

**The Maya Solar of Yucatán: Transformations of
Land, Livelihoods and Identities
in Peri-Urban Settlements in Mexico**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, the global struggles of indigenous peoples have become ever more visible. The thesis draws connections stemming from the ongoing existence and challenges of the Maya people of Yucatán in Mexico, not to the evident resistance of ongoing indigenous movements in the Americas, but to their endurance. Here, I examine the multiplicity of events occurring in the Maya *solar* of Yucatán, a house and garden plot that has historically supported an intricate indigenous system of land, livelihoods and identities. The *solar* is today under threat of extinction along with the way of life and the people it once fully sustained. This threat is itself a contested terrain as the current and historical endurance of the *solar* and of Maya peoples may be proof of their resilience.

This thesis focuses on the unfolding transformations of the *solar* and the responses of Maya populations, gathered in Yucatán at different points between November 2013 and May 2015. Based on qualitative research that combines interviews and secondary documentary analysis, the research seeks to recognise and validate the human experience and situated knowledge of Maya populations. The data collected is interpreted through an overarching theoretical and methodological framework drawn from the Decoloniality perspective, which addresses the continuation of colonial powers within the modern world and highlights the historical denial of power, knowledge and being to native societies under the long-term effects of ‘coloniality’. Through the Decoloniality perspective, I contest and rework existing theoretical frameworks of ‘Primitive Accumulation’, ‘Latin American urban studies’, and ‘Indigenous Geographies’ in order to foreground indigenous and colonial questions from a political and epistemological Latin American perspective.

Extensively, this research: 1) provides new evidence of the Maya’s plight, bringing to light their realities and their everyday life; 2) decolonises knowledge through further developing the Decoloniality perspective; and, 3) challenges the general understandings of Maya populations as a far more complex and contradictory than their usual dichotomous representation: as urban/rural, modern/traditional and indigenous/non-indigenous.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
PART I: INTRODUCTION	1
1. OVERVIEW.....	3
1.1 Thesis outline	3
1.2 The Maya of Yucatán	5
1.3 On the motivation and the problem	6
1.4 Contextualising the thesis: the research focus	10
1.4.1 The historical development of the <i>solar</i>	10
1.4.2 The Maya <i>solar</i> of Yucatán.....	12
1.5 The inter-relatedness of the Maya <i>solar</i> to land, livelihoods and identities.....	15
1.5.1 Research questions and objectives	18
1.5.2 Thesis structure	19
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	21
2.1 Introduction	21
2.2 The Decoloniality perspective.....	22
2.2.1 Differences with Postcolonial theory	23
2.2.2 Decoloniality in the modern/colonial world	25
2.2.3 Power, knowledge and being.....	26
2.2.4 Decolonial turn	27
2.3 A review of literatures underpinning the thesis	28
2.3.1 Primitive Accumulation.....	28
2.3.2 Latin American urban studies	30
2.3.3 Indigenous Geographies	31
3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....	33
3.1 Introduction	33
3.2 Background: Critical Ethnography.....	33
3.2.1 Ethical considerations.....	35
3.3 Methods	36
3.3.1 Documentary research.....	36
3.3.2 Field methods	36
3.3.3 Linking methods to research objectives.....	38
3.3.4 Fieldwork design	39
3.4 Study locations	42

3.4.1 Governance in Yucatán	43
3.4.2 Fieldwork settlements	46
3.5 Reflexive positionality	47
REFERENCES.....	51
PART II: ACADEMIC PAPERS	63
4. PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION IN INDIGENOUS MEXICO: THE CONTESTED TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MAYA SOLAR OF YUCATÁN	65
4.1 Abstract.....	65
4.2 Introduction.....	66
4.3 Decolonising Primitive Accumulation theory	69
4.3.1 Critiques from the Global South	70
4.3.2 A Decoloniality perspective for Primitive Accumulation.....	71
4.4 Conquest, slavery and resistance: the historical construction of the Maya <i>solar</i> in Yucatán	72
4.4.1 The violent ‘rationalisation’ of the <i>solar</i> in colonial Yucatán.....	73
4.4.2 The oligarchic accumulation of land and people	74
4.4.3 Land reforms, from distribution to privatisation	75
4.5 Primitive accumulation under neoliberal globalisation: the contemporary Maya struggles.....	76
4.5.1 Commodification and individualisation of common land.....	76
4.5.2 Suppression of alternative forms of agricultural production	78
4.5.3 Undermining and commodifying indigenous housing and identities	79
4.6 Conclusions	82
References.....	83
5. THE URBAN BEYOND THE CITY: THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MAYA SOLAR IN YUCATÁN, MEXICO	90
5.1 Abstract.....	90
5.2 Introduction.....	90
5.3 Rethinking the urban in Latin America	92
5.3.1 Urban theory in Latin America.....	93
5.3.2 Decolonial urbanism.....	95
5.4 Constructing and transforming the urban in Yucatán	97
5.4.1 Peri-urban settlements in Yucatán: Geographical and historical contextualisation.....	98
5.4.2 (Re)Producing the peri-urban in Yucatán from above and from below.....	100
5.5 Conceptualising the ‘beyond the city’ peri-urban.....	105
5.6 Conclusions	108
References.....	109

6. THE CONTESTED REPRODUCTION OF MAYA IDENTITIES IN YUCATÁN, MEXICO.....	113
6.1 Abstract.....	113
6.2 Introduction	113
6.3 Decolonial Indigenous Geographies	117
6.3.1 <i>Indigenismo</i> and the representation of Indigenous peoples in Mexico.....	120
6.3.2 Reclaiming and constructing Indigeneity	122
6.4 Contradictions and convergences of Maya identities in Yucatán	123
6.4.1 Contemporary <i>Indigenismo</i> practices.....	124
6.4.2 Constructions of Maya Indigeneity.....	127
6.5 Actually existing Maya life.....	129
6.5.1 Performing and living identities.....	129
6.5.2 Working the land.....	131
6.5.2 Living the <i>solar</i> and the house.....	132
6.6 Conclusions.....	134
References	135
PART III: CRITICAL DISCUSSION.....	141
7. CONTRIBUTIONS: DECOLONIALITY	143
7.1 Introduction	143
7.2 Re-locating the research	144
7.3 Findings, contributions and limitations	148
7.3.1 Empirical findings and contributions	148
7.3.2 Theoretical findings and contributions.....	153
7.3.3 Ontological findings and contributions	155
8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	158
8.1 Introduction	158
8.2 Future research.....	158
8.3 Final remarks	160
REFERENCES.....	162
APPENDICES	169
Appendix 1: Fieldwork.....	171
Appendix 2: Aerial view of <i>solares</i>	179

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of the State of Yucatán, Mexico	6
Figure 2: Hurricane Isidore and its trajectory, September 2002	7
Figure 3: Maya communities as beneficiaries of land distribution in Yucatán (1930)...	12
Figure 4: A traditional Maya <i>solar</i> of Yucatán.....	13
Figure 5: Transformations of settlements and the Maya <i>solar</i> (Oxkutzcab, Yucatán) ...	16
Figure 6: Scheme for research rationale	17
Figure 7: Land, livelihoods and identities in Yucatán.....	18
Figure 8: Examples of markets in the study area.	40
Figure 9: Women in organisations and markets	41
Figure 10: Fieldwork strategies of mapping and semi-structured interviews	41
Figure 11: Built environment in the study area.....	43
Figure 12: Fieldwork locations.....	47
Figure 13: Fieldwork locations with <i>solar</i> and housing diversity	81
Figure 14: Map of Yucatán and location of fieldwork settlements	98
Figure 15: Location of the state of Yucatán and fieldwork settlements	115
Figure 16: Families in their <i>solar</i>	133
Figure 17: Information sheet for possible participants (in Spanish).....	171
Figure 18: Informed consent form for participants (in Spanish).....	172
Figure 19: Semi-structured interviews for local populations (in Spanish)	173
Figure 20: Examples of undivided <i>solares</i> (from fieldwork).....	179
Figure 21: Examples of physically divided <i>solares</i> without ‘legal’ division (from fieldwork)	180

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Government agencies and objectives	44
Table 2: Characteristics of the peri-urban in Yucatán	99
Table 3: Questionnaire for local populations (in Spanish).....	174
Table 4: Examples of questionnaires for government officers (in Spanish).....	176
Table 5: List of anonymised interviewees	178

ABBREVIATIONS

ASF (*Auditoría Superior de la Federación*) – Federation Superior Audit Office

CDI (*Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas*) – National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples

CNI (*Congreso Nacional Indígena*) – National Indigenous Congress

FONDEN (*Fondo de Desastres Naturales*) – Natural Disasters Fund

INAIP (*Instituto Estatal de Acceso a la Información Pública*) – State Institute of Access to Public Information

IVEY (*Instituto de Vivienda del Estado de Yucatán*) – Housing Agency of the State of Yucatán

PROCAMPO (*Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo*) – Programme for Direct Assistance in Agriculture, now called PROAGRO

PROCEDE (*Programa Nacional de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Solares Urbanos*) – National Programme of Certification of *Ejido* and Urban *Solar* Rights

SEDATU (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano*) – Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development

SEDESOL (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social*) – Ministry of Social Development

SEDUMA (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente*) – Ministry of Urban Development and Environment

SEFOTUR (*Secretaría de Fomento Turístico*) – Ministry of Touristic Promotion

PART I: Introduction

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Thesis outline

This thesis is about the ongoing existence and challenges facing the *Maya solar* of Yucatán in Mexico – a house and garden plot that has historically supported an intricate indigenous system of land, livelihoods and identities. I will explore why and how the *Maya solar* is today under threat of extinction along with the way of life and the people it once fully sustained, but also how that threat is itself a contested terrain. This thesis draws on the Decoloniality perspective that foregrounds indigenous and colonial questions in the intertwining of land, livelihoods and identities in the making and reproduction of the *solar* over time. In short, Decoloniality addresses the continuation of colonial powers within the modern world from a political and epistemological Latin American perspective. This Decoloniality perspective is also used to critically dialogue and advance each of three specific theoretical or disciplinary frameworks used in the analysis: ‘Primitive Accumulation’, ‘Latin American urban studies’, and ‘Indigenous Geographies’. I will expand on these frameworks further on in this section. Evidence for this research was gathered through both secondary literature analysis and primary empirical data collection. Fieldwork for the latter was carried out in Yucatán at different points between November 2013 and May 2015.

The assembled evidence produced three sets of arguments which are organised in three academic papers presented in this thesis in order. The arguments in summary are as follows:

1. In Yucatán, the current dispossession of Maya lands, livelihoods and even identities is neither new nor recent but part of an ongoing struggle for survival experienced by Maya populations since colonial times. I have used the Marxist theory of ‘Primitive Accumulation’, which offers an account of the origins of capitalism, and reworked it from both Decoloniality and Critical Geography perspectives, to historically trace these dispossession processes and locate them in the present moment. This innovative approach unravelled the key role of the *Maya solar* as a space for continuous resistance of Maya populations in the quiet processes of the everyday life.

2. Contemporary Maya territories in Yucatán are being transformed in complex and contradictory ways resulting in spaces that are neither urban nor rural but something in between, and hence, are considered in neither local urban regulations nor regional theoretical developments. I reviewed the literature within 'Latin American urban studies' and applied a Decoloniality perspective to critically uncover its dominant theoretical and conceptual assumptions which has tended to characterise the Maya communities as rural and backward. Instead, using the concept of Decolonial urbanism I develop a new understanding of the peri-urban as not simply an interstitial space between the urban and the rural, but as 'the urban beyond the city', where indigenous spaces such as the *solar* are important for the development of livelihoods and the possibility of self-subsistence in non-rural environments.

3. Identities of Maya populations in Yucatán are the result of contradictory elements of representations and performances, related, on the one hand to state policies derived from what is known as *Indigenismo*, and, on the other hand, of constructions, related to Indigeneity practices emerging from populations themselves. Actually lived experiences are reproduced through everyday life experiences marked by these contradictory elements. I have argued that these conflicting processes can be reconciled through the concept of 'Decolonial Indigenous Geographies'. This concept helps us to understand how the *solar* takes a central role for the ongoing enabling of material and intangible elements for the reproduction of Maya identities.

In the process, the thesis will demonstrate the relevance of the Decoloniality perspective for bringing those diverse theoretical frameworks into dialogue through their contestation and reworking, addressing their gaps when dealing with indigenous peoples, their territories and their ways of living. The thesis is organised in three main parts: **Part I** is an Introduction comprising an Overview of the background to the thesis and its main arguments, the Theoretical Framework that critically informs the analysis, and the Methodological Approach adopted; **Part II** contains the main body of work which consists of three academic papers that each deal principally with one of the three overarching themes of this research: land, livelihoods, and identities. Finally, **Part III** includes a Critical Discussion which analyses the empirical, theoretical and ontological contributions of this research based on the set research questions, and Conclusions, with

some final reflections on the research, the process and the findings, as well as some recommendations for further research.

In the remainder of this Introduction, I situate this research about the Maya people of Yucatán. I introduce briefly the problems addressed in this thesis and my motivations for engaging with this subject. I also contextualise the focus of my research, the *Maya solar* in both historical and contemporary ways, to better understand the different perspectives from which it has been analysed. I discuss the research questions and objectives, and present a structure of the thesis. Following, I briefly present the theoretical framework with traverses each of the academic papers which comprise the main body of work of this thesis, and the specific theories I have engaged with in each of them. Finally, I set out the methodological framework of the research, including the design and the details of the fieldwork carried out in Yucatán.

1.2 The Maya of Yucatán

The Maya Civilisation dates back to at least 1800 BCE and extended into what are today the Mexican States of Yucatán, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Tabasco and Chiapas as well as the countries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Empirically, the thesis is focused on processes of change within Yucatán, located in Southeast Mexico (Figure 1). The state is divided in 106 municipalities and currently holds the twelfth largest metropolitan area of Mexico, which includes five municipalities around the major city in the region, Mérida. In 2010, the state of Yucatán had a population of 1,955,577 inhabitants and population density of 49 people per square kilometre (INEGI, 2010). Current Maya populations are considered to be the continuous inhabitants of this region and are currently identified by their language, known as Yucatec Maya. In 2010, there were 544,927 people over three years old in Yucatán who spoke an indigenous language (mostly Mayan language) and could be therefore considered to be Maya. They represent 28 per cent of the Yucatán population, a proportion that has been in continuous decline since 1940, according to recorded national statistics, when they numbered 73.9 per cent. Of the 2010 figure, only 10 per cent are monolingual Mayan speakers (INEGI, 2010; INEGI, 2004). This continuous decline is part of the current struggles of Maya people today which I address later in this thesis.

The *Maya solar* of Yucatán comprises a way of life within a specific dynamic space under continuous transformation that has endured and remained as the basic habitat unit and a continuous feature throughout the historical development of the region. In this space, people carry out everyday life activities (social, economic, cultural, and environmental)

contributing towards the cohesion of the family unit and of the community through actions of preservation, enrichment and diffusion of knowledge shaping individual and social identities. Moreover, it is in this place where people organise their self-provision in a series of spaces (e.g. kitchen, barn, and henhouse) connecting their livelihoods to the surrounding land. The *solar* has been produced and shaped in relation to the region's specific environmental conditions, characterised by a flat and karst topography, a lack of surface water other than cenotes – natural sinkholes (see Antochiw, 2010) – and the existence of three seasons. The dry season has high temperatures and scant rainfall between March and May; the rainy season, with intense rainfall between June and October; and the cold front season, with scant rainfall between November and February. It is mainly covered by tropical deciduous forest developed over limestone, thin and stony soil. The vulnerability of the region is defined by the recurrent forest fires and the high frequency of hurricanes (Toledo et al., 2008; Schmitter-Soto et al., 2002).

Figure 1: Location of the State of Yucatán, Mexico



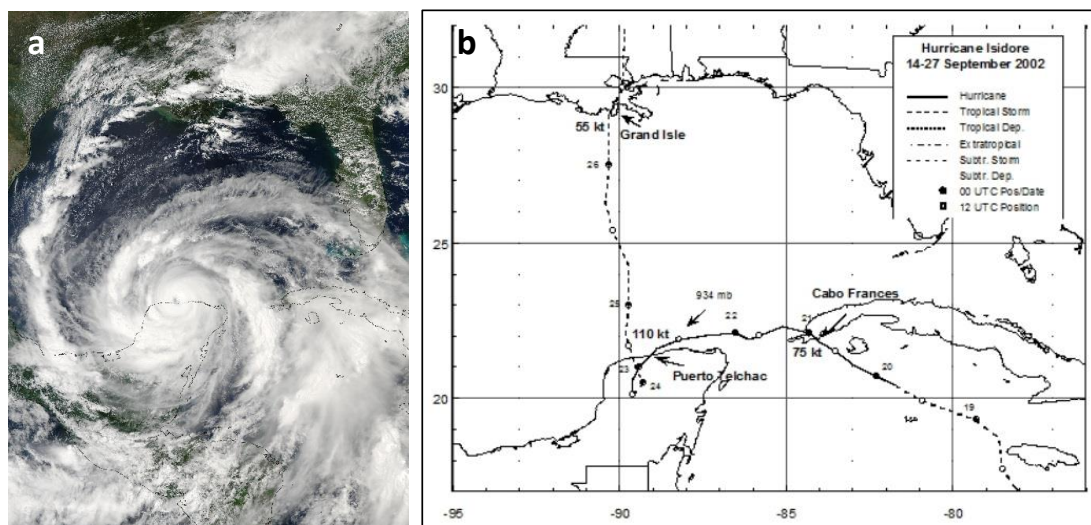
Source: Author (2016)

1.3 On the motivation and the problem

In September 2002, Hurricane Isidore hit western Cuba and then the northern Yucatán Peninsula (Figure 2) as a devastating Category 3 before moving to southeast United States as a tropical storm (Avila, 2002). In the aftermath, 33,000 houses were left damaged or completely destroyed in the State of Yucatán alone, with most of these houses officially identified as ‘not having a solid roof’ (World Vision, 2002: online), or with ‘a roof made with weak and poorly resistant materials’ (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003: 20) – in other words, Maya houses traditionally built with palm roofs and wattle-and-daub. In order for the federal and the state governments to implement the Natural Disaster Fund (*Fondo de Desastres Naturales* – FONDEN) for emergency and reconstruction, four

main steps had to be taken (World Bank, 2012: 18): first, a declaration of a natural disaster; second, damage assessment and request for FONDEN resources; third, disbursement of resources and implementation of reconstruction activities; and, fourth, public reporting on post-disaster activities. Yucatán was hit by the hurricane on the 22nd of September; according to a state government annual report which includes a specific section on the hurricane, by the 29th of September both the State Governor and the Mexican President announced a large housing programme for the affected populations. By the 7th of October, 117 attention centres had been set up to register affected populations for the housing programme. Days later, engineering and architecture students from local universities went through the affected settlements in order to determine the type of housing damage (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003). As a local third-semester architecture student, I volunteered to help carry out a state government-led survey to assess those damages. I was motivated by the opportunity to contribute providing housing relief to affected populations, and the interest to understand why so many families had lost their homes, specifically *Maya homes*.

Figure 2: Hurricane Isidore and its trajectory, September 2002



Sources: a) Desclotres et al. (2002); b) Avila (2002: 18)

The survey was very basic; we were told to describe the type of damage, whether structural or superficial, the materials of the damaged house and its location, in case there were more than one house in the *solar*. We were also required to register both the mode of construction and whether the inhabitants could repair the housing themselves or if they would need government aid. This survey was used to provide general descriptions of the situation and it was followed by a more specific survey carried out by the Ministry of

Social Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social* – SEDESOL). Although many towns and villages bore witness to a devastating sight of collapsed roofs and walls, some still endured. I met Maya families anxious to obtain resources to fix their houses and some who had already sought out loans from relatives to repair their roofs using precarious materials such as cardboard-corrugated roofing sheets. The government supplied as part of the emergency relief millions of those roofing sheets, and thousands of blankets and mattresses (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003). It was in those ‘attention centres’, which in some places consisted of no more than a table with a few local volunteers, where those who had lost their home were registered. Here they were told what help would mean – a *‘pie de casa’*, for which there is no literal translation into English but essentially it means a very basic room made of concrete blocks to which families could build upon later to make a proper house (Angelotti Pasteur, personal communication, 12/07/2016). This basic room was ordained to be 23 square metres and have a bathroom with a septic tank (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003).

As a volunteer, I received no information of where the survey was sent to or what its outcomes were. According to the same state government annual report, the final lists of beneficiaries came from the attention centres and these were used to survey 80,000 homes reported damaged. Based on this information and on information from other sectors such as agriculture, education, health, and public infrastructure, the funds for FONDEN were requested and granted in December 2002 (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003). According to the state government, the building of *pies de casa* started in February 2003 and was set to finish in June 2003 but reportedly did not end until 2006 (Angelotti Pasteur, 2014a; 2014b; Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2002-2003).

During the FONDEN surveys, it was common for many Maya families to report having more than one home damaged within their *solar*, as a *solar* was typically an extended family space with multiple homes constructed. However, as only one *pie de casa* per *solar* was being allocated, Maya families were being forced to legally divide their *solar* into smaller plots in order to receive one *pie de casa* for each damaged house. The prototype of the *pie de casa*, based on national characteristics for housing, are meant to be adapted to fit uses and customs of local communities (see SHCP, 1999: 5.3). During the building phase, Maya communities asked local and state governments for their customs to be respected, especially regarding their house location and relative position in the *solar*. However, materials were already being supplied and construction workers had already been hired, meaning that local communities were not considered when making decisions – some insisted, but they were mostly ignored by construction workers, building companies, and local and state governments (Torres Pérez, 2011). Hence, the customs

and input of Maya people regarding the ‘houses’ they were to inhabit were not respected. Other inconsistencies in the employment of FONDEN resources, such as duplicated beneficiaries lists, unclear allocation of resources, and unfinished housing actions, have been evidenced by the Federation Superior Audit Office (Auditoría Superior de la Federación – ASF, 2002).

Maya people were supposed to just *adapt* to a new space at odds with their traditional ways of living and their environment. Some, however, refused to adapt and instead transformed the *pie de casa* into a warehouse or a safe house for hurricanes while rebuilding their traditional Maya house beside it. In some places, it was younger Maya who moved into the *pie de casa* because it was perceived as ‘modern’ and the materials as ‘urban’ (Torres Pérez, 2011). Some *pies de casa* were never finished by construction companies and their intended recipients were never given additional financial resources to complete them (see Angelotti Pasteur, 2014a). Over time, this type of ‘housing’ became institutionalised, transformed into an official government housing offer based on public subsidies, for providing *pies de casa* for non-disaster related programmes. Completed and unfinished *pies de casa* as well as the original hurricane damage altered the built environment around Yucatán. Concrete cubes became a usual sight when traveling throughout the region instead of the traditional vista of Maya houses in big *solares*. While some Maya families rebuilt their Maya houses with whatever little resources they had, appearing as if they were rejecting the imposed transition towards modernity and urbanisation, for most families it was impossible to turn back – their *solar* was now divided, meaning that they had less capacity to self-sustain their livelihoods and that one of their identity symbols, the Maya house, was near-erased from local landscapes.

It was this imposed urbanisation and modernisation, especially as the result of a natural disaster, that formed my main motivation for looking more closely into the Maya ways of living, into what was being lost with the transformations of the *solar* as the source of social, economic, environmental and cultural elements for the survival of Maya populations, and into the responses from affected Maya families. Throughout their history, Maya people have endured attempts by both colonial and national governments to make them ‘modern’ and ‘urban’ instead of their perceived reality as ‘rural’ and ‘backward’ by working the land and living in a Maya house, which has been further branded as lower social class and perceived as a symbol of poverty, insalubrity and dysfunctionality (see Cabrera Pacheco, 2014). However, the same rurality and backwardness are promoted as tourist attractions, whether they are conceived as part of new waves of eco and rural tourism or as belonging to the past through museums and archaeological sites. Therefore, the problems that I address in this thesis are the

transformations of the *solar* based on urbanising, modernising, commodifying, and undermining processes, not only of the *solar* as a place but as a way of living which includes the land, livelihoods and identities attached to it, as well as the responses of the Maya populations living in it.

1.4 Contextualising the thesis: the research focus

The Maya *solar* of Yucatán has historically supported an intricate indigenous system of land, livelihoods and identities. It has remained as the basic habitat unit in the region and its vital role for the continuous development of everyday life activities (social, economic, cultural, and environmental) of Maya people has allowed complex connections between individuals and communities, allowing the survival of their ways of life. In order to both contextualise and focus the thesis, in this section I elaborate on the *solar* as it has been dynamically constructed throughout the history of the Maya people in Yucatán, and then, on its current configuration.

1.4.1 The historical development of the solar

During the Classic (CE 250-950) and Post-classic (CE 950-1542) periods of the Maya civilisation (Foias, 2013), family demands and needs determined the use of town lands,¹ which were divided by their authorities in diverse plots based on family groups (Folan et al., 2000; Tourtellot and Sabloff, 1972; Villa Rojas, 1961). Restall (1998: 357) analysed colonial documents from 1548 and found that for Maya families living in this region and time period: ‘a Maya house typically contained two to six residents; there were often two or three houses to a house-plot’. Beyond the land use and ownership, a few authors (see García de Miguel, 2000) have commented on the unfavourable climatic and physical conditions of the Yucatán Peninsula and how unlikely it is that a civilisation could have been developed in such conditions, making the development of an efficient land management system crucial to the Maya way of living. The Maya northern lowlands, where Yucatán is located, were and still are, limited in water and in cultivable lands. Local characteristics of soil, water, and weather were decisive in developing the itinerant extensive agricultural system – namely slash-and-burn (*roza-tumba-quema*) (García de Miguel, 2000). Several intensive agricultural production systems were designed to complement the *milpa* system – a name from the Nahuatl word used for ‘corn field’, such

¹ To better understand land use and ownership amongst the Maya, see Villa Rojas (1961).

as what is called nowadays the home garden (or *solar*) where polyculture was also practiced (García de Miguel, 2000; Farriss, 1978).

Spanish colonisation subjected the Maya and their ways of living to violent transformations between 1542 and 1821, altering the *solar* and the relations of Maya people with their environment. Throughout this time, scattered Maya villages were depopulated – through the violent destruction of houses and means of subsistence, disintegrating extended families, and putting together indigenous people into Indian Congregations to be better controlled in smaller spaces and make their land available for settlers (Terán and Rasmussen, 2009; Sullivan, 1996; Farriss, 1978). However, as soon as colonial control declined, Maya populations gradually dispersed themselves again back into their well-known pattern of scattered settlements, especially towards the east side of the Peninsula. Their dispersed organisation appeared to be based on a better subsistence strategy. Survival strategies of the Maya during colonial times included extended families living in *solares* developing sustaining livelihood strategies based on diversification: activities away from the *solar* were generally carried out by male members of the family while *solar* activities were female based (Peniche Rivero, 2003). In-plot (or *solar*) activities included growing the orchard, keeping pigs and poultry and weaving. Cattle was mostly used for cash and was only consumed as an emergency due to crop failure, as were wild fruits, such as breadnut fruits, and root vegetables. All these activities benefited the whole house-plot even generating economic surplus (Restall, 1998; Farriss, 1978).

Haciendas, or land estates, were developed in the region both before and after the independence (1821) based first on corn, sugar and forage, and later and more importantly on henequen (*Agave fourcroydes*) to produce raw fibres during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910). Henequen plantations required seven years before production and that involved constant weeding and then regular harvesting and quick processing before deterioration. Thus, haciendas required a constant labour force. The control of the popular classes in haciendas was established through the debt peonage system, a form of slavery, but also by mechanisms of coercion and isolation mixed with paternalist incentives and security. Estimations during this time account for at least 75 per cent of all rural dwellers lived in haciendas and around 96 per cent of all family leaders were landless (Joseph, 2003). One of the major land changes during this period, besides the plantations and the haciendas, was the transformation of housing patterns of the workers, from scattered wattle-and-daub housing to clustered whitewashed masonry forming grid patterns extending outwards from the hacienda itself (Wells and Joseph, 1996), altering once again the relation of Maya populations with their environment and the configurations of their *solar*.

With the triumph of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), land was redistributed to peasant and indigenous populations (Figure 3) especially between 1934 and 1940, during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas. The legal entity of the *ejido* was developed borrowing its name from the Spanish term for the common land on the outskirts or exit of a village, and it was legally created and codified by Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution (Aboites, 1985). In short, in the form of *ejido*, landless *campesinos* (peasants) received the right to perpetually benefit from the land as an agricultural provider but not as a monetary resource, i.e. they could work the land, guard the forests or exploit other resources for their own and their communities benefit, but not use it for selling, renting or mortgaging. The fundamental identity of the *ejido* involved ‘a communal a participatory form of governance; a livelihood strategy that is agrarian or forest-based; and an equitable distribution of resources’ (Barnes, 2009: 398). This land system permitted Maya people to work the *milpa* under a slash-and-burn once again and the development of *solar* activities which complemented each other, and with other activities such as the production of honey and handcrafts, and wage labour for extra money (Warman, 1985). While some features of the Maya ways of living were lost in their historical and ongoing struggles for maintaining their lands, livelihoods and identities, not all was lost. It is because of these processes of quiet rejection of imposed authorities that some ways and spaces have endured 300 years of colonial domination and over 200 years of national governments. The main focus of this thesis is this *solar* and the transformations it has endured.

Figure 3: Maya communities as beneficiaries of land distribution in Yucatán (1930)



Source: Brannon and Joseph (1991: 27)

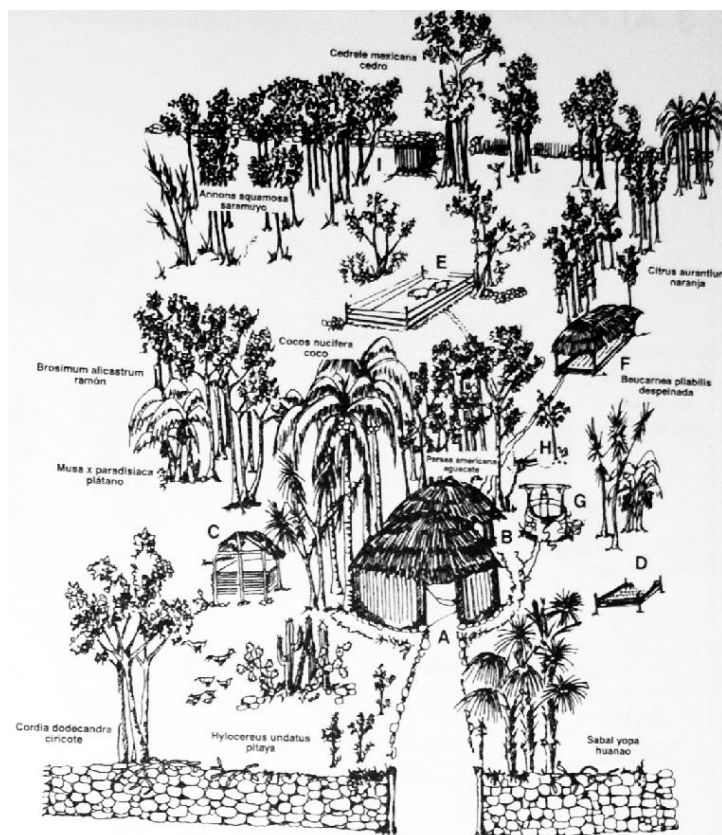
1.4.2 The Maya solar of Yucatán

Cultivation and husbandry within the *solar* is mainly destined to cover the subsistence needs of the family, complementing production in the *milpa*, an agriculture system which relies on polyculture and a slash-and-burn, usually practiced in *ejido* land, which is a form

of land held in common property in Mexico briefly described above. It has also contributed towards the cohesion of the family unit and of the community through actions of preservation, enrichment and diffusion of knowledge. The socio-environmental relations within the *solar* have been an important part of its configuration and its role in the wider community. It has generally contained the traditional Maya house and a series of spaces (e.g. kitchen, barn, and henhouse) where social, cultural and economic activities take place, providing not only food but also material construction, utensils and forage for domestic animals. Even further, it has made possible an economic surplus because of the crops and the animals' commerce. In the *solar*, family management ensure the continuity of different practices and activities that shape the configuration of the settlements and its surroundings (Aké Gómez et al., 1999; Jiménez-Osornio et al., 1999; Correa Navarro, 1997; Vara Morán, 1995).

The traditional Maya *solar* (Figure 4) has the following elements (Ayllón Trujillo, 2003; Aké Gómez et al., 1999; Chico Ponce de León, 1995; Tello Peón, 1995) which are strongly linked with each other and the traditional way of living of Maya people:

Figure 4: A traditional Maya *solar* of Yucatán



Source: Aké Gómez et al. (1999: 239)

- The home (*naj*)² is a vernacular housing traditionally built with palm roofs and wattle-and-daub. [A in Figure 4]
- The kitchen (*k'oben*) is the space to prepare and to consume the food, and is a secondary body, or annex, to the main building. Traditionally, the roof of this construction is made from wood and Guano palm (generally *Sabal yapa* in Yucatán); while the walls are made from wattle without daub (*colox-ché*), which allows the kitchen's fume to disperse. It usually has a cooking fire that is set with three stones and some firewood between them. [B]
- The barn (*ch'iil*) is a wooden structure used to store the corn; is it used more commonly where the *milpa* complements the *solar*. [C]
- A seedbed (*k'anché*), as an elevated structure, is used to store the corn cobs but also to grow vegetables and medicine plants. It is used as a support for the cultivation management and as a seedbed for major species' seedlings therefore creating a cultivable space, other than the soil of the *solar*. Nowadays, they are being substituted by wooden crates and containers which are hanged to keep it away from the domestic animals. [D]
- There is also a pigsty (*u naj k'éek*), a small construction used to keep the pigs, and a henhouse (*u najiil kaax*), to keep the chickens; they are made from wood or stones. [E-F]
- An artesian well (*ch'e'en*) was an important element of the composition of the *solar* because it was the only water source for all of the activities. Nowadays, most houses have a pipeline connection for water. [G]
- A washing place (*nukulí p'o'o*), for clothing and utensils, is usually located under a large tree or under a palm roof. The sink was originally made from the hollowed trunk of a specific tree but nowadays is made from cement with the same characteristics. [H]
- The latrine (*kuchil ta*) is a space that has also evolved, from being just an open place at the back of the *solar* transforming into semi or complete bathrooms connected to pipelines and to a septic tank (wastewater disposal system). [I]

It appears that when the Maya *solar* is located within more rural environments its importance in the everyday life with the development of livelihoods, its connection to land and its relevance in constructing identities is quite evident (see Poot-Pool et al., 2005; Baños, 2002). However, when it is located in more urbanised environments its importance

² These words are in the Mayan language from Yucatán.

seems to decline in terms of size but also in the relevance of its components, from spaces and activities to the use of vegetation. The *solar* in urban environments is often imagined as a result of rural to urban migration where individuals recreate rural ways of life, but more often they are the product of processes of rapid urbanisation, by which populations get caught between self-subsistence practices and more labour-wage based ones. As a result of these processes, settlements developed in ways that are not quite urban but cannot be categorised solely as rural. As I will elaborate later on (see [5.4.1](#)), I have considered locations with characteristics of both rural and urban environments as *peri-urban* and it is on these where my research has been located.

1.5 The inter-relationship of the Maya *solar* to land, livelihoods and identities

The Maya *solar* of Yucatán continues to exist in these peri-urban settlements in relation to its significance as the source of social, economic, environmental and cultural elements for the survival of Maya populations and in connection with families' responses to external pressures for change. Therefore, the *solar* affects and is affected by its inter-relationship with internal family dynamics, the urban settlement it is inserted into, and the land complementing it, usually *ejido* land where people work their *milpa*. These connections as experienced under current transformation processes of rural-to-urban transitions have not been analysed. Scholars such as Terán and Rasmussen (2009); and, Hernández Xolocotzi et al. (1995) have focused on the relations of the *milpa* and the *ejido*, extending to the *solar* but solely for rural environments. I am therefore looking at the *solar* as being transformed by multi-scalar processes but also from its deep connections to land ownership and land use, to the development of livelihoods and its relevance in constructing identities, from a historical and contemporary point of view.

Some of the current transformations of the *solar* and the settlements they are located in can be visually represented, as I have done in the following images (Figure 5) with one of the fieldwork settlements. From large tree-covered block centres (Figure 5a), where the different sizes of the *solar* provide families with environmental resources and contributes to enhancing the micro-climate of the region; to smaller and denser blocks (Figure 5b), with minimum tree-coverage and far less space for developing activities in the *solar*; and finally to new housing units (Figure 5c), with basically non-existent areas for tree-coverage and *solar* activities, as they are not considered priorities when developing state subsidised housing for lower socio-economic levels. These transformations mean that the traditional ways of living of the Maya people are being challenged.

Figure 5: Transformations of settlements and the Maya *solar* (Oxkuztcab, Yucatán)



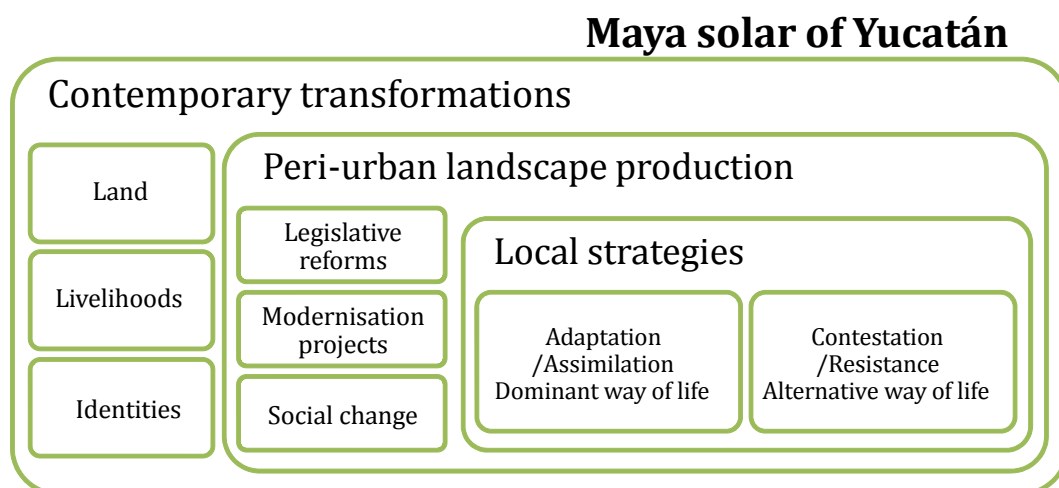
Source: Modified by author from Google Maps (2016)

The *solar* is inextricably intertwined with land, livelihoods and identities of the Maya of Yucatán and it is this inter-relationship that has shaped the development of this thesis. The central purpose of this research is to understand how and why these spaces and ways of life were constructed and what processes of transformation they have endured to become what they are today, and what is being further transformed today. From this perspective, historically, indigenous communities and their ways of life, i.e. the knowledge and being of these populations, were seen as not enough. Furthermore, as it

continues to happen since 1492, the ‘discovery’ year, indigenous communities in the Americas, and particularly in this case, Maya communities in Yucatán, are being undermined, exploited and commodified at the same time. They keep, however, fighting back and resisting the attempts of eliminate their alternative ways of living and engaging with the world, even if quietly through their everyday life. Through this thesis, I do not pretend to be a voice rising from their chosen silence. I do however intend to make their struggle known, and to provide a new light over the ongoing situations happening in Yucatán concerning the Maya populations through different theoretical frameworks which I have brought together under the Decolonial perspective. I want to engage with what Fanon (2001) has named the ‘colonial problem’ following the Zapatistas’ voice when they say ‘the world we want is one where many worlds fit’ (EZLN, 1996).

Derived from this, the conceptual framework driving this proposal can be integrated at different levels as follows in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Scheme for research rationale



Source: Author

Exemplifying one of these inter-relations, I take local markets (Figure 7a) which depend on the production of both the *solar* and the *milpa*, to offer options to people without access to land or who no longer produce in their own *solares*. Local markets and local production enables the continuity of traditions attached to identities by offering not only food but local productions of clothes, toys and medicines. The production in the *milpa* complements the production in the *solar*. The *milpa* has become a synonym of a corn field, as seen in Figure 7b, but families do still rely on polyculture to balance their diet. The Maya house (Figure 7c) is still present and is still an option for Maya families in spite of

all the difficulties for its construction and moreover, in spite the reluctance of the government and the wider society to recognise it as a ‘dignified’ option for living, not only in rural environments but also in urbanised settlements. Finally, the *solar* provides with the possibility of developing activities reflecting the identities of Maya people, in this case, the weaving of hammocks (Figure 7d) which is a basic element for Maya families and it can also provide extra income in the tourism markets. Furthermore, the *solar* contributes to the transmission of knowledge and abilities and the continuing of traditions.

Figure 7: Land, livelihoods and identities in Yucatán



Sources: a, c) Own photographs (2014); b) Nancy Silva Solís (2012); d) Own photograph (2006)

1.5.1 Research questions and objectives

Based on the contextualisation of the challenges facing the Maya *solar* today and our understanding of them, the aims of the thesis are represented by key research questions and objectives. The research questions framing this thesis are:

- What is the historical importance of the *solar* in Yucatán for the reproduction of the Maya way of life?
- What are the contemporary drivers of peri-urbanisation in the *solar* and how are these influencing the current transformations in land, livelihoods and identities?

- What do these processes of transformation mean for the local strategies of space production and the Maya way of living?
- What contributions can the Decoloniality perspective make to the understanding of both historical and contemporary transformations of the *solar* and the reproduction of the Maya way of life?

These questions generate the following research objectives:

1. To explore the importance of the Maya *solar* of Yucatán throughout its historical evolution.
2. To characterise the nature of the transformations occurring in the *solar*, focusing on changes in land, livelihoods and identities within the framework of urban landscapes production (rural-to-urban transition).
3. To critically assess the origins, causes and explanations for these changes through a multi-scalar framework that examines:
 - a. The localised effects of neoliberal globalisation politics in national and local legislation reforms.
 - b. The impacts of national modernisation and development projects.
 - c. The contemporary effects of social change in the *solar*.
4. To examine the internal configurations, transformations, realities and possibilities of dominant and alternative strategies of space production in the peri-urban Maya *solar*.

1.5.2 Thesis structure

Expanding from the outline in sub-section 1.1, this thesis is organised in three main parts. **Part I**, or Introduction, comprises three sections: Overview, Theoretical framework, and Methodological framework. The first section has introduced the context, the problems and the objectives of this thesis. The second part will introduce the overarching theoretical framework of this research, as well as the specific theories for each of the papers of Part II. The third section will engage with the rationale behind the methodological framework, the methods themselves, the research design and the locations selected for collecting empirical evidence.

Part II contains three academic papers; which mirror the three themes overarching this research: land, livelihoods, and identities. Paper 1 is titled 'Primitive Accumulation in Indigenous Mexico: The Contested Transformations of the Maya *Solar* of Yucatán' and covers mostly issues about land and its relation to livelihoods and identities in the ongoing

dispossession of Maya populations and their resistance. These themes are addressed through the reworking of Primitive Accumulation theory by Decoloniality perspective. Paper 2 is titled 'The Urban beyond the City: The Transformations of the Maya *Solar* in Yucatán, Mexico' and covers livelihoods and the production of alternative spaces with rural and urban characteristics through the contestation of traditional Urban theory in Latin America through a proposed Decolonial urbanism and the reworking of the concept of the 'peri-urban'. Paper 3 is titled 'The Contested Reproduction of Maya Identities in Yucatán, Mexico' and covers identities from a Decolonial perspective on Indigenous Geographies and under a contradictory context of *Indigenismo* practices of representation and their continuous development from Indigeneity constructions. These contradictions are lived, embraced and contested from a specific place, the *solar*.

Finally, **Part III**, or Critical Discussion, includes two sections, the Contributions and the Final Considerations. In the first section through answering the research questions which guided the thesis I examine the findings, contributions and limitations of the academic papers from Part II from empirical, theoretical and ontological points of view; to finalise, I present some final remarks and some recommendations for further research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this section, I will set out the theoretical framework that both informs the analysis herein and also with which I have critically engaged with and developed. The overarching theoretical framework of this thesis is the Decoloniality perspective. Decolonial scholars (e.g. Maldonado-Torres, 2014) see this perspective as both an intellectual project aimed at theoretical development for creating new realities, but also as a methodological tool that makes connections between variables through an interrelated analysis. As both a theoretical and methodological approach, Decoloniality and its strong focus on historical, material, colonial, class, land, resources, culture, and ideology factors, provides an important advance on existing critical theories and a powerful critique of existing dominant conceptions and approaches. By engaging with these theories and concepts, Decoloniality is in turn developed and refined:

The process remains a decolonial one as long as it helps to build bridges between these different areas, between the different decolonial activities, and between the different subjects and communities involved in the process of decolonization. [...] Decoloniality is never pure nor perfect, and it does not count with a full picture of what a decolonized institution, society, or world can be (Maldonado-Torres, 2016: 30).

Using this overarching theoretical framework of Decoloniality, the thesis also draws critically on, as well as seeking to theoretically advance through the Decolonial perspective, the Marxist theory of Primitive Accumulation, debates on the nature of urbanisation and peri-urban forms in Latin American urban studies, and the embryonic field of Indigenous Geographies. I will show how Decoloniality perspective helps to decolonise Primitive Accumulation theory when used to analyse Maya history and contemporary life but also how Primitive Accumulation theory helps to deepen Decoloniality's historical political economy approach. I will explain how Decoloniality unsettles urban studies and offers a new perspective on peri-urbanism and livelihoods, but also Latin American urban studies helps to ground Decoloniality in space and place.

Finally, I will suggest that Decoloniality helps to confront the scholarship on Indigenous Geographies by emphasising the conflictive and complex perspectives on the reproduction of indigenous identities, while this discipline helps to develop new perspectives for Decolonial place-making that emphasises quiet resistance processes.

Inspired by this Decolonial perspective and being consistent with it, I have reflected and rethought the language used to refer to indigenous populations in Latin America. Therefore, in this thesis I deliberately do not use terms such as ‘pre-colonial’, ‘pre-Hispanic’ or ‘pre-Columbian’ to refer to the period prior to the invasion and colonisation of the Americas where great civilisations existed and dominated. When this period is referred by others by these names I have changed them in this thesis to ‘native’ or referred to ‘Maya civilisation’, for example, to acknowledge their existence in their own right rather than to be referred to and defined as the past of something else. In what follows I describe the main ideas and possibilities of Decolonial thought, and the epistemological framework of my research.

2.2 The Decoloniality perspective

The Decoloniality perspective (also known as the ‘modernity/coloniality perspective’), has been a very important ‘discovery’ in my academic development. Part of my theoretical understanding of Decoloniality outlined in this section stems from classes I attended in July 2014 as part of the ‘Decolonizing Knowledge and Power Summer School’ held in Barcelona, Spain, in July 2014. Lecturers included Linda Alcoff (2007), Ramón Grosfoguel (2011), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007), and Ruth Gilmore (2002), amongst others. It helped to put a conceptual frame to the questions I was raising, to provide a critical perspective on the theories I was engaging with, and to inform my fieldwork. In reviewing literature and undertaking fieldwork interviews, I encountered thoughts and discourses not dissimilar to those that originated during colonial times, and were carried on further after the so-called independence processes in the Americas, regarding the perceived condition of indigenous peoples and communities as ‘backward’ and moreover, in need of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’.

The main authors in this perspective, referred sometimes as the ‘coloniality of power group’, are Walter Dignolo (2003), Edgardo Lander (2000), Aníbal Quijano (1992), Enrique Dussel (1994), Catherine Walsh (2007), Fernando Coronil (1996), Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and Santiago Castro-Gómez (2005). Other scholars whose work has been related to this perspective are María Lugones (2010), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (1990), and Arturo Escobar (2011).

Some of their influences can be traced to Frantz Fanon (2001), Aimé Césaire (2006), Paulo Freire (1970/1974), Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), and Stuart Hall (1997). Decoloniality perspective stems from Postcolonial theory and the work of its main representatives, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. This origin has been described not as its 'Latin American version' but as considering the specificities of the Latin American region against the backlight of Postcolonial theory (Restrepo and Rojas, 2010; Castro-Gómez, 2005). I will address the differences between Decoloniality and Postcolonial theory in the next section.

One of the first contributions I engaged with comes from Decolonial feminist scholar María Lugones (2010) who argued that colonisation did more than 'inventing' the colonised, but deeply disrupted the understandings of native populations, e.g. social patterns and cosmological visions (see Bhambra, 2014). Walter D. Mignolo (2005: 165), a Decolonial literature scholar, has relied on an Aymara word, *pachakuti* ('the violent turnaround of life'), by which Andean people described 'what happened to them and their way of life with the arrival of the Spaniards'. This evokes the violent disruption of civilisations and their ways of life, and those who survived the extermination – which was perceived by colonisers but assimilated by some of the colonised as well, as bringing the light of 'civilisation' and taking native populations out of 'primitivism' (see Césaire, 2006) – were incorporated into a new social, political, economic, and even environmental system. Based on my understanding of these processes, I argue that native ways of life endured, even if intertwined with other ways of life for over 500 years. These ways of engaging with the world have persisted for many reasons and indigenous communities should have the final word over their continuity or their ongoing intertwining with other ways of life.

2.2.1 Differences with Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory can trace its origins to the publication of Edward Said's 'Orientalism' in 1978 (Restrepo and Rojas, 2010; Mezzadra, 2008). According to Mignolo (2000), Orientalism is the cultural imaginary of the modern/colonial world when the image of the centre of Europe (i.e. England, France and Germany), replaced the Christian Europe image from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (i.e. Italy, Spain and Portugal). The latter is considered to be the first modernity era while the former is therefore, the second modernity (see Dussel, 1993). Within the early Postcolonial theoretical scholarship there was a radical innovation in the critical analysis of the colonial discourse. Against its monolithic conception scholars engaged with the colonised subjects based on

hybridisation, negotiation and resistance (Mezzadra, 2008). By this, new methods of old colonial practices were addressed, but no emphasis was put on moving 'beyond' these practices.

A main critique of Postcolonial theory was on the European historicity still in place in the imaginaries of a world of 'centres' and 'peripheries' to which 'development' processes that occurred in Europe would occur everywhere else in time (see Chakrabarty, 2008). An important contribution from Postcolonial scholars were concepts of subaltern and subalternity, drawing from a Gramscian influence, which referred to subjects whose action have been historically ignored throughout colonialisms, nationalisms, and Marxisms. The identity of these subjects came from a reduction of their so-called 'superiors' identity and not from the attributes and characteristics of their own social existence (or the negation of their existence) (Guha, 2002 quoted in Mezzadra, 2008). Hence, Postcolonial Studies have addressed the colonial experience as having structured not just the colonised but also the coloniser (Restrepo and Rojas, 2010).

The ideas of Said, Bhabha, and Spivak were consolidated and developed in the intellectual movement known as Postcolonial theory especially around cultural issues but also incorporating socio-economic concerns (Bhabha, 2014). These scholars were grounded in European critical theory, especially the Poststructuralism of Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, and the experiences of the intellectual elite from the old English colonies in Asia and North Africa (Mignolo, 2007; Ashcroft et al., 1998). As Postcolonial historian Arif Dirlik has stated, Postcolonialism answered a need created by Marxist structuralism: 'the necessity to overcome the crisis produced by the inability of [Marxist] old categories to explain the [contemporary] world' (Castro-Gómez, 2005: 16, brackets in original quote). In return, some Marxist authors (ibid) have argued that the Postcolonialism of Said, Bhabha and Spivak, as well as the Poststructuralism it draws from, is itself an ideology that hides class interests and separates culture from its global material conditionings in a world fundamentally shaped by an extended neoliberal capitalism. Other authors have considered that Postcolonial theories have focused on a critique of coloniality but not on the analysis of its material conditionings, i.e. colonialism. One of the reasons why decolonisation movements 'failed' around the world is because they did not change the terms of the conversation, 'from *cultural* to *colonial difference*' and remained within the European 'universal' system of thought (Mignolo, 2009; 2000: 740; Castro-Gómez, 2005). In contrast, from a Latin American experience, the re-thinking of Postcolonial theory happens through the incorporation of World-system, Dependency, and Critical Social theories, and the

disrupting of the 'time' of modernity (Bhabra, 2014; Mignolo, 2007; Castro-Gómez, 2005).

Nonetheless, even when colonialisms have been different in their locations and materialities, there are commonalities, 'especially at the level of ideology and discourse formation', throughout the specificities of each colonial force (Ashcroft et al., 1998: 191). It is this epistemological specificity that Decolonial scholars aim for in their treatment of Latin America. In the words of Bhabra (2014: 118-119): 'The key issue for Mignolo is not only that epistemology is not ahistorical, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that epistemology has to be geographical in its historicity'. Decolonial perspective is amicably separated from Postcolonial theory based on three main differences identified by Restrepo and Rojas (2010: 24). First, the former works within the problematising space left by coloniality while the latter lies in the space constituted by colonialism. Second, the historical experiences and locations of enunciation are different: the former goes back to the colonisation of the Americas between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, while the latter refers to the colonisation of Asia and Africa between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Third, their genealogy also differs; the former derives from intellectual and political experiences and trajectories from Latin America itself, and the latter, from Poststructuralism, and postcolonial experience of places such as India, and current colonisations, such as Palestine. 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism' are not only 'ideologies' but are ways of life, thought, and action structures integrated into the habitat of the social actors (Castro-Gómez, 2005).

2.2.2 Decoloniality in the modern/colonial world

The concept of Decoloniality is useful to transcend the widespread assumption, in both political and academic discourses, that we are currently living in a decolonised and postcolonial world. The Decolonial perspective highlights the long-term effects of 'coloniality' and the incomplete processes of decolonisation by attending to the continuity of 'power over' which emerged from the diverse colonialisms and was based on the international division of labour between centres and peripheries as well as the ethnic-racial hierarchical organisation of populations. These were cemented throughout several centuries of European colonial expansion starting in the sixteenth century, and were not significantly transformed with the formation of Nation-States in the peripheries (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; 2007; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 2001).

The Decoloniality perspective is the counterbalance of modernity/coloniality experiences; these experiences occurred first in the Americas to Spanish and Portuguese

colonial powers, to continue in Asia and Africa, to the British Empire and the French colonialism. Dussel, following Wallerstein's world system theory, identified the Spanish territorial expansion in the sixteenth century as the origin of the incorporation of unprecedented raw material and labour force into the markets, allowing what Marx called the primitive accumulation of capital. Therefore, modernity and colonialism are mutually dependent phenomena, because Europe only becomes the centre of the world-system when it makes peripheries out of its colonies, and the 'othering' of its population defined Europe as 'modern' (Mignolo, 2007; Castro-Gómez, 2005; Dussel, 1999; 1994). The founding of these systems are the unequal relations between centres and peripheries. The dependency theory acknowledged such unequal relations with the development of the centre based on the underdevelopment of the peripheries. This theory proposed a different analysis of capitalism emphasising the limits of economic development imposed by the colonial legacy and the role of colonies as suppliers to the centre (Restrepo and Rojas, 2010; Montoya, 2009; Almandoz, 2008).

2.2.3 Power, knowledge and being

When looking through a Decolonial perspective, contemporary global capitalism re-signifies the exclusions caused by epistemic, spiritual, racial/ethnic and genre/sexual hierarchies unfolded by modernity (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007). In the words of Bhabra (2014: 119),

The colonial matrix of power, that Mignolo (2002) argues is the inextricable combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality), has to be central to any discussion of contemporary global inequalities and the historical basis of their emergence.

Hence, the historical denial of power, knowledge and being to native societies has endured through contemporary neo-colonial and imperialistic practices of control, domination and exploitation based on racial inferiorisation. A Decolonial perspective can be understood as the transformation of the content and the terms of the conversation, to use Mignolo's words, from the subalternised, ignored and displaced, the *damnés* (see Fanon, 2001), from a critical thought deriving from the intertwined relation of modernity/coloniality. The coloniality of power, by which human groups and places are hierarchically categorised for their exploitation, is founded in the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of social and geo-cultural identities in the world, within an

epistemic place in which power is described and legitimised. It is also understood as a pattern of global power of dominance/exploitation/confrontation relations around labour, nature, sex, subjectivity, and authority, within the emergence and reproduction of the capitalist colonial/modern world. The coloniality of knowledge, by which certain systems of knowledge are marginalised and made invisible, is based on the Eurocentric imposition of history, knowledge, politics, aesthetics, and way of existing as epistemological superior or uniquely valid, as a universal paradigm, while negating the legacies of other peoples by reducing them to being 'primitive', 'irrational', and 'ignorant'. The coloniality of being, by which certain human beings are deemed inferior, is framed as the lived experience of the modern/colonial world system where discourses resulting from the 'encounters' of populations are imposed to make effective such inferiorisation, affecting not only the colonised but also the colonisers (Walsh, 2012; 2005; Restrepo and Rojas, 2010; Castro-Gómez, 2007; Escobar, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 2000; Nygren, 1999; Dussel, 1994; 1993).

2.2.4 Decolonial turn

Decolonial turn is the opening up to other ways of thinking and other-life forms (other-economies, other-political theories) from those of the modern/colonial world (Mignolo, 2007). It refers to the perceived existence of multiple, modern forms of colonial power that have in fact produced and concealed the creation of technologies of dehumanisation that affect particular communities and subjects in ways that differentiate and divide them. The transformation of this power would allow places and peoples, which were neglected by imperial and colonial powers, the possibilities of articulating and reinstating reason, knowledge and future through a 'paradigm-other'. This paradigm-other involves the construction of critical thought from the histories and experiences which were generated by 'coloniality'. Therefore, the linear conception of history of Western thought generated from 'modernity' cannot absorb the diversity of existing-paradigms for producing knowledge in the world (Mignolo, 2005; 2003; Walsh, 2005). Decolonial theory sees both the knowledge and the lived experience of the people marked by this colonial project as relevant to the understanding of modern forms of power and to generate alternatives to them (Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

The shift from an individual attitude towards cooperation is one of the most fundamental moments of the Decolonial turn. Changes such as this open up new possibilities in terms of knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). Decolonial projects are not to simply confront colonialism through processes of decolonisation,

[...] but rather at the radical reconstruction of knowledge, power, being, and life itself. Projects aimed at ‘decoloniality’, understood as the simultaneous and continuous processes of transformation and creation, the construction of radically distinct social imaginaries, conditions, and relations of power, knowledge (Walsh, 2012: 11).

2.3 A review of literatures underpinning the thesis

Having outlined what Decoloniality perspective is, I will now review the three complementary bodies of theoretical scholarship that the thesis critically draws on in its analysis of the transformations of land, livelihoods and identities in relation to the Maya *solar* of Yucatán, outlined in the previous section. These frameworks are discussed in the following order: the Marxist theory of Primitive Accumulation, debates about urbanisation in Latin American urban studies, and the field of Indigenous Geographies. I now provide a brief summary of each framework here in anticipation of a more extensive discussion later in Part II of the thesis. My aim here is to outline the main ideas and to identify the main critiques and gaps that I addressed from a Decoloniality perspective in the three academic papers contained in Part II.

2.3.1 Primitive Accumulation

The first of the elements in the interrelation shaping the *solar* in Yucatán is land, understood as the *solar* itself and its surroundings. I have analysed the processes of transformation of land from the perspective of Primitive Accumulation due to the resemblance of some Maya struggles with those of the feudal enclosures in Europe. The theory of Primitive Accumulation was arguably first developed by Karl Marx (1990 [1867]). Marx used the contested term to capture ‘the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production’ and reproduction, thus transforming the existing social relations to land under capitalist modes of production through land enclosures and processes of proletarianisation, by which landless workers had only their labour power to sell as wage labour to survive (Marx, 1990 [1867]: 874-875). A key feature of Primitive Accumulation theory was the extra-economic forces that brought capitalism into being – the political, legal, social, cultural, physical, and ideological forces that were used to separate, control, structure and subjectify as the basis for the eventual normalisation of capitalist social relations (ibid). Some scholars have followed what is known as the classical interpretation of primitive accumulation by which it only refers to the initial one-

off transition towards capitalism until it becomes dominant (see Sassen, 2010; Zarembka, 2002). Others have theorised that primitive accumulation is in fact a systemic and continuous process rather than a 'one-off' historical act of land dispossessions and people exploitation, i.e. primitive accumulation is continually implemented, instead of occurring only one time (see De Angelis, 2001; Midnight Notes Collective, 1990).

However, Primitive Accumulation, due to its rootedness in Eurocentric socialist thought and context (Veltmeyer, 2005), fails to acknowledge the role of the Americas as the racialised form of land appropriation, labour exploitation, and mass commodity production which turned capital into capitalism (Mignolo, 2005). From Decoloniality, I follow Fanon's critique based on the 'colonial problem':

This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. Everything up to and including the very nature of precapitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again. In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed [their] rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of [their] successful transplantation, in spite of [their] appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others' (Fanon, 2001: 39).

A recent critique of the extensive use of Western-rooted theories without their immersion in the Latin American realities can be found in the work of Gudynas (2015a; 2015b). He argues that the abstracting, globalising and generalising sweep of Harvey's 'Accumulation by Dispossession' theory with its focus on global capital and the new imperialism of governments in the Global North has enabled national governments within Latin America to blame external forces for 'the predatory practices of appropriation of Latin America's natural resources, the usurpation of [indigenous] lands and their lives, and the imposition of conditions of oppression' (Gudynas, 2015a: online). Neo-extractivism (see Gudynas, 2009) and land-grabbing (see Edelman et al., 2013) are two of the main processes connected to accumulation and dispossession in Latin America. Further limitations of Primitive Accumulation are its restriction in time and space, its arguing for immediacy, its conception as something inevitable and total, and its disregard for resistance (see Levien, 2015; Coulthard, 2014; Hall, 2012; Kelly, 2011).

Hence, by addressing these gaps, the decolonising of Primitive Accumulation becomes apt to be redeveloped in Latin America, and to contribute to the understandings of indigenous people's historical political economy, and of the Maya of Yucatán in

particular. The focus relies on the historic contribution of these populations into a primitive accumulation for the world centre, the historical and contemporary coexistence of modes the production in the region, and the continuous resistance of said populations over their oppressions (Di Muzio, 2007; Veltmeyer, 2005; Moore, 2004).

2.3.2 Latin American urban studies

The second element of the interrelations shaping the *solar* is the development of livelihoods with the *solar* itself and within the surrounding lands, as well as within the settlement where the *solar* is located. I have analysed the processes of transformation of livelihoods from an urbanisation perspective. By these, I have engaged in the development of the 'peri-urban' as the 'urban beyond the city' that as a discipline Latin American urban studies have failed to address. Summarising, these studies, including theorisations and research, as well as the actual urban development, have been influenced for the most part by theories, paradigms and practices from outside the region, specifically from Europe and the United States. Some of these conceive the urban as part of capitalist development phases, or as part of a dependent development; while theories of modernisation, socio-economic formation, and dependency have been adapted to Latin American socio-economic realities marking the region's historical position in the territorial division of labour (Duhau López, 2014; Montoya, 2009; Schteingart, 2000; Santos, 1982). Further, global and world cities theories have been highly influential even though cities in the Global South are generally regarded as not having the same possibilities of absorbing processes of global economies and therefore fall behind cities in the Global North (Montoya, 2009; Lungo, 1996; Sassen, 1991; Friedmann, 1986). More recently urban studies have addressed cities and the urban from emergent concepts, such as 'peripheries', 'urban informality', 'zones of exception' and 'grey spaces'; and new theories, such as 'ordinary cities' and 'planetary urbanism', consider the 'other' cities usually left out from theories and analyses as part of the worldwide urban fabric, even if from different perspectives (Brenner and Schmid, 2011; Roy, 2011; Robinson, 2006).

However, this alternative views of the 'urban' usually derive from Postcolonial theories, leaving 'other urbans' yet to be considered in urban studies. These other-urbans include those which are indeed 'ordinary' but which also provide people the opportunity of subsistence living. Decoloniality perspective is useful in exposing how this limited notion of the urban is particularly unhelpful to understand the territorial settlements of indigenous communities which are still considered to be 'backward, uncivilised and underdeveloped' and are yet to 'catch up' and 'move on' towards a more 'urban' and

'modern' way of living (Patel, 2014; Vainer, 2014: 50). Following Decolonial urbanism (Farrés and Matarán (2014), I rely on the three pillars of the Decoloniality perspective – power, knowledge and being (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Dussel, 2001; Quijano, 1992) – to analyse the construction and transformation of the urban from above and from below from a territorial perspective. The role of the state, housing developers and agro-business following Western/Global North ways of conceiving the urban world is contrasted to the way families and communities manage and organise their local territory. The contradictions and complex transformations by which settlements in the Global South are produced result in places that I have named as 'peri-urban', reworking the original term which refers to the peripheries of larger cities and the 'diffusion' of the urban (see Lombard, 2015; 2014). These peri-urban settlements, in the periphery of urban studies (see Simone, 2010), allow for the possibility of self-subsistence livelihoods in the fusion of typical rural and urban ways of living within indigenous traditions and cultures.

2.3.3 Indigenous Geographies

The third of the elements in the interrelation shaping the *solar* in Yucatán are the identities of Maya people who inhabit it. I have used the Decoloniality perspective to go beyond Indigenous Geographies' current epistemological limits and to reflect the experiences of the diversity of indigenous knowledges that sustain it, connected to particular contexts and geographies. As a discipline, geography, as many others, was developed on the basis of concepts, ideas and authors linked to imperialistic politics of conquest through the generation of knowledge. In the words of Milton Santos (2005), renowned Brazilian geographer, colonial geography essentialised ways of life and attached them to specific regions, and its research was based on people, societies, and places as objects and on their classification. As a tool for colonial projects, geography contributed to the mapping and describing of indigenous territories, which were framed under the European domain and for European purposes, i.e. the occupation and possession of lands and other resources, and the creation of spaces, regions, and territories by claiming and bordering them (Ribeiro, 2015; Frantz and Howitt, 2012). According to Quijano (2000), the imposition of an hegemonic Eurocentric way of perceiving and producing knowledge derived on the colonisation not only of the bodies but on the minds, or imaginaries, of a large part of the world population. From this, Ribeiro (2015) has argued that it is therefore Geography's role to subvert such colonial imaginaries.

The discipline of Indigenous Geographies is developed as a way of addressing indigenous concerns. Its critical approach engages with the transformations and relations of place,

community, and culture as well as the consequences for/of geographical practice (Coombes et al., 2012; 2011). As indigenous populations struggle against remnants of a colonial and racialised past, they continue to live in its legacy, where some identities have more value than others, and where indigenous narratives are continuously silenced. As a counterbalance of colonial continuities, Decoloniality contests such relations of power, in practices that aim at their erasure through assimilation and dispossession (Larsen and Johnson, 2012; Sium et al., 2012; Coombes et al., 2011).

Therefore, with the development of Decolonial Indigenous Geographies I address the specific disciplinary location of Indigenous Geographies in ‘settler colonialisms’ – indigenous peoples in the Global North, from a Latin American experience of complex and contradictory identities. I have also confronted *Indigenismo* practices and Indigeneity constructions in their contribution to the reproduction of identities. *Indigenismo* has directed the elimination and assimilation of indigenous populations through the commodification of their knowledge and their past, and the undermining of their bodies and their realities. Indigeneity has enacted recognition for the alternative ways of seeing the world, therefore embracing diversity and even contradictory ways of self-identification especially through resistance to dominant nation-states (Sium et al., 2012; Walsh, 2012; Coombes et al., 2011; Maybury-Lewis, 2003; Smith, 1999). I have also addressed the focus of active resistance in the experiences of Indigenous Geographies in settler nation-states and the confinements that the specificity of place imposes on them. From the critical acknowledgment of places, such as the *solar*, as an integral part of identity I have conceptualised it as the site of continuous and enduring process of resistance, even if in the quiet developments of the everyday life (Larsen and Johnson, 2012; Escobar, 2008; Hauge, 2007; Speller et al., 2002).

The theoretical frameworks examined in this section were developed in accordance with the empirical evidence expected to be collected in Yucatán and the one actually assembled through several field methods, including ethnographic and semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and the recording of field-notes. Theories and perspectives influenced the development of a methodological framework – but they were also influenced by the outcomes of such methods. In the next section I will construct my methodological framework starting with the disciplinary locations of the research and the use of Critical Ethnography as a backdrop in the field. I will then reflect on my positionality and ethical considerations, to follow with the examination of the methods actually used for collecting evidence. Finally, I will expand on the fieldwork design and locate the fieldwork settlements.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I will set out and critically discuss the methodological framework I developed to accomplish the objectives outlined in the first section of the thesis (see [1.5.1](#)). The overall driver of this methodological framework was to enable my research to look more closely into the Maya ways of living, into what is being lost with the transformations of the *solar* as the source of social, economic, environmental and cultural elements for the survival of Maya populations, and into the responses from affected Maya families. I initially located my research design within the fields of Human and Critical Geography, and later further developed it with ideas drawn from the Decoloniality perspective.

Influenced by these theoretical disciplines, I designed my research based primarily on a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodologies recognise and validate the human experience while examining mechanisms, processes, and practices in intensive detail (DeLyser et al., 2010). Moreover, qualitative methods are used '[to] better understand how places themselves influence ways of life and understandings of the world, as well as how [these] influence particular places' (ibid: 6). I have also relied on theoretical and methodological pluralisms, in order to gain complementary perspectives for the analysis of complex and often contradictory realities (DeLyser et al., 2010; McCulloch, 2004). The main methodological approach I have employed is Critical Ethnography, which will be discussed in the following section. I will also examine the ethical implications of this research and my positionality. In the following sections, I will introduce the methods applied and their relation to the research objectives. I will then explain the fieldwork design before finally locating the settlements where the empirical research was conducted.

3.2 Background: Critical Ethnography

As a human geographer, my research was guided towards the study of 'places, people, bodies, discourses, silenced voices, and fragmented spaces' (Winchester and Rofe, 2010: 3); while recognising 'the complexity of everyday life reality, the multitude of influences that shape lived experience, and the importance of spatial contexts of human interaction' (DeLyser et al., 2010: 6). From Critical Geography, which comes from 'a tradition of

critical theory' (Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro, 2008: 1), I designed the research under a commitment to 'expose the socio-spatial processes that (re)produce inequalities between people and places' (Hubbard et al., 2002 quoted in Blomley, 2006: 91), by providing transformative insights and progressive praxis to undo dominant discourses, the ultimate purpose is to make a difference (Blomley, 2006). Finally, from a Decoloniality perspective I have foregrounded an indigenous specificity to look at the unequal socio-spatial relations of their 'othering' from the colonial/modern world we inhabit, and of the ongoing and long term effects of coloniality in everyday life, lived experiences, and spatial contexts; while revealing the origins of power and knowledge which are enacted against certain ways of being (Castro-Gómez 2005; Dussel 1994). All three approaches led me to adopt a Critical Ethnography approach as the foundation of my methodological design for engaging with the everyday complex and contradictory realities of Maya populations and to inform on inequalities and oppressions, but also on their resistance.

Critical Ethnography is an overtly political approach aimed at exposing inequalities, unfairness and injustices within a particular lived domain as part of an effort to go beyond merely understanding it and instead to effect change in oppressive social structures (Madison, 2012; O'Reilly, 2009). It questions not only how things *are* but how they could *be* (Thomas, 1993) and explores how beliefs and values guide people's actions and how they understand these actions; it also seeks to understand how these actions marginalise specific groups of (other) people (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). The roots of critical ethnography can be traced back to Bourdieu's sociology, Bernstein's sociolinguistics and the Birmingham School's cultural studies, and the revision of Marx after Gramsci, Althusser and Foucault, including feminist, postcolonial and critical theories (Lather, 2007).

Critical Ethnography connects local knowledge and unravels the exercise of power in the social reproduction of culture, and focuses on the construction of inequities and consent (ibid). One of its goals is the deconstruction of categorical oppositions and structures to bring to surface the lived experience, the masked social power and control and hidden agendas; challenging oppressive assumptions and critiquing the taken-for-granted (O'Reilly, 2009; Jackson, 1998; Thomas, 1993). It aims to expose the repression of alternatives within the building of social existence by the means of hegemonic control, in what Henri Lefebvre called 'terrorism of everyday life' (Thomas, 1993). Based on the literature review on the subject, I refer to Gramsci's explanation of hegemony as 'the manner in which dominant classes controlled and exploited subordinate groups by consent, thereby masking exploitation by convincing the exploited that their condition was natural to them' (Madison, 2012: 65).

The social relations within the research are, as Gramsci put it, ‘a pedagogical encounter’ between researcher and those researched, therefore engaging with ‘really useful knowledge’ of the everyday life (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995). Even though the practice of Critical Ethnography shares methods with conventional ethnography (i.e. participant observation techniques and interpretive analysis) it differs from it by bringing forward issues of subjectivity and power relations (Peñaloza, 1994) as well as the paradoxes of ethics, representation and interpretation (Lather, 2007). Conventional ethnographic description is transformed into critical ethnography by means of construction and translation of a social reality produced by the own statuses of researchers (e.g. gender, age, background, political orientations) and by their simple presence in the field which determine the subjectivity and the reflexivity. The researcher therefore ‘produces more of what s/he reproduces’ (Rossman and Rallis, 2003; Ghasarian, 2002: 16, 21-22). Before discussing how I implemented a Critical Ethnography approach in practice, I will briefly reflect on the ethical issues raised by the research.

3.2.1 Ethical considerations

This research is not meant to be a voice for the Maya populations but it does intend to make their ongoing struggles known, and to provide new perspectives on them. As people trusted me enough to tell me the things they did and they opened enough to engage in the subjects we were discussing, I now discuss the ethical considerations of this research. I have relied on their words for constructing their realities, but it is my reading of those words and realities, and the connections I have made to other experiences, global but also personal, that are reproduced in this thesis.

In order to be able to do fieldwork, I had to follow ethical guidelines from the University of Leeds from which this project was approved. As part of the ethical considerations of the thesis, I relied on ‘informed consent’ to conduct formal and informal conversations with people. All of the people I interacted with regarding this research were told who I was, where was I coming from (both Mérida and the United Kingdom) and what was I doing in their settlement. If people were interested in participating, I gave them an information sheet with the basics of the project (see Figure 17 in Appendix 1: Fieldwork). Some people agreed to be interviewed right there while others preferred to set up a date or not to participate at all. As part of the requirements of the University guidelines I prepared a consent form (see Figure 18 in Appendix 1: Fieldwork) but only managed to use it a few times. People gave informed consent orally after I explained the form – signing

consent forms, or even ticking a box in this case, is not customary in Yucatán, as I had reported it to the University and as it is recorded in their approval.

3.3 Methods

In this section I first describe the methods used to collect and analyse data, followed by an examination on how these methods informed each of the thesis' objectives. I have divided these methods into documentary research, i.e. mostly secondary literature analysis, and field methods, i.e. how to collect empirical data. Following this, I examine the development of fieldwork compared to the original research design and I explain how the methods described have been used in fieldwork.

3.3.1 Documentary research

Documentary research refers to the content analysis of official records and public documents (Fernández Poncela, 2009). Documentary sources, 'each with their own problems and potential uses for researchers' (McCulloch, 2004: 109), can be any of the following: primary, secondary, solicited, unsolicited, paper-based, virtual, archival records, books, newspapers, periodicals, works of fiction, official data and proceedings, reports, diaries, letters and autobiographies. According to McCulloch (2004), a documentary research achieves its full potential when it draws connections between the public and the private, as well as past and present. There must be taken into consideration that these documents reflect different kinds of realities according to the context and purpose they were created for; they should not be treated as firm evidence of what they report, no matter how 'official' they are. As argued by Atkinson and Coffey (2010: 79): 'Documents are social facts, in that they are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways'; as much importance should be given to the evidence they provide, the origins, the how, and the why these documents were produced is also relevant (McCulloch, 2004).

3.3.2 Field methods

Participant observation: Participant observation comes from the seeming contradiction between the emotional involvement implied in participating and the detachment in observing (Paul, 1953 cited in Dewalt et al., 1998). Participant observation has many degrees, depending on the level of involvement – from the research as spectator to a total immersion in the situation, but also on the amount of time available - from single

observations to long term or multiple observations (Rossman and Rallis, 2003; Spradley, 1980). According to Dewalt et al. (1998), participant observation is both a data collection by which the degree of involvement will include and unveil different types of data, and an analytic tool by which the understanding and interpretation of the data will be connected on the knowledge acquired during fieldwork. Therefore, it enhances the quality of data obtained in fieldwork and the quality of its later interpretation.

Semi-structured interviewing: Interviews are a method for gathering data where the information exchanged is spoken. Interviews allow the researcher to discover what is relevant to the informant and allows access to certain information about events, opinions and experience. It depends highly on memory and at some extent, requires the checking, verifying and scrutinizing of possible conclusions. Semi-structured interviews have flexibility within a predetermined list of questions, depending on how these are addressed by the interviewee. Through this method, interviewees can express their views more freely, due to open-ended questions, and even explore relevant issues for them. However, it is also possible to obtain comparable qualitative data if the interview guide is followed (Longhurst, 2016; Dunn, 2010; Cohen and Crabtree, 2008).

Ethnographic interviewing: Ethnographic interviewing seeks to establish a respectful and on-going relation between researcher and interviewees; a good relation ensures a genuine exchange of views and a purposefully exploration of meaningful events for both parts. For the researchers, it involves not only an ethical engagement with the participants throughout the entire project but also their own role in the co-construction of knowledge (Heyl, 2001). From the interview process, there should be an understanding of the participants' reconstruction of their own lives and also, an interpretation of this situation and the events by the researcher, what in cultural anthropology is called the emic and etic views (Rossman and Rallis, 2003; Heyl, 2001). According to Bourdieu (1996 cited in Heyl, 2001), knowledge of people's reality and the social conditions of their everyday life are necessary for the researcher to truly engage with the interviewees.

Field notes' recording: Field notes' recording are used to describe settings, people, activities, dialogues and emotions, from both the context and the own researcher (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). They are meant to complement the participant observation and to question everyday life events, social spaces and material encounters. They also give context to the ethnographic interviews, especially when they are audio-taped, by being descriptive, reflective and interpretive in the notes (Till, 2009).

3.3.3 Linking methods to research objectives

My first objective – ‘To explore the importance of the Maya *solar* of Yucatán throughout its historical evolution’ – primarily relied on documentary research. I conducted a critical review of documents, articles and books dealing with the histories of the Maya populations in Yucatán from the development of their civilisation in the region, through the colonial domination and the development of neo-colonial governments, to the neoliberal globalisation occurring nowadays. Some of these historical documents are based on, or are indeed written from, colonial accounts, i.e. the history has not been told from the Maya perspective but from their colonisers (e.g. de Landa, 1985 [1566]), and this should be acknowledged. Others accounts are told from essentialist perspectives (e.g. Redfield, 1941), while others have worked out ways to bring the Maya realities and sometimes their voices up front (e.g. Restall, 1999).

For my second objective – ‘To characterise the nature of the transformations occurring in the *solar*, focusing on changes in land, livelihoods and identities within the framework of urban landscapes production (rural-to-urban transition)’ – I relied on ethnographic and semi-structured interviews with local populations, and complemented it with government interviews and secondary literature analysis. I relied on the conceptual framework’s elements (see Figure 6 in sub-section [1.5.1](#)) to guide the design of the interview questions, starting with people’s experiences on different transformation processes, about land, livelihoods and identities, in order to link them with existing governmental regulations and programmes. I also considered questions about people’s perceptions on the ‘modern’ versus the ‘traditional’, and about their views on urbanisation. An example of an interview guideline (in Spanish) is shown in Table 3 ([Appendix 1](#)).

For the third objective: ‘To critically asses the origins, causes and explanations for these changes through a multi-scalar framework’, I reviewed official regulations and government documents and secondary literature about them. I also interviewed government officers about such regulations, in order to connect the realities local people had explained to me and what I observed in the field with the different scales this processes of transformation rely on.

For the fourth objective: ‘To examine the internal configurations, transformations, realities and possibilities of dominant and alternative strategies of space production in the peri-urban Maya *solar*’, I relied again on the experiences of local people through ethnographic interviews, the insights of government officers who are engaged with these realities, and on secondary literature analysis on Maya people, the spaces they inhabit,

and the struggles they face on everyday basis. Field-notes complemented the information from recorded interviews with sketches and details from families and their *solares*.

3.3.4 Fieldwork design

The fieldwork design included three planned phases: a ‘preliminary’ phase to collect basic notions of the study locations; a ‘surface’ research on the selected settlements; and an ‘in-depth’ research in specific locations (see Rossman and Rallis, 2003). It was important to acknowledge that when doing research about the complexities and realities of the everyday life of a certain group of people ‘[all] the messiness of everyday life can intrude’ (Heyl, 2001: 375) – with this in mind, the research was set to be adapted from the moment of design to the moment of implementation (see Peñaloza, 1994).

In the first phase I visited all possible locations for the study (fourteen locations) which will be detailed in the next section. The first and second phases of fieldwork were carried out between November 2013 and April 2014. During the first phase, I conducted a documentary research in order to collect information from several secondary sources from census, governmental and academic institutions about population characteristics (e.g. number, density, language spoken, indices), housing characteristics (e.g. occupants, number of rooms, services availability), economic activities, geographic regions, municipality and city surfaces, *ejido* characteristics, among others. This was done in order to get a general picture of the places I was going to visit. These characteristics were complemented with information gathered during December 2013 with visits to all of the fourteen selected locations (e.g. urbanisation level and presence of *solares*). From these visits, one of the outcomes was the collection of images of the urban settlements, traditional houses, *solares*, and markets (Figure 8). This first set of participant observation recorded spaces, the physical set; actors, who was involved; activities, what people did; events, what was happening; and, time, when was it happening (Spradley, 1980).

In the second phase, I carried out participant observation with limited participation and more descriptive observation with the aim of getting a sense of the location’s dynamics through informal talks and systematic observation. From the previous phase, I identified and selected settlements with different characteristics, such as the level of urbanization and the state of the market, as well as from different geographical and economic areas of Yucatán. The general environment of the settlements and the disposition of the personnel in the city halls were also taken into consideration, i.e. if the settlement appeared to be unmaintained or if I had trouble delivering the presentation letter. Between February and March 2014, I spent a few days in each settlement, visiting the markets and other areas,

engaging in semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with local people, especially women working in the markets and also with a women's organisation for producing crafts (Figure 9). Approaching people in their houses proved to be harder than these encounters. As I was more used to carry out fieldwork in smaller settlements, I had some obstacles while working in these more urban ones. From authority figures, I could only interview one of the *Comisarios Ejidales*, because of scheduling conflicts and different events happening in these places, including political proselytism and carnival celebrations. Even with these obstacles, I was able to get some important information to strengthen my objectives within the research, especially regarding land and the *ejidos*.

Figure 8: Examples of markets in the study area.



Source: Own photographs (2013)

Within the third phase, the in-depth research, I carried out an immersion in the location dynamics of one selected settlement with a more focused observation. The original research design contemplated adding two locations for a wider comprehension of the situations throughout settlements with different characteristics but some situations on the field prevented this so I only focused on one settlement keeping other locations on a more 'surface' level. I carried out this phase in Espita during March 2015. Ethnographic interviews were important for engaging with different families within the selected location through a larger amount of time, I usually visited the household three times, the first to establish contact and have a small conversation while obtaining their consent for a deeper

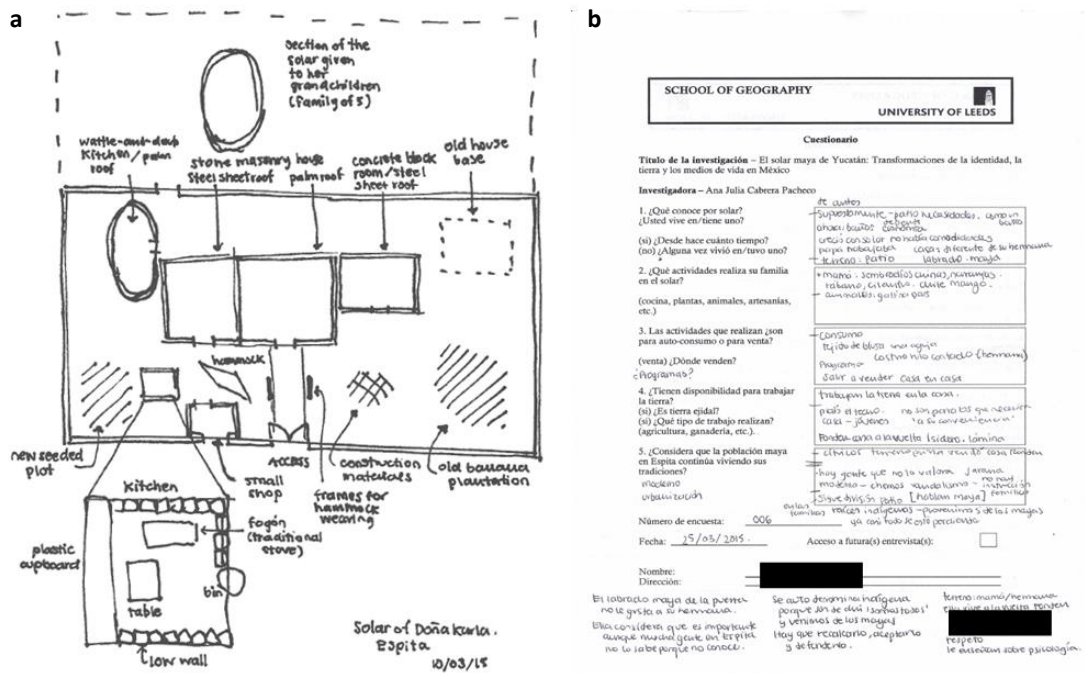
semi-structured interview (see Figure 18 in [Appendix 1](#) for the interview guide) in a second visit. Some photographs were taken on the last visit with final comments from both sides. Techniques for this phase, recorded in [field-notes](#), included mapping of *solares* (see Figure 10a) and the urban settlement, time-line matrices for establishing changes and photographic descriptions to complement the ethnographic interviewing. Finally, I complemented these ethnographic interviews with general information on the same subjects through smaller [semi-structured interviews](#) in order to collect a wider range of people's responses (see Figure 10b for an example and Figure 19 in [Appendix 1](#) for the template).

Figure 9: Women in organisations and markets



Source: Own photographs (2014)

Figure 10: Fieldwork strategies of mapping and semi-structured interviews



Source: Fieldwork notes, 10/03/2015; 25/03/2015

I also interviewed relevant government officers (see Table 4 in [Appendix 1](#) for examples of questionnaires) during the months of January and February 2015, through differentiated semi-structured interviews according to their expertise, to get a more comprehensive picture of the realities that Maya communities have to deal with when facing government authorities. From all the planned interviews at least two were not made possible because people had left their charges to pursue political positions and a couple more never replied to the many attempts to contact them. All of the others were interviewed in their government offices in the state's capital Mérida. Finally, all these interviews (see Table 5 in [Appendix 1](#)) were transcribed and analysed according to each of the different themes driving this research, i.e. land, livelihoods and identities. All translations needed for this thesis are my own.

3.4 Study locations

This research is focused on the Maya *solar* in peri-urban settlements of Yucatán. In this section I explain the settlement diversity in Yucatán, and introduce the study locations. I have also included a subsection on the governance in Yucatán to explain how this settlements work and how do they relate to state and national agencies and regulations, such as the *ejido*. According to the Government Regulations of the Municipalities of the State of Yucatán (*Ley de Gobierno de los Municipios del Estado de Yucatán*), human settlements in the state are categorised as: *Ciudad*, with no less than 15,000 inhabitants; *Villa*, no less than 8,000; *Pueblo*, no less than 3,000; *Comisaría*, no less than 500; and, *Sub-comisaría*, below 500 (Congreso del Estado de Yucatán, 2012). With this in mind, at first, I selected settlements in the city category. With information from the 2010 Census (INEGI, 2010) I identified 13 settlements in this category. Four of the top six cities are located in the metropolitan area of the state's capital: Mérida, Kanasín, Umán and Progreso. The other two are regarded as highly important cities in the state: Valladolid and Tizimín. All of these cities have over 35,000 inhabitants. Since one of the objectives of the research is 'to characterise the nature of the transformations occurring in the *solar*, focusing on changes in land, livelihoods and identities within the framework of urban landscapes production (rural-to-urban transition)', I decided to leave out these large cities and focus on urban settlements which could have 'rural' life in the process of being urbanised. Therefore, I added *villas* over 10,000 inhabitants to cover the spectrum of locations under and over 15,000 inhabitants (Figure 11). The selected settlements are:

Akil, Acanceh, Chemax, Espita, Hunucmá, Izamal, Maxcanú, Motul de Carrillo Puerto, Muna, Oxkutzcab, Peto, Tekax de Álvaro Obregón, Ticul, and Tixkokob.

Figure 11: Built environment in the study area



Source: Own photographs (2013)

3.4.1 Governance in Yucatán

In Mexico, the municipalities are the base of the territorial division and of the political and administrative organisation of the states. The municipalities in Yucatán have full autonomy to govern and administer themselves within the stipulations of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States (*Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*) and of the State of Yucatán. In Yucatán, the local government is integrated every three years by Councillors (*Regidores*). Two of the councillors, the Municipal Mayor (*Presidente Municipal*) and the Administrator (*Síndico*), are elected through popular vote. Along with other authorities, such as committees for urban development and public works, and health and ecology, they are located in settlements known as municipal heads (*cabecera municipal*) from where they carry on with their roles for the whole municipality (Congreso del Estado de Yucatán, 2012). Local government's finances are managed autonomously, exercised freely, and are also transparent and legal. They come from: taxes, rights, products, real-estate's changes, federal and state participations, contributions, public services and funding resources (ibid: Articles 140 and 141).

Municipalities work alongside state and national agencies for the implementation of programmes and regulations. State level agencies are part of the Centralised Public Administration (*Administración Pública Centralizada*) from the Government of Yucatán, under control of the state governor. National level agencies are part of national level Ministries which are directed by cabinet members of the Mexican President; these agencies usually have local offices at state level known as ‘delegations’. For this thesis, I selected the agencies described in Table 1 according to their relevance to its themes.

Table 1: Government agencies and objectives

Government Agency Level	Name of Agency Official objectives
CDI <i>Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas</i> National Level	National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples
	To advance in the legislative harmonisation, the recognition and validity of rights as well as access to justice of indigenous peoples. To guarantee access of indigenous populations to food, health, education, basic infrastructure and housing. To improve sources of monetary and non-monetary income of indigenous families and communities. To strengthen the participation of indigenous societies and the inter-government coordination in planning and managing the development of indigenous peoples. To preserve the culture of indigenous peoples as national heritage and as articulating element of institutional action.
IVEY <i>Instituto de Vivienda del Estado de Yucatán</i>	Housing Agency of the State of Yucatán
	To plan and to execute programmes supporting dignified housing, in order to contribute towards the reduction of lack of housing through the adequate use of territorial reserves and working along social, public and private organisations, in order to achieve an ordered and sustainable growth of housing in Yucatán.
SEDATU <i>Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano</i> National Level	Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development
	To plan, coordinate, manage, generate and implement the public policies of territorial planning; to secure a dignified housing, urban and rural development; also, to give legal certainty to the agrarian nucleus. To prevent the settlements in risk areas and to contribute to the immediate attention in case of natural phenomena, in order to improve the life quality of the Mexican populations.
SEDESOL <i>Secretaría de Desarrollo Social</i> National Level	Ministry of Social Development
	To formulate and coordinate the solidary and subsidiary social policy of the national government, aimed toward the common good, and to implement it along society in a jointly responsible way. To accomplish the overcoming of poverty by an integral human development, inclusive and jointly responsible, towards achieving sufficient levels of well-being.
SEDUMA <i>Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente</i>	Ministry of Urban Development and Environment
	To formulate and manage the State Programme of Urban Development and Environment, to guard its implementation and to

Government Agency Level	Name of Agency Official objectives
State level	evaluate its results establishing the general the general regulatory frameworks regarding natural resources, ecology, sanitation, water and environment of the urban development, considering the different regions of the state.
SEFOTUR <i>Secretaría de Fomento Turístico</i> State Level	Ministry of Touristic Promotion
	To propose the instrumentation of policies, programmes and actions aimed at promoting, stimulate touristic activities of the state. To use adequately the touristic resources, supporting the preservation of ecological balance and integrating social and private organisations into these activities. To carry out actions directed to increase the touristic activity accordingly to an adequate planning and organising.

Source: Personal compilation from Agencies

Other forms of governance within municipalities are those related to land and the communal management of *ejidos*. In Yucatán, 57 per cent of the territory is managed as *ejidos* or communities (SRA, 2012). These accounted for 698 *ejidos* and one *comunidad*, with approximately 82,712 *ejidatarios* and 1.5 million hectares of which 76.3 per cent are kept in common use (Procuraduría Agraria, 2007; Cornelius and Myhre, 1998). According to Article 44 of the Agrarian Law, *ejido* land was usually divided by its use into three categories: human settlement land, which is composed of an urbanised area for urban and social development, and its *fundo legal* or ‘the town itself’ (Pacheco, 1889: 5), which is the area transferred to the state to build house lots called *solares*; common use land, for pasture or forest; and individual agricultural parcels (INEGI, n.d.; Barnes, 2009; Cámara de Diputados, 1993: Article 63). The human settlement land is meant to have enough area for the development of the community life. In other words, a part of the *ejido* land was destined to be inhabited by the *ejidatarios* (*ejido* members with full rights) in *solares*. A *solar* is the piece of *ejido* land within the human settlement that is mainly used to inhabit, but can also be used for commerce, industry and public service. *Solares* were randomly distributed among the *ejidatarios* – up to a maximum of 2,000 square meters per *ejidatario* (INEGI, n.d.; PRECESAM, c2012). According to the Agrarian Law (Cámara de Diputados, 1993: Article 68), the *solares* are full property of their title holders and each *ejidatario* has the right to receive a *solar* free of charge when the urbanisation area is constituted, whenever it is possible.

The *ejido* works based on three bodies: the assembly, the *comisariado edijal*, and the surveillance board. The assembly is constituted by all the *ejidatarios* and it is the supreme body of the *ejido*; the *comisariado ejidal* executes the agreements made by the assembly and

represents and manages the *ejido*, its president is called *Comisario Ejidal*; and, the surveillance board supervise the actions and finances of the *comisariado ejidal* (Cámara de Diputados, 1993: Articles 21, 22, 32, and 36). Among the specific codes regulating the organisation of *ejidos* and *ejidatarios*, it was established that each *ejidatario* had the right to a maximum of twenty hectares of land for direct cultivation (de Janvry et al., 1997). The *ejido* land could not be sold or transferred to non-*ejidatarios*; but the state could claim the land back through expropriation, most likely through a ‘vicious cycle’ of invasion-expropriation-regularisation of land (Barnes, 2009; Jones and Ward, 1998). The introduction of a land certification programme, the National Programme of Certification of *Ejido* and Urban Solar Rights (*Programa Nacional de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Solares Urbanos* – PROCEDE) in 1993, followed a major Agrarian Law reform from 1992 and was developed towards the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. After the certification, the *ejidatarios* could decide to move the tenure status of *ejido* land from common social property into private land, through the parcelling of land claiming the right of exploitation, use and usufruct of their own parcel, and sell, rent or mortgage it to non-*ejidatarios* as well as to set contracts with local and foreign private companies (Cámara de Diputados, 1993), therefore affecting the way *ejidos* work and relate to their settlements.

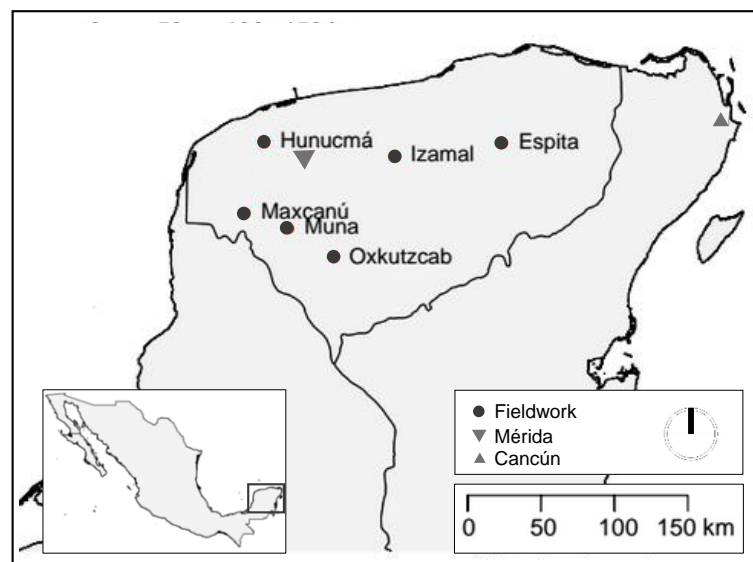
3.4.2 Fieldwork settlements

After phase one of the research design I selected six locations for the next phase (Figure 12). Their characteristics are presented below; complementary characteristics are presented in Table 2 in sub-section [5.4.1](#).

1. Espita – it has a more rural environment dependent on agricultural labour, the market was small and well maintained, there seem to be many *solares* and traditional houses, and it is located in the east of the state within the livestock economic region.
2. Hunucmá – it has a more urban environment, the market has an everyday outdoor setting, more informal than the indoor section, and it is located near Mérida and the coast, within the metropolitan influence.
3. Izamal – it has a unique city centre and a tourist environment with plenty infrastructure, the market is large, and it is located in the central region of the state.

4. Maxcanú – it has a medium level of urbanisation, mixing traditional characteristics with an urban influence from being located over the federal road leading to Mexico City.
5. Muna – it has a medium level of urbanisation with a considerable number of *pies de casa*, it is close to archaeological zones in the south region and has some infrastructure for tourists.
6. Oxkutzcab – it is a large urban city dependent on agricultural production, the market is a landmark in the region, it also has the presence of traditional characteristics, such as houses and ways of living, and it is also located nearby tourist sites in the south region.

Figure 12: Fieldwork locations



Source: Author (2016)

From these locations, I conducted the in-depth research in Espita while keeping a surface level in the others, especially from Muna and Oxkutzcab, where I had the opportunity to work with a fieldwork assistant who conducted some complementary interviews in July 2015.

3.5 Reflexive positionality

Taking Critical Ethnography as a base for designing the research and for keeping it as a background for actually doing fieldwork was my way of ‘decolonising’ ethnography. According to Jordan and Yeomans (1995: 391), ‘ethnography came to be closely

associated with, and developed by, an emergent anthropology in the [nineteenth] century which itself was given form by [colonialism] and imperialism'. In connecting Critical Geography and Decoloniality through Critical Ethnography and qualitative methods, I have drawn on realities of Maya populations in order to connect them with the theoretical frameworks I used as lenses to analyse such reality. As it was neither my goal nor my position to be a voice for the Maya populations I have intended to show their ongoing struggles and to provide a new light for their understanding. If at moments I have fallen into what I critique, of characterising or representing the subjects of my research, then it is entirely my misstep and it would be my next job to be reflexive and to decolonise my scholarship.

From this notion of looking back to the self, I have identified with the notions that Sultana (2007: 383) speaks about:

While some scholars have argued that acknowledgement of positionality, reflexivity, identity, and representation does not necessarily result in politically engaged research and writing, and may not result in destabilizing existing power relations or bring about dramatic changes, the alternative of not heeding such issues is even more problematic. Recognizing and working with multiple positionalities of researchers and research participants that are constantly negotiated is needed in creating ethical relations, which should be encouraged and embraced in undertaking challenging but rewarding field research.

Drawing from Sultana (2007: 377) 'positionality, reflexivity and fieldwork (e)motions' and following her example, I have reflected on my positionality when doing fieldwork, such as the fact of doing 'fieldwork' back 'home'. The distinction can be problematic since even in my own planning, I was going 'home', except that I was not. The first hint came from university regulations, in order to be covered by health insurance I had to comply with British measures, which meant getting vaccine shots for going back home. In reality, my home is in the state capital Mérida, which made me a 'city scholar' – what and where home is was a factor from differentiation between local people and myself. I have added scholar because my 'educational privilege' was a major indication of a relative position of power. I was a student from a British university coming back to do research on local populations' everyday life. One of the concerns of some of the women I interacted with was the fact that I was away from home – not only for my studies but for the fieldwork I was conducting. Indeed, I was not home: 'As such, I was simultaneously an insider, outsider, both and neither' (Sultana, 2007: 377). I was local, but not really 'local'. I was

born and raised in Yucatán and of Maya heritage but other subjectivities and privileges influenced my interactions with people. However, after engaging with informal and formal conversations with people my locality was established at some point. Even when being ‘not quite the same, not quite the other’ (Trinh, 1997: 418), people seemed to be sure that I understood the details of their experiences and that I was genuinely interested in knowing more about their everyday life struggles. I had the opportunity to give back information in a few occasions, when my previous interviews from government officials had provided useful material for local people to reflect on it. I was also able to pick on subtleties from people, when they were hesitant on addressing a subject or when they were too eager to do so – people who were not usual recipients of subsidies (mostly because they believed in hard work rather than flattering authorities) were most likely to be critical to their own situation and their political and economic surroundings. Furthermore, ‘inside knowledge’ allowed me to conduct a thorough selection of settlements for fieldwork.

Stepping back from myself and looking at the research I was doing, I relied on Decoloniality perspective to grant subjects agency. The ‘messiness of everyday life’ (Heyl, 2001: 375) came from dealing with people with their own positionalities. I had planned my fieldwork but one cannot plan for everything. Three main obstacles that I encountered on this: 1. I had an intimidating encounter with state police who were looking over ‘outsiders’ places for a robbery in town. As I had to assure them that I was on my own, a student of a foreign university, and my habitual residence was in Mérida, I perceived it as a risk; 2. The relations of power change when dealing with government officers, delays in their response pushed back the entirety of fieldwork; and, 3. I was excited to go back and re-interview the *Comisario Ejidal* who had been insightful on our first meeting – but one year after he had sold land without informing *ejidatarios* and the situation was troublesome to the end that I was recommended not to go near the *Casa Ejidal*. I had to ‘gossip’ my way into finding what had happened and I also lost the chance of photographing the Emiliano Zapata inspired mural of ‘*Tierra y Libertad*’ (Land and Freedom) located inside.

Finally, images are also part of my methodological contribution – when speaking about places, maybe from my architectural background, I have the need to visualise it to better understand it. I sketched some of the *solares* I visited and then discovered a most useful tool from the government of Yucatán (see INSEJUPY, 2012-2018) which not only shows streets, sectors, blocks and plots, but the actual buildings composing each plot. It was designed from a land registry perspective but it turned out to be enlightening when figuring out plot divisions of families and their not-legally divided *solares* (Figure 20 and Figure 21 in [Appendix 2](#)). This tool also exemplifies the privileges that having access to a computer and to the internet can do for locating specific information. Even if I have only

presented one of these images in this document due to limitations on academic papers, I used this tool to complement my field-notes, sketches and recordings of families' experiences in their *solares*.

Part I examined the motivations for this research, as well as its focus, Maya people of Yucatán and the Maya *solar*. It also introduced the questions and objectives guiding the research, as well as the overarching theoretical framework, Decoloniality perspective, and briefly engaged with each of the theoretical constructions and the methodological framework used in the body of work of this thesis. Part II will then present a set of analyses of the empirical material gathered during the aforementioned fieldwork through the different lenses of land, livelihoods and identities and in relation to key theoretical conceptualisations. Section 4. Primitive Accumulation in Indigenous Mexico: The Contested Transformations of the Maya *Solar* of Yucatán, or Paper 1, focuses on empirical evidence on land, although also dealing with livelihoods and identities, based on ethnographic research done in Espita and a critical historical documentary research through the theory of Primitive Accumulation, reworked from Decoloniality and Critical Geography. Section 5. The Urban beyond the City: The Transformations of the Maya *Solar* in Yucatán, Mexico, or Paper 2, focuses on evidence about livelihoods, complemented with land and identities, based on fieldwork experiences from all six settlements through the contestation of Latin American urban studies and the proposal of new ways of understanding the peri-urban based on Decolonial urbanism. Section 6. The Contested Reproduction of Maya Identities in Yucatán, Mexico, or Paper 3, focuses on empirical evidence regarding identities, without losing its links to land and livelihoods, based on fieldwork experiences from all six settlements and data from a quantitative study from Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa (2014), through a critical review of Indigenous Identities based on Decolonial perspectives of place, and for bringing together opposing views of identities of *Indigenismo* and Indigeneity.

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PART II: Academic Papers

4. PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION IN INDIGENOUS MEXICO: THE CONTESTED TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MAYA *SOLAR* OF YUCATÁN³

4.1 Abstract

This paper analyses the transformation of the Maya *solar* in relation to the contested Marxian theory of Primitive Accumulation. The Maya of Yucatán are part of the Maya indigenous populations of southeast Mexico and Central America. Their *solar*, a house and garden plot that has historically supported an intricate indigenous system of land, livelihoods and identities, is today under threat along with the way of life it once sustained. The paper argues that a spatial-temporal re-working of Primitive Accumulation that draws on both Decoloniality perspective and Critical Geography can help us to better understand both the historical and contemporary significance of the *solar*'s plight. Using this theoretical framework, the paper shows how the *solar* has in fact been historically constructed through different cycles of enclosure, dispossession and resistance in Mexico.

The Spanish colonial period (1542-1821) enforced its 'rationalisation' in ways that disrupted space and time of native populations; the hacienda period, before and after independence (1821), constrained the *solar* within the accumulation of Maya land and labour by oligarchic powers; the post-revolution (1910) period saw its strengthening alongside land (re)distribution policies that were nevertheless bound up in forms of primitive accumulation; and most recently, the neoliberal turn under the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994) has directly undermined it through politically-imposed processes of marketization and commodification at every scale. Through this same historical lens, the paper also shows how Maya populations in Yucatán have been able to, following Bayat (2000), 'quietly' resist primitive accumulation by re-encroaching on their *solares* and reconstituting forms of commons to support their way of life. In this perspective, the same dialectic of dispossession and re-creation of commons can be

³ Cabrera Pacheco, A.J. (*forthcoming to CITY: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*). Primitive Accumulation in Indigenous Mexico: the Contested Transformations of the Maya Solar of Yucatán.

detected amidst the unprecedented commodification of Maya land, livelihoods and identities taking place under neoliberal globalisation processes today.

4.2 Introduction

Patricia lives with her husband and two children on her part of the family *solar*⁴ in Espita, a small urban settlement in the state of Yucatán in southeast Mexico. The *solar* is a plot of land inhabited by Maya families like Patricia's with a traditional Maya house, a wattle-and-daub building with palm roof, as the hub of a wider configuration of reproductive spaces including a kitchen, orchard and henhouse (see Estrada Lugo et al., 1998; Chico Ponce de León, 1995). Nowadays, however, the specific way of life that Patricia's *solar* once sustained, as part of a complex system of land, livelihoods and identities, is slowly dying. A major factor is the enforced sub-division of *solares* as a condition for certain government subsidies, such as sanitation programmes, leaving much smaller plots that support far fewer crops and poultry. As Patricia explained to me,

[...] when my father gave me a section of the *solar* for me to build my own house, he was not left with much. It is better when one has space in the *solar* because one can grow herbs and vegetables and save money (Interview: Patricia, 11/03/2015).

Before its division, the family *solar* was a large plot measuring 925 square metres with common spaces shared with her extended family in the traditional Maya way. Patricia's ability to grow food has been further hit by government policies encouraging the homogenisation of crop production and herbicide use in the surrounding communal fields that are also being subject to privatisation pressures. She even struggles to fix the traditional palm roof of her house as the Guano palms previously grown in *solares* are fast disappearing, partly due to their exploitation by the region's 'touristification' of Maya culture.

My encounter with Patricia's family took place in March 2015 during fieldwork exploring the transformations of land, livelihoods and identities of the Maya within urbanising spaces of Yucatán. Far from an isolated story, this vignette is emblematic of a wider social trend in Yucatán and other Mexican states. Currently, the Maya *solar*, a key site of indigenous Mexico, is facing gradual extinction through processes synonymous with the

⁴ Some words are used in Spanish due to a lack of an accurate term in English language that fully describes the meaning of the term.

Marxist concept of 'Primitive Accumulation'. In Marx's original formulation, primitive accumulation captured the transformation of existing social relations to land – in his case, peasant communities subsisting under feudal modes of production – into capitalist social relations through the gradual enclosure of land and proletarianisation of its occupiers (Marx, 1990 [1867]). This paper will show how primitive accumulation is transforming the Maya *solar* of Yucatán in the form of state-imposed neoliberal policies specifically enacted through the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada and Mexico. NAFTA has subjected the Maya's land-based livelihood systems to unprecedented capitalist logics through three key mechanisms: reforms driving the spread of private property relations through previously communal lands; temporary state subsidies supposedly to 'protect' farmers as they transition into NAFTA's economic free trade zone that subvert indigenous agriculture; and various initiatives, such as disaster-based programmes and tourism initiatives that are commodifying, modernising and urbanising the *solar* and its traditional housing. The significance of these processes lies in their assault on the *solar's* pivotal historical role in supporting the Maya's sustainable and resilient self-subsistence mode of production and land use forged over nearly 2,000 years in Yucatán's harsh physical environment (García de Miguel, 2000).

However, the paper also argues that primitive accumulation within the *solar* is neither new nor definitive for the Maya of Yucatán. Influenced by both Critical Geography and Decoloniality perspectives, an alternative reading of both primitive accumulation and the historical struggles of the Yucatán Maya is presented that shows how this contemporary top-down, state-led commodification of the *solar* is connected over time and space to cycles of resource plundering, dispossession and resistance underway in Latin America since at least the colonial invasions of the sixteenth century. The paper uses this theoretical framework to show how the Maya *solar* has in fact been historically constructed through different cycles of enclosure, dispossession and resistance. The Spanish colonial period (1542-1821) enforced its 'rationalisation' in ways that disrupted space and time of native populations; the hacienda period, before and after independence (1821), constrained the *solar* within the accumulation of land and labour by oligarchic powers; and, the post-revolution (1910) period saw it strengthened alongside land (re)distribution policies that were nevertheless bound up in forms of primitive accumulation. Using this historical lens, the paper shows how Maya populations in Yucatán have been able to, following Bayat (2000), 'quietly' resist primitive accumulation by re-encroaching on their *solares* and reconstituting forms of commons to support their way of life. In this perspective, the Maya way of life and the *solar* we now see as under

threat have themselves been constructed through these drawn out processes of dispossession and re-creation of commons, and this same dialectic can be detected amidst the unprecedented commodification of Maya land, livelihoods and identities taking place today under neoliberal globalisation processes.

The primary research for this paper draws heavily on the peri-urban settlement of Espita where 51 per cent of the 11,551 population are Maya by official language records (INEGI, 2010). An economic and cultural stronghold during Mexico's hacienda period, Espita fell into decline after the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Today, the local population mostly relies on agriculture and specifically corn production (SEFOE, 2002). Fieldwork was conducted between 2013 and 2015, including participant observation of local Maya communities going about their daily lives, followed by in-depth interviews with both selected Maya families, whose names have been changed, and Yucatán state officers, who are identified only by the agency they represented. It is important to acknowledge that these accounts are neither representative nor exclusive with respect to 'the hundreds of Maya communities in the Peninsula of Yucatán [who] differ from one to another in history, subsistence ways, 'acculturation' levels, organisational complexities, identity representation, characteristics of their relation to the dominant society, and other factors' (Quintal et al., 2003: 369). My own positionality was also an important dimension in these encounters as someone born and raised in Yucatán and of Maya heritage but whose interactions with people were influenced by other subjectivities, such as returning to the region as a student of a British university as well as my age and gender. I felt and was perceived as an outsider until engaging in conversations that established my 'locality' and gave room to realities that even when I do not share them, I can fully relate.

The paper proceeds as follows. A first section discusses Primitive Accumulation's contested theoretical and empirical development in Europe before introducing a reworked conceptualisation that draws from Latin American scholarship and specifically 'Decoloniality perspective'. A second section constructs a historical periodisation of the Maya dispossession and resistance from the colonial period up to the present neoliberal turn, arguing how Maya people have utilised self-subsistence as a quiet form of resistance. A third section focuses on the current processes of primitive accumulation and resistance in and around the Maya *solar*. The conclusion highlights the ongoing resistance of alternative ways of living under overwhelming neoliberal processes.

4.3 Decolonising Primitive Accumulation theory

The concept of Primitive Accumulation was conceived in the context of mid-nineteenth century industrial Britain in which the urban and industrial development of *laissez-faire* capitalism was materialising alongside the enclosure of the countryside. It was defined by Karl Marx in *Capital*, Volume I, as ‘the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production... [thus transforming] the social means of subsistence and of production into capital [and] the immediate producers into wage labourers’ (Marx, 1990 [1867]: 874-875). Marx saw capital’s birthing through this process of class separation as dependent on *extra-economic* mechanisms or, what he sarcastically called the ‘idyllic methods of primitive accumulation’ such as the ‘spoliation (*plundering*) of the church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism’ (895). In classical interpretations of Marx’s theory, Primitive Accumulation refers only to the initial transition towards capitalism as a series of ‘one-off’ acts that gradually conquer different geographies for capital until it becomes dominant (see Sassen, 2010 for a contemporary application; and Zarembka, 2002 for a discussion). Opposing this classical approach, scholars within the Open Marxist tradition have more convincingly theorised capitalism as involving an everyday social struggle in which the extra-economic forces of primitive accumulation are continually required to maintain the separation of workers from productive resources and prevent land, labour and subjectivities from escaping or undermining capitalist logics (De Angelis, 2001; Midnight Notes Collective, 1990).

Incorporating aspects of both classical and Open Marxist approaches, and drawing on Rosa Luxemburg’s (2003 [1913]) notion of the dual nature of capital accumulation that incorporates the global spatial relations between capitalism and non-capitalist modes of production, Marxist geographer David Harvey (2003) has developed the concept of ‘Accumulation by Dispossession’. While acknowledging the continuous nature of primitive accumulation through old and new mechanisms, Harvey argues that the ever-growing crisis tendencies of global capitalism are seeing a new mode of accumulation in which global capital, backed by imperialist governments in the Global North, requires continuous and persistent ‘violent processes of dispossession’ of what lies ‘outside of itself’ for its expanded reproduction (see Hodkinson, 2012). These tendencies take different forms in different contexts. For example, in the Global North, accumulation by dispossession is led by the privatisation of state industries and assets so as to release public or common assets and resources into the market for investment, upgrading and speculation with over-accumulating capital. In contrast, the Global South and Latin

America are primarily dispossessed through the geo-power games of international trade forced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, backed by the United States and Europe (Harvey, 2003).

4.3.1 Critiques from the Global South

This theorising of Primitive Accumulation as ‘continuous, contemporary and global’ (Glassman, 2006: 615) enables us to better understand how it ‘can be extended temporally and conceptually to account for the existence of other kinds of coercion in the present’ (Brass, 2011: 8); as well as to historical and geographical spaces wherever people are forced into ‘a greater dependence on the market’ (Perelman, 2000, 34). In this vein, the history of Latin America, especially since European colonialism began, is a history of ongoing primitive accumulation. There have been ‘classical’ shifts in the mode of production from subsistence to capitalist, and agrarian to urban that continue today, following Harvey, under the NAFTA-style agreements of neoliberal globalisation; as well as examples of ‘disaster capitalism’ (see Klein, 2007), where Latin American governments and transnational companies utilise natural or social disasters and their chaotic aftermaths to impose neoliberal policies, such as privatisation schemes, under the disguise of top-down reconstruction.

However, Marxist approaches to primitive accumulation have been subject to important critiques in relation to the Global South and Latin America in particular. Harvey’s ‘Accumulation by Dispossession’ theory has been critiqued by Gudynas (2015a; 2015b) for its abstracting, globalising and generalising portrayal of global capital and the new imperialism that deflects the responsibility of national governments *within* Latin America for ‘predatory practices of appropriation of Latin America’s natural resources, the usurpation of [indigenous] lands and their lives, and the imposition of conditions of oppression’ (Gudynas, 2015a: online). These practices are understood, not as primitive accumulation, but as ‘neo-extractivism’ – a new wave of colonial extractive processes, namely mineral extraction, and large-scale agricultural, biofuel and timber production, for the benefit of the centre (and periphery’s elites) and with small profit redistributions in the form of social programmes by so-called progressive governments (Svampa, 2012; Gudynas, 2009).

Primitive Accumulation has been subject to further critiques, including its failure to address changes of living conditions or types of dispossession over time and space (Levien, 2015), and its emphasis on both *immediacy* (in time or space) when processes can take a long time to mature or materialise (Kelly, 2011), and *inevitability* of a process

bringing 'backward' indigenous communities into capitalism as a normative development (Coulthard, 2014). Critics have also argued that complete dispossession as implied by primitive accumulation is not required to force dependence on the market (Hall, 2012). As part of its failure to properly engage with either resistance or racialised subjects (Mollett, 2016), it does not acknowledge the struggles of indigenous communities 'to preserve their traditional livelihoods and to protect global commons' (Veltmeyer, 2012: 61). Finally, due to its rootedness in Eurocentric socialist thought and context (Veltmeyer, 2005), it does not acknowledge the role of the Americas as the racialised form of land appropriation, labour exploitation, and mass commodity production which turned capital into capitalism (Mignolo, 2005). These factors evidence why its use in Latin American settings has hitherto been highly problematic and theoretically incapable of capturing its specific realities of accumulation and dispossession.

4.3.2 A Decoloniality perspective for Primitive Accumulation

At the heart of the disjuncture over Primitive Accumulation between Eurocentric Marxism and its Global South discontents is a profound ontological dissonance that Fanon (2001) has addressed as the 'colonial problem'. This is exemplified by the classical Marxist approach of Bartra (1993: 85) who argued that the 'destruction of communal property in Mexico *followed paths similar* [my emphasis] to those taken by the process of primitive accumulation in Europe'. As Córdova (1989) has shown, the notion that primitive accumulation took place *separately* overlooks the intimate geographical and temporal relationship between land enclosures in Europe and European colonisation of the Americas during the sixteenth century. This intimate connection is illuminated through 'Decoloniality perspective' that re-thinks Postcolonial theory from the Latin American experience through incorporating World-system and Dependency theories (Castro-Gómez, 2005). Decoloniality perspective highlights the long-term effects of 'coloniality' as the historical denial of power, knowledge and being to native societies, and its on-going reproduction through contemporary neo-colonial and imperialistic practices of control, domination and exploitation based on racial inferiorisation (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Dussel, 1994). This means that such processes which originated in the Americas by European invasion continue to this day still based on racial hierarchies by which 'backward' populations are brought into 'modern' settings, e.g. self-provision into wage labour.

By using this Decoloniality framework, I argue that Primitive Accumulation can be applied to Latin America, to indigenous peoples' histories and to the Maya of Yucatán

more specifically, in three ways. First, by theorising the European colonisation of the Americas as producing the first periphery of a capitalist world-system, we can understand how the exploitation of ‘free’ indigenous labour and natural resources represented a ‘primitive accumulation’ for the world centre in which wealth was extracted from Spanish and Portuguese colonies and transformed into capital in England (Galeano, 2011; Di Muzio, 2007; Mignolo, 2005; Dussel, 1999). In this light, the colonial conquest of Latin America did not need to usher in capitalist social relations to be part of historical and geographically expansive processes of primitive accumulation. Second, the history of Latin America also shows that primitive accumulation is not inevitable. As Moore (2004: 92) has rightly cautioned, ‘peripheral processes of primitive accumulation [...] co-exist with other modes of production around the world’ – some of these processes ‘develop’ into capital but others ‘stall’ permanently. This argument is particularly apt when applied to Latin America where subsistence forms of production, both currently and historically, coexist with capitalist relations, sometimes even within the same household (see Wallerstein and Smith, 1992), breaking expected ‘paths’ of development and discarding complete processes of dispossession. Linked to the non-inevitability of primitive accumulation is a third aspect of Decoloniality, namely the re-centring of a continuous resistance from indigenous groups over their oppressions, which have occurred throughout the history of primitive accumulation in Latin America since colonial times (see Veltmeyer, 2005). One of the more well-known indigenous/peasant movements, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, is part of a longer historical cycle of resistance towards on-going exploitation and dispossession of Maya populations (Hall and Fenelon, 2008). Using this Decolonised theory of Primitive Accumulation, the rest of the paper will historically analyse the construction and transformation of the Maya *solar* in Yucatán through different cycles of enclosure, dispossession and resistance in order to situate the contemporary assault on the Maya way of life under neoliberal globalisation not as the beginning of primitive accumulation, but its latest cycle.

4.4 Conquest, slavery and resistance: the historical construction of the Maya *solar* in Yucatán

This section explores the struggles of the Maya of Yucatán to retain their way of life and collective subsistence practices in the face of different regimes of power and domination over time. Scholar understandings of land use and ownership within the Maya civilisation in Yucatán are unclear and imprecise; however, some scholars (see Villa Rojas, 1961) believe they were attached to a social organisation which included nobility, commoners

and slaves, i.e. a form not dissimilar to feudalism. Family production, within households and town lands, was used for self-sufficiency, for exchange within communities, and for paying tributes to the ruling class (Tourtellot and Sabloff, 1972). Flanked by polyculture agriculture under slash-and-burn, a system called *milpa*⁵ – used extensively in the region – in communal farmlands, the *solar* was where Maya extended families lived and engaged in additional crop-growing and animal husbandry. The organisation of their towns was based on scattered patterns of family-plots which appeared as ‘disorganised’ to Spanish colonisers (Terán and Rasmussen, 2009; García de Miguel, 2000). The following sections aim to show the historical construction of the Maya *solar* through processes of dispossession and re-creation of commons to support their way of life. This will be evidenced in relation to three distinct eras of primitive accumulation – colonial times, hacienda periods and the post-Mexican Revolution.

4.4.1 The violent ‘rationalisation’ of the solar in colonial Yucatán

The Spanish domination of the Maya of Yucatán (1542-1821) encompassed many of what Marx called the ‘idyllic methods’ of primitive accumulation but within a colonial setting. Chief among those were land enclosures by which the scattered Maya villages were depopulated – through the violent destruction of houses and means of subsistence, extended families disintegrated, and indigenous people put together into Indian Congregations to be better controlled in smaller spaces and make their land available for settlers (Terán and Rasmussen, 2009; Sullivan, 1996; Farriss, 1978). It was, paradoxically, through the colonisers’ spatial rationalisation that the *solar* itself became formalised and physically configured within the organisation of towns in square grids and the standardisation of housing plots around a central square following Spanish regulations for its colonies. Even more, its name was borrowed from a Spanish word and there are no records of an equivalent Maya term (de Pierrebourg et al., 2012; Restall, 1999). These changes did not bring the proletarianisation of Maya and other native populations; but it was nevertheless a violent and racialised transformation of an internal hierarchy for an external one where the accumulation of land, labour, resources and wealth buttressed colonial power within a wider emerging capitalist world-system (Mignolo, 2005). Even with their tightly policed conditions, Maya families developed sustaining strategies based on livelihood diversification in their *solar* and by controlling the land that was available to them: ‘[...] maize farming, arboriculture, herb and vegetable growing, water extraction, weaving, apiculture, cattle rearing, horse keeping, and other

⁵ Derived from the Nahuatl phrase used for ‘corn field’.

kinds of animal husbandry' (Restall, 1998: 368). Resistance also involved violent struggle such as a major Maya rebellion (1761) – ultimately unsuccessful, led by Jacinto Canek, which intended to take back control of political and religious authority lost to the settlers (Patch, 2003). Overall, whenever colonial control relaxed or declined, Maya populations gradually took control of their ways of living by migrating towards the east of the Peninsula and reorganising into their well-known pattern of scattered settlements (Farriss, 1978).

4.4.2 The oligarchic accumulation of land and people

The commercial production of corn, sugar and fodder in Yucatán only began in the late eighteenth century, but extended beyond the formal end of colonial rule in 1821. This production responded to growing demand, from both local consumption resulting from population growth, and from foreign trade especially with the ports of New Orleans and Havana. This agriculture expansion was only possible because of the accumulation of land by settler families in both 'regions' of Yucatán: the west owned and controlled by Spaniards, and the east considered as 'refuge' territory for Maya groups. The accumulation of land meant that masses of Maya people became displaced, and again clustered and controlled, because they were forced to work in large plantations in return for enough land to work their *milpa*. After 1856, major Mexican land distribution reforms were overturned by oligarchic powers, who took control over Maya populations and their land, just as in racialised colonial relations. While Maya people initially pressured peacefully for access to land, their demands gradually escalated into an armed insurrection known as the Caste War (1847-1901), of the Maya lower-class (mostly from the east region) who were eventually defeated. Oligarch families took back control of insurgent-occupied Maya land and their labour and established large-scale henequen plantations. The 'henequen boom' (1880-1915) responded to the international demand for hard fibres, and Maya populations were violently incorporated into a world-system of extractive capitalism where Yucatán haciendas depended on the United States as their sole market (Peniche Rivero, 2003; Wells and Joseph, 1996; Aboites, 1985).

Hacienda workers received 'the right to occupy *milpa* lands, a house to live in, medical care' (Peniche Rivero, 2003: 572); house and land, however, were the first debts Maya people incurred under a debt-peonage system, a form of slavery. These added to small debts from the hacienda general store, their only source for household supplies, which were all deducted from their meagre weekly wages. When *milpa* production became harder to combine with their 'waged' labour in haciendas due to lack of land and time, a

critical strategy for subsistence was the intensification of household agriculture and animal husbandry in the *solar* (Hernández, 2014), which became a place of resistance within hacienda lands and helped to develop a form of collective identity.

4.4.3 Land reforms, from distribution to privatisation

The Maya of Yucatán had no apparent role in the 1910 Mexican Revolution against oligarchic power. Rather, its outcomes were ‘imposed’ in the region and ushered in a new political economy of land redistribution and a ‘return’ to a more autonomous, self-dependent way of life that meant ‘to sow on their own account, to build their own houses, to grow orchards in the *solares* of their houses, to enrol their children in schools’ (Aboites, 1985: 84). Land redistribution was institutionalised after the Revolution in the creation of the *ejido*. Codified by Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, the *ejido* refers to state-recognised common land in Mexico and provided landless peasant and indigenous populations the right to perpetually benefit from the land as an agricultural provider. It was designed to carry on traditional community organisations oriented to mutual insurance, collective labour and labour exchange, under an ideal complete autonomy and self-management. *Ejidatarios* (individuals with full rights to use *ejido* in common with others) could work the land, guard the forests or exploit other resources for their own and their communities benefit, but not use it for selling, renting or mortgaging, putting this land legally off-market (Barnes, 2009; de Janvry et al., 1997; Guerrero, 1975).

However, as de Janvry et al. (1997) argued, the *ejido* was full of contradictions, as a compromise between a temporary form of land ownership which would eventually lead to a full private property, and a distinct and permanent form of collective property. Under the Presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) nearly eighteen million hectares of hacienda lands were expropriated, formalising the redistribution of *ejido* land. By the end of the twentieth century, *ejidos* covered 52 per cent of the total land of Mexico. The *solar* was legally recognised as the *ejido*’s urban and private counterpart (Barnes, 2009; Jones and Ward, 1998). In Yucatán, the *solar* fostered cohesion to the family unit and the wider community through the diffusion of indigenous knowledge, such as plant benefits, crop-improvement, and palm-roof building. Furthermore, it facilitated household-based livelihood strategies consisting on polyculture *milpa* in *ejido* land, *solar* activities, the production of honey and handcrafts, and wage labour for extra cash (Aké Gómez et al., 1999; Warman, 1985). However, land reforms also triggered the incorporation and assimilation of marginalised and racialised social groups, such as former hacienda-workers, into a homogenous national Mexican state (Aboites, 1985). As part of its

contradictions, the creation of *ejidos* was, as we shall see in the next section, an important prelude in the neoliberal turn from the early 1980s onwards in Mexico, where the *ejido* has been considered to be a pivot of on-going primitive accumulation in the expansion of capitalist forms of agricultural production (Morton, 2010).

4.5 Primitive accumulation under neoliberal globalisation: the contemporary Maya struggles

In this section, I explain how primitive accumulation and the unfolding practices of coloniality are underway in Yucatán led by the neoliberal state, on an unprecedented scale and in ways somewhat distinct from historical processes. Neoliberal ideas arguably first emerged in Mexico after the 1982 economic crisis with reforms to Article 27 in 1983 which ‘renewed’ the process of agrarian privatisation, towards ‘rural modernisation and growth’ (Durand Alcántara, 1993: online), followed by an agreement with the World Bank in 1988 that resulted in agricultural credits to compensate for failed programmes, accompanied by familiar market liberalisation conditions (Robles, 1992). The decisive neoliberal breakthrough came in January 1994 with the signing of NAFTA, a trilateral agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada designed to guarantee ‘free’ trade and investment across borders. The reforms required by NAFTA in Mexico meant privatisation and deregulation of the economy; international investment and trade opening; and, most importantly, the cutting loose of traditional protections and supports for the workforce, especially in agriculture (Barkin et al., 1997). While indigenous resistance to these neoliberal processes is most famously seen in the rise of the Zapatistas against the implementation of NAFTA, the Maya of Yucatán have also resisted the incursion of capitalist social relations into their lives particularly using silence, ‘not as a sample of weakness and apathy but as a strategy in their political struggle against a long history of breached accords, empty promises, simulated supports and deceiving programmes’ (Duarte Duarte, 2013: 6). My analysis, drawing from fieldwork in Espita, identifies the main actors, institutions and processes of contemporary primitive accumulation, and the ways Maya people contest them.

4.5.1 Commodification and individualisation of common land

One of the first and most important incursions of neoliberalism into the Maya of Yucatán came in the form of the recommodification of land through the privatisation and individualisation of common property. This began with the further reform of Article 27

and its regulation under the 1992 Agrarian Law, designed ‘to end the process of land redistribution and to open the *ejido* lands to the market’ (Otero, 2004: 12). The law in effect paved the way for the sale of lucrative plots to agro-industrial interests and developers, setting free the ‘production potential’ of the *ejido* into the world market system (de Janvry et al., 1997: 11). It was followed in 1993 by PROCEDE (*Programa Nacional de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Solares Urbanos*), a national programme for cataloguing all common land and *solares* that would enable *ejido* land to be privatised and prepare the ground for market liberalisation under NAFTA. After certification, *ejidatarios* could decide between keeping the *ejido* in common or sub-dividing their common holding into individually-owned plots that could then be sold, rented or mortgaged to non-*ejidatarios*, as well as opened up to contracts with local and foreign private companies (Barkin et al., 1997). My interviews with Yucatán government officers supported the view of existing scholarship that this programme was controversial in its objectives, methods and outcomes, with the Environment officer (Interview, 19/01/2015) describing it as ‘deadly, because it has been dispossessing [...] the Maya people [...] and sending them into extreme poverty and to become peons again’.

And yet, in-keeping with the Maya’s historical resistance to enclosure, Yucatán was one of the few states in which a majority of *ejidos* remained as common land after PROCEDE (Pérez, 2004). In Espita, *ejidatarios* proudly recounted their decision to keep the *ejido* in common and reject PROCEDE’s intentions:

[...] most *ejidatarios* said ‘we do not want parcels; we want [the land] free’. Three times they repeated [the process...] and we said again: ‘we want freedom to work the land, we do not want any abuse with these parcels, we do not want this’ [...]. We signed that the *ejido* land will remain of common use for 30 years (Interview: Ulises, 05/02/2014).

This refusal to privatise the *ejido* was motivated less by idealism and more by the pragmatic reliance on land cultivation; the *Comisario Ejidal* (the representative of the *ejido* in Espita) stressed the importance of prioritising future generations:

[...] this way young people can keep working the *ejido*, because if it was parcelled, with each of our needs, people would sell it and it is over, there is no more *ejido* [...] We want to keep it as it is, as common use (Interview, 05/05/2014).

By refusing or stalling the process of commodification and individualisation of the *ejido*, Maya people are able to maintain the connection to land beyond their own *solar*. Firewood, trees used for construction, and fruits and vegetables found in the local market come from the surrounding land even for non-*ejidatarios*.

4.5.2 Suppression of alternative forms of agricultural production

A second front of primitive accumulation under neoliberal globalisation has been the destructive impact of temporary, market-adjustment subsidies for farmers adapting to NAFTA's free market on indigenous agricultural systems. In 1994, the government launched PROCAMPO (*Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo*) as a temporary agricultural subsidy programme to support *campesinos* (peasants) while they adapted to NAFTA (it continues today under the name PROAGRO). Described as 'a hybrid between compensation, welfare and adjustment' (Sadoulet et al., 2001: 1054), three million producers received annual monetary support calculated by the number of hectares they had cultivated in any of nine basic crops in the years preceding 1993 but also for livestock, forestry or specific environmental projects (Sadoulet et al., 2001; SARH, 1994). Although primarily aimed at smoothing the way for devastating neoliberal structural adjustment of agricultural production, Yucatán state officers (Interviews: Environment, 19/01/2015; Indigenous Development, 06/02/2015) revealed that this subsidy system caused land degradation by encouraging large surfaces of corn monoculture, the use of herbicides which prevented other crops, and suppressing alternative land uses such as polyculture-based *milpa*.

Interviewees again emphasised how the Maya have sought to resist these interventions by covertly growing their *milpa* as traditional polyculture in small areas, hidden from inspection of their subsidised production of corn monoculture. Nevertheless, the impacts of neoliberal reforms have combined with the damaging effects of climate change on rain patterns to undermine *campesinos* ability to subsist. Maya families in Espita explained how the land has 'become tired' damaging their corn production and impelling the need to earn cash to buy food, or to apply for subsidies from the government (Interviews: Patricia, 11/03/2015; Don Genaro, 19/03/2015). In this context, the pressure to sub-divide and sell *ejido* land for finance is becoming increasingly irresistible for more Maya people, all the time further undermining their own future survival as subsistence farmers by reluctantly enabling the land to be used for cattle-ranching, export crops such as soya and sorghum (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015), and the penetration of multinational corporations and genetically-modified food. Maya people are thus being dispossessed of

their lands only to then be further exploited as wage labour by being hired to work it, as explained by a local *ejidatario*:

Many have rented out their land but the majority sold it. [...] That land, a rich person manages it now. [...] These poor people settled on 'lending' the land [for a fixed amount of money] but then they realised they signed away their land. What are they going to claim back? [...] Thus, the slavery returns. [...] Around nine thousand hectares of land have been knocked down [...] and people get tired because it is a constant work. [...] You cannot do it your way because it is for growing mahogany and cedar. [...] It is slavery because one is not free, your workload is measured (Interview: Ulises, 05/05/2015).

This coerced selling of land does not mean the boosting of non-farm livelihoods and it prevents Maya families from regaining access to land (see Alonso-Fradejas, 2012). Non-agricultural livelihoods in Espita practiced by my interviewees include driving moto-taxis and managing small shops (Interviews: Martha and Doña Karla, 10/03/2015; Valentina, 25/03/2015). Doña Renata's story (Interview: 04/02/2014) exemplified the multiplicity of activities carried out in a *solar* – her family grows vegetables and keeps pigs and chickens for self-subsistence and selling on her market stall, but they also make crafts from plants and trees, and prepare traditional medicinal remedies.

4.5.3 Undermining and commodifying indigenous housing and identities

While the previous mechanisms of primitive accumulation have undermined the *solar* by attacking the larger system of land and livelihoods, the final main front is the neoliberal assault on the Maya *solar* itself. The *solar* and the traditional ways of life it sustains are perceived as 'backward' and set to disappear amidst processes of modernisation within a 'rural to urban' transition (sometimes 'stalling' in peri-urban conditions) (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming). According to the Environment officer (Interview, 19/01/2015), 'the *solar* is the reflection of the social, economic, cultural, environmental and administrative deterioration that Maya people are suffering with these politics of market, free trade and private property'. The gradual disappearance of the *solar* is partly understood through what Klein (2007) has called 'disaster capitalism', using the chaotic aftermath of a 'disaster' to impose neoliberal policies. Using the crisis of Hurricane Isidore (September 2002) in Yucatán, which severely damaged or completely destroyed large numbers of Maya houses, the Mexican state created relief programmes in which

reconstruction aid was tied to the individualisation and commodification of the *solares*. The main vehicle for this primitive accumulation was the FONDEN (*Fondo de Desastres* [1999]), through which '*pies de casa*' (small concrete rooms – Figure 13d) were built, considered as basic habitat units (Cabrera Pacheco, 2014). '*Pie de casa*' has no literal translation – it is supposed to be an initial building to which families can build upon later to make a 'proper' house (Angelotti Pasteur, personal communication, 12/07/2016) but through FONDEN families only received one-room buildings some of which were never finished (Angelotti Pasteur, 2014). On paper, FONDEN regulations stipulated that these new houses had to respect the customs and traditions of the region (SHCP, 1999); evidence shows that this was not the case in Yucatán, even when recipients of new housing asked for their traditions to be considered. The custom of extended families sharing a single large *solar* plot was undermined through the requirement to legally and physically divide the plots to receive more than one '*pie de casa*'.⁶ According to the Social Development officer (Interview: 10/02/2015), the legal division of the *solar*, which enables private ownership, has since become an important requirement for having access to further government subsidies which require evidence of individual ownership. One of the downsides of this plot-division is the space reduction, undermining self-provision. According to Doña Karla (Interview: 10/03/2015) 'the *solar* used to be enough'.

Beyond the individualisation of urban ownership, the undermining of the Maya house as a viable option even for extreme meteorological conditions was discarded by the government based on perceived safety and costs, according to my interviews. Even today, government programmes subsidise concrete rooms while labelling them as 'safe' and 'durable' (Interview: Housing officer, 23/02/2015). The Maya house (Figure 13c), one of the symbols of Maya identities, has evolved by adapting to the environmental conditions from the region, including hurricanes and high temperatures. Its resistance to hurricane winds has been tested (see Angelotti Pasteur, 2014; Centeno Lara et al., 2005), giving room to its improvement, while the traditional palm roof provides relief to high temperatures which is not achieved in '*pies de casa*'. One of the consequences of dividing *solares* is the loss of tree coverage as more space is needed to compensate for the loss of shared activities. *Solares* then lose a most needed shade for carrying out certain social and everyday life activities on an average high temperature of 32.8 degrees. Figure 13a shows an undivided *solar* with enough space for developing livelihoods and social activities as well as a large tree covered area, while Figure 13b shows a divided one with arguably less

⁶ Much of this evidence was presented and discussed in the Symposium 'Past and Present of the Mayas' House' during the Third International Conference of the Maya Culture (*Simposio Pasado y presente de la casa de los mayas. 3er Congreso Internacional de la Cultura Maya*) held in Mérida, Mexico, 2011.

livelihood options attached to the *solar*; Figure 13e shows the trend for new housing developments, far smaller than traditional *solares*. As hurricanes are not a daily-life occurrence in Yucatán, but high temperatures usually are, local housing alternatives should be recognised as a dignified option for living.

Figure 13: Fieldwork locations with *solar* and housing diversity



Source: INSEJUPY (2012-2018) [a, b, e]; Author [c, d] (2014, 2011).

Against this background, building a Maya house is becoming ever more difficult: there is no government support, traditional knowledge is being lost, and materials, such as the Guano palm, are becoming scarce and expensive – a ‘luxury’ even. While the Maya house is now considered a symbol of poverty, the prices of the palm have gone up and can only be found in specific *milpas* and sold for specific uses (Cabrera Pacheco, 2014). Credits are being offered for building Maya houses to offer tourists a Maya ‘experience’ (Interview: Tourism officer, 16/01/2015). Moreover, as part of touristic development plans (2007-2012), some *ejido* lands were catalogued as ‘inadequate’ to be used in agriculture and

offered to companies while *ejidatarios* were offered employment in their own land (Duarte Duarte, 2014; 2013). In Espita people are already hearing about this appropriation of resources:

[...] and companies and people with money come and [local people] become employees again. The process is repeated. [...] These people say] 'You give us the land, I put in the supplies, you work for me and I will give you 100 pesos daily'. The employee is the *campesino*, the owner of the land (Interview: Alfredo, 26/03/2015).

Tourism has thus become added to non-food crops, cattle-ranching and the exploitation of forest resources as a direct threat to the Maya way of life, as their *solar* and its traditional elements have no value unless they can be commodified under the label of 'Maya tradition'. This transformation in which the only people 'benefiting' from Maya houses are now tourists, especially international ones, represents the ultimate primitive accumulation of Maya life through the commodification of the *solar* as a representation of the Maya culture to be consumed.

4.6 Conclusions

As argued, the Maya *solar* forms part of a complex system of land, livelihoods and identities. Contemporary processes of primitive accumulation are leading to critical transformations of the meaning and practices of the *solar* by undermining this system through several mechanisms. Common land is being commodified and individualised under neoliberal reforms spreading private property relations. Further alternative forms of agricultural production are being disrupted as a consequence of NAFTA's unequal terms, putting Maya household strategies at risk and putting pressure on the relevance of the *solar* as a space for self-subsistence. Moreover, the *solar* itself is subject to unprecedented and contradictory pressures from disaster-based programmes, and ongoing housing programmes, which are transforming traditional ways of life into 'modern' and 'urban', at the same time that tourism initiatives are commodifying such traditional ways of life for international 'consumption'.

However, transformations of the *solar* and the way of life it sustains under primitive accumulation are not new. The *solar* itself was historically constructed through waves of dispossession, resistance and recuperation of environmental, social and cultural resources for profit. From the period of colonial domination to the post-independence era of

haciendas, Maya people were violently separated from their means of existence, and clustered and reorganised in ways that were alien to them. Yet they managed to develop strategies to adapt, resist and contest these processes, especially by ‘quietly’ re-encroaching on their *solares* and reconstituting their way of life, as part of the diversity of resistance movements in the world, understood as complex and even ‘messy’. Maya people have resisted in historical ways such as Duarte Duarte (2014: 271) has argued: ‘[older Maya people] speak from a world [that] neither the conquest, the pacification, the colonisation, the paternalism, the liberalism nor the free market have been able to eliminate’. But as they face overwhelming processes of incorporation to free market economies, resisting by quietly living in a *solar* might not be the same as pushing neoliberal policies and the state out of communities.

In order to be able to (re)produce alternative ways of living as viable options for indigenous populations, shifting our world perspectives is required. Based on this, the paper’s contribution to Primitive Accumulation debates is achieved by bringing the ongoing ‘coloniality’ to the foreground. The transformation processes of the *solar* and the Maya way of living cannot only be explained through means of Primitive Accumulation, in the sense previously understood by scholars. Along with other similar concepts, such as ‘Accumulation by Dispossession’, Primitive Accumulation must be Decolonised, in the sense of being reinterpreted, contested and reworked under the specificities of the Latin America and other Global South experiences to draw a more comprehensive historical and current analysis. This paper is therefore a nascent look at historical and contemporary struggles by ‘stretching’ a Marxist concept under Decoloniality perspective. Of course, more is left to do.

Finally, even when in urban and peri-urban environments the Maya life in the *solar* is disappearing, it still serves as a reminder that not all regions of the world have become incorporated into the hegemonic mode of production, and their resistance, even if under the quiet everyday life of self-provision, is an indication that they want to keep it that way – as a different way of living life.

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5. THE URBAN BEYOND THE CITY: THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MAYA *SOLAR* IN YUCATÁN, MEXICO⁷

5.1 Abstract

The development of the urban in Latin America is usually based on conceptions of megacities and other theories and experiences imported from the Global North. This paper aims to contribute a new understanding of the peri-urban, presented through a Decolonial lens as a place beyond ‘the city’ where both the urban and the rural converge in a series of ‘ordinary’ places. In particular, I look at the long term transformation of the Maya *solar* in Yucatán, Mexico, a space for the production of food and other domestic needs. I analyse the *solar* not as a remnant of a rural past but as a feature of the new peri-urban which supports the development of livelihoods and the possibility of self-provision.

5.2 Introduction

In this paper I develop a critical understanding of the peri-urban to capture complex processes of transformation in Yucatán, Mexico. Human settlements in Yucatán can be considered as some of the most traditional yet rapidly urbanising places in the world and it is therefore difficult to fit them into the neat categories of urban or rural. Maya communities can still work their land and provide from it but at the same time processes of individualisation, privatisation and commodification of land, livelihoods and even identities are advancing. These complex processes have not yet been fully studied in urban theory and policy development due to their mismatch with existing conceptual frameworks. Many of the approaches in urban studies in Latin America understand the urban following specific ideas of the city while leaving out different alternatives and ways of living (Robinson, 2006). I employ a ‘Decolonial’ approach to expose how this limited notion of the urban is particularly unhelpful for understanding the territorial settlements of indigenous communities, such as the Maya of Yucatán.

⁷ Cabrera Pacheco, A.J. (*revise and resubmit to ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*). The Urban beyond the City in Mexico: The Transformations of the Maya *Solar* in Yucatán.

The state of Yucatán is located in Southeast Mexico. It has a population of 1'955,577 inhabitants of which the indigenous people, considered as the population of three or more years who speak the Mayan language, is roughly the 30 percent (INEGI, 2010). This research positions the *Maya solar* as one of the most important spaces in Yucatán for the reproduction of the Maya way of living. The *solar* is a dynamic space under continuous transformation that has endured and remained as the basic habitable unit and a continuous feature of the region throughout its history. More than a space, it comprises a way of living. The *solar* is mainly destined to cover the subsistence needs of the family complemented by the *milpa*, an agriculture system which relies on polyculture and a slash-and-burn practice usually done in *ejido* land, or state recognised common land in Mexico.⁸ The *solar* is also important in contributing to the cohesion of the family unit and of the community through actions of preservation, enrichment and diffusion of knowledge. The socio-environmental relations within the *solar* have been an important part of its configuration and its role in the wider community. It has generally contained the traditional Maya house and a series of spaces (e.g. kitchen, barn, henhouse, etc.) where social, cultural and economic activities take place, providing not only food but also material construction, utensils and forage for domestic animals. Even further, it has made possible an economic surplus because of the crops and the animals' commerce. In the *solar*, family management ensures the continuity of different practices and activities that shape the configuration of the settlements and its surroundings (Aké Gómez et al., 1999; Jiménez-Osornio et al., 1999; Correa Navarro, 1997; Vara Morán, 1995).

From a review of literature and empirical evidence collected as part of a PhD research project⁹, when the *Maya solar* is located within more rural environments its importance in everyday life and to the development of livelihoods, its connection to land and its relevance in constructing identities is very evident. However, when the *solar* is located in more urbanised environments, its importance seems to decline in terms of size but also in the relevance of its components, from spaces and activities to the use of vegetation (see for example, Poot-Pool et al., 2005). The *solar* in urban environments is often imagined by scholars as a result of rural to urban migration where individuals recreate rural ways of life, but more often they are the product of processes of rapid urbanisation, by which populations get caught between self-subsistence practices and more wage labour-based

⁸ Codified by the Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, *ejidos* provided landless peasant and indigenous populations the right to perpetually benefit from the land as an agricultural provider (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming).

⁹ Fieldwork was conducted in Yucatán between 2013 and 2015. I engaged in participant observation with local communities going about their daily lives followed by in-depth interviews with selected families. Officials from several government agencies from the state level (Yucatán) were also interviewed. Names have been changed. All translations are mine.

ones. Settlements are being transformed by both governments and local populations, and with them, the ways of living of the Maya people are being challenged. In this paper I study these contradictions and complex transformations that produce neither rural nor urban settlements but something which takes elements from both and are not necessarily on a clear path towards one or the other. I propose a new understanding of the concept of the 'peri-urban' in order to comprehend the processes shaping these settlements, often overlooked by urban theories which focus on megacities or on adapting frameworks from the Global North. I do this by looking at transformations both from above, with programmes and actions from the government, and from below, by exploring how populations decide on the continuity of their way of living based on self-provision.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section critically reviews the development of the urban in Latin America based on research, theories and production, drawing on imported concepts and practices. It also analyses current theories and proposes an urbanism grounded in the specificities of the Latin America context, questioning the historical origins of the urban in the region while involving alternative understandings, specifically from the indigenous populations. The second section presents empirical evidence from the PhD research by reviewing the characteristics of the peri-urban in Yucatán including its historical contextualisation. It also deals with the production of the peri-urban as conceptualised from the government followed by the alternatives presented by local populations while developing their ways of life as a counter-narrative of this process of peri-urbanisation. The third section draws from Decolonial urbanism and empirical evidence to rework the concept of the peri-urban as the urban-other, neither rural nor urban but as a place where different characteristics of both converge. It also reviews the development of livelihoods and self-provision within more 'urban' environments as a relevant feature of such spaces.

5.3 Rethinking the urban in Latin America

Discussing the urban in Latin America in academic and policy debates usually means focusing on large scale cities and their role in the global urban network. Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and other metropolises dominate the literature and often define what a Latin America city is or what it is supposed to be (Duhau López, 2014). On the same line, in Mexico urban research seems to concentrate on large metropolitan areas wherein other areas might be included only in relation to one or two major cities. However, the urban population of Latin America does not just reside in large metropolises and the vast differences between these cities in any case means that they should not be

categorised as one type of 'Latin American city'. According to Lefèvre (2005: 250) 'Latin American cities are too diversified in their social, economic and political aspects, up to the point that is arguable to talk about them as if they were a monolithic block'. Moreover, the conception, design and building of most Latin American cities have largely been determined by imported models, practices and projects 'embedded in and disseminated through colonialism and globalisation' (Vainer, 2014: 48). This means that they were first developed under colonial power, and have subsequently followed European and North American models of urbanisation and modernity (Patel, 2014; Vainer, 2014). Therefore, we need more a complex understanding of the urban, which takes on board the diversity of urban experiences as well as the influence of colonialism, which I start to develop in this section by connecting various literatures. I will first present a brief review of urban research and urban theory in Latin America based mostly on scholars who have done extensive historical literature reviews, followed by the latest urban theories. Then I will analyse the novel concept of 'Decolonial urbanism' based on the work by Farrés and Matarán (2014) framed within the Decoloniality perspective.

5.3.1 Urban theory in Latin America

Urban research, theory and development in Latin America within the twentieth century were for the most part influenced by external theories, paradigms and practices. According to an extensive literature review made by Duhau López (2014), during the 1960s and 1970s, two different perspectives attempted to explain the rapid processes of urbanisation: as a normal phase within capitalist development; and as a dependent development. From these two perspectives came the concept of marginality, both social and urban, specifically concerned with a growing population that was not yet incorporated to the capitalist modernisation process, especially rural-urban migrants (Schteingart, 2000). Another perspective from another literature review by Schteingart (2000) was the theory of Modernisation, adapted to the Latin American context, which differentiated between traditional and modern sectors, seen as independent from each other. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, urban policy and research was framed under the programmes of the World Bank and the United Nations. The failure of economic prescriptions in the region set the framework for structural adjustment programmes which were designed to reform and to privatise the state, including public services and urban production. In order to counterbalance these neoliberal processes, urban research throughout Latin America became influenced by Marxist approaches on urban soil, housing, urban social movements and urbanisation processes (Almandoz, 2008; Schteingart, 2000; Lungo, 1996). Another theory used in Latin America was the 'Socio-

Economic Formation' which Santos (1982) addressed as inherently spatial. According to this theory, the differential evolution of societies is defined not only by their own terms by which people transformed the space they live in through their own labour, but in relation to external forces from where they gain impulse. Latin American Dependency theory relates to this, in critically disregarding urbanisation as the outcome of 'the continuous struggle of diverse classes, groups and institutions' but looked at it instead as a 'reflection of external forces' (Singer, 1974 quoted in Lungo, 1996: 696). According to Development theory, economic and social transformations occurring in the late nineteenth century in Latin America are interpreted as steps towards 'reaching' the modernity posed by European cities. Urbanisation was seen not as autonomous or solely dependent on economic circumstances but from the region's historical position in the global territorial division of labour (Santos, 2000 quoted in Montoya, 2009). While Dependency theories are still useful in explaining uneven regional and urban development in Latin America, they are still based on urban hierarchies and they are mostly conditioned by the analysis of major metropolises which are not representative of the realities of thousands of smaller urban and peri-urban settlements.

The predominance of neoliberal politics in the late 1980s and in the 1990s reinforced sectoral studies; in the 1990s these were mostly about urban segregation, the socio-spatial organisation of cities, urban mobility, sustainable urban development, globalisation, spatial restructuring, and global cities (Duhau López, 2014; Lungo, 1996). Global and World City theories (Sassen, 1991; Friedmann, 1986) have been influential in urban research in Latin America as a way of understanding the role of cities in relation to a global urban economic system, based on hierarchies and connections. A brief literature review showed that these theories have been used to analyse global city-regions; the emergence of cities due to global connections based on the international division of labour, such as in maquiladoras; and, the role of certain cities in the world system. However, the general view from the larger Global South is that their cities do not have the same possibilities of absorbing processes of global economies and therefore fall behind cities in the Global North (Montoya, 2009; Lungo, 1996).

More recently, some theories have shifted the focus of analysis from a single category of cities at the top of a global urban hierarchy towards an urban widespread through a series of heterogeneous and everyday urban experiences. Roy (2011: 224) addresses the study and representation of Global South cities through a 'Subaltern Urbanism' which seeks 'to confer recognition on spaces of poverty and forms of popular agency that often remain invisible and neglected in the archives of urban theory'. While her theorisation is based primarily on megacities and their slums, she questions the possibilities of understanding

the heterogeneity of Southern urbanism by engaging with emergent concepts – peripheries, urban informality, zones of exception, and grey spaces – for research and analysis. A handful of newer theories have addressed ‘other’ cities away from dominating ones. First, the idea of the ‘Ordinary City’ was developed as a reaction to the emphasis on global cities and in particular cities in the Global North which ‘tended to privilege certain experiences’ as universal (Robinson, 2006: 6). Robinson acknowledges that theorising about cities ‘should be resourced by a greater diversity of urban experiences’ (ibid: 6). ‘Ordinary Cities’ group all cities, not based on categories such as hierarchy or ‘advancement’ but as part of a larger assemblage by which they are connected through many interactions and flows. These cities are ‘diverse, complex and internally differentiated’ (ibid: 109). Second, the conception of the world under a ‘Planetary Urbanisation’ where all spaces ‘have become integral parts of the worldwide urban fabric’ and the urban cannot be solely understood based on one type of city (Brenner and Schmid, 2011: 13). Within this perspective the urban has become the representation of a worldwide condition. These authors however, also recognise the emergence of new landscapes of socio-spatial difference (ibid).

These theories provide alternatives for understanding the urban in the Global South by acknowledging the wider urban realities that exist beyond large metropolis and cities as centres of the global neoliberal economy. However, something is as yet missing for understanding the processes of settlements that seem both urban and ordinary while also providing people with subsistence living, but they are still not considered within urban studies. Theories are still not grounded in the specificities of the region nor address the development of the urban under processes of coloniality, i.e. an ongoing relation based on colonial power stretched under the imposition of the ‘modern’.

5.3.2 Decolonial urbanism

‘Decolonial urbanism’, as conceptualised by Farrés and Matarán (2014), aims to be a grounded urban theory that acknowledges the specificities of the local without losing the larger connections to the global, and deals with the ongoing legacies and processes of modernity and coloniality. Drawing from Dependency and World-system theories, the ‘Decoloniality perspective’ (Castro-Gómez, 2005) analyses ‘coloniality’ as ‘the long lasting effect of the colonial denial of power, knowledge and being to native societies, and its ongoing reproduction through contemporary neo-colonial and imperialistic practices’ (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming). The incorporation of the Americas into the world-system as its first periphery also meant the consideration of its population as the ‘other’

by whose confrontation with Europe defined itself as 'modern' (Dussel, 1999; 1994). Therefore, modernity involves colonialism as its constitutive element and not only its past (Castro-Gómez, 2005). This Decolonial theory does not only recognise the external interventions of power but also acknowledges the ongoing resistance practices of the Americas' oppressed populations. In this section I analyse the work done by Farrés and Matarán (2014), Patel (2014) and Vainer (2014) who have linked this theory to urbanism.

The planning, designing and building of towns and territories in the Americas have been based on imported models ever since its conquest. Colonial domination did more than eliminate indigenous populations and extract their resources for the benefit of the centre: it radically changed the way of living and of conceiving space and time of native populations. Native populations and their knowledge were considered as 'backward, uncivilised and underdeveloped' (Vainer, 2014: 50). Territories and populations were controlled through different ways such as large plantations (*latifundia*) and the right of colonisers to control tributes and forced labour of indigenous populations (*encomienda*) (Vainer, 2014; Farriss, 1978). After independence, the ideas from the different nation-states to construct their cities were based on 'catching-up' and 'moving on' towards a modern and urban space, people and ways of living (Patel, 2014). According to Vainer, 'the Western –European and later North American– city became a universal model, exported in mode of urbanisation and territorial land use planning and practices of production and consumption' (Vainer, 2014: 49). It is to be noticed however that the use of these models was not necessarily an 'imposition' but an 'aspiration' of certain upper socio-economic classes within Latin America (Almandoz, 1999).

Following the region's independences, the pervasive coloniality that stretches from the colonial period can be understood from a territorial point of view. Decolonial scholars have identified three different forms of coloniality: power, knowledge, and being (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Quijano, 1992), which I later deploy in my empirical analysis. When the concept of territory is applied to these, different understandings of how relations between populations and the place they live in arise (Farrés and Matarán, 2014). From the point of view of the territorial coloniality of power we can analyse the role of the state, housing developers and agro-business in contrast to families and communities' ways of managing and organising their local territory. In terms of the territorial coloniality of knowledge, it is important to highlight the Western/Global North imposed ways of living against the indigenous world views and ways of living, i.e. how to conceive and live the territory and the urban. Finally, the territorial coloniality of being, shows the tension between the urban and non-urban. While grounded in the colonial experience, these conceptualisations are not only relevant to the Global South as its cities and towns were not the only ones

constructed from their relation to the colonial and the coloniality power of the centre: cities from the Global North also developed from their relation with the periphery (Farrés and Matarán, 2014; Patel, 2014; Vainer, 2014).

The Decoloniality literature has highlighted how these permanent colonial trends are not total and there are always ways in which people resist them. Based on Dussel (2001), Farrés and Matarán (2014) stressed the existence of multiple and horizontal voices and dialogues, usually 'invisible' to the hegemonic reality, being raised as critical alternatives of the unsustainable ways of developing the urban. From this, two main ideas emerge. The first is a need to rediscover alternative ways of managing territories, whether rural, urban or something completely different, in ways that maintain the identities of local populations. The second is the development of critical urban studies which are not embedded in hegemonic language but are able to be relevant to different contexts and to be open to alternative ways of conceptualising and constructing the urban. What this literature review has highlighted is that many approaches to urban studies employ a narrow understanding of the urban and leave little space for other ways of living. A decolonial approach is useful in exposing how this limited notion of the urban is particularly unhelpful to understand the territorial settlements of indigenous communities. In the rest of the paper, inspired by the Decoloniality perspective, I develop the concept of the 'peri-urban' which can help to analyse the transformation processes taking place in the urban-other or the ordinary places in Yucatán.

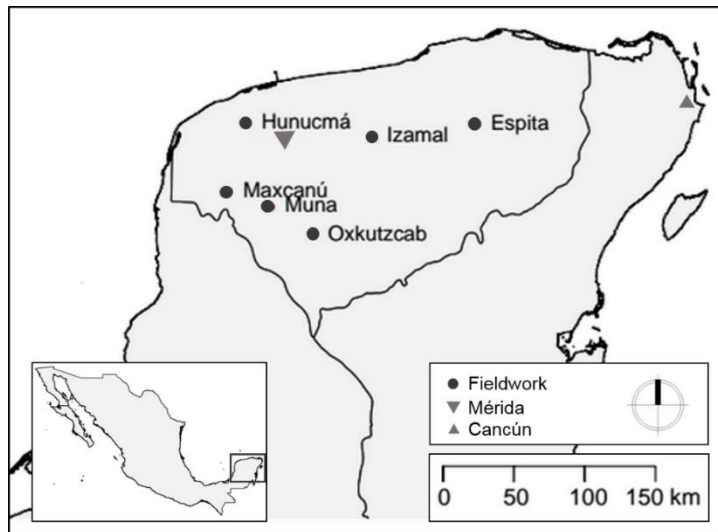
5.4 Constructing and transforming the urban in Yucatán

In Mexico, from an operational definition set in the 1960s, settlements with populations of 15,000 or more are considered part of the Urban National System (ONU-Habitat, 2011). Given the nature of my research of urban settlements undergoing processes of urbanisation of rural life, I considered settlements over 10,000 and under 35,000 inhabitants to cover the spectrum of locations under and over 15,000 inhabitants (INEGI, 2010) and I critically analysed them in the context of a transformative process of urbanisation and modernisation. I consider the different characteristics and dynamics of these settlements. In particular, I examine the current production of peri-urban spaces from above and from below, based on Decolonial urbanism framework.

5.4.1 Peri-urban settlements in Yucatán: Geographical and historical contextualisation

Based on preliminary fieldwork (2013), I selected six settlements (Espita, Hunucmá, Izamal, Maxcanú, Muna and Oxkutzcab – see Figure 14) with different characteristics regarding perceived urbanisation level, indigenous population, geographical area, economic activities and others (see Table 2). Based on population and size of the settlement the largest ones are Oxkutzcab and Hunucmá; the medium ones are Izamal and Maxcanú; and, the smallest ones, Espita and Muna.

Figure 14: Map of Yucatán and location of fieldwork settlements



Source: Author (2016)

What is striking about an analysis of statistical data of these settlements (see Table 2) is that the formal and official definitions of the urban and rural do not correspond to what takes place in these settlements: the most populated settlements are not necessarily those who are independent from land subsistence economy (see Oxkutzcab) and the densest ones are not the ones with better access to basic urban services (see Espita). Some of these data also show how different these settlements are from each other, in terms of urban services, such as electricity, water and drainage: the maximum percentage is in Oxkutzcab with 83 percent and the minimum is 52 percent in Espita; and on indigenous population, Oxkutzcab has the highest percentage with 55 and Hunucmá the lowest with 16 per cent. On a municipal level, when analysing employed population based on the economic sector Espita and Muna have the highest percentages on the primary sector, which can be connected with a more rural environment; while Hunucmá and Izamal have little dependence on this sector. Oxkutzcab has its economic activity divided between the

primary and the tertiary sectors; it largely depends on the production of citrus fruits but it is the largest city within a highly touristic area. This mix of rural and urban characteristics provides a base for the consideration of these settlements as ‘peri-urban’.

Table 2: Characteristics of the peri-urban in Yucatán

Name	Population		Economic Population per Sector			Settlement	
	Total	% of Indigenous Language	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Density (per Ha)	Urban Services (House %)
Espita	11,551	51	59	18	23	19.14	52
Hunucmá	24,910	16	22	32	44	15.99	54
Izamal	16,195	24	23	38	38	17.37	74
Maxcanú	12,621	31	21	41	37	17.95	64
Muna	11,469	47	43	21	35	16.47	76
Oxkutzcab	23,096	55	40	16	43	17.52	83

Source: Author’s elaboration from INAFED (2010); INEGI (2010); and, SEFOE (2002)

One thing these settlements have in common is their belonging to a municipality classified as indigenous by the Government of Mexico through the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (*Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* – CDI). By this classification, all municipalities with 40 per cent or more of indigenous population are regarded as indigenous (CDI, 2010). Most of my fieldwork settlements, while having been part of the Maya (native) political organisation (Villa Rojas, 1961),¹⁰ have their official founding as Spanish settlements. Maya people have a history of dispossession and of quiet resistance by maintaining their ways of life, which nowadays is represented by their Maya *solar*, the livelihoods it sustains and the land they depend on. After the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Maya populations have been enduring simultaneous processes of undermining and commodification of their way of life (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming). Some research on Maya livelihoods has addressed the very diverse implications of neoliberal programmes in rural Mexico, such as the threatening of subsistence production, along with the undermining of traditional farming systems; and the modernisation of agriculture systems

¹⁰ The settlements from my research can be situated as part of four Maya provinces: Espita from the *Cupul*; Izamal from *Ah Kin Chel*; Hunucmá and Maxcanú from *Ah Canul*; and, Muna and Oxkutzcab from *Tutul Xiu* (INAFED, 2010).

(see Cabrera Pacheco, 2014; Soares Moares and Vargas Velázquez, 2011; Robles-Zavala, 2010; Poole et al., 2007). However, I argue that by adopting a new conception of the urban these practices of subsistence would not only belong to rural settings.

In the following sections, I analyse the current situations of the selected settlements in Yucatán as the peri-urban is being produced, from the interventions of local, state and national governments following global neoliberal agendas, but also as produced by populations themselves when they resist these impositions by actively engaging in the reproduction of their everyday life based on self-provision and the 'traditional' use of space. I use the framework of Decolonial urbanism to construct the possibility of the urban beyond the city and contest traditional urbanisms where the rural exists to provide resources to the urban or as in a developing process towards the urban, while incorporating indigenous ways of living.

5.4.2 (Re)Producing the peri-urban in Yucatán from above and from below

Producing the urban in Yucatán seems to be connected with specific actions in the imaginary of local populations: to have better urban services, such as household water and electricity but also roads and public infrastructure including street lights and park maintenance, but also to have good health facilities among others. As Simone (2011: 356) argued, the urban 'slips away' in multiple realities both visible and invisible while the 'urban life makes itself known in various ways'. However, supplying urban services is regarded by many local governments as a way to gain political presence more than to benefit local populations. Therefore, the perception of the urban is linked to the fair and transparent distribution of resources; when local populations do not feel part of this process, as they have done throughout their history, they develop forms of resistance, sometimes quite visible such as revolts and legal actions, but most times in the quiet form of the reproduction of their everyday life in their *solar* and their communities (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming). In the next sections I analyse empirical evidence of the (re)production of the peri-urban through the Decoloniality perspective explained in the conceptualisation of Decolonial urbanism drawing on three categories: power, knowledge and being.

Territorial coloniality of power

From the territorial coloniality of power, the role of the state, and consequently of housing developers and agro-business, in land use decisions reflects the unequal power in the

production of the urban. Private companies have the power, backed by subsidies from the government, to build houses based on expected numbers rather than necessities and of transforming subsistence agriculture into soya monoculture or cedar tree farms (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015). Local and state governments have also the power of transforming settlements into 'Maya towns' by 'rescuing' the same Maya houses that government housing agencies do not consider as adequate for living but tourism agencies will grant credits for (Interview: Tourism officer, 16/01/2015). Moreover, power is represented by the imposition of different programmes, regulations and subsidies which affect the possibility of developing livelihoods and self-provision in peri-urban settlements. Those settlements that conform to the government agencies' criteria of 'ruralness' are more likely to receive government funding aiming at developing family economies through production.

As an example of these programmes, the National Programme of Certification of *Ejido* and Urban *Solar* Rights (PROCEDE) developed in 1993, aimed to 'individualise' *ejido* land by granting the possibility of individual ownership over a common one. In the cases where land was indeed parcelled, it reduced the area for crop rotation causing a drop in productivity and the loss of areas with dense vegetation where people usually got materials for housing and firewood, amongst other uses (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015). Another example is the Programme for Direct Assistance in Agriculture (PROCAMPO) – now PROAGRO, launched in 1994, which aimed at modernising the agricultural fields and compensating peasants for the outcomes of NAFTA, while giving improved corn seeds and herbicides as part of the payment. In many cases, and combined with the reduced plots caused by PROCEDE, this programme caused degradation in the soil and the damage of other crops (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015).¹¹ A last example is the implementation of several environmental regulations for production, conservation, and management, which did not take into consideration Maya traditional practices and indeed banned some of them. As a result, in some places Maya populations are already being legally prosecuted for carrying on with them. My fieldwork confirmed that, 'laws are helping to disarticulate the *solar* and the Maya ways of living', as put by an Environment officer (Interview: 19/01/2015). In some areas, people have shifted from production towards complete consumption, based mostly on the monetary help received from these programmes.

¹¹ I problematise elsewhere both PROCEDE and PROCAMPO from a Primitive Accumulation and a Decoloniality perspective as the commodification and individualisation of common land, and the suppression of alternative forms of agricultural production (Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming).

Local populations contest this territorial coloniality of power through the continuous production of their traditional *solar* and *milpa* in order to have resources to deal with the imposed market strategies of PROCEDE and PROCAMPO. The government provided peasants with livelihoods during the hard times presented by NAFTA, but these livelihoods proved not to be enough, mainly because they were not supposed to last for long and families became dependent on them. While some people rely on subsidies to provide for their daily life, others use them to develop alternative livelihoods, such as small grocery shop from a senior citizens' subsidy (Interview: Doña Karla, 10/03/2015). But in most cases, as Mariana (Interview: 28/01/2014) and Martha (Interview: 10/03/2015) explained, in order to get subsidies one has to spend a lot of time in the city hall waiting and 'being seen'. Some families are too busy making their own livelihoods and have no time to waste with bureaucratic (and corruption) practices. Some people develop their own livelihoods based on abilities or resources, such as putting up auto or bicycle repair shops, without depending on government aid which sometimes is perceived as based on political affiliations (Interview, Ulises: 05/02/2014). These alternative livelihoods once complemented land work, but that is not always the case now. From local population experiences: Martha's family (Interview: 10/03/2015) has no other income than her husband's work as a moto-taxi driver while Paulina's extended family (Interview: 08/03/2015) still relies on working the land together to produce enough for self-provision and to sell the surplus.

Territorial coloniality of knowledge

If we now look at the territorial coloniality of knowledge, my fieldwork confirms that some government authorities share a view that 'we have to teach [*campesinos*] to produce' (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015; Social Development officer, 10/02/2015). The *milpa* has been considered one of the central elements of the Maya economy, providing families with different types of crops. However, since the implementation of PROCEDE and PROCAMPO, production is not always enough for providing families' subsistence. Moreover, having a strong connection with the land is not perceived as 'urban' and it is therefore not promoted outside the 'rural'. Additionally, in some of the government agencies there is a link between the Maya house, a precarious living, and rural areas. It is considered as something ancient that has no current relevance, and that it would be left behind when moving towards 'dignified housing', as the new concrete houses are called, because people have 'the right to improve their living standards' (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015; Housing officer, 23/02/2015). However, in other agencies there is

an acknowledgement of the value of the house, *solar* and *milpa* to local populations who hold on to them until it becomes impossible to sustain. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge that 'the complex use of the *solar* is being lost' (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015). In such cases, the loss of the *solar* increases families' expenses as they have to buy food. The loss of the Maya house, developed in tune with the environment, in favour of 'modern' houses implies a rise in the living costs due to extra appliances to make the house cooler. While the Maya house is now considered a symbol of poverty, the prices of the Guano palm (a key construction material) have gone up with restricted locations and uses (Cabrera Pacheco, 2014). The persistence of traditional knowledge such as the construction of Maya houses and polyculture based *milpa*, challenges in some ways the imposition by the government of certain type of housing, wage-labour and crop management. Along this, not only traditional knowledge is being lost but also the familiar urban landscape they provided in these settlements.

Nonetheless, some elder people who had stopped managing their *solar* and *milpa*, feel like now they have no option but to start again because they have the need to provide for themselves, thus rescuing some of the knowledge and practices (Interview: Don Genaro and Doña Andrea, 19/03/2015; Martha, 10/03/2015; Doña Karla, 10/03/2015). These ways of living are still the ones they go back to when they need to, especially when other forms of livelihoods prove not to be enough. Families are now complementing wage-labour (in agricultural fields or as construction workers in Mérida or the Mexican Caribbean coast) with food production, when some decades ago it was the other way around. Based on traditional knowledge, artisans receive subsidies and payments (even if low) for crafting products for tourists (Interviews: Mariana, 28/01/2014; Martha, 10/03/2015; Patricia, 11/03/2015). In some cases, however, such products are still highly appreciated by local populations and therefore artisans have no need to leave to sell their products (Interviews: Patricia, 11/03/2015; Alfonso, 26/03/2015).

Territorial coloniality of being

In terms of the territorial coloniality of being, government officials make a sharp distinction in what is urban and what is rural. Programmes and subsidies are addressed in terms of individual social development in urban settlements and in terms of community development in rural ones (Interview: Social Development officer, 10/02/2015). An example of this differentiation happened when discussing about new regulations for subsidised housing in urban settlements in an interview with a government officer, and when I mentioned the *solar*, the conversation immediately shifted towards rural areas and

the importance of agriculture (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015). Governments seem to disregard the possibility of production in what they consider urban places driving populations to use subsidies to buy food instead of producing it. Even more, subsidies have caused a shift from production into consumption even in rural areas. In some places, rural populations nowadays go to larger cities to buy things they used to produce themselves (Interview: Indigenous Development officer, 06/02/2015).

Local populations have internalised some of these rural/urban conceptions and for example, aspire to a more 'urbanised' housing even when it is too hot to live in. The benefits of being 'more urban' in terms of connections for health and commerce, as well as the presence of urban services are acknowledged by local populations. However, some of these benefits are provided based on political relevance (i.e. voters) and not the actual needs of people (Interviews: Christian, 13/07/2015; Martha, 10/03/2015; Ulises, 05/02/2014). Local populations, however, are aware of the importance of their *solar* for their survival even within a labour-wage oriented society and remain firm on the relevance of land. When families' plot is large enough to sustain more than one family, they use it as a whole. Even so, more families are yielding over pressure for private individual property and therefore, they divide their plots (Interview: Paulina, 08/03/2015; Martha, 10/03/2015). Some residents realise the dependence on subsidies for survival while developing 'alternative livelihoods': *milpa*, hunting, growing plants and keeping animals in their *solar* (Interview: Christian, 13/07/2015). These were the very basis of Maya subsistence not so long ago, which are currently at risk: Maya people who depend on the land are more connected to the environment and therefore are more likely to be affected by climate change, specifically changes in rain patterns. Bad crop seasons are more frequent now and added to the newer regulations on land, based on PROCEDE and PROCAMPO, it is one of the reasons why people quit working the land (and being peasants) and migrate. Social change is not sudden, though. It is gradual, as Pedro talks about his settlement: 'Men still go to their *milpa* and women still take care of their *solar*' (Interview: Pedro, 13/07/2015).

As a final note, one government officer recognised that:

The *solar* is the reflection of the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and administrative deterioration that Maya people are suffering with these politics of market, free trade and private property. And the strong individualism that is being generated is wearing us out' (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015).

In the actions of some of the local communities in Yucatán this deterioration is transformed into opportunity: if PROCEDE is imposed, *ejidos* will maintain their common lands; if PROCAMPO demands only corn production, they will subversively keep polyculture areas; if the government gives houses, they will accept them and keep their Maya house as the primary habitat unit for as long as they can.

5.5 Conceptualising the ‘beyond the city’ peri-urban

Inspired by Decolonial urbanism and my experience doing research in select Yucatán settlements, I have reworked the concept of the ‘peri-urban’ to analyse the relation between indigenous populations, the place they inhabit and their ways of living while caught in ‘urban’ environments based on conflicting and contested understanding on the periphery. Furthermore, by including the concept of ‘urban livelihoods’ I highlighted the fact that the peri-urban must also be seen as a space for self-provision and self-subsistence of indigenous communities. As I have argued, urbanisation in the Global South is often referred as a ‘catching-up’ process. We can find a base for this theorisation in the ‘folk urban-continuum’ developed by Redfield’s study of the Maya in Yucatán (Redfield, 1941).¹² This theory analysed a process of civilisation common to the humanity as moving between a traditional and a modern pole (Gorelik, 2008). This approach is based on the assumption that there is a developmental lag between urban and rural communities so that changes begin to appear first in urban areas and then gradually are adopted by nearby suburban communities before finally diffusing to more remote rural villages (Nansaior and Patanothai, 2011). Applied to the current peri-urban scholar definitions, the continuum is understood as: ‘zones of rapid change at the urban periphery, by land transitioning from rural to urban uses, where different land systems may come into conflict’ (Lombard, 2015: 1-2), and ‘there is inevitable retirement of rural socio-economic activities and lifestyle’ (Cobbinah et al., 2015: 121).

In contrast to these understandings of the urban/rural transition, I propose the notion of the ‘urban beyond the city’ by reworking the ‘peri-urban’ concept to imply the production of radically different spaces which are not necessarily based on linear and global processes. In its original definition, the peri-urban refers to the interstitial space between the urban and the rural, where urban dynamics become diffuse into rural land and produce unique spaces at the fringe of large cities. Peri-urban spaces therefore break the

¹² Specifically to Yucatán and the Maya, this study put in ‘order’ of isolation and homogeneity towards cultural disorganisation and individualisation the communities analysed: an ‘indigenous village’, a ‘peasant village’, a ‘market town’, and a ‘Spanish-modern city’.

rural-urban dichotomy by basically having rural spaces with socio-economic urban dynamics. Linked with the concept of the diffuse city, distance and connections mark the relations between small and medium cities amongst themselves and with the central city (Ávila Sánchez, 2009; Delgado et al., 2008).

By contesting the peri-urban I also aim to rework the concept of periphery. Simone (2010: 40) refers to the periphery as 'space in-between [...] never really brought fully under the auspices of the logic and development trajectories that characterise a centre'. Moreover, he speaks of cities 'at the periphery of urban analysis' (ibid: 14) and whose urbanism has thereby been ignored (Roy, 2011), as in McFarlane's (2008: 356) 'urban shadows' where 'a range of urban experiences [are] made peripheral'. This periphery, as conceptualised by Simone (2011: 359), has 'new factories that come and go, [...] agricultural plots that come and go, [...] dense agglomerations of people that sometimes act like the city we know and sometimes not'. These spaces are maintained through low wages of their residents who 'learn to rely upon their own wits rather than make sustained demands for a better life' (ibid).

The analysed settlements in Yucatán can be therefore considered as 'peripheries' of urban theory and subject to be included in the rework of the peri-urban. Moreover, these spaces can be seen as 'ordinary' which does not necessarily mean that they are disconnected from the global. As Robinson (2006: 101-102) argued, the 'historical legacies of these cities [...] are also products of earlier global encounters [...] and] have long histories of interactions and contacts with other places and have, over time, been drawn into the global economy in different roles'. Examples of this history can be seen in the colonial past and the hacienda period while the current global encounters are marked by the presence of some industries in many of these settlements. Dealing with peri-urban as peripheries outside of 'normal' urban theorisations also brings the framework of the 'informality' as some have characterised the peri-urban (Roy, 2005). Some of the key characteristics of these analyses are: 'irregular land tenure, self-building housing, low level of infrastructure and residents with low income' (Lombard, 2014: 3). While these could be helpful in the understanding of peri-urban (re)production, in some places, such as Yucatán, it is important to keep in mind that several of these characteristics derive from indigenous traditions on land and housing for example, which have been left out of regulations and planning and are subsequently considered 'informal' when analysed. This can lead to the categorisation of traditional housing as 'not the right kind of shelter' or 'inadequate' reproduced by government agencies along with policies on private ownership through titling as a 'solution' to informality.

In Mexico's many urban contexts, being seen as having rural customs as opposite of urban ones implies a sense of being backward and even anti-modern (Varley, 2013). The rurality of its inhabitants and ways of living will 'discursively separat[e] the place and its people from "the city"' (Lombard, 2014: 39). A dualistic approach based on Modernisation theory has differentiated the rural and the urban with the first one often having 'a traditional indigenous underdeveloped sector' and the second one being 'a modern, westernised urban sector' (Castillo, 2003: 340). However, there are some areas, especially in peri-urban spaces, where both characteristics coexist within a settlement or even a household. And in these peri-urban areas households can maintain and develop self-sufficiency strategies by providing for their own food and other needs. In contrast, as we saw in the discussion on the *Maya solar* above, the urbanisation discourse, promoted by local and national governments in Mexico and Latin America, has been one of population being absorbed by wage labour employment and therefore self-sufficiency is being discouraged.

Nonetheless, because of national unstable economies, alternative strategies have to be developed (Castillo, 2003), even within urban settlements such as those highlighted in my fieldwork. The development of urban livelihoods in the peri-urban usually bring together indigenous ways of living more often than not linked with rural environments with the 'modern' dynamics of the urban. However, because of this undermining of the rural, peri-urban indigenous communities have 'their living conditions difficult and uncertain' (Cobbinah et al., 2015: 121). Based on such perceptions, usually deriving from government programmes, households in peri-urban regions often sought to change their livelihoods to depend less on the natural resource base (e.g. the *milpa* and the *solar* in Yucatán) and more on urban employment and services (Lerner and Eakin, 2011). Added to this, subsidies that provided livelihoods 'in terms of [resident's] management of households, expenditures, proclivities and associations' effectively transformed their ways of living (Simone, 2011: 359-360).

However, even with pressures and new dynamics between land uses and livelihood activities, families manage to develop fusions of typical rural and urban ways of living by maintaining some traditions and cultures based on their indigenous relation to land by which production is a motivation factor even in rapidly urbanising regions where other sort of livelihoods become more relevant (Lerner et al., 2013; Simon et al., 2006; Tacoli, 2003). In the end, '[t]he decisions of peri-urban households to engage in agriculture are therefore based on various material (i.e. land, income) and non-material assets as well as economic opportunities and cultural identity' (Lerner et al., 2013: 54).

5.6 Conclusions

In this paper I have presented the complex processes of socio-spatial transformation happening in Yucatán, which cannot be classified as specifically rural nor urban. By addressing spaces at the periphery of urban theory and research, I have brought some of the issues, conflicts and agencies of people living in these areas up front and have engaged with a different understanding of the production of the places we live in. Taking the ideas of the ordinary city and planetary urbanisation into Decoloniality as a new framework of analysis is not a way of categorising but a way of bringing light into the 'other'. This means that every peri-urban area looks different from the other depending on the characteristics they have intertwined from both the rural and the urban. The urban beyond the city or the 'peri-urban' as I have conceptualised it, is a useful way of understanding the ordinary spaces for the everyday life of Maya people and the relation between their land, the development of their livelihoods and the construction of their identities.

However, even when communities develop and maintain urban livelihoods, they exist in quite a precarious condition that can quickly change, potentially eroding traditional ways of living. Ongoing changes in family and community dynamics drawing towards urban wage labour dependence may have diminished the capacity of the Maya *solar* as a resource provider and also might have impacted its configuration. I have used the Decolonial perspective to connect Maya people's histories and realities with conditions imposed from above, such as programmes based on neoliberal practices, but also with struggles and reactions from below, such as the ongoing nature of their self-provision as a way of living. Therefore, the peri-urban is configured by converging rural and urban characteristics but also by converging actions and reactions from the people living it and the ones making decisions on it.

The conceptualisation of the peri-urban as an area outside of urban studies implies that more research is left to do. Not only on bringing together different meanings and definitions of the peri-urban itself as a hybrid of the urban and the rural but also on the theory still left out of the analysis, such as incorporating agrarian questions and new ruralities into the framework. The agency of indigenous populations in the developing of their own way of living and their own urban spaces is usually unaccounted for. Moreover, empirical evidence of the myriad of possibilities of the urban in Latin America is needed to reconfigure the understanding of what is a 'Latin America city'.

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6. THE CONTESTED REPRODUCTION OF MAYA IDENTITIES IN YUCATÁN, MEXICO¹³

6.1 Abstract

The reproduction of Maya identities in Yucatán is based on the contradictions and convergences of the Mexican government's ongoing *Indigenismo* practices of representation, and the continuous development of such identities from Indigeneity constructions by populations themselves. Based on a theoretical framework I have called Decolonial Indigenous Geographies, this paper argues that Maya identities need to be understood as far more complex than *Indigenismo* practices and Indigeneity constructions would suggest, irrespective of whether local populations are imposed with them, choose to perform them, or actually live them. For the latter, the Maya *solar* of Yucatán, as a place where people have historically carried out their everyday life activities (social, economic, cultural, and environmental), becomes relevant in the developing of individual and social identities strongly connected with material and intangible elements. However, both the undermining – through stigmatisation, and the commodification – for tourism purposes, of these elements further conflicts the reproduction of identities within the everyday life of Maya populations. The silent embracing of continuity, however, has wrought the *solar* and the Maya ways of living for over 500 years of resistance to colonial and neo-colonial powers.

6.2 Introduction

In the Peninsula [of Yucatán], Maya peoples resist to be disappeared by decree, defending their lands from attacks by tourism companies and estate agencies; where hired hitmen operate with impunity dispossessing pueblos¹⁴, and the invasion of transgenic agroindustry threatens the existence of Maya peoples; and, the corruption of magnates who take over agrarian territories, cultural and archaeological sites, and

¹³ Cabrera Pacheco, A.J. (*Article manuscript in progress, to be submitted for publication in spring 2017*). The Contested (re)Production of Maya Identities in Yucatán, Mexico.

¹⁴ *Pueblo*, understood as either the settlement or the people who inhabit it (Eiss, 2008).

even the indigenous identity, attempt to turn a pueblo as alive as the extension of their language, in fetishised commodities (CNI and EZLN, 2016).

The Zapatistas'¹⁵ communiqué of September 2016 effectively summarises the current events and processes that Maya people struggle with in Yucatán. In the words of Smith (2007: 350), 'neoliberalism has been influential in creating the market places as the site where native and indigenous peoples, communities, knowledges, and identities are contested as if they are simply commodities of culture and legacies of the past'. However, she argues, these commodification processes have not completely uprooted existent heterogeneous subjectivities nor have they disappeared historical processes of resistance to counter hegemonic realities of indigenous peoples, from colonialisms to current national states.

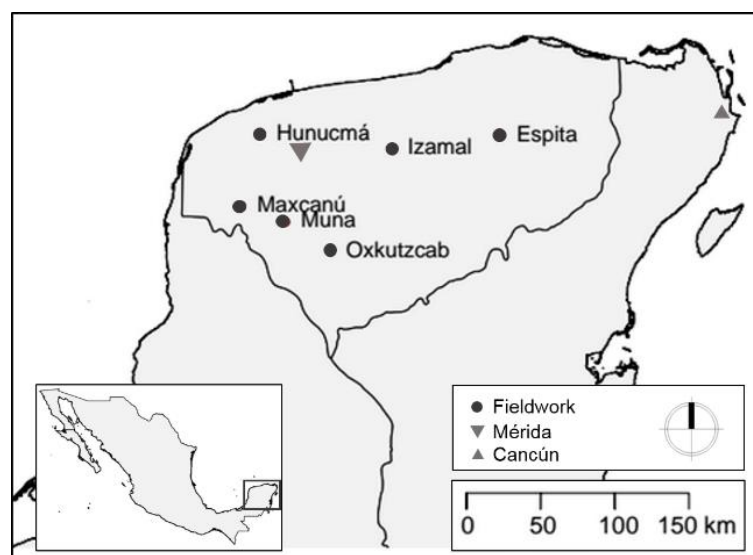
In the indigenous tradition in Mexico, the territory is an inherent part of culture, necessary for providing biological and social continuity (Estrada Lugo et al., 1998). Throughout their history, Maya populations in Yucatán, Mexico (Figure 15) have developed their everyday life in a domestic space called the *solar*. This is a dynamic space under continuous transformation that has endured and remained as the basic habitat unit in the region. The *solar* serves as a complementary space for self-subsistence agriculture, also contributing towards family and community cohesion through actions of preservation, enrichment and diffusion of knowledge. The *solar* as a space has generally contained the traditional Maya house and a series of spaces (e.g. kitchen, barn, and henhouse) where social, cultural and economic activities take place. Family management ensure the continuity of different practices and activities that shape the configuration of the settlements and its surroundings (Aké Gómez et al., 1999; Jiménez-Osornio et al., 1999).

This paper addresses the commodification of the Maya people of Yucatán, their identities, and their cultural and survival territories, as explained in the Zapatistas' communiqué. I will analyse the reproduction of current Maya identities from what I call Decolonial Indigenous Geographies perspective. Using this lens, I argue that the reproduction of their identities is forged in conflict between the discursive practices of *Indigenismo* as embodied in how scholarly and government perspectives represent the Maya and how the Maya perform – in ways that are coerced – this identity for tourism; and the construction of

¹⁵ The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* – EZLN) rose up in arms on the 1st of January 1994 against the Mexican government. Their struggle has since then reached the development of an alternative way of life (see Earle and Simonelli, 2005; and, Collier, 1999).

Maya identity from the everyday life of being in their own territory and spaces that are understood through Indigeneity perspectives. Policies implemented in the twentieth century towards assimilation and hence the elimination of indigenous ways of living, known as *Indigenismo*, have carried on to pervade the present of indigenous populations and to dictate most policies and institutions which ‘deal’ with them (Gutiérrez Nájera et al., 2012; Klahn, 2011/2012; de la Cadena and Starn, 2007). Indigeneity, in contrast, has enacted recognition for the alternative ways of seeing the world, therefore embracing diversity and even contradictory ways of self-identification especially through resistance to dominant nation-states (Sium et al., 2012; Walsh, 2012; Smith, 1999). This research stems from fieldwork conducted in Yucatán for several months between 2013 and 2015. The identified settlements were selected within a specific context of urbanisation and modernisation processes, not categorising indigenous populations as only rural or as disconnected from their indigeneity in urban environments. Participant observation was the main method for engaging with local populations, and with selected anonymised families, I engaged in ethnographic interviews to go through their everyday life. I also interviewed government officers of state agencies relevant to the research, who are anonymised here and referred to through the agency they worked for.

Figure 15: Location of the state of Yucatán and fieldwork settlements



Source: Author (2016)

In common with many other disciplines, geography ‘has a regrettable colonial legacy to address’ (Frantz and Howitt, 2012: 727) from the occupation and possession of indigenous peoples’ resources. Even now, geographers ‘have been reticent to theorize [...]

Indigenous identities' and 'research on the topic has been marginalized in mainstream disciplinary debate' (Coombes et al., 2011: 473). Hence, Indigenous Geographies as a discipline has been developed with the aim of 'revealing gaps in geographical approaches to place, community, and culture' (ibid: 474) and stressing indigenous peoples 'as central to the work of geographers in practical, empirical and conceptual terms' (Frantz and Howitt, 2012: 728). Decoloniality perspective will be mobilised as a useful framework to trace back the struggles of Maya people since their colonial domination (1542-1821), dictating their minds and their lived experience beyond colonialism. This perspective is able to show how the current racial inferiorisation of Maya populations, in order to control, dominate or exploit them, are marked not only by modernity but by coloniality, by means of the historical denial of power, knowledge, and being to native populations (see Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Castro-Gómez, 2005; Walsh, 2005). This denial was envisaged by colonialism as a 'mode of erasure' by which indigenous ways would be replaced with new assemblages. However, the erasure was never fully completed, developing a 'transcultural present' by which the identities of both indigenous and non-indigenous populations have co-constituted each other (Coombes et al., 2011). Considering that even critical approaches to geography and to indigenous people need 'ongoing critique and refinement' (de Leeuw et al., 2012: 183), I have engaged with critiques to the continuous understanding of indigenous peoples as a homogenous group; indigenous geographies' dependent relation to non-indigenous geographies; its focus on active resistance; and its location on 'settler societies' – mainly Indigenous groups within Anglophone nation-states, see Coombes et al. (2011) – amongst others.

Indigenous identities in Yucatán have been conceptualised as fluid and situational where being indigenous and being mestizo are not mutually exclusive categories (Lizama Quijano, 2010; Watanabe, 2008). The Caste War (1847-1902) has been described as the birth of the Maya-ethnicity (Eiss, 2008; Castañeda, 2004), where Maya 'rebels' waging war against non-Maya populations developed a sense of ethnic consciousness. However, a social and cultural homogenous lower class was also developed to classify the 'loyal' Maya groups, also called the 'pacified Indians', who later became haciendas' labour force in henequen (*Agave fourcroydes*) plantations, where they were designated as mestizos by the henequen elite classes. By this, the Indian classification was eliminated in the official discourse in Yucatán and Maya ethnicity was effectively reinvented, marked since then as 'lacking of confrontation' (Labrecque, 2005; Gabbert, 2004; Joseph, 2003). According to Castañeda (2004), the implicit scholarly hypothesis is that Maya ethnicity has been the sum of accommodating and negotiating interests across history, and not a belonging identity nor a state imposition. This accommodating feature can partly explain the

apparent lack of resistance to the various episodes of domination and repression suffered by the Maya people, particularly in comparison to the globally known resistance movement launched by the Zapatistas.

Maya identities in Yucatán are best understood as co-constituted by silent resistance, linked to the ongoing experience of Maya peoples' way of living in the family *solar*. This is a place where they continue to intertwine their traditions with the 'modern' and the 'urban' through everyday life activities. The individual and social identities, strongly connected with material and intangible elements, are continuously reproduced. But this space, which is so important for the Maya identity, is undergoing deep processes of transformation related to government and larger societal practices that undermine and stigmatise it. These transformations go beyond material and physical changes, and have a wider impact on the lived experience and the configuration of the place, its historical relevance, and its contemporary socio-environmental relations. The *solar* and the Maya house as symbolic, social, and physical spaces, are often negatively associated with poverty, dysfunction and lack of sanitation, as I will present in this paper, and this marks the identities of Maya populations and influences their practices of resistances (or the lack of them) towards the eradication of their ways of living. Therefore, they reproduce their identity from a dialectic process between *Indigenismo* and Indigeneity perspectives, and within their everyday life experienced in their *solar*. In order to understand this dynamic process of identity reproduction I frame it under a Decolonised Indigenous Geographies framework.

6.3 Decolonial Indigenous Geographies

The Decoloniality perspective highlights the long-term effects of 'coloniality' as the continuity of the power which emerged from colonialism, based on the international division of labour between centres and peripheries as well as the ethnic-racial hierarchical organisation of populations. Coloniality is therefore the extension of the effects of colonial denial of power, knowledge, and being to native populations, in their everyday lived experience (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Castro-Gómez, 2005). This means that indigenous populations not only struggle against remnants of a colonial racialised past but continue to live the colonial legacy of considering some identities more valuable and important than others, and of silencing their narratives (Coombes et al., 2011). Similarly, as a counterbalance, coloniality is also a long term and ongoing process which 'cannot take place without contestation. It must necessarily push back against the colonial relations of power that threaten Indigenous ways of being' (Sium et al., 2012: III). Indigenous peoples

'continue to experience (post)colonial practices aimed at their simultaneous assimilation, appropriation, and extinction. So indigenous research inevitably engages the 'colonial present'' (Larsen and Johnson, 2012: 2). Academia and its production of knowledge is part and parcel of processes of coloniality and therefore the first task of any research into indigenous identities must be to contest existing assumptions and power relations within academic disciplines. Scholars working from an Indigenous Geographies perspective have in fact pointed 'to the complex intersections between what might previously have been considered the separate environmental, social, economic, political, cultural and legal geographies of an issue of place' (Panelli, 2008: 807). Thus, decolonising geography entails the recognition that 'the discipline of geography should engage more actively with the post- and neo-colonial/imperial experiences of indigeneity, regardless of the potential fraughtness of such a pursuit' (Shaw et al., 2006: 267-268). In this terms, Indigenous Geographies are considered 'a body of work which warrants an accessible yet critical inventory because of its insights into social transformation and cross-cultural relations, and its consequences for geographical practice' (Coombes et al., 2012a: 810). While previous research on indigenous peoples from geography were based on their homogenisation and essentialisation as either saviours or vulnerable, recent Indigenous Geographies have intertwined diverse processes of identification, voice, land, and justice in order to engage with 'the complex material, political and cultural characteristics of emergent Indigenous geographies' as alternatives to development policies and neoliberalism (Coombes et al., 2012a; 2012b: 697; Radcliffe, 2007).

Facing the critiques, Decolonised Indigenous Geographies move away from 'a simplistic set of pre/post binaries' of indigenous identities which explores 'the need to address questions of complicity, ambiguity and messiness' in 'the interstices in neoliberal practices and a more hopeful politics of place-based identities' (Coombes et al., 2012b: 694, 695, 697). Even when Indigenous Geographies 'are grounded in critiques of racism, colonial legacies, and particular forms of economic political power' (Radcliffe, 2007: 393), they have their understanding in Postcolonial theory (and Poststructuralism) and their location within the experiences of certain colonialism, i.e. 'settler colonialism' in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Canada, and even Finland and Norway, limiting their scope. 'With careful response' to this critique, decolonised Indigenous Geographies 'may reveal their potential to nurture, enliven, teach and transform' (Coombes et al., 2014: 851) beyond their current epistemological limits, and reflect the experiences of the diversity of indigenous knowledges that sustain it, connected to particular contexts and geographies (Sium et al., 2012), and more precisely to the concepts of place, discussed below. As Walsh (2005) argues, following a Decoloniality perspective, the construction of a

'paradigm other' develops from histories and experiences marked not only by modernity but by coloniality. This has been fully recognised by some Maya scholars such as Duarte Duarte (2013: 5) who has argued that 'it is time to question the racial hierarchies and regulations imposed during colonial times, which are used nowadays to continue to colonise and to dictate a way of being [...as] 'Maya'. This paper seeks to contribute to this process of decolonising scholarly work by critically analysing the material and intangible transformations of the Maya *solar* as part of the process of identity reproduction.

Another critique to Indigenous Geographies is their extended coverage of one particular type of resistance, active and environmentally grounded (see Coombes et al., 2012a), and moreover, rejecting place-based ethnographies as a colonial 'experience of spatial confinement, of restraint and prohibition' (Gibson, 2012 quoted in Coombes et al., 2014: 846). However, place can also be regarded from an everyday life and continuity processes of resistance, 'central to the process of discovery, an active collaborator in the production of knowledge' (Larsen and Johnson, 2012: 7), which 'offers common intellectual, ethical and methodological ground for the practice of Indigenous research' (ibid: 11). Place, as a geographical space, acquires meaning through the interactions people have with it consolidating social structures and cultural practices (Escobar, 2001). Places are 'often associated with a certain group of people, a certain lifestyle and social status' (Hauge, 2007: 47), providing identities linked to 'the physical environment and the meaning attached to it' (ibid: 48). The continuous conquest and ecological and cultural transformation of territories and people is a requirement for the spatial-cultural projects of modernity and development. The link between place and identity within indigenous geographies, if broken, cannot contribute to the production of alternatives to the hegemonic conditions of capitalism and modernity (see Radcliffe, 2007). Hence, places are more than just nodes in contexts of globalisation and coloniality but sites of dynamic cultures, economies, and environments. Transformations and continuities are built 'on the multiplicity of actions at the level of everyday life' (Escobar, 2008: 67; 2001).

According to Speller et al. (2002), places are integral part of identity, more so than the context or the background of people. Even small changes in the configuration of these places can alter their meaning. Moreover, places and identities are marked by material and intangible symbols, hence when these are negatively associated they will be avoided; whereas positive symbols will be maintained and enhanced (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003 quoted in Hauge, 2007). Places are therefore constructed through material and intangible relations in ways of living and everyday life activities. Wacquant et al. (2014) have addressed these 'negative' associations of symbolic, social and physical spaces through the concept of 'territorial stigmatisation'. They argue that this concept refers 'not a static

condition or a neutral process, but a consequential and injurious form of action through collective representation fastened on place' (ibid: 1270). The stigma of such spaces will be attached to the social discredit of their inhabitants. The construction of the 'denigration' of place, however, does not only falls on figures of power, such as governments and private companies, but on the general society, scholars, and even their own inhabitants (ibid). Although these authors have used 'territorial stigmatisation' to study urban marginality across space and time (see Wacquant, 2008), especially in the 'post-industrial metropolis' and the stigmas attached to neighbourhoods through 'poverty, subaltern ethnicity, degraded housing, imputed immorality and street crime' I will demonstrate its fitting to spaces in indigenous Mexico branded as 'backward' and 'unmodern' and the racialised coloniality attached to them. For this, the Decoloniality perspective will be deployed which as explained above provides a critical analysis to study the Indigenous Geographies of place, and the links to wider social and material practice.

In what follows I focus on two opposing perspectives of discussing indigenous identities. The first addresses the representation of indigenous peoples by following assimilation policies, called *Indigenismo* in Mexico which celebrated 'ancient' native cultures but disregarded contemporary populations. The second, called Indigeneity, has engaged with the construction of indigenous identities from an ideal heterogeneous acceptance but which seems to demand active participation of such indigenous populations.

6.3.1 Indigenismo and the representation of Indigenous peoples in Mexico

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there were two interlinked lines of thought regarding indigenous peoples. The first assumed that 'backward peoples' were rightly dominated by 'more advanced peoples' (Maybury-Lewis, 2003: 324-325) because native societies 'belonged to an earlier, inferior stage of human history' (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007: 1). The second one assured that such indigenous societies were to be eliminated or at least assimilated into the mainstream culture because of progress and modernisation. Indigenous culture, perceived as un-modern, illiterate, and rural was incompatible with the desired development planned by the governments (Clifford, 2007; de la Cadena and Starn, 2007; Maybury-Lewis, 2003). In Mexico, *Indigenismo* policies surging after the Mexican Revolution (1910) were associated with the creation of a new and modern nation-state through the *mestizaje* by which indigenous groups and their ethnical distinctions (culture, language, and memory) were effectively eliminated from the national plans in order to 'advance' as a nation, effectively establishing them within racial hierarchies (Klahn, 2011/2012). Ethnicity 'is often a residual of colonialism; it remains a

measuring stick that exists as part of the state's vocabulary to measure, contain and control colonized peoples, and it remains a dehistoricized stand-in for Indigeneity' (Sium et al., 2012: VII).

According to one of the forebears of *Indigenismo* in Mexico, Gamio (1916 in Korsbaek and Sámano-Rentería, 2007: 201), 'the Mexican ideal was a mestizo Mexico, produced by a fusion process' while another, Vasconcelos (1925: 13), stated that: 'The Indian does not have another door to the future than the door of the modern culture, nor other path that the one cleared by the Latin civilisation'. *Mestizaje*, conceived as a national identity myth, was created by the elites who then obscured its creation (Klahn, 2011/2012); 'the heroic indigenous past was a source of national pride while surviving populations were stigmatised' (ibid: 176). The government attempted to use language and education to enforce some sort of cultural extinction (Gutiérrez Nájera et al., 2012: 3); while current welfare systems operate under 'dimensions of paternalism, condescension, and insensitivity to native concerns' (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007: 21). This elimination and assimilation occurred, and keeps occurring 'by alienating [indigenous peoples] lands and suppressing or undermining their cultures' (Maybury-Lewis, 2003: 325). Under the neoliberal turn the state has 'played a central role to channel productive resources and to promote many productive units' (Quintal et al., 2003: 341); which is orchestrated by markets and profits where self-subsistence and the ways of living attached to it are regarded as 'un-modern'. These are discouraged through their undermining and the imposition of 'modern' elements to shift populations into new modes of production as I will show later in the paper.

However, it would seem that *Indigenismo* politics indirectly reinforced an ethnical rebirth and brought indigenous groups into the Mexican national project, when their purpose was to erase their difference (Klahn, 2011/2012). Still, indigenous realities are still not a comprehensive part of nation-state polities. These type of indigenisms continue to be reinforced through structures of power and relationships, markedly in areas such as knowledge production which follows a coloniality process, still embedded in 'discourses of universal knowledge', by which some actors, their practices are more made more visible and granted more value than others (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007; Latour, 1993). The enduring policies of *Indigenismo* in Mexico confirm that the past of indigenous peoples continue to be more important than their present, or the people themselves (Sium et al., 2012). This is the basis of the commodification of indigenous knowledge and their past, and the undermining of actual indigenous peoples and their realities; I will return to this further on in the document.

6.3.2 Reclaiming and constructing Indigeneity

Resistance to ‘the epistemic violence of national pressures to conform’ (Radcliffe, 2007: 394) to processes of homogenisation such as *Indigenismo* have been addressed from an Indigeneity perspective. The engagement of geography as a discipline with indigeneity refocuses its practices and develops novel forms of research (Coombes et al., 2012a: 818). The concept of Indigeneity is itself contested and has been discussed from different perspectives by scholars in particular regarding the correlation between indigeneity and resistance. For example, according to Bakisvar (2007 in de la Cadena and Starn, 2007: 19-20), ‘we cannot assume that indigeneity is intrinsically a sign of subalternity or a mode of resistance’. While Castree (2004: 136), citing Castells, argues that ‘people laying claim to the title ‘indigenous’ have [...] created a ‘resistance identity’’. Castell’s ‘resistance identity’ as explained by Routledge (2001: 222-223), ‘is generated by social actors based on principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society, and leads to the formation of collective resistance’. Castells (2010: xxiii) argues that one form of resistance identities is that of territorial identity, as ‘a fundamental anchor of belonging’. This conception of indigenous identities as resistance identities shifts the idea of the ‘authentic others’ living in ‘spaces of backwardness’ (Nygren, 1999: 271, 275) towards ‘the construction of radically distinct social imaginaries, conditions and relations of power, knowledge’ and even being (Walsh, 2012: 11).

Nonetheless, indigeneity is not the only contested concept. According to Maybury-Lewis (2003: 324), ‘indigenous peoples are those who have been conquered by populations ethnically or culturally different from themselves and who have been incorporated into states that consider them outsiders or usually inferiors’. Some scholars have identified key elements for generating indigeneity; Pratt (2007: 401) relies on: unsolicited encounter; dispossession; perdurance (i.e. not eradicated nor assimilated); proselytization; and, unpayable debt; while Castree (2004) in his analysis of place, indigenous rights and ‘local’ resources, speaks about the control of the place that indigenous people inhabit as a key element; and, Clifford (2007: 198) argues that indigenous populations ‘are defined by a long attachment to a locale and by violent histories of occupation, expropriation, and marginalization’. Finally, in the words of Smith (2007: 348-349),

The identity of ‘the native’ is regarded as complicated, ambiguous, and therefore troubling term even for those who live the realities and contradictions of being native, and a member of a colonized and minority community that stills remembers other ways of being, of knowing and of relating to the world. [...] Whereas the desires by the native to be self-defining and self-naming can be read as a desire to be free, to

escape definition, to be complicated, to develop and change and be regarded as fully human.

More than taking a specific form of Indigeneity, the changing boundaries of politics and epistemologies of who is or not and indigenous person are being acknowledged; this means that instead of being categorised by others amongst symbols and meanings, indigeneity is acknowledged as a conceptual term, one that demands its recognition as relational in the fields of governance, subjectivities and knowledges involving both indigenous and non-indigenous populations (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007; Merlan, 2007). Nonetheless, as Sium et al. (2012: VIII) have noted, 'Indigeneity is full of contestation and contradiction, both within itself and in relation to outside forces', even when it is supposed to be easy identifiable, Indigeneity is diverse and contradictory (Smith, 1999).

From the oppositions and contradictory convergences of *Indigenismo* and Indigeneity, I construct place identity in order to emphasise the role of the *solar* in Maya communities but also to signal the stigma that some of the Maya symbols carry and by which populations avoid being related to them. This sets the framework of the empirical focus on the positive, the negative and the in-between of the actual existing Maya people in Yucatán.

6.4 Contradictions and convergences of Maya identities in Yucatán

In this section I develop an analysis pointing to the relentless undermining of Maya ways of living, the *solar* and specifically the Maya house through their classification by the government as 'lower social class and perceived as symbols of poverty, unhealthy and dysfunctional' (Cabrera Pacheco, 2014: 24). Throughout their history, Maya people have endured attempts of the government of making them 'modern' and 'urban' instead of their perceived reality as 'rural' and 'backward' because it seems that there is no conception of a good 'living standard' attached to working the land and living in a Maya house. However, the same rurality and backwardness are promoted as tourist attractions whether they are conceived as part of new waves of eco and rural tourism or as belonging to the past through museums and archaeological sites. Coombes et al. (2011) have identified a form of strategic essentialism where people and/or the government are claiming both irrevocable change and 'authenticity' at the same time. For developing this section, I relied on documentary research, on data from a qualitative project of Maya identities, and on interviews with government officers and local populations.

6.4.1 Contemporary Indigenismo practices

Evidence of the richness generated by 2,000 years of existence and fusion in the state of Yucatán is being used as the basis of marketing advertisement to propel tourism, and the economy, by generating value for national and international tourists, companies and the general society (SEFOTUR, 2014). From the official state government website I identified two marketing studies from private companies (see Emblem Consultores, 2013; Grado 13 Arquitectura, 2013) whose views I reproduce in the following analysis. Firstly, they recognised government current activities as promoting history and culture from an ‘exotic and rarity’ point of view. From this, they proposed alternative marketing scenarios, based on the Maya ‘subject’ being the focus or not; in the first ‘the unique importance of a [developed and refined] living culture’ was emphasised. Within this, the Maya ‘world and culture’ are set to be ‘relaunched from an emotional and contemporary platform’ (Grado 13 Arquitectura, 2013: 24-25). Conclusions and recommendations from such consultant agencies emphasised how ‘competitive’ is the Maya world brand. According to these companies, to be able to compete, Yucatán has to build products which will set it apart from the other Maya worlds, i.e. from other Mexican states and countries of the region.

From my perspective, local populations as the ‘heirs’ of such world seem to be receiving mixed messages of ‘our major richness are not history or culture but you’, followed by ‘you are the cuisine, culture, experiences, history’ of Yucatán (SEFOTUR, 2014: 29), i.e. people are not expected to represent the culture of the state but they are expected to be part of it reflecting a certain identity. These leaves other Maya knowledges, symbols, and ways of living to be less valuable, which translates into the intervention of the government on how Maya people dress, speak, make crafts, live and even identify themselves, resembling *Indigenismo* approaches from the past. For example, a tourism officer (Interview, 16/01/201) said ‘I will put someone to teach you to improve [your crafts]’, and also, ‘many of these *campesinos* [peasants], that we call [...] *ejidatarios* when their name should be *campesinos* as in the rest of the world’. In parallel to these approaches, governmental regulations aim at the legal ratification of the rights of Maya communities in Yucatán:

With the recognition of indigenous [peoples] as subjects of public right, they are given faculties so they would be the ones who adopt the organisation forms that better convene to their needs, who practice their legitimate rights, and who constitute their

regulatory framework to be inserted in the juridical framework of the state (Congreso del Estado de Yucatán, 2012: 3).

However, according to the same document, Maya people from Yucatán had distinguishing development processes from other Maya populations, by which the current Maya people in Yucatán are in fact 'mestiza' (Congreso del Estado de Yucatán, 2012; see Wammack Weber and Duarte Duarte, 2012) and therefore they access to these rights could be contested. This denial of a full Maya identity follows the premises of *Indigenismo* by eliminating indigenous particularities and heterogeneities, and creating one group which is no longer indigenous, but mestizo. As it happens in other 'postcolonial' places, 'the state plays a central role in establishing the social significance of some markers over others' (Jung, 2008: 38), and in Yucatán assimilation has come in the form of *mestizaje*, on what Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa (2014) have called 'ethnocide through homogenization (or occidentalisation)', disguised as education. Dating from the post-Revolution educational goals, Maya people have received most (if not all) their education in Spanish language, making a strong line between educated and non-educated, literate and illiterate, and associating the latter with speaking Mayan language and working the land. Discrimination runs deep within Yucatán and Mexico, based on the same essentialist characteristics implanted on indigenous peoples since colonial times (see Castañeda, 2004).

Within the *Indigenismo* paradigm, the indigenous past is valued, especially for tourism purposes while Maya populations are expected to assimilate into the global neoliberal world, entering the labour market, away from self-provision, and transforming their traditional housing into what the government calls 'adequate housing'. The original term for this type of housing used in government policies, advertisements and discourse is '*vivienda digna*' which can be translated as dignified, decent or adequate housing. Therefore, the possibility of providing their own traditional wattle-and-daub with palm roof Maya house (see Figure 16) is rejected, on basis of it being categorised, as mentioned, as poor, unhealthy and dysfunctional, branding them as undesirable for living and puts it away from government discourses of 'improving of living standards' (Interview: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015). Turning these spaces into negative symbols has meant that some populations have avoided them and their perceived stigma in order to better shape their identities (see Wacquant et al., 2014; Hauge, 2007). The Maya house is also branded as the cause of several social issues (alcoholism, vandalism, and others) as government officers elaborated on (Interviews: Agrarian officer, 19/01/2015; Housing officer, 23/02/2015), explaining how living in a Maya house gave room to immorality and safety

risks such as fires. This relates to what Wacquant et al. (2014: 1274) reported as ‘incidents of deviance or violence in and around [stigmatised areas being] routinely sensationalized and referred back to the allegedly intrinsic sociocultural traits of the residents’. In this case, the Maya house has been demonised and these ‘incidents’, such as domestic violence, are being ‘fought’ by the government through the elimination of the Maya house, instead of addressing them directly. Meanwhile, for tourism purposes, the government can ‘rescue’ it to show tourists ‘how [Maya people] live’ and to help them to ‘dignify’ their house again (Interview: Tourism officer, 16/01/2015). As part of the fetishisation of the Maya image, the palm roof of the Maya house, a key element because of the local climate, has been widely used in tourism, making the Guano palm inaccessible for local populations in price but also in their distribution. While government officers assure that the plant is extinct and that is why families do not use it anymore (Interview: Social Development officer, 10/02/2015), their use in tourism infrastructure is widespread throughout the region.

Local media is also a key stakeholder in reproducing the *Indigenismo* paradigm setting out what is expected of Maya people regarding tourism: ‘There is a segment in the international tourism who [...] pays dollars to get to know the mysticism and the Maya customs, [and the people] who dress *hipiles*,¹⁶ speak the Mayan language, sleep in hammocks, and cook in traditional stoves’ (Chan Caamal, 2014). Value is not set on everyday life usefulness or traditional importance but on monetary benefits of performance, as it is done in touristic places such as Cancun, in the neighbouring state of Quintana Roo, where Maya culture is used as the background for a massive tourist industry (see Fraga Berdugo and Arias Reyes, 2015; Re Cruz, 2006). Communities do not have much agency on how their culture is being used and how they are being represented. One of the periods where Maya people were exploited and dispossessed was the hacienda period (1880-1915) (see Cabrera Pacheco, forthcoming). Nowadays, there is a Foundation converting these haciendas into luxury hotels and giving jobs to Maya people. The government perspective of the re-use of haciendas is positive because of the company’s so-called ‘social work’ in which they are ‘giving [Maya populations] a culture, not of servility, like the haciendas of before [...] a taboo subject in Mexico, [...] but] giving them again the dignity of what they are’ (Interview: Tourism officer, 16/01/2015). However, when discussing this matter with members of a non-governmental organisation who have actually engaged with these communities, the story they recount is one of Maya people being hired to serve tourists as their ancestors served hacienda owners in the past, and to

¹⁶ The *hipil* (called *huipil* in other Mexican regions) is the traditional everyday dress of Maya women.

'perform' jobs that their ancestors did as slaves. Moreover, their housing and their presence outside the performance is not tolerated; in some cases they have been displaced into 'adequate housing' away from hacienda lands.

While *Indigenismo* practices are still determining at some level the lives of Maya populations, there have been some paradigm shifts through Indigeneity constructions, as I will present in the following section.

6.4.2 Constructions of Maya Indigeneity

Struggles between *Indigenismo* and Indigeneity paradigms are not exclusive of local populations and can be found within the government, as I encountered during fieldwork. In spite of the generalised *Indigenismo* practices, there are some critical actors within the government which recognise the value of Maya culture and traditions not for its possible commodification but for its worth for Maya populations themselves. A shift towards the recognition of a multicultural nation instead of a *mestizo* one has been implemented even if there are no regulations for putting it in practice (Interview: Indigenous Development officer, 06/02/2015). This has meant that Maya populations are treated *just* as rural producers instead of recognised indigenous right-bearing subjects, i.e. they have access to land-related subsidies but they cannot claim lands or other rights based on their Indigeneity (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015).

The actual Indigeneity of Maya people in the Peninsula Yucatán was addressed in a quantitative and ethnographic study by Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa (2014).¹⁷ Participants were asked to answer if they would self-identify with several descriptors, including Mexican, Maya, and Indian, regarding their 'ethnic identity'. Indian (*indio*) was more relatable than Indigenous (*indígena*) (65 versus 63 per cent) but Maya was the term they related the most (91 per cent). The Mayan speaking quality (called *mayero*) was also acknowledged (84 per cent) while being mestizo was still highly present (75 per cent). When asked about what were the characteristics of Maya people which they gave preference to, it was those who speak Mayan language (81 per cent) and those who have 'old beliefs of Yucatán' (80 per cent); while their physical characteristics was the least important (57 per cent). Regarding the Maya of the past (as the ones who built cities such as Chichén-Itzá and Uxmal) and if they have any link with the current Mayas, participants agreed for the most part (68 per cent) but only 23 per cent of them had any knowledge of

¹⁷ This study has a number of surveys in many places in the Peninsula of Yucatán, which includes the states of Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán. The data I am using is the tabulated version for the state of Yucatán.

archaeological sites in their own municipalities (Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa, 2014). This study exemplifies what Pratt (2007: 399) describes as a relational nucleus of Indigeneity, as “indigenous’ is rarely if ever the primary identity of indigenous people’.

Even when people have indigeneity, as conceived by Smith (2007: 348) ‘complicated, ambiguous, and therefore troubling [...] even for those who live the realities and contradictions of being native’, this is an undervalued identity associated with a specific way of living (Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa, 2014). Associations between poverty and Indigeneity are based on ‘politics that explicitly relate traditional clothing and some ways of being and doing as Maya’ (Duarte Duarte, 2013: 1). Facing this, some Maya people ‘have adopted silence not as a sample of weakness and apathy but as a strategy in their political struggle against a long history of breached accords, empty promises, simulated supports and deceiving programmes’ (ibid: 6). This has allowed the development of survival strategies of the Maya (see Quintal et al., 2003); but more important is a diversity recognition from populations themselves that Sium et al. (2012) speak about, by which ‘the hundreds of Maya communities in the Peninsula of Yucatán differ from one to another in history, subsistence ways, ‘acculturation’ levels, organisational complexities, identity representation, characteristics of their relation to the dominant society, and other factors’ (Quintal et al., 2003: 369).

During interviews with local populations throughout fieldwork in Yucatán, people identified themselves based on their religion, their relation to land as *milperos*, *ejidatarios*, *campesinos*, and their Indigeneity as descendent of the Maya, Indian, and *mayeros*, or simply as *yucatecos*. As noted in the study by Lizama Quijano and Bracamonte y Sosa (2014), the characteristics that local people give to being Maya are speaking Mayan language and having ‘old beliefs’. From the latter, there are still *H’men* (Maya priest) in many settlements, who perform ceremonies (Interview: Doña Fina, 27/03/2015). Moreover, the image of the Maya people ‘is represented by events like the *Hanal Pixán*,¹⁸ in traditions like believing in the *aluxes*.¹⁹ People still remember the old’ (Interview: Christian, 13/07/2015). People do relate themselves to ancient Maya people in ways of considering it an inheritance or legacy, as Patricia (Interview, 11/03/2015) states ‘I think it is a Maya inheritance because we have been following these traditions for a long time. So, in this way we are part of them’; and Christian (Interview, 13/07/2015), ‘[Maya legacy] is the inheritance from our grandparents which is reflected in the *hipiles*, the

¹⁸ ‘Food for the souls’, a mix of European and Maya traditions where food is left for the souls of deceased relatives on fixed dates (31st October and 1st-2nd November). It is the Maya Yucatec version of the Mexican Day of the Dead.

¹⁹ The *alux* is a Maya mythological creature who is believed to help *campesinos* in their *milpas* with favourable conditions when they receive offerings.

language, the food and the history'. People also identify themselves from the language they speak, as Doña Fina (Interview, 27/03/2015), who identifies herself as '*mayera*'. Lastly, there are some people like Jimena (Interview, 25/03/2015) who self-identifies as indigenous because 'we have indigenous roots, we are all from there and we descend from the Maya. We have to strength it, acknowledge it and defend it'. Indigeneity in Yucatán is a lived experience which is evident by these responses. It is true however, that indigenous identity has been undermined in Yucatán, further contributing to the contradictions and convergences of both Indigeneity and *Indigenismo* in the everyday life experience of Maya people in the place they inhabit, as I will analyse in the next section.

6.5 Actually existing Maya life

In this section I shift the attention to the ways in which Maya people in Yucatán actually reproduce these complex and contested forms of identity. Maya people's identity was specifically discussed with the Indigenous Development officer (Interview, 06/02/2015) who considered that it is a well-structured identity which is 'camouflaged' according to the scenario in which Maya people perform and what it is expected from them. It is in this sense that Maya people would use traditional clothing when selling crafts to tourists, in order to 'connect' with the market in ways described by Maybury-Lewis (2003) and by Larraín (2000). Its relation with the government has not necessarily been of confrontation but of maintaining control and continuity over their ways of life, in spite of programmes and pressures. I focus on two important aspects of the reproduction of their identity: their relation to land, the *solar* and the Maya house, and the contradictory performance and living of their identities; both of which relate to the 'customary-modern hybrids [places in] which Indigenous people may, in fact, choose to live' (see Larsen and Johnson, 2012; Pickerill, 2009 quoted in Coombes et al., 2011: 477).

6.5.1 Performing and living identities

The Mexican government is promoting in Yucatán an economic transition from agriculture to services, where cultural tourism, as we have seen before is considered a growing business. However, as critical scholars have highlighted, this Maya culture-based tourism 'is built upon impoverishment, ancestral lands appropriation, and dispossession of the old ways of working, to substitute them with labour in agroindustry, [and] tourism industry...' (Wammack and Duarte, 2010 in Duarte Duarte, 2013: 7). Furthermore, people living their culture and keeping it alive often get caught in neoliberal practices,

such as crafting items for the benefit of others. Making hammocks (and other types of crafts) is an ongoing tradition that people who have the abilities and knowledge carry on for the benefit of families and communities. However, it is also exploited by intermediaries who have access to larger markets. They pay low ‘wages’ for crafts such as hammocks (100 pesos) and sell them on average at 800 pesos (Interviews: Social Development officer, 10/02/2015; NGO worker, 13/08/2015). I witnessed this hammock production during my interviews with some of these hammock-weavers. In spite of the commodification of crafts and the exploitation of craft making, some people only make them for their own use or for their families, or for selling in their own settlement. The ones who do have some access to a wider market, usually because of government subsidies, are compelled to put on their traditional dress, a *terno* which is an elaborated version of the *hipil*, to be able to sell their product, even if they do not wear it on their daily life.

However, some elements of the Maya tradition have endured, such as the Mayan language – even if also currently threatened. Families have different approaches towards teaching the Mayan language to their children, some use it to communicate with them while others only use Spanish language – some children will pick up the Mayan eventually but others never will. This is not new but it rather keeps happening throughout generations. Mayan language is usually understood and most people from my interviews use it to communicate on daily basis. Of interest is the notion that the language is taught in both primary school and higher education; however, the latter is based on a commodified way where students learn it because ‘tourists will even pay to hear you speak Mayan’ (Interview: Macarena, 25/03/2015). However, it is also used as a basis for daily discrimination and within social mobility, such as buying a house closer to the city centre, having higher education or political aspirations. One of the families I interviewed have experienced this based on their Maya surname and on speaking Mayan language. They have analysed this from different perspectives and shared some of those during the interview:

[In other places] you can see a mix of the [Maya and Spanish] surnames but here is it very difficult for you to see a *Canché*²⁰ with a *Peniche*²¹. [People] keep their [social] class. We have ascribed it to the hacienda period because in here it was clearly marked [...]. Thus people from the city centre are descendants from those [hacienda

²⁰ Maya name literally translated as ‘wooden snake’, kept as a surname amongst Yucatec Maya populations (see Tuláakal, 2016 for more examples of Maya surnames).

²¹ This Spanish surname has been traced back to the first settlers in Espita in Yucatán, see Batt (1991: 198).

owner] families. Then because they had economic power and all [...] somehow they managed to continue with their patrimony, their ranchos, their cattle [...]. [People] from the lower income neighbourhoods [...], they started to live closer to the city centre and were looked down. [...] There was some sort of bullying because of the fact that they were improving [their living standard] (Interview: Arturo, 26/03/2015).

6.5.2 Working the land

The territory has been stated as the privileged framework for the continuity within the ongoing transformations of the relations of Maya communities (Quintal et al., 2003; Estrada Lugo et al., 1998), even when shaped by discrimination and second class citizenship (see de la Cadena and Starn, 2007). It is ‘the territorial self-sufficiency that has historically sustained [Maya] autonomies’ (Wammack Weber and Duarte Duarte, 2012: 193) by which some people regard land as the reason to keep going: as of 2006, there were over 100 thousand *milperos* practicing the traditional shifting polyculture (ibid). The link between the *solar* and the *milpa* relies, amongst other things, in the knowledge about agriculture practices better adapted to the environment and the geography of the region. Because of the impacts of government policies and programmes ‘the *milpa* remained but as a space of cultural resistance. [...] Nowadays the amount of polyculture functioning is less because government politics have been influencing [towards monoculture]’ (Interview: Indigenous Development officer, 06/02/2015).

For its part, the *ejido* (as common land) has been historically assumed by Maya communities as their own way of relating with land and this has continued through various strategies despite government-led programmes eroding it. For example, when a land titling programme occurred in 1993, people ‘outsmarted the government’ by leaving considerable areas of land as common use even if they parcelled the *ejido*. In some *ejidos*, 80 per cent of ejidatarios in Yucatán, the totality of the land was kept in common (Procuraduría Agraria, 2007; see Quintal et al., 2003), ‘in this sense, people can continue doing what they traditionally did’ (Interview: Indigenous Development officer, 06/02/2015). This practice of keeping the *ejido* in common seems indeed as a form of resistance, as it is the continuing of polyculture, even in small patches of squash, chillies and tomatoes in addition to corn. However, doing things traditionally is linked to living in poverty, according to some interviews with local populations. Furthermore, the link between working the land and lack of education is strong: ‘[the young people] who do not finish their studies are the ones who help in the *milpa*. But the ones who do finish are the ones who go out to work’ (Interview: Patricia, 11/03/2015). This translates into shifts

towards wage labour disregarding the production of food, 'we will starve to death because no one produces [food] anymore' (Interview: Don Alfonso, 26/03/2015).

6.5.3 *Living the solar and the house*

There are different perceptions of the *solar* (Figure 16) from local populations. Some regarded it as the plot (*terreno*) where people live and what they own. Some others consider it as something old, something from 'before'. Some refer to it as 'the toilet' because they used it (some still do) for open-air defecation or under some Guano-palm building. Some people recognise it as something Maya but not all are comfortable with the idea of identifying themselves as living in one (even when they do). In these cases, people say they live in a *terreno*. The *solar* is often the result of the division of a previous family *solar*. This division is not necessarily 'legal' and it is also not necessarily 'physical'. For some of the people from my interviews having an individual property of their plot was not necessary, which raises questions about living a house or using a *solar* versus owning them, as regarded by several scholars (Panelli, 2008: 805), when they say 'homes' can be used 'to mobilize and destabilize fixed notions of private and public'. Having shared spaces seemed to be enough. Some families share spaces in a large *solar* even when each has their own house, traditional or not. But some families do put *albarradas*, traditional low walls made of stones with no mortar, to mark their own space or to access government subsidies (e.g. housing, toilets, and backyard production). Large *solares* were ideal for producing food and for living within an extended family system.

Families who divide their *solar* to conform to individual property policies or to have access to subsidies face the consequences of the space reduction. Less space means fewer possibilities for self-provision but also means the loss of environmental biodiversity, and the language attached to this. According to Doña Karla (Interview, 10/03/2015) 'the *solar* used to be enough'. Production in the *solar* helps families' economy by saving some money on food, but it goes beyond that, as many of my interviewees acknowledged, they all did their *solar* and *milpa* because they liked doing it and that is why they found ways and spaces for it. The *ka'anche'*, an elevated structure used as a seedbed to grow vegetables and medicine plants, is one of the elements of the *solar* which is being kept especially in more urban areas. It is a way of living they embrace while being aware of the difficulties it carries.

Figure 16: Families in their *solar*



Source: Own photographs (2015)

As mentioned, the Maya house has been stigmatised as not an ‘adequate housing’, amongst many other characterisations. However, it has also been regarded by a few government agencies as ‘a fixed housing’ (Interview: Housing officer, 23/02/2015); as having ‘all the Maya cosmogony contained’ (Interview: Environment officer, 19/01/2015); and, as ‘an element that generates wellbeing and it must not be substituted by a false idea of development’ (Interview: Indigenous Development officer, 06/02/2015). Even so, the normalisation of the ‘*pie de casa*’ (a room made of concrete materials, originally implemented after the hurricane Isidore (2002) through a Natural Disasters Fund – FONDEN) as housing in government programmes for years after the hurricane, has meant changes in the perceptions of local populations:

...people liked having a safe ‘*pie de casa*’. There are *comisarias* [settlement in Yucatán, between 500 and three thousand people] where they did not like it, there is too much heat inside and they are not used to that [...]. [People rebuilt their Maya houses] in the *comisarias* but not in Muna [head of municipality with 11,469 inhabitants]. In here people prefer to make an effort and make their house of ‘material’ even if they take long [to save the money] (Interview: Christian, 13/07/2015).

Traditional Maya houses evolved adapted to the environmental conditions from the region, including hurricanes and high temperatures, and its resistance to hurricane winds has been tested (see Angelotti Pasteur, 2014; and, Centeno Lara et al., 2005), giving room to its improvement. While the traditional palm roof provides relief to high temperatures this is not achieved in '*pies de casa*', which puts an unnecessary stress in families' income to keep their houses cool. As one interviewee put it: 'you cannot even put up a hammock there... but even one like that would be alright [to receive]' (Interview: Doña Karla, 10/03/2015), reaffirming the contradictions between wanting to keep the Maya house and the stigmas attached to it, which end up being attached to the identities of people living these places. But the reality is that people do live still in Maya houses and *solares*, quietly facing the attempts of neoliberal governments to change their ways of life.

6.6 Conclusions

In this paper I have contributed towards the decolonisation of geography as a discipline by actively engaging with coloniality experiences of indigenous populations. Furthermore, I have contributed to Indigenous Geographies by addressing some of its gaps regarding place for developing a different type of resistance, one based on a quiet continuity of the everyday life; regarding its links to other 'south' epistemologies such as Decoloniality perspective; and regarding the complexities in the reproduction of Maya identities, in specific, by reframing the existent knowledge on them. By questioning the racial hierarchies attached to power, knowledge and being I have addressed the reproduction of Maya identities through opposing perspectives of *Indigenismo* and Indigeneity. Furthermore, I have analysed the role of the *solar* as the place where Maya populations live their identities rather than perform them, and the relevance of material and intangible elements, such as the Maya house and the Mayan language in the actual reproduction of Maya identities.

Expanding on these actually existing reproductions, Maya people do have many complicated and contradictory identities as per the Indigeneity scholarship attests. But they have also been represented by others and had to deal with this representation for over 500 years, therefore incorporating some of those representation to their daily lives and their performances. As argued by (Coombes et al., 2011: 478), the co-production of indigenous identities in globalised discourses derives from going beyond the binary relations of 'endogenous-exogenous, past-present, enchanting-rationalizing, and global-local'. Maya people are part of the neoliberal global world and they participate in it,

performing when they have to and quietly living in their house and *solar* when the performance is not required. An actual recognition of their existence as indigenous right-bearing subjects would be to not impose such performance or trivialise it – or undermine their traditions and ways of life so they only get to perform them instead of living them, and allowing the contradictions to flow into whatever direction their individual and collective identities will lead them. For example, if Maya populations have the same access as they did before to the necessary materials to build their own Maya houses and they were not undermined for it, what type of house would they prefer to live in?

This contributes to the recognition that in between desires of freedom for self-recognition –including being complicated and being able to change, there are ‘multiple and shifting identities and hybridities with much more nuanced positions about what constitutes native identities, native communities, and native knowledge in anti- and postcolonial times’ (Smith, 2007: 348-349). However, it is also important to recognise the implications of such hybridities when indigenous people rely on more traditional representations – even if not by their own designs, as way of livelihoods (see Coombes et al., 2011). What would be the case if Maya people of Yucatán were to organise? Resistance, continuity, and social change should be all equal options for them.

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PART III: Critical Discussion

7. CONTRIBUTIONS: DECOLONIALITY

7.1 Introduction

The preceding Parts I and II have examined how and why the *Maya solar*, as an intricate indigenous system of land, livelihoods and identities, has been maintained over time in relation to the conflicting processes of transformation and contestation from Maya populations in Yucatán. Part III is comprised of two sections: the first sets out my main contributions to knowledge; and the second section engages in some final considerations. In the first section, I re-locate my research on the Maya of Yucatán within broader debates relating to indigenous peoples and their struggles, before providing some key answers to the original research questions and reflecting on the main theoretical contributions and limitations of the research based on Decoloniality perspective. In the second section, I will present some final remarks, and recommendations for further research.

To briefly recap, throughout the academic papers in Part II, I examined the multiplicity of events occurring at once in the *solar*, drawing from historical constructions and intertwining the three key concepts of land, livelihoods and identities. The unfolding transformations and the responses of Maya populations were analysed using qualitative research that combined interviews and secondary documentary analysis. The thesis has interpreted this evidence through the Decoloniality perspective, which has acted as a lens to contest and rework the existing theoretical frameworks of ‘Primitive Accumulation’, ‘Latin American urban studies’, and ‘Indigenous Geographies’, addressing their gaps when dealing with indigenous peoples, their territories and their ways of living. This has led to three main sets of arguments presented in the three academic papers of Part II:

1. In Yucatán, the current dispossession of Maya lands, livelihoods and even identities is neither new nor recent but part of an ongoing struggle for survival experienced by Maya populations since colonial times. I have used the Marxist theory of ‘Primitive Accumulation’, which offers an account of the origins of capitalism, and reworked it from both Decoloniality and Critical Geography perspectives, to historically trace these dispossession processes and locate them in the present moment. This innovative approach unravelled the key role of the

Maya *solar* as a space for continuous resistance of Maya populations in the quiet processes of the everyday life.

2. Contemporary Maya territories in Yucatán are being transformed in complex and contradictory ways resulting in spaces that are neither urban nor rural but something in between, and hence, are considered in neither local urban regulations nor regional theoretical developments. I reviewed the literature within 'Latin American urban studies' and applied a Decoloniality perspective to critically uncover its dominant theoretical and conceptual assumptions which has tended to characterise the Maya communities as rural and backward. Instead, using the concept of Decolonial urbanism I develop a new understanding of the peri-urban as not simply an interstitial space between the urban and the rural, but as 'the urban beyond the city', where indigenous spaces such as the *solar* are important for the development of livelihoods and the possibility of self-subsistence in non-rural environments.
3. Identities of Maya populations in Yucatán are the result of contradictory elements of representations and performances, related, on the one hand to state policies derived from what is known as *Indigenismo*, and, on the other hand, of constructions, related to Indigeneity practices emerging from populations themselves. Actually lived experiences are reproduced through everyday life experiences marked by these contradictory elements. I have argued that these conflicting processes can be reconciled through the concept of 'Decolonial Indigenous Geographies'. This concept helps us to understand how the *solar* takes a central role for the ongoing enabling of material and intangible elements for the reproduction of Maya identities.

From these arguments and from the research questions set in Part I, I now engage in a critical discussion to highlight my key findings, contributions and their limitations.

7.2 Re-locating the research

Since I began writing this thesis in 2012, the global struggles of indigenous peoples to defend their land, to keep their livelihoods safe, to continue with their ways of living, and to fight racism, amongst many other difficulties, have become ever more visible. Rather than seeing the Maya of Yucatán as separate to these struggles or my research findings as

unique to them, it is important to re-locate my research within the ongoing indigenous struggles in the Americas, drawing connections not from their visible resistance but from their endurance.

In terms of struggles for the defence of land and livelihoods, there are numerous cases across the Americas within which the Maya of Yucatán can be located.

Six years after genetically-modified soya was first grown in the Yucatán Peninsula,²² affecting 253 thousand hectares of land upon which supported traditional livelihoods of 50,000 families, especially threatening traditional bee keeping, in November 2015 a legal battle was won by a group of Maya beekeepers with the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (*Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación* – SCJN) ordering corporate giant Monsanto to stop growing this crop in the region (Barragán, 2015). Following this legal battle, the SCJN ordered an enquiry to be conducted with Maya populations of the region in order to determine the acceptance or not of this crop. Several groups have denounced as biased the individuals and institutions in charge of informing local populations about benefits and harms of GMOs (Cruz, 2016). Last month, in October 2016 Maya bee keepers from the Mexican state of Campeche testified in the International Court of Justice in The Hague against Monsanto for violating the communities' human rights with their products (Santana, 2016). Furthermore, that same month, the government of Yucatán issued a decree declaring the state an area free from agriculture involving GMOs 'in order to preserve the biodiversity, the agrobiodiversity and the quality of products from rural and coastal communities' (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2016: 25). However, this last month, November 2016, the Colectivo Apícola de los Chenes (2016) have manifested that no sanctions have come to those who illegally sow transgenic soya and to the company who produces it and introduces it in the affected communities, Monsanto.

Meanwhile, in Oaxaca, a southern state in Mexico, a Zapotec community got a favourable judicial order against a Mexican and Australian consortium in order to stop a wind farm of 400 megawatts in rural areas outside their settlement, Juchitán; this victory comes after a judge had ruled against them in June (Burnett, 2016). The lawsuit derives from reported inconsistencies in a governmental indigenous inquiry back in 2014 for such project. It was the first inquiry of its type for a wind farm since the Mexican government energy reform in 2013. Previous wind farms in the area have been regarded as 'good for the town' but not for all people in such towns – those who do not own any land do not

²² The original authorisation for commercial transgenic soya in Yucatán included two municipalities from my fieldwork: Oxkutzcab with 71,968 hectares and Espita with 398 hectares (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2016).

benefit from the rents, but do face rising prices and the loss of jobs once the wind farm is built. Oaxaca is one of the poorest areas in Mexico, and wind farms have only deepened inequalities (Burnett, 2016).

In the north of the Americas, indigenous people have set up several camps to resist the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) which crosses Great Sioux Nation territory protected under nineteenth century treaties as well as under recent United States environmental regulations (NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective, 2016). As in many other regions, indigenous and environmental rights are intertwined in what some scholars and activists have named 'environmental racism'; the course of the oil pipeline both endangers the Missouri river from which they get their water supply, and disrupts sacred burial grounds. The project therefore damages their land and cultural heritage. Resistance is taking place both at the front, facing militarised police and criminalisation of peaceful protests, and in court, where in September 2016 a judge denied protesters the halting of the construction (Levin, 2016; Milman, 2016).

In South America, struggles are taking place against megaprojects as documented in the latest Continental Summit of Abya Yala Communication (*Cumbre Continental de Comunicación de Abya Yala*). Indigenous people in Peru and Colombia are struggling against mining projects; in Ecuador, people from the Amazon region struggle against oil companies; and in Bolivia, people face hydroelectric projects (*Cumbre Continental de Comunicaciones Indígena del Abya-Yala*, 2016). Focusing on large projects however, leads to the overlooking of smaller but equally damaging processes. In Guyana, for example, small-scale or 'artisan' gold-mining in 2011 counted for 14,000 licensed miners looking for gold while affecting rivers and streams of which Amerindian populations rely on (Dillard, 2012). These Amerindian populations have a legal title to over 29,000 square kilometres, however, they do not have any rights to valuable subsoil minerals in that land. Indeed, a high court in 2013 ruled that if miners have approved licenses, 'indigenous groups do not have the right to expel legal miners from their land' (Purdy, 2013: online). And most recently, illegal gold-mining in the Brazilian Amazon close to Venezuela, is life-threatening an uncontacted tribe within the Yanomami indigenous territory (Survival, 2016).

The Maya struggle can also be located within other contemporary conflicts surrounding indigenous peoples living urban settings. Due to increasing urbanisation and migration (rural to urban) processes, in 2000 there was an estimation of 40 per cent of the indigenous population of the Latin America area analysed by Del Popolo et al. (2009) living in urban areas. This area includes the countries of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The pressure to

abandon their culture is higher in large cities, derived from deep socio-cultural transformations. From census data, the authors have set that one in three indigenous people in Mexico and Guatemala reside in urban areas, while half of the indigenous population in Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela does so; the highest percentage is Chile with 64.8 per cent (Del Popolo et al., 2009). Furthermore, according to Yanes Rizo (2004) the 'indigenous question' in Mexico, and also in Latin America, is understood as the processes of 'urbanisation' of indigenous populations, i.e. where indigenous populations migrate into the urban. In here, indigenous people can also be differentiated, as of the indigenous population of Mexico City, between 'resident' indigenous people – those who have migrated to the city, and 'native' indigenous people – those who saw their lands encroached by the urban sprawl. However, as Duarte Duarte (2010) has expressed, indigenous people face discrimination based on disdain, invisibilisation and paternalism, not only towards the person but towards their indigeneity (Yanes Rizo, 2004).

My research on the Maya of Yucatán is also located within very contemporary political events in Mexico which could have international repercussions. In a communiqué of October 2016, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the National Indigenous Congress (*Congreso Nacional Indígena* – CNI), the Zapatistas denounced a long list of attacks, dispossessions and injustices that indigenous peoples around Mexico suffer, showing also solidarity with the people of the Dakota nation in the United States. What set apart this communiqué from previous ones was a shift from resistance from indigenous territories and experiences towards the proposal of an independent candidate of an Indigenous Governing Council, represented by an indigenous woman, to contend for the Mexican presidency in 2018 (CNI and EZLN, 2016). This announcement by the Zapatistas and the CNI was met with joy, hope, support, doubts, questions, and even deep ingrained sexism and racism. Racism comes from the continuous undermining of the validity of indigenous experiences and their knowledge. The proposal of the Zapatistas and the CNI aims not for power but for reconnecting from below, in their own words:

We ratify that our struggle is not for power which we do not seek; rather, we call on all the native peoples and civil society to organise to stop this destruction [brought by capitalism], [and] to strengthen our resistances and rebellions, i.e. defending the life of every person, family, collective, community [and] neighbourhood. [We make a call] to construct peace and justice by reweaving ourselves from below, from where we are what we are (CNI and EZLN, 2016: online).

Having demonstrated the ongoing relevance and indeed urgency of the Maya of Yucatán's struggles as part of ongoing indigenous movements across the Americas, I now engage with the thesis's findings, contributions and their limitations about the transformations of the Maya *solar* and the Maya people in Yucatán.

7.3 Findings, contributions and limitations

This thesis has focused on the Maya *solar* and the Maya people, and on the intertwining of land, livelihoods and identities, through a historical perspective and within the everyday life experiences in peri-urban settlements. The main original contributions of this thesis can be described as threefold that will be further elaborated in dedicated sub-sections afterwards:

- First, it has made an original *empirical contribution to knowledge of the Maya of Yucatán* by providing new primary evidence of the Maya's plight, bringing to light their realities and their everyday life in ways not previously documented (7.3.1);
- Second, it has made an original *theoretical contribution to the ongoing decolonisation of knowledge* through further developing the Decoloniality perspective (7.3.2);
- Third, it has made an original *ontological contribution to understanding the Maya populations that survive in Yucatán* that renders their being in the world as a far more complex reality than the generally accepted dichotomous conceptions of the indigenous world: urban/rural, modern/traditional, indigenous/non-indigenous, amongst others (7.3.3).

7.3.1 Empirical findings and contributions

Based on the research questions guiding this research laid out in Part I, in sub-section 1.5.1, I present the main findings, contributions and limitations of this PhD, referring back to each of the empirical contributions of the academic papers on Part II, or addressing them by grouping findings based on themes.

The first research question was:

What is the historical importance of the *solar* in Yucatán for the reproduction of the Maya way of life?

The *solar* has been the place that Maya people have historically relied on to be able to reproduce their ways of life. The endurance of this place has been in spite of waves of

dispossession, exploitation and commodification directed at Maya populations. It has, however, also been shaped by the ongoing confrontation of these processes with the different ways Maya people have resisted, contested, adapted and assimilated to the resulting transformations in their everyday life. Hence, the historical importance of the *solar* lies on such endurance and on the ability to provide to its inhabitants with both material and intangible elements of land, livelihoods and identities, to guarantee their resilience through their ongoing struggles. The *solar* has been shaped by a myriad of conflicting processes. However, it has been through the continuous relations between Maya people and the territory they inhabit, and through their collective needs that the *solar* is finally shaped into what it is today: a space in between and beyond urban/rural, modern/traditional, and indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomies.

As I mentioned in sub-section [3.3.3](#), the limitations of documentary research, in this case for the historical importance of the *solar* for Maya populations, are on the origins of the evidence. Few historical accounts actually come from Maya themselves (for example, U Molay Chhibal Maya Uinic, 2014 [1941]), most come from the perspective of their ‘othering’ (see contested colonial source de Landa, 1985 [1566]).

The second research question was:

What are the contemporary drivers of peri-urbanisation in the *solar* and how are these influencing the current transformations in land, livelihoods and identities?

For answering this question, I refer back to the conceptual framework (Figure 6 in section [1.5](#)) to show the interconnection of the contemporary transformations of land, livelihoods and identities with factors of change in the production of peri-urban landscapes. Therefore, I have grouped my findings from the three papers as they connect these elements instead of listing them separately.

My research found that modernisation projects, for example the development of new housing funded by the government programme FONDEN and followed by the state government housing agency as a ‘regular’ housing subsidy, are important drivers for change and have multiple effects. By pretexting ‘risk management’ for the eventuality of other hurricanes, the government has erased the possibility of Maya populations to build their own houses through their own resources or through subsidies, and has indeed benefited private housing developers (see Angelotti Pasteur, 2014). These programmes, appealing as they might be to Maya communities, have an important effect in land management including the division of *solares* through titling programmes to impose secure tenure. This upsets the traditional family property of Maya populations and inserts private

individual property as something to aspire to instead of destabilising notions of private and public, as Panelli (2008) had identified. In turn, livelihoods are transformed as the *solar* is no longer large, and food production and animal husbandry must be eliminated or reduced; smaller plots also hinder the development of certain activities such as the setting of weaving frames or the processing of Guano palms for crafts. People then rely on out-of-plot livelihoods, such as moto-taxi drivers or in-the-house settings of small shops. Finally, on identities, as younger generations move into new housing types they lose the opportunity of identifying with a symbol of their culture, the Maya house, which will definitely have impacts on their identity construction and the value they give to such symbols (see Speller et al., 2002).

Additionally, when new housing types are designed from outside the region, as it happened with FONDEN's *pies de casa*, they are not adapted to the environment which presents further complications. For example, accommodating a traditional hammock is recognised in local planning regulations when building non-Maya houses, to make sure that there is enough space and health problems do not arise due to hammock 'malfunctioning' (something which is traditionally considered in the building of a Maya house). However, new houses are not designed based on hammocks but on (small) beds. Based on this, either houses are adapted to local environments and customs (which does not seem likely based on my interviewees) or local populations will have to. If the hammock's everyday importance is lost in urban spaces where these new types of housing are designed for, its path seems to be its stigmatisation as connected to the 'rural' Maya house – and its commodification for tourism consumption.

Another driver for transformation is legislative reforms which are driving populations away from agriculture, and from their traditional ways of living, including the Maya house, into a more 'urban' and 'modern' environment (Lerner and Eakin, 2011; Simone, 2011). For example, limiting common ownership and promoting tenure security impacts on the amount of space available for food production, hence people rely more on wages to buy food. In a second example, legislation was passed where indigenous populations were classified as 'mestiza' population, not only further stigmatising indigenous identities but in fact denying them access to autonomy as the legislation was intended for (see Duarte Duarte, 2014 for an analysis). A third example connects legislations with their effects (in a summary of different stories collected from fieldwork): a change in land ownership from PROCEDE (land titling programme aimed at parcelling *ejidos*) combined with land subsidies of PROCAMPO (agriculture programme aimed at compensating losses derived from free trade) reduced the size and productivity of Maya lands, driving people to sell it. Some of these previous owners were hired as agricultural workers for

cedar farms in a precarious working environment (e.g. no benefits). They have a pressure for money and have no support to fix their Maya house. Then, a hurricane comes and destroys said house. The government then intervenes and gives them a 'better' house – incompatible with the local environment but 'modern' and 'urban'. This concatenation of events shows the connection between the 'un-modern' and 'rural' with indigeneity and the further stigmatisation of these elements drives social change in Maya communities, which adds to the changes brought back by migrants and generational shifts (see Coulthard, 2014; Patel, 2014; Vainer, 2014; Wacquant et al., 2014; Varley, 2013).

The third question was:

What do these processes of transformation mean for the local strategies of space production and the Maya way of living?

I have organised the findings about the strategies of Maya populations around the main struggles of Maya people identified and analysed in the first paper, i.e. the government programmes of PROCEDE, PROCAMPO, and FONDEN, while incorporating findings from the second and third papers on the same subjects, or deriving from them.

Facing PROCEDE, the different strategies from Maya populations can be exemplified as follows:

- Some people have indeed divided their land and have sold it, as in the previous example, some of these people now work as precarious agricultural workers for a wage to buy food instead of producing it.
- Some *ejidatarios* have rejected PROCEDE completely and have kept the land in common and continue to do their *milpa* in common *ejido* land.
- Some other *ejidatarios* have nonetheless decided to divide only one portion of the land while keeping common property for the majority of the *ejido*.

Facing PROCAMPO, the different strategies from Maya populations can be exemplified as follows:

- Some people never received this monetary support so they have carried on with their ways of living complementing it with other activities to generate enough income to invest in agriculture needs, such as equipment.
- Some people who do not work the land do receive it, and they use the money for their own needs. Corruption at different levels of the subsidy chain leaves these cases unnoticed or unaccounted for.

- Some people who receive it and work the land have shifted towards (or indeed, remained on) commercial production. While some are still based on *milpa* systems they have intensified and extended it in order to produce enough to supply local markets or other retail stores.
- Some people receive it as well but instead of shifting towards commercial ‘modern’ production, as intended by the programme, they have used the money in other areas of their lives and continue to practice agriculture in the self-subsistence *milpa* system as they have done so before. As interviewees recounted, people usually ‘hide’ the spaces of *milpa* – only showing corn fields to PROCAMPO auditors.

Another finding is that the possibilities for reproducing these ways of living once they are lost – as happened with the first case in PROCEDE and the second case in PROCAMPO, are very small. Not only is the land lost, but also the knowledge to work it, developed over hundreds of years: the *milpa*, the slash-and-burn process, the rain patterns, the species required for ecological succession, amongst others, are considered as traditional and only shared from one generation to the other. Some scholars, such as Terán and Rasmussen (2009); and, Hernández Xolocotzi et al. (1995), have recorded this knowledge but they are no replacement for the experienced-based knowledge transmitted orally. Moreover, the implementation of several environmental regulations for production, conservation, and management, have resulted in the disarticulation of the *solar* and the Maya ways of living. Particularly, this occurs when people move away from production to only consumption, and when they are handed out the money, or deprived of other possibilities for doing so. However, due to unreliability of other forms of livelihoods, some people who had stopped working their *solar* and *milpa*, have not just the need but the desire to start again. Because they need to provide for themselves and they want to rely on what they produce rather than what they can buy. This ‘rescues’ some of the knowledge and practices simply by clearing out a space in their *solar* for harvesting some corn, squashes, sweet potatoes and chillies, maybe using other subsidies to get them started, and to share the knowledge and practice with younger generations.

Additionally, while I have discussed in this thesis the social, cultural and political losses of this disarticulation, I did not engage with possible environmental losses. The number and type of species in the *solar* and the *milpa* have been widely documented across disciplines in agrobiodiversity. I will only refer to numbers to understand the magnitude of possible losses. Toledo et al. (2008) identified an average (minimum/maximum) of 35 (20/50) plant species in the *milpa* and 100-150 (50/387) in the *solar* (which they call family orchard). Also from the *solar*, Poot-Pool et al. (2005) identified 161 plant species for a

rural *solar* (which they called home garden), 177 for a semi-urban one, and 214 for a peri-urban one (referring to a place on the fringe of a large city).

Finally, FONDEN and the housing programmes ensuing after it, provided with *pies de casa* to replace Maya houses for which physical and legal divisions of the *solar* were needed. The different strategies from Maya populations facing these situations can be exemplified as follows:

- Some families legally divided their *solares* and received more than one *pie de casa* per original *solar*, matching the number of Maya houses severely damaged by the hurricane.
- Some families managed to keep their *solar* physically as one in the traditional way but also became recipients of such *pie de casa* subsidy.
- Some families who got the *pie de casa* decided to build back their traditional Maya house next to it in their *solar*, usually where it originally stood.

A common response of the families who did not receive a *pie de casa* after the hurricane or for the housing programmes developed after it, seems to be, however, of complete assimilation, as an interviewee manifested: ‘...but even one like that would be alright [to receive]’. People conform and assimilate to government impositions, following what Maldonado-Torres (2007); and, Quijano (2000) argued about coloniality conquering the minds of native populations. The division of *solares* has historically been a mediation for family conflicts, and *albarradas* (low walls made of stones without mortar) are used as strategies to visually divide a *solar*, although not legally, and sometimes they get access to further subsidies this way. However, by doing so families limit their possibilities of developing *solar*-based livelihoods. In cases where the land in the *solar* is not enough, a Maya element is used in diverse forms, such as the *ka’anche*’ (an elevated seedbed) as a strategy to increase the available land.

7.3.2 Theoretical findings and contributions

The fourth and final research question goes beyond empirical findings and allowed me to make substantial original contributions to theoretical understandings. The question is:

What contributions can the Decoloniality perspective make to the understanding of both historical and contemporary transformations of the *solar* and the reproduction of the Maya way of life?

In order to answer this I have summarised the contributions that through Decoloniality I have developed from each of the theoretical or disciplinary frameworks used in this thesis.

The Decoloniality perspective has served as a critical lens not only to discover weaknesses but also to gather insights of theories which in turn – in a circular way, contribute to advance the field of Decolonial studies.

The original contribution from the first paper is the decolonisation of the theory of Primitive Accumulation. Primitive Accumulation is rooted in Eurocentric socialist thought and context, therefore failing to address the role of the Americas as the racialised form of land appropriation, labour exploitation, and mass commodity production which turned capital into capitalism (Veltmeyer, 2005). Moreover, it tends to be restricted in time and space, argues for immediacy, inevitability, and totality, disregarding resistance (Levien, 2015; Coulthard, 2014; Hall, 2012; Kelly, 2011). Through Decoloniality perspective, Primitive Accumulation can be rendered a more nuanced and complex framework that can be usefully applied to the analysis of the exploitation of indigenous people in Latin America in three ways, as follows. First, the rise of capitalism in England was possible due to the transformation of wealth from Spain and Portugal generated by the exploitation of indigenous labour and natural resources in the Americas, i.e. primitive accumulation for the world centre. Second, primitive accumulation is not inevitable, it has co-existed with other modes of production breaking the expected complete overtaking of capitalism in the world. Third, the consideration of the continuous resistance of indigenous groups over their oppressions since colonial times (Galeano, 2011; Di Muzio, 2007; Moore, 2004; Dussel, 1999; Wallerstein and Smith, 1992).

The original contribution from the second paper is the proposal of a new understanding of the 'peri-urban' as the 'urban beyond the city'. Latin American urban studies tended to situate the regional urban as a 'catching-up' process towards theories, research and urban developments of Europe and the United States (Duhau López, 2014; Montoya, 2009; Schteingart, 2000; Santos, 1982). The new concept of the 'peri-urban' grounded in 'Decolonial urbanism' stems from the relations of indigenous populations, the place they inhabit and their ways of living. These populations are caught in 'peripheral' urban environments and at the same time rely on 'informal' spaces for self-provision and self-subsistence (Roy, 2011; 2005; Simone, 2010; McFarlane, 2008), based on which I have proposed new understandings of 'peripheries' and 'informality'. The reworked concept of the peri-urban implies the production of radically different spaces which are not necessarily based on linear and global processes. This conceptualisation aims at grounding urban studies in the realities of urban production with populations deciding on the continuity of their ways of living based on self-subsistence livelihoods (Cobbinah et al., 2015; Lerner et al., 2013; Varley, 2013; Simon et al., 2006; Castillo, 2003; Tacoli,

2003). The recognition of indigenous realities and spaces in the production of settlements can make a difference in the perception of the urban – or the peri-urban.

The original contribution from the third paper is the decolonisation of Indigenous Geographies. This discipline engages with critical approaches to place, community and culture transformations and positions indigenous peoples within the practice of geography, but it is mainly located in the experiences of indigenous peoples in the Global North which differ from other experiences (Coombes et al., 2012; Frantz and Howitt, 2012; Coombes et al., 2011). I have brought together concepts of ‘place-identity’, ‘*Indigenismo*’ and ‘Indigeneity’ to help shape the decolonisation of this discipline. From an indigenous perspective, identities are linked to both material and intangible elements. Place grounds knowledge while consolidating social structures and cultural practices (Larsen and Johnson, 2012; Hauge, 2007; Escobar, 2001). By proposing Decolonial Indigenous Geographies I aim to go beyond current epistemological limits of Indigenous Geographies from a Latin American experience of complex and contradictory identities. By reflecting the knowledges of diverse indigenous experiences, connected to particular contexts and geographies, they are no longer silenced but foregrounded. From the critical acknowledgment of place as an integral part of identity I have conceptualised the *solar* as the site of continuous and enduring processes of resistance, even if in the quiet developments of the everyday life.

7.3.3 Ontological findings and contributions

The final contribution of this thesis is its different understanding of the Maya peoples in Yucatán who have been continuously regarded and represented as rural, traditional and backward – all within a negative sense. Their realities however, as I have established in the three papers, are far more complex than this reading and representation but also far more contradictory than populations only being their opposites, i.e. urban, modern and progressive. Some scholars have defined linear development processes between tradition and modernity (see Porsanger, 2011; Gorelik, 2008) and rural to urban (see Nansaior and Patanothai, 2011). As argued by Kuokkanen (2009 in Porsanger, 2011: 232): ‘The dichotomy of these concepts has been a powerful tool to marginalise and suppress indigenous peoples and to place them outside modern society’. In Querétaro, a state in central Mexico, when looking at indigenous peoples in urban spaces, Terven Salinas and Vázquez Estrada (2016), following Escobar’s (2012) notions about the dichotomy of culture and development, question dichotomies in local regulations on culture and rights of indigenous peoples which further fragment cultural relations between indigenous and

non-indigenous populations and universalise their views, such as rural/urban and indigenous community/national territory, national society/indigenous society. Moreover, scholars have examined some of these dichotomous conceptions of indigenous populations: spirit/matter, human/nature and linear time/cyclic time, and draw benefits for non-indigenous populations in the learning of indigenous peoples' perspectives, such as O'Loughlin (1996: 145) argues: '[...] future generations [could] understand more clearly the nature of their world and their affinity with – rather than antagonism towards – it'.

What I have shown about Maya populations challenges existing knowledge about them – in a way, decolonising such knowledge. More than just showing empirically how they construct their everyday lives and to advancing bodies of work I have also advanced what we know of the Maya people being in the world. One example of how I have changed my understanding and advanced in my comprehension of Maya populations is based on the conceptual framework discussed above (Figure 6 in section 1.5). After engaging with the contemporary transformations and the peri-urban landscape production in previous sections, I now focus on the third component, namely the local strategies of people facing such transformations and processes of peri-urbanisation. I had anticipated two main strategies: the adaptation or assimilation of local populations into a 'dominant' way of life – which could be described as mainstream, urban, modern, and other related adjectives, or the contestation and resistance of local populations to give up their 'alternative' way of life – which could be described as their traditional Maya ways. However, during fieldwork and in the later analysis of the collected information, I realised that there was a third option, which goes beyond the usual dichotomous conceptions when referring to indigenous populations, i.e. urban/rural, modern/traditional, indigenous/non-indigenous. I found that people have adopted some characteristics of the 'dominant' way of life but have continued with their traditional 'alternative' ways. Furthermore, in some cases people have gone beyond these options and developed new ones.

These complex realities mark the everyday life of Maya populations. Conceiving the *solar* as not only part of rural environments enhances the possibilities of developing urban livelihoods in the peri-urban – hence bringing together indigenous ways of living still related to land, livelihoods and identities into the 'modern' dynamics of the urban. My research showed how there are spaces where both characteristics coexist within a settlement or even a household; in the realities of Maya people they do not have to be or do, one or the other. I have talked about the *ejidatarios* who decided to divide only one portion of their *ejido* land while keeping the majority in common property. I have also

mentioned people receiving agriculture subsidies but overtly keeping their own traditional polyculture *milpa* away from mandatory pesticides. Additionally, there are people taking new housing given by the government while keeping, or rebuilding, their Maya house and their traditional kitchen next to it. They indeed upset categories of identities not as the government intends of being mestizo instead of being indigenous, but of being both at the same time, or being one or the other when the situation requires it. I have constructed a new way of understanding complexities and contradictions in Maya peoples' identities, in their own settlements, and even in their resistance in the quiet space of their everyday life, their *solar*.

This section has drawn together, synthesised and further problematised the arguments presented throughout Part II, complementing the information discussed on Part I. In doing so, I have acknowledged both the contributions and the limitations of this research. In the following section I provide an outline of some unresolved areas for further research, as well as provide some final remarks.

8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Introduction

As I have discussed the realities and possibilities of the Maya people of Yucatán and their *solar*, as well as the findings, contributions and limitations of this thesis, in this final section I discuss the idea of Decolonial Indigenous Geographies as the framework for further research based on the work from the three academic papers through the decolonisation of theories and disciplines, and proposing its advancement with the incorporation of unresolved areas from this thesis. To finalise, I take on current socio-economic and political events, such as NAFTA, that will surely further shape the discussed realities and possibilities of populations in Yucatán, for example in the consequences of migration and return-migration.

8.2 Future research

In what follows I have outlined some unresolved areas for further research. First is the consideration that one of the most important implications of this thesis for any further research is centred in the advancement towards a discipline of Decolonial Indigenous Geographies. The proposal of this theoretical understanding is based on the reworking of Geography, the incorporation of indigenous and colonial questions in a diversity of disciplines, and the furthering of Decoloniality perspective that recognises the historical struggles and their ongoing growing complexities into the present, from conflicting exogenous and endogenous specific processes, to the multiplicity of possibilities of both resistances and dispossessions. Research in this direction would need to address the unresolved areas left in this thesis such as the importance of research conducted in the same language of indigenous populations, especially if furthering the discipline implies engaging in collaborative research – talking to people in their own language goes beyond ‘gaining’ access or information. It should aim at deepening the personal relations that this sort of research must entail. From personal experience, in previous research I conducted, I made use of interpreters while interviewing (a different Mayan language, actually) but for this research, as I have problematised before, I was going ‘home’. As Duarte Duarte (2010) has argued, as a society in Yucatán we have been told that we have to ‘rescue’ the language, that people no longer speak it, and while it is true that some have actively

stopped teaching it to their children, the vast majority of people I encountered in the settlements where my fieldwork took place spoke Mayan – and it was a shame that I did not.

A second approach only hinted in this thesis was gender – specifically on the gender roles in the traditional Maya Yucatán which are quite clear, women take care of *solares* and men work the *milpa*. One of my interviewees, Macarena (Interview: 25/03/2015) is a female student living on her own in a *solar* owned by her father. This is most uncommon and marks other level of transformations of family dynamics in the Maya Yucatán. Changes brought by migration in rural areas under the lens of gender have been studied by Bianet Castellanos (2012) and some other gender related studies have looked at women weavers (see Aguilar Cordero et al., 2008).

A third element for Decolonial Indigenous Geographies is the critical analysis of colonial and modern history, and most important, the foreground of native history, in this case, a decolonised historiography of the Maya. Yucatán is a distinctive area on its own and, sometimes, inserting it to the wider Mexican history is problematic. For example, referring solely to the Mexican Independence when dealing with Yucatán obscures the fact that, as a region, Yucatán gained its independence before Mexico, although the same year (1821); and later joined it. A second example, as I have only briefly shown, is that there was no single Maya native group but a group of provinces – this is not something usually acknowledge when referring to the Maya people of Yucatán and it is an important element of their identities' construction, even when they have been historically homogenised. This would bring people closer to their own ancestry. There have been some projects to physically bring Maya people to see Maya archaeological sites from which they lived close enough their whole lives but never actually visited. The 'othering' in the Maya case comes not only from non-indigenous to indigenous but from the Maya of the past and the Maya of the present.

Furthermore, the foregrounding of indigenous knowledges and of their processes of construction within Decolonial Indigenous Geographies will help to overturn and indeed decolonise current views and scholarship that Maya scholar Ana Rosa Duarte Duarte (2010: online) has clearly denounced:

Because the issue of discrimination is very direct, in the sense that all indigenous people are viewed as children and treated as children; what we know has no value and we have to learn everything else. The discrimination never acknowledges that there is, in fact, indigenous knowledge, and that [society] should be open to other

types of ['knowing'];] the ideological standpoint is the view that our knowledge is worthless to the outside, so we are the ones that have to learn.

Finally, an important concept for Andean indigenous populations and for Decoloniality is *suma qamaña/sumak kawsay* – from the Aymara-Quechua from Bolivia and Quechua from Ecuador (see Tortosa, 2009), which has been translated as *buen vivir* in Spanish – not fully grasping the whole meaning of the concept (Huanacuni Mamani, 2010). The idea of *suma qamaña* is therefore translated as to live in harmony and equilibrium with the cycles of Mother Earth, cosmos, life, history and all forms of existence. Identity is connected to 'living well' in which everyone (and everything) thoroughly enjoy a life based in values which have endured for over 500 years (ibid). Further research with the Maya of Yucatán could explore the meaning of this concept for their everyday life and to better frame forms of indigeneity attached to land and home.

To conclude, as part of my commitment to further this research and make it available for local populations, it needs to be translated into Spanish, or indeed Mayan, for its findings and contributions to reach the needed audiences to inspire transformations in the understanding of Maya people (themselves/ourselves) and the value of their everyday life experiences.

8.3 Final remarks

During the first phase of fieldwork, hopping on 'moto-taxis' was one of the main methods of 'getting to know' the settlement, specifically asking drivers for the opportunity to visit traditional Maya houses and areas where people still kept their *solares*. Drivers were unsure of where to take me and as I stressed that I was really interested in the traditional ways, one of them finally said: 'Why don't I take you to see the pretty houses? The houses that migrants have built are much nicer to see'. Maya houses and Maya *solares* are not something people in these settlements seem to feel proud of and they would rather show off 'pretty' houses. This follows a long standing process of undermining of the Maya 'image' as poor, and even unhealthy and precarious (Sánchez Suárez, 2006; Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2004), while being commodified for the benefit of international tourism at the same time.

As I am writing this on November 2016, the newly elected United States' President has vowed to deport millions of undocumented Mexican migrants and to get rid of NAFTA. The Mexican government has started to make plans to incorporate some of these possible

deportees into manufacturing and assembly plants but is currently seeking to address the trade terms in order to 'modernise' NAFTA (EFE, 2016). Because of legislation reforms and programmes derived from NAFTA, e.g. family agricultural production was not enough or they had too many loses too many times, people in Yucatán, especially young men from peri-urban and rural areas, have sought to migrate, sometimes with the specific objective in mind of earning enough wages to build a house (Cornejo Portugal and Fortuny Loret de Mola, 2011). Because of NAFTA, '[North] American transnationals and local Mexican elites got richer [but the] poor got poorer. [...] An estimated 1.3 million Mexicans were driven off the land by [NAFTA]. The flow of [undocumented] workers to the US increased dramatically' (Lawrence, 2016: online). The most important internal migration areas for people from Yucatán are Mérida, the state capital, and the 'Maya Riviera' in Yucatán's neighbouring state of Quintana Roo. The most important international migration area is the state of California in the United States with over 60 per cent of registered Yucatec migrants living there (4,341 registered in 2006), followed by the state of Oregon, with less than ten per cent according to data from the Development Agency of the Maya Culture in Yucatán (*Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya en Yucatán* – INDEMAYA) quoted in Iglesias Lesaga (2011). In 2013, a news report estimated 30 thousand people from Yucatán living in California of which 20 thousand spoke Mayan (Sepúlveda, 2013).

As the uncertainty and eventual changes roll out, the Maya *solar* will once again be subject to reconfigurations. Only time will tell of the ensuing resilience of the *solar* but if Maya people manage to hold on to the necessary resources, on land and livelihoods, to carry on with it, and continue to reproduce their identities and ways of life as they have done so for over 500 years, they would indeed endure.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Fieldwork

Figure 17: Information sheet for possible participants (in Spanish)

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY


UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

24/01/2014

Título de la Investigación
El solar maya de Yucatán: Transformaciones en la identidad, la tierra y los medios de vida en asentamientos urbanos de México.

Investigadora – Ana Julia Cabrera Pacheco

Proyecto de investigación

La investigación es financiada principalmente por el Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (Conacyt) de México con una beca de estudios de doctorado en la Universidad de Leeds. El solar maya yucateco en sus inicios fue el principal recurso social, económico y ambiental de las familias mayas y de su identidad, actualmente este papel se ha debilitado y su importancia se ha cuestionado. El objetivo del proyecto es comprender los cambios del solar a través de un análisis sobre su importancia histórica y actual, enfocándose en la tierra, los medios de vida y la identidad. Se han seleccionado comunidades urbanas y periurbanas. Se entrevistará a residentes de solares y de otros tipos de vivienda, así como a personas relacionadas con los mismos en distintas esferas socio-económicas de la comunidad. La investigación tiene dos etapas:

- 1) Entrevistas de media hora aproximadamente sobre los cambios en los modos de vida particulares y de la comunidad.
- 2) Convivencia con algunas familias para una mayor profundidad en las entrevistas.


Participación

La participación es voluntaria y bajo consentimiento. El participante debe estar completamente informado sobre lo que involucra su participación en el proyecto. Se entregarán copias de la información y el consentimiento. Las preguntas de la entrevista permitirán a los participantes el desarrollo y explicación de sus ideas. Los temas están planeados para ser relevantes en la vida diaria de la persona, su familia y su comunidad. El audio de la entrevista será grabado y yo tomaré algunas notas y fotografías, que serán parte del análisis y podrán ser incluidos en escritos académicos. La participación de las personas particulares será anónima por requerimiento de la Universidad de Leeds. Se espera que este trabajo asegure una mejor comprensión de la vida diaria de las personas en la región. Los resultados de la investigación estarán disponibles con la publicación de la tesis doctoral y en otros espacios académicos. Me aseguraré de compartirle a usted y a su comunidad los hallazgos de esta investigación.

¡¡Gracias por su cooperación!!

Para mayor información favor de contactar a:
Ana Julia Cabrera Pacheco
Escuela de Geografía – Universidad de Leeds
[redacted]@leeds.ac.uk
[redacted] (México) / [redacted] (Inglaterra)

Figure 18: Informed consent form for participants (in Spanish)

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Hoja de consentimiento de participación

Título de la Investigación:
El solar maya de Yucatán: Transformaciones en la identidad, la tierra y los medios de vida en asentamientos urbanos de México.

Investigadora: Ana Julia Cabrera Pacheco

1. He leído y he comprendido la hoja de información que me fue entregada (fecha 24/01/2014) y que explica el proyecto de investigación. He realizado las preguntas que he considerado necesarias y he obtenido respuestas satisfactorias.
2. Comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que si no me siento a gusto durante la entrevista puedo declinar a contestar alguna pregunta o terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento. He sido informada(o) que puedo retirarme completamente de la investigación hasta seis meses después de esta entrevista.
3. Estoy de acuerdo con que el audio de la entrevista sea grabado. Comprendo que esta grabación facilitará la fluidez de la entrevista y que las notas tomadas apoyarán la información grabada. Estoy de acuerdo con que se tomen fotografías, dentro y alrededor de mi vivienda, que sean relevantes a la investigación.
4. Comprendo que mi participación es anónima, esto es, que mi nombre no será identificado en ningún reporte que se derive de esta entrevista, incluyendo pero no limitando la tesis de doctorado, artículos y presentaciones. Acepto el uso y la publicación de citas directas que pudieran ser relevantes a la investigación.
5. Acepto participar en este proyecto de investigación.
6. Confirmo que me ha sido entregada una copia de esta hoja de consentimiento.

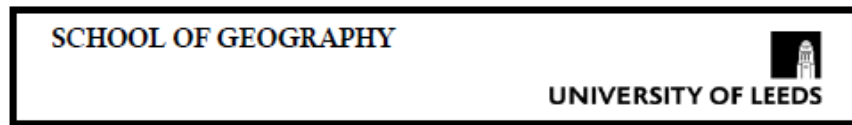
Nombre del participante: _____

Fecha: _____ Otorgo mi consentimiento:

Firma de la investigadora: _____

Para mayor información favor de contactar a:
Ana Julia Cabrera Pacheco
Escuela de Geografía – Universidad de Leeds
[redacted]@leeds.ac.uk
[redacted] (México) / [redacted] Inglaterra)

Figure 19: Semi-structured interviews for local populations (in Spanish)



Cuestionario

Título de la investigación – El solar maya de Yucatán: Transformaciones de la identidad, la tierra y los medios de vida en México

Investigadora – Ana Julia Cabrera Pacheco

1. ¿Qué conoce por solar?
¿Usted vive en/tiene uno?

(sí) ¿Desde hace cuánto tiempo?
(no) ¿Alguna vez vivió en/tuvo uno?

2. ¿Qué actividades realiza su familia en el solar?

(cocina, plantas, animales, artesanías, etc.)

3. Las actividades que realizan ¿son para auto-consumo o para venta?

(venta) ¿Dónde venden?

4. ¿Tienen disponibilidad para trabajar la tierra?

(sí) ¿Es tierra ejidal?
(sí) ¿Qué tipo de trabajo realizan? (agricultura, ganadería, etc.).

5. ¿Considera que la población maya en Espita continúa viviendo sus tradiciones?

Número de encuesta: _____

Fecha: _____

Acceso a futura(s) entrevista(s):

Nombre: _____

Dirección: _____

Table 3: Questionnaire for local populations (in Spanish)

Theme	Questions
<p>Historical information</p>	<p>¿Cómo se manejaban la tierra y el pueblo? ¿Quién poseía la tierra? ¿La gente se organizaba para utilizar la tierra o alguien les decía qué hacer? ¿Cuándo se distribuyó la tierra? ¿Fue todo ejido o alguna parte no se categorizó como ejido? ¿Todas las familias fueron miembros del ejido? ¿Ha cambiado? ¿Todos estuvieron de acuerdo con la distribución? ¿Tuvieron algún obstáculo para vivir de la tierra? ¿Alguien tuvo más tierra que los demás?</p> <p>¿Qué tan importante era tener un solar y la milpa para las familias y la comunidad? ¿Dependía toda la población de la producción de la tierra? ¿Qué otras formas de ganarse la vida habían? ¿Qué tipos de recursos había disponibles para las familias y la comunidad? ¿Cómo accedían a estos recursos? ¿Existía un mercado? ¿Cómo se relacionaban estos recursos a la producción agrícola? ¿Cómo se organizaban las familias para la subsistencia?</p> <p>¿Quién habitaba el pueblo? ¿Cómo se construían las comunidades? ¿Cómo se relacionaban las familias entre sí? ¿Cómo eran las interacciones entre individuos? ¿Qué tradiciones sobrevivieron de antes? ¿Qué cosas se siguen haciendo de la misma forma (casa, vestido, lenguaje, etc.)? ¿Qué ha cambiado?</p>
<p>Current information</p>	<p><u>TIERRA</u></p> <p>¿Quién posee la tierra? ¿Quién la utiliza? ¿Para qué? ¿Cómo funciona el ejido? ¿Ha cambiado este funcionamiento en los últimos años? ¿Cambió por PROCEDE o por el huracán en 2002? ¿O por algún otro evento importante? ¿Se utilizó tierra ejidal para la urbanización? ¿Existe alguna oferta por la tierra ejidal? ¿Tiene acceso a la tierra la gente que no es ejidataria? ¿La gente quiere seguir trabajando la tierra?</p> <p><u>MEDIOS DE VIDA Y SOLAR</u></p> <p>¿Cuáles otras opciones existen para ganarse la vida? ¿Había estas opciones anteriormente? ¿Se complementa la producción de la tierra en la casa (solar)? ¿Quién produce en la casa? ¿Qué es lo que se produce? ¿Necesita espacio en el solar para esto? Si no tuviera el espacio ¿cómo podría producir? ¿Qué se hace con esta producción (mercado, intercambio, otro)? ¿Cuál es el tamaño del predio y ha cambiado recientemente? ¿Por qué cambió? ¿Las familias aún viven juntas y comparten un mismo predio? ¿Cómo era antes? ¿Cómo funciona ahora?</p> <p><u>MODERNIZACIÓN Y URBANIZACIÓN</u></p> <p>¿Cuándo se instalaron los supermercados en el pueblo? ¿Cambió algo esta presencia – impacto en la venta del mercado, cambios en la producción casera, la gente tuvo que buscar trabajo para poder comprar?</p> <p>¿Quién decide los cambios en la estructura de las relaciones o en la construcción de las viviendas? ¿Cómo viven las nuevas generaciones? ¿Tienen nuevas viviendas? ¿Aún viven en solares grandes?</p> <p>Sobre la urbanización, ¿qué considera rural y qué urbano? ¿Cómo considera que es el pueblo, rural o urbano? ¿Es lo urbano una aspiración? ¿Qué es lo moderno? ¿Le gustaría que el pueblo sea moderno? ¿Cómo puede lograrse la modernidad? ¿Qué se necesitaría en el pueblo?</p> <p><u>VIVIENDA</u></p> <p>¿Alguien le ha pedido que cambie o que conserve su vivienda? ¿Es más fácil construir algún tipo de vivienda? ¿Quién habita en los diferentes tipos de vivienda? ¿Se necesita permiso para construir una nueva vivienda? ¿Dónde se</p>

Theme	Questions
	<p>compran o consiguen los materiales? ¿Podría construir una vivienda tradicional con recursos de su solar? ¿Podía antes? ¿La gente se ayuda para construir? ¿Lo hacía antes? ¿Qué significa vivir en una vivienda tradicional y en un solar? ¿Por qué decidió seguir viviendo en una vivienda maya o cambiarla? ¿Cuál es el contexto de esa decisión (programa, recursos, etc.)? ¿Se relaciona la conservación de los espacios con las relaciones familiares o los cambios familiares son resultado de los cambios en la espacialidad?</p> <p><u>IDENTIDADES</u></p> <p>¿Qué significa ser capaz de tener la tierra y trabajarla? ¿Ser capaz de cultivar lo que uno consume? ¿Ser capaz de construir su propia vivienda? ¿De tener decisiones sobre estos asuntos? ¿Cómo viviría si tuviera la posibilidad de decidir por usted mismo/a?</p> <p>¿Significa algo aquí la herencia maya (el lenguaje, el vestido, los nombres, la comida, la imagen, la forma de vida, etc.)? ¿Cómo se entreteje lo maya en su propia vida? ¿Cómo se hacen las cosas en Yucatán que usted considera que es diferente de otras partes de México? ¿Cómo y por qué?</p>
<p>Regulations/ Programmes/ Projects</p>	<p>¿Conoce programas y proyectos que se apliquen en el pueblo? ¿Quién está a cargo? ¿Cómo se beneficia la gente de ellos? ¿Quién se beneficia y quién no? ¿Cuáles son sus objetivos? ¿Quién los diseña? ¿Cómo se desarrollan? ¿Cómo se decidió que era la acción adecuada para ese objetivo? ¿Cómo cambian la vida de las personas estos eventos? ¿Las familias viven de diferente forma? ¿Cómo son diferentes?</p> <p>¿Qué tipos de cambio apoya usted y cuáles no? ¿Quién se beneficia de estos cambios? ¿Cree usted que se beneficiaría de otro tipo de proyectos que se enfoque en sus actividades y decisiones? ¿Participa usted en las decisiones que se toman acerca de cambios o de programas y proyectos? ¿Considera que los cambios que la gente quiere son los mismos que quiere el gobierno?</p>
<p>Other methods</p>	<p>Mapas: ¿Dónde se encuentran los límites del pueblo? ¿Sobre la tierra de quién creció a través de los años? ¿Cómo se organiza el pueblo? ¿Tenían antes todas las familias un mismo tamaño de solar o predio? ¿Cómo se decidía la ubicación dentro del pueblo? ¿Tiene fotos antiguas? ¿Dónde es / quién es / cuándo es?</p>

Table 4: Examples of questionnaires for government officers (in Spanish)

To whom	Questions
<p>Environment officer</p>	<p>¿Cómo se vinculan los Planes de Desarrollo estatal y municipales? ¿Cuál es el proceso de elaboración de estos planes? (en referencia al nacional, a los planes anteriores, participación de otras instituciones, secretarías, población, entidades privadas) ¿En qué benefician o cómo afectan los reglamentos y las reformas a las poblaciones y los ejidos? ¿Cómo se integran los ejidos y el uso del solar en la planeación y reglamentación urbana y ambiental? ¿Cómo se acuerdan los usos otorgados a la tierra con el uso que las comunidades hacen de ella? (uso de leña, por ejemplo) ¿cómo se integraría el uso de las comunidades a sus propios recursos a los planes de uso de la tierra? (a nivel estatal y municipal) ¿Cómo se clasifican los asentamientos? ¿Cuáles son los recursos y programas encaminados a la urbanización? ¿Cuál es el proceso de desarrollo urbano y cuál es su objetivo? ¿Cuáles son las acciones del desarrollo urbano? ¿Cuál es el vínculo entre el desarrollo urbano y rural? ¿Cómo se relaciona la urbanización con la producción familiar de autoconsumo (traspatio)? ¿Cuál es el valor o el fomento del solar como unidad ambiental modificada? (dentro de lo rural y lo urbano) ¿Cuál es la relación entre poblaciones mayas, el solar y los asentamientos urbanos? Cartas urbanas: material cartográfico y estadístico; documentos de difusión de infraestructura y equipamiento existente. ‘Planeación de desarrollo urbano potencializado’ – ¿qué significa? En las Funciones generales de la Dirección de Desarrollo Urbano se habla de Actividad productiva (distribución adecuada entre la población), sin embargo, sólo se refiere a industrias, agroindustrias y parques industriales, ¿qué sucede con otras formas de producción? ¿Podría darme más información sobre los siguientes puntos? Plataforma urbana sustentable; viviendas de calidad; servicios urbanos modernos y suficientes. Rezagos económicos, productivos y sociales (estudio del sistema de ciudades, características regionales). ¿Trabajan en conjunto con los municipios, ejidos o con otras instituciones?</p>
<p>Agrarian officer</p>	<p>¿Cuál es la presencia de la institución en el estado y a nivel municipal? ¿Cuál es el proceso de elaboración de los ordenamientos territoriales (en las dos escalas)? (referencia al nacional, a los planes anteriores, participación de otras instituciones, secretarías, población, entidades privadas). ¿Cuál es la relación entre la planeación agraria, la territorial y la urbana? ¿Hay alguna preferencia de una sobre las otras? ¿Hacia dónde se encaminan? ¿Cómo se acuerdan los usos otorgados a la tierra con el uso que las comunidades hacen de ella? (uso de leña, por ejemplo) ¿cómo se integraría el uso de las comunidades a sus propios recursos a los planes de uso de la tierra? (a nivel estatal y municipal) ¿Cuáles son las diferencias entre desarrollo urbano y rural? ¿Qué valor tiene el uso del solar y su relación con la milpa para la institución? ¿Considera el solar como un elemento relevante para el desarrollo rural o urbano? ¿Cuál considera que es el papel del solar en los asentamientos urbanos? ¿Cuál es el valor o el fomento del solar como unidad ambiental modificada? (dentro de lo rural y lo urbano) ¿Cuál es la relación entre poblaciones mayas, el solar y los asentamientos urbanos? ¿Qué entiende la institución por vivienda digna? ¿Se hacen distinciones regionales (casa maya)? ¿En qué benefician o cómo afectan los reglamentos y las reformas a las poblaciones y los ejidos? ¿Cómo se integran los ejidos en la planeación urbana y ambiental? ¿Cuál es la relación de los ejidos con los asentamientos urbanos?</p>

To whom	Questions
	<p>¿Cómo se administra el ejido? ¿Ha cambiado por algún reglamento o reforma? ¿Cómo se integra en las planeaciones? PROCEDE/TLCAN ¿Cuáles fueron sus objetivos y cuál fue el resultado? ¿La individualización del ejido sigue siendo importante? ¿Hay programas encaminados a la parcelación motivada hacia la generación de nuevos impuestos? ¿Cuál es el papel del ejido hoy en día? ¿Se prevé su transformación? ¿Cómo se evalúa la función del ejido? (producción alimentaria, generación de recursos, empleos). ¿Trabajan en conjunto con los municipios, ejidos o con otras instituciones locales?</p>
<p>Indigenous Development officer</p>	<p>¿Cuál es el significado del ‘desarrollo de los pueblos indígenas’? ¿En qué formas se busca garantizar el acceso de la población indígena a la alimentación, salud, educación, infraestructura básica y vivienda? (sobre todo vivienda) ¿Cuál es el rol del solar y la casa maya en este acceso? ¿Qué opina de la vivienda maya y el solar como la representación física y contemporánea de la cultura maya (del uso del espacio y de habilidades y conocimientos específicos)? ¿Cómo se promueven el solar y la vivienda maya a través de este instituto? Si alguien quiere (re)construir su casa maya ¿tiene acceso a algún tipo de recursos? ¿Qué acciones de la comisión permiten la identificación de individuos y grupos como mayas con acceso a recursos sociales, culturales y naturales para decidir sobre su estilo/forma de vida? [Proceso de identificación como indígena]. ¿Qué programas, reglamentos y reformas existen ahora que da valor a lo maya contemporáneo y quiénes son los beneficiarios? ¿Cuál es la importancia de lo maya/ser maya en el desarrollo comunitario? ¿Cómo se identifica la gente como maya? (a través de...) ¿Qué significa el legado maya para la población? ¿Cómo se entreteje en la vida diaria el lenguaje, el vestido, los nombres, la comida, la imagen y la forma de vida en general? ¿Cómo se representa lo maya como imagen y con qué propósito? ¿Considera que las poblaciones mayas tienen control sobre sus recursos? ¿Cómo y dónde? ¿Cómo utilizan estos recursos? ¿Son dueños de la tierra? ¿Qué tierra? ¿Cuál es la relación entre poblaciones mayas, el solar y los asentamientos urbanos? ¿Cómo se relaciona el ser indígena con el ser rural? ¿Cuáles son los vínculos entre pobreza e identidad? ¿Cuál es el papel de la auto-producción/uso de medios de vida/subsistencia con la pobreza (y la identidad)? [Uso de recursos disponibles]. ¿Cómo es el trabajo con organizaciones mayas? [Algún contacto que pudiera ser útil...] ¿Trabajan en conjunto con los municipios, ejidos o con otras instituciones locales?</p>

Table 5: List of anonymised interviewees

Code	Date	Name	Place
A01	05/02/2014	<i>Comisario Ejidal</i>	Mérida
A02	27/01/2014	Municipal authority	Mérida
B01	16/01/2015	Tourism officer	Mérida
B02	19/01/2015	Agrarian officer	Mérida
B03	19/01/2015	Environment officer	Mérida
B04	06/02/2015	Indigenous Development officer	Mérida
B05	10/02/2015	Social Development officer	Mérida
B06	23/02/2015	Housing officer	Mérida
B07	21/07/2015	Regional Development officer	Mérida
B08	13/08/2015	NGO worker	Mérida
C01	28/01/2014	Mariana	Maxcanú
C02	04/02/2014	Renata	Espita
C03	05/02/2014	Ulises	Espita
C04	13/02/2014	Claudia	Izamal
C05	26/03/2014	Marisa	Oxkutzcab
C06	08/03/2015	Paulina	Espita
C07	10/03/2015	Martha and Doña Karla	Espita
C08	11/03/2015	Patricia	Espita
C09	19/03/2015	Don Genaro and Doña Andrea	Espita
C10	25/03/2015	Adela	Espita
C11	25/03/2015	Carmen	Espita
C12	25/03/2015	Macarena	Espita
C13	25/03/2015	Camila	Espita
C14	25/03/2015	Valentina	Espita
C15	25/03/2015	Maribel	Espita
C16	25/03/2015	Jimena	Espita
C17	26/03/2015	Don Alfonso, Alfredo and Nina	Espita
C18	27/03/2015	Blanca	Espita
C19	27/03/2015	Diana	Espita
C20	27/03/2015	Fina	Espita
C21	27/03/2015	María	Espita
C22	27/03/2015	Alejandra	Espita
C23	27/03/2015	Cecilia	Espita
C24	04/06/2015	Emiliano	Oxkutzcab
C25	13/07/2015	Pedro	Muna
C26	13/07/2015	Christian	Muna
C27	13/07/2015	Héctor	Muna

Appendix 2: Aerial view of *solares*

Figure 20: Examples of undivided *solares* (from fieldwork)



Source: Modified by author from INSEJUPY (2012-2018)

Figure 21: Examples of physically divided *solares* without 'legal' division (from fieldwork)



Source: Modified by author from INSEJUPY (2012-2018)

Note: From my field-notes, elements in red have palm roofs – Maya houses and kitchens mostly, elements in orange have sheet roofs, and elements in yellow have concrete roofs.

