

## Papers

# The production of social space in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Spatiality, Sociality and Historicity

A produção do espaço social em Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, México. Espacialidade, Sociabilidade e Historicidade

La producción del espacio social en Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, México. Espacialidad, Socialidad e Historicidad

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### Keywords:

Tourism.  
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### Palavras-chave:

Turismo.  
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### Palabras clave:

Turismo  
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### Abstract

The work aims to reveal the social space produced in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico, through the perception, conception and experience of the destination of social agents that shape it, to identify the forms of appropriation and use resulting from tourism. The theoretical model is based on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre (1974) and Edward Soja (2008) on the production and trialectics of space. The techniques applied were non-participant observation, documentary research, a survey of 233 tourists, as well as 43 interviews with key informants. It has been identified that the area of Playa del Carmen has been appropriated for purposes of accumulation of capital, fragmenting the city and creating symbolic and physical class divisions. Its population growth has led to an uncontrolled urban growth which ensues in social problems, causing uprooting of social subjects from the space.

### Resumo

O objetivo do trabalho é revelar a transformação do espaço social em Playa del Carmen, no estado de Quintana Roo - México, através da percepção, concepção e vivência dos atores que tem configurado este destino, para reconhecer as formas de apropriação e de uso que produz o turismo. O modelo teórico se baseia nas propostas de Henri Lefebvre (1974) e Eduard Soja (2008) sobre a produção do espaço e sua dialética tridimensional ou 'trialética'. Foram utilizadas técnicas de observação não participante, revisão documental, aplicação de questionário a 233 turistas e entrevista a 43 atores chave e residentes. Através das informações obtidas, identificou-se que o espaço de Playa del Carmen tem sido apropriado com fins de acumulação do capital, fragmentando a cidade e criando divisões de classe, tanto simbólicas como físicas. Seu aumento populacional tem gerado um incontrolado crescimento urbano, que resulta em problemas sociais, gerando um desenraizamento dos sujeitos sociais para o espaço.

### Resumen

El objetivo del trabajo es develar la transformación del espacio social en Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, México, a través de la percepción, concepción y vivencia de los actores que han configurado el destino, para reconocer las formas de apropiación y uso que produce el

Trialectica.  
Playa del Carmen.

turismo. El modelo teórico se basa en los planteamientos de Henri Lefebvre (1974) y Edward Soja (2008) acerca de la producción del espacio y su trialectica. Se utilizaron las técnicas de observación no participante, revisión de documentos de archivos, encuesta a 233 turistas y 43 entrevistas a personas clave y residentes. A través de la información obtenida, se identificó que el espacio de Playa del Carmen ha sido apropiado con fines de acumulación del capital, fragmentando a la ciudad y creando fronteras de clase tanto simbólicas como físicas. Su crecimiento poblacional ha generado un incontrolado crecimiento urbano, que ha derivado en problemas sociales generando un desarraigo de los sujetos sociales al espacio.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the disciplines through which the production of space in tourism has been studied, has been geography, where space is defined by tourists' behaviour and likes that shape and demarcate a destination (Almirón, 2004). Likewise, the production of space is given through the configuration of a destination by tourism and its processes of acculturation and use of resources (Nogues, 2008; Hurtado & Valenzuela, 2009; Castillo & Villar, 2011; Ramos, 2012; Zizumbo Villarreal et al, 2013; and Thomé, 2015). However, the production of space in a tourist site also causes problems such as privatization and environmental damage (Hurtado & Valenzuela, 2009; da Conceição Pereira, 2012) in the expansion and transformation of space (García & Marín Poot, 2014).

The production of space in tourism has been studied considering different elements that define a type of consumption that, in turn, defines and creates space to meet the needs of tourists (Mansfeld, 1990) taking into consideration the fact that one of the purposes of the production of space is the accumulation of capital, as mentioned by Britton (1991), Balslev & Velázquez (2010) and Gonzalez & Kotschack (2017). They all agree that tourism has been a precursor to the commodification of space, creating tourist sites by reproducing the taste of tourists, which sometimes leads to creating both symbolic and physical social barriers between tourists and residents, as well as an imposition of the capital of foreign companies allowing an empowerment (Balsey, 2010).

Rooting and uprooting of the destination as mentioned by Anaya & Palafox-Muñoz (2010) and Castrogiovanni (2007) is another aspect of production of space as well as the creation of imaginaries through it, by exposing feelings of satisfaction and well-being by tourists when they interact with residents.

In the investigation, Playa del Carmen is considered the case of study, located in the Municipality of Solidaridad, Quintana Roo, Mexico, being one of the main tourist destinations in the country according to data provided by the Secretariat of Federal Tourism (SECTUR) in 2018, the destination development derived from the growth of Cancun being the first planned tourist destination in the state, however, from the beginning its tourist target was more selective by implementing various activities focused mainly on nature tourism. Moreover, the place has problems such as lack of service supplies for the uncontrolled growth of its population. Increasingly tourism companies continue to modify the space and causing various problems in the city. Thus, visitors are not the only participants in the production of space, but also residents, businessmen and politicians related to the sector, each one contributes to social and economic production. The aim of the study is to unveil the configuration of social space in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico, through the perception, conception and lived experience of actors that have contributed to the configuration of the destination, to know the forms and uses appropriation produced by tourism. The theoretical model applied for this study draws on Henri Lefebvre (1974) and then take as a reference the contribution of the theoretical model of Edward Soja (2008) about the production and trialectics of space, which refers not only to capitalist produc-

tion, but to the symbolic production, i.e. the part of the imaginary, and social relationships, help the constitution of a place. Non-participating observation techniques, documentary research, survey of tourists and interviews with key informants were used to obtain information. The article is presented at the beginning with the theoretical framework and methodology, addressing contributions on the trialectics of space in the tourism sector in conjunction with the model of Soja, who is the main theorist of the research. Subsequently the stages of research are presented through the applied methodology and then give a context of the studied destination. Finally, the results of the work are presented and the implications and limitations are discussed.

## 2 THE TRIALECTICS OF SPACE IN TOURISM STUDIES

The category of "tourist space" allows to explain the formation of elements and social groups involved in the production and use of social space by the tourist phenomenon, pointing out the social, economic and even political circumstances that entails. The world economy, characterized by intense and sophisticated processes of consumer commodification, has influenced the transformations produced in the tourist social space by the incorporation of tourism activity creating products depending on its demand, but also as an active subject of its transcendence, in such a way that it has a process of reconquering the spaces and places.

Against this background, it would be interesting to examine the thematic lines that have contributed to the study of the social space in tourism, in order to identify their approaches and contributions to the understanding of tourism. Through a review of articles in various repositories, four related topics were located such as: geography and landscape, tourist and capital consumption, communication and deformation of spaces caused by social problems deriving from tourism and tourism imaginaries.

As for the first line, the studies tend to focus on explanations of how the tourist space is defined by issues of tourists behaviour and their likes, which provoke the construction and territorial delimitation of a tourist destination, as well as the deterioration of the landscape caused by tourism development (Almirón (2004); Hurtado & Valenzuela (2009); da Conceição Pereira (2012); and Zizumbo-Villarreal (2013), Hurtado & Valenzuela (2009) and García & Marín Poot (2014); Hiernaux (2006 and 2008) and Pinassi (2015)).

In terms of research focused on tourism consumption and capital, the studies focus on the development of a symbolic space that goes beyond the territorial space of a tourist destination, considering different elements that define a type of consumption which drifts in the definition and creation of spaces so as to satisfy the needs and likes of tourists, topics such as rooting and uprooting are seen in the same way (Mansfeld (1990); Britton, (1991); Balslev & Velázquez, (2010) y Gonzalez & Kotschack, (2017); Troncoso (2008); Atlejevic & Doorne, (2003) and Anaya & Palafox-Muñoz, (2010)).

Now, with regard to studies related to the communication and deformation of spaces due to social problems caused by tourism authors such as Castrogiovanni (2007); Heimtun (2007) and López & Marín (2010) analyse how marketing and media are ensuing tourists' motivation for visitors to move to a certain social tourist space, an issue that also leads to setting new trends for places by producing a space which, in the case of tourism, can be categorized as Places, Between-Places and Non-Places, referring to the delimitations that the space has for tourism purposes.

Finally, the studies related to tourism imaginaries – Laguna (2006) and Mascarenhas & Gándara (2010), Mazón, Huete & Mantecón (2011) and Quintero, Rodríguez & Castañeda (2017) – emphasize that they are considered symbolic and political-economic construction strategies for local, regional and national identity. This study follows this line of research, using Lefebvre's (1974) and Soja's (2008) theory of the "conceptual triad", through which the symbolic part that constitutes the production of a social space is highlighted.

## 3 THEORY OF THE TRIALECTICS OF SPATIALITY

One of the main exponents of this field of study is the Frenchman Henri Lefebvre (1974), who focused his proposal of a social space on the production that society generates within a space, referring not only to capitalist production relationships, but to the ways in which the symbolic part of production, i.e. the part of the imaginary, and social relations, help the establishment of a site.

In the first epoch of modernity, human-built structures began to replace natural spaces of cultural importance. The evolution of symbolic natural spaces (such as caves, valleys and mountains) to spaces of absolute significance (such as cathedrals, schools and government bodies) involved a significant material social replacement, i.e., they are built.

The production of a demarcated space, modified, transformed by the networks, circuits and flows that settle – such as routes, canals, roads, commercial circuits and highways – are nevertheless a material space based on natural one, in which the acts of generations, classes, political powers are inscribed as producers of objects and enduring realities. During this process, the city and the countryside assume a new relationship within a third term: the state that has the city as its centre (Jiménez, 2017). Therefore, each state has its own space, which is primarily a matter of nature, to which the state historically and politically opposes.

Thus, by better understanding the concept of social space and using it on any destination, we notice the insertion of various elements that encompass the behaviour of people, in this case, the users contrast with the culture of residents, this causes the creation of spaces for capital accumulation purposes, on which depends the type of people who interact within it and who generate trends in the destination establishing characteristics on which people rely, to know if they can be inserted into it and whether they will equally give them satisfaction to their needs.

As Harvey (1994) rightly mentioned, saying that something is socially constructed does not mean that it is subjective and arbitrary. The choices of society with respect to what is essential space to understanding how society operates and therefore how it operates in relation to individuals with the force and objective understanding that no one, individually, can escape from what is developed in space without suffering consequences. This leads to understand that there is a dominant and dominated space in the relationship between space among society.

However, it is important to emphasize the difference between social space and tourist or social tourist space to understand the reproduction of the trialectics of space, both share elements, however they are not entirely the same. Over time, space, being considered mostly as palpable or only sensorial, causes a study of contributions that focuses on quantitative aspects that end in positivism, that is that they address epistemological or reflective terms but do not get to have a deepening of the results or descriptions of the problem, in most texts that implement the term: tourist space (Britton, 1991; Heimtum, 2007 and Andrade, 2011), they leave aside the qualitative part that helps the application of knowledge in a hermeneutic way and thus generate a reconceptualization of the term social tourist space, considering aspects mostly material, which lies in a lack of attention to the social aspect.

However, through authors such as MacCannell (1973), it can be understood that the social tourist space considers social movements derived from tourism, which lie in the production of their ideas, lifestyles and beliefs manifesting them within a tourist destination to constitute it through its needs and preferences so that a production of space is obtained.

On the other hand, focusing on the production of space, the study related to the trialectics of space by Soja (2008), drawing on Lefebvre (1974), points out the existence of three fundamental dimensions:

**Table 1** - Soja's model of the trialectics of urban space

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>SPACIALITY (FIRST SPACE)</b>	It is perceived physically and empirically. It is measured and mapped. It underlies the material goods that dominate the study and interpretation of urban spatiality.
<b>SOCIALITY (SECOND SPACE)</b>	Symbolic representations are presented. It gives a conception in images of space and establishes a geographical policy of space through the imposition of products given by political planners and entrepreneurs.
<b>HISTORICITY (THIRD SPACE)</b>	Here is the interpretation of time lived through the declarations of social subjects that converge in space.

**Source:** the authors based on Lefebvre (1974) and Soja (2008).

Soja mentioned that in order to understand the complexity of reality, it is necessary doing it in a trialectic form: being in the world, understand it and interpret it (Guzmán, 2007). Thus, no dimension of space can be understood in isolation.

Thus, the choice of the model theory by Soja (2008) particularly, helps to understand the production of tourist space, going beyond the outdated and reductionist vision that represents the territory as it is to consider it only as a space built by society. This trialectics of spatiality considers that space in tourism is laden with symbols that generate a discourse that both tourists and residents can grasp through the established by entrepreneurs and political actors.

The development of this study will help to obtain a detailed understanding of how a tourist reality and transformation of the space derived from the three dimensions represented in the selected tourist destination.

#### 4 APLICATION OF THE TRIALECTICS OF SPATIALITY IN PLAYA DEL CARMEN

The research process was mixed, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, and was divided into three stages, each focused on working the spatial dimensions given by Soja (2008) as shown in Table 2:

**Table 2** - Research process

Stages	Variables and analysis units	Methods	Techniques
<b>First stage: Social practice (spatiality)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urban agglomeration</li> <li>- Social order</li> <li>- Human settlements (houses, towns, colonies, slums)</li> <li>- Places of innovation, consumption, culture</li> </ul>	Documentary and statistical methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-participant observation in the social space of the tourists and residents.</li> <li>- Review of the municipal development plan</li> <li>- Review of photographs and historical records of the destination</li> <li>- A survey of 233 tourists in Quinta Avenida, Plaza las Américas and Parque Fundadores</li> </ul>
<b>Second stage: Representation of spaces (sociality)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simulated, aestheticized, museified, and gentrified urban spaces</li> <li>- Dominant politics of space that codifies and orders it</li> <li>- Tourism products promotion</li> <li>- Constructed spaces for tourists and inhabitants</li> </ul>	Biographic approach and documentary method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-participant observation</li> <li>- Interviews with 4 political actors at the City Hall and with 5 entrepreneurs at the Quinta Avenida</li> <li>- Review of images and publicity from 1st and 27th of October, 2018</li> </ul>
<b>Third stage: Spaces of representation (historicity)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Class boundaries</li> <li>- Expansion of the activities (production of culture)</li> <li>- Description of places, rooting and uprooting in space</li> </ul>	Biographic approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-participant observation</li> <li>- 15 interviews with inhabitants with more than 5 years living in the city and 23 interviews with tourists made at the Quinta Avenida, Parque Fundadores and Plaza Quinta la Alegría from 1st and 27th of October, 2018.</li> </ul>

**Source:** the authors.

Quantitative research was used to integrate a profile of tourists, whose information survey was carried out through an intentional non-probability statistical survey, whose study variables and indicators are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** - Variables and indicators of the survey applied to tourists in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo

Socio-demographic characteristics	Travel characteristics	Motives of the visit	Valorisation of the product	Perception of the space
Age	Companions	Motivation of displacement	How one heard about the service	Social ties with residents
Marital status	Transport used	Most attractive spot	Reasons for choosing the accommodation	Social ties with other tourists
Gender	Overnight stay	Principal activity	Price and quality of accommodation	Changes noticed in the place
Place of origin	Accommodation		Suggestions for improvement	Words which are associated with the visit
Family monthly income	Visit frequency			
Occupation	Length of stay			

**Source:** the authors

The survey was administered to 233 tourists, using a questionnaire with 33 questions. The respondents were selected randomly, through a PAPI system of data collection at the points mentioned in the table above.

The sociodemographic profile of the tourists surveyed is as follows:

**Table 4** - Profile of tourists surveyed in Playa del Carmen

Variable	Range	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	Less than 18 years	6%
	From 19 to 27	20%
	From 28 to 37	32%
	From 38 to 47	23%
	From 48 to 57	7%
	More than 58	12%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	49%
	Female	51%
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	47%
	Married	42%
	Divorced	7%
	Widower	3%
	Civil union	5%
<b>Place of origin</b>	National	74%
	International	
<b>Family monthly income (in MXN)</b>	Less than 10 hundred pesos	13%
	From 11 to 20 hundred pesos	39%
	From 20 001 to 30 hundred pesos	22%
	From 30 001 to 40 hundred pesos	7%
	More than 40,001 pesos	3%
	Businessmen	13%
<b>Occupation</b>	Executive	9%
	Professional	19%
	Student	14%
	Employed	32%
	Unemployed	2%
	Retired	6%
	Other	4%

**Source:** the author.

The majority of tourists are young, between 28 and 37 years old, representing the 33% of the population surveyed. Most were national visitors from the State of Mexico and Mexico City. 39% receive a monthly income of 11,000 to 20,000 thousand pesos, and 32% are employees.

For the development of the dimensions related to sociality and historicity, qualitative research was used and the method of biographic approach was applied, which results from oral or written reports of a person and his or her interaction with the receiver, which is an essential interpretation filter to what the interviewee says (Hernández, 2005). Nevertheless, it is totally chained to the memory of the key subject, which is why it sometimes becomes somewhat subjective; however, it is the one to evoke the more intimate side of a person's imagination. Through the accounts of the social subjects, information was obtained that underpins the aforementioned dimensions, which refer to the second and third stages of research, in the second stage (dimension of sociality) 5 tourism businessmen were interviewed and 4 political agents related to tourism, since they are subjects who impose rules in the space for their coding through the construction of simulated spaces for tourists and residents, as well as spreading tourist products and brands.

The following table shows the choice of tourism entrepreneurs and political actors interviewed:

**Table 5** - Tourism enterprises interviewed

Type of Business	Business name	Type of entrepreneur	Number of interviews
Bar and restaurants	La Fishería and 100 %	Microentrepreneur and	2
	Natural	macro-entrepreneur	
Accommodation	El Patio Hotel & Suite	Microentrepreneur	1
Boutiques	La Troupe	Microentrepreneur	1
Travel Agency	Star Tours	Microentrepreneur	1

**Source:** the authors

**Table 6** - Political actors interviewed

Political actor	Department	Number of interviewed actors
Head Director of Turismo	City Council of Solidaridad	1
Head Director of Infrastructure, Urban Development and Environment	City Council of Solidaridad	2
Head Director of Economic Development	City Council of Solidaridad	3
Head Director of Planning	City Council of Solidaridad	4

**Source:** the authors.

In the last dimension (historicity), which is related to the experience or the lived space, the inhabitants and tourists were interviewed, sharing their experiences related to how they lived their first days on the site.

The selection of these subjects was random, however each reported different experiences of their visit to the destination. In the following their profile is shown in a table, being classified by age, nationality, gender and occupation, to know in more detail the representation of space.

**Table 7** – Profile of tourists interviewed

Age					Nationality		Gender		Occupation						
-18	19	28	38	48	M1	E1	M2	H	TG	E2	D	E3	AC	J	E4
	to	to	to	to											
	27	37	47	57											
1	10	5	4	3	19	4	14	9	2	9	5	3	1	1	2
Total	23				23		23		23						

**Source:** the author.

**Notes:** M1: Mexican M2: woman H: man

E1: foreigner E2: employee E3: entrepreneur E4: student

TG: government employee D: professor AC: housewife J: retired

Similarly, the profile of the selected residents, with the same classification as that of tourists, is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8** – Profile of residents interviewed

Age					Nationality		Gender		Occupation						
-18	19	28	38	48	M1	E1	M2	H	V	M3	A	C	TG	AC	E2
	to	to	to	to											
	27	37	47	57											
0	7	5	2	1	14	1	8	7	7	9	5	3	1	1	2
Total	15				15		15		15						

**Source:** the author.

**Notes:** M1: Mexican M2: woman M3: waiter H: man

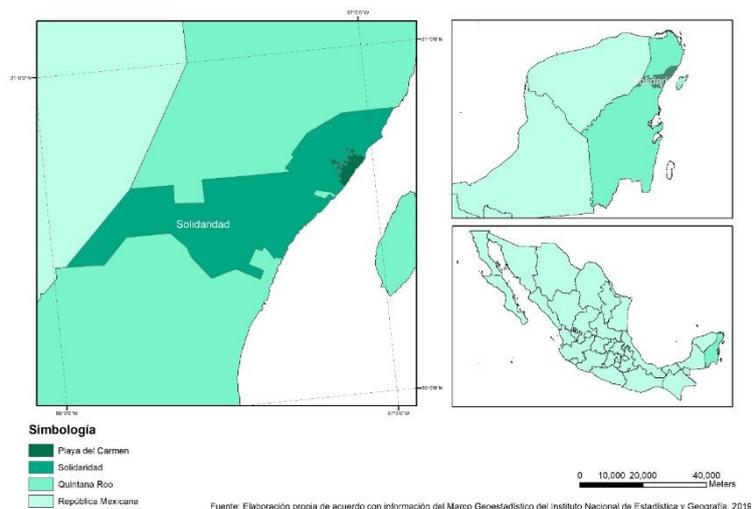
E1: foreigner E2: entrepreneur V: vendor A: academic/professor

C: cook TG: government employee AC: housewife

With the data obtained, the interpretation of the information was made applying the trialectics of spatiality proposed by Soja (2008) in Playa del Carmen and its production of space.

## 5 THE SOCIAL SPACE OF PLAYA DEL CARMEN, QUINTANA ROO

Currently the coast of Quintana Roo is the main tourist region of Mexico and one of the most important in the Caribbean, with 8.8 million tourists in 2017, according to the Secretariat of Tourism of Quintana Roo (SEDETUR, 2017).

**Map 1** - Location of Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo

In 1970 Quintana Roo had 88,000 inhabitants, despite having an average population density of 1.7 per km<sup>2</sup>, there was an uneven population distribution (SIC-DGE, 1970); the north, except the islands of Cozumel and Mujeres, was virtually uninhabited, while the centre maintained a dispersed indigenous population.

The State Development Plan 1993-1999 (Gobierno del Estado de Quintana Roo, 1993), meant a change in the region's tourism policy, while Cancun was defined as a centre for mass tourism, based on wholesale and charter systems (a place where people, especially young people have the freedom to do what they want without having any restrictions), the plan proposed the development of new centres for more selective tourism, closer to nature and related to the conservation of the environment. During the 1990s the so-called "Riviera Maya" – between Cancun and Tulúm – consolidated, where Playa del Carmen stands out as the site with the most tourist influx in the area.

Playa del Carmen has a remarkable diversity in its geographical space, which has been used by political actors and entrepreneurs for the construction of recreational facilities in the benefit of the visitor. Unlike Cancun, as mentioned, the inclusion of tourism products in the jungle began in 1970s, leading to the interaction between nature and man, perceived as a "virgin space" because it had little contact at the beginning with man-made spaces.

Regarding the above, urban tourism development of this coastal strip began with the construction of Puerto Aventuras, continuing with other housing developments such as Playacar, which doubled the urban area of Playa del Carmen, whose core became quickly in service area for hotels that began to be built along the beach.

Playa del Carmen belongs to the Municipality of Solidaridad, named after the sensibility and selfless actions of the inhabitants of Quintana Roo willing to build a community society, on the individuality of their actions, supporting the less socially and economically favoured, and providing opportunities for progress to those who have decided to settle in these lands from various parts of Mexico and the world (Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y Desarrollo, 2016 en Plan Municipal de Desarrollo 2010-2050). Thus, the growth and consolidation of Solidaridad has arisen thanks to the settlement of immigrants who arrive to contribute both socially and economically to the place, therefore, it is a municipality that for the most part is made up of foreigners, which makes it undeniably different from several territories in the country.

The State Development Plan 1993-1999 (Gobierno del Estado de Quintana Roo, 1993), proposed a change in the tourism policy of the region. It proposed the installation of new centres for more selective tourism, closer to nature and related to the conservation of the environment. During the 1990s, the so-called "Riviera Maya" spread between Cancun and Tulúm was consolidated, of which Playa del Carmen is part.

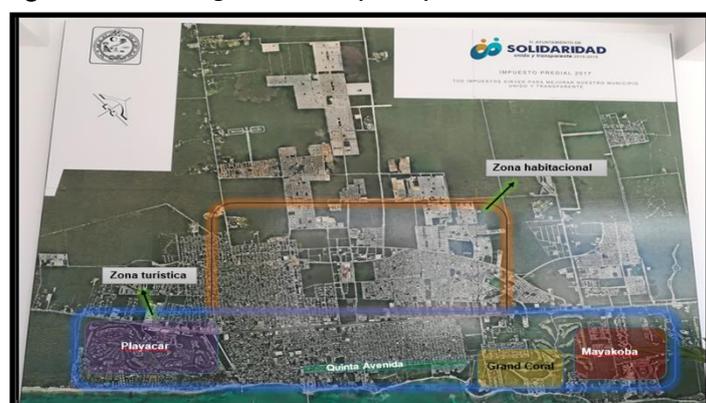
Today according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2015), the Municipality of Solidaridad is the third fastest growing in the state of Quintana Roo.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Spatiality. The perceived.

It is particularly interesting that, according to several studies (Córdoba & García, 2003; Quiroz, 2006 and Plan de Desarrollo Municipal, 2016-2018), Playa del Carmen is a city divided by the federal highway, creating two cities. On the one hand the city that is aimed at tourism is on the east side towards the coast line, with a urban planning – retail and housing – aimed at upper and upper middle classes, while to the west of the road, housing and shops for workers, who commute daily to the city of tourism to provide services such as: cleaning, gardening, and other general services. The division can be seen in Figure 1, where the tourist sites of highest concentration and capital production, mostly of foreign capital, are located, which have been the cause of the growth of colonies inhabited by immigrants that settle to work mostly in tourist establishments.

**Figure 1** - Satellite image of the territory of Playa del Carmen and its social and tourist production



**Source:** the authors based on the map of the Municipality of Solidaridad

Table 9 provides a brief information on the sites shown in Figure 1.

**Table 9** - Most socially produced tourist sites in Playa del Carmen

Tourist site	Characteristics
Playacar	Exclusive tourist complex, which constitutes the hotel area of Playa del Carmen created in 1979.
Mayakoba	Created in 1990, neoliberal policies in Mexico, derived in the participation of private companies in the construction and concession of transport infrastructure from which was created this hotel development.
Grand Coral	Created in 2009, Spanish banks Bancaja and Banco de Valencia participated as investors in the development with an investment of \$3 billion. 6,500 homes, two boutique hotels, shopping centre and golf course.
Quinta Avenida	Pedestrian corridor where the main centres, shops, boutiques, restaurants, cafes and bars of Playa del Carmen are concentrated.

**Source:** the authors.

It is noted the appropriation by entrepreneurs and the granting by politicians who approve the permits to configure the space both socially and physically, taking advantage of the natural and cultural resources. Therefore, we refer here the land use through the profitability of the spaces as mentioned (Caligaris & Pérez Trento, 2017), considering that there is a separation of spaces in terms of real estate and absolute income, focused on owning the right to private property through the permission granted by the State to entrepreneurs with the aim of meeting the needs of a social group with specific characteristics of the capitalist market. On the other hand there are also the establishments that allude to the differential income of the space, which

focus on being built within a space with particular characteristics, taking advantage of the natural resources that surround it in the physical space of Playa del Carmen, close to the beach or jungle, which make it a selective space.

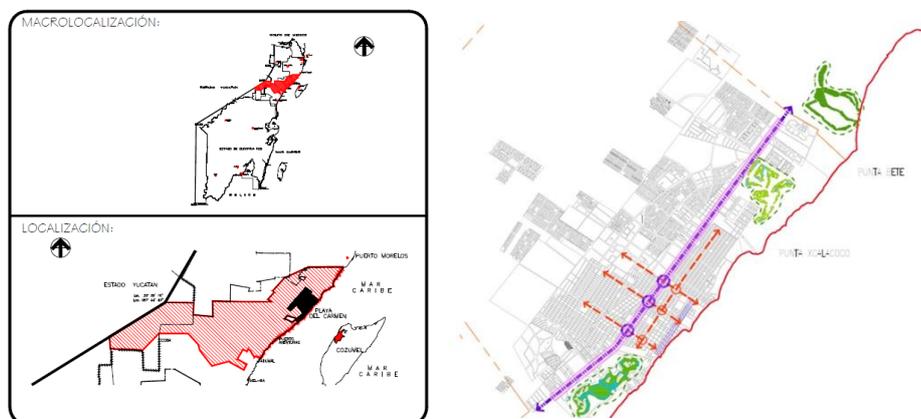
With regard to the practices of tourists on the use of space in this part of the city, the survey shows that most prefer to stay overnight at the destination (82%), making mostly use of hotels (49%), although there is also a significant number of tourists who choose guesthouses to stay (22%), finding more comfort in them. 35% of the tourists surveyed mentioned that the location of the destination is of paramount importance in the choice of accommodation, as well as in recommendation (23%). This lies in the estimated length of stay, considering staying more than 4 days (59%), since most arrive at the destination for entertainment purposes (50%) and rest (40%), which undoubtedly characterizes the type of tourism carried out in Playa del Carmen since its appearance.

Regarding the attractions of the destination, the Beaches are the major reason for a first visit (59%); Quinta Avenida is presented as the second option (38%), Plaza Quinta la Alegría was chosen as third (29%), while Parque Fundadores has been chosen as the fourth option (44%) and Xcaret as fifth (31%). Therefore, the main activity to be carried out is related to entertainment (38%) and the walks through the squares (24%), considering that the Quinta Avenida is the place with the most squares and shopping centres.

As for the prices assessed by tourists relative to the same places as the Beaches along with the Parque Fundadores and the Plaza Quinta la Alegría, have been considered fairly priced places (80%, 57% and 53% respectively), while Quinta Avenida and Xcaret are considered to be high-priced sites (57% and 78% respectively).

The interviews to tourists provided information on the dimension of spacing in Playa del Carmen, some of this relate to the data acquired in the survey carried out. This dimension starts with the urban agglomeration that emerged, then the colonies that have developed because of tourism, tourism companies and urban corridors of the city. Therefore, the following figure is presented.

**Figure 2** - Urban image plan of the Municipality of Solidaridad



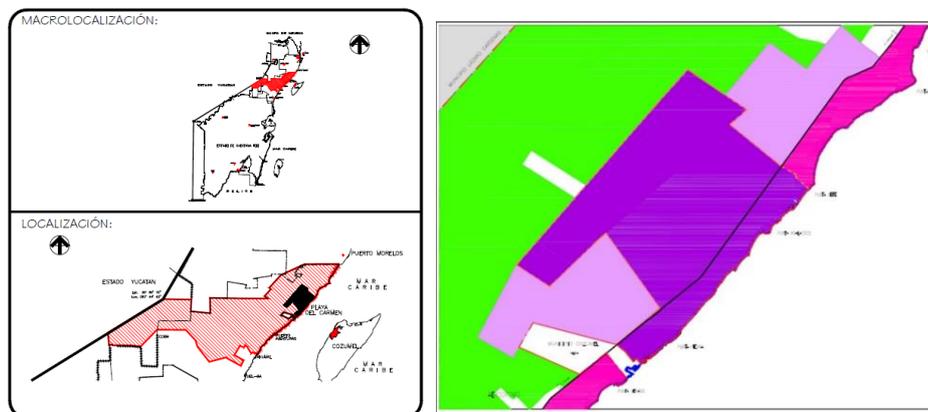
**Source:** Municipality of Solidaridad 2011 – 2016.

The purple line points to the Cancun–Tulum road, through which people and both tourists and residents move to reach the destination. Similarly, red lines mean existing urban corridors. The road, divides the residential areas with the tourist area and notes that the communities (grey areas) were built near the tourist zone, which is located near the coast (purple grid strip) in which the Quinta Avenida is located, being the place with the most tourist establishments in the city. The green coloured sites are the resorts with a golf course, of which the largest of them, belonging to Playacar, took advantage of the lakes with which the destination counts and appropriated them to incorporate them as attractive to their establishment. This alludes to the preferred tourist spaces already mentioned above by tourists.

Today the social order is divided by the Cancun–Tulum road due to the construction of hotels along the beach, this caused "economic interdependencies, (...) as well as destructive, arising from the intentional groups and collective cohabitation of people in space" (Soja, 2008, p. 42), with the aim of ranking the territory to have a

use of the space that could contribute to the production of the economic capital of the site. Below is a plan specifying the current use of space in the Municipality of Solidaridad:

**Figure 3** - Use of space in Playa del Carmen



**Source:** Municipality of Solidaridad, 2011–2016.

The green area represents the natural protected area, which has been increasingly minimized by the construction of tourist spaces, various businesses, and housing areas. The purple area represents the urban use, which is the rapid growth of the city, from 2011 to mid-2018, there has been a growth of 44,740 inhabitants. While the pink colour area, represents urban growth and finally the Mexican pink area, represents the tourist space, thus revealing the hierarchical order in the city.

The perception of the social order in the destination, is also identified by tourists and such situation makes them feel a discomfort when it converges in space, since they sometimes label it as social injustice. For Soja (2008) this aspect involves the formation of a regional network of centres and hierarchically nested settlements, suggesting that people have little interaction with the real life of the inhabitants.

On the other hand, just as in the results of the survey, tourists selected the beaches, as well as the people and the environment, as what they like most about the destination, considering that the entertainment and the climate of the place, are essential factors for visiting. While the elements that they dislike the most are the rubbish, the high prices and the affected beaches, highlighting that the changes or environmental elements have been the ones most identified by them.

Among visitors' proposals it stands out less expensive prices in establishments and tourist areas, more cleanliness and environmental care, demanding that tourism bodies improve destination quality. As for the relationship between inhabitants and tourists, 79% of tourists have no ties to the population while 21% have them; most of them are people who know the destination for more than 1 year and have their own house there.

Regarding the changes in space perceived by tourists in urban, social, economic and environmental aspects they indicate that there are more houses (13%), more influx of people (19%), high prices (23%) and pollution (19%). As for human settlements, they focus on the construction of houses, colonies, neighbourhoods, etc., existing in the city. The sale of land at the destination increases steadily over time, due to the wide influx of immigrants, established real estate companies have increased this situation by implementing various market strategies to attract people and encourage them to choose Playa del Carmen as an ideal place to live. According to INEGI as of 2019, the city has 287 real estate and residential agencies, which should be considered a relevant indicator of the population growth.

Likewise, over the 28 years of accelerated growth of the city there are 74,099 homes throughout Playa del Carmen, according to the data presented by the National Housing Inventory of INEGI since its last update in 2015, which undoubtedly has related to the urban changes noticed by tourists in the city.

There are many differences, mainly more houses, and more communities like Villas del Sol which is growing much more and becoming worse than the Colosio's community (E 15).<sup>1</sup>

Related to this, Soja (2008) calls the effect of urban agglomeration the new urbanization, where historically it points out that they occurred in the fertile river lands and valleys, however in the case of Playa del Carmen it has a lot to do with its location near the sea and this relentless growth process related to tourism activity.

As for the places of innovation, consumption and culture, the Municipality of Solidaridad has 2,354 tourist services establishments (hotels, museums, restaurants, travel agencies, shopping malls) part of the number mentioned 1,673 belong to Playa del Carmen, this data is provided again by INEGI since 2018. For what tourists in their interviews mention that having more and more tourist establishments in the city, increases competition and this is recent in the price hike of the products offered. This situation represents it in the economic changes what they perceived in the city, mentioned in the surveys, this relates to what Balsey mentions (2010), in which in order to strengthen a tourist destination, there is the imposition of companies that allow the reproduction of the taste of tourists and thus obtain a specific type of tourism.

## 6.2 Sociality. The conceived.

The entrepreneurs and political agents in Playa del Carmen are the main responsible for tourism development, each has a different conception of the place. One of the ways of appropriation of the destination is the simulation and museumification of spaces, in which craft production shops or sites created to display works of art (paintings, photographs, clothing, etc.) that have been installed by Mexican artists, trying to highlight Mexican culture, especially for the fact that today it is more visited by foreigners than national tourists. According to Soja (2008) the urbanization process, aims to meet the demand of new virtual communities, which occupy the privileged places of an increasingly segmented urban space, somehow becoming points of Intersection.

The conceptions of the key social subjects selected for the development of the social dimension were divided. First, we present the stories shared by the political agents in the interviews. It should be noted that there was an approach to the areas that relate to the tourism of the Government of the Municipality of Solidaridad.

We begin with the conception of the most representative places of the tourist destination, where Interviewee 1 mentioned that it is the Parque Fundadores. Its origin dates back to the 1950s, where the first families began to use it as a meeting point, according to data from the Municipality of Solidaridad, as it is located next to the Ferry to Cozumel and is at the beginning of Quinta Avenida. Ten years later the construction of the chapel began, which was done by the settlement of the few families that inhabited the site. Today it is considered as a reference point, as well as the most important space of Playa del Carmen.

To me the part that I like most about Playa, is the Parque Fundadores because it is where the city begins. It is the soul of the site; I think it's a very iconic part. There is even the image of the virgin of Carmen, which is the reason why it bears the name of Playa del Carmen (E 1).<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the art galleries where paintings or handicrafts are exhibited, those responsible for encouraging and assisting the maintenance of tourism activity by the municipal government, have implemented funding programs, which aim to support their work and of course, to continue the sale of these products that are undoubtedly representative of Mexican culture.

For both Soja (2008) and Lefebvre (1974), the production relationships imposed at the site cause a division of spaces, sites made specifically for certain types of people are generated, for example, in Playa del Carmen one can see the difference between the spaces built for tourists and inhabitants through the security and image that the colonies have compared to the tourist areas.

Sociality as mentioned by Soja (2008, p. 375) is the cause of the creation of "multiple axes of differential power and status that produce and maintain socio-economic inequality". Playa del Carmen has delimited exactly the area accessible to tourists and the area that somehow becomes forbidden for them. Even political

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewed tourist number 15

<sup>2</sup> Political actor interviewed number 1

actors give reason for this type of problems, such as the Head Director of Tourism in Solidaridad, who mentioned the existence of areas considered dangerous for which the municipal police have planned more security

As a result, the tourist police have been encouraged to carry out 24/7 vigilance, especially in the Quinta Avenida area, given that the political agents consider it beneficial for the tourists' tranquility and confidence. However, they are aware that surveillance needs to be increased in residential areas.

On the other hand, there is a controversy about security in the city, as criminal problems have increased. According to the Secretario Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, so far in the last quarter of 2019, there was a 70% increase in murders, compared to the same period in 2018. Today, Playa del Carmen is among the most violent municipalities in Mexico due to its rate of 86.1 murders per 100 thousand inhabitants in the municipality of Solidaridad, according to data provided by INEGI. Of course, this has affected the tourism sector, given that the number of visitors has declined being one of the most important falls of the year, according to Conrad Bergwerf, leader of the Riviera Maya Hotels Association in interview for the newspaper *La Jornada Maya* in June 2019.

For this reason, the promotion of the destination to improve the image of the place and counteract this data has been strengthened. It should be noted that both political agents and entrepreneurs make their own advertising, so we analyse both social groups.

Regarding the public authorities, advertising has been based on agreements with the Secretariat of Federal Tourism (SECTUR), even contests have been created to encourage the residents themselves for the preservation of tourism in the city, which is named National Contest of Tourism and Culture, which took place more than 10 years ago and which currently seems to be an emergency call to rescue a little what has been lost in terms of tourism and which undoubtedly, serves as a tool to promote tourism, aiming to motivate both foreign and domestic tourists to visit the destination. However, for security problems, more than 50 million Mexican pesos for tourism promotion have been allocated for the year 2019 to improve the living conditions of the destination, where Playa del Carmen and Acapulco stand out as the main sites to carry out actions to improve tourism according to data provided by the president of Tulum Hotels Association.

As for the advertising of tourist products by the five entrepreneurs interviewed, they were selected with different aims to have a broad perspective on their perception.

For them, the promotion has been a strong tool, social networks, where through them they have contact with customers, even in partnership with travel agencies, which have the task of evaluating the quality of the service where the greater the assessment, the greater their recognition.

It should be noted that the use of social networks and various mass media for some entrepreneurs has not been enough, the issue of the red balances presented by the city in terms of crime, weakens the promotional actions. So far in 2019 more than 50 businesses have been closed between October 2018 and March 2019, according to the Cámara Nacional Comercio Servicios y Turismo (Canaco Servytur) because of the high rates of insecurity in the city, an issue that has even caused many entrepreneurs with intentions of settling in at the destination, opt for a better place.

Despite the tourism growth and increased popularity of the destination, not precisely because of the promotional campaigns on the part of the Government, but because of new technological tools of tourism entrepreneurs and their great use by tourists, the implementation of various means of promotion in tourist establishments, consider that it is not enough to keep their business active and according to this, contributes little to what Soja (2008) mentions about the importance of the promotion, considering it as a new form of urban economy.

For Playa del Carmen, the tourist space has been considered as a material space or in other terms as "perceived space" and as a mental space also, referring to the "conceived space", that is, they are under the forces of power that give to objects. However, although within the aims of developing the tourism activity on the site is to implement rules to strengthen the tourist vocation, the social problems have been stronger, preventing the perception of these social subjects to be developed in the way Soja (2008) mentions in the dimension of sociality. For this reason, those who impose rules in the destination today, are the cases of

insecurity and crime that increase day by day in the Municipality. For this reason, Playa del Carmen is not used in the desired way by tourists, residents and service providers.

### 6.3 Historicity. The lived space.

Historicity refers to the dimension of space in which the experiences lived are the ones that converge, in this space people create a series of symbolisms through what they live. Soja (2008) qualifies it as a space where everything can be seen and known, here each social subject forms his or her concept of space and through that generates various subjectivities that assign meaning to a place. Thus, tourists and residents in that dimension are considered, since they are the subjects who move in the space of Playa del Carmen according to what they see, know, feel and experience. Likewise, these subjects are the generators of the production of space and thanks to them, it has been possible to form them.

Being ordered in such a way that people consider the consumption of products offered as a necessity, it generates a certain type of competition between tourists and the residents, this leads to barriers that make them feel that each has their own space and cannot match.

In the first instance, interpretations of the stories obtained through the 23 interviews of tourists will be presented, which provided statements of their experience in space.

In most of the above mentioned about class borders, they agree that the tourist area is way divided from the residents area, for them, the area of the locals is not that attractive and makes them think that there is a lack of resources or basic services, as well as being perceived as unsafe sites. Not only that, but such social problem also identifies it as the preference of nationality between them, an issue that causes discomfort to destination, considering it as a social rejection.

It is difficult to observe that you arrive at a restaurant and immediately you notice the discrimination of a Mexican instead of a foreigner (E 7).<sup>3</sup>

Purchasing power is also another reason why they feel a differentiation between a tourist and another, for most of the tourists interviewed of national origin, mentioned that the prices of the establishments are very expensive and sometimes it becomes unaffordable to purchase products offered. In this sense, it causes them disgust as they consider that the foreign tourist has the preference and the Mexican tourist is little recognized.

The barriers between classes are also identified in the housing areas and the tourist area. Ten of the 23 tourists interviewed mentioned that the colonies of the city seem marginalized, since at first glance they seemed not well cared for and there was little cleaning compared to most tourist areas.

The issue of the expansion of the activities is referred by Soja (2008) as the flexibility that gives the destination by allowing the establishment of different companies and businesses that refers to the increase in the sale of handicrafts, creation of jobs – but with low wages for the large supply in the sector – and the worsening of working conditions for the same reason.

I came here because from where I'm from, life is very difficult, I settled 20 years ago and the truth was that at first I was doing very well, I worked in hospitality, then they made staff cuts for the flu and they no longer gave me a chance to work, now I sell handicrafts here (on Quinta Avenida) and I do better than if I were working on the same thing again (E 11)<sup>4</sup>

As for tourists, this situation is not observed, since none of them have mentioned something associated to this. That is why only the experiences of the residents related to the subject are noted later.

Derived from these problems, the tourist of Playa del Carmen feels uprooted in the destination, despite the Municipal Government and the companies intend the opposite, they want to create a deeply-rooted feeling for the destination so that tourists are motivated to visit it and the site continues to be considered one of the most attractive in terms of tourism.

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<sup>3</sup> Tourist interviewed number 7

<sup>4</sup> Resident interviewed number 11

One question of the interview with tourists addressed the hypothesis of stop being a visitor and becoming a resident, for which most of them mentioned that they do not consider it an ideal place to live, because of all the increasing social problems in recent years, and also environmental problems.

No, I really wouldn't like it, not only because of the environment, but also because the weather is not something I like very much. Also, to live in a destination where one is virtually a foreigner, I better go to another country or to the United States which is almost the same as Playa (E 8).<sup>5</sup>

Frequent visitors consider that such social problems derive from the intensification of tourism, they also believe that one of the reasons for that is the foreign appropriation, i.e., foreigners impose their habits and customs, or even the appropriation of certain tourist establishments that create an alien environment, causing discomfort to people. Of course, it should be mentioned that there are tourists to whom the tourist site, gives them a lot of tranquillity and comfort, although it is a minority among the 23 interviewees.

Thus, the interpretation of the accounts of the residents interviewed, which also provided statements of their experience in space, will be presented below, allowing to have a broad context of what Playa del Carmen symbolizes for them.

The experience of having class borders happens since their arrival in the city, they live this spatial difference by not wandering the tourist areas because the prices of the establishments are not affordable for them. The fact that more foreign visitors arrive at the destination, makes most tourist places to offer their products in dollars and at least, for the inhabitants working in the government and service sector, the tourist area is the space in where they least come together. They even prefer to travel to another destination in the Caribbean, where they are most comfortable and welcomed by service providers.

Of the 15 people interviewed, eight mentioned an experience in the space through which a feeling of frontier between one society and another is expressed, for which, an approach can be reached where the problem is perceived. Rising prices for residents is an important element in the use of a tourist product by being somewhat unaffordable for them. They also identify the tourist area with more care not only in the security aspect, but in the image.

For residents, the increase in the tourist influx has caused them to take over the space that at first for the inhabitants especially with more than 10 years living in the destination, was considered with more freedom of movement. Today, they prefer to visit another type of tourist space where there is not yet as much tourist activity as for example the cenotes that are located near the city.

There is also a rejection of the inhabitants to tourists and they generate some conflict between one social group and another, allowing the separation between the two groups to be perpetuated. Situation by which it creates tension between society and encourages the development of violence on the site.

Also, border issues are identified between the same residents. There is a difference between those who come from the south and those from the centre of Mexico. The people from the centre live in better areas than southerners, for this reason, there is discrimination and clashes between social groups from different communities and between workers who share activities.

For Soja (2008) the metropolitan way of functioning related to the creation of class borders generates a reproduction of social inequalities.

Regarding the expansion of activities, Soja (2008) consider it as the flexibility of the space for the installation of infrastructure that underlies the increase of jobs, however most of them are considered low-paid. Likewise, the sale of handicrafts is intensified to give it a cultural context. The interviews with locals show this problem, as they feel unhappy about the ill-treatment from tourism entrepreneurs and the low-pay jobs, and some are looking for other sources of income, such as selling on the streets artisanal products because they get better income opportunities compared to working in a tourism company.

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<sup>5</sup> Tourist interviewed number 8

For all this, residents' rooting and uprooting in the destination is a determining element for the production and significance of the destination, for several of them Playa del Carmen is, for the most part, far from the place that it was ten years ago at and their identity as *playenses* has been affected as well.

For seven of the 15 residents interviewed, the city of Playa del Carmen has been constantly changing given the increase in tourism and social problems related to insecurity, this has caused their memories of what was the destination at the time of their arrival, change little by little. Specifically, in terms of tourism, there are spaces where they felt more identified given the activities they performed, such as going to Mass at Virgen del Carmen chapel or being with their family in the Parque Fundadores. Today, they do not converge constantly in these spaces. According to their accounts, moving to the city centre involves being more surrounded by foreign people, specifically tourists, rather than residents, for them most of the inhabitants who are in this area, they are engaged in the sale of food or the carrying out activities such as pre-Hispanic dances or clown presentations. That is exactly, an uprooting visualization to the destination.

The tourist activity being permeated by the daily life of people who inhabit a tourist destination, their stories allow to interpret the dimension of the third space in Playa del Carmen, giving a sense of understanding that goes beyond a territorial and material spatiality.

The space of Playa del Carmen is constituted through different actions established in the trialectics of space. However, each social subject contributes to the constitution of destination, sometimes despite their intentions and considerations about the destinations are different, there are coincidences that help to understand how the social tourist space is being produced.

The conclusions derived from the results obtained are presented below.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The trialectics of space by Soja (2008) allows the understanding of the production of space in Playa del Carmen and confirms that the tourism activity depends not only on the economic aspect, but also social, allowing the analysis of its multidimensional process.

The spatiality of the destination has been growing as a result of the increase of the tourist offer in the place. In this dimension, there are problems of destruction and transformation of space and population growth. As well as a spatial hierarchy to avoid the confluence of tourists in residential areas.

Regarding sociality, the destination is conceived as an appropriate space for the establishment of tourist infrastructure, with the aim of promoting the consumption by tourists and inhabitants, in general, it has to do with changes in production processes; with the intangible and innovative nature of all those products and services that make an urban environment competitive; with new and flexible territorial articulation; with space-use permits from political actors, which become instruments that promote consumption.

Through the historicity it was possible to know the evocations of tourists and inhabitants, that Playa del Carmen has undergone a series of changes that have caused a nonconformity and a production of feelings of fear and discomfort towards the destination. The interviewees mentioned problematic controversies between residents and situations of violence in the destination. There is a rejection between tourists and residents and an uprooting on both parts because of the appropriation of the space.

Finally, the space trialectics supported the understanding of production at the destination. However, the opportunity for resistance and emancipation provided by lived space, both in real and imaginary geographies, should not be undermined, through it, an active role is identified in the production of space, which allows to understand the space of Playa del Carmen as one in which there is a division between a space of hope and another of threat, which, in short, is understood that this dimension only acquires sense when it is practiced and lived in freedom.

Thus it is stated that what was said in the research hypothesis, the space in Playa del Carmen has increased hierarchization derived from the establishment of tourism companies and the construction of housing, which underlies the creation of class borders physical and symbolic, which cause uprooting of the resident population and tourists.

In conclusion, as contributions of the work we highlight the intensified growth of a destination like Playa del Carmen in such a short time only for the purposes of tourism development, allowed a different contribution and with enough value to stand out. In addition, the implementation of Soja's trialectics of space allowed to have a complete and detailed view of space production, inciting to reflect on the importance of the correct preservation and the correct development of tourist activity not only beach destinations but anywhere else.

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**Appendix A - Collection instruments used**



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Project: The production of the social tourist space of Playa del Carmen

Survey for tourists

Interviewer (will be filled by the interviewer) \_\_\_\_\_ Survey No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Objective:

Instructions: Please underline or cross out the answer you choose.

General details

1. Age
  - (1) Less than 18
  - (2) From 19 to 27
  - (3) From 28 to 37
  - (4) From 38 to 47
  - (5) From 48 to 57
  - (6) More than 58
2. Gender (1) Male (2) Female
3. Marital Status
  - (1) Single
  - (2) Married
  - (3) Divorced
  - (4) Widowed
  - (5) Civil union
4. Provenance
  - (1) Mexico
  - (2) Abroad (indicate the country and proceed to question 6) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Place of residence (please indicate which)
  - (1) State or community  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) Municipality or locality  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Occupation
  - (1) Businessman
  - (2) Executive
  - (3) Professional
  - (4) Student
  - (5) Employee
  - (6) Unemployed
  - (7) Retired
  - (8) Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Family monthly income
  - (1) Less than 10,000 pesos
  - (2) From 11 to 20,000 pesos
  - (3) From 20 001 to 30,000 pesos
  - (4) From 30 001 to 40,000 pesos
  - (5) More than 40,001 pesos
8. Visit frequency
  - (1) Unique occasion
  - (2) At least once a year
  - (3) Twice a year
  - (4) Three times a year or more
15. How long do you know the tourist destination?
  - (1) First time
  - (2) Less than 6 months
  - (3) More than 6 months
  - (4) More than a year
16. Estimated length of stay:
  - (1) 1 day
  - (2) 2 days
  - (3) 3 or 4 days
  - (4) More than 4 days
17. Purpose of the visit:
  - (1) Rest
  - (2) Entertainment
  - (3) Cultural
  - (4) Ecotourism
  - (5) Health
9. Travelling company
  - (1) Alone
  - (2) Family
  - (3) Friends
  - (4) Co-workers
  - (5) Group partners (association, club)
10. Transportation
  - (1) Plane
  - (2) Car
  - (3) Bus
  - (4) Ship
  - (5) Other
- Tourist profile
11. Overnight stay in Playa del Carmen:
  - (1) Yes
  - (2) No (proceed to question 14)
12. Type of accommodation in which you stay
  - (1) Hotel
  - (2) Cruise
  - (3) Guest house (Airbnb)
  - (4) Private house
  - (5) Other (Indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the reason for choosing the type of accommodation where you stay?
  - (1) Location
  - (2) Recommendation
  - (3) Experience
  - (4) Quality
  - (5) Other
14. How did you find out about this tourist destination?
  - (1) Recommendation
  - (2) Friends
  - (3) Television advertising
  - (4) Internet advertising
  - (5) Other
19. Select the site that attracts you the most from Playa del Carmen:
  - (1) Beaches
  - (2) La Quinta Avenida
  - (3) Plaza (indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (4) Park (indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (5) Other (indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_
20. Select a Plaza or Shopping Centre that attracts you the most in Playa del Carmen:
  - (1) Plaza Quinta La Alegría
  - (2) Plaza Las Américas
  - (3) Plaza Playacar
  - (4) Other (indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_
21. Select the site that least attracts you in Playa del Carmen:
  - (1) Beaches
  - (2) La Quinta Avenida
  - (3) Parque Fundadores
  - (4) Plaza Quinta Alegría
  - (5) Xcaret

18. Underline the main attractions to visit and in the lines place the letters (A, B, C, D, E) indicating the order of visit, assigning the A to the first place and E to the last

- (1) Beaches \_\_\_\_
- (2) Plaza Quinta Alegría \_\_\_\_
- (3) Parque Fundadores \_\_\_\_
- (4) La Quinta Avenida \_\_\_\_
- (5) Xcaret \_\_\_\_\_

- (6) Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) None

22. Main activity to be carried out:

- (1) Entertainment in bars/clubs
- (2) Sports (water activities, golf, skating, beach volleyball, football, bicycle)
- (3) Strolls in the plazas
- (4) Shopping in boutiques
- (5) Visit to theme parks
- (6) Sighting of animals
- (7) Other (indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_

Quality and price of tourist attractions in Playa del Carmen

Instructions: Mark with an x the quality of the services and prices of the tourist attractions you have visited and/or know so far

23. Tourist Attractions in Playa del Carmen	24. The quality of the attractions used in Playa del Carmen would qualify as:					25. Prices in relation to the attractions granted would be considered			26. Total approximate spend of your stay:
	(1) Dreadful	(2) Bad	(3) Regular	(4) Good	(5) Excellent	(1) Low	(2) Fair	(3) High	
(1) Beaches									A) Less than \$5 000 B) More than \$5 000 C) More than \$6 000 D) More than \$8 000 E) More than \$10 000
(2) La Quinta Avenida									
(3) Plaza Quinta Alegría									
(4) Parque Fundadores									
(5) Xcaret									
(6) Others									

**Instructions:** Underline or cross out the answer you choose  
 27. Have you established social ties with the local population?

- (1) No
- (2) Yes

28. Have you established social ties with other tourists?

- (1) No
- (2) Yes

29. If you have visited the site more than once, point out the changes you have noticed in the tourist destination (please indicate which on the lines)

- (1) Urbans \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Social \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Economic \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Environmental \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) Others \_\_\_\_\_

Words association

30. Which of the following words do you associate with your visit to Playa del Carmen? Choose two at most, placing the corresponding number or word on the lines.

- 1) Health    2) Enjoyment    3) Amusement    4) Community    5) Family    6) Tranquillity    7) Adventure    8) Social life
1. \_\_\_\_\_    2. \_\_\_\_\_

In one word, describe

31. What do you like most about Playa del Carmen? \_\_\_\_\_

32. What do you dislike most about Playa del Carmen? \_\_\_\_\_

33. What would you propose to improve this tourist destination? \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B** - Script for semi-structured interviews with tourists



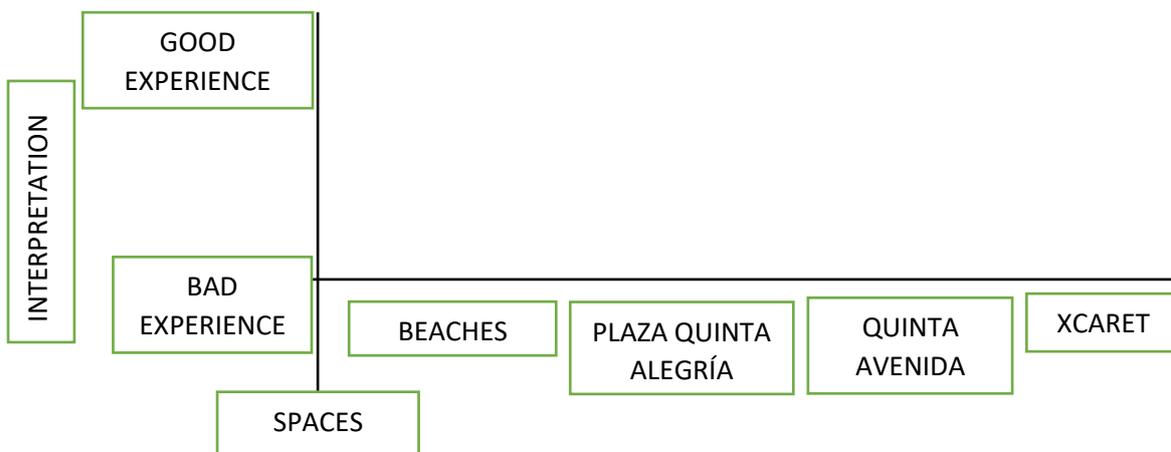
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Project: The production of the social tourist space of Playa del Carmen

**A. Tourist experience**

1. Name
2. Age
3. Provenance
4. Occupation
5. Is this your first time visiting Playa del Carmen? (If the answer is no, proceed to question 6).
6. What motivated you to come back? (Tourist and social offer)
7. With whom are you travelling?
8. Do you remember how you found out about this tourist site?
9. What transport and/or road did you use to get to Playa del Carmen?
10. At the time of your arrival, what did you think of Playa del Carmen?
11. What activities have you done? (Deepen that experience)
12. What sites have you visited since your arrival? (Accommodation, restaurants, market, tourist offer)
13. Can you set an approximate cost per trip for the days of stay?
14. Have you found any particular places or tourist attractions more attractive?
15. Would you visit Playa del Carmen again? Why?
16. Do you plan to use the same type of transport and road to get to Playa del Carmen?
17. From the time you've been here, have you established any kind of relationship with the inhabitants of Playa?
18. If so, with whom and how did such relationship originate?
19. What do you think of the social relationship between tourists and residents of Playa del Carmen?
20. Where are you staying (hotel, guest house, etc)?
21. What reason made you choose that accommodation?
23. What activities do you plan to do or have you done during your stay?
24. What sites do you plan to visit or have you already visited? (describe a visiting day, to rank the sites visited space use table)
25. So far, can you indicate the average spending?
26. Which site(s) attract you most in Playa del Carmen? Why?
27. Is there a space you haven't visited for any particular reason? Why?
28. Complete the importance of experience chart



29. Delve into the narrative of each space and the emotion of the interpretation they give it.
30. Have you noticed differences between local areas and tourist areas? Which ones?
31. Throughout the time you have visited this site, have you noticed any changes in the territory? Which ones? What's your opinion?
32. If you could live here, where would you like to have a house? Why?
33. How do you imagine Playa del Carmen in about 10 years?

**Appendix C** - Script for semi-structured interviews with local population



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**Project: The production of the social tourist space of Playa del Carmen**

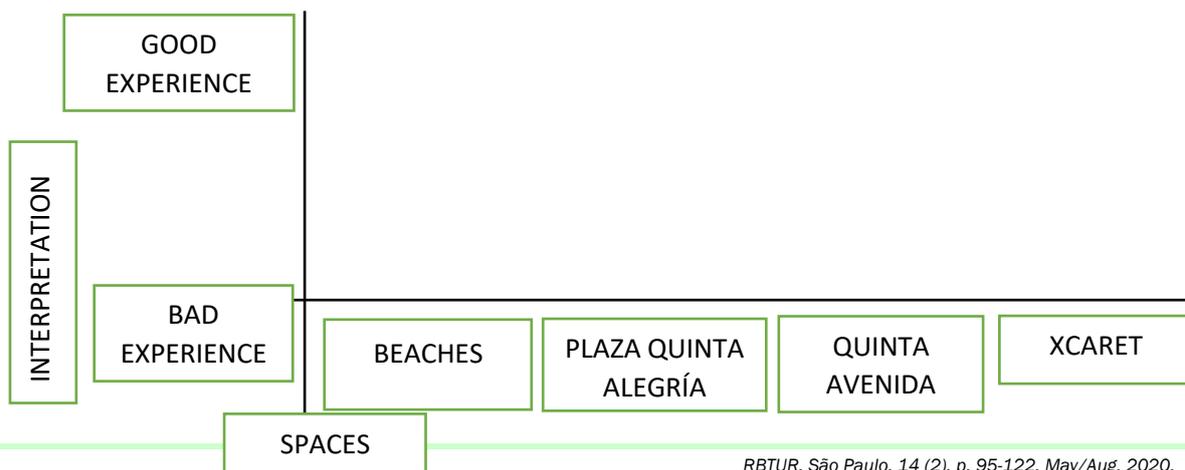
Interviewer: Andrea Aranxa Albarrán Solleiro Interview No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Objective: To identify the experience of space of the inhabitants through the symbolic use and appropriation of the destination through established material and symbolic practices.

**Living and appropriation of space**

1. Name
2. Age
3. Occupation
4. Are you a resident of Playa del Carmen?
5. How many years have you lived here? (If the respondent lives there since he/she was a child question 7, 8, 9. If not, skip questions 8 and 10)
6. Do you have relatives in Playa del Carmen?
7. How do you remember Playa del Carmen from your childhood or when you first arrived here? (deepen infrastructure)
8. At the time, what activities and traditions did you do as a family? (civil habits, use of tourist attractions by the population, access to beaches)
9. Do you continue doing some of these activities? Why?
10. Were there any physical or infrastructure changes near your home? Which ones?
11. Where do you live now, have you always lived there? Is it your own house?
12. Why did you settle in Playa del Carmen? (Skip question if the respondent is homegrown)
13. Do you think the appropriation of Playa by foreign people is related to tourism? Why?
14. In the same sense, how have you noticed the appropriation of destination by tourists?
15. Do you also consider that there have been social changes resulting from the above? Which ones? What do you think about such changes? (Relationship or knowledge of workers in tourism companies)
16. What is your experience in the time you have been living in Playa del Carmen?
17. What do you think of tourism?
18. Have you benefited from tourism?
19. Do you think tourism has led to divisions in the Playense community?
20. What do you think about government support for tourism activity in Playa del Carmen?
21. What do you think of tourists?
22. How would you say the relationship between the population and tourists is?
23. Have you established any kind of social relationship with any tourist? How was it? (description)
24. In your opinion, what is the relationship between the municipal government and the population?
25. Is there a special place, square or resort for you in Playa del Carmen? Why?
26. Which site(s) attract you most in Playa del Carmen? Why?
27. Is there a space you haven't visited for any particular reason? Why?
28. Complete the importance of experience chart



29. Delve into the narrative of each space and the interpretation they give it (if possible, get old photos).
30. How do you imagine Playa del Carmen in about 10 years?

## Appendix D - Tourism profile in the current administration



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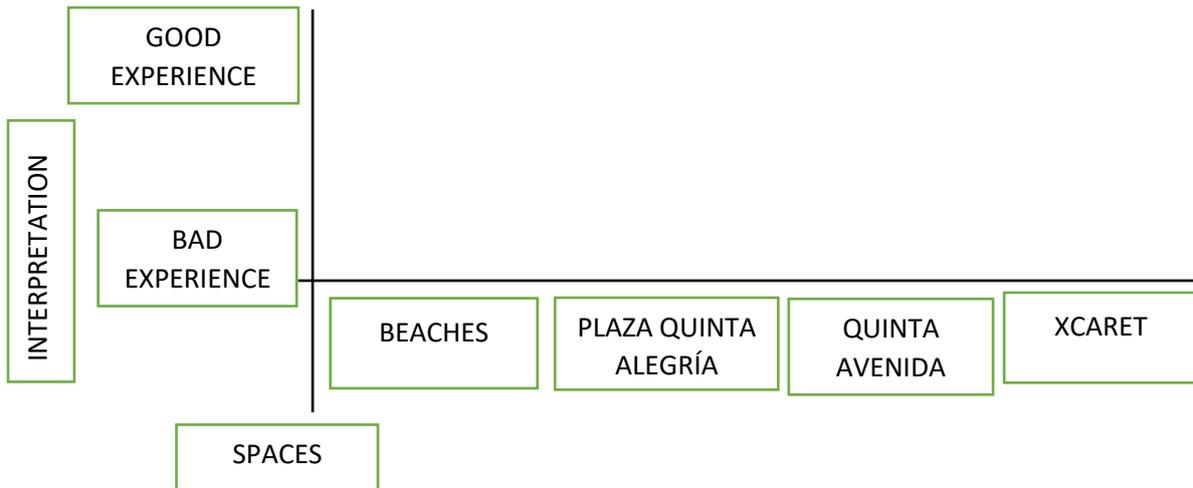
### Project: The production of the social tourist space of Playa del Carmen Script for semi-structured interviews for authorities

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Interview No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Objective: To identify the experience of space in tourists and residents through the symbolic use and appropriation of the destination through established material and symbolic practices.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Occupation/administrative position
4. Years in the position
5. What is your perception of Playa del Carmen?
6. What does tourism represent for the current government?
7. Why do you think it is essential to boost tourism in Playa del Carmen?
8. Is there some kind of program to boost tourism?
9. What is it? Who and where is it implemented?
10. What have been the benefits of tourism in Playa del Carmen?
11. What are the consequences of tourism in Playa del Carmen?
12. Were there any urban changes? Which ones? What are your comments on this?
13. Were there any economic changes? Which ones? What are your comments on this?
14. Were there any social changes, too? Which ones? What is your view of these changes?
15. Could you mention the diversity of tourist services offered by the destination?
16. Where are such services concentrated? Why are they concentrated on such a place?
17. Are most services from public or private companies?
18. How are permits granted for the establishment of such services?
19. In this regard, what is the relationship between the government and entrepreneurs?
20. What are the growth zones caused by tourism and the consequences?
21. What are the strategies of the city council to increase the flow of tourists?
22. In what does local administration invest more to boost tourism?
23. What is the importance of the private sector for Playa del Carmen tourism?
24. Why do you consider Playa del Carmen to be one of the most visited destinations in Mexico?
- 25- What are the benefits of being a consolidated tourist destination and its consequences?
26. Has tourism improved the quality of life of the Playenses?
27. In this regard, what do you think of the relationship between the government and residents?
28. What do you think of the relationship between tourists and residents?
29. What type of tourist do you think visits the most Playa del Carmen and why?
30. How do you think Playa del Carmen is perceived internationally as a tourist destination?
31. Do you consider that the diversity of tourist services should be expanded? How? Where?
32. If this diversity is expanded in such areas, what effects would it have?
33. Could you mention some of the consequences in high season?
34. Do you know the most used ways to access the destination?
35. Do you think those accesses need any adjustment or improvement? Why?
36. Were there any problems over the past five years with access roads? How have they been fixed?
37. Do you consider that tourism is a key issue in the administration of the City Council? Why?
38. What site(s) do you think most attractive in Playa del Carmen? Why?
39. What site(s) do you consider least attractive in Playa del Carmen? Why?
40. Complete the importance of experience chart



40. Delve into the narrative of each space and the interpretation they give it (if possible, get old photos).

41. How do you imagine Playa del Carmen in about 10 years?

## Appendix E - Entrepreneurs' experience



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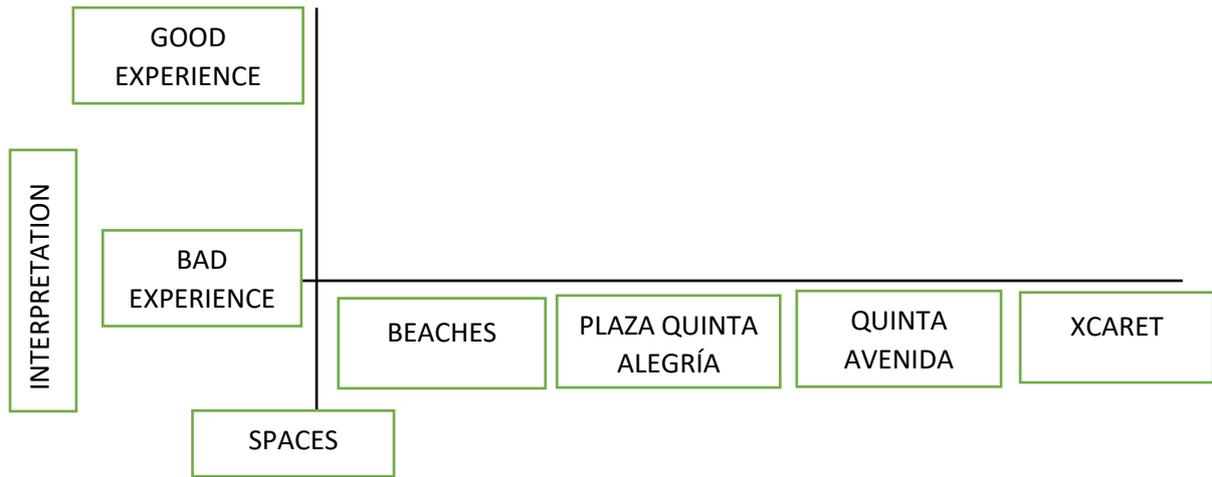
Project: The production of the social tourist space of Playa del Carmen  
 Script for semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Interview No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Objective: To identify the experience of space of entrepreneurs through the symbolic use and appropriation of destination through established material and symbolic practices.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Provenance
4. Occupation
5. Kind of business
6. Location of business
10. For how long has the establishment been operating?
11. How did you start this business or company? (History, founders, original location, name, etc.)
12. How did you acquire the land?
13. Why did you decide to settle the business on this site?
14. What types of services or products are offered in your company?
15. What are your strategies for attracting customers?
16. Who are your main customers? Are they foreign or domestic?
17. What type of tourist is the least attracted to your establishment?
18. What days are the most occupied?
19. In which season of the year do you have the most demand and income?
20. Do you advertise? How?
21. Do you generate any kind of personalized attention to your customers? Which one?
22. Has your company allowed you to build ties with customers?
23. Has your establishment or company required the work of outsiders?
24. Regularly, what kind of activities do these people perform?
25. Do you have any relationship with the municipal government for the improvement of the service or products offered?
26. Has the establishment had any kind of physical renovation or has it always had the same image?
27. Why did you carried out such renovation? When and why was it done?
28. Do you think your company has generated a certain kind of identity or rooted the destination in both tourists and the population?
29. Does your property have any kind of close relationship with the population? In what way?
30. How does your business or company represent Playa del Carmen?
31. How does your company benefit the tourist activity?
32. Do you consider that your company is a fundamental part of tourism in Playa del Carmen?
33. How essential is tourism for your company?
34. Do you think your company has generated profits for Playa del Carmen? Which ones?
35. How important are tourists to you?
36. What do you think about the relationship between tourists and residents?
37. What would you say the relationship between the population and the government is?
38. During the management of your business, have you seen urban changes in this area in the municipality? Which ones? What's your opinion?
39. Do you know what the space was like in Playa del Carmen before you set up your company?
40. Have you seen any economic changes? Which ones? What's your opinion?
41. Have you seen social changes, too? Which ones? What is your opinion on this?
42. Which site(s) attract you most in Playa del Carmen? Why?
43. Which site(s) do you dislike in Playa del Carmen? Why?
44. Is there a space you haven't visited for any particular reason?
45. Complete the importance of experience chart



40. Delve into the narrative of each space and the interpretation they give it (if possible, get old photos).
41. How do you imagine Playa del Carmen in about 10 years?