

**Shaping multiple Ajijics and development.  
A Mexican town in the context of the  
international retirement migration**

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# **Shaping multiple Ajijics and development. A Mexican town in the context of the international retirement migration**

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To my family and friends



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## **Special dedication and tribute**

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My father, Carlos Díaz Garnica, in the first half of the 70's fought against the exploitation of the workers of the Mexican Telephone company (TELMEX), and fought against the fake and right-wing telephone workers' "union" (*sindicato charro*) that used to support the abuse of the workers' rights. He was one of the union leaders who contributed significantly in the overthrow of that corrupted "union" and in the formation of a new union (in 1976) that started respecting the workers' rights established in the Mexican labour law. Definitely, his work contributed to the improvement of labour conditions of many telephone workers throughout Mexico from then until nowadays. Even though his role caused him to lose his job and put his life at risk several times, he never stopped. I am also grateful to him because he

transmitted his life experience to me and my siblings, since we were children, through frequent family talks in which we also discussed unionism, history, politics, among other topics. These talks created in us a social and political consciousness. Among other things, he taught us that there are so many injustices and abuses in the world that we cannot be with our arms crossed; that if we do not do anything about it, we become part of the problem.

On the other hand, this book's dedication and tribute are also to my mother, María Margarita Copado Quintero, who passed away in January 2006. For me, she is the strongest and bravest woman I ever met. In the 70's she was diagnosed as having Lupus and the doctors wanted to amputate one of her legs. The doctors told her that without the amputation she would die within one year, and that through the amputation she would live a few years more. In spite of all doctors' warnings, she took a very difficult and brave decision; she rejected the amputation and decided to look for alternative and natural medicine to treat her illness. Against all doctors' predictions, she survived for 30 years. For me, she is an example of bravery, hope, strength, and love for her life and family. In the end she died as she wanted: after seeing her children grow up into adults and standing on two feet.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1. The history of a research problem

The Chapala Lakeside area in Mexico is considered a tourist and retirement destination mainly due to its natural beauty (especially for being on the shore of Lake Chapala -the largest lake in Mexico<sup>1</sup>-) and moderate climate all year round. Real estate companies in Chapala Lakeside commonly highlight in their advertisements that the National Geographic Magazine ranked this area second in the list of places with the best climate in the world<sup>2</sup>.

The Chapala Lakeside's popularity started in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, after the frequent visits from the former Mexican president, Porfirio Díaz, to a town within this area: Chapala<sup>3</sup> (Talavera 1982: 9-10). The presidential visits brought relevance to this area, especially to this town, where selected groups of distinguished landowners, entrepreneurs, and politicians built summer houses and clubs on the shore of lake (Talavera 1982: 37).

The beauty of Chapala Lakeside also appealed to foreigners. The first handful of foreigners settled in Chapala Lakeside in the late 1800's (Truly 2002: 266). The following group of foreigners, who were mostly artists and intellectuals, started establishing themselves mainly in the town of Chapala and in the neighboring town of Ajijic -5 kms away- in the 1940's ("Ana"<sup>4</sup>, Ajijic 2008). Then, the construction of the road Guadalajara-Chapala-Jocotepec in

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<sup>1</sup> According to the *Comision Estatal del Agua de Jalisco* (CEA) (state commission for the water of Jalisco) -2013-, Lake Chapala has a total surface of 114,659 hectares, 86% is from Jalisco State and 14% belongs to Michoacán State. Also, the CEA states that the lake has a total capacity of around 8,000 million cubic meters (Mm3).

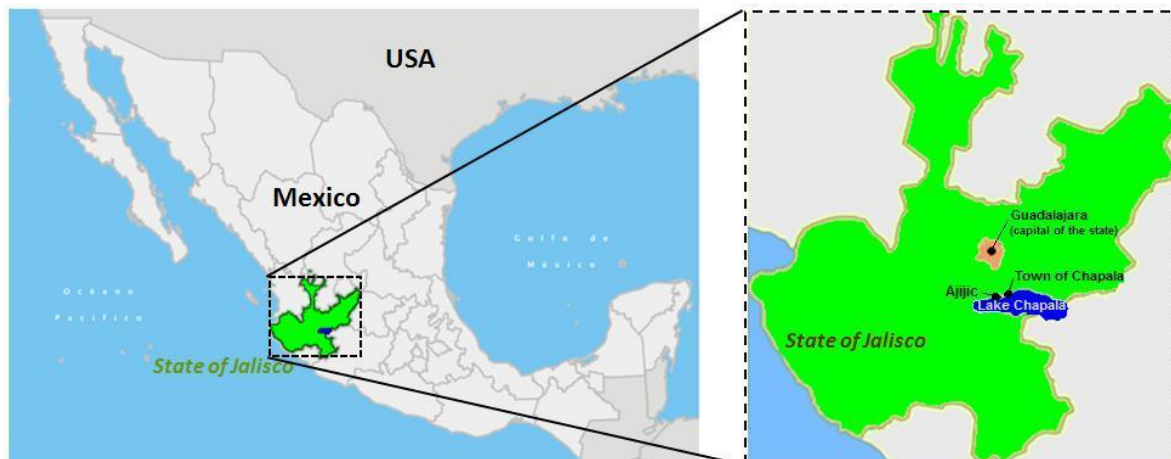
<sup>2</sup> Some examples of real estate companies that highlight the National Geographic's ranking can be seen on the following websites: <http://www.chapalapmc.com/ajijic.php> (Accessed: 26 March 2013) and <http://www.theriggsteamajijic.com/> (Accessed: 26 March 2013).

<sup>3</sup> According to Talavera (1982: 37) President Porfirio Díaz used to visit the town of Chapala to spend part of his holidays there, where he also had financial investments. Talavera describes that the president used to spend Holy Week in the country estate "*El Manglar*", which was property of his brother-in-law, Lorenzo Elizaga. Also, he describes that Christian Schjetnan, a Norwegian established in this town, founded a public limited company to promote tourism in Chapala Lakeside. Among the main shareholders were the Mexican president and the national Minister of Treasury, José Yves Limantour.

<sup>4</sup> In the present study, the names between quotation marks are pseudonyms given on request to some of my interviewees. "Ana" is a real estate agent who I interviewed in Ajijic in July 2008.

1950 facilitated the arrival of the first group of foreign retirees<sup>5</sup>: the US' veterans from the WWII (Talavera 1982: 45). In the following decades, other groups of US' veterans would arrive, especially those who participated in the Korea and Vietnam wars ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). Through the years, the foreigners coming to settle in Chapala Lakeside were mainly retirees, and Ajijic became the main destination for them ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). In this way, the Chapala Lakeside area, especially Ajijic, became a receiver of what has been identified in different literature as the International Retirement Migration<sup>6</sup> (IRM).

The following maps show the location of Lake Chapala, the Chapala Lakeside area, and the town of Ajijic.

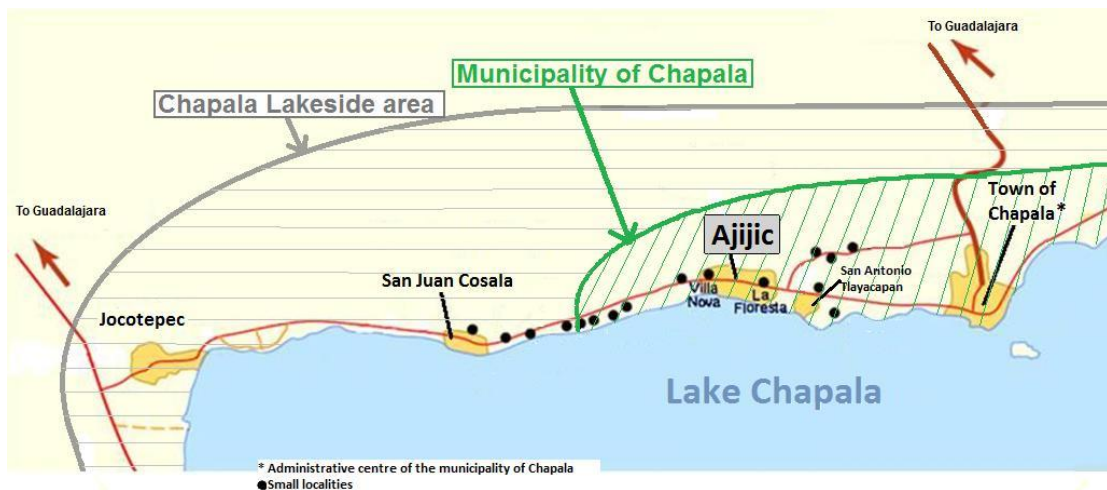


**Map 1. Location of Lake Chapala within the Mexican state of Jalisco. Source: author.**

<sup>5</sup> "Foreign retiree" is a term used mainly by the local real estate agents (also known as "realtors") to refer to those people who are not legally recognised as Mexican (by birth or by naturalisation), mostly aged 65 or older, and who are already retired from doing their main economic activity or activities ("Ana", Ajijic 2008).

<sup>6</sup> The International Retirement Migration is basically the phenomenon that involves the migration of retirees to a country other than their own in order to spend (partially or completely) their retirement time there. Some important characteristics of the IRM phenomenon are analysed in section 4.3 of this chapter.





**Map 2. The North West of the Chapala Lakeside area.** Within the latter is located the municipality of Chapala. Ajijic is the second largest town (10,509 inhabitants [INEGI 2010]) within this municipality; the town of Chapala (municipal administrative center) is the largest one (21,596 inhabitants [INEGI 2010]). Source: author.

The first time I visited Ajijic was in the 1980's as a tourist. Due to the beauty of this town and the close vicinity of my birth city (Guadalajara, which is around 50 km away), my visits to Ajijic were frequent. I used to travel to this town especially at weekends when it is commonly visited by tourists from Guadalajara. In that decade, it was possible to see a few residential developments<sup>7</sup> becoming a feature of Ajijic, these were known for being inhabited (permanently or seasonally) mainly by wealthy people from Guadalajara or foreigners retirees.

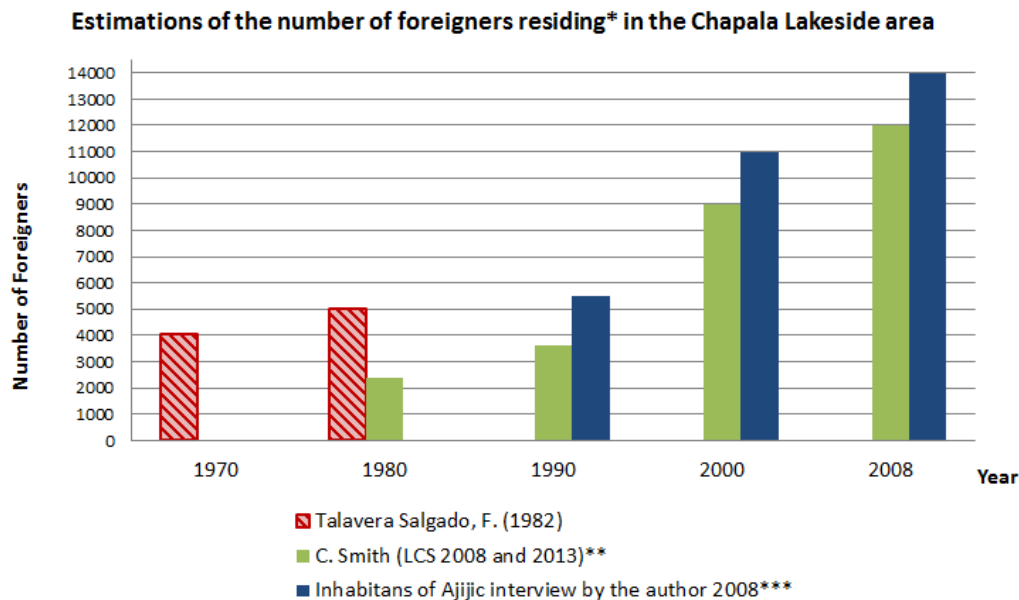
However, during the 1990's a significant change occurred in Ajijic. This town experienced its biggest social, economic, and physical transformation of the last 50 years. This transformation was triggered mainly by two factors: 1) a significant increase in the number of foreign retirees moving into Ajijic; and 2) an increase in the construction of residential developments, which was partly derived from the growth of the foreign retirees' demand for houses<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> "Residential development" is a term mainly used by local realtors to refer to the specific area of land on which houses, streets, and public services (street lighting, sewage, etc.) have been constructed. In Chapala Lakeside, the number of houses within each residential development ranges from 20 to 200 ("Ana", Ajijic 2008).

<sup>8</sup> According to the realtor "Ana" (Ajijic 2008), around 90% of the residential developments constructed since the 1990's has been oriented to satisfy the foreign retirees' demand. "Ana" explains that these residential developments were even designed following the wishes and needs of these foreigners, for example: developments designed as "gated communities" and developments with houses designed in "Californian" style.

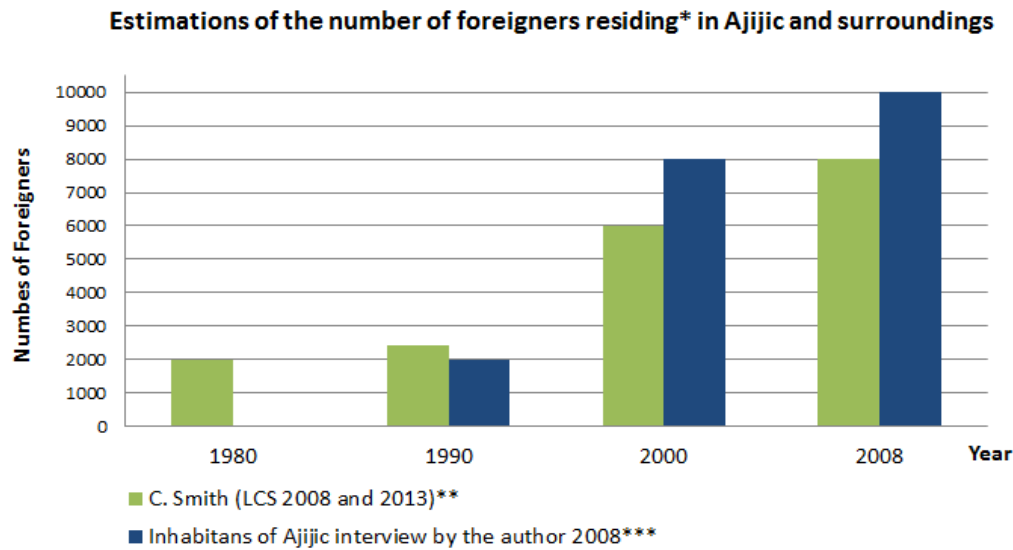
Regarding the significant increase in the number of foreign retirees moving into Ajijic, these newcomers were mostly US and Canadian born citizens, who were characterised for being permanent and seasonal residents of this town. The latter type of residents are the so-called “snowbirds”, who come every year to this area escaping from hard winters in their home countries, and the “sunbirds”, who come during summer to this area attracted by its moderate climate.

Even though there is not an official census of the number of foreigners residing in the Chapala Lakeside area or in Ajijic, there are multiple estimations from different sources, which I present in the figures below<sup>9</sup>. In these figures, the reader can observe the significant increase in the number of foreigners residing in Chapala Lakeside and Ajijic during the 1990’s.



**Figure 1. Estimations about the number of foreigners residing in the Chapala Lakeside area in different years. Source: author. Figure elaborated with information collected from different sources.**

<sup>9</sup> In these figures, I present the estimations from individuals and institutions who historically have had more contact with the foreign community in Chapala Lakeside. I believe that the latter characteristic make their estimations more credible. These sources are: 1) the Lake Chapala Society (LCS). Founded in 1955 (LCS 2013) by some of the foreigners who settled in Chapala Lakeside during the 1940’s and beginning of the 1950’s, it developed to the largest association of foreigners in Chapala Lakeside -and in all Mexico- (LCS has over 3,700 members [LCS 2009]). LCS is located in the centre of Ajijic. 2) Selected inhabitants of Ajijic (members of the foreign and host communities) who were interviewed by the author. These interviewees are inhabitants who have testified in their everyday life the growth of the foreign community in the area. And 3) F. Talavera. He carried out research in Chapala Lakeside, which was published in 1982. Even though in Talavera’s publication his estimations refer to “*norteamericanos*” (a term that in Ajijic is used to refer mainly to the US born citizens) and not to “*extranjeros*” (foreigners), I decided to include his estimations in the figure of “foreigners” for two reasons: one, according to the interviewed inhabitants of Ajijic, in those years the “foreigners” were formed mainly of “*norteamericanos*”; and two, due to the lack of information about the number of foreigners in 1970 and 1980, Talavera’s estimations give us at least an idea.



**Figure 2. Estimations of the number of foreigners residing in Ajijic and surrounding areas<sup>10</sup> in different years. Source: author. Figure elaborated with information collected from different sources.**

\* These estimations refer to the number of foreigners during high seasons (summer and winter). Most of the people I interviewed in 2008 estimate that during low seasons the number of foreigners drops by 30 to 50 %. Additionally, they estimate that from the total number of foreigners 90% are retirees, and that 75% come from US, 20% from Canada, and 5% from other countries, mainly Europe.

\*\* Charlie Smith, former President of the Lake Chapala Society (2004 – 2007). He was interviewed by the author in Ajijic in February 2008, and the author asked for his estimates by email in February 2013.

\*\*\* Average (rounded) of estimations made by 30 interviewees.

If we take as base the average of the estimates presented in the figures above, we can see that the number of foreigners residing in Chapala Lakeside grew from 4,500 in 1990 to 10,000 in 2000. While, in Ajijic, they grew from 2,200 in 1990 to 7,000 in 2000. This means that during the 1990's the number of foreigners increased by 122% in the Chapala Lakeside area and by 218% in Ajijic. The increase (in percentage) during that decade, in Chapala Lakeside and Ajijic, is the highest compared to the other decades presented in these figures.

Regarding the second factor that triggered the transformation of Ajijic -the increase in the construction of residential developments-, the figure below demonstrates the start of the construction's boom in the 1990's. Map 3 below shows that these developments were mainly built in and around Ajijic.

<sup>10</sup> In this thesis, when I mention "Ajijic and surrounding areas" or "Ajijic and surroundings", I make reference to the area that includes this town and some localities around it, excluding the neighbouring towns of San Juan Cosalá (to the West) and Chapala (to the East). See Map 3.

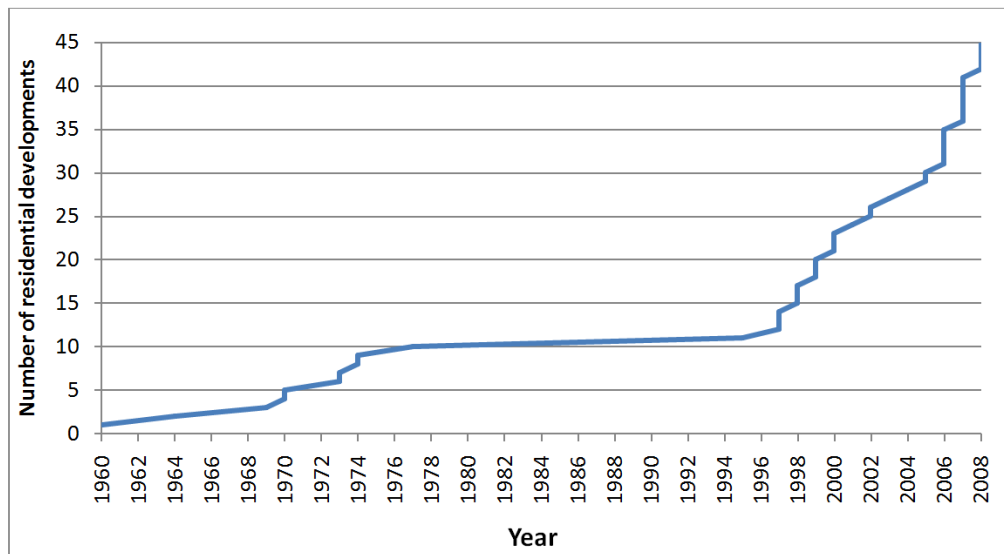


Figure 3. Construction of residential developments by year. In this figure we can observe the 1990's boom, which started around 1995. Source: author. Figure elaborated with information collected from the municipality of Chapala's archives.



Map 3. Residential developments constructed until 2008. Most of them built in Ajijic and surroundings. Source: author. Map elaborated with information collected from the municipality of Chapala's archives.

The 1990's significant increase in the number of foreign retirees and in the number of residential developments in Ajijic and its surroundings was facilitated by national and municipal governmental policies.

The adoption of neoliberal policies at national level during the 1990's marked the introduction of Mexico into the globalisation process and influenced the transformation of Ajijic and its surroundings. Before the 1990's, the Mexican laws had restrictions for foreigners' possession of Mexican land and properties, however the adoption of neoliberal policies during the 1990's reduced these restrictions in order to facilitate foreign investment. In the case of Ajijic, this change in the Mexican laws facilitated foreigners to buy houses and land in this town. Also, among these neoliberal policies was the signature of the NAFTA<sup>11</sup>. This facilitated the importation of products from US and Canada into Chapala Lakeside, making this area attractive especially for those foreign retirees who want products from their homeland available in their retirement destination.

At municipal level, the 1990's transformation of Ajijic was facilitated by the successive governments of the municipality of Chapala. Motivated mainly by the reactivation of the local economy derived from the arrival of the first groups of foreign retirees, these governments granted developers and real estate companies (and individuals) the necessary permits to significantly expand the construction of residential developments and infrastructure. In this way, the successive governments intended to shape this municipality into a retirement destination, and it became -mainly since the 1990's- the municipal government' unofficial project<sup>12</sup> to bring what these governments considered as local development and modernisation ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). The successive mayors have been justifying this project through political discourses in which they consider the local economic benefits derived from the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination as "local development", and the construction of residential developments as "modernisation".

During the 1990's, the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination for foreigners was notorious. Since that decade, during my regular visits to Ajijic, I saw many changes taking place in this town and its surroundings, for example: the increase in the number of small

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<sup>11</sup> The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed by the governments of Canada, US, and Mexico, and came into force in 1994. This agreement includes mainly the progressive elimination of barriers to trade and investment between the three countries.

<sup>12</sup> Even though the realtor "Ana" mentions that this is an unofficial project of the government, she also mentions that this project was promoted through the different mayors' public discourses.

businesses and real estate companies exhibiting commercial advertisements written in English<sup>13</sup> and with prices in US dollars<sup>14</sup>; the appearance of places of worship for multiple religions<sup>15</sup>, social clubs, and charity organisations founded by foreign retirees; the activation of the local commerce; and especially the increase in the number of foreign retirees and residential developments.

The IRM phenomenon in Ajijic struck me especially as contrary to the historic trend of Mexicans migrating to US<sup>16</sup>, the IRM was a type of migration in the opposite direction. This was not only represented by US citizens migrating to Ajijic, but also by Canadians and –to a lesser extent- Europeans. Here, I started getting interested in the effects on Ajijic resulting from the IRM phenomenon and from the derived municipal government's project of local development and modernisation, which supports the construction of Ajijic as a retirement destination.

In 2006 I was introduced to the English social anthropologist Dr Norman Long. He was one of the seasonal inhabitants of Ajijic and like me he was also interested in the transnational life of part of the foreign community established in this town. The frequent and enjoyable conversations I had with him about Ajijic and its transformation, rekindled my interest in this topic. This motivated me to start the application process to realise doctoral studies where I could undertake an investigation into the transformation of Ajijic. I sent my research proposal to Wageningen University in the Netherlands, where I had graduated from my MSc program one year earlier. There, I was accepted into the PhD program of the Rural Development Sociology Group. Then, the National Commission of Science and Technology of Mexico

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<sup>13</sup> In Mexico the official language is Spanish.

<sup>14</sup> In Mexico the official currency is the Mexican Peso (MXN).

<sup>15</sup> The existence of places of worship for multiple religions in and around Ajijic is a noticeable change since this town is known for being almost totally Catholic. This was the religion imposed by the Spanish colonisers when they arrived in Axixic (nowadays Ajijic) in 1531. Most of the inhabitants of the town I interviewed in 2008 commented that even though foreigners have brought new religions to Ajijic since the 1990's, around 90% of the host population in Ajijic is still Catholic. According to the Mexican national institute of statistics and geography (INEGI 2010b), in 2010 the municipality of Chapala had a total population of 48,839, from which 43,383 were Catholic (that is to say 88.8% of the total population).

<sup>16</sup> Some of the first registers of the migration of Mexicans to US is presented by Garcia y Griego (1988, in: Salas 2009), who mention that this type of migration grew moderately in the last years of the XIX Century triggered by the need of workers to build the railways in US. Additionally, Salas (2009: 79-81) mentions that the migration of Mexicans to US was intensified during the 1970's due to the Mexican economic crisis in that decade. She adds that since then this type of migration has been growing significantly: during the 1970's, a minimum 1.2 million Mexicans migrated to US; during the 1980's, 2.1 million; in 1990, 2.7 million; in 2000, 5.1 million; and in the last six years (2001-2006) the highest rate of migration (Camarena 2007, in: Salas 2009) has been registered.

(Conacyt) granted me a scholarship to finance my studies. In this way I could carry out my investigation into Ajijic, the results of which are presented in this book.

## 2. Research problem, questions, and objective

The transformation of Ajijic in the 1990's -triggered by the increase in the number of foreign retirees and residential developments- has found some support among local social groups, but also opposition. This is because the transformation of Ajijic has brought benefits for some, but also negative consequences for others.

On the one hand, there were some local economic benefits represented by a reactivation of the local economy. This was triggered by the increase in foreign investment in the area, the increase in the consumption of goods and services produced and offered locally, and the generation of new jobs for the members of the host community -especially jobs in housekeeping, and in the construction and tourist sector-<sup>17</sup> ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). Other local benefits were represented mainly by the emergence of diverse charity organisations founded by foreigners and which benefit mainly the host community. On the other hand, there were also economic negative consequences for the members of the host community, for example: an increase in the prices of their basic staples ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). Other negative consequences were represented mainly by: 1) the fact that members of the host community lost access to places that used to be public. This happened mainly due to the construction of residential developments in these places; and 2) the increase of local land conflicts ("Ana", Ajijic 2008). The latter was derived from the construction of some residential developments invading federal land<sup>18</sup> and archeological areas (both property of the nation), communal land

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<sup>17</sup> Regarding the generation of new jobs, I found opposing opinions among the people I interviewed in Ajijic. For example, the realtor "Ana" (Ajijic, 2008) mentioned the generation of new jobs as an important local economic benefit. However, the gardener José E. Aguas (Ajijic, 2009), the bricklayer Gerardo Guzmán (Ajijic, 2009), and the housekeeper "Andrés" (Ajijic, 2009) complained that their jobs offer them a very low salary, not enough to satisfy the basic needs of a two-member family. José, Gerardo, and "Andrés" expressed that they must have a second economic activity to earn a modest income. Gerardo also argues that even though employers are legally obligated to register employees with the *Seguro Social* (state health and social care system), they do not do it, leaving many employees without right to a pension and medical attention in case of illness, disability, or accidents; among other benefits lost by employees.

<sup>18</sup> Especially during the reduction of Lake Chapala due to severe periods of drought, some people occupied the dried areas of the lakebed, which are considered legally as "federal land" (property of the nation). Most of these occupations were authorised by the national government (through Conagua -National Commission of Water-) under the legal figure of "concession". This meant, in general terms, that the occupiers could not own this land, but they could use it for agricultural activities. Additionally, occupiers were not allowed to build in this area; some exceptions were made to removable structures. However, during the 1990's boom in constructions, some occupiers not only constructed houses in this area, but also

(property of the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*<sup>19</sup>), and the *lugares tradicionales* (places considered as historically and traditionally relevant by mainly the natives of this town).

In this thesis, I argue that the IRM phenomenon in Ajijic provoked the emergence of different projects of shaping the physical characteristics of this town, its local development and modernisation<sup>20</sup>. Through these projects, social actors<sup>21</sup> shape Ajijic according to their different interpretations about what the town of Ajijic is<sup>22</sup>, and what local development and modernisation mean to them. The transformation of the physical characteristics of Ajijic, through these projects, has also transformed the social life of this town.

In addition, in order to carry out their projects, actors try to get public legitimisation (which can be read as the acceptance or support from the population –Habermas 1975-) of two elements: 1) the physical transformation of Ajijic that they carry out; and 2) their interpretations of Ajijic, its local development and modernisation. Interestingly, in order to acquire this legitimisation, actors organise events and create situations in which they exhibit very particular practices<sup>23</sup> to the general public or to specific individuals. These practices are:

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negotiated with that land (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008). According to Iglesias (newspaper: “*El Informador*”, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2010), in 2010 Conagua identified 60 illegal constructions of houses and small businesses on federal land (in the lakebed), some of them constructed since the 1990’s. Guillen (newspaper: “*El Informador*”, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010) mentioned that in the Chapala Lakeside area some 160 km<sup>2</sup> (16,000 hectares) of federal land on which summer houses can be found, is actually under concession. The area given in concession represents almost 15% of the official area of the lake and in extension is similar to the whole area of the city of Guadalajara (187 km<sup>2</sup>). In the municipality of Chapala there are 606 concessions.

<sup>19</sup> The *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* (indigenous community of Ajijic) emerged as legal entity in 1795 during the Spanish colonisation of Mexico. The members of this community are locally called *comuneros*.

<sup>20</sup> Except for one official project (the governmental project of shaping the municipality into a beach resort –Chapter 3-), the rest of the projects are considered unofficial/informal. All of the six projects analysed in this study try to shape the physical features of Ajijic; four of them also try to shape Ajijic’s local development; and one of them tries to shape not only Ajijic’s physical features and local development, but also its modernisation.

<sup>21</sup> Long (2007) defines social actor(s) as follows: “(my translation from Spanish) *Social actors* are all those social entities that have agency in the way that posses the capacity of knowing, evaluating problematic situations and organising ‘appropriate’ answers. Social actors exist in a variety of forms: individuals, informal groups or interpersonal networks, organisations, colectivities, and in what is sometimes identified as ‘macro’ actors (e.g. a national government, a Church or particular international organisation)”. Hereafter, I will refer to it as “actor(s)”.

<sup>22</sup> By actors’ interpretation of Ajijic I make reference to how they consider (strategically or not) this town as a unit. For example, some actors consider Ajijic as a “retirement destination”, other actors as *tierra comunal* (communal land), others as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (*Teopantitla* and the traditional places), and others as *playa de mar* (beach resort).

<sup>23</sup> One clear definition of practice is that of Schatzki (2003): “practice is a ‘bundle’ of activities, that is to say, an organized nexus of actions. Any practice, consequently, embraces two overall dimensions: activity and organization” (Schatzki 2003: 71).



the use of discourses<sup>24</sup> about their interpretation of Ajijic; the use of objects<sup>25</sup>; and the use of rituals. I pay special attention to the latter practice since I also argue that actors gather and assemble their projects and interpretations of Ajijic and its local development through rituals<sup>26</sup>. The relevance of this assemblage of actors, projects, and interpretations is that it generates a social entity that I describe as global-transnational-local (GTL)<sup>27</sup> and a space of legitimisation<sup>28</sup>. Both of them have a central influence in the transformation of Ajijic.

The diverse ways in which actors are shaping Ajijic through their projects raise important research questions that the present study answers.

Below, I present my general research questions (A-B) and the specific ones (1-6). All of them refer to the transformation of Ajijic since the 1990's and in the context of the IRM.

- A) How do actors use discourses, objects and rituals as practices of legitimisation with which they shape Ajijic?
- B) How do actors generate spaces of legitimisation and GTL social entities through rituals and how do these shape Ajijic?

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<sup>24</sup> I use Long's (2007) notion of discourse: "(my translation from Spanish) discourse refers to the group of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, narratives, and statements that promote a particular version of 'the truth' about objects, people and specific events". I specially use this notion to describe the actors' narratives that promote a particular interpretation of Ajijic, its local development and modernisation.

<sup>25</sup> In this thesis, by "objects" I make reference to things that have physical existence and that are meaningful to actors in the process of transformation of Ajijic. Some objects have been recently created by actors (e.g. residential developments), other objects were created long time ago and they are now adopted by actors (e.g. archaeological objects), and still others were created by nature and are now adopted by actors (e.g. the water spring *Ojo de Agua*), among other type of objects.

<sup>26</sup> In this study I argue that ritual is a set of actions performed periodically, which contains symbolism that plays an important role for its performers, and which is at the same time a process in transformation. The latter characteristic is because the ritual is also a way for its performers to use their agency. In this process, the performers adapt themselves, and the ritual performance, to their changing context in order to reach their goals. In Chapter 4 I explain how other authors have defined rituals and how I came to this definition.

<sup>27</sup> By GTL social entity I make reference to the network formed of people from different countries, people who have a transnational life, and people from the place where these entities emerge (commonly called "locals"). In Ajijic, these social entities are formed mainly of foreign retirees from different countries, foreigners who reside during one part of the year in Ajijic and during the other part in their home countries (e.g. the snow- or sunbirds, and other transnational groups), and the people from Chapala Lakeside. GTL social entities are analysed in Chapter 4 and 5.

<sup>28</sup> In this thesis I use my redefinition of Habermas' concept of legitimisation (this concept and the reasons that took me to redefine it are presented in Section 4.2). In this way, by legitimisation I make reference to the citizens' consideration of a actor (e.g. the municipal government), its views (e.g. its interpretation of Ajijic and its local development), its practices (e.g. producing/adopting objects that transform the features of Ajijic), and the objects it produces/adopts (e.g. residential developments) as something acceptable and deserving of their support.

- 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon?
- 2) How do actors use discourses and objects to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?
- 3) How have actors materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have shaped this town the most?
- 4) What is the role of the municipal government's development interventions in the transformation of Ajijic?
- 5) How are rituals used by actors to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?
- 6) How does the analysis of rituals contribute to the notion of actor's agency and to our understanding of processes of development and modernisation?

The answers to these research questions will contribute to theoretical views and understanding of three topics that are central in the transformation of Ajijic: 1) processes of modernisation and development; 2) processes of legitimisation; and 3) the global phenomenon of the IRM. The knowledge generated through this study can be useful to academics and researchers interested in these topics. Additionally, this knowledge can be used by policy makers interested in designing better regulations oriented to bringing benefits to the inhabitants (including foreign retirees, natives, and other social groups) of communities influenced by the IRM.

In sum, the central objective of this research is to understand how actors in Ajijic shape the transformation of Ajijic initiated in the 1990's –in the context of the IRM- by using discourses, objects, rituals, and by generating spaces of legitimisation and GTL social entities.

In order to answer the research questions and to achieve the given objective, I carried out this study based on the methodological and conceptual frameworks that I will present in the following section.

### **3. Methodological and conceptual frameworks**

In this study I use two methodological perspectives: the ethnographic approach to global assemblages (Collier and Ong 2004) and the Actor-Oriented Approach (Long 2007). However, it is important to highlight that this study focuses on the actor's practices, more

than on the actors themselves. For example, the actors of the transformation of Ajijic were not chosen by me before the fieldwork started. Indeed, it was through focusing on practices performed by the people in specific public and private events in Ajijic –during the research fieldwork- what revealed who the actors of the transformation of this town are. The focus on practices offered some advantages for this study, for example it gave the possibility to avoid the researcher’s influence inherent in methodological pre-determinations of actors. Also, in most of the cases, it offered the possibility to testify how actors perform the practices with which they shape Ajijic. This opened the possibility to observe important elements that influence the transformation of Ajijic and that are only observable in the actor’s performance of their practices<sup>29</sup>.

The ethnographic approach to global assemblages proposes to study the sites or domains in which global forms (e.g. the global flows of foreign retirees, part of the IRM) interact with other heterogeneous components in situated events. In the case of Ajijic, I use this approach to study the global assemblages that are formed by the interaction between global flows of foreigners (mainly retirees) and heterogeneous locally-situated actors. The components of these global assemblages come together in specific events where actors shape Ajijic, its local development and modernisation.

According to Collier and Ong (2004) the field occupied by the global assemblage is a contingent, uneasy, unstable field where forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematised or at stake. In this way, these authors highlight global assemblages as dynamic, where conflict and contingency are inherent. In order to document this dynamism, Collier and Ong urge us to explore ethnographically the practices of the different actors involved in it. To carry out this task, I studied the practices that actors perform in specific events in order to shape Ajijic. For this I considered the following tenets of the methodology of the Actor-Oriented Approach –AOA- (Long 2007)<sup>30</sup>:

1) *“To take into consideration issues of heterogeneity in order to comprehend the (actors’) interpretations and different responses to circumstances (that is to say, we have to pay attention to the ‘multiple realities’)”* (Long 2007: 441).

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<sup>29</sup> One example is the symbolic act of blowing smoke towards an invading residential development. This is a practice only observable during the performance of the *Huentli* ritual and it is used by the performers to denounce publicly the invasion of a ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*. Through this act they also try to get public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* and the de-legitimisation of the invading residential development.

<sup>30</sup> The quotations from Long (2007) that I use in this thesis are my translation from the Spanish version of his book.

In accordance with this tenet, in the present thesis actors are considered as heterogeneous in their responses to their changing context, especially to the effects of IRM and the derived municipal project of development and modernisation. Additionally, this tenet helps us to understand that there is not a unique interpretation of Ajijic, its local development and modernisation, but multiple and different ones which contain a myriad of colluding and contesting interests involving places. The concept of “multiple realities” is used to highlight the different realities experienced by actors, which are also reflected on their diverse meanings and interpretations of the world they live in (Long 2007: 148). In this line, social life is formed of multiple realities constructed and confirmed mainly through the actors’ experience (Long 2007: 111) and through various and contested social and material relations (Arce & Long 2000).

2) *“To document ethnographically the actor’s practices as socially situated, and the ways in which actors use their social relations, technologies, material and non-material resources, discourses and texts (such as official documents and arguments, if normative or not)”* (Long 2007: 441).

In Ajijic, I use ethnographic research methods (e.g. fieldwork and participant observation) especially to document the actors’ social interactions and their practices with which they transform Ajijic - mainly how they use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic, objects, and rituals-.

3) *“To focus on the organisational and ordering processes (more than ‘the order’ itself) relevant to the different arenas<sup>31</sup> and institutional domains<sup>32</sup>”* (Long 2007: 441).

Even though the focus of this study is not on organisational and ordering processes, but on the actors’ practices of shaping Ajijic, these processes are also analysed. According to Long (2007: 443), organisational processes cover a range of practices that imply cooperation and

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<sup>31</sup> Long defines “arenas” as follows: “*Arenas* are spaces of contest for resources, demands, values, issues, meanings and representations: that is to say, they are sites of contest that exist within and through domains” (Long 2007: 444).

<sup>32</sup> Long defines “domain” as follows: “*Domains* represent the site of rules, norms and values that become central for the ordering process and for the establishment of pragmatic rules of governance. [...] Domains should not be considered as ‘cultural suppositions’ but that they are produced and transformed through the common experiences and the struggles of actors” (Long 2007:443-444).

contest between individuals or groups, within and through the different social domains. He refers that these practices are part of the activities inherent in “formal” and “informal” organisation, and also involve practices of mediation between organisations, levels of authority and spheres of control.

In this study, I describe and analyse the actors’ practices of cooperation and contest with which they create formal and informal organisations in the context of the IRM phenomenon. For example, how actors generate GTL social entities through rituals (Chapter 4 and 5).

4) “*To explore the relevant interfaces<sup>33</sup> that show the points of contradiction or discontinuity between the different (and frequently incompatible) actors’ life-worlds<sup>34</sup>, including, not only the ‘local’ actors, but also the institutional actors that ‘intervene’ or the other actors, whose interests come into play*” (Long 2007: 441).

A central part of this thesis is to explore the points of discrepancy between different actors’ interpretations about Ajijic, its local development and modernisation. Multiple examples of this can be found in this thesis (e.g. the case of *Ojo de Agua* [Chapter 2] and the *Huentli* ritual [Chapter 4]). Additionally, this thesis describes and analyses social intersection points that are not of discrepancy, but of assemblage. For example, how actors create assemblages of their projects and interpretations through rituals (Chapters 4 and 5).

Regarding the conceptual framework of this thesis, in addition to the concepts mentioned so far, I also use another concept fundamental to the AOA, that of the actor’s agency. Long (2007) defines this concept as follows:

“*The agency refers to the capacity of knowing and acting, and the way in which the actions and reflections constitute social practices that impact or influence on, their own and others’, actions and interpretations. The agency is generally recognised as ex*

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<sup>33</sup> Long (2007) defines “interface” as follows: “A social interface is a critical intersection point between the ‘life-worlds’, social fields or levels of social organisation where it is more likely to find *social discontinuities*, based on discrepancies of values, interests, knowledge and power” (Long 2007: 445).

<sup>34</sup> In Long (2007)’s analysis of the concept of “life-worlds” used by Schutz (1962), and Schutz & Luckmann (1973), he defines this concept as follows: “*Life-worlds* are ‘lived’ social worlds, and to a large extent ‘taken for granted’, centred on particular individuals. Such worlds should not be seen as ‘backcloths’ that frame the actions of the individuals, but as the product of the constant processes of re-ordering and re-evaluation of relations and experiences by the individual. The life-worlds include actions, interactions and meanings, and they are identified with specific socio-geographical spaces, and with life stories” (Long 2007: 443).

*post facto* through its recognised or supposed effects. The people and the networks of people have agency. Besides, they can attribute agency to various objects and ideas, which, at the same time, can have influence on the actors' perceptions about what is possible. The agency is constituted, consequently, of a complex mixture of social, cultural, and material elements. *The strategic agency* implies the recruitment of actors for the 'project' of other person or persons" (Long 2007: 442).

In the present study, this concept is useful to describe the capacity of actors to shape Ajijic and carry out strategies that generate public legitimisation of their interpretations, practices, and objects they construct or adopt. Also, this concept helps to describe the actors' capacity to transform or counter-act the effects of the IRM and the derived municipal government's project of development and modernisation.

In addition, I use Arce and Long's (2000) concept of "modernities". These authors explain how modernities are generated by actors:

"(The) ideas and practices of modernity are themselves appropriated and re-embedded in locally-situated practices, thus accelerating the fragmentation and dispersal of modernity into constantly proliferating modernities. These "multiple modernities" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993) generate powerful counter-tendencies to what is conceived of as Western modernisation, exhibiting so-called 'distorted' or 'divergent' patterns of development, and re-assembling what is often naively designated as 'tradition'" (Arce and Long 2000: 1).

In the case of Ajijic, this concept is useful to describe how the municipal government's idea and practice of bringing "local development" and "modernisation" through the alteration of the landscape and the integration of the foreign retirees into Chapala Lakeside are partially appropriated and re-embedded in the practices of local actors. In this way, local actors generate projects that combine –to a different extent each– the municipal government's idea and practice of modernisation and development, their own interpretations of Ajijic (and some also of its local development), and elements that they consider as "traditional". In other words, these actors create new modernities (represented by projects and their inherent ideas and practices). Some of these counter-act the municipal government's project of development, and others emerge as alternative projects of development that do not counter-act it.

A deeper exploration on the notion of modernities is presented in the first part of the following section. Additionally, the following section presents a summarised review of relevant studies and theoretical perspectives to the three central topics in the process of transformation of Ajijic. These topics are: 1) processes of modernisation and development; 2) processes of legitimisation; and 3) the IRM phenomenon.

## **4. Contributions of this study to theoretical perspectives on processes of modernisation and development, processes of legitimisation, and IRM**

### **4.1. Processes of modernisation and development**

There are two governmental planned interventions of development and modernisation that have significantly influenced the transformation of Ajijic since the 1990's: at national level, the adoption of neoliberal policies and the introduction of national economic reforms; and at municipal level, the implementation of the municipal government's project of development and modernisation which has been shaping the municipality as a retirement destination.

In order to understand better the views inherent in these governmental initiatives and their effects in Ajijic, I present in this sub-section a review of the theoretical perspectives on planned interventions of development and modernisation. This review is based on the study done by Arce and Long (2000) in which they analyse the different theories of this type of interventions. In their study, the authors highlight the relevance of analysing ethnographically the modernities that emerge as countertendencies to institutional policy interventions.

First, it is important to define modernisation. This term is derived from the term "modern". Arce and Long (2000: 4) consider the term modern as "a sense of belonging to the present and an awareness of a past to which people can link and at the same time distantiate themselves". They explain that 'modernity' was reinvented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to characterise rationalism, science, and the pursuit of 'progress', meanings that nowadays still prevail. Furthermore, they make a distinction between modernity and modernisation:

“(modernity is) a metaphor for new or emerging ‘here-and-now’ materialities, meanings and cultural styles seen in relation to the notion of some past state of things (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1993) [...] (and modernisation is) a comprehensive

package of technical and institutional measures aimed at widespread societal transformation and underpinned by neo-evolutionary theoretical narratives [...] Whereas modernity entails self-organising and transforming practices in different strata and sectors of society, modernisation is normally a policy initiative undertaken and implemented by cosmopolitan administrative and technological elites -national or international-” (Arce and Long 2000: 2).

However, the implementation of the two governmental planned interventions that have significantly influenced the transformation of Ajijic has been justified discursively by national and local governments as bringing not only modernisation, but also “development” (also called “progress”). These terms have common, but also different meanings for the actors in Ajijic. Nevertheless, most actors refer to modernisation as the means, and development or progress as the objective. In this way, these two governmental interventions raise some questions: what are the ideas behind the terms modernisation and development/progress in the history of planned interventions? And how do these ideas link to the governmental interventions that have affected Ajijic? These questions are answered in the paragraphs below.

According to Arce and Long (2000: 5) development studies emerged as a distinctive field of study after 1945 as a result of the concern of Western experts about the modernisation of the colonies and the emerging independent countries. These authors mention that the emulation of what is referred as ‘civilization’ or modernity over ‘barbarism’ constructed a notion of time, called modern. They add:

“(the idea of modern) posited the so-called ‘backward’ or ‘underdeveloped’ countries - later exalted as the ‘Third World’- as representing an earlier stage of technological inferiority and ignorance -due principally to their lack of scientific knowledge and modern legal-rational institutions-” (Arce and Long 2000: 5).

These authors state that planning models and aid policies of the industrialised countries - promoted by international organisations and supported by academic research - were oriented not only to help what was called underdeveloped nations to catch up, but also to identify and eliminate the “traditional” cultural and institutional obstacles that were assumed to block “progress”. They refer to Rostow’s (1960) theory about the five stages through which nations had to pass to become modern, and the pre-conditions for “take-off”. This theory marked another twist, as they explain:



“...new values and social institutions finally inject economic motives into people’s lives, infecting tradition with modernism and establishing economic growth as a normal condition of progress. According to this narrative, the model for underdeveloped countries is the West, particularly the US” (Arce and Long 2000: 5-6).

If we consider the before mentioned views on development and modernisation, which are identified with what is called modernisation theory, we can find multiple similarities with those governmental interventions that have affected Ajijic. For example, the implementation of neoliberal policies and other economic reforms by the national government in Mexico was based on the adoption of the set of policy reforms promoted by the members of the so-called “Washington Consensus” (Rionda 2013): international financial institutions - mainly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank - and the US Treasury Department (Williamson 2004)<sup>35</sup>. These policies were oriented<sup>36</sup> to crisis-affected developing countries in Latin America, and urged the economic opening of trade and investment and the expansion of the market in their domestic economies. This set of policies also included a central neoliberal measurement, to reduce the control of the state on the national economy mainly through deregulation of the economy and privatisation of state-owned enterprises. The state’s regulation of the economy is something assumed by the promoters of this set of policies as an institutional obstacle to market competition and consequently to economic growth (see Williamson 1990). In this way, the implementation of these policies in Mexico implied three relevant aspects. The first aspect is the assumption of economic growth and market growth as indicator of development. This assumption is similar to modernisation theory’s view of considering economic growth as a normal condition of “progress”. The second aspect is the adoption of the view of gradual stages towards “development”; the Washington Consensus’ policies assume that economic growth is reached after nations have passed through stages of de-regulation, privatisation, etc. This assumption is also similar to that taken in modernisation theory, specifically in Rostow’s stages theory (1960). The third aspect is the adoption of

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<sup>35</sup> According to John Williamson (2004), even though the Washington Consensus (term coined by him) has been widely interpreted as a policy prescription and as being of wider application than in Latin America (e.g. as interpreted by Fisher 2003; in: Williamson 2004), this was not written as a policy prescription for development. Instead, Williamson explains, this was written as: “A list of ten specific policy reforms, which I (Williamson) claimed were widely agreed in Washington to be desirable in just about all the countries of Latin America, as of 1989.” (Williamson 2004: 1).

<sup>36</sup> Or “desirable”, in Williamson’s words (2004).

policies implemented in industrialised countries, especially in US. This is also assumed in modernisation theory, which - as mentioned above by Arce and Long - considers the West, particularly US, as a model for underdeveloped countries.

Also, at municipal level, we can find some similarities between modernisation theory and the municipal government's project of development and modernisation (that of constructing the municipality of Chapala as a retirement destination). For example, the municipal government considers the local economic benefits that bring the transformation of the municipality into a retirement destination as local development. This is similar to modernisation theory's view of considering economic growth as a normal condition of "progress". Additionally, the municipal government has substituted from the physicality of the municipality some of the elements considered "traditional" with "modern" ones in its attempt to build it as a retirement destination and, consequently, to bring local development. This is similar to the characteristic that was part of modernisation theory: the identification and eradication of "traditional" elements considered obstacles to "progress". One example of this is how the municipal government transformed some "traditional" cobblestone streets<sup>37</sup> of Ajijic into asphalted streets that are then considered part of the "modern" Ajijic. The municipal government considered that cobblestone streets are not appropriate for the growing car traffic derived in part from the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. Another example is that the municipal government granted realtors and developers permits to construct residential developments (considered as an act of modernisation) in what is locally known as the *lugares tradicionales* (traditional places) of Ajijic in its attempt to shape this town as a retirement destination.

However, some characteristics of modernisation theory have been accumulating criticism through time. These criticisms show us the ideas that underpin Arce and Long's notion of "modernities".

The first criticism is to the segmented view of the social world adopted by modernisation theory. This is explained by Arce and Long:

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<sup>37</sup> The inhabitants of some *barrios* (neighbourhoods) of Ajijic opposed the municipal government's project of asphaltting their cobblestone streets claiming the cobblestone as something "traditional" of this town. Some inhabitants succeeded in protecting their cobblestone streets (Guadalupe de la Peña, Ajijic 2008). Additionally, through the years some realtors realised that cobblestone streets are attractive for those foreign retirees who look to live in a more "traditional" Mexican town. For this reason realtors started constructing residential developments with internal cobblestone streets ("Ana", Ajijic 2008).

“In modernization theory, economic, technological and demographic conditions, and the organisation of appropriate social institutions and value frameworks, were located as functionally segmented orders (“systems”), and treated by experts as separate from the multifarious, and at times contradictory, experiences and practices of everyday life” (Arce and Long 2000: 6).

The above authors assure that independently, whether or not one accepts the idea of the segmented orders, actors appropriate in their practices, and re-interpret, modern idioms, technologies, and practices inherent in planned interventions, showing how assumed segmented orders combine. They add that the following authors’ ideas support their criticism about segmented orders: 1) Latour (1993) criticises the segmented view of modernisation theory by arguing that notions of modernity dichotomise ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, ‘people’ and ‘things’, and fail to recognise the heterogeneous mixings of activities and processes composed of material, cultural, human, and non-human elements; 2) Parkin (1995: 144) highlights the “blending” together of hegemonic and non-hegemonic knowledge, which Arce and Long (2000) assure also occurs between the “expert” knowledge inherent in planned interventions and the knowledge of the people affected by these interventions; and 3) Elias’ (1994) notion of “fusion” highlights that the actor’s behaviour and capacity to re-position the modern within the familiar is one of the aspects of the continuous transformation brought by Western modernity<sup>38</sup>.

The second criticism is to the view of considering stages towards progress adopted by modernisation theorists. According to Elias (1994, in Arce and Long 2000: 9), social change takes place in a “long sequence of spurts and counter-spurts” and does not follow a straight and progressive line as assumed in modernisation theory. Elias argues that social change “generates repeatedly greater or lesser counter-movements in which the contrasts in society and the fluctuations in the behaviour of individuals, their effective outbreaks, increase again” (Elias 1994, in Arce and Long 2000: 9).

The third criticism, according to Arce and Long (2000), is that modernisation theory overlooks counter values (Wertheim 1965) and ‘counter-tendencies’ (Galjart 1981) to dominant patterns of development. Wertheim (1965) considers that society is never a ‘completely integrated entity’ since in any community there are always forms of protest

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<sup>38</sup> Latour (1993), Parkin (1995: 144), and Elias (1994), as cited in Arce and Long (2000).

towards the existing hierarchical structure. He highlights that we need to consider these opposing values within society to understand processes of change. Likewise, Galjart (1981) argues that focusing on the strategic actions that counteract the dominant development trends and thinking reveals to us that development is not a simple process of incorporation (Arce and Long 2000: 18) as assumed in the modernist view.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, taking into account the mentioned criticisms to modernisation theory, this study pays special attention to the multiple modernities that emerged in Ajijic and that counter-act (or not) the municipal government's project of development and modernisation. Additionally, this study shows that actors do not create their diverse modernities freely or without opposition, but that they carry out practices of legitimisation to be able to produce and keep alive their modernities with which they transform Ajijic. This is explained in the following section.

## **4.2. Processes of legitimisation**

In order to understand the different practices of legitimisation carried out by the multiple actors of the transformation of Ajijic, it is necessary to explore briefly Habermas' (1975) theory concerning the role of legitimisation in capitalist societies: the "legitimisation crisis" theory. Habermas argues that the "economic system" of late capitalist societies generates "unresolved economic steering problems". According to him, these steering problems could provoke that the economic system fails to produce sufficient "consumable values" and to distribute these values in an equitable way among the population of these societies. Consequently, citizens could start doubting about the efficacy and fairness of the economic system, which could lead to a crisis of its legitimisation. This crisis is manifested by the loss of citizens' faith in the values that support the economic system. He assures that this crisis subsequently puts the administrative system (the so-called "state"<sup>40</sup> apparatus<sup>41</sup>) and the economic system at risk. Habermas' theory states that the core elements of the ideology that

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<sup>39</sup> Wertheim (1965) and Galjart (1981) as cited in Arce and Long (2000).

<sup>40</sup> According to Cudworth (2007: 1), there is no consensus concerning the most adequate definition of state. However, the most commonly used definition is that of Max Weber (Dubreuil 2010: 189) in which he defines the state as the political organisation with a government that possess the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a specific territory (Cudworth 2007: 95). Flint and Taylor (2007: 137) make a distinction between state and government by explaining that government is a specific group of people, the administrative bureaucracy that controls the state apparatus at a given time.

<sup>41</sup> According to Althusser (1971: 137) the Marxists classics define "state apparatus" as the institutions that form the "machinery" of the state: (institutions of legal enforcement) the police, the courts, the prisons, the army; and ("above" the before mentioned) the head of state, the government, and the administration.

supports the capitalist system<sup>42</sup> are being undermined, which is causing the legitimisation of advanced capitalist states to decline.

Regarding the state, Habermas mentions that this is required to follow the indications of the economic system. For example, he refers that the state creates the conditions to capital accumulation (required by the capitalist economic system) by its intervention in the economy through taxation, control of inflation, credit, currency exchange, among other ways. However, he adds, the role of the state in creating the conditions to capital accumulation also generates “dysfunctional side effects” that could affect the state welfare and social governmental programmes. In order to avoid these side effects, Habermas refers that the state also intervenes in the market by, for example, guiding capital investments, regulating the market competition, and doing arrangements with corporations. Nevertheless, according to Habermas, to be able to carry out its role, the state needs to be legitimised by its citizens as a fair and just entity, otherwise citizens lose motivation to co-operate with it, which would bring its legitimisation crisis.

In this way, legitimisation is for Habermas the citizens’ consideration (based on what he calls “motivations”, “loyalty”, or “values”) of their economic system and/or administrative system - and their way to proceed - as efficient, fair, and deserving of their support.

Finally, Habermas’ theory gives a central role to the state apparatus and its legitimisation in maintaining the economic system and in shaping the economy and social life of capitalist societies.

However, the case of Ajijic shows that its inhabitants legitimise or de-legitimise not only what Habermas calls the economic and administrative systems, but also multiple actors of the transformation of this town. Precisely, as part of the projects that emerged in Ajijic by the effects of the IRM and the derived municipal project of development and modernisation, actors carry out practices that seek the public legitimisation of their interpretations of Ajijic, projects, and the way in which they transform this town<sup>43</sup>. Among these practices that seek

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<sup>42</sup> Habermas mentions as core elements of the capitalist’s ideology: the belief that the market is a fair distributor of values; the belief that general welfare is achieved by individual wealth accumulation; and the belief that all people can reproduce their lives by exchanging their labour power for wages.

<sup>43</sup> In order to avoid confusion, it is important to clarify that legitimisation is carried out in different ways. For example, actors carry out practices with which they try to obtain public legitimisation (the legitimisation from Ajijic’s inhabitants) of their interpretations of Ajijic (and/or Ajijic’s local development and modernisation) and objects and practices with which they shape Ajijic. However, at the same time actors also legitimise or de-legitimise other actors’ interpretations, objects and practices.

public legitimisation, actors use discourses, objects, and rituals. These actors' practices have become central in the transformation of Ajijic because if actors get public legitimisation, they can transform this town in their own way with the acceptance and/or support from the legitimising inhabitants (including other actors). Lack of legitimisation, on the other hand, could risk counter-actions from inhabitants who could obstruct or even stop the actors' transformation of Ajijic. One example of legitimisation is how realtors legitimise and support the municipal project of transforming the municipality into a retirement destination through advertising this interpretation of the municipality and through selling houses of the residential developments (Chapter 2). One example of the lack of legitimisation is how the *comuneros*, who de-legitimise the invasions provoked by the municipal project of transforming Ajijic into a retirement destination, stopped the construction of some residential developments in this town through activism ("Ana", Ajijic 2008) –Chapter 2-.

In this way, legitimisation is playing an important role in the realisation of the actors' projects with which they shape Ajijic in the context of IRM. A view of the studies and theories about this contextual and global phenomenon of migration is presented in the following section.

### **4.3. The IRM phenomenon**

International retirement migration is the phenomenon that involves the migration of retirees towards a country different than their home country in order to spend (partially or completely) their retirement time there. Literature shows that Ajijic is not the only host community affected by this phenomenon. For example, Ono (2008) studied IRM focusing on the Japanese retirees in Malaysia. In Ono's study, one of the points highlighted is that IRM entails the move of not simply "non-labourers", but also retirees who are "service and care seekers who need people to work for them, especially in the fields of domestic work, medical treatment, and care for the elderly" (Ono 2008: 152). Another example is the investigation on IRM made by Williams *et al.* (1997) on the northern European retirees who settled in southern Europe. Their study offers three main explanations of why southern Europe is attractive to northern European retirees: the cheaper prices of houses and lower costs of living and heating; the

warmer climate compared to the cold regions of northern Europe; and the retirees' pursuit of landscape, cultures and lifestyles.<sup>44</sup>

On the American continent, according to Aregional, “due to the high prices of houses in US, every time more pensioned from that country move to Latin American countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize and Ecuador looking for lower costs of real estate, health services and food” (Aregional, in Franco 2013). The US Census Bureau adds that this trend will grow because it is estimated that by 2030 there will be 72.8 million of retired in US, from which 40 million will have difficulties to keep the level of life of that country (US Census Bureau, in Franco 2013).

At global level, according to International Living, Mexico is the fourth most attractive economy –from a sample of 22 nations- for the US retirees, only below Ecuador, Panama and Malaysia that stand out for their competitive house prices and fiscal benefits on buying local real estate (International Living, in Franco 2013)<sup>45</sup>.

Regarding studies about the Mexican host communities of IRM, most of these studies are focused on the US retirees, who represent the large majority of the foreign retirees in Mexico. For example, Lizárraga (2008) studied the IRM phenomenon focusing on the US retirees in Mazatlán and Cabo San Lucas (Mexico). His study stated that it is mainly the cheaper cost of living in Mazatlán and Cabo San Lucas -and the high cost of houses and health insurance in US- that motivates the US retirees to migrate to these two retirement destinations. Similar to the US Census Bureau (above), Lizárraga also mentioned that the number of US retirees in Mexican host communities probably will continue growing. Lizárraga stated that this will occur mainly due to the retirement of the “baby boom” generation. This is one of the largest generations in US history and is represented by US citizens born between 1946 and 1964 (called “baby boomers”), who were expected to start retiring around 2011 (Werner 2011: 4). In addition, Lizárraga’ study mentioned that even though there is an activation of the real estate market in Mazatlán and Cabo San Lucas, which brings foreign investment into the region, most of the profits stayed in the hands of foreigners, mainly in the real estate companies from US which had offices in these locations.

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<sup>44</sup> More examples of studies on IRM in different countries are the study of Williams *et al.* (2000) on the British retirees in the Mediterranean; the study of Oliver (2007) on the British retirees in Spain; and the study of Koch-Schulte (2008) on the foreign retirees in Udon Thani, Thailand.

<sup>45</sup> In this sample were evaluated 8 factors: real estate, special benefit for pensioned, cost of life, integration to the place, entertainment, health, retiree-oriented infrastructure and weather (Franco 2013).

In Lizárraga's (2008) study is mentioned two authors who propose the regulation of the IRM. One is Cabral (2007), who study the US retirees in Cabo San Lucas, and who highlights the need of regulating IRM since this could have negative social and economic consequences to host communities. Cabral states that more than 90% of the real estate companies in Cabo San Lucas are from US and that these companies have bought the houses along the local coastline at a low price, which later they have sold at exorbitant prices. One of the consequences, according to Cabral, is that locals have now restricted access to beaches that used to be public<sup>46</sup>. The other author is Avilés (2006), who studied the US retirees in San Miguel de Allende (Guanajuato, Mexico). Aviles highlights the need for legal restrictions on IRM because in the case of San Miguel de Allende, the US retirees are 10% of the population, but they possess 85% of the real estate in the urban zone. He adds that these US retirees let their properties only to foreigners, put their rent prices in US dollars, and own almost all hotels, galleries, restaurants, and some bars where they forbid Mexicans to enter<sup>47</sup>.

In Mexico, Daley (2007: 124) identifies six places as the most important host communities of IRM: 1) Los Cabos, Baja California Sur; 2) Los Barriles, Baja California Sur; 3) Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco; 4) Guadalajara and Lake Chapala (the Chapala Lakeside area), Jalisco; 5) San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato; and 6) Cuernavaca, Morelos<sup>48</sup>. Of all these places, the Chapala Lakeside area stands out as the host community with the largest number of foreigners - around 90% of them retirees - (Smith, Ajijic 2008). The number of foreigners residing in this area in 2008 was estimated between 12,000 and 14,000 (Figure 1). Within this area, Ajijic

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<sup>46</sup> Even though Article 27 of the Mexican constitution (*Constitucion Politica de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* 2012) establishes that only Mexicans or Mexican companies can possess Mexican land and waters of the national area that includes 100 kilometres along the national borders and 50 kilometres along the national coasts, there exist two ways in which foreigners can possess these legally. Lizárraga (2008) explains that one way, possible since 1973, is that foreigners can buy land within the mentioned area through a *fideicomiso*. This is commonly offered by private banks in México to foreigners. Through *fideicomiso*, the foreigner pays the price of the land to the bank, then the land is bought in the name of the bank, which grants all possessing rights to the foreigner over the land. In this way, the foreigner can make use of the land, sell it, or leave it as his will. The second way, Lizárraga explains, is through registering a company with an address in Mexico. In this way, this company will be legally treated as "Mexican company" (even though if this is 100% foreigner-owned) and it will have the legal right to buy Mexican land or properties in the above-mentioned area.

<sup>47</sup> Coincidentally, in the case of Ajijic, Talavera (1982: 51) mentioned that (during the 1970's) there were some cases of discrimination against the natives of this town by a foreigner who have owned a restaurant-bar-hotel, and who have forbidden the entrance to natives during meetings of foreigners that were realised frequently in this hotel.

<sup>48</sup> Other examples of studies on IRM in Mexican host communities are those of Dagen Bloom (2007) who -like Avilés (2006)- studied the retirees from US in San Miguel de Allende; Bringas (1989) who studied the US retirees in Tijuana-Ensenada; and Palma (1990) who studied the US veterans established in Guadalajara between 1982 and 1984.



stands out as the host community with the largest number of foreigners, estimated between 8,000 and 10,000 in 2008 (Figure 2).

Despite the attractiveness of the Chapala Lakeside area and Ajijic for IRM in Mexico, there are only a few studies about this phenomenon in this area and town. The more relevant studies for this thesis are those realised by Stokes (1981), Talavera (1982), Sunil *et al.* (2007), Truly (2002, 2006), and Methvin (2009).

Stokes' (1981) study focuses on the history of the US retirees living in Chapala Lakeside. This author presents an evolutive view of this community of retirees by defining five stages of its stay in this area: the discovery stage -from the end of the XIX century to the early 1900's-; the founder stage -from the early 1900's to the middle of the 1950's-; the expansion stage -from the middle of the 1950's to the middle of the 1970's-; and the established colony stage -from the middle of the 1970's to the late 1980's-. Truly (2006) adds the modern stage -from the early 1990's to the author's present (2006)-.

Talavera (1982) studied the land conflicts that emerged with the construction of the first residential developments during the establishment of foreign retirees in this area, focusing on the period from 1940 to 1977. Sunil *et al.* (2007) focused on studying the reasons why retirees from US took Chapala Lakeside as their retirement destination. The latter was also done by Truly (2002, 2006), who in addition investigated the type of retirees and their attitudes. Furthermore, Methvin (2009) studied how the US retirees contributed to the development of the Chapala Lakeside area through formal and informal philanthropy and through their contributions to the local health-care sector, the latter being his main focus.

Although the above-mentioned studies of IRM in Chapala Lakeside contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon in this area, there are still some gaps in the information, which the present study attempts to fill through five contributions explained in the following paragraphs.

A characteristic that is common to the literature mentioned (except that of Talavera [1982]) is that methodologically these investigations all collected information almost only from the narratives and data of foreign retirees. This gives the idea of the foreign retirees as containers of the IRM phenomenon, spreading around the world transforming the host communities in which they arrive. In opposition to this view, and following the ethnographic approach to global assemblages (Collier and Ong 2004), I consider that IRM is not contained in the flows of foreign retirees, but that it is the result of the interaction of heterogeneous components of a global assemblage. Among these components are global forms (e.g. the global flows of

foreign retirees) and local actors (e.g. *comuneros* and realtors<sup>49</sup>). In this way, the first contribution of the present study is to consider the narratives, discourses, and practices of the multiple actors -and not only those of foreign retirees- involved in the transformation of Ajijic.

The second contribution of the present study is to consider the form that the transformation of Ajijic takes as derived from IRM, is not shaped by consensus among actors only, as assumed in some of the above-mentioned studies, but also by their conflicts, negotiations, and their responses to contingencies.

Also, I consider that the above-mentioned studies (except that of Talavera [1982]) tend to assume that IRM brings mostly or only “development” to the Chapala Lakeside area (Methvin’ study being the clearest example of this). However, as I have indicated in section 2 of this chapter, IRM also triggered negative consequences for the host community. For this reason, the third contribution of my study is to include not only the foreign retirees’ contribution to local development, but also how IRM has provoked (directly or indirectly) conflict and dislike among some groups of the local population. I intend to describe not just the other face of IRM, but the multiple faces of IRM. This will help us to understand the IRM phenomenon in an integral way.

Concerning migration theories, IRM is a phenomenon that challenges the existing theoretical views. Methvin (2009) explains that while the dominant migration theory has focused extensively on the movement of people from lesser-developed countries to more developed countries, and on labour migration<sup>50</sup>; the IRM phenomenon is generally characterised by migration in the opposite direction and for different motives. According to Methvin, IRM is characterised by the movement of retired migrants from the developed ‘North’ to the developing ‘South’ and is largely defined by “amenity preferences”<sup>51</sup>. He adds that IRM is a contemporary and emerging type of migration, which is defined as a sub-field of emigration studies. However, based on the case of Ajijic, I object to this definition of the IRM on two grounds:

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<sup>49</sup> Other local actors are: the group of native artists from Ajijic; the performers of the rituals *Huentli*, *Fiestas de San Andrés* and *Chili Cookoff*; members of the municipality of Chapala; and some natives of Ajijic who denounce and counteract land invasions.

<sup>50</sup> This view of dominant migration theory can be also found in the studies realised by Hirschman *et al.* (1999) and Portes and DeWind (2007).

<sup>51</sup> This notion of IRM is also shared by Williams *et al.* (2000) and the Migration Policy Institute (2006).

First, I object to the existing trend of considering IRM (assumed as migration from the North to the South) as exclusively related to amenity preferences migration. My objection is based on the fact that this trend considers the foreign retirees mainly as “non-labourers” (and as “service and care seekers” [Ono 2008]), separating IRM completely from labour migration. However, in the case of Ajijic there is a link between foreign retirees and labour, and this link has important effects on this town. Even though labour is not the main reason that brings foreign retirees to Chapala Lakeside, some of these retirees started working as realtors after their settlement in this area. I call this type of foreigners the “foreign retiree-realtors”. The foreign retiree-realtors do not represent the majority of the total population of foreigners in Chapala Lakeside, however their work has had a significant economic and social impact in the area. According to Hernández (2006), former member of the municipal government of Chapala, in 2005 about half of the 150 realtor members of the GIL (the biggest association of realtors of Chapala Lakeside) were foreign retirees<sup>52</sup>. Hernández added that the GIL reported to have sold real estate located in Chapala Lakeside in: 2001 over 20 million USD; 2002 more than 2001 (he did not specify how much); 2003 over 33 million USD; 2004 over 54 million USD; and 2005 over 75 million USD. He assures that 70 percent of these transactions were realised by foreigners. However, Hernández complains that 50% of the foreign retiree-realtors have no work permit issued by the Mexican government -which means that their commercial activities as realtors are illegal- and that they do not pay taxes in Mexico on their millionaire sales. He also added that the profit these foreign retiree-realtors make is mostly leaving Chapala Lakeside because they are transferred to bank accounts in their home countries (an issue also mentioned by Talavera [1982: 142]). According to Hernández, the actual situation is even worse since these figures do not include the foreign retiree-realtors who work independently from the GIL nor those who use Mexican *presta-nombres* (figure heads)<sup>53</sup>. Apart from the money that Hernández assures leaves Chapala Lakeside and its impact on the local economy, there are also social consequences of the work of the foreign retiree-realtors. For example, through the years some foreign retiree-realtors have been accused of committing land invasions and abusive transactions (Talavera 1982; “Ana”, Ajijic, 2008) which have been denounced and fought in multiple ways by different groups of the host population.

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<sup>52</sup> Also in 2008 foreign retirees still made up about half of the realtors of Chapala Lakeside (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

<sup>53</sup> According to the realtor “Ana” (Ajijic, 2008), the *presta-nombres* in Lakeside are Mexican people who lend or rent their name to a foreign realtor to be used by the latter when buying and selling houses or properties. She adds that generally realtors use *presta-nombres* in order to avoid restrictions that the Mexican law imposes on the foreigners working in Mexico. The usage of *presta-nombres* has also provoked that real estate agencies owned by foreigners are registered locally as owned by Mexicans, making difficult to know the real number of real estate agencies owned by the first group.

Because of the foreign retiree-realtors' economic and social impacts, I believe that in the case of Ajijic the analysis of IRM cannot be regarded as not-linked to foreign retiree's labour. Even though my study is not an economic analysis of the labour of foreign retiree-realtors, it analyses the impact of their economic activity on the social life of Ajijic. In this way the fourth contribution of this investigation is to include the analysis of the retirees' labor in the study of the IRM phenomenon.

Second, I object to the consideration of IRM as a flow in a one-way direction, from the "developed North" to the "developing South". In the case of Chapala Lakeside, about 50% of the total number of foreign retirees (i.e. around 6,000 out of 12,000 foreign retirees [Smith 2013]) did not leave their home country or the developed North totally. They spend only part of the year (winter or summer) in Chapala Lakeside and the rest of the year in their home countries, every year. In other words, the retirement life of these foreign residents does not take place solely in Chapala Lakeside or solely in their home country, but in a transnational space that includes both places. For this reason, the fifth contribution of the present investigation is to study not only *International Retirement Migration*, but also this specific type of continuous and circular migration, which I call *Transnational Retirement Migration*. The transnational migrants show different social dynamics and have a different impact on the Chapala Lakeside area due to their continuous transnational mobility (Chapter 5).

Finally, the presentation in this section of the main studies and theories related to the three central topics in the transformation of Ajijic and the contributions of the present study to these, leads me to a following step. This is to explain how I approached the field of study, in other words, what considerations I made, and what ethnographic research tools I used to document how different actors in Ajijic experience the mentioned processes and shape this town. This is explained in the following section.

## **5. Approaching the field**

### **5.1. Considerations regarding the inhabitants of Ajijic and their identities**

The five central *barrios* (neighbourhoods) of Ajijic are inhabited mainly by the Mexican community of this town (which is formed basically of people who were born in Ajijic [the natives] and –to a lesser extent - of people born in neighbouring lakeside towns or other

places of Mexico). Even though it is possible to find members of the foreign community also inhabiting the central barrios, most of them live outside these barrios and in the outskirts of Ajijic, where most of the residential developments are located.

The members of the Mexican community of Ajijic call the members of the foreign community of this town in different ways, for example as: *extranjeros* (foreigners), *gringos*, or *americanos*<sup>54</sup>. While the other way around, the members of the foreign community call the members of the Mexican community of Ajijic mainly as “locals”, “Mexicans”, or “natives”. When differentiating themselves from the foreign community, the members of the Mexican community of Ajijic refer to themselves mainly as *de Ajijic* (from Ajijic), and to a lesser extent as *locales* (locals). On the other hand, the members of the foreign community of Ajijic refer to themselves mainly as “expatriates” or “expats”, and some even use the Mexican term *gringos*.

Taking into account the multiplicity in the ways used by the inhabitants of Ajijic to refer to themselves and to the members of the other communities in Ajijic, and in order to avoid confusions for the reader, I use one single term for each community. I use the term of “foreign community of Ajijic” to refer to the community formed of inhabitants of Ajijic (and surroundings of this town) who are not legally recognised as Mexican (by birth or by naturalisation). I include in this term the foreign retirees and non-retirees, who could be seasonal or permanent residents. However, the terms “foreign community of Ajijic” and “Mexican community of Ajijic”, express only two communities living in a common place, and this does not reflect the IRM phenomenon, in which a flow of foreign retirees establishes in a host community. For this reason, I decided to use in this thesis the term “host community<sup>55</sup> of Ajijic” instead of Mexican community of Ajijic. I refer to host community not as a community that welcomes other, but as a community that receives other, independent to whether members of the host community support or oppose the arrival of members of the other community. I make few exceptions on the use of the term Mexican community of Ajijic when this facilitates the explanation of the topics tackled in this study.

However, it is important to clarify that the terms foreign community of Ajijic and host community of Ajijic in the present study are not intended to be categories that take their

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<sup>54</sup> The terms *gringos* or *americanos* are also used by members of the Mexican community of Ajijic to refer specifically to the people born in US.

<sup>55</sup> The term “host community” (or the term ““receiving community”) is also used in different literature about the IRM phenomenon.

members as homogeneous. The members of these two communities are heterogeneous, and when they are not differentiating from the other (foreign or host) community, they identify themselves with other identities that exist within their own community. For example, when differentiating themselves from the host community, the members of the foreign community could refer to themselves as “expats”, but when they are differentiating themselves from other “expats”, they could refer to themselves as “Americans”, “Canadians”, “snowbirds”, “sunbirds” etc. In the same way, when differentiating themselves from the foreign community, the members of the host community could refer to themselves as *de Ajijic* (from Ajijic) or *locales* (locals), but when they are differentiating themselves from other *de Ajijic* or *locales*, they could refer to themselves as *de Tecoluta* (from *Tecoluta* -one of the Ajijic’s *barrios*-), *comunero*, etc. In other words, the identities of the inhabitants of Ajijic vary according to whom these inhabitants are differentiating themselves from, or vary according to their interests. One example of the latter is when a retiree from US identifies himself as “American citizen” when crossing the US-Mexican border, and in Ajijic the same person identifies himself as “local” in order to show his affinity for this town and its people.

In summary, for analytical reasons I will use the terms foreign community and host community. However, if the people’s use of other identities emerges as relevant for this study, I will highlight it for the reader.

## **5.2. Why do research in Ajijic?**

The selection of the place of study, Ajijic, was based on three considerations: 1) among all the Mexican host communities of the IRM, the municipality of Chapala experienced the fastest growth in the number of foreign retirees (Migration Policy Institute 2006); 2) within this municipality, Ajijic and its surroundings stand out as the host community with the largest number of foreign retirees among all the Mexican host communities of the IRM, and among the host towns of Chapala Lakeside (Smith 2008). These two considerations make Ajijic an excellent place to study the IRM phenomenon and its local effects since in this town these effects are more evident. Finally, the third consideration is related to my personal experience. I am acquainted with Ajijic due to the countless and irregular visits I have made to this town as tourist since the 1980’s. These visits allowed me to experience directly, in spite of not always being continuously, the progressive transformation of Ajijic through the years. This gave me a diachronic view and a better understanding of the IRM phenomenon in Ajijic before I started my investigation into this town. This consideration is also the reason why I did not choose to study any other host community of IRM in other country.

### 5.3. Methods used for collecting qualitative and quantitative data

As part of my PhD program at Wageningen University, I carried out fieldwork in Ajijic from September 2007 to February 2009, which included some sporadic visits to the neighbouring lakeside towns of Chapala, San Antonio Tlayacapan, and San Juan Cosalá (all these towns are situated in the North West part of the Chapala Lakeside area). Mainly in Ajijic I collected qualitative and quantitative information.

For qualitative information I used the following methods and techniques:

#### 1) Participant observation

- Volunteering in the “Chili Cookoff” in Ajijic. I worked as volunteer in the largest fundraising event in Chapala Lakeside area, the “Chili Cookoff 2008”, which was celebrated from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008 in Ajijic. This three-day event, which I consider as a ritual<sup>56</sup>, is held every year and is organised mainly by the foreign retirees established in Lakeside. During the “Chili Cookoff”, I took notes and pictures, and carried out informal steered conversations with different attendees of this event<sup>57</sup>. My participation in the Chili Cookoff gave me important information about the ritual nature of this event and how multiple actors use it when facing the IRM phenomenon.
- Ajijic’s annual public events. I became part of the audience of multiple annual public events. Even though not all these events are described or quoted in the present study, they offered me the opportunity to identify the actors of the transformation of Ajijic and observe their practices. In most of these events members of the foreign and host communities participate. However some of these events are organised mainly or completely by the foreign retirees, and others mainly or completely by the host population.

The events which I attended in 2008 that were organised *mainly or completely* by the foreign retirees were (apart from the Chili Cookoff): the “July *Fiesta* at LCS”, the “Annual Harvest Fair” and the 7<sup>th</sup> *Feria de los Maestros del Arte* (in Chapala). These events have charitable purposes.

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<sup>56</sup> My consideration of this event as a ritual is explained in Chapter 5.

<sup>57</sup> When I started volunteering in the Chili Cookoff I was not planning to do a research about this event in Ajijic, thus most of the information presented in this thesis comes from ethnographic interviews based on informal steered conversations, my field-diary, and the field-notes I took during the three days of this event.

Regarding events organised *mainly or completely* by the host community, I attended: *Fiestas de San Andrés* (2007) (nine-days Catholic celebration of the Ajijic's Patron Saint), which I also consider as a ritual<sup>58</sup>; *Mes de la Virgen del Rosario* (one-month Catholic celebration of the Virgin of Rosario); the *Huentli* ritual (pre-Columbian ritual reproduced by four natives of Ajijic since 2007); *La Pasion de Cristo* (Catholic representation of the passion of Christ); *Fiestas Patrias* (celebration of the Mexican independence's day); *Dia de Muertos* (pre-Columbian celebration of death day); *Dia de la Revolucion* (celebration of the Mexican revolution's day); and *Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (Catholic celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe's day). The first three events are realised only in Ajijic, whereas the last seven events are celebrated in many towns and cities throughout Mexico, including Ajijic.

- One-off public event in Chapala. I became part of the audience of the public inauguration of the first phase of re-designing the lakefront of Chapala (July 2008).
- Private events in Ajijic. I attended several private events to which I was personally invited by different people. Like in public events, these events also offered me the opportunity to identify the actors of the transformation of Ajijic and observe their practices. I received invitations from: the realtor "Ana" to attend her -what I call- introduction to Ajijic talk; the *comunero* "Alfredo" to see the border signs for communal land; "Víctor" to see the archaeological utensils of *Teopantitla*; "Juan" to see the archaeological monolith *La Piedra Rayada*; Antonio López to see the invaded *lugares tradicionales*.
- Accidental events. I collected information from respondents that were present in events that I experienced by chance during my fieldwork, for example: a gangs' fight in the road of Ajijic (September 2007), a small protest in the front of Ajijic's cemetery (May 2008), and the painting of the façade of a foreign retiree's house in Ajijic (July 2008).

## 2) In-depth Interviews

I carried out 39 in-depth interviews. Some of my interviewees asked me to keep them anonymous in this study. I did so by using pseudonyms between quotation marks (e.g. "Ana"). Other interviewees decided to give me their first names, but not their surnames, while

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<sup>58</sup> My consideration of this event as a ritual is explained in Chapter 4.



still others gave me their full names. The way all my interviewees are named in this study is according to their own preference, and in consideration of ethics.

The number of interviewees was not predetermined, but appeared after I had collected the information needed for developing the topics included in this research. Observing the practices that people carried out in public and private events to which I was invited led me to identify the main actors of the transformation of Ajijic. Then, the interviewees were carefully selected in my attempt to include the main actors, or members of actor groups: realtors; charity workers; the performers of the rituals *Huentli*, *Fiestas de San Andrés*, and Chili Cookoff; *comuneros*; civil servants of the municipality of Chapala; and the group of art painters natives of Ajijic. The number of interviewees of each actor-group varies because some members of these groups agreed to be interviewed while others did not. The final number of people I interviewed per actor-group is as follows: 6 realtors (2 born in US, 2 born in Canada, and 2 natives from Chapala Lakeside); 4 charity workers (2 born in US, 1 born in Canada, 1 native from Chapala Lakeside); 12 performers of the three rituals analysed (*Huentli* [2], *Fiestas de San Andrés* [4], and Chili Cookoff [6]); 2 members of the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* (both natives from Chapala Lakeside); 2 civil servants of the Municipality of Chapala (natives from Chapala Lakeside); and 4 art painters (natives from Chapala Lakeside). In addition, there were another 9 interviewees, 3 were considered as “members of the foreign community of Ajijic” (2 born in US and 1 born in Canada) and 6 as “members of the host community of Ajijic” (all natives from Ajijic). Even though the narratives of all these 39 interviewees were central for me to understand the processes of transformation of Ajijic, it was not necessary to quote in this study all these interviewees.

In these in-depth interviews I used interview guides in which I included key topics and mostly open-ended questions in a semi-structured format. The duration of each of these in-depth interviews was approximately between 2 to 4 hours.

### 3) Diaries and field notes.

For collecting quantitative information I used the following methods and techniques:

- I carried out a study which gave me the number of residential developments in and around Ajijic and their year of construction. The information was collected from the Municipality of Chapala’s archives in 2008 (Annex 1).

- I used the census realised by INEGI (2010a) -national institute of statistics and geography- about the number of inhabitants of the different towns in Chapala Lakeside, and about their religious affiliation (INEGI 2010b).
- I also collected quantitative information from my interviewees' narratives and from the documentation that they made accessible to me.

## 6. Outline of thesis

In a general view, chapters 2 and 3 describe and analyse how actors use discourses and objects, and chapters 4 and 5 how they use rituals, to shape Ajijic. Chapter 6 presents the general conclusions of this study.

Some of the research questions presented in this study are answered by one chapter and other questions by two or more chapters. A more detailed description by chapter is presented below.

In Chapter 2 I describe and analyse empirical cases that show how actors use discourses and objects as part of their projects of shaping Ajijic. On the one hand, I present actors of the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. Here, I present how some realtors and mayors (former and current) use (or used) discourses about Ajijic, its local development and modernisation, in their attempt to legitimise the construction of residential developments and the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. On the other hand, I describe how actors of two different projects (that of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal* and that of shaping this town into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*) use discourses and objects not only to legitimise their projects and interpretations of Ajijic, but also to de-legitimise some invading residential developments built during the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my first and second specific research questions.

In Chapter 3 I present how actors have materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have transformed this town the most: Ajijic as a retirement destination and the municipality of Chapala -including Ajijic- as *playa de mar* (beach resort). The first interpretation has been promoted as part of the municipal government's project of development and modernisation; this project has been implemented mainly since the 1990's. The second interpretation of Ajijic is part of a more recent project of development designed by the municipal government around 2006. In this chapter I explore how actors in these projects use discourses and objects to transform Ajijic, focusing in how they commoditise the features of Ajijic as a retirement

destination and the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*. The commoditisation of these features contributes to their materialisation in the landscape of Ajijic, which consequently has transformed the social life of this town. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my first and second, and it answers my third and fourth, specific research questions.

In Chapter 4 I describe and analyse how actors use two rituals -considered as local- to shape Ajijic. These rituals are organised by members of the host community (in difference to the foreign community). In the first part of the chapter I present how the *ritualistas* use the *Huentli* ritual to shape this town and to obtain public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic and its local development. The performance of the *Huentli* counter-acts an invading residential development built during the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. Additionally, through this ritual is generated a space that legitimises the *ritualistas*' ways of "making justice", which they assure are more effective than those of the governmental justice system. Through this ritual, actors also contribute to the project of shaping Ajijic into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*.

In the second part of Chapter 4 I present how through *Fiestas de San Andrés* (FSA) –which is also a ritual- actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. This is the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where the different local guilds, the foreign community of Ajijic, and *hijos ausentes* (the natives of Ajijic residing in Mexico City and US) are socially integrated. The assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. Both play an important role in the transformation of Ajijic. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my first, fifth and sixth specific research questions.

Chapter 5 presents an event –which is also a ritual- through which actors shape Ajijic: the "Chili Cookoff of Ajijic". This ritual has some similarities to FSA (Chapter 4), but also some differences. While FSA is organised by the host community, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is organised by members of the foreign community of this town. Like FSA, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is also a ritual through which local actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. However, different than FSA, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actors also join a specific interpretation of local development. In this way, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actors join the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where its foreign and Mexican communities work together for the local charities. Additionally, actors join the interpretation of local development as something reachable through organising fund raising events. Similar

to FSA, the assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic –created through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic- generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. However, these space and entity have different effects in the transformation of Ajijic than those effects from the space and entity created through FSA. In this fashion, this chapter contributes to answer my first, fifth and sixth specific research questions.

Chapter 6 presents the major findings and conclusions of this book. This chapter is divided in two sections. The first section elaborates on the research questions, and the second section contributes to the theoretical views presented in this book and includes final remarks.

## Chapter 2

# Using discourses and objects to shape Ajijic in the context of the IRM phenomenon

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter empirical cases that show how actors use discourses and objects as part of their projects of shaping Ajijic are described and analysed. Also, it is described how these actors use discourses and objects in their attempt to obtain public legitimisation. This is, actors try that Ajijic's inhabitants legitimise: 1) the physical transformation of this town that actors carry out; and/or 2) the actors' interpretation of this town, its local development and modernisation. Some actors also use objects and discourses in their efforts that Ajijic's inhabitants de-legitimise the interpretations and objects inherent in other projects.

The chapter is organised as follows. First, my experience in one accidental event in Ajijic is described and analysed, which helps to explain some important properties of people's interpretations of Ajijic. Then, I describe how different actors in Ajijic produce objects and try to get public legitimisation of these through discourses about their interpretation of this town. Next, on the one hand, I describe and analyse the practices of a realtor who is part of the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. On the other hand, I describe the practices of actors who are part of projects that counter-act some land invasions triggered by the before mentioned project. These counter-acting projects are that of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal* (communal land), and that of shaping Ajijic into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (Teopantitla and the traditional places). In these two projects, actors use discourses and what I call counter-objects and a contested-object in their efforts to coax Ajijic's inhabitants into legitimising their projects and de-legitimising the invading residential developments built as part of the project of shaping Ajijic as a retirement destination.

In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my research questions: 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon? And 2) How do actors use discourses and objects to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?

## 2. Some important properties of interpretations of Ajijic

One day in September 2007, I was travelling by bus from San Juan Cosalá to Ajijic. It was around 2 pm and the bus was packed; some passengers were seated and others were standing. The bus was following the route Jocotepec-Chapala, passing along the lakeside towns placed in the North West part of the Chapala Lakeside area.

During our travel, when we were in the surroundings of Ajijic, the bus suddenly stopped in the middle of the road, blocking the way for the vehicles that were behind. From the inside of the bus I saw some people desperately running and screaming along the sidewalks. I did not know what was happening and why the bus had stopped. Inside the bus most of the passengers moved towards the windows on the left side of the bus to see what was happening outside. Looking out of the window I could see a fight in the street. There were three guys on one side of the road and four on the other throwing stones at each other. Some of these guys had splatters of blood on their faces and clothes. The passengers inside the bus started mentioning that this was a fight between gangs. At that time I knew that Ajijic had gangs because a local newspaper had reported gang fights in Ajijic a few days earlier. In the article gang fights were described as something sporadic and occurring only at night in the area of Ajijic's mountain. However, to my surprise, this fight was happening in the middle of the day and in a very populated area. When people in the bus were assumed a gang fight was taking place, I was surprised by the way they mentioned this, as if they had already seen such a situation before.

In the street, one of the guys approached his attacker, who then smashed a bottle of beer in his face. Immediately, the injured man collapsed onto the ground with his face covered in blood. Some people on the sidewalks ran away in order to avoid the flying rocks. Soon I realised that our bus driver had stopped because he wanted to see the fight. It seemed that he did not care about stopping the traffic. The drivers behind the bus were repeatedly honking urging our bus moving forward. Our bus driver ignored the desperation of these drivers. After some minutes, our driver decided to continue, leaving the on-going fight behind.

I was surprised to see such a bloody and violent fight but also hearing the comments of some of the passengers surprised me even more. They were not angry about the situation, some of them were even excited and were making comments like: "*que buena pelea*" (what a good fight) or "*ya hacia falta algo emocionante para hoy*" (something exciting like that was needed today). I also realised that the few foreigners in our bus also reacted surprised about the whole situation. One of the foreigners said in English to other that he did not know about the

existence of gangs in Ajijic, to which the other foreigner replied that he did not either. After some minutes, I asked the man seated next to me, a native from Ajijic, if fights like that one were common in Ajijic; he answered that these were not common, but that they do happen once in a while. He added that these could happen anywhere in Ajijic and even in the middle of the day; he said just to accept it as part of Ajijic.

My experience that day in the bus made me realise several facts. The first one is that people consider the same place differently. At that time, I considered Ajijic as a town where gang fights could occur in the mountain area, but not in very populated areas, nor in the middle of the day. The passenger seated next to me, a native of Ajijic, saw gang fights, although not common, as a part of Ajijic, and which could occur in any part of this town and even in the middle of the day. While the two foreigners on that bus, said they did not consider gangs as being part of Ajijic at all.

After that day I started considering Ajijic as a town with gang fights that could occur in any place of this town and even in the middle of the day. In other words, my interpretation of Ajijic had been deconstructed and constructed through how I had experienced that event and by my interaction with the passengers of that bus. This made me realise a second fact: people's interpretations of a place are shaped by their experiences and are socially constructed.

However, through the time, I realised that my interpretation of Ajijic would be reconstructed many times more through future events and interactions with people. In other words, I realised a third fact: people's interpretations of a place are processes in continuous transformation.

Even though my experience described above helps us to understand that people's interpretations of a place are heterogeneous, formed by experiences and social interactions, and are a process in continuous transformation, there is a fourth fact: interpretations of a place can be used by people in their discourses in order to reach their diverse goals. In other words, discourses about the interpretation of a place can be used by people when wielding their agency.

In Ajijic, actors use discourses about their interpretation of this town (including discourses about its local development and modernisation) to try to obtain public legitimisation of their projects and objects they create or adopt as part of their projects. Through these projects and objects, actors try to reach their goals and shape the transformation of Ajijic in the context of

the IRM phenomenon and the implementation of the municipal government's project of development and modernisation.

However, since actors' discourses concerning their interpretation of Ajijic are used to wield agency, actors could also pretend to have certain interpretations of this town in order to reach their goals. For this reason, in this thesis I do not focus on whether actors really interpret Ajijic in the way they say to do (or not), but on how actors use these discourses to reach their goals. In the following section I describe my encounter in Ajijic with the discourses about multiple interpretations of Ajijic and some objects that are legitimised through these discourses.

### **3. My encounter with objects legitimised with discourses about different interpretations of Ajijic**

During my research in Ajijic, when talking with inhabitants of this town, one of the first things I realised was that one specific geographical place could be named in different ways depending on who is referring to it. For example, some inhabitants of Ajijic call one of the neighbourhoods of this town *barrio Tecoluta*, others call the same neighbourhood *barrio de Guadalupe* (both names are regularly used by members of the Mexican community in this town), and other people (generally realtors) refer to this neighbourhood as part of "Ajijic West". After I interviewed some inhabitants of Ajijic, I would realise that *Tecoluta* is the name given to this area (in which this neighbourhood is placed) by the pre-Columbian founders of Axixic (nowadays Ajijic): the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*<sup>59</sup>. *Barrio de Guadalupe*<sup>60</sup> is the name given by the Ajijic's Catholic Church after the Spanish colonisers arrived in this town<sup>61</sup>. And, "Ajijic West" is the name used mainly by realtors for reasons of marketing since the real estate market in Ajijic is focused on English speakers -mostly retirees from US-. However, the inhabitant's differences on naming the zones of Ajijic are not only present in their narratives, but also in their maps, in which the boundaries of the zones of Ajijic also differ. For example, the local realtors showed me maps, in which some zones of Ajijic were titled with the name of the closest residential development to the zone, or with

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<sup>59</sup> Most of my interviews refer that *Tecoluta* is derived from the *Nahuatl* name *Tecolutl*. *Nahuatl* was the language spoken by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*.

<sup>60</sup> *Guadalupe* refers to the Catholic Virgin of *Guadalupe*.

<sup>61</sup> According to Fray Antonio Tello (Porrúa 1997), the Spanish colonisers arrived in Ajijic in 1531.



names in English (“Upper Ajijic”, “Ajijic Village”, “Lower *La Floresta*”, etc.). The *comunero* “Alfredo” (Ajijic, 2008)<sup>62</sup> showed me a map in which the zones of Ajijic were titled as *tierra comunal* (communal land). And, the *Delegado* (municipal delegate) of Ajijic and the priest of the Ajijic’s catholic church showed me a map where all the different zones, in this case *barrios* (neighbourhoods), of Ajijic were titled after catholic virgin and saints (*Guadalupe*, *San Miguel*, *San Gaspar*, *San Sebastián*, *Santo Santiago*, and *San José*).

The people who showed me these maps also differed in their general interpretation of Ajijic. For example, the realtors I visited referred to Ajijic as a retirement destination and the *comuneros* referred to Ajijic as *tierra comunal*.

I found the following as the most common interpretations of Ajijic:

- Ajijic as catholic *barrios*, interpreted like this mainly by the priest, the *Delegado*, and some members of the Mexican community of this town;
- Ajijic as a retirement destination, interpreted like this mainly by realtors and the municipal government of Chapala;
- Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (*Teopantitla* and the traditional places), interpreted like this mainly by some natives from Ajijic;
- Ajijic as *tierra comunal*, interpreted like this mainly by the *comuneros*.

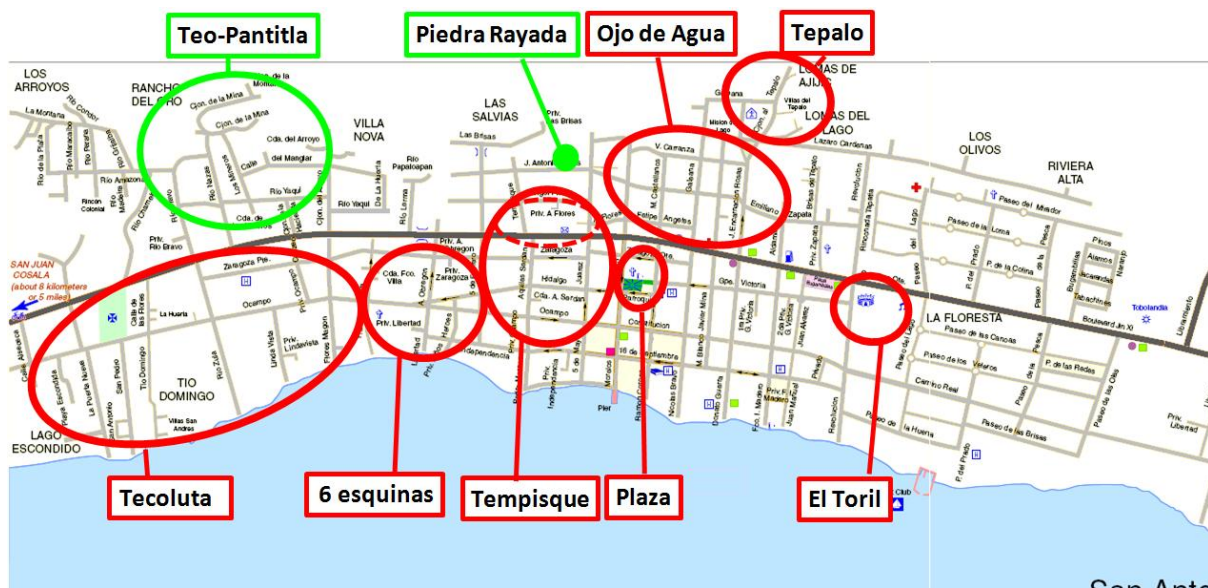
To illustrate the different ways inhabitants of Ajijic describe the geographical zones of this town and how they interpret Ajijic, I present below some maps and pictures of maps.

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<sup>62</sup> I interviewed the *comunero* “Alfredo” in Ajijic in January 2008.



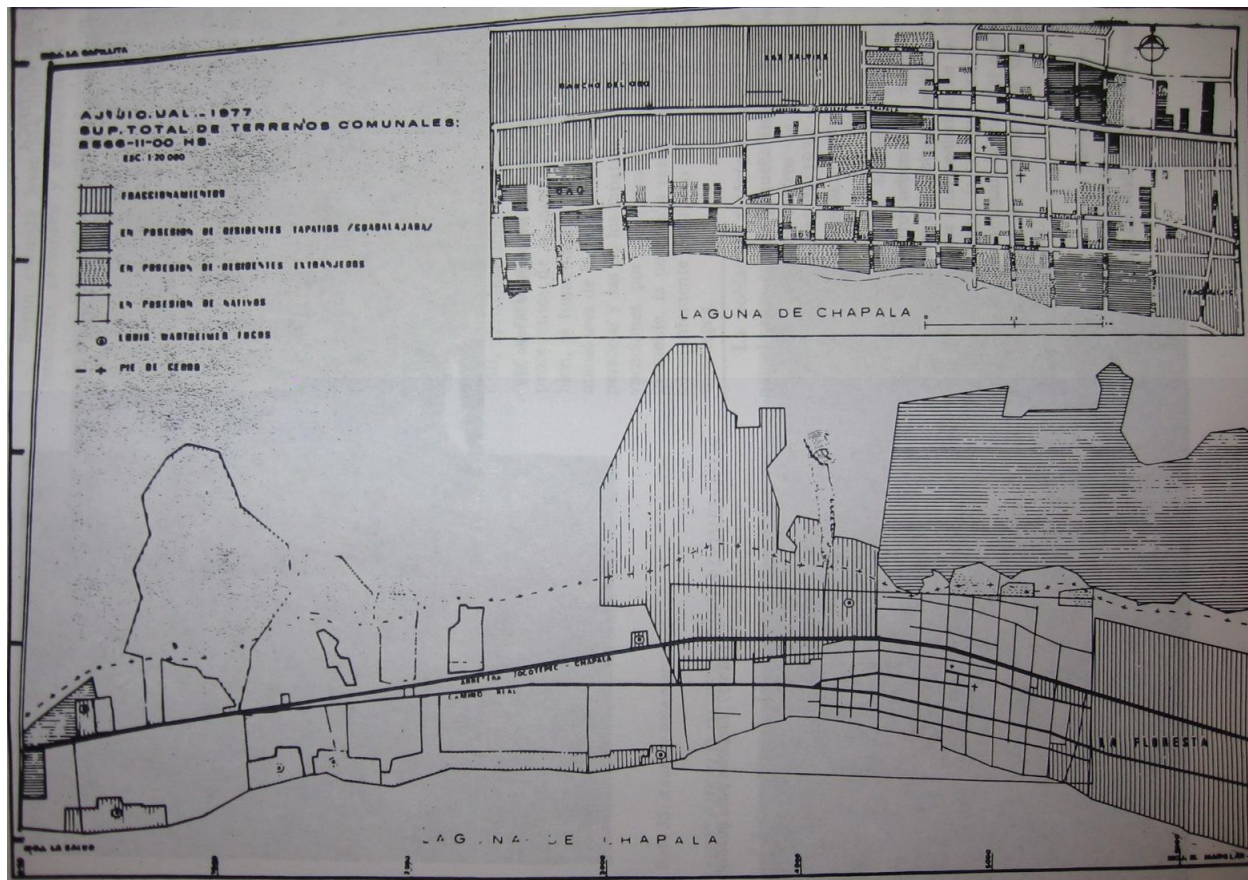
Map 4. Ajijic as a retirement destination. The boxes and division lines (in green) were added by the author to highlight the different zones of Ajijic. Some of these zones have English names (e.g. “Upper Ajijic”) or use the name of the closest residential development (e.g. “Lomas de Ajijic”). Source: author, based on the maps of the interviewed realtors of Ajijic and their narratives<sup>63</sup>.



Map 5. Ajijic as Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales. The areas of Ajijic were highlighted by the author. In this map the reader can observe some zones named in terms derived from Nahuatl (e.g. Teopantitla and Tecoluta). The archaeological zones are Teopantitla and the zone of La Piedra Rayada. Source: author, based on the narratives of the interviewed natives of Ajijic<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Among the narratives of the realtors I interviewed, I found slight variations in the way they described the precise location of the boundaries of the different zones of Ajijic. On this map I indicated how most of them locate the boundaries of these zones.

<sup>64</sup> Among the narratives of my interviewees, I found slight variations in the way they described the precise location of the boundaries of the different zones of Ajijic. This map shows how most of my interviewees locate the different zones’ boundaries.



Picture 1. Ajijic as *tierra comunal*. In this map the reader can observe the different zones of Ajijic called *terrenos comunales* (communal land). Additionally, the reader can see the communal land in possession of: (my translation from Spanish) “residents from Guadalajara”, “foreign residents” and “native residents”, among other details. Source: picture of the map shown to the author by the *comunero* “Alfredo” (January 2008)<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> This map can be also found in: Talavera Salgado, Francisco; “Lago Chapala. Turismo Residencial y Campesinado”; Antropología Social Colección Científica, INAH; México; 1982. Even though this map is from 1977 and “Alfredo” did not have an actualised map with the current possessions of communal land, he assures the possession of communal land by “*no-comuneros*” (non-*comuneros*) increased drastically during the 1990s.





**Picture 2. Ajijic as catholic *barrios*. In this map the reader can observe the *barrios* named after catholic virgin and saints. Source: picture of the map shown to the author by the *Delegado* of Ajijic (May 2008)<sup>66</sup>.**

The analytical importance of presenting the different ways in which people describe and name the different zones of Ajijic, and their interpretation of this town, are based on that these differences are not just a simple disagreement between them about how to name or describe them. But, these differences also reflect some historical conflicts in this town. For example, some of the natives interviewed explained to me that they call the *barrio Tecoluta* as such, and not as Guadalupe (catholic name), because calling the *barrios* by catholic names would mean to contribute to one of the objectives of the Spaniards who colonised Mexico<sup>67</sup>. This objective was, according to these interviewees, to impose the religion, language, and culture of the colonisers and make the pre-Columbian religions, languages, and cultures of Mexico disappear. Another example is the *comunero* “Alfredo”, who mentions that naming zones of Ajijic after the residential developments’ names or in English might cause people to forget that there is communal land and that this has been invaded by some residential developments.

However, maps are not the only objects that people try (through discourses) that Ajijic's inhabitants legitimise. In this town, actors try to get public legitimisation of many objects through discourses about not only their interpretations of Ajijic, but also of its local development and modernisation. The construction or adoption of these objects by actors has

<sup>66</sup> This is a picture of the map authored by Tony Burton, on which the *Delegado* of Ajijic indicated to me with colours the different *barrios* of Ajijic and their names. This map with indications was also intended to be the draft for a map that the local church was planning to print in a bigger scale to be exhibited at the entrance of the parish in 2008.

<sup>67</sup> According to Márquez (2010: 4 and 7), México was colony of Spain from 1521 to 1821.

shaped the physical characteristics of Ajijic and has also transformed the social life of this town. The most relevant case is the construction of residential developments as part of the municipal government's project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. Mostly realtors and the municipal government try to obtain public legitimisation of the construction of residential developments through discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination and about Ajijic's local development and modernisation. These actors express a more or less common interpretation of the local economic benefits brought by the transformation of Ajijic in this way as "local development"; and the construction of residential developments as "modernisation". The relevance of actors shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination through mainly the construction of residential developments is that (as mentioned in Chapter 1) this has brought the biggest social, economic, and physical transformation of this town in the last 50 years.

In the following section I describe and analyse the practices with which actors shape Ajijic into a retirement destination.

#### **4. The project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination**

The project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination was generated by the municipal government of Chapala as a strategy of local development and modernisation in the context of the IRM phenomenon. Ajijic as a retirement destination is also the globally spread interpretation of this town, which is advertised mainly by real estate companies through the internet. In addition, this interpretation of Ajijic is expressed by realtors to any person interested in renting or buying real estate in this town through their free-of-charge talks, which I call "introduction to Ajijic" talks. These talks are carried out in the real estate agencies' offices. In the following paragraphs, I describe my experience at one of the several talks I attended. Describing this experience introduces the main characteristics of this specific interpretation of Ajijic.

#### 4.1. Discourses in the “introduction to Ajijic” talks

In September 2007, I attended an “introduction to Ajijic” talk after I was invited by the realtor “Ana”<sup>68</sup>. This talk took place in the real estate agency where she was working, and this was attended by eight people: a couple of retirees from Canada, two retiree couples from US, one Mexican man from Guadalajara, and myself. The talk was in English and lasted around 2 hours. During this talk, the realtor “Ana” asked us to introduce ourselves and then she introduced herself. She told us, among other personal information, that she was a retiree, and that after a friend’s invitation to spend some holidays in Ajijic in 1992, she was attracted by the beauty, weather, retiree-oriented infrastructure, and cheap cost of living of this town, which made her decide to stay forever. “Ana” said that after she arrived, her friend, who owns a real estate company, offered her a job as realtor, which she accepted mainly to keep herself active more than for the money. Additionally, “Ana” mentioned the advantages of buying or renting a house in Ajijic, and her personal experience of living in this town. Then, one of the attendees asked “Ana” what her interpretation of Ajijic was. She explained that Ajijic is a perfect retirement destination due to its characteristics, which she started naming. I wrote these down in my notebook as follows:

- Regarding the Ajijic’s natural attractions, “Ana” highlighted Ajijic’s: beautiful landscape; stable weather, which was considered by the National Geographic Magazine as the place with the second best weather in the world; privileged location on the shore of the largest lake in Mexico; etc.
- Regarding the Ajijic’s retiree-oriented (and foreignised) infrastructure and clubs, “Ana” highlighted Ajijic’s: good services and well-equipped homes for the elderly; private hospitals; imported food shops; sport and social foreign clubs; US’ TV channels; etc.
- Regarding the Ajijic’s cost of living, “Ana” highlighted Ajijic’s cheaper cost of living when compared to that in US and Canada.

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<sup>68</sup> I omit the real name of this realtor, based on that when I visited her, in September 2007, I was in her office as possible client and not as researcher. However, in a posterior visit I made to her, I asked her permit to present in this thesis my experience in her “introduction to Ajijic” talk and her narratives, which she accepted under the condition of omitting her name. She asked me to name her in this study with the pseudonym “Ana”.

- Regarding the aspect of Ajijic as a Mexican village, but with services like a city, “Ana” highlighted that Ajijic still keeps the balance between a traditional village and a city. She explained that in spite of the growing traffic in the streets, Ajijic still keeps the traditional Mexican village environment: cobbled stone streets, green areas, colourful houses, etc. She added that Ajijic also offers all services of a city: a movie theatre, internet accessibility, cable TV, imported food, hospitals, etc.
- Regarding the Ajijic of artists and intellectuals (the former establishment of artists and intellectuals in Ajijic is used by realtors as one more of the local attractions), “Ana” highlighted that international famous artists and intellectuals visited as well as lived in Ajijic, she mentioned as an example that this town was the source of inspiration for the English writer D.H. Lawrence.
- Regarding Ajijic’s wide variety of residential developments, “Ana” highlighted that there are all kind of residential developments, with all services, meeting all clients’ needs. She mentioned that many of these developments have their own security personnel at the entrance (the so-called ‘gated communities’).

Then, when the “introduction to Ajijic” talk came to its end, “Ana” gave us her business card in case we needed more information about real estate in Chapala Lakeside<sup>69</sup>.

Later I would realise that the same characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination mentioned by “Ana” during her talk were also mentioned by other realtors in future “introduction to Ajijic” talks I attended. Coincidentally, in these other talks, the realtors also described Ajijic as a retirement destination.

But how did the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination emerge? Almost one year after the “introduction to Ajijic” talk given by the realtor “Ana”, I interviewed her in July 2008<sup>70</sup>. Some months before “Ana” had left her job as realtor<sup>71</sup>. However based on her twenty

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<sup>69</sup> In the “introduction to Ajijic” talk, I realised that the Ajijic’s real estate market is focused on foreigners (mainly retirees from US and Canada) and that the prices of renting/buying houses (priced in US dollars) were expensive when compared to rental prices of neighbouring towns like San Antonio Tlayacapan.

<sup>70</sup> This interview was in Spanish. “Ana” speaks this language alongside English.

<sup>71</sup> After my first meeting with her in September 2007, we kept in contact during all my fieldwork, which created a friendship between us. This, together with the fact that she was not a realtor anymore, meant that during our interview she was open to talk about local land conflicts and the role of the realtors on it.

years of experience as a realtor in Ajijic she explained to me the process of formation of the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination and its materialisation through mainly the construction of residential developments. This is presented in the following section.

#### **4.2. Brief history of using discourses about Ajijic as a retirement destination to legitimise the construction of residential developments**

According to “Ana”, people started considering Ajijic as a retirement destination after the 1950’s with the first in-flow of foreign retirees moving into this town. However, she adds that through the years, this view of Ajijic has been changing. She explains that although the natural attractions of this town have been always considered an essential part of the image of Ajijic as a retirement destination, new components have been added with time. She mentions as an example: “the wide variety of residential developments, the city-like services, and the retiree-oriented infrastructure”<sup>72</sup> (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

“Ana” explained to me that through the years the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination has been used in the discourses of almost all the different mayors of the municipality of Chapala, especially since the 1990’s until present day. According to her, these mayors have been motivated by the local economic benefits brought by the establishment of foreign retirees in Chapala Lakeside, and that thus they have been supporting the construction of Ajijic as a retirement destination through granting mainly real estate and developer companies permits to construct residential developments in this area. She confirmed that the municipal government’s support in transforming Ajijic into a retirement destination became the government’s project of local development and modernisation. However, “Ana” complained that during the 90’s, the municipal government granted construction permits “excessively” and sometimes without proper checks regarding the legal status of the land where residential developments were built.

“Ana” also narrated to me how some realtors, developers, and people from the municipal government of Chapala tried to persuade some local farmers to sell their land for building during the 90’s residential developments. She explains:

“Different realtors, developers, and people from the municipal government talked with the farmers. They told the farmers that Ajijic was becoming a retirement destination

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<sup>72</sup> All my quotations coming from my interview with “Ana” in July 2008 are my translation from Spanish.



and that this would bring benefits to everybody in this town. However, they also had to explain to these farmers that as part of this transformation it was planned to build some residential developments on their lands. They tried to convince the farmers to sell their lands through telling them that the construction of residential developments would bring local economic benefits, which consequently would bring development to the town [...] Also, they told them that these residential developments would bring the modernisation of Ajijic through bringing new houses, streets, and services into this town. Many farmers were not convinced and refused to sell their land. However in the end, I would say, the farmers were forced to sell and they received almost nothing for their land. This was an abuse!” (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

These actions realised by some realtors, developers, and people from the municipal government were also narrated to me by other interviewees, for example the *ritualista* José (Ajijic 2008)<sup>73</sup> and the *comunero* “Alfredo” (Ajijic 2009).<sup>74</sup>

However, “Ana” also explains that not all construction plans were actually realised:

“Some constructions in process were stopped, for example the Mexican community protested and stopped the splitting of the Ajijic’s cemetery in two parts. This division of the cemetery was ordered by the American realtor Louis Wertheimer in order to connect two of his residential developments. People got angry because although they stopped the division of the cemetery, the cemetery was partially damaged (situation also mentioned by Talavera [1982: 56]). Also, the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* stopped the plans of constructing some residential developments on communal land during the 1990’s. The *comuneros* said to the authorities that Ajijic is formed of communal land so that any local development of this town must include the protection of its communal land” (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

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<sup>73</sup> I interviewed José in Ajijic in January 2008.

<sup>74</sup> Additionally, the *Manifiesto* of the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* of 1969 (in Talavera 1982) describes cases where there was not a negotiation with the farmers, but the invasion of their land by realtors and developers. For example, according to this *Manifiesto*, in 1957 the developer-realtor José Aguilar Figueroa took possession of 96.27.00 hectares of communal land, showing a “fraudulent title deed” (Talavera 1982: 147). In part of this land, the residential development *La Floresta* would be built. Also, Talavera (1982) mentions that the American-Jewish realtor and developer Louis Wertheimer from 1950 stripped native farmers of large extensions of land in a fraudulent way (Talavera 1982: 56).

“Ana”’s narratives on the one hand give account of how some realtors, developers, and people from the municipal government tried that farmers legitimise the construction of residential developments in their land. This attempt was done through these realtors’, developers’, and municipal authorities’ discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic (as a retirement destination), its local development (considered as the local economic benefits derived from shaping Ajijic into this way) and modernisation (considered as the construction of residential developments). On the other hand, “Ana”’s narratives reveal that the *comuneros* used discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic as *tierra comunal* and its local development (which includes the protection of communal land) to try that the municipal authorities legitimise their actions of counteracting or stopping the construction of some residential developments. In other words, in similar way that discourses about interpretations of Ajijic and its local development and modernisation are used to legitimise the construction of residential developments, discourses are also used to de-legitimise them and stop their construction.

Nowadays “Ana” considers that, except for the “abuses and illegal invasions” committed by some realtors, developers and people from the municipal government, Ajijic as a retirement destination is important for the local development and modernisation of this town. She explains:

“The situation that I used to, and realtors still do, advertise Ajijic as a retirement destination with the purpose of selling houses does not mean that the characteristics of Ajijic advertised in this image are false. Ajijic is beautiful and its characteristics must be advertised because this brings investment to Ajijic, which is good for the local development and modernisation of this town. For example, real estate and developer companies build residential developments, and realtors sometimes build single houses. One day, I bought a piece of land, where I let a house be built in order to sell it. In any case, the construction of residential developments or single houses not only brings local economic benefits, through jobs, investment, etc., that is to say local development. But also, this modernises the infrastructure of this town by bringing new houses, streets, and services. I am proud that I contributed to transform Ajijic into a retirement destination through constructing a house, working for real estate companies that build residential developments, and advertising Ajijic as a retirement destination on the internet and in talks. Realtors are very important for the local economy, however I have to admit that some realtors (she emphasised not all) committed invasions, abuses or illegalities against the poor local farmers when these realtors obtained their land” (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

However, the construction of Ajijic as a retirement destination also brought some transformation in the social relations of the residents of Ajijic. This is presented in the following section.

### **4.3. Transformation of the social life by the construction of Ajijic as a retirement destination**

The most significant social changes that occurred by the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination were the emergence of some mixed foreign-Mexican groups (linked to art, charity, business, etc.) and the emergence of land conflicts derived mainly from the invasions by some residential developments on communal land<sup>75</sup>. According to “Ana” (2008), during the 1990’s the invasions and land conflicts increased significantly.

Some narratives I collected from residents of Ajijic describe some specific changes in the social relation between some foreigners and the Mexican residents, and between some Mexican residents of Ajijic and residents of neighbouring lakeside towns:

“With the increase of foreigners and residential developments during the 1990’s, many more natives started changing their way of seeing the foreigners in Ajijic. They used to see foreigners as visitors and now they see them as bosses, or as possessors of local land and properties. This changed the relationship between the foreigners and those natives who became their employees because you know that you do not talk and treat your boss in the same way you do a visitor. Also, the 1990’s brought certain tension because many more natives changed from being the owners of their land to non-land owners employed by foreigners, receiving orders on what used to be their land” (Felipe, Ajijic 2009).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Talavera (1982) mentions that since the first decades when Ajijic started becoming a retirement destination some social changes occurred. For example he describes how invasions by realtors and developers on communal land not only brought land conflicts but also the alliance between realtors, the Ajijic’s Catholic Church, and the municipal authorities. According to Talavera, these actors supported each other against the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* during the land conflicts. As example, he describes how in 1961 the local Catholic Church tried to influence the opinion of its followers through supporting the local realtors and accusing the *comuneros* of being “communists” (Talavera 1982: 89).

<sup>76</sup> This quotation is my translation from Spanish. Felipe was interviewed in January 2009. He was born in Ajijic and he has been working as a housekeeper for foreigners for more than ten years. He also works as fresh fruit trader.

“The relationship between some people from neighbouring lakeside towns and us (the people from Ajijic) changed with the construction of houses during the 1990’s. Some people from neighbouring towns start calling us (the Mexican employees of foreigners) the ‘foreigners’ boot lickers’. Even though not all people from neighbouring towns think like that, this provoked certain rivalry for some, which is not good. However, in my case I do not care if someone calls me that because I know it is not true. At least in Ajijic people have some jobs working for foreigners. Even some people from these neighbouring lakeside towns work in Ajijic. By the way...this is another change, now for labour reasons, more people from neighbouring towns come here (Ajijic) to work together with us.” (Carlos, Ajijic 2009).<sup>77</sup>

Carlos (Ajijic 2009) adds some positive social changes that occurred mainly since the 1990’s. He mentions:

“Many foreigners in Ajijic like to do charity work. They have founded a lot of charity organisations that help the locals in all *La Rivera* (Chapala Lakeside). And even more important is that they organise frequent fund-raising events for charity in which they invite the locals to participate. Nowadays there are many events where you see foreigners and locals working together, as organisers and also as participants. Through this, some foreigners and locals have formed a close relationship, others do not, but at least they come and work together through these charity events, which is very important for the union of the inhabitants of Ajijic” (Carlos, Ajijic 2009).

Finally, another important social change that provoked the transformation of Ajijic during the 1990’s was the emergence of projects (apart from Ajijic being shaped into a retirement destination) where actors shape Ajijic differently. Some of these projects emerged as a counter-action to the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination and other do not counter-act it. In the following section I describe and analyse the practices with which actors carry out a project that counter-acts the land invasions provoked by the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination.

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<sup>77</sup> This quotation is my translation from Spanish. Carlos was interviewed in February 2009. He was born in Ajijic and he has been working as a gardener and as a plumber in several foreigners’ houses in Ajijic for the last seven years.

## 5. The project of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal*

In similar way that some actors construct residential developments, the *comuneros* create their own objects. I call the objects generated by the *comuneros* as “counter-objects” since they are created as an opposing response to the appearance of other objects (residential developments). A deeper explanation of this is presented in the following sub-section.

### 5.1. Discourses and tours to the “border signs” (counter-objects)

The *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* emerged as a legal entity during the Spanish colonisation of Mexico. According to the *Manifiesto* of the *Comunidad* (1969), King Charles IV of Spain granted the natives of Ajijic (also those from -San Antonio- Tlayacapan and Chapala) the land of their own town under the legal title of communal land. In this way, in Ajijic 2,358 hectares were titled as communal land in 1795 (Talavera 1982: 146 and 150). This land would be administrated under the communal system, which implies that the land’s benefits, possession or right of use belong to the group, the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*, and not to an individual (“Alfredo”, Ajijic 2008). The *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* and its communal land are legally recognised nowadays. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, with the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination, cases of invasions of communal land started occurring, and increased with the 1990’s boom in the construction of residential developments (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

The *comuneros*, unsatisfied with the official legal system that process their demands for recovering their invaded land, and in order to counteract these invasions, decided to paint signs on several big stones placed in different areas of Ajijic to represent border signs of their communal land. In January 2008, the *comunero* “Alfredo” invited me to see these signs. I accepted his invitation. On the way to see these, he explained to me that he frequently guides people to the border signs with the objective of explaining to them that Ajijic is formed of communal land and what the objectives of these signs are. Then, “Alfredo” told me that they made these signs based on their communal land’s map. According to him, they made these signs in order to achieve three objectives: 1) to show the boundaries of the communal land in order to avoid more invasions; 2) to “counter-attack” those invading residential developments through communicating to the Ajijic’s inhabitants that those residential developments have invaded communal land; and 3) to communicate to the Ajijic’s inhabitants the *comuneros*’ view of local development, which he refers as the growth of Ajijic inhabited by foreigners and locals, but including the protection of their communal land and tenure system. The second

mentioned objective is the main reason why I name these border signs as counter-objects to the construction of those invading residential developments. Below, the reader can see photos of two of the multiple border signs that exist in Ajijic.



Picture 3. One of the border signs for communal land made by the *comuneros* in the zone *El Tepalo* in Ajijic. Source: author.



Picture 4. Another border sign for communal land made by the *comuneros* in North-West Ajijic. Source: author.

Even though the multiple border signs placed in Ajijic and surroundings do not represent a significant transformation of the physical features of this town, they are counter-objects that play an important role in the current land conflicts. Through the border signs, and “Alfredo”’s discourses while showing of these signs to people, the *comuneros* not only generate public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic as *tierra comunal* and its local development. But also, through these counter-objects and discourses, the *comuneros* de-legitimise those invading residential developments through communicating to the public that these developments are illegally constructed on their land.

Interestingly, even though none of the signs has written on it that some residential developments have invaded communal land (most of the border signs has written on them only: “*Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*”<sup>78</sup>), these counter-objects are also symbols that communicate this message to some people. For example, some days before “Alfredo” took me to see the border signs I was having a walk with the *ritualista* José around the surroundings of Ajijic. During our walk we came across one of the *comuneros*’ border signs. When I asked José what that sign was about, he answered me that it was a border sign that symbolises the invasion by some residential developments on communal land<sup>79</sup>. Then, I asked José how he knew that, if the words written on the sign did not actually mean that. He answered that it was obvious. He explained to me that most of the natives in Ajijic know about the invasions of communal land because this is a very old problem in the town, which started more or less 50 years ago and which got worse during the 1990’s. He said that most natives know this was the reason why the *comuneros* made these signs and that it was not necessary to actually write or say it.

In this way, one of the messages that the *comuneros* want to communicate through their border signs, the denouncing that some residential developments have invaded communal land, was received by the *ritualista* José, and according to him also by most of the natives in Ajijic. This reveals one of the ways the *comuneros* denounce the invasion of their land, which is not realised through written<sup>80</sup> or oral communication, but through symbols<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> A few of these border signs include also the name of the zone where these are placed, for example the one placed in the zone *Tepalo* in Ajijic: “*Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic. El Tepalo*”.

<sup>79</sup> José mentions that even though the sign does not communicate which specific residential development(s) -from those surrounding the sign- is (are) invading communal land, the sign simply communicates that there is an invasion around it.

<sup>80</sup> Here, I mean that even though written words are part of the symbol, there was no need to write that “some residential developments have invaded communal land” to communicate this meaning.



Together, the border signs as symbols and the “Alfredo”’s discourses during his tours, also represent one creative and alternative way to denounce the invasions of their land, which according to “Alfredo” is more effective and faster than only using the Mexican legal system, which they consider slow. “Alfredo” explains:

“Through my tours to show the border signs, and the border signs themselves, every time we are letting more people know: that Ajijic is *tierra comunal*; what our view of local development is; that our land was illegally invaded long time ago, and that we have not yet received justice for the invasion. In this way, every time we receive support from more inhabitants of Ajijic. This is important because the more people that support us, the more pressure the local authorities get to solve our cases. For us this way is faster and more effective than proceeding only through the Mexican legal system, which is very slow. For example, it took 16 years for the tribunals to accept that two residential developments had invaded our land<sup>82</sup>. Many residential developments are actually invading our land, but they have only resolved in two cases so far, and for these two cases it took them 16 years!” (“Alfredo”, Ajijic 2008).

However, the increase in the construction of residential developments during the 1990’s not only brought invasions of communal land, but also the invasion of archaeological areas (*Teopantitla* and the zone of *La Piedra Rayada*) and some places considered relevant for the history and traditions of Ajijic (*los lugares tradicionales*). In the following section I describe and analyse the practices with which actors carry out their project of shaping Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. Like the *comuneros*’ project, this also counter-acts the land invasions triggered by the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination.

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<sup>81</sup> Even though I argue in this study that symbols can be read differently, there are also more or less common interpretations like in the case of José and other interviewees (e.g. “Ana”, Luis, Pedro, “Aurelio”, and “Oscar”) who, without being told by the *comuneros*, understand that the border signs symbolises the invasion by some residential developments on communal land.

<sup>82</sup> This case was also published in the local newspaper “*El Charal*” (2008). The note mentioned that The *Tribunal Colegiado en Materia Administrativa del Tercer Circuito* (tribunal for administrative matters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district) resolved that the residential developments named “*Lomas del Lago*” and “*Misión del Lago*” were built on communal land. The tribunal ordered the former local authorities (ex-mayor of Chapala, and others ex-civil servants, who authorised and granted the building permit at that time) to pay a fine of around five and a half million pesos to the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* for the invasion of its land. However, the *Comunidad* has still no answer to its question of why none realtor was fined in this tribunal resolution and why the tribunal resolved only two residential developments cases instead of all of those claimed by the *Comunidad*.



## 6. The project of shaping Ajijic into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*

### 6.1. Discourses and exhibition of “archaeological utensils” (counter-objects)

In November 2008, I interviewed Jesús López<sup>83</sup>, a researcher of Ajijic’s history, writer, and art painter native from this town, who considers Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. He explained to me that *Teopantitla* was a settlement inhabited by *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* in pre-Columbian times where Ajijic is now situated. He estimates that this settlement was located about 1.5 kilometres West from the centre of Ajijic. Also, Jesús explained to me that the *lugares tradicionales* are specific places in Ajijic that the native residents consider as important for the history and tradition of their community. He named some of these places: the zone of *La Piedra Rayada* (the carved stone), *Ojo de Agua* (the spring), *Arroyo Tepalo* (stream *Tepalo*), and *Cascadas Tepalo* (waterfalls *Tepalo*). According to Jesús, most of these places have been considered traditional since pre-Columbian times.

However, Jesús complains that during the 1990’s the zone where *Teopantitla* used to be situated and its archaeological ruins were destroyed and buried by the construction of residential developments. Invasion that Jesús assures occurred as well in many *lugares tradicionales*.

Jesús remembers that before the construction of residential developments on the former *Teopantitla*, he and his friends used to play in that area. There, he assures it was common to find archaeological utensils like handmade pottery, knives, and other small objects made of stone and clay. Particularly, Jesús remembers that one day he and his friends found an underground grave and a wall that, according to him, seemed to be part of a playground of an ancient sport. Jesús narrates that when he and his friends heard about the plans to construct a residential development on that place, they tried to stop the construction. However, in spite of their efforts, the construction of the development took place. Nowadays, in order to bring back the memory of *Teopantitla*, Jesús painted a mural where this pre-Columbian settlement

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<sup>83</sup> Jesús López is one of the most well-known art painters from Ajijic. He received his first painting lessons in the children’s art school of Ajijic founded by Neill James (the most famous foreign benefactor in Ajijic). After Jesús finished his courses at the art school and his posterior career on art, he decided to emigrate to US where he spent a large part of his life. Nowadays, he is once again living in Ajijic and working as art teacher and painter. In 2008, he had a position in the CCA (cultural centre of Ajijic). I interviewed Jesús in Ajijic.

is represented. This mural is exhibited to the general public in the *Centro Cultural de Ajijic* (cultural centre of Ajijic)<sup>84</sup>. The photo below shows part of this artistic creation.



**Picture 5.** Mural painted by Jesús López in the *Centro Cultural de Ajijic* in which he represented *Teopantitla*. Source: author.

Jesús mentions that the archaeological utensils that many people found in the zone of *Teopantitla*, before the residential development was constructed, are proof of the former existence of this pre-Columbian settlement. He mentions that many people still keep these utensils. One of these people is “Víctor”<sup>85</sup>, who I had met in January 2008, and who invited me to see the utensils he possesses. “Víctor” assured me that he would donate them if they had a museum in Ajijic.

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<sup>84</sup> The *Centro Cultural de Ajijic* (CCA) is an art gallery and school of multiple arts. This is placed besides the central *plaza* (square) of Ajijic.

<sup>85</sup> I interviewed “Víctor” in Ajijic in January 2008.

The day “V́ctor” showed me the utensils, I took a picture of them and I asked his permission to present the photo in my thesis, to which he agreed. The reader can see this picture below.



**Picture 6.** “Archaeological utensils” of the zone of *Teopantitla*, which is nowadays occupied by a residential development. Source: author (for privacy reasons parts of the picture were blurred by the author).

“V́ctor” told me that the archaeological utensils that he showed me are evidence of the former existence of *Teopantitla* which was invaded and destroyed by the construction of a residential development –as also mentioned by Jesús-. “V́ctor” also mentioned that other invasions have occurred in other *lugares tradicionales*.

Coincidentally, both, Jesús and “V́ctor” expressed sadness and complained about the authorities who had granted the permits to allow the construction of those invading residential developments.

Similar to the *comuneros* who created counter-objects (the border signs) as an opposing response to the construction of residential developments on communal land, Jesús created a mural and “V́ctor” adopted the archaeological utensils as counter-objects to the residential development built on *Teopantitla*.

The discourses from Jesús and “V́ctor” about the invasion of *Teopantitla* and other *lugares tradicionales* are practices with which they try to obtain public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. Also, the act of painting a

mural representing *Teopantitla* - Jesús- and “Víctors”’s exhibition of the utensils are part of these practices. Additionally, through these two actors’ practices they de-legitimise the construction of those invading residential developments.

However, *Teopantitla* is not the only archaeological zone that has been invaded by residential developments, also the archaeological zone of *La Piedra Rayada* -which is also considered as one of the *lugares tradicionales*- has suffered the same fate. This is analysed in the following section.

## **6.2. Discourses and tours to *La Piedra Rayada* (a counter-object)**

Like Jesús López and “Víctor” (in the previous section), “Juan”<sup>86</sup> also considers Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* and complains about the invasion of these places. In September 2008, “Juan” invited me to see *La Piedra Rayada*, which he assures is an archaeological monolith located in the zone of the same name. According to “Juan”, *La Piedra Rayada* was made by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* in pre-Columbian times. Based on his experience as an archaeologist, “Juan” explained to me that the zone of *La Piedra Rayada* (adjacent to Ajijic mountain) was probably one ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*. Additionally, he believes that *La Piedra Rayada* is a calendar for the rainy and agricultural seasons, which was used by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*. “Juan” narrated to me that the public could previously gain access to *La Piedra Rayada*, but that during the 1990’s developers constructed a residential development in this zone, making the monolith inaccessible to the public. These construction works caused that *La Piedra Rayada* is now trapped inside a private house.

The day when “Juan” and I went to see *La Piedra Rayada*, we walked along Northwest Ajijic trying to find the house inside of which this monolith is located. After walking for around 20 minutes, “Juan” found the house. I was expecting to see *La Piedra Rayada* from the street, but I could not since the house has a high wall at the front. Once outside the house “Juan” told me that he could not guarantee that we would get to see the monolith. However, he said that he would try his best. Then he knocked on the door and asked the person who opened the door politely for permission to enter in order to see *La Piedra Rayada*. However, that man refused “Juan”’s request explaining to us that he was only the housekeeper and that he had

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<sup>86</sup> I interviewed “Juan” in Ajijic in September 2008.

received orders from the house owner not to let people in to see the monolith. But, while the housekeeper was talking to us, I could see *La Piedra Rayada* through the open door. This was easy to see from the street due to its large size and because it was situated in the central garden of the house. The monolith was surrounded by small bushes and had a piece of a dried trunk of a tree attached. After some minutes, the housekeeper closed the door, and we left. “Juan” told me he was sorry we were refused entry to the house to see the monolith closely. However, he offered to give me some pictures of the monolith to show in my study. He mentioned that he had received these pictures anonymously by email. So, I accepted his offer. The reader can see these pictures below, which show the same monolith I saw from the street that day.



**Picture 7.** The archaeological monolith *La Piedra Rayada* inside private property. This is besides a pool and is surrounded by planted bushes. Source: anonymous (for privacy reasons parts of the picture were blurred by the author).





**Picture 8. Closer view of *La Piedra Rayada*. Source: anonymous (for privacy reasons parts of the picture were blurred by the author).**

“Juan” mentioned his concern that *La Piedra Rayada* is being damage by the humidity of the pool, by the roots of the planted bushes that surround it, and by the attached dried trunk. “Juan” said that the painted colours and some carved symbols on the monolith have faded due to lack of protection. For this reason, he explained, his priority is not only to make *La Piedra Rayada* accessible again for the general public, but also to place it in a protected environment as soon as possible. According to “Juan”, *La Piedra Rayada* is not the only case of public objects that have become inaccessible after the construction of residential developments in and around Ajijic. He added that the stones *El Caballo* and *La Piedra Bailadora* have also became lost.

Currently, “Juan” is organising a group of people that intends to make the monolith accessible to the public again and denounces the invasion of the zone of *La Piedra Rayada*. Over time, this group has acquired its own identity, and now its claim is recognised by the local

government. In November 2008 negotiations started between this group, the local government, and the owner of the house where the monolith is located, to find a solution to make this monolith once again accessible to the public.

In this way, through “Juan”’s discourses and adoption of a counter-object (*La Piedra Rayada*) to the invading residential development, he tries to get public legitimisation of this *lugar tradicional* of *Teopantitla* and to de-legitimise that residential development. So far, “Juan” has achieved certain level of public legitimisation, a group of people who support him has been created, this then has opened the possibility to negotiate with the local government and the owner of the house for the recovery of *La Piedra Rayada*.

### 6.3. Discourses and tours to *Ojo de Agua* (a contested-object)

Actors of the transformation of Ajijic do not only create (or adopt) objects and counter-objects separately like the white and black pieces in a chess game, but also some specific objects are overlapped in the physical construction of two different interpretations of Ajijic. One object can be created by an actor, who legitimises this object through his discourses about a certain interpretation of Ajijic, but later the same object can be transformed into a counter-object by another actor who legitimises this through discourses about a different interpretation of Ajijic. Since this is like a battle for transforming and re-transforming the same object, I call this as contested-object. The case of *Ojo de Agua* in the following section is a clear example of an object of this type.

#### 6.3.1. Guiding me to *Ojo de Agua*

According to Jesús López (Ajijic 2008), who was mentioned in sections before, *Ojo de Agua* is one of the *lugares tradicionales* that has been considered traditional since pre-Columbian times and that has historical relevance for the native community of Ajijic. He explains:

“The king of *Teopantitla* was the *Huei-Tlatuani* ‘*Cascalotzin*’, which means venerable crow. He had one daughter, *Xochipilli*, which means ‘small flower’. He also had one son, *Coyotzin*, who reigned over the territory of Tlaxomulco... One day, *Cascalotzin* was worried because his daughter went missing for a whole day, as frequently happened, so he ordered his guards to find her. She was found in the east of *Teopantitla* taking a bath in the very transparent waters of a puddle formed by a

spring. *Xochipilli* named this place *Atl-xik-xik* based on the sound made by the rain drops, and the water coming from the spring, falling into the puddle. *Atl-xik-xik* would be the origins for the name *Axixic*, which nowadays we know as *Ajijic*” (Jesús, Ajijic 2008).

Jesús complains that unfortunately *Ojo de Agua* has been also invaded by the construction of residential developments. Similar to the case of *Teopantitla*, in order to bring back the memory of *Ojo de Agua*, Jesús painted a representation of this historic place in a mural. This is exhibited publically in the *Centro Cultural de Ajijic*. In the picture below the reader can see part of this mural, where is represented *Xochipilli* taking a bath in *Ojo de Agua*.





**Picture 9.** Mural painted by Jesús López in the *Centro Cultural de Ajijic* in which he represented *Xochipilli* in *Ojo de Agua* (Atl-xik-xik). Source: author.

Some days after my talk with Jesús, I met Antonio López<sup>87</sup>, another art painter from Ajijic, who told me that some residential developments had invaded *Teopantitla*, two *lugares tradicionales* (*Ojo de Agua* and *Arroyo Tepalo*), and blocked the main entrance to another *lugar tradicional*, *Cascadas Tepalo*. He offered to take me to see these one Sunday morning, which I accepted.

First, we visited the place where *Ojo de Agua* used to be. This is in the north west of Ajijic. Nowadays, the neighbourhood in this place is called *Ojo de Agua*. When we arrived at a small manhole cover on the ground of a dirty alley between the residential developments I was surprised to see that this was the place with such historical relevance, as explained to me by Jesús. Antonio told me that the spring itself and the close surrounding area was known as *Ojo de Agua* and that in order to supply the residential developments with water the spring had been piped. He added that over the time the area has almost completely been invaded by residential developments and that the only thing that people can see from *Ojo de Agua* is a metallic manhole cover in the alleyway and the surrounding walls. The following picture shows the current shape of the historic *Ojo de Agua*.

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<sup>87</sup> Antonio López is one of the most well-known art painters from Ajijic and he is brother of Jesús López. Antonio was born in Ajijic and received his first painting lessons in the children art school of Ajijic founded by Neill James (the most famous foreign benefactor in Ajijic). After Antonio finished his courses, he and other children were sponsored by Neill James to continue studying art in the “*Instituto Allende*” (art school) in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. Then he worked in INBA (national institute of arts) in Mexico City. He has exhibited his art in different galleries in Mexico, Canada, US, and some European countries. Nowadays, he works as art teacher and painter in Ajijic. I interviewed Antonio in Ajijic in November 2008.





**Picture 10.** The historic *Ojo de Agua* converted by residential constructors into a metallic manhole cover in an alley of Ajijic. Source: author.

Antonio explained to me that in order to counteract this transformation of *Ojo de Agua*, recently a group of art painters in Ajijic and the *Centro Cultural de Ajijic* created a project to transform this alley (where the spring used to be) into an art passage. Antonio showed me how many of the most famous painters of Ajijic have already painted the walls of this alley with artistic murals. However, Antonio complained that unfortunately Ajijic has the problem of drug addicts and *pandillas* (gangs) among some of its young inhabitants and that the alley has been affected by it. He explained that since drug addicts and gang members have been coming to this alley, there has been trash on the ground and graffiti sprayed over the murals and that this is one of the reasons why not many people come to see the art passage. Nevertheless the project continues. Some pictures of the art passage are presented below.



**Picture 11.** The art passage in *Ojo de Agua*. In the picture it is possible to read: “(my translation from Spanish) The cultural centre (CCA) rescuing the people’s historic spaces; respect them, take care of them. *El Ojo de Agua*”. Source: author.



**Picture 12.** The art passage in *Ojo de Agua*. Source: author.

In a later interview I held with “Tomás”<sup>88</sup>, one of the members of the *Ojo de Agua* gang that had sprayed graffiti over these murals, he explained that they *grafitearon* (sprayed graffiti over) these walls to show that this neighbourhood is their territory. He mentioned that gangs in Ajijic use graffiti to mark their territory and, in this way, to avoid problems between them. The members of one gang cannot do certain things in other gang’s territory, he explained. He gave me as an example, that if a *tecolutero* (member of the gang *tecoluteros*) sprayed graffiti, stole something or robbed or beat somebody in *Ojo de Agua*, they (the gang *Ojo de Agua*) would beat this *tecolutero* for disrespecting their territory.

The special features of *Ojo de Agua* bring some important analytical considerations. These are mentioned in the following sub-section.

### 6.3.2. The contested-object as the materialisation of a social interface

The case of *Ojo de Agua* is special because it shows us the actions of different actors on this single contested-object. First, according to Antonio, the traditional *Ojo de Agua* was one of the *lugares tradicionales* and this was frequently visited by the native population due to its natural beauty and historical relevance. That is to say, *Ojo de Agua* was in public possession. Then, *Ojo de Agua* was transformed by other actors, the realtors and developers who constructed residential developments on it, from a spring into a new object (a metallic manhole cover in the ground of an alley). Then, the group of art painters, which is formed mainly by natives, re-possessed the same object, transforming it into a new one: an art passage. And finally, there is another actor who joins the contest for *Ojo de Agua*, the *Ojo de Agua* gang. Even though Ajijic’s gangs are not recognised as central actors in Ajijic’s land conflicts, the *Ojo de Agua* gang plays a central role in determining if the painters’ project of the art passage succeeded or not. This is because this gang has the capacity to shape the art passage through graffiti and trash, and the capacity to keep some visitors away from this place.

The case of *Ojo de Agua* also shows how the different actors’ interpretations of Ajijic clash or overlap in this specific contested-object. First, it was built a residential development that invaded the spring *Ojo de Agua*. The municipal government, realtors, and developers used discourses about Ajijic as a retirement destination to try to obtain public legitimisation of this

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<sup>88</sup> I interviewed “Tomás” in Ajijic in November 2008.

construction (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008). Then, Antonio and the group of art painters transformed *Ojo de Agua* and try to get public legitimisation of this through discourses about Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. Finally, the *Ojo de Agua* gang transformed this place and tries to legitimise this through discourses in which the members of the gang interpret this place as part of their territory. In this way, the case of *Ojo de Agua* also reflects the clash of different life-worlds, for example that of Antonio, in which the task of rescuing places with historical relevance for the population acquire special importance, and that of “Tomás”, which is engaged with the gangs’ life and rules.

In summary, *Ojo de Agua* represents the materialisation of a social interface (Long 2007), that is to say, the points of contradiction between the different, and frequently incompatible, actors’ life-worlds (Long 2007) are materialised in the physical features of this contested-object. The relevance of *Ojo de Agua* is that through this single contested-object we can see different people’s projects and interpretations of Ajijic -part of their life-worlds- in contest, which reveals the importance of considering the actors’ heterogeneity if we want to understand the process of transformation of Ajijic.

In the following section I present another case of *lugares tradicionales* invaded by residential developments.

#### **6.4. Discourses and tours to *Arroyo Tepalo* (a counter-object)**

After visiting *Ojo de Agua*, Antonio and I continued our walk towards the next *lugar tradicional* which is in the north east of Ajijic: *Arroyo Tepalo*. Antonio explained that *Arroyo Tepalo* was a stream that people used to visit due to its natural beauty. There, according to him, people used to picnic or spend their leisure time. However, he complained that unfortunately both banks of this stream were invaded by the construction of two residential developments and the streambed is now used as deposit of construction debris. In this way, he assures, the local community have lost another *lugar tradicional*.

Antonio further explained that the invasion of *Arroyo Tepalo* also blocked the main access to another *lugar tradicional*: *Cascadas Tepalo* (waterfalls *Tepalo* -in the mountain of Ajijic-). He mentioned that in former times people used to walk along the banks of the stream to reach the waterfalls, but this is not possible anymore due to the invading residential developments. Antonio said that it is still possible to walk through the streambed in order to reach *Cascadas Tepalo*, however he highlights that one can only access it during dry seasons and that this is a



very risky task. The latter is because along the streambed there is a lot of construction debris and loose stones, which could cause accidents to the people trying it. Then, Antonio invited me to walk the streambed with him in order to prove to me exactly what he was saying. So we did it very carefully and I confirmed what Antonio had said. In the streambed we found debris, dead animals, and loose sand and stones that made it difficult for us to pass through. I testified that definitely walking through the streambed is very risky. In the following picture the reader can see the bed of the stream (in a dry season). In this picture is possible to see the walls of the two residential developments invading the banks of the stream and Antonio trying to walk along the dry streambed.



**Picture 13.** The former stream *Arroyo Tepalo*, now in between the walls of two residential developments and used as a deposit of construction debris. Source: author.

When I asked Antonio who responsible for the invasions of the banks of *Arroyo Tepalo* was, he explained that the foreign retirees (main inhabitants of these residential developments) are not responsible for this, but the local authorities who granted the realtors and developers the permits to construct residential developments on this place.

Finally, Antonio has adopted *Ojo de Agua* and *Arroyo Tepalo* as counter-objects (even though *Ojo de Agua* is also a contested-object) and through his tours to see them and discourses, he tries to get public legitimisation of Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*, and public de-legitimisation of the invading residential developments. However, in the case of Antonio, the invasion of *Arroyo Tepalo* not only blocked his access to this place, but also changed his relationship with this place. This is explained in the following section.

## **7. Transformation of the relationship between people and place**

The increase in the construction of residential developments during the 1990's not only brought changes in the social relations between some inhabitants of Ajijic (Section 4.3), but also a change in the relationship between some inhabitants and the place in which they live.

The narratives of some people interviewed in this study give account of this. For example, Felipe explains:

“Before the 1990's increase in the construction of residential developments, some natives used to be the owners of some land in Ajijic, with which they used to have a close relationship. For example, they used to decide when to cultivate their land and how to treat it in order to produce food and conserve it in good conditions at the same time. For many farmers in Ajijic the land was not simply a tool to produce food. They venerate their land. Some used to perform rituals in which they venerate their land. Some used to pray for their land. Their land was part of their lives and their ancestors' lives. Suddenly, all this has gone. During the 1990's, many farmers lost their land. Some of them sold it because their need of cash forced them to do so, others did not want to sell it, but they were forced to do so or were dispossessed. In this way, many of the farmers became employees: gardeners, housekeepers, bricklayer, etc. on the same land they used to own. Through this, they lost control over the land on which they work every day, thereby also losing their close relationship with their land” (Felipe, Ajijic 2009).



The narratives of Antonio also give account of how the construction of residential developments in *Arroyo Tepalo* changed his relationship with this place. He explains:

“When I was young, I used to visit *Arroyo Tepalo* frequently; I had good times there, like many other people. When the residential developments invaded the banks of that stream, the people, including myself, stopped visiting that place. In my case, I do not like going there anymore because I really get sad when I see how that beautiful place was transformed into an abandoned deposit of construction debris and dead animals. Now, the only times I visit this place is when I show somebody how this place was transformed” (Antonio, Ajijic 2008).

Carlos also mentions a change in his relationship with *Teopantitla*. He explains:

“A long time ago, I used to picnic in the zone of *Tepantitla*. My family and I really used to enjoy visiting this place. However, when this place was covered by residential developments, I could not visit this place anymore. Nowadays, I try not to pass by this place. I get angry if I do. I get angry because I know that the history of our town was buried under those luxury houses. In a similar way to when the Spaniards destroyed the Aztec temples and built Catholic churches over them in order to hide all traces of the Aztec culture, now residential developments are built over historic places of Ajijic. Nowadays, it is not that they want to hide the history of Ajijic, but that they do not care about the history of this town, the authorities are only interested in the economic profits that the construction of houses brings” (Carlos, Ajijic 2009).

The narratives of Antonio and Carlos show us that the invasion of land by residential developments not only meant for them the loss of their access to specific places, but also altered their affective relationship with these places and the actions they perform towards these. For example, after the invasion of *Arroyo Tepalo*, for Antonio this *lugar tradicional* passed from being a place that used to give him good times to a place that makes him feel sad. Additionally, for him *Arroyo Tepalo* passed from being a place that he used to visit frequently to a place that he has stopped visiting (except when he takes somebody to see the invasion). Another example is that of Carlos. For him *Teopantitla* passed from being a place that he used to enjoy to a place that makes him feel angry. In addition, for him *Teopantitla* became a place that he tries to avoid.

However, the affective relationship between people and objects (in this case, places) not only influences the people's actions of visiting or not visiting these. As I will present in chapters 4 and 5, affective relationships between actors and objects also influence the practices with which actors shape Ajijic.

## 8. Conclusions

Taking into account the empirical cases presented in this chapter, I conclude that people's interpretations of a place are: heterogeneous; shaped by social interactions and by how people experience their world; processes in continuous transformation; and part of people's agency. The latter characteristic is very important because actors use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic (and in some cases also of its local development and modernisation) to try to get public legitimisation of the objects they create or adopt. With these objects actors transform the physical characteristics of Ajijic through their different projects. The most relevant case is the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. In this project, realtors, developers, and the municipal government use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic and its local development and modernisation to try to obtain public legitimisation of the construction of residential developments they realise or support.

However, as the reader saw in this chapter, other actors have created projects that counter-act the invasions of communal land, archaeological zones, and *lugares tradicionales*, derived from the project of shaping Ajijic as a retirement destination. These projects are that of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal* and that of shaping it into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. Through analysing the practices of actors of these two projects we can see that they not only use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic (and about Ajijic's local development, in case of the *comuneros*), but also counter-objects and a contested-object. These objects are used to try to legitimise their interpretations of Ajijic and projects and to delegitimise some objects of the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination (the invading residential developments). Even though these counter-objects and contested object do not represent a significant transformation of the physical characteristics of Ajijic - as the construction of residential developments does -, these reveal how actors materialise land conflicts through their practices of using objects. The materialisation realised by actors through the projects presented in this chapter has transformed not only the physical characteristics of Ajijic, but also the social life of this town. This chapter presented how apart from the emergence of land conflicts, also social groups emerged, for example the group

formed by art painters who look for “rescuing” *Ojo de Agua* and the group for recovering *La Piedra Rayada*. In addition, the narratives of some interviewees give account of a change in the social relations between some residents of this town, and in the relationship between some people and different places of Ajijic, which consequently has affected the way these people act towards these places.

In summary, this chapter presented two important tools with which different actors fight for the transformation of Ajijic in the context of the global phenomenon of the IRM: the practice of using discourses about the interpretation of Ajijic and that of using objects. With these practices actors not only transform the features of Ajijic and its social life, but also counter-act and stop the transformation of Ajijic that other actors realise. One example of the latter is how *comuneros* used discourses to de-legitimise and stop the construction of some residential developments in communal land (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

More practices and projects, which have an important influence in the transformation of Ajijic in the context of the IRM phenomenon, are presented in the following chapters.

## Chapter 3

# Discourses and objects in the commoditisation of features of Ajijic. Governmental development interventions in the context of the IRM

### 1. Introduction

In the context of the IRM phenomenon, the municipal government of Chapala carries out two projects that try to achieve what is referred by the municipal mayor as “local development”. These projects are that of shaping Ajijic as a retirement destination and that of shaping the municipality (including Ajijic) as *playa de mar* (beach resort). The first started being implemented mainly in the 1990’s and the second since around 2006. From all the projects that have shaped the features of Ajijic, these two projects have transformed this town the most. This chapter explores how actors in these projects use discourses and objects to transform Ajijic, focusing in how they commoditise<sup>89</sup> the features of this town as a retirement destination and the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*. The commoditisation of these features contributes to the materialisation of the retirement destination and the *playa de mar* in the landscape of Ajijic.

In summary, the present chapter brings multiple contributions to our understanding of two issues: 1) how actors use objects and discourses to transform Ajijic through processes of commoditisation; and 2) the role of governmental development interventions in the context of the IRM. In this way, the present chapter contributes to answer my research questions: 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon? And 2) How do actors use discourses and objects to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic? And, it answers my research questions: 3) How have actors materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have shaped this town the most? And 4) What is the role of the municipal government’s development interventions in the transformation of Ajijic?

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<sup>89</sup> The process of commoditisation is explained in section 2.

## **2. Commoditisation**

A notion that is useful for this chapter is that of commoditisation. This is explained by Long (2007) as follows:

“By ‘commoditisation’ we mean the processes by which the notion of ‘exchange-value’, not necessarily at the expense of ‘use-value’, comes to assume an increasingly important evaluative and normative role in the discourse and economic life of a given social unit (e.g. household, village, region or national economy). Unlike the notion of commercialisation, which addresses itself to the processes by which products acquire exchange-value through market relations, commoditisation is broader in scope since it applies to all the different phases of production and reproduction. Hence commoditisation covers not only the processes by which goods are valued in the market, but also how commodity values and relations shape consumption, production, distribution, exchange, circulation and investment patterns, cultural values and behaviour” (Long 2007: 185-186).

Even though this notion may not fit exactly the cases presented in this chapter, it is useful to describe the process in which actors not only grant exchange value<sup>90</sup> to the features of this town as a retirement destination and the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*. But also, to describe the commoditisation as a process that is shaped by actors through their social encounters of interests, wishes, and how they imagine the ideal community. The process of commoditisation is realised by actors through several phases: production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption. The relevance of the commoditisation process is that it acquires importance for actors in their discourses and in the way they experience and transform Ajijic and the municipality. The different phases of the commoditisation process are analysed in the following sections.

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<sup>90</sup> In this study, by “granting exchange value” to the features of Ajijic/municipality I make reference to simply the actors’ action of considering and treating these features as a tradable objects, which they can produce, objectify, commoditise and consume -as commodities-.

### **3. Discourses and objects in the commoditisation of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination**

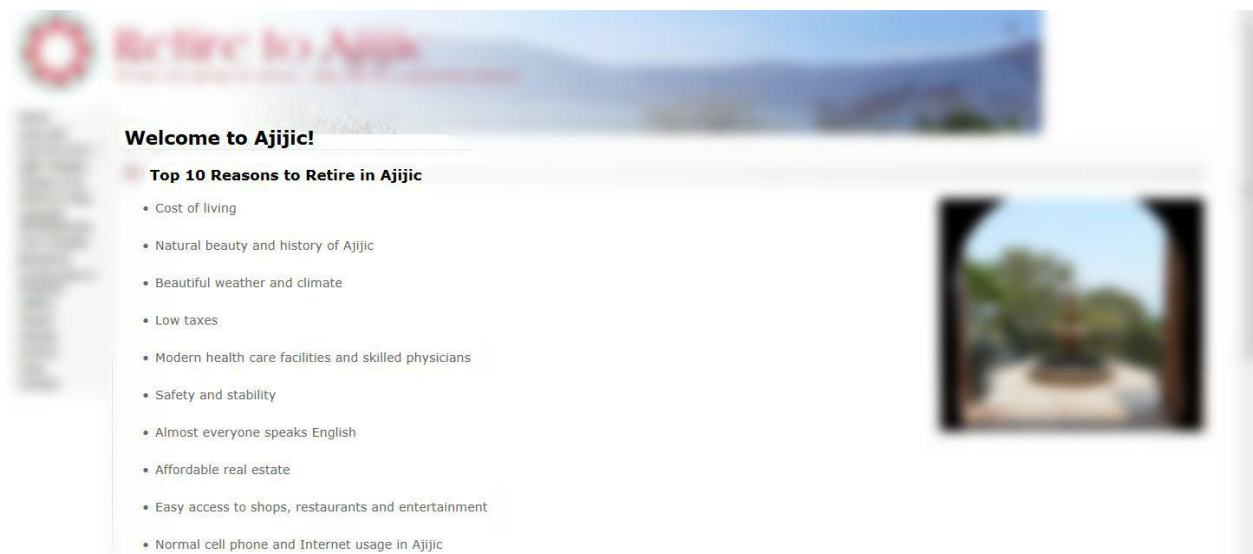
#### **3.1. The realtor in the phases of production and objectification**

In Chapter 2, the reader could observe what the main characteristics of the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination are. However these raise one question: how come these characteristics became part of this interpretation of Ajijic? In the interview I held with the former-realtor “Ana” (Ajijic, 2008), she tried to answer my question. She explained:

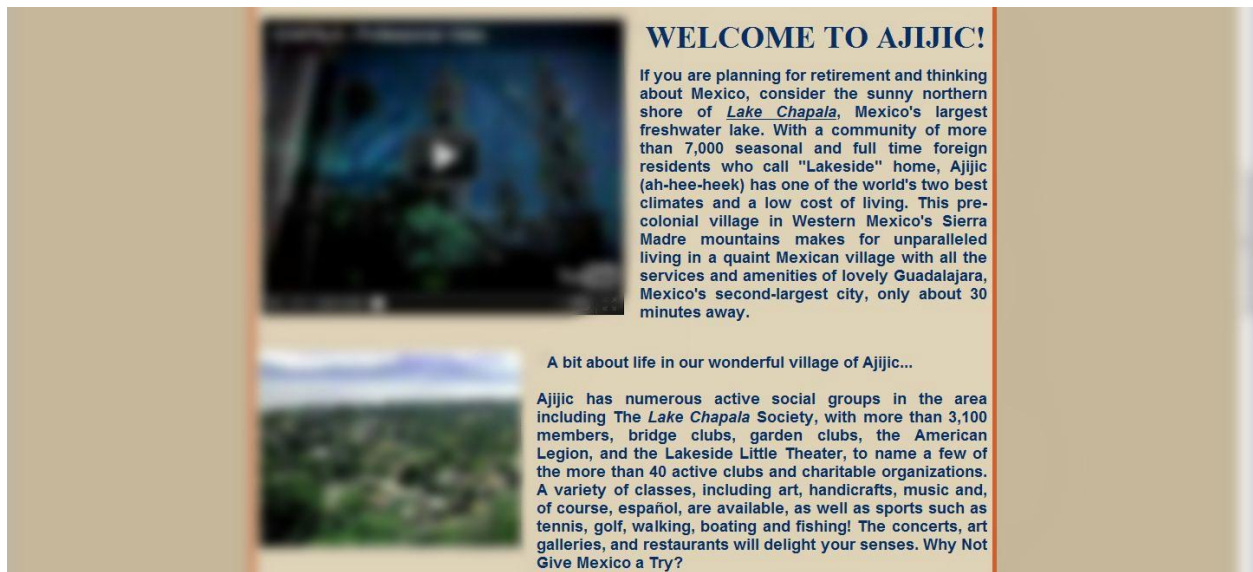
“Through time, real estate companies in Ajijic realised that for many clients the characteristics of Ajijic are as important as the characteristics of the house they want to buy. For example, when I used to be realtor, many foreigners arrived in Ajijic and the first questions they asked me were more about the characteristics of Ajijic than about the houses: ‘is it true that the English writer D.H. Lawrence used to live here and that this town was his source of inspiration for his book “The Plumed Serpent”? Is it true that this town was ranked by the National Geographic as the place with the second best climate in the world? Is it true that I can buy imported American food here, and pick up American TV channels and internet? Is it true that in Ajijic there are private elderly homes, hospitals, sport and social clubs for foreigners? Is it true that the cost of life here is cheaper than in US and Canada?’ Some visitors were more interested in the weather while others in the retiree-oriented infrastructure or other Ajijic’s features. Due to the importance that clients give to these characteristics of Ajijic, real estate companies started investing money not only on constructing and designing houses based on the clients’ wishes expressed in the introduction talks (“introduction to Ajijic” talks), but also on advertising these characteristics of Ajijic through their webpages, booklets, introduction talks, etc. Definitely these characteristics have helped real estate companies sell houses in Ajijic. Based on my experience as a realtor, I can tell you that this image of Ajijic also contributed enormously to the 1990’s boom of retirees coming to Lakeside, and indirectly to the boom in the construction of residential developments and infrastructure for retirees [...] Summarising, realtors are indeed selling two products: one is real estate and the other is this image of Ajijic as a retirement destination” (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

The “Ana”’s narratives show that the advertised characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination are not only determined by the real estate companies. Indeed, this is a result of the encounters between realtors and newcomers in the “introduction to Ajijic” talks. In other words, the features advertised globally of Ajijic as a retirement destination are formed by some characteristics of this town selected by realtors according to their and newcomers’ interests, wishes, and how they imagine the ideal retirement community. However, realtors use their agency when selecting the characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination. Some characteristics of Ajijic are purposively omitted, for example the land conflicts and the existence of juvenile gangs, which (as the reader saw in Chapter 2) are part of the characteristics of this town. This is because the inclusion of these characteristics could hinder the realtor’s objective of attracting real estate buyers into Ajijic. So far, the reader can realise that the characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination are socially shaped and purposively selected as part of realtors’ agency.

In the pictures below, the reader can see some characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination advertised by real estate companies in their webpages.



**Picture 14. Fragment of a real estate company’s webpage. In this, Ajijic is advertised for its: “cost of living” (assumed cheaper than US & Canada); “Natural beauty...”; “Beautiful weather and climate”; “Modern health care facilities...”. Some parts of the picture were blurred by the author to protect the identity of the company. (Accessed: April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012).**



**Picture 15.** Fragment of a real estate company’s webpage. In this, Ajijic is advertised by its following features: “(placed in) the sunny northern shore of Lake Chapala, Mexico’s largest freshwater lake”; “... has one of the world’s two best climates and a low cost of living”; “... quaint Mexican village with all the services and amenities of lovely Guadalajara (the capital city of the state)...”; “Ajijic has numerous active social groups (and clubs)”. Some parts of the picture were blurred by the author to protect the identity of the company. (Accessed: April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

However, real estate companies are not only selecting the existing characteristics of Ajijic to be advertised, but also they are creating some of these characteristics. For example, they construct residential developments and houses, which are designed according to the newcomers’ interests manifested in the “introduction to Ajijic” talks. Furthermore, they create booklets and internet webpages that show these features of Ajijic. In this way, the socially shaped features of Ajijic as a retirement destination come into a phase of objectification. Here is where clients discourses pass through a realtor’ selection process and then turn into objects.

Additionally, the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination and its characteristics have no a fixed shape. “Ana” explains:

“The clients were not always looking for the same characteristics of Ajijic. Most of the clients are foreigners, and the kind of foreigners coming to Lakeside has been changing through the years. The first foreigners to arrive to Lakeside were mostly artists and intellectuals. Generally they liked to interact with the natives and they were more interested in getting involved with the Mexican culture. For example, they ate Mexican food, attended traditional Mexican celebrations, lived close to the native



fishermen and farmers, etc. They were not looking for imported food, US' TV channels, or 'gated communities'. They wanted to experience the Mexican life. However, nowadays, there are different types of foreigners, and some of them are not interested in interacting with the natives or learning about the Mexican culture. Some of them like to live physically and socially separated from the natives, to eat only imported food from US or Canada, to watch US' TV channels, etc. For this reason, adapting to this situation, nowadays real estate companies highlight in their advertisements that in Ajijic you can find imported food and international TV channels. Also, these companies offer different styles of houses for all these different types of foreigners, ranging from the traditional Mexican house surrounded by cobbled stone streets to a modern or Californian style house or one inside a 'gated community'<sup>91</sup>. In this way, throughout the years, new characteristics have been added to the image of Ajijic, for example: the multiple styles of residential developments, the retiree-oriented infrastructure, and the services like those found in a city" ("Ana", Ajijic 2008).

As we can see in "Ana"'s explanation, since clients' interests differ (e.g. the foreigners who want to interact with the native population and those who do not) and change through time (e.g. previously imported food was not demanded by foreign retirees, but nowadays it is), consequently the features of this interpretation of Ajijic also change. Realtors have been adapting these features to the changing needs of their clients. In this way over the years, realtors and real estate companies have also been adapting the houses they sell, and so consequently transforming part of the physical characteristics of Ajijic. In other words, the encounters of realtors and clients, and their changing interests, wishes, and imaginations about the ideal community, have an important influence on keeping the Ajijic's landscape in a more or less continuous transformation. This is realised through the phases of production and objectification.

In the following sub-section I present the role of the realtor in the subsequent phases of the process that experience the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination: commoditisation and consumption.

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<sup>91</sup> Even though, as "Ana" mentions, there are some foreigners who look for "gated communities" because they like to live physically and socially separated from the natives. It is important to mention that there are also some foreigners who have decided to live in "gated communities" because these are assumed as more secure, or because these offer a better view of the Lake, among many other reasons.

### **3.2. The realtor in the phases of commoditisation and consumption**

One important aspect of the “Ana”’s narratives is that these show how the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination is also commoditised when realtors treat it as a tradable object. As she mentioned: “realtors are indeed selling two products: one is real estate and the other is this image of Ajijic as a retirement destination”. Furthermore, this interpretation of Ajijic has properties of a commodity. Real estate companies participate in the production of it, invest in it, advertise it, sell it (especially to the clients who are more interested in these features of Ajijic than the house they buy), and gain profits from it through the sale of real estate.

Additionally, realtors also participate in the process of consumption of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination. “Ana” explains:

“Around half of the realtors in Lakeside are foreign retirees who themselves bought the image of Ajijic as a retirement destination. For that reason they are here. In fact, they still consume this image of Ajijic. They use the services that are part of the retiree-oriented infra-structure and some of them are even buyers of the houses they sell. I am one of them. When I arrived in Ajijic for the first time, I initially rented a house. Then, I started working as realtor. Later, I bought one of the houses that I was selling, which has been my home ever since” (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

So far the reader has seen the realtors’ role in the process of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination. However, since the role of the clients is also central in this process, I analyse this role in the following sub-section. For this I present the case of Caroline, one realtor’s client.

### **3.3. The realtor's client in the process of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption**

#### **3.3.1. Painting in "Mexican style" the house of Caroline**

During my fieldwork in Ajijic, I met Caroline<sup>92</sup> in the Lake Chapala Society, she is a retiree from US, 61 years old, and she moved to Ajijic in 2005. Even though Caroline is not member of the LCS, she likes to visit this place once in a while to have a coffee and chat with other people on the LCS' patio. Like many foreigners in Lakeside, she is a "snowbird". She spends winters in Ajijic and the rest of the year in US.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2008, I went to interview Caroline at her home. That day in her house, before the interview started, she showed me the Mexican handy craft and art that decorate her living room, where the interview would take place<sup>93</sup>. She said proudly that she had collected all those items because she likes the Mexican culture. Also, she was wearing a traditional Mexican dress, which is in Mexico known as the traditional dress of *Tehuana*<sup>94</sup>.

Twenty minutes into the interview, somebody knocked on her door. She stood up and went to see who it was. Due to the closeness of her living room to her front door, I overheard that she was trying to speak Spanish with the man who was at her door. I listened and heard the man did not seem to understand what Caroline was saying. So, I stood up and walked towards the door in order to offer Caroline help with the communication, which she accepted. Standing at Caroline's door was a man with several cans of paint on the floor. He said to me that he had been hired a day earlier by Caroline to paint her house's façade, but that he did not understand the instructions that Caroline was giving him. Then Caroline asked me to tell the painter to use brighter colours than those he had with him. She said she wanted bright colours like those of the Mexican houses. She was insisting on having her façade painted in "Mexican style". After I had translated Caroline's wishes for the painter, I realised that the painter actually understood very well that Caroline wanted brighter colours, however he was confused about

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<sup>92</sup> I interviewed Caroline in July 2008, in Ajijic.

<sup>93</sup> Among these items, there were figurines made of *papel mache*; wooden *alebrijes* (a type of Mexican handy craft) from Oaxaca; diverse handy craft made by the *Huichol* (Mexican ethnic group); and art paintings hanging on the walls, representing the landscapes of some Mexican towns.

<sup>94</sup> This type of dress is commonly worn by the women from the *Istmo de Tehuantepec* (region in South Mexico).

Caroline wanting her façade painted in “Mexican style”. The painter told me that most of the houses he knows are not painted in bright colours. At that moment I felt trapped between the Mexican painter’s and Caroline’s understanding of “Mexican style”. It was evident that the painter’s view of “Mexican style” was different to that of Caroline. Everything was still in confusion until Caroline brought out a Magazine and showed us a picture that was in it. She said it was an American magazine with a picture of a house in Ajijic. The façade of that house was painted entirely in bright colours and its façade even had some artistic flowers painted on it as decoration. Caroline showed the magazine picture to the painter and me and told me that that was how she wanted her façade painted. So the painter again looked at the colours of the house in that photograph and asked me to inform Caroline that he would go to buy the paints in those exact colours. The painter said that he would return later with the paints she wanted. After the painter had left, Caroline and I returned to her living room, where we continued our interview. However, curious about why Caroline wanted her façade painted in what she referred to as Mexican style, I asked her reasons, to which she replied:

“I didn’t like sending the painter back to the paint store, but I really want to have my facade in Mexican style. This was one of the reasons why my husband and I came to Ajijic. We wanted to retire in one of these small and traditional Mexican towns and to live in one of these colourful Mexican houses that we saw in the Magazines. We found information about Ajijic on the internet and in magazines and we realised that this was the town that we were looking for. We want to live in the environment and life of Mexican towns, you know, the colourful houses, the cobblestone streets, horses in the streets, nice people, peace and tranquillity. We are paying for having this house here and for living in this Mexican environment” (Caroline, Ajijic 2008).<sup>95</sup>

Through the Caroline’s narratives we can see how she got engaged with some characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination advertised on the internet and in magazines. Specifically she mentioned some features which are also advertised by realtors in Ajijic through their “introduction to Ajijic” talks and their webpages. These characteristics are Ajijic as a “traditional Mexican town”, with “colourful houses”, with “cobblestone streets”, etc. Additionally, one interesting thing is that Caroline also perceives this interpretation of Ajijic as an object which can be bought, as a commodity, especially when she refers that they

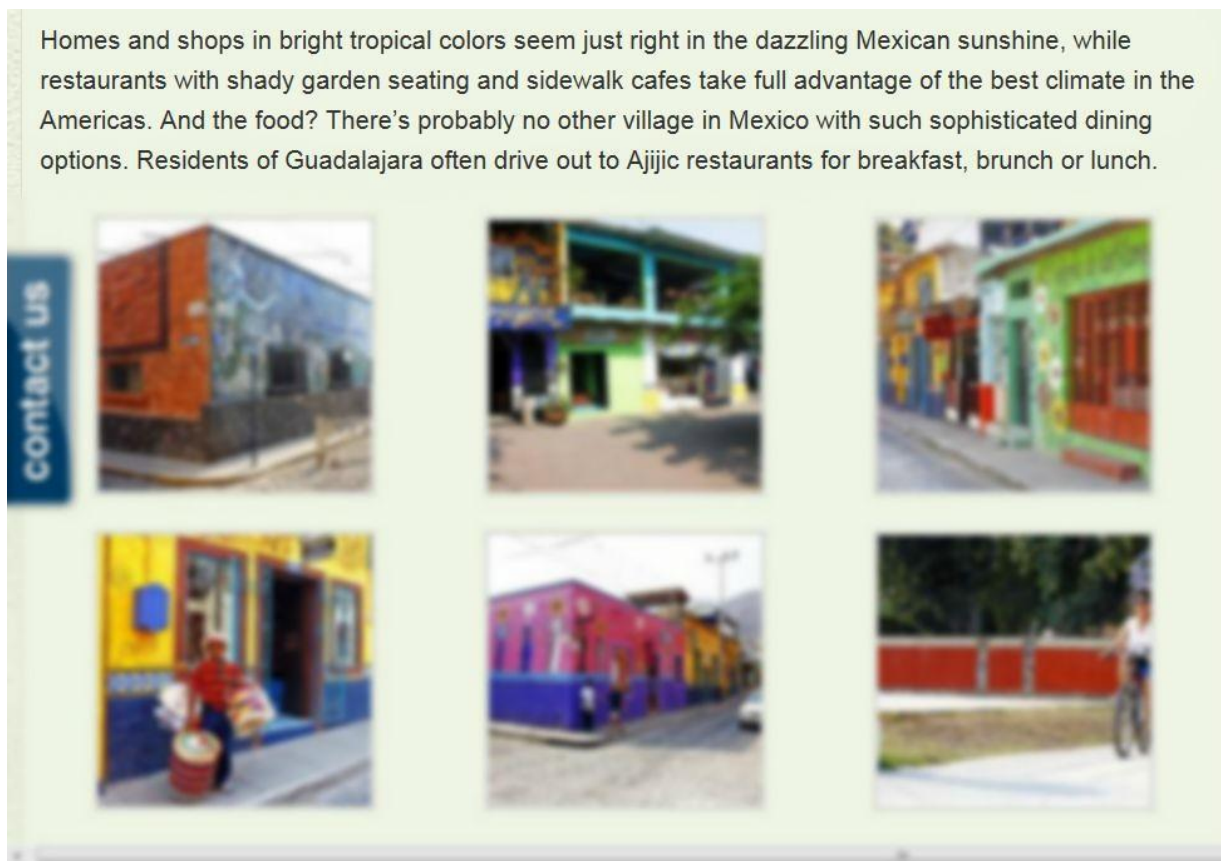
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<sup>95</sup> Since the whole situation with the painter was interesting for me, I asked her permission to present my narration about this incident and her narratives in the present study, to which she agreed.

(Caroline and husband) are “paying [...] for living for living in this Mexican environment (the colourful houses, the cobblestone streets...)”.

Also, through Caroline’s practices we can see how she consumes the components of this image of Ajijic that she and husband bought, for example through what she refers as “to live in the environment and life of the Mexican towns”, through decorating her house with Mexican handy craft and art, dressing in traditional Mexican clothes, or painting her house in a colourful “Mexican style”.

In the picture below the reader can see some characteristics of Ajijic as a retirement destination as advertised on a real estate company’s webpage. In this picture is also possible to read how some colourful facades of Ajijic are portrayed as an attraction of this town.



**Picture 16.** Fragment of a real estate company’s webpage. In this, Ajijic is advertised by its following features: “Homes and shops in bright tropical colours...”; “... best climate in the Americas”; among other. Some parts of the picture were blurred by the author to protect the identity of the company. (Accessed: April 12, 2012).

Additionally, during my interview with Caroline, I asked her if Ajijic met her expectations; she answered:

“Indeed, I like many things in Ajijic, however there are several things that I didn’t expect from here. For example, my Mexican neighbour has some roosters in his yard and sometimes they crow in the very early morning. I don’t like it because the roosters wake me up too early. Also, during the festivities of the town, people use fireworks which are so loud; when the rockets explode they scare me. I feel very tense during those days [...] After the rockets have exploded, the remaining sticks of these rockets come down and they can hit you. This is really dangerous; the government should forbid the use of these rockets. Another thing that I don’t like is that there are many mobile stands that sell *tacos*<sup>96</sup> in the streets of Ajijic. It is ok when they (the *taco* sellers) cook meat, but when they cook guts I don’t like the smell, it is disgusting! I didn’t know that in Mexico some people like to eat *tacos* of guts. On the corner near the first house we bought here (in Ajijic), there was a guy selling *tacos* six days a week, and every time he cooked guts, the smell drifted into my house. It was terrible. We couldn’t stand it, after the first weeks we were fed up as I’m not used to this smell, for me it is physically impossible to handle. I was experiencing frequent nauseas. This smell forced us to move from that house to this house. Here we don’t have the smell problem” (Caroline, Ajijic 2008).

The case of Caroline also shows us what happen when the image that she found on internet and magazines, which she and her husband bought, is not the one she found when she was established in Ajijic. This reveals disconnections between the constructed image of Ajijic as a retirement destination flowing globally through communication media and some characteristics of the everyday life of this town such as some sounds (e.g. of roosters, rockets, etc.) and smells (e.g. of cooking guts). Caroline’s case also reveals the relevance of bodily senses in the process of consumption of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination. For example it is through Caroline’s bodily senses, specifically hearing and smelling, that the clash between the globally advertised image of Ajijic and the daily life of Ajijic occur.

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<sup>96</sup> *Taco* is a traditional Mexican dish made of tortilla (flat-round-bread made with dough, generally of maize) rolled or folded around a filling. Some examples of the filling could be: cooked meat(s), beans, or seafood. Most of the times, this filling is also garnished with vegetables, such as chopped onion and cilantro, and a sauce(s). In Mexico, the *taco* is considered a staple, and this can be easily found in the kitchen of many houses, in restaurants, or in mobile stands in the streets throughout Mexico.

Additionally, it is through her sense of smell how she became affected by some of the features of Ajijic (the smell of cooking guts) which made her move from her first house. The case of Caroline is also considered in Chapter 5, where I analyse the importance of bodily sensations in actors' agency.

Another important point in the Caroline's case is that through her practices like decorating her house with Mexican handy craft and art, dressing in traditional Mexican clothing, or painting her house in a colourful "Mexican style"; she is producing and objectifying her own image of Ajijic. She materialises in this way, as much as possible, her imagined Ajijic over the Ajijic she found and that does not match exactly with her wishes and expectations.

In sum, through Caroline's practices we can see how clients of realtors also take a role in the phases of production, objectification, commoditisation and consumption of the features of Ajijic.

However, real estate companies (through their realtors) and their clients are not the only actors in the process of production, objectification, commoditising, and consumption of features of Ajijic, so are the municipal government of Chapala. In the following section, I describe how members of the government of the municipality of Chapala are producing, objectifying, commoditising, and consuming the features of this municipality as *playa de mar* (beach resort).

## **4. Discourses and objects in the commoditisation of the features of the municipality as *playa de mar* (beach resort)**

### **4.1. The phases of production and objectification and its obstacles**

In parallel with the municipal government's project of shaping the municipality as a retirement destination, the government has designed another project. Since around 2006, aiming to attract more foreign retirees and tourism into this municipality, the government has been carrying out his *Plan de Desarrollo Urbano* (plan of urban development), which includes the shaping of the lakefronts (and other areas) of the municipality as *playa de mar*. Since that year, the government has invested in transforming lakefronts into seafronts. For this, seashore beach palms have been planted on the shores of several lakeside towns -and in

other places of the municipality- and sea beach sand has been placed along several shores of the lake.

According to the mayor of the municipality of Chapala (2008)<sup>97</sup>, one of the objectives of transforming the municipality in this way is to offer a sea-like beach close to Guadalajara (capital of the state -ca 50 km away-). This is mainly to appeal those tourists (and foreign retirees) who do not want to travel longer distances to reach the closest sea beaches (ca 300 km away) from Guadalajara. The mayor implies that the increase in the number of visitors within the municipality would bring local economic benefits.

However, the transformation of lakefronts into seafronts has found two major obstacles in its process. The first obstacle is the people manifesting their opposition to the government's actions of planting seashore beach palms instead of trees, and there has been even more opposition to the replacement of the existing trees for palms. For example, some protests among the inhabitants of Ajijic started when in the first week of May 2008, the authorities from the Municipality of Chapala ordered the felling of the trees that were in the front of Ajijic's cemetery and planted beach palms as replacement.

Some days after the trees were felled, I decided to go to the cemetery to see these newly planted beach palms. There, I came across a group of people in the entrance of the cemetery protesting against the planting of those palms. Since I had my audio recorder with me I decided to conduct a very short and informal interview with one of the protesters, Miguel. I asked him why they were protesting. He answered:

“We are protesting because the municipal government felled the trees that we used to have here and planted these horrible palms [...] It is amazing how local authorities of Chapala cut the trees down during the night, like delinquents, when everybody is sleeping, to avoid people stopping them. Now we have lost the nice shade from those trees. Palms do not give enough shade. Under the shade of those trees people used to meet after burials. Now this will not be possible, in the summer people will have to leave the cemetery immediately after the burial because the sun is very intense then and there will not be enough shade for them to stay here” (Miguel, Ajijic 2008)<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Chapala mayor's speech at the inauguration of Chapala's lakefront in July 2008.

<sup>98</sup> This is my translation from Spanish. Miguel was interviewed in May 2008.



When I asked Miguel why the municipal government ordered to cut the trees down, he answered:

“This is because the municipal government has the crazy idea of transforming the municipality into a beach resort to bring development into the municipality. I do not like this because this is transforming not only the shores of lakeside towns, but also their streets. Palms are not only planted on the shore, as you can see they are also planted in the cemetery. Besides, they not only plant these horrible palms, but also cut our trees down, which took many decades to grow [...] They (the municipal authorities) are changing our nature, they are replacing the natural plants and the soil from this place for something from elsewhere, they are bringing beach palms and sand from distant places. I prefer the Ajijic in which I was born, that of big trees and shade in its streets. We will try to stop the governmental project of replacing our trees for beach palms” (Miguel, Ajijic 2008).

As the reader can realise, the Miguel’s group emerges as opposition to the planting of palms and replacement of trees for palms (part of the governmental project) and, as mentioned by Miguel, his group will try to stop these governmental actions.

Additionally, there is another obstacle for this governmental project. This is the assumption, among many visitors, that the Lake Chapala’s pollution level is harmful for humans, which causes some visitors to avoid swimming in the lake and, to a much lesser extent, eating its fish<sup>99</sup>. The latter is sold in different restaurants, stands, and other places along Chapala Lakeside.

According to Ríos *et al.* (2009) Lake Chapala pollution started around 50 years ago with the industrialisation of the country, when the lake started receiving industrial discharges from the area and from other Mexican states through rivers that flow into this lake. Since then, there has been a debate about the pollution level of Lake Chapala’s water. This debate has been feed by studies revealing the existence of different pollutants in the lake, at un-harmful levels for human health, but also by studies revealing the opposite. The following are some relevant examples:

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<sup>99</sup> This view is shared by most of my interviewees in Ajijic, for example: José, “Ana”, Carlos, Felipe, “Alfredo”, among others.

- In 2001 a study was published that showed the existence of mercury (considered toxic -in high levels- for humans) in the fish caught in Lake Chapala, this study was carried out by the researchers Ayla and Ford from the School of Medicine of Harvard University –US- (Ayla and Ford 2001).
- In 2008, a study realised by a team of experts from US and Mexico<sup>100</sup> showed that “for swimming” water, from 16 sites analysed in the north west of Lake Chapala (including the lake waters of Chapala and Ajijic), only one site exceeded the limit of units of *Fecal Coliform Bacteria* (FCB) -this site is in the lake waters of San Pedro Tesistan-. The 16 sites were below the limit of FCB for “raising fish” (aquaculture). Regarding the pollution of these sites by pesticides, herbicides, and heavy metals, the same study mentioned that the levels of these pollutants are so low that do not represent any hazard for recreational use of the water (e.g. swimming), and that the lake’s water could even be used -after processing- as drinking water. The study adds: “In general, if the fish come from Mezcala and westward (North West of the lake), consumption, even daily, poses a very low hazard, if you do not eat the gills, heart, liver and kidneys (of the fish)”. In this study a comparison is made: “In the USA, the top 100 beaches for recreation (e.g. swimming) exceed the recreational full-body immersion criteria (200 units of FCB/100ml [US regulations]) 25% of the time”.
- In 2009, academics from the universities of Guadalajara and Guanajuato (Ríos *et al.* 2009) published a study that showed that the bed and water of Lake Chapala were polluted to levels toxic for any living organism and the environment. The pollutants present were: phosphorus, fluorine, sulfur, and solid waste coming from fertilisers and municipal and industrial discharges. This study took samples from 13 sites of Lake Chapala at different depths of the water.

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<sup>100</sup> In the study participated: Dr. Todd D. Stong (US); Engineer Maria Aparicio; M. Andrea Leal (TPCCA); Mtra. Elena Tolentino; Chemist Norma Huerta (QSB); and Sergio Ortega (MS). According to this study: water samples were collected at points beyond the lake edge where the water depth was one meter; the water samples were taken at a point 30 cm beneath the water’s surface; and the evaluation of water quality was as per Mexican standard NOM-003-ECOL-1997, which specifies a maximum count of 240 FCB (*Fecal Coliform Bacteria*)/100ml in water samples for “full-body immersion water recreation” (e.g. swimming), and a maximum of 1000 FCB/100 ml for “aquaculture” (e.g. raising fish). This study also mentioned that the samples were taken from the lake water of the following lakeside towns: San Nicolás de Ibarra, Chapala, Ajijic, Piedra Barrenada, San Juan Cosalá, El Chante, Jocotepec and San Pedro Tesistán. For more details about the study see: Stong, T. D. *et al.*; “Coliform Bacteria Testing of lake Chapala Shores”; March 2008, published in internet at: <http://www.amigosdelago.org/news/ColiformTesting-e.htm> (Accessed: April 2011).

- In 2010, a study realised by researchers from institutions of Mexico and US<sup>101</sup>, shows that after analysing 92 women of reproductive age, who live in Lakeside towns of Chapala and consume fish from this lake, 27.2% of them had high concentrations of mercury in their hair (more than 1 ppm).
- In 2011 (March 31<sup>st</sup>) it was publically announced by Lakeside mayors, a congressman, and other participants<sup>102</sup> that the human consumption of fish from Lake Chapala does not represent any health risk. The event took place in a public tasting event of Chapala's fish realised in the patio of the Jalisco State congress. This announcement was based on two studies realised since May 2010 to analyse the methylmercury in the carp fish of the Lake<sup>103</sup>.

In Ajijic, most of my interviewees<sup>104</sup> coincide in that, apart from the lake's water studies, there are multiple ways through which visitors perceive the pollution of Lake Chapala, which discourages them from swimming in this lake or to consume its fish. For example, they mentioned that some visitors consider Lake Chapala to be polluted because this is a topic that has been spread via the communication media for decades or due to the continuous presence of *lirio* (aquatic lily) on the surface of its waters<sup>105</sup>.

However, independently whether from the studies of the lake's water, the communication media, or the presence of *lirio*, the fact is that due to pollution concerns, there is mistrust among some visitors about swimming in, or eating fish from, the lake. Mistrust that has been

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<sup>101</sup> This study was realised by researchers from: Mount Sinai School of Medicine (US); IMTA (Mexican Institute of Water Technology); INSP (National Institute of Public Health, Mexico); and the Jonsson-Rowland Science Center (US). The study was published as: Trasande *et al.*; "Methylmercury exposure in a subsistence fishing community in Lake Chapala, Mexico: an ecological approach"; *Environmental Health (magazine)* (9:1); January 2010.

<sup>102</sup> The public tasting event of Chapala's fish was organised by Lakeside's mayors, the congressman Hector Alvarez, Dr. Todd D. Stong (retired engineer from US, now established in Ajijic), and the Fishermen's Cooperative of Lake Chapala.

<sup>103</sup> In these studies participated: SAGARPA-Jalisco (state office of the ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food); CIATEJ (centre for research and assistance in technology and design of the state of Jalisco); SS-Jalisco (state office of the ministry of health); and Paragon Labs (US). SAGARPA took 180 samples of the fish from different zones of the lake. Separately, the study led by Dr. Todd D. Stong, took over 30 days 250 fish from 25 different points of Lake Chapala, which were analysed by CIATEJ and Paragon Labs (Ramírez 2011; Álvarez 2011).

<sup>104</sup> For example: José, "Ana", Carlos, Felipe, "Alfredo", among others.

<sup>105</sup> According to Ríos *et al.* (2009), the pollution by phosphorus, fluorine, sulfur and solid waste coming from fertilisers and municipal and industrial discharges causes an over production of *lirio*, which is floating in the waters of Lake Chapala.

present for several decades and still continues. For this reason, the municipal project is not only focused on transforming the lakefronts into seafronts, but also on re-gaining the trust that visitors used to have about swimming in the lake or consuming its fish before the pollution concerns started. This re-gaining of the visitors' trust is essential for the success of this governmental project, otherwise: how attractive can a beach be in which people cannot enter the water or eat the freshly caught fish? In the following paragraphs the reader can see how the mayor and the civil servants of the municipality of Chapala try to overcome the above mentioned obstacle in the inauguration of the sea-designed front of Chapala.

## **4.2. The phases of commoditisation and consumption**

### **4.2.1. The inauguration of the seafront of Chapala. An event to legitimise the transformation of Chapala and Ajijic**

During my fieldwork in Ajijic I met Luis<sup>106</sup>. He lives in Ajijic, but he works in the town of Chapala. Since he commutes Monday to Friday to Chapala, he is usually acquainted with the events that occur in this town. One day, Luis told me that some of his friends, who are civil servants of the municipality of Chapala, had invited him to an event in which they were partly involved in the organisation. It was the inauguration of the first stage of the re-designing of the lakefront in this town, which took place in the last week of July 2008. As Luis knew about my role as researcher, he invited me along to this event; he said that in that way I could know more about the events that occur in the administrative centre of the municipality. Luis said that the inauguration would be open to the public and that as part of this event there would be a swimming contest in Lake Chapala. He also mentioned that the mayor of Chapala would receive the State Jalisco governor, the mayors of other lakeside towns, and other distinguished guests from Guadalajara.

On the day of the inauguration, Luis and I went to the town of Chapala. People had started gathering at the lakefront since noon. There was, as part of the event, an exhibition of pictures of the progressive stages of re-designing the Chapala's lakefront over the last years. Some people were looking at these pictures, while other people were just waiting for the ceremony

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<sup>106</sup> I interviewed Luis in Ajijic, in June 2008.

to start. Later, the host took a microphone, and welcomed the audience, among whom, he mentioned: the local authorities from other lakeside towns, entrepreneurs from Chapala, and foreign and Mexican inhabitants of Lakeside. After the welcome words, the host announced that the inauguration ceremony would start soon. However, this did not happen, the opening of the ceremony was delayed. While the audience was waiting, the carnival's queen arrived and some people were taking pictures of her. Later, a foreigner started singing songs of Frank Sinatra in order to entertain the audience. After some time, the host took the microphone again and made an announcement to the audience appealing for their patience and inviting them to take some free snacks of *ceviche*<sup>107</sup> and caviar prepared with fish from the lake, which were prepared especially for this event. Some people went to enjoy the snacks, among these people Luis recognised his friends, the civil servants of the municipality of Chapala. Luis greeted them and introduced me. Then, Luis asked them why the inauguration was delayed, they answered that it was because the governor of Jalisco was having a tour by boat along the different lakeside towns. They informed us that the boat, called *Fiesta Lago de Chapala*, had been inaugurated one month before as one of the new attractions of Lakeside.

After talking with Luis' friends, Luis and I went to see the exhibition of pictures of the Chapala's lakefront. There, Luis told me that one of his friends was not only helping in the organisation of the event, but also participating in the swimming contest realised in the lake.

Finally, one hour and a half later, around 1:30 p.m. the governor of Jalisco, Emilio González, his wife, and other authorities from the state arrived. On the lakefront they joined the mayor of Chapala, Gerardo Degollado, and (according to Luis) the mayor's wife and a journalist.

Then, the mayor of Chapala took the microphone to welcome the governor and authorities from the state, the former mayors of Chapala, mayors of neighbouring municipalities, and the workers who re-designed the lakefront. He also thanked, in English, the group of Mexican and foreign retirees of Chapala for contributing in the re-designing of the lighthouse (which is on the pier of the lakefront), and for bringing some ideas to the lakefront project. During the mayor's speech, he mentioned that the change to the image of Lakeside in the last year and a half had increased the visitors in this area. The mayor also mentioned some achieved goals reached by his administration<sup>108</sup>. When the mayor's speech ended, the governor of Jalisco

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<sup>107</sup> In Chapala Lakeside, *ceviche* is a dish prepared basically with chopped fish meat, chopped vegetables (generally tomatoes and onions), and some species. In Mexico, the way of preparing this dish and its ingredients varies from place to place. Besides Mexico, this dish is also prepared in other Latin-American countries.

<sup>108</sup> Among these, he mentioned the re-opening of the traditional restaurant-bar "Beer Garden" on the lakefront, the refurbishing of some old houses and public places in the town of Chapala, and the construction of the retaining wall, which

took the microphone. The governor started talking about his reminiscences of Chapala, in the times when the water of the lake was cleaner and when fishers could catch *pescado blanco* (white fish, which have become extinct in this lake). However, he explained that now the lake's water is being cleaned due to municipal and state efforts. Luis told me that those efforts are the construction of a wastewater treatment plant and the removal of *lirio* from Lake Chapala<sup>109</sup>. Also the governor mentioned that he had ordered the start of a breeding project for *pescado blanco* in Tizapan (lakeside town) in order to have this fish again in Lakeside. The audience gave the governor a big applause.

After the speeches finished, the mayor was talking in front of the press' cameras inviting all people to come to the municipality of Chapala and to the Lakeside area, always highlighting that the municipality, with the support of the governor of Jalisco: has been cleaning the Lakeside shores and the water of Lake Chapala; has redesigned several lakefronts in different lakeside towns; and is constructing more parking lots in Chapala for the visitors who come by car. In addition, the mayor mentioned that the new lakefront of Chapala is ready to receive visitors from everywhere, and that this is a good opportunity for those who want to enjoy a beach resort. At the end, the mayor mentioned Chapala as the best opportunity for people who do not want to spend several hours on the road getting to the sea beaches of Jalisco because, according to him, now people can experience a sea beach (the municipality) just 45 minutes from Guadalajara.

Then, the inaugural ribbon of the lakefront was cut by the governor and the mayor, who were surrounded by a group of photographers from the press and other communication media. After that, they cut a ribbon symbolising the re-opening of restaurant-bar "Beer Garden"<sup>110</sup>, which is located on the lakefront. Then the mayor and governor walked to the edge of the

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protects the cars driving along the Jocotepec-Chapala's road (in the part of Chapala) from rocks falling down from the mountain.

<sup>109</sup> According to Luis (Ajjic 2008), the local government cleans the lake of *lirio* because this plant gives a polluted appearance to the lake, making the lake less attractive for foreigners and tourists, and hindering the activities of foreigners, tourists and locals, like sailing, swimming, fishing, etc. Luis mentions that the eradication of *lirio* from the lake's water has been a goal of past mayors of Chapala in the last decades, and that this goal has never been totally achieved. Luis says that the fishermen, the government, or even NGOs have cleaned the lake of *lirio* before, but that their actions keep the lake clean only for a period since this plant soon spreads again. This happens, he assures, because the pollution of the lake has never been stopped. He mentions that if there is pollution, there is *lirio*.

<sup>110</sup> This restaurant-bar has mainly become known since the 1960's. There, the musician Mike Laure used to play his tropical songs, which became nationally famous, also contributing in this way to the fame of the Chapala's beauty, town that is mentioned in some of his songs. In those times, many people from Guadalajara used to come to this bar in order to dance and/or enjoy Mike Laure's music. However, once this musician left Chapala over the years the Beer Garden lost its popularity. Now, the re-opening of this bar became part of the municipal project.

lakefront where they placed the first brick to symbolise the start of the second stage of this re-designing project. As final activity, they visited the lighthouse on the lakefront pier, the walls of which are decorated with artistic murals, painted by the local artist Miguel Mora, representing different periods of Chapala's history. After this visit governor and mayor left and the inauguration came to an end.

The description in this chapter of the inauguration of the first stage of re-designing the lakefront of Chapala is important because this shows elements of the phases of commoditisation and consumption of the characteristics of the municipality as *playa de mar*. This is analysed in the following sub-section.

### **4.3. The process of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption**

The shaping of the municipality into *playa de mar* follows a process of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption. I explain the whole process as follows:

First, the interpretation of the municipality as *playa de mar* is produced. This was designed by the municipal government and, as the mayor mentioned, by some Mexican and foreign inhabitants of Chapala, who after contributing in re-designing the lighthouse, brought some ideas to re-design the lakefront. In this way, the interpretation of the municipality as *playa de mar* became part of the municipal *plan de desarrollo urbano* (plan of urban development). Second, this specific interpretation of the municipality is objectified or materialised. Some examples are the transformation of the lakefront of Chapala into a seafront; the plantation of beach palms or the replacing of trees for palms (as in the case of the Ajijic's cemetery); and the placing of beach sand along the shores of several lakeside towns. Third, there is a commoditisation of the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*. The municipal government (together with multiple actors) produced the interpretation of the municipality as *playa de mar*, invested in it, advertised it (through the inauguration and mayor' and governor' speeches), and get profits from it through the local economic benefits brought by the increase of visitors in the area. Fourth, the features of the municipality as *playa de mar* are also consumed. In the inauguration, we saw how the governor and civil servants from Chapala consumed publically some components of the municipality as *playa de mar* in order to advertise them. For example, the governor was using (publically) the facilities of the new sea beach Chapala Lakeside area (e.g. taking a tour in the recently inaugurated *Fiesta Lago de Chapala* boat). Also, among other people, civil servants of the municipality of Chapala (Luis'

friends) were consuming fish from the lake in front of the audience (the snacks of *ceviche* and caviar). Additionally, according to Luis, one of them was participating in the swimming contest in the Lake. In this way, through the inauguration, civil servants consume features of the municipality as *playa de mar* in front of the audience, the press, and communication media. Through these actions, civil servants send the message to the public that the municipal government is so sure about the safe levels of pollution of the lake that even members of its government swim in the lake and eat its fish<sup>111</sup>. In this way, the municipal government attempts to overcome one of the obstacles to the tourist and foreigners consumption of the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*: the still existing assumption among visitors that the pollution levels of the lake are harmful for humans, which has been discouraging some of them from swimming in the lake or from eating its fish.

Sometime after the inauguration of the seafront of Chapala, the transformation of the lakefront of Ajijic into a seafront started being realised (the reader can see pictures of these “seafronts” in the last page of this chapter).

In the following section, I analyse the two municipal projects tackled before and the contribution of this analysis to the understanding of governmental interventions in the context of the IRM phenomenon.

## **5. Governmental interventions in the context of the IRM**

According to Habermas (1975), the state - through its government - in capitalist societies creates the conditions to capital accumulation by its intervention in the economy (e.g. through taxation, control of inflation, credit, currency exchange, among other ways). However, he adds that creating the conditions to capital accumulation also generates “dysfunctional side effects” - which could affect the state welfare and social governmental programmes. In order to avoid these side effects, he claims, the state also intervenes in the market by, for example, guiding capital investments, regulating the market competition, and making arrangements

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<sup>111</sup> Another example of public consumption of fish from Lake Chapala is that mentioned in past sections, which was organised by Lakeside’ mayors, state Congressmen, Dr. Todd D. Stong, and members of the Fishermen’s Cooperative of Lake Chapala on the patio of the state congress building.



with corporations. In this way, Habermas highlights the relevance of the state' (or governmental)<sup>112</sup> intervention in the economy and market of capitalist societies.

As the reader saw in Chapter 1, Ajijic (and its municipality) has been affected mainly by two governmental interventions. At national level, the adoption of neoliberal policies and other economic reforms, including the signing of the NAFTA. And at municipal level, the municipal government's project of local development and modernisation that involves the shaping of Ajijic into a retirement destination. Additionally, the present chapter shows that since around 2006 there has been another intervention from the municipal government. This is the *plan de desarrollo urbano* that involves shaping the municipality into a *playa de mar*'s landscape. Both municipal interventions have been announced through governmental political discourses as oriented to bring what is interpreted as "local development".

Taking into account Habermas' view on governmental interventions, the present chapter shows some important considerations. Following Habermas, the role of the direct interventions of the government in the economy and market plays an important role in the transformation of capitalist societies. As the reader saw in Chapter 1, in Mexico, the national government's intervention carried out through the adoption of neoliberal policies and other reforms in the national economy and market during the 1990's facilitated the transformation of the municipality of Chapala -mainly Ajijic-. However, at municipal level the municipal governmental interventions adopted different characteristics. As it was presented in this chapter, in the context of the IRM phenomenon, the municipal government initiatives were not a direct interventions in the local economy and market (different from Habermas' assumption), but interventions through the transformation of the local landscape. Even though the objective of the transformation of the landscape is to bring what is referred as "local economic benefits", the landscape became the path to governmental interventions. The cases presented in this chapter are two examples of this: the municipal government's project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination; and a clearer example is the direct intervention of the municipal government on shaping the municipality's landscape as *playa de mar*.

Another consideration is that what Habermas assumes to be governmental (or state) interventions, in the case of Ajijic, and the municipality, these interventions are not

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<sup>112</sup> According to Althusser (1971: 137), state is not the same as government. He mentions that the Marxists classics consider the government as one of the institutions that form the "machinery" of the state. However, I use the term "governmental intervention" instead of what Habermas calls "state intervention" because it is the government who is the implementer of "state" interventions, and because the first term offers more clarity to my analysis in the case of Ajijic/municipality of Chapala.

completely governmental. Even though the government played an important role in the creation of these initiatives, this chapter shows that there are multiple actors involved in the production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption of the features of Ajijic or the municipality created through these initiatives. The participation of these multiple actors in the mentioned phases makes possible the materialisation in the local landscape of the two interpretations of Ajijic or the municipality promoted in these projects.

## 6. Conclusions

The first conclusion of this chapter is that actors have materialised the interpretations of Ajijic as a retirement destination and the municipality (including Ajijic) as *playa de mar* through processes of commoditisation which entails several phases: production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption.

However, the interpretations of Ajijic/municipality inherent in the municipal projects are not created only by the government. These interpretations are socially constructed. For example, the globally advertised features of Ajijic as a retirement destination are formed from realtors' and newcomers' interests, wishes, and how they imagine the ideal retirement community. This is an interpretation socially created, even though realtors use their agency to select which features are advertised and which are not. Additionally, some of these features did not emerge from Ajijic, but were incorporated by realtors through considering the global flows of retirees' interests, wishes, and imaginations about the ideal retirement community (e.g. stores selling imported food from US and houses in Californian style). In this way, the landscape of Ajijic contains features that come from this town and others that come from global flows of people, who have arrived in this place through the IRM phenomenon.

Similar situation have occurred with the interpretation of the municipality as *playa de mar*. This was designed by multiple actors, including the municipal government and the group of Mexican and foreign retirees of Chapala. The latter group contributed through bringing some ideas to transform the lakefront into a seafront, according to the mayor of Chapala. In this way, the physical features of the municipality as *playa de mar* represent interests, wishes, and how the ideal retirement community is imagined by not only members of the host community, but also of members of the foreign community.

Another conclusion is that the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination are not fixed, but that these are part of a process in transformation. Through realtors' agency, this interpretation

of Ajijic is continuously adapted according to the changing context. However, since this changing interpretation is being objectified by real estate companies and realtors, so the physical features of Ajijic are also being transformed continuously through the years. These are shaped by changing local and global interests, wishes and ways of imagining Ajijic.

Another conclusion is that Ajijic as a retirement destination is a special type of commodity. On the one hand, real estate companies produce it (together with other actors), invest in it, advertise it, sell it, and get profits from it through the sale of real estate. On the other hand, clients pay money for it and consume it through different practices. The case of Caroline shows how she consumes this interpretation of Ajijic through living what she calls “the Mexican life”. This is done by her through, for example, decorating her house with Mexican handy craft and art, wearing a traditional Mexican dress, and painting her house in “Mexican style”. That is to say, she consumes this image of Ajijic through using some objects (e.g. Mexican decorations and dress) and creating new ones (e.g. the facade in “Mexican style”) that for her represent the image of the place she and her husband bought. However, through using and creating objects, she is also transforming the features of this town. For example, now she wearing traditional Mexican clothes, and her colourful facade in “Mexican style”, have become part of Ajijic’s features. In this way, the case of Caroline shows that clients play a role in the process of production, objectification, commoditisation and consumption of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination. This takes us to question the common view of considering companies as the only actor who produce and objectify commodities and the clients as the only ones who buy and consume these. The case of the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination reveal a new type of commodity in which companies (through their realtors) and clients are involved in its process of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption.

I conclude that there are disconnections between the interpretation of Ajijic as a retirement destination flowing globally through communication media and the characteristics of the everyday life of this town. And, it is through clients’ bodily senses that the clash between the globally advertised interpretation of Ajijic and the daily life of this town (see the case of Caroline) can occur. In this way, people’s bodily senses are shown to play a role in the process of consumption of the features of Ajijic and in the people’s agency when facing the clash of interpretations of Ajijic.

Regarding the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*, these are also produced, objectified, commoditised, and consumed by multiple actors. Additionally the case of *playa de mar* shows the relevance of actors’ practices of using public events (the seafront

inauguration), discourses, and certain practices of consumption (having a tour in boat, swimming in the lake, or eating its fish) to achieve at least two objectives: 1) to try to overcome an obstacle (the assumption of the lake as having harmful levels of pollution) to the materialisation of the municipality as *playa de mar*; and 2) to advertise the municipality as *playa de mar* like a consumable commodity.

Finally, the analysis of the two municipal projects presented in this chapter show some relevant considerations about governmental interventions in the context of the IRM phenomenon. Following Habermas' view, the role of the direct interventions of the government in the economy and market plays an important role in the transformation of capitalist societies. In Mexico, definitively the national government' intervention in the economy and market during the 1990's facilitated the transformation of Ajijs. However at municipal level and in the context of the IRM, the municipal government's interventions show two features that differ from the national one. The first characteristic is that these interventions are not merely governmental. As mentioned before, there are multiple actors involved in the production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption of the features of Ajijs/municipality created through these interventions. And, the second characteristic is that, different to Habermas' view (1975), these governmental initiatives are not a direct intervention in the local economy and market, but an intervention through the transformation of the local landscape. That is to say, the landscape became the main path to governmental interventions. This shows the special characteristics that adopt development interventions when the municipal government faces the effects of the global phenomenon of the IRM.



**Picture 17.** The lakefront of Chapala transformed into a seafront. New objects in Chapala's landscape: beach palms, beach sand, and new promenade. A project also for Ajijic. Source: author.



**Picture 18. The lakefront of Ajijic transformed into a seafront. New objects in Ajijic's landscape: beach palms, palm shelters, and promenade. Source: author.**

## Chapter 4

# Using two “local” rituals to shape Ajijic in the context of the IRM phenomenon

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe and analyse how actors use two rituals -considered as local- to shape Ajijic. These rituals are organised by members of the host community. In the first part of the chapter I present how the *ritualistas* use the *Huentli* ritual to shape this town and to obtain public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic and its local development. The performance of the *Huentli* counter-acts an invading residential development built during the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. Additionally, through this ritual is generated a space that legitimises the *ritualistas*’ ways of “making justice”, which they assure are more effective than those of the governmental justice system. Through this ritual, actors also contribute to the project of shaping Ajijic into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*.

In the second part of Chapter 4 I present how through *Fiestas de San Andrés* (FSA) –which is also a ritual- actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. This is the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where the different local guilds, the foreign community of Ajijic, and *hijos ausentes* (the natives of Ajijic residing in Mexico City and US) are socially integrated. The assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. Both play an important role in the transformation of Ajijic. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my specific research questions: 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon? 5) How are rituals used by actors to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic? And 6) How does the analysis of rituals contribute to the notion of actor’s agency and to our understanding of processes of development and modernisation?



## 2. Summarised view of some characteristics of rituals

In 1915 Durkheim considered that the function of a ritual was to strengthen the link between the individual and God (the latter can be also read as any authoritative entity or society). In other words, he considered a ritual as a mean of social integration. Another contribution from Durkheim was that he started analysing rituals as a representation of society.

Decades later, Gluckman (1963) analysed how in some rituals conflicts of social rules are represented, but in spite of these conflicts, at the same time a certain unity remains. He called these “rituals of rebellion” and described how through this kind of ritual the Swazi people in Southern Africa legitimise their chief or authorities.

Víctor Turner, in “The Ritual Process” (1969), described how, in the ritual for installing an Ndembu senior chief in Zambia, the chief was separated from the village, isolated, and insulted continuously by the performers. He described that after this, the chief is returned back to the village with the new status of a senior chief. This phase of the ritual, where the chief is marginalised, was defined by Turner as a period of “anti-structure”. Turner considered the “anti-structure” as a phase where the existing social order and hierarchies in that community are inverted or eliminated. For Turner, this type of ritual is formed from three phases: separation (the person is separated from his daily role), liminality (the person is relegated and his status becomes uncertain), and re-aggregation (the person is incorporated to society with a new status)<sup>113</sup>.

Focusing on the phase of the ritual named “rebellion” (Gluckman 1963), “anti-structure” (Turner 1969), or “liminality” (Turner 1969; van Gennep 1960), Turner assured that during this phase a sense of togetherness was developed among the performers of the ritual, what he called *communitas*, which empowers the maximum authority. For example, the case mentioned above in which the Ndembu chief gets marginalised under the authority and will of the *communitas*.

In 1988, David Kertzer wrote that a ritual is an “action wrapped in a web of symbolism”, giving to rituals a communicative role. However, according to Bloch (1989) this communication is restricted. For Bloch rituals are seen as formalised in the way that they limit protest.

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<sup>113</sup> This three-phase model of rituals is also described by van Gennep in his book “The Rites of Passage” (1960).



Even though the past summarised view is not intended to present all features of rituals, this presents the ones that can be discussed through the description of the two rituals analysed in this chapter: the *Huentli* and *Fiestas de San Andrés* (FSA). These rituals are presented in the section 3 and 4 of this chapter, respectively.

### **3. The *Huentli* ritual. Differently interpreted and the transformation of its performance**

Around 1531, Fray Antonio Tello, a Spanish Catholic friar and chronicler who came to Axixic (nowadays Ajijic) during the Spanish colonisation, wrote about a ritual performed by the natives of this place. These natives were the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*<sup>114</sup>. Tello described that in that ritual the performers used to provoke bleedings in their bodies, which would be offered to their gods. He, as a Catholic evangelist, described this ritual as an order from the devil, in which the main purpose for the performers was to get immortality. He describes it:

“... the devil ordered everyone, through their idols, to make a very small jar, scratch their ears, and put a drop of the extracted blood in every jar. Afterwards they bathe in the lake, where they must place their jars; this would bring them immortality” (Tello [Porrua 1997])<sup>115</sup>.

Even though this ritual used to be performed almost five hundred years ago, nowadays this ritual is present in the narratives of some inhabitants of Ajijic. For example, the president of the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*, Dionicio Morales<sup>116</sup>, says that this ritual is called *Huentli*<sup>117</sup> and that it used to be carried out on the shore of the lake of Axixique (nowadays Lake Chapala) by *indios cocas* in pre-Columbian times. Dionicio mentions that the reason for performing this ritual was to renew the alliance between them and: “their deities; the agricultural cycle; and the ancestral rhythm” (Dionicio, Ajijic 2008).

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<sup>114</sup> Some descriptions of the *Huentli* presented in this chapter refer that this ritual was performed by only *indios cocas*, and other refer that it was performed by *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*.

<sup>115</sup> This is my translation from Spanish.

<sup>116</sup> I interviewed Dionicio in Ajijic, in November 2008.

<sup>117</sup> According to Dionicio, *Huentli* is the *Nahuatl* word for “bleedings”.

Additionally, the art painter and native from Ajijic, Javier Zaragoza<sup>118</sup>, painted a mural on the façade of the Ajijic's *Delegacion* (Ajijic municipal delegate's office) that represents the ritual *Sangrias de Mayo* (bleedings of May), the Spanish name of the ritual referred to by Dionicio as *Huentli* (the reader can see a picture of this mural in the last page of this chapter).

The Javier's mural also includes a text that explains what *Sangrias de Mayo* is about:

“‘*Sangrias de Mayo*’. During the first days of May, people from all hamlets gather on the shore of the lake to celebrate the longest period of abstinence of the year and to invoke: *Tlaloc*, Lord of the celestial waters; *Chalchihuitlicue*, the one who wears a turquoise jade skirt, Lady of the waters that spill; and *Michicihuatl*, deity fish-woman and guardian of our mother lake of *Axixique*. This ceremony used to be performed in order to strength the alliance with deities, to thank our ancestors for the past agricultural cycle and to ask them for the coming one” (Javier, mural *Sangrias de Mayo*)<sup>119</sup>.

Since 2007, the *Huentli* (or *Sangrias de Mayo*) is performed every year by a group of four natives from Ajijic. They call themselves the *ritualistas*. In January 2008 I met and interviewed one of them, José<sup>120</sup>. Some of the information collected through my interview with José is presented in the following sections.

### 3.1. The *ritualistas* and the *Huentli*

During my interview with José, he explained how he and the other *ritualistas* met, and how they came to form this group and perform the *Huentli*:

“We did not know each other (the *ritualistas*). One day we were in a painting exhibition in the *Centro Cultural* (CCA). There we found the painter Jesús Lopez, who was talking about *Teopantitla*, one pre-Columbian town. From the people who were listening to Jesús, I and other three people, who are now my *hermanos* (brothers;

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<sup>118</sup> Javier Zaragoza is one of the most well-known art painters from Ajijic. I interviewed Javier in Ajijic, in November 2008.

<sup>119</sup> My translation from Spanish.

<sup>120</sup> I interviewed José in Ajijic.

he refers to the other *ritualistas*) stayed until the end of the talk. We were very interested in the story of *Teopantitla*. Later, Jesús left and we continued talking about the pre-Columbian times. Then our conversation turned to pre-Columbian rituals in Ajijic. This is how we started talking about the *Huentli*. We agreed that it was a pity that the *Huentli* was not performed anymore. In the end, when the gallery was about to close, we exchanged telephone numbers with the purpose of having another conversation again in the future. Several days later, I started thinking that it would be a good idea to study and investigate more about the *Huentli* in order to perform it and keep it alive. So I contacted my *hermanos* to tell them my idea and they liked it... So we started searching information about the *Huentli*. After some time we knew where the zone in which *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* used to perform the *Huentli* was...” (José, Ajijic 2008)<sup>121</sup>.

Then other *ritualista*, Roberto, interrupted our interview. He said:

“Yes José, but tell him also about all the problems we had before deciding where the *Huentli* would take place, ha ha ha (Roberto laughs and then started explaining to me)... in the beginning there was a disagreement between us (*ritualistas*) about where exactly the *Huentli* used to be performed by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*. After doing research, all of us agreed about the zone, but not about the specific place within this zone. One of us interpreted that the place was on the shore of the lake (Chapala), close to the pier. Another interpreted it as being on the shore of the lake, close to *Teopantitla*. The disagreement caused a distance between us; however after some days we resumed the project and agreed to do it on the shore close to *Teopantitla*. We decided that meanwhile it was within the right zone, the specific place did not make so much difference” (Roberto, Ajijic 2008)<sup>122</sup>.

Then José resumed the conversation:

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<sup>121</sup> All narratives from José presented in this study are my translation from Spanish.

<sup>122</sup> This is my translation from Spanish.

“Yes, Roberto is right. Since then, we perform the *Huentli* in that place, it will be the second time this year. However it is still not well-known in Ajijic that we perform this ritual. So you will see that we do not have a large audience” (José, Ajijic 2008).

At the end of the interview, José invited me to see their coming performance of the *Huentli* in May (2008).

### 3.2. The *Huentli*'s performance

On 2nd May, in order to watch the performance of the *Huentli*, I walked along the lake's shore until the agreed place. There José and the other three *ritualistas* were already gathered. They were dressed in white *manta*<sup>123</sup> and preparing the area for the ritual. In the audience there were 10 people and a few other passers-by that stopped to observe. Among the audience there were also some foreigners. One of them asked me what that ceremony was about, I explained to him that it was the representation of the pre-Columbian *Huentli* ritual. Then, he stayed to watch.

Before starting the ritual, I asked the *ritualistas* their permission to make an audio recording of their performance, to which they agreed; however they asked me not to use my camera.

First, José gave the audience an explanation of the history of the *Huentli*, as an introduction to the performance:

“In pre-Columbian times, the *Huentli* was a ritual performed by our ancestors, the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*. This ritual was a ceremony to invoke and ask petitions to: *Tlaloc*, the man of the celestial waters; *Chalchihuitlicue*, the woman of the spilling waters, who wears a jade dress; and *Michicihuatl*, a fish-woman deity and guardian of our lake of *Axixique* (Lake Chapala). This ceremony used to be done here in this zone during the *Hueitzoztli*, which is a period of abstinence during the first days of May. The objective of this abstinence was to renew the alliance between the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* and: the forces and deities; the ancestral rhythm; and the agricultural

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<sup>123</sup> Long white linen fabric. The *ritualistas* were wrapped in it, similar to the dress of the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* in Javier's mural.

cycle, which bring strength and fertility to the land. Everything was in relation to the forces of nature and the universe” (José, Ajijic 2008).

At the same time that José was talking, the other *ritualistas* were making an altar around a nearby tree. The *ritualistas* placed a *manta* (linen fabric) and *papel amate* (pre-Columbian type of paper) on the floor around this tree, on which they placed flowers and *chiquihuites* (woven baskets) with maize cobs, beans, and some fruit as offerings. Then José continued his explanation:

“The dance that we are about to begin used to be danced by several groups of *ritualistas*: the *cotlatlazin*, who observed the movement of the sky during the rainy season, were taking care that the rain did not come with so much fury during the harvest. The *tlacoloteros*, the men-tree, were dancing by rotating around their own axis and raising a cloud of dust, which was intended to expel the rodents from the harvest. The *tlacoloteros* were the allies of maize, tomatoes, beans, chili, and the pumpkins. The *huehuenches*, were old men, whose dance represented the movement of the planets and animals, which are the principles and strength of nature. They fight against each other, offering sweat and blood to the fact of ‘surviving’. They symbolise the ancestral origin and the wisdom of *Tezcatlipoca*. This ceremony used to last four days and three nights fasting, drinking only *tejuino* (beverage made of fermented maize) and a beverage made from the *ololuhqui* plant. On the fourth day people met to communicate with *Tlaloc*, the masculine essence of rain, and to carry out the *Tlamalistli*. This was the action of depositing the offerings into the lake by boat. During the *Tlamalistli*, the place also used to be decorated with small clay figures of animals like monkeys, deer, dogs, ocelots, eagles, etc. Furthermore, the people would stand in a line in front of the priest. He would pierce them with a Maguey (type of agave plant) thorn in the lobe of the ears, shoulders, and calves and collect the blood in small containers. Then, people would cover the small containers with dough made of maize’s flour, and tie all containers together with an *ixtle* (agave fibre) thread. Also tears of a person in mourning, who had lost a loved one, could be deposited in the containers. When the containers, the *Huentli*, were ready, a woman would take to the lake by boat and place the *Huentli* in the waters of the lake. She would also bathe in the lake as a symbol of union and purification of all towns. In the end, before people returned back to their home towns, they would take some of the Lake’s water with

them to place it in rivers, streams, and springs in their home towns in order to have enough water for the coming agricultural period” (José, Ajijic 2008).

Then José and two other *ritualistas* started dancing to the rhythm of a drum being played by the fourth *ritualista*. During this dance, José represented the *cotlatlazin*; one *ritualista* represented the *tlacoloteros*; and the other took the role of the *huehuenches*. After the dance they deposited the offerings (fruits) in the lake by boat, and when they returned, they opened a bag containing several agave thorns, which they distributed among themselves. They started piercing their bodies with the thorns and collected the blood in small clay containers. José and another *ritualistas*, deposited these containers in the lake and also bathed. After this, they brought in small containers lake’s water which they said they would deposit later in the rivers of Ajijic. Before the ceremony finished, José said to the audience:

“This zone, where we are standing right now, is the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*, which is now partially invaded by a residential development. For this reason, in the last part of the ritual, apart from asking our Gods for a good rainy season and for strength, we also ask them to stop the invasion of *Teopantitla*, and to create a strong union between the Mexicans and foreigners living in Ajijic and in all Lakeside” (José, Ajijic 2008).

Then, the other three *ritualistas* started singing some chants; meanwhile José was asking their petitions to their Gods. After this, José burned some dried herbs and pieces of charcoal in a small container. José started blowing the smoke, in the direction of the sky, towards the bodies of all *ritualistas* (also guiding some smoke with his hands to his body), in the direction of the “invading” residential development, and then towards the audience. Next, he said:

“This smoke will help us to receive from our gods what we have just asked for. For this reason the smoke has been directed to our four petitions: the sky, in order to get good rainy season; our bodies, to get physical strength; the residential development, to stop the invasion of *Teopantitla*; and you (the audience), to have a strong union between Mexicans and foreigners” (José, Ajijic 2008).

Then, the ritual was over.

The description of the *Huentli*’s performance and the interpretations of this ritual presented before lead us to the analysis presented in the following section.

### 3.3. Analysis of the interpretations and performance of the *Huentli*

Around six months after the *ritualistas*’ performance, Dionicio told me, coinciding with the *ritualistas*’ description of the *Huentli*, that this ritual used to be performed by the *indios cocas* in order to ask petitions to their deities and that the ritual was intended “... to renew the alliance between them and: their deities; the agricultural cycle; and the ancestral rhythm” (Dionicio, Ajijic 2008). Additionally, Dionicio’s description also coincides with that of the *ritualistas* in that one of the characteristics of this ritual was that a priest pierced with a thorn the ears, shoulders, and calves of the performers in order to get the blood for the offerings. However, when listening to Dionicio’s description of the *Huentli*, I realised that the *ritualistas* had added several symbolic<sup>124</sup> acts to their performance: the denounce of the invasion by a residential development in *Teopantitla*; a petition to their Gods to stop this invasion; a petition to have a strong union between the Mexicans and foreigners living in the whole Chapala Lakeside area; and the act of blowing smoke towards the invading residential development and the audience. In this way, the *ritualistas* included in the ritual more contemporary issues, the invasion of *Teopantitla* and the union between the foreign and Mexican communities of Ajijic. The *Huentli* ritual, which is known among the inhabitants of Ajijic as a pre-Columbian and local ritual, has been adapted by the *ritualistas*, including in its performance elements derived not only from contemporary issues, but also from a global phenomenon, the IRM.

There are multiple similarities between how the *Huentli* ritual is described by Javier, Dionicio, and the *ritualistas*. For example, their descriptions coincide in that the performers: provoke bleedings of their bodies, offer these bleedings to their deities, deposit their offerings in the lake, consider a relation between the lake and their deities, among other similarities (Tello’s description also coincide with some of these similarities). However, there are also differences. For example, according to Tello the purpose of this ritual was to get immortality. For Javier however the purpose was “...to strength the alliance with deities, to thank our ancestors for the past agricultural cycle and to ask them for the coming one” (Javier, mural

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<sup>124</sup> In this study, I consider “symbol” as any graphic figure, object, or people’s discourse or action, which is meant to represent an idea, concept, or other object. However, symbols are not always interpreted in the same way by people, one example is presented in Chapter 5 where the Chili (the dish) in the Chili Cookoff ritual is considered by some as a symbol of Mexicans while by others as one of Texans.

*Sangrias de Mayo*). And, for Dionicio and the *ritualistas*, the purpose was to renew the alliance between the *indios cocas* (and *cazcanes*: the *ritualistas*) and: their “deities”; “the ancestral rhythm”; and “the agricultural cycle” (Dionicio, Ajijic 2008; José, Ajijic 2008). Additionally, in Javier’s mural it is written that the petition is made to the ancestors, meanwhile Dionicio and the *ritualistas* state that the petition is made to the deities.

Also, there are some differences in the performance of the ritual. Tello described how, almost five hundred years ago, the performers scratched their ears themselves to get the blood for the offerings. Dionicio and the *ritualistas* however mention that a priest pierces the ears, shoulders, and calves of the performers with a Maguey thorn in order to get the blood for the offerings. Moreover, the *ritualistas*, added contemporary issues into their petitions and perform the symbolic act of blowing smoke towards the audience and the invading residential development. In a nutshell, based on the descriptions of this ritual made by Tello, Javier, Dionicio and the *ritualistas*, we can realise that: their interpretations of this ritual differ in certain aspects; the performance has changed from that performed almost five hundred years ago; and the ritual has been actualised by the *ritualistas*.

However, it is important to highlight that the differences in the interpretations of this ritual, or the transformation of the performance through the time, does not mean that this ritual lacks authenticity or that the observers have been fooled by watching a performance that is not exactly the same as the one that used to be performed by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*. Despite of the differences between interpretations and the transformation of the performance, there are still characteristics of the ritual that used to be performed by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* (as described by Tello around 1531), which the multiple interpretations share.

In other words, the transformation of the ritual performance is not linked to lack of authenticity, but to one feature of this ritual, it is a path for the performers to use their agency and adapt to their changing context. In this process the performance of the ritual is altered (e.g. including the act of blowing smoke towards a residential development).

Additionally, the transformation of the *Huentli*’s performance may occur due to the heterogeneity of the performers since they may interpret the components of this ritual differently. In this way, the characteristics of this ritual could also be the result of the negotiations and agreements between the performers when selecting which interpretation, from the range of different ones, will be selected as part of the ritual. For example, as mentioned by José, the specific place where the *Huentli* is performed nowadays was disputed after doing research, causing disagreement due to the *ritualistas*’ different interpretations about where the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* used to perform the ritual. Even though they could



have selected the right place (this we do not know), the existence of multiple interpretations opens the possibility to choosing the wrong one and altering in this way the features of the ritual.

In that sense, the fact that the current performance of *Huentli* is not exactly the same as that performed by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes* should not be so relevant for the audience, since probably the ritual performed in those times could have also been an adaptation of a ritual performed even earlier by the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*’ ancestors. Even though this ritual could contain some elements of the history, tradition, language, and other aspects of the pre-Columbian life of the *indios cocas* and *cazcanes*, so far, comparing Tello’s description of the *Huentli* with the other descriptions, we can see that this ritual is a process in transformation, not a unique pattern repeated through generations.

The performers’ use of the ritual as a path to use their agency when facing their changing context is explored in the following section.

### **3.4. Actor’s body-context agency. Shaping the landscape and social relations through the *Huentli***

Through the *Huentli* ritual, its performers have altered the local landscape and have transformed their social relations. According to José, the *ritualistas* have converted the place where they perform this ritual from being an empty area with a tree and partially invaded by a residential development to a ceremonial centre. Even though the creation of this ceremonial centre does not represent a significant transformation of the landscape, José assures that this centre and the *Huentli* have transformed the relationship between them (*ritualistas*) and this place, between themselves, and between them and other people. He explains:

“It is incredible, but since we have practiced the ritual, we feel more fondness for nature, for other people, and for ourselves. Before knowing about the *Huentli*, this place meant nothing for us. Now, we have affection and respect for this place, for this reason once in a while we come and clean it from the garbage left by visitors, and we also decorate it. We try to keep it clean during the year. This place and the *Huentli* have also changed our lives [...] the relationship between us changed from acquaintances to more than friends; we call each other as *hermanos* (brothers). For this reason we support each other. For example, we have a pot in which every month each *ritualista* deposits an agreed small amount of money. When one of us has economic

problems, we give him money from the pot. This person must pay it back as soon as he is able to do so. It is a system of trust. We also help each other by doing each other favours. Besides, if we know that somebody in town needs help and that it is possible for us to help him, we do it. We do this many times during the year. We were not like this before we started performing the *Huentli* in this place. We never expected that we would get these feelings and that we would do all these good actions. This is for us the real local development, people supporting each other, solving problems together, integrating the foreign and Mexican communities, and protecting *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* from invasions [...] For this reason we have affection for this place because this place is changing our lives for the good” (José, Ajijic 2008).

The José’s narratives not only give account of what the *ritualistas*’ interpretation of local development is, but also through these narratives we can realise that, as stated by Long (2007), actors also grant agency to objects. In the case of the *ritualistas*, they have granted agency to the ceremonial centre. In this way, they have an effect on this place and, as José assures us, the place has an effect on them (through changing their lives, relations, attitude, etc.). In other words, the *ritualistas* have created an “interaction” with this place that did not exist before they practiced the *Huentli*.

Additionally, the *ritualistas* have also generated new social relations: the relation of brotherhood between themselves and the supportive relationship with other people. One important characteristic of these social relations and the alteration of the local landscape by the creation of the ceremonial centre is that they do not last only during the ritual’s performance, but also beyond this ceremony. For example, their system of support between them and their support to other people are carried out through the whole year. This also occurs with the *ritualistas*’ relationship with the ceremonial centre, which they clean and decorate all year round.

The practices that emerge through the ritual and their extension to the daily lives of the performers reveal that this ritual is a path used by the performers to use their agency with which they not only transform the ritual performance (as mentioned in the section before), but also their context.

Interestingly, the *ritualistas* relationship with the ceremonial centre, between themselves, and between them and other people are also based on unexpected feelings of affection that the *ritualistas* started experiencing since they performed the *Huentli* for the first time. And, these

affections are also influencing the *ritualistas*’ practices. For example, according to José’s narratives, it is because of the affection and respect that they now have for the ceremonial centre that has motivated them to keep it clean and decorated throughout the year; it is the feelings of brotherhood between them that motivate them to support each other; and it is their fondness for other people that motivate the *ritualistas* to support them. In other words, the case of the *ritualistas* shows that agency is not only a cognitive capacity of actors (Giddens, 1979; Long, 2007) through which they carry out strategies to transform their context, but also this is shaped by unexpected affections (or other type of unexpected bodily sensations<sup>125</sup>) that may occur during the transformation they realise.

In this way, the *ritualistas*’ practices with which they transform their context are also shaped by the responses of their bodily sensations towards objects and people from their context.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, as mentioned before, one important feature of the *Huentli* is that through this ritual the *ritualistas* publicly denounce the partial invasion of the former ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*. During my interview with José, I asked him if the *ritualistas* have filed a lawsuit against those responsible for this invasion. He answered no; he explains why:

“We achieve more by acting ourselves than using the governmental tribunals; they are slow and not so efficient because they are overloaded with work. See the *comuneros*, they fought against the invasion of their land and were in tribunals for a long, long time. They have achieved some justice, but not enough. The ritual is our way of getting justice, we have recovered part of the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla* and we have solved a few of our problems through supporting each other” (José, Ajijic 2008).

Through José’s narrative the reader can realise how the *ritualistas* use the *Huentli* as a way to get justice to problems that they face, not only about the invasion of this ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*, but other problems as well.

In the following part of the chapter, I describe and analyse another ritual through which actors try to reach their goals and shape Ajijic: *Fiestas de San Andrés*.

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<sup>125</sup> By “bodily sensations” I make reference to: 1) human bodily feelings (those of affection, attachment, brotherhood, anger, etc.) towards objects and people; and 2) human bodily senses (smell, taste, hearing, etc.)- with which we perceive our context.

<sup>126</sup> A further analysis of bodily sensations is presented in Chapter 5.

## 4. The ritual of *Fiestas de San Andrés*

*Fiestas de San Andrés* -FSA- (the Saint Andres' parties) is also known in Ajijic as *Fiestas del Pueblo* (the town's parties) or *Fiestas Patronales* (the patron saint's parties). Even though FSA is known as a celebration, I argue that this is also a ritual. Its features match with the definition of ritual that I present in the conclusions of this chapter.

### 4.1. Summarised description of *Fiestas de San Andrés* and its performance in 2007

Officially, FSA is a nine-day Catholic celebration carried out every year in honour of Ajijic's patron saint, the apostle *San Andrés*. Like in most Mexican towns, in Ajijic the patron saint's celebration is the biggest festivity of the year. FSA is not only attended by people from Ajijic, but also by people from other lakeside towns, and even from people residing in distant places such as Mexico City and US, every year. The organisation of this celebration is led by the Catholic Church of Ajijic, but mainly the different guilds of this town cover the expenses of FSA.

Even though the guilds are the main sponsors, there are also other groups of people supporting it economically, in specie, and/or by volunteering in this celebration, for example: the group of *hijos ausentes del D.F.* (natives from Ajijic residing in Mexico City); the group of *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos* (natives from Ajijic residing in US); the group representing the foreign community established in Ajijic; and the people representing some small local businesses. The two groups of *hijos ausentes* raise money throughout the year in the communities where they reside, and with this money they contribute to FSA.

Mostly each different guild or group (or combination of groups) is in charge of organising and financing the party on one specific day of the nine days of celebration. For example: the guild of musicians is in charge of organising and paying for the first days of celebration; the group representing the foreign community settled in Ajijic is in charge of the second day; the guild of the construction workers is in charge of the third day; and so on. However the order and combination of guilds and groups could be different every year.

Officially, FSA is carried out from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> November. However there are events realised before the 22<sup>nd</sup>, which introduce this celebration: the *Vigilia Patronal* in the catholic

church, the parade of *carros alegóricos* (allegorical floats), and the *serenata* (serenade) to *San Andrés* performed by the guild of the musicians.

During the nine days of FSA, there are activities from the morning until night. Every day, at 6 am, people gather in the front of the church, and when the *banda*<sup>127</sup> arrives, they enter. On the way into the church, the *banda* plays and sings - together with the people - *las mañanitas* (traditional Mexican song for birthdays) to the *San Andrés*’ figure that is inside the church. At 8 am, the first mass begins, and at noon the second. In the evening, around 6:30 pm, there is a procession along the streets of Ajijic which finishes in the church, where at 7pm the Solemn Mass is held. After this, people go to the central square of Ajijic. There, people visit the food and drinks stands, and watch the performances of singers and dancers on a previously set up stage. Around 10:30 pm, *El Castillo* (the castle) is lit. This is a tower made of wood around nine meters high with spinning wheels of fireworks. *El Castillo* is one of the night’s attractions, this offers a visual show of fireworks to the public and for some observers some fun when people run away from the *buscapiés* (fireworks that can fly in any direction), which on some occasions shoot into the audience. All these above mentioned activities take place every day during the nine days of celebration, only the main evening attraction - the performing singer or band - change from day to day.

## 4.2. Contesting for the alliance with the Church

The reasons why the members of guilds and groups participate in the organisation of FSA vary. For example, for “Aurelio”, a member of the farmers’ guild, his reasons are linked to religion and tradition:

“...I do it (participate in the organisation of FSA) because I want to support *San Andrés* and the traditions of Ajijic, nothing else.” (“Aurelio”, guild of farmers, Ajijic 2008)<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Bandas* are traditional Mexican bands of musicians that play and sing mostly northern Mexican music.

<sup>128</sup> “Aurelio” speaks Spanish. His narratives presented in this study are my translation. I interviewed “Aurelio” in Ajijic in October 2008.

Another participant in the organisation of FSA is the *ritualista* José. He explained his reason for participating:

“Even though I am not catholic, I participate in *Fiestas de San Andrés* because I want to support the Church’s attempts to integrate all groups of Ajjic. This is a good cause.” (José, Ajjic 2008)

However Bertha<sup>129</sup>, a 64 years old woman native from Ajjic, who said she had attended this celebration every year since she was a child, explained that there is mainly one reason why guilds and groups participate in FSA:

“Guilds and groups unofficially compete to bring the most famous performer of the night to Ajjic. This is because they want to be recognised as the most supportive guild or group to *Fiestas de San Andrés*” (Bertha, Ajjic 2008)<sup>130</sup>.

Through the narratives of the different guild members I came to realise that the aim of this unofficial and symbolic contest is to be recognised by the Church and inhabitants of Ajjic as the most supportive guild or group of FSA. According to the guild’s members I interviewed, to be recognised as the most supportive guild helps them to keep or strengthen the relationship with the local Church, which brings them benefits. The following narratives are some examples:

“By contributing to *Fiestas de San Andrés*, we keep our good relationship with the Church. We support the Church and the Church support us. Since the building construction growth in Ajjic, some people see us (constructors) as collaborators of this change (the physical transformation of Ajjic by the constructions’ boom). Unfortunately, many people who do not like this change of Ajjic, also do not like us. But through *Fiestas de San Andrés* we show the people that this change has also brought good things to Ajjic, for example jobs and money, and that some of this money is also invested in *Fiestas de San Andrés*. The Church is on our side and they have mentioned these advantages to the people before. The Church supports us because they recognise the benefits that the building constructions have brought to

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<sup>129</sup> Bertha has lived all her life in Ajjic. She is one of the few natives from Ajjic who works in the Lake Chapala Society. In this association, Bertha is in charge of the book sale stand. She was interviewed in September 2008.

<sup>130</sup> Bertha speaks Spanish. Her narratives in this study are my translation.

Ajijic. Thanks to these jobs and money now we are one of the guilds that contributes the most to *Fiestas de San Andrés*” (“Pedro”, guild of the constructors and associated, Ajijic 2008)<sup>131</sup>.

“We have to support the local Church since they also support us. For example, they let us carry out our mass in English in the church every Sunday morning. Also, thanks to the Church we are allowed to participate in the *fiestas* (FSA). In this way we can show the locals that we, as a foreign community, also contribute to the local traditions and Church” (Robert, the foreign community group, 2008)<sup>132</sup>.

“Every time we celebrate the *fiestas* (FSA), we consolidate our closeness with the local Church. The Church helps us to integrate with the locals. We work together with them in the *fiestas*’ organisation and this is great. In this way we get closer to the locals and it creates a friendly environment. You can see, I have gained some Mexican friends from other guilds in the *fiestas*” (Susan, the foreign community group, 2008)<sup>133</sup>.

But how important is for some guilds/groups to create or strengthen the alliance with the local Church? As mentioned in past chapters, according to Talavera (1982), during the 1960’s and 1970’s the alliance between the local Church and realtors played an important role in Ajijic’s land conflicts. He explains that the local Church tried to persuade the Catholic believers to welcome the construction of residential developments in this town. Talavera described how, when the land conflicts started to emerge with the construction of some residential developments, the Church supported the realtors and accused the groups that denounced the invasions (the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*) of being communists. Talavera stated that the Church’s support and accusations were realised particularly during the Church service.

Nowadays, according to the former realtor “Ana”<sup>134</sup>, since land conflicts are still alive, creating or strengthening the alliance with the Church is still important for the guilds, mainly for the guild of constructors and associates and for the group of the foreign community since

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<sup>131</sup> His narratives in this study are my translation from Spanish. Pedro was interviewed in Ajijic in October 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Robert was interviewed in Ajijic in November 2008.

<sup>133</sup> Susan was interviewed in Ajijic in November 2008.

<sup>134</sup> I interviewed “Ana” in Ajijic, in July 2008.

both groups include realtors among their members. “Ana” explains that the figure of the realtor is still associated by some natives, with “abusive real estate negotiations” and “land invasions”, even though not all realtors were or are involved in these<sup>135</sup>. She adds that through the alliance with the Church, the realtors of these two groups (constructors and foreigners) are allowed to participate in FSA, which gives them the possibility to show themselves as being part of the community (in the case of the foreign realtors) and supporters of Ajijics’ traditions and Church. This generates a more accepted image of them within the community, she explains.

“Ana” also comments that the realtors of these groups are also exhibited as part of the community and as contributors through the printed FSA program. She explains that every year the Ajijic’s Church orders multiple copies of the FSA’s program to be printed for the local population. Apart from the list of activities realised in FSA, it includes the list of contributors to FSA. She adds that, through this program, the Church officially informs the population which guilds and groups are supporting the Church and this tradition (FSA), and so people can also see what guilds or groups are not contributing.

In this way, we can realise that FSA not only contains an official symbolism (e.g. the ceremonies around the figure of *San Andrés*), but also an unofficial symbolism, for example that of being the most supportive guild or group of FSA and the Church.

According to “Ana”, the priest of local Church has mentioned multiple times that the main objective of FSA is to venerate *San Andrés* and to integrate the different guilds and supporting groups, the *hijos ausentes*, and the foreign community as one integrated community. She adds that the priest considers FSA also as a project of social integration. “Ana” explains that she participates in the organisation of FSA to support this project. In her opinion, this project is working well because it brings together all groups of Ajijic, including realtors who have been accused of invading land and farmers whose land has been invaded. She mentions that in this way, FSA is a moment and place of truce and integration.

However, the gathering of actors is not seen as social integration by all participants. One example is “Aurelio”, who explains:

“I do not like to work with realtors, but during the organisation and participation in the *Fiestas de San Andrés*, we, all guilds, including realtors, have to work together for the *Fiestas de San Andrés*. However, this is like the saying ‘*estamos juntos pero no*

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<sup>135</sup> Some of these abusive practices are narrated by “Ana” in Chapter 2.



*revueltos*’ (this saying is commonly used to mean ‘we are together but we are not united’)” (“Aurelio”, guild of farmers, 2008).

Apart of the before mentioned features of FSA, in the following section I present another characteristic of this ritual: it is a process in transformation.

#### **4.3. Transformation of the FSA’s performance. The global and transnational influences**

Regarding the performance of FSA, this has been transformed through time, specifically in the level of contribution among the performers and in the incorporation of new groups in the organisation and realisation of this ritual. Bertha (Ajijic 2008) explains some changes that emerged through the boom in the construction of residential developments during the 1990’s:

“Some decades ago, the *gremio de los agricultores* (guild of farmers) used to be the most economically supportive guild to *Fiestas de San Andrés*. They used to be the guild that spent the most money during this celebration, ran the best day party, and brought the most famous and expensive artists or performers to *Fiestas de San Andrés*. But throughout the years, and with the growth of the building constructions, the economic situation for the guilds changed. Nowadays, the *gremio de constructores y asociados* (guild of constructors and associated) is the most economically powerful and one of the most supportive to *Fiestas de San Andrés*. Indeed, the farmers have almost disappeared. Through the years, agriculture became a non-profitable activity. Many farmers had to migrate to US looking for work [...] Also through the years new groups were invited to participate in *Fiestas de San Andrés*, the *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos y el D.F.* and the foreign retirees of Ajijic” (Bertha, Ajijic 2008).

Bertha’s narratives give account of how the 1990’s increase in the construction sector, triggered by the IRM phenomenon, altered the position of the guilds in relation to which one is the most supportive of FSA. Also through her narratives we can realise that FSA has been adapted by the Church through the time, incorporating emerging groups derived from phenomena that influence Ajijic, for example the two groups of *hijos ausentes* and the group of foreign retirees of Ajijic. The *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos* emerged by the

phenomenon of Mexicans migrating to US. From these migrants, the ones who come back to Ajijic every year<sup>136</sup> form the group called *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos*. The *hijos ausentes en el D.F.* emerged also by the phenomenon of migration, but towards Mexico City. And, as we saw in Chapter 1, the community of foreign retirees in Ajijic emerged by the IRM phenomenon. According to “Ana” the groups of *hijos ausentes* emerged around the 1970’s and 1980’s, and the group of foreign retirees mainly since the 1990’s (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

Additionally, Bertha mentions that due to the incorporation of these new groups into FSA, the activities within this event have been modified accordingly. Through watching the realisation of FSA, I testified what Bertha had told me. For example, new activities had been incorporated like the *recepción de los hijos ausentes del D.F.* (reception of *hijos ausentes* from Mexico City), and the incorporation of the group of *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos* and the group of the foreign community in the *Solemne peregrinación* (solemn pilgrimage). Both activities are performed on the last day of FSA (November 30<sup>th</sup>).

In this way, through my experience during FSA and the narratives of some of its participants, I realised that even though nowadays FSA is considered in Ajijic as a “local” celebration, this is also shaped by mainly a transnational phenomenon (*hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos*) and a global –and partially transnational– phenomenon (IRM). So far, the influence of these phenomena has altered: the hierarchies of the guilds and consequently their position in relation to their support to FSA; who the participating groups are; and the activities that are realised within this ritual.

## 5. Conclusions

This chapter tackles two projects of shaping Ajijic. In the first part of this chapter, it was presented how through the *Huentli* ritual the *ritualistas* contribute to the project of shaping Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. In the second part, it was presented how actors join another project of shaping Ajijic. This is the project led by the local Church and realised through the FSA ritual: shaping Ajijic as a community in which the different guilds and groups, the *hijos ausentes*, and the foreign community are socially integrated.

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<sup>136</sup> This group of *hijos ausentes* is not the total amount of natives of Ajijic residing in US. These yearly visitors are mostly those who possess documents that allow them to cross the Mexico-US border legally.

In the case of the *Huentli*, through this ritual the *ritualistas* have converted a place from being an empty area partially invaded by a residential development to a ceremonial centre. Even though the creation of this ceremonial centre does not represent a significant transformation of the local landscape, José’s narratives give account that this centre and the *Huentli* have transformed the relationship between them (*ritualistas*) and this place, between themselves, and between them and other people “for the good” (which is considered by them also as one characteristic of local development). These are transformations that last not only during the ritual’s performance, but also beyond this ceremony, in their daily lives. Additionally, through the *Huentli* the *ritualistas* denounce publicly the partial invasion of the former ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*. I conclude that this denunciation, together with their economic and favours support system, are tools developed by the *ritualistas* with which they try to face some of the problems that have emerged by the transformation of Ajijic - triggered by IRM - like the land invasion and the need of integration between the foreign and Mexican communities. So far, through the *ritualistas* ways of “making justice”, they have recovered part of what they refer as the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*, they have created a space to communicate publicly their petitions, and they solve, to a certain level, their economic and other problems. Furthermore, through the *Huentli* the *ritualistas* are also trying to get public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* and trying to create public de-legitimisation for the invading residential development.

Regarding the case of FSA, through this ritual actors keep or strengthen their relationship with the local Church, which bring them benefits. For example, the Church tell its followers that the constructions have also brought more jobs and money to Ajijic, which according to “Pedro” (guild of the constructors and associated) helps the constructors to be accepted by those Ajijic’s inhabitants who like neither the transformation of Ajijic nor the constructors. In this way, through FSA a space of legitimisation is created in which multiple actors (among them realtors who have been accused of invading land [“Ana”, Ajijic 2008]) try to obtain public legitimisation as part of the community and as supporters of the Ajijic’s traditions and Church. This facilitates, even though it does not guarantee, the social integration of the different groups in Ajijic.

I also conclude that through the FSA ritual, actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. In this chapter we saw how the *ritualista* José, who contributes to the project of shaping Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*, and “Ana”, who contributes to the project of shaping Ajijic as a retirement destination, join the above mentioned Church’s project of social integration. Even though this assemblage of actors, projects and interpretations of Ajijic does

not mean that actors eliminate their conflicts, neither do they abandon their own projects, the assemblage creates a special social entity. This entity is formed mainly of global (foreign retirees from different countries) transnational (*hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos*) and local (members of the local guilds and groups) components. Since I did not come across a proper term that describes the features of this type of emerging social form, I call it in this study global-transnational-local (GTL) social entity since this term highlights its most special characteristics. The relevance of the GTL social entity is that it works for shaping Ajijic -and for the Church's project- and connects transnational flows of capital and people with local actors. For example, the *hijos ausentes en Estados Unidos* raise money during the whole year in their communities in US, which they contribute to FSA. In this way, the GTL social entity brings together this transnational flow of people, this transnational capital, and actors in Ajijic.

Regarding the *Huentli*, the analysis of this ritual brings an important contribution to the notion of actor's agency. The case of the *ritualistas* shows that agency is not only a cognitive capacity of actors (Giddens 1979; Long 2007) through which they carry out strategies to transform their context, but also this is shaped by unexpected affections that may occur during the transformation they realise. In this way, the *ritualistas'* practices with which they transform their context are also shaped by the responses of their bodily sensations towards objects and people from this context.

Through the analysis of the *Huentli* and FSA rituals, I not only found some similarities to the ritual's characteristics stated by the different authors which I presented in the section 2 of this chapter, but also some differences. Durkheim (1915) considered a ritual as a mean of social integration, and Turner (1969) stated that through rituals a sense of togetherness is developed among its participants, what he called *communitas*, which empowers the maximum authority.

However, the social entities that are created through the *Huentli* and FSA rituals neither represent a total social integration, nor *communitas*. In the case of *Huentli*, we saw how even though *ritualistas* look for the social integration of foreign and Mexican communities, their ritual is also used to de-legitimise indirectly other members of the community, for example those who authorised and built the invading residential development. Similarly this occurs in FSA, where some actors develop a sense of togetherness, but others do not; as "Aurelio" explained: "*estamos juntos pero no revueltos*" (which can be read as "we are together but we are not united"). In this way, social entities formed through the *Huentli* and FSA are not a total union, but neither a total separation. Thus, in order to avoid the union sense inherent in the term *communitas*, I use the term social entity, considering this as a social form made of

people, whom some become united, but others do not. In the same way, I also use the term assemblage when it involves the gathering of not only people, but also of ideas, projects, or other elements -which some merge, but others do not-.

As stated by Gluckman (1963), in some rituals social conflicts are also represented. In the case of the *Huentli*, the reader saw how in this ritual, the *ritualistas* include in their petitions the stop of the invasion of *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. In FSA, land conflicts come out through the participants’ discourses during the performance of FSA –even though it does not occur in a totally open way-, as I testified in FSA 2007.

Additionally, the *Huentli* and FSA rituals proved to be actions wrapped in a web of symbolism (Kertzer 1988), which give these rituals a communicative role. An example of this is the mentioned *ritualistas*’ act of blowing smoke towards a residential development, with which they also denounce the invasion of the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla*. Another example is how in FSA, the FSA’s program also works as symbol that communicates indirectly which guilds or groups are not contributing to FSA and Church (“Ana”, Ajijic 2008).

Bloch (1989) sees rituals as highly formalised in the way that restricts debate or contestation. I found Bloch’ statement as partially true. Even though *Huentli* is a way to avoid the total confrontation between those who authorised the construction of the invading residential development and the *ritualistas*, this ritual is also a performance of contestation. The use of this ritual as a way of denouncing land invasion proves this. Contestation also occurs in the FSA ritual. Some participants use this ritual to express their opposition to some realtors through their conversations with other participants, as I testified during the realisation of the FSA.

Meanwhile Durkheim focused on rituals as a representation of society, Gluckman as representation of “rebellion”, and Turner as representation of “anti structure” (all these views tending to pay more attention to the representativeness of the ritual), the ritual as a process in transformation was overlooked. The *Huentli* and FSA show that the transformation of the ritual’s performance is important for the performers since through this they cope with their changing context.

Finally, based on the cases of the *Huentli* and FSA rituals, this chapter proposes to see rituals also as sets of actions performed periodically, which contain symbolism that plays an important role for their performers, and which are at the same time processes in transformation. The latter characteristic is because rituals are also paths for their performers to

use their agency. In this process, the performers adapt themselves, and the ritual performance, to their changing context in order to reach their goals.



Picture 19. Mural “Sangrias de Mayo” (Huentli) painted by Javier Zaragoza on the façade of *Delegación de Ajijic* (Ajijic municipal delegate’s office). Source: photo published by Steven Miller in: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/shmiller/3370682357/?q=mural sangrias de mayo ajijic](http://www.flickr.com/photos/shmiller/3370682357/?q=mural+sangrias+de+mayo+ajijic) (Accessed: September 2012).

## **Chapter 5**

# **Using a “foreign” ritual to shape Ajijic in the context of the IRM phenomenon**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter presents an event, which is also a ritual, through which actors shape Ajijic: the “Chili Cookoff of Ajijic”<sup>137</sup>. This ritual has some similarities to FSA (Chapter 4), but also some differences. While FSA is organised by the host community, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is organised by members of the foreign community of this town. Like FSA, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is also a ritual through which local actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. However, different than FSA, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actors also join a specific interpretation of local development. In this way, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actors join the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where its foreign and Mexican communities work together for the local charities. Additionally, actors join the interpretation of local development as something reachable through organising fund raising events. Similar to FSA, the assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic –created through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic- generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. However, these space and entity have different effects in the transformation of Ajijic than those effects from the space and entity created through FSA. In this fashion, this chapter contributes to answer my specific research questions: 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon? 5) How are rituals used by actors to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic? And 6) How does the analysis of rituals contribute to the notion of actor’s agency and to our understanding of processes of development and modernisation?

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<sup>137</sup> Even though the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is a fund-raising cooking contest, party, and fair, this is also a ritual. This matches with the definition of ritual proposed in Chapter 4. That is to say, this is a set of actions performed periodically, which contains symbolism that plays an important role for its performers, and which is at the same time a process in transformation. The latter characteristic is because the ritual is also a way for its performers to use their agency. In this process, the performers adapt themselves, and the ritual performance, to their changing context in order to reach their goals.

## 2. Outline of the Chapter

Some of the social dynamics that actors realise within the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic are justified by them with different histories about the origins of some symbols inherent in this ritual and the Chili Cookoff itself, which they also consider as symbol. For this reason, I present in section 3 the histories of these symbols: the *chile* (the fruit), the Chili (the dish), and the Chili Cookoff -in general- and the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic (competitions of cooking Chili). In section 4, I describe my participation as a volunteer in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic 2008. This gives us an insight into how the performance of this ritual is carried out and the social dynamics within this. Next, section 5 presents how actors have been shaping the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic through the years in order to face local problems, negotiations, and global contingencies. In this section the reader can see how the performers adapt themselves, and the ritual, to their changing context in order to keep this ritual going. Section 6 shows the relevance of the Chili Cookoff's symbols on bringing participants<sup>138</sup> to this ritual, permitting its growth and its capacity to transform Ajijic. In section 7 an analysis is presented about the engagement of people with the ritual's symbols and the relevance of this to the notion of the actor's agency. Section 8 presents an analysis of how through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actors create an assemblage, which generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity that play an important role in the transformation of this town. Finally in section 9 I present the conclusions of this chapter.

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<sup>138</sup> In this thesis I make a distinction between organisers, participants, and visitors of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic. By organisers, I make reference to the people member of the Chili Cookoff's board and other collaborators who carry out the administration and preparation (among other tasks) of this annual event. By participants, I make reference to the people who participate in the Chili Cookoff as competing cooks, Chili judges, representatives of charity organisations, exhibitors, musicians and other performers presented in the event's stage, performers of the opening parade, the police officers and fire-fighters who take care of the security of the event, and all volunteers working in this event. By visitors, I make reference to the people who are not included in the before mentioned groups but visit the Chili Cookoff.



### 3. Brief history of the origins of *chile*, Chili, Chili Cookoff and the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic

#### 3.1. *Chile*. The fruit of *Capsicum*

*Chile* (in English “chili pepper”, “chili”, or “chilli”) is the fruit of the genus of plants scientifically named as *Capsicum*<sup>139</sup> (flowering plants of the “nightshade” family, *Solanaceae*). According to Pickersgill (2007, in Aguilar-Meléndez 2009), the five most economically notable species of capsicum are thought to have been domesticated for the first time, independently, in at least two regions of the pre-Columbian Americas: in Mesoamerica (*C. annuum* and *C. frutescens*) and in South America (*C. baccatum*, *C. pubescens*, and *C. chinense*).

In Mexico, *chile* (which is the Spanish word derived from the Nahuatl<sup>140</sup> word *Chilli* or *Xilli*) can be found as a *wild*<sup>141</sup> or *domesticated*<sup>142</sup> plant. According to Smith (1967, in Aguilar-Meléndez 2009), archaeological evidence in Mexico shows that humans have been using *wild chiles* as food possibly since ~8000 BC. In the case of *domesticated chiles*, for human consumption, the world’s oldest evidence was found in Tehuacan Valley (Mexico<sup>143</sup>) dating between 5000-6000 BC (Perry *et al.*, 2007; Pickersgill, 2007, in Aguilar-Meléndez 2009).

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<sup>139</sup> In some regions of Australia, New Zealand and India, the name *Capsicum* is not only the name of the plant, but also the name of its fruit.

<sup>140</sup> *Nahuatl* was the language spoken by the Aztecs, who were the pre-Columbian inhabitants of nowadays Central Mexico.

<sup>141</sup> By “wild” I make reference to the plant grown without human intervention.

<sup>142</sup> According to the “Convention on Biological Diversity” organised by the United Nations, in its “Article 2. Use of Terms”, defines: “‘domesticated or cultivated species’ means species in which the evolutionary process has been influenced by humans to meet their needs” (United Nations, CBD, and UNEP 1995).

<sup>143</sup> In addition to **chile (fruit of *Capsicum*)**, Mexico is also considered the place where the oldest evidence has been found of the following foods: 1) **maize (*Zea mays* L.) and squash (*Cucurbitas* pp.)**, two publications in 2009 (Ranere, A. *et al.*; Piperno, D. *et al.*) show that in the Central Balsas watershed (Mexico) archaeological milling tools with residues of maize (*Zea mays* L.) and domesticated squash (*Cucurbita* spp.) dating at least 8700 calendric years B.P have been found (~6700 BC); 2) **Cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.)**, according to the Schokoladenmuseum of Cologne (Germany) (2000), the Olmec culture (the first mayor civilisation in Mexico) was the first to grow cocoa plants in large quantities around the year 1500 BC; 3) **Avocado (*Persea Americana* L.)**, according to Galindo-Tovar *et al.* (2007) the most ancient evidence of the existence of the avocado tree in Mesoamerica is around 10,000 years ago (~8,000 BC) in Coaxcatlan, Puebla, in Mexico; 4) **Cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* L.)**, even though Moulherat *et al.* (2002) explain that cotton was *first cultivated* 7000 year ago (~5000 BC) by the inhabitants of western Pakistan (in Mehrgarh), Roche (1994) wrote about evidence of *cotton fabrics* found in Tehuacan (Mexico) that dated to around 5800 BC.

Not only is Mexico the country where the world's oldest evidences of human consumption of *wild chiles* (~8000 BC) and *domesticated chiles* (5000-6000 BC) have been found, but also nowadays Mexico is also the third major consumer of *chile* in the world, after the two most populated countries in the globe: India and China (CRN India 2013)<sup>144</sup>. Additionally, Mexico is the country with the biggest genetic variety of *chiles* in the world (Inforural 2012).

### 3.2. Chili (or “Chili *con Carne*”). The dish

In English, the word “chili” could also refer to a very popular dish in Texas (US) known as Chili or “Chili *con Carne*” (chili peppers with meat). According to the International Chili Society (ICS)<sup>145</sup>, this is a stew made of “any kind of meat or combination of meats, cooked with red chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients, with the exception of BEANS and PASTA which are strictly forbidden” (ICS 2012). Even though the ICS excludes beans from this dish, in Texas there are some varieties of Chili that include beans<sup>146</sup>. The stew prepared with those basic ingredients mentioned by the ICS (with or without beans) is also prepared in different countries around the world. Some of these dishes vary in the way of cooking, the species included or the addition of extra ingredients. One of these countries is Mexico, where, according to Zelayeta (1968) in her book “Elena's Secrets of Mexican Cooking”, the Mexican dish *Carne en Salsa de Chili Colorado* (meat in red chili sauce) is much the same as the “Chili *con Carne*” claimed as Texan. She explains in her book that the “*Carne en Salsa de Chili Colorado*” is a famous Mexican dish “that’s been taken and made famous by the Lone Star State (referring to Texas)” (Zelayeta 1968). Also, the stew with these afore mentioned basic ingredients is known by other names in Mexico. For example, “V́ctor” (2008)<sup>147</sup>, a Mexican cook participating in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic –and who also possesses archaeological evidence of *Teopantitla* (Chapter 2)-, mentions that the Texan Chili originated in Mexico and was derived from the Mexican dish known as *Carne con Chile* (meat with chili peppers).

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<sup>144</sup> CRN India gives technical analysis of the Indian Stock Market and offers information about the India's main export products and their consumption (Capsicum's fruit among them).

<sup>145</sup> The International Chili Society (ICS) is one of the two main US organisations that sanctions and rules the contest of cooking Chili, known as “Chili Cookoffs”, internationally.

<sup>146</sup> According to Hill (1906), varieties of Chili with beans have existed in Texas (where this dish is popular) since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>147</sup> I interviewed “V́ctor” in Ajijic in January 2008.

Regarding the origins of Chili, the ICS recognises that even though this stew is very popular in Texas, the mixture of meat, *chiles*, herbs, and beans was known to the Incas<sup>148</sup>, Aztecs<sup>149</sup>, and Mayans<sup>150</sup> long before Columbus (ICS 2012). In addition, so far the oldest reference to a meat stew with *chile*, salt, and tomatoes was made by Bernal Díaz del Castillo<sup>151</sup> in 1519. He narrated how the *indios Cholulas*<sup>152</sup> were so confident of Victory in a battle against the Spanish colonisers that they had prepared, prior to the battle’s commencement, cauldrons with boiled tomatoes, *chiles*, and salt as a Victory dish. The other main ingredient, meat, would be added later, and this would be the flesh of the defeated colonisers (Díaz del Castillo [1632] 1996).

Although the combination meat, *chile*, herbs, and beans was used by the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans from pre-Columbian times (ICS 2012), and with tomatoes instead of beans by the Cholulas at least from 1519 (Díaz del Castillo [1632] 1996); Ramsdell (1959) assures that the meat stew with *chiles* and spices (also with tomatoes and/or beans) originated in Texas. He argues that in the 1720’s Canary Islanders were sent by the King of Spain to settle in, what is now known as Texas, where they created this stew using local ingredients. However, the weakness of Ramsdell’s argument is the date of his evidence (1720’s), being not older than that of the Cholulas’ stew (Mexico - at least from 1519), or that of the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans in pre-Columbian times (at least from 1492). Other commonly mentioned evidence of the Chili being Texan, where the dates again fall short, are: in 1880’s there were Mexican women known as “Chili Queens” selling Chili in San Antonio, Texas (Bushick 1934); in 1893 the San Antonio Chili Stand was offering Chili in the Columbian Exposition in Chicago (ICS 2012); and the appearance of “Chili Parlors”, also known as “Chili Joints”, in Texas and other US states from 1914 (ICS 2012).

Another problem in Ramsdell’s arguments is that when he states in his book that: “Chili, as we know it in the U.S., cannot be found in Mexico today except in a few spots which cater to

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<sup>148</sup> Incas were the pre-Columbian inhabitants of western South America.

<sup>149</sup> As mentioned before, Aztecs were pre-Columbian inhabitants of nowadays Central Mexico.

<sup>150</sup> Mayans were the pre-Columbian inhabitants from the area from nowadays southern Mexico to northern El Salvador and western Honduras. Currently, descendants from Mayans can still be found in the south of Mexico.

<sup>151</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo was a Spanish coloniser who wrote about his experience in the conquest of Mexico (1519-1521). He was part of the expedition led by the Spanish *conquistador* Hernán Cortés, which caused the fall of the Aztec Empire in 1521 and brought large parts of Mexico under the King of Spain’s rule.

<sup>152</sup> The *indios Cholulas* were the pre-Columbian inhabitants of what is currently known as the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley in Mexico.

tourists” (Ramsdell 1959), he does not mention what specific recipe of Chili he is referring to. In US there are many variations of this dish and they vary from place to place, and even from personal preferences. Even, if we hypothetically consider that there is only one type of Chili in US (as Ramsdell does: “Chili, as we know it in the US”), any dish could claim as having originated in US by only changing the cooking method or by adding one extra spice to the dish. In other words, Ramsdell’s argument always opens the possibility to declare Chili is Texan by claiming that it is not exactly the same as those stews made by the Cholulas, Aztecs, Mayans, and the Incas. However, this argument also collapses if we take into account that the basic ingredients (or most of the ingredients) of the pre-Columbian dish are also in those varieties of Texan Chili: meat, *chile*, species, (ingredients already combined in stews made by Cholulas, Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas), and in some varieties with tomatoes (ingredient also earlier included by the Cholulas in their stew) and/or beans (previously added by the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas to their stew).

However, meanwhile the debate about the origins of the stew made of meat, *chile*, and spices (with or without tomatoes and/or beans) was growing, in Texas the Chili or “Chili *con Carne*” was designated as the “official dish of Texas” and “symbol of Texas” by the Texas House of Representatives in the Concurrent Resolution Number 18 of the 65<sup>th</sup> Texas legislature during its regular session in 1977.

But how important is it, where Chili actually originated? The history of the origin of the *chile* and Chili is used by “V́ctor” and other Mexicans cooks as justification of their participation in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijs. Also, foreign cooks use the history of the Chili to justify their participation.

### **3.3. Chili Cookoff. The contest of cooking the dish Chili**

According to Bob Ritchey (in Raven 2007a), the first known Chili Cookoff was held in 1952 in Dallas, Texas. However the Chili Cookoff that took place in 1967 in Terlinga (Texas) is considered to be the beginning of the series of annual contests, which are still celebrated today. According to Horton (1989), the Chili Cookoff of 1967 was carried out by the Chili Appreciation Society (which later changed its name to “Chili Appreciation Society International” [CASI])<sup>153</sup> in order to “improve the quality of chili in restaurants and broadcast

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<sup>153</sup> This is a charity organisation of which its date of foundation is imprecise (between 1939 and 1947 [Ritchey B. in: Raven 2007a]).

Texas-style recipes all over the earth" (Horton 1989). However, some of the organisers of that Chili Cookoff in Terlinga split and founded their own organisations. In 1970 the International Chili Society (ICS 2012) was set up that was in charge of carrying out the Chili Cookoff in California (US). In 1974, after two of the ICS founders, F. X. Tolbert and C. V. Woods parted ways, the latter kept the ICS and its Chili Cookoff in California and the other continued with CASI and its Chili Cookoff in Terlinga (Raven 2007b). Then, in 1983, after a conflict between F. X. Tolbert and other founders of the CASI, F. X. Tolbert decided to form his own group called the “Original Terlinga International Frank X. Tolbert–Wick Fowler Memorial Championship Chili Cookoff, Inc.” –TOLBERT- (Horton 1989). Meanwhile the Chili Cookoffs spread to other cities and states of US, and even to other countries; mainly Canada and Mexico.

Nowadays, the three organisations (CASI, ICS, and TOLBERT) separately carry out their own annual Chili world championships: The CASI celebrates its “Terlingua International Chili Championship (TICC)” in Terlingua; the ICS celebrates its “World's Championship Chili Cookoff (WCCC)” in Reno (Nevada); and TOLBERT celebrates its “Original Viva Terlingua International Frank X. Tolbert--Wick Fowler Memorial Championship Chili Cookoff” in Terlingua. All three organisations sanction and provide their own rules to Chili Cookoff participants to govern the manner in which these events are conducted. From the three organisations, ICS and CASI are the largest ones. CASI sanctions over 500 Chili Cookoffs internationally every year; these events raise over \$1 million US dollars annually for charity (CASI 2012). Whereas the ICS sanctions over 200 Chili Cookoffs internationally every year; these events raise over \$86 million US dollars for charities (ICS 2012). According to their respective webpages, the CASI has Chili Cookoff members in US, Canada, and Mexico; and the ICS has them in US, Canada, Mexico (1978-2008), Cayman Islands (2001-2009), and Australia (2001).

However, there are also Chili Cookoffs events which are not members of CASI, ICS, or TOLBERT, for example: the annual “Chilympiad” (only for men) in San Marcos, Texas, founded in 1970; the “Hell Hath No Fury Like A Woman Scorned Cookoff” (founded as response to the Chilympiad’s men exclusivity) in Luckenbach, Texas; the “Lone Star Chili Cook-off” in New York City (US), founded in 1994; and the “Chili Cookoff” in Munich (Germany), founded in 1999. Nowadays, another example is the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic; this was founded and became a member of the ICS between 1978 and 1979, but since 2009 this event has started working independently from the ICS. The brief history of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is presented in the following section.

### 3.4. The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic

In Ajijic, its Chili Cookoff is locally renown for two main aspects: firstly, as a cooking contest, where participant cooks compete to produce the best Chili or “Chili *con Carne*”; and secondly, as a fundraising event, where most of the proceeds collected are donated to charity organisations.

According to Ann Whiting (2009)<sup>154</sup>, the main founder of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic, this event was carried out for the first time in 1978 by her and a small group of foreign retirees established in Chapala Lakeside. Among these foreign retirees, she mentioned: Morley Eager, Mickey Church, and Ron Dorsey; and others like Joan Frost and Don Howse who joined the group later.

Ann Whiting was born in 1940 in Detroit, Michigan (US), where, she worked as nurse at the Henry Ford Hospital. In 1960 she and her husband moved to Mexico and established themselves in the city of Guadalajara (around 50 km from Ajijic). Ann explained to me that after their arrival in Guadalajara she was always trying to make contact with the Mexican inhabitants and the small American community of this city. In Guadalajara, Ann had jobs in different institutions and companies<sup>155</sup>. Also, almost since her arrival she started carrying out charitable activities in this city and in Chapala Lakeside. For example: she worked for the blind children, and later she became one of the founders of the first school for blind girls in Mexico (around 1966); in 1978 she founded the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic, which has been raising funds for charities ever since; and she worked in the union of sugar producers in Mexico, where she strived for bettering the sugar workers’ housing<sup>156</sup>. Ann has been honoured repeatedly for her charitable activities. She has received recognition from the

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<sup>154</sup> I interviewed Ann Whiting in April 2009. Since it was not possible to contact Ann during my stay in Ajijic, I had to interview her after my fieldwork, when I was already back in Wageningen, the Netherlands (April 2009), working on the second phase of my PhD programme. For this reason the interview was realised by telephone.

<sup>155</sup> She worked for 9 years as administrator of the dental clinic of the Universidad de Guadalajara; she has been on the board of the *Instituto Cultural Mexico-Norteamericano* (English and Spanish language school and cultural centre) in Guadalajara since around 1963; she has been president of the American Society of Jalisco (AMSOC) at least seven times, an association that offers information about Mexico, and other services, to mainly foreign newcomers; in 2003, Ann retired after working 30 years (from 1973-2003) at *Grupo Modelo*, a Mexican beer company (known mainly for producing and exporting internationally the beer “Corona”).

<sup>156</sup> Ann Whiting was also president of the *Club Rotario de Guadalajara* (Guadalajara Rotary Club), and later she became part of the *Club Rotario Ajijic* (Ajijic Rotary Club), both clubs generate projects against poverty, illiteracy, abuse and pollution; she worked for the group “Living Lakes” which supports the conservation of the lakes around the world, including the Lake Chapala; she was one of the founders of the Clinic for the Eyes in Guadalajara; and she has supported projects for the Red Cross in Chapala Lakeside; she is involved in a project called “*Amistad*” which supports the *Huichol* ethnic group.

Rotary Club, the Daughters of the American Revolution in Chapala Lakeside (they named her the woman of the year), and the former Jalisco governor (Alberto Cardenas).

In the interview I held with Ann Whiting, she explained to me that the idea of carrying out the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic was born from her wish to help the needy from Chapala Lakeside, for whom she said she has always felt affection, but also from frustration for the sometimes lack of proper support to them. Ann commented that after visiting her brother in Texas, she realised that in that US state people carry out Chili Cookoffs “almost everywhere” to finance charity organisations. Later, she travelled to California, where she found a Chili Cookoff event organised by the ICS. There, she expressed her interest in doing a Chili Cookoff in Chapala Lakeside to the organisers of that event. They advised her to contact the board of the ICS. Following their advice, Ann visited the ICS board in Las Vegas, Nevada, where they were carrying out a Chili Cookoff. Ann talked to the ICS board about the possibilities of holding a Chili Cookoff in Chapala Lakeside and they offered their support. Additionally, she found some participant cooks from that Chili Cookoff who were keen to come to compete in Chapala Lakeside. In this way, the Chili Cookoff in Chapala Lakeside (which has been always in and around Ajijic) became a member of the ICS. The organisers, cooks, and judges of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic pay annual fees to the ICS to be members of this organisation. In exchange, the ICS grant:

- the organisers, the ICS’s membership regulation; the cooking contest regulation (which indicates the ingredients that participant cooks are allowed to use for their Chili); organising advisory; and the supporting visit of some foreign ICS’ cooks and judges to the local Chili Cookoff;
- the cooks, the possibility (if they win in Ajijic) to participate as representatives of Mexico in the international final competition in Reno (Nevada), where the competing cooks have the chance to become the world champion and to win a large amount of money as the main prize;
- the judges, the possibility to vote for the competing dishes in the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic and the possibility to be invited to judge other Chili Cookoffs internationally.

Ann remembers that at the beginning, the support from the ICS and from the foreign ICS cooks was fundamental to carrying out the event in Ajijic as the people in this town did not know what the Chili Cookoff was about.

Ann informed me that when she returned to Ajijic from US, the first thing to do was to find a place where the Chili Cookoff could be carried out. She was looking for a venue suitable for the installation of tents with the basic cooking equipment such as stoves, bottled gas, etc. So Ann talked to Morley Eager, one of the founders of this event and at that time owner of the hotel-restaurant “*La Vieja Posada*”, which is located on the shore of Lake Chapala. Ann asked Morley to allow the event to be held on the shore area that lies in front of his hotel-restaurant. Morley Eager agreed and this became the location where the first Chili Cookoff of Ajijic was realised. Ann also remembers that in this first Chili Cookoff there were only a few participants, all of them members of Chapala Lakeside’s foreign community. However, she admits that she had never imagined that the foreign participation would increase year by year and that the event would grow to become the largest fundraising event in this area. Neither, could she have imagined that this event would also bring the participation of Mexicans. According to Ann, the very existence and success of the Chili Cookoff is mainly down to the volunteers who organise and realise this annual event (she estimates around 150 volunteers in 2009). The volunteers are mostly members of the foreign community with only a small group of Mexicans from Chapala Lakeside. Ann adds that the Chili Cookoff board decided to pay some of the Mexican volunteers due to these volunteers’ need for an income. Also, she recognises as central, the support of the sponsors, the main one being *Grupo Modelo* (the beer company from where she retired after 30 years in 2003). Due to Ann’s petition, this company has been covering a large part of the costs of the event since the first Chili Cookoff. Ann highlights the good relationship she still keeps with *Grupo Modelo*. Even though she is no longer officially working for this company, the company continues to sponsor the Chili Cookoff and she continues supporting the company by giving tours in English to the visitors that *Grupo Modelo* receives from abroad.

In the following section, the reader can have an insight into the composition of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic in 2008, how it was performed, and the social dynamics within it.

#### **4. Description of my experience as a volunteer in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic in 2008**

During my fieldwork I participated as volunteer in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic in 2008. I saw this event advertised in Ajijic long before it took place. The Chili Cookoff is carried out annually over three days; in 2008 this was February 15, 16, and 17 (Friday to Sunday). That year the Chili Cookoff was celebrating its 30 year anniversary.



During my work as volunteer I realised that in Ajijic the Chili Cookoff is not only a fund raising cooking contest, but also an event composed of multiple activities, in which the cooking contest takes a central role. For example, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is also a trade fair where big and small companies, small vendors (of handicraft, jewellery, art, etc.), charities and non-profitable organisations, among other exhibitors, show (in their respective booths) their products and services. Also, the Chili Cookoff is a party. Visitors can eat, drink, enjoy the various musical and dance performances presented on the stage, as well as participate in the daily raffles organised by this event. And, as I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is also a ritual.

My interest in participating as volunteer in the Chili Cookoff emerged when I was visiting the Lake Chapala Society<sup>157</sup> (LCS) in Ajijic, which is, according to Charlie Smith<sup>158</sup>, the largest association of foreigners in Mexico. I was there having a conversation with Charlie about the phenomenon of the foreign retiree immigration in Chapala Lakeside, when I expressed to Charlie my wish of getting to know more foreign residents in Ajijic in order to know more about their life in this town. This is when he advised me to work as volunteer in the Chili Cookoff. He explained to me that this would be an ideal opportunity for me to get to know more foreigners and, at the same time, an opportunity to help the charities of Chapala Lakeside. Even though I was not planning at that time to do research or to write about the Chili Cookoff, Charlie was right in suggesting my participation. So I accepted and I registered myself as volunteer. Charlie later informed me that I would work with the group of traffic guides within the parking lot of the event from 12 midday to 2:30 pm during the three days of Chili Cookoff. The Chili Cookoff car park was in fact the Tobolandia<sup>159</sup> car park, where the event was being held that year.

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<sup>157</sup> The Lake Chapala Society (LCS) is a non-profit organisation placed in Ajijic with over 3,700 members from more than 24 nations (mainly from US and Canada). For over fifty years this association has been helping foreigners living at Chapala Lakeside, newcomers, and old-timers through offering them information (about buying a house in Chapala Lakeside, immigration procedures, Mexican laws, etc.) and multiple services (mostly for members): library, video library, lectures, discussion groups, weekly dancing, meditation groups, medical services and tests, the LCS' members directory, free LCS mail courier service, etc. The LCS also assists the local Mexican community through courses: Computer Technology, English, Art, Remedial Academic Programs; and through granting scholarships to locals (the Student Aid Program). The LCS also founded a Spanish-language library open to the public. Almost one-third of the LCS' annual budget assists the local Mexican community (LCS 2009).

<sup>158</sup> Charlie Smith is a foreign retiree, who moved from Boston, Massachusetts (US), to Ajijic around 1999 and became part of the foreign retiree community established in this town since then. He was president of the LCS from 2004 to 2007. In 2008, he was volunteering for LCS and the Chili Cookoff. I interviewed Charlie in February 2008 and I asked him some statistical information in February 2013.

<sup>159</sup> Tobolandia is a water park in Ajijic.

Even though officially the Chili Cookoff started on Friday 15 (February), on the evening of the Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> there was a reception and party open to the public at the *Nueva Posada* Hotel in Ajijic. There, volunteers and judges welcomed the cooks competing in all categories. The reader can see these categories, the composition of the event, and the benefited charities in the following sub-section.

#### **4.1. Competing categories, the Chili Cookoff grounds, and the benefited charities**

##### *Competing categories*

- “Jalisco State Chili Rojo”. This is a competition for the cooking of “Traditional Red Chili” (also known as Chili); this category is only for competitors from Jalisco State. According to the ICS rules, this dish is defined as “any kind of meat or combination of meats, cooked with red chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients, with the exception of BEANS and PASTA which are strictly forbidden” (ICS 2010);
- “Jalisco State Chili Verde”. This is a competition for the cooking of “Chili Verde” (green chili), which according to the ICS has the same rules as the “Traditional Red Chili”, excepting for the usage of “green chili peppers” instead of “red chili peppers” (ICS 2010); this category is only for competitors from Jalisco State;
- “Salsa”. This is a competition for the cooking of *salsa* (sauce); according to the ICS, there are no restrictions on ingredients or the method of cooking (ICS 2010);
- “Mexican National Chili”. This is a competition for the cooking of “Traditional Red Chili” (or Chili). This category is for competitors coming from any part of Mexico. It follows the ICS rules mentioned before;
- “People's Choice” in two modalities: “Home Cooks” and “Local Chefs”. “People’s Choice” means that this category is not judged by the official ICS judges, but by the public visiting this event. The modality “Home Cooks” is intended for those of Chapala Lakeside. The modality “Local Chefs” is intended for chefs of the Chapala Lakeside’s restaurants. The cooks in these two modalities compete in cooking the Chili and *Salsa*. However, different from the Chili and *Salsa* mentioned in the past categories, the “People’s Choice” is not ruled by the ICS, but by the local board. The latter established as the only rule for this category: to use *chile*.

### *The Chili Cookoff grounds*

There were in total around 70 booths, from this, around 50 booths were mainly for:

- people selling handicraft, art, clothes, jewellery, etc. Most of these vendors were contacted by the Chili Cookoff organisers via the different *tianguis* (open markets) along Chapala Lakeside, where some of them offer their products;
- representatives from small businesses of Chapala Lakeside offering products/services (local galleries, restaurants, etc.);
- representatives of bigger companies such as: BBVA-Bancomer (Mexican-Spanish bank, the largest in Mexico; at the event this company was offering their financial services, among them loans for foreigners interested in buying real estate in Mexico [the service is called the “Preferred Customers’ Unit”]); Interlago (real estate company from Chapala Lakeside); etc.;
- representatives of charity organisations (those not benefited from the Chili Cookoff’s proceeds) such as: the Lake Chapala Society A.C. (which also realises charitable activities); the *Villa Infantil de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San José A.C.* (orphanage for children); etc.
- representatives of other non-profitable organisations such as: “Democrats Abroad” (they were offering information to the US citizens about how to vote in the US elections 2008 from Chapala Lakeside, and promoting the Democrat candidate for the presidency of US, Barack Obama); the Chapala Lakeside Spay & Neuter Center, A.C. (spay, neuter and adoption of dogs); the “Animal Rescue Group”; etc.

The majority of the around 50 booths represented the first two above mentioned groups. There were Mexican and foreign inhabitants of Chapala Lakeside among the vendors and representatives of small businesses, charities, and other non-profitable organisations.

Apart from these about 50 booths, there were eight booths especially for the charity organisations that benefited from the Chili Cookoff’s proceeds that year. According to Ann Whiting (2009), the benefited charity organisations must participate in the Chili Cookoff. In their booths, each charity gives information about its services (and sometimes also its needs) and sells food to the visitors (hamburgers, hotdogs, barbecue ribs, donuts, cookies, etc.). One of these charities was also selling some second-hand furniture.

The remaining booths were for the volunteers in charge of different tasks: giving information about the Chili Cookoff; selling the “Peoples’ Choice Tasting Kits”; selling the official Chili Cookoff T-shirts; and selling liquor, beers, and sodas. Apart from the “ICS judges’ tent” and the “cooks’ tent” (which was equipped with stoves), there was the “shade tent”, which was the biggest of all the tents.

*The benefited charities and non-profitable organisations<sup>160</sup>*

1. Cruz Roja de Chapala (Red Cross of Chapala). This is the Chapala Chapter of the Mexican Red Cross (part of the International Red Cross).
2. Los Niños de Chapala & Ajijic A.C. (the children of Chapala and Ajijic). This organisation provides to needy children: scholarships, school supplies and uniforms, a monthly supplement and, in some cases, accommodation and transportation assistance.
3. Escuela para Sordos de Jocotepec A.C. (Chapala Lakeside School for the Deaf in Jocotepec). This organisation provides education and grants medical devices for the deaf.
4. Niños de San Antonio A.C. (children of San Antonio). This organisation provides food and other supplies to Chapala Lakeside children, and also provides educative workshops for family members.
5. Programa Pro Niños Incapacitados del Lago A.C. (program for disabled children of the Lake). This organisation pays for medications, medical tests, and special equipment for children with disabilities or illnesses.
6. Casa de Ancianos de Chapala A.C. (Home for the elderly of Chapala). This organisation provides a home for the care of elderly residents of Chapala Lakeside.
7. Centro de Desarrollo Ajijic A.C. (centre of development Ajijic). This organisation provides medical consultations, family planning and reproductive health education for Chapala Lakeside families.
8. Misión San Pablo A.C. (mission San Pablo). This organisation provides an orphanage for children who have lost their parents due to AIDS.

In the following sub-sections I describe the three days of Chili Cookoff of Ajijic.

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<sup>160</sup> In this thesis I will refer to the “charities and non-profitable organisations” only as “charities” since this is how these organisations are referred to by the people involved with the Chili Cookoff.

## 4.2. Friday, February 15. The first day of Chili Cookoff

On Friday, the doors of the Chili Cookoff were opened around 11:00 am. When I arrived at the Chili Cookoff, there were around seven people in the entrance. Among them, there was Charlie Smith, who introduced me the other people. They were foreign retirees (all of them around 70 years old) volunteering in this event. Like Charlie, none of them speak Spanish. Two of them were in charge of selling the entrance tickets and the others were preparing themselves for their working position within the event. Charlie Smith immediately gave me a fluorescent green vest and an identity card which I had to hang around my neck, on the card was written: “2008 Mexican National Chili Cookoff. Volunteer”. He also gave me a short explanation, pointing out on a map the location of the booths<sup>161</sup> of the different vendors and exhibitors; toilets; parking lot; etc.

Then, Charlie showed me the spot where I would be supervising the traffic. It was where the main entrance-way split into two: one leading to the Tobolandia and Chili Cookoff car park; and the other only for delivery vehicles for the vendors and exhibitors.

The place where I was working facilitated me to see the different people involved with this event (visitors, volunteers, workers, vendors, and representatives of organisations and companies). Among the visitors, I also saw people coming from Guadalajara, for example a big group of children from the American School of Guadalajara.

During my shift, I saw three Mexican girls from Chapala Lakeside walking around the Chili Cookoff grounds advertising the Tasting Kits needed to taste and vote for the competing dishes. Each of them was carrying a signboard with an advertisement at the top written in English: “Vote for your favourite in the People’s Choice Competition. Tasting Kits on sale now”. When I asked them, they told me they were helping their father, who was hired by the event’s organisers to advertise the Tasting kits.

On that particular day the competitions category of “People’s Choice”, in the modality of “Local Chefs” cooking *Salsa*, and the category of “Jalisco State Chili Verde” were being held. When my shift finished, a foreign volunteer came to replace me and I decided to go to see the cooking competitions. In the entrance of the “People’s Choice”’s tent, there was the tickets booth, where a queue of visitors was waiting to buy their “Tasting Kits”. I also lined up and

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<sup>161</sup> The number of *tents* at the Chili Cookoff (which were lent by the main sponsors: “*Grupo Modelo*” and “*Pepsi*”) is not the same as the number of *booths*. There are tents where only one booth is placed, but there are also bigger tents under which two booths are located.

bought mine. The kit cost 10 pesos (around 1 USD) and contained a plastic spoon, a napkin, a small plastic container, and a ballot so one can vote for his favourite dish. Then, I walked along the booths of the competing chefs to taste their dishes. Some of the chefs' booths had a banner with the name of the Chapala Lakeside restaurant that they were representing, and others only the name of the chef. One booth was decorated with the Texan flag while other booths were decorated with the Mexican flag or with paper decorations in the Mexican flag colours (green, white, and red). In all these booths the chefs were not alone. After talking with the people in these booths along my tasting walk, I realised that most of them were accompanied by their spouse or a team. In one booth there was a couple from Texas, in other three booths there were foreigner-Mexican couples, in another booth there was a Mexican cook, and in the last booth there was a team of Mexicans. When I finished tasting the dishes, I filled in and deposited my vote in the ballot box.

In a different line of tents the ICS' cooks were competing in the category "Jalisco State Chili Verde", whose dishes are judged in the "ICS judges' tent". Among these ICS' cooks, there were some who travel every year through different countries to participate in diverse Chili Cookoffs. They are locally known as "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants". One example was a couple, an American man and a Mexican woman, who told me that every year apart from participating in Ajijic, they travel to several cities in US to compete in different Chili Cookoffs. They mentioned that before coming to Ajijic that year, they were in the Chili Cookoff in Hawaii. They admitted to liking the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic more than that of Hawaii due to the "Mexican style" of the first. They explained that this "Mexican style" is formed by *Mariachis*<sup>162</sup>, the *Ballet Folklórico*<sup>163</sup>, amongst other Mexican attractions. They assured me that the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is well-known internationally among the people involved with Chili Cookoffs due to its "Mexican style". They added that the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is considered unique since most Chili Cookoffs have a marked Texan style. In the last part of our conversation, they mentioned that like them, many international participants come to Ajijic not so much for getting "ICS points", but because they enjoy the "Mexican style" of this Chili Cookoff, which keeps them coming back every year.

Since I was curious to know about the origin of the Chili, during my walk along the chefs' booths and along the booths of the ICS' cooks, I asked some of them where this dish comes from. All the foreign chefs and cooks I asked answered that the Chili Cookoff and the Chili

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<sup>162</sup> *Mariachis* are traditional Mexican groups of musicians that play and sing mainly Mexican music.

<sup>163</sup> *Ballet Folklóricos* are traditional Mexican groups of dancers.

are Texan. Some of these cooks mentioned that the Chili Cookoff originated around the 1960’s and that according to the Ramsdell’ book the Chili dates back to the XVIII century. Also, most of these foreign cooks told me that they participate in this event in order to keep the Chili Cookoff and the Chili as Texan traditions. However, some of the Mexican chefs and ICS cooks told me that the Chili is a Mexican dish. So, that day I realised that there was not a unanimous opinion about the origin of this dish.

Later, surprisingly for me, I found “V́ctor”, the person who had showed me one month earlier the utensils that he assures are the archaeological evidence of *Teopantitla*. He was surprised to see me too and told me that he was participating as a competing cook in the Chili Cookoff. However, when I asked “V́ctor” what his motives were in participating in the Chili Cookoff. He answered that he wanted to prove to the foreigners and the public visiting this event that the Chili is indeed Mexican. He explained to me that the Chili has been known in Mexico since Pre-Columbian times and that nowadays it is known as *Carne con Chile* (meat with chili). He commented that his objective was to show foreigners and visitors to the Chili Cookoff how delicious the Mexican stew tastes. He added that if his stew won as best Chili, the judges would be so surprised when he told them that what he had cooked was really the Mexican *Carne con Chile*. He mentioned that this would be a way to prove to them the Mexican origin of the Chili. Then, since I was still interested in “V́ctor”’s reasons for participating in this event, I asked him for a short interview, to which he agreed. Then, I got my audio recorder out of my backpack and asked his permission to record the interview. He accepted under the condition of using the same pseudonym that he had used in our previous interview one month earlier. I started the interview asking him about how he got to know about the Chili Cookoff, and asked him to give me more details about his motives for participating in this event. He answered:

“I got to know about the existence of this competition of cooking with *chile* (the Chili Cookoff) through the advertisements placed at the sides of the road (Ajijic’s road). One day I was passing by and I saw an ad in which there was the caricatured image of a big *chile* wearing the traditional Mexican *charro*’s<sup>164</sup> hat and some text inviting the people to participate in this competition. However, what really motivated me to enter into this competition (the Chili Cookoff) as cook was that I was really irritated that foreigners come to Mexico to tell and judge how to cook with *chile*, for example how to cook the ‘*Carne con chile*’, ‘*salsa*’, etc. Imagine that! Mexicans have been cooking

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<sup>164</sup> *Charro* is the traditional horsemen from Mexico who, among other abilities, perform skilled acts with his rope and trained horse.

with *chile* since the Aztecs and Mayans in pre-Columbian times. Most of our national cuisine is prepared with countless varieties of *chiles*. Mexico is the country with biggest variety of *chiles* in the world. We have so many varieties of *chiles*, that nearly each variety of *chile* is used to prepare a different specific Mexican dish. In general terms, the Mexican food is based on maize, beans, and *chile*. I have no doubt in saying that in Mexico, most of the Mexicans eat *chile* in their three daily meals: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In Mexico, even most of the candies for children contains *chile*. However, somehow these foreigners arrive and say that what they call Chili is a Texan dish, even though this dish has been known in Mexico since long before Texas even existed. Then, the foreigners make this contest (the Chili Cookoff) where they impose the rules for cooking *Carne con chile*, what they call Chili, and where they even tell you the ingredients that you must or must not use. Then, they (the ICS judges) judge the dishes; and in the end, the winners are always the foreign cooks. Nowadays this is changing, there is more Mexican participation; however this is still a contest based on foreign rules, with mainly foreign judges, with mainly foreign cooks, and with mainly foreign winners for cooking a Mexican dish. For these reasons the organisers needed to include the category “Mexican Cook” because they were feeling it had been a bit unfair that foreigners, instead of Mexicans, had been representing Mexico for many years in the world championship in US” (“V́ctor”, Ajijic 2008)<sup>165</sup>.

However, “V́ctor” also recognised that another reason for his participation in the Chili Cookoff is to support the foreigners in, what he call, their “wish of making Ajijic a place where foreigners and locals join as one to bring local development through charitable activities”; he comments:

“Even though my personal opinion about the Chili Cookoff is as I mentioned, this does not mean that I do not appreciate the effort of the foreign organisers, participants, and visitors to help the local charities, which indeed help our people. In fact, another reason for my participation in the Chili Cookoff is to support the foreign organisers’ wish of making Ajijic a place where foreigners and locals join as one to bring local development through charitable activities. Although here sometimes I have to join some participants who see Ajijic as a simple retirement destination without history, which bothers me since my view is that local development should be realised

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<sup>165</sup> The quotations from “V́ctor”’s narratives in this thesis are my translation from Spanish.



respecting the historic places of Ajijic such as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (area and places according to him invaded by residential developments), I participate anyway. I participate because this is my way of contributing to the local charities [...] I think foreigners are good people and they are always welcome in Mexico, even I like them, I have some good foreign friends. With the Chili Cookoff we (the host community) can see that many foreigners in Chapala Lakeside are supporters of the local charities. They (foreigners) also show us that they are part of our community and that they are able to help. However, regarding the Chili, sorry but do not say that this is Texan, this is Mexican. This is also said in the book written by Bernal Díaz (Díaz del Castillo). Maybe they changed a bit of the ingredients, but this dish is derived from a Mexican dish for sure. Come on! What percentage of the total population of *gringos* (people born in US) eats *chile* in their country and since when? And what percentage of the total population of Mexicans eats *chile* in Mexico and since when? You can even see this when the group of foreign Chili’s judges taste the competing dishes, they get red faces and they almost choke! Even though these dishes are not really hot. They are not simply accustomed to eat *chile*” (“Víctor”, Ajijic 2008).

Also, “Víctor” explained to me why the introduction of the category “People’s Choice” competition (voted by the visitors who buy the Tasting Kit) brought more Mexicans to participate in the Chili Cookoff; he comments:

“The introduction of the ‘People’s Choice’ definitely brought more Mexicans to the Chili Cookoff. Nowadays, there are more Mexican cooks, visitors, and even a few Mexican winners. All this happened because there were more Mexican voters (those who bought the Tasting Kits). There is a kind of trend that if the judges are foreigners, there are more foreign winners; and if the judges or voters are Mexican, then there are more Mexican winners. However, this is not due to nationalistic voting in favour of the cook who is from your own country, but due to the taste of the judges or voters. The ICS judges carry out a blind tasting of the competing dishes. These dishes have no name of the cooks. In spite of few exceptions, on the one hand, the foreign ICS judges and foreign voters, who are mostly *gringos* (born in US), prefer those US recipes of Chili, like those prepared in Texas. These stews are like the Mexican *Carne con chile* but a bit sweeter and less hot. On the other hand, also with a few exceptions, if the judges are Mexican, they prefer the recipes that are similar to the *Carne con chile* that they eat in Mexico. Before the appearance of the ‘People’s Choice’, many Mexican

cooks I know did not want to participate in the Chili Cookoff because even if you cooked the best *Carne con chile* in Chapala Lakeside, in the end you would still lose the competition because the ICS judges, who are mostly foreigners, preferred the foreign version of the dish. So giving the public the possibility to vote (in the ‘People’s Choice’) brought more Mexican voters and the opportunity for Mexican cooks to win. But more important is that the “People’s Choice” could bring the opportunity for the original *Carne con chile*, that of Mexico, to win and to show all the people the original dish of what they call Chili. This motivated not only my participation in the Chili Cookoff, but also the participation of many of the other Mexican cooks. In summary, it is mainly *chile* and *Carne con chile* that has brought us here. In my case, as I told you before, I was also brought by my anger about foreigners trying to rule the use of *chile*” (“Víctor”, Ajijic 2008).

Then, “Víctor” had to go, so we ended our conversation. After that, I visited the “ICS judges’ tent”, where 13 ICS judges were assessing the competing stews. I started taking pictures of this activity when one of the judges approached to me and introduced himself as Federico Collignon. I asked him for the nationalities of the judges. He told me that two were Mexicans, himself and Tony Andalon, and the others (around 11) were foreigners. According to Federico, he, himself, has been participating in the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic for 24 years and Tony for around 25 years. After some minutes, Federico was called to return to the tasting table, but before he left I asked him for his telephone number in order to have an interview with him at a later date.

Next, I walked around the event to talk to some of the vendors, volunteers, and representatives of charity organisations. During my walk I met Marilú Amici, who along with a Canadian couple (Sandra Cartwright and her husband) were the representatives and volunteers of the charity organisation *Villa Infantil* (short name for: *Villa Infantil de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San José A.C.*), which is an orphanage in Chapala Lakeside. During my conversation with Marilú, she gave me information about *Villa Infantil* and also informed me that one can donate not only money to this charity, but also second-hand items. Marilú explained to me that they also accept second-hand stuff because if they receive something as a donation that they do not need, they can sell it later in their bazaar, or they can exchange it with another charities for other items. She added that since the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic gathers many charities together in its grounds, this event also facilitates that the representatives of the charities can talk directly to each other in order to know what every charity needs, what they

have extra or what they do not need. In this way charities can exchange donated items between them or give items away to a needed charity.

However, through the Chili Cookoff there is not only an interaction between charities of Chapala Lakeside, but also between foreign charities and charities from this area. Marilú explained how some time ago the group “Christian Youth”<sup>166</sup>, which is an organisation from US that also realises charitable activities, came to the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic and met the representatives of *Misión San Pablo* (charity in Chapala Lakeside). Then the group “Christian Youth” was invited to visit the *Misión San Pablo*’s facilities. Marilú said that after that visit, they were so touched by the needs of *Misión San Pablo* that they decided to help. She remembers that they donated bottled water to this charity, and that since that day a good relationship between the group and the charity emerged. Marilú mentioned the “Christian Youth” then continued making periodical donations of items or money collected in US to this charity in Chapala Lakeside.

Marilú said she was proud of working for *Villa Infantil* (where she has been working since almost the foundation of this organisation) and proud of the organisation’s transparency in the management of the donations they receive. However, she also mentioned some of the problems this charity faces. Marilú said that at that moment, among other facilities’ failures, they had some cracks in the walls and that they needed support to fix these. She highlighted that it is very important for the orphans, the sick, and the handicapped children to have the proper facilities for their physical and physiological development.

At the end of our conversation, she informed me that she had volunteered as an exhibitor of *La Villa* in the Chili Cookoff because of the affection she feels for *La Villa*’s children and because these children need help and support. Then, Marilú asked me if I would like to register my personal data and email address in the *La Villa*’s contact book. She said in that way I could be kept informed about the charity and its events, and also it meant that I could contact the organisation if I wanted to make a donation in the future, or in case I knew somebody who wanted to do so. So I accepted and I registered my personal data and email address in their book.

After talking with Marilú, I went to the “shade tent” where tables and chairs are set out. The stage was placed in front of this tent, so that the audience could eat and/or drink while they

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<sup>166</sup> Marilú was not completely sure about remembering the right name of this group from US. She had some doubts, however “Christian Youth” sounded the most familiar to her.

appreciated performances on the stage. At that moment the raffle of the day was being drawn. The raffle tickets had been sold to the visitors by several volunteers walking around the event's grounds during the day. Then, the winner of the "People's Choice" and the "Jalisco State Chili Verde" were announced as the last scheduled activity of the day. After this, people started leaving. Some booths were closing around 6:00 pm.

### **4.3. Saturday, February 16. The second day of Chili Cookoff**

On Saturday, again the gates to the Chili Cookoff grounds were opened around 11:00 am. This was the day of the "Chili Cookoff's Parade" along the Ajjic road. This parade started around 11:30 am in front of the Lloyd company (in Ajjic) and reached the entrance of the Chili Cookoff grounds around noon. This parade was formed of: decorated floats; members of the *Club de Charros* (Charros' club) of Ajjic riding their horses; members of the different foreigners' clubs in Chapala Lakeside (they were carrying flags of Mexico, US, and Canada); among other participants.

At 12:00 pm I started my voluntary work directing the cars, standing in the same place as the previous day. There, I saw several police officers walking around the Chili Cookoff grounds. Later, Charlie Smith would tell me that the officers were part of the municipal government's contribution to the Chili Cookoff. These police officers were in charge of supervising the peace and security of the Chili Cookoff's grounds. Also, Charlie implied that the government provides the traffic officers, who guide the Chili Cookoff's parade, as well as the fire-fighters who supervise the safety of the cooking facilities in the "cooks tent".

I was surprised because the number of visitors increased significantly compared to Friday. Charlie explained to me that on Saturdays and Sundays many more Mexicans come as many people from Guadalajara visit Tobolandia or Chapala Lakeside at the weekend so many of them drop into the event. However, I realised that the increase in the number of visitors on Saturday would bring also some unexpected problems to the organisers. For example, some hours later, I saw Charlie driving out of the Chili Cookoff. On his way out he saw me and told me, amazed, that he was going to get some more entrance tickets because there were so many visitors that they were running out.

After my shift, I went to the tents of the competing cooks. On that day three categories were competing: the "People's Choice", modality of "Home Cooks" (judged by the visitors with Tasting Kit); the *Salsa* and the "Jalisco State Chili Rojo" (both judged by the ICS judges).

That day there was a longer queue of people waiting to buy the “Tasting Kits” than the day before. Among those in line, I saw José, one of the performers of the *Huentli* ritual, who I had interviewed in January 2008, and who considers Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*. So, after I entered into the area of the competing cooks I said hello and joined him during the tasting walk. There, I asked him why he had decided to come to the Chili Cookoff. He answered that he felt sorry for the Chapala Lakeside’ needy because they do not have enough support from the government. He mentioned that he found in the Chili Cookoff a good opportunity to help the needy and to contribute to the foreign organisers’ objective of uniting the foreign and local communities and to bring local development by supporting charities. José explained to me that even though there were some foreigners who had invaded lands, there were many more good foreigners who wanted to help Ajijic. He assured me that the foreigners’ creation of the Chili Cookoff was proof that these good foreigners had become part of the local community since they were also worried about the community’s problems. Then I asked José how he had contributed to the Chili Cookoff. He answered that through paying the entry fee, buying the Tasting Kit (to taste the competing dishes) and the official Chili Cookoff T-Shirt. Then he explained that even though historically the Chili is a Mexican dish and not a Texan one as considered by foreigners, this does not matter. What matters, he implied, was to contribute to the Chili Cookoff and its charitable goal. Then he said good bye to me. While leaving, he reminded me not to forget the invitation he had extended to me around one month before, about watching his group (*ritualistas*) perform the *Huentli* ritual in May.

Then, I looked for something to eat, so I visited the booths of the “eight benefited charities” and those of the participating restaurants from Chapala Lakeside. These were the only booths where food was being sold. These booths were crowded with visitors who wanted to buy food, so I had to wait quite long before I could order something. After I got my dish, I went to the “shade tent” to look for a chair and table. The “shade tent” was also crowded, however after walking amongst the tables, I was lucky to find a vacant chair. While I was passing by the tables, I was able to confirm the international mixture of people who were attending this event. I continuously heard people speaking in Spanish, English, and a few in French and German. From the “shade tent” I could see on the stage the *Mariachi* and the *Ballet Folklórico* performing. This performance made some people, who I saw speaking Spanish and English, stand up from their chairs in order to get closer to the stage to take pictures of the performers. The *Mariachi* and *Ballet Folklórico* livened up the public under the “shade tent”. Later on, a band from Ajijic, who introduced themselves as “*Las Ventanas*”, started playing and singing songs in English from “The Doors” and “Carlos Santana”, this encouraged some of these English speakers to start dancing.

Then, curious about the motives that bring visitors to the Chili Cookoff, I decided to ask some visitors and to record their answers about the main reasons for them attending this event. I found very diverse answers, but surprisingly most of them were linked to Mexican symbols. For example: some (not only Mexicans, but also foreigners) visit this event to see the *Mariachis*’ or *Ballet Folklórico*’s performance. Here are some of their answers:

“I like to come to the Chili Cookoff because I like to see the *Ballet Folklórico*. I like their performance, their dresses, and the music. I always get goose-bumps when I see them dancing, it makes me feel happy, it makes me feel very Mexican, and even it encourages me to dance ha ha ha (she laughs). If the *Ballet Folklórico* dances next year, I will come again” (Guadalupe, Chili Cookoff 2008)<sup>167</sup>.

“My family and I, were planning to visit Tobolandia (the water park in Ajijic), but when we were parking our car there (he points out the parking lot) we heard a *Mariachi* was participating in this event (the Chili Cookoff). Then all my family wanted to come and listen the *Mariachi* playing. We like *Mariachis* a lot because they play traditional Mexican music (...) Then, one person told us that the *Mariachi* plays in this event every year. So we will come for sure next years to listen to the *Mariachi* again” (Eugenio, Chili Cookoff 2008)<sup>168</sup>.

“The main reason why I come to the Chili Cookoff is because I like to see the Mexican traditions, you know, the *Charros*, the woman dancing in their colourful dresses of the revolution (the *Ballet Folklórico*). I like the Mexican culture. A long time ago, I attended another Chili Cookoff in Texas, but I prefer the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic because this has also got the Mexican touch” (Michael, Chili Cookoff 2008)<sup>169</sup>.

“You see me as a blond, but I think inside I am Mexican because I always like to be part of the Mexican celebrations. I come to the Chili Cookoff every year because here you can see all the great things Mexicans do, their traditions, the Mexican men

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<sup>167</sup> Guadalupe is a 54 years old woman native from, and living in, the town of Chapala. She claims to visit the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic every year. My translation from Spanish.

<sup>168</sup> Eugenio is a 60 years old man native from Ajijic. My translation from Spanish.

<sup>169</sup> Michael is 71 years old, native from San Antonio, Texas and currently living in Ajijic. He visits the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic every year.

wearing big hats and singing Mexican songs (the *Mariachi*). This is the reason why I moved to Ajijic, to live the Mexican life” (George, Chili Cookoff 2008)<sup>170</sup>.

After I asking visitors for their motives in attending the Chili Cookoff, I went back to the “shade tent”. From there, I saw on the stage some members of the Chili Cookoff’s board (among them Ann Whiting [founder], Aurora Michel, Loren Reynolds [president of the Chili Cookoff], and others), together with their special guests (the representatives of the US and Canadian Consulates in Guadalajara) and the “ICS judges”. They were drawing the daily raffle and the winners received their prizes with big applause from the public. Among the prizes there were many products from the sponsoring companies. Then, the board also announced the winners of the “People's Choice” (Home Cook) competition and the 8th “Jalisco State Chili *Rojo*” championship and awarded the certificates and prizes. After this, the board closed the event inviting the public to return the following day for the remaining cooking competitions.

#### **4.4. Sunday, February 17. The third and last day of Chili Cookoff**

In Sunday, around 11:00 am the gates opened and, just like the two days before, I started directing the traffic flow at 12:00 pm. There were more cars with Mexican plates going to Tobolandia and the Chili Cookoff than the Friday and Saturday.

During my shift, I met Chad from Portland (US). He was another foreign retiree volunteering in the traffic directing team. Chad and his wife (also volunteer) were both snowbirds who came to Ajijic for the first time in 2003. He mentioned that they had bought a house in “*Rancho de Oro*” (one of the residential developments around Ajijic), but that they travel back to Portland every summer as they have a beach house there. He mentioned that the main reason for volunteering in the Chili Cookoff was because he liked to contribute to good causes now he is retired.

After my shift was over I went to the cooking competition tents. That day the two competition categories were: “People’s Choice. Local Chefs (cooking ‘Chili’)”; and the 30th “Mexican

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<sup>170</sup> George is a 75 years old man native from Michigan (US) and currently living in Ajijic. He visits the Chili Cookoff in Ajijic every year.

National Chili". In the cooking tents, I found the realtor "Ana", who had given the "introduction to Ajijic" talk in September 2007, and who considers Ajijic as a *retirement destination*. She was together with "Alfredo", the *comunero* who I had interviewed in January (2008), and who considers Ajijic as communal land. I was surprised as in the interview I had had with "Alfredo" in January, he had mentioned that the realtor "Ana" was linked to the group of what "Alfredo" called the "*invasor*" realtors<sup>171</sup>.

I said hello to "Ana" and "Alfredo" and then I asked them what they were doing in the Chili Cookoff. "Alfredo" answered that both of them were there to contribute to the charitable causes of the foreigners who organise the Chili Cookoff. He explained that they want to contribute to forge Ajijic as a town where foreigners and locals work together and where it is possible to get local development through realising fund-raising events for charities. Then, "Alfredo" added that he had come together with the realtor "Ana", to show people that in spite of the differences between the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* and some realtors, they can still be together for the sake of the needy of Lakeside. "Ana" nodded her head in agreement. Then I asked them how they actually contributed to the Chili Cookoff. "Ana" answered that by visiting this event, buying entrance tickets, the Tasting Kits and raffle tickets. Then, she mentioned that the Chili Cookoff also shows how all groups that make up the local community of Ajijic join for a good reason. Next, both said good bye to me and left.

Later I went to the "shade tent", which was as crowded as it had been the previous day. At that moment, there was a band on stage playing and singing English songs. Afterwards, I had a walk around the Chili Cookoff grounds, where I found the Lake Chapala Society (LCS) booth. Here, representatives were giving information to the visitors about their charitable activities and services. Among these services, there was one called the "LCS mail service", which is especially for the members who wish to send post from Chapala Lakeside to any worldwide destination (via US). That service is advertised as faster, safer, and cheaper than the Mexican postal service. Later, Charlie Smith would explain to me how that service works. He said that since many members of the LCS are snowbirds and sunbirds, who have a transnational life travelling backwards and forwards from Ajijic to US, some of them support the LCS by taking the LCS' members post to US. Charlie explained that what these

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<sup>171</sup> The *comunero* "Alfredo" makes a distinction between two groups of realtors, the "*no invasor*" (non-invading) realtors and the "*invasor*" (invading) realtors. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there have been conflicts between the *comuneros* and what is referred by "Alfredo" as "*invasor*" realtors almost since the 1950's. Nowadays the legal conflict still exists. The *comuneros* filed a law suit against those responsible for constructing some residential developments over their communal land. During the interview I had with "Ana" (2008), she mentioned to know that the *comuneros* consider her as "*invasor*", something that she denies to be.



transnational travellers usually do is: before going to US they collect the LCS post, and after crossing the Mexico-US border, they deposit it in the first US postal box they come across. Then the US post system handles this post further, delivering it within US or to any destination in the world. Charlie added that since many snowbirds and sunbirds are members of the LCS, the service works quite regularly. He added that this is only one of the ways in which these transnational travellers contribute to the LCS; it is now a service offered by the LCS to all its members.

Later, I returned to the “shade tent”, from where I saw the board’s members mounting the stage, some of whom were wearing the official Chili Cookoff T-shirt, with the event’s motto: “Mexican National Chili Cookoff. *Juntos Logramos Todo* (together we achieve everything)” on. This T-shirt has also got the image of the US, Mexican, and Canadian flags printed on it. They were on sale to the public in one of the tents during the three-day event. In a posterior interview I held with Ann Whiting in March 2009, she explained to me that the motto and the three flags together symbolise the main nationalities of all volunteers participating in this event and show to the general population that this event is also for Mexicans. Ann added that Mexicans should participate in this event since it is for the development of their own people.

Once, on the stage, the board’ members drew the day’s raffle and announced the winners of the “People’s Choice, Local Chefs (‘Chili’)” and the “Mexican National Chili” competition. The winners received their certificates, prizes, and the public applauded. After this, the board thanked the sponsors<sup>172</sup> of that year for their support. Also, the board thanked the volunteers and all the people involved in the realisation of the Chili Cookoff. Finally they closed the event and invited everyone to participate in the next Chili Cookoff of Ajijic, in 2009.

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<sup>172</sup> The main sponsors that year were: *Grupo Modelo* (Mexican company, producer of the internationally distributed “Corona” beer); Pepsi (the branch in Mexico of the American multinational corporation producer of the internationally distributed “Pepsi-Cola” soda); Delta Airlines, Sky Team (the branch in Mexico of the American airline company [and airlines associated: “Sky Team”], this company donated free-flights to US to the chili Cookoff, which were offered as part of the prizes); José Cuervo (Mexican company producer of the internationally distributed “Tequila José Cuervo”); Lloyd (Mexican corporation offering investment funds, this is one of the largest in Mexico); Dolphy Helados (Mexican company producer of ice cream, with branches in most states of Mexico); Katya (Chapala Lakeside company producer of drinking bottled water); Real de Chapala (a hotel in Ajijic); La Nueva Posada (a hotel in Ajijic); Tony’s Meats (a butcher’s in Chapala Lakeside); and Tobolandia (the water park in Ajijic).

## 5. The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic. A ritual as process in continuous transformation

One contribution of the description given about the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic 2008 is that it offers a glimpse into the composition, environment, and some of the social dynamics within this three-day ritual. However, the Chili Cookoff was not always as it was performed in 2008, but has been in continuous transformation since its foundation. This makes it necessary to have a view of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic diachronically. For this reason, in this section I present the narratives of the founder and other collaborators of this ritual, who have experienced closely the transformation of it throughout the years.

### 5.1. Changing the venue, sponsors, and prizes. Adapting to local problems, negotiations, and global contingencies

Federico Collignon<sup>173</sup>, one of the only two ICS Mexican judges, explained to me that one of the problems that the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic has faced several times since its foundation was in finding a location for this event to be held. He remembers that the first Chili Cookoff was realised in the lake shore (in front of the hotel-restaurant “*La Vieja Posada*”), but that later, the event grew in such a way that this location proved not to be big enough anymore. Then they moved to the Ajijic soccer field. However, Federico explains that after some years of holding the Chili Cookoff there they were no longer allowed to continue. According to him, the board in charge of the soccer field complained that the grass was damaged after each Chili Cookoff event. Then, Federico recalls, the Chili Cookoff was moved to an area besides the *libramiento*<sup>174</sup>. According to Federico, the land owner is an American man who also owns the nursery “*La Flor Exotica*” opposite. Federico remembers the Chili Cookoff was held here for seven years, from 2000 to 2007. He adds: “the location was excellent because the Chili Cookoff event could be seen by all traffic passing along these two roads (the *libramiento* and Jocotepec-Chapala road), in that way this event got more exposure” (Federico, Guadalajara 2008)<sup>175</sup>.

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<sup>173</sup> I interviewed Federico Collignon in Guadalajara, in March 2008.

<sup>174</sup> The *libramiento* is the road Ajijic-Guadalajara in its joint to Jocotepec-(Ajijic)-Chapala road. The *libramiento* is in the limit between Ajijic and the neighbouring town of San Antonio Tlayacapan.

<sup>175</sup> The quotations from Federico’s narratives in this thesis are my translation from Spanish.

However, in the interview I held with “V́ctor”, the Chili Cookoff’s Mexican cook mentioned in previous sections, he told me why the owner of the area besides the *libramiento* did not allow the realisation of Chili Cookoff to continue taking place on his property. He says: “I think the organisers of the Chili Cookoff were not thankful enough to the owner, I think they also forgot to mention his name in the acknowledgements’ speech” (“V́ctor”, Ajjic 2008). Then, according to “V́ctor”, the venue of the event was moved to the parking lot of Tobolandia, which has been the location of the Chili Cookoff since 2008<sup>176</sup>.

Regarding the change of the Chili Cookoff venue from the *libramiento* to the parking lot of Tobolandia, Federico assures me that the latter is also a very good venue because it is right in front of the former one. By this, he means, the current venue also offers exposure from the two roads. Federico adds that another advantage the current venue offers to the Chili Cookoff is that it is in the middle of the route between Tobolandia and its visitors. Federico explains:

“While the Chili Cookoff event is on, visitors to Tobolandia must pass by the Chili Cookoff venue because it is on the way to the water park. This has brought more visitors to the Chili Cookoff as Mexicans families visiting Tobolandia during this period often drop by the Chili Cookoff for a moment before or afterwards. Definitely, this has triggered the growth of visitors and so the development of the Chili Cookoff event” (Federico, Guadalajara 2008).

Federico added that another problem the organisers of the Chili Cookoff have faced throughout the years was to find sponsors. He explains: “Due to Ann Whiting (the founder), who was working for *Grupo Modelo*, we got sponsorship from this company, however sometimes it was difficult to find other sponsors” (Federico, Guadalajara 2008). Federico remembers that they also visited Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola looking for support for the Chili Cookoff and that this was not an easy task. He mentions that even though the Chili Cookoff is a fundraising event for charities, companies do not readily agree to sponsor it, and that for that reason they have to negotiate with these companies. He explains:

“We have to negotiate! For example, we planned to sell sodas in the Chili Cookoff grounds in order to collect money for the local charities. So, Coca-Cola offered to sell us their sodas at a reduced price. The plan being we would then sell these drinks at

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<sup>176</sup> In 2012, the Chili Cookoff was celebrated inside Tobolandia, not only in its parking lot. Source: The Chili Cookoff of Ajjic’s webpage (February 2012).

regular prices during the Chili Cookoff. Then, we would pay Coca-Cola the reduced cost and the Chili Cookoff would keep the difference. However, the reduced price they offered us did not allow a big enough profit margin, so we offered them an alternative option: getting a larger amount of drinks to sell if they would reduce the price of their sodas more. They rejected our offer so the negotiation was broken. Then we started negotiations with Pepsi and they offered us a lower price for their sodas plus one important thing: they also offered to lend us tents, tables, and chairs. This was so important because we really need this equipment in order to grow. In the end we closed the deal with Pepsi. In that way Pepsi became sponsor of the Chili Cookoff and not Coca-Cola<sup>177</sup> (Federico, Guadalajara 2008).

Federico also remembers that the organisers of the Chili Cookoff approached Allan W. Lloyd, the company where he was working, to ask for their sponsorship. Federico explains that the company accepted and started donating some money to the Chili Cookoff. However, he mentions that even though the money was useful, the event's organisers started thinking that it would be "more representative" if instead of money, the company donated the silver coins that this company sells. Federico explains:

"At that time I was working for that company, 'Allan W. Lloyd', which now is called 'Actinver-Lloyd'. So I suggested to Ricardo and the other owners: 'why do not you, instead of giving money to the event, give silver coins? For example, one Onza Troy (troy ounce, 31.10 grams) to the first place, and half Onza Troy to the second, third, fourth, and fifth place'. They accepted the idea. After that, they started donating silver coins to the Chili Cookoff, which we awarded the winner cooks as part of the prizes. It is more satisfactory to be given a commemorative silver coin as a prize than just money" (Federico, Guadalajara 2008).

However, Federico mentions that they not only negotiated with big companies to get sponsorship, but also with small businesses and stores along Chapala Lakeside. He said that every year the organisers have to ask small businesses and stores in Chapala Lakeside for their support or sponsorship:

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<sup>177</sup> After Pepsi Cola being one of the main sponsors of the Chili Cookoff in Ajjic for around 30 years, around 2012 Coca Cola replaced Pepsi Cola. Source: The Chili Cookoff of Ajjic's webpage (Accessed: February 2012).

“Every year the organisers visit: restaurants, which usually donate vouchers for free dinners or drinks; hotels, which offer mainly free-accommodations for a weekend; spas; hair dressers; etc. All these donations become part of the prizes we award to the winners of the cooking contest or become one of the multiple raffles prizes during the event. Also here, the organisers negotiate. Sometimes people do not donate because they think that it always has to be money donations. For this reason, we have to explain to them that it is also possible to donate goods or services that they offer. Sometimes initially they do not want to donate, but after some negotiation they agree to do so. The organisers offer them mainly exposure. The owners of small business know that the Chili Cookoff is a good opportunity for them to help charities, but also to advertise their products and services” (Federico, Guadalajara 2008).

Federico, also remarks that the Chili Cookoff has been transformed by global contingencies. He explains, that, for example, the number of “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants” (those travelling down every year from Canada and US) decreased in the years directly after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on US. He explains that some of these foreign participants were too scared to fly. While others, were de-motivated to fly to Mexico to participate in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic due to the rigid safety procedures then implemented at airports after the attacks. Federico explains that airport officers started confiscating some of the ingredients that cooks used to bring to Ajijic to prepare their competing dishes. However, he adds that this situation was solved by some Chapala Lakeside’s cooks, who facilitated their ingredients to foreign cooks, and by the event’s organisers. The latter, he informs, searched along Chapala Lakeside for stores where the Chili ingredients could be found, and passed this information to the foreign cooks.

In addition, Ann Whiting (Guadalajara 2009) mentions that the international financial crises that emerged around 2007 made it more difficult for the ICS’ cooks and judges, who annually come from US and Canada, to travel, and consequently participate in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic. However, Ann recognises that after a while some of these ICS’ cooks and judges, resumed coming to Ajijic.

Finally, the narratives of Federico, “V́ctor”, and Ann give account of how the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is a process in continuous transformation, shaped mainly by the organisers’ (and other participants’) agency used when facing: local problems to find a venue, negotiations with sponsors, and global contingencies. However, there are other changes that have transformed the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic significantly, these are the introduction of competing

categories and symbols. The latter contributes to confirm the ritual nature of the Chili Cookoff, which is analysed in the following section.

## **6. The Chili Cookoff of Ajjic. A ritual loaded with symbolism**

Ann (Guadalajara 2009) remembers that the first Chili Cookoff in Ajjic (in 1978) was very small and different compared to the Chili Cookoff of 2008. She mentions that in the first Chili Cookoff the competition was only of one dish (the Chili); there were about 25 competing cooks; a few volunteers (mainly the founders); no Mexican participants; a few sponsors; and little proceeds to donate to charities. Federico (Guadalajara 2008) remembers that the first Chili Cookoff's proceeds were donated to only three charity organisations in Chapala Lakeside: "*Escuela para Sordos de Jocotepec*" (Chapala Lakeside School for the Deaf, in Jocotepec), the *Cruz Roja de Chapala* (Red Cross, in Chapala), and "*Niños y Jovenes*" (school and shelter for children, in San Juan Cosalá).

According to Ann, the board always wanted to involve the Mexican inhabitants of Chapala Lakeside in the Chili Cookoff because this is intended to benefit their community. For this reason, during the 1980's the board introduced a new competing category, the "Mexican Cook", in which only Mexicans could contest for cooking the best Chili. The winner in this category would then represent Mexico in the World's Championship Chili Cookoff (WCCC) in Reno, Nevada. Ann comments that before this category was introduced, foreigners (instead of Mexicans) were representing Mexico in the World Championship.

Ann carries on that the "Mexican Cook" category attracted some Mexicans into the Chili Cookoff, however, they wanted to appeal even more. For this reason, in 2007, Ann asked Jim Hussin and Don Howse (two of the organisers of this event) to introduce another category: the "People's Choice" category, in two modalities: "home cook" and "local chef". The competing dishes in this category would be judged by the visitors who buy an accessible Tasting Kit (10 Mexican pesos [~1 USD] in 2008). Ann states that this category brought more competing Mexican cooks and more Mexican visitors to the event, especially those who wanted to judge the competing dishes. She explains:

"When we introduced the 'People's Choice', there were so many Mexican cooks who wanted to participate that even we didn't had enough room for them. So we put their names on a waiting list to participate the next year [...] Also the Mexican public loved it (the 'People's Choice' category), they liked the idea that they could judge the

competing dishes. There was a big queue of people, many Mexicans, waiting to taste and judge the cooks’ recipes of *Salsa* and (People’s Choice) Chili [...] Also we had a lot of young Mexicans who won, which was wonderful, this motivated more Mexicans to compete” (Ann, Guadalajara 2009).

However, the introduction of the “Mexican Cook” and the “People’s Choice” categories were not the only measures adopted in the history of Chili Cookoff of Ajijic to bring Mexican participation, but also the incorporation of symbols considered as Mexican. The image of *chile* (considered as Mexican symbol by “V́ctor” and by another Mexican competing cooks<sup>178</sup>) started being used to a wider extent through the Chili Cookoff’s advertisements. “V́ctor”, remembers that a caricatured image of a big *chile* wearing the traditional Mexican *charro*’s hat, started appearing in the Chili Cookoff’s banners and on bill boards placed at the sides of Ajijic’s roads. According to him, the *chile* and the Chili Cookoff as “competition of cooking with *chile*”, appealed to Mexicans cooks, like him, to compete. As I described in Chili Cookoff 2008, “V́ctor”’s nationalist feelings for the *chile* and Chili, he assures, motivated him to participate in this event: “...what really motivated me to enter into this competition (the Chili Cookoff) as cook was that I was really irritated that foreigners come to Mexico to tell and judge how to cook with *chile*” (“V́ctor”, Ajijic 2008).

Also, other symbols considered Mexican were introduced by the board to the Chili Cookoff: the *Mariachi* and the *Ballet Folklórico*, both perform on the stage; the *Club de Charros*, which perform in the Chili Cookoff’s opening parade; and the Mexican flag, which is present -together with the US and Canadian flags- in the Chili Cookoff’s opening parade and as part of the T-shirts logo. As I described in the Chili Cookoff 2008, some of these Mexican symbols are mentioned not only by Mexicans (e.g. Guadalupe and Eugenio), but also by foreigners (e.g. Michael and George) to be their main motivation to participate in this event.

The case of the Chili as symbol is special because this is interpreted by some Mexican competing cooks as Mexican, and by some foreign competing cooks as Texan. The competing cook “V́ctor” (and other Mexican competing cooks as well) and some foreign cooks assure that the Chili brought them into the Chili Cookoff. “V́ctor” is carrying out an unofficial competition in order to prove the origin of Chili as Mexican. While some foreign cooks

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<sup>178</sup> The Mexican cooks I interviewed consider the *chile* as a Mexican symbol basically for one or several of the following three reasons (according to their narratives): 1) *chile* has been eaten in Mexico since pre-Columbian times; 2) Mexico is one of the major consumers of *chile* in the world; and 3) Mexico is the country with the widest variety of *chiles* in the world.

claimed that they came to the Chili Cookoff because they want to keep the Chili Cookoff and the Chili as Texan traditions.

In addition, I found in the Chili Cookoff 2008 that there is another important symbol: the Chili Cookoff itself. This is considered by some organisers, participants, and visitors as a symbol of charity, which they stated to be the main reason why they participate in, or to contribute to, this event. For example: Ann Whiting; Marilú Amici; Chad; “Alfredo”; “Ana”; José; Charlie Smith; Federico Collignon; and it could also be the reason for many of the 150 people working in the Chili Cookoff as volunteers.

Also, I found that unlike the Chili Cookoff’ organisers, participants, and visitors mentioned so far, other visitors come to this event motivated by reasons not linked to this ritual’ symbols. For example, some visitors claimed to visit the Chili Cookoff because they wanted to “have a good time with the family” or “to eat and watch the various performers on stage”. Despite of the latter cases and the existence of other motives to visit the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic unlinked to this ritual’ symbols, all the other cases mentioned before<sup>179</sup> reveal that the engagement of people with these symbols have an important role in bringing participants and visitors into this event.

Also important is that these symbols show to be central on bringing together: 1) local actors (some of them in conflict) of the transformation of Ajijic -analysed further-; and 2) global flows of people and capital and some of these local actors. Number two can be better explained through two examples: the first is that Chili is a symbol that plays a central role in putting in contact the global flows of “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants” with local actors (i.e. the participants and organisers of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic). This contact has created links between these groups, which have contributed to make the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic internationally known (through these global flows of people) and to ensure the continuation of these international visitors to this local event (e.g. the local organisers’ support to the international ICS cooks’ travel to Ajijic). In this way, these links contribute to keeping the local Chili Cookoff running every year and enable this event to continue influencing the transformation of Ajijic through supporting charities. The second example is that the Chili Cookoff is a symbol of charity, which plays a central role in bringing together global flows of capital and charities of Chapala Lakeside (e.g. the periodical money and

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<sup>179</sup> “Victor” -and other Mexican cooks interviewed-, Guadalupe, Eugenio, Marilú Amici, José, “Alfredo”, Federico Collignon, “Ana”, Ann Whiting, Charlie Smith, the foreign cooks who want to keep the Chili Cookoff and Chili as Texan traditions, Michael, George, and Chad.



goods donated from US by the charity “American Youth” to the local charity *Misión San Pablo*).

In summary, the engagement of international and local participants and visitors with symbols definitively influences the growth of this event, and indirectly its proceeds and the capacity to change the life of many people, mainly those dependent on the eight benefited local charities. This capacity cannot be underestimated. Nowadays, the Chili Cookoff is the largest fundraising event in Chapala Lakeside and is organised and carried out almost a hundred per cent by volunteers. Ann Whiting mentions that from the first Chili Cookoff in 1978 to the Chili Cookoff in 2009, the number of volunteers increased from a few people (basically the founders) to 150 volunteers. Also, Ann explains that the Chili Cookoff and its proceeds have been growing year by year since 1978. She highlights that the money raised by the Chili Cookoff grew from around 50,000 pesos (approx. 5,000 USD)<sup>180</sup> in 1978 to around 450,000 pesos (approx. 45,000 USD<sup>181</sup>) in 2009.

However, Ann adds that not all the money raised goes directly to the charities, only after covering the expenses of realising the event, is the remaining money donated to charities. For example, in 2009, Ann mentions that from the 450,000 pesos (approx. 45,000 USD) raised, 280,000 pesos (approx. 28,000 USD) were donated to the eight charities, each receiving 35,000 pesos (approx. 3,500 USD).

Ann estimates that the lowest amount of money raised by the Chili Cookoff in the last 15 years was around 250,000 pesos (approx. 25,000 USD), and that the average over the same period was around 400,000 pesos (approx. 40,000 USD) per year. She states that since the foundation of this event up to 2009 (that is to say over 31 years) they have donated in total many “millions of pesos” (hundreds of thousands of USD) to charity organisations in Chapala Lakeside.

Finally, the engagement between people and symbols not only boosted the Chili Cookoff event and its proceeds, but also bring some analytical contributions to the current notion of actor’s agency. This is analysed in the following section.

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<sup>180</sup> Ann estimated roughly that the equivalent of 50,000 pesos in 1978 would be around 5,000 USD in 2009.

<sup>181</sup> Ann’s estimations are based on the currency exchange rate, Mexican Peso-USD, of April 2009 (when I interviewed her).

## 7. Chili Cookoff and the actor's body-context agency

One of the contributions of the analysis of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is that it shows the people's engagement of their bodily sensations<sup>182</sup> with this ritual's symbols. For example, people getting engaged with the *chile* and Chili through feelings of nationalism, and with the Chili Cookoff (as a symbol of charity) through feelings of sympathy and affection for the needy dependents of the charities supported by this event. The importance of analysing these engagements is based mainly on two facts: 1) these engagements have influence on the growth or reduction of the number of people coming to the Chili Cookoff, and consequently on its proceeds and capacity to transform Ajijic; and 2) these engagements show the relevance of bodily sensations within actors' agency. These facts are explained in more depth in the following paragraphs.

The Ann Whiting's narratives and my description of the Chili Cookoff 2008 give account of how the people's engagements with symbols through bodily sensations have a central role, not only in bringing people to the Chili Cookoff, but also on the practices that these people carry out within this event. For example, Ann assures her feelings of sympathy and affection for the Chapala Lakeside's needy not only engage her with the Chili Cookoff and motivate her to come to this event every year. But also, these feelings motivate her to do voluntary work as an organiser of the Chili Cookoff. Another example is the case of the Mexican cook "V́ctor". His nationalist feelings for the *chile* and Chili not only engaged him with these symbols and motivate him to come to this event every year. But also, these feelings encourage him to cook and use discourses within the Chili Cookoff in his attempt to prove that the Chili has, according to him, a Mexican origin.

Also, a specific bodily sense, the taste, has influence on the social dynamics around a central activity of the Chili Cookoff: the judging of the competing dishes. According to "V́ctor", the judges' taste is an important issue in the Chili Cookoff. He mentions that this can increase or decrease the amount of competing cooks and visitors coming to this event, and consequently can affect its proceeds.

"V́ctor" remembers that one time a problem emerged when the board also invited among the ICS' judges, what "V́ctor" calls, "non taste-experienced" judges to participate in the Chili

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<sup>182</sup> As I explained in Chapter 4, by "bodily sensations" I make reference to: 1) human bodily feelings (those of attachment, brotherhood, sympathy, affection, etc.) towards objects and people; and 2) human bodily senses (smell, taste, hearing, etc.)-with which we perceive our context.

Cookoff. This situation, he narrates, caused irritation among some competing cooks, who felt that their dishes deserved to be judged only by taste-experienced judges. “V́ctor” assures that the invitation of non taste-experienced judges demotivated some of the competing cooks to participate in preceding years. He adds that this situation affected the growth of the Chili Cookoff and its proceeds because if there is a reduction of competitors, there is also a reduction of money collected from the fees that competitors have to pay to compete.

In addition, “V́ctor” assures that the judges’ taste can affect the number of Mexican cooks and visitors coming to the Chili Cookoff. He assures that this situation happens because the judges prefer the flavours that they taste and enjoy during most part of their lives. He adds that during the taste of the competing dishes, the judges have no possibility to make a biased judgment since they judge numbered dishes and they do not know who cooked which dish. He refers that in this way is only the judges’ taste what matters and what determine who wins. This situation, according to him, causes the Mexican cooks’ dishes, which are similar to the Mexican *Carne con chile*, to lose the competition because the ICS’ judges in Ajijic are mostly foreigners (in 2008, 11 out of 13 ICS judges were foreigners [Federico, Ajijic 2008]). “V́ctor” assures this has demotivated Mexicans to participate. However, he mentions that this situation changed with the introduction of the “People’s choice” category since many Mexican visitors became judges (or voters) and started voting in favour of the dishes that taste more similar to the *Carne con chile*. According to him, this move of incorporating Mexican tasters among the (People’s choice) voters brought more Mexican competitors and visitors, which in turn lead to more proceeds.

Finally, the importance of the people’s engagements of their bodily sensations with the Chili Cookoff’ symbols is enormous. People’s feelings of nationalism for *chile* and Chili, feelings of sympathy and affection for the needy, the feeling of enjoyment gained by some people listening to *Mariachis* or by seeing the performance of the *Ballet Folklórico*, the enjoyment of some foreigners by experiencing the “Mexican touch” or the “Mexican life”, among many other bodily sensations, have been central on bringing many organisers, participants, and visitors into this ritual. The bodily sensations that have encouraged many people to volunteer for this ritual are especially important. This is because volunteering has been the force that generated this ritual, that has kept it running for 35 years<sup>183</sup>, and that has provided its capacity to transform Ajijic, especially the life of the people dependent on the local charities. As mentioned by Ann:

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<sup>183</sup> The Chili Cookoff celebrated their 35 years anniversary in February 2013.

“the Chili Cookoff in Ajjijc would not exist without the good feelings that motivate people to volunteer for the Chili Cookoff [...] This is an event organised and carried out only by volunteers [...] At the moment we are 150 volunteers” (Ann, Guadalajara 2009).

In this way, -similar to the case of the *ritualistas* analysed in Chapter 4- the analysis of the Chili Cookoff shows us that actors’ agency is not just a cognitive and acting capacity of actors (Giddens, 1979; Long, 2007). The cases presented in this chapter suggests that we should consider the relation “body-context” as important part of actor’s agency. In this way, by “body” I make reference to not only the cognitive part of the actor’s body (i.e. not only to his capacity of knowing and developing strategies), but also the actor’s bodily sensations (i.e. to his capacity to affect and being affected through his bodily sensations). Additionally by joining the words “body-context” I want to highlight the engagement between the actor’s body and its context. In this engagement, the actor’s body has not only the capacity of affecting its context, but also of being affected by material and/or non-material elements of its context. One example of these contextual material elements is the *chile* in the Chili Cookoff. And, one example of the contextual non-material elements is, the music played by the *Mariachi* in the Chili Cookoff. Both elements provoke reactions in people through their bodily sensations, which they assure motivate them to carry out specific practices within this event. According to “V́ctor” the *chile* (and his anger about foreigners ruling the use of *chile*) brought him to participate as a cook in the cooking contest. And Eugenio and his family stated that the music of the *Mariachi* motivated them to come as visitors to the Chili Cookoff and motivated them to return in the coming years.

As the reader can see in the before mentioned example of “V́ctor”, he attributes certain power to the *chile* which makes him participate in the Chili Cookoff. In other words, “V́ctor” assures that there is an effect coming from the *chile*. However, this assumed effect of the *chile* is generated by V́ctor himself and not by the *chile*. The proof is that the same “effect” of the *chile* is not experienced by all Mexican participants in this event. In other words, “V́ctor” granted agency to the *chile*, which “brought” him to the Chili Cookoff. As stated by Long (2007), actors have the capacity to grant agency to objects. Most cases presented in this chapter show this.

However, I argue that some contextual elements also affect actors and influence their practices without the need of actors granting agency to these elements. For example, the flavour of the competing dishes has an effect on the judges’ bodies (through their sense of

taste), which make them to declare one dish or other as the winner. In this case I believe that the effect of the dishes’ flavour on the judges is not generated by the judges granting agency to this element of their context (the flavour), but by an almost un-controllable reaction of their bodies to this element’s effect. For this reason I consider that in what I call “body-context agency” actors are affected by material and/or non-material elements of their context to which actors grant agency or not<sup>184</sup>.

Regarding the Chili Cookoff, the actor’s body-context agency has been essential for the foundation and growth of this ritual, and consequently on its effects on the transformation of Ajijic. These effects are not only economic (e.g. the millions of pesos donated to the Chapala Lakeside’s charities [Ann, Guadalajara 2009]), but also are manifested on the physical features and social life of this town.

The effects of the Chili Cookoff on the physicality of Ajijic are indirect and these occur because some of the benefited charities have used the donations they receive to transform their facilities or to construct new ones. Even though these physical transformations do not represent a significant change in the physicality of Ajijic or Chapala Lakeside, these are very important for people dependent on some of these charities. For example, Marilú Amici (representative of the orphanage *Villa Infantil*) highlights the importance for the orphans, the sick, and the handicapped children of having proper facilities for their physical and psychological development.

The effects of the Chili Cookoff on the social life of Ajijic are based mainly on the fact that this ritual has generated a GTL social entity and a space of legitimisation. Both are analysed in the following section.

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<sup>184</sup> Another case that supports my example of how actors can be affected by elements of their context to which I believe actors do not grant agency is that of Caroline in Chapter 3. Caroline move out from her first house in Ajijic because the smell of cooking guts coming from a *tacos* (traditional Mexican dish) stand placed close to her house provoked her frequent nauseas bouts. According to Caroline, her body was not used to this smell and consequently she could not physically handle it. She assures this smell “forced” her to move out. In the case of Caroline, through the engagement of her bodily senses (her sense of smell) with one element of her context (the smell of cooking guts) she became affected by this element, which “forced” her to move out. In Caroline’s case I believe the effect of the smell of cooking guts on her is not generated by Caroline granting agency to this element, but by an almost un-controllable reaction of her body to this element’s effect.

## 8. The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic, the space of legitimisation and the GTL social entity

One important finding derived from the analysis of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is that through this ritual actors who have different projects of shaping Ajijic and its local development, gather and work (or contribute in a different way) together for this ritual's charitable objectives. For example, the Chili Cookoff gathers actors who have projects of shaping Ajijic as: retirement destination (e.g. the realtor "Ana"); *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (e.g. "Víctor" and the *ritualista* José); and communal land (e.g. the *comunero* "Alfredo"). Interestingly, some of these people belong to actors groups that have had, and currently still have, legal conflicts between each other: the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic* and the group, called by the *comunero* "Alfredo", of "invasor" realtors. However, in spite of the current legal conflict between these two groups, the *comunero* "Alfredo" and the realtor "Ana" (who "Alfredo" assured is part of the "invasor" realtors) not only gather at the Chili Cookoff, but also interact and contribute together to this ritual by visiting it and buying its products.

Another important characteristic of the Chili Cookoff is that through this ritual actors join to one specific interpretation of Ajijic and its local development. For example, regarding the interpretation of Ajijic, even though "Ana" considers this town as a retirement destination, "Víctor" and José as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*, and "Alfredo" as communal land, they join the project of the Chili Cookoff's organisers in which they try to shape Ajijic as a town made of the foreign and host communities working together for charities. Regarding local development, the actors have also different ideas about what local development is: "Ana" considers this as the local economic benefits brought by the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination; "Víctor" as the growth of Ajijic including the protection of *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*, and "Alfredo" as the growth of Ajijic inhabited by foreigners and locals, but including the protection of their communal land and tenure system. Nevertheless despite these differences, they support, what according to them is the view of the Chili Cookoff's organisers, the concept that local development is something that can be also done through organising fund-raising events for charities.

Even though the assemblage of some actors is temporary (i.e. during the duration of the Chili Cookoff) and the assemblage of actors' interpretations into one is partial (i.e. this occurs without the actors abandoning the interpretations of their respective projects of shaping Ajijic and its local development), the assemblage of actors and their interpretations bring some important social effects to Ajijic.

The first social effect of this assemblage is that it generates a space of legitimisation. Through the Chili Cookoff, the organisers of this ritual achieve, to a certain extent, public legitimisation; not only of their view of Ajijic and its local development, but also the legitimisation of the foreign community as part of the local community and as supporters of local charities. We can see that this legitimisation is granted by different actors present in the Chili Cookoff, one example of them is “V́ctor”, who mentions: “With the Chili Cookoff we (the host community) can see that many foreigners in Chapala Lakeside are supporters of the local charities. They (foreigners) also show us that they are part of our community and that they are able to help.” (“V́ctor”, Ajijic 2008).

The second social effect of this assemblage is that it generates a GTL social entity. This is formed by Mexican actors (e.g. “Ana”, Joś and “Alfredo”), foreign actors established in Ajijic (e.g. the foreign volunteers), transnational actors (e.g. the “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants” and snowbirds), among many other people linked to this ritual. In the following paragraphs I list three important characteristics of the GTL social entity and some effects this has in the transformation of Ajijic.

1) The GTL social entity is independent and not determined by international regulations established by private associations or governments, but by the engagements of its members with the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic’ symbols and by the social interactions between members.

This can be explained through the following two examples.

First example: even though in the beginning it was fundamental for the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic to gain the support and regulations of the international association ICS, through time this event grew and got transformed in such a way that the ICS’ support and regulations were no longer necessary for its performance and growth. This meant the organisers of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic ceased their membership of the ICS in 2008<sup>185</sup>. As result of the latter, the organisers of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic on the one hand stopped spending money on ICS’ membership fees, but on the other hand they became worried about losing the “international

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<sup>185</sup> According to Ann Whiting (Guadalajara 2009), due to their resignation from the ICS’ membership, since 2009 the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is keeping only the “People’s Choice” categories (judged by the public who buy the Tasting Kit). This is, the subcategories “Home Cooks” and “Local Chefs” for cooking Chili and *Salsa*, where the only rule is to use *chile*. However, with the time new categories have been incorporated. For example, according to the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic’s webpage, in 2012 apart from the competitions of Chili and *Salsa*, they also introduced the competition of preparing the best “Margarita” drink. This is also a “People’s Choice” category. Source: The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic’s webpage (February 2012).

ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" in Ajijic. The latter preoccupation was based on the fact that after leaving the ICS' membership, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic could not grant "ICS points" to its participants or a pass to the world championship in US anymore ("Víctor", Ajijic 2009). However, surprisingly, the "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" continued coming to Ajijic. This happened due to the strong links that these transnational flows had already formed during years with the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic and some local organisers and cooks (Ann Whiting, Guadalajara 2009). As we saw in previous sections, some of these strong links are the engagements of the "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" with the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic' symbols. One example is the American-Mexican couple ("international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants") who come to the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic every year, not so much for getting "ICS points", but for enjoying the "Mexican style" of this event (e.g. *Mariachis*, the *Ballet Folklórico*, etc.).

The second example: (as mentioned by Federico - Guadalajara 2008) after the September 11 attacks in US, airport officers started confiscating some of the ingredients that "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" used to bring to Ajijic to prepare their competing dishes. This de-motivated these cooks to travel to Ajijic. However, after some time they resumed travelling to this town because the organisers and local cooks of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic facilitated that foreign cooks could get their required ingredients in Chapala Lakeside. In this way the solidarity and interaction between members of this GTL social entity bridged the obstacle presented by these international governmental regulations.

2) The GTL social entity contains members that keep a transnational continuous mobility. This has special effects on the process of transformation of Ajijic.

The transnational continuous mobility and practices of the snowbirds, "international charity representatives", and "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" (all members of this GTL social entity) contribute to the charities that participate in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic and/or to this ritual. In this way, this transnational mobility contributes indirectly to the transformation of Ajijic realised by the Chili Cookoff. For example: 1) a majority of the snowbirds that belong to the GTL social entity that emerged from the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic are also members of the LCS –association and charity participant in the Chili Cookoff- ("Víctor", Chili Cookoff 2008). These snowbirds contribute to the LCS by transporting its members' post, which they take to US in their frequent travels. In this way, the transnational mobility of these continuous travellers is central for the existence and operation of this novel mailing system (named the "LCS mail service"). Nowadays, people who want to use this



service must become LCS’ member and pay membership fees to this organisation. This service has become attractive for many since this has resulted in a cheaper, faster and safer service than the Mexican national postal system (Charlie Smith, Ajijic 2008); 2) the transnational mobility of the “international charity representatives” generates periodical inflows of donations from abroad to Lakeside. For example, the periodical visits of the representatives of the charity “American Youth” to *Misión San Pablo* in Lakeside, bringing donations from US to this area; and 3) the transnational mobility of the “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants” contributes to advertising the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic internationally, which could bring new participants to Ajijic and consequently make this ritual grows. It also assures the participation of these visitors in this local event and contributes to keeping this ritual running.

Due to the continuous transnational mobility of the snowbirds and sunbirds, I also propose through this chapter to study not only the *international* retirement migration, but also this specific type of continuous and circular migration of retirees, which I call *transnational* retirement migration. Even though sunbirds are not commonly seen in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic (due to the season), they contribute as much as the snowbirds on keeping the “LCS mail service” working. The relevance of studying these types of transnational retired migrants is based on that they realise unique social dynamics that have a unique impact on the Chapala Lakeside area (e.g. the consolidation of the “LCS mail service”).

### 3) The GTL social entity makes the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic a GTL ritual.

One of the reasons why the performance of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is global is because it involves the basic format that is reproduced by other Chili Cookoffs performed in different countries. This is the contest of cooking Chili as a fund raising event for charitable purposes, following similar rules (those established by the ICS or CASI). However, through the years the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic acquired not only more global characteristics, but also transnational, Mexican and local ones due to the elements brought by the GTL social entity that emerged through this ritual. For example, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic acquired the following global characteristics: 1) its performers became more international since Mexicans and more Canadians -and a small group of Europeans- joined this ritual, which used to be performed by a small group of mostly US foreign retirees; and 2) its performance started including elements from different countries, for example the exhibition of the Canadian flag, the performance of Mexican music, and the international dishes sold at this event. The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic became transnational due to the incorporation of transnational participants

(e.g. the snowbirds and ICS international cooks). This ritual also became national (Mexican) because over time the ritual organisers started incorporating symbols considered Mexican, among them: Mexican images (e.g. the Mexican flag); Mexican sounds (e.g. the Mariachis' music); and Mexican flavours (e.g. the participation of Mexican recipes [e.g. the *Carne con Chile*]). Additionally, this ritual became local for many reasons, for example, it started incorporating: Chapala Lakeside' inhabitants among its organisers, participants, and visitors; the different Chapala Lakeside' versions of *Salsa* and *Chili*; products and services from Chapala Lakeside, which started being offered and exhibited at the Chili Cookoff's booths; among other examples.

The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic as a GTL ritual offers multiple benefits to multiple actors. For example, the relevance of this event for charity organisations is not centred only in the proceeds they could gain from it (in the case of the eight benefited charities). But also, that this ritual brings to the Chapala Lakeside's charities the possibility to interact with each other in one place, to exchange information about their material surpluses and needs, and to exchange or negotiate donated items (Marilú, Chili Cookoff 2008).

In addition, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic offers to charities one important thing: exposure. This could help them to find donors since the charities' booths can be seen by hundreds of people who could spread the information about these organisations and their needs locally, nationally, and even internationally. This is due mainly to the local, national, and international members of the GTL social entity who gather in this ritual.

Also, the Chili Cookoff provides the opportunity for the charities to register personal data, including contact details, of hundreds of visitors and participants. In this way, charities create links with these people, who could be potential donors or links to donors. For example, after the Chili Cookoff in 2008, I personally started receiving informative emails (which I am glad to receive) from the charity *Villa Infantil* (where I registered myself), about their organisation, their events, and the possibilities of contributing to this charity. In addition, as mentioned before, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic, the Chapala Lakeside's charities can be in contact with foreign charities and receive global flows of capital (e.g. the case of the "American Youth" and *Misión San Pablo*).

However, it would be naive to think that the representatives of local charities are the only ones using this unique opportunity brought by the GTL composition of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic. Probably other participants such as small or big companies, among other vendors and exhibitors, are doing their information exchanging, contacting and collecting personal data of local, national, and international potential clients.

## 9. Conclusions

My conclusions are numbered as follows:

1) A symbol can have multiple histories and interpretations, which could provoke a contest between actors for the symbolic meanings.

As the reader saw in this chapter, the symbol Chili has multiple histories (e.g. those from Díaz del Castillo [1632] and Ramsdell [1959]) which competing cooks adopt to support their claim of this dish as Mexican or Texan. The multiple interpretations of this symbol has provoked a contest between some of the competing cooks to prove their interpretation of the meaning of this symbol as the unique one (e.g. the “Víctor”’s unofficial contest to prove the Chili as Mexican).

Even though the histories of the *chile*, Chili (or *Carne con Chile*), and the Chili Cookoff can be used by this ritual’s performers in their narratives to justify their engagement with these symbols, this is not merely what motivate them to participate and carry out specific practices in the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic. Indeed, it is the actors’ engagements between their bodily sensations and this ritual’ symbols. As we saw in this chapter, the *ritualista* José, who in spite of knowing the history of the Chili as Mexican, was not engaged with this symbol. Instead, he comes and contributes to the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic motivated by his feelings of sympathy for the Chapala Lakeside’ needy, which engaged him with the Chili Cookoff as a symbol of charity. In this way, the case of José, among other cases presented in this chapter, lead me to my following conclusion.

2) This chapter confirms that agency is not just a cognitive and acting capacity of actors (Giddens, 1979; Long, 2007). This is not only cognitive since this is also shaped by (un-)controllable physical reactions of the actor’s body to its context. Besides, this is not only an actor’s capacity of acting and influencing his context since this capacity is also shaped by how the actor’s body is being influenced by elements of its context.

In this chapter I described how the engagement of the actors’ bodily sensations (including affections and feelings of nationalism) with the Chili Cookoff’s symbols has motivated them to participate in this ritual, by which they contribute to shape Ajijic. In their engagement, actors also grant agency to objects (Long 2007), for example when the competing cook “Víctor” claims that the Chili “brought” him to participate in the Chili Cookoff. However, the case of the Chili’s judges shows that their agency is also shaped by what seems to be uncontrollable reactions or senses of their bodies to elements of their context: the Chili dishes.

Through the judges' decision of who will be the winning Chili, they indirectly shape the Chili Cookoff since this decision influences the increase or decrease of Mexican participants and visitors coming to the event. Interestingly, the judges' decision is not framed by the Chili Cookoff's regulations, neither is it shaped by a cognitive strategy of the judges, but by how their sense of taste reacts to the Chili dishes when they are blind judging these. Through this chapter I propose to look at agency more as actor's body-context agency.

3) The process of transformation of Ajijic also involves the assemblage of different actors' projects and interpretations of Ajijic and its local development through the Chili Cookoff ritual. This assemblage generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity, both of which have influence in the transformation of this town.

The relevance of the generated space of legitimisation is included in my final conclusion. The importance of the GTL social entity is that it influences the transformation of Ajijic in multiple ways. One is linked to the transnational mobility of some of the members of this social entity, which makes unique transformations (e.g. the emergence of the "LCS mail service" and the generation of periodical inflows of donations from abroad to Chapala Lakeside's charities). Another way is that the GTL social entity makes the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic a GTL ritual. The latter consideration leads me to my following three conclusions.

4) The transformation of Ajijic is shaped not only by a process of globalisation, but also of transnationalisation, and localisation.

The global-transnational-local composition of the Chili Cookoff reveals that Ajijic is passing not only through a process of globalisation (e.g. the IRM phenomenon). But also through transnationalism (e.g. Ajijic belongs to the transnational space where the *transnational* retirement migration and the "international ICS Chili Cookoffs' participants" flow) and localisation (e.g. the internationalisation of the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic as something unique from this Mexican town, as something local of Ajijic).

In addition, the GTL composition of the Chili Cookoff reveals the existence of contemporary spaces and people identities that questions the terms commonly used to define these. For example, the geographical space where snowbirds and international ICS participants inhabit and/or flow cannot be defined with terms like municipality, state, or nation. This is a space that blurs the boundaries assumed in these terms. Also, the identity of some participants of the Chili Cookoff cannot be defined as, for example, US citizens or Canadian, but that new identities emerge like that of the snowbirds or sunbirds, who are not entirely US

citizens/Canadians but a mixture of US/Canadian, Mexican and Chapala Lakesider, among other mixtures.

5) The benefits that the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic as GTL ritual bring to the Ajijic’s inhabitants is not centred in the proceeds that this ritual raises for local charities (as commonly assumed), but in many more.

As the reader saw in this chapter, this GTL ritual has not only donated millions of pesos to local charities, but also works for some participants as an open door which gives them access to a unique international, transnational and local space. In this space, participants can negotiate, create contacts (including those with global flows of money and donations), and exchange and collect information with members of the GTL social entity who converge during this three-day ritual. More important is that some links generated during this ritual are permanent and dynamic during the year (e.g. the visits of the American Youth to Chapala Lakeside along the year). In other words, although the ritual itself only lasts three days, the links that emerge from the interaction of some members of the GTL social entity last longer than the ritual’s performance. Some of these links have been in contact for years. For example, the links between the “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants” and some local organisers and cooks, which contribute to advertising this ritual internationally and to keep it running every year.

6) The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic, as a GTL ritual, not only benefits the host community (as commonly assumed), but also the foreign community of Ajijic and foreign transnational migrants who visit this town.

At the same time that this GTL ritual is a local door that make possible the access to transnational and global flows of people and capital, it is also a global and transnational door to local elements. The latter is because the ritual gives the foreign community and the foreign transnational migrants the possibility to access and enjoy what is referred by some of them as the “Mexican style” (American-Mexican couple of “international ICS Chili Cookoffs’ participants”, Chili Cookoff 2008), the “Mexican touch” (Michael, Chili Cookoff 2008), and the “Mexican life” (George, Chili Cookoff 2008).

Also important, as mentioned before, is that through this GTL ritual, a space of legitimisation is generated. In this space, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic’s organisers (most of them members of the foreign community) achieve public legitimisation of their project of shaping Ajijic according to their interpretation of this town and its local development. This is, according to the narratives of different actors presented in this chapter, Ajijic as a town made of the foreign

and host communities working together for charities, where local development is considered as something that can be also achieved through organising fund-raising events for charities. Additionally, in this space, the organisers of the ritual generate public legitimisation of the foreign community as part of the local community and as supporters of local charities. This facilitates members of the host community to accept the foreigners as part of their own community and to collaborate with their project of shaping Ajijic. The narratives of some members of the host community presented in this chapter confirm this.



Picture 20. The Mexican, US, and Canadian flags carried by members of one of the associations of foreigners in Chapala Lakeside (the Shrine Club) in the Chili Cookoff's opening parade. Source: Kenée Campo:

[http://mexicanchilicookoff.com/entertainmentshow/index\\_2.html](http://mexicanchilicookoff.com/entertainmentshow/index_2.html) (Accessed: April 12 2012).



Picture 21. The Texan flag decorating the booth of a competing cook from Texas. Source: author, February 2008.



Picture 22. The author in green vest volunteering in the Chili Cookoff Ajiic 2008. Behind the author, two girls from Chapala Lakeside having a short break after advertising the sale of “Tasting Kits” for the “People’s Choice” competition. Source: author, February 2008.



Picture 23. The Mexican-US team (Lourdes, Bob, and Cesar) presenting its competing Salsa in the “People’s Choice” competition. Category, “Local chefs”. Source: author, February 2008.





**Picture 24.** The ICS' judges tasting the competing dishes under the "Judges' Tent". Source: author, February 2008.



**Picture 25.** The *Mariachi* playing and the *Ballet Folklórico* dancing on the Chili Cookoff's stage. Source: author, February 2008.



**Picture 26.** Attendees under the "Shade Tent". Multiple languages in one place. Source: author, February 2008.



**Picture 27.** The visitors queuing to buy the "Tasting Kit" to taste and vote for the competing dishes. "People's Choice" competition. Source: author, February 2008.



**Picture 28.** The booth of the charity "*Los Niños de Chapala y Ajijic*" (children of Chapala and Ajijic). Volunteers in this booth giving information about this charity and selling donuts. Source: author, February 2008.



**Picture 29.** Some winner cooks, members of the Chili Cookoff's board, ICS' judges, and the representatives from the Canadian and the US consulates. Source: author, February 2008.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions**

The chapters of this thesis were organised in a way as to answer the research questions that I presented in the Introduction. In this chapter I present my major findings and conclusions. Section 1 elaborates on the research questions and section 2 contributes to the theoretical views presented in this book and includes final remarks.

#### **1. Answering the research questions**

In Chapter 1, two general research questions were formulated: 1) How do actors use discourses, objects and rituals as practices of legitimisation with which they shape Ajijic? And, 2) How do actors generate spaces of legitimisation and global-transnational-local (GTL) social entities through rituals and how do these shape Ajijic? I will elaborate on these questions by giving answers to the specific research questions presented below.

The first question is: What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon?

During the 1990's, when the number of foreign retirees moving to this town increased (effect influenced by the IRM phenomenon), several projects emerged. This study has described the most relevant projects regarding their impact on the social life of the inhabitants of Ajijic. One of them is that of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. Even though some municipal governments have been supporting the transformation of Ajijic in this way since the 1950's, it was mainly since the 1990's that this support became the municipal government's project of local development and modernisation. This project has been oriented to shape the retirement destination mainly through the construction of residential developments (Chapters 2 and 3). The main actors realising this project have been the successive municipal governments who granted the construction permits, and the real estate companies and their realtors (who trade –and in some cases also build- single houses and/or residential developments).

Together, the significant increase in the number of foreign retirees and the rapid increase of residential developments during the 1990s caused the emergence of more projects of shaping Ajijic. These emerging projects were defined by different actors' interpretations of Ajijic (and some of these projects were also defined by different interpretations of Ajijic's local development). Most of these projects emerged in part as a counter-action to the invasions of land that occurred during the implementation of the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. One of these counter-acting projects is that of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal* (Chapter 2). As response to the IRM and the invasions of communal land by the construction of some residential developments, the *comuneros* decided to shape the physical features of Ajijic through their own project.

Another of these emerging projects is that of shaping Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* (Chapters 2 and 4). In this project multiple actors participate, such as the art painter Jesús López; the holder of archaeological items, "Víctor"; the group that seeks to give public access to *La Piedra Rayada*; the group of art painters that seek to recover *Ojo de Agua*; the art painter Antonio López; and the group that performs the *Huentli* ritual. As in the case of the *comuneros'* project, this project emerged as a response to the IRM and the invasions of land by the construction of residential developments; in this case, the invasion of *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*.

The project of shaping the municipality -including Ajijic- as *playa de mar* (beach resort) is another of these emerging projects (Chapter 3). It differs from the last two above-mentioned projects in the sense that forming a beach landscape does not counteract the shaping of Ajijic as a retirement destination. The *playa de mar* project emerged as a parallel municipal government's project of local development. In the implementation of this project also multiple actors participated, mainly the municipal government, some members of the Mexican and foreign communities of Chapala, and Jalisco State governor.

A fifth emerging project described is that of shaping Ajijic into a community where the different local guilds, the foreign community of Ajijic, and *hijos ausentes* (Ajijic's natives residing in Mexico City and US) are socially integrated (Chapter 4). Even though this project of integrating the different groups inhabiting Ajijic emerged long before the 1990's, it was re-designed or updated through the years by integrating more recently formed groups: the *hijos ausentes* and the group of foreign retirees (integrated during the 1990's). This project is implemented mainly by the local Church and the different guilds of Ajijic.

Finally, a project emerged with the purpose of shaping Ajijic into a community where the foreign and Mexican communities work together for the local charities (Chapter 5). This is a

local development project and it was generated by a group of foreign retirees. The main actors participating in this project are some of the foreign retirees already residing in Ajijic, transnational flows of foreigners (like the ICS Chili Cookoff's cooks, representatives of foreign charities, and the so-called snowbirds), and some members of the Mexican community of Ajijic.

The second research question that this study answers is: How do actors use discourses and objects to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?

I have shown how actors use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic (and some actors also about their interpretations of Ajijic's local development and modernisation), in their attempt to get public legitimisation of the objects they produce or adopt. Through these objects actors transform the physical features of Ajijic and the social life in this town.

Chapters 2 and 3 described how mainly the municipal government and the realtors use discourses about Ajijic as a retirement destination and its local development and modernisation to try to obtain public legitimisation of the residential developments they trade and/or build (realtors) or support to build (municipal government). In these discourses they share the consideration of the local economic benefits derived from the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination as a "local development", and the construction of residential developments as "modernisation". Together with the increase in the number of foreign retirees, the construction of residential developments during the 1990's brought Ajijic its largest social, economic, and physical changes in the last 50 years.

In Chapter 2 I also presented how different actors use discourses about Ajijic as *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* to try to get public legitimisation of their counter-objects, such as Jesús López' murals, "Víctor's archaeological items, *La Piedra Rayada*, the art passage in *Ojo de Agua* (which is also a contested-object), and *Arroyo Tepalo*. Even though the creation/adoption of these counter-objects does not represent an important alteration of the physical features of Ajijic, they play an important role in the transformation of the social life of this town. Actors use these counter-objects, and discourses, to obtain public legitimisation of *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* and the public de-legitimisation of the invading residential developments. Consequently, the public legitimisation and de-legitimisation have helped these actors to form social groups that counter-act invading residential developments.

Chapter 3 showed how the mayor of Chapala uses discourses about the interpretation of the municipality as *playa de mar* to try to get public legitimisation of the transformation of the

lakefronts into seafronts, the planting of beach palms, and the placement of beach sand in specific areas of the lake's shore. These objects represent the second largest transformation of the physical features of Ajijic after the residential developments.

Another case is that of how the *comuneros* use discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic as *tierra comunal* and its local development to try to obtain public legitimisation of the counter-objects they have created: the border signs. In their discourses they consider local development as the growth of Ajijic inhabited by foreigners and locals, but including the protection of their communal land and tenure system. Like the counter-objects before mentioned (two paragraphs back), the border signs do not alter significantly the physical features of Ajijic. However, through the exhibition of these border signs the *comuneros* try to get public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic and its local development, and attempt to obtain public de-legitimisation of the invading residential developments. Additionally, through these border signs the *comuneros* try to protect their land from further invasions and denounce the existing invasions. In this way, they manage to obtain support from the inhabitants of Ajijic which increases the pressure on the local authorities to find a solution for the invasion of communal land.

Finally, the *ritualistas* use discourses about *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales* to try to legitimise their elaboration of a ceremonial centre. The centre is used by the *ritualistas* as a counter-object to try to obtain public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic and public de-legitimisation of a invading residential development.

The third question of this study is: How have actors materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have shaped this town the most?

Through the cases presented in Chapter 3, it becomes evident that actors have materialised the interpretations of Ajijic as a retirement destination and the municipality as *playa de mar* through processes of commoditisation which entails several phases: production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption. All these phases are socially constructed. Even though the above-mentioned interpretations of Ajijic and municipality are part of the municipal government's projects, these interpretations were defined not only by the government. They are the result of the encounter of different actors' interests, wishes, and how they imagine the local community.

Chapter 3 showed that the interpretations of Ajijic as a retirement destination and the municipality as *playa de mar* are commodities. While some actors produce them, invest

money in them, advertise them, sell them, and obtain profits from them, others buy and consume them. However, they are a special type of commodity that takes us to question the common view of considering companies as the only actor who produces and objectifies commodities, and the clients as the only ones who buy and consume them. As one of the cases described in Chapter 3 exemplifies, companies and clients are involved in the phases of production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption of these commodities. Another special characteristic of these commodities is that even though they are locally produced, they are also shaped by global flows of people's interests, wishes, and how they imagine the ideal community, which came to Ajijic and the wider municipality through IRM. The clearest example is that of Ajijic as a retirement destination, where one of its features is the existence of residential developments built according to the wishes of global flows of foreign retirees.

Nevertheless, the case of Ajijic as a retirement destination also shows that since local and global interests, wishes and imagined communities are changing through time, the features of the interpretation of Ajijic also change. This is because realtors are adapting these features to the changing context. Consequently, since these features are objectified in the landscape of Ajijic, the physical aspect of this town is also being transformed through time, shaped by the encounters between global, transnational, and local elements gathered by the IRM phenomenon in this town.

The fourth question is: What is the role of the municipal government's development interventions in the transformation of Ajijic?

In Chapter 1 I have referred to Habermas (1975) for whom the role of the direct interventions of the government in the economy and market plays an important role in the transformation of capitalist societies. In Mexico, definitively the national government's intervention in the economy and market during the 1990's facilitated the transformation of Ajijic. This intervention was represented mainly by the implementation of neoliberal policies and economic reforms at national level. However, it is clear from Chapter 3 that at municipal level and in the context of IRM, the municipal government interventions were realised through the projects of shaping Ajijic as retirement destination and the municipality as *playa de mar*. These municipal interventions show two features that differ from those of the intervention realised at national level: 1) these municipal level interventions are not merely governmental. There are multiple actors involved in the production, objectification, commoditisation, and consumption of the features of Ajijic and the municipality created through these interventions; and 2) contrasting to Habermas' (1975) view, the municipal initiatives are not a direct

intervention in the local economy and market, but an intervention through the transformation of the local landscape. That is to say, in Ajijic the landscape became the main path for governmental interventions.

The role of the municipal government's interventions through the two governmental projects is important in the transformation of Ajijic. From all existing projects of shaping Ajijic, the governmental projects are the ones that have transformed this town the most. However, this does not mean that it is the government who determines how Ajijic is shaped. In the national context of the adoption of neoliberal policies and economic reforms, and in the local context of the IRM phenomenon, the municipal government's projects are permeable, allowing the influence of multiple actors (e.g. realtors and global flows of foreigners). Additionally, these governmental projects have to face the counter-action of other projects and social groups that emerge in Ajijic, which oppose certain aspects of the governmental projects (e.g. the opposition to the construction of residential developments in specific areas, or to the replacement of trees for beach palms). These opposing projects cannot be underestimated. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *comuneros* stopped the plans to construct some residential developments on communal land during the 1990's. As result, the physical characteristics of Ajijic are not shaped only by objects brought by the municipal government's projects, such as residential developments, seafronts, and beach palms and sand, but also by counter-objects produced or adopted in other projects, for example border signs, artistic murals, an art passage, and a ceremonial centre.

The fifth question is: How are rituals used by actors to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?

I have shown in chapters 4 and 5 that actors use the *Huentli*, *Fiestas de San Andrés* (FSA), and Chili Cookoff rituals to reach their goals and shape Ajijic.

After part of the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla* was invaded by a residential development (José, Chapter 4), the *ritualistas* perform the *Huentli* ritual in the non-invaded part of the centre. Through this ritual, they have taken possession of the non-invaded part and have built a new ceremonial centre in it. Additionally, through this ritual, they denounce publicly the partial invasion of the ceremonial centre of *Teopantitla* and they have developed a system of economic and favour mutual support. Besides, through this ritual, the *ritualistas* exhibit ceremonial objects (e.g. dressing in *manta*) and express discourses as practices of legitimisation and de-legitimisation. In this way, the *ritualistas* have designed what they refer to as their own ways of "making justice", which according to them are more effective than the governmental judicial system.

Through the FSA ritual (Chapter 4), its organisers carry out the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where the different local guilds, the foreign community of Ajijic, and the *hijos ausentes* are socially integrated. Interestingly, through this ritual, local actors who have different projects for shaping Ajijic gather, work together, and join this project of social integration. This assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. On the one hand, in the emerging space of legitimisation, some realtors, foreign retirees and *hijos ausentes* are publicly legitimised as part of the local community and as supporters of the local Church and this tradition (FSA). On the other hand, the emerging GTL social entity makes possible the contact between transnational flows of people (*hijos ausentes* and snowbirds), transnational capital (the money that *hijos ausentes* bring from their communities in US to sponsor part of FSA annually), and local actors. The assemblage realised through this ritual does not mean that actors eliminate the conflicts between some of them; neither that they abandon their own projects of shaping Ajijic. However, it enables the gathering of actors in conflict, the temporary freezing of their conflicts, and it facilitates the social integration of guilds and other groups, including groups generated by global phenomena: *hijos ausentes* and foreign retirees. In this way, interestingly, this ritual gathers temporally people from different –or “opposite”– migration phenomena: the commonly considered as “South-North” migrants (*hijos ausentes*) and the “North-South” migrants (foreign retirees) –even though I consider to a certain extent each group also as transnational.

The Chili Cookoff of Ajijic (Chapter 5) showed some similarities to FSA, but also some differences. For example different than FSA, the organisers of the Chili Cookoff carry out the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where the foreign and Mexican communities work together for the local charities. But, similar to FSA, the Chili Cookoff is a ritual through which local actors who have different projects for shaping Ajijic gather, work together, and join a project and its inherent interpretation of Ajijic and its local development. Also, this assemblage of actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. In the Chili Cookoff, in the emerging space of legitimisation, foreign retirees are legitimised as part of the local community and (unlike FSA) as supporters of local charity organisations. As in FSA, the emerging GTL social entity makes possible the contact between transnational flows of people and capital, and local actors. These transnational flows of people are the ICS Chili Cookoff’ cooks, representatives of charities, and snowbirds. The transnational capital is represented by the continuous donation of money and resources from US-based charities towards local charities. And finally, as in the case of FSA, this assemblage makes possible the gathering of actors in conflict, the temporary freezing of their conflicts, and facilitates the social integration of the different foreign and

local groups. Through the FSA ritual, actors carry out a project of social integration, and through the Chili Cookoff actors realise a project of social integration and local development.

The last specific question is: How does the analysis of rituals contribute to the notion of actor's agency and to our understanding of processes of development and modernisation?

The analysis of the *Huentli* and Chili Cookoff rituals contributes to the notion of actor's agency in that these show that agency is not just a cognitive and acting capacity of actors (Giddens 1979; Long 2007). This is not only cognitive since this is also shaped by (un-)controllable physical reactions of the actor's body to its context. Besides, this is not only an actor's capacity of acting and influencing his context since this capacity is also shaped by how the actor's body is being influenced by elements of its context.

In Chapter 5 I described how the engagement of the actors' bodily sensations (including affections and feelings of nationalism) with the Chili Cookoff's symbols has motivated them to participate in this ritual, by which they contribute to shape Ajijic. In their engagement, actors also grant agency to objects (Long 2007), for example when the competing cook "V́ctor" claims that the Chili "brought" him to participate in the Chili Cookoff. However, the case of the Chili's judges shows that their agency is also shaped by what seems to be uncontrollable reactions or senses of their bodies to elements of their context: the Chili dishes. Through the judges' decision of who will be the winning Chili, they indirectly shape the Chili Cookoff since this decision influences the increase or decrease of Mexican participants and visitors coming to the event. Interestingly, the judges' decision is not framed by the Chili Cookoff's regulations, neither is it shaped by a cognitive strategy of the judges, but by how their sense of taste reacts to the Chili dishes when they are blind judging these.

Taking into account the analysis of the *Huentli* and Chili Cookoff rituals, I propose to look at agency more as actor's body-context agency.

The contribution of these various rituals to the understanding of the processes of development and modernisation in the context of IRM is explained in the following section.



## 2. Conclusions regarding processes of development and modernisation, processes of legitimisation, and the IRM phenomenon

In this study I have used Arce and Long's (2000) notion of "modernities" in order to understand the processes of development and modernisation occurring in Ajijic. They argue that the ideas and practices of modernity -embedded in planned interventions of development and modernisation- are appropriated by locally situated actors and re-embedded in their practices. Actors thus -these authors add- generate multiple modernities which combine what is conceived as "modern" and "traditional", involving the blending together of "hegemonic" and "non-hegemonic" knowledge and opposing values. These modernities, Arce and Long state, generate counter-tendencies to dominant views of development and modernisation.

As I have shown in this study the process explained above by Arce and Long (2000) occurs more or less in Ajijic. The municipal government's project of local development and modernisation, shaping Ajijic as a retirement destination, contains the idea and practice of bringing local development and modernisation through the transformation of the physical features of this town. This idea and practice was appropriated and re-embedded in the practices of the local actors. In this way, they created their own projects of local development which combined their interpretations of Ajijic and its development and modernisation with the governmental view. These emerging projects and inherent combined ideas and practices are modernities that: 1) combine elements considered by actors as "modern" and "traditional"; and 2) some emerge as counter-tendencies to the municipal government's project and others emerge as alternative projects of development that do not counter-act it. One example of the emerging modernities is the *comuneros'* project, which combines some elements from the municipal government's project of development and modernisation (the alteration of the landscape and the integration of the foreign retirees into the local community) with the protection of what is referred to by the *comunero* "Alfredo" as "traditional" (the communal land and tenure system). This is also a project that counter-acts the governmental project of development and modernisation.

The analyses of the rituals presented in this study further contribute to the view of modernities by showing that the process of transformation of Ajijic not only moves from the implementation of the municipal government's project and its hegemonic view of development and modernisation to the generation of diverse modernities, but also from the creation of multiple modernities to their assemblage through rituals. As mentioned before, the assemblages of these modernities (represented by the mentioned projects and inherent ideas

and practices) generate spaces of legitimisation and GTL social entities that play an important role in the transformation of Ajijic.

Regarding processes of legitimisation, Habermas' (1975) legitimisation crisis theory assigns a central role to the state apparatus and its legitimisation in maintaining the economic system and in shaping the economy and social life of capitalist societies. However, the previous chapters have shown that in Ajijic inhabitants legitimise or de-legitimise not only the state apparatus (or what Habermas calls the economic system), but also the multiple actors involved in the transformation of this town. The actors' attempts to obtain public legitimisation or to generate public de-legitimisation are essential since with legitimisation they can either get useful support from the inhabitants of Ajijic, or without legitimisation they can face counteractions from them.

Additionally, this study showed that there is a certain crisis in the legitimisation of the governmental institutions, as theorised by Habermas (1975). In Ajijic, *ritualistas* and *comuneros* consider the governmental institutions of justice as slow and for this reason they have developed their own ways of making justice which they believe to be faster and more efficient than the governmental ones. Also, the municipal government is being de-legitimised by multiple actors since they blame it for granting permits to construct residential developments that invade communal land, federal land, archaeological zones, and several *lugares tradicionales*.

Regarding IRM, I conclude that this phenomenon is better studied through analysing the actors' practices with which they shape the host communities. In this task, the ethnographic approach to global assemblages (Collier and Ong 2004) and the Actor-Oriented Approach (Long 2007) have proven to be useful. I also defend that in the study of the IRM phenomenon we should provide a more integral view of the phenomenon by including not only the practices and discourses of foreign retirees, but also those of other actors impacted by this phenomenon, especially the different groups of the host community. Furthermore, we should address not only how foreign retirees generate benefits to the host communities, but also how they (directly or indirectly) generate conflict and dislike among some groups of the local population. Additionally, I also confirm that IRM cannot be defined just as a migration from the "North" to the "South" since, in Ajijic almost half of the total number of foreign retirees lives a transnational life, spending one part of the year in Ajijic and the other part in their home countries. IRM should therefore be seen also as transnational retirement migration (TRM). Also, IRM should not be seen as a form of migration related only to "amenity

preferences". In Ajijic, half of the total number of realtors is foreign retirees and their work has had an economic (Hernández 2006) and social impact in the area.

Finally, the transformation of Ajijic in the context of the IRM phenomenon is not shaped only by the global flows of foreign retirees, neither only by the local government, but by multiple local, international, and transnational actors. The transformation of Ajijic is the result of their interactions, alliances, negotiations and confrontations. In response to the effects of IRM, these actors created projects that are defined mainly by different interests, interpretations, affections for land, local histories, and how they imagine the ideal community. The encounter or clash of these projects has been materialised in the landscape of Ajijic and in its social life.

In this process, in the case of Ajijic, the role of the government seems to have been changing through the years from being the regulator and guide of the transformation of the town to becoming more of an actor. Even though it still plays a central role, the municipal government now participates in this transformation through creating its own projects, which are at the same time influenced and counter-acted by different non-governmental actors.

Interestingly, while actors use discourses and objects as tools to fight for the transformation of Ajijic, through performing rituals, they also soften the effect of the clashes between their projects. By the use of rituals they avoid total confrontation or separation, facilitate social integration, and strengthen the bonds of their assemblages. Together, discourses, objects, and rituals prove to be central tools with which actors generate a certain balance between the benefits and the conflicts inherent in the IRM phenomenon.

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## Annex 1. Residential developments and their year of construction

Name of residential development	Year of construction
Rancho del Oro	1960
Riberas del Pilar	1964
La Canacinta	1969
Vista del Lago	1970
Chula Vista (Condominio Hacienda Chula Vista)	1970
La Floresta	1973
Chapala Haciendas 1	1973
Las Redes	1974
Brisas de Chapala	1974
Lomas del Lago	1977
Puerta Paraiso	1995
San Juan de las Colinas	1997
Casa Linda	1997
Birds of Paradise (Aves de Paraiso)	1997
La Floresta (Condominio la Floresta Habitacional)	1998
Rincon Colonial	1998
El Palmar Courtyard	1998
La Cristina	1999
Las Terrazas	1999
Vista Alegre	1999
Riviera Alta	2000
Rinconada de Chapala	2000
Chula Vista Norte (Alta)	2000
Las Palmas	2001
Los Arroyos Sur	2002
Los Olivos	2002
El Parque (Villas el Parque)	2003
Las Quintas	2004
Villas Santa Fe	2005
Los Lirios	2005
Arroyo Alto	2006
Los Sabinos (Condominio Los Sabinos)	2006
Tres Canadas	2006
Villas Santa Paula	2006
El Limon	2006
Ventanas Residencial	2007
Las Catarinas (Condominio Las Catarinas)	2007
Hacienda la Canacinta	2007
Hacienda La Cristina	2007
El Dorado (Condominio el Dorado)	2007
Cielo Vista	2007

Sotogrande (in construction)	2008
Vista Real (in construction)	2008
Las Salvias (Villas las Salvias)	2008
Chapala Haciendas 2	2008

Source: municipality of Chapala's archives (2008)

(Note: this table was made to the best of my knowledge since some of the data in the municipal archives were not clearly readable)

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## Summary

Ajijic is a Mexican town that during the 1990's experienced its biggest social, economic, and physical transformation of the last 50 years. This transformation was mainly triggered by two factors: 1) a significant increase in the number of foreign retirees moving into Ajijic (effect of a global phenomenon identified in different literature as international retirement migration [IRM]); and 2) the consequent increase in the construction of residential developments and infrastructure (mainly retiree-oriented). The latter factor has been supported by most of the governments that have administrated the municipality of Chapala (in which Ajijic is placed) through their project of shaping this municipality into a retirement destination -mainly since the 1990's-. These governments have justified this project through political discourses in which is considered the local economic benefits brought by the arrival of foreign retirees and by the construction of residential developments as reference of "local development". Additionally, in these discourses is considered the construction of residential developments as reference of "modernisation".

In Ajijic, the physical transformation of this town into a retirement destination found some support among local groups, but also some opposition. This is because the transformation of Ajijic brought local economic benefits, but also increased the cases of invasions of local land. The latter was derived from the construction of some residential developments that invade federal land and archaeological areas (both property of the nation), communal land (property of the *Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic*), and the *lugares tradicionales* (places considered as historically and traditionally relevant by the natives of this town).

In this thesis, I argue that the IRM phenomenon in Ajijic provoked the emergence of different projects of shaping the physical characteristics of this town (some of these projects also shape Ajijic's local development and modernisation). Through these projects, social actors shape Ajijic according to their different interpretations of what the town of Ajijic is, and what local development and modernisation mean to them. The transformation of the physical characteristics of Ajijic, through these projects, has also transformed the social life of this town.

In addition, in order to carry out their projects, social actors try to get public legitimisation (which can be read as the acceptance or support from the population –Habermas 1975-) of two elements: 1) the physical transformation of Ajijic that they carry out; and 2) their interpretations of Ajijic, its local development and modernisation. Interestingly, in order to acquire this legitimisation, social actors organise events and create situations in which they

exhibit very particular practices to the general public or to specific individuals. These practices are: the use of discourses about their interpretation of Ajijic; the use of objects; and the use of rituals. This study pays special attention to the latter practice since I also argue that social actors gather and assemble their projects and interpretations of Ajijic and its local development through rituals. The relevance of this assemblage of social actors, projects and interpretations is that it generates a social entity that I describe as global-transnational-local (GTL) and a space of legitimisation. Both of them have a central influence in the transformation of Ajijic.

The diverse ways in which social actors are shaping Ajijic through their projects raise two important general research questions: How do social actors use discourses, objects and rituals as practices of legitimisation with which they shape Ajijic? And, how do social actors generate spaces of legitimisation and GTL social entities through rituals, and how do these shape Ajijic?

These questions are answered in the present thesis, in which it was used an ethnographic approach to global assemblages (Collier and Ong 2004) and the Actor-Oriented Approach (Long 2007). The thesis is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 1 is the introduction of thesis. Here, the research problem, questions, and objective; the methodological and conceptual frameworks; the theoretical views on central topics in the transformation of Ajijic; the research methods used in this study; and the outline of thesis are presented.

In Chapter 2 I describe and analyse empirical cases that show how social actors use discourses and objects as part of their projects of shaping Ajijic. On the one hand, I present social actors of the project of shaping Ajijic into a retirement destination. Here, I present how some realtors and mayors (former and current) use (or used) discourses about Ajijic, its local development and modernisation, in their attempt to legitimise the construction of residential developments and the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. On the other hand, I describe how social actors of two different projects (that of shaping Ajijic into *tierra comunal* and that of shaping this town into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*) use discourses and objects not only to legitimise their projects and interpretations of Ajijic, but also to de-legitimise some invading residential developments built during the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my specific research questions: 1) What projects of shaping Ajijic emerge by the effects of the IRM phenomenon? And 2) How do social actors use discourses and objects to achieve their goals and shape Ajijic?

In Chapter 3 I present how social actors have materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have transformed this town the most: Ajijic as a retirement destination and the municipality of Chapala -including Ajijic- as *playa de mar* (beach resort). The first interpretation has been promoted as part of the municipal government's project of development and modernisation; this project has been implemented mainly since the 1990's. The second interpretation of Ajijic is part of a more recent project of development designed by the municipal government around 2006. In this chapter I explore how social actors in these projects use discourses and objects to transform Ajijic, focusing in how they commoditise the features of Ajijic as a retirement destination and the features of the municipality as *playa de mar*. The commoditisation of these features contributes to their materialisation in the landscape of Ajijic, which consequently has transformed the social life of this town. In this way, like Chapter 2, this chapter also contributes to answer my specific research questions 1 and 2, and additionally answers my questions: 3) How have social actors materialised the interpretations of Ajijic that have shaped this town the most? And 4) What is the role of the municipal government's development interventions in the transformation of Ajijic?

In Chapter 4 I describe and analyse how social actors use two rituals -considered as local- to shape Ajijic. These rituals are organised by members of the host community (in difference to the foreign community). In the first part of the chapter I present how the *ritualistas* use the *Huentli* ritual to shape this town and to obtain public legitimisation of their interpretation of Ajijic and its local development. The performance of the *Huentli* counter-acts an invading residential development built during the transformation of Ajijic into a retirement destination. Additionally, through this ritual is generated a space that legitimises the *ritualistas'* ways of "making justice", which they assure are more effective than those of the governmental justice system. Through this ritual, social actors also contribute to the project of shaping Ajijic into *Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales*.

In the second part of Chapter 4 I present how through *Fiestas de San Andrés* (FSA) -which is also a ritual- social actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. This is the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where the different local guilds, the foreign community of Ajijic, and *hijos ausentes* (the natives of Ajijic residing in Mexico City and US) are socially integrated. The assemblage of social actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. Both play an important role in the transformation of Ajijic. In this way, this chapter contributes to answer my specific research question number 1 and: 5) How are rituals used by social actors to achieve their goals and

shape Ajijic? And 6) How does the analysis of rituals contribute to the notion of social actor's agency and to our understanding of processes of development and modernisation?

Chapter 5 presents an event –which is also a ritual- through which social actors shape Ajijic: the “Chili Cookoff of Ajijic”. This ritual has some similarities to FSA (Chapter 4), but also some differences. While FSA is organised by the host community, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is organised by members of the foreign community of this town. Like FSA, the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic is also a ritual through which local social actors who are involved with different projects in shaping Ajijic and its development, gather, work or contribute together, and join one project. However, different than FSA, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic social actors also join a specific interpretation of local development. In this way, through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic social actors join the project of shaping Ajijic into a community where its foreign and Mexican communities work together for the local charities. Additionally, social actors join the interpretation of local development as something reachable through organising fund raising events. Similar to FSA, the assemblage of social actors, their projects, and their interpretations of Ajijic –created through the Chili Cookoff of Ajijic- generates a space of legitimisation and a GTL social entity. However, these space and entity have different effects in the transformation of Ajijic than those effects from the space and entity created through FSA. In this fashion, this chapter contributes to answer my specific research questions 1, 5, and 6.

Chapter 6 presents the major findings and conclusions of this study. This chapter states that while social actors use discourses and objects as tools to fight for the transformation of Ajijic, through performing rituals they soften the effect of the clashes between their projects of shaping this town. By the use of rituals they avoid total confrontation or separation, facilitate social integration, and strengthen the bonds of their assemblages. Together, discourses, objects and rituals prove to be central tools with which social actors generate a certain balance between the benefits and the conflicts inherent in the IRM phenomenon.

Additionally, Chapter 6 answers the research questions presented in this study. The answers to these questions contribute to theoretical views and understanding of three topics that are central in the transformation of Ajijic: 1) processes of modernisation and development; 2) processes of legitimisation; and 3) the global phenomenon of the IRM. The knowledge generated through this study can be useful to academics and researchers interested in these topics. Also, this knowledge can be used by policy makers interested in designing better regulations oriented to bringing benefits to the inhabitants (including foreign retirees, natives, and other groups) of communities influenced by the IRM phenomenon.

## Resumen

Ajijic es un pueblo en México que durante los 1990's sufrió su más grande transformación social, económica, y física en los últimos 50 años. Esta transformación fue principalmente propiciada por dos factores: 1) un incremento significativo en el número de extranjeros retirados establecidos en Ajijic (efecto de un fenómeno global identificado en diferente literatura como migración internacional de retirados (MIR -IRM por sus siglas en inglés-); y 2) un consecuente incremento en la construcción de fraccionamientos residenciales e infraestructura (principalmente para retirados). Este segundo factor ha sido apoyado por la mayoría de los gobiernos que han administrado el municipio de Chapala (en el cual se encuentra Ajijic) a través de su proyecto de diseñar este municipio como un destino de retiro –principalmente desde los 1990's-. Estos gobiernos han justificado este proyecto a través de discursos políticos en los cuales se considera a los beneficios económicos locales resultado de la llegada de extranjeros retirados y de la construcción de fraccionamientos residenciales como referencia de “desarrollo local”. Así también, en estos discursos se considera la construcción de fraccionamientos residenciales como referencia de “modernización”.

En Ajijic, la transformación de este pueblo en un destino de retiro ha encontrado cierto apoyo de grupos locales, pero también cierta oposición. Esto es porque la transformación de Ajijic trajo beneficios económicos locales, pero también incrementó los casos de invasión de tierra en este lugar. Esto último fue derivado de la construcción de algunos fraccionamientos residenciales que invaden terrenos federales y zonas arqueológicas (ambas propiedad de la nación), tierra comunal (propiedad de la Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic), y lugares tradicionales (lugares considerados como históricamente y tradicionalmente relevantes por la población nativa).

En esta tesis argumento que el fenómeno de la MIR en Ajijic provocó el surgimiento de diferentes proyectos que dan forma a las características físicas de este pueblo (algunos de estos proyectos también dan forma al desarrollo local y modernización de Ajijic). A través de estos proyectos, actores sociales transforman Ajijic de acuerdo a sus diferentes interpretaciones de qué Ajijic es, y qué significa para ellos desarrollo local y modernización. La transformación de las características físicas de Ajijic, a través de estos proyectos, también ha transformado la vida social de este pueblo.

Además, para realizar sus proyectos, estos actores sociales intentan obtener legitimación pública (lo que puede ser leído como aceptación o apoyo de la población –Habermas 1975-)

en dos elementos: 1) la transformación física de Ajijic que ellos realizan; y 2) sus interpretaciones de Ajijic, su desarrollo local y modernización. De manera interesante, para conseguir esta legitimación, actores sociales organizan eventos y crean situaciones en las cuales exhiben prácticas muy particulares al público en general o a individuos específicos. Estas prácticas son: el uso de discursos acerca de su interpretación de Ajijic; el uso de objetos; y el uso de rituales. Esta investigación pone atención especial a esta última práctica debido a que también argumento que actores sociales se reúnen y ensamblan sus proyectos e interpretaciones de Ajijic y su desarrollo local a través de rituales. La relevancia de este ensamblaje de actores sociales, proyectos e interpretaciones es que genera una entidad social que es global-transnacional-local (GTL) y un espacio de legitimación. Ambos tienen una influencia central en la transformación de Ajijic.

Las diversas maneras con las que actores sociales transforman Ajijic a través de sus proyectos nos trae dos importantes preguntas generales de investigación: Cómo actores sociales usan discursos, objetos y rituales como prácticas de legitimación con las cuales transforman Ajijic? Y, cómo actores sociales generan espacios de legitimación y entidades sociales GTL a través de rituales, y cómo estos transforman Ajijic?

Estas preguntas son respondidas en la presente tesis, en la cual fue adoptada una perspectiva etnográfica para ensamblajes globales (Collier and Ong 2004) y una Perspectiva Centrada en el Actor (Long 2007). Esta tesis está dividida en seis capítulos:

Capítulo 1 es la introducción de tesis. Aquí es presentado: el problema, preguntas y objetivo de investigación; los marcos metodológico y conceptual; las perspectivas teóricas acerca de los temas centrales de la transformación de Ajijic; los métodos de investigación utilizados en este estudio; y una reseña de esta tesis.

En el Capítulo 2 describo y analizo casos empíricos que muestran cómo actores sociales usan discursos y objetos como parte de sus proyectos con los que transforman Ajijic. Por un lado, presento actores sociales del proyecto que transforma Ajijic en un destino de retiro. Aquí presento cómo algunos agentes inmobiliarios y presidentes municipales (pasados y actual) usan (o usaron) discursos acerca de Ajijic, su desarrollo local y modernización, en su intento de legitimar la construcción de fraccionamientos residenciales y la transformación de Ajijic en un destino de retiro. Por otro lado, aquí describo cómo actores sociales de dos proyectos diferentes (el que da forma a Ajijic como tierra comunal y el que da forma a este pueblo como Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales) usan discursos y objetos no solamente para legitimar sus proyectos e interpretaciones acerca de Ajijic, sino también para de-legitimar algunos fraccionamientos residenciales invasores construidos durante la transformación de Ajijic en

destino de retiro. Así, este capítulo contribuye a la respuesta de mis preguntas específicas de investigación: 1) Qué proyectos que transforman Ajijic surgen debido a los efectos del fenómeno de la MIR? Y 2) Cómo actores sociales usan discursos y objetos para alcanzar sus objetivos y transformar Ajijic?

En el Capítulo 3 presento cómo actores sociales han materializado las interpretaciones acerca de Ajijic que más han transformado este pueblo: Ajijic como destino de retiro y el municipio de Chapala –incluido Ajijic– como playa de mar. La primera interpretación ha sido promovida como parte del proyecto de desarrollo y modernización del gobierno municipal; este proyecto ha sido implementado principalmente desde los 1990's. La segunda interpretación acerca de Ajijic es parte de un más reciente proyecto de desarrollo diseñado por el gobierno municipal alrededor del 2006. En este capítulo exploro cómo actores sociales de estos proyectos usan discursos y objetos para transformar Ajijic, enfocándome en cómo ellos mercantilizan las características de Ajijic como destino de retiro y las características de la municipalidad como playa de mar. La mercantilización de estas características contribuye a su materialización en el paisaje de Ajijic, lo cual ha transformado la vida social de este pueblo. Así, como el Capítulo 2, este capítulo contribuye a la respuesta de mis preguntas específicas de investigación 1 y 2, and adicionalmente responde a mis preguntas: 3) Cómo actores sociales han materializado las interpretaciones de Ajijic que más han transformado este pueblo? Y 4) Cúal es el rol de las intervenciones de desarrollo del gobierno municipal en la transformación de Ajijic?

En el Capítulo 4 describo y analizo cómo actores sociales usan dos rituales –considerados como locales– para transformar Ajijic. Estos rituales son organizados por miembros de la comunidad huésped -a diferencia de la comunidad de extranjeros-. En la primera parte del capítulo presento cómo los “ritualistas” usan el ritual Huentli para transformar Ajijic y para obtener legitimación pública de su interpretación acerca de este pueblo y su desarrollo local. La realización del ritual Huentli contra-actúa un fraccionamiento residencial invasor construido durante la transformación de Ajijic en un destino de retiro. Así también, a través de este ritual es generado un espacio que legitima las maneras de “hacer justicia” de los “ritualistas”, las cuales ellos aseguran son más efectivas que las del sistema de justicia del gobierno. A través de este ritual, actores sociales también contribuyen al proyecto que da forma a Ajijic como Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales.

En la segunda parte del Capítulo 4 presento cómo a través de Fiestas de San Andres (FSA) –el cual es también un ritual– actores sociales quienes participan en diferentes proyectos que transforman Ajijic y su desarrollo, se reúnen, trabajan o contribuyen juntos, y se unen a un



proyecto. Este es el proyecto que busca transformar Ajijic en una comunidad donde los diferentes gremios locales, la comunidad de extranjeros en Ajijic, y los hijos ausentes (nativos de Ajijic residiendo en la Ciudad de México y en los Estados Unidos de América) estén socialmente integrados. El ensamblaje de actores sociales, sus proyectos, y sus interpretaciones acerca de Ajijic genera un espacio de legitimación y una entidad social que es global-transnacional-local (GTL). Ambos, juegan un rol importante en la transformación de Ajijic. Así, este capítulo contribuye a la respuesta de mis preguntas específicas de investigación 1 y 5) Cómo actores sociales usan rituales para alcanzar sus objetivos y transformar Ajijic? Y 6) Cómo contribuye el análisis de rituales a la noción de agencia del actor social y a nuestro entendimiento de procesos de desarrollo y modernización?

El Capítulo 5 presenta un evento —el cual es también un ritual- a través del cual actores sociales transforman Ajijic: el “Chili Cookoff of Ajijic”. Este ritual tiene algunas similitudes con FSA (Capítulo 4), pero también algunas diferencias. Mientras el ritual FSA es organizado por la comunidad huésped, el Chili Cookoff of Ajijic es organizado por miembros de la comunidad de extranjeros en este pueblo. Como el ritual FSA, el Chili Cookoff of Ajijic es también un ritual a través del cual actores sociales quienes participan en diferentes proyectos que transforman Ajijic y su desarrollo, se reúnen, trabajan o contribuyen juntos, y se unen a un proyecto. Sin embargo, diferente al ritual FSA, a través del Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actores sociales también se unen a una interpretación específica de desarrollo local. De esta manera, a través del Chili Cookoff of Ajijic actores sociales se unen al proyecto que transforma Ajijic en una comunidad donde sus comunidades extranjera y huésped trabajan juntos por las organizaciones locales caritativas. Adicionalmente, actores sociales se unen a la interpretación de desarrollo local como algo alcanzable a través de la organización de eventos recaudadores de fondos. De manera similar al ritual FSA, el ensamblaje de actores sociales, sus proyectos, y sus interpretaciones de Ajijic -creado a través del Chili Cookoff of Ajijic- genera un espacio de legitimación y una entidad social GTL. Sin embargo, este espacio y esta entidad tienen efectos diferentes en la transformación de Ajijic que los efectos del espacio y entidad creados en FSA. De esta manera, el presente capítulo contribuye a la respuesta de mi primera, quinta y sexta preguntas específicas de investigación.

El Capítulo 6 presenta los hallazgos y conclusiones más relevantes de este estudio. Este capítulo expone que mientras actores sociales usan discursos y objetos como herramientas para contender por la transformación de Ajijic, a través de la realización de rituales ellos reducen el efecto de los choques entre sus proyectos con los que transforman este pueblo. A través del uso de rituales ellos evitan la confrontación o separación total, facilitan la integración social, y fortalecen los lazos de sus ensamblajes. Juntos, discursos, objetos, y

rituales prueban ser herramientas centrales con las cuales actores sociales generan un cierto balance entre los beneficios y conflictos inherentes al fenómeno de la MIR.

Adicionalmente, Capítulo 6 responde las preguntas de investigación presentadas en este estudio. La respuesta a estas preguntas contribuye a las perspectivas teóricas y al entendimiento de tres temas que son centrales en la transformación de Ajjijic: 1) procesos de modernización y desarrollo; 2) procesos de legitimación; y 3) el fenómeno global de la MIR. El conocimiento generado a través de este estudio puede ser útil a académicos e investigadores interesados en estos temas. Así también, este conocimiento puede ser usado por diseñadores de políticas públicas interesados en crear mejores leyes o normas orientadas a traer beneficios a los habitantes (incluyendo extranjeros retirados, nativos, y otros grupos) de comunidades influidas por el fenómeno de la MIR.

## Samenvatting

Ajijic is een Mexicaanse stad die in de jaren '90 haar grootste sociale, economische en fysieke transformatie van de laatste 50 jaar onderging. Deze transformatie werd voornamelijk veroorzaakt door twee factoren: 1) een significante stijging in het aantal buitenlandse gepensioneerden die in Ajijic kwamen te wonen (het gevolg van een wereldwijd fenomeen dat in de verschillende literatuur wordt benoemd als Internationale Pensioens-migratie [IRM]); en 2) een consequente stijging in de constructie van onroerend goed en infrastructuur (voornamelijk gericht op gepensioneerden). Deze laatste factor is gesteund door de meeste besturen van de gemeente Chapala (waar Ajijic deel van is) sinds de jaren '90, via hun project om deze gemeente tot een pensioens-bestemming te vormen. Deze gemeentelijke besturen hebben dit project gerechtvaardigd met behulp van politieke discoursen, waarin werd gesteld dat de komst van de buitenlandse gepensioneerden en de constructie van residentiële projecten, lokale economische voordelen met zich zouden mee brengen. Naar deze voordelen werd gerefereerd als “lokale ontwikkeling”. Het bestuur heeft ook bij de constructie van residentiële projecten gerefereerd naar “modernisering”.

De fysieke transformatie van de stad in een pensioens-bestemming heeft in Ajijic steun gevonden onder lokale sociale groeperingen, maar ook weerstand. De reden hiervoor is dat de transformatie van Ajijic lokale economische voordelen met zich mee heeft gebracht, maar tegelijkertijd heeft het ook een stijging in de lokale landconflicten veroorzaakt. Dit laatste is voortgekomen uit de constructie van enkele residentiële projecten in federale en archeologische gebieden (beiden eigendom van de Staat), op gemeenschappelijk land (eigendom van de Comunidad Indígena de Ajijic) en op de lugares tradicionales (plekken die als historisch en traditioneel worden beschouwd door de inheemse mensen van deze stad).

In dit proefschrift stel ik dat het IRM-fenomeen het ontstaan van verschillende projecten, die de fysieke karakteristieken van Ajijic vormen, heeft veroorzaakt (enkele van deze projecten veroorzaken ook de lokale ontwikkeling en modernisering van Ajijic). Actoren vormen Ajijic via deze projecten, naar hun verschillende interpretaties van wat de stad Ajijic is, en wat lokale ontwikkeling en modernisering betekent voor hen. De transformatie van de fysieke karakteristieken van Ajijic heeft ook via deze projecten het sociale leven in deze stad getransformeerd.

De actoren proberen de publieke goedkeuring (waarmee wordt bedoeld: de acceptatie en steun van het publiek – Habermas, 1975) voor twee elementen te krijgen om hun projecten te

kunnen uitvoeren: 1) de fysieke transformatie van Ajijic die zij uitvoeren; en 2) hun interpretaties van Ajijic, haar lokale ontwikkeling en modernisering. Om deze goedkeuring te krijgen, organiseren de actoren evenementen en creëren zij situaties, waarin zij zeer specifieke handelingen belichten naar het algemene publiek of naar specifieke individuen, namelijk: het gebruik van discoursen over hun interpretaties van Ajijic; het gebruik van objecten; en het gebruik van rituelen. Ik zal vooral de aandacht leggen op het laatste. Ik stel namelijk ook dat actoren hun projecten en hun interpretaties van Ajijic en haar lokale ontwikkeling via rituelen verkrijgen en verzamelen. De relevantie van deze assemblage van actoren, projecten en interpretaties is dat het een globale-transnationale-lokale (GTL) sociale entiteit genereert en een ruimte (space) van goedkeuring. Beiden hebben een belangrijke invloed op de transformatie van Ajijic.

De verschillende manieren waarop actoren Ajijic via hun projecten vormen, onderscheiden twee algemene onderzoeksvragen: Hoe gebruiken sociale actoren discoursen, objecten en rituelen als handelingen (practices) voor goedkeuring, waarmee zij Ajijic vormen? Hoe genereren sociale actoren ruimtes (spaces) van goedkeuring en GTL sociale entiteiten door rituelen, en hoe vormen dezen Ajijic?

Deze onderzoeksvragen worden beantwoord in dit proefschrift, waarin ik een etnografische benadering gebruik voor wereldwijde assemblages (global assemblages) (Collier en Ong, 2004) en voor de Actor-georiënteerde Benadering (Actor-Oriented Approach) (Long, 2007). Het proefschrift is verdeeld in zes hoofdstukken:

Hoofdstuk 1 is de introductie van het proefschrift. Hierin staan het onderzoeksprobleem, de onderzoeksvragen en de doelstellingen. Ook staan hier het methodologische en conceptuele raamwerk; de theoretische visies over de centrale onderwerpen van de transformatie van Ajijic; de onderzoeksmethodes die ik heb gebruikt in deze studie; en tenslotte een overzicht van het proefschrift.

In hoofdstuk 2 beschrijf en analyseer ik empirische casussen, die laten zien hoe de actoren discoursen en objecten gebruiken als deel van het vormen van de transformatie van Ajijic. Ten eerste presenteer ik de actoren van het project gericht op het vormen van Ajijic naar een pensioens-bestemming. Hierbij laat ik zien hoe enkele makelaren en burgemeesters discoursen gebruiken over Ajijic en haar lokale ontwikkeling en modernisering, terwijl ze trachten de goedkeuring te krijgen voor de constructie van residentiële ontwikkelingen en voor de transformatie van Ajijic in een pensioens-bestemming. Ten tweede beschrijf ik hoe de

actoren van twee verschillende projecten (die van het vormen van Ajijic in een tierra comunal en die van het vormen van deze stad in Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales) discoursen en objecten gebruiken om niet alleen hun projecten en interpretaties van Ajijic te rechtvaardigen, maar ook om enkele binnenvallende residentiële projecten, die deel zijn van de vorming van Ajijic in een pensioens-bestemming, te onrechtvaardigen. Op deze manier zal dit hoofdstuk bijdragen aan het antwoord op mijn specifieke onderzoeksvragen: 1) Welke projecten voor het vormen van Ajijic ontstaan door de effecten van het IRM fenomeen? En 2) Hoe gebruiken actoren discoursen en objecten om hun doelen te bereiken en Ajijic te vormen?

In hoofdstuk 3 laat ik zien hoe actoren de interpretaties van Ajijic concreet hebben gemaakt, met name de interpretaties die deze stad het meest hebben getransformeerd, namelijk: Ajijic als een pensioens-bestemming en Chapala Lakeside – inclusief Ajijic – als playa de mar (strand resort). De eerste interpretatie is uitgedragen als onderdeel van het ontwikkelings- en moderniseringsproject van het gemeentelijk bestuur; dit project is vooral sinds de jaren '90 gerealiseerd. De tweede interpretatie van Ajijic is onderdeel van een recenter ontwikkelingsproject dat rond 2006 is ontworpen door het gemeentelijk bestuur. Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt hoe actoren verschillende discoursen en objecten gebruiken in deze projecten om Ajijic te transformeren. Hierbij ligt de focus op hoe zij de karakteristieken van Ajijic als een pensioens-bestemming en de karakteristieken van de gemeente als playa de mar in consumptiegoederen veranderen. De commoditisering van deze karakteristieken worden concreet gemaakt in het landschap van Ajijic, dat derhalve ook het sociale leven in deze stad heeft getransformeerd. Op deze manier zal dit hoofdstuk, net als hoofdstuk 2 bijdragen aan het antwoord op de eerste en de tweede specifieke onderzoeksvragen, en het zal ook de volgende specifieke onderzoeksvragen beantwoorden: 3) Hoe hebben de actoren de interpretaties van Ajijic die deze stad het meest hebben gevormd, concreet gemaakt? En 4) Wat is de rol van de ontwikkelingsinterventies van gemeentelijk bestuur in de transformatie van Ajijic?

In hoofdstuk 4 beschrijf en analyseer ik hoe actoren twee – als lokaal beschouwde – rituelen gebruiken, om de transformatie van Ajijic te vormen. Deze rituelen worden georganiseerd door leden van de gastgemeenschap. In het eerste deel van het hoofdstuk laat ik zien hoe de ritualistas het ritueel Huentli gebruiken om de stad te vormen en om de publieke goedkeuring te verkrijgen over hun interpretaties van Ajijic en haar lokale ontwikkeling. De uitvoering van de Huentli is een tegenactie voor de realisatie van de projecten van het gemeentelijke bestuur met betrekking tot het vormen van Ajijic tot een pensioens-bestemming. Via dit ritueel wordt er ook een ruimte (space) gegenereerd dat de manier van “rechtvaardigheid creëren” van de ritualistas legitimeert. Deze is volgens hen effectiever dan die van het gouvernementele

rechtssysteem. Via dit ritueel, dragen actoren ook bij aan het project om Ajijic in een Teopantitla y los lugares tradicionales te vormen.

In het tweede deel van hoofdstuk 4 zal ik laten zien hoe via het ritueel Fiestas de San Andres (FSA) lokale actoren, die betrokken zijn bij verschillende projecten om Ajijic en haar ontwikkeling te vormen, samenkomen, samenwerken, samen bijdragen aan het project en samen deelnemen aan het project. Dit heeft betrekking tot het project om Ajijic tot een gemeenschap te vormen, in welke de verschillende lokale gilden, de buitenlandse gemeenschap van Ajijic en de hijos ausentes (de inheemse mensen van Ajijic die in Mexico City en de VS wonen) sociaal geïntegreerd worden. De assemblages van actoren, hun projecten en hun interpretaties van Ajijic genereert een ruimte van rechtvaardiging en een globale – transnationale – lokale (GTL) sociale entiteit. Beiden spelen een belangrijke rol in de transformatie van Ajijic. Op deze manier zal dit hoofdstuk bijdragen aan het antwoord op de eerste specifieke onderzoeksvraag en ook op de volgende vragen: 5) Hoe worden rituelen gebruikt door actoren om hun doelen te bereiken en Ajijic te vormen? En 6) Hoe kan de analyse van de rituelen bijdragen aan het concept van agency van de actoren en tot ons begrip over processen van ontwikkeling en modernisering?

Hoofdstuk 5 laat een ander ritueel zien, via welk actoren de transformatie van Ajijic vormen: de “Chili Cookoff of Ajijic”. Dit heeft enkele gelijkenissen met het FSA (hoofdstuk 4), maar ook enkele verschillen. De FSA is georganiseerd door de gastgemeenschap, terwijl the Chili Cookoff is georganiseerd door leden van de buitenlandse gemeenschap. Net als het FSA is de Chili Cookoff een ritueel via welke de lokale actoren, die zijn betrokken bij verschillende projecten in het vormen van Ajijic en haar ontwikkeling, samenkomen, samenwerken, samen bijdragen en samen deelnemen aan het project. Echter, anders dan bij FSA nemen de actoren via de Chili Cookoff ook deel aan een specifieke interpretatie van lokale ontwikkeling. Op deze manier nemen de actoren via de Chili Cookoff deel aan het project om Ajijic in een gemeenschap om te vormen waar de buitenlandse en de Mexicaanse gemeenschappen samenwerken voor lokale goede doelen. Daaraan toegevoegd, nemen de actoren deel aan de interpretaties van lokale ontwikkeling als iets dat bereikbaar is via het organiseren van evenementen voor fondsenwerving. Net als bij FSA, genereren de assemblages van actoren, hun projecten en hun interpretaties van Ajijic via de Chili Cookoff een ruimte van rechtvaardiging en een GTL sociale entiteit. Echter, deze ruimte en entiteit hebben een verschillend effect op de transformatie van Ajijic, dan diegene die zijn gegenereerd door de ruimte en entiteit via het FSA. Op deze manier zal dit hoofdstuk bijdragen aan het beantwoorden van mijn eerste, vijfde en zesde specifieke onderzoeksvragen.

Hoofdstuk 6 zal de belangrijkste bevindingen en conclusies van dit boek presenteren. Dit hoofdstuk stelt dat terwijl actoren discoursen en objecten gebruiken om te vechten voor de transformatie van Ajijic, zij tegelijkertijd door het uitvoeren van rituelen juist het effect van de conflicten tussen hun projecten om de stad te vormen, verzachten. Via het gebruik van rituelen vermijden zij een algehele confrontatie of scheiding, maken zij sociale integratie mogelijk en versterken zij de banden van hun assemblages. Discoursen, objecten en rituelen bewijzen dat deze samen een belangrijk middel zijn via welke actoren een bepaalde balans tussen voordelen en conflicten omtrent het IRM fenomeen kunnen genereren.

Daarbij toegevoegd, beantwoordt hoofdstuk 6 de onderzoeksvragen van deze studie. Het antwoord op deze vragen draagt bij aan de theoretische standpunten over drie onderwerpen die centraal staan in de transformatie van Ajijic: 1) processen van modernisering en ontwikkeling; 2) processen van rechtvaardiging; en 3) het wereldwijde fenomeen van IRM. De kennis die via deze studie is opgedaan kan belangrijk zijn voor academici en onderzoekers die geïnteresseerd zijn in deze onderwerpen. Ook kan deze kennis gebruikt worden door beleidsmakers, die geïnteresseerd zijn in het ontwerpen van betere regelgevingen met betrekking tot het brengen van voordelen naar de inwoners (inclusief buitenlandse gepensioneerden, inheemse mensen, en andere sociale groepen) uit gemeenschappen die beïnvloed zijn door het IRM fenomeen.

## About the author

Francisco Vladimir Díaz Copado was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1976. From 1996 to 2002, he worked as a research assistant in multiple investigation projects in CIESAS-Occidente (Centre of Research and Superior Studies in Social Anthropology) -Guadalajara, Mexico-. These projects were related to the following topics: practices of social compensation in rural areas of Jalisco and Nayarit, evaluation of institutional programmes for combating poverty in Jalisco, the debt economy in Western Mexico, and Mexican civil societies. His involvement in these research projects was his introduction to the field of the social anthropology and the ethnographic methods of research. In 2001 he was granted a one-year fellowship sponsored by CIESAS-Occidente to elaborate his BSc' thesis, which he titled "Globalización y Pobreza en el Agro: el caso de Cocula, Jalisco" (Globalisation and Poverty in Agriculture: the case of Cocula, Jalisco [Mexico]). The latter study included four months of ethnographic field research in Cocula, Jalisco, Mexico. In 2003 Vladimir Díaz obtained his BSc degree in International Studies at the Universidad de Guadalajara.

Also in 2003, Vladimir Díaz was granted a full "Wageningen University Fellowship" by the Wageningen University in the Netherlands, this enabled him to study the master's programme "International Development Studies" at this institution. As part of this programme, he wrote the thesis titled "Livelihood Strategies and Responses of Maize Producers in Cocula, Jalisco, Mexico to Globalization and Trade Liberalization", which involved ethnographic fieldwork in Cocula, Jalisco, Mexico lasting of four months. Vladimir Díaz obtained his MSc' degree in 2005.

In 2007, Vladimir Díaz was granted a full scholarship sponsored by CONACYT (National Commission for Science and Technology [Mexico]) to study the PhD programme in the Rural Development Sociology Group at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. As part of his PhD programme, he carried out ethnographic field research in Ajijic, Mexico, for 18 months, from September 2007 to February 2009. Also, during his PhD programme, he participated as a teacher's assistant, leading one of the workshops assigned to the course "Methods, Techniques and Data Analysis of Field Research" of the Rural Development Sociology Group of Wageningen University in May 2011 and May 2012.

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**Completed Training and Supervision Plan**

<b>Name of the activity</b>	<b>Department/ Institute</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Credits (ECTS)*</b>
<b>A) Project related competences</b>			
WUR Course: "Anthropology and Rural Development" (RDS-32306)	RDS, Wageningen University	2007	6
WUR Course: "Capita Selecta Rural Development Sociology" (RDS-50906)	RDS, Wageningen University	2007	6
Writing Scientific Research Proposal	RDS, Wageningen University	2007	6
<b>B) General research related competences</b>			
CERES orientation programme	CERES, Utrecht University	2007	5.5
CERES presentation tutorials	CERES, Utrecht University	2007	5.5
CERES Summer School 2007	CERES, Utrecht University	2007	1
<b>C) Career related competences/personal development</b>			
Teaching assistant: Leading the workshop of the course "Methods, Techniques and Data Analysis of Field Research B" (RDS-33306)	RDS, Wageningen University	2011-2012	4
Participation at the RDS Advanced Research Seminars. Presentations on: - "Imagination, Images, and Objectification of Images in Ajijic Mexico" - "Images about a place, Objects and Rituals in Ajijic Mexico"	RDS, Wageningen University	2007-2011	4
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>38</b>

\*One ECTS on average is equivalent to 28 hours of course work.

Painting in the cover: “*Viejos Amigos*”, Carlos Díaz Copado (2008).

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