of the showers.

These waters are the basis of the tourable landscape of Ixmiquilpan, and their development a crucial part of the economic basis of many communities. At the same time, they have been a point of contention for members of CDI who are interested in promoting ‘ecotourism’ in Ixmiquilpan. As was made clear to me, ‘ecotourism’ required a particular aesthetic (‘rustic’ was the word used) in order to maintain an ‘indigenous-eco’ touring landscape, and plastic water slides simply were not indigenous enough to count (Personal Conversation, February 2012). Indeed, the decision in El Alberto to purchase and install plastic waterslides was characterized as overly influenced by migrant experience in the United States and surrounding communities and not by the type of cultural preservation and resuscitation desired (ibid.). While CDI celebrates the *Caminata* as a community-based project, this comment reflects a view of indigeneity as only local and as threatened by transnationality, a view contested by many sites in Ixmiquilpan, including El Alberto, that bring together aesthetics from the multiple sites of community on both sides of the border.

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<sup>54</sup> Although the politics of the region are much more complicated, in general there is an ongoing problem arising from conflicts and lack of clarity in communal and privately held lands, something often exacerbated by the manipulations and interventions of political parties or candidates. Land conflict between El Alberto and La Estancia was not something I broached in my interviews, yet it does contribute to rumors and suspicions about El Alberto within the municipality. In an interview, one *subdelegado* talked about conflict with neighbouring communities and his worry that others dissuade tourists from coming to El Alberto by giving ‘bad information’ to them which was, to him, the biggest current problem facing the park (Personal Interview, April 22, 2012).

Although CDI does control PTAZI<sup>55</sup> and other sources of funding for these kinds of projects, unlike the tour operators and guides in Leticia they do not have the same kind of control to direct the movements of tourists and there seems to be little concern in El Alberto that plastic water slides are going to inhibit people from being fascinated by the *Caminata*. For other communities trying to get starting on tourism, this may be a bigger concern and it does reflect important struggles over the tourable landscape that speak to how ‘appropriate indigeneity’ is also written through how things count as tourable.

### *Cold Waters*

Neither the black waters of the Rio Tula nor the hot waters are potable, yet in the past people either drank the dirty water and lived daily with stomach aches and problems that became normalized (Personal Interview, April 3, 2012) or drank large amounts of *pulque*, a slightly alcoholic drink derived from liquid of the maguey (Sarat, 2010). In October 2011 a new project was opened in El Alberto to change this situation, the result of several years of work and organizing on the part of many of the people who had initially been part of creating the *Caminata* and who had moved on to work on other projects to benefit their community. This project, *Agua Eco.Alberto*, encompasses a water purification plant, operating above the main well that taps the cold waters deep below the surface and is then transported to filling stations all over the town where jugs can be refilled with clean, cold water. These filling stations now also operate all across the municipality bringing needed potable water to other communities, and profit to El Alberto. In many ways, this project is a result of the success of the *Caminata* which gave many the capacity and connections to get this project off the ground.

The project itself is a private initiative between Danone (the French water company) and its Mexican subsidiary Bonafont<sup>56</sup> with financial support coming from migrants working in the United States and a small contribution by SEDESOL in Mexico. This particular strategy for accessing clean water is situated within current trends of privatized development and service provision that tend to bypass state institutions that are uninterested or have been decimated to the point that they are unable to fulfill these basic needs. That this is the first time clean, affordable water has been available in El Alberto and in much of the municipality is telling of the historical neglect within the region, and the effects of neoliberalization on state institutions. Like the water purification plant (or at the very least the water stations themselves), the artisan cooperative *Mujeres Reunidos* is a project that has been run by women from El Alberto and elsewhere for over 10 years that sells sponges and *ayates*<sup>57</sup> made by hand from maguey fibres to the Body Shop and Este Lauder where they are sold as natural beauty products. Because the earnings from this project go mostly to women, scholars like Schmidt (2006) and Rivera Garay (2010) argue that this and other aspects of the migration process have created shifts in the patriarchal governing structures of the communities of the Valle

<sup>55</sup> *Programa de Turismo Alternativo en Zonas Indígenas*, Program for Alternative Tourism in Indigenous Zones.

<sup>56</sup> This project is part of Danone Communities and Bonafont Social Projects, through which El Alberto received a loan of \$4.5 million pesos (approx.. \$370,000 CAD) that is to be repaid by the community within four years (2013-2017) (EcoAlberto in Mezquital).

<sup>57</sup> Usually in the form of large squares of woven fibres, these were traditionally used to carry things. When sold in the Body Shop they are marketed as beauty products.

del Mezquital, including the presence of women in assemblies, which communities have had to negotiate.

Between them, the water purification project and the artisan cooperative reflect contemporary shifts in the development landscape that emphasize terms like community empowerment and private social partnerships. Part of this has to do with the aims of neoliberal development to download and disperse transformation through the autonomous community that takes responsibility for its own development (on the already set out terms of neoliberal capitalism) and whose members need to create themselves as subjects holding the capacity to develop within them (Blaser, 2009). But this also has to do, as Li (2007) notes, with how people make use of improvement schemes in a context where there is little control of broader political-economic conditions.

Within Mexico, much of this development is done through programs aimed at capturing migrant remittances. Examples include programs such as 3X1, which began in the state of Zacatecas and was subsequently adopted as a national strategy, and *Mi Comunidad* which began in Guanajuato but was subsequently scrapped. Both these programs aim “to channel collective funding from migrants into social projects” (Delgado Wise, 2004, p. 152), that, in the case of 3X1 can include school structures, infrastructure projects, wells or potable water plants, or ecotourism or other enterprises.<sup>58</sup> Importantly, these projects are only funded by the program; the work itself is done by community members. While this program provides needed support for community services, it also works to disentangle the state from these responsibilities by making migrants responsible for development and for making Mexico a place where people have options other than migration. However, it is also indicative of a shift within Mexico to be more supportive of migrants, those *del otro lado*, who previously had faced much more ambivalent, and often negative, representations in Mexican media and popular culture (Saragoza, 2011).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “3X1” is a program initiated by the Mexican government whereby migrant associations in the US can send money to their communities in Mexico for directed and specific (approved) development projects. Under the program it is not important whether the money has been earned by people with papers or not, though you do have to submit paperwork with names and phone numbers. For every peso invested by the migrant association, the Mexican government gives 3, one from each of the three levels –federal, state, and municipal. The program has been seen as a large success for channeling migrant remittances into development projects (such as building a school, a well, a small business that can employ enough people from the community to fit the project’s aims) that it is being replicated by countries in Central America (notably Guatemala has a similar program for migrants from that country who are in Mexico). Part of the funding for the program comes from loans from the Inter American Development Bank. The program has also been critique though especially where those municipalities that have to pay an equal share are usually ones with large migrant populations and thus are some of the poorest in the country and therefore not able to meet these commitments.

<sup>59</sup> At the same time, ongoing structures of inequality shape how communities are forced to navigate these systems and programs. On a trip to one very small community in the hills, with less than 100 inhabitants, my companion took photographs of different community members standing in front of their houses. The reason was that several of them had put in applications with SEDESOL to receive funding for housing improvements, but because it was such a small place, many of the inhabitants had the same family names and so SEDESOL refused to believe that they were from different homes (they denied the initial application assuming they were one family trying to get more support than they were entitled to). The photos would be sent in as proof that they were indeed living in different houses, though I was also told that this would probably not be sufficient

Long before the 3X1 program was nationalised, though, migrants from the Valle had begun seeing themselves as the subjects and entrepreneurs of development to change their landscape of poverty and isolation. The specific history of *indigenismo* in the Valle played a role in shaping these possibilities where the region became the site of *indigenista* policies including bilingual education in the 1970s with the creation of the *Patrimonio Indígena de Valle del Mezquital* (PIVM) and the *Hñäbñu* Supreme Council (Schmidt & Crummet 2004, p. 407; Solís Lizama & Loret de Mola, 2010). Through the work of the PIVM, and especially under the particular leadership of Maurillo Muñoz who is said to have challenged the paternalistic relationships of *indigenismo* through greater egalitarianism (Schmidt and Crummet 2004, p. 407) local leaders were trained who could navigate the bureaucratic systems of the state while being deeply aware of their indigenous traditions, languages, and the situation of their communities. It is many of these leaders who now operate in the Valle del Mezquital and in the migrant communities in the United States to maintain and recreate *Hñäbñu* forms of governance and (today) transnational community connections to strengthen their communities. In the context of state neoliberalization, many *Hñäbñu* communities have been able to successfully develop their own projects of livelihood because of what was put in place in the 1970s. Through this, and in combination with strategic negotiation in many communities of private partnerships and community-based development projects, people in the Valle are cultivating both an entrepreneurial subjectivity and a specific political identity as migrants and as *Hñäbñu*.

In their study of migrants from the Valle del Mezquital and Yucatan, Solís Lizama and Loret de Mola argue that the persistent discrimination faced by *Hñäbñu*, combined with the strength of the system of communal obligation have made people in these communities less inclined to look to the state for assistance with projects (2010). This strong feeling of autonomy was reflected to me in many of my interviews and in daily conversations. It is not my aim in this dissertation to evaluate how this system is working or the kind of development underway in the Valle, though I think it is fair to underscore that while based on an indigenous system of work, these projects are not anti-capitalist, but rather strategic negotiations of the possibilities transnational movement has opened up and current community-based neoliberal development practices. I think, though, that this gives an important insight into how the possibilities for making alternative claims through tourability emerged, through the histories of marginalization and autonomy shaping the Valle del Mezquital and the work of shifting subjectivities in the Valle in which migrants think of themselves as entrepreneurs of development, but also political agents capable of organizing, maintaining systems of obligation and belonging, and telling their own stories.

This migrant identity is as much about overcoming other divisive systems as it is an entrepreneurial one, as one activist and community leader I met put it to a group he was assisting with a 3X1 application. He called on them to work together rather than fighting or

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and another government worker would come out to the community to do a report, since, as they argues, government agents simply do not understand life in these small communities and therefore place extra burdens on these small, already deeply marginalized, places.

identifying in terms of religion or political affiliation, because in this ‘we are all migrants’. Although conflicts often remain entrenched, and communities are all doing this differently, a politicized identity as migrants able to shape their lives and communities for the better exists in the region, shaped by and re-shaping the landscape of (under)development and marginalization-transnationalization.

### **Recovering El Alberto: Religion and work in the remaking of a town**

The *Caminata Nocturna* begins outside the old Catholic church in El Alberto. In the dark, participants are met by a guide who tells the story of Don Beto and El Alberto’s recovery through collective work. Don Beto, the mythical founder of El Alberto, was a man of commitment who worked hard and kept his promises. He was a ‘man of the moustache’ (*de bigote*), a reference to his supposed practice of tearing out a whisker of his moustache each time he made a promise in order to make sure that he kept it. This story of recovery is one of complete transformation from a forgotten, isolated ‘phantom’ town to one with electricity, clean running water, a highway connecting it to Ixmiquilpan, a school, and an eco-park – all developments that have occurred in the lifetime of many of its inhabitants and through their own work. This development, we are told, only happens because of the way people in El Alberto have been able to work together. In a region divided by religion and politics, El Alberto, the story goes, is a community that is united in work.

I have already mentioned the strong system of work and obligation that exists in El Alberto and the Valle more broadly. In this system, all adult males and unmarried women are required to work for a year once every seven to ten years without pay in one of the community-run services or enterprises. In El Alberto this can mean working in the park or the Gran Cañón, at the water purification plant, in the school, as a *delegado*, etc. People in El Alberto commonly refer to someone who is doing a year of service as a *comité*, literally translated as committee, but which means an individual doing this specific kind of service work.<sup>60</sup> *Delegados* are elected each year from the assembly and are the representatives of the community with the municipal government, and other communities. In El Alberto there is one *delegado* and two *sub-delegados* who oversee the park and make sure that all the work is being fulfilled as set out in the yearly assemblies. Doing this year of service is required to maintain belonging in the community; without it, families are not able to access lands and services. In addition to the year of service, people can be called on to participate in *faenas*, or collective work projects, and to pool money (a *cooperación*) for a specific reason (such as the building of the initial pool in El Alberto). Almost all those participating in the *Caminata* are doing so as their year of service, though, as I explore more in Chapter 6 there are many other forms of work going on in the park. At the end of the night, after tourists have enjoyed coffee and *atole* in the restaurant at the Gran Cañón, all those who perform gather and indicate their presence as their names are called out from a list by one of the *sub-delegados*. Those who are not there, I was told, are publically identified at the next assembly meeting (held every Monday) and are fined (Personal Interview, February 19, 2012), unless they have

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<sup>60</sup> So, for example, there are around 70 comités in the park, meaning 70 people who are doing their year of service there. There were 6 comités at the purification plant while I was there. I learned later that the term comité is specific to El Alberto, though the system of work operates similarly in other communities.

a legitimate reason. Although strict, these political relations of work are also negotiated by those involved. During one dinner I had with a family from another community, the son indicated that he was meant to be working in the *vigilancia* (community security patrol) that night, but did not want to leave the dinner we were having. When challenged that he would be fined, he explained that he could ‘work it off’ by working an extra shift at some other point.

This system of work and belonging is part of both the transformation stories of El Alberto’s recovery and one that is shifting in response to the realities of transnational migration and contemporary border politics. In this way the border and the possibilities of mobility across it shape both the stories from which the *Caminata* is drawn and the work on which it is based. In particular, stories of recovery speak about the *delegados* in the 1970s who resurrected this indigenous system of belonging for the *Hñähñu* in an effort to better the conditions of life for the community and negotiate how people could maintain ties to the community in the face of large scale migration. Thus, those who have migrated are also expected to return to complete a year of service when called on, in addition to sending money for *cooperaciones* and *faenas* since they are not physically present to work during these times. For those I met during my research, many of whom had returned from the US recently, returning to do this work was very important, not only for maintaining rights within the community or supporting family left behind, but for providing a chance to visit relatives and connect with their land. However, there are many who do not return, either because they do not want to or because it is too difficult. As the border has become more securitized, and the cost of paying a *pollero* to cross more prohibitive (now reaching \$3000-\$5000 USD per person), Coutin argues the United States has become a carceral territory in its own way, holding people in because the stakes of leaving (and then being able to return) are too great (2010).

For those in El Alberto, this is felt profoundly, as many of those currently doing their service mused about going, but also about the dangers and costs. Those whose family members do not come back to do their service must take up the obligations themselves in order to avoid losing their rights in the community. This, more frequently, has fallen to women who are often also caring for children and trying to do paid work in order to support themselves. A result of this has been both an extra burden of work placed on many women, while also involving more women in the governance structures of the communities as it is only those who do service who can participate in assemblies (a system that has largely maintained these assemblies as male-dominated spaces). In recent years, community assemblies have begun the process of renegotiating these requirements to take account for border militarization by allowing people in the United States to pay community members currently in the home community to complete their year of service on their behalf. For many in El Alberto this is seen as a good thing that both responds to changes in border restriction and provides some paid employment for people in the town. As Raúl indicated: “yes, because it is difficult to come, well, to come is easy, but the problem is when you go back. For example the kid [whose year of service he was fulfilling] has a family, he has a wife and three kids, and is illegal. They [the kids] are in school and he is working and if he comes they will have to stay there but who is going to pay the living expenses? The rent, the food?”

(Personal Interview, March 3-4 2012, my translation). I complicate and explore this system of work as it relates to the *Caminata* more in Chapter 6; here I want to highlight its importance in the story of recovery through which the town of El Alberto is spoken and written about, and through which the continual work to '*seguir adelante*' (move forward) is understood.

Despite the claim that work is what unites El Alberto, religion is deeply intertwined with work in the town's story in a way that galvanizes many inhabitants and also marks out the space and claims of the *Caminata*. Religion is very important in the Valle del Mezquital and in El Alberto. People speak of the community years ago as a place of poverty and violence where people lived in terrible conditions and fighting was regular. Many blame this on the heavy drinking of *pulque* which was also associated with the Catholic fiestas. As in many parts of Latin America, Protestant religions, especially Pentecostalism and other forms of Evangelical Protestantism began to emerge in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking hold in El Alberto in the 1970s with the founding of the first Protestant church (Sarat, 2013). That this was linked with the work of certain *delegados* at this time to revive and strengthen the system of collective work as a foundation for community cohesion is also important. As Carlos put it, "there was a group of people who began to make a change, they brought what is the Christian [Evangelical] Church, to organize and lift us, saying to change our life, don't smoke, drink, begin to work, and this is how people did it, but now many years ago" (Personal Interview, March 3 & 4, 2012, my translation). Only a few people in El Alberto still identify as Catholic and the Catholic church no longer holds regular mass; most that are religious identify as belonging to one of the two Pentecostal churches in the community, or, as they refer to themselves, as *cristianos*.

The importance of Protestantism in El Alberto had deep effects on my research, both in the content of my interviews and in the way it shaped by experiences and my ability (or, more often inability) to connect with people. I have no space in this dissertation to go into a lengthy discussion of the religious complexity of El Alberto; however, it is important to note as a crucial part of daily life for many in the town. Leah Sarat has written an excellent dissertation (now a monograph) on religion in El Alberto and responses to migration that reveals some of this complexity (2010, 2013). In her work she looks at the difference between the discourses in the *Caminata*, which emphasize community roots and staying in Mexico because of the dangers of the border and those of the Pentecostal churches which present the migrant journey as a trial that can be overcome through faith in God and crossing borders as something the righteous can and should do. Indeed the title of her dissertation, "The God Without Borders and the Mexican Dream", brilliantly encapsulates these joint imaginings of migration. In my own interviews I heard the idea that crossing the border was an effort of personal work and faith. For Martha, a *comedor* operator in the park, it was God who decided where you should be and if you make it to the other side it is because of faith, whereas if the *migra* catch and deport you it is a sign that God does not want you to be in the United States. She continued by telling me the story of her husband who was caught twice by the *migra* in almost exactly the same place and how for her this was a sign that she needed to return from the US to be with her husband in Mexico (Personal Interview, March 13, 2012).

For Sarat, and for me, these reflections matter for the way they reveal how people try and cope with the arbitrariness of border enforcement and the seeming elements of chance involved in making it to the other side or not, as well as the traumas of the physically and emotionally difficult journey that always contains the open possibility of death. However, I was also struck in some of these personalized narratives, along with others that reflected on the journey as one of personal work that you either succeed in or not, for their potential depoliticizing effects on the discussion of migration. That it, where God or chance or even personal effort become the deciders of who makes it across and who does not, it seems to evade the active role of those who are making political decisions about the border and the work of those like border guards who reproduce the border every day. Coping with experiences at the border requires mobilizing all kinds of strategies and so my point is certainly not to pass personal judgement on this particular one. However, more broadly, I think these narratives of faith were part of what made religion in El Alberto difficult for me to contend with and forced me to reflect on how I saw myself as politically aligned with the people I was interviewing.

Across the Valle del Mezquital, conflicts between Protestant and Catholic believers have taken their toll with communities splitting on religious lines or people having power or water cut off by *delegados* of a different faith (this is also the most likely reason that El Dexthi split from El Alberto though few people talk about it). In addition to its view of Catholicism as encouraging heavy drinking during festivals and not being as centred on work, Pentacostal beliefs have also often discouraged indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices as forms of witchcraft (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29 2012; Sarat, 2010). This has led many to have ambiguous feelings about the *Caminata* because, while it relies on and encourages the system of work that is credited to this Protestant recovery and has been prosperous, it also makes use of *Hñäbñu* spiritual beliefs, especially when tourists are taken down to the Rio Tula to throw rocks in the water as we learn about a *Hñäbñu* cosmos. For Poncho, this spiritualism was about connecting to community roots and the magic of nature and space, important parts of the journey that both the tourists and the community are on which is as much spiritual as it is physical (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29 2012).

At the same time, the *Caminata* is a productive part of the stories of community cohesion that forestall the kinds of religious and political conflict seen in many other communities in the region. In particular, the story that is told by guides to tourists at the beginning of the *Caminata* is that while there may be different politics and different religious beliefs, in the moment of work they, in the community, are all one. This was reflected and repeated to me in many interviews and conversations and celebrated as an important distinction between El Alberto and surrounding communities. Becoming one through work is something tourists are also asked to do during the *Caminata*. This is inflected with religious tones; as we are told at the beginning of the tour, we are all children of God and God does not see divisions between us. Thus, we travel in the dark together, according to the guides, so that we will not be able to see our differences.



Yet the guides also speak about roots and their indigenous belonging in this place called El Alberto. Not only are we all children of God, we are also children of our mother nature and she will not hurt us if we take care of her and each other on our journey. In contrast, I heard some say that those of us from the cities have lost our roots and should work to find them in our own places. While this might in part be seen as an appeal to the desires of tourists to be able to consume ‘indigeneity’ through their experience in this rural space, it was clear that this appeal to rooted-ness and nature was also important for the political content of the tour. For the benefit of Mexican tourists especially, guides speak about how those from the cities need to recover their sense of Mexican-ness and a connection to this place not built on the false patriotism of political parties or football matches, but a real commitment to working ‘here’.

The landscape of the *Caminata* is thus imbued with multiple religious and spiritual relations: Christian equality from which our claims to move should be equal, *Hñähñu* naturalism that gives the river and hills magical and sacred significance and power, and the spiritual connections to home and roots through which hard work can build communities and belonging. The terrain crossed during the *Caminata* is thus a complex landscape shaped by the relations of religion and work and retold through the stories of community recovery in which tourists also participate.

The story of recovery through religion and work is part of both the performance of the *Caminata* and a negotiation of the transnational relations and material through which it is produced. The claims to unity are not disingenuous; unlike other communities, people in El Alberto do practice their religions freely without daily conflict. But they do also function towards certain ends, making the *Caminata* more appealing as an example of community development or mobilizing community identities in strategies to move forward. Like all productions of tourability, the *Caminata* is deeply political, though its aims can be evaluated very differently than the touristic projects of a place like Leticia. In the following sections I look at some of the claims made through the performance of the *Caminata*, both how the toured of El Alberto recreate the border region and the performances demanded or made possible for visiting tourists.

### **Performing the *Caminata* and Alternate Claims Through Tourability**

A single performance of the *Caminata* requires the work of around 70 people from El Alberto. The evening begins outside the small store in the *balneario* around 8 p.m. and can last until three or four in the morning. Because the *balneario* is slightly separated from the central area of the town where tourists are taken in trucks to meet their guides, most do not have any sense where they are or how intermingled with the space of the town the *Caminata* performance is. In Chapter 6 I use my investigations in El Alberto to analyse various forms of work that go into the production of the tour and how it exists in both daily space and practice in quite mundane ways. Here, I want to look at the *Caminata* as a performance, that is, as an experience that involves both artifice and the suspension of disbelief as well as embodied participation and responses to its emotional and physical content. Clearly performance and work are interwoven, but I use them as separate analytical frameworks to examine in different ways the work that the tour does as a challenging performance and the

contested work of producing the tour.<sup>61</sup> In this section, I ask what kinds of claims are being made through the *Caminata*'s performance, how do these differ from other, more standard, claims made through tourability, and what effect do these have (if any) on how to think about touristic or migrant mobility? As I argue, by mobilizing their experiences as indigenous migrants, people in El Alberto appropriate the terms of mobility (both touristic and migrant) to challenge the violence and inequalities of the U.S.-Mexican border.

Scholars studying tourism have very effectively challenged analysing tourism as a visual experience, largely initiated by John Urry's (1991) concept of the tourist gaze, which build off Foucault's analysis of the medical gaze and its production of the body as marked by disease and targeted by science. In contrast, performance and performativity has provided an understanding of touristic experience gleaned through multiple senses and importantly the interactions of co-constituting subjectivities that create and respond to expectations (Adler, 1989; Hollinshed, 2004; Everett, 2009; Brunner, 2005). In her historical analysis of travel, Adler argues that travel has evolved through various methods or aesthetics of movement that can be learned and practiced (1989). Importantly, these methods or performances of movement can also be troubled or disrupted as they encounter 'the world'. Studies of performance have thus also been interested in the kinds of subjectivities that can be expressed, enacted, or produced (both in positive and negative terms) through touristic experience. This emphasis has also shifted attention on 'the toured' from merely representing to actively performing (see Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, 2005), through actions embodied in toured subjectivities and choices about what to perform or how to interact with a particular environment in the creation of a tourable aesthetic. Questions of performance maintain but also complicate questions of power in touristic gazing by asking what kinds of subjectivities are produced and how these methods of travel support forms of governance. They also raise question of how expectations govern what the toured do, but also how they negotiate these expectations along with other needs or desires.

Although performance analysis has been applied to all types of touring, it may be particularly relevant for understanding how the *Caminata* is produced and the claims it is making on the one hand because it goes beyond what Underiner calls "witnessing performance" to one that bodily engages the participant in the identity of another (2011). Additionally, and quite simply, it is also a tour in which very little is actually seen. During the tour it is dark, sometimes very dark if there is no moon or it is raining, and much of the action, particularly of the *migra*, occurs (just) out of sight so that more is heard or imagined than seen directly. When you encounter the drug-smugglers or the *cholos*, you are told to keep your eyes down and not to look at them. Even though of course people do look, the experience of being unsure of what is going to happen to you is what becomes important. There are parts of the *Caminata* that are seen, little 'shows' put on for the tourists of some migrants being captured or taken away by traffickers, or in the past a show of O'dham from Arizona encountering and challenging migrants as they enter their territories. But what you

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<sup>61</sup> I also think that looking at performance tends to privilege an exceptional reading of the *Caminata*, which it is for most of the tourists participating. This is important, and relevant to how it works and the ways it intervenes in debates about mobility, but I also think there is value in looking at it as work in order to re-privilege the mundane as a site of political analysis.

see is not necessarily the most important, the *Caminata* is also asking you about what you feel (Sarat, 2010). In the very opening remarks to the *Caminata*, another part of its performance, the lead guide explains that we are there in the dark because in the dark we cannot see any differences between us and others and this will help us build the sense of unity and humanity the *Caminata* is striving for.

One of the most interesting alternative claims that I saw being made through the performance of the *Caminata* was through its presentation as simulation. In many of my interviews and in discussions from guides about the tour, people pointed to the *Caminata* as ‘*un simulacro*’, a simulation, of the border and what it is like to cross without documents. However, most people would also note that the *Caminata* does not come close to capturing the reality of the crossing. As Martha expressed the difference:

well, here it is not like what it is in reality...we walk three days, three nights without eating...we need to walk far and you don't know if you are going to arrive...it's what happened with my husband, he arrived in Las Vegas and he was sent back and each time he tried crossing the border they punished him, one month, two months, three months [in detention]. (Personal Interview, March 17, 2012, my translation)

Another way this was put by many people was to say that the *Caminata* does not even present five percent of what it is to cross *de mojado*. However, unlike the concerns about authenticity that were expressed in Leticia that wanted to get the presentation of Amazon culture and life ‘right’, I came to understand that an essential part of the claim in the *Caminata* is this ambiguity between its realness and its inability to fully grasp the thing it is trying to represent.

People in El Alberto are keenly aware that most of their participants could never really feel what they have felt or fully understand or grasp the stakes and consequences of their choices to migrate in the space of a single night's simulation, and guides make as much clear in their presentations to tourists. This ambiguity is also performed through the mix of humour and seriousness deployed by the guides that, on the one hand, makes it difficult to respond with a clear touristic performance (as many blogs and articles note, and as I saw and experienced myself, it is impossible at some moments to know whether to laugh or cry). On the other hand, this mixture is jarring because it brings tourists back to the fact of this simulation, the ultimate unreality of the whole night that plays out as well in the unreality of some of its absurdities. Below I argue that guides and others get upset when tourists do not take the experience seriously enough, because they will miss the point about the difficulties of crossing; yet, if you take the tour too seriously, you may miss another point that is just as crucial: that you are ultimately *not* in a position to fully understand the implications of this real life experience for the people who recreate and perform it. Encountering this inaccessibility is crucial and changes, I think, the claims of the *Caminata* from those of forms of ethnic touring or ‘voluntouring’ which are obsessed with accessing the most authentic experience of otherness or community life as possible.

For the creators and workers on the *Caminata*, the purpose of the tour is to teach people about the dangers of crossing the border so that they will not go, potentially risking their lives. The other way this aim is framed is to point to the success of the tour itself, the organization and planning it takes to run and the park as examples of what can be done by

those who stay and work hard in their communities. It is partly through a performance of and on the body that the creators of the *Caminata* strove to create awareness and educate participants about the suffering of migrants. This is done, in part, by not informing visitors beforehand as to what to expect on the tour itself. As a visitor you are told not to bring anything with you, except maybe a bottle of water, so that many come totally unprepared with the wrong kind of shoes (and many lose their shoes in the muddy banks of the river), clothes that are not warm enough, and little sense of the physical demands ahead (Personal Interview, April 3, 2012). One of the founders and early guides on the tour explained how initially they had a comments book that people could write in at the park office and that after the *Caminata* people would be left often in tears, or visibly shaken, and write about how the tour had touched them in such emotional ways to make them ‘see’ the realities of the border crossing differently (ibid.). As I look at in the following chapter, one implication of the *Caminata*’s organization and performance is that it is hard to capture in a photograph (that quintessentially touristic technique) and instead almost *requires* that those re-producing or re-presenting it tell a lengthier story.

However, this narrative about the *Caminata* is troubled by the fact that the majority of people who go on the tour are students (both high school and university students) and young professionals from Mexico City, Queretaro and other major urban areas (though, interestingly, fewer from the state of Hidalgo). This last point was explained to me by the fact that people are generally poorer in Hidalgo and thus have less disposable income to put towards travel and leisure. In addition to this, the tour has attracted a smaller number of international tourists, and many journalists and academics from all over the world and a least one film crew from France. Although the first *Caminata* in 2004 was run for local students from the University of Ixmiquilpan, those participating on the tour are most often people who are not in a position to have to think about migrating, and particularly not likely to think about doing so without documents.

Though they continue to argue that the *Caminata* is about teaching people not to cross, people in El Alberto are not unaware of the contradictions between this message and who is actually participating. As I noted in Chapter 2, one of the *migra* officers saw the *Caminata* as showing middle class youth from Mexico City who have the skills in demand in the global economy and can cross the border more easily what others have to go through (Personal Interview, February 10, 2012). Similarly, I heard park employees reflect on the ‘bad’ behaviour of some participants, especially after one tour that I participated on with a very rowdy group of high school students from Mexico City. This behaviour, they argued, of drinking or laughing on the tour or not listening to the guides diminished the experience and the educational value of the tour and thus did not actually do anything to break down the privileges with which the students arrived. A local news article about Ixmiquilpan during Semana Santa referred to the week as ‘*El* spring-break *chilango*’<sup>62</sup>, a reference not only to the sheer number of young people coming from Mexico City to the *balnearios* during that week, but more subtly to the well-known and widely reported practices and behaviour of ‘spring

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<sup>62</sup> *Chilango* is a term used to designate people from Mexico City. It can be used both disparagingly and as a self-identification.

breakers' from the U.S. and Canada in Cancún and other resort towns in Mexico. Yet park workers deploy this as well in different dialogue used in the *Caminata*; for example, at the end of my last tour, the guides told the group of students that they were the students, they had the privilege of education, formation, patriotism, while those in El Alberto did not, but that they, the students, should also have Mexico inside them (in the form of the national anthem which is always sung at the end). Tellingly, it was the guides from El Alberto who knew the words to the national anthem, not the students who fumbled their way through. In this way, guides use the hardships experienced by participants throughout the evening to stimulate reflection on the costs (and rewards) of hard work. They also make use of performances of privilege to perform their own positions of marginalization to underscore a political message of the tour: the suffering of migrants and the possibilities opened by collective work.

While performances of the anthem and the use of the national flag seem to tap into national sentiment, their performance in the tour is explicitly framed as having to do with community recovery and the need for rootedness amidst the dislocations of migration. Yet this rootedness is also combined with a performance that criss-crosses borders, back and forth between the United States and Mexico, the borderzone and the Valle, and celebrates breaking down borders between people. Woven into the overall message that it is not worth it to cross the border in this way, are claims about the injustices of the crossing and the treatment of Mexican workers, and how the vulnerability of migrants, produced by the illegality enforced through border policing practices, is exploited by drug smugglers, gangs, and untrustworthy *coyotes* operating in the border region. The dialogue also makes clear that the choice to stay is itself a very difficult one, one that requires will and courage and, as expressed by guides in the final moments of the *Caminata*, a willingness and openness to work on the self and in the community. When I asked Poncho about the emphasis on roots and belonging in the tour and the contradiction between this and the desires I heard from many to work in the United States, he responded that what is needed is a response to both possibilities (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29, 2012). It is here that I see the *Caminata* situated in its performance of rootedness and movement.

Outside school group visits and the happenstance of weekenders who stumble upon the *Caminata* while at the *balneario*, others are drawn to the *Caminata* through stories and experiences of people they know who have migrated. I met and spoke to one tourist who had grown up in Oaxaca and heard stories from her uncle about his undocumented crossing. She noted that for these family members, speaking about their experiences migrating was difficult and often they did not because of a sense of embarrassment, thus it surprised her to know that people in El Alberto were so open about it (Personal Conversation, March 2012). The bad behaviour of students from private schools (like the ones who had been on our tour with us the night before) was indicative of their privilege of not having to think about what migratory experiences mean for individuals and families and thus the educational goals of the tour could not be fully achieved (*ibid.*). On another occasion I saw tourists who were waiting for the *Caminata* to start talking in very emotional terms about what they had heard about the border from friends and family. In this sense, for some at least, the *Caminata* provides a space to experience solidarity with family members who have crossed, or maybe only attempted crossing.

For most visitors, the *Caminata* taps into an ambiguous mixture of emotions and physical feelings of pleasure, suffering, excitement, adventure, and reflection. I look in Chapter 5 at the effect of these unpredictable emotions on how stories are told and circulated about the *Caminata* and its status as an ‘ethical’ project. It is another question how far this extends to create the possibility of performing solidarity. My first time on the tour, I found myself torn between feelings of apprehension and a desire to laugh at both the absurdity of running through the mud on a cold and rainy night and the much more tragic absurdity of the border that makes some into targets while others pass easily. I thought about this absurdity alongside the arbitrariness of violence at the borderzone that can lead to dangerous situations or death if you happen to walk through the wrong place or take a wrong turn in the desert. Yet I find solidarity a difficult concept to apply to the experience of the *Caminata*. People I interviewed in El Alberto never used the term solidarity and rarely described the aim or result of the *Caminata* as more than producing understanding (*conciencia*). Some even rejected the idea that the tour could be seen as anything but adventure or a game by non-Mexican participants because they were so removed from the context (Personal Interview, February 10, 2012; Personal Conversation, March 2012). At the same time, Sarat argues that participants build relations of solidarity during the tour through the collective suffering and work required to complete it (2010). She argues that the disruptions of the tour ‘work’ on tourists’ bodies to produce new possibilities for solidarity (*ibid.*), something that may also have changed as the tour has been shortened and made less challenging. As I look at below, the gendered lines on which this happens leaves me questioning how these possibilities are really being opened up. I also question with whom this solidarity is being formed and how we can distinguish education and awareness from solidarity as practice.

Marilyn Moynagh sees political tourism, and particularly the texts written by such tourists as allowing their readers to witness the struggle through the eyes of the political tourist, but also bear witness to a performance of solidarity “and to the tensions and contradictions that beset that performance” (2008, p. 15). Yet these performances of solidarity in political tourism come from a deep investment, or attempt at investment, in the specific political struggles of others. Likewise, solidarity has to be more than being together in an experience. Although it is a contested concept and has been misused and abused to detrimental effects, for many activists and within social movements, ‘in solidarity’ carries with it demands for specific action rather than merely an awareness that something is a problem (though this can be an important first step) (Walia, 2012). At the end of the *Caminata*, guides tell participants that they have only done half the work needed and are now in a position to work on their hearts and work together to create a better Mexico. This is not, however, an invitation to do collective work with those in El Alberto (nor does it need to be); rather, it is an invitation to do work on ourselves and in our own communities. There are ways that this could be its own kind of solidarity work, yet those lines and connections are not drawn themselves through the performance of the *Caminata*, they are merely an invitation to future action should participants choose to take it. Thus I am less convinced that the *Caminata* is itself a performance of solidarity, even while its creators claim to want to reach into participants’ hearts and reshape their actions by laying a groundwork experience and knowledge for the future.

*Border Violence, Collective Work, and Caballeros*

Performances of violence are key ways the *Caminata* works on the experiences of tourists to reshape their understanding of the border and the stakes of migration. The tour also tries to take account of differentiated experiences of violence, particularly as this relates to feminized migrants. Scholars and activists in and of the border region have noted how women and other non-hetero-male identified migrants experience violence in multiple and intersecting ways based on patriarchal and colonial hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and class (Telléz, 2008; Price, 1999; 2000). This profoundly shapes women's experiences crossing the border, but also often their daily lives in border towns like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. On the *Caminata*, this gendered violence was characterized as the result of the particular 'vulnerability' of women which guides informed us of and which the performed encounters with drug-traffickers attempted to show. However, it is here I see one of the key limitations of the *Caminata* project in how its performances replay and reproduce patriarchal gender narratives that do not move past seeing women as vulnerable (and agency-less) victims, and end up re-privileging masculinized visions of work.

I have noted that the system of service and belonging has historically been male-dominated. For this reason, very few women participate in the actual performance of the *Caminata* as they are not usually *comités* of the park (despite the fact that two women were instrumental in its creation and early operation). Although I noted how changes in gender relations are happening across the region, both Sarat (2010) and Rivera Garay (2006) have also noted times where certain moralizing discourses shape or constrain some of the choices women in the region make. However, these gender relations are neither what I found most compelling to think about during the tour, nor what I feel I have specific research to talk responsibly about.

For me what was far more interesting was the way the performances of tourists reproduced gendered narratives of vulnerability and agency. Many young men participating as tourists seemed overwhelmingly interested in the trek as a display of their skill and physical abilities, often pushing to go farther, faster, and in more dangerous ways through the terrain that is dark, unknown, muddy, and can quite easily produce injury (imagine, if you will, a hundred people rushing down a muddy bank towards a fast moving river in the dark with no idea where they are going). At the start of the tour, guides tell participants that not only are we unable to see inequalities between each other in the dark, but that tonight we must work together, help each other up when we fall, and think of ourselves as collectively working towards the same goal, even while we all carry our own dreams and baggage with us. Guides also used their performance on the *Caminata* to be different kinds of *polleros* than the untrustworthy ones we were told about. These guides performed their work as leaders and teachers, caring for the safe passage of migrants and articulating their work in terms that challenge the way paid guides will often act, again, in part, a consequence of border securitization which makes it impossible for migrants to make their own way across. Thus, in part, the *Caminata* tries to challenge the unequal terms of migrant mobility through a different performance of work.

This vision of collective work was harder to actualize, however, because, in my experience, masculine performances that refused to accept any kind of assistance were more common. It was also hard to actualize in the subsequent narratives presented by guides. In each tour I went on, after our first bout of running, guides came to chastise the men in the group for not being gentlemen (*caballeros*) when they saw women stumble or fall. In this moment, the narrative of collective solidarity that might have potential to articulate work differently (as less individualistic or competitive) transformed into chivalry, transforming women's bodies and work into objects of care and vulnerability that mutually reinforced the adventurous performances of many of the young men.

Later in the tour, after participants climbed up a steep bluff, guides gathered us around to congratulate us on the good work that we had done. However, these congratulations were reserved for the women participants (whom we applauded) and for others who are marked out as having physical disabilities or other types of 'differences'. In contrast, we were encouraged by the guides not to applaud for the men at first because they had not been *caballeros*, and indeed at one point we were told that we could walk over them should they fall. This can be seen, of course, as merely part of the humour that the guides mix with the seriousness of the tour. However, I think it is also an important moment for how migrant agency is being circumscribed by the performers of the tour themselves. Women's bodies are portrayed as vulnerable to a different kind of violence (sexual assault, or being taken for 'sale' by drugtraffickers).<sup>63</sup> Although these are indeed important to women's experiences of the border, descriptions of people as vulnerable have been used in various contexts in ways that remove political agency from these subjects while, as was the case in the tours I saw, not actively engaging the voices of these subjects in the recounting of their experiences. Women as migrants are described as vulnerable because they are more likely to be coming with children, yet how and why these choices are made (for example, the choice to bring children because of inadequate support from partners in childcare obligations) are not addressed (for example, see McEvoy et al., 2012). This view of violence as enacted by 'bad people' at the border also limits a view of what has been argued are intersecting experiences of domestic violence, violence when crossing the border, and within the spaces where migrant women often work in both the U.S. and Mexican border-towns, as well as the complex work of resistance taken by women in these contexts (see Telléz, 2008). Although my point is not that the *Caminata* has to *do* everything, I do think these performances are important to look at for how they replicate a vision of the border landscape that might itself be implicated in reproducing patriarchal power relations, which much feminist writing has argued also need to be combated to produce the conditions for migrant justice.

At the same time that I claim this re-privileges masculinized visions of work and agency, it also sets up an interested re-creation of how migrant labour in the United States is feminized and masculinized in terms that allow for (different) forms of exploitation and disposability. Where feminized labour makes use of notions of women as vulnerable, docile,

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<sup>63</sup> Usually on the tour there is at least one 'vignette' where the group is accosted by narcotraficantes who, in some cases, will 'select' the 'most beautiful' women from the group to take away with them (this tourist is later returned to the rest of the group).



and as bodies on which desires and expectations can be scripted, the work that migrant men are more likely to do in the US, such as construction or agricultural work, is physically dangerous and usually does not include good health and safety standards, both of which work in different ways to create unsafe working conditions and marginalize these workers as rights-bearers and agents. In many of my interviews, people reflected in their working conditions in the U.S. as part of how they suffered as migrants. Yet on the *Caminata*, in very brute terms, women as objects of protection are at times juxtaposed to disposable men not in need of care (or protection) and not worthy of applause.

As a complex performance, the *Caminata* both opens possibilities and reproduces limits. Incorporated into its performance are both the agency migrants have to contest their treatment, work differently together on their border crossing journeys (or work at home to create better communities) and the gendered disposability of migrant labour both as workers in the US and in the violences of the border crossing. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to those who play the border patrol as a site where some of the most contentious possibilities of this performance are opened up.

***Burla a la Migra/Burlarse de la Migra*<sup>64</sup>: Performing the border patrol through violence, humour, boredom, and fun**

As I argued in the opening to this chapter, people in El Alberto make use of the *Caminata* to tell their own stories of the border and express their agency as transnational actors able to participate in discourses of the border, security, and migration. One of the most important performances of the *Caminata* is that of the Border Patrol Officers or *migra* as they are commonly known. Usually working in two teams of three or four, these people travel up and down the roads of El Alberto on nights of the *Caminata* in two trucks topped with flashing police lights and fitted with radios and sirens to simulate the sounds heard from Border Patrol vehicles. *Migra* officers are usually selected because they have at least some knowledge of English (though not all do) and so are able to mimic dialogue and provide mini-shows for tourists as they are huddled in the bushes hoping not to be captured. Some of this performance is exaggerated, especially the constant use of firecrackers to mimic gunshots which most acknowledge is inaccurate since the real Border Patrol rarely discharges its firearms. Yet through performances that sometimes mock and sometimes bring out the injustices of how they are treated at the border, the *migra* provide one of the more complicated components of the tour and one that challenges most directly the structures of power at the U.S.-Mexico border.

During my time in El Alberto, I was struck by the ambiguous feelings many people had about the *migra*. Some told me stories about their own experiences and the horrible treatment they had received when caught at the border, or reflected on the stories they themselves had heard from others about the racialized violence used by *migra* officers to degrade, humiliate, and supposedly dissuade migrants from crossing. In contrast, Fernando, one of the men playing a *migra* office at the time of my research, commented: “I am going to struggle [to cross], and if I succeed, well, and if not...I don’t think anything against them

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<sup>64</sup> Outwit the border patrol/make fun of the border patrol

[the *migra*] because they are doing their job, I'm not against them because they are just protecting where they belong" (Personal Interview, February 19, 2012, my translation). While this man felt that he could understand the work that these officers do to protect 'where they belong', others were more critical and referred to the work as awful. Some went even further and claimed their connection with native people in the United States arguing that those who protect the border do not 'belong' there any more than people from El Alberto since they are all immigrants as well.<sup>65</sup>

For one young man I met who had been held in detention recently at the border (and who was currently working as one of the *migra* officers on the *Caminata*), the conditions of his detention were deplorable to him, but he also claimed that crossing through the desert, for many, the *migra* are the least immediately dangerous thing a migrant can encounter. As he explained it, in the desert if the *migra* show up people could choose to run or let themselves be caught. If they run, the *migra* might catch them anyway, or they might get lost in which case they will probably die. If caught, they might be beat up, put in detention, sent back to Mexico, probably in debt for the thousands of U.S. dollars paid to cross, and will have a criminal record in the U.S., but, as he put it, they're probably not going to die. Yet, he claimed, the *migra* are not bad people, they are not like the *cholos* and the *narcos*, which is why sometimes he heard people say "God willing the *migra* will show up, because I can't stand this anymore" (Personal Conversation, March, 2012, my translation).

This kind of ambiguity is present in the performance of the *migra* on the *Caminata*. At one point during the tour it is the arrival of the *migra*'s sirens that 'saves' the group of migrants from the *narcos* holding them at gunpoint. Yet the *migra* are still dangerous; we see them catch a group of migrants (actually more performers from El Alberto) who are beaten up and thrown into a truck to be taken to detention. Tourists who are caught by the *migra* are treated poorly and are returned to the group to tell their stories. At the same time that *migra* officers try and ply tourists with stories of having food, providing shelter and protection from the *cholos* and *narcos* roaming the banks of the river, we are made fearful of them by the actions we cannot see them doing to those they have captured (while we can hear the abuse, the beating, and the gunshots) as we hide under a bush. The performance of the *migra* officers includes dialogue that at times reveals a lot of the indignation and frustration felt by those in El Alberto about their treatment. At one point on a tour, the *migra* officers began telling us that they would throw us in overcrowded detention facilities where there is little food and of poor quality. At the same time, they talked amongst themselves warning each other that these 'Mexicanoos' (as they pretend to mis-pronounce *mexicano*) might be dangerous and criminals. The threat of detention, which carries stakes that cannot be represented in the tour itself, remains very real while people also perform their indignation at being ascribed a status of criminality or 'dangerous aliens'. Thus, the 'concern' of *migra* officers, or their 'goodness' in comparison to the others who deploy violence at the border never overshadows in its performance their power to detain and their status as enactors of sovereign power.

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<sup>65</sup> At least a few times I heard people say that they are hardly any estadounidenses living in the U.S., reclaiming this word which normally just means 'American' to refer only to First Peoples.

The power of the *migra* officers is also resisted through humour. In some of the advertising for the *Caminata*, tourists are encouraged to come not only to experience what it is like to cross *de mojado*, but also to ‘*burla la migra*’ (outwit the *migra*). One article on the tour expressed the experience of this contradiction by saying: “it takes only a quick look to note his small stature, the Mexican moustaches on the dark faces. ‘When did the roles get reversed?’ you ask yourself seeing a pair of Canadians fall in front of him” (Acuña, 2011, my translation). At the same time the *migra* are ‘enemies’ on the tour, they are portrayed as weaker and less serious. Their dialogue is often funny and usually elicits laughter (most Mexican students in the urban areas study English and so will understand the dialogue). Unlike the *narcos* and the *cholos* who are played in much more terrifying ways, the *migra* officers will do things like ‘go for coffee’ when they cannot find us. The *migra*, we are told, find coming down to the river too dangerous and so we are safe from them there, unlike the *narcos* and *cholos* who will. In comparison to the work migrants will do to achieve their aims, we are presented with the *migra* as less committed, less capable, and in a position of privilege where their work does not demand the same sacrifices or hold the same consequences.

Yet it is also clear that some involved in the tour’s production know well the ambiguity of state borders that play with their lives and livelihoods. This is also reflected in the performance of the *migra* and in the ways people from El Alberto will talk to reporters, journalists, and academics about their project. Many people I spoke to took a lot of pride in commenting that Mexican labour and consumption were essential to upholding the U.S. economy. In one documentary on the project, Poncho can be seen talking about the contradictions in the ‘policing’ of the border, that let certain people pass while others (usually those not as fit to work) are captured. He challenges that if the US really wanted to, they could stop all the migrants from coming in, but this is clearly not what they want (Vice Guide to Travel, Feb 1, 2010). Whether the US has that kind of power is not the point; rather, the point is that the performers of the *Caminata* also engage with the border as hypocritical, malleable, and as a political tool that designates some as acceptable (at least for certain kinds of jobs) while others can be completely excluded. Thus on the *Caminata*, while the *migra* are challenged for their use of violence, racializations and criminalizations of all ‘Mexicans’, they are also made into targets of political satire for being incompetent and sometimes inconsistent in ways that clearly serve ends other than merely restricting all entry.

I was given a very different view of the border patrol on my second visit to El Alberto when I was permitted to go on a ‘ride-along’ in one of the *migra* trucks to see how the performance looked from the perspective of this work. I did not read this experience as revealing the ‘backstage’ of the performance to me; rather, I found it interesting for the other kinds of performances that were intermingled with what we as tourists see or hear the *migra* officers doing. I was struck by how boring so much of the experience was; there are large stretches of time (sometimes over an hour) where the *migra* sit and wait for their next ‘call’ to come over the walkie-talkies used to coordinate the tour (and the everyday work of the park). There are moments of intense action when chasing tourists or searching in the bushes, but most of the evening was spent in the car texting, sleeping, telling jokes, or sitting in silence. It struck me later that this mixture of action and boredom was in fact probably a

pretty accurate performance of work as a border patrol agent, and the boredom and fatigue of U.S. border policy. In a sense, then, it made me see the *Caminata* as an imaginative performance of the border region that mimics and (possibly) makes fun of the lack of imagination spurred by desires to ‘protect our borders’ (i.e. hiring more border guards to sit in trucks at night trying to ‘catch migrants’, building more fences, higher fences, or fences that stretch out into the ocean). Week after week, the *migra* officers on the *Caminata* perform the same series of actions, with the same group of people, over the course of a year in a way that, rather than being the ‘truth’ behind some falseness that tourists experience, re-performs a different aspect of the mundane work of the border patrol as another part of how the border landscape is produced.

The following day, during an interview with Juan, a young man working as a *migra* officer, I was also struck by how this performance could quite easily embody the language of a ‘game’ with which the lives and livelihoods of migrants can be abstracted in the work of ‘securing’ the border. He told me, “we all have fun, you saw us last night. It’s boring sitting in the car, but it is fun trying to catch people. Sometimes we beat them, and sometimes they beat us”. I half-jokingly responded, “so sometimes the *migra* loses?” “Yeah”, he said “sometimes we lose...but then we go out next time and there are more of us than them and we beat them, we catch them this time” (Personal Interview, February 19, 2012). As a park worker continually called on to perform and represent the project to journalist, investigators, and tourists, this was quite possibly a very intentional comment. Yet I find it far more important for illustrating how in the work of playing the *migra* the creators of the *Caminata* have produced an embodied performance of the border patrol that can replicate, mimic, and mock all at once the power these agents have over the lives, livelihoods, and mobilities of so many in El Alberto.

## Conclusion

During my initial interviews in El Alberto, when I was still trying to get people to speak directly to questions about tourists and their privileged mobility, I became concerned that I was not actually doing the research I had set out to do as each conversation slipped into stories about migration, experiences of crossing the border, and why development at home was so important. It was only later that I realized these conversations were marked by both the intensity of migration as a lived reality for people in El Alberto *and* by the process through which migrant stories had been transformed into something tourable by these same people. Rather than pictures of the river, monkeys, or malocas, it was migrant stories people offered me because it was for these stories that I must have come, as so many others have since the *Caminata Nocturna* began in 2004. Although initially concerned that I was being pushed into a dissertation about migration, I realized that what I was really being offered was a view into the process of making something not normally considered as such tourable, a process that worked its way into the things people said in interviews and the shifts in our conversations.

In this chapter I have traced some of the histories, conditions, and transformations that made the *Caminata* possible. I have argued that the creators of the *Caminata* have strategically used tourism to contend with and intervene in the consequences of neoliberal

restructuring and their restricted access to mobility. As transnational agents they have used making migrant stories tourable to recreate their town and their possibilities and open their own and others' reflections on the conditions of contemporary mobility. In this chapter, along with analysis of the current landscape in which the *Caminata* was created and is enacted and the political transformations of the Valle del Mezquital, I have looked at specific ways the performances of the *Caminata* work towards these aims to elicit reflection and awareness. This has not been a smooth process so it has been important to trace some of the difficulties and contentions, as well as the broader political-economic situation that people in El Alberto have little chance to change. Importantly, while some in the community see the *Caminata* as speaking for the suffering of all migrants, others see it as only a strategy for community development, or even just a strategy for earning money, and not connected to any larger political cause or movement.

In the following chapter, I take up some of the contentious positions on what the *Caminata* is circulated through blogs and media reporting that, along with stories about the blockade at Nazaret, reveal frictions in the governance of mobility. As the complexity of this chapter indicates, the *Caminata* defies easy story-telling in the same way it defies easy categorization. I have never explained the *Caminata* to anyone and not had them puzzle over what they think it means and how they feel about it, and I continue to take this as deeply important to appreciate the possibilities generated by the project and the significance of how different people try to talk about its meaning.

## Chapter 5: Travelling Tales of Transnational Mobility: Telling stories of blockades and tourist crossings *de mojado*

This chapter is about how touring stories and sites travel and circulate and what they can show and tell about the global politics of mobility. Travelogues and travel writing are important places where knowledge is produced, not only for travellers, but also more broadly for giving us a ‘picture’ of the world. Travel writers play an “*active* role in the reproduction of discursive hegemony” through the way they represent their travel to and experience of places and others (Lisle 2006, p. 261). Yet this travel writing can also be “contradictory, insecure, and ambiguous” which potentially makes it run up against or challenge these very hegemonic discourses (ibid.). Far from just being dependent on the personality or even politics of the particular writer, I argue this is also a result of the work done by the toured to make (or unmake) tourable sites and the fact that this work might not progress in very clear or expected ways (intentionally or not).

In this chapter I look specifically at how those who tell stories of the *Caminata* and the blockade at Nazaret, in their attempts to find a way to write about the decisions and actions at these different sites, produce and provoke contentious discussions that reveal different positions on transnational mobility. Both the *Caminata* and the blockade are political in this way for providing the possibility to interject in and trouble standard accounts of touristic movement yet in very different ways and to different effects. I argue that the way stories about Nazaret fall back on questions of authenticity limits the impact of this action, though it does trouble other narratives for people in Leticia itself. In contrast, the *Caminata*, by forcing travel writing into more ambiguous terrain and through the work of those involved in the project in actively engaging with its circulation, has been more challenging. However, the power relations in which stories of the *Caminata*, like Nazaret, circulate, along with the salience of desires for an ethical or moral language to touring continue to limit many of the dilemmas and ambiguities opened in conversations about this project.

In the prolific circulations about the *Caminata*, and to an extent in the more limited circulations about Nazaret, there are discussions going on and knowledge being produced about appropriate and inappropriate transnational mobility. More broadly within my dissertation, this chapter is about the frictions of circulating stories of touristic space. I have been arguing so far that the production of tourability is situated within political projects and thus the meaning of what is tourable is also constructed towards certain political aims. This is done through the various techniques of producing subjects, landscapes, and mobilities. Tourability is also produced in the stories told about tourable spaces, and how these stories circulate. Where touristic space is simple and clear, operating in ways that make sense to the narratives and desires of privileged movement, it easily reproduces the right to tour and/or assumptions about the appropriate ways to travel, despite the fact that writing touristic space is always a process of exclusions and making difference legible. As points where some of the frictions of producing tourability have erupted more openly within these circulating travel tales, I suggest that the *Caminata* and Nazaret’s blockade can be seen to open certain dilemmas for discourses of movement. In the case of Nazaret this opening was quite small. The story of denying access to tourists was largely framed as an anecdote, a small tale, or an

unusual and intriguing response that could quite easily be subsumed (though not entirely) in the same narratives of authenticity and ethics that neoliberal touring is mobilizing so well. For the *Caminata*, its creators, intentionally or not, troubled many of these narratives through a re-imagining of what touristic space might look like and by forcing people to deal with the project in its decidedly unclear and non-straightforward terms.

I use ‘appropriateness’ as the process through which certain things are made right or wrong in particular times and places; in the case of travel writing this involves producing knowledge that defines what is legitimate and illegitimate transnational movement. Yet that is neither analytically nor politically sufficient, and so we must also ask ‘appropriate to what?’ What political aims, projects, disposition of things (in Foucault’s sense)<sup>66</sup> is this configuration of appropriateness working within, for whose privilege and to what effect for the livelihoods and possibilities of those implicated? As I noted in Chapter 2, studies on the politics of mobility have reflected on how *both* permitted and prohibited movement are subject to government, to be managed in the case of the former or restricted in the case of the latter, but that this rests on constructing the terms of what is legitimate or illegitimate (Squire, 2011, p. 2). As Nyers and Rygiel argue, “individuals and populations are constituted as certain types of subjects through the regulation of their movement and through their access to mobility as a resource, as well as their abilities to make claims to rights to movement” (2012, p. 3). Other kinds of claims to free movement are also made, especially through tourism, that mobilize an expression of freedom linked to contemporary market governance. Indeed, as I have been exploring in this dissertation, the ability to lay claim to a right to *touristic* movement poses troubling political problems for those of us concerned with global inequalities. An attempt to address these problems, I suspect, requires a critical analysis of how this mobility is made possible, and a focus on moments where those claims are not so easily made. Asking how travelling tales reproduce claims to mobility, or might be made not to do so, is one way to do this.

In Chapter 3 I looked at how travel guide writers are also travel entrepreneurs who participate in producing the tourability of places like Leticia as well as the entitlements of touristic movement. Scholars of travel writing and political tourism, such as Debbie Lisle (2006), Marilyn Moynagh (2008), and Claire Lindsay (2010) have all looked at the power relations and ways of ‘producing’ the world contained in these kinds of texts. Here I continue with that line of analysis by looking at how the mobility of travel stories and the (transnational) mobility of categories of touring (like ‘community’, but also ‘borders’ and ‘ethics’) are produced but also placed in friction. I continue my work with Anna Tsing’s concept and her contention that universals or transnational concepts are made by the movement and mobilization through and in various places, a process that always encounters friction as these are challenged or reshaped along the contours of particular histories or necessities (2005). The frictions of accounting for the *Caminata* and the blockade at Nazaret are sites where the production of transnational movement and concepts of tourability are

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<sup>66</sup> In his analysis of governmentality, Foucault understands the art of government as the ‘right disposition of things’; that is, government exercises power through techniques that organize relations between people and between things in order to serve the benefit of those governed within the rationality that defines that art of government.

entangled in difficulties and where the power relations between the work of those who live in the site and those who circulate stories about the site can be seen. Although it would seem that comparing these situations would mean drawing out the differences between them, I think it is interesting to ask how they circulate differently within similar discourses of tourism and development. The central distinction I make is that by falling back on language of authenticity and cultural preservation, stories of Nazaret's blockade do more to replicate and reproduce touristic mobility than contest or disrupt it. In contrast, it is partly the sheer confusion generated by trying to come to terms with the ambiguities of the *Caminata* project that makes it politically useful because it forces us to talk about political questions and to tackle mobilities together in a way that other debates about touristic sites based on authenticity (Van den Berghe, 1994; MacCannell, 1976; Brown, 2013) or the distribution of benefits (Sharpley, 2009; Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Shen et al., 2008) do not. This poses other features of tourism that are important and importantly its linkages to other mobilities and strategies to define and govern the way people should cross borders. Travel stories also circulate within a political economy affecting how the power to write, to be heard, or to be seen as a travel writer at all is itself unevenly distributed.

Late during my research in El Alberto I became intrigued by the sheer number of stories about the site appearing in blogs, journalistic pieces, academic texts, and videos. As I have indicated, my introduction to El Alberto was as yet another interested outsider, but upon hearing several times of the number of people who had come to write about the *Caminata* and the loss of control by those involved in its production over the message and meaning circulated in these pieces, I thought there might be something I could offer by way of a review of these circulations. I began collecting all the stories I could and ended up with over 50 pieces in English, Spanish, and French from an array of sources and positions spanning from 2004 (the year the *Caminata* started) to 2012.

In contrast to the flurry of writing about the *Caminata*, I encountered only seven pieces written about Nazaret and so I supplemented the material I draw on for this chapter with the responses I received during interviews to my questions about Nazaret. In both cases I was able to find certain trends or themes in the discussions surrounding these very different places. My analysis of these texts and comments was based on asking what assumptions or claims about movement could be seen in them, how these were made possible and why or to whom they are useful as ways to account for either site. I begin by looking at the story of Nazaret and, particularly, the dominant way people found to make sense of the blockade through a story about authenticity and cultural preservation. After exploring some of the limits of replicating a debate about authenticity, I then engage debates provoked in texts about the *Caminata* and, to a lesser extent, in the less prominent ways people in Leticia had for accounting for Nazaret. The aim here is to look at ways appropriate mobility is reproduced, yet also contested and troubled through the questions that appear around who counts as a travel writer, the limits of what is tourable, and through frictions encountered in key concepts of tourability (specifically borders, ethics, community, and profit).

### **A Small Story: Circulating Nazaret and the government of authenticity**



There is no clarity to the story of Nazaret's blockade. Over the course of my conversations and in the texts I read, competing accounts filtered through off-handed or half-forgotten musings about this community along the river. Exactly how the blockade has impacted relations is unclear; whether this is, as some see it, a total rejection of any outside interference or merely a rejection of certain kinds of tourists depends on who you are talking to. The length of time the blockade has been in place also lacks clarity; although the media reporting about it came out in March 2011 I was told by at least one person that the community had refused to be involved in tourism from as far back as 2001. Yet a clear story about Nazaret is not my concern and, I think, betrays some of the weaknesses of an approach looking for the truth of a story rather than asking what certain stories do (or fail to do).

One of the questions I was interested in exploring during my research in Leticia was how does Nazaret's decision to block tourists appear in conversations with others in the tourism industry and what kind of effects does this seem to have (if any)? To this end, I posed questions in all of my interviews, either directly asking about the blockade in Nazareth, or to glean more general thoughts on a community rejecting tourism. This, combined with the few journalistic pieces I could gather on the situation allows for some reflection on what the blockade as a response does or does not provoke, or at least what its representation by me in interviews provokes in a discussion of regional tourism development.<sup>67</sup> Like the various writings about the *Caminata*, ways of writing about or accounting for the actions at Nazaret reflected on access and openness, as well as authenticity and the need to protect this from the perils of global tourism. As I look at later, especially in responses from people in Leticia, the stories also prompted thinking about the meaning of 'community' and what makes something tourable. In none of these cases were the provocations as pronounced as they were and are in reflections about the *Caminata*. Indeed, Nazaret's rejection of tourism appeared more often as something anecdotal, a rumour, or an interesting side story, seemingly of little importance to the overall meaning and production of tourism (and touristic right) in the region. In the daily practice of guides, tour agencies, and tourist journeys it had little visible impact on what tourism looked like.

I think there are several possible reasons for this. For one thing, as was explained to me, for most in the region Nazaret has never really been a major part of the touring network or circuit and therefore this decision was not overly disruptive to the overall practice of touring. The more established communities like Macedonia and La Libertad continued to receive tourists. Another reason this story may have had less access to circulation is the already established touristic story to be told about Leticia that is, in many ways, quite banal. That is, El Alberto and the Valle del Mezquital is not a point on international tourist circuits of Mexico and so is not saturated by images and tourist expectations (as I have looked at in relation to the Amazon Basin). Finally, the *Caminata* is a project, not a rejection. The

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<sup>67</sup> I gathered responses from 15 interviews directly about the decision in Nazaret to reject tourism or, in two cases, indirectly about community decisions to say 'no' to tourism more abstractly. I deemed speaking abstractly in these two cases better given the context and situation of the interviews. I was only able to find seven online articles talking about the decision, 6 in English and 1 in Spanish. Apparently there was also a video that was circulated for a time on YouTube, but I was not able to locate it.

interjections of people from Nazaret who were interviewed in news articles about the decision raise important contentions about the way tourism is operating in the region, but the complex and ambiguous content of the *Caminata* (and the fact that people in El Alberto have themselves been so active in its circulation) means that there is much more to write about it. It may be the case that people in Nazaret are not interested in provoking or participating further in these circulating debates, and I believe their actions are enough to provoke some important questions. I also think it is relevant, looking back to the discussion in Chapter 3, that as people in the region are engaged in trying to find ways to contest movement while the colonial processes that have historically created that movement have often been so far removed from their control, finding a way to completely deny access might be the only option available. For these reasons I do not think it is fair to simply measure the effect of stories about Nazaret against those of the *Caminata*; they are not comparable in this way. But they are both revealing of some of the key political terms of touristic movement.

The most prominent way people take up the story of Nazaret is as a tale of cultural authenticity struggling against the onslaught of the ‘outside’ and ‘modern’ world. This was particularly how it was framed in the limited international reporting. Tourism, bringing with it ‘first-world’ values, puts cultural connections and community at risk, creating competition, garbage, and other detritus irrevocably changing indigeneity into something not entirely authentic. Authenticity is a key framework for the way the ‘problem’ of tourism is framed in Leticia more generally, and so it is hardly surprising the way this inflected the discussion around Nazaret. As we saw earlier, people in Leticia are very aware of how tourism ‘works’ on the mentalities and subjectivities of people involved, and often this is celebrated as creating more capable and competent agents of regional tourism.

Conversely this work of changing represents the threat against which Nazaret is “defending their language and culture. This could also be the reason to conserve their culture as a community, that they do not want to change their mentality [thinking]” (Personal Interview, August 15, 2012, my translation). Similarly, in some interviews when asked about Nazaret people meandered easily into their thoughts on the ‘commodification of culture’ and often their distress at how this turned socially and spiritually significant things like *malocas* into touring attractions (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012), or artisan creations into objects of culture that could then be sold (Personal Conversation, July 2012). Beyond this it was also possible for some to validate the decision through what it meant for cultural preservation, as in the following comment: “So we think it’s legitimate, we think it’s in line with what our policy is to support culture and if they feel that ecotourism is something that will negatively affect their culture, then we feel they’re legitimate to stop it, or at least we always say organize the house before you focus on tourism to make sure...you have ecotourism to work the way you want it to” (Personal Interview, August 8, 2012). In other words, not only is authenticity an object that can be preserved, it is also the legitimate grounds on which to contest touristic movement.

There are multiple ways to think about this position. One is to question the very notion of authentic culture; the noble savage existing in a pure state is both an impossibility and imagined through the power relations that work to ‘other’ indigenous peoples and

produce narratives about them for the benefit of ‘moderns’. Another is to challenge the ethical position that pure cultural forms are something that can (and should) be ‘seen’ by us ‘moderns’ while being left untouched and unchanged. From the previous chapters, the contradiction in this ethical position should be evident – the idea of moving through touristic space to see and experience things (towards your own self-fulfillment and change) and without changing them is both neoliberal in its aim to smooth the world and in tension with the other neoliberal aims in tourism: the production of appropriate subjects and landscapes to facilitate that movement. Importantly, I also see this as indicative of the depoliticization of cultural difference that occurs within much (neo)liberal multicultural discourse. In contrast to understanding difference as providing the grounding for political autonomy and as based in deep ontological differences that are potentially challenging to the systems of power in capitalist and statist systems (Blaser, 2014), this view of difference focuses on practices or objects that can be observed and contained ‘within’ the modern ontology of liberal governance.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the underlying assumption that these positions tap into is that a plurality of lifeways can be preserved (ensconced in their localized difference) within *and* as objects of the current global political-economic framework despite the fact that, as I looked at in Chapter 3, this framework threatens the livelihoods and landscapes of these lifeways.

Authenticity is a touchstone of tourism and tourability. There are certainly forms of touring that do not rest on authenticity (exclusive resorts, kitch tourism), or solely (forms of dark tourism, diaspora touring), but almost all ideas about and of touring have at one point or another come to rest, even uncomfortably, on the notion of authenticity. In his 1976 book, Dean MacCannell set out the first and probably most cited account of the relationship between touring and authenticity with his idea of the ‘stage’ and the tourist’s ongoing search and longing for admittance to the ‘backstage’ (1976). For MacCannell, the drive to tour authenticity was part of a modern experience which sought to remedy an overly modern world of falsity and flux where social reality is governed by performances rather than the stark relations of ‘primitive’ life. The desire to see and experience the authentic ‘background’ or backstage of another’s culture is about escaping momentarily from modernity and its alienating processes.

In the critical reflections of people living in, working in, and studying the touristic field of Leticia, authenticity (or the lack thereof) is one of the dominant frameworks for contesting what is produced as tourable and how. The ‘problem’ located in these analyses is that tourists visiting Leticia do not get an authentic experience of life and culture in this place because they are bombarded by a manufactured indigeneity that feeds off stereotypical images and expectations of the ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ Amazon. In the process, lamented is the loss of tradition and ‘real’ cultural practice as communities mimic these expectations in short, sometimes farcical performances of what indigenous life looks like. The argument is that these expectations are a problem because they come from without, not from within. Within this framework, crucial to resolving the problems of tourism in Leticia is negating these false images and performing the ‘real’ ones as determined by the people whose lives

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<sup>68</sup> I am very grateful to William Coleman for his questions regarding my use of difference in this analysis.

and homes are themselves the tourable objects. On the one hand it is hard to deny the importance of an argument that demands autonomy and participation for the toured. On the other hand, the problems associated with entitlements to access and the political-economy of producing landscapes as tourable are largely sidestepped in this move. Instead, the process MacCannell outlined is able to continue with the desire to access the ‘real’ (the backstage) and make it as authentic as possible replacing any questioning of whether and why access should be facilitated at all.

This is not, however, sufficient to deal with the ways authenticity has been mobilized in contemporary touring and contemporary capitalism. This is reflected in part in analyses of authenticity within a ‘postmodern’ world which see tourists as savvy to the ploys and constructedness of authenticity and thus travel as what Urry called ‘post-tourists’ (1994, 2011). Scholars like Rickly-Boyd (2012) and Brown (2013) reflect on shifts in the importance of authenticity from an ‘objective’ category (something held by an object or experience) to an existential concern. Objective authenticity is concerned with the object of the gaze and its perceived authenticity. In contrast, existential authenticity is concerned with the authenticity experienced and the ability of the tourist to access a state of authentic being through that experience (Brown, 2013). Authentic being, along MacCannell’s lines, is the salve to the loss of the self in modern life; however, authenticity has now become more than a temporary experience that ruptures the mundane (see Graburn, 1989) and is, rather, part of the package of traits needed for access and success in the global economy.

As a desire fueled in contemporary neoliberalism, being authentic and sure in your being is part of a process that articulates the individual to production as more than just a cog in modernity’s machine and instead as a designer, an entrepreneur, or a creative node in the network. Authenticity is found in tourism because it moves the tourist away from constraints in their daily life and allows them to ‘be’ and ‘explore’ themselves. For Brown, captured in this authentic experience of self in travel is the capacity to ‘bring it back’ with you and become this authentic being in your daily life (2013). Where MacCannell opens his book with an epigraph from Baudelaire expressing his desires to flee the world to escape the torment of being in his (modern) place, the utility of authenticity and the elsewhere is now found (at least in part) in what it allows tourists to bring back in the form of their subjectivity (see Vrsti, 2012). Of course, this still requires the production of an authenticity to be gazed upon and authentic relationships through which to express ourselves. Going back to what I explored in Chapter 1, this also might require those who are toured or servicing the movement of tourists to attune themselves to this authentic being and the mechanisms of its possible actualization, a set of skills that is markedly different from the servile relations of touring past.

In this context I argue the critiques about authenticity provoked and circulated through Nazaret’s action, though also largely determined by the already existing frameworks for debating tourism development in the region, are limited in the way they work within these already well defined projects. In the remainder of this chapter I explore other difficult encounters with how travelling tales circulate, especially through questions of appropriateness rather than authenticity. Debating authenticity can open important

questions about who decides what is authentic and how authenticity is used to govern the terms and limits of indigeneity, but it does not challenge access (the very thing the action in Nazaret engaged) or contest the privileged mobility of tourists. At least in the case of Nazaret, many of the political questions opened by this small move in a small place to deny access were sidestepped in conversational shifts to cultural integrity. In other words, I think Nazaret's decision created frictions that cannot fully be accounted for through the language of authenticity.

### **The *Caminata* as training camp and the politics of circulation**

There is far too much written about the *Caminata* to express completely or (chrono)logically. Since its initial development in 2004 confusing, contradictory, and altogether messy representations have appeared through blogs, discussion boards, videos, plays, and films, online and print reporting, academic discussion and publication, governmental and NGO responses, and of course the voices of those who construct and perform the project itself. These congeal in a type of conversation, though they tend not to be in much dialogue with one another. They are full of bad translations, mis-representations, and at times downright absurd inaccuracies, none of which makes them any the less productive. If we can say that the *Caminata* is performative of migrant mobilities and global claims, and that it is re-performed incessantly through the monologues, dialogues, and diatribes it provokes, it is worth being attuned to some of the political positions opened up through these representations.

Since its inception one of the most strident criticisms of the *Caminata* has been that it is not 'just' (or not 'really') a tourist activity, but is in fact operating as a training camp for would-be migrants to learn what it is like crossing the border. This was especially the case in U.S. based reporting of the project and not, by and large, from Mexican based reporting.<sup>69</sup> Although in recent years the work that people involved in the project have done to counter this accusation have lessened explicit references to this criticism, the image of the *Caminata* as training ground continues to play a role in how it is perceived and contested. This criticism has appeared in unfavourable reporting of the project, within nativistic/white supremacist blog postings about it, but also (apparently) within the municipality and in other communities where there has been some suspicion of the project. In addition, one story I heard from several people was that during his time in office, President George W. Bush had made a comment to the effect that 'there is a place in Mexico where people are taught how to cross the border; that place is El Alberto'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Underiner (2011) argues that there is an important distinction between the US and European based reporting and that in Mexico, particularly the more 'respectful' tone taken in most Mexican based reporting. I agree to an extent, though as I look at below, the *Caminata* has not escaped serious critiques from Mexican reporters and government officials. However, as I noted before, I also reject her distinction between 'domestic' and 'international' responses; rather I prefer to analyse these texts as expressing various transnational positions.

<sup>70</sup> Although I was never able to verify this claim, it was something I heard in one form or another on several occasions. I think its importance as a rumour that circulates amongst people in El Alberto, and in neighbouring communities is now more important than any question of its accuracy (though I myself feel no reason not to believe it). For an examination of reporting from the U.S. media that also made claims about El Alberto as a training camp see Underiner (2011).

The training camp metaphor is an interesting one for the way that it taps into and reproduces many of the assumptions necessary in the making and militarizing of the U.S.-Mexico border. That is, migrants here are understood as being ‘trained’ to make these illegal crossings, the border stays put as a naturalized or politically necessary division and those who undercut it are enemies to sovereign authority. As has been noted by many, producing the mobility of migrants as ‘illegal’ or ‘invasion’ of sovereign lands and authority permits states to respond to that mobility through militarized force (Weber, 2010; Andreas, 2000; Coutin, 2010). It also effectively governs the political meaning of that mobility by re-inscribing sovereign authority as the highest ordering principle of how people move, where they live and work, and thus the unequal distribution of life chances and possibilities authorized through the concept of state-based citizenship (see Mau, 2010). This was only reinforced in calls in 2013 for ‘reform’ by the Obama administration which include creating arduous ‘pathways’ to citizenship in conjunction with increased spending on border security and enforcement.<sup>71</sup> To argue that the *Caminata* is a training camp is to mobilize the perceived supremacy of this authority by re-inscribing the migrant as an (organized) threat and reduces the agency of any migrant to be nothing but a ‘tool’ or a ‘weapon’ in this assault. Thus building walls, buying guns, surveillance practices, and the coopting of policing forces into the militarized projects of sovereign borders appear as though they were intuitive responses.

The training camp criticism has been intensely challenged by those working in the park. In almost every interview given, in almost every description given of the *Caminata*, people will explicitly state that this is not a place to train people to cross the border, it is the opposite: a place where they work to raise awareness of the dangers of crossing the border and encourage people to stay. Over the course of my time in El Alberto, everyone I spoke to in the community told me this, almost verbatim a times. Hearing this over and over again struck me as an odd experience, especially since I had not been as aware of the training camp criticism before arriving and I certainly had not interpreted the project in that way. And still, over and over again people would, often passionately, often as if speaking by rote, say ‘they say that we are training people to cross the border, but that is not it. We are doing this so people don’t go’. As I noted in the previous chapter, this latter claim is problematic if one considers that the majority of the tourists participating in the *Caminata* are high school and university students or young professionals from Mexico City and other urban areas. However, this also means that the alternate claim of it being a training camp is equally difficult to support.

I was not as aware of just how powerful and frustrating this representation as a training camp was until my very last day in El Alberto. I had at that point started to collect journalistic pieces and blogs about the *Caminata* and had been struck by how in almost every

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<sup>71</sup> Even the ‘pathways to citizenship’ in recent proposals (announced January 2013) reproduce these ideas by insisting that claims by undocumented people need to be held behind all other pending claims so as not to disrupt the ‘legal’ process and that the process for gaining citizenship could include paying fines for ‘illegal’ entry and status in the US –what amounts, as was pointed out to me, to a head-tax (see “Obama Immigration Reform Speech: ‘The Time is Now’”, Huffington Post, Jan 29, 2013, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/29/obama-immigration-reform-speech\\_n\\_2575572.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/29/obama-immigration-reform-speech_n_2575572.html).)

journalistic piece (the favourable ones at least), they too said the same thing: that the project had been criticized for being a training camp, but that is not what it is about. I thought surely after eight years of this we could set that criticism aside. That day, the park administrator told me about a book that had just been released, for which there had been a book launch presentation the day before in Ixmiquilpan, called *Entrenamiento para migrantes, periodismo cultural* ("Training for migrants, cultural journalism"). In this book the author, Aída Suárez, collects personal stories from migrants and their families throughout the Valle del Mezquital as a way to look at some of the implications and responses to migration in the region (El Sol de Hidalgo, April 20, 2012). The book, which I have not read, opens with the author's account of the *Caminata* project in El Alberto. The exact intention of the book's title is unclear, but the very notion of using 'training' to continue referring to the *Caminata* project shows just how easily the voices and claims of those working in the project can be sidelined in the way people *want* to talk about it.

Later that day we were in the park office when two people from Mexico City showed up to do some scouting for a film crew from Montreal who were coming later in the year to do some video reporting on the *Caminata*. This is something that, as I have said, is a regular occurrence. One of the scouts was talking to the administrator about the park, the project, and its history. Finally, she paused and asked 'so this is a place where people can train to cross the border?' Visibly annoyed, the park administrator explained yet again the project's aims. Only later, when she and I and a couple others from the park were talking in the office did she express her anger saying, 'it is as if in the past eight years all of those interviews have been for nothing'.

I tell this story because it reveals how frictions exist in how stories are circulated and who gets to tell them. But I also suggest this is about how different subjects are made mobile or can access mobility. People in El Alberto are being scripted as inappropriately mobile not only for their physical border crossings in search of work, but also for their claims to participate in debates and visions of transnational movement, justice, and the circulation of knowledge. Thus when the administrator challenges the travelling tales and the tale-telling of travellers by insisting that they get the aims of the project 'right', this is in part a desire that people be authentic in their representation, but more importantly I think it is a claim that it is not only tourists who get to participate in the transnational conversation about what the *Caminata* is. Despite the fact that people in El Alberto do not 'tour', or rather that their travel is considered other than touring, they too are, in a sense, global travel writers. Yet more often than not the appropriate transnational diffusion of the site is deemed to come from tourists as the sensibilized and global actors within tourism, not from the savvy and transnational knowledges of the toured who are contesting how they are being written in both their tourability and their status as migrants.<sup>72</sup>

### **Circulating the Limits of Tourability**

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<sup>72</sup> Because I chose to respect Nazaret's blockade in my own research practice and methods, I don't have the same kind of story to tell about how they may or may not be participants in this travel writing.

### *Accessing Nazaret*

Producing something as tourable facilitates the movement of tourists by giving them somewhere to go and a particular kind of site or experience. In this way, what can be tourable is about choosing how features of life can be represented in touristic space *and* what kind of touristic movement this promotes (movement for education, for development, for depoliticized leisure). In its more obvious forms, the bounds of tourability are created by the appearance of already formed cultural difference which is often actually the result of a longer process of negotiations and decisions about how that difference is going to be performed and circumscribed so as to appeal to touristic demands. Both in stories about the *Caminata* and Nazaret, very different questions about tourability emerged – that is, questions about what we should be able to tour or not. I begin this section with the question of access in the context of Nazaret. In the following section, I look at how ‘dark tourism’ as a discourse about the *Caminata* played on the limits of tourability. Although debates about the appropriateness of the *Caminata* open important questions, as with Nazaret, the power relations involved in defining how something is ‘appropriately’ tourable or not work in other ways to depoliticize the meanings of the *Caminata*, especially in reflections in the Mexican media on it as ‘dark’ tourism’.

It was clear from the media representations of Nazaret that there was something jarring about the situation, but also something that could be mobilized for the consumption of tourists. Clearly the idea of rejecting tourism is strange, yet it also seems to fulfill certain secret desires of some of us to see tourists ‘put in their place’ and imagine a world without gawkers and their cameras. Yet while access denied might be jarring, it did not open the reasons why indigeneity might be a tourable object or might mobilize people to cross borders and make claims to access. I suspect this is because the object to be toured remained easily legible. Those in Nazaret making this decision were supposedly not making a choice about working to provide tourable space, but rather denying access to what was already there. I return to this point in Chapter 6 through a rereading of the blockade as a refusal to work. What actually would make them tourable, make them acceptable markers of indigeneity in the region, is absent in media articles because tourable culture is taken as an already constituted thing (or as something that is constituted outside the practice of tourism). In other words, their tourability was presumed as given, it was just that they had chosen not to be toured.

In contrast, the question of tourability did get raised in conversations and interviews with people in the region, but using a developmentalist discourse. Highlighting the choice of Nazaret as potentially good, one coordinator, Valentina, noted that if the community were not prepared enough, with the right kinds of organization to receive tourists it makes sense to not encourage people to come and spend money when the experience is not going to be well presented (Personal Interview, July 17, 2012). Far from being just another culture on display, tourability involves a certain level of development (something I have previously discussed) and this limit appeared in what was provoked by the story of Nazaret. For a different tour operator, the choice to ban tourism was more or less irrelevant because, for her, Nazaret was too large and did not present the same kind of ‘lived culture’, artisan goods, or open telling of stories as those her company visited (Personal Conversation, July 2012).



In other tellings Nazaret appeared alternately as either not indigenous enough (too political, or too impacted by the Catholic Church and the *internado*), or too indigenous, holding onto and preserving their culture to the extent that they did not want any outside interference from tourism or any other institution. This ambivalence reflects the ambivalence of tourability, which is not just about any difference, but one that can be well presented with the right kind of infrastructure to meet tourist demands. What is tourable is thus set out in these contradicting dynamics of presenting the object of tourability as natural and the possibility of being toured as requiring certain kinds of places and people.

*Dark Tourism on the Caminata*

Governing what can be tourable has often also meant confronting and restricting the kinds of political messages or content that tourists will be exposed to, particularly if this challenges the types of economic and political liberalism so much of tourism is invested in. Politically designed or motivated tourism continues nonetheless and often challenges these other touristic desires. While what is designed for tourists in Leticia is largely unchallenging and fits well into the projects of neoliberal touring (one of the reasons I think a straight rejection of tourism presents itself as one of the only alternative options) the alternative claims and projects in which the *Caminata* is produced are not so straightforward. However, in certain texts about the *Caminata* a preoccupation with defining ‘good’ tourism has been used to erase its political content by situating the tour as part of growing preoccupations with the trend of ‘dark tourism’ (*turismo negro*) in Mexico that threatens to mar the image of the country.<sup>73</sup>

The claims that the *Caminata* is ‘dark tourism’ seem to have surfaced in particular around 2011 after the publishing of a report from the private security firm Grupo Multisistemas de Seguridad Industrial (GMSI), “*Perspectivas Turísticas*”, that highlighted a 0.5% decrease in ‘normal’ tourism accompanied by an increase in demand for dark and “emotionally powerful” sites (Ciudad Capital, 2011). Importantly, the reporting around this issue conflates, as the report itself does with disturbing ease, tourists visiting ‘dangerous’ neighbourhoods in Mexico City, murder and ‘drug trade-tours’ in Ciudad Juárez, sex-tourism, drug-tourism, visiting poverty in indigenous communities (or *Zapatista* communities in Chiapas), and the *Caminata*. As a list of Mexico’s ‘ills’, or ‘embarrassments’ as one headline put it (ibid.), the tourism that the *Caminata* is perceived to be part of is only an opportunistic way to capture tourists where growing violence (and stories about violence in particular) are threatening the industry.<sup>74</sup> As a comment posted by the authors of the same article on their piece puts it:

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<sup>73</sup> Dark tourism is usually used to refer to touring sites of massacres, genocides, or memorials such as concentration camps in Europe, the Khmer-Rouge ‘killing fields’ and memorials in Cambodia, etc. (Lennon & Foley 2000; Skinner, 2012; Sharpley & Stone, 2009). Importantly in the scholarly literature, dark tourism is not usually used to refer to touring slums or other places of poverty, and so its use here in these pieces is also conflating and sensationalist. For some, dark tourism refers to touring that has some specific relationship to death (Walter 2009). It is not within the scope of the work here, but it would be interesting to do a more thorough examination of how this kind of touring is being reflected on in Mexico currently and what this might say about the relationship people have to current violence and to various political narratives about it causes or implications.

<sup>74</sup> See Mexico Vacation Awareness (<http://www.mexicovacationawareness.com/>) for an example of this.

There is not much information about this [dark tourism], since the tourist agencies try to hide that many of the packages they offer to foreigners take them to sites where bloody events have happened, above all related to the drug-trade, which, if known more fully, the tourist businesses would be highly criticized for their promotion of violence in the country. Remember, and even though it might not appear so, that in the same way they promote trips to Chiapas and promise the visitors to take them to Zapatista territories, which also would be dark tourism for the simple fact that in this state in 1994 a battle was initiated between the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) and authorities. (ibid., 2011[comment posted March 2012], my translation)

In some texts, this type of touring represents an inappropriate use of space and exploitation of violence; for others, it is simply an evil that should be embraced because it allows the tourism industry to continue producing revenue in these ‘difficult’ times (Sánchez, Nov 16, 2011). The conflation of these diverse sites under the category of ‘dark tourism’ plays an important role in the way the production of these touristic sites can be (and I believe at least in part is being) depoliticized. As with the references to being a training camp, many people in El Alberto strongly reject the ‘dark tourism’ label and have worked to explain the specific motivations of their project that they see as building awareness and bringing benefit of the community. Despite this work, ‘dark tourism’ has been an easy label to attach to the *Caminata*, which points to the power relations involved in the production of a site’s meaning and the ways ‘tolerable limits’ of how everyday life can be translated into a tourable site are constructed.<sup>75</sup>

In other words, the anxiety here is that this type of touring might not be mobilizing ‘Mexico’ in the right way. Far from merely a concern with supposedly morally dubious behaviour, it is significant that these stories of concern about Mexico include ones directly related to contestation over neoliberal development, be they Zapatista resistance in Chiapas or migrating stories in El Alberto. By circulating these as instances of dark tourism the violences of neoliberalism that they contend with are cut off from their structural situation and made into video-game style clips of violence or morbid fascination in a country ‘losing control’. As I look at below, thinking about the *Caminata* as personal adventure and a site for displaying physical skill exists in other representations, but here the pejorative connotations of dark tourism and the particular voices (private security firms) expressing this concern make it all the more powerful and erase the ambiguity in which those other claims are made. However, the *Caminata*, in both its production and performance, is certainly more complicated and its political work more challenging to the ways tourists move. It does not produce and circulate dominant imaginings of ‘life’, ‘culture’, and ‘modernity’ in Mexico (the ‘authenticity’ people struggle to display in Leticia) or facilitate an easy circulation of tourists by eliding the political-economic landscape in which rural community development is taking place. This is not to say that I do not remain sceptical about what touring in Chiapas or the

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<sup>75</sup> In her dissertation about the *Caminata*, Leah Sarat argues that it is one way for migrants to negotiate the real possibilities of death that exist in their crossing at the US border (2010). Whether it might be a way for tourists to engage with the possibilities of death I cannot really say, but I do not think that this is why or how people are referring to this as dark tourism.

*Caminata*, which are certainly very different, does or looks like. But the implication is that making the economic violences of neoliberalism into tourable experiences does not produce the right kind of touristic movement – the kind of movement claimed in the right to tour and seen in the desires for existential authenticity.

The story is, of course, not that simple; rather, it expresses a tension in the designs of appropriate mobility. On the one hand, dark tourism provides something else for the tourist who is fed up with monuments and museums to see – it is not the normal or boring movement of touring that is failing to actualize our self-identities or provide us with that “existential authenticity” (Brown, 2013). In this sense, lumping these sites together and calling them all ‘dark tourism’ is effective in the way it turns the site into a place for the self to flourish through adventure and risk rather than encounter and grapple with political-economic inequality. At the same time, this touring is seen as actualizing the hedonistic desires of North Americans and Europeans, experiencing self-fulfilment through encounters with violence in postcolonial and thus ‘other’ worlds. Indeed, these tourists are understood to be looking for “sexual encounters, adventure, and a big dose of adrenaline” (Hugo Hernández, Milenio 2011, my translation). Or, quoting also from the GMSI report “it all started with the so-called spring-break Americans and Europeans’ youth who wanted amusement without limits and visited the northern border and the Mexican beaches” (Cabezas, Feb. 6 2011, my translation).

In the context of the *Caminata* this is important as the tour is circulated as though it were providing international tourists the means to fulfill desires for an adrenaline rush and not as a way of relating to other Mexicans and educating them about the migrant experience, something that I noted as a key aim of the project. In this way the representation as dark tourism works to specifically depoliticize the *Caminata* precisely through a perceived relationship to ‘foreigners’ (who are here depicted as simply looking for hedonistic pleasure) and its participation in a voyeuristic circulation of tourists. This highlighting of the desires of foreigners (over the voices of those who created the *Caminata*) is an important effect given that this ‘dark tourism’ reporting largely came from Mexican media sources and blogs. Although overshadowed by other kinds of representations, the dark tourism discussion about the *Caminata* is important for the broader claims it reveals about frictions at the limits of tourability and the function these limits serve in the formation of certain touring subjects. It also reveals how the power to define the *Caminata* as dark tourism works to depoliticize its claims as well as limit *how* the project can circulate not as a story about political-economic/mobility injustice but rather a stimulating glimpse into the nether-world of illicit movement. Similarly, stories circulating about a community that is not prepared enough, or maybe not indigenous enough, to be tourable anyway construct and replay limits both on Nazaret’s tourability and how its story interjects in touristic movement.

### **Ambiguous Borders and Moral Tourists: Circulating categories of tourability**

If, as I have been exploring, there are certain representations of either the *Caminata* or the blockade in Nazaret that reveal important assumptions and power relations, I also became aware of certain categories of tourability that were brought out but also problematized in attempts to give accounts of these places. Two that were particularly

prominent were borders and ethics. I have already talked in earlier chapters about the shiftiness of borders (the shifting borders in the Amazon are a deep part of its history while border crossings of all kinds abound in El Alberto). The border is also a category of touring; as I looked at in Chapter 2, contemporary neoliberal touring articulates a vision of a particular kind of borderless world, yet borders are also important to maintain in touring (the borders between difference need to be clearly defined while the barriers or troubles of crossing them should be minimized for the needs of global tourists). At the same time touring continues to rest on the historical border-making of home and away, work and leisure, borders in touring are also fluid and flexible.

Ethics is also a category that has become increasingly important within tourism, and particularly within the definitions of touristic movement. The environmentally and culturally conscientious tourist has become something of an ideal that moves people to understand themselves as a certain kind of ‘better’ traveller and forms a basis for how one can ‘practice’ tourism in ethical ways. This ethical touring has also been effectively linked to pro-poor touring, which I look at in the final section below. Here I look at ethics in terms of how people moralize about their own behaviour while touring. In a sense there is an ethical performance of touring that circulates alongside and is implicated in the ethical developmental aims of tourism (particularly in the Global South). Yet in the case of both borders and ethics understood as concepts facilitating touristic movement, the blockade at Nazaret and especially the *Caminata* have provoked less simple or straightforward articulations of what these mean.

The blockade at Nazaret seems to be all about borders, and especially all about the borders between what tourists can access and what they cannot. This border work is done in all tourable places, and in all community-based touristic sites daily decisions are made by those performing the site as to what gets included and what is off-limits. There are stakes in this, of course. Tour guides can easily write communities off for being too closed or too possessive, and tourists can be (un)intentionally invasive in the kinds of things they imagine they are entitled to. The politics of these everyday negotiations of access often go unremarked, yet the complete denial of access presents itself as a deeper kind of problem or provocation that is somehow radically different from what happens where visitors do get to tour. In the case of the blockade, the provocation of this border was momentarily jarring, yet not deeply troubling. For some like Alberto, it was a clear response to the disrespectful way tour guides understand their access to communities in the region, where they enter “like a dog in his own home” (Personal Interview, August 3, 2012). For Yesenia, a hostel owner in the city, the story presented a platform to discuss the difference between legislation in Brazil which requires state permission from FUNAI (*Fundação Nacional do Índio*, National Indian Foundation) to access indigenous reserves and the almost complete lack of a protectionist mentality in Colombia (Personal Interview, July 15, 2012).

Despite these musings about access and movement, most of those interviewed framed the issues as a right of indigenous communities to permit or deny access, but a decision that extended no farther than the bounds of any given community. By and large comments about free will to preserve culture displaced thinking about a decision to deny entry as a political

will to determine admissibility and access (the very political powers of the state) (see Long, March 24, 2011). The ‘right’ that communities have to deny access was seen by many of those I spoke to in Leticia to be about whether or not they wanted the opportunity to have tourists. In a sense this reflects the specific situation in this region of the Amazon: there is always another community around the corner that is opening up and preparing itself to receive tourists just like there is always a detour through the jungle to be taken to avoid even thinking about how this border play is happening. It also reflects a broader distinction between touristic borders and harder, ostensibly more political borders in which toured communities rarely count as agents.

‘The border’, as the nation-state border between the US and Mexico of course plays an event more explicit role in the *Caminata*. Indeed, the *Caminata* can be seen as a representation itself, one of many made of this border region in popular and academic forms all of which lay claim to and tell stories about this space, though on vastly different terms (Ortiz-Gonzalez, 2007). In one of the more outrageous representations of the *Caminata*, and yet one that has circulated more widely as it has been published both as an article in the Huffington Post and in the introduction to a popular non-fiction book,<sup>76</sup> Harmon Leon reveals what I take to be important ambiguities of the *Caminata* in two simple questions: “have we crossed the border”? And, “is it wrong that it’s fun” (Leon, April 26, 2011)? These questions open up crucial contentions and frictions in how appropriate transnational mobility is circulated through travelling stories of the *Caminata* that, unlike the stories of ethical encounter found in writing about Nazaret, provoke the ambiguous field on which politics plays out in place of attempts to smooth this over.

The first of these questions is linked to a preoccupation in many texts (especially those in English) with the meaning of crossing the border in the *Caminata*. Leon, whose lack of Spanish leaves him confused about most of what happens on the tour, expends many words trying to decipher the moment when the border has been crossed or clarify which ‘state’ he is in at any time. For instance, he ponders while being chased by the US Border Patrol “if we’re still in simulated Mexico (real Mexico, actually) then why are we running? Technically, on simulated-legal paper, we really haven’t done anything wrong other than a public display of nighttime running” (ibid.). Many pieces speak about the disorientation experienced during the tour – a disorientation that extends to never knowing entirely where you are. On the tour, we start in Mexico, and are presumably making our way to the United States, but in my experience there was no particular moment when we were told ‘now we are in the US’. Even if there were, we detour back to Hidalgo anyway as we stop by the Rio Tula (which only moments ago played the role of the Rio Bravo) to talk about its significance to the *Hñähñu*. In the end participants are picked up (presumably on ‘the other side’) only to be taken back to Mexico by way of the Gran Cañón to pay homage to the migrants who have not made it over.

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<sup>76</sup> Harmon Leon, *The American Dream: Walking in the Shoes of Carnies, Arms Dealers, Immigrant Dreamers, Pot Farmers, and Christian Believers* (New York: Nation Books, 2008).

Along-side this back and forth movement tourists are presented with representations of national sentiment such as the flag (carried by guides on the journey), collective singing of the national anthem, and a call made at the end to work together in Mexico to build opportunities and make a deeper connection to this place. However, these markings of nationalism should not be confounded with the sovereign power being contested through the tours crossings; the tour is both deeply critical of the Mexican state and the persecution of migrants by U.S. authorities and deeply invested in feelings of rootedness and belonging. Simultaneous to its emphasis on rootedness, the very material production of the tour is deeply transnational (for example, many of the tours ‘props’ such as the border patrol sirens and army uniforms worn by migra officers were purchased in the US where migrants also learned much of the English they use to perform the border patrol and heard or experienced the stories that make up the tour’s content). So while it is unclear which side of the border tourists are on, it is also not clear on which side of the border the tour has been ‘made’ leaving rootedness and transnationalism to play out together as an intensely uncomfortable juxtaposition for standard accounts of touring *and* migrating. In response, texts about this troubled border-crossing seem to want to resolve the tensions raised in one of two positions: either reflecting on the threat of ‘invasion’ by illegals ‘set free’ in the sovereign territory of the United States or celebrating the (economic) freedom found in the struggle to cross or, more commonly, the freedom to stay found in the development of the park itself (offering, as it does, an ‘alternative’ and ‘legal’ means of employment).

I think the disorientation at the border could suggest other things about the ambiguity of being undocumented, but the point I want to make here is that the debates that play out in articles and representations of the *Caminata* are limited by their situation within a discourse or analytic about the border framed around (il)legality and the desire or anxiety about finding ways to resolve the tensions of cross-border identities through legalization. That is, in statist discourse the terms of identity are set on which side of the border you *are* on and which side you *have a ‘right’* to be on. In this framework it becomes crucial to ask if we have crossed the border quite simply because if we do not know where we are (in territorial terms), we cannot know who we are (in legal terms). In a context where migration is part of almost every aspect of daily life, and where migrating can be called a ‘way of life’ I found that this discursive field of legality/illegality is not necessarily the most important way people in El Alberto understand their identities and ability to cross borders. Maybe this comes across in part in an inattention to the ‘exactness’ of the border in the *Caminata*, and this explains why it makes people so uncomfortable. Either way, invoking the border in terms of (il)legality reflects a particular appropriation of mobile subjectivities into statist discourses that works to set terms for understanding appropriate movement, but, importantly, is also a contested framework (Squire, 2011, p. 9).

This takes me back to a point I made earlier about the differences between the *Caminata* and Nazaret: the *Caminata* is a project *about* borders, Nazaret is the assertion *of* a border. The border it asserts is one that colonialism has long been in the practice of denying (or governing). In contrast, discomforts in the *Caminata* come from a play with what are often taken to be the stable borders of states and identities. This does not mean that its border-play is more radical than the assertion of a non-state border, but the method is

different enough, and the situation it takes up (migration) is contentious enough, to provoke in a way that Nazaret's blockade does not (and probably would not even if more people paid attention to it).

The second question Leon poses, 'is it wrong that it's fun', reflects a different anxiety about how touring should interact with borders, this time the borders between work and play, or working on the self and experiencing pleasure. This border, as we will see, is also integral to how ethical behaviour is circumscribed though it is certainly not the only way this can be done. Blurring and breaking down boundaries is what those who designed the *Caminata* thought of doing, including borders between people and between the spiritual and the real (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29, 2012). The use of humour represents an important aspect of these blurred boundaries, as does the way we are encouraged to celebrate and feel pride at the 'good work' we have done overcoming the various obstacles presented to us. Guides often tell jokes and laugh with each other and participants, and the performances, particularly of the *migra* officers, are often quite funny and provoke laughter even as tourists are meant to be hiding in the bushes. In writing about the *Caminata*, this mix of humour with the seriousness of the migrant journey is probably one of its most provocative aspects:

"Our Mexican host was not interested. Not in a tourist attraction that took something so serious and turned it into a source of amusement, he said. That sort of thing, he said, was an embarrassment" (No name {Austin and Matthew}, Dec 2, 2010).

"Maria Garcia, a Mexican immigrant who founded the Hispanic Community Support Center in Duluth, Ga., said the mock crossing could be perceived as exploiting the suffering of migrants. "Someone crossing the border knows they could die," she said. "Someone going on this tour knows they will have fun"...This is kind of trippy" (El hijo perdido, Nov 27, 2006).

"Someplace between comedy and drama there lies a little piece of reality. We hear things that just don't make much sense and can't decide if something is really sad or really funny...When I first heard about this, I laughed. I was shocked, but still laughed. I mean come on, an amusement park in Mexico that has a mock border crossing. That sounds like reality TV alright!" (Coleman, May 27, 2008)

"In his hands he has the list of those who, wanting strong emotions, have paid 250 pesos per head to participate in a crazy variation on hide-and-seek" (Acuña, Nov 28, 2011)

This confusion about whether we should be feeling empathy for the pain and hardship of the migrants we mimic, shame at our ability to laugh as we partake in the experience, or physical prowess and pride at the completion of what some call an 'obstacle course' reveals some of the undoing of modern narratives of touring that viewed touristic life as discrete and at leisure in contrast to working time (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 2011; Graburn, 1989). It also raises questions about how existential authenticity can be achieved through such an ambiguous experience that refuses to provide clear identities or moral positions. Although

many of the quotations above seem to be looking at how the *Caminata* disrespects the real suffering of migrants, the broader suggestion I think is that for those of us who do not live migration as a reality, trying to understand this struggle through a pleasurable or exciting touring experience mixes categories that, when mixed, damage both the seriousness of what is being talked about and the leisure of touristic movement. In contrast to the ways work and play mix towards productive ends in voluntourism – ostensibly or otherwise (Vrasti, 2012), the *Caminata* looks like voyeurism or self-indulgence, themes seen above in concerns about its potential role as ‘dark’ tourism or below in its relationship to pro-poor development. Again, though, I am raising this here to look at how categories or ethical practice or performance for tourists are being remade or disrupted.

Stories of tourism development tend to examine the practice as an organic or logical extension of the advance of capitalism (particularly leisure time) in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Debbie Lisle has looked at another aspect of its development that impacts the forms travel mobility takes and can help unpack some of this difficult ambiguity between pleasure and work. She notes that Thomas Cook, whose grand tours are often cited as the start of the modern tourism industry, organized these around a particular *moral* discourse (especially temperance) and around the production of appropriate Victorian values while on tour (Lisle, 2010). Thus the ‘democratization’ of touring, which is celebrated as starting with Cook, was “circumscribed...by his wider ethical vision that dictated what *kind* of travel was to be made available to ‘the millions’, thereby designing travel as an educational experience to inculcate certain norms of behaviour while away that would also more generally develop more ‘civilized’ subjects (ibid., p. 140).<sup>77</sup> She goes on to argue that this ethical vision has remained in travelling practice and discourse, particularly in the emphasis on ethical travel which tries to separate the virtuous work of ‘being good’ on holiday from the pleasurable but hedonistic and damaging mass tourism. The irony for Lisle is that this virtue becomes the basis for pleasure, as like Nietzsche’s ascetic, the “joyless cosmopolitans” of contemporary tourism find moral pleasure and validation in trying to occupy ever more conscientious positions.

Unfortunately for these seekers of virtuous pleasure, the *Caminata* does not allow this distinction to rest quite so easily. At any point during the performance it shakes up these categories and forces tourists to experience both – the educational work on your subject that is trying to reform it in more conscientious ways and the pleasurable, and maybe less virtuous, antics of being chased around in the night. And so Leon’s question, “is it wrong that it’s fun?” may be exactly on point – and simultaneously unanswerable. It may be that people laugh during the *Caminata* (and many do) because they feel guilty for enjoying themselves. But the fact that this enjoyment is performed alongside the bodily sensations of pain and anger that force you to reflect on the suffering of migrants makes it more difficult at any point to stop and, in a detached way, shake your head at a vision of injustice before you and say ‘that’s awful’, ‘how brave they are’, or simply sigh.

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<sup>77</sup> Likewise, in his analysis of tourism as an ‘ordering’, Franklin (2004) argues that while travelling networks existed prior to Cook, it was Cook who smoothed this movement out and “rendered it touristic”. He makes the case for moving away from structural analyses of tourism developing out of industrial capitalism and the drive for leisure and rather to seeing tourism and touristic mobility as something specifically *made* to happen.



Ethical performances appear quite readily in the internationally circulated pieces about Nazaret, especially through the comments. Stories cite gawking tourists who ask invasive questions and leave trash behind as the central reasons for the decision to blockade. Certain comments to these articles reflect on this ‘bad’ behaviour of tourists and celebrate the decision as a response to these ignorant tourists. Others used it as a platform to chide tourists who visit their own regions or cities for their behaviour. Little time was afforded to the historical context of invasiveness and extraction in which touring is situated in the region (as I looked at in Chapter 3); rather, the story circulated as one about disrespectful behaviour and people who were simply fed up with it. Thus, in contrast to some of the ambiguities of the *Caminata*’s stories, the performance of virtuous pleasure was presented as the action that could be taken to resolve the ‘problem’ with touristic movement that Nazaret’s blockade was calling attention to.<sup>78</sup>

I am not trying to suggest, however, that the way the *Caminata* circulates is able to undo all of these problems. In particular, I think the way the *Caminata* is taken up as stories of personal work or adventure reflects attempts at resolving the blurring of work and pleasure in ways that can re-inscribe the ethical tourist as the most appropriate touristic subject. The kind of moralizing Lisle points to can be seen in some of the judgements about the way people participate affecting how much they can really learn from the experience. In one such blog posting, the author laments that unlike his friends who had more tact and skill in playing the game (which reminds him of ‘Gears of War’), too many loud and disruptive people ‘sadly’ did not learn as much or made it difficult to appreciate the magic of the tour (no name {Rodrigo}, Aug 19, 2009). Indeed, I remember feeling the same way during my second tour and had to stop myself and reflect on how and why it is so hard to avoid this kind of moral statement. Similarly, several texts ask questions along the lines Gizelle Lau does:

So you think you’re a travel expert? A down-to-earth backpacker who travels green and is the kind that *really gets in touch* with the culture, the locals and the traditions of the destination you’re visiting? Well, if you want to even *begin* to understand what it’s like to be a Mexican trying to illegally cross the border into the United States – here’s your chance. (Lau, May 29, 2008)

Here, authenticity rears its head while also claiming the *Caminata* as a learning experience that ‘good’ tourists committed to global understanding of the struggles of those poorer than them would not want to miss out on. What I find interesting here is that the

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<sup>78</sup> The performance of virtuous pleasure is also part of broader practices of ethical consumption which I do not have space to deal with here. Critiques of ethical consumption have looked at how it is replicated processes of commodity fetishism around ethical categories and how it often only requires very superficial criteria to be met to make a product ‘ethical’ that do not take into account other effects (in the example of tourism, the ethical consumption of a site can be produced by having community participation or a recycling programme, while the fact that tourists have to take flights and other environmentally unsustainable forms of transportation to get ‘there’ are often sidelined) (Carrier 2010). Lisle’s account of virtuous pleasure indicates that this is also about producing certain kinds of subjectivities, mainly those who can mobilize individualized ethical responses to political concerns.

moral performances that are circulated about how one experiences the seriousness of the *Caminata* and the lessons it has to teach you do not necessarily line up with the embodied experience of being on the *Caminata* where one can laugh, cry, be angry, scared, annoyed, or bored at any time (something that can also be heard through the texts about it). Again, borders on the *Caminata* do not necessarily make the logical or political sense we might want. In other words, while tourists and readers of these circulations are presented with ambiguous feelings, there is still a moral language of ethical or responsible touring (the performance of the virtuous traveller) through which many, though not all, talk about what the *Caminata* is or does.<sup>79</sup>

The performance of virtuous travelling, to either a small community on the Amazon River or El Alberto's migrant simulation, is also tied to the current popularity of what has been called 'pro-poor touring', or touring with a purpose. This 'purpose' is also made possible through the circulation of concepts of travel and tourability such as community and profit to which I now turn. My aim is to look at whether the frictions of how these concepts take shape in the production of specific sites also present interesting challenges for the production of touristic movement.

### **Community, Profit, and Troubling the Categories of Pro-Poor Tourism**

If the 'problem' of dark tourism is a problem about the 'Mexico' that is mobilized in tourable sites, another way this problem circulates is in trying to make sense of the kind of 'development' the *Caminata* provides and how work and touristic movement can be justified through an appropriate relationship to economic growth. The problem of development is also of concern in Leticia, and similarly the right kind of tourism is largely presumed to be able to take communities to the 'right' kind of development. However, in debates about how tourism can lead to development for marginalized people and places, crucial concepts like community and profit can also become sites of contention or challenge. Indeed, pro-poor tourism, as the field is commonly called, is also referred to as community-based touring where the profits gleaned from visitors are reinvested in collectively run projects providing necessary services that states have often failed to. In this framework 'the community' and 'profit' become ethical categories used to measure and evaluate both the consumption of touristic sites and how they are produced. 'The community' is something that can be internally coherent, marked as culturally different, and, importantly, capable of development. This last is often linked with having a strong governance structure but also, ironically, with the ability of the community to integrate while remaining distinct, to make use of opportunities presented by wider social and political structures, and by capacities to be entrepreneurial and efficient. As I have been arguing in other ways throughout this dissertation, pro-poor tourism is not about offering a form of development that *all* are supposedly able to access.

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<sup>79</sup> Certain texts have developed a more political (rather than moral) interrogation of these ambiguities, especially when looking at one theatrical rendering of the *Caminata* experience (see Véronique Klein, "Premier monde, Primer mundo" (June 16, 2011), <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/perform/article/160611/premier-monde-primer-mundo> (Accessed April 2012)).

I noted in Chapter 1 how the concept of community as a governmental tool is often not good at accounting for the differences and particularities of how life is organized. This was also brought out in discussions of Nazaret. As foundational for certain forms of ethical movement (in this case the ‘ethical travellers’ or pro-poor touring) community is a transnational concept whose troubling raises uncomfortable questions about how we justify privileged movement and attempt to understand the objects of development. In the case of the *Caminata*, it is ‘profit’ that is troubled, both in how people justify the use of profits as part of what makes participating in the *Caminata* part of ‘good’ touristic movement, and how this can counter claims that the use of migrant experiences to make a profit is not a ‘good’ mobilization of those lived experiences. The system of work that I spoke about in the previous chapter, which requires unpaid service work from all adult males in the community, is also deeply important to how people write about the *Caminata* and particularly how profit as a contentious issue in certain forms can justify touristic movement but in other ways can delegitimize (by ‘corrupting’). Both profit and community are transnational concepts that mobilize tourists towards goals of development, yet like all the transnational concepts seen in this dissertation they cannot exist free-floating or lay out smoothly on landscapes: they can only exist in the trouble and friction of their attempted actualization.

Community is a difficult concept for writers of political and cultural theory. As an anthropological concept it has long been challenged as the prime means for identifying an ‘object’ of ethnographic analysis. Contained in the notion of the ‘other’ community can be denials of coeval-ness or insufficient attention to their embeddedness and interaction with ‘outside’ or broader processes and structures. The theoretical and practical coherence of community has also been challenged as scholars become more attuned and willing to see the complexity of any group of people and what I like to think of as our collective resistance to any coherent definition. For Benedict Anderson, creating the abstract idea of community by creating an abstract idea of one's connection to everyone else in the nation was foundational to the project of nationalism (1983). Capturing a growing sense that these ties have broken down, tourism promotion often uses community to represent a desire for the past, a place of more simple and stronger connections to people that ‘we’ have lost and can recuperate in a temporary way by journeying to a ‘past’ land. However, ‘community’ has also been theorized as a temporal project of the future, one that is becoming or in creation (Nancy, 1991). For the developmental desires of tourism, community is what becomes possible through the practice of tourism, as a certain kind of whole, democratic, and developed entity providing both the future possibilities for its inhabitants and the preserved past that can be visited. Thus the insistence of pro-poor tourism fuses a desire to reach into the past with a desire to create the future, and community is the site on which both are set to play out.<sup>80</sup>

I highlighted the role ‘community’ plays in recent critical development studies as the way both the problem and what is necessary for ‘solutions’ to developmental crises are marked. The rise of pro-poor touring or linking touring to ‘sustainable livelihoods’ (Shen et

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<sup>80</sup> Community, of course, means many things including many varied things for the people who inhabit them or identify with them. I am not trying to write about community per se here, rather look at pro-poor tourism's deployment of community and the trouble it gets into.

al., 2008) emerged from critiques of the social and economic costs of mass tourism development, particularly in the Global South, and ongoing desires to link tourism to development in this case within the ‘new development paradigm’ of sustainability and community-based, participatory projects (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). However, for Baptista the rise of pro-poor touring is also linked to the production of ‘poverty’ as a tourable, and governable, object (2012). This kind of tourism has not just involved seeing tourism as a means for development, but using signs of underdevelopment (in rural communities or city slums) as the very sites in which tourists can explore (poverty and themselves) and intervene. The problematization of ‘poverty’ by development NGOs and agencies as contained conditions of ‘lack’, and delinked from demands for broader structural change, allows for the presentation of ‘community-based’ tourism as a solution (ibid.).

In this model it is actually the visible markers of the problematized condition, ‘poverty’, that become the tourable difference which by extension then allows tourism, and tourists particularly, to participate in the developmental solution – providing the resources to address the particular lack visibly presented (ibid.). It is this work of participating towards equitably distributed development (so-called because it is community-based) that justifies what would otherwise be inappropriate and invasive visits to these ‘nether-regions’. For example, a study of favela tours in Brazil which started around the Rio Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro shows how when these were initially criticized for being voyeuristic the response of tour operators was to link the practice of touring the favelas to charitable work being done to alleviate their worst conditions and thereby make the tours more ‘acceptable’ business for middle class Brazilians and political elites (Frenzel, 2012). Obviously touring indigenous communities in the Amazon is a very different thing from touring slums in Rio, but seeing such touring as providing opportunities for development has become a widely accepted way to respond to the critiques of voyeurism and exoticization in this kind of ‘ethnic’ touring. Thus, far from merely the cannibal tourists who want photos of the natives, eco-ethnic tourists arrive with another purpose, to help the natives develop and sustain their communities against the onslaughts of environmental degradation, political and cultural marginalization, or community break-down.

The question of what ‘the community’ denying tourism was did not feature in the international media circulation of the blockade at Nazaret; the community, like its tourability, was taken as obvious and given. However, in certain discussions with people in Leticia the community appeared differently and had an important impact on how the blockade was evaluated. For some, the decision could only be legitimated if it had been a democratic and autonomously generated one; as Santiago, a hostel owner, put it, “it is their right, because they have the right to live peacefully and to not be seen like animals in a laboratory, this is good, and I agree with this. If they did it through agreement. But, the problem is that often this is driven through intrigue” (Personal Interview, July 10, 2012, my translation). Suspicions at the decision were raised where Nazaret was seen as too integrated into the politics of the region, leading to a subtle questioning that supported the *idea* of rejecting tourism, but hinted at something less ‘acceptable’ under the surface (Personal Interview, June 28 & 29, 2012).

What I saw in these comments was a reflection of presumptions about the community that is worthy of development, the community where decisions are taken collectively without relations of power and where the impacts of colonial relations – whereby people use manipulation or political manoeuvring as strategies to counter the effects of their marginalization (Scott 1985) – are overcome *by the community itself*. Yet it was also a reflection on how this situation is more complicated because communities often do not fit these models well. This kind of romanticism also appeared in comments that reflected on the decision as able to counter the way tourism can “break or separate the community, bring jealousies” and make it so that these communities are no longer “living as a community...because in communities it is not about personal benefit, it is about the benefit of the community” (Personal Interview, August 15, 2012, my translation). Crucially it is not that acknowledging all alternative life-ways is inherently romanticism, but that in these kinds of mobilizations within alternative tourism discourse, the community is taken as a separable tourable object and replicated as the ideal entity that can be internally coherent and uncorrupted by the ‘outside’ structures, despite being already implicated in them.

This romanticism was both disrupted and rearticulated by one conversation that identified the complex relations in which decisions are taken, yet the ultimate lack of autonomy communities have. Daniela, a woman from the *resguardo Kilómetro 6* told me the decision had been taken by the *cabildo* of Nazaret who saw that no involvement in government projects had yielded anything for them. Yet the stories that followed and meandered in much of the rest of the interview were about the families involved, their various connections and relative power leading to various other tensions. Nazaret’s blockade was only a piece from which stories of other relations could emerge. As was summed up by her partner, Luis, for me, “each community is its own world, no?” (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012, my translation). I was challenged to be careful in my own representation of a ‘community decision’ because such a thing does not exist in the way we imagine it to, particularly because of the temporariness and contingency that depends on who has power in the community and shifting opinions.

Rearticulated in this same conversation was a maybe no less romantic vision of autonomy. For Luis who was working in local tourism, autonomy could only mean a complete separation from all ‘outside’ structures and dependencies and so even in this decision to cut off from tourism and other institutions (though still receiving fund transfers from the state) we could not talk about Nazaret’s decision in terms of autonomy. The blockade could only be anecdotal because “sooner or later Nazaret will reintegrate itself because there is nothing more than integration” (ibid.). While a more sophisticated reflection on the dynamics of the region, the discussion could not help but be inflected with a sense of loss at the community that could not be and the past we could not re-claim. Much like its momentary appearance in many of my interviews, Nazaret’s blockade could bring a moment’s pause to the concept of the ‘community’ that is toured; however, in most of the dominant ways touring was talked about in Leticia, and in many of the desires for its ‘promise’, the articulation of community I talked about above, one legible to pro-poor touring and sustainable development, remained more or less securely in place.

El Alberto's recognition as an indigenous community also facilitates representations of internal coherence. Yet, more important in the texts I examined was the sense of discomfort raised by the notion of making a profit off the migrant experience. Thus what happens to those profits became an important issue for working out tensions in the deemed 'appropriateness' of this kind of touring (or the kind of entrepreneurialism shown by people in El Alberto). In almost all cases, textual or video representations of the *Caminata* make reference to the system of work that supports it or to the profits made from the tour. Those that are positive speak about the profits being evenly distributed amongst inhabitants or being used for community projects. The story most often told, as it is most often told by many in El Alberto and during the *Caminata*, is of the town's recovery after being decimated by migration up to only a few years ago that, with the help of this project, is now providing the means and a reason to 'stay'. In many renditions the story we get is that in past times "the lure of the dollar has sapped the community of its men and its traditional *Hñähñu* customs" (Gordon, December 29, 2006) which can now be recuperated through local, community based development. Particularly the valorization of this as an indigenous (for some anti-capitalist) system of work and community development where no one is seen as making 'too much' money is crucial in how the project is presented as aimed at 'good' or, to return to Lisle, 'ethical' forms of production and consumption.

Questions of profit become more contentious in more unfavourable readings of the project that refer to it as a "big money making game and tourist attraction" (no name, Feb 15, 2007). These tensions are also seen in different uses of the verbs *vender* (sell) and *ofrecer* (offer) to describe how people in El Alberto are presenting the migrant experience to tourists. 'Selling' implies something untoward that exposes the monetary relations of touring when what tourists want is to be 'offered' an honest cultural experience based on a sense of engaging that can evade its economic necessities. The more negative texts also tend to highlight what is seen as a troubling relationship to the Mexican government (due to the funding and support receive through CDI). However, this relationship is appropriated in these texts to argue that the Mexican government is complicit in the 'illegality' being promoted in the tour, or, by implication, to discredit the community-based nature of the project. While it might seem desirable to reassert the community or grassroots nature of the project as an autonomous response to the conditions of neoliberalism, debates about where the profit goes also reveal assumptions about the way community tourism should engage with, and provide a solution to, the 'migration problem'.

In trying to make statements about what the *Caminata* does, representations tend to focus on the role it plays in providing a 'break' in the flow of migration. Depending on which side you are on, this break is either a break in the number of people coming in, or the number of people leaving, but either way the position seems to be that if everyone stayed in place things would be a lot better. As one author puts it "maybe in the middle of the desert in Hidalgo someone might realize the importance of addressing their own social and political issues at home rather than looking for the answers here [in the US]. If that's the case, then perhaps it's a hike in the right direction" (Coleman, May 27 2008). Not all the texts are quite as hostile; another common response is to pose migration as the result of economic 'pushes' that leave people in rural Mexico as victims to economic upheaval in search of whatever

might be available, and the *Caminata* as a locally designed response to this victimization that has repopulated the town and allowed people to stay. Indeed this is also the rhetoric of the *Caminata* from which writers draw the stories of regeneration and which pushes people to think about working ‘at home’. But this working at home is more complicated than just ‘not migrating’ and it is expressed at the same time the *Caminata* is designed to push against a variety of borders. Similarly, as I look at in Chapter 4, desires to move in El Alberto are framed in more complex ways than just ‘economic necessity’. Looking back to the previous section, there are clearly other ways ‘intervention’ is challenged – not least through those mixtures of pleasure and empathy that cause so much tension.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to being about justifying how we can tour migration, I think that some of the representations and debates about profit (along with those concerned about its mix of pleasure and virtue and the claims that it is a ‘training camp’) raise questions about what the politicized/politically engaged migrant looks like alongside the politically engaged ‘tourist’. Further in the background, especially in the circulation of concerns like those raised by Amnesty International, there is a questioning of what ‘good’ mobilization looks like. And it certainly seems that it does not look like using migrant experiences to make money. The idea of turning poverty or other conditions commonly associated with life in the Global South (such as irregular migration) into touristic capital might be presented as crude, disrespectful or crass, but the structural situation in which it is embedded (where poverty has become a ‘problem’ to be located aesthetically in particular places and intervened in) produces the conditions in which making these places or situations tourable is a viable or attractive option (Baptista, 2012). As Baptista rightly notes political agency is evident, if sometimes uncomfortable, in the ways these ‘problems’ can be reappropriated by those seen as the ‘subjects’ of them and mobilized in diverse ways towards the aims of those subjects.

## Conclusion

This chapter has been about exploring how two very different stories of travel were circulated and represented. It has also been about the way this circulation participates in producing each story’s meaning and reveals the frictions of tourability and debates about transnational mobility. Both, in different ways and to different effects, raise questions about how (in)appropriate movement is made possible or (il)legitimated. Apart from their reproduction of authenticity as the desire and legitimation for touristic movement, texts and responses to the blockade in Nazaret contend with its frictions in only brief and haphazard ways. Dominant claims for how (in)appropriate movement should look also appear strongly in representations of the *Caminata*, yet within both these are important moments where what

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<sup>81</sup> For example, the *Caminata* can be seen in comparison to the ‘Reality Tours’ tours run by Global Exchange of the Mexican-U.S. border region (interestingly also frequently cited as examples of dark tourism).<sup>81</sup> These tours feature visits to maquiladoras and the border zone itself, along with a visit to a migrant shelter in Tijuana to speak directly to would-be migrants to get a sense of their difficult experience (Global Exchange Reality Tours, “Mexico: Beyond Borders- Health, Labor, and the Environment”). This tour thus allows tourists to perform more obvious or more normalized displays of political solidarity linked to ‘concrete’ sites of intervention in the suffering of migrants. They also allow us to understand the claims of migrants through a representation of their position as victims of an unfair world and maybe less as agents who might respond in surprising (and profit-making) ways to their situation.

counts as tourable, who counts as a travel writer, and concepts like borders, ethics, community, and profit are troubled. What we see here is that accounting for touristic space can be as political as the work of producing tourability – and indeed the two are linked.

Although not a prominent feature of the way people in El Alberto talk about the project, showing intersections between touristic and irregular mobility can broaden reflection on the politics of transnational mobility, the claims of mobile subjects, and the governing of appropriate movement. Debbie Lisle's work is helpful to return to here to think about how travel writing actively participates in shaping how we see the world and our access to it, while also not necessarily telling a straightforward story (2006). Clearly people in El Alberto have been able to lay claim to this field of debate in the very production of the *Caminata* and have, to some degree, managed to insert their voices in stories of the project so that certain narratives or claims about it have a more difficult time of it. But, of course, this is not done on an equal basis and the difference between how some stories circulate more than others is important to understanding the power relations involved in producing accounts of global movement. The sites of tension discussed in this chapter reveal important ambiguities, but they are also issues around which certain discourses (of borders, states, and actors) (re)form more easily.

There is, of course, no way to get out of representation, and I am not suggesting that the only justice to be found here is in locating the 'true' statements of those who created the project to tell us what it means. Not only would this be impossible, it also would not be helpful given the role these representations play in constituting the tour's meaning. The *Caminata* means lots of different things to different people, including different things to people in El Alberto. Reading accounts about the *Caminata* having experienced and researched it is both interesting and unsettling because it is clear that we all have very different stories to tell, and indeed there *are* so many stories to be told. The *Caminata* is a space for theorizing and thinking, but it is also as a real practice involving real people with complex motivations, positions, and politics. If I have been abusive of these it has been for the purpose of bringing things out in a way that I hope can be seen as accountable to the power imbalances in which my, and all, representations are produced.

For different methodological reasons there is no way to get away from talking *around* Nazaret's decision (or rather, focusing on its effect rather than how it actually happened). People in Nazaret certainly participated in circulating the story of their blockade internationally and locally, and though I did not focus on their work specifically in my research, it is important to acknowledge. Yet it is also important to acknowledge that its absence is reflective of the very different positions between those in El Alberto and those in Nazaret in terms of their opportunity to participate in how their stories circulated both because of the limited attention paid to Nazaret and because of the way the story fits into dominating narratives of ethics and authenticity much more easily. What shocks, seems absurd, or seems appealing about the *Caminata* has drawn more people, including myself, to tell its story, something I grappled with during my research and that continues to bother me. I think this is both exactly where the political possibilities of the project lie (in the confusion and ambiguity it generates), and something that nags me for the way excitement and novelty



garner political attention. Few people are puzzled by the story of Nazaret and despite the fact that I am not sure it *is* as interesting a story at all, there is something unsettling about the ways it can be dismissed.

From this discussion of travelling stories, I turn now in the final chapter to a discussion of work in the global economy of touring. What I have looked at here already examines some of the work of producing tourability and touristic movement, through representations and the work of the toured to participate in their own travelling stories. I now turn to the work of producing the aesthetic landscapes and performances of tourable sites and the very different ways work can be (de)valued, mobilized, or withdrawn.

## **Chapter 6: Touring Economies and the Claims of Mobility: Work and refusal in tourable places**

If in the previous chapter I looked at what travelling tales can tell us about the uneven mobility of tourability and the right to tour, this chapter returns to the ‘ground’ of the touristic site to explore the organization and daily practice of work in Leticia and El Alberto that make touring possible. I have been arguing that the right to tour, the mobility of tourists, is governed and produced, enacting political projects that help form subjectivities and landscapes within a neoliberal political-economic framework. The central argument of this dissertation has been that the basis for touristic movement (which facilitates this kind of subject making) is the work of producing sites as tourable, a production that I have shown through my examination of touring in Leticia and the *Caminata Nocturna* is full of frictions, contestations, and strategic negotiations. I have been positing that the work of making mobility possible is what makes tourability transnational, and thus the people who negotiate or contest how tourability is produced in a given site are engaging in transnational politics. As I examined in Chapter 1, the commodity chains approach (also called the global production network (GPN) approach) looks at tourism as a production chain where various relations in multiple locales are involved in the production of products and services of tourism (Ochoa, 2008b; Wonders & Michalowski, 2001; Judd, 2006). While I challenged the concept of the commodity chain through Anna Tsing’s concept of friction, I also pointed to the limited engagement within this literature with labour itself. That is, while this approach takes the transnational relations of making tourability seriously, it has tended to be less interested in questions of what people in fact do in these points of production, how they experience what they do, how their relations of labour are organized, with what effects, and with what possibilities. They also, by and large, do not ask how the transnational organization of tourism constructs certain kinds of working relations and environments in which tourability is made possible. These are the questions I aim to address in this chapter.

The tourism industry has been taken up as a site to study work within the last couple decades, fuelled, at least in part, by recent interest in work under conditions of neoliberalism with less focus on historicized or situated histories of touristic work. With insights drawn from analyses in other industries, new questions have emerged that go beyond the management studies approach to the uniqueness of ‘tourism employment’ as a ‘product’ where producer and consumer interact in the same place (see Crang, 1997), and analyses of the movement of labour through touristic sites (especially resorts) (see Castellanos, 2010; Bookman, 2006; Lovelock & Leopold, 2011; Bianchi, 2000). Instead, much of the literature asks about how work is experienced by people in these environments, how the histories of touristic workers are written, or how worker struggles have emerged within sites and hotels (Vandergrift, 2008; Sallaz, 2010; Tufts, 2006; Adler & Adler, 2004; Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). In her introduction to a special issue of *Tourist Studies* that examines tourism as work, Veijola (2010) argues for refocusing the study of tourism on labour and the experience of work. Rather than present ‘the tourist’ as “emblematic” of our time, she asks how the work of ‘the toured’ reflects contemporary economic and political conditions as more and more places have become ‘seen’, and more people are now working as ‘hosts’ (2010). However, like so much of the research in tourism studies, the goal of this analysis falls back on efforts to

make the tourism industry better – specifically by advocating a multi-disciplinary training of 'tourism entrepreneurs'. As Veijola states "fluent literacy in culture, nature, business, social situations and research on tourism - and the labour called for and created in all of these - enhances the positive societal role of the tourism industry globally and locally " (ibid., p. 85). Here I disagree, and suggest instead that an analysis of work in tourism is more important for revealing and developing a critical stance to the more dangerous and problematic shifts underway in the global economy, as well as the inherent inequalities of power that privilege the mobility of tourists.

In previous chapters I have looked at some of the cultural projects through which neoliberal subjectivities are produced – that is, the cultural projects of contemporary market governance. While much of this has related to the production of consuming and entrepreneurial subjectivities (the production of the autonomous individual who can be the subject of their own government and development), other scholars have also looked at how new cultures of production are shaping relationships to work in ways that facilitate market society and new demands of capitalism. For Best and Paterson, the recognition in International Political Economy that 'the economy' can never be a wholly autonomous and self-contained sphere means that it is both situated within cultural and political contexts, but also that it requires certain cultural practices to become actualized (2010). They go further to argue that an important aspect of these cultural shifts is their globalization; that is, while the cultural is contextualized and local, there are specific cultures that circulate globally. For them this includes such things as global management or investing cultures which involve strategies that project transnationally shared meanings or subjectivities (ibid., p. 4). While I have been arguing that the transnational is only produced in its irregular and interrupted circulation, like the transnational concepts of pro-poor development, globalizing cultures of service and professionalism are important features of the tourism industry. This can be seen in how industry actors circulate a similar and familiar set of values or codes that aim to standardize service as well as expectations. Thus the landscaping projects of producing tourability also involve particular relations of work and, we will see, particular embodiments that relate to global shifts but are also bound up in the messy encounters of place.

Through this theorizing about work and circulation, this chapter also opens up another site of friction - the encounters of analysis and translation that try to make sense of the world through perspectives drawn from elsewhere (in this case the political-economic analysis of the post-industrial Global North). Particularly in the context of Leticia, I am aware that the forms of economic organization do not line up well, while the discourses of immaterial labour, which I explore below, interact in particular ways with the extractivist economy of this border region. What I contribute here is a reframing of the analysis to understand this work as tied to and part of the political economy of mobilities, including the mobilities of my own work and analysis.

That is, rather than just being the work of producing place (as a site where 'the global economy' touches down), I see the work of the toured as productive of the terms of mobility and, maybe, the refusal to work, or the insistence on working differently as changing how that mobility is possible. Further, beyond the work of those who service transportation

circuits or hubs, or write circulating stories (e.g. travel writers), I argue that even in the performance of a guided tour, the work going on is tied to the production of mobility (in addition to and through the production of place). I also see this as contributing to a broader analysis of work within transnational political analysis, especially in the sense of understanding how transnational relations are not just affecting patterns of migration and the work of migrant labour in the Global North, but also the organization of work within areas of the Global South that, like many tourable sites, often appear as closed ‘places’, but are, I would argue, zones of transnational production.

As has been the aim throughout this dissertation, labour, as a starting point of analysis, is also important to challenging how the tourist has been privileged as a transnational actor within tourism studies. Particularly, the story of European tourism development, which argues that it was the offshoot of rising leisure time within industrial work, has tended to focus attention on consumption and ‘the gaze’ of the tourist as the driving force of tourism (see Urry, 2011; Lash & Urry, 1994). This tends, maybe unintentionally, to present tourism workers as simply responding to these expectations. Similarly, Camp argues that certain forms of tourism work are made invisible in the stories told about tourable sites (particularly historical ones) (2011). Tourable sites are often scripted as developed by particular tourism entrepreneurs or visionaries in ways that can occlude the labour of workers who built and serviced the site. The story I told in Chapter 3 about Mike Tsalikis, a story told repeatedly in Leticia and circulated well beyond, does this by emphasizing the efforts of this ‘visionary’ over the daily labour of performing tourable indigeneity in the communities or servicing and maintaining the Isla de los Micos. Paradoxically, certain labour histories can also come to obscure others, particularly where they are fascinating in their own right as non-capitalist or derived from other systems. For example, in the case of El Alberto those writing about the site have tended to privilege writing about the system of work that is bound to the system of belonging I discussed in Chapter 4, but which does not capture all the forms of work that go on in the park or go into making it tourable. I am not arguing here that I can rectify this problem by revealing all the ways work is done and intersect in any given tourable site; my point, rather, is that there are political questions for writing and analysis raised by both starting with labour, and which forms of work are included.

Before turning to the main arguments of this chapter, I need to make two methodological caveats. First, more so than any other chapter, the analysis here is in an early stage of elaboration. This is because although I went into the field looking for the ways tourability is produced, I did not go into this project with a very deep theorization of work. In contrast, I emphasized thinking about agency or resistance over work in a way that, reviewing my notes from ‘the field’, reveals my own reflections as too fixated on finding what could make touring impossible. I see this as being productive in and of itself, rather than limiting, because I have found interesting questions posed through this analysis that I hope can be brought out in future research. This is complimented (for good or for bad) by the fact that much of the research on tourism as work has been developed around particular shifts in labour in affluent societies (especially the rise of post-industrial and precarious work and the so-called ‘creative’ industries) and so does not take as deep a look at the particularities and histories of touristic work. It seems to me that touristic work has always,

or at least in many forms and for a longer time, been characterized by the kinds of demands of affect, embodiment, and flexibility that have provoked recent research into neoliberal conditions of work. An exception to this is Philip Crang's essay on performance and touristic work in which he argued that the embodied nature of tourism work as *tourism* work in particular could actually be the basis for new theorizing about work itself, rather than merely the recipient of theorizing from elsewhere (1997, p. 138). However, even when scholars such as Crang (1997), Ionnides and Debbages (1998), or Urry (2011) have acknowledged the longstanding relationships of work in tourism that are structured around embodiment, flexibility, and service, it remains largely unexplored. In a sense, then, it seems that the work on tourism and work is still under-historicized and too indebted to merely applying what has been theorized elsewhere. Doing more than pointing to this issue is, unfortunately, out of the scope of this project.

My second caveat concerns the research I present here about Leticia. As I discussed in the Introduction, I made a conscious decision upon arriving in Leticia not to participate in any guided tours. This was a political decision on my part because I felt I could not participate in ways that would not reproduce the very damaging effects I have been talking about in this dissertation. I made the decision that my ability to write critically about what I was seeing did not outweigh the damage I would cause by participating in the tours, and I take responsibility for how this affects my analysis. Thus, here I rely on information I received from other sources about how tours are run and how communities respond to tour companies and tourists (conversations with and papers by scholars in the region, interviews, and observations of touristic promotions). I feel this still allows me to effectively engage with the questions I have posed in this chapter, but I leave it up to the reader to make up their own mind.

The first section of this chapter lays out current theorizing on immaterial labour and embodiment as a way into both how discussions of work figure into tourism research and the subsequent section looking at specific divisions of labour that I saw in Leticia. Specifically, returning to an argument started at the end of Chapter 2, I argue that a racialized division of work, governed through access to material profits but also through techniques of professionalization and claims about emotional labour reveals important tensions in some of the 'promises' of tourism development. Far from understanding relations of work as a way to develop better industry practices, my analysis is about revealing and problematizing the stakes of being tourable. While much of this distinction is drawn on seeing certain toured subjects as simply performing 'life' in the jungle, I also examine how tourism development is making use of life as what makes the forest productive and thus inserting life within the economies of touristic space and movement. Thus, I argue, life becomes embedded in relations of work opening other forms of government but also other forms of challenging this entanglement. A central contribution I make in this chapter is to use this analysis to reframe the actions of communities like Nazaret as a refusal to work that challenges expectations about the availability of both land and labour to certain kinds of development and movement. Although the refusal to work has a specific theoretical history in the work of autonomous Marxism as a form of worker resistance, it also has a colonial history in the

Americas that can provide a potential framework for seeing land and labour as joint sites where power and resistance can be exercised.

From there, I shift focus to El Alberto to examine various forms of work, both within and outside the system of work and belonging, which go into making the *Caminata* possible. I argue that this work is shaped by the structures of migrant labour and touristic mobility that are beyond the control of those involved and provide both the tools for creativity and limit those possibilities. This section moves away from the discussions of immaterial labour as largely unable to account for the ways work is woven into the tourable landscape of El Alberto. Finally, in the last section of this chapter I return to the literature on service and 'new work' to compare experiences where my research became interwoven with the service and tourable work of both sites. As a way to end this chapter, I use this to reflect again on how people in El Alberto interact with and make their own use of the mobility and circulation of others, in this case my own.

### **Hostessing as the 'New Work'? Immaterial labour, embodiment, and problems of translation**

The 'new' management of entrepreneurial society tells us that we hold within ourselves both the responsibility and the possibility for our own success. Earlier I noted how this dictum has affected the world of development where the individual and the community have become sites of capacity building in order to compete in the already laid out, and supposedly accepted, market economy. Similarly in the excitement for pro-poor tourism, communities are seen as able, through producing themselves as tourable, to create the possibilities of pulling themselves out of poverty. This emphasis on entrepreneurship also entails new organizations of work based on both changes in production and demands placed on workers. A useful starting point for entering these discussions are shifting practices of production and work that privilege what Hardt and Negri and others have called immaterial labour; that is, the material production of products that are themselves immaterial such as knowledge, images and media, and service. For these authors, this form of production has become hegemonic not in the sense that all work is now immaterial, but in the sense that its terms and values are forced onto other forms of work (Hardt & Negri 2004; Trott 2007). Immaterial labour, they argue, is dominated by the production of information and by service work as affective labour geared towards production of relationships (Hardt & Negri, 2004). The rise of immaterial labour has also been linked to the rise of 'network society' or an emphasis on global flows of information, products and people, and production cycles. Thus while labour in immaterial 'production' becomes disaggregated and loosened from strict places and times of work (as in the factory), the networks of production are organized when needed into cycles of capitalist production (thus making them both ever-shifting and precarious) (Lazzarato, 1996).

Within this economy, a new privilege is placed on 'creative' capacity, a resource held within the individual that can be honed and tapped to reshape the world around them in marketable ways. This articulation of creativity is also based on particular values and subjectivities that have been critiqued as exclusionary (Richards & Wilson, 2007; Davies, 2010). In the context of tourism, 'creative tourists' are lauded as dynamic parts of the

creation of touristic places, and tourism entrepreneurs are finding a new set of demands for figuring out how to incorporate and engage with this active consumption (Richards & Wilson 2007, p. 16). These entrepreneurial subjects are both the consumers and the 'new' labourers who are able to channel individualizing tendencies of neoliberalism into the organization of their work – individually responsible for success and evaluating their lives through the lens of how it helps them compete with others (in other words, making all activities useful to the entrepreneurial self, including travel) (Vrasti, 2012). In this sense, tourism is about immaterial production in that the 'product' is the aesthetic experience or encounter, and involves the production of knowledge both about the site and about the 'self' being developed, while also being based on networks of agents whose dispersed tasks create both the possibilities of imagining certain sites as tourable and the material means to 'get there'. Important here is the performance of guiding work that, as I suggested in Chapter 1, operates as the dominant model for the type of capacities that can be developed through tourism. This work has increasingly taken on the role of affective, relationship building labour with guiding celebrated not only for providing avenues for entrepreneurship, but also for guiding tourists through the building of relationships to difference and place and managing their emotional experience. This goes far beyond the image of the working guide as someone who shows and interprets a touristic site to one who is able to manage the experiences and feelings of others.

As Ionnides and Debbages noted over a decade ago, labour and production network flexibility have been restructuring major sections of the tourism industry (1998). While appealing to the demands for autonomy and self-actualization made in so-called 'post-tourism', where touring is a way of stylizing and working on the self, these forms of production mix with other, mass based production models in what they call the tourism industry 'polyglot' (ibid., p. 233-4). Similarly, in his work on touristic places as 'performed places', Philip Crang argued that we can see a particular emphasis in tourism management literature on bodily performance and management of feeling (1997). This, he argued, is also situated in management debates about how to surveil forms of work, such as touring, which relied increasingly on spontaneity and the autonomy of workers to provide for the shifting needs and desires of individual tourists (ibid., p. 141). Although he falls short of a critical analysis of how this is related to structures and projects of neoliberalism, Crang does point to the political importance of embodied work in tourism through his argument that because tourist places are performed places, the work done by those who are toured is actually part of a contentious process that shapes the very tourability of those places (ibid., 146).

Veijola and Jokinen have articulated the 'new work' that dominates in immaterial production as characterized by 'hostessing' (2008). This form of work is related to the mediation of services and encounters through "managing affects, communication and corporeality" (ibid., p. 168). The work of being a host thus requires linking the body and personality of the worker (in how the work is performed and the service delivered) to the product itself. They, and others, note that this work is feminized in the sense of the attributes it draws on (care, empathy, good-naturedness) and the fact that women are more likely to occupy many of the service sector roles, even while these desired attributes are now

spread out to include all workers. Rather than celebrate how these new forms of work release workers from the disciplinary controls of mass production, feminist scholars have argued that this creates new ways of regulating workers through their bodies, specifically through privileging the visibility of certain kinds of workers, which creates new hierarchies of race, gender, or class within the workplace (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008; McDowell, 2009). As Vraiti notes, “governmentality is never about including or subjecting everyone equally. It is simply a standard of measurement to assess people’s ability to live up to whatever governmental injunctions are deemed necessary” (2012, p. 22). Thus in the rise of ‘new’ service work as productive of active relations between servers and consumers, certain workers are encouraged to be self-regulating agents of these relations while others continue to be disciplined ‘behind the scenes’ (or, in the case of tourism, as mere parts of the ‘scene’) to the visibility and creative activity of others. In other words, there are different kinds of embodiments demanded of touristic work that reflect both the shifts in creative and immaterial labour and the ongoing use of disciplinary controls, and which create and maintain hierarchies in the division of labour in tourable places. In the context of Leticia, I argue that these distinctions are enforced largely on the basis of race and ethnicity (though not explicitly on gender), strategic regulation of informality and, to a certain extent, a displacement of local *leticianos* through discourses of professionalism. In contrast, in El Alberto distinctions between workers are more complicated by being bound up in the political system of belonging in which this work and touristic demands are taking place.

Aiwan Ong has challenged these stories of political-economic transition in a different way by arguing that there is no linear transition from disciplinary control to regulatory technologies used to control immaterial labour. Rather, different forms of control operate simultaneously within the same production chains. As she states, “latitudinal forms of market governmentality often deploy a mix of regulatory norms and ethnicized modes of labor incarceration” (2006, p.123). That these forms of labour remain segregated in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or geography indicates both the continued salience of these structural relations and the insufficiency of presenting totalizing shifts in the global economy. As she states, “ethnicized production networks depend on disciplinary institutions of ethnic enclaves, factories, and families to instill feminine values of loyalty, obedience, and patience, and to mold docile labor” (ibid., p. 124). Importantly, these disciplinary technologies that produce servility and docility have long been features of tourism (one would almost say they are requirements of all tourism work being, as it is, predicated on giving people a break from working life and making comfortable the experience of difference). However, this now increasingly exists alongside other values in work such as entrepreneurialism and depictions of creativity as articulated by proponents of the so-called ‘creative class’ (see Richards, 2011). While tourism does not appear to rely on mass factory production, in tourable landscapes such as Leticia disciplinary techniques to mold the types of tourism workers necessary for the circulation of tourists through ‘community experiences’ or ‘encounters with indigenous ethnicities’ do operate. In addition to other kinds of workers such as certain hotel staff, transportation workers, or servers, these workers are distinguished from entrepreneurial guides and tour operators in the touring landscape through the techniques of power that control the meaning and performance of their work.



Alongside calls for looking at the interweaving of disciplinary and entrepreneurial technologies of power in the management of labour, Tsing's concept of friction is useful to return to here as there is a certain risk that the stories of the rise of immaterial labour are often told in ways that obscure both their own historicity and the dynamics of movement. That is, on the one hand the rise in literature on immaterial labour is specifically located in a particular sense of 'crisis' or 'shift' that has occurred in the fordist production models of much of the Global North. Thus the literature, largely stemming from this context, has been overwhelmingly focused on the meaning and impacts of changing relations of work and production within the historical and historicized moment of contemporary Western Europe and North America.<sup>82</sup> This shift, and the scholarship it has provoked, risks re-extending this historical moment into yet another universal story of political economy that can be used to make sense of places elsewhere (or from which these places deviate). This is particularly relevant when considering how the 'shift' has also involved new networks of production in many parts of the Global South that include factories, export processing zones, mining, and other industries where relations of work are also mutating, but in very different ways. We return, then, to the difficulties of accounting for movement – in this case, the movement of ideas, concepts, explanations, or theories. As Tsing notes with much of the literature on globalization and on the expansion of mobility as the extensions of liberalism, it is often assumed that as it extends, liberalism "is completely successful in creating the subjects it conjures, for better or for worse" (2005, p. 214). Rather, she contends that 'universals', ideas, or systems of management are 'engaged' to, as she puts it, "acknowledge the fact that to be effective they must enter the fray" of the complex sites or landscapes in which outcomes can be unexpected or contradictory (ibid., p. 270-1).

Neither Leticia nor El Albero fit neatly into the narratives I have sketched above. The shifting economy in Leticia can be seen as on the move from one extractive industry to another, rather than from industrial to post-industrial, with significant consequences for workers as the demands of coca production differ greatly from those of tourability. The jungle is being transformed, at least in part, through shifts from extracting tangible resources like wood or coca to the extraction of touristic resources – the immaterial experience of the jungle itself. This has also involved transforming life itself into something that makes the forest productive. Meanwhile, the language of service, affect, and professionalization play out and are extended through the circulation of tourists and demands of being tourable. At the same time, the possibility to refuse to be toured exists and also challenges the extensions of both accumulating the jungle as a tourable resource and the hegemony of the norms of immaterial labour. Neoliberalism has played out far more profoundly in El Albero in the form of market liberalization and the competing dynamics of demands for labour and restricted mobility that produce cheap, easily exploitable migrant labour for the Global North, than it has in the sense of subjectification. At the same time, the celebration of entrepreneurial subjectivity in aspects of development policy in Mexico is part of what has

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<sup>82</sup> Though, as in the case of voluntourism or teaching English overseas, many of the workers from this context participate in work and develop their creative and entrepreneurial skills outside the spatial boundaries of the Global North.

made the *Caminata* possible. Yet, as I will show below, the ways these intersect with the system of political belonging and the messy economic landscape is not at all straightforward.

Finally, returning to a discussion from Chapter 1, it is important to distinguish an analysis of rationalities from one of process. While Tsing's ethnography stresses the need to understand universals and encounters in the form of 'the fragment', she is less clear about how, as scholars this may help us elucidate and problematize global structures of power. In contrast to Best and Paterson's argument for analysing how cultures become globally salient or globalized through the ways they are circulated (and by whom) (2010), Tsing's commitment is to understanding how these connections are made. However, the effect is to move attention away from governing rationalities themselves to the difficulty they have in moving or translating. This tension remains important to acknowledge and work within, since it cannot be overcome, but I think the usefulness of the above theorizing, while its translation remains difficult, is to provide hints or suspicions as to how to frame and dissect the problems of contemporary capitalism.

### **Divisions of Touristic Labour: Entrepreneurs, professionals, and emotional work**

Using Ong's argument about hierarchies in different forms of work within neoliberal economies as a jumping off point, my aim in this section is to show ways that racialized enclaves of work in tourism are disciplined in relation to the professional and 'creative' work claimed by certain guides and tour operators in Leticia. Ong uses the term enclave to refer to the geographies of production that characterize the unequal distribution of power and subjectivity within the contemporary economy and restrict (both spatially and in terms of labour mobility) certain ethnicized workers as disciplined labour (2006, p. 124-5). In Chapter 2 I spoke about the racializations of work that I saw play out in Leticia. While these are not 'enclaves' in the sense that Ong uses (i.e. their spatial separation is not as dramatic and they are not specific institutions of control), there are similar dynamics to the way work is separated. Particularly what I think the division of labour in Leticia shows is the way the affective and relational work of immaterial labour is embodied in guides while the bodies of those in toured communities are disciplined and contained as objects of a tourable community and within particular performances of indigeneity.

To briefly recap my argument in Chapter 2, what I found in certain discussions with tour guides or operators was a particular performance of 'non-indigeneity', or a way of identifying themselves as 'closer' to the tourists (in racial and developmental terms) and thus better equipped than indigenous inhabitants to do particular kinds of service work. In contrast, indigenous people were described as best able to present their culture and life-ways, or produce artisan goods for sale. Importantly, in the context of the political economy of tourism, the type of service work these guides and operators assigned to themselves is work that tends to be more highly valued. I argued in Chapter 2 that, in the context of Leticia, the linkage of this more valuable work to development and whiteness are important to the reproduction of racial hierarchies. To complicate the picture, many of the guides in the region are themselves indigenous; however, they tend to work for tour agencies that are run by non-indigenous operators or get contracted by these agencies from their communities. However, the work of presenting a particular, tourable indigeneity is differentiated from the

service work of guides and tour operators. For indigenous tour guides, this distinction is complicated; as Ochoa and Tobón argue “the model case for how Tikuna cultural knowledge has been translated in the new form of work is the work of tour guides” (2010, p. 53, my translation). Producing this knowledge comes through training that helps formulate ways of relating nature and culture in tourable packages that are easily explained on guided walks (*ibid.*). Yet although this is knowledge production (a form of immaterial labour), this work is also still distinguished from the entrepreneurship of tourism operators at the same time it is differentiated from the work of performing indigeneity as an object to be viewed (and photographed). The maintenance of these divisions is done through techniques that control who can do what work, how that work is valued, and what can be seen as work at all.

Racialized strategies of division of work, or the intersecting of race with worker hierarchies, exist in multiple ways within the tourism industry, but operate on the privileging of certain subjects as able to occupy positions that others are excluded from. Sallaz’ (2010) analysis of workers in an entertainment complex in Johannesburg, South Africa is one interested example. In a context where management was forced to hire black workers at the end of official apartheid, managers also refused to recognize these workers as service workers, specifically not as working in customer service. The reasons cited were largely based on racial stereotypes held by managers that black employees were incapable of offering customer service and thus needed to be kept separate from the ‘service’ jobs they did, to the extent that the company instituted a policy against tipping (*ibid.*). Similarly in her study of working conditions in a touristic site in Costa Rica, Vandergrift notes the complex movements of workers that saw many tourists from the Global North migrate to the country or overstay tourist visas in order to work in the tourist sector where they were more likely to be offered visible, front line positions serving tourists over Afro-Costa Ricans or Nicaraguan migrants (2008). At the same time these workers brought privileged skills (such as English) and embodied the whiteness associated with customer service (rather than domestic service), she also notes how these workers were considered more docile and more vulnerable in some ways because they lacked status or work visas in many cases and were not paid any benefits (*ibid.*). Their occupation of these jobs, however, permitted the exclusion of locals and migrants from other parts of Central America from accessing these more coveted positions. As I noted in Chapters 2 and 3, the movement of labour to Leticia has operated on similar distinctions, with Andean Colombians and entrepreneurs from Europe and elsewhere occupying many of the key positions as operators and hotel owners (while other migrants have also been brought in to fill manual labour).

If the analysis of tour operators’ claims to ‘non-indigeneity’ addresses in part how control over who can do what work is organized, similar processes of racialization also operate to make certain work more or less valuable. One example of this comes from people who talk about only receiving tips for performing for tourists. In the organization of their tours, Decameron Explorer offers full day excursions for their guests for anywhere from 62,000 to 246,000 Colombian pesos (\$35-140 CDN) but lists a “talk with a shaman” as free (presumably with the assumption that tourists will be asked to tip). This assumption in fact organizes how many have experienced their work in communities that are visited by

guides and tourists. One of the sources of tension I heard about repeatedly was the way guides and operators would come to communities looking for dances or ritual explanations and in exchange only encourage tourists to leave small tips (usually only a few thousand pesos, \$1-2 CND); yet when it was discovered, sometimes by accident, that these companies and guides were also getting paid for their services, some communities began demanding more compensation for their work (Personal Interview, August 11, 2012; Personal Interview, July 10, 2012). As more information has circulated in the region about how the tourism industry works and who is getting paid, in part at least through the circulation of a video on tourism development called *Nuama pa Kori*<sup>83</sup> created by researchers at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia Sede Amazonas, people in the region have become more aware of the inequalities with how tourism is organized. However, I have been arguing that the dynamics of tourism development involve more than just distribution of resources. What makes touring political are the various questions about how access to sites are naturalized even while they are contested and how certain relations of work are made necessary for this access.

One of the central dynamics within the tourable landscape of Leticia is the push to professionalization. As in many tourable places, much of the rhetoric of what makes for professional service is derived from the transnational circulation of discourses of the appropriate levels of comfort, access to services, and expectations of travel that institutions like the UNWTO or the WTTC use as measures of quality. Mowforth and Munt argue in their study of tourism and development that key contemporary means of competition between touristic sites are done through uniqueness, intellectualism, and professionalism as a set of characteristics that apply particularly to tour guides and managers in hosting positions (2008). Building on Lash and Urry's (1994) analysis of contemporary consumption, Mowforth and Munt argue the practice of inventing professions is tied to shifting labour from 'merely' work to a vocational dedication to a task (2008). Professionalization through strategies such as codes of conduct, curriculum vitae, and specific accreditation are, for them, linked to strategies of tourism service providers from the Global North who displace and dominate the industry in many areas of the Global South. However, as I looked at in Chapter 2, this distinction is in many ways unhelpful, since the techniques of professionalization are also clearly embraced and developed within 'third-world' contexts and mobilized in ways that distinguish subjectivities within tourable sites.

In his argument for looking at professionalization as an *episteme* (or the ground on which certain discourses or statements become possible), Adams contends that the process of professionalization also involves extending the values and structures of established professions into more and more forms of work, as well as more and more facets of life (2012). 'Being professional' is a key goal used as a technique for creating the self-regulating workers of immaterial production. As seemingly neutral standards of merit and competence, professionalization obscures how these are related to class (*ibid.*, p. 335), or how professionalization is not a process that is open to all bodies (Sullivan, 2012). As dominant actors in the contemporary economy, Engin Isin goes further to link the strategies of

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<sup>83</sup> *Nuama pa Kori* translates in Spanish as *Buen Viaje, Hombre Blanco*, or in English as *Have a Good Trip, White Man*.

professionals to citizenship by arguing that, “as the professions govern themselves, they reorient virtues that arise from governing themselves towards governing others. Thus, the virtues of being a professional gradually permeate the virtues of being a citizen and the vices of being a stranger, an outsider, and an alien” (2002, p. 249). In this sense, professionalization has a much more nuanced relationship to power than simply a set of values or standards. Professional governance comes to be reproduced as generalizable norms of conduct.

Similarly to the link I made in Chapter 3 between environmental consciousness and the 'garbage free' tourable aesthetic, professionalization also extends for some beyond the realm of tourability to other aspects of life and into ways of molding subjectivities. During an interview in which he talked about the difficulty faced in Leticia with getting people from the region to work (the way they 'should' in tourism), Santiago, a hostel owner quoted before, commented:

More and more, logically, people will learn. It has a lot to do with education, with family stability, many things, if they work in businesses and have medical services. You have to understand that you have to give. Therefore it is a process...The business owners, they are all immigrants. They are people who have lived in Europe, people who have another vision of the world, people who work, people who know what it is to give service to clients. (Personal Interview, July 10, 2012, my translation)

In this comment, like in others I heard, professional services and the skills needed to be 'professional' in tourism were linked to other kinds of social development, extending professionalism beyond the framework of the job itself to the mode of being a subject.

At the same time, this comment reveals an extension of the values of immaterial and neoliberal production into other facets of life, increasingly incorporating social experience into the objectives of production. Being a tour operator thus requires not only the knowledge and skills practiced on the job, but also the appropriate life experience and ethic honed outside of strict working time. While for Hardt and Negri this process of making life productive for capitalist production can be understood through the concept of biopolitical production (2004; Trott, 2007), the relationship between life and production is also specifically complicated in Leticia by the ways different ways of being in the world are mobilized as useful to tourability. 'Life' in certain forms becomes an object of touristic gaze, while in other forms (and for other subjects), life experience is a project to be worked on and directed towards developing the capacities necessary for competing in a neoliberal economy. In a context like Leticia where tourism is promoted as one of the few viable options for livelihood, it becomes even more pressing to ask how divisions of access to these different subjectivities (these different modes of making life productive) are being made, but also how appropriate ways of being are stretched and extrapolated from the relations of work (in this case, professionalization) used to facilitate the movement of tourists. Put differently, the question is how tourism development creates tourability and the touristic professional as the models and the confines of subjectivity, and the demands or exclusions predicated on those models.

Distinguishing the kind of work that guides do in contrast to the work of performing the ‘community’ as a touristic site is also articulated through the language of emotional labour and the way this labour is imbricated in the production of life as a tourable object. As Joey, an indigenous guide working for one of the larger hotels commented when I asked him about the relationship between tourists and indigenous communities: “it’s all good, the people [in communities] receive tourists well. And tourists in the same way, from the heart, as soon as they can leave some money, that is what the visitors do. Well, it is because they do it not because the indigenous people, let’s say, demand that they give this money. It is from the heart that visitors give them money” (Personal Interview, July 4, 2012, my translation). Later in the same interview he referred to tourists being encouraged to buy artisan goods so that the community would receive some economic benefit, and that this was a role the guides fulfilled. Yet when I asked him how he as a guide chooses communities to visit, he replied:

since we are not members of the community, we choose a lot of times for the attention from each community. So for example, if you go with a group of people and they treat them well, don’t treat them poorly, so you are going to choose this community because they treated us well, we were able to complete all the activities the way they should be done, and so you will always go to this one. But if you go to a community and they don’t treat you well, which is they want money from the tourists first, well, this is bad. So, you say no, this community I won’t visit, because if I go there with tourists they are going to be really aggressive, they are going to want them to give money. You go to the place where tourists give from the heart, so these are the communities you choose. (ibid.)

For him, the act of asking for money sullied the experience of the tour and the supposed relationship existing between hosts and guests in which both give ‘from the heart’ rather than compensate for the work done to prepare for and receive tourists. This creates a certain performative demand that requires those working as the toured to present themselves in particular ways, and specifically in ways that elide their role as workers (who receive compensation that signifies the value of their work). It also reflects a certain vision of guiding work as negotiating emotional relationships within touristic space and mediating the social relations of life in the forest as a touristic encounter. Rather than try to characterize this guide’s full thoughts, as interviews are themselves performative, I point to this exchange as an example of how the tourist interaction was presented in many contexts in ways that obscured the work of being tourable done by those who are not guides. That is, I think many guides see their work as intermediaries as a complex negotiation between the worlds of tourists and toured that requires finding creative ways to facilitate encounters and encourage things like the purchasing of artisan goods. What is revealed here are the ways that this mediation uses a denial of work to discipline the work of the toured in the way they present their bodies and govern performances.

Gallego (2011) highlights the importance of these relations for understanding how community members negotiate their own performances and articulate these as work that needs to be valued. In her study of the community of La Libertad, she shows how the work of artisan production also requires performative work to sell those products (see also Giselle

Nova, 2011). In this way, artisan production is linked to performances of the body and bodily attributes, but in a context very different to the affective labour claimed by the guide quoted above. Indigenous tourable subjects within communities performing passivity and authentic tradition in the form of both their body and the artisan works they have produced for sale are not doing the same kind of embodied, emotional work demanded in the neoliberal economy from guides, or other tourism service workers. Yet, rather than see these performances as enactments of domination (or of a dominated subjectivity), I think it is more fruitful to see them, similar to other forms of work, as mixtures of coercion and agency. Gallego, who spent many months researching in La Libertad, describes the everyday work of producing the artisan market where people are sent out ‘on watch’ to warn the community when tourists are coming so that they can throw off the clothes they wear every day, hastily dress in ‘traditional’ clothing, and lay out their goods for sale in front of their homes for tourists to peruse (2011). During tourist visits, which last only around twenty minutes each, people, usually women, will sit quietly by their wares not speaking to each other, but watching and waiting, and answering short questions about prices for tourists. Once they leave, however, Gallego describes how those demeanors of silent, passive service would change into loud and often boisterous conversations that would include, at times, judgements about the tourists themselves, their clothes, attitudes, or what they bought (2011).

While the way people in La Libertad engage in tourism work is derided by many in the region, including in other indigenous communities, for being an undignified and inauthentic display of ‘culture for sale’, Gallego helpfully points to how people in the community understand their work very differently. As she argues, the people she interviewed do not see themselves as ‘selling culture’ (as if cultural meanings and processes could in fact be commoditized and given away to others), but rather as putting on a show that tourists want to see (2011). The payment they receive for this work is in the form of entrance fees, tips, and purchases of their artisan goods; however, in all these cases, they find themselves in a disadvantaged position to get fair payment. Thus, in some cases guides, who are responsible for paying entrance fees from the money paid to them by tourists, will sometimes not comply with the community fees, and tourists in her experience will always try and bargain down the prices of artisan goods (ibid.). However, the complaint she identified from those in La Libertad was not that this relationship diminished the significance of their cultural meanings or work, but rather that they were not paid fairly.

This was also put to me to consider in a different way by Luis, a hostel worker I have quoted before. When I asked if he thought the stereotypical images of indigenous people were damaging, he responded

no, it is not damaging. People here are going to make a living the way they can. And if to make a living you need to dress up like an indian, well you dress like that. If in Spain you have to work as a waiter, you work as a waiter. And if here you have to dance in [traditional] dress, well you dance in that dress. You make a living the way you can. The damage here has a much longer history, and for many other reasons, but this is just one manifestation of how one culture, one type of production, is destroying the other. (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012, my translation)

While the representations of indigenous people and the demands placed on the types of performances are important, if we think of these people as workers, we can also ask a different set of questions. What kinds of workers are being formed and disciplined? What are the conditions of this work and how is this situated historically in racialized exploitation and discrimination? And, how is this process also encountering shifting relations of work and mobility in the contemporary global economy? As ostensibly passive recipients of tourists' gaze, tips, and purchases, workers in the communities are required to work in ways that maintain this relationship – being passive and quiet, being ready to bargain prices, and not making overt demands if guides do not pay the full price since, as seen in the previous comments about how guides select communities, that might mean they will not come back with more tourists. Of course, people do not merely submit to these conditions, there are ways that they embrace, negotiate, or contest the terms of work. The relationship, however, remains heavily weighted against those in the communities who find few avenues to challenge the control of guides, operators, companies, and governments.

Professionalization in Leticia is also specifically targeted at informality, in particular, the informal guides who operate without certification from the docks. These guides are depicted by most professional agencies and operators as suspicious, duplicitous, and sometimes dangerous, with stories circulating regularly about guides robbing or assaulting the tourists they take into the jungle. In contrast, the formalization of professional guides is presented as providing the safety and security that enhances touristic experience (and in this way professionalization is linked to facilitating mobility). Organizations like DAFEC and the *Fondo de Promoción Eco-Turística del Amazonas* (FPTA)<sup>84</sup> – an association of private enterprises in Leticia – promote professional standards and, especially, regulation of who can provide services in the region as the way to “correct” the problems of informality and ‘illegality’ in the sector (DAFEC, 2011). Although I never specifically sought out informal guides to interview (the process of building trust with this group of people was too daunting for the short period of time I was there), I was approached at times by guides at the docks offering me tours of ‘jungle, river, and artisan goods’, or simply calling out from a nearby bench the names of communities they would take anyone to. The discourse of professionalization articulates this informality as its outside, or other, that either needs to be abolished or brought under the regulation of professional standards. Thus where DAFEC and FPTA have put a lot of rhetorical (if not actual) attention to cutting down on the practice of informal guiding, they have positioned it as outside how tourism is developing in the region.

Yet, as Phillips argues, the idea that informality is a form of exclusion, or separate, from a ‘legitimate’ or ‘formalized’ economy, is challenged by the ways these forms of work intermingle and are co-constituting (2011, p. 382). If, as she argues, informality is defined through vulnerability, flexibility, and disposability, this means that it has both long been the case for certain workers, and increasingly central to the structuration of work in large parts of the ‘formal’ economy (ibid.). Particularly in celebrations of creative labour and knowledge economies, these features of informality are keys to success.

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<sup>84</sup> Fund for the Promotion of Eco-Tourism in the Amazon



Indeed, in the case of Puerto Nariño, it was the informal practice of going down to the docks to meet tourists and take them around the area that brought some local guides into the tourism industry and encouraged them to challenge the monopoly on guiding held by companies from Leticia (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012). However, it is at the same moment that these guides are beginning to professionalize by joining in an association and working on developing a code of conduct that in Leticia the ‘problem’ of informal guiding has become such a prominent target (with some unsure of how seriously the practice actually affects regional touring). This is important because it shows how the relationship to informality can shift in and out of usefulness for more ‘formalized’ development, such that at certain moments it becomes a problem to be targeted in the process of advancing professionalization. In other words, entrepreneurialism that is celebrated at one moment can later become an obstacle to be targeted. Informal guiding is by far not the only informal service that facilitates tourism in the region - from street vendors to laundry services to other kinds of domestic work that cares for the bodies of tourists, or the informal reception of tourists in communities and certain sellers of artisan goods. There is nothing that makes this informal work inherently better or worse than formalized work; my point is that in the intermingling of these forms of work, local and transnational power relations operate to organize or discipline sites of informality. In other words, the distinction of informality as outside regulation is also blurred by the ways informality is both useful (in this case, to facilitating the circulation of tourists) and regulated through practices aimed at steering these activities<sup>85</sup>. These are in fact done in contingent ways that reflect informality valued as flexible and entrepreneurial and then devalued as an obstacle to professionalization.

Through these uses of professionalization, emotional mediation, and specific modes of differentiating themselves from toured communities, guides are interlocked within many of the dynamics of contemporary entrepreneurial work. Having guides think of themselves in these terms is in part useful to the professionalizations of guiding practice as a vocation celebrated for its entrepreneurialism and access to the cosmopolitan sensibilities of sophisticated tourists. It is also a point where circulating standards of labour and service ‘enter the fray’ of social-historical dynamics in the making of touristic space. That this

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<sup>85</sup> Taxi service in Leticia represents an interesting example of this. The dominant mode of transportation in the city is by motorbike; anecdotal stories put the number of motorbikes in the town as twice the actual population. For people who do not have or want to use their own, the moto-taxis are the second best option - basically consisting of people who ride around town on a motorbike all day with a spare helmet stopping to pick up passengers when hailed at the side of the road. Typically, trips cost between 1000-2000 pesos (\$1 CND). The mototaxis are unregulated, and technically illegal, but so quotidian that no one bats an eye, even as the drive past the police station or transport city employees. There is an exception, however, when a checkpoint is installed along the highway leading to the airport and University. This is due to the flight that arrives every afternoon from Bogotá. The car taxi drivers, who are regulated and certified, afraid of the competition from the mototaxis, have made an agreement with the police that, at that time of day only, they will patrol the highway and forbid any moto-taxi from getting through. Car-taxis are notoriously expensive in Leticia, charging 15,000 pesos (or around \$8 CAD) for a ride that costs 2000 pesos (or just over \$1 CAD) on a moto-taxi. Yet, while none of the moto-taxi drivers is ever ticketed or fined, this particular hour of the day a specific kind of regulation is enforced in order to ensure the peaceful coexistence of these modes of transportation, all of which service the tourist economy in different ways, while maintaining a certain privileged access to tourists for professional taxi companies.

intermediary work becomes necessary for the smooth mobilities of tourists through the space of the forest, as a social space of indigenous life that can be made tourable, means that these dynamics are also part of the global mobility claimed by visitors.

### **The Productivity of Life and Refusing to Work**

While guides perform professionalism and create and manage the relationships and emotional responses of tourists, the creation of touristic sites through such things as making the home space or ritual celebrations tourable is more frequently described as displays of life, or, in the best cases, through the language of performance (see Little, 2000; Gibson, 2009). On the one hand, tourable work is contained in the mediating work of guides as seen in the comment above where the status of these life practices as part of the exchange economy, increasingly the only economy, is denied. On the other hand, there are ways that life is being both extended in Leticia through its conceptualization as a social-natural landscape, and re-contained in the ways that it is brought into tourability as what makes the forest productive. Life as a site of productivity and as imbricated with relations of work is thus also interesting for thinking through the political dangers and potentials contained in the work of making place tourable.<sup>86</sup>

As Arturo Escobar (2008) and others have noted, the modern distinction between culture and nature, life and environment, have obscured other relational understandings of life as the social-natural connections of place. In this modern conception, humans are autonomized from nature in order to be able to claim mastery over it. In a similar response, mastery is produced through conservation by excluding the human from nature in order to preserve the 'purely natural'. However, rather than simply write 'out' social life as the imposition of human actions on 'nature', as many conservationists (and ecotourism promoters) do, life as social relations in the forest is also becoming part of the object that can be made productive through its tourability. As I argued in Chapter 3, indigenous practices in the forest sit in ambiguous relation to the tourable landscape under construction – as both part of it in the form of pathways and knowledges, and as barriers to it in the form of *chagras* and other land uses. Similarly, Feijoo notes how the creation of *resguardos* in the region was also intimately linked to conservationism through the life practices of indigenous peoples who were presumed to be stewards of nature that could conserve the forest for the state. Rather than simply preserving the forest, however, creating the forest as tourable is also about creating the forest as productive and profitable. Life, as the relations within the social-natural space of the forest, and work become entangled in the role indigenous people are intended to take on in this forest management.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The argument here is based on discussions and work I have done with Marcela Vecchione Gonçalves and is deeply indebted to her insights into land, lifeways, and development through her work in the Brazilian Amazon.

<sup>87</sup> 'Life', as something that is 'sold' to visiting tourists is not in itself a new process; most forms of ethnic tourism rely on presenting life in a specific location as worthy of being toured. Rather the production of life and lifeways in the Amazon as tourable is specific for the way it is situated in a politics of forest management and exploitation going back to earlier rubber trading, but also including more recent pushes to conserve the forest. In this sense it is also important for the way that it coopts indigenous peoples as agents in a process of creating productivity, rather than objectifying peoples and lifeways as commodities to be toured.

A telling example of this process is the *Bio-Observatorio del Amazonas* (BOA) project, which attempted to create a conservationist reserve adjacent to the Nazaret reserve in 2008. This project did not follow a modern splitting of nature and culture that would see a reserve as a space emptied of human activity. Rather those designing the project wanted to use the space to depict 'life' itself in the forest. One of the key aims of the project was to make a sense of place in the forest. Planning documents stated that unlike the non-places of transnational movement, BOA would provide visitors a way to experience the Amazon as a place of life – what they call '*un si-lugar*', or a real place. Within this vision of placeness, the project made clear that '*bio*' was intended to mean not just biology (the 'nature' of the jungle) but rather life in its entirety, meaning the relationships of people, place, and nature that create the Amazon as a lived space (Corporamazonia, 2008). This use of the idea of the forest as a social-natural world – the very concept of landscape that is also closer to the conceptions of place articulated by many indigenous peoples across the Amazon – was thus crucial to the very making of this site as a tourable place. Although the project fell through for political reasons, the aims of its design of space make clear the importance not just of the forest as territory brought into the state through its securitization and development, but life (as connected to specific land) as a site for management. Making the forest profitable shifts in this development from the extraction of resources (through the labour of indigenous peoples), to the productivity of indigenous life in the forest as an object of tourability.

Life and not simply nature is made into the productive resource of the forest that can be toured. This living that, to many tour guides or in the professionalizing discourses that circulated through Leticia, is seen as 'mere living', is also thus brought into a system of work that creates value through daily practices. That is, in the same way that indigenous knowledge of the forest was brought into capitalist economies of rubber extraction by mobilizing indigenous peoples as indentured workers, the life of the forest that is tourable, which for BOA was also necessarily social, connects these life practices in new ways to the economy of work in the region.

As I aimed to show in the previous section, designating certain things as work and others as life, or locating work in particular activities over others, enables the maintenance of other relations of inequality and marginalization. Secondly, and more importantly here, the struggle to understand work in this context is also my attempt to understand the value of this work to capitalism. In other words, 'living' in the jungle a certain way has become useful in this case to capitalist projects of making space tourable and bringing the forest into the production-consumption nexus of capitalism, making those who are toured workers producing value. But this is also about understanding the refusal to be toured as specifically political *within* the colonial-capitalist systems of creating labour and resources. Being toured needs to be seen as work first before refusing to be toured can be seen as the kind of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial politics it is.

Key political questions are raised when we see how life conceptualized in this way, and not as the pristine conservation of nature, is being articulated with tourism development. What are the stakes where indigenous life is increasingly understood through the lens of its tourability, and not as extending to other, autonomously determined, projects or ends?

What is the stake for lifeways in the forest where certain kinds of interactions are able to be tourable, and others are aestheticized out? These are big questions I cannot address here. Rather, what I want to suggest is a politicization of this entanglement of life and tourability – in my case through a reflection on work. There is a distinct risk here of subsuming this place into categorizations of work drawn from the experiences of capitalist industrialization (and post-industrialization); however, Leticia has also long been a site of work deeply connected to transnational capitalist economies, despite its remoteness or marginalization. Here I am not seeing work as limited to wage employment, but rather to the broad array of engagements and activities that go into (re)production within the multiple economies of a place.<sup>88</sup> Rather than think of only one capitalist economy of work, there are multiple ways that work is formed and captured within capitalist economies.

It is in this context that I think it is possible to read the refusal to admit tourists to Nazaret as a refusal to work, or a refusal to make life ‘productive’. It is, of course, a refusal to the entitlements of access embodied by many travellers, and a reassertion of a different border politics. But it is also the refusal to do the work of being tourable or to submit to the conditions or terms of that work as they are playing out in the region. In the case of Nazaret, this refusal actually extended beyond touring to other organizations and government agencies that are being denied access to the community. In the case of a much simpler story, like the one I told about Absalón at the beginning of Chapter 3, the moment of turning tourists away, which might feel like the disruption of the expected fulfilment of a journey, is also a moment that signals a choice over when and how to work, and this in a system that operates on the apparent infinite accessibility of new (and old) sites to visit.

Although the refusal to work is a strategy that cannot be contained within any particular historical or theoretical moment, within Leftist scholarship and practice in the West it has been largely associated with the challenges posed by autonomous Marxism. In this literature, the refusal to work is a refusal of the ethic of work as tied to the production of value in and for capitalism (Weeks 2011). In another vein, the refusal to work is seen as resistance to the cooptation of all activity under the values and purposes of capitalism, including all action in common, such that refusal or “exodus” becomes a positive project of redeveloping the “abundance of possibilities” in human commonality (Virno 1996, p. 198). I am careful not to suggest this is what is going on here, again the projects of translation leave open interesting points of connection, yet also call for more rigorous and situated analysis than what I have done here. However, examining Nazaret’s decision to deny entry to tourists as a refusal to work provides a way to re-read comments that they are unprepared to receive tourists (and thus tourists are better off not going there anyway). From others, I heard that while Nazaret has closed its doors to tourism, people in the community are currently working on developing a theatre group along with other projects (Personal Interview, July 9, 2012). In this sense ‘unpreparedness’ is a choice to work towards other

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<sup>88</sup> Work, in this sense, is not necessarily limited to or equivalent to capitalist labour, though my focus in this piece is on labour’s role within the productivity of life and nature to a capitalist enterprise, tourism. I do not want to suggest that work is the most appropriate category for understanding the activities of life aimed at lifeways that are non-capitalist; rather I use work here as a way to engage with how the activities of indigenous peoples in the region have been sutured into the fabric of regional extractivist economies.

ends, or to understand life towards other ends, something that challenges the perceived obviousness of tourism as the choice for development. I say this not because it is how people in the region expressed the issue to me, but rather because I see reading these as refusals to work as an added disruption to touristic mobility and entitlement precisely because the performance of tourability tends not to be thought of as work. It also, however, points an interesting and I think important avenue for thinking about how the actions of those who are toured challenge the political aims of tourability – in this case the attempts to capture work and life.

In the case of Leticia, then, we have to see these particular refusals to work in the context of colonialism and exploitation, which are by extension anti-capitalist, but are also distinct from the refusal to work or refusal of work ethic celebrated in the *Operaismo* of 1970s Italy. Because the political-economy of Leticia is driven by ongoing primitive accumulation, including the accumulation of space as tourable and thus as a site of capitalist value, the question of what a refusal to work means is more complicated. Refusal to work also has a specific colonial heritage, particularly in the Americas, with the collective resistances of African slaves and indigenous people to work within colonial systems (see Trouillot, 1995; DuBois, 2013 [1935]<sup>89</sup>). As I noted briefly in Chapter 3, the history of rubber extraction in Leticia was also a history of displacement, with some of the community settlements up the river the result of indigenous people choosing to escape rather than work for the rubber companies (Riano, 2003). In the history of resource exploitation in the region, both land and labour have been crucial to colonial practice, not only in terms of making use of indigenous labourers to do the work needed by colonial-capitalist expansion, but also to mobilize the knowledge of these inhabitants to find the rubber, or, in today's case, to perform the jungle for tourists. As exemplified by the BOA's definition of 'life' to be made tourable, many people in communities around Leticia are not being incorporated into the capitalist economy by having their work become part of a wage system but rather through the creation of land, landscapes, and life as capitalist resources that these workers perform and maintain. In other words, in the context of this kind of touring, it is not only that landscapes are cleared or stylized to make them visually tourable, but that ways of living become forms of work within these landscapes as part of their tourability. It is thus worth asking how resistance (or strategizing) in terms of both land *and* labour takes place, in this case a refusal to be toured as a refusal to make land, labour, and life tourable and thus part of facilitating touristic movement. To understand this more fully would require more detailed research into the transformations of work, value, and refusal in the region than undertaken for this dissertation. However in pointing to it, I hope to point forwards to the possibility of different kinds of critical questions to pose about tourism and the politics of (not) being toured.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> DuBois writes in *Black Reconstruction in America* about what he calls the "general strike against slavery" during the Civil War when slaves from the South left to ally themselves with Northern armies as paid workers or soldiers.

<sup>90</sup> This understanding of politics is also limited by not engaging with definitions and articulations of the political as derived from indigenous peoples' ontologies. Taking these into account would require a very different research project, but it is important to acknowledge this limitation. I am grateful to Cristina Rojas for raising this point with me.

**'Somos Cabrones' and 'El Pan de Cada Día'<sup>91</sup>**

Where in Leticia work and life are distinguished, and life in the forest becomes a site of productivity, work is the most common way people in El Alberto describe both what they and the tourists that visit them do. People I spoke to understood their work passionately as both part of an important system of belonging and as integral to their own identity and the community's capacity to create and earn money on its own. As David put it:

Political people from the federal and state government have defamed us, saying that things don't go well here because they have categorized us as *Hñähñu* and [say] we can't organize this. But us, the town of El Alberto and its inhabitants cannot go to begging, or go to robbing, or go to committing murder, and why? Because we have this way of thinking that we have to work to earn our daily bread [el pan de cada día] and for our family. So for this reason, for us, the government can be what it wants, for us we don't care. What we care about is that we are bringing in earnings and that they let us work. (Personal Interview, March 31, 2012, my translation)

The strength of this work is tied to the strength of the obligations that go along with the needs to maintain community cohesion and make the park and other community projects function as they do. This emphasis on work finds its way into the *Caminata* through encouraging tourists to work hard to overcome the trials of the tour and break down their own ways of thinking. During my first tour, a couple from Mexico City pushed themselves forwards with calls to each other of '*somos cabrones*', we are tough guys, reflecting both the toughness required to be an undocumented migrant, and the exhilarating experience of toughness on offer for visitors in the *Caminata*. Both these visions of work, as the source of daily bread and the expression of toughness, are powerful, and both, likewise, are more complex than they appear.

In Chapter 4 I spoke about the importance of the system of work to El Alberto, and to other communities in the region. For many, this system operates in a way that produces both social cohesion and an identity as workers and migrants that can overcome other divisions that have historically plagued the region. As the guides say in the opening to the *Caminata*, "in the moment of work, we are united". This is of course more complex, and while this system of work is meaningful, it is also a strategic organization of labour with its own gendered relations and coercive practices. Importantly, and as I look at in the last part of this section, this system of work is also situated in other hierarchical relations both with the border, and with touristic movement. Work in El Alberto and on the *Caminata* is situated within people's negotiation of transnational migrant work and the dynamics of touristic movement and their own movement across borders, all of which provide moments for creativity, but remain largely beyond their control.

The park as a tourable site, and the *Caminata*, is produced through service work in which members (mostly men) of the community are able to secure belonging for themselves and their families by working for a year as a *comité*. This is not the only kind of work that

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<sup>91</sup> 'We are tough guys' and 'our daily bread'.

happens in the park; service work that provides food and cleaning services for tourists is also done, predominantly by women who are not fulfilling a year of service. In fact in these cases the women doing this work rely on the money earned from visiting tourists to keep their businesses going. Women also sell artisan goods at the park individually rather than through the weaving collective *Mujeres Reunidos*, and during *Semana Santa* more people come to the park to sell. All these forms of work rely on the presence of tourists and are thus precarious in the way touristic work is because they will not get paid if there are no tourists present. During a conversation with one woman working with her family in a *comedor*, a small restaurant stall, she commented on how they only set up on weekends, and sometimes on Fridays, because that would be the only time tourists would be around, and likewise, would only do so during the busiest months (when I first arrived in February, there was no food available at the park). In contrast, those doing service work are not directly affected by the number of tourists visiting as what they earn through their work is political rights which they gain regardless. Because the *comedores* are family run, they also feed these workers during the day, with *comités* usually going to the *comedor* run by their family members or friends.

Likewise, cleaners also work during the times when there are tourists around. During *Semana Santa*, more people work in this capacity (including *comités*) along with younger children who walk around the park collecting garbage. I was told that they were encouraged to come and help as everyone in the community ‘pitches in’ during *Semana Santa* when hundreds of tourists are present. I was not able to verify if this literally meant everyone in the community participated in the work during *Semana Santa*, but there was certainly a feeling at that time that the majority in the community (and indeed in the region) had their attention and time squarely focused on the tourists visiting for the week. The other way the work of the children was explained to me was as training in the hard-working mentality or ethic of the community. As I heard people say in passing, these young people were being trained from youth to be hard working and to think of work towards the benefit of the community.

Yet people are also ambivalent about work in El Alberto. While people feel obligations to their community to work, they also comment on how difficult it can be. Being a *comité* of the park requires a huge time commitment and sometimes involves very hard work. Those who work on the *Caminata* will often come to the park for a full day of work, from before 9 am to 5 pm and then, after a short break to eat, will prepare for and then perform in the *Caminata* which sometimes lasts until 2 am or later. These same people will either be back again at the park the next morning at 9 am, or in some cases will then work through the night as *vigilancia* (security) only to work again through the following day. During regular weeks, when the *Caminata* is only done on Saturday nights, this means a heavy weekend schedule. During *Semana Santa*, the work is heightened because the *Caminata* is run almost every night and usually requires everyone because of the much higher number of tourists. People I spoke to also reflected their ambivalence around the way the park rotates its staff every year with the new group taking on their year of service. Some noted that this made it difficult to meet the demands and expectations for professional service as new people would have to be trained each year, and this presented a problem for growing or developing the capacity of the park. The learning curve, it seemed, could be quite steep, and the two paid administrators at the park and the Gran Cañón, both women, along with people

who have worked there before were often the main resources for this learning. Yet others noted the benefits of spreading out capacity building amongst more members of the community and saw this work as aimed at goals that differed from the professionalization of touristic work I looked at in the context of Leticia.

The year of service comes without days off or vacation time; during the year *comités* at the park get very little sleep or rest and are constantly on call for whenever they might be needed. The work is punctuated, meaning that there are times where very little is done, where people are able to gather to rest, but because workers are always on call, these resting moments are only so long as no one is needed and can be broken at any time. Other positions, like the *sub-delegados*, get almost no time to rest at all during the day as they are constantly on the move to ensure that everyone else is doing their job. One night during *Semana Santa*, as people were preparing for the evening's *Caminata*, I stopped and had a conversation with one of the park workers. He talked to me about how tired he was and how difficult it was during this week in particular where they have to run a *Caminata* each night with hundreds of people. Finally, he said, "it is a hardship, *un sufrimiento*". In past conversations, this was the word he had used to describe the hard work of crossing the border and working as a migrant in the United States. When I asked if there was something about the way the park was organized that could be made better so the work would not be as hard, he responded simply: "yes, we could not have a *Caminata* tonight".

From the perspective of the work of the park, the *Caminata* is a mundane activity, one that, at times, is more troublesome than not for workers. For the tourist participant, the adventure of running through the hills and down by the river seems extraordinary, with the actual space of the tour, as I have said, moving between here and there, the border and central Mexico in a disorienting way. Yet the tour starts in the space of the town, along the main town road that goes down to the park entrance. It took until my third tour to truly grasp just how 'close' the *Caminata* is, and just how embedded it is in the space of the town. On a night when the *Caminata* is performed, you can hear the sirens from anywhere in town, and can walk down to the roadside, as I did during *Semana Santa*, to stand with the park workers and watch the opening scenes of the action as tourists run down the steep road to the bridge and disappear along the banks of the river. The quotidian nature of the tour makes it a performance in its own right for members of the town who stand by the road to watch, but also situates it within rather than apart or exceptional to the other banal, physically difficult, or time consuming labour that goes into the park and daily life in the Valle. This also directly situates the *Caminata* within the struggles of getting by in El Alberto and within the transnational experience of living and working in the contemporary neoliberal global economy (as migrants, and as rural indigenous subjects). In this way, the *Caminata* reveals itself and its politics as part of everyday struggles rather than in the exceptional experience of the tourists who participate.

As in the conversation I quoted above, for some, the work of the park was at times expressed through reflections on experiences of work as migrants, both the crossing of the border and the difficult labour demanded of most migrants in the United States. Yet, in making these comparisons people also distinguished the meaning of the work for



themselves. In one comparison, Javier, currently working as a *migra* officer, said that working in the park was hard because you never get to rest. Having to give time, being constantly on call, was the hardest part he saw in the work. But, he continued, “here they demand time, it’s hard work, but there [in the United States] it’s almost slavery. Here it is work for us” (Personal Interview February 10, my translation). Similarly many people I spoke to commented on how the work is difficult because they do not get paid for the year of service and therefore must find some other way to support themselves. But, in return, they argued, people get access to land, water, electricity, and they can grow their own food and sustain themselves. In contrast, people would argue, they may get paid in the United States, and even paid well, but they have to spend that money on rent, paying bills, and buying food, and, unlike living in El Alberto, they do not get access to their own land (Personal Interview, March 17, 2012).

In these ways, the experience of migrant work in the neoliberal economy shapes more about how work is done in the park than just the content of the tour. Although people in the park did not identify with an explicitly anti-capitalist politics, through reflecting on their different struggles to get by in the United States and in El Alberto, people raised questions about how their status as workers in each place reflected a different set of values, and ultimately a very different political subjectivity derived through the process of work. Yet, some people also used an identification with the migrant work so many described as ‘a hardship’ to assert claims to autonomy and capacity. Some people I interviewed and spoke with directly identified the hard work in El Alberto with the hard work in the United States and talked about themselves as workers able to withstand tough conditions, or, as Martha did, as workers who did not need the kind of labour rights they saw as protecting ‘American’ workers (Personal Interview, March 13, 2012). In this sense, identifying with this work as key to the success of the park, but also to the cohesion of the community, is as much a political tool as the conditions of work and discrimination are as points of anger and frustration. This is not a romantic worker identity; even less is it one that might meet the calls for radical workers’ struggles against contemporary capitalism. Rather, it is a messy encounter, an interweaving of worker identities that makes the *Caminata* project possible the way it is, yet not without costs.

Despite these messy contradictions in the work of making the *Caminata* that make it appear so different from the work of producing a tourable place like Leticia, it remains embedded in broader power relations. I have already spoken about how this system of work is situated within, and is forced to respond to, changes in border security and immigration policies and practices that put the relations of work and belonging at risk as people are less able to return. It is also important that while the work of tourability can change the terms of touristic mobility, it does not entirely reshape these. On the one hand, as I looked at in Chapter 5, the kind of work that the *Caminata* makes possible for tourists disrupts many of the standard narratives of what ethical touring looks like and what makes for good tourists. Rather than being about ‘helping out’ the community, it shifts the location of tourist work towards change in the tourists themselves. Yet the way the tour has become popular has meant that the demands on working time for those producing the tour have increased, as more and more people come and in larger groups.

Park workers will not normally run a *Caminata* if less than 25 people have signed up during the day, but will also take reservations from schools or groups that plan to come on a particular evening. On my second tour, a group of close to a hundred students from a private school in Mexico City was expected to come; however, the tour bus was delayed leaving the city and so the students did not show up at the park until 11 pm (a full three hours after the *Caminata* is supposed to start). As we waited for their arrival, the young men working in the *migra* and I sat outside the park store, where, after working a full day and, in some cases, the night before, they had no choice but to wait knowing that they would have to work long into the night once the students arrived.

Once they did, these loud and rowdy students had to be registered, and then the *comités* were put to work setting up all their tents for the students before the tour could begin. The reason for this, as was explained to those of us still waiting, was that the students would be tired and worn out at the end of the tour and would not be able to wait for their tents to be set up then. As I watched this work, I wondered looking between the faces of the *comités* and the students, some of whom were only a few years apart, how their very different positions affected the ways work was being demanded from them. One of the effects of the popularity of the tour has also been that the length and level of difficulty have been reduced, both to offer the tour to more people at the same time and to allow people with differing abilities to participate. Once our tour finally started (ending around 4 am), I saw the students complain about what was being demanded of them and the park workers make choices about how to proceed with the tour based on the lack of responsiveness from the students. At the time this made me think about the limits of political solidarity-building through the tour as it was obvious the ways the tour could be read and 'consumed' as adventure rather than for its political content. I also thought about the ways this particular tour reflected ongoing imbalances of work within tourism where, as work increased for those in the park by the number of students present, the work demanded of these students decreased to facilitate getting them through the experience.

For Poncho, and others, the shortened version of the tour simply does not do the same work to strip down participants and, as he put, reveal themselves without exterior coverings to the message of the tour (Personal Interview, March 20 & 29, 2012). Coming to the end of the tour, physically and emotionally stripped and naked, is what guides tell us allows you to receive the message of the torches lit in the canyon for migrants who have not made it over and think about the work participants are asked to carry forwards and build in themselves and in the country. Yet this vision of work is situated both in the relations with more privileged participants and the existing expectations about how (and how much) tourists can be asked to work. Thus, although there are a great number of things I like about the *Caminata*, and a great many ways I think it is productive, I have found this story useful to return to as a reminder of how careful we as scholars need to be to situate analyses of politically designed tourism and non-capitalist forms of work. The *Caminata* is a project built by members of El Alberto who work to assert their control over its features and representation; yet, they also rely on the movement of tourists, the production of which extends far beyond their control or any one touristic site.

### **Working in Tourable Places: Service, research, and touring**

What ties these vignettes into the work of tourable sites together are the ways they show some of the frictions encountered in the circulation of touristic movement. Importantly for Tsing, frictions are not the same as resistance; they are the encounters that make all circulation – even the circulation of hegemony – possible. The work on which touristic movement is made possible or difficult is seen here through the complex maintenance of divisions between touristic workers or in the refusal to work, as I looked at in the context of Leticia, or through the negotiation of other political systems or desires for how work becomes embedded in touring as in El Alberto.

As a final thought in this chapter, I want to return to the discussion about affective labour to talk about service as the embodiment of availability and contrast this with the way service is mobilized in El Alberto. My motivation here is actually to return to my discussion in the Introduction to this dissertation about methods and the ways my research was shaped by the already existing ways of relating produced through touristic and academic movement and circulation. What my experience indicates to me is how my own work as a researcher was embedded in both sites in relation to me as a tourist and an academic, and how these relations are part of broader ways contemporary mobilities are being negotiated in toured (and researched) places.

As Minca has argued, the body of the toured worker has been an important site on which power has operated in the production of touristic sites (2010). Looking at resort workers in particular, he argues that workers are made docile and aestheticized to match tourist desires (for comfort, relaxation, and care). Within the tourism industry this is not a new aspect to work and has certainly been highlighted for targeting racialized and gendered subjects as those whose bodies are most desired (and most available to be worked on and molded) (Enloe, 1989). However, Veijola and Jokinen make the argument that so-called 'new work' can be understood through the act of 'hostessing', a feminized form of work but one that is increasingly demanded from all workers (2008). Hostessing as a form of new work stretches beyond previous forms of feminized or domestic work by extending this work to be about emotional rather than merely physical support (*ibid.*)<sup>92</sup> As I noted earlier in the case of guides, this difference can be understood as shifting the role of the guide from a purveyor of knowledge to someone who mediates exchanges, or manages tourist desires or needs (skills many of the guides in Leticia associated with their professionalization).

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<sup>92</sup> Linda McDowell's *Working Bodies* (2009) is an excellent study of how embodiment within service work in the United Kingdom is reshaping relations of work and power. She argues that unlike forms of manual work that require disciplinary mechanisms enacted on the body to regulate production, service work requires the physical body and emotions to become part of what is produced and consumed. In service, she argues, the embodied attributes of workers become essential to the interactive exchange involved in this kind of work which, rather than being based on purchasing a product, is about consuming an experience in which feelings matter and are formed by the perceived emotions and observable feelings of the worker (*ibid.* 9). However, her focus on the United Kingdom limits the usefulness of her analysis for understanding tourable work because of the way many of the shifts she talks about have been characteristic of tourable work for a much longer timeframe.

These insights open up a number of interesting avenues of research that, unfortunately, at the time of my research were not specifically within my focus and so I have less to say about this than might otherwise be the case. Rather, the dynamic in my research that I want to reflect on here is the confluence of service, work, and research in which I became embedded in each site.

On one trip to hotels in Leticia to find people interested in participating in interviews, I had a direct experience interweaving neoliberal service work and research. At one of the more upscale hotels in town I asked if I could speak to someone about the project I was working on. I was directed to the hotel's travel agency, which hires their own guides to take hotel guests out on package tours in the region, primarily in the form of the 'full day' tour. The hotel itself also sported a swimming pool designed in the style of a tropical lagoon and an expensive fashion and perfume store. I sat with the one of the agency operators, a young man, for a few minutes and explained my research project and that I was interested in contacting guides who might be able to speak to me. He listened, and then said he could have a guide come in right now to talk to me. Without waiting for my response, he called a young woman into the office whom I recognized from the front counter of the hotel. As she sat down, he said to me "she is only 23 years old, but she knows about tourism here." Then to the young woman he explained that I wanted to know about tourism in the region. The receptionist began to explain, as she most likely did to all visiting guests, about the tours offered by the hotel. Interrupting her, the young man said "no, no, she wants to interview you for her project." The young woman looked very confused, and so I stepped in and began to explain that I was doing work as a doctoral student and that I was just looking right now for people who might be interested in participating. In mid-sentence, the young man interrupted me, saying "excuse me, just hold on a minute," then turning back to the young woman said, "you know about tourism here, you know the area, the relations with tourists, all that, so she is going to ask you questions and you are going to answer her."

As the young woman looked at me, still deeply confused, I did the only thing I could think of which was to arrange a time to come back to talk to her after regular business hours. This, I hoped, would give her time to think about whether she wanted to talk to me and avoid putting her in a situation where she would have to make this kind of decision in the presence of a superior in her workplace. However, beyond the sticky ethics of this particular situation, I tell the story because it is an example both of the power relations embedded in service work and the way my academic work became caught up in this service economy.

As Veijola and Jokinen argue, the values of hostessing in the service economy of touring are heavily gendered, not in the sense of necessarily being attached to female bodies, but in the sense of demanding certain feminized attributes in the everyday action of carrying out the work (2008). In my story, openness and infinite availability were demanded of the receptionist called in to talk to me, yet these demands were quite easily translated into the work of participating in research as merely another aspect of the work of being tourable. That is, as Barbara Heron noted in her reflections on her doctoral research within a development work context, the assumptions of infinite availability (to be researched, to be subjects of development, or to be toured) intermingle with assumptions about when and

how we can make choices about what we research (or what we tour, or whom we go to save) (Heron, 2004). As in other ways that being tourable in Leticia is structured around a particular form of touristic movement (and vision of how difference is depicted), being available as research-able in this case was understood in a way that made the work of being researched merely part of other work producing tourability, and replicating the same, widely marketable service model that makes these workers available to the disposal of visitors and their needs.

A very different story of service and research comes from my experience in El Alberto. I have already spoken about how speaking to journalists and other researchers has become part of the everyday work of the park, but it is worth stressing how this is organized. All park *comités* use walkie-talkies to communicate between the park and the Gran Cañón, so that information about what people are doing is circulated widely (though this excludes many tourists, as it did me, because the majority of this communication happens in *Hñäbñü*). As happened to me, and as I saw happen to others upon arrival at the park, the administrator immediately went to her walkie-talkie to call for the people, representatives of various roles, who could come and give interviews to whomever had arrived. This usually included someone from amongst the guides, the migra officers, and sometimes someone who had worked as a ‘coyote’ who could talk about their ‘real-life’ work and experiences. In the organization of *comité* work, members of the park are called on to be available for whatever needs doing at all times, and this includes giving interviews and talking to people. As both ‘part of the job’ and as publically available information, giving interviews is required or expected work fulfilled by certain people who occupy particular roles.

Depending on how you look at the way work is organized in the park, this could be seen as coercive, though there are ways people make choices about how to do this as I look at in a moment below. For me, this situation raised some ethical questions and forced me to think about how my work was embedded in other work being done within the park. Particularly, it became obvious that I was participating in an ongoing circulation of interested journalists and researchers whose activities shaped my work. For example, the fact that many journalists and researchers have not returned copies of what they have written to the community has increasingly become a source of tension, especially as the less favourable publications I looked at in Chapter 5 circulate. Making me aware of this, and pointing out the imbalanced power relations between my ability to circulate information and the ability of those in the park to do so, was a feature of certain conversation. Yet stories of previous researchers were also ways many conversations started, with people telling me about how they had spoken to this or that young woman from Arizona, Florida, California, or New York (in many instances this may have been the same person, as places and projects became jumbled in the circulating trail of researchers). In one surprising exchange, I was hailed at the side of the park entrance by a man who simply said, “I gave an interview to Leah Sarat; do you want an interview?”

Yet to understand this as a replication of my position of privilege as a researcher or tourist would be misleading, and would miss a crucial aspect to the way the enactment of service differs in El Alberto. When people in El Alberto spoke about service, they

articulated that service as what they did for the community; in other words, the work through which belonging is maintained rather than the work of serving the needs of tourists. Of course, as I looked at in the previous section, serving these needs is still part of how work is done and organized in the park; however, in the circulation of journalists and researchers, I think, another aim was at play. As I reflected on the stories that were told to me over and over again about the park, the reasons for its development, the ways that it was not a training camp, I began to understand my own role and position within the transnational landscape of the tour's production as a means to facilitate the circulation desired (and needed) by those running the park. This does not mean that I see their responses to me as disingenuous or less valuable, but rather it forces me to see myself as a site of political work for the park workers because my text, my circulation of their words, might promote the visions they wanted to claim for what they were doing or replicate some of the most damaging representations.

In other words, I think what emerges from comparing these experiences is the possibility to ask how the conceptualization of service impacts the ways this work interacts with mobility and circulation. In these examples, this work seems organized either in ways that are deeply attached to serving the needs of privileged mobilities, or in ways that infuse that movement with other aims. Despite all of this, it is worth pointing out that the only time I received a direct 'no' to a request for an interview was in Leticia and not in El Alberto. I encountered people in El Alberto who did not want to talk to me, but this tended to be indicated in quiet or subtle ways, claiming not to have enough knowledge of the *Caminata* to talk about it, or steering me towards someone else who would (probably) be more interested in talking to me. I remain uncomfortable about how these relationships affected my work, but I also think on reflection that the experience of thinking of myself as a worker caught up in circulation was an important insight given to me by the people in El Alberto. I think the ambiguity of my position of privilege (which I certainly do not deny continues to exist) says something important about how people, even in the most surprising places, are able to act transnationally by engaging with how things and people move and circulate.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the work of tourability as I saw in my research in Leticia and El Alberto. Through this I have examined how the racializations of work in Leticia in which distinctions between life and work operate as tools to maintain ethnic labour hierarchies, and how the ambiguous ways people understand and respond to the hard work demanded of them as migrants and as workers on the *Caminata* are reflected in it as both a 'suffering' and a source of daily bread. In the case of Leticia, I examined how the appropriation of life as a social-natural landscape fix that life as an object of tourability and entangle those living in the forest as workers within the tourist economy. I have also looked at how I as a researcher was caught up in very different service economies that ultimately revealed very different relations of power. I have used this to argue that transformation in the global economy of work circulate through the production of tourable spaces in ways that place certain demands on bodily labour or privilege and reproduce certain forms of entrepreneurialism. This analysis of conditions of work places in question some of the 'promises' of what tourism development and touristic mobility do. I have also used this to

suggest that there may be theoretical and political value in understanding refusals to be toured as refusals to work and the different ways people conceptualize their and other's work as participating in the politics of transnational mobility. That is, understanding what people do in tourable places and how power is organized through who does what work, how work is valued, and how that work interacts with the aims and desires of other mobile subjects (tourist as well as researchers or migrants), can help us understand both the myriad and everyday ways that relations between different people are reproduced or reimagined, and how people in tourable places are implicated in the global economy of work and movement.

At the same time, these arguments encounter their own frictions as theorizations from one location, particularly scholarship on immaterial labour and refusals to work drawn from the post-industrializing spaces in the Global North, cannot simply be transcribed onto sites in the Global South.<sup>93</sup> An analysis such as this also puts into question the role of tourism, and particularly ecotourism, within the politics of land, autonomy, and redistribution across Latin America and more globally. That is, what is at stake where indigenous peoples' relationships to land are understood as defining their 'role' *within* the broader capitalist economy, rather than as political claims about autonomy, governance, and colonialism? For me, this has opened some of the most interesting questions that, while they may not speak directly back to the people generous enough to allow me to do research with them, I hope to carry forwards from this project.

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<sup>93</sup> Similar frictions exist in my uses and understandings of politics in relation to Indigenous peoples.

## **Conclusion: Workers, Landscapes, Movement**

Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. But some natives – most natives in the world – cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go – so when the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself. (Kincaid, 1988, p. 19)

If you go as a tourist, you have to bring a lot of money. If the government gives you a visa as a tourist it is because you are going to spend money. If you ask for a visa to work, it is only because the company has solicited you. But, there is no work...Hopefully they will make it freer to be given a work visa, because I want to work. Going as a tourist, there is no money in that. With what money am I going to pay to go as a tourist? I would like it if they gave me a visa to work...I don't know, one day, I hope one day I can work. (Personal Interview "Raúl", March 3 & 4, 2012, El Alberto, my translation)

In this dissertation, I have aimed to articulate an understanding of the work and conditions of tourability as a transnational politics that can tell us about the contemporary shape of touristic mobility specifically, and neoliberal desires for borderless and mobile worlds (for some) more broadly. In this way, this is a study of privileged movement through a perspective drawn from those who are presumed not to tour – those who are, as Wood called them, the 'been-seens' (1998). Generating a view of the been-seens as globally political subjects and actors and their landscapes as the contingent ground on which mobile rights are claimed, has been at the core of this project. To say that rights are made possible by mobility but claimed in struggle (as Aradau, Huysmans, & Squire (2010) suggest) begs the question of how, where, with whom, and towards what these struggles take place. I have argued in this dissertation that the struggle of claiming touristic rights is in fact in large part the struggle of those whose daily lives, livelihoods, territories, cities, communities, bodies, and homes are constructed and produced as tourable (and sometimes are refused). Touristic mobility involves the shaping and contorting of workers and landscapes, the aesthetics of what is seen and the relationships of place, nature, memory, and history. It involves the 'frictions' of transnational movement, which is not the same as resistance, but the difficult process of trying to make systems work from one place to another (Tsing, 2005). To understand touristic mobility in this way is not to suggest that those who are toured are in positions to radically alter the unequal and often devastating conditions under which tourism development, particularly in the Global South, is taking place. Rather, it is to suggest a politicization of the way the been-seens are made tourable, the stakes, consequences and power involved, to suggest the myriad ways these people do intervene in the politics of their visibility and the mobility it sustains, and to imagine the political stakes and motivations for refusing to be toured.



This study has also been about extending understanding and analysis of tourism and touristic mobility within global politics. As the opening quotations indicate, the core of touristic movement remains a core of inequality. Jamaica Kincaid's powerful words about Antigua remind us that all over the world 'small places' are manipulated in ways that can make their banality tourable, while those who live there and whose work makes that touring possible see little opportunities to travel with the same ease. While the sites explored in this study reveal the complexity of this process and the ways people in small places do act, and do travel, this fundamental inequality is at the centre of why tourism actually matters. It is a political problem of who gets to move and how home for some is made into a resort for others.

As I suggested in Chapters 1 and 2, the movement of tourists can tell us a lot about contemporary articulations of freedom – particularly for the way desires to cross borders are mobilized in neoliberal governance and the rationalities of market capitalism. Through my analysis of the UN WTO and the framing of the right to tour as an obligation to be tourable I showed how these rationalities also produce tourability as an indicator of development and as markers of fostering this freedom. Governing through freedom, as a key element of contemporary neoliberal order (Rose, 1999), inflects the role of community participation, pro-poor development schemes, and the promotion of domestic touring in the tourism economies of the Global South. Yet, this is importantly not the only way that power is exercised to produce the conditions for touristic movement. Sovereign claims to territory and national belonging, disciplinary organizations of work, the imposition of 'free trade' and privatization, and colonial practices of assimilation (or the 'tolerable indigeneity' of contemporary multiculturalism) are all seen in the variety and scope of the landscaping projects I have explored in this dissertation. Much more is thus at stake in the possibility for claiming touristic rights than the distribution of financial benefits or cultural exchange would imply. Yet what is also clear from both Leticia and El Alberto, is that those who are toured are often aware of many of these stakes and able to refuse or creatively deploy tourability in ways that serve their needs.

Drawing out the conclusions from this study, however, it seems that any alternative projects or refusals of those who are toured are being overwhelmed. The kind of political solidarity that might be hoped for in a project like the *Caminata* remains elusive as privileged urban students participate in the tour as adventurous and boisterous fun, or those who write about it emphasize absurdity more than political messaging. The small, largely unnoticed action of a community along the Amazon River refusing tourists entry is theoretically enticing, but remains a small story, and one that, in the words of one of my interviewees, is bound to be consumed in the prevailing logic of the regional tourism boom. As I maintain throughout this project, these actions are important, but their potentials, like the potentials of alternative tourism itself, should give us pause given the modes of domination of the projects towards which tourism works.

Many or most of the workers in tourism development in the Global South do not have the same kind of access to power or resources as either those who tour or the global and transnational agents and structures that shape their lives and livelihoods. In Leticia this has meant that the introduction of tourism has done little if anything to positively alter the

relations of inequality that dominate how people struggle to get by. While members of El Alberto use migrant and indigenous identities to represent the border on their own terms their status as migrants and their circulation as exploitable and deportable labour in the neoliberal economy have not changed because of this tour. Those who continue to cross the border in search of work will probably experience just as dangerous and discriminatory a crossing, if not more so as both U.S. and Mexican policy continues to fail to address the ‘open wounds’ (Anzaldúa, 1987) at this border. At home, the park may or may not provide enough paid employment to survive in Mexico’s neoliberal rural economy. Thus even in its most creative moments, many of the promises of tourism development ring hollow.

Put simply, tourism is decidedly not “a garden where the marginal can speak” (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 31). Thus, at the same time that I place those who are toured as central to the analysis, I am sceptical of equally romantic claims of how much these actions can change, or how much they are steered towards changing any of the problems of touristic movement. Similarly, the question of alternative meanings and objectives remains largely articulated in terms of the desires of tourists (for a responsible encounter that does not leave *you* feeling terrible). One reason, then to challenge a fixation on the tourist is to open ourselves to the possibility that the alternative desires or political projects of those who are toured may not in fact be the same as our own but may indeed be critical and creative. That is, from the vantage point of those of us who are tourists, we may *want* tourism to do all kinds of things (provide relaxation, escape, education, or alternative political projects) and yet the pervasiveness of what *we* want may be exactly the problem.

But what does this tell us about tourism? Does it tell those of us who see travel as an important part of our lives that we must give up our journeys? Does it mean that we should set aside all our aims and efforts to make our travelling a little less ‘bad’, a little less destructive, a little less obscene? As someone whose life has been deeply marked by privileged travel, these are questions that haunt me in a very intimate way. During a conversation with a tour guide in Peru, I was asked what I intended to do with the work I was doing. I responded that I was trying to create a better understanding of the stakes of tourism development amongst people like myself, in my own context where I felt I could do more responsible political work. He scoffed and said I was wrong, that the best work I could do would be to work in a community here in the Amazon to help them make tourism better. I stressed that this was not the work I wanted to do, and not the aim of my research. He responded: “so what, then? You are going back to Canada to teach them how to be better tourists?”

My answer was and remains no; these are not the questions that this dissertation does, or I think should, try to answer. Rather, what I have hoped to show about tourism is its involvement in the political realities of contemporary life, an involvement that goes far beyond those who travel, or even those who are now toured. And if current political realities need to be re-thought, and need substantive and potentially radical change (as I think they do), then the role tourism plays in shaping, extending, and upholding these realities deserves much greater attention.

This dissertation has also not been about pursuing the question of whether or not tourism development is right or wrong, good or bad. If, as people in both El Alberto and Leticia told me, tourism is less dislocating than migration (and even potentially recreates cohesion) and if it is less destructive than rubber extraction or drug trafficking, then it is indeed pretentious to argue that these people should not accept this option to *seguir adelante* or replace the boom that has gone bust. It does mean, however, that as critical scholars of tourism and global politics we have a responsibility to ask *why* tourism is the only option available and what kind of implications this has.

### Thoughts on Going Forwards

I ended my research in El Alberto in April 2012. Most of the people I spoke to there had left again by August of the same year, as their year of service ended in the park and they went back to the cities to find work or back over the border with or without documents. The *Caminata Nocturna* continues, however, and the park maintains its success. Journalists continue to write about the *Caminata*, though not with the same fervor of the first years following its opening. Violence against all migrants in Mexico is steadily increasing as state policies criminalize those coming from Central America, while the U.S. Congress continues to include increased border security at the top of any list of ‘immigration reform’ measures. In this context, the *Caminata* remains both a political challenge and part of a daily struggle to get by in the Valle del Mezquital.

Stories of Nazaret have long stopped circulating in international media as tourism development continues apace. In 2013 Decameron pulled out of its concession when Amacayacú was unable to reopen for tourists due to the 2012 flooding (El Espectador, November 3, 2013), providing a useful justification for something the company had been trying to achieve over the past years. While the National Parks Administration struggles to find a solution to this, and to the unemployment faced by the indigenous communities that relied so heavily on the park, one suggestion has been to push the visiting area and hotel to areas just outside the park (ibid.) – a suggestion that would further transform the landscapes used by indigenous people in the region to the purposes of touristic movement.

The stories of El Alberto and Leticia reveal important dynamics of contemporary tourability, and they also open questions beyond the scope and structure of this dissertation that deserve attention within International Relations. The first is thinking seriously about the interactions of work, workers, and power in the production of touring and tourability. This was a concern that developed only through my reflections on what I had heard and seen in my research sites, and I would like to take this as a different starting point for future research. As Amoore suggests:

it is the everyday lives of workers as active subjects that make particular forms of global production possible and that potentially limit or contest productive practices. [From this we can take] *work* as a subject of inquiry and *workers* as global subjects positioned centrally in our understanding of the contemporary global political economy. (2006, p. 15)

This is increasingly seen in moves within critical IR and IPE (see Davies, 2010 & 2006; Lisle, 2013; Agathangelou, 2004) and is especially relevant to scholars interested in approaching global politics from perspectives other than those of dominant and dominating actors.

Given that most people interact with the global political economy as workers rather than as state leaders, corporate executives, NGO managers, or even as street protesters, understanding this work can help understand the entrenched structures of global order.

In an economy increasingly defined by premiums on flexibility in how, where, and when we work, the possibilities of working on the move have become quite enticing. This mixing is most evident within voluntour activities, which link touring to doing volunteer work (Vrasti, 2012), but is also part of the discourse of certain kinds of ethical, reality, or slum touring that mobilizing 'learning' about the socio-political conditions of the other as part of the experience of travel that is necessary to alleviate the sense of unease and discomfort with standard tourism (Frenzel, 2012). Young tourists are also attracted as workers through the working holiday program in New Zealand and Australia and the industry of teaching English overseas, as they are told repeatedly that working on the move provides the necessary skills and experience to compete in the contemporary economy. It is also claimed that this way of working on the move provides the means to 'see the world' in a way that other tourists cannot and without many of the problems associated with mass tourism (excessive consumption, hedonism, and the impossibility of 'giving back' to those from whom tourists receive service and hospitality). Yet all these mobile workers encounter work within the sites they visit as well, work that, I have argued, is also mobile in the way that it produces the possibility of being toured, thus making tourable places available to the transnational movements of tourists. This opens a number of questions about how this work and these workers interact, what kinds of power relations are shaped, reproduced, or molded in the process, and what kinds of ends this work serves. In a critical IR scholarship interested in a multitude of political subjectivities, there is certainly room, then, to think about the power relations in which work like this takes place, and the ways these are politicized by workers.

This leads to a second theme opened by this study that I want to carry forwards: how those who are toured can and do act politically. As I noted in Chapter 4, the *Caminata* can be seen as both an entrepreneurial achievement and as a form of political action. These aspects of the project require teasing out in order to understand the politicization of touristic mobility and the claims being made in representing the border that go well beyond an appropriation of the financial benefits of touring. Most of the literature on tourism remains too focused on community participation and the ways communities can acquire benefits from tourism development to the detriment of evaluating the political projects in which tourism operates and the other ends it can be mobilized towards. As I suggested in the introduction, global political analysis can play an important role here to bring these distinctions out. Additionally, although both of my sites involved indigenous people, my research methods and arguments did not by and large make use of current scholarship on indigeneity within IR, political theorizing, or anti-colonial and decolonizing theory and methodologies (see Beier, 2006; Shaw, 2008; Alfred, 2005; Smith, 1999). However, indigenous identities and histories play an important role in both the Valle del Mezquital and Leticia for how people are responding to neoliberal development and transnational movement. Likewise, much of the tourism development (particularly in its alternative forms) under way in the Global South (and the Global North) is taking place on indigenous

lands and through indigenous landscapes. Although this presents other kinds of problems of friction and representation, it is worth thinking more about how indigenous identity and indigenous political thought are part of the political actions of those who are toured.

Finally, a key motivation for this research has been engaging with the insights of researchers looking at the changing circumstances of transnational mobility, the politics of irregular movement, and the political challenges of crossing borders and claiming rights (see Soguk & Whitehall, 1999; Nyers, 2006; Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Moulin, 2007; Squire, 2011; McNevin, 2007; Coutin 2010). I have argued that a fuller understanding of privileged mobility is necessary to the critical projects of reconceptualising actors and structures of global politics, and that understanding how tourism mobilizes its borderless vision is useful to defining the no borders world we really want to see. Going forwards, however, I want to investigate more specifically how the construction of a touristic mobility interacts with or affects irregular mobility. How do multiple iterations of borders, ones that confine and permit simultaneously, develop? Are there instances where the vision of freedom espoused in the right to tour overwhelms other calls for freedom to move, freedom to return, or freedom to stay, and how do people respond? What can we resist about touristic movement that will make the migrant mobility in the opening quotation of this conclusion more possible, and what kind of claims to freedom need to be defended? These questions, and others, will help us situate tourability and touristic movement in the work of thinking about political alternatives, as neither an afterthought nor a panacea, but as a sticky, messy, and significant part of contemporary global political life.

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## Appendix A: List of Interviews

### *Mexico (El Alberto/Ixmiquilpan)*

List of semi-formal interviews:

1. “Maria” 10 February, 2012, El Alberto, Park Administrator, field notes
2. “Javier” 10 February, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker/“Migra Officer”, field notes
3. “El Guia” 10 February, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker/“Coyote”, field notes
4. “Juan” 19 February, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker/“Migra Officer”, field notes
5. “Fernando” 19 February, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker /“Migra Officer”, recorded
6. “Carlos” 3 & 4 March, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker, recorded
7. “Raúl” 3 & 4 March, 2012, El Alberto, Park Worker /“Narcotraficante”, recorded
8. “Martha” 13 March, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, recorded and field notes
9. “Natalia” 17 March, 2012, El Alberto, (group interview) Community Member, her husband, and father in-law, field notes
10. “Angélica” 19 March, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
11. “Jesús” 20 March, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
12. “Alejandro” 23 March, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
13. “Poncho”, 20 & 29 March, 2012, Ixmiquilpan, field notes
14. “David” 31 March, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, recorded
15. “Josefina” 3 April, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
16. “Marcos” 5 April, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
17. “Roberto” 14 April, 2012, El Alberto, Community Member, field notes
18. “Miguel” and “Antonio” 22 April, 2012, El Alberto, (group interview) Sub-Delegado, Sub-Delegado, field notes

List of Government/Organizational Conversations:

1. 15 February 2012, Procuraduría Agraria, Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo
2. 22 February 2012, SEDESOL (Federal), Pachuca, Hidalgo
3. 22 February 2012, SEDESOL (State), Pachuca, Hidalgo
4. 22 & 28 February 2012, CDI, Pachuca, Hidalgo

### *Colombia (Leticia/Puerto Nariño)*

List of semi-formal interviews :

1. “Samuel” 27 June, 2012, Leticia, (group interview) Tour Agency Owner, daughter, spouse “Ana”, recorded
2. “Nicolás” 28 & 29 June, Leticia, Tour Operator/Guide, recorded
3. “Edmundo” 4 July, 2012, Leticia, Pastoral Social, field-notes
4. “Joey” 6 July, 2012, Leticia, Tour guide, recorded
5. “Luis” and “Daniela” 9 July, 2012, Leticia, (group interview) 2 Hostel managers, recorded

6. “Santiago” 10 July, 2012, Leticia, Hostel owner, recorded
7. “Mariana” 12 July, 2012, Puerto Nariño, Fundación Natütama, field-notes
8. “Emilio” 12 July, 2012, Puerto Nariño, Tour guide, field-notes
9. “Yesenia” 15 July, 2012, Leticia, Hotel owner, field-notes
10. “Valentina” 17 July 2012, Leticia, Touristic Reserve coordinator, recorded
11. “Sandra” 1 August 2012, Leticia, Municipal Tourism Advisor, recorded
12. “Alberto” 3 August 2012, Leticia, ACITAM Member, recorded
13. “Eduardo” 8 August 2012, Leticia, PNN Amacayacu Park Worker, recorded
14. “Diego” 11 August 2012, Leticia, Ecotourism Lodge Manager, field-notes
15. “Andrés” 15 August 2012, Leticia, Touristic Reserve and Hostel owner, recorded

List of Government/Organization Conversations:

1. 27 June, 2012, DAFEC, Leticia
2. 29 June, 2012, Centro de Trabajo Indigenista, Tabatinga
3. 12 July, 2012, Municipal Tourism Office, Puerto Nariño
4. 31 July 2012, GAIA Foundation, Leticia