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OAXACA'S INDIGENOUS GUELAGUETZA FESTIVAL: NOT ALL THAT GLISTENS IS GOLD

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Guelaguetza is one of Mexico's premiere celebrations of indigenous dance and music. The festival occurs every July in Oaxaca City where it is a premier tourist attraction providing opportunities for socioeconomic growth and development. Yet the festival also creates negative impacts such as commodification and commercialization of the festival, which may lead to the bastardization of culture, including loss of indigenous authenticity and exploitation of local resources. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to critically analyze the positive and negative impacts of the 2007 Guelaguetza in order to determine the extent to which the festival focuses on becoming a tourist attraction at the expense of community celebration. A qualitative research design utilizing the case study approach was employed to analyze positive and negative impacts emerging from the real-world context of the 2007 Guelaguetza. The results of the study revealed that not all that glistens is gold at the festival. Behind the façade of this visually spectacular festival, the Guelaguetza is at real risk of becoming a colorful, attractive, yet meaningless, commercialized tourist venture if tourist and commercial needs are favored at the expense of the people and their traditions. Consequently, now is the time to revisit and redefine the purpose of the Guelaguetza to ensure it remains a sociocultural and economically viable annual festival for everyone to enjoy, long into the future.

Key words: Indigenous; Festivals; Impacts; Tourism

Introduction

Guelaguetza is an effervescent, lively festival of music, song, and dance that occurs every July in Oaxaca City, Mexico. The festival originated from the traditions of indigenous Mexicans living in the central valleys of the State of Oaxaca, Mexico. Historically, Guelaguetza was a popular community fiesta based on giving and receiving gifts and communal cooperation (Bellinghausen, 2007). Contemporary Guelaguetza is still based on these original indigenous traditions but,

over time, it has increasingly developed significant economic, sociocultural, and political impacts. Moreover, Guelaguetza has been accused of being utilized as a tourism attraction to further political and economic agendas rather than as a vehicle for the expression of traditional community celebrations.

While there is little argument that increased tourism via the Guelaguetza would provide the indigenous people of Oaxaca with numerous positive opportunities for socioeconomic growth and development (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Grunewald, 2002; M. K. Smith, 2003),

there is also a strong likelihood of negative impacts occurring such as commodification and commercialization of the festival, which may lead to the bastardization of culture, including loss of indigenous authenticity and exploitation of local resources (Boissevain, 1996; Crick, 1989; Hinch & Butler, 1996; Johnston, 2000; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; V. L. Smith, 2001; Sofield, 1993; Taylor, 2001). Consequently, there is an increasing concern that the Guelagueta is in imminent danger of distorting and/or losing the very essence of the festival. Thus, there has been increasing interest in developing ways of identifying and understanding the array of impacts associated with Guelagueta. The purpose of this case study then, was to identify and analyze the positive and negative impacts of the 2007 Guelagueta and determine the extent to which the festival focuses on becoming a tourist attraction at the expense of community celebration.

To achieve this, the article provides a theoretical overview of festivals to inform the study. Then, to comprehend the centrality of the Guelagueta for indigenous Mexicans and to understand the origins and history of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca State, the article provides an overview of the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, the indigenous Indians who live in Oaxaca and Oaxaca City before presenting a synopsis of the Guelagueta. Next, the article outlines the research methodology and methods utilized in this case study before presenting a discussion of results of analysis of the 2007 Guelagueta. The final section provides implications pertaining to the impacts of the Guelagueta and their potential effect on the development and growth of the festival in the future.

Festivals

A “festival is a public themed celebration” (Getz, 1997, p. 8) that plays a central, sociocultural, and political role in different societies (Alomes, 2000) and it encourages citizens to participate in the creation and maintenance of the activities as a part of the shared life of a community (Schuster, 1995). These communal gatherings objectify people’s collective wishes and dreams and provide an important occasion for a unique experience in their social lives (Arcodia & Robb, 2000; Earls, 1993). Thus, the social functions of festivals are closely related to values that communities regard as essential to their ideology, including historical continuity and social identity (Derrett, 2002;

Falassi, 1987; Pennington-Gray & Holdnak, 2002). Moreover, it is generally accepted that festivals are able to comment on the power relations of societies, as they constitute some form of representation about the society in which they occur (Mewett, 1988).

Festivals may be regarded as “celebrations of something the local community wishes to share and which involves the public as participants in the experience” (South Australian Tourism Commission, 1997, p. 2). These community celebrations (Goldblatt, 1997) not only facilitate the development of contemporary cultural identity, but also enhance the well-being of the community and the development of social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). While contemporary festivals are vehicles for facilitating sociocultural impacts, including celebrating, “enhancing or preserving local culture and history” (Parry, 1991, p. 19), they are also a means to facilitate economic and political development (Anderson & Solberg, 1999; Burgan & Mules, 2000; Faulkner, 1994; Gitelson, Guadagnolo, & Moore, 1988; Long & Perdue, 1990; Mules & Faulkner, 1996; Rees, 2000; Yardley, MacDonald, & Clarke, 1990).

Sociocultural Impacts of Festivals

A festival such as Guelagueta can affect the community by both enhancing and detracting from the sociocultural environment of the region (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Hall, 1992; Soutar & McLeod, 1993). For instance, sociocultural impacts of festivals that may enhance the region include enrichment of community well-being by providing opportunities “to break away from daily routines,” socialization “with family and friends within the larger community” (Earls, 1993, p. 32), development of social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006), and the development of the cultural and artistic fabric of the society. Moreover, festivals enhance community cohesiveness and cooperation and present opportunities to raise a destination’s cultural profile abroad (Robinson, 1998). Importantly, such positive impacts are often used to offset the negative outcomes of festivals, which include disruption to resident lifestyles, traffic congestion, vandalism, overcrowding, crime (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000), and commercialization and commodification of culture (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Commodification occurs when “cultural and relational expressions are transformed to commodities in a market” resulting in

loss of content which in turn is “assessed on the basis of economic values and values of actors external to the culture” (Pettersen & Viken, 2007 p. 185). Often, commodification of culture is brought about by over enthusiastic attempts to increase economic growth.

Economic Impacts of Festivals

Economic impacts are a significant element of a festival like Guelaguetza, which has the capacity to generate, to varying degrees, an array of positive economic impacts for Oaxaca (Long & Perdue, 1990; Mehmetoglu, 2002). For instance, Guelaguetza provides opportunities for tourism and positive commercial outcomes, which, in turn, may bring about increased revenue, employment, business opportunities (Alston, 1998; Dwyer et al., 2000; Ritchie, 1984; Soutar & McLeod, 1993), the development of new infrastructure, and increased indirect financial inflows from, among other things, visitors' expenditure (Anderson & Solberg, 1999). Consequently, festivals are increasingly being utilized as vehicles for economic development and such positive economic benefits are often used to justify the economic costs of a festival (Burgan & Mules, 2000). Potential costs include inflated prices, leakages associated with imported goods and services (Faulkner, 1994), resident exodus and interruption to normal business, opportunity costs (Dwyer et al., 2000), congestion, and strains on local facilities. Not surprisingly, such impacts can present governments with less than desirable situations and facilitate the development of negative political impacts.

Political Impacts of Festivals

Robinson (1998) believes that festivals have the power to move not just communities but nations. A less favorable political impact of a cultural festival like Guelaguetza may be the utilization of the festival as a vehicle for political propaganda to promote either alternative or government political ideology, instead of using the festival as a means to facilitate positive impacts for the community. Indeed, the festival may often be held simply to reflect the desire of an elite group or an entrepreneur who wishes to pursue personal interests in the name of community development (Ritchie, 1984). Thus, communities must rally together to resist any inequitable or anti-democratic impacts of entrepreneurialism (Owen, 2002) either by government or private enterprise. Alternatively, political impacts may

be favorable as a festival can: 1) increase awareness of issues and provide a forum for political debate such as Bob Geldof's Make Poverty History gatherings, 2) increase national and international profile such as the Edinburgh festival, 3) promote nationalism such as the Centenary Celebrations of Australia, and 4) enhance the image of a region such as Oaxaca.

Oaxaca State, Mexico

On February 3, 1824, the State of Oaxaca was founded within the newly independent Mexican Republic (Chronological Table of Mesoamerican Archaeology, 2007) and is now the fifth largest state of Mexico. Oaxaca is located in the southeastern corner of the country and is one of the three poorest states in Mexico with 22% of people on social security (Maciel, 2006).

The State of Oaxaca is divided into 571 municipalities and has a population of 3,224,270 people, of whom approximately 60–70% are indigenous (Oaxaca's Tourist Guide, 2007). “Oaxaca is the richest expression of the country's ethnic majority, with its sixteen ethnic groups and its ninety-two dialects” (Nagengast & Kearney, 1990, p. 63). It is the most ethnically complex of Mexico's 31 states and has the highest indigenous population in Mexico with over 400 indigenous communities (Pye, 1999). Actually indigenous peoples, in particular, the Zapotec and the Mixtec, settled in the State of Oaxaca and occupied the region for hundreds of years.

The Indigenous Indians of the State of Oaxaca

The State of Oaxaca enjoys a rich cultural diversity, arguably brought about by a mountainous topography, which formed a natural barrier between individual towns and tribal groups and forced them to live in isolation from each other for long periods. Consequently, 16 ethnolinguistic groups developed (Schmal, 2006), which are reasonably easy to identify through dialect, customs, food habits, and rituals. However, Frizzi (2000) suggested, “the majority of Indigenous peoples in Oaxaca identify more closely with their village or their community than with their ethno linguistic group” (p. 1).

The two largest linguistic groups to emerge were the neighboring Zapotec and Mixtec Indians who were kindred peoples living in the mountain enclaves and fertile valleys of Oaxaca. The Zapotecos and Mixtec

were a sedentary, agricultural people who harvested corn, beans, chocolate, tomatoes, chilli, squash, pumpkin, and gourds, and some of the early inhabitants also fished and hunted and worshipped a pantheon of gods (Hopkins, 1984).

Zapotec religion was animalistic and while the Zapotecs were not monotheists, “they did recognize a supreme being who was without beginning or end, who created everything but was not himself created” (Marcus, 1983, p. 345). The Zapotec Indians called themselves *Be'ena'a*, or “The People” and their legends claim that their ancestors did not migrate to the area but rather emerged from the earth, from caves, or they turned into people from trees or jaguars. Not surprisingly, then, the Zapotec Indians referred to themselves as the rightful and original inhabitants of their lands (Mesoamerican Religions, 2007).

Sometime between the third and eighth centuries A.D., the Zapotec culture peaked and the Zapotec Indians gradually became displaced by the Mixtecs who worshipped the forces of nature including life, death, and an afterlife (Spores, 1983). The Mixtecs' dominance in the Valley of Oaxaca, however, was short-lived as the Aztec armies crossed into the Valley of Oaxaca in the 1450s with the intention of extending their hegemony into this unconquered region. Despite many battles with both the Zapotecs and Mixtecs, the Aztecs triumphed over the Mixtecs in 1458 and, in 1486, the Aztecs established a fort on the hill of Huaxyáacac that is now called El Fortín and overlooks contemporary Oaxaca City.

In 1521, the Spaniards, led by Hernán Cortés, arrived in the Valley of Oaxaca and, according to Taylor (1972), there was a “peaceful conquest (which) spared the Valley of Oaxaca the loss of life and the grave social and psychological dislocations experienced by the Aztecs in the Valley of Mexico” (p. 345). The city of Oaxaca was founded several years later in 1532, after Spanish settlers petitioned the Queen of Spain for a grant of land to establish the city.

Oaxaca City, Mexico

The capital of the State of Oaxaca is Oaxaca City, which used to be called Oaxaca de Juárez, in honor of 19th century President and national hero, Benito Juárez. Oaxaca City is located 540 km south of Mexico City in the Oaxaca Valley in the Sierra Madre del Sur Mountains (Surf-Mexico, 2007). Oaxaca is argu-

ably the poorest and most ethnically diverse region of Mexico with a population of approximately 260,000 people. Oaxaca City is touted as one of the foremost cities in Mexico for culture, cuisine, music, dance, painting, traditions, history, colonial patrimony, and pre-Hispanic treasures (Wende, 2007). Because of such a colorful and culturally rich history, Oaxaca is known to tourists not only for its rich culture, but also for vivacious public celebrations of traditional festivals (Wende, 2007). The festivals keep the traditions of indigenous communities alive through dance, dress, customs, and calends (i.e., processions with paper lamps and huge fabric marmots with candles inside) (Randall, 2007). The busy schedule of festivals in Oaxaca City includes festivals like 1) the Night of the Radishes on December 23, where farmers display carved giant radishes, 2) the Day of the Dead on November 2, and 3) the Festival of Lunes del Cerro (i.e., Monday of the Hill) in July, featuring the Guelaguetza.

The Guelaguetza: The Gift of all Peoples of Oaxaca

Ostensibly, the Guelaguetza is the most important festival in Oaxaca as it is one of Mexico's premiere celebrations of dance and music (Iglesias, 1995). Guelaguetza is a Zapotec word meaning a reciprocal exchange of gifts and services and it corresponds to paying off social debts (Beals, 1970). The Guelaguetza is one of many examples of ritualized exchanges of gifts practiced by the community-oriented indigenous peoples of Mexico (Monaghan, 1990). For instance, the Zapotecs assist one another in agriculture, in building houses for newlyweds, in childbirth and deaths, as well as in celebrating patron saints. These activities can be costly and labor intensive. The names of the people assisting in these occasions are recorded, so that the recipients of their generosity can repay the favor at some future date (Monaghan, 1990). The agricultural Guelaguetza is especially valued, as it is the only way many families who cannot pay additional workers are able to plant and harvest crops (Iglesias, 1995). Hence, the underpinning purpose of the festival is the exchange of products and services that represents the age-old tradition of paying in advance (Beals, 1970).

Guelaguetza is also held each year to propitiate the gods in return for sufficient rain and a bountiful harvest. More than 3,000 years ago, the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca began to cultivate plants to augment

hunting, fishing, and gathering. The most important of these was corn, which formed the basis of their diet. Thus, the gods and goddesses involved with water and corn were vital among the hagiocracy and the peoples' tribute to them was a lively and colorful celebration of music, dance, and products. The offering of gifts took place midway through the rainy season to ensure moderate rains continued to bring forth the best crops (Aztec Gods and Deities, 2007). In July, they honored Centeotl, the Corn Goddess Xilonen, the Goddess of Tender Ears of Corn, and Huitzilopochtli, God of War. These rituals began with a meal offered to everyone. On the 10th day of the month after singing and dancing, a maiden, dressed to represent the Corn Goddess, was sacrificed and her heart was offered to the deity. The festival went on for 9 days (Iglesias, 1995).

Although Zapotecs have practiced the Guelaguetza custom since ancestral times with the roots of the festival dedicated to the indigenous gods of the Zapotec and Mixtec, the festival also connects indigenous traditions with the Catholic faith. When the Spanish arrived in Oaxaca in 1521, they tried to convert the indigenous people by imposing the Catholic religion upon them. For example, the Catholics would raise pagan temples and build Christian churches on the ruins, which served not only to conserve the holiness of the place but also to identify it with the new religion. In the case of the Guelaguetza, Franciscan and Dominican orders forbade worship to the Goddess Centeotl and destroyed the altar situated on the Bella Vista Hill (i.e., Cerro Del Fortin). In its place, they built a Catholic temple in honor of the Virgin of Monte Carmelo. The idea was to change the celebration of Lunes del Cerro, which dates back to pre-Hispanic rituals in honor of Centeotl, the corn Goddess, to the feast of the Virgin Del Carmen on July 16. However, the Oaxacan Folklore Society (Iglesias, 1995) reported that the indigenous population continued to gather on the hill each July 16 to honor the old gods. Therefore, pragmatic Catholic missionaries decided to move the festivities in honor of the Virgin del Carmen to the Sunday closest to that date and to hold a secularized indigenous fiesta on the next Monday.

In the 17th century, the local celebrations in honor of Saint Carmen began with a mass and a procession climbing the hill. Many dressed in indigenous costumes and danced to the *huéhuatl* and *teponaztles* (i.e., indigenous drums). The Tarasca, a dragon-serpent made of paper and cloth and with men inside to ani-

mate it, joined the parade. In 1741, the Tarasca was banned by Bishop Tomás Montaña, who argued that it scared the people attending the Virgin's celebration. He replaced it with the Dance of the Giants, which consisted of three couples, one indigenous, one Spanish, and one black, who performed in the churchyard before the gathered townspeople (Iglesias, 1995).

The celebration honoring the Virgin del Carmen continued among the people during Mexico's independence and revolution. In 1932, on the City of Oaxaca's 400th anniversary since the royal charter of King Charles V created the Villa de Antequera, now Oaxaca City, the Lunes del Cerro was organized as part of the anniversary festivities (Iglesias, 1995). It was decided that a "Homenaje Racial" should occur as a tribute to the capital city from the indigenous groups throughout the State and take place at the Cerro Del Fortín. The festival was patronized by Mexican President, Abelardo Rodríguez, and led by Governor Francisco López Cortés and was the antecedent of the contemporary Guelaguetza where, among other things, indigenous craftspeople give the wares of their region to the gathered guests. By 1953, the Guelaguetza and the Lunes del Cerro celebrations were officially combined and promoted as a commercialized festival and viewed by government and industry alike as a vehicle for economic development in Oaxaca (Davies, 2007b). In 1974, an amphitheater, seating about 11,000, was built purportedly as a home to express and share Oaxacan folklore (Iglesias, 1995) but according to Mader (2007), it was built to accommodate more tourists. Nevertheless, since 1974, the Guelaguetza has been held on the two Mondays following July 16, except if these Mondays coincide with the July 18, which is the anniversary of the death of Benito Juárez (Iglesias, 1995), Mexico's first indigenous and apparently most beloved leader (MEXonline, 2007).

Ancillary events have developed around the two Mondays in July, including some original indigenous traditions and some more contemporary innovations such as the contest to select the Queen of the Guelaguetza, who represents the Goddess Centeotl. The Queen of the Guelaguetza is chosen from communities most knowledgeable about the tradition of their people and she presides over the festivities and celebrations. Additionally, the Bani Stui Gulal (i.e., Repetition of Ancient Times) occurs on the same Sunday night as the Queen is chosen and it provides a narration, in the form of a play, of the history of Lunes

del Cerro. It is a dramatic presentation of how the Guelaguetza was celebrated in different epochs. Additionally, at night, the amphitheater fills with people to welcome the representation of the founding of Oaxaca through the legend of the Zapotec Princess, Donaji who suffered a tragic death for being faithful to her people (Rantlust, 2007).

In addition to the Legend of Donaji, there are also celebrations that occur on late Saturday afternoon before the Monday Guelaguetza. The celebrations begin with the Calendas, which is a parade led by 1) *marmotas*, which are large lanterns made of cane, paper, and cloth in the form of a star or sphere and appear to float in the air, 2) *monigotes*, which are giant puppets with people inside manipulating them, and 3) the dancers of the seven regions of Oaxaca State, which are the Central Valleys, the Sierra Juárez, the Cañada, the Papaloapan, the Mixteca, the Coast, and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Everyone is invited to join in the parade.

At 5 am on the Monday morning, the birthday song called *Las Mañanitas* is played with pre-Hispanic whistles, *chirimías* (i.e., a type of clarinet), and drums while fireworks summon the people for the fiesta (Iglesias, 1995). The people walk up the hill to the amphitheater accompanied by the sound of music, fireworks, and pageantry. Around 9 am, the delegations and spectators start arriving at the amphitheater and 1 hour later the Goddess Centeotl and all the delegations are presented and paraded around the stage. The Guelaguetza proper starts with a parade of *chirimías* and *marmots* (i.e., giant puppets) that precedes a parade of the woman of Oaxaca, the woman of the markets, and a typical musical and dance expression called the *Jarabe del Valle*. Centeotl then takes her seat with the Governor of the State and invited dignitaries such as the King and Queen of Spain, the President of the Republic, officials and guests of the Governor. The first delegation is introduced and the celebration begins with the regional representatives and popular dances from the seven regions of the State. Dances range from solemn to raucous expressions of local culture. At the end of each dance, every village showers the audience with samples of typical products from their village, including pineapples from the Papaloapan, sombrero de palma from the Mixteca, mezcal from Ejutla, and many other products of regions thrown by members of each delegation into the audience. The dancing concludes around 1 pm with the *Danza de la Pluma* (i.e., The

Feather Dance) and music and dance commemorate the indigenous struggle against the Spanish conquistadores. When the festivities are over, the spectators may enjoy *trompadas*, *pepitorias*, *gollorias*, *cocadas*, and *turronecitas* offered by the various vendors at the festival (Chronological Table of Mesoamerican Archaeology, 2007).

The 2006 Guelaguetza

In 2006, the Guelaguetza festival arguably became a pawn and, concomitantly, a casualty of politics. The Governor of the State of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, took office in 2004 for a term of 6 years. Ruiz is a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Mexico's preeminent political organization from 1929 until the early 1990s. Although the PRI engineered political peace for nearly five decades, the party has been accused of using electoral fraud, corruption, bribery, and repression to maintain control over individuals and groups (Merrill & Miró, 1996). The PRI, in power in Oaxaca State for 78 years, apparently has a reputation of having "untouchable" city mayors and governors (Derewicz, 2006), including Governor Ruiz, who has not only been accused of corruption but he has also been blamed for repression and violence against political opponents, media outlets, and indigenous peoples in Oaxaca (Maciel, 2006).

It was amidst this political backdrop on May 22, 2006, that approximately 40,000 teachers from the National Union of Education Workers (i.e., Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación) (SNTE) along with families and friends, mostly from Oaxaca State's poor rural areas, staged a massive sit-in at the Zocalo in Oaxaca City (Cohen, 2007). The sit-in was the 25th annual national teachers' union strike (Maciel, 2006; Manzano, 2006) and they were striking for pay increases, improved working conditions, and increased budgets to provide for impoverished schools' meals, uniforms, and supplies ("Political Crisis in Oaxaca," 2006). Traditionally, Governor Ruiz practiced collective bargaining at these strikes; however, in 2006, the Governor did not attempt negotiation with the strikers but rather ordered the police to forcibly remove the strikers from the city center on June 14, 2006 (Wende, 2007). The Governor dispatched between 1,000 and 3,000 armed State police on a predawn raid where they "attacked the encampment of teachers using clubs and rubber bullets, and raining down tear gas from a helicopter" (Wende, 2007,

p. 72). According to one observer (Derewicz, 2006), “gunshots echoed through city streets as the police helicopter shot tear gas down into the crowd of men, women, and children. Fires burned and people lay bloodied in ambulances. As dawn broke, ordinary citizens barricaded the streets, keeping the police out of the city’s central plaza” (p. 1).

The teachers regrouped and took back the Zocalo several hours later (Wende, 2007). Although the violence subsided after June 14, several days later, on June 16, the Popular Assembly for the People of Oaxaca (i.e., Asamblea Popular del Pueblo Oaxaqueño) (APPO) was established largely to oppose the administration of Governor Ruiz (Waterbury, 2007). For over 6 months, the APPO and SNTE maintained control over the city of Oaxaca and large parts of the State. In short, they were demanding the resignation of the Governor (“Political Crisis in Oaxaca,” 2006). Consequently, roadblocks, occupation of public buildings, closure of banks, and marches involving up to 800,000 demonstrators demanding democratic reforms and the resignation of Governor Ruiz became commonplace in Oaxaca City (CommomDreams.org, 2007). During this time, the APPO announced that they also intended to boycott the state-sponsored Guelaguetza (Cohen, 2007), maintaining it represented a “waste of economic resources that only benefits big business, owners of hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies . . . not the Oaxacan people” (Denham, 2006, p. 1). Indeed, the APPO argued that the Guelaguetza had been appropriated by government for many years, so they vowed to reclaim and celebrate a people’s Guelaguetza in 2006 (Cohen, 2007; El Enemigo Comun, 2007).

Consequently, several days before the first Lunes del Cerro was to take place, protestors apparently seized buses to not only use as roadblocks to prevent access to the amphitheater in the Cerro del Fortin but to also trap tourists inside their hotels until late in the afternoon to prevent them from attending the festival (Corrugated Films, 2006). A group of masked people, allegedly not allied with the APPO and SNTE (Davies, 2007b), also caused major damage to the amphitheater by destroying bathrooms, burning platforms, and burning the Guelaguetza stage (Denham, 2006; Davies, 2007a), causing an estimated 700,000 pesos (i.e., AUD\$70,000.00) in damage to the amphitheater. Although the Government guaranteed that the festival would go on as scheduled, on July 17, Governor Ruiz officially cancelled the event, truncating 74 years of

the celebration in order “to avoid risking the safety of Oaxacans and national and international tourists” (Denham, 2006).

In response to the Government’s cancellation of the festival, an alternative free Guelaguetza, which was promised by the APPO, was organized for Monday, July 24, 2006 (Wende, 2007). According to observers Derewicz, (2007) and Davies (2007a), 20,000 Oaxacans and tourists attended the APPO’s “Alternative Guelaguetza of the People” at the Oaxacan Technological Institute. The People’s Guelaguetza consisted of traditional dances, parade floats, and musical performances from the seven regions of Oaxaca State, including some that had never before been presented at the state-sponsored Guelaguetza. Inaugural performances included those from 1) Santiago Chilantongo, who presented carnival pieces, 2) San Juan Yolotepec, who parodied the struggle of Moors and Christians, and 3) the Macuiltanguis dancers, who performed “the little bullfight” (Vasquez, cited in Davies, 2007a). Additionally, a participant at the festival (Derewicz, 2007) said the APPO leaders gave speeches and protesters marched and chanted “*Ya cayó; Ulises ya cayó*” (i.e., Ulises has already fallen). The People’s Guelaguetza continued to nightfall and was deemed a success. Derewicz (2007) said a leader of the SNTE announced that the success of the alternative festival demonstrated “that we have the capability not only for political acts but also for cultural events and to recover the history of Oaxaca” (p. 1). Promises were made that the people’s alternative Guelaguetza would be repeated every year and protesters vowed to block the 2007 state-sponsored Guelaguetza to stage their own festival again.

2007 Guelaguetza

For many weeks prior to the festival, television advertisements produced by the Secretaria de Turismo in Oaxaca announced the return of Guelaguetza in 2007 (Schwartz, 2007). A week before the Guelaguetza was due to commence, the Secretary of Tourism, Beatriz Rodríguez Casasnovas, confirmed to the press that the state-sponsored Guelaguetza would go ahead regardless of the conflict between the APPO, SNTE, and the Government. The Government assured the public that the festival was not at risk because operations were under way to secure the Guelaguetza, according to the Secretary of Citizen Protection, Lino Celaya (Vásquez, cited in Davies, 2007a).

Nevertheless, on July 14, 2007, the APPO announced that it would still hold an alternative cultural festival in the main Guelaguetza amphitheater on the Cerro Del Fortin (Peller, 2007). On Monday, July 16, 2007, the APPO and SNTE requested the use of the amphitheater for the People's Guelaguetza. State police apparently refused the request and set up barriers to prevent the group from heading to the amphitheater ("Protesters, Police Clash," 2007). At 11 am on Monday, July 16, 2007, protesters began attempting to enter the Guelaguetza amphitheater; however, the Federal Preventive Police and State police had surrounded the perimeter of the amphitheater and were preventing people from entering to celebrate the alternative People's Guelaguetza (Ross, 2007). A crowd of around 10,000 people had gathered at the amphitheater when violence broke out between the police and the crowd. Tear gas, rocks, sticks, and unidentified explosive projectiles were apparently used as weapons during the clash (Peller, 2007; Schwartz, 2007). In the ensuing battle, six buses were burned and several vehicles were gutted by fire, businesses near the Hotel Fortin Plaza were damaged along with the hotel's restaurant (Davies, 2007b). The media ("Leftists Riot," 2007) reported that guests at the nearby Hotel Fortin and Victoria Hotel were evacuated from the premises unharmed; however, at least 50 people were injured, including journalists and photographers and 20 State police officers. Thirty demonstrators were arrested, more than 62 people were detained ("Protesters, Police Clash," 2007) and one person was killed (Peller, 2007).

On the morning of July 22, the headlines in *Las Noticias* forewarned that the Cerro del Fortin and the Guelaguetza amphitheater would be cordoned off again by police and military to prevent its use for the People's Guelaguetza (Davies, 2007b). Davies (2007b) maintained Government reasoning for not allowing the staging of the People's Guelaguetza in the amphitheater was that the people did not have Government permission to use the facility and the event might provide an opportunity for guerrillas to blow up the strategic site. In response, the APPO and the SNTE said they would continue nonviolent resistance to the official Guelaguetza by, among other things, encouraging tourists not to purchase tickets to the event, or if they had purchased tickets, to send them back for a refund and not attend the state-sponsored Guelaguetza. Additionally, to avoid further bloodshed, the APPO

and SNTE announced that the People's Guelaguetza would move to Plaza del la Danza.

The Sub-Secretary of Government, Joaquín Rodríguez Palacios, urged the APPO and the SNTE not to boycott the state-sponsored Guelaguetza claiming, "this is a festival for all the Oaxaqueños and it reflects our ethnic diversity" (Davies, 2007a, p. 1). Concurrently, the President of the National Tourist Confederation, Miguel Torruco Marqués, sought guarantees from all three levels of Government that the festival would go on (Davies, 2007a) and, in response, the Government guaranteed the festival would be staged and that it would be safe for tourists (Schwartz, 2007).

The official Guelaguetza did take place in 2007, albeit under what appeared to be a state of occupation. Thousands of police and army units patrolled the city, outlying roads were all blocked with military checkpoints, and the borders of Oaxaca State were closed. Buses of APPO and SNTE supporters were turned away at the State borders as they tried to join in support of the protests. Hundreds of riot police were stationed along both sides of the road that led to the amphitheater on Cerro Del Fortin. The access gates into the amphitheater were heavily fortified with riot police ("High Court Throws Out," 2007) along with a heavy and very visible security force inside the amphitheater.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere in the very hot, noisy, and crowded amphitheater was one of expectation and excitement as over 11,000 spectators cheered the band and waited in anticipation for the first performance of the festival. A diverse array of regional delegations performed for nearly 4 hours, free of protests and to an amphitheatre filled with enthusiastic spectators. There was little evidence of the conflict-ridden relations between the APPO, SNTE, and Government and the controversy that surrounded the state sponsored Guelaguetza, except perhaps for the abundance of armed security throughout the venue. Tourists not familiar with the chain of events surrounding the Guelaguetza would be forgiven for believing that they were encountering an authentic cultural experience amidst a diverse, yet united and buoyant, Oaxacan community who were celebrating age-old indigenous traditions through music, song, and dance. Yet many Oaxacans apparently felt that what tourists were actually witnessing was cultural appropriation where indigenous dance troupes were performing folkloric

dances for tourists rather than contributing to a traditional community celebration (Corrugated Films, 2006). These diverse perspectives suggested that not all that glistens is gold and lurking behind the façade of the state-sponsored Guelagueta were significant negative impacts threatening the future of the festival.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design utilizing a single case study approach was employed to undertake an holistic investigation of the positive and negative impacts emerging from the real-world context of the 2007 Guelagueta (Reid, 2006; Yin, 2003). According to Tellis (1997), the “case study can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining” (p. 1) as it strives to gain an holistic understanding of interrelated activities engaged in by actors in a social situation (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1990). Thus, the case study was deemed an appropriate approach for this research.

The research was theoretically grounded in social constructivism (Appelton & King, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1994), which emphasizes the importance of culture and context in order to understand what occurs in society (Derry, 1999; McMahan, 1997). Social knowledge is constructed from the accounts of social actors by interpreting everyday concepts and their underlying meanings and motives. Therefore, social constructivism theoretically underpinned this research because a festival may be considered a process of social interaction embedded in economic structures (Saxton, 1997). In keeping with social constructivism and to fully identify and comprehend the complex issues pertaining to the festival, qualitative mixed methods were used to collect and interpret both primary and secondary data from multiple sources (Yin, 1994).

Primary Data Collection

Primary data were collected via video recording of the Guelagueta on July 29 and 30, 2007. The use of video as a tool for collecting data has been in the social sciences since the 1960s (Berliner, 1969; Gottdiener, 1979; Heider, 1976) and the method has gradually become an indispensable research tool across an array of disciplines (Albrecht, 1985; Dufon, 2002; Pen-Edwards, 2004). Importantly, it was deemed necessary to video the entire event in order to avoid establishing

boundaries (Blum-Kulka, 1997) and also guard against bias that might predispose the researcher to focus only on certain areas (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, video footage was taken by the researcher from a tourist perspective and included footage of video of 1) getting to the festival (i.e., security, traffic, and crowd management, etc.), 2) getting into the festival (i.e., crowd management, signage, etc.), 3) organizational aspects inside the festival (i.e., market stalls, signage, crowd flow, attendance, seating, security, amenities, food, shade, etc.), 4) the performance (i.e., performers and spectators), and 5) exiting the festival (i.e., crowd management, protocols, security, etc.). In this study, video was used as a means of data collection because of practical logistics, including the provision of permanent data and visual recall (Grimshaw, 1982).

Data were collected by the researcher through observation of both participants and spectators at the festival. The researcher actively participated in the event as a tourist to “learn from them their view of reality” (Agar, 1996, p. 157). Participant observation involved undertaking the dual roles of participation and data collection concurrently and the researcher’s role oscillated through the observer-participant spectrum (Junker, cited in May, 1997), depending on time and place and program. Observation had the advantage that it allowed patterns of behavior to be observed that may not be apparent to individual subjects involved; however, observation ideally is supplemented by other data collection techniques (Veal, 1997). Therefore, to supplement the video and observational data, an in-depth interview was undertaken on July 31, 2007 with the event organizer from the Secretaria de Turismo, Oaxaca. The in-depth interview generated empirical data about the Guelagueta (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Punch, 2005) and it was an effective way of accessing a government perspective of the situation. Importantly, the in-depth interview facilitated an increased understanding of issues pertaining to the Guelagueta because it provided a counterperspective to the opinions of those who opposed the government and who could not be sourced for interview but whose opinions were widely accessible via an array of secondary sources. Thus, the in-depth interview not only provided the researcher with data that could not be experienced directly but it developed “a shared perspective and understanding between two or more people” (Yates, 2004, p. XX) and helped the researcher gain a more balanced understanding of the complex issues sur-

rounding Guelaguetza (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995).

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data were collected from 1) government documents, 2) Internet articles, and 3) academic journals. Secondary data were extremely useful because they provided vital information about the festival that was not otherwise accessible. For instance, the Secretaria de Turismo in Oaxaca provided unpublished 2005 and 2007 evaluation reports of the Guelaguetza. Additionally, Internet articles from multiple sources (i.e., government, opposition party, APPO, residents, tourists, journalists) provided an array of varied perspectives relating to historical events and issues associated with Guelaguetza. Finally, literature pertaining to impacts of events, in particular, provided the theoretical framework for analysis (Alston, 1998; Alomes, 2000; Anderson & Solberg, 1999; Burgan & Mules, 2000; Crompton & McKay, 1994; Faulkner 1994; Fredline, Deery, & Jago, 2005; Getz, 1997; Hall, 1989; Jago & Shaw, 1998; Ritchie, 1984; Robinson, 1988).

Data Analysis

After the fieldwork was completed, data collected from the aforementioned range of sources were compiled and analyzed. Video provided unprecedented assistance to the field researcher because a unique feature of using video data was, during analysis, the researcher could return to the field many times over, refreshing the researcher's memory about details and occurrences at the festival. The process for analyzing the video data was based on Abasi and Taylor (2007). An analysis coding framework was developed from the previous literature pertaining to positive and negative impacts of events and was used as the instrument for analysis. Observational techniques based on qualitative discovery (Bottorff, 2003) involved repeatedly viewing video footage to identify the positive and negative impacts of the festival. The data from the video was eventually reduced to only include information deemed relevant to the positive and negative impacts of the Guelaguetza. This same process was also used to analyze the text from the in-depth interview and secondary sources. Once the impacts were categorized, themes and patterns in the data from both the video and text were identified via content analysis, which focused on the theoretically relevant episodes

and elements of the collected data (Ratcliff, 2003). The final categories from content analysis were used to determine the extent to which the festival focused on becoming a tourist attraction at the expense of community celebration.

Limitations

This study utilized a qualitative research design and according to Liberman (1999) "the craft of a qualitative sociologist consists not of an objective methodology" (p. 53); thus, the research was interpretive and subjective by nature. As subjectivity formed a large part of the interpretive analysis, the researcher's perspectives may have influence interpretation of the text (Gadamer, 1976). Moreover, during analysis of the data, the researcher's own awareness of factors outside the social and historical context may have distorted the process and influenced interpretation of the text (Gadamer, 1976).

Results and Discussion

The use of the coding analysis framework was instrumental in the generation of results shown in Table 1, which present the positive and negative sociocultural, economic, and political impacts of the 2007 Guelaguetza.

Sociocultural Impacts of the Guelaguetza

The importance of the sociocultural impacts or the people impacts (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Glasson, Godfrey, & Goodey, 1995) of the Guelaguetza should not be underestimated as support from the host community is an essential component of sustainable events (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonald, 2008). Overall, the host community of the Guelaguetza appears supportive of the community celebration that showcases indigenous Mexican culture (Iglesias, 1995), as it holds for the Oaxaqueños a profound sentiment of history, culture, and traditions. Indeed, the festival is a celebration of Oaxaca's indigenous diversity in areas including art, dance, music, and culture. In 2007, according to the survey undertaken by the Guelaguetza organizer at the Secretaria de Turismo (2007), 79% of attendees, of which approximately 80% were nationals, believed the Guelaguetza definitely met their expectations, including the provision for attendees to access and experience different customs and values at the festival. Furthermore,

Table 1
Positive and Negative Impacts of the Guelaguetza

Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
<p>Sociocultural impacts Generates community celebration and participation Culturally significant festival Preserves and enhances traditions, rituals and culture Enhances community pride Promotes community cohesion</p> <p>Economic impacts Promotes tourism in Oaxaca Provides economic injection and spin-offs Provides employment opportunities Increases/improves facilities and infrastructure Promotes sponsorship investment (private and government) Facilitates regional development</p> <p>Political impacts Increases national prestige of Oaxaca Generates national and international profile of Oaxaca Provides a vehicle for facilitating indigenous capacity development Increases awareness of indigenous Mexicans Promotes Mexican tourism</p>	<p>Promotes commercialization and commodification of culture Facilitates loss of cultural authenticity Diverts social services from normal routine (i.e., police) Generates community alienation and increases crime and bad behavior Risk to public health and safety</p> <p>Increases dependency on tourism Generates inflation and leakages as tourism increases Loss of income due to festival cancellation Misallocation and/or diversion of public funds Opportunity Costs</p> <p>Enhances political exploitation and/or corruption Facilitates political unrest and provides a vehicle to communicate propaganda Loss of community ownership and control Promotes centralized and monopolized management Increases negative imaging of Oaxaca</p>

Guelaguetza also provided a forum for interchange, involvement, and contact among the people and, as shown in Table 1, presented an opportunity for the people to come together culturally and socially. Arguably, this promotes community cohesion while strengthening identity and reinforcing unity (Ross, 2007).

Davies (2007b) however, maintained that Guelaguetza focuses more on pleasing tourists rather than the local community. Interestingly the Secretaria de Turismo (2007) said that while they want to maintain Guelaguetza as a festival for the people, their "primary goal was to increase tourism, not only international but also national tourism." Not surprisingly, then, Derewicz (2007) warned that Guelaguetza has become an overly commercialized and commodified state-sponsored festival that charges money for the main events. For instance, many Oaxacans apparently cannot afford the cost of admission to the official Guelaguetza as it becomes increasingly commercialized and pricey, effectively excluding most Oaxacans from attending (Bishop, 2006). Not surprisingly, then, locals including Ross (2007) voiced concern that the Guelaguetza is at risk of becoming a cash cow for tourist moguls and the Government, who may exploit the indigenous cultures who live mostly in poverty.

This is not a new phenomenon according to Burchett (1993), who claimed that there is a litany of

documented tourism, and arguably event impacts upon indigenous culture that identify situations where cultures have been cheapened, misrepresented, and trivialized. Not surprisingly, then, the sociocultural impacts derived from analysis suggested that increased commercialization and commodification of the Guelaguetza is facilitating a loss of cultural authenticity. According to Cole (2007), the concepts of cultural commodification and authenticity are closely related and a common view in the literature is that tourism turns culture into a commodity, packaged and sold to tourists and results in a loss of authenticity. Authenticity is a contested term (Tomomitsu, 2005) and the constructivist perspective claims that authenticity has a variety of different meanings that are dependent on subjective interpretation (McCrone et al., 1995). The constructivist does not see authenticity "bound up within binaries of 'authentic' versus 'inauthentic,' but rather as a social process" (Wang, 1999, p. 355) in which tourists determine the level of authenticity of the cultural experience. MacCannell (1989), however, maintained authenticity is often staged, like a theater performance of a specific culture, time period, place, or event, which is used to create an impression of authenticity for tourists but, in fact, renders the experience inauthentic. Arguably, such is the threat to the Guelaguetza, where the *raison d'être* of the festival is

becoming blurred between a staged performance and an individualized and/or spontaneous expressions of culture. Moreover, if the authentic cultural experience is a major drawcard of the Guelagueta, then the loss of authentic dimensions of the festival will weaken its sustainability.

Concern relating to cultural authenticity was not the only negative sociocultural impact identified during the analysis. Other major concerns were the diversion of social services due to civic unrest and increased crime. For instance, the U.S. Department of State (2008) travel advisory warned that “some deaths occurred during violent demonstrations, including an American citizen who died in the 2006 violence in Oaxaca” (p. 1). Indeed, local Oaxacan information warned crime was a danger faced by tourists in Oaxaca’s City center and according to the locals, petty theft has increased since the 2006 demonstrations (Developingwords.org, 2006). In response to these demonstrations, a very large security force, including police and army, was deployed to Oaxaca to patrol the city, the road to the Cerro Del Fortin, and the amphitheater. Additionally, security forces were also established at control posts to undertake inspection of all cars entering the main four access points to the city (Mex Files, 2007). According to the event organizer (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007), such actions had a positive effect at the festival as only 3% of attendees felt there was some sort of danger at the festival and 10% felt insecure while 23% felt safe and 64% felt very safe at the festival. Nevertheless, the attempt to ensure a safe Guelagueta with large numbers of heavily armed police and army personnel actually alienated many of the local people and, at one stage, security forces were unable to keep demonstrators from reaching the amphitheater where the Guelagueta festival was scheduled to be held (Schwartz, 2007). In fact, Uhler (2007) claimed the safety guarantee of the Government was meaningless because, in reality, the safety of attendees was not in the hands of the Government but in the hands of the people of Oaxaca, as it always has been.

Economic Impacts of the Guelagueta

Despite the potential issues of safety in Oaxaca, July 2007 was peak tourist season because Guelagueta, the biggest folklore festival in the Americas (Ross, 2007), is a popular tourist attraction (“Leftists Riot,” 2007) drawing 20,861 national attendees and 5,629

foreign tourists over the festival period, according to the Secretaria de Turismo (2007). According to the event organizer’s survey results, approximately 65% of these attendees felt the overall quality of the 2007 Guelagueta was excellent (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007). Not surprisingly, then, Guelagueta is the biggest tourist attraction for Oaxaca City (Wallis, 2007) where apparently, a local (Developingwords.org, 2006) believed that tourists often outnumber the locals in the streets.

This influx of tourists to Oaxaca to see the Guelagueta provides significant economic benefits to the host community each year. In 2007, the Secretaria de Turismo noted the Guelagueta generated 90,142,526.0 pesos (i.e., AUD\$9,405,192.78) and numerous employment and business opportunities for locals (i.e., ushers, vendors, suppliers, caterers). Moreover, Guelagueta is accompanied by other events, including the Mezcal Fair, presentations of dance troupes, dozens of meetings of the Papaloapam basin, gastronomy shows, and the Juchitán night festivals for various saints (Davies, 2007b). Consequently, as a result of Guelagueta and associated events, various businesses throughout the city of Oaxaca, including restaurants, hotels and transportation, among others, enjoy a multitude of economic spin-offs. Additionally, the city of Oaxaca benefits from the development of the purpose-built, 11,000-seat amphitheater and increased investment into the festival from sponsors including Cocoa Cola, Banamex, Telemex, and the Department of Tourism in Oaxaca (Go Oaxaca, 2007).

Arguably, the government/corporate-sponsored Guelagueta is becoming overtly commercialized and commodified and is widely viewed as a tourist spectacle driven by profits rather than the celebration’s true communal roots. Indeed, Oaxaca is apparently becoming increasingly dependent upon tourism (El Enemigo Comun, 2007; Secretaria de Turismo, 2007) as it accounts for much of Oaxaca City’s economy and many have counted on Guelagueta to signal the rebirth of the tourism industry (Schwartz, 2007). After the 1950s, Oaxaca City utilized tourism as an alternative means of revenue (OaxacaOaxaca, 2007); consequently, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, artisans, jewelry stores, and other services are becoming increasingly dependent upon the economic spin-offs provided by the Guelagueta (Bellinghausen, 2007) as a primary rather than alternative source of income.

It is not only business, however, that can be adversely affected by negative economic impacts from tourism, or lack thereof. The host community can also experience negative economic impacts such as inflation. For instance, the best tickets to the Guelaguetza sell for 400 pesos (i.e., AUD\$40.00) in a state where the minimum wage is 46 pesos per day or barely over AUD\$4.00 (Davies, 2006; Wallis, 2007). Granted, a third of the tickets were free to the public, but they were in such high demand that they were extremely difficult to acquire (Liebertz, 2007). The best tickets, however, were in sections A and B but they were not free. Interestingly, international tourists could not purchase these tickets online via Ticketmaster Mexico, as it would only accept Mexican credit cards. Moreover, while these purchased tickets were closer to the stage than the free section, they did not have any seating allocation and upon arrival at the amphitheater all ticket holders had to scramble to get a seat of any sort, or a wall to lean on, due to overbooking. Additionally, the amphitheater had no overhead cover from weather so the audience were subjected to a very hot summer sun for over 4 hours in the open-air amphitheater. Also, throughout the amphitheater, electrical wires and cables used for sound, lighting, and media were left exposed on walkways to both weather and the public, yet there was no electricity supplied to food and drink vendors. Additionally, the Donaji show was not postponed during a severe electrical storm in which audio, lighting, and stage equipment, performers, and audience were all exposed to the severities of an electrical storm atop a mountain.

While lack of seating and arguably health and safety were potential problems for Guelaguetza in 2007, the cancellation of the festival in 2006 was apparently a problem for many locals. For instance, although some town people supported the APPO, "others went from being frustrated to outraged as the tourist industry in Oaxaca City, the base of the economy, dwindled to nothing and schools and businesses shut down for months. Many residents deeply resented disruption of their daily routines and many worried that their city was transforming into a war zone" (Wende, 2007, p. 72). Indeed, as result of cancellation, Oaxaca's economy suffered a serious blow in 2006, reducing tourism in Oaxaca by 75%, costing the city more than 45 million dollars, according to a business lobby group called the Mexican Employers Federation (Grillo, 2006). Due to threat of cancellation and safety issues

again in 2007, tourism fell by 80% and according to Alcantara (cited in Maciel, 2006), Head of the Hotels and Motels Association of Oaxaca, losses in the hospitality sector reached more than 1 billion pesos. Some 27 companies closed down and more than 800 people lost their jobs (City Mayors Association, 2007). Such costs shape the sociocultural, economic, and political impacts of the festival and do not bode well for its long-term sustainability.

Political Impacts of the Guelaguetza

Over the past 57 years, the Guelaguetza has become a publicized festival on the Oaxaqueña calendar. There is a strong media presence at the festival, which is televised live across the nation and Internet information is now expanding the profile of the festival to an international market. In 2007, a significant number of the 5,700 international visitors at Guelaguetza constituting approximately 60% Americans and 30% Europeans (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007) were arguably seeking, among other things, an authentic indigenous cultural experience (Hodgson, Firth, & Presbury, 2007). Thus, the festival provides opportunities for indigenous communities to raise awareness of indigenous issues in Mexico and Oaxaca in particular.

The indigenous groups and communities that participated in the Guelaguetza all speak a dialect of their own and have built their own specific cultures, which sets them apart from the rest of the State's population (Oaxaca's Tourist Guide, 2007). On March 21, 1998, the enactment of The Law on Indigenous Communities and Peoples' Rights of Oaxaca formally recognized indigenous autonomy, indigenous land rights, and self-determination (Pye, 1999). The Guelaguetza festival is an effective vehicle to not only increase awareness of these rights but to also facilitate capacity development and self-determination among the Indigenous people of Oaxaca. Moreover, the Guelaguetza provides the opportunity to develop indigenous tourism in Oaxaca City, which is a popular colonial city because, among other things, of its rich and diverse cultural traditions (Wende, 2007).

Concomitantly, Guelaguetza has been susceptible to political exploitation and corruption. For instance, on the one hand, the people have boycotted the Guelaguetza as a way of pressuring Governor Ruiz to step down from power. On the other hand, an APPO representative said Governor Ruiz has transformed

Guelaguetza into a propagandistic farce staged with 2,000 people he rounded up and thousands of police disguised as spectators (Bucio & Tobar, 2007). Indeed, Mader (2007) claimed the Government filled seats not only with State Government employees but also with paid supporters who were bused in from outlying communities in an effort to pad out the attendance of the Guelaguetza due to low prepaid ticket sales (Mex Economic News and Analysis on Mexico, 2007, p. 1). Such political turmoil, which has surrounded the Guelaguetza in the last couple of years, paralyzed the Guelaguetza in 2006 (Grillo, 2006) and curtailed its success, particularly in relation to tourism, in 2007.

Therefore, continued political unrest in Oaxaca will be detrimental to the economic situation of the local community. A 30-year-old resident who sells banana leaves in the Mercado de Abastos said, "we do agree with some things the teachers demand, but this is affecting too many people" (Corrugated Films, 2007, p. 1). Many Oaxaqueños depend on the influx of tourism to make ends meet. The economic impact of empty restaurants and sidewalk cafés may lead many who are sympathetic to the APPO and SNTE to demand an end to the movement's impact upon the city. Another local merchant added, "I don't support what the protestors are doing nor the way they're going about it, because the people that are hurting are the small business owners and street vendors" (Liebertz, 2007, p. 1). Alongside losing business, there is a growing risk that the local community will also lose control of their festival because, according to Davies (2007a), Guelaguetza management is monopolized and centralized and increasingly benefits the politicians and the more wealthy merchants. Consequently, such outcomes undoubtedly impact upon the social life and structure of the community (Allen et al., 2007) as the Oaxaqueños become more alienated and receive fewer benefits from the festival each year.

Arguably, if the situation is not adequately addressed in the near future and the protests and violence continue, the image of Oaxaca City will be severely tarnished. Butler and Hinch (2007) warned that "if tourists do not have a positive image of a destination, they will not visit it" (p. 326) and this was made evident at the Guelaguetza in 2007 where attendee numbers were down from 2005 by approximately 48,000 (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007) with a notable decrease in foreign tourists (Contreras, 2007). According to Bucio and Tobar, (2007) "tourism (in Oaxaca) is down to a trickle.

People are afraid to come, and I don't blame them." In fact, in 2007, rather than looking like a celebration of the most important cultural event in Oaxaca, the area resembled a military camp (Mex Files, 2007). While this apparently helped 64% of the Guelaguetza attendees feel very secure at the 2007 festival (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007), the heavy police presence and the threat of unrest will undoubtedly act as a deterrent to potential visitors in the future.

Dancing at the Crossroads: Which Way for the Guelaguetza?

It becomes reasonably evident via analysis that the purpose of the contemporary Guelaguetza has become a contentious issue as divergent perspectives drive future festival development down different roads. On the one road, the goal of the state sponsored Guelaguetza is to be a commercially viable festival that provides opportunities for Government, industry, and the local community to realize increased economic benefits through tourism (Secretaria de Turismo, 2007). Furthermore, the festival attempts to provide positive sociocultural benefits to the diverse array of indigenous communities in Oaxaca, including opportunities to not only share and promote culture and tradition but also to provide a platform for enhancing tolerance and understanding (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Secretaria de Turismo, 2007). On the other road, the state-sponsored Guelaguetza has been criticized for being Oaxaca's version of Disneyland as it jeopardizes the authenticity of social relations and cultural rituals among indigenous Oaxacans (Denham, 2006; O'Gorman & Thompson, 2007). For instance, according to Denham (2006), Guelaguetza has become a tourist spectacular that exploits, commodifies, and markets indigenous culture for financial gain. Similarly, Bishop and Carvey (2006) maintained the APPO expropriated the festival and attempted to transform it in order to return them to the people of Oaxaca, rather than as packages for tourists. According to O'Gorman and Thompson (2007), the commodification of a festival is often responsible for jeopardizing the authenticity of social relations and cultural rituals. Indeed, Liebertz (2007) bemoaned that what the state-sponsored Guelaguetza presents as tradition is really a bastardization of culture put on for the sake of commerce, while Bellinghausen (2007) believed that the Guelaguetza has become a syncretized fiesta rather than a true indigenous interchange.

Hence, there are those advocating Guelaguetza should continue to be developed as a viable commercial tourism venture while others insist Guelaguetza should be given back to the Oaxaqueños to ensure the festival is an authentic indigenous community celebration.

There is little doubt, then, that the Guelaguetza is at a crossroad but potentially, both roads lead to a dead end. The road to a commercialized Guelaguetza has capacity to increase tourism and associated economic benefits but it also has the potential to jeopardize the very essence of the festival by commoditizing, diluting, or even destroying the traditions, culture, and history of Oaxacas' indigenous peoples (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). This road has the potential to lead the Oaxaqueños to a "doomed existence as a tourist commodity, admired for its quaint folkways but not taken seriously" (Besculides et al., 2002, p. 6). The road to a community Guelaguetza has the potential to reinstate community ownership and preserve the traditions, culture, and history of indigenous Oaxacans. If the festival, however, is not economically viable and sustainable and does not receive the support of the people, many of whom are apparently losing interest in supporting and participating in this age-old tradition (Secretaría de Turismo, 2007), it faces the likelihood of becoming defunct.

Consequently, Guelaguetza needs to consider a third, alternative route that ensures there is only one festival that is apolitical and belongs to everyone (Liebertz, 2007) as surely there is only room for one Guelaguetza. The staging of both the Government and the People's Guelaguetza is not a viable long-term option as staging two rival festivals will undoubtedly diminish, rather than strengthen, the sociocultural and economic benefits and credibility of Guelaguetza over time. Furthermore, continued violent demonstrations and clashes between Government and protestors will not only negatively impact upon the cohesion of the local community but will also increase tourists' perceptions that Oaxaca is not a safe destination and weaken Guelaguetza's tourism potential and associated benefits (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Most importantly, the purpose of the Guelaguetza must be reestablished, and consideration should be given to blending the commercial elements of the state-sponsored Guelaguetza with the traditional elements of the People's Guelaguetza (Butler & Hinch, 2007) while ensuring that moral and ethical limits are not transgressed (Pettersen & Viken, 2007). Essentially, the two festivals need not be mu-

tually exclusive because, together, they can generate positive economic, sociocultural, and political benefits for the local community, which will provide opportunities to unite rather than divide the Oaxacan people.

Conclusion

A key characteristic of a festival such as the Guelaguetza is the sense of community and celebration engendered by an occasion that is a public and freely accessed social gathering involving a variety of media such as arts and craft, performances, and demonstrations (Goldblatt, 1997). When the Guelaguetza commences in Oaxaca City in July of each year, the community festival takes participants and spectators on a vibrant, colorful, and musical journey into the history, traditions, and cultures of the indigenous Oaxacans of Mexico. Yet not all that glistens is gold. Behind the façade of this visually spectacular celebration, the government-sponsored Guelaguetza is at real risk of becoming a colorful, attractive, yet meaningless commercialized tourist venture if tourist and commercial needs are favored at the expense of the people and tradition (Davies, 2007a). Concomitantly, the People's Guelaguetza is also at real risk of becoming a colorful, authentic, yet penniless and/or obsolete community festival if community and tourism support is lost due to excessive political unrest throughout Oaxaca City.

Now is the time, then, to revisit and redefine the purpose of the Guelaguetza to ensure it remains a sociocultural and economically viable annual festival for everyone to enjoy, long into the future. Measures must be taken now to avoid the Guelaguetza simply becoming an economic excursion where Government and corporations exploit indigenous traditions for money. Measures must also be taken now to avoid the Guelaguetza becoming a political pawn where Government and the APPO exploit indigenous traditions for power. Measures must be taken now to ensure the very essence of the festival is preserved so that indigenous Mexicans, local Oaxacans, and tourists alike continue to have the opportunity to share in and experience, long into the future, the indigenous Mexican festival called Guelaguetza.

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