Mariana Di-Bella Díaz de León

TOWARDS SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN GUANAJUATO, MEXICO: A RESIDENT-CENTRIC APPROACH

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

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IN GUANAJUATO, MEXICO:

A RESIDENT-CENTRIC APPROACH

by

Mariana Di-Bella Díaz de León

(Mexico)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research,

Policy, Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Mariana Di-Bella Díaz de León**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 31 May 2023

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Signature

Abstract

In recent years, the tourism sector has become increasingly relevant in a global scale. International arrivals reached a historical peak in 2019, with millions of people traveling to participate in leisure, cultural, and authentic experiences. As a result, the concept of overtourism reemerged in the last decade to explain the negative impact, challenges and issues that derive from massive tourism. Simultaneously, plans to better manage the economic, social, and environmental elements in tourism became more popular under the idea of sustainability. This thesis explores how the tourism strategy in the city of Guanajuato, Mexico can be more socially sustainable, prioritizing the wellbeing of its residents and the preservation of their heritage.

This research can be divided in two parts. The first part covers the concepts of cultural tourism, overtourism, and sustainable tourism from the academic and institutional perspectives. Additionally, it presents the most relevant heritage elements of Guanajuato City in relation to tourism, including the city center and the adjacent mines. The second part introduces the main trends and challenges that result from tourism in the city, such as garbage management, traffic, increasing costs of living, and access to water. Moreover, it provides an analysis of the governmental tourism strategy, which demonstrates that the while there is important progress in the aspect of sustainable tourism, the current strategy prioritizes the economic angle over the social and environmental elements. Lastly, the thesis provides a set of recommendations to strengthen socially sustainable tourism strategies in Guanajuato, involving citizen participation and a Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach in order to foster the wellbeing of the city's residents.

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List of Abbreviations

1. AHD – Authorized Heritage Discourse

2. ASETUR – *Asociación de Secretarios de Turismo de México A.C.,* Tourism Secretaries Association of Mexico

3. FIC – Festival Internacional Cervantino

4. HUL – Historic Urban Landscape

5. INSTO – International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

6. OTEG – *Observatorio Turístico del Estado de Guanajuato,* Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato

7. UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

8. UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

9. UNWTO – World Tourism Organization

Introduction

I was born in Irapuato, a city approximately 40 km distant from Guanajuato City, in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. Through personal experience, I have always been aware of Guanajuato City's popularity for people across the state and even throughout the country. During the last few years, I took interest in tourism as a field of study, especially cultural tourism and sustainable tourism. I then became aware of the challenges that highly touristic cities are facing worldwide, and I studied cases of overtourism in popular tourism destinations such as Venice, Barcelona, and Amsterdam. This thesis was written out of a desire to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism in Guanajuato City on the local population, prioritizing the quality of life of its residents and preserving its heritage values.

In Mexico, as in several other countries around the world, tourism is of strategic importance in the national economy. In 2019, tourism represented 8.6% of Mexico's GDP[1] and 8.3% in the state of Guanajuato[2]. Despite the economic growth that comes with tourism activity, the growing industry in highly popular destinations has led to problems such as gentrification, pollution, damage of historical landmarks, and cultural commoditization.[3] The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 accelerated international discussions about the management of such a relevant sector. Countries and cities pushed for a more sustainable approach to tourism from social, economic, and environmental points of view.

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[1] Tourism Secretariat (SECTUR)/DATATUR, *El PIB turístico estatal y municipal 2018-2019 en México: una aproximación inicial*, accessed May 25, 2023, https://www.datatur.sectur.gob.mx/Documentos%20compartidos/Aproximacion_al_PIB_Turistico_Estatal_y_Municipal.pdf

[2] "Turismo, motor para la reactivación económica", Government of the State of Guanajuato, last modified September 28, 2020, accessed May 25, 2023, https://boletines.guanajuato.gob.mx/2020/09/28/turismo-motor-para-la-reactivacion-economica/

[3] Michelle Rutty et al., "The global effects and impacts of tourism" in *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Sustainability,* ed. C. Michael Hall, Stefan Gössling, and Daniel Scott, (London: Routledge, 2015).

Introducing Guanajuato

Located in the center of Mexico, the state of Guanajuato is one of 32 states into which the country is divided. Guanajuato is the 6th most populated entity in Mexico, with 6,166,934 inhabitants registered in 2020.[4] The state received 27,033,396 visitors in 2019, out of which 66% were Mexican, 26% were local, and 8% were of international provenance.[5] Guanajuato City is the capital of the state of Guanajuato. It has been a place of significant historical and economic value in Mexico since the time of the Viceroyalty. The geology of the area rendered it rich in precious metals (especially silver) and minerals, making it one of the main mining centers in the continent in historical, post-conquest times.

Some of the tunnels for which the city is famous, were built in the early nineteenth century and are still an integral part of the city's infrastructure. Despite the change in their original function, they remain a living testimony to the past of the city. The mixture of religious and colonial architecture, along with numerous mines and corresponding haciendas as well as indigenous archeological sites located in the city's surroundings, make it unique among Mexican cultural and historical landscapes. The Historic Town of Guanajuato and Adjacent Mines were listed by UNESCO as a Heritage Site in 1988, increasing the touristic attractiveness of the place.

Guanajuato City's tourism strategy is heavily reliant on two specific aspects of Mexican history. The defined segmentation of historical periods will be a constant theme throughout this thesis, as the division of historical periods into academic silos plays a crucial role in the way tourist attractions are presented to the public. The linear way Mexican history is portrayed, however, is not exclusive to the field of tourism but is also present in the education curriculum.

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[4] "Population of Guanajuato", National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), accessed January 12, 2023, https://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/gto/poblacion/

[5] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *Indicadores de la Actividad Turística del Estado de Guanajuato: diciembre 2019,* (Guanajuato: SECTUR, 2021), accessed April 25th, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/indicadores/reportes_mensuales

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In my experience, public history books divide the history of Mexico into 5 main, but separate stages: Pre-Columbian, Colonial, Independent Mexico, Revolutionary Mexico, and Modern/contemporary Mexico. This Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) is what categorizes Guanajuato City as a place to explore the heritage silos of Colonial and Independent Mexican history.

Figure 1: Location of Guanajuato City and the state of Guanajuato in Mexico. (Source: México Real).[6]

Research aim and questions

This thesis deals with the current state of tourism and heritage in Guanajuato City, Mexico. More specifically, it presents governmental efforts to develop a sustainable tourism strategy and its potential in the area of social sustainability. The outcome of this work will be a concise analysis of the strategy as it stands now as well as a set of recommendations to strengthen the social sustainability aspect, prioritizing citizen participation, intangible heritage and quality of life for the city's residents. Consequently, the main research question is: ***How can the tourism***

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[6] Text in image translated from Spanish by author. "Estado de Guanajuato en la República Mexicana", México Real, digital image, accessed May 28, 2023 https://mr.travelbymexico.com/685-estado-de-guanajuato/

strategy in Guanajuato be more socially sustainable to foster the wellbeing of its residents and the preservation of their heritage? Derived from the main question, the following research questions support this research:

- How can sustainable tourism be defined in a post-colonial context and under the scope of a Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) in Mexico?

- What has the government of the state of Guanajuato implicitly prioritized within its efforts to develop a sustainable tourism strategy for Guanajuato? What has this strategy achieved in terms of social, economic, and environmental sustainability?

- Which areas of the current tourism strategy require immediate attention from the perspective of the citizens of Guanajuato and various governmental offices, to develop a more efficient sustainable tourism strategy?

- To what extent does the current strategy and Authorized Heritage Discourse foster inclusion and citizen participation in tourism, as well as their opposites, exclusion and citizen apathy? How can Guanajuato's tourism strategy better include the needs and priorities of locals?

- How can intangible heritage be better shared with visitors without commodifying local cultural traditions?

Methodology and sources

This study relies largely on primary sources for information regarding the tourism strategy of Guanajuato and secondary sources for the impact of tourism in Guanajuato City and the residents' approach towards tourism. Moreover, I have also included information obtained through participant observation from my youth in Guanajuato. This latter information sources represent the experience of a local visitor—from a different city in the State of Guanajuato—

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who often visited the city for the purpose of taking part in leisure and cultural activities. Additionally, the following methods were used for this research:

Case Studies

In Chapter 1, I have included three case studies of highly touristic cities, the impact that tourism has had on them and whether the official tourism strategy has been modified to address said impact. The cities selected as case studies are San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, Ouro Preto in Brazil, and Bruges in Belgium. These cities were chosen because they share certain characteristics with Guanajuato, namely their socio-economic context, heritage values, tourist attractions, and even historical background. The objective of the case studies is to present different ways in which tourism can have a negative impact on the local population, and how different authorities faced those challenges. Furthermore, these examples will provide insights into a range of solutions and approaches that may be adapted to the context of Guanajuato to develop a more socially sustainable tourism strategy.

Interviews

Given the relevance that governmental entities hold for the purposes of this thesis, a semi-structured interview was held online with the Secretary of Tourism of the State of Guanajuato, Juan José Álvarez Brunel, and with the Director of Tourism Intelligence of the State, Miriam Adame Alcaraz. This interview provided insights into the priorities that lead the state's —and consequently, Guanajuato City's— tourism strategy. Moreover, it showcased the narrative managed by the tourism authorities of Guanajuato, as well as the tools and methodologies they are currently developing to better measure the impacts of tourism.

Challenges and limitations

The main limitation for this thesis was my inability to carry out field research during the time of preparation or writing. Consequently, it was not possible to include the testimonials, experiences or perceptions from different sectors of the population, especially those parts of the citizenry with limited access to technological tools. Moreover, due to shifts in the timeline of this thesis, it was also not possible to arrange an interview with the competent authorities in the Cultural Heritage sector to obtain their approach to tourism.

Lastly, this thesis is limited to the scopes and intersection between tourism and cultural heritage. Certain aspects such as security, migration, and urban planning, among others, have been intentionally left out or only briefly mentioned to prioritize the main areas of research. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that these elements are crucial for the development of a more comprehensive tourism policy for the city of Guanajuato and that they must be included in future research.

Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six parts: the introduction, four chapters, and the conclusion. The first chapter presents the main conceptual interpretations of tourism in academia and in the international community. Moreover, it introduces definitions for three main concepts that emanate from the concept of tourism and that are crucial for this research: overtourism, sustainable tourism, and cultural tourism. Additionally, it contains the three case studies of San Miguel de Allende, Ouro Preto, and Bruges, and their significance and correlation to the tourism scene in Guanajuato.

The second chapter delves into Guanajuato's history and heritage. In the first section, a historical overview of the city is provided which is, of course, intrinsically tied to Guanajuato's

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cultural heritage. The second section presents relevant heritage elements, both tangible and intangible, that contribute to the city's cultural landscape today. These elements also claim a special significance in the tourism panorama of Guanajuato City.

The third chapter covers tourism practices in Guanajuato, primarily based on an analysis of the State Tourism Observatory, the Tourism Program 2021-2024 and an interview with the Secretary of Tourism and the Director of Tourism Intelligence of the State. Moreover, it offers an overview of tourism trends in Guanajuato City, including demographic, landmarks and geographical concentrations. Finally, the main issues that the residents face as a byproduct of tourism activity are introduced.

The fourth chapter provides an analysis of the main challenges in the tourism strategy in relation to heritage and Guanajuato City's quality of life. These findings come together as a result of the information gathered in the previous chapters. Additionally, this chapter includes a set of recommendations to support local authorities in the development of a socially sustainable tourism strategy, prioritizing citizen participation.

Lastly, the conclusion includes a summary of the findings and results of this thesis, as well as potential future lines of research to further strengthen the development of citizen-led tourism strategies.

Overall, this thesis was conceptualized as a contribution to the fields of sustainable tourism and heritage. More specifically, it was written with a practical approach to provide useful insights for tourism and heritage authorities and practitioners in Guanajuato City.

Chapter 1: Under the umbrella of tourism

Tourism is a broad concept that involves several elements. Moreover, tourism is a human activity, which means that its definition and components will adapt to human trends and ideologies as they change. The purpose of this chapter is twofold; the first part lays the conceptual foundations of this thesis, namely tourism and three of its sub-categories: overtourism, sustainable tourism, and cultural tourism. The second part of the chapter is composed of three case studies of overtourism and tourism management. The cases of San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, Ouro Preto in Brazil and Bruges in Belgium will contribute to clarifying the ideas of overtourism and cultural tourism. These examples will also serve as a reference for the recommendations drafted as an output of this thesis.

1.1 Conceptual interpretations of tourism

As defined by the United Nations and, more specifically, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), **Tourism** is a

> social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation, [...] (and it) has an impact on the economy, the natural and built environment, the local population at the places visited and the visitors themselves.[7]

Accordingly, the UNWTO identifies three main forms of tourism:

a) **Domestic tourism:** comprises the activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference, either as part of a domestic tourism trip or part of an outbound tourism trip.

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[7] United Nations, "Development and needs for tourism statistics" in *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* (New York: UN, 2010)*:* 1, accessed January 20, 2023, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_83rev1e.pdf

b) **Inbound tourism:** comprises the activities of a non-resident visitor within the country of reference on an inbound tourism trip.

c) **Outbound tourism:** comprises the activities of a resident visitor outside the country of reference, either as part of an outbound tourism trip or as part of a domestic tourism trip.[8]

Furthermore, it is important to differentiate the most relevant aspect of tourism: visitors. Depending on the extent of their trip, visitors can be categorized as **tourists** if the trip involves an overnight stay, or as **excursionists** if they are same-day visitors.[9]
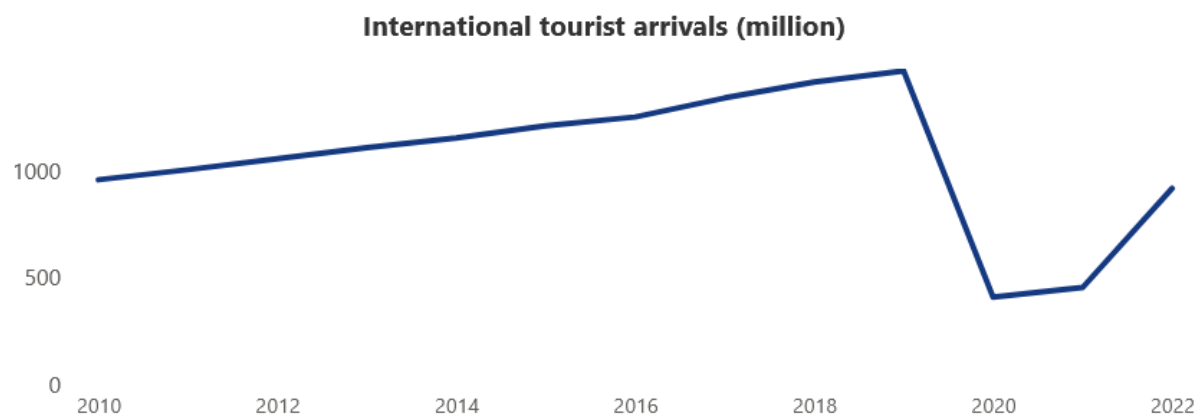
Figure 2: Rising constantly over the last decades, international tourism reached its peak in 2019 with 1,465.8 million arrivals. In 2021, after travel restrictions enforced during the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted or eased, tourism activities are on the rise again. (Source: UNWTO).[10]

In the last few decades and particularly after the 2008 economic crisis, tourism has been on the rise and it has become an important driver for economic growth in different countries across the world.[11] Academic research, impact measurement strategies, and economic and marketing

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[8] United Nations, "The demand perspective: basic concepts and definitions" in *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* (New York: UN, 2010): 15, accessed January 20, 2023, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_83rev1e.pdf

[9] United Nations, "The demand perspective: basic concepts and definitions"

[10] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "Global and regional tourism performance", accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance

[11] Tourism represented 4% of the world's GDP before the COVID-19 pandemic. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *The Economic Contribution of Tourism and the Impact of COVID-19,* (Madrid: UNWTO, 2021): 5, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284423200

interest on the subject have increased as well. Consequently, terminology related to tourism is in constant flux and growth, with new concepts being coined to better explain the phenomena and trends associated with tourism. In that regard, there are three main tourism sub-concepts that need to be clarified for the purpose of this thesis.

The first concept is **overtourism**. Overtourism as a term is fairly recent, reaching a broader audience through the public media in 2016, although the ideas behind what we know as overtourism today have been present since the mid-20th century.[12] The term itself originally referred to quantitative aspects of tourism, namely increasingly growing numbers of visitors that overcrowded their destinations, causing a series of negative impacts on the place and its residents. As academic interest grew regarding tourism, scholars and media alike highlighted the specific issues that came from massive inflows of visitors: loud noise, destruction of natural resources, and touristification of city centers.[13] As these and other qualitative elements came into play, the concept of overtourism began to take shape in the international context.

In 2018, the European Parliament defined overtourism as a "situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds".[14] Similarly, that same year, the World Tourism Organization described this phenomenon as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way".[15] In academia, alternative, more

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[12] Alastair M. Morrison and J. Andreas Coca-Stefaniak, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Tourism Cities* (London, New York: Routledge, 2021): 7.

[13] Ko Koens, Bernadett Papp, and Albert Postma, "Is overtourism overused? Understanding the impact of tourism in a city context", *Sustainability* 10, no. 12 (November 2018), accessed January 19, 2023, https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124384

[14] European Parliament, *Overtourism: Impact and possible policy responses,* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2018): 15, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf

[15] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *'Overtourism'? Understanding and managing urban tourism growth beyond perceptions* (Madrid: UNWTO, 2018): 4, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420070

general definitions came up as well, such as the conceptualization of overtourism as an "excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment".[16]

For the purposes of this thesis, overtourism will be understood as a context in which tourism trends and practices overpower the destination's capacities, endangering the cultural and natural landscape and lowering the citizens' quality of life while prioritizing economic growth and visitors' expectations. Overtourism as a term has been criticized for its lack of a concise or unanimous definition, nevertheless, as a relatively general term, it is sufficiently flexible to be applied across different contexts and over time without becoming obsolete.

In this regard, a specific component of overtourism plays an important role in this research: touristification. Touristification is conceptualized in this thesis as a process in which space is used for tourism purposes, moving away from the original nature and use of entire neighborhoods. Part of this process is the conversion of spaces with a residential purpose — including housing, public spaces, and retail facilities— into tourist uses such as lodging, restaurants, and shops. This new type of infrastructure tends to cause services needed for the local residents' everyday activities to be dismantled.[17] In this regard, touristification prioritizes economic growth over the residents' quality of life.

The second main sub-concept of tourism is **sustainable tourism,** which can be considered the other side of the coin in contrast to overtourism. Overtourism and sustainable tourism also represent two opposing standpoints; the former is usually used by residents to defend their right to live, while the latter is more often used by visitors who defend their right to travel.[18] A

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[16] Koens, Papp and Postma, "Is overtourism overused?", 4385.
[17] Agustín Cocola-Grant, "Place-based displacement: Touristification and neighborhood change", *Geoforum* 138 (January 2023), accessed May 25, 2023 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.103665
[18] Juan Manuel García-García, Malar Llopis-Amorós and Cristina Santos-Rojos, "Overtourism and Sustainablity: a bibliometric study (2018-2021)", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 188 (March 2023): 122285, accessed January 19, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.122285

widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism is that of the UNWTO, which identifies it as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities".[19] Accordingly, the UNWTO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) highlighted three pillars for sustainable tourism:

    a) Sustainable economic development: profitability of tourism at all levels.

    b) Sustainable social development: respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities.

    c) Sustainable development of the environment: conserving natural resources and biodiversity.[20]

As previously stated, tourism has been used primarily as an economic driver; consequently, the cultural and environmental aspects have been relegated to second place. This thesis, however, is mainly focused on strengthening social and cultural sustainability in relation to tourism. Without disregarding the economic aspect and taking into consideration all the stakeholders involved in tourism activities, a solid, inclusive, and bottom-up strategy can prioritize the preservation of culture and social well-being in the destination.

Lastly, the third concept is **cultural tourism**. The most comprehensive definition for cultural tourism is the one provided, once again, by the World Tourism Organization:

> A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage,

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[19] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook,* (Madrid: UNWTO, 2013): 17, accessed January 19, 2023, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284415496

[20] United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *Making tourism more sustainable: A guide for policy makers,* (Madrid: UNWTO, 2005): 11, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284408214

culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs, and traditions.[21]

Even though this definition involves diverse examples of tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, it lacks the involvement of the local community and is mostly focused on the visitors' experience. Therefore, and in line with the aforementioned notion of cultural sustainability, this thesis will approach the concept of cultural tourism using a bottom-up perspective, based on the needs and priorities of the local residents and their heritage values.

1.2 Overtourism as a global phenomenon: Case studies

A common denominator among the terms and ideas described above is their primarily euro-centric approach. Overtourism as a concept was initially used to describe the phenomenon in cities such as Amsterdam, Venice, and Barcelona, and slowly trickling through to other areas of the world. In the next few pages, I will briefly introduce three relevant case studies before diving into the case of Guanajuato City, Mexico. Two of these cases —San Miguel de Allende in Mexico and Ouro Preto in Brazil— were chosen, not only to bring more Latin American scenarios to the table but also to highlight those aspects that differentiate them from the European context —exemplified in this case through the case study of Bruges, Belgium.

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[21] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "Tourism and Culture", accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.unwto.org/tourism-and-culture

1.2.1 San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

Figure 3: Location of San Miguel de Allende in Mexico. (Source: Google Maps).[22]

Only 80 km away from Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende is a Mexican city with high touristic value and demand. Due to its beautiful colonial architecture and relaxed small-town atmosphere, it has been acknowledged through numerous national and international awards. Amongst these, it was categorized as *Pueblo Mágico* (Magical Town) by the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico in 2022, it was named American Cultural Capital 2019 by the International Bureau of Cultural Capitals, #1 city in Mexico, Central and South America by Condé Nast Traveler Magazine in 2016, Best City in the World by Condé Nast Traveler Magazine in 2013, and it was listed as a "Cultural Heritage City" by UNESCO in 2008.[23]

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[22] "San Miguel de Allende, Mexico", Google Maps, accessed May 29, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/place/San+Miguel+de+Allende,+Guanajuato,+Mexico/@20.929151,-101.0022023,10.81z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x842b51af9871bc0f:0x653101031d07b0a4!8m2!3d20.9144491!4d-100.745235!16zL20vMDU2MjAx?hl=en&entry=ttu

[23] "Premios y nombramientos", Visit San Miguel, accessed January 16, 2023, https://visitsanmiguel.travel/visita8.php

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Figure 4: UNESCO Heritage City of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. (Source: iStock).[24]

Consequently, the tourist demand in the city has steadily increased over the last decade. In 2020, 73% of visitors were from the state of Guanajuato, 26% were national, and only 1% were international (although before the pandemic, the average percentage of international visitors in the last ten years remained steady at around 9%).[25] Nevertheless, San Miguel de Allende is undergoing an inhabitant substitution phenomenon where affluent Americans are choosing the city as a retirement destination, which means there is an international impact beyond the percentage of international visitors to the city.[26]

The presence of international inhabitants and visitors is slowly transforming the identity of San

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[24] Ferrantraite, *San Miguel de Allende Mexiko,* digital photograph, 2016, 5293 x 3967 pixels, iStock, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.istockphoto.com/de/foto/san-miguel-de-allende-mexiko-gm629387256-111973057

[25] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), "Perfil del Visitante 2020: San Miguel de Allende", Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato (OTEG), December 2020, accessed January 16, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/ver_todos/6

[26] Marina Inés de la Torre, "Gentrificación migratoria en San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato", *Cultura Científica y Tecnológica* 15, no. 66 (December 2018), accessed January 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.20983/culcyt.2018.3.8

Miguel. The main example of this is the city center, which has shifted from a residential to a commercial area, with bars, shops and boutiques targeting visitors with high purchasing power.[27] Local residents are then forced to look for housing in the city's periphery, which offers more affordable prices. In addition, those residents are left with the least efficient offer of services, as most of the efforts towards public services concentrate on tending to the touristic and central areas of the city.[28] Furthermore, locals show dissatisfaction when it comes to mass tourism in the city center, as it causes traffic jams, pollution, and overall excessive use of resources.[29]

The issue of identity, however, goes beyond the commercialization and touristification of the city center and the loss of the original landscape. San Miguel de Allende does not have a predominant traditional, local cuisine (as most cities in Mexico do). Instead, it has adopted an international cuisine, welcoming a fusion of flavors from all over the world and opening the door to culinary innovation and exclusivity. Additionally, locals are showing a preference for English, French, or Italian over Spanish as more efficient alternatives to better communicate with international visitors.[30] These elements have lent San Miguel accolades for a cosmopolitan city, in which international backgrounds converge and mix.

Recently, efforts have been made to recover and preserve local traditions and intangible heritage, mostly through festivals and celebrations. A new marketing strategy has been developed by the public and private sectors to promote an image of a more traditional town,

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[27] Ricardo Sonda de la Rosa, Agustín Ruiz Lanuza, and Josefina Alcudia Rocha, "Tourism area life cycle analysis in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato", *ECOFRAN Journal* 7, no. 12, (June 2021), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.35429/ejrp.2021.12.7.7.21
[28] David Navarrete Escobedo, "Foreigners as Gentrifiers and Tourists in a Mexican Historic District", *Urban Studies* 57, no. 15, (January 2020), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019896532
[29] Sonda de la Rosa, Ruiz Lanuza, and Alcudia Rocha, "Tourism area life cycle analysis in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato".
[30] Luis Angel Soto de Anda, Graciela Cruz Jiménez, and Elva Esther Vargas Martínez, "Turismo e identidad en San Miguel de Allende, México", *Cuadernos de Turismo* 1, no. 44, (November 2019), accessed January 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.6018/turismo.44.404961

focused mostly on its colonial heritage. [31] This strategy, however, comes after years of prioritizing tangible heritage for aesthetic purposes, with legislation and policy drafted towards this end.[32] This shift could potentially be attributed to the prioritization of sustainable tourism practices that the state of Guanajuato is developing, which are presented in a more detailed manner in Chapter 3.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the inclination towards prioritizing tourism development over the livability of the city has taken a toll on the image of San Miguel de Allende and on its residents' quality of life. On the one hand, the old tourism practices showcased a colorful, cosmopolitan and aesthetically pleasing destination. As such, there was little effort put into deeper cultural experiences for visitors to better explore the heritage of the city and its residents. On the other hand, the touristification of central areas of San Miguel have had negative impacts on costs of living, mobility, and limited public services. This case study portrays the risks that come with unsustainable tourism strategies.

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[31] Soto de Anda, Cruz Jiménez, and Vargas Martínez.
[32] De la Torre, "Gentrificación Migratoria en San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato".

1.2.2 Ouro Preto, Brazil

Figure 5: Location of Ouro Preto in Brazil. (Source: Google Maps).[33]

Ouro Preto is a city in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Towards the end of the 1600s, the discovery of gold in the area known today as Ouro Preto marked the beginning of the most important gold rush in the Portuguese colonies. As a result of the mining activities in the city, Ouro Preto became the heart of a gold-mining boom that peaked in the mid-18th century.[34] Even after the decline of gold extraction, the city remained an important regional political center in Minas Gerais. Nowadays, mining continues to be the most important source of local revenue, followed by economic activities derived from

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[33] "Ouro Preto, Brazil", Google Maps, accessed May 29, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/place/Ouro+Preto,+State+of+Minas+Gerais,+35400-000,+Brazil/@-20.3912458,-43.5222454,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0xa40b1d2c57b55b:0xd984d1131d83d5fc!8m2!3d-20.402211!4d-43.5105574!16zL20vMDF0bGR5?hl=en&entry=ttu

[34] Viviane da Silva Borges Barbosa, Bráulio Magalhaes Fonseca, and Hernani Mota de Lima, "Assessing risks of abandoned urban mines in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Ouro Preto, Brazil", *Applied Geography* 139, (February 2022), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2022.102648

tourism.[35]

Figure 6: UNESCO Heritage city of Ouro Preto, Brazil. (Source: Flickr)[36]

During the 18th century, Ouro Preto underwent a serious creative boom, in which music, theater, sculpture, painting and literature took center stage. This cultural expansion was also physically materialized in the construction of churches in the form of rich, baroque-style buildings as in many other Latin American cities under Spanish and Portuguese rule.[37] In 1969, the Federal University of Ouro Preto was established in the city, enhancing its educational landscape and contributing to the young, student-oriented atmosphere that characterizes the city nowadays.

In 2017, the population of Ouro Preto comprised 74,659 people. In that same year, the city

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[35] Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos and Sue A.S. Iamamoto, "The difficult legacy of mining in past and contemporary Potosí and Ouro Preto", *Journal of Latin American Geography* 18, no. 3 (October 2019), accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48618853

[36] Rosa Cabecinhas and Alcino Cunha, *Ouro Preto, Brazil,* digital photograph, 2011, Flickr, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.flickr.com/photos/rosino/6288971321/

[37] Celina Borges Lemos, "A formação da paisagem cultural de Oruo Preto, Minas Gerais- Algumas características do processo de ocupação como constituintes da sua ambiência barroca", *Linguagens nas Artes* 2, no. 2, (January 2021), accessed January 13, 2023, https://revista.uemg.br/index.php/linguagensnasartes/article/view/5845

registered a monthly inflow of approximately 34,800 visitors. Of those visitors, 55% were tourists spending an average of 2.6 nights in the city, while the remaining 45% were excursionists coming from surrounding cities such as Belo Horizonte. According to data from the Brazilian government, 38.6% of visitors are locals from the state of Minas Gerais, while 49.9% are national visitors and the remaining 11.5% come from abroad.[38]

Ouro Preto was the first Brazilian city to be inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1980. The trend for cultural tourism in Ouro Preto began in the 1960s with a focus on the baroque and kept growing as the Carnival and religious celebrations caught the attention of foreigners. Things have not changed too much, with visitors coming to the city nowadays during the Carnival and for the student party of the Federal University in October, as well as for its baroque ecclesiastic architecture, sculptures, and overall aesthetic values.[39]

Nevertheless, despite the economic growth that tourism represents, the residents of Ouro Preto are experiencing its impact in different ways. Mainly, areas within the historic city center are being turned into hotels and business establishments to accommodate the growing needs of visitors. This, along with the growing number of tourists and excursionists, is altering the daily activities of residents and transforming their public spaces.[40] On the other hand, tourists have pointed out issues at the destination, such as traffic, lack of accessibility, limited parking spaces and restaurants, and lack of bilingual employees.[41]

Again, most of the research regarding cultural tourism in Ouro Preto focuses on visitor

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[38] Lúcia Maria Aquino de Queiroz, *Turismo Cultural e Desenvolvimento: Cachoeira & Ouro Preto* (Bahia: Editora UFRB, 2019).

[39] Borges Lemos, "A formação da paisagem cultural de Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais".

[40] Leandro Benedini Brusadin and Rafael Henrique T. da Silva, "O uso turístico do patrimonio cultural em Ouro Preto", *Cultur Revista de Cultura e Turismo* 6, no. 1 (February 2012), accessed January 13, 2023, https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/5314887.pdf

[41] Ana Cláudia Azevedo, Mariana de Freitas Coelho, and Elizabeth Kyoko Wada, "What are we missing? Destination marketing and hospitality of a cultural destination in Brazil from the stakeholders' perspective", *PODIUM Sport, Leisure and Tourism Review* 10, no. 2, (August 2021), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.5585/podium.v10i2.17014

satisfaction rather than the impact on the destination itself or the involvement of the local community. This issue has been widely pointed out in academia regarding tourism in Ouro Preto, paving the way for the creation of more inclusive policies in the future. This challenge is also present in current tourism strategies in Guanajuato, which up to now have been centered around visitors' experience and satisfaction.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that tourism in Ouro Preto has grown in a relatively sustainable way, mostly because the branding and marketing efforts of the city declined after the 1980s.[42] This slow growth is useful as a case analysis of a city that has surprising parallels with Guanajuato in Mexico, but in a context in which tourism-based economic growth has not yet dominated the local government's priorities. As such, Ouro Preto's slow growth can serve as an example of how to reorganize tourism and economic priorities in Guanajuato, focusing on the local community first.

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[42] Azevedo, de Freitas and Kyoko Wada.

1.2.3 Bruges, Belgium

Figure 7: Location of Bruges in Belgium. (Source: Google Maps).[43]

Bruges is the capital city of the province of West Flanders, in the northwest of Belgium. With nearly 20,000 inhabitants, Bruges positions itself as the sixth-largest city in the country by population numbers. The city is a major tourist destination within the country; its Historical Center has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000, and it was also selected as the "European Capital of Culture" in 2002. Its attractiveness for tourism is anything but recent. Three main pillars have been identified as the forces captivating the almost nine million visitors[44] who stop by the historic center of Bruges every year: its cultural offerings, the city's heritage, and easy access from other large cities nearby.[45]

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[43] "Bruges, Belgium", Google Maps, accessed May 29, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/place/Bruges,+Belgium/@50.8061632,-0.3601673,4.98z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x47c350d0c11e420d:0x1aa2f35ac8834df7!8m2!3d51.2091807!4d3.2247552!16zL20vMGs0MjQ?hl=en&entry=ttu

[44] Jules Johnston, "Too many tourists: Bruges will no longer advertise for day trippers", *The Brussels Time,* June 12, 2019, accessed January 14, 2023, https://www.brusselstimes.com/58344/too-many-tourists-bruges-will-no-longer-advertises-for-day-trippers-brussels-ghent-tourism-visit-cruise-ship

[45] Brigitta Pécsek, "The role of slow design elements in managing tourist flow on the example of Bruges, Belgium", *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 64, no. 2 (July 2015), accessed January 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.15201/hungeobull.64.2.5

Figure 8: UNESCO Heritage city of Bruges, Belgium. (Source: Getty Images)[46]

Such a high number of visitors, however, comes at a price for the residents of Bruges. From an economic aspect, the consequences of such an inflow of visitors included increasing prices in goods and housing, as well as little spending from excursionists coming on cruise ships. Noise and pollution in public areas were also an inconvenience for the locals. Moreover, rejection of mass tourism grew amongst Bruges' citizens because tourists seemed to approach the city as a place of superficial heritage consumption, disregarding its history and culture. Despite these sentiments, locals see value in tourism and do not wish to discourage the inflow of visitors.[47]

As a response to the residents' discomfort with tourism management, the local government implemented a number of changes in policy and regulations. For example, parties were banned in the streets, and tourist buses no longer have access to the city center. Additionally, scooters

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[46] Getty Images, *Bruges, Belgium,* digital photograph, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel/bc/2022/04/five-reasons-to-visit-bruges-in-2022
[47] Katarzyna Janusz, Sofie Six, and Dominique Vanneste, "Building tourism-resilient communities by incorporating residents' perceptions? A photo-elicitation study of tourism development in Bruges", *Journal of Tourism Futures* 3, no. 2 (December 2017), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-04-2017-0011

and tourist taxis are restricted to avoid disturbing the residents' everyday activities.[48] The city reduced its own marketing campaign by removing promotional materials from hotels and other tourist hotspots in nearby major cities like Brussels and Ghent, with the objective of decelerating the inflow of visitors and, particularly, excursionists.[49]

Nevertheless, further long-term measures were taken by the government, encouraging a participative approach based on the needs and priorities of Bruges' citizens. In 2019, the Strategic Vision Memorandum for Tourism 2019-2024 was created. This document contains not only the goals that were set for 2024 but also the goals, choices and priorities leading the strategy. In a nutshell, the government shifted the city's approach by "working around the central question of what tourism can mean for Bruges and no longer what the city can do for tourism".[50] To achieve their new aims, they set four strategic goals in the Vision Memorandum:

- Tourism contributes to a balanced city: social and environmental added value are as important as economic added value. In addition, the strategy focuses on target groups relevant because of their intrinsic qualities rather than the volumes of revenue they generate.

- Tourism contributes to a connected city: successful tourism is built in collaboration and co-creation with all place makers: residents, visitors, and entrepreneurs.

- Tourism contributes to an attractive city: respect for history and tradition are combined with innovation and experimentation, making Bruges a contemporary and surprising cultural destination.

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[48] Vanessa Gowreesunkar and Hugues Seraphin, "Introduction: What smart and sustainable strategies could be used to reduce the impact of overtourism?", *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 11, no. 5, (October 2019), accessed January 13, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-06-2019-0044
[49] Johnston, "Too many tourists: Bruges will no longer advertise for day trippers".
[50] Dieter Dewulf and team, ed., *A four-leafed clover for tourism in Bruges: Strategic vision memorandum tourism 2019-2024,* (Bruges: Colin Beheydt, General Director City of Bruges, 2019): 10, accessed January 10, 2023, https://www.visitbruges.be/en/pdf-strategic-vision-memorandum-tourism-2019-2024

- Tourism contributes to an enterprising city: fostering a favorable investment climate for sustainable entrepreneurship, with a level playing field for everyone.

The strategy developed and implemented in Bruges heavily relies on cooperation and participation, fostering feedback and contribution from the residents. Moreover, as stated in the question leading their new approach to tourism, the Bruges government places the city and the citizens' needs and priorities at the center of the strategy. This kind of participative approach, with a fair and collaborative intervention from all stakeholders, promotes sustainable tourism. With this in mind, the local government of Guanajuato can develop a similar strategy that benefits all involved but prioritizes the livability of the city and the well-being of its residents.

Chapter conclusion

The aforementioned cases, as well as the conceptual interpretations presented in the first part of the chapter, serve as an introduction to the main ideas and challenges related to tourism. Simultaneously, the examples of tourism management described in the case studies shed light on the mistakes to avoid and the steps to take when planning a tourism strategy, especially one with a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable approach. These foundations are essential to understand the context and risks of tourism taking place in Guanajuato City, Mexico, described in Chapter 3. The next chapter will provide an introduction to Guanajuato's history and heritage, which are intrinsically linked to the current tourism strategy.

Chapter 2: Guanajuato as a cultural hub

This chapter will dive into certain cultural aspects that characterize the city of Guanajuato. The first section is dedicated to the history of the city, remarking on the most relevant events that took place there as well as the reason behind Guanajuato's sinuous layout and infrastructure. The second section covers in detail selected aspects of the city's material cultural landscape in greater detail, including its characteristic tunnels and alleys, three of its most emblematic buildings, and the mines and haciendas in the Guanajuato hinterland so integral to the city's historic development. Lastly, the third section provides insights into the intangible heritage of the city, including its major traditions, festivals and legends.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the cultural richness and attributes of the city of Guanajuato, both tangible and intangible. Additionally, the historical overview serves as an explanation of why the city is shaped as it is today and how mining and geography have marked its infrastructure and the residents' lifestyle. Moreover, the chapter connects three of the most relevant cultural pillars of Guanajuato: mining, religion, and the arts. Finally, it also functions as a preamble to Chapter 3, which addresses the tourism trends and challenges in the city.

2.1 Historical overview

This section provides a non-exhaustive overview of the history of Guanajuato city. The purpose of this brief historical recapitulation is to provide the reader with sufficient background information to better understand the present for of the city. The events highlighted in this overview can be categorized as belonging to the periods of Colonial and Independent Mexico, the main historical periods associated with the city of Guanajuato but always handled as intellectual silos, not in connection with each other. This is a consequence of the Authorized

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Heritage Discourse (AHD) of the state of Guanajuato as a whole, which plays a crucial role in the state's tourism strategy.

As conceptualized by Laurajane Smith, the AHD is a narrative that sets a number of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage. Moreover, the AHD "privileges expert values and knowledge about the past and its material manifestations, and dominates and regulates professional heritage practices",[51] often with nation-building purposes. In Mexico, this discourse manifests itself in the way in which history is presented, with an almost inflexible understanding of the historical periods of the country. In the case of Guanajuato, particularly Guanajuato City, the relevant heritage comes from the Viceroyalty and the process of Independence. Consequently, those are the periods covered in this brief historical overview.

2.1.1 Mining glory and associated infrastructure

Guanajuato is a prime example of a city shaped by its inhabitants' relationship with the surrounding natural environment. Established in a semi-arid area, the city faced challenges directly related to water since its establishment: droughts, floods and access to drinking water would eventually determine Guanajuato's layout from its foundation in 1570 until today. Additionally, the region's mineral wealth would lead it to become the most important silver mining center in the Spanish viceroyalties during the eighteenth century.

Between 1541 and 1546 —approximately 20 years after the declaration of the Spanish Conquest following the fall of the Aztec Empire— four sources of silver were discovered in the area known as *Cuanaxhuata* (from the Purepecha language, meaning "mountainous place of frogs"). These sites —Marfil, Tepetapa, Santa Anna and Cerro del Cuarto— were located in areas between the feet of the Santa Anna, Serena, el Meco and San Miguel hills. The climate

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[51] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* (London: Routledge, 2006): 4.

in this region is predominantly semi-arid, which was beneficial for the indigenous maize crops that could endure such climatic constraints. Nevertheless, preferred cereal crops such as wheat brought by the Spaniards needed significantly more water to flourish. Consequently, after the silver deposits were discovered and newcomers started arriving, the colonizers settled along the Guanajuato River basin to provide the extra water needed for growing wheat.[52]

During the first years of the conquest, the Spanish crown offered several incentives to bring people of both indigenous and Spanish descent to settle in and exploit the mineral resources. This eventually led to the official foundation of the city Santa Fe de Guanajuato, in 1570.[53] Unlike other cities in the Spanish colonies, Guanajuato did not develop on a grid plan; instead, the city was built following the natural contours of the surrounding hills. This organic construction lay the foundation for the narrow, sinuous, and uneven streets that can still be found in the city center nowadays.[54]

In the years following the discovery of the deposits, the mining industry grew at a fast pace, reaching its peak between the 1760s and 1810s. At this time, the mine of *La Valenciana* was the best-performing mine in all of Spain's colonial territories in the Americas, with a higher silver production than all the mines in the Viceroyalty of Peru.[55] This tremendous expansion led to an unprecedented migration to Guanajuato, including numerous foreign companies that established their mining operations in the region. By 1780, there were 50 haciendas and 300

[52] Georgina H. Endfield, Isabel Fernández Tejedo, and Sarah H. O'Hara, "Conflict and Cooperation: Water, Floods, and Social Response in Colonial Guanajuato, Mexico", *Environmental History 9,* no. 2 (April 2004), accessed April 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.2307/3986085

[53] Endfield, Fernández, and O'Hara, "Conflict and Cooperation".

[54] José de Jesús Cordero Domínguez, "La piel y las venas urbanas en el centro histórico de Guanajuato, México", *Revista Cuestión Urbana* 2, no. 3 (June 2018), accessed April 12, 2023, http://cec.sociales.uba.ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2018/07/14_Dominguez.pdf

[55] Enrique Canudas Sandoval, *Las venas de plata en la historia de México: Síntesis de historia económica, siglo XIX,* (Mexico City: Editorial utopía, 2005).

small metalworking factories operating in and around Guanajuato, and by 1792, the city's

population had reached about 51,000 souls.[56]

Figure 9: The Noble City of Guanaxuato, as seen from the top of San Miguel hill (from the West), Author unknown, eighteenth century. (Source: Indies General Archive)[57]

The increasing growth in mining activities and subsequent inflow of inhabitants revealed a

major issue for the city of Guanajuato: drinking water. On the one hand, mercury used in the

silver extraction process posed a significant health threat, since mercury spills polluted the

water that was commonly used by the city's inhabitants. On the other hand, the remaining, still

potable water was scarce in this semi-arid environment, and eventually proved insufficient for

Guanajuato's growing population. In 1749, the municipal government built the *La Olla* dam

on the outskirts of the city, and in the 1770s, projects were proposed to pipe the water from the

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[56] Luis Gordo Peláez, "Water and infrastructure in late colonial Guanajuato", in *The Routledge Handbook of Infrastructure Design: Global Perspectives from Architectural History,* ed. Joseph Heathcott (London: Routledge, 2022).

[57] Author unknown, *La Noble Ciudad de Guanaxuato, Vista desde lo alto del Serro de San Miguel (por el Poniente)*, eighteenth century, manuscript, 30.7 x39.4 cm, Indies General Archive, Seville, accessed December 19, 2022, http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/21564

dam into the city for drinking purposes. Eventually, a second dam, *Los Pozuelos*, was built for this purpose, and its construction was completed in 1791.[58]

The construction of the dams, beyond satisfying the citizens' most basic needs, also served the purpose of mitigating the harsh droughts that hit the city year after year. During the 1700s, Guanajuato underwent several drought events, some of which destroyed crops and led to famines.[59] Consequently, other infrastructural developments, such as a central grain storage building known as *Alhóndiga de Granaditas* were built towards the end of the century. In contrast to the challenge of the droughts, however, the city also faced constant and often devastating floods. The torrential summer rains often raised the level of the Guanajuato River and its dams, causing them to overflow. Even though the floods were primarily caused by natural occurrences such as torrential rain, this phenomenon was also closely linked to the mining activities in the region. With the increase in silver production, it became common practice to discard excavated mining waste into the Guanajuato River, also causing its level to rise.[60]

Back in the 1760s, local authorities determined that an efficient way to reduce the risk of flooding would be to enclose the Guanajuato River, building high, solid walls along its course and raising the level of houses and streets along the riverside. Vicente Manuel de Sardaneta, First Marquis of Rayas, owned land on both sides of the river. Consequently, his land was now partitioned due to the newly built barriers. The Marquis was interested in unifying both sides of his property, so in 1776, he decided to build the San Antonio Inn on top of the walls. The

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[58] Gordo Peláez, "Water and infrastructure in late colonial Guanajuato".

[59] Gordo Peláez.

[60] Raúl Miranda Avilés et al., "Las inundaciones históricas de la ciudad de Guanajuato", *Nuestra Tierra* no.9, (Spring 2008), accessed December 19, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333981846_Las_inundaciones_historicas_de_la_ciudad_de_Guanajuato

Guanajuato River now flowed under de Sardaneta's land rather than across it.[61] Following his example, other citizens decided to do the same to their properties, creating the foundations of the tunnels and underground streets that would be built in the following decades. These structures are known today as the Old Tunnels.

Figure 10: View of San Antonio Inn from the old Guanajuato riverbed, now known as Miguel Hidalgo Underground Street. (Source: Google Maps).[62]

In 1883, a new tunnel was built for the drainage purpose, becoming the oldest tunnel in Guanajuato. Inaugurated in 1908, the Porfirio Díaz tunnel (also known as "El Cuajin" tunnel) is 1.162 km long and 7 meters wide. El Cuajín deviated most of the water coming from the surrounding hills away from the city, The technology used to build it was largely based on the city's experience with constructing mine shafts.[63]

[61] Lawren Escamilla, "El origen de los túneles en Guanajuato que surgió por inundiaciones que alertaron al estado", Cultura Colectiva, July 22, 2023, accessed December 20, 2023, https://culturacolectiva.com/historia/tuneles-de-guanajuato-historia-origen-cuantos-hay-cuando-se-hicieron/

[62] Google Street View capture made by author. "Guanajuato", Google Street View, April 2019, accessed December 19, 2022, https://www.google.com/maps/@21.0160406,-101.2544703,3a,75y,137.3h,103.91t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1stpTeWw-Scc6pu5nnyBbQRw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656?entry=ttu

[63] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), "Guanajuato Underground, Túneles y Leyendas" Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato (OTEG), April 22, 2015, accessed December 18, 2022, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/detalle_noticia/1953

Given the success of El Cuajin in the following years, other older tunnels no longer received inflows of water. Mold and mud, along with waste accumulated inside the tunnels produced strong smells that were unpleasant for people living or passing nearby. They also became a health hazard. As time passed and automobiles became increasingly popular in Guanajuato, the use of these tunnels shifted from hydraulic management to roadways. One by one, most tunnels were transformed to accommodate the new transportation needs of the city, creating a complex network of underground streets that connect different points of the city. The Guanajuato River was redirected into smaller tunnels and pipes, and in 1964, the riverbed was transformed into what is known today as the Miguel Hidalgo underground street.[64]

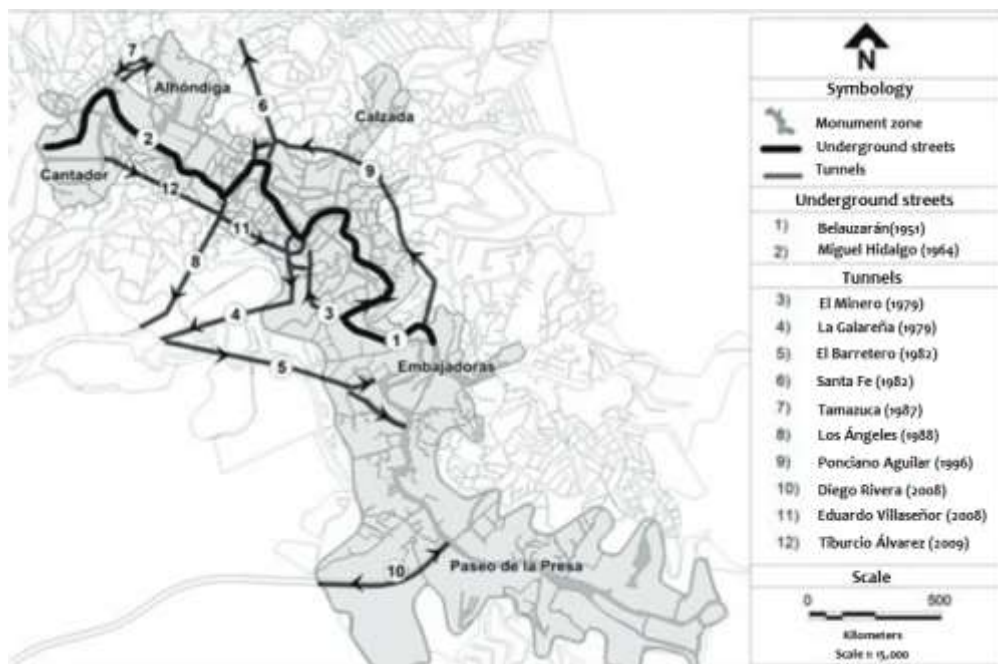*Figure 11: Current map of underground streets and roadway tunnels in Guanajuato, which are used for everyday traffic. (Source: José de Jesús Cordero Domínguez)[65]*

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[64] Cordero Domínguez, "La piel y las venas urbanas en el centro histórico de Guanajuato, México".
[65] The darker gray area of the map represents the city center of Guanajuato City. Symbology translated from Spanish by author. Cordero Domínguez, 174, image 5.

2.1.2 Cradle of the Mexican Independence

In 1810, the Spanish territory of New Spain saw the explosion of a political movement that would lead to the independence of Mexico from Spanish rule in 1821. On an international level, Spain was undergoing a severe crisis of legitimacy. Renewed tensions with Great Britain and French intervention in Spanish politics quickly destabilized the Spanish Monarchy. Consequently, profound economic instability impacted Spain and its territories overseas. In New Spain, economic inequality kept growing, eventually affecting even wealthy landowners whose power suddenly vanished.[66] One of these landowners was the Creole priest, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, from the small town of Pénjamo, located 100 km from Guanajuato City. The priest not only had the admiration of his parish and community, but he also commanded the respect of local authorities and politicians.

Due to his popularity, the priest managed to mobilize masses of people in a protest against the losses that he and others belonging to his social status were experiencing.[67] On September 16th, 1810, the priest Hidalgo gave a speech in the Parish of Dolores (now Dolores Hidalgo) in Guanajuato, ringing the bells of the church and raising a call to arms against the rulers of New Spain. This event is known in Mexican history as the Cry of Dolores (Grito de Dolores), commemorated every year as a celebration of Mexican Independence.

The first battle for independence took place on September 28th, 1810. After receiving no response from the local Governor of Guanajuato to surrender his post, Hidalgo decided to gather troops of his own and take over the city. The conflict is now known as the Capture of Alhóndiga de Granaditas.[68] Later that year, in November, the revolutionaries killed the Spanish

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[66] Alfredo Ávila and Luis Jáuregui, "La disolución de la monarquía hispánica y el proceso de independencia", in *Nueva Historia General de México"*, ed. Erik Velásquez García et al., (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2010).
[67] Ávila and Jáuregui.
[68] Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), "Pieza: Asalto a la Alhóndiga de Granaditas", Galería de Historia, Museo del Caracol, accessed February 10, 2023, https://lugares.inah.gob.mx/es/museos-inah/museo/museo-piezas/7402-7402-asalto-a-la-alh%C3%B3ndiga-de-granaditas.html?lugar_id=454

and Creole prisoners held inside Alhóndiga, which led to a counterattack by the Viceroyal army. Several leaders of the revolutionary movement were killed, and Guanajuato stood on the verge of mass executions.

Eventually, in 1811, Miguel Hidalgo and the three other leaders of the movement —Ignacio Allende, Juan Aldama, and Mariano Jiménez—were captured and killed by the Viceroyal troops. In an effort to deter the revolutionaries from continuing the conflict, the army hung the heads of the leaders in cages on each corner of the Alhóndiga in central Guanajuato, where they remained for 10 years.[69] This showcase demonstrated what would happen to those who would rebel against the Spanish crown and the Viceroyalty.

Now, however, the names of these leaders remain, not only in history but have also become part of Guanajuato's geography: the city of Dolores is now the Municipality of Dolores Hidalgo; San Miguel el Grande is now the Municipality of San Miguel de Allende; and Hacienda de Jaripitío is now the town of Aldama. Mariano Jiménez is not commemorated in the same way. Guanajuato City, along with other cities in the state of Guanajuato and other states, are now part of what is known as Hidalgo's Route and the Route of Independence. These routes trace the steps of Miguel Hidalgo and the Insurgent army during the War of Independence.[70]

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[69] "14 de octubre de 1811: Las cabezas de Hidalgo, Allende, Aldama y Jiménez son expuestas en la Alhóndiga de Granaditas", México es Cultura, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.mexicoescultura.com/actividad/159386/14-de-octubre-de-1811-las-cabezas-de-hidalgo-allende-aldama-y-jimenez-son-expuestas-en-la-alhondiga-de-granaditas.html

[70] "Ruta de la Independencia", Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato, accessed February 10, 2023, https://cedocvirtual.sectur.gob.mx/janium/Documentos/11597.pdf

Figure 12: View of the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, the grain storage building in downtown Guanajuato City. (Source: El buen ciudadano).[71]

2.2 Material cultural landscape

This section describes three of the most emblematic material cultural assets of Guanajuato. Intrinsically linked to the city's history, the sites have been selected mainly based on their popularity amongst visitors and locals. Additionally, with the exception of the mines and haciendas, the buildings and structures included in the chapter are located in the city center, the busiest and most visited area of Guanajuato, as will be explained in Chapter 3.

2.2.1 Infrastructure: tunnels and alleys

Nowadays, Guanajuato's underground network comprises 23 tunnels adding up to more than 8 km in length.[72] The tunnels and underground passages have become a part of the cultural landscape of the city, and the engineering complexity behind it is a focus of attraction for

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[71] In the corner of the building, a plaque reads "Hidalgo" to commemorate the site where his head was displayed after his execution. Each corner of the building has the name of the Insurgency leader whose head was exposed there. "Acuerdan fortalecer actividades en la Alhóndiga de Granaditas", El buen ciudadano, November 27, 2022, accessed February 10, 2023, https://elbuenciudadano.com/acuerdan-fortalecer-actividades-en-la-alhondiga-de-granaditas/

[72] Secretaría de Turismo del Estado de Guanajuato, "Guanajuato Underground, Túneles y Leyendas".

visitors from all over the country and the world. In 1988, the Historic Town of Guanajuato and Adjacent Mines was incorporated into the UNESCO World Heritage List, largely because of the human labor that lay behind such an interesting urban setting.

2.2.2 The basilica, the university and the theater

The **Basilica of Our Lady of Guanajuato** was built between 1671 and 1696, although it only earned the status of Basilica in 1957.[73] Its Baroque and Neoclassical architectural styles, as well as the vibrant yellow color of its exterior have turned the Basilica into one of the city's most recognizable buildings. Moreover, it is located on one of the busiest streets in Guanajuato, surrounded by numerous restaurants and shops and with its main facade facing a small green area called the Plaza de la Paz (Peace Square).

The significance of the Basilica, beyond its architectural value, is twofold. The first point is that the main altar was built to host a valuable statue of a Madonna holding the Child. The legend behind this statue is that it was originally Our Lady of Andalusia, hidden by Christians during the Moorish invasion of Granada in 716 CE It remained hidden until it was rediscovered in the 16th century. King Phillip II of Spain sent the statue to New Spain in 1557 as a sign of gratitude towards the mining town, which was a relevant source of wealth for the crown.[74] The second reason is tightly linked to the first one since it was mine owners from Guanajuato who funded the construction and decoration of the church. Our Lady of Guanajuato is consequently the patron saint of the mining city.

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[73] "Basílica Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato", Ciudades Mexicanas Patrimonio Mundial, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.ciudadespatrimonio.mx/basilica-colegiata-de-nuestra-senora-de-guanajuato/
[74] Guanajuato History, "Nuestra senora de Guanajuato: leyenda, historia y devoción", YouTube video, September 19, 2020, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYJTXxKlNT8&t=39s

Figure 13: Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Exterior (left)[75] and main altar (right). (Source: Wikipedia).[76]

The history of the **University of Guanajuato** dates back to 1732 with the foundation of the

Holy Trinity School. The Jesuits in the city ran the school until the order was banished from

the territory of New Spain in 1767. After this period, the school was shut down only to be

reopened 18 years later as the "Royal School of Immaculate Conception", under the

supervision of Philippian priests. During the 1800's, the University expanded through the

establishment of a library, a mineralogy collection, and physics and chemistry labs. In 1870,

[75] Pachanka, *Basílica Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato,* digital photograph, 2012, 1944 x 2592 pixels, Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 22, 2023, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bas%C3%ADlica_Colegiata_de_Nuestra_Se%C3%B1ora_de_Guanaj uato.jpg

[76] Jezabel Karlin Aguirre Reyes, *Basílica Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato,* digital photograph, 2011, 2592 x 3888 pixels, Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 22, 2023, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Bas%C3%ADlica_Colegiata_de_Nuestra_Se%C3%B1ora_de_Guanajuat o_01.jpg

the University became a State College, finally transforming into the University of Guanajuato in 1945.[77]

The main facade of the central building, along with its emblematic stairs, were built between 1950 and 1952.[78] The stairs have multiple functions beyond aesthetic ones; they are used for taking graduation pictures for the students, they serve as the base to set the Day of the Dead altar, and they often function as a stage for the University's student band. The stairs are also a common meeting point for students, who comprise a total of 34,000 for the whole institution.[79]

Figure 14: Aerial view of the main building of the University of Guanajuato. (Source: Líder Empresarial)[80]

In relation to the material possessions of the University, the institution has a Cultural Heritage Assets Office (Oficina de los Bienes del Patrimonio Cultural) which is in charge of "protecting

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[77] "University of Guanajuato Historical Review", Universidad de Guanajuato, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www3.ugto.mx/en/get-to-know-the-ug/univeristy-of-guanajuato-historical-review

[78] "Espacios emblemáticos y museos", Universidad de Guanajuato, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www3.ugto.mx/ugvirtual/

[79] "Home Page", Universidad de Guanajuato, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www3.ugto.mx/en/

[80] Abigail Carranza, "La Universidad de Guanajuato aprueba aumento salarial a trabajadores", digital photograph, March 29, 2022, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.liderempresarial.com/la-universidad-de-guanajuato-aprueba-aumento-salarial-a-trabajadores/

the university, artistic, cultural, scientific and technological collections that contain historical, identity and belonging meanings for the university community and society in general".[81] The Office is closely linked to the University's Archive and its Conservation and Restauration Area. Moreover, the University is in charge of three museums, three art galleries [82] and one hacienda.[83]

The history of the theater is far more recent than those of the University and the Basilica. Named after Benito Juárez, one of Mexico's most renowned Presidents, the **Teatro Juárez** was built between 1872 and 1903. With a capacity of 800 people, [84] the theater is a representation of the eclectic architectural style that was popularized in Mexico towards the end of the nineteenth century. Its neoclassic facade contrasts against the art nouveau and Moorish-style interiors popular throughout the Western world at that time. The theater saw its heyday in the years between its inauguration and the outburst of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, becoming one of the most important cultural and artistic venues in the country.[85]

The Teatro Juárez has become an architectural symbol of the city of Guanajuato. As opposed to the buildings of the University and the Basilica, it clearly follows European stylistic trends. Moreover, the building itself is an indicator of the relevance that the arts had in the city and the interest in fostering cultural activities for Guanajuato's residents. Nowadays, the theater serves as the main venue of the Festival Internacional Cervantino, one of the most famous events for scenic arts on the continent. Throughout the year, the theater's steps are used by people to sit

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[81] "Oficina de los Bienes de Patrimonio Cultural", Universidad de Guanajuato, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.ugto.mx/archivo-general/oficina-de-los-bienes-del-patrimonio-cultural-de-la-ug
[82] "Museos y Galerías", Universidad de Guanajuato, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.cultura.ugto.mx/museosygalerias
[83] "Espacios emblemáticos y museos", Universidad de Guanajuato.
[84] "Teatro Juárez", Sistema de Información Cultural, accessed April 22, 2023, https://sic.cultura.gob.mx/ficha.php?table=teatro&table_id=386
[85] "Teatro Juárez, Guanajuato", Guanajuato Mexico City, accessed April 22, 2023, http://guanajuatomexicocity.com/Guanajuato-guide/Teatro-Juarez-Guanajuato.html

while eating ice cream, for children to run up and down, and for families to be entertained by street performers who put on shows for them.

Figure 15: Teatro Juárez. Main facade (left)[86] and interior (right).[87] (Sources: México Destinos and Gto Viaja).

2.2.3 Mines and Haciendas

Away from the city center, another emblem of the city of Guanajuato is its mines. Five mines are located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site: La Valenciana, Bocamina de San Ramón, Mina de Rayas, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Cata, and El Nopal.[88] Hand in hand with the mines, a related heritage item from colonial times is the *haciendas*, the estates owned by those with the resources to exploit the land, either by agriculture or mining. Haciendas were a common phenomenon not only in Guanajuato but also in Spain itself and in the territories conquered by the Spanish crown.

The haciendas contributed to a particular economic model in New Spain. The estates were meant to house the owners of the land (mainly Spanish or Creole and, in some cases, Mestizos), the managers, and the permanent workers (indigenous or African people). They possessed sheds and workshops and usually a chapel in which priests would perform private masses for

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[86] "Teatro Juárez", México Destinos, digital photograph, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.mexicodestinos.com/lugares/teatro-juarez
[87] "Teatro Juárez, un lugar histórico", Gto. viaja, digital photograph, accesed April 24, 2023, https://www.gtoviaja.com/teatro-juarez-un-lugar-historico/
[88] "Ciudad histórica de Guanajuato y minas adyacentes", Dirección de Patrimonio Mundial, accessed April 22, 2023, https://patrimoniomundialmexico.inah.gob.mx/publico/lista_detalle.php?idLista=MTA=

CEU eTD Collection

the owners. Even though employees of the haciendas were technically free workers, it was common for the owners to keep them working for indeterminate times through a system of debts that the workers acquired as advances on their wages.[89]

Figure 16: Mina de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Cata, turned into a golf course. (Source: Unión Guanajuato)[90]

After the decline of mining activity in the region, the use and purpose of the mines changed for most, but not for all of them. La Valenciana, for instance, is still exploited for minerals, although a site museum has been developed on the premises of the estate. The exhibition includes pictures of the mine across time, machinery, equipment and tools used in the mine, art

[89] Ida Altman, Sarah Cline, and Juan Javier Pescador, *The Early History of Greater Mexico,* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2003).
[90] "¿Qué hacer en Guanajuato? 20 lugares increíbles y poco conocidos para visitar", Unión Guanajuato, digital photograph, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.unionguanajuato.mx/2021/09/13/que-hacer-en-guanajuato-20-lugares-increibles-y-poco-conocidos-para-visitar/

pieces depicting La Valenciana produced by artists from Guanajuato, and a brief history of the mine and the mining industry in the region.[91]

Similarly, Mina de Rayas and Bocamina de San Ramón also built a museum in the ex-haciendas with a similar approach to that of La Valenciana.[92] In the case of Bocamina de San Ramón, they also turned the estate into an event venue, focused particularly on weddings.[93] In contrast, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Cata has been transformed into a golf course. Lastly, El Nopal mine is now owned and managed by the University of Guanajuato since 1975. In it, students and faculty get to practice their topography and geology, as well as conduct research. El Nopal is also open for visits to the general public.[94] In the city center, smaller former haciendas are now transformed into galleries and boutique hotels.

2.3 Intangible heritage: traditions, festivals and legends

2.3.1 Callejoneadas

The *callejoneadas* are one of Guanajuato's most popular traditions. They consist of a night tour around the most important alleys (callejones) of the city center, accompanied by the University's *estudiantina* or student band. The route begins at the steps of Teatro Juarez and traditionally ends in the famous *Callejón del beso* (kiss alley). During the tour, the *estudiantina* interprets various songs from Mexico and Spain, especially romantic ballads. Simultaneously, the guides share stories and legends about the alleys, fostering an ambiance of romance and mystique. Traditionally, women who partake in the callejoneadas are given a rose, while men receive a beverage to drink along the tour.

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[91] "Nuestras Colecciones", Museo Valenciana 1791, accessed April 24, 2023, https://valenciana1791.webnode.es/
[92] "Minas abiertas al público en Guanajuato", Guanajuato VIP, accessed April 24, 2023, https://guanajuato.vip/descubre/minas-en-guanajuato#mina-de-san-juan-de-rayas
[93] "Nuestra historia", Museo Bocamina San Ramón, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.museobocaminasanramon.com/nuestra-historia
[94] "Espacios emblemáticos y museos", Universidad de Guanajuato.

Estudiantinas, or this kind of student band, are of Spanish origin. The estudiantina of the University of Guanajuato can be traced to the 1880s, although it was formalized in 1963 with its official debut. This is also considered the origin of the callejoneadas in Guanajuato. Nowadays, however, the estudiantina of the university district of Guanajuato is composed of members of different universities. For the performance, the students wear attires inspired by medieval European clothing, and the main instruments they play include guitar, bandurria, tambourine and double bass, sometimes accompanied by other instruments.[95]

Figure 17: Members of an estudiantina leading a callejoneada through the streets of Guanajuato. (Source: Food and Travel).[96]

2.3.2 Festival Internacional Cervantino (FIC)

The Festival Internacional Cervantino (FIC) is considered to be the most important cultural and artistic event in Mexico and Latin America. The festival involves different kinds of artistic expressions, such as opera, theater, dance, plastic arts, literature and audiovisual media. Its

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[95] "Inicio", Callejoneadas en Guanajuato, accessed April 27, 2023, https://callejoneadasenguanajuato.com/
[96] "Qué son las callejoneadas en Guanajuato y cómo vivirlas", Food and Travel, accessed April 27, 2023, https://foodandtravel.mx/que-son-las-callejoneadas-en-guanajuato-y-como-vivirlas/

origins date to 1953, when *entremeses* —short theatrical performances— became popular in different squares and other public spaces. The performances were originally organized by Professor Enrique Ruelas, as a tribute to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, one of Spain's most renowned writers and novelists. Towards the 1970's, other types of performances began to take place along with the *entremeses*, finally becoming the FIC in 1972.[97]

One of the most attractive aspects of the festival is the way that it is closely entwined with the local community, since the events take place in numerous venues across Guanajuato as well as in public spaces. In 2022, 50% of the events in the program were accessible for free. Furthermore, the Festival offers special programs for particular audiences, such as children or music students. Moreover, the FIC involves culture-oriented social causes, including theater workshops for vulnerable communities, with the goal of regenerating the social fabric. The FIC is executed with the support of the Federal Government through the Ministry of Culture, the governments of the state of Guanajuato and the municipality of Guanajuato City, and the University of Guanajuato.[98]

2.3.3 Legends and mystique

In addition to its historical, architectural and artistic value, Guanajuato's infrastructure contributes to a peculiar aspect of the city's intangible heritage. The city is known within Mexico for its mystique, for the folk tales and mysteries that revolve around it. One of the most popular folk tales in Guanajuato is the story of *La Llorona* (the Weeping Woman), a woman who drowned her children and whose spirit now wanders at night in the tunnels, looking for children to replace her own. Even though the story is famous across Mexico, and even in other

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[97] "Sobre el FIC", Festival Internacional Cervantino, accessed April 27, 2023, https://46.festivalcervantino.gob.mx/sobre-fic/
[98] "Acerca de", Festival Internacional Cervantino, accessed April 27, 2023, https://festivalcervantino.gob.mx/acerca-de-fic50/

Spanish-speaking countries, it holds a significant place amongst the legends of Guanajuato city.

On a more macabre note, mummies are another, more real character of Guanajuato's legends. Around the mid-19th century, bodies of people who had not paid the tax for permanent burial were exhumed in the cemetery of Santa Paula. Due to climate and air conditions in the tombs, as well as certain embalming practices, several bodies had become mummified. The mummies, left out in the open in the cemetery, began to attract curious visitors, and eventually became a tourist attraction in the city around the turn of the twentieth century. The mummies were then placed in the catacombs of the cemetery, but eventually, a formal Mummy Museum (Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato) was established in 1988, which is still open today. The mummies are recurring characters in the legends of the city.[99]

Chapter conclusion

This chapter presents selected cultural attributes of Guanajuato, focusing on those most relevant for tourism activities in the city. Evidently, Guanajuato possesses a rich blend of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Its heritage values range from historical to aesthetic, including archaeological, religious, architectural and community entities. Furthermore, it is clear that all of the cultural elements of the city are closely connected to one another, providing a diverse, complex and unique landscape for locals and visitors alike. The components presented in this chapter will be addressed again in Chapter 3, analyzing them within the context of tourism and the inherent challenges that it poses.

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[99] Ciro Caraballo Perichi, "El museo de las momias de Guanajuato: ¿Momias o cadáveres? La explotación comercial del morbo tanático", *Apuntes: Revista de estudios sobre patrimonio cultural* 18, no.1-2, (2005), accessed April 26, 2023, https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/revApuntesArq/article/view/9056

Chapter 3: Tourism in Guanajuato

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of tourist activity in Guanajuato City. The first section covers the priorities encompassed in the State Tourism Program 2021-2024 and selected by the Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato in relation to sustainable tourism, cultural offer, and data collection. The second section focuses on tourism trends in the city, including the most popular locations and sites amongst visitors and a description of the "average" visitor as well. The third part of the chapter briefly addresses the main tourism-related challenges identified by authorities in the state and city of Guanajuato.

The Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato (OTEG by its Spanish acronym) is the main entity when it comes to tourism-related activities. The Observatory's mission is to

> be a multidisciplinary organization, focused on the identification, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the results of the tourism activity, through indicators that allow improving the competitiveness of the sector, with a focus on sustainability and social inclusion to help decision-making.[100]

Guanajuato's was the first Mexican Observatory to be included in the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The INSTO monitors the economic, environmental, and social impact of tourism at the destination level. To that end, there are 11 mandatory issue areas that INSTO Observatories are required to monitor: tourism seasonality, employment, destination economic benefits, energy management, water management, waste water (sewage) management, solid waste management, climate action, accessibility, local satisfaction, and governance.[101] These areas are undeniably relevant for fostering more sustainable practices. Nonetheless, heritage

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[100] "¿Qué es el Observatorio Turístico del Estado de Guanajuato?", Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato (OTEG), accessed May 4th, 2023 http://www.observatorioturistico.org/oteg
[101] "Tools and resources", World Tourism Observatory (UNWTO), accessed May 5, 2023, https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/unwto-international-network-of-sustainable-tourism-observatories/tools-resources

and history-related elements are missing from the picture. Heritage is briefly mentioned within INSTO's Local Satisfaction area, but only tangentially:

> The wellbeing of host communities is highly relevant when measuring the impact of tourism on destination level. Communities can be impacted both positively from tourism through jobs, economic activity and improved social services and negatively due to overtourism, stress or damage on local resources and cultural values.[102]

Nevertheless, the introduction of heritage as one of the mandatory issue areas could pose a challenge in terms of impact measurement. Due to the abstract nature of heritage itself, it could be difficult to come to establish instruments to evaluate and measure the impact of tourism on heritage. However, with the cooperation of other organisms of the United Nations, such as UNESCO, guidelines could be drafted within INSTO to connect heritage protection and tourism in a practical approach. The evaluation of the impact on heritage is fundamental in highly touristic destinations, especially those that are already tasked with heritage protection due to being listed as a UNESCO Heritage City, as is the case of Guanajuato.

Based on the INSTO's guidelines, the OTEG in Guanajuato has developed its own practices and indicators to measure the impact of tourism, determine its areas of improvement and create solutions and strategies to tackle different issues. Consequently, the OTEG is composed of different members from both public and private initiatives, as well as academic institutions and a Tourist Advisory Council that contribute to the aforementioned goals.

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[102] "Local satisfaction" World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), accessed May 28, 2023, https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/unwto-international-network-of-sustainable-tourism-observatories/tools-local-satisfaction
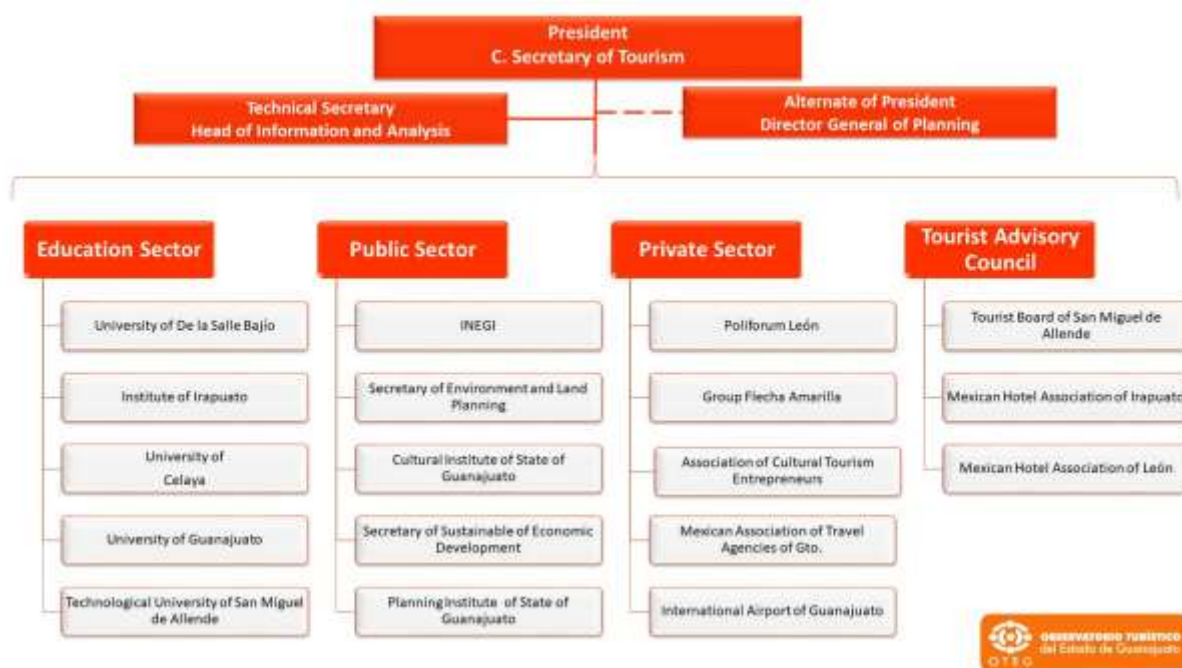
*Figure 18: Organizational chart of the members of the Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato.
(Source: OTEG)[103]*

3.1 Tourism priorities within the State Tourism Program 2021-2024

Since 2021, the Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato has implemented a number of
changes to strengthen the Tourism Observatory (OTEG), primarily in accordance with the
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and its Network of Sustainable Tourism
Observatories (INSTO). The main agency leading this transformation within the OTEG is the
Directorate of Tourism Intelligence. These multi-level goals, guidelines and efforts come
together in the State Tourism Program 2021-2024. The three pillars for strategic planning
within the State Tourism program are listed as follows:[104]

1. Development of tourism innovation and intelligence

    a. To develop innovation projects for the tourism sector in the State

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[103] "Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (OTEG)", World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)/OTEG, accessed
May 8, 2023, http://insto.unwto.org/observatories/guanajuato-mexico/

[104] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *State Tourism Program 2021-2024*, (Guanajuato:
Official Gazette, 2021): 82-86 accessed April 20, 2023, https://sectur.guanajuato.gob.mx/e-normateca/

      b.   To develop tourism intelligence for the sector in the State

2.   Sustainable development of tourism destinations

      a.   To strengthen the value chain of the tourism sector

      b.   To strengthen the tourist vocations of the destinations

3.   State tourism promotion and diffusion

      a.   To strengthen the promotion and diffusion of the tourism brand positioning of Guanajuato in national and international markets

      b.   To promote the commercialization of tourism services and products

      c.   Consolidate the organization of international festivals and special events that encourage tourism in the state.

The second strategic line, *Sustainable development of tourism destinations*, is particularly relevant to this thesis since it relates to sustainable tourism. In order to measure the two objectives listed under it, the Tourism State Program encompasses specific indicators with a corresponding set of strategies to support them. For purposes of clarity, the complete breakdown of these indicators and strategies is included below.
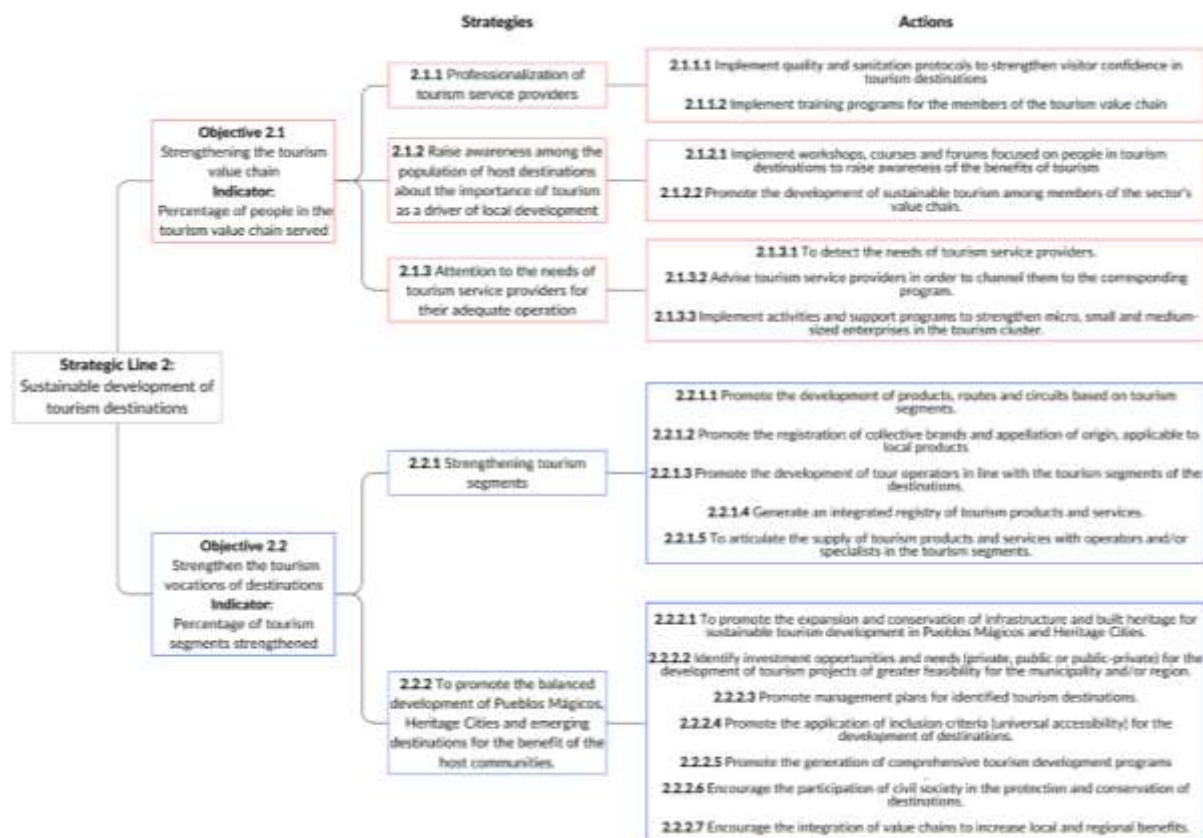
Figure 19: Breakdown of Strategic Line 2 of Guanajuato's State Tourism Program 2021-2024. Visual made by author.[105]

Nevertheless, three main issues can be identified within the strategic line of "Sustainable development for tourism destinations". First, it is evident from the terminology used throughout this section of the program (professionalization, service providers, collective brand, and value chain, among others) that the strategies and actions intended to achieve the objectives of this strategic line are predominantly marketing- and business-oriented. While a sustainable economy is one of the pillars of sustainable tourism, it is impossible to ignore the still limited number of goals and strategies related to social sustainability. As for environmental sustainability, there is no mention of such a subject throughout the whole section. Moreover, the economic approach leading this strategic line is focused on growth as well as expansion of

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[105] Visual made by author with information from SECTUR, *State Tourism Program 2021-2024*, 83-85, translated from Spanish.

tourism products and offers. Nonetheless, there are no actions approaching specific economic benefits for the residents, such as the distribution of wealth or socioeconomic mobility.

Second, there is only one strategy related to the well-being of locals, strategy 2.2.2 *Promoting the balanced development of Pueblos Mágicos, heritage cities, and emerging destinations for the benefit of the host communities.* However, this strategy again prioritizes the development of touristic infrastructure, management plans for the destinations, and fostering the integration of value chains. It only has two points that could be interpreted as beneficial for residents which are not necessarily economy-related: fostering the implementation of universal accessibility principles in the destinations and encouraging the participation of civil society in the protection and conservation of the destinations. Again, even in this seemingly community-focused point, there is a straightforward economic priority and not enough elements to provide a socially sustainable approach to tourism.

Third, the language throughout this section of the Tourism Program is ambiguous. There are no explanations as to what "development" means, or what is understood by "increasing local and regional benefits", for example. Given the contents of the strategic line, its objectives, and actions, the reader would assume that both development and benefits mean economic growth, but there is no actual clarification. The challenge with this type of issue is that the lack of clarity can become an obstacle in the implementation or execution of actions. Eventually, even indicators would be difficult to measure for success given how broadly they are phrased.

To gather more detailed information about the tourism strategy of Guanajuato and the State Tourism Program, I interviewed Mr. Juan José Álvarez Brunel, Secretary of Tourism of the State of Guanajuato, and Ms. Miriam Adame Alcaraz, Director of Tourism Intelligence. In the interview, the Secretary and the Director indicated that there is a main idea behind the Tourism Program, which is the concept of segmentation. In the scope of tourism, market segmentation

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is understood as "the process of classifying a population of tourists into subgroups homogeneous in terms of geographic, demographic, socioeconomic, psychographic, or behavioral characteristics".[106]

Since 2021 the OTEG has refined the tourism segments to better tailor its outreach, promotion and marketing campaigns.[107] Consequently, there are 9 main tourism segments currently identified in the State of Guanajuato: sports, gastronomy, culture, wellness, distilled spirits, wine tourism, nature and adventure, MICE,[108] and romance.[109] Moreover, they have identified that adventure and nature tourism are also becoming increasingly popular.[110] In the case of Guanajuato City, the romance segment is prioritized to attract tourists interested in the city as, for example, a wedding destination.

At the same time, Secretary Álvarez Brunel emphasized that the goal is to promote a state-wide tourism strategy rather than standalone strategies for each touristic city. In this sense, the aim of the Secretariat is to foster a comprehensive tourism experience, combining romance with history and gastronomy across cities and towns. Both the Secretary and the Director agree that the ultimate goal is to increase the number of visitors and the percentage of overnight stays. The Secretary states that there is great interest in an inclusive economy and that the number of visitors to the State of Guanajuato has doubled since last year. Furthermore, he added that Guanajuato has numerous characteristics that attract investors and that they want to promote

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[106] Josef A. Mazanec and Sara Dolnicar, "Segmentation – Tourism", in *Encyclopedia of Tourism,* ed. Jafar Jafari and Honggen Xiao (London: Springer, 2022), accessed May 24, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01669-6_169-3

[107] Mr. Juan José Álvarez Brunel (Secretar of Tourism of the State of Guanajuato) and Ms. Miriam Adame Alcaraz (Director of Tourism Intelligence), interview with the author, May 4, 2023.

[108] MICE stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions.

[109] "Touristic Segments", Government of the State of Guanajuato, accessed April 24, 2023, https://guanajuato.mx/en/category/touristics-segments/

[110] Secretary Álvarez Brunel and Director Adame Alcaraz, interview with author.

the relationship with the private sector. He accentuates that the State of Guanajuato is the 6th largest economy in Mexico and that tourism represents almost 10% of its GDP.

With that in mind, visitor satisfaction plays a crucial role in tourism. Alongside the Directorate of Tourism Intelligence, the Secretariat has developed a more comprehensive set of indicators to measure visitor behavior and satisfaction. Within the OTEG, tourism activity is measured according to four indicators: destination management, inclusive economy, society and culture, and environment. Each of them has its own sub-set of indicators to evaluate performance through the number of visitors interested or participating in each.[111]

In addition to this, the OTEG is currently developing a strategy to measure local satisfaction regarding tourism as well, in accordance with the trend of the INSTO. To this end, the five universities involved in the OTEG's activities are leading the development of a methodology to measure local satisfaction.[112] Currently, however, the priority lies on visitor satisfaction because, as pointed out by the Secretary, tourism activity leads Guanajuato's economy and supports an important value chain in the State.

Regarding sustainability, the OTEG is prioritizing care for the environment within its approach to tourism. They are determined to implement sustainable measures in every area of the Tourism Secretariat's activities and strategies. Secretary Álvarez Brunel explained that, on the one hand, they have developed and signed an agreement for cooperation with the environmental authorities of the state of Guanajuato and the national Tourism Secretaries Association (ASETUR). On the other hand, they have created a Sustainable Tourism

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[111] "Tablero de control e indicadores", Tourism Observatory of the State of Guanajuato (OTEG), accessed May 10, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/indicadores/tablero_control
[112] Director Adame Alcaraz, interview with author.

distinction (Distintivo Guanajuato Turismo Sostenible) for service providers who follow good practices for sustainable tourism in events held within the State.

3.2 Overview of tourism trends in the city

The State of Guanajuato is a well-known tourism destination in Mexico. The attractiveness of this destination is primarily because of Guanajuato's mild weather around the year, its historical and architectural value, and intense tourism marketing strategies implemented by state and local authorities. As part of Guanajuato state's touristic overview, it is worth mentioning that 5 towns within the state hold the title of *Pueblo Mágico* ("Magical Town"), a national initiative aimed to re-value and foster tourism in places with significant symbolic, historical, traditional, and cultural attributes.[113] This program targets mainly Mexican visitors, promoting national tourism and intended to de-centralize touristic activities, motivating visitors to explore smaller towns across the country. In addition to the *Pueblos Mágicos,* two cities in Guanajuato are listed as UNESCO Heritage Sites: the state capital, Guanajuato City, and San Miguel de Allende.

In contrast with the local population, the state of Guanajuato received 18,722,517 visitors (both tourists and single-day travelers) in 2021.[114] That year, 48.6% of the visitors were local (from within the state), 49.7% national, and 1.7% international.[115] These percentages, however, differ from the ones from 2019 because of travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of a total of 27,033,396 visitors in 2019,[116] 66% were Mexican nationals, 26% were local, and 8%

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[113] "Pueblos Mágicos", Tourism Secretariat, accessed January 12, 2023, https://www.sectur.gob.mx/gobmx/pueblos-magicos/

[114] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *Indicadores de la actividad turística del Estado de Guanajuato,* (Guanajuato: SECTUR, 2021), accessed April 25, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/indicadores/reportes_mensuales

[115] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato, *Perfil del Visitante 2021: Estado de Guanajuato*, (Guanajuato: SECTUR, 2021), accessed April 25, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/ver_todos/6

[116] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato, *Perfil del Visitante 2019: Estado de Guanajuato,* (Guanajuato: SECTUR, 2019), accessed April 25, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/ver_todos/6

were international visitors.

The Historic Town of Guanajuato and Adjacent Mines were listed by UNESCO as a Heritage Site in 1988, increasing the touristic attractiveness of the place. In 2021, 44.5% of visitors to the city came from the state of Guanajuato, 53.5% were national visitors and 2% were international visitors. Furthermore, 54% of visitors that year were tourists and 44% were day-trippers. The majority of visitors went to Guanajuato City for leisure purposes, followed by cultural or religious reasons and then by adventure, nature, and sports activities.[117] In a pre-pandemic context (2019) 15% of visitors came from within the state, 74% were national visitors and 11% came from abroad.[118]

Beyond the number of visitors, it is worth looking at where they spend their time in Guanajuato City. When researching activities for visitors to do in Guanajuato City, different traveling websites and guides come up with lists of the 10 or 15 most popular locations in the city. A comparative analysis between four different sources (Trip Advisor, Lonely Planet, Culture Trip, and Chat GPT) show little to no variance in the sites proposed as "top things to see" (see Annex A). The majority of these sites were presented in the previous chapter of this thesis as some of the most relevant locations in terms of Guanajuato City's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

When the most popular sites are mapped, the significant majority (83% of them) are located in the city center. Only the Mummy Museum (Museo de las Momias) and San Cayetano's church (Templo de San Cayetano) are located outside the area. In the case of the Mummy Museum, the reason why it falls outside the perimeter of the city center is that it is located next to Santa

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[117] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato, *Perfil del Visitante 2021: Guanajuato Capital*, (Guanajuato: SECTUR 2021), accessed April 25, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/seccion/6
[118] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato, *Perfil del Visitante 2019: Guanajuato Capital,* (Guanajuato: SECTUR, 2019), accessed April 25, 2023, http://www.observatorioturistico.org/publicaciones/seccion/6

Paula's cemetery. Regarding the location of San Cayetano's church, also known as the church of La Valenciana (Iglesia de La Valenciana), it is the church of La Valenciana mine, located about 4.5 km away from the city center.
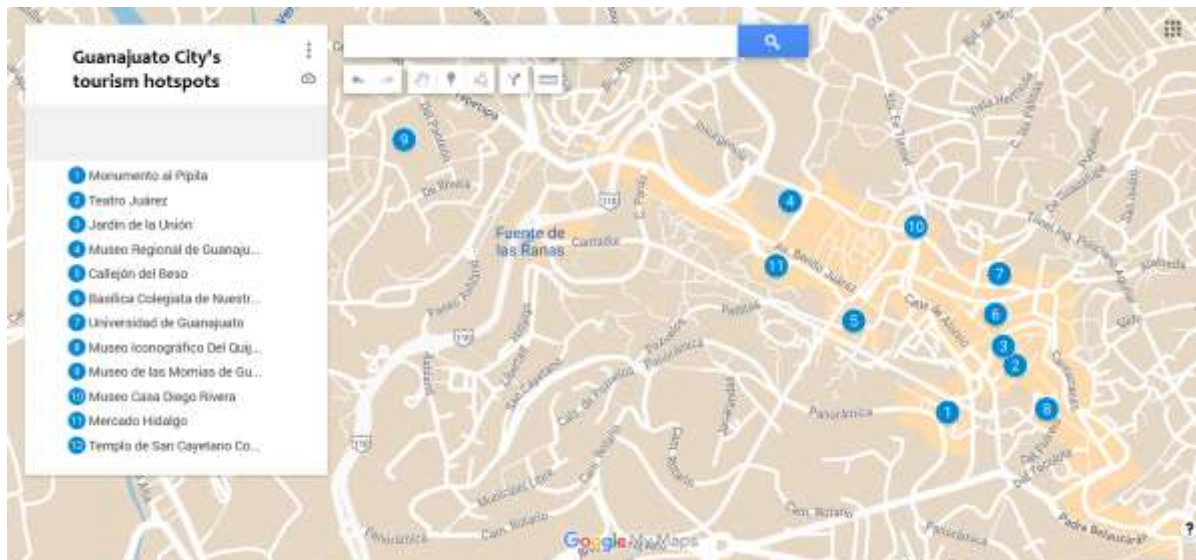

Figure 20: Location of main tourist attractions in Guanajuato City's central area. Highlighted in orange is the city center. Visual made by author.[119]

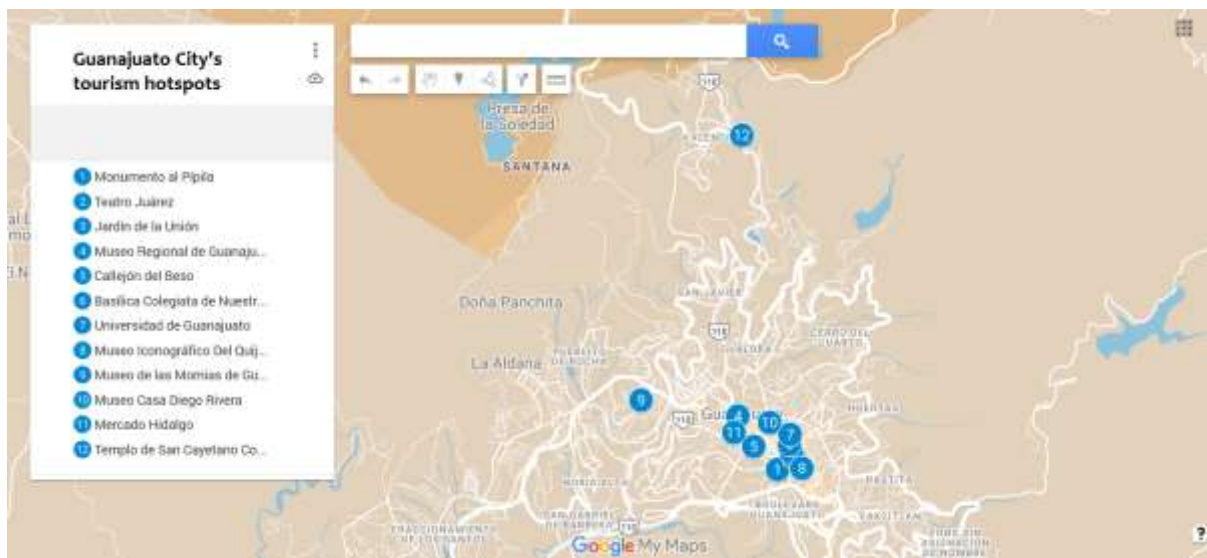*Figure 21: Location of main tourist attractions in Guanajuato City, zoomed out to show San Cayetano's church in La Valenciana Mine. Visual made by author.[120]*

[119] Visual by author, "Guanajuato City's tourism hotspots", Google My Maps, May 17, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1SDl6KYtiPekjH_E7iO79v1qpjsNtCG8&usp=sharing
[120] Visual by author, "Guanajuato City's tourism hotspots".

During his interview with me, Secretary Álvarez Brunel highlighted that there is a strong emphasis on Guanajuato City's role in Mexican history, especially during and after the independence movement in the 1800's within the tourism strategy. Additionally, he accentuates the mines as part of the city's heritage, with mining being the *raison d'être* for the very existence of Guanajuato since the time of the Viceroyalty. It is understandable, then, that the majority of the most popular tourist attractions in the city are related to Guanajuato's golden age of mining (i.e. the Theater and the Basilica) and to its role during the War of Independence (such as the Alhóndiga and the Pípila monument).

3.3 Challenges of tourism in Guanajuato

Given the already high level of tourism activity in Guanajuato City, both the government and academics have identified a number of challenges related to the sector. From a data-accuracy standpoint, the OTEG has diagnosed an insufficient amount of trustworthy data coming from the destinations as one of the main issues. [121] The Director of Tourism Intelligence of Guanajuato, Miriam Adame, specified in the same interview that they are transforming the methodology used for data-gathering and expanding their sources. The OTEG is diversifying the contact points with visitors, implementing methods that go beyond traditional surveys. Now, they conduct face-to-face polls and panels across a variety of locations at different times of the year, aiming to strengthen the Observatory's data collection.

Similarly, Secretary Álvarez Brunel mentioned the challenge of informal business activity in Guanajuato. The Tourism Secretariat has developed a State Tourism Registry, which serves a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, service providers must register so that the authorities keep track of the tourism offerings in the state. On the other hand, the registry generates customer satisfaction surveys for each service provider, contributing to identifying areas needing

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[121] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *State Tourism Program 2021-2024.*

improvement. So far, it is estimated that 40% of service providers are registered, reflecting the issue of quantifying the activities of informal businesses.

After analyzing the data collected amongst visitors, the Secretariat included its suggestions within the Tourism Program. The main aspect to be addressed in UNESCO Heritage Cities such as Guanajuato is the limited number of parking spaces and the service of guide tours.[122] Additionally, another one of the challenges within the state is the creation of tourism products and attractions. In the Tourism Program, it is stated that "there is an existing tourism offer, but the destinations have a notorious lack of marketable experiences."[123] Nevertheless, similarly to the case *Sustainable Tourism strategic line* presented earlier in this chapter, there is no explanation as to what this actually means.

In 2021, Guanajuato City achieved an average satisfaction index of 9.1/10, with 92% of visitors polled willing to promote Guanajuato as a travel destination.[124] In spite of the high score, the underperforming elements of satisfaction reflect those identified in the Tourism Plan; a low number of tourist attractions, insufficient parking places, garbage and high prices are some of the points highlighted by visitors that should be addressed. Furthermore, the issues of parking and garbage collection were also identified as "disappointing" in the visitor satisfaction analysis.[125]

Not surprisingly, the locals share some of the observations made by visitors. Due to the infrastructure of Guanajuato City and its narrow streets, traffic and an overdemand for parking spots are the most common complaints reported by residents.[126] This problem is followed by

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[122] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *State Tourism Program 2021-2024,* 76.
[123] *State Tourism Program 2021-2024,* 77.
[124] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato, *Perfil del Visitante 2021: Guanajuato Capital.*
[125] *Perfil del Visitante 2021: Guanajuato Capital.*
[126] María Inés Ortíz Álvarez et al., "Guanajuato, 'Ciudad Patrimonio de la Humanidad'. ¿Oportunidad o desafío para el turismo sostenible?", *ARBOR Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* (September 2017), accessed May 15, 2023, https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2017.785n3008

excessive production and mismanagement of garbage, along with the misbehavior of young tourists, usually under the influence of alcohol.[127] Lastly, due to increasing numbers of visitors in touristic peak months and festival season, some areas of the city (particularly in the outskirts) suffer from water shortages, as this resource is reserved to satisfy the demand in the city center.

Chapter conclusion

The information presented throughout this chapter demonstrates that the State and City of Guanajuato have developed a clear tourism strategy, heavily reliant on visitor segments and a varied offer of tourism products. Furthermore, it is evident that the competent authorities have made advancements to comply with international standards for sustainable tourism practices. Nevertheless, a number of challenges still arise when it comes to social sustainability, specifically the quality of life of Guanajuato City's residents. The next and final chapter will provide an analysis of the challenges and opportunities in Guanajuato's tourism strategy and heritage values, as well as a set of recommendations to be taken into account for future planning.

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[127] Ortíz Álvarez et al., "Guanajuato, 'Ciudad Patrimonio de la Humanidad'".

Chapter 4: A pathway to sustainability

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical analysis, both in terms of tourism and heritage, based on the information presented in the previous chapters. The analytical section of the chapter is divided into three areas: Segmentation and inclusion, economy and opportunities, and the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). The second section of the chapter provides recommendations for the areas of potential improvement identified in the analysis. These recommendations are based on Heritage and Tourism studies, as well as on the case studies presented in the first chapter of the thesis.

4.1 Analysis

4.1.1 Segmentation and inclusion

Based on the interview carried out with the State Tourism Secretary and Director of Tourism Intelligence of Guanajuato, as well as the information obtained from the State Tourism Program and Guanajuato City's website, the relevance of market segmentation is undeniable. As explained in Chapter 3, this approach to segmentation divides tourists into homogeneous subgroups. It is evident that this approach has the goal of developing a tailored product or service based on each segment's specific interests and communicating with them in an attractive and effective way.

Nevertheless, the segmentation approach goes beyond the sub-categorization of tourists. Mexican history is constantly explained and understood in a linear perspective, in which historical periods have a defined start and finish, with their own heritage attributes, protagonists, and even relevant locations. In this regard, segmentation is understood in its

simplest meaning: a large group (history) divided into smaller groups (segments/periods).[128] In terms of heritage, the deep segmentation that leads the tourism strategy in Guanajuato has the potential to create artificial heritage silos based on a linear historical narrative. In tourism sites across Mexico, it is relatively easy to identify the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) developed by local, regional and national authorities. While conducting research for this thesis, I have identified five main historical segments embedded in the AHD in tourism and which, in my experience, mirror the segmented narrative embedded in public history books:

1. **Pre-Columbian heritage:** indigenous traditions, practices and identities are strictly tied to archaeological sites. Indigenous nations were born, peaked and eventually declined at different points before the Spanish conquest. The existence of indigenous peoples is then relegated to a secondary role in colonial and post-colonial landmarks, making space for the next historical period.

2. **Colonial heritage:** highlights the power of Spanish conquistadores and colonizers. The syncretism between the Spanish and the indigenous is prioritized in this narrative. The strong "*mestizo*" Mexican identity is heavily reliant on this period. Moreover, life and events in New Spain are often explained in accordance with events taking place far away in Spain. This period comes to life in baroque architecture, catholic churches, and places related to colonial wealth, such as mines.

3. **Independent Mexico:** the struggles of indigenous people and mestizos are brought to light by Creoles in the early nineteenth century. After a 10-year conflict for independence, Mexico was born as a united nation, stepping out of the oppression of the Spanish crown. The period of independence is embodied in places similar to those

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[128] "Segment", Cambridge Dictionary, accessed May 25, 2023, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/segment

of the previous period, but with a more political approach such as public squares and government buildings.

4. **Revolutionary Mexico:** this period encompasses the drastic economic growth and infrastructure development that the country saw in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Simultaneously, history tends to focus on the increasing inequality among citizens and the undermining of political institutions. It is portrayed as a pivotal period for democracy in Mexico. Several buildings erected in the years prior to the Revolution are now landmarks of this time.

5. **Modern/contemporary Mexico:** the last and current stage in the country's historical narrative mostly covers the social changes that took place in the country from the twentieth century until the present. This period can be understood when looking at the many different architectural styles that appear over the country (especially in Mexico City), all with an international influence.

As explained in previous chapters, the city of Guanajuato has a cultural and tourism brand heavily focused on the colonial and post-colonial stages. Currently, efforts to diversify the supply of tourism products and to portray a more cosmopolitan and global cultural offer is also leading the city towards presenting itself as a product of the last period of modern Mexico. Nevertheless, one negative result of this kind of historical segmentation minimizes the role of certain groups which are not regarded as authentic protagonists during these separate periods.

During the Viceroyalty, indigenous people in the area around Guanajuato would work in the mines, and it was their hard labor that kept them going and thriving. However, the indigenous role in the narratives of haciendas remains only tangential. Most of the hacienda enterprises are focused on the business vision of the owners or the mining activity as an economic force in the region and abroad. Many of them do have site museums providing the visitors with insights

into the mining scene of the region, the history of the family who owned the property, or showcasing machinery and delving into the technical aspects of mining. However, in the majority of these places, there is barely any mention regarding the exploitation of indigenous and African workers, if any at all. This darker history is forgotten and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

In contrast, archaeological sites in other parts of Guanajuato State and Mexico as a whole praise the indigenous communities that once lived there. The state of Guanajuato has 5 archaeological zones open to the public, and it is the only state in the country in charge of managing and tending to the archeological sites within its territory.[129] Nowadays, there are 96 indigenous communities in the state, more than 67,000 people identify as indigenous,[130] and approximately 109,000 people identify as afro-Mexican or afro-descendant.[131] According to Secretary Álvarez Brunel, "Guanajuato is one of the states (in Mexico) that continues to preserve the identity of its ethnic groups in a very important way".[132]

However indigenous history generally seems to stop being relevant in the public space after the Conquest. Excluding indigenous peoples from the development of these places' narratives perpetuates power dynamics established under colonial rule. The experiences of indigenous employees in the mines are a forgotten heritage that is as valuable as the mining industry itself, but their role remains limited to the cultural histories from pre-colonial archaeological sites. Consequently, there is a need to foster an inclusive approach to tourism, understanding

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[129] Mr. Juan José Álvarez Brunel, (Secretary of Tourism of the State of Guanajuato), interview with the author, May 4, 2023.

[130] "Indígenas Guanajuatenses", Secretaría de Desarrollo Social y Humano de Guanajuato, accessed May 28, 2023, https://desarrollosocial.guanajuato.gob.mx/indigenas/

[131] "Diversidad: Guanajuato", Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), accessed May 28, 2023, https://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/gto/poblacion/diversidad.aspx?tema=me&e=11

[132] Secretary Álvarez Brunel, interview with author.

inclusion as the efforts and practices to ensure groups or individuals with different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted, treated equally,[133] and whose voice is taken into account.

As explained in the findings from studies of tourism preferences, it is clear that visitors are looking for authentic experiences that can make them feel connected to the locals.[134] The aspect of Guanajuato's indigenous heritage in a post-conquest context is neglected within the city's cultural landscape, even though it represents an area of opportunity to involve indigenous people and for visitors to get acquainted with their perspective of the mining industry. Nonetheless, from the tourism economy standpoint, this approach may often represent a conflict of interest, as will be explained in the following section.

4.1.2 Economy and opportunities

Given that laborers in the mines often worked and lived under difficult conditions, a portrayal of such scenarios might prove harmful to business. As explained before, several mines and haciendas in Guanajuato were transformed into wedding or event venues, and one of them was turned into a golf course. The tourism authorities are transparent and straightforward about their efforts to push the 'Romance' sector in Guanajuato City, in which mines play an important role. On the Tourism Secretariat's website, the Romance Tourism segment offers a list of wedding venues in the city, most of which comprise former haciendas and mines. [135] Consequently, these locations are marketed as beautiful, peaceful and romantic places to carry out weddings for local, national and international markets. These narratives could collide with

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[133] "What is inclusion?", Inclusion Action in Ontario, accessed May 25, 2023, https://inclusionactionontario.ca/what-is-inclusion/
[134] Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato (SECTUR), *State Tourism Program 2021-2024.*
[135] "Directorio de Romance 2023", Government of the State of Guanajuato, accessed May 9, 2023, https://guanajuato.mx/documentos/directorio-romance-2023.pdf

the introduction of indigenous voices in mines and haciendas, which may be potentially harmful to the business of romance.

For Guanajuato City, tourism represents an important source of revenue and employment. However, the economic spillover is an insufficient instrument to effectively assess the impact of tourism. The Tourism Observatory works on the development of new tools and indicators for this research purpose, but they are still heavily reliant primarily on visitor input. Secretary Álvarez Brunel explained the reason behind Guanajuato's tourism indicators:

> Although we have talked about the satisfaction of the local, the visitor comes first, since he is the one that gives us the raison d'être of tourism, the one that spills over the economy and allows us to maintain a very important value chain.[136]

However, worldwide trends show that local satisfaction is key to developing a sustainable and beneficial tourism strategy.[137] The current approach to tourism in Guanajuato prioritizes visitors' expectations, experience and satisfaction because of the economic benefits of tourism activities. This point is similar to an observation made in the previous chapter regarding the strategic lines for sustainable tourism, in which the economic benefits take precedence over the social and environmental aspects of sustainability.

Similarly, the current tourism strategy of Guanajuato revolves around increasing the volume of visitors, even though an increase in tourists does not necessarily reflect an improvement in the residents' personal or family finances. If multiple hotels and restaurants are opened, but their staff is paid minimum wages, then the economic spill-over ceases to be an indicator of welfare, since profit offers little opportunity for local social mobility.[138] Furthermore,

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[136] Secretary Álvarez Brunel, interview with author.
[137] Alastair M. Morrison and J. Andreas Coca-Stefaniak, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Tourism Cities,* (London, New York: Routledge, 2021).
[138] Claudia Asch, "All the world's a stage: Creating Guanajuato, Mexico's tourism image", *Études caribéennes* 13 (December 2009), accessed January 28, 2023, https://doi.org/10.4000/etudescaribeennes.3882

dissatisfaction among residents can become evident for visitors as well, impacting their image of the city. In the end, cities should be livable, and not just pleasant places to visit for a few days.

In this regard, one last significant factor to analyze is land use. One of the main transformations that came with tourism in Guanajuato City's city center is the modification of land use, from residential to service, commercial and luxury lodging. Heritage properties dedicated to luxury lodging in the city have a mixed-commercial use, and around these areas, there are further modifications to the use of land. Certain streets in Guanajuato, where hotels have been built, now host fast food joints and chains, convenience stores, bars, boutiques, and souvenir stores. All of these businesses have replaced the local butcheries, bookstores, shoe stores, hardware stores and other enterprises that had traditionally operated there for years.[139]

In the first chapter of this thesis, I defined overtourism as a context in which tourism trends and practices overpower the destination's capacities, endangering the cultural and natural landscape and lowering the citizens' quality of life while prioritizing economic growth and visitors' expectations. In the case of Guanajuato, some of the elements of overtourism are already occurring in the city. Namely, economic growth is already taking precedence over certain aspects of the residents' quality of life, such as traffic, poor management of garbage, increasing costs of living, and access to water. Nonetheless, these challenges are still manageable and there are possibilities for improvement with further consideration from the government. While Guanajuato City cannot now be categorized as a case of overtourism, it does have the potential to develop, exacerbating the aforementioned issues.

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[139] David Navarrete Escobedo, "Turismo gentrificador en ciudades patrimoniales. Exclusión y transformaciones urbano-arquitectónicas del patrimonio en Guanajuato, México", *Revista INVI* 32, no. 89, (May 2017), accessed February 21, 2023, https://revistainvi.uchile.cl/index.php/INVI/article/view/62731/66650

4.1.3 Historic Urban Landscape

Guanajuato City's cultural wealth must be understood beyond the built heritage in the city center. It should be considered a Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) that radiates from the city center outwards, reaching beyond the outskirts of the city and including its adjacent mines, similar to its conceptualization under UNESCO's World Heritage List. A HUL is defined as "the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic centre' or 'ensemble' to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting".[140] Guanajuato should also be understood under this rubric. The mountains that surround the city, the river that shaped the foundations of Guanajuato's layout and the mines that fostered industry should be understood as being just as significant as the Basilica, the university or any of the characteristic baroque buildings in the city.

The potential for tourism in historic urban landscapes such as Guanajuato is undeniable, as is the economic growth that often comes with it. Nevertheless, these economic initiatives should still have the city's residents as their main beneficiaries.[141] Furthermore, in order to achieve sustainable tourism strategies, the local communities must be involved in the decision-making process from the early stages.[142] These decisions could include consultations concerning changes in the uses of the land that could foster touristification of certain areas of the city,

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[140] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions", in *Records of the General Conference, 36th session, Paris, 25 October - 10 November 2011, v. 1: Resolutions*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2012): 52, accessed May 15th, 2023, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215084.page=55

[141] UNESCO, "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions".

[142] Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (NECSTouR), *Barcelona Declaration of Tourism and Cultural Heritage: Better Places to live, better places to visit* (Barcelona: NECSTouR, 2018), accessed May 9, 2023, https://mcusercontent.com/dec6071747257d07792f828d7/files/35fffeab-d51b-4527-9abe-df2a2cdad454/BCN_DECLARATION_TOURISM_AND_CULTURAL_HERITAGE_FINAL.01.pdf

historical narratives presented in difficult settings with darker heritage such as mines and haciendas, or management of foreign traffic within the city.

Within the scope of the Historic Urban Landscape, it is also important to consider the environmental impact of tourism. In Guanajuato, as in many other touristic cities, pollution and garbage production drastically increase when the number of visitors rises.[143] However, highly touristic areas tend to receive more attention as regards things like garbage disposal in order to present a pleasant image to visitors, even if other areas of the city are not equally tended to. Not only is waste and traffic pollution an issue in touristic areas, but in many cases, there is tremendous overexploitation of natural resources as well. As previously stated, access to water in the peripheries of Guanajuato City is a challenge, since this resource tends to be funneled away from these areas to satisfy the demand of tourism-intense zones.

From a different point of view, environmental sustainability plays an ambiguous role in the city's tourism strategy. On the one hand, the Tourism Secretariat of the State of Guanajuato is pushing for climate-related initiatives. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Secretariat led an initiative for environmental authorities of the state and the network of Tourism Secretaries (ASETUR) in favor of environmental action. Additionally, they created the Sustainable Guanajuato distinction for service providers who follow good practices for sustainable tourism. On the other hand, there is no mention of environmental sustainability in the strategic lines for sustainable tourism in the State Tourism Program. It is unclear to what extent environmental sustainability is actually being considered within the official vision for sustainable tourism in Guanajuato.

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[143] Tazim Jamal and Seunhgoon Lee, "Ethical Issues in Tourism" in *The SAGE Handbook of Marketing Ethics,* ed. Lynne Eagle et al., (London: SAGE, 2021).

Figure 22: Poster in Guanajuato City mocking official sign saying not to litter, since it is a touristic area. (Source: Sánchez Duro).[144]

4.2   Recommendations

4.2.1 Shift to value over volume

Currently, the success or impact of tourism in Guanajuato is measured in terms of bed occupancy, and the current tourism strategies aim to increase the volume of visitors to the city and to the state.[145] Nevertheless, the economic spill-over that comes with an increasing number of visitors does not necessarily pose opportunities for economic mobility for residents when the citizenry employed in the tourism sector often works low-paying jobs in hotels, restaurants and storefronts.[146] Moreover, the current inflow of visitors is already leading to practical challenges with the City's infrastructure, such as traffic and insufficient parking places.

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[144] Upper sign reads "Do not dispose of garbage here, this is a touristic area. Avoid being fined. Sincerely, City Hall". Poster below reads "In other places DO litter, where you do not consider them to be touristic". Oihane Sánchez Duro, "Más allá de la mercancía: formatos al margen de la cultura oficial", *SOBRE*, no.5 (June 2019): 26, figure 5, accessed May 10, 2023, https://doi.org/10.30827/sobre.v5i0.8533
[145] Secretary Álvarez Brunel, interview with author.
[146] Claudia Asch, "All the world's a stage: Creating Guanajuato, México's Tourism Image".

Moreover, there are currently no instruments to evaluate residents' satisfaction or guarantee social participation in the development of tourism policies.

On the one hand, it is important to develop qualitative data points to evaluate the impact and success of tourism, including residents' perception of tourism, meaningful interaction between locals and visitors, environmental protection in touristic areas, distribution of economic benefits, and participation of marginalized communities.[147] On the other hand, there is a need to promote the development of cultural and tourism experiences that take place at a slow pace, in which visitors have and take the time to interact with locals, their traditions and their version of the city's history. A city with such a rich historic and cultural background provides an important opportunity to target an audience interested in understanding and appreciating the significance of Guanajuato's many historical and social identities.[148]

4.2.2   Further involve universities as bridges for decision-making

Five universities state-wide area are already involved in the development and activities of Guanajuato's Tourism Observatory, including the University of Guanajuato. In partnership with the university, municipal authorities of Guanajuato City can develop mechanisms to engage experts, students, residents and marginalized communities in the decision-making process. Focus groups, panels and knowledge exchange workshops can take place during both formal and informal events to increase citizen participation. The University of Guanajuato, as a place for education, already has the infrastructure and expertise required to foster spaces of dialogue. Moreover, within its faculty there are experts in different fields who could support the development of new approaches to tourism policymaking. The University is an institution

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[147] Dana Stefan, "How tourism can be part of the solution to climate change", Travel Tomorrow, May 8, 2023, accessed May 9, 2023, https://traveltomorrow.com/how-tourism-can-be-part-of-the-solution-to-climate-change/
[148] NECSTouR, *Barcelona Declaration of Tourism and Cultural Heritage: Better places to live, better places to visit.*

recognized by academics, the government, the public and even visitors. Therefore, it can act as a natural bridge in which the government, the private sector, and different segments of the population can converge.

With the information compiled in this research, and after the analysis previously presented, there are three main issues that could be addressed with the support of the University.

a) The development of a pilot program to manage traffic and parking in the city center. This effort should take place in cooperation with the corresponding urban planning and transportation authorities. An option to consider is to further decrease the available parking spots for non-local traffic in the city center, prioritizing mobility for the residents and potentially decreasing traffic. To compensate, low-cost parking lots could be built in the outskirts of the city, and the city hall could consider the implementation of a "visitor shuttle" that could transport visitors from the parking lots to one point in the city center.

b) With the support of the University, workshops could be organized in which indigenous communities and managers of site museums in the mines can have conversations about the way history is currently portrayed in the mines and haciendas. Considering the historical role of mines and haciendas in the touristic and economic landscape of Guanajuato, it is understandable that such an issue may prove to be a delicate matter. Nonetheless, we must not forget that indigenous heritage is as relevant in the mines as the minerals themselves.

c) The last point is closely related to the second. Considering the interest that visitors have in exploring authentic experiences, the University could help develop a support center for residents who have an idea for a tourism product based on their individual, family or community heritage or traditions. If the offer of tourism products is created by the

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residents themselves, it is likely that the visitors will eventually have access to a more diverse and unique set of experiences and opportunities for cultural exchange. Simultaneously, if it is the local community that leads in providing the cultural and tourism offer of the city, the heritage commodification that tends to take place in highly tourism| cities might be reduced.[149]

4.2.3   Use tourism as a tool for quality of life

In the case studies analyzed at the beginning of this thesis, it was evident how highly touristic heritage cities like San Miguel de Allende, Ouro Preto, and Bruges face numerous challenges. In the case of Bruges, the stress of overtourism led local authorities to radically transform their approach to tourism as a whole. Even though Guanajuato City is not in such a critical state yet, in order to avoid it and to foster social, economic, and environmentally sustainable tourism there must be a shift in the way tourism is perceived by both government authorities and the local population. While the case of San Miguel de Allende proved that touristification can take over a city and push its citizens to the peripheries, Ouro Preto and Bruges showed that these effects can be decreased and sometimes even reversed through a shift in decision-making.

The current approach towards tourism is based on what Guanajuato can do to attract more visitors. Nevertheless, the priority of the city should still be to guarantee its residents' quality of life. In this regard, like Bruges, it is worth asking "what can tourism do for Guanajuato?". This change involves a higher level of citizen participation, from beginning to end. Moreover, it requires that the concerns, discontent and suggestions of residents be taken into consideration as much and even more than visitor suggestions and comments. Furthermore, government authorities and academics have already identified a number of critical issues such as parking

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[149] Steve Watson, "Ethics and Heritage Tourism", in *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage,* ed. Trace Ireland and John Schofield (New York: Springer, 2015)

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and traffic, poor management of garbage, increasing costs of living, and access to water, especially in non-touristic areas. The next step would be to directly tackle these issues or at least incorporate solutions for them into the near-future tourism strategies.

Chapter conclusion

Evidently, there is no perfect solution for any problem. The tourism authorities in Guanajuato are already making important progress to establish a, economically sustainable policy in accordance with international guidelines and standards. Guanajuato can actually be considered one of the leading states for sustainable tourism in Mexico. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, especially in the social and environmental sustainability aspects. These recommendations have been restricted to the areas of tourism and cultural heritage from a local standpoint. The scope of this thesis does not permit the exploration of other critical but very sensitive areas such as security, transparency, or public budget. Overall, the purpose of these recommendations as I present them here is to show that a bottom-up tourism strategy has the potential for creating a more diverse, unique, and rich offer for visitors while improving the living standards of local residents.

Conclusion

Guanajuato City is a place of natural and cultural richness. Its establishment, development and infrastructure have always been based on an undeniable connection between people and nature. The city thrives on its history and its people, with eyes set on the future. Such beauty, tradition and charm are worth sharing with anyone who is fortunate enough to visit, but sustainable tourism principles should never result in the wellbeing of Guanajuato's residents and their needs being neglected. It is evident that the local and state authorities in Guanajuato are making important efforts to execute sustainable approaches to tourism, especially in the economic and environmental aspects. There is, however, still room for improvement from the perspective of social sustainability.

Culture and cultural offers are not lacking in Guanajuato. Nevertheless, spaces must be created in which Guanajuato's residents, especially those who have been left out of the main historical narratives, can share their version of the past, their heritage connections to the city and the traditions that they retain in their daily lives. Locals should be the ones choosing what they can offer to visitors, and the approached used should largely be done from the bottom-up while adhering to national tourism policies from both the central and state governments. When postcolonial contexts adopt multiple international practices and priorities to cater to the expectations of an international audience, there is a risk of commodifying culture and to actually lose what is perceived as authentic.

The historical silos and Authorized Heritage Discourse that dominate Guanajuato City leave out already marginalized sectors of the population, such as the case of indigenous communities and their often difficult connections to the mines. The profit that comes marketing the city and its mines as a Romance destination overshadow the dark heritage of hundreds of mine workers

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whose history has been relegated to a secondary role. Similarly, the pursuit of economic growth tends to outweigh important aspects of the daily life of Guanajuato's residents, whose experiences have not yet been considered when evaluating the impact of tourism.

Additionally, the government, as well as academics, are well aware of Guanajuato's residents' main concerns regarding excessive garbage accumulation in public spaces, increasing costs of living in touristic areas, pollution and traffic, and poor distribution of scarce water resources. Nevertheless, the main objective of the current tourism strategy continues to be to increase the number of visitors, which will unavoidably exacerbate the social, infrastructure and environmental issues previously mentioned. Therefore, it is imperative to rethink the goal of the strategy and to shift to a value over volume perspective.

The State Tourism Observatory, it should be said, is spearheading important initiatives to better understand tourism in the city, adjusting them more to international standards of sustainable development. The fact that this institution is composed of a variety of stakeholders, including universities, also leaves room for new voices to be added to the decision-making process in the tourism strategy for the city. There is therefore an infrastructure already in place for cooperation between different sectors within the government, but it is necessary to bring in marginalized voices to take part in the conversation within this framework as well.

At the beginning of this thesis, overtourism was defined as a context in which tourism trends and practices overpower the destination's capacities, endangering the cultural and natural landscape and lowering the citizens' quality of life while prioritizing economic growth and visitors' expectations. After this research, it is evident that certain aspects of Guanajuato City's capacities are being overpowered by tourism activity, such as poor garbage collection, traffic, parking, and water. Even though it cannot be categorically affirmed that the cultural and natural

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landscapes are endangered, there is a potential for the citizens' quality of life slowly begin to decrease due to the impact of tourism.

Consequently, it is my conclusion that Guanajuato City could be categorized as a context-specific case of overtourism in the future. Even though the conditions are not critical at the moment, they could become so if the needs of its residents are not addressed and are sacrificed for the sake of visitors and continuous economic growth measured purely in terms of immediate monetary profit. Nonetheless, due to the government's determination to develop more sustainable practices, I am confident that dialogue is possible, and that the residents' concerns potentially have a place in the development of future tourism strategies.

The purpose of this thesis was to study the current priorities lying behind today's tourism strategy in Guanajuato City and its connection to heritage. Moreover, my contribution to the development of sustainable tourism practices is a concise set of recommendations aimed at fostering citizen participation as outlined in my thesis. I am convinced that tourism and culture are indivisible in Guanajuato, and that together they pose an undeniable possibility for healthy economic growth and development. Nevertheless, the one thing that I intend to show with this work, is that for this sector to be socially sustainable, it needs both government policy, hand in glove with validated input from all social strata in the city, from the bottom up.

In the future, I believe that this research could be broadened to include other relevant topics, such as the role of migration and migration heritage in contemporary Guanajuato, or the serious challenge of security for tourism in the region. Moreover, since the government of Guanajuato City has already identified the growing interest in nature tourism, there is a large tourism terrain to explore in the creation of nature activities and more nature-culture linkages. Lastly, another direction for research ought to be different types of migration taking place in the city and to what extent they are shaping Guanajuato's heritage and tourism trends.

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Appendix A: Most popular tourist attractions in Guanajuato City

Lonely Planet[150]	1. Museo y casa Diego Rivera 2. Teatro Juárez 3. Templo La Valenciana (San Cayetano) 4. Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato 5. Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato
Trip Advisor[151]	1. Monumento al Pípila 2. Teatro Juárez 3. Jardín de la Unión 4. Alhóndiga de Granaditas 5. Callejón del beso 6. Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato 7. Universidad de Guanajuato 8. Museo Iconográfico del Quijote 9. Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato 10. Santuario de Cristo Rey
Culture Trip[152]	1. Monumento al Pípila 2. Museo y casa Diego Rivera 3. Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato 4. Mercado Hidalgo 5. Callejón del beso 6. Jardín de la Unión 7. Templo La Valenciana (San Cayetano)
Chat GPT	1. Alhóndiga de Granaditas 2. Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato 3. Callejón del beso 4. Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guanajuato 5. Teatro Juárez 6. Jardín de la Unión 7. Museo y casa Diego Rivera 8. Mercado Hidalgo 9. Monumento al Pípila 10. Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato

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