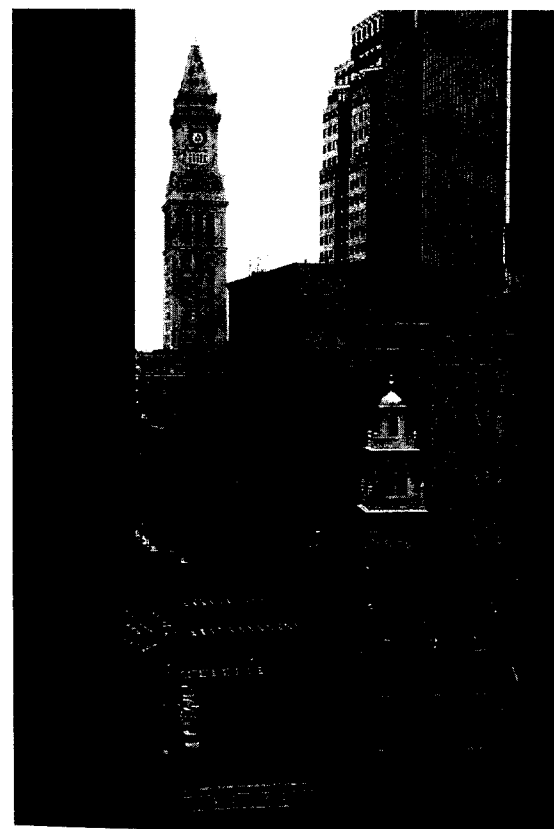


The Tourist City

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Cancún Bliss

The development of Cancún began in the mid-1970s. Thirty years later it was the biggest resort in Mexico, having surpassed even Acapulco, the country's other tourist mecca.¹ Cancún's idyllic image, which differs dramatically from that of the rest of Mexico, derives from the enchantment of the Caribbean environment combined with the concept of a totally new city devoted to leisure. Always intended as a resort, Cancún was conceived in the mid-1960s as a large-scale project promoted by the Mexican government. At that time, new initiatives were designed at the federal level for economic and regional development: a steel plant on the South Pacific Coast and petroleum refineries and petrochemical plants on the Gulf Coast. As part of this broad effort at development, a group of bankers decided to promote a risky strategy: to improve Mexican tourism through an entirely new, planned project on the Caribbean side—Cancún.

This ambitious enterprise began in 1976. It was a substantial element of Mexico's pre-1984 development strategy, which depended heavily on public investment. Cancún, now a long-term exemplar of tourism policy in Mexico, has passed through various stages of national development and through intermittent crises, sustaining and even improving its niche in national tourism. Recently it has been shifting from a resort enclave to an open urban center, integrated more than ever into the Mayan region around it, although it has not produced a substantial improvement in regional conditions.

After twenty years of ongoing development, even during Mexico's worst economic crisis, Cancún has changed; its present status reflects

modifications of the tourism model in Mexico. This reorientation is a sort of accommodation in the face of new tendencies in international tourism. Moreover, further transformation is likely. Among the new policies being proposed in the country is the legalization of gambling, still not allowed in Mexico. Cancún would be a potential site for a casino, and tourism activities could change markedly if this decision was to be made.²

Mass Tourism in Mexico

The social reforms that spread throughout the Western world during the late 1930s were crucial in introducing free time and leisure activities for the working class, in addition to the notion of spending money on holidays. Since then, tourism has grown worldwide.³ These changes have been reflected in the volume of Mexican tourism. In 1929, only 19,000 tourists entered Mexico. Following World War II, this number reached 164,000 and continued to increase steadily. In 1963, tourism passed the one million mark and by 1969 the number of visitors had doubled to two million. By 1970, arrivals by air were exceeding land travel into Mexico. In general, the number of tourists to Mexico has been rising, although some flattening occurred after 1974 as a result of Mexico's economic and political situation (see table 1).⁴

Mexico entered a new stage of growth after World War II. Its manufacturing sector had been stimulated by the war-generated demand, as a complement to the United States economy, and this expansion initiated a long phase of development. Miguel Alemán, the first civilian president (1946–52), was deeply committed to Mexican modernization.⁵ During this period, economic expansion was the main objective of the strongly nationalist administration, which promoted protectionism to ensure the development of a national industrial base within the country. Between 1945 and 1970 the economy grew at an annual rate of about 9 percent.

The economic development model adopted by Mexico was intensively oriented toward modernizing industry and developing the infrastructure needed for that purpose. Agriculture, traditionally a subsistence sector, was only partially transformed through the green revolution. Salaries increased for white-collar workers, and within three decades, the size of the middle class had grown substantially. The consumption patterns of the middle class were increasingly affected by in-

Table 1 International Tourists Visiting Mexico, 1929–76

Year	No. of Tourists (in thousands)
1929	19.2
1945	164.8
1963	1,057.8
1969	2,064.8
1976	3,107.2

Source: Jiménez 1992, 278–79.

ternational standards. Mexicans, perhaps more than Europeans, were anxious to participate in the American way of life.

At the same time, tourism was being organized on the basis of geographic clusters.⁶ The largest source of tourists to Mexico was, of course, the United States (see table 2). The first major contact with American tourism occurred in the Tijuana–San Diego area during the Prohibition Era. In response to a demand for leisure activities by the U.S. population, Mexicans began to offer everything from prostitution to gambling at the secluded Casino de Agua Caliente. From the Marines based in San Diego to the Hollywood stars, everybody had reasons to cross the border.

Acapulco started in the 1930s as a small-scale resort.⁷ During World War II, it was seen as a safe place for tourism. After the war, Mexican elites became patrons of the resort. As the country's bourgeoisie expanded, it selected Acapulco as its holiday destination. New hotels, luxury residences, and a yacht club were developed with government subsidies and private investment. A glamorous image of Acapulco was quickly spawned, thanks also to the development of the Mexican film industry and, later, of television, which introduced a "new geography of desire and pleasure."⁸

In the meantime, Veracruz, a traditional resort on the Gulf Coast and the principal port of Mexico, started to lose its appeal for the Mexican masses as their principal holiday destination.⁹ Acapulco offered them a definitive image of modernization: a collection of high-rise buildings constructed in the 1950s and 1960s, set along a breathtaking coast and boasting impressive hotels and first-rate restaurants. Present, too, were all those small symbols of American modernity, such as fast food, miniature golf, and discos. Finally, in the 1960s, Mexican tourists were able to afford their own dream city, which was a reflection (pale but real) of American modernity.

Table 2 Percentage of Tourists to Mexico from the United States, 1960–95

Year	American Tourists (%)
1960	87.1
1965	87.9
1970	93.4
1975	86.6
1980	83.4
1985	84.2
1990	87.5
1995	86.9

Source: Jiménez 1992, 308; SECTUR 1996.

In the mid-1960s, Acapulco was the only modern tourist resort in Mexico. Of course, some adventurous tourists headed for different, wilder places, for example, a gorgeous, unpopulated coastal location or an inaccessible archaeological site in the rain forest of Yucatán. Mexico City was also a favorite destination for tourism, for three reasons: its comfortable accommodations, its cultural and historical importance, and, finally, the existence of the only international airport in Mexico, which had been modernized in the 1950s to meet increasing international demand.

In the 1960s, however, the country began to run into economic difficulties. Because exports of agricultural and raw materials were not supplying a sufficient surplus volume of domestic capital, the Mexican government started to engage in state-sponsored development, in an effort to stimulate industrial production, but the increase in goods manufacturing was not enough to improve the economy in the short run. A different solution was needed at the same time that industrial projects were being developed. Tourism therefore became central to Mexican public policy, and Cancún was pivotal to these plans.

Cancún as an International Project

The federal government has closely followed the development of tourism. Beginning in the 1920s the federal government became involved through the granting of visas and the establishment of consultative commissions to propose ways of developing the industry. Toward the end of the 1950s, it opened its first tourism office abroad.¹⁰ Miguel Alemán con-

tinued his support for tourism with the establishment of the National Council for Tourism, created in 1961. In 1962 the first National Tourism Development Plan was proposed.

During the 1960s, younger officials concluded that traditional approaches to tourism were inadequate, arguing that more federal involvement was needed if the country was to fulfill its three main objectives: the continued growth of international tourism to Mexico, improvement in the quality of infrastructure, and the development of new resorts. Meanwhile, the Mexican government had established two official institutions to finance the development of tourism. The first was charged with the improvement of infrastructure, the second with the financing of new hotels. Both entities were part of the Mexican central bank, the Bank of Mexico.

As mentioned earlier, in the 1960s Acapulco was the only Mexican resort that more or less met international standards of acceptability. But Acapulco was growing chaotically: urban growth was taking place with no control and planning, poverty was rising, and the city and tourist zones lacked necessary infrastructure.¹¹ It was likely that foreign tourists would be increasingly repelled by such conditions. Although no other major resort was under development at the time, it was clear that new sites had to be considered. Young technocrats like Antonio Enriquez Savignac began an overview of Mexico's coastal areas. (The term *overview* is not an exaggeration: they actually flew by helicopter to select the sites.) The Caribbean coast offered one of the most gorgeous prospects, and of the thirty-five sites considered, Cancún was one of the best. The glimpse from above gave an excellent idea of the charming conditions of the environment but, as we shall see, not of the crucial problematics of the zone.

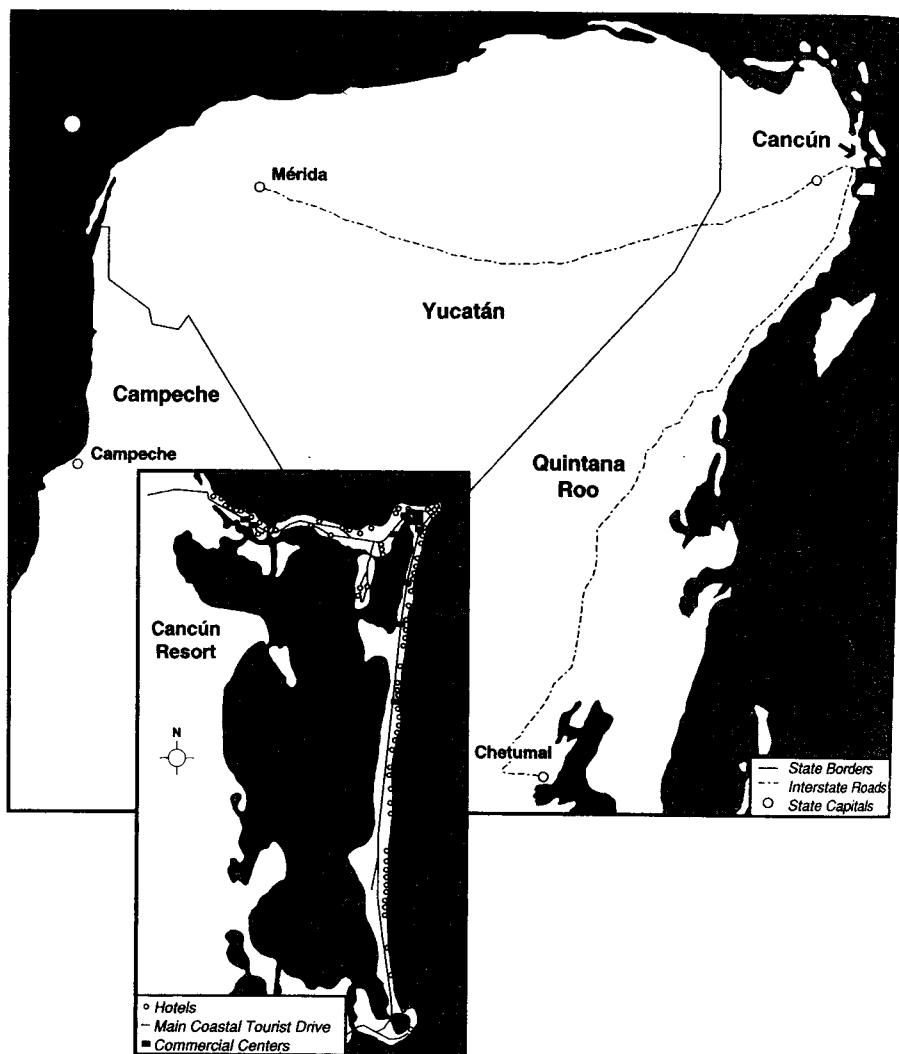
Cancún was thus selected as a possible new resort project. Bankers convinced the director of the Mexican central bank, as well as the secretary of finance and the president, of the advantages of the project. At that time, international banking organizations were encouraging large-scale projects for economic development, and Mexico's plans for Cancún fit perfectly. Mexico proposed Cancún as a project, and its plan was accepted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 1964.¹² The Mexican government justified the project by arguing that it would provide a substantial increase in the flow of convertible currencies into Mexico, generate many new jobs outside of existing, overtaxed urban centers, especially Mexico City, and counter patterns of regional inequality.

In part, the selection of Cancún also reflected geostrategic considerations. The government feared a threat from the Left in the Yucatán, which had barely developed, except around Mérida; it also faced problems in its main export, sisal, for which demand was dropping (see map 1). Worst off was the state of Quintana Roo, which had no important urban center and no prospect for economic development. The area bordered the politically troubled neighborhood of Central America. Fear of indigenous uprisings therefore contributed to the desire to find development alternatives for the southeast. The same reasoning later led to the impulse to jump-start projects in Mexican California and also to develop Ixtapa, where guerrillas had operated since the 1960s.

Financing from both the IDB and the Mexican government supported infrastructure development for Cancún, which is a barrier island, a long, straight stretch of land dividing the Caribbean Sea from the Nichupté Lagoon. Only two narrow inlets connect the sea and the brackish lagoon. According to initial projections, 85 percent of visitors to the area would be international tourists. Facilities were designed only for high-income guests.¹³

The initial plan defined two main zones: a tourist zone, reserved basically for hotel structures, and an urban service center. A large avenue was to mark the edge of the tourist zone, with hotels facing the sea. No development was considered for the side facing the lagoon. The cost of such a layout was, of course, terribly high, since all the infrastructure would serve only one side of the avenue. The layout was a clear reflection of the dominant tourism design of the 1960s: the sea was the main tourist attraction; the tourist area was to be isolated from the urban zone containing the central business district (CBD) and residences of service and administrative workers; and middle-class housing was slated for four-story buildings, with standard layouts and construction materials.

Tourists were expected to arrive in Cancún through the international airport and be transported directly to the hotel resort. Then they would spend all their holiday at the same place and return home. This classical tourism model also separated the work space from the leisure space: like Le Corbusierian urbanists, the designers of Cancún were very strict about segregation. Low- and medium-skilled workers would travel to the hotel zone by bus, and those with higher skill levels by car. The ideal organization of space would provide special locations for work and allow a minimum interface between workers and the public. Room cleaning, for example, would be done when tourists were out (on the beach); ser-



Map of the Cancún region (inset: map of the Cancún resort showing areas developed for tourism)

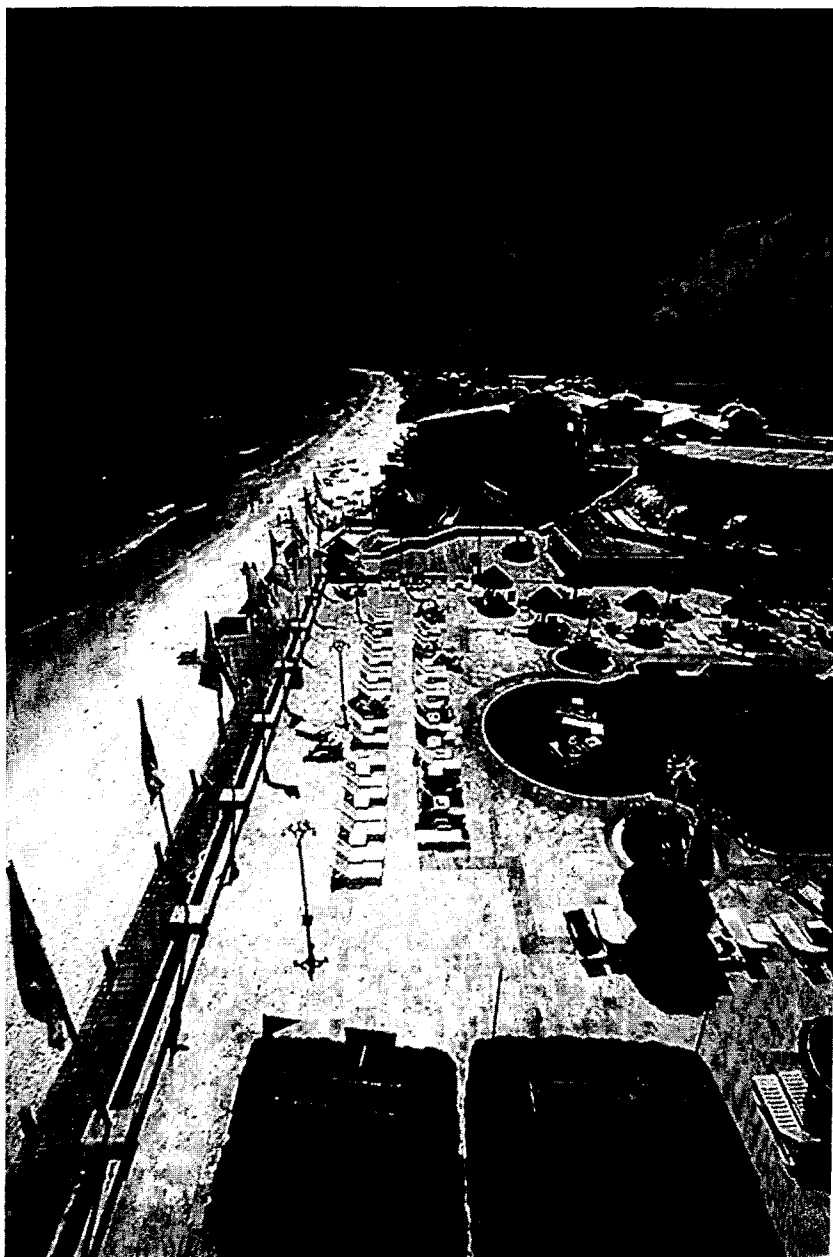
Cancún's original development was oriented in one direction—to the sea—and faced away from the Yucatán region.

vices for the hotel were in the basements or not visible. In these ways, Cancún was the most authentic expression of Taylorist principles of efficiency applied to hotel space: it reflected an idealistic, quasi-utopian spatial organization, with a total division between labor and leisure, workers and tourists. At least until the mid-1980s, Cancún could be considered as a paradigm of a totally Fordist tourist resort, if Fordism is defined as large-scale production of a uniform product according to inflexible organizational principles. This model of space was present not only in the organization of the hotel but also in the relation between the tourist and the broader environment. The lagoon, for example, was not considered a tourist attraction. Although the sea was obviously a crucial visual and esthetic attraction, it provided only a venue for cautious swimming in front of the hotel: interaction with the surroundings was clearly restricted to the fringe of sand and the immediate sea. The visual landscape was a backdrop for sitting or lying on the beach.¹⁴

The luxury of the hotels was a clear reflection of the resort's catering to a foreign, upper-income clientele. The design also reflected the expectation that people vacationing in Cancún were seeking privacy and tranquility. All the land was offered at the same time: the infrastructure development of the tourist zone was therefore conceived and built at one moment. An analysis conducted in 1984 indicated that sufficient land had been supplied with services to accommodate an increase in visitors for the next twenty-five years.¹⁵ Until 1984, no restrictions forced developers to cluster; because the whole length of the island was built to the highest standard, projects could be located anywhere, and the Land Department was ready to permit any project. In fact, the density of occupancy of the tourist zone and the efficiency in the use of the infrastructure was not relevant. The main goal was to attract new hotels, which would develop like bubbles along the fringe.

Cancún's image came from the quality of its structures and its environment. As some authors have recognized, no distinction can be made between one resort of this sort and another: Gay-Para, for example, wrote about this kind of development as "high rise public housing structures with feet in the water," while de Ventós described his confusion in not knowing if he was in Honolulu or elsewhere.¹⁶ Augé proposed the concept of the "no-place," meaning a space without history, identity, or any possibility of being appropriated by social groups.¹⁷

The resort began operations in 1976, when the first hotel opened to the public. The year 1984 is considered a turning point in the develop-



The hotel-zone tourist "bubble" in Cancún, Yucatán, Mexico

Cancún pioneered the sun-and-sand vacation, with the sea as a scenic backdrop.

ment of Cancún because the utopian project began to be overwhelmed by new factors: mass tourism and an overall change in tourist preferences. These factors would transform the original project into a much more open, but also more complex, resort.

The National Impact

From a national perspective, Cancún was a success from the beginning. The main objective was to eliminate Acapulco's monopoly in international deluxe tourism, not only because of its deterioration but also because, as Urry has observed, variety is one of the basic purposes of tourism.¹⁸ Indeed, the extraordinary was no longer available in Acapulco. New sites had to be designed to insure a new look for Mexican tourism.

The entrepreneurial response to the project was outstanding: in 1984, around six thousand rooms were available, the vast majority in the highest luxury categories. By 1995, Cancún was the largest hotel resort in Mexico, at least for high-end accommodations.¹⁹ By 1994 Cancún accounted for 20 percent of international tourists in Mexico, while Acapulco dropped from 21 percent in 1975 to 4 percent. Even more important, official calculations show that Cancún has become the main source of foreign exchange flowing to Mexico through tourism. Estimated as a mere 18 percent in 1988, the figure for 1993 was around 32 percent. Unlike other resorts developed later by FONATUR, the government's development arm, such as Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Loreto, or Los Cabos, Cancún was immediately accepted by national and international development capital as an investment opportunity.

The role of FONATUR was decisive in promoting a certain image of the development and insuring the start of tourist activities. By 1983, FONATUR owned six hotels in Cancún, with a total of 1,063 rooms (18.6 percent of the rooms in Mexico), as well as two restaurants, two malls, the only golf course in the resort, and the convention center. FONATUR's main purpose, however, was not to make profits for itself but rather to invest public funds to promote private investment. Among those profiting from this initiative was the nation's political class, which invested heavily in the project. As Fernando Martí points out, President Echeverría (1970–76) at first opposed the project, but he soon fell in love with it—and invested.²⁰ As the scandals surrounding the Salinas family have shown, the popular suspicion that politicians were the real owners of Cancún was not so far from the truth.

The growth of Cancún as the most important resort in Mexico required expensive government-financed advertising. Additional government support included infrastructure development, extremely large offers of land to private investors, and guarantees of continuous official backing for investment in the area. According to FONATUR's figures, in 1994, 4,629 acres were accessed by more than 99 miles of roads. The costs of this project ran high, and expenditures to support tourism contributed substantially to the country's debt burden. Even after the mid-1980s, when the national government abandoned or privatized a large number of its industrialization projects, tourism remained a priority because of its foreign exchange earnings.

City or Resort?

After 1982 Mexico's rate of economic growth became erratic, with significant effects on tourism. The peso, which had been devalued only once since the 1950s, had been maintained in an overvalued position throughout the 1970s, making Mexico a relatively expensive destination. During the oil boom, the Mexican tourism balance reversed (Mexicans were spending more money outside the country than were foreigners visiting Mexico). Greater affluence, however, also resulted in an increased flow of Mexicans to their national resorts. The ratio of Mexican to foreign visitors in Cancún ceased to be the 3:17 originally forecast; instead, in 1975 three Mexicans visited the resort for every foreigner, and indigenous expenditures contributed substantially to the development of Cancún until 1982. After that year, however, repeated devaluations made the Mexican peso such a bargain that Cancún was no longer restricted to high-income external groups. Flying to Cancún for a week's vacation was suddenly possible for a large sector of U.S. society. In addition, direct flights to Cancún allowed lower air fares and led to the development of a more intensive package system. By 1994, almost half of the arrivals by air were through charter planes. Consequently, control over Cancún's future fell into the hands of tour operators, mainly Americans.

At the same time, the construction industry became involved in a boom never even imagined in 1984. With incredible speed, the open spaces in Cancún's tourist zone began to fill up with new structures. Until 1984, the idea had been to preserve a certain image: high buildings were not allowed to block the view to the sea, a clearly exclusive model. The strong market, however, stimulated a new vision of the resort by the Mexican

authorities. It was time to increase the densities, to impose new standards on building height, and to reinforce the market with a diversification of facilities. Mass tourism overtook Cancún after 1984, causing enormous growth. Even though occupancy had fallen in all Mexican resorts, Cancún still maintained the highest rate nationally (around 72 percent in 1994) and therefore remained as the most profitable resort in the country for tourism entrepreneurs.

Mass tourism, though a welcome development for the Mexican economy, forced a change in the Cancún model. Motivations for traveling had changed at the international level. The hotel-beach-waterfront program of past decades was no longer acceptable, because the public had come to fear the health consequences of intense exposure to sun, and other vacation activities such as sports, nature, shopping, and culture disrupted the traditional model of the "three esses"—sand, sun, and sex. Attracting people to the beach without complementary activities became difficult. Shopping had become more integral to the vacation experience and, moreover, offered new opportunities for profit. The commercial centers initially conceived by FONATUR required expansion as they became tourist attractions in their own right and not simply service facilities.

The lagoon gained a new importance as a tourist attraction; not only were new restaurants and services installed on this side, but boat trips, waterskiing, and windsurfing gained in market share. The development thus shifted from a completely sea-oriented design to a sea-lagoon orientation. Finally, both sides of the main avenue were marketed and considered appropriate for commercial development. To promote the lure of the "wild sea," scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, submarine excursions to view coral reefs, and other commercial ventures were developed. Finally, the urban center itself started to become a tourist attraction. Tired of remaining in the hotel bubble and of using cabs or buses to get downtown, visitors who had discovered the new restaurants, boutiques, and services that gave the city center a more exciting atmosphere than the beachfront began to stay in the former service area. Thus, new, lower-level hotels and restaurants in the city drew a new group of visitors, both domestic and foreign.

Can one therefore conclude that a segregated resort has become a complex urban seaside center? In part the answer is yes, since the urban district has become part of the resort, supplementing the hotel development of the island fringe. But Cancún remains completely different from Acapulco, where the resident population lives just a few blocks from the

tourist zone and where residents and tourists have traditionally intermixed. In Cancún the tourist population is still segregated from local residents, even though the city has become the main urban center of the state of Quintana Roo and continues to draw population from the surrounding region.²¹

Back to the Region

One of the surprises of the Cancún project is the new relation the resort has developed with its region. At the beginning, Cancún was an isolated development that required a migrant labor force. The largest number of jobs were low paying and were filled mainly by Mayan workers who were born in villages and small towns on the peninsula. Often this migration occurred in two steps. The first, and intermediate, stop was Mérida, where the Indians worked in low-paying tourism-related jobs. Through their exposure to restaurants, hotels, and tourist services, many learned to speak Spanish and to dress like Westerners, preferring modern synthetic fabrics to their beautiful traditional garments. Sometimes, English words—the key to jobs in Cancún—were added to their sparse Spanish vocabulary. With this informal training, Mayan workers then traveled to Cancún, the final destination and the mythic site of a new life. There they ended up as help in the hotel kitchens (which were not air-conditioned, of course), as workers servicing the underground systems, or as gardeners. Frequently, migrants returned home for some holidays, bringing with them new costumes, electronic devices, and home appliances, symbols of their integration into modern life.²²

The skilled workforce that operated the hotels was more urban in origin. And sometimes its "migration" was imposed, as when an enterprise transferred workers from other facilities to a hotel or business in Cancún. Voluntary migration to these jobs was also common, however. The hope of a better income or a more glamorous life was sufficient incentive to insure a constant source of labor. Middle-class singles or people open to risk and entrepreneurial endeavors went freely to Cancún, finding jobs as medium-level employees in hotels and in businesses. Some became part of a growing "Californian class," a group consisting of natives and foreigners that was beginning to assume leadership roles in the city.²³ (The use of drugs and the adoption of a "cool life" clearly mixed well with leisure lifestyles and combined to define this complex and international set of people.)

Table 3 Tourism vs. Other Economic Activities in Cancún, as a Percentage of Economic Activity in the State of Quintana Roo, 1989 and 1994*

Indicators of Tourism Activity	1989 (%)	1994 (%)
Share of business establishments	15.3	6.1
Share of employment	38.9	30.1
Share of wages	44.2	49.9
Share of assets of business establishments	57.2	71.2
Share of gross added value	37.2	45.7
Share of gross capital formation	66.1	42.5

Source: National Economic Census 1989, 1994.

*Manuel Rodríguez Woog is responsible for developing the methodology that defines the activities that are included in tourism. I wish to thank him for providing the information in this table.

A 1984 study showed that the demand for goods in Cancún could not be satisfied locally.²⁴ In fact, not only food but also construction materials had to be imported from outside the region. In the 1990s, however, an important change began to take place as more goods were supplied from within the region. The growing resort had spawned development of new industries, not only in Cancún but in and around nearby municipalities; in fact, the Yucatán peninsula was one of the fastest-growing industrial regions from 1988 to 1994. Entrepreneurs from Mérida began taking an interest in the resort as hotels, restaurants, and various services offered new opportunities for smaller enterprises. New accommodations, in the form of apartments and condominiums, were also being developed, again involving regional enterprises. Thus, Cancún, though originally a "bubble resort," affected the whole region. The consequences of this spillover was to make tourism less dominant in the state's economy (see table 3). This reflected the effectiveness of tourism in generating new activities in the rest of the state. At the same time, workers in Cancún saw their wages rise, and they began to spend it in the region. Tourism is still the most profitable business in the state of Quintana Roo, but it is not limited to Cancún.²⁵

In the late 1980s, tourism began to sprawl throughout the region. Accommodations in various categories started to appear in the coastal zone of Quintana Roo, toward Chetumal and Belize. This new development caused a complex diversification of Cancún's original focus as an upscale resort; now the more luxurious and exclusive small resorts were being built away from Cancún, for example, at Puerto Aventuras. These

resorts attracted the richest segments of the market, those people looking for a quiet place with first-class accommodations. At the same time, inexpensive accommodations could still be found all along the coast. A growing demand for this type of accommodation is visible even at international levels: many Canadians, Americans, and Europeans are pleased to find themselves in an environment that is more exotic and less geared toward mass tourism, where they are isolated not only from technology but from comfort. Cheaper air fares facilitate the arrival of new social groups who are more interested in the landscape and extraordinary qualities of the Caribbean Sea than in the five-star comforts of the luxury hotels in Cancún or elsewhere along the coast.

The tourism model is therefore changing in and around Cancún. Even within the original resort, most of the tourism packages offer visits to the archaeological zones or other side trips inside the region. Journeys to the ancient Mayan sites of Chichen Itza, Tulum, and Uxmal now compete with the traditional sea-hotel-city trip. These developments have partly been the result of the Mexican government's steady withdrawal from Cancún. Initially a state-sponsored resort offering a uniform product, Cancún has been left to market forces. This economic process of "touristification" has in turn created a variety of new market niches.²⁶

Perspectives

The deluxe Fordist utopia of the 1960s and 1970s has been transformed into a model of mass tourism based on a broader view than the traditional sand-sea concept.²⁷ The transition was achieved by making the enclave into a regional city resort with heterogeneous attractions, a trend opposite to that described by Judd in Chapter 3. This transformation took place not just through a physical restructuring but also through a reconsideration of tourism functions inside the city of Cancún and through regional colonization; the region is now a supplemental resource to the resort.

The result, however, is not a clear success in terms of regional development, even though the impact is substantial. The distance continues to grow between the local winners and the remaining population, which has been impoverished by national and regional economic crises. The vast majority of Mexicans living within the region have not benefited from Cancún's development. More than ever, Cancún is inaccessible to the peasant population, as most jobs now available there are no longer

open to unskilled migrant workers. Low wages, unstable labor markets, racism, a high cost of living, and poor housing are some of the conditions that would-be migrants have found in Cancún.

The changes that have occurred in Cancún reflect a clear departure from the carefully planned, government-sponsored development of the past. Planning efforts have been supplanted by the desire to use Cancún as a platform for profits. With the current flow of drug money into Cancún, disorganized capitalism offers new activities for entrepreneurs. In fact, all tourist activities in Mexico seem to have been penetrated by drug investment and money laundering.²⁸ There is increasing pressure to open casinos, even though this is a risky strategy for a country trying to wipe out flagrant corruption and bolster democratic processes. The threat to the natural environment is also growing. Water activities, for example, are increasing in Cancún, despite their detrimental effect on the lagoon, and more and more food, drink, and other services are being offered by buildings erected directly in the lagoon. Tourist development along the coastal region may also be environmentally devastating, even in the near future.

Clearly the new tourism model for Cancún is creating a postmodern city and tourist experience. Whereas in the past tourists went mainly to relax on the beach, now a kaleidoscope of activities awaits them, not only in Cancún but also in the coastal region. A hyperaccelerated way of life during vacations is now available as an alternative to just relaxing. Originally conceived as a deluxe enclave serving wealthy foreigners in splendid seclusion, Cancún and its environs now encompass a complex mix of residents and visitors. Additionally, the integration of its economy with that of the region has tightened ties with other towns and cities. These advances, however, have not yet mitigated the inequalities separating those able to take advantage of the new economic opportunities from those who cannot.

46. Caruso 1995, 5K.
47. Rogers 1996, 1A.
48. Davis 1995, 38.

Daniel Hiernaux-Nicolas, "Cancún Bliss"

1. In 1995, Cancún had 18,859 hotel rooms, or 11.6 percent of the rooms in Mexico, and Acapulco 17,647, or 10.9 percent.

2. At the moment, changes to the law on gambling have been proposed to the Parliament, with a negative result: even within the majority of the official party, there is strong opposition to this project, which is supported by the Ministry of Tourism and some entrepreneurs.

3. The annual growth rate for world tourism was 11 percent in 1950–60; 9 percent in 1960–70; 6 percent in 1970–80; and 3 percent in 1980–85 (Cazes 1989, 9).

4. Particularly in 1976, when President Echeverría promoted and approved a United Nations vote against Zionism; also after bank nationalization in 1982; and as a result of the earthquakes and disastrous economic situation of 1985–86. In brief, the internal situation in Mexico has been interpreted dramatically by tourists, principally from the United States.

5. Miguel Alemán was a leader in promoting tourism after he left office in 1952. Founder of the Continental Hotel chain, he also had decisive roles in the international marketing of travel to Mexico and the creation of new educational projects for tourism. A clear reflection of the ideas of his time, his tourism philosophy was oriented toward peace and international friendship. Those arguments were important in the development of Mexican tourism in the 1950s and 1960s (see Alemán 1983).

6. Lozato 1988; Cazes 1994.

7. Ramírez 1986, 6.

8. Cazes 1994, 77. The 1950s and 1960s in Europe were marked by the diffusion of this image of Mexico through movies, music, and operettas. The images projected an exotic version of Mexican culture but also of Brazil and the Latin culture in general.

9. Veracruz is the main Mexican port of the Gulf as well as the traditional contact with the rest of the world. Tourism developed there in the 1950s, but climatic conditions are not favorable, and the expected growth was never realized because of competition from Acapulco.

10. Jiménez 1984, 102.

11. Planning for Acapulco began in the 1960s: a main road was constructed along the coast, infrastructure was greatly improved, and housing programs were initiated for the urban poor. Nevertheless, housing, infrastructure, and services were inadequate to meet the large demands of the resort.

12. The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank supported some large regional ventures in Mexico in the 1970s, particularly the Lázaro Cárdenas City project, which included a steel plant and new port projects.

13. Hiernaux 1989b.

14. In another paper, I have argued that landscape induces a sort of rent, not for the use of the space per se but for the privilege of viewing another space. Therefore, rent results not from the physical conditions of a piece of land but from the quality of surrounding space to be viewed (Hiernaux 1989a).

15. Hiernaux 1984.

16. Gay-Para 1985; de Ventós 1976.

17. Augé 1992. An interesting concept of space can also be found in Shields 1991.

18. Urry 1990, 10–11.

19. Nevertheless, Acapulco has a large number of rooms not included in the official statistics, mainly because they are in apartments and houses. A recent estimate includes 11,434 rooms in various categories (Hernández 1996, 87). Of course, Cancún also has a large number of rooms in apartments, condominiums, time-shares, etc., though fewer than Acapulco. If we use these statistics, Acapulco is still the largest resort, but with a greater distribution of rooms in varied categories.

20. Martí 1985.

21. In 1994 FONATUR estimated the population of Cancún (which started from scratch in 1975) to be around 240,000.

22. Instability was higher in Cancún in 1986 than in the rest of the tourist resorts of Mexico (Secretaría de Turismo 1986).

23. When working in FONATUR in 1983–84, I developed this comparison regarding the way of life of this new social group, which is interested not only in self-employment or high positions in the corporate structures but also in exploring new issues in Cancún, such as the environment (still a new concept in the early 1980s in Mexico). This peculiar lifestyle, a mix of late-American hippie and neo-Mexican hippie, had very different patterns from previous modes of living; it was oriented more toward a Californian, rather than a Mexican, way of life.

24. Acuña and de la Garza 1989.

25. The figures included in the table refer not only to Cancún but to all resorts in the state territory, including Cozumel, Bacalar, and the coast between Belize and Cancún.

26. We use the neologism that Lanfant used to describe a social process, but we assume it can also be appropriated for spaces (Lanfant 1994).

27. Urry 1990.

28. The Mexican press regularly offers information about houses, hotels, and other tourist facilities confiscated from drug dealers. Cancún, Puerto Vallarta, and the main tourist resorts in Mexico are plagued by the problems associated with drug money (see the newspaper *El Financiero* [Mexico City] 1994–96, inter alia).

Saskia Sassen and Frank Roost, "The City"

1. The Internet and, more generally, electronic space—whether public (like the Internet) or private—is too large a topic to address in this brief chapter. But it is important both as a space for entertainment (e.g., on-line chat clubs); a space for the consumption of entertainment products; and a space that has engendered a whole new set of relations with actual urban space. See, e.g., Rotzer 1995; Sassen 1997; Graham and Marvin 1996; *Futur Antérieur* 1995.

2. Scott 1995.

3. A. Smith 1991.

4. This is supported and made possible through a range of innovations and technical developments: digitalization, optical fibers, compression, navigation software, the new capacities of PCs, networks such as the Internet, and other internets.