

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In México, it is characteristic that occupations are clearly assigned to specific national groups. Almost all pawn shops, grocery stores, and ordinary pubs are in the hands of Spaniards. The French own hotels and fashion houses; mines and large trading businesses belong to the Americans; the Germans represent the academic class and large wholesalers. Because of this, the Germans are the most respected foreigners in México.<sup>1</sup>

Arnold Krumm-Heller, ca. 1910.  
Medical doctor, founder of the *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua*.

Around 27 years ago I immigrated (into Yucatán) with my now deceased husband, Federico Worbis. We arrived from Germany in complete poverty [...] with the intention to work, and to be able to earn honestly our subsistence and that of our then small children [...].<sup>2</sup>

Cristina Franke viuda de Worbis, 1909.  
56 year-old, poultry street vendor in Yucatán.

1. “Überhaupt ist es für Mexiko charakteristisch, dass dort die verschiedenen Berufe streng an die Nationalitäten gebunden sind, die sich damit befassen. So sind zum Beispiel die Pfandhäuser, Kolonialwarengeschäfte und ordinären Kneipen fast alle in spanischen Händen. Die Franzosen haben Hotels, Modehäuser, die Amerikaner Minen und größere Handelsunternehmen, der Deutsche vertritt den Gelehrtenstand und die Großhandelshäuser, und schon deswegen ist der Deutsche von jeher der geachtetste Ausländer in Mexiko.” Cf. Arnold Krumm-Heller, *Mexiko, mein Heimatland!*, (Halle: Dr. Krumm-Hellersche Verlagsanstalt, 1919), pp. 45f. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my responsibility. The citation style used in this book is an adaptation of the Chicago Notes and Bibliography Style, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007). Spelling and capitalization of words and sources’ titles in languages other than English follow the principles of the specific language in question. When referencing original documents, I will be writing the names, titles, and signatures exactly as they are classified in their respective depositories. This explains the variations in spelling. When dates are indicated, these follow the day/month/year format.

2. “Hace el espacio de veintisiete años poco más o menos, que en unión de mi finado esposo Don Federico Worbis, venimos de Alemania en completo estado de pobreza [...] con el ánimo de trabajar honradamente para procurarnos nuestra subsistencia y la de nuestros pequeños hijos [...]” Cf. Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán (hereinafter AGEY), Poder Ejecutivo (hereinafter PE), Gobernación, 1909-1910, caja 497, Cristina Franke viuda de Worbis to the German Consul in Mexico City, Mérida, 28.07.1909; additional information about Mrs. Worbis obtained from AGEY, Justicia Civil (hereinafter JC), 1918, Robo, caja 98, exp. 13, Franke de Worbis vs. Maas. More about the Worbis family in Chapter 7.

In Mexican popular imagery, the German immigrant experience remains as one intrinsically marked with economic attainment. According to Friedrich Freiherr von Gerolt, Prussian Consul to México, by 1836 his fellow countrymen are already “among the most important and successful migrants” in the country.<sup>3</sup> Until the First World War, the migrants that came to México were, supposedly, largely businessmen, scientists, intellectuals, professionals, well-paid craftsmen, and students.<sup>4</sup> Even those in remote, isolated regions are described as wealthy, highly educated, self-sufficient, hardworking, courageous, intelligent, prosperous, “pioneers.”<sup>5</sup> This stereotype<sup>6</sup> is widely encountered even now. For example, a scholar specializing in Latin American Studies reacted to information about German commoners saying that in his mind “in México being German is equal to being rich.”<sup>7</sup> This does not mean, however, that information to the contrary is not available. It has often been overlooked.

In the Fall of 1887, *The New York Times* published an article about the conditions in which Germans, who had once been part of a failed colonization project, found themselves in Yucatán, México.<sup>8</sup> The article shines a light on the fact that the path of migrant social incorporation into a stratified society—as México and most Latin American societies were at the turn of the twentieth century—took varied forms, which is the theme I am interested in. The newspaper details that these German-speaking residents of modest means could only find

3. Cited by Marianne Oeste de Bopp, “Deutsche Auswanderung nach Mexico,” in: *The German Contribution to the Building of the Americas: Studies in Honor of Karl J. R. Arndt*, ed. Gerhard K. Friesen and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover, NH: Clark University Press, 1977), pp. 21-45, (p. 29).

4. Marianne Oeste de Bopp, “Una curiosidad bibliográfica,” *Historia Mexicana* (hereinafter *Hist Mex*) 12, no. 1 (1963): pp. 117-21, (p. 117).

5. Helen H. Seargeant, *San Antonio Nexapa*, (Chiapas: Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, 2000), pp. 70, 130, 280-3.

6. Stereotypes in the context of historical intercultural encounters can be defined as characteristics that arbitrarily are attributed to a group, and supposed to characterize it. These do not have to be accurate, are usually over emphasized, and could be positively or negatively charged. Some people show resistance to reviewing these propositions, even when facing contradictory evidence. See: Frauke Gewecke, *Wie die neue Welt in die alte kam*, (Stuttgart: Klett, 1986), p. 343.

7. Fieldnote, 16.09.2011.

8. S. J. B., “Yucatan and her Slaves,” *The New York Times*, 02.10.1887, [http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?\\_r=1&res=9F04E1DB1530E633A25751C0A9669D94669FD7CF](http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9F04E1DB1530E633A25751C0A9669D94669FD7CF), (accessed 28.08.2008).

employment in a limited number of low-paid trades. In some cases, they found themselves reduced to daily laborers, which the author considered comparable to situations of serfdom. As part of the article, the 59 year-old Friedrich Worbis was interviewed in Mérida, where he had been living with his family for around 20 years. Questioned as to whether he had been deprived of his freedom or found animosity among the locals, Worbis said:

The reverse. They are a warm-hearted people. And have assisted us in many ways, but, unfortunately, the natives belonging in our sphere of life have the same troubles to contend with that we have.<sup>9</sup>

Worbis had immigrated with his family into Yucatán as members of the failed Villa Carlota colonization project.<sup>10</sup> The Worbis, as several other families, stayed in the state and tried to make a living as “normal” immigrants. Recorded more than two decades after Worbis’ entrance into the country, this part of his statement provides insights into five interesting features that challenge the until now popular image of the Germans as privileged and lucratively successful migrants in México. First: Germanophone commoners were working in non-skilled jobs during the Porfiriato.<sup>11</sup> Second: the presence of foreign

9. Ibidem.

10. Alma Durán-Merk, *Identifying Villa Carlota: German Settlements in Yucatán, México, during the Second Mexican Empire, 1864-1867*, (Magister Artium, Universität Augsburg, 2007). This work was published as a book in Spanish as *Villa Carlota. Colonias alemanas en Yucatán*, (Mérida: CONACULTA, ICY, CEPESA, 2009). The Villa Carlota settlements were farming colonies, not to be misunderstood as territories under the immediate control of a foreign state: they were not founded as part of a conquest or territorial expansion of another country. Those who joined this project renounced their nationality of origin and accepted Mexican citizenship.

11. The Porfiriato, also referred to as Porfirismo or the Díaz Era, is the historical timespan when México was under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Traditionally defined to be from 1876 until 1911, this is considered by some historians to have actually started in 1877. For examples of the first case, see Daniel Cosío Villegas, “El Porfiriato: su historiografía o arte histórico,” in: *Extremos de América*, ed. Daniel Cosío Villegas (México: Hermes), pp. 113-8; Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz. Del héroe al dictador*, (México: Planeta, 2001). The second case is represented by Elisa Speckmann Guerra, “El Porfiriato,” in: *Nueva historia mínima de México*, ed. Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo et al. (México: El Colegio de México, 2004), pp. 192-224. Given that Díaz ruled through others during two short periods —parts of 1876, and 1880-1884 the whole epoch is considered as the Díaz Era.

workers, such as this family, did not awaken expressions of xenophobia among the Yucatecans,<sup>12</sup> which according to the academic literature was prevailing at that time.<sup>13</sup> Third: Friedrich Worbis declared that the “natives” helped them in many ways. This, on one side, speaks for interactions, instead of social self-segregation, the latter being the mode of acculturation<sup>14</sup> that ethnic literature proposes was found as prevalent by the Germans in México. Fourth: when Worbis referred to those “natives *in our sphere of life*” he was probably pointing out to Yucatán’s social stratification,<sup>15</sup> implying that as underprivileged migrants they integrated into the lower strata, that of the poor local laborers—in those days mostly native Maya people, and underprivileged Creole<sup>16</sup> that worked long hours for a miserable salary. The fifth and final point: Friedrich Worbis’ statement is an expression of his own, unique, experience of migration: his *Lebenswelt*,<sup>17</sup> life-world, was different from those of the propertied migrants’ we have known about until now.

Thenceforth, these five features question the widespread image that deems pecuniary success as a constitutive part of the German migrant experience in México since the first generation, which still transcends

12. When referring to “Yucatecans,” or *yucatecos*, it is hereby meant the residents of the Mexican state of Yucatán, without distinction of their ethnocultural admixture or language usage. “*Meridanos*” are those who reside in Mérida.

13. There is abundant literature about this theme, for example: Moisés González Navarro, “Xenofobia y xenofilia en la Revolución Mexicana,” *Hist Mex* 18, no. 4 (1969): pp. 569-61; Moisés González Navarro, *Historia Moderna de México. El Porfiriato. La vida social*, ed. Daniel Cosío Villegas (México: Hermes, 1973); Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero*, vol. I (México: El Colegio de México, 1993); Delia Salazar Anaya, ed. *Xenofobia y xenofilia en la historia de México siglos XIX y XX: homenaje a Moisés González Navarro*, (México: INM, SEGOB, INAH, 2006).

14. John W. Berry, “Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation,” in: *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research*, ed. Kevin M. Chun et al. (Washington: APA, 2003), pp. 17-38, proposes four modes, or strategies, by the process of acculturation: segregation, marginalization, integration and assimilation. I will go into more details in the following chapter.

15. Emphasis by author. Stratification refers to a form of hierarchical division of a society, whereby people are ranked into patterns of unequal power, wealth, or prestige. Thomas Barfield, *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 450f.

16. As Maya are here designated the descendants from the Maya Mesoamerican civilization; Creole or *mestizos* are people of Indigenous and either European or African parentage.

17. The meaning of this term will be explained in Chapter 2.

until today in multiple forms. In the media and in social interactions people associate a last name of this origin with belonging to the propertied classes, many stories present them as wealthy migrants of choice and high achievers who “help to modernize México,”<sup>18</sup> and their descendants claim to have noble origins. Even if a substantial number of people of this parentage gained influence over time,<sup>19</sup> —considering the reduced quantity of the original flow—<sup>20</sup> why has it not been asked if this could be, for example, the result of structural conditions, individual, familial, and communal strategies, or of upper social mobility gained through generations? Probably because of the presumptions that Germans never arrived “poor,” and that their pathways in México invariably led to boundless achievements. In this paper, I will show how these clichés can be deconstructed.

Additionally, we need to take into consideration that most of the scholarly literature dedicated to this migration has focused, until now, on the propertied classes, the so-called *Handelskonquistadoren*.<sup>21</sup> Walther L. Bernecker coined this term in his analysis of government interests, business practices, political sympathies, and integration of European and North American business people in México before 1860. Reflecting on the term *per se*, the idea of trade conquistadors evokes connotations of supremacy, power, superiority, dominance, and of a position marked by privilege over other peoples. The association with such characteristics is also found in the works of Brígida von Mentz and her associates, who see the German residents

18. Fieldnote, 27.02.2003.

19. Among other publications, this theme has been treated by Jürgen Buchenau, “Auge y declive de una diáspora. La colonia alemana en México,” *istor, Revista de Historia Internacional* 8, no. 30 (2007): pp. 71-98. In popular media —such as Wikipedia, blogs, webpages, and ethnic discussion forums— these kinds of ideas are extensively present.

20. Several scholars have acknowledged that German-speaking migration into México was not significant numerically, such as Bernecker, Berninger, Buchenau, and von Mentz and her associates. Please see the bibliography.

21. Walther L. Bernecker, *Die Handelskonquistadoren. Europäische Interessen und mexikanischer Staat im 19. Jahrhundert*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988a). Please note that for the sake of readability, non-English, unfamiliar, isolated words are italicized every time they appear in this manuscript; when a translation is required this is set next to it or as a footnote the first time that it appears. A glossary of the most commonly used terms is included as Appendix 3.

in México as representatives of German Imperialism.<sup>22</sup> These merchants were “entrepreneurs and middle-class fortune seekers rather than a stream of lower class immigrants”<sup>23</sup> and resided mostly in the Mexican capital.<sup>24</sup> These *Handelskonquistadoren* have been categorized as part of an affluent and industrious elite, who “armed with considerable investment capital”<sup>25</sup> and wealthy family ties rapidly obtained great influence in México’s economy and incorporated themselves into the Mexican elite.<sup>26</sup> The characteristics of these “migrants of choice”<sup>27</sup> can be summarized by saying that at their arrival the majority of them were single, rich, young, urban males with a sojourn mentality; most of them, according to the literature, belittled the host society, avoided private contact with the locals, married endogenously, and precluded from reinvesting their profits in México. Their sole objective was to become rich as quickly as possible, according to some authors, in order to go back to Germany. At group level, these *Auslandsdeutsche*, German residents abroad, have

22. Brígida von Mentz et al., *Los pioneros del imperialismo alemán en México*, (México: CIESAS, 1982); Brígida von Mentz et al., eds., *Los empresarios alemanes, el Tercer Reich, la oposición de derecha y Cárdenas*, vol. I (México: CIESAS, 1988).

23. Jürgen Buchenau, “Small Numbers, Great Impact: Mexico and Its Immigrants, 1821-1973,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 3 (2001): pp. 23-49, (p. 27).

24. There is a considerable body of scholarship that focuses on the elite German migration into México. The more in-depth studies about the German entrepreneurs in Mexico are those from Walther L. Bernecker, “Los alemanes en el México decimonónico: cuantificación, estructura socio-profesional, posturas político-ideológicas,” in: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, ed. Hermann Kellenbenz (Köln: Böhlau, 1988b), 385-414; Walther L. Bernecker, “Deutsche im Mexiko des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in: *Wirkungen von Migrationen auf aufnehmende Gesellschaften*, ed. Hans Hopfinger and Horst Kopp (Neustadt an der Aisch: Degener, 1996), 231-5; von Mentz et al. 1982. The former contains a case study about family entrepreneurship in Veracruz, see: Beatriz Scharrer, “Estudio de caso: el grupo familiar de empresarios Stein-Sartorius,” in: *Los pioneros del imperialismo alemán en México*, ed. Brígida von Mentz et al. (México: CIESAS, 1982), pp. 231-86.

25. Buchenau 2001: 27.

26. Von Mentz et al. 1982.

27. Jürgen Buchenau, *Tools of Progress: A German Merchant Family in Mexico City, 1865-Present*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), p. 16. “Migrants of choice,” or “migrants of plenty,” are terms commonly used to refer to people who make a self-aware decision to migrate, instead of being “forced,” or influenced, by structural, political, social or economic conditions. The application of these terms to migration motivated by financial progress is contested in current migration research, as I will address in Chapter 2.

been occasionally described as a relatively cohesive and self-segregated “colony” in which many successfully refused miscegenation and socio-cultural integration at least until the eve of the Second World War.<sup>28</sup> This image created the myth of the Germans as a group who found it “difficult to acculturate.”

The aforementioned features, although based on the analysis of part of the German capitalist class in México City during the nineteenth century, appear to have been uncritically extended to all immigrants of European, especially German, origin both in academic as well as in public discourse. Is this the only ethnic group in México around which such myths of origin and influence have been created? No. This type of imagery was also constructed around the migrants from the commune of Ubaye, in the French Alps, in Mexican historiography referred to as the Barcelonnettes. However, there is one important difference: although the Barcelonnettes’ generalized image was kept mostly static for a long time, in the last decade an intense process of scholarly deconstruction has been taking place. Many old conceptions and generalizations have been corrected and re-evaluated thanks to multiple regional contributions using new sources, methods, and interpretations.<sup>29</sup> The oversimplified image of other Western European clusters has not been revisited yet. I intend to contribute, with the present work, to revealing the different roles taken by the germanophone people in a specific regional society.

Whereas the chronicle of capitalists’ newcomers does indeed report a good deal of the German historical migration experience in México, to focus only on this has also abridged its real complexity. First, it portrays the Germans in México as a relatively dominant, coherent unit that held a straight ethnic, class, and religious separation until the third decade of the nineteenth century. The idea, however, that

28. Friedrich Ratzel, *Aus Mexiko. Reiseskizzen aus den Jahren 1874 und 1875*, (Stuttgart: Brockhaus, 1969); Joachim Kühn, “Das Deutschtum in Mexiko um 1850,” in: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte vom Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, ed. Richard von Konetzke (Köln-Graz: Böhlau, 1965), 335-7; Buchenau 2001: 28-30; Buchenau 2004: passim. However, some Germans married Mexican citizens and were well integrated in the local economy, according to Silke Nagel, *Ausländer in Mexiko. Die Kolonien der deutschen und US-amerikanischen Einwanderer in der mexikanischen Hauptstadt, 1890-1942*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2005), p. 14.

29. Leticia Gamboa Ojeda, ed. *Los barcelonnettes en México: miradas regionales, siglos XIX-XX*, (Puebla: BUAP, 2008).

shared cultural traits lead directly to group solidarity has been challenged since the 1970s.<sup>30</sup> Second, this vision restricts acknowledgment of the variations developed over time and space, and it is exclusory because it silences the important and diverse paths followed by those germanophone populaces of humble origins. Finally, those who lived in other locations are marginalized in accounts whose central focus is the Mexican capital. The experiences of German residents in México City, who apparently were only about one-third of the total of those in the whole country,<sup>31</sup> have been monolithically applied to what is, in reality, a highly diversified group.

While some historians have reported on small numbers of German craftsmen, laborers, unskilled workers, the poor and indigent, the traces of the latter have not been followed and they remain unstudied.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the term *Kaufmann*, merchant, translates generally in Spanish as *comerciante*. People with a large range of statuses can use this term to describe their occupation: from a petty trader, street vendor, retailer or salaried clerk, to a bookkeeper, an assistant, cashier, manager or investor. It should be noted that by 1841, these employees in the German states could be differentiated in eight sub-categories in terms of socio-economic background, preparation, salaries, possibilities of upward mobility, etc.<sup>33</sup>

30. Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture and Difference*, (London: Universitetsforlaget, 1969); Magnus Mörner, *Adventurers and Proletarians. The Story of Migrants in Latin America*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), p. 70f; Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaudt, *Immigrant America. A Portrait*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1996). Steven Vertovec, *Migration and Social Cohesion*, (Cheltenham: Elgar, 1999) is a volume dedicated especially to this issue. In it, the importance of analyzing interdependence and reciprocity among the groups in contact is emphasized.

31. In 1891 about 1,500 German-speaking people lived in Mexico, 500 of them in the capital, cf. Oeste de Bopp 1963: 118.

32. Ratzel 1969: 47; Orla Holm, *Aus Mexiko*, (Berlin: F. Fontane & Co., 1908); Kühn 1965: 34; Geo A. Schmidt, *Mexiko*, (Berlin: Reimer, 1925), p. 17; von Mentz et al. 1982: 35; Bernecker 1988b: 393; Brígida von Mentz, "Presencia alemana en la economía y la sociedad mexicanas del siglo XIX," in: *Las relaciones germano-mexicanas. Desde el aporte de los hermanos Humboldt hasta el presente*, ed. León Bieber, (México: El Colegio de México, 2003), pp. 131-41, (p. 135).

33. Rolf Engelsing, "Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Differenzierung der deutschen kaufmännischen Angestellten 1690-1900, Teil 1," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 123, (1967a): pp. 347-80, especially 357f; Rolf Engelsing, "Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Differenzierung der deutschen kaufmännischen Angestellten 1690-1900, Teil 2," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 123, (1967b): pp. 482-514.



Until now, this diversity has been ignored for analytical purposes. How to assume, then, that the migration experience of a simple employee could be the same as that of the owner of the company? The *Lebenswelten* of commoners most surely diverged from those of the elite. To reconstruct them will allow us to demystify the historical incorporation processes of ethnic minority groups in México, and help us to understand how and why the lives of migrating commoners differed from those of privileged newcomers. This is especially important in the present, when we attempt to comprehend to what degree the challenges and opportunities that contemporary migrants face are related to antecedents and long-duration processes.

Though it has been said that probably the integration modes of the unprosperous Germans were different from those of the *Handelskonquistadoren*,<sup>34</sup> those migration experiences have still not been sufficiently reviewed.<sup>35</sup> Thinking about the words of Friedrich Worbis that we read before, I wonder: what was it like to be a poor Prussian or Bavarian, for example, in a Mexican province during the nineteenth century? What did that mean in his daily life, and that of the members of his family? Was it easier to be accepted in a smaller city than in the Mexican capital? The Worbis family was Protestant: which strategies did they use to adapt to a mostly Catholic society? Besides, not only German nationals of modest means were in Yucatán at that time. There were Austrians, Swiss, Poles, Hungarians, and others who also spoke German; additionally, there were a number of middle and upper class newcomers. Considering the diversity of the group: how did the migration experience diverge according to the pre-migratory socio-economic status of the family? Were there special challenges that the subaltern sectors had to overcome to recreate a life in a new society? In Mexico City, according to the academic literature, only those in the upper social ranks formed the “German colony.”<sup>36</sup> Were there intra-ethnic contacts among different classes? Was “Germaness” contested in Yucatán? Some of the migrants did not fulfill the blond and blue-eyed stereotype;<sup>37</sup> were they perceived as “non-

34. Von Mentz et al. 1982.

35. There is only one descriptive study, carried out in Puebla. I will discuss it later.

36. Nagel 2005: 15f.

37. How elite people with those characteristics lived in Mexico’s capital is explored by Jürgen Buchenau, “Blond and Blue-Eyed in Mexico City, 1821 to 1975,” in: *The*

white”? Was being “German” enough to be in a position of power? How did women who migrated individually experience migration? What about children who, for various reasons, were separated from their original families and stayed in the state?<sup>38</sup> Many questions remain unanswered because of the lack of a systematic study that investigates in detail the migration and incorporation processes in Mexican provinces of German-speaking migrants of diverse socio-economic origins over a long period of time. The present ethnography seeks to fill in this research gap by exploring the Yucatecan experience.

Yucatán became home to a considerable number of foreign comers. As part of the Villa Carlota colonization project, 443 germanophone-born individuals, mainly impoverished farmers and artisans and their families, settled during 1865 and 1867 in the predominantly Maya villages of Santa Elena and Pustunich.<sup>39</sup> While the project collapsed together with the Second Mexican Empire in 1867, several of those families remained in Yucatán, where today some of them are now in the seventh generation. Mistakenly perceived as a marginal region, Yucatán was an active participant in the international economy from 1876 until the 1930s because of its henequen production,<sup>40</sup> which also attracted a moderate amount of German-speaking middle class and a few elite migrants to the peninsula. However, there was also a relative number of newcomers of modest means who carried on semi-skilled and un-skilled jobs. From the Colonial Period, members of all socio-economic groups concentrated in Mérida, the capital and

*Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 85-110.

38. Please note that in México the term “state” refers to a province. This is how the term is used in this work when referring to the Mexican states.

39. Durán-Merk 2009: especially Chapter III.

40. Henequen (*Agave fourcroydes*) —in English also called sisal hemp— is a variety of the agave cactus, or maguey, that has been cultivated in Yucatán since before the Spanish invasion. Rope and burlap bags were made from it, which were in great demand for the USA’s mechanized agriculture. As a point of reference, the Yucatecan henequen production rose from 112,911 bales in 1880 up to close to one million bales in 1915. For an overview of the accumulation of capital of certain Yucatecan families see Allen Wells, “Family Elites in a Boom-and-Bust Economy: The Molinas and Peóns of Porfirian Yucatán,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* (hereinafter *HAHR*) 62, no. 2 (1982): pp. 224-53. For a good bilingual overview of the history of henequen, see Maureen Ransom Carty, coord. *Henequén, leyenda, historia y cultura*, (Mérida: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán, Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2006).

center of almost all activities.<sup>41</sup> This means that these immigrants and their offspring participated in Yucatán's Golden Age as *hacendados*,<sup>42</sup> ranchers, administrators, investors, small to large scale entrepreneurs, educators, technicians and qualified professionals, but also as clerks, artisans, draymen, laborers, house maids, mechanics, and construction workers. The analysis of this particularly wider configuration will provide a more differentiated report of the migration and incorporation<sup>43</sup> experiences and their conditions.

### 1.1. STATE OF THE ART

As already mentioned, a methodical study of the incorporation of a socio-financial diverse group of germanophone-born individuals in México has not been carried out. Most of the published data relates to the entrepreneurial presence in Mexico City. I will move on to an overview of research in the area to date, highlighting the main perspectives, focuses, contributions, findings, and shortcomings of the works that are relevant.

#### *German Immigration to México*

Most of the first writers in German language who reported how their fellow countrymen lived in México were not particularly interested in projecting the real conditions they found.<sup>44</sup> Commonly diplomats, businessmen, travelers, or promoters of colonization, their devotion to celebrating the image of the wealthy, cultured, industrious and highly

41. Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 32f; Asael Hansen and Juan Bastarrachea, *Mérida: Su transformación de capital colonial a naciente metrópoli en 1935*, (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1984), pp. 91f.

42. In this work, I refer to the owners of large estates or plantations as *hacendados*, reserving the English term "rancher" for those who had small properties.

43. This term is discussed in the next chapter.

44. Two of the few exceptions are the reports of Ferdinand Seiffart, Consul General of Prussia to Mexico from 1846 to 1850, which has been studied in detail by Kühn 1965: passim; and the one written by B. von Boguslawski, *Ueber deutsche Colonisation in Mexico*, (Berlin: Hempel, 1851).

successful Hanseatic or Prussian migrant<sup>45</sup> has done so well that until the present some of those myths still endure, such as assigning to all foreigners of this origin noble and affluent roots. These narratives that equate European migration with “development,”<sup>46</sup> mentioned compatriots in places other than the Mexican capital only occasionally.<sup>47</sup>

The next generation, formed by academics, had a different approach. Led by specialists in German studies, these works attempted for the first time to include some interactions with the host society.<sup>48</sup> However, these scholars were still predisposed to some degree by modernization theory, and their major interest seem to have been to record the efforts made by this foreign community to keep their *Deutschtum* (Germanness) alive, and to praise their accomplishments while in México. Nevertheless, they serve as orientation and provide data about sources for further research. Although the largest contributions were in German language, for the first time some of these works were written in Spanish, which have served as reference to almost all subsequent efforts.

The formation of power groups in México’s capital has been sufficiently studied, thanks to the broad and relevant scholarly production of a third generation of researchers. The most significant for the present work are the texts of Walther L. Bernecker,<sup>49</sup> and two extensive analyses carried out by the research team spearheaded by

45. Among them Wilhelm Pferdekamp, *Auf Humboldts Spuren – Deutsche in jungen Mexiko*, (München: Max Hueber, 1958); Ratzel 1969; Holm 1908; Heinrich Lemcke, *Mexico. Das Land und seine Leute*, (Berlin: Alfred Schall, 1900). Although published later, Victor W. von Hagen, *Der Ruf der neuen Welt. Deutsche bauen Amerika*, (München: Droemer, 1970), approaches the theme similarly.

46. According to this premise-cum-model, countries “progress” linearly towards “civilization.” Migrants from “advanced” nations could help those in “underdeveloped” areas to “improve” their conditions. The application of this paradigm to migration studies will be discussed in more detail ahead.

47. For example, Ratzel 1969: 156ff, briefly reports his impressions of the Germans in the port of Veracruz.

48. Oeste de Bopp 1963; Oeste de Bopp 1977: pp. 21-45; Marianne Oeste de Bopp, “Die Deutschen in Mexico,” in: *Die Deutschen in Lateinamerika. Schicksal und Leistung*, ed. Hartmut Fröschle, (Tübingen: Erdmann, 1979), pp. 475-564..

49. Bernecker 1988b; Walther L. Bernecker, “Competencia comercial europea a través del atlántico: el caso de México,” in: *México y la economía atlántica. Siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Sandra Kuntz and Horst Pietschmann, (México: El Colegio de México, 2006), pp. 109-42.

Brígida von Mentz.<sup>50</sup> Using a dependency theory framework,<sup>51</sup> the content of the latter is mainly interested in pecuniary and political interactions, with the exception of some interesting notes and a short chapter about the social relationships and daily lives of the Germans before the Porfiriato.<sup>52</sup>

Newer production, such as the study of the acculturation process of a Prussian *Handelskonquistador* family in Mexico City from a transnational perspective, also provides some aspects that can be paralleled or contested.<sup>53</sup> In his study, Jürgen Buchenau details, for example, that the third generation still spoke German as first language, kept German traditions alive, and married endogamically. It will be interesting to compare those outcomes to those resulting from this study.

The same applies to the comparative analysis carried out by the historian Silke Nagel. She examined the internal dynamics and roles played by the German and the American “colonies” in the nation’s capital from 1890 until 1942, paying special attention to the institutions they formed and the strategies they developed in order to maintain their unity and national identity.<sup>54</sup> Defining as members of the German “colony” those who were active in the group’s ethnic life through their support and participation in their own churches, associations and schools,<sup>55</sup> the universe Nagel studied concentrates on the upper-middle and the upper class aliens who belonged to those organizations. Among her conclusions, she maintains that the German-speaking people in Mexico City before 1876 did not have large attachments to a specific country of origin, official representation on the part of the sending and receiving

50. Von Mentz et al. 1982; ibidem 1988. In a recent book, Margarita Theesz Poschner, *Migración húngara en México y Argentina (1939-1949)*, (México: UNM-CEM, Tilde Editores, 2012) analyses the identity of Hungarian immigrants in México starting in 1939.

51. Dependency theory, a neo-Marxist critique of modernization theory, seeks to identify the causes of underdevelopment, some of which are the result of colonial encounters. It “theorizes historic macro-economic relations and processes at national and international level.” Michael Kearney, “From the Invisible Hand to Visible Feet: Anthropological Studies of Migration and Development,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15, (1986): pp. 331-61, (p. 338).

52. Brígida von Mentz, “Relaciones sociales y vida cotidiana,” in: *Los pioneros del imperialismo alemán en México*, ed. Brígida von Mentz et al., (México: CIESAS, 1982), pp. 331-62.

53. Buchenau 2004.

54. Nagel 2005.

55. Ibidem: 13f.

societies was weak, and the newcomers required the establishment of meaningful contacts with locals and other foreigners in order to attain success. She also detected changes during the Porfiriato, when many elite Western-Europeans identified themselves as some sort of “carriers of modernization,” which found echo within part of the Mexican political program of that period; at the same time, the group intensified its internal social stratification, which excluded those of reduced income and weak communal position. Smaller cities with diverse socio-economic conditions could have undergone a different development: the Yucatecan case could give insights into these differences.

Two recently written academic theses about the Germans in the province of Puebla can also provide data to compare and contrast against the findings in Yucatán. An account of the immigration experience and integration into the receiving society of a small group of elite and middle-class immigrants in Puebla from 1821 until 1910, from a historical perspective, is offered in one of these studies, which has also been recently published as a book.<sup>56</sup> It sees this phenomenon as successful because of its moneymaking achievements and its partial cultural and religious adaptation, but does not address the issue of diversity in detail. More than on migration processes, it concentrates on resettlement. The work is mostly descriptive and it is based on the ample consultation of multiple primary sources. It contributes refreshing information about the life paths of some German people<sup>57</sup> in the Mexican province: their socio-financial positions in the host society varied, and not all of them became ostensibly rich; some moved up socially because of their marriage strategies; contrary to what was believed, many married locals and formed German-Pueblan families; a good number of the Protestants converted into Catholicism, which apparently was relatively easy. These are all important aspects that can be compared to the migration experiences in Yucatán.

56. Ana Luisa Rojas Marín, *Del bosque a los árboles. Miradas a los alemanes residentes en la Ciudad de Puebla, 1821-1910*, (Maestra en Historia, ICSyH, BUAP, 2007). After presenting an overview of the composition of the migrant group, the study describes the trajectories of three immigrants and four German-owned businesses. As a book, it can be found as Ana Luisa Rojas Marín, *Del bosque a los árboles*, (Puebla: BUAP, 2012). Although a detailed study of the migrants in question, it does not analyze their situation from the theoretical perspective of such concepts as integration and adaptation.

57. Other German-speaking people were excluded from that study.

The objective of the second Master's thesis was to analyze the German migrants in Puebla from 1910 to 1945,<sup>58</sup> focusing on the composition of the migrant group and relocation processes. Besides certain conceptual ambiguity, the major drawback of this study lies in the intrinsic limitations of primary sources used. Relying mostly on the Censuses, the Registro Nacional de Extranjeros (National Registry of Foreigners) and the Filiaciones de Población (Enlistment Records) —the first known for their serious shortcomings and lack of accuracy,<sup>59</sup> the second starting 1932, and the third in 1933— those primary elements offer only a snapshot in time and cannot provide accurate information about the German community and their socio-economic characteristics from 1910 until 1945. Another weakness is that it attempts to analyze the changes of the German "colony" in Puebla solely through its ethnic institutions, without taking into account the host society.

Well-documented regional studies carried out in Chiapas, Colima and in the Mexican Northeast provide reports about the presence and activities of German migrants, many of whom were of humble origins, remained in the country, married locals, and established solid businesses and families.<sup>60</sup> This means, that the Pueblan and the Yu-

58. Katharina Happ, *Deutsche Einwanderer in der mexikanischen Provinzhauptstadt Puebla 1910-1945*, (Magister Artium, Freie Universität Berlin, 2003). The work suffers from serious irregularities, such as the use without a proper reflection of the binary and linear-typology of migration by William Petersen, which has long been discredited.

59. For a well-founded and detailed critique of the inaccuracies of the Mexican censuses, see Sergio Camposortega Cruz, "Análisis demográfico de las corrientes migratorias a México desde finales del siglo XIX," in: *Destino México. Un estudio de las migraciones asiáticas a México, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. María Elena Ota Mishima, (México: El Colegio de México, 1997), pp. 23-53.

60. See for example: Servando Ortoll, *Vogel. Conquistas y desventuras de un cónsul y hacendado alemán en Colima*, (Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora, 2005); Julia Preciado Zamora, *Por las faldas del volcán de Colima: cristeros, agraristas y pacíficos*, (México, Publicaciones de la Casa Chata, 2007), where part of the origin, trajectories and regional influence of the Schöndube and Vogel families are studied from an anthropological perspective. Recently, an essay started to identify the origins of the families of German descent that played a role in the development of Sonora and Baja California: Jesús Méndez Reyes, "Alemanes en el noroeste mexicano. Notas sobre su actividad comercial a inicios del siglo XX," *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 46 (2013), pp. 55-86. For a diversified view of the German immigrants in Chiapas turn to José Alejos García, "Dominio extranjero en Chiapas. El desarrollo cafetalero en la Sierra Norte," *Mesoamérica* 32 (1996), pp. 283-298.

catecan cases are, by no means, exceptions when it comes to receiving immigrants with a low to middle class origin, who at some level or other integrated themselves successfully into their new environment.

Moving on to texts written in México about immigration in general, when it comes to the German-speaking presence, these are mostly compilations of older works printed in Spanish.<sup>61</sup> Many accounts of other historical migrations analyzing a specific group such as Mennonites,<sup>62</sup> Jews and political exiles,<sup>63</sup> deal with time periods not covered in this volume or, given their characteristics—they are neither guided nor explained by theory—cannot be taken into account as professional analyses.

There are also some studies that include anecdotes about how foreigners in México interacted with other cultural groups,<sup>64</sup> but they do not analyze germanophone-born people specifically. The same applies to other publications, which compile statistics and some of the official arguments favoring preferential treatment for elite immigrants.<sup>65</sup> These can, however, provide interesting data.

61. E.g. Luz María Martínez Montiel and Araceli Reynoso Medina, “Inmigración europea y asiática siglos XIX y XX,” in: *Simbiosis de culturas. Los inmigrantes y su cultura en México*, ed. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, (México: CONACULTA, FCE, 1993), pp. 245-424.

62. Luis Aboites Aguilar, “Xenofobia local, xenofobia federal. Los primeros años menonitas en Chihuahua, 1922-1933,” in: *Xenofobia y xenofilia en la historia de México siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Delia Salazar, (México: SEGOB, INM, INAH, 2006), pp. 309-22; Jane-Dale Lloyd, “Las colonias mormonas porfiristas en Chihuahua: ¿un proyecto de vida comunitaria alterna?,” *ibidem*, pp. 203-32.

63. Such as the multiple essays edited by Renata von Hanffstengel et al., *Mexiko: Das wohltemperierte Exil*, (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Interculturales Germano-Mexicanas, 1995); Ricardo Pérez Monfort, “Apuntes sobre el exilio alemán en México durante las décadas de los años treinta y cuarenta del siglo XX,” in: *Xenofobia y xenofilia en la Historia de México siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Delia Salazar Anaya, (México: SEGOB, INM, INAH, 2006), pp. 469-88.

64. Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero*, vol. II, (México: El Colegio de México, 1994b).

65. González Navarro 1969; Moisés González Navarro, *La colonización en México, 1877-1910*, (México: Talleres de Impresión de Estampillas y Valores, 1960); Moisés González Navarro, *Población y sociedad en México (1900-1970)*, vol. I, (México: El Colegio de México, 1974b).



*German-Speaking Migration into Yucatán*

With regards to immigration into the peninsula *per se*, although a wide range of cultural groups from different native-country socio-economic backgrounds have been analyzed —such as Koreans,<sup>66</sup> Africans,<sup>67</sup> Canary Islanders,<sup>68</sup> Cubans,<sup>69</sup> French<sup>70</sup> and Syrian-Lebanese—<sup>71</sup> very little attention has been dedicated to the German-speaking presence. Short accounts of questionable accuracy can be found in encyclopedia entries, pamphlets, and newspaper collaborations. There is also a brief article about the Germans and the henequen industry, written by Mérida's chronicler.<sup>72</sup> Only one scholarly work has studied the German colonization project Villa Carlota.<sup>73</sup>

As this State of the Art has shown, there is a need for a scientific study that examines methodically the presence, dimensions of incorporation, and interactions of both elite and non-elite germanophone

66. Javier Amado Corona Baeza, "La inmigración coreana," in: *Henequén, leyenda, historia y cultura*, coord. Maureen Ransom Carty, (Mérida: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán, Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2006), pp. 159-7; José Luis Gutiérrez May, *Sanos, fuertes y humildes. Los inmigrantes coreanos en Yucatán, 1905-1910*, (Licenciado en Historia, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 2011).

67. Francisco Fernández Repetto and Geny Negroe Sierra, *Una población perdida en la memoria: los negros de Yucatán*, (Mérida: UADY, 1995); Jorge Victoria Ojeda and Jorge Canto Alcocer, *San Fernando Aké. Microhistoria de una comunidad afroamericana en Yucatán*, (Mérida: UADY, 2006); Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

68. Manuel Ferrer Muñoz, "Notas sueltas sobre presencia de canarios en Yucatán (siglos XVIII y XIX)," *AEA* 48, (2002): pp. 121-3; Manuel Ferrer Muñoz and Lizbeth Rodríguez Luna, *Canarios de Yucatán*, (Mérida: UADY, 2011).

69. Carlos E. Bojórquez Urzáiz, *La emigración cubana en Yucatán 1868-1898*, (Mérida: Imágen Contemporánea, 2000).

70. Emiliano Canto Mayén, *Inmigración e influencia cultural de Francia en la región henequenera de Yucatán, 1860-1914*, (Maestría en Estudios Regionales, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2011a).

71. For example Luis Ramírez Carrillo, "Los libaneses en el auge henequenero," in: *Henequén, leyenda, historia y cultura*, coord. Maureen Ransom Carty, (Mérida: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán, Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2006), pp. 183-93; Luis Ramírez Carrillo, *Secretos de familia: libaneses y elites empresariales en Yucatán*, (México: CONACULTA, 1994).

72. Juan Francisco Peón Ancona, "Los alemanes y el henequén," in: *Henequén, leyenda, historia y cultura*, coord. Maureen Ransom Carty, (Mérida: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán, Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 2006), pp. 174-81.

73. Durán-Merk 2007.

immigrants and their offspring in provincial Mexico. This is the gap in scholarly knowledge that this publication intends to fill.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE OF THIS WORK

The two main questions of this study are: what were the social and cultural characteristics of the German-speaking residents in Yucatán between 1876 and 1914? How did these newcomers and their descendants become incorporated into the Yucatecan society?

In accordance with the methodological and theoretical challenges of our time,<sup>74</sup> movement, resettlement, and possible remigration processes will be included in order to gain a more encompassing understanding of the phenomenon. This implies that extensive research in multiple locations must be carried out to illuminate pre-migration conditions, and returns or further migrations.

The two major research objectives expressed above pose certain requirements. In order to answer the first question it is essential to identify the German-speaking people who immigrated. To respond to the second inquiry involves the examination of the *Lebenswelten* of the migrants through which we have access to their interactions with their receiving society.<sup>75</sup> These two pursuits will guide this work as if by using multifocal glasses, i.e., through connecting the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. In terms of the intercultural contacts resulting from these experienced migrations, I am particularly interested in indications of transculturation, and how these varied according to different markers of identity.

It is necessary now to explain some decisions that I have made. The first is the scope of this monograph's research domain, the "German-speaking residents of Yucatán." During the investigation it became clear that few people, especially among those born before the 1880s, identified themselves as Germans; more often than the term Prussian,

74. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005b); Caroline Brettell and James Hollifield, *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*, (New York: Routledge, 2008b); Christiane Harzig et al., *What is Migration History?*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

75. The theoretical framework guiding this study is specified in Chapter 2.

regional or local identities were used as forms of subjective group bonding. Given the time period selected, several geographical or political changes affected self-ascription.<sup>76</sup> The Germans, according to substantial evidence collected for this analysis, interacted intensively with people of five other collectives —Austrians, Swiss, Poles, Russians, and Alsatians— that were present in Yucatán at that time. The last four units posed a challenge: there were not enough to be studied independently and too many to be overlooked, especially because of their interconnectedness to the Germans. It appears that beyond whatever dissimilarities they might have had, language created a bridge that invited them, or forced them, to a certain degree of shared action. Not without doubts, I decided to study them together under the label “German-speaking”<sup>77</sup> as a general notion for practical purposes, acknowledging from the start that the group is not homogenous. Other researchers who have studied germanophone groups in other areas —such as Central Europe, Australia, Africa, and the Americas— have successfully taken this path,<sup>78</sup> which allows for a more holistic view, is oriented toward interactions, and helps to prevent nation-centered examinations. Even if not fully convinced, as Ronald Cohen has pointed out, anthropologists, as outsiders, must categorize.<sup>79</sup> Thenceforth, I name the group German-speaking immigrants, referring to them also as *yuca-alemanes* —Yuca(tecan)- Germans, which is how some of their descendants identify themselves— and Mayab-Germans. In literature, poetry, and common usage, the Yucatecans refer to their land in three other ways even now, which I also incorporate in my writing: the Mayalands, Mayab, and “The land of the pheasant and the deer.” The last two come from oral tradition and Maya narratives: “*Lelí é lá, ú lúumil cutz, ú lúumil ceb, Mayab ú kabá,*” “this is the land of the pheasant and the deer, and its name is Mayab,” as transcribed by

76. It pertains to immigrants born before 1871 in the different states that would later form the German Empire. There are also cases of ethnic Germans born in third countries, or nationalized Germans, who embraced hyphenated identities.

77. As synonyms I use germanophone and germanophone-born.

78. See, for example, the various essays contained in Mathias Schulze et al., *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration and Loss*, (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).

79. Ronald Cohen, “Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7, (1978): pp. 379-403, (p. 382).

Antonio Médez Bolio.<sup>80</sup> When I write only “German” I am referring specifically to German subjects or citizens. Please note that besides place of birth and self-identification, I use cultural markers to define the people who are included in this study—such as language, cultural practices, ideology and religion—and not phenotypical ascriptions, hearsays, or last names, as other writers have done.

Another difficult choice was who could be part of this study. On one extreme, some authors take all people with German-sounding last names that they find in documents or oral reports, without distinction as to whether they were transients or how long they stayed. On the other extreme, certain scholars suggest that “immigrants” are only those who do not plan to go back to their country of origin—which departs from the idea that everything can be foreseen, which is in most cases not possible, and in historical empirical cases turns out to be even more difficult to assess. I have judged appropriate the reliance on the guidelines of the United Nations, which define immigrants as those who reside in a different country to that of origin for at least one continuous year.<sup>81</sup> I believe this definition allows for a minimum of interactions with the host society to take place. These relationships and actions could be read as indicators of actions or ideas that reveal ways and dimensions of integration.

The concentration on Mérida as a contact zone<sup>82</sup> and core geographical area of analysis responds to the fact that this is where most of the subjects studied resided; nevertheless, those who lived in other Yucatecan localities are included as far as reliable information makes it possible. Additionally, there were temporary forms of intra-state, multiple, and circular migration. These will be pointed out.

80. Redfield 1941: 3; Antonio Médez Bolio, *La tierra del faisán y del venado*, (Mérida: Ediciones Cordemex, 1984), p. 13.

81. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “International Migration Report,” ed. United Nations, (New York: United Nations, 2000), <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/ittmig2002/2002ITTMIG TEXT22-11.pdf>, (accessed 27.03.2010).

82. I use the term “contact zone” in its wide meaning, in which it “invokes the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect,” which conceives these encounters as possibilities for interactions, shared understanding and practices as well as difficulties, conflict and expressions of inequalities. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.

The time span of this inquiry, from 1876 to 1914, has been set for several reasons. It corresponds to that of Yucatán's bonanza, when the business with the Green Gold, that is the henequen, made the state one of the most prosperous of the country. This historical period—which encompasses from the Porfiriato (1876-1911) until right before the arrival of the Revolution to the Mayab in 1915—has been extensively studied. Third, it correlates to the Golden Time of the *yuca-alemanes* in the peninsula. Furthermore, its length permits an analysis of the *Lebenswelten* of several generations, which is crucial for exploring issues of social incorporation.

This book seeks to further a conceptual discussion about immigration as a phenomenon that for centuries has shaped human history. Its result could lead to refinements in theories about relocation and cultural change. Even if applied to a migratory experience from the past, the questions guiding this research are current. Close analysis of historical evidence will help to illuminate contemporary mobility, revealing continuities and difficulties, as well as the complexity and variability of immigration experiences.

It also aspires to contribute to our understanding of how, and why, foreigners became part of diverse groups and social classes in México during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Besides filling a gap in European-Mexican history and giving visibility to the experiences of migrants from the lower and middle classes, it will help to better comprehend the varied processes of migrant integration into a host environment, widening our knowledge of transcultural processes—all of them significant theoretical and empirical discussions at present. The particular dynamic of Yucatán's inclusion into national and transnational capitalism during the period I am studying can be paralleled to that of other Latin American, especially Caribbean, societies that also received a considerable number of newcomers. Additionally, it will provide data on the subject of the relationship between the construction and negotiation of ethnicity and class in post-colonized societies, intra-ethnic stratification, cohesion and conflict, social mobility, as well as on the topic of non-privileged groups and their relationship to the elite.

This work explores how people of German descent discursively constructed or interpreted their cultural identity only insofar as the existing information allows for it, and as extensively as it is necessary

to understand the processes of place-making in the host society. It is not, however, an exhaustive study about social identity representations and their logic.

A rigid scrutiny of the integrative processes of the Mayab-Germans cannot be carried out, given that the data available does not allow for such analysis. After more than 100 years and several wars, the documents and other sources that I was able to recover are most probably only part of what once existed. This makes it impossible to deliver an examination without certain gaps. There are also aspects that are completely beyond the grasp of researchers studying historical migrations because it is not possible to obtain data from direct observation and interactions. Therefore, I am not suggesting that the findings gained here are applicable to the experience of other immigrants in other states, but provide a finely textured empirical micro-level ethnographic examination of a highly diversified immigrant community.

### 1.3. RESEARCH METHODS AND STRATEGIES

This is the ethnography of a historical migration. Its main concern is to understand how the German-speaking immigrants and their offspring incorporated themselves into their host community at the turn of the past century.<sup>83</sup> From an anthropological viewpoint, migration is considered as a cultural and societal process, which is affected by changing socio-financial, political and legislative conditions in both the “sending” and the “receiving” societies. Special attention is paid to the diversity of the post-migration experiences, their connotations for the people involved, the modes of migrant incorporation, as well as the cultural changes that result from resettlements.<sup>84</sup> This does not

83. LeCompte and Schensul define ethnography as “both a product of research and a research process. The product is an interpretative story, reconstruction, or narrative about a group of people [...] includes historical material and paints a picture of people going about their daily lives as they happen over a representative period of time,” see: Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*, (Walnut Creek: Altamira, 1999), p. 4.

84. Caroline Brettell and James Hollifield, “Introduction,” in: *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*, ed. Caroline Brettell and James Hollifield, (New York: Routledge, 2008a), pp. 1-2; on the historical development of the ethnography of migration see Kearney 1986; Andreas Ackermann, “Ethnologische Migrationsforschung:

mean, however, that “cultures” are tidily contained; nor that migration is a unilinear and finite process exclusively between two points. Although I will discuss these two topics in the next chapter, I am bringing them up here because this conceptualization has methodological implications: research in several countries and states, the need to capture a wide range of migration experiences, and a focus on relationships more than on locations.

At the same time that it embarks on a self-reflection process that accompanies its new orientation, Europeanist ethnology has increased its traditional openness for interdisciplinary work with other neighboring specializations of knowledge —such as sociology, philology, history, geography, and cultural studies, for example— that complement aspects of our approach to migration.<sup>85</sup> This work is not an exception. Given that I have been trained not only in European ethnology, but also in social sciences, the readings that have influenced my work and informed this study come from different disciplines.<sup>86</sup> What makes ethnological work different, however, is its interest in the concrete experience, its use of a distinctive methodology that relies on fieldwork, the historical dimensions in which the processes are embedded during their analysis, its descriptive quality, and its flexibility.<sup>87</sup>

Ein Überblick,” *Kea 10*, Ethnologie der Migration (1997): pp. 1-28; Christa Markom, “Geschichte der Migrationsforschung: Interdisziplinäre Verflechtungen,” in: *Anthropologie der Migration. Theoretische Grundlagen und interdisziplinäre Aspekte*, ed. Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Wien: Facultas, 2009), pp. 29-49.

85. Clifford Geertz broached the issue of a continuous, rapid “blurring of genres” happening between the social and the human sciences; see Clifford Geertz, “Blurred Lines: The Refiguration of Social Thought,” in: *Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000a), pp. 19-35. For a contemporary view of how this dialogue is articulated nowadays in Europeanist ethnology, consult Mairéad Nic Craith et al., *Everyday Culture in Europa. Approaches and Methodologies*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008). This discipline carries different names in German: *Volkskunde* is one of them.

86. I also hold a Bachelor’s degree in Mass Communications, have studied Sociology for a year, and while doing my Master’s I took Romance Literature as a minor.

87. Mairéad Nic Craith, “From National to Transnational: A Discipline *en route* to Europa,” in: *Everyday Culture in Europa. Approaches and Methodologies*, ed. Mairéad Nic Craith et al., (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-17, (pp. 2-9).

### 1.3.1. *Methodology*

To approach *Lebenswelten*, about which only a few direct statements from the first immigrant generation have survived, posed many methodological and theoretical challenges. I engaged in intense conversations and correspondence with colleagues and mentors, asking for suggestions about other possible sources, discussing the most appropriate tools to use, and how to avoid the possible pitfalls of such an endeavor. With the help of many people, I was able to compile rich reliable valid information, which without a doubt can be used for different purposes in varied ways. The present monograph is just one of them: one that departing from factual evidence aims, recreates “how it was” to be an immigrant at a specific time and place, and that aspires to grasp the cultural aspects of this experience.

This text, as stated, seeks to reconstruct and offer a hermeneutically wide, comprehensive interpretation of the migration experience of germanophone people in Yucatán. Through it I wish to identify and explain the modes by which they incorporated themselves into the host society, paying distinct attention to how the *Lebenswelten* of the newcomers interacted —intertwined, depended, collaborated and sometimes even clashed— with those of the members of the other ethnic groups they encountered in the Mayab. I am especially interested in the incorporation<sup>88</sup> of the migrants at the micro-level, which permits the contemplation of the individual and familiar resettlement experience. I will, however, take into consideration the meso-level, i.e. the presence of the whole group, and the macro-level, that is the structural, budgetary, legal, historical and political context in which these migration happened. These last three built the context of reception, which is especially important because it organized “the life chances of the newcomers.”<sup>89</sup>

Several theories will be necessary to explain the migratory processes themselves and the processes of integration through several generations. To analyze the incorporation modes, I have chosen to adopt a transcultural perspective, which focuses on the individual life-long specific experience, and allows for a holistic integration of methods

88. This term will be explained in detail in the upcoming section.

89. Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz, “Contemporary Immigration: Theoretical Perspectives on its Determinants and Modes of Incorporation,” *International Migration Review* XXIII, no. 3 (1989): pp. 606-30.



and conceptual frameworks of diverse disciplines that seek to explain cultural interaction in the context of migration.<sup>90</sup> The complete theoretical framework supporting this analysis will be clarified in the following chapter.

Methodologically, I made use of a mix<sup>91</sup> of four techniques to obtain data:

- Critical analysis<sup>92</sup> of historical records, secondary texts and visual materials.
- Qualitative interviews.
- Field notes based on participant observation of activities undertaken by the immigrant's actual descendants.
- Comparison to other communities, when possible.

The details of the first will be discussed in the next segment, the other three in the immediately following subsection. I implemented several research strategies. First, I concentrated on the creation of a quantitative and qualitative portrait, which includes the principal characteristics of the group. Given that there was no previous study about the germanophone migrants in Yucatán I could build upon, such an analysis is necessary to grasp the size, composition, general

90. The concept of transculturation will be explained in Chapter 2.

91. It offers the opportunity for acquiring new data, confirming, correcting, or discarding information, which as a result “adds dimensions of depth and accuracy to the cultural portrait constructed.” Cf. Stephen Schensul et al., *Essential Ethnographic Methods. Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaires*, (Walnut Creek: Altamira, 1999), p. 4. I have also relied on Pertti Pelto and Gretel Pelto, *Anthropological Research: The Structure of Inquiry*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

92. Following Karl-S. Kramer, the anthropologist Silke Götsch suggests to, first, critically ask how “real” documents are, meaning that we have to consider by whom, how, why, when and for which motive was the specific material created and preserved. Second, we ought to understand the order in which the events related took place, and, as third, we need to address to what degree the contents could be deliberately tendentious. Additionally, she recommends considering the ability of documents to “put in writing social events and cultural practices,” which brings with itself the necessity to interpret them in relationship to their context. See Silke Götsch, “Archivalische Quellen und die Möglichkeiten ihrer Auswertung,” in: *Methoden der Volkskunde. Positionen, Quellen, Arbeitsweisen der Europäischen Ethnologie*, ed. Silke Götsch and Albrecht Lehmann (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2001), pp. 15-32, (pp. 23f). This approach is also followed by social historians such as Carlo Ginzburg, *El hilo de las buellas. Lo verdadero, lo falso y lo ficticio*, (Buenos Aires: FCE, 2010), pp. 351-94, 433-65.

characteristics, basic institutions, and spaces of cultural practice. All of these aspects are relevant for answering my first research question—what were the characteristics of the germanophone-born immigrants in Yucatán between 1876 and 1914? This data is also essential in order to identify the sub-groups involved and their characteristics, and to examine their integration into the peninsular culture. As a second step, I proceeded to select multiple case studies for presentation based on the availability of reliable data, through which I explore in detail the characteristics of the migration experience within its specific environment. This will allow me to answer the second research question that is directing this study—how did the newcomers and their descendants incorporate into the Yucatecan society?

I believe that this mix of techniques and strategies integrates, complements, and contrasts the information in accordance with my objective to better portray the life paths and relations of individuals in this particular transcultural context.

#### 1.3.1.1. Genesis of this Project, the Interviews, and the Field Notes

My interest in this research theme has a long history, which must be briefly told to understand the three phases in which data was obtained. In 2002, during my third visit to the Mayalands, and thanks to a conversation with my friends Humberto and Manuel Bonilla Caamal—descendants of a former Villa Carlota colonist—I practically stumbled upon what would become my research theme for more than a decade: the unstudied migration of Germans into Yucatán in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I was immediately interested in the phenomenon and initiated a search for literature and primary sources, in preparation for what was to become my first research season. Back in the peninsula in 2003, I began by casting a wide net and compiled archival and hemerographic information. At the same time, I started to carry out exploratory, open-ended, in-depth interviews with a large number of individuals with whom I entered into contact by chance, through recommendation, or because they contacted me.<sup>93</sup>

93. During my 2003, 2004, 2009, and 2011 research seasons in Yucatán, I was interviewed by the local press; in 2010 I presented my book *Villa Carlota. Colonias alemanas en Yucatán*, and organized an exhibit on this same theme at the Archivo Histórico

I knew by that time that not only the colonists of Villa Carlota, but also a wide array of German-speaking migrants were there during the Porfiriato. Given that several direct descendants and people who were part of the second generation, or interacted with them, were already of an advanced age, I decided to continue documenting both groups. I gave, nonetheless, priority to material relating to the Villa Carlota colony from 1865 to 1867 that I needed for my Master's thesis. The rest was saved for the present publication.

The second phase started in 2004 and finished in 2006, during which I carried forward my archival research and continued my fieldwork by conducting additional exploratory conversations with new interview partners, while moving on to do narrative and focused interviews with some individuals and families, emphasizing the offspring of the colonists of Villa Carlota. Using open-ended questions to start, six main subjects were addressed in these focus interviews:

1. The interviewed person's memories about the origins of their ancestors.
2. Remembrances about processes of migration.
3. Accounts of how the first generation experienced daily life in Yucatán.
4. Reminiscences about the following generations.
5. The interviewees' personal life stories.
6. Recollections about the German-speaking presence in the peninsula through time.

When the interviewees were people who interacted with the here-studied migrants, but not their direct descendants, the conversations were adjusted to cover approximately the same topics from their particular perspective. These were locals, who as neighbors, godchildren, friends, fellows, or employees were in touch with members of the germanophone community.<sup>94</sup>

de Mérida. Thanks to these events, many people with information about this subject contacted me. Additionally, I attended the *Stammtisch*, (the regular's table or gathering), organized by the German Consul in Mérida, as well as other social and cultural happenings where I had the opportunity to come in contact with possible interview partners, and to obtain other recommendations.

94. The term "German-speaking community" denotes here the non-primordialist constructivist group of germanophone people living in Yucatán from 1876-1914. The persons studied under this term are not necessarily secluded from the receiving society.

Fortunately, I was able to hold long conversations with five members of the second generation, born between 1909 and 1938 in Mérida, who had clear, first hand, memories of their ancestors and their contemporaries. These talks were conducted in the form of oral history. Others who were among the most questioned were part of the third and fourth generations. From those predominantly in their eighties now, several were especially helpful because—thanks to the longevity of some of their ancestors and the tradition of taking care of the elderly at home—they had had a chance to hold long in-depth conversations with their elders that elucidated the living conditions, motivation, experiences, opportunities found and disillusion of the first newcomers. The rest of the descendants I interviewed were part of the fifth and sixth generations, many of whom remember numerous oral stories, and even preserved their family's material heirlooms. Five of the descendants became key informants, to whom I returned several times throughout the years. I also conversed with priests and officials of the Catholic Church, attorneys, civil registry officials, city chroniclers, and other specialists who could help me to better understand this phenomenon.

New contacts were not always easily attainable, and it took time to build trust and rapport, but once this was established I was given access not only to oral accounts, but also to family archives and personal objects that have been kept in private possession for decades.

In 2007, I submitted my Master's thesis and concentrated on the present study. From 2008 until 2011, the third phase, I completed all the material needed for it. This period was composed of a total of four research seasons, which amounted to fourteen months of investigation in different cities on two continents, during which I intensified my inquiries about non-colonist German-speaking immigrants both in Europe and in the Americas.

The interviews were pivotal, not only because of their content but also because they guided me into potentially available data to look for during my archival research. These were conducted in either Spanish or English, according to the preference of the interviewees; in several cases the same person was questioned more than once, especially if there were uncertainties, issues of accuracy, discrepancies,

This differs from a “colony,” which I understand as a farming settlement, thus I will only speak about “ex-colonists” when referring to the Villa Carlottans.

if new evidence came up, or if some information needed to be more meticulously discussed. The great majority of these sessions were recorded and fully transcribed; for the rest, only a handful, protocols were made immediately afterwards. Aware of the possible drawbacks of oral evidence, I verified data against archival and hemerographic proof, or compared it to other testimonials.

From the conducted interviews, the aspects related to this study were qualitatively analyzed to reconstruct factual processes,<sup>95</sup> looking carefully not only for concrete data and relevant themes, but also through agreements and exceptions, omissions and disagreements. I proceeded this way to make sure that some questions arose from this particular, localized context and not exclusively from the theory. Without a doubt, these interviews and field notes could also be evaluated in the context of a different research question and objectives, one of the projects for the future.

In total, information provided by eight experts,<sup>96</sup> data obtained in 46 focused individual ethnographical interviews<sup>97</sup> —as well as by e-mail, and telephone and Skype interviews— has been incorporated into this monograph. Additionally, I conducted 11 family interviews, during which persons of different generations and strata shared their memories about their ancestors' history. These were very productive, proving that each individual has different recollections. When appropriate, objects of memory<sup>98</sup> were introduced, a draft of a family tree<sup>99</sup>

95. Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, (London: SAGE, 2006), p. 332.

96. Included were representatives of various institutions in Mérida and key cultural consultants. The following have served as guidelines for conducting the expert interviews: Alexander Bogner, *Das Experteninterview. Theorien, Methoden, Anwendungsfelder*, (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag, 2005); Flick 2006: 165; Anne Honer, "Das explorative Interview, zur Rekonstruktion der Relevanz von ExpertInnen und anderen Leuten," *Schweizerische Zeitung für Soziologie* 20, no. 3 (1994): pp. 620-40.

97. The technique, limitations, and challenges of this method are clearly presented by Flick 2006: 116ff; Judith Schlehe, "Formen qualitativer Feldforschung," in: *Methoden und Techniken der Feldforschung*, ed. Bettina Beer, (Berlin: Reimer, 2003), pp. 119-42; Fritz Schütze, "Biographieforschung und narratives Interview," *Neue Praxis* 13, no. 3 (1983), [http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/files/2009/950/schuetze-biographieforschung\\_und\\_narratives\\_interview.pdf](http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/files/2009/950/schuetze-biographieforschung_und_narratives_interview.pdf), (accessed 06.11.2006).

98. Such as newspaper clips, family heirlooms, photos, etc. About objects of memory, see Pierre Nora, *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*, (Berlin: Fischer, 1998). Some people refer to these items as memorabilia.

99. A form of genealogical mapping. I will offer the reconstructed family trees of those migrants presented as extended cases in Chapter 7. For using this method, I took

was discussed, or the conversation took place while visiting places of memory,<sup>100</sup> such as cemeteries, houses, or churches. Once back in Germany, I continued to exchange data with several informants through e-mails, phone calls, and Skype sessions. It was not possible to conduct any interviews with relatives in Germany, given that the contact in almost all cases broke down at the latest by the 1940s.

Regarding the field notes, these were produced during my research seasons. I acquired information through informal conversations and wrote down impressions, observations, interactions, and quotes. For their inclusion here, I also paid attention to *how* something was said, and its context.

Not being Yucatecan, but a Mexican-American who has been living for more than a decade in Germany, the information obtained by all these methods helped me enormously to understand this migration from the point of view of the Mayab-Germans, and that of some other members of the Yucatecan society.

Thanks to the use of all these research tools it was possible to identify to a certain degree the motivation of the immigrants, their families' living conditions through several generations, business and social networks they belonged to, preferred ethnic and national identities, as well as some cultural practices and discourses.

### 1.3.1.2. Comparative Approach

To keep the present work in perspective, I will compare as much as possible the findings here gained to the statements formulated by other researchers about the German immigrants in the city of Puebla, considering also, and differentiating from, the group of germanophone-born people in the Mexican capital. The first is meaningful given that population and economy of Puebla and Mérida were somewhat comparable during the time span studied, had a rather parallel presence

under consideration the instructions offered by Roland Hardenberg, "Die 'genealogische Methode.' Eine kritische Einführung," in: *Methoden ethnologischer Forschung*, ed. Bettina Beer, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2008), pp. 83-102.

100. That is, sites where memory crystalizes, cf. Nora 1998; see also Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, (München: Beck, 2006), especially Chapter 5.

—if only at a certain point— of elite and middle class newcomers, and enjoyed a monetary bonanza before the Mexican Revolution. They are, nevertheless, counterparts in two aspects: Puebla did not receive settlers, and its German immigrants of meager means have not been fully studied. Besides, being only 80 kilometers southeast from Mexico City, the German residents in Puebla were able to work closely with their fellow countrymen in the capital, while those in Yucatán were more isolated.

### 1.3.2. *Research Strategies*

In order to keep my efforts directed, I set out first to compile all the information necessary to create a quantitative portrait with the principal characteristics of the group. After that, I proceed to identify the integrational themes that emerged from the empirical data, and to create sub-groups based on similarities and differences. At the end, five ethno-historical family case studies<sup>101</sup> were selected for presentation, through which the incorporation processes are explored in detail.

#### 1.3.2.1. Creation of the “Database Yuca-Alemanes, 1876-1914”

In order to verify and organize the data, as a first step all the information obtained by the research methods mentioned at the beginning of this section was input into a large database. This was designed to contain 23 fields.<sup>102</sup> The information includes: jobs, education, housing

101. In order to suit my scrutiny, I am here combining the ethnographic and historical types as explained by Jerry von Willis, *Foundations of Qualitative Research. Interpretive and Critical Approaches*, (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2007), p. 242. This means that I will use historiographical and ethnological methods, and go beyond the chronological history of events by embedding them in their context and emphasizing socio-cultural issues.

102. The domains contain the following information: Name or names and alternative spellings; places and dates of birth and death; locations where the people resided before and after their life in the Mayalands; generations to which they belong; nationality of origin and naturalization(s); religion, conversion and other religious events; civil status and its variations; languages spoken and their preferred forms of ethnic identification and affiliation; interactions with the locals; first and last date of registration in Yucatán; residential and business addresses; family, social and work life, legal and medical information, plus one field for other information.

conditions, home and religious life, social contacts, travel patterns, friendships, motivation, occupational partnerships, legal cases as well as challenges, conflicts and ambivalences in diverse areas of the life of the first generation and their descendants. These thousands of fragmentary pieces of facts and data related to around 900 people came from many sources, which were carefully tracked in one special field. We must imagine this database as full of minuscule, irregular, parts of an extremely large puzzle that can be evaluated again and again for different academic purposes. Given the great volume of information, managing this in a databank was absolutely necessary to identify patterns and themes, differences and conflicts.

As a second stage, the data was refined according to the requirements posed by this examination. Those people who turned out to be transients, tourists, of other cultural origins, or arrived to the Mayab outside the period here studied, were transferred into a separate database. The “Database *Yuca-Alemanes*, 1876-1914” was double checked, and possible errors were filtered. In its final form it contains information pertaining to 608 people. This is the source of the group portrait that will be offered in Chapter 5 and the analysis at meso- and micro-levels presented in Chapters 6 and 7. A third step was taken in order to prepare the information necessary to analyze the paths of incorporation of the sub-groups and familial *Lebenswelten*. All relevant evidence was grouped into four classifications for the purpose of theoretical analysis. These correspond to the four different dimensions of social incorporation that I am using to systematize this study, which I will explain in the next subsection.

The “Database *Yuca-Alemanes*, 1876-1914” will be cited as such, and all the sources that formed the basis for it are listed at the end of this work, in Appendix 1.

### 1.3.2.2. The *Lebenswelten* of the Immigrants and their Descendants

This work also offers a set of five detailed case studies that will present and analyze the *Lebenswelten* of immigrants, i.e., their customary everyday life in the Yucatecan setting. My aim is to breathe life into these migration experiences, to reconstruct and explain how the German newcomers and their offspring became incorporated into the



peninsular society. In all cases, the migration and settlement experience of a central member of the first generation is presented in detail; after that, his or her succeeding generations until 1914 are followed.

In the early stages of this monograph, it became clear that there was no such a thing as a “typical” germanophone migrant during the studied period in Yucatán, nor “standard” group experiences or strategies. The evidence clearly shows that there was great diversity depending on class origin, gender, familiar configuration, income, age, and other identity markers. The criteria, then, for selecting the case studies were established with the intention of capturing the greatest range of variation possible,<sup>103</sup> the amount of reliable data obtained about them, and the socio-economic characteristics of the first immigrants at the point of arrival to the peninsula. For their study, the cases are divided into three different groups, following the anthropologist Hugo Nutini:<sup>104</sup> (1) Superordinate sector, that is investors, in the peninsular context of the time formed by large *hacendados* and wholesalers. (2) The middle classes, i.e. specialists, professionals, qualified workers, as well as medium and small entrepreneurs. Finally, (3) the lower strata, composed by farmers and craftsmen. Here it must be stated again that the data available is irregular and there are gaps in some aspects or periods, however, not to the degree to make them non-endorsable. Because the experiences of professionals and working class newcomers have been studied very little, I grant them more attention.

With the objective of proceeding systematically in this examination, I sorted the information obtained according to the dimensions of incorporation I wish to analyze. Taking as a departure point those proposed

103. David Fitzgerald, “Towards a Theoretical Ethnography of Migration,” *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2006): pp. 1-24, (pp. 15f), noting that the contribution of an ethnographic exploration of a migration event is usually restricted to societal significance, suggesting several complementary strategies to increase its empirical representativeness. The data compiled for the present investigation allows for the application of three of those suggestions: the selection of a wide range of experiences of migration, the incorporation of quantitative data, and the large gathering of survey material from the countries involved in this event. I thank Prof. Fitzgerald for his recommendations in terms of how to apply some of the suggestions he exposed in his already cited paper to ethno-historical migration research. David Fitzgerald, e-mail to author, 18.08.2011.

104. Hugo G. Nutini, *Social Stratification and Mobility in Central Veracruz*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), pp. 80-103. See also Hugo Nutini and Barry Isaac, *Social Stratification in Central Mexico, 1500-2000*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

by Frederick Heckmann and Dominique Schnapper,<sup>105</sup> I present here their conceptualization and components, expanding them slightly for their application to this particular historical ethnography, as follows:

1. **Structural:** Refers to access and participation in primary institutions of the receiving society. Comprised are: education and training, work opportunities, housing, and citizenship. I will add migratory regulations and participation in local politics.
2. **Cultural:** Defined by the authors as an interactive, mutual process that alters both groups, which is in line with the theoretical perspective I take in this analysis. Here, I will include information related to cultural practices, e.g. religion, language usage, rituals, food, housing, clothing, work habits, conceptions of health and disease, and accustomed forms of medical practices.
3. **Social Membership:** Encompasses private and public relationships, such as friendships, marriages, voluntary associations, and social intercourse. I would add family networks, god-parenting—which is of primordial importance in this particular study—and occupational partnerships.
4. **Identificational:** Includes expressions of belonging or affinities. These could take several forms that can co-exist and change. The authors mention ethnic, national, and multiple identifications. In this study I am also considering regional identities.

These dimensions of incorporation are interwoven and will be looked at in their corresponding historical and locational context. I will also make use of them as a guide to attempt, in Chapter 6, an

105. Friedrich Heckmann and Dominique Schnapper, "Introduction," in: *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies. National Differences and Trends of Convergence*, ed. Friedrich Heckmann and Dominique Schnapper, (Stuttgart: Lucius, 2003), pp. 9-14. Using these categories, the project guided by the authors sought to evaluate "the inclusion of new populations into existing social structures of the immigration country." The search for the right schema to use for this reflection was difficult; I appreciate Prof. Peter Waldmann for his advice in this matter. These dimensions proposed by Heckmann and Schnapper, with a slight change in nomenclature, are also used by the NORFACE Research Programme on Migration, which intends to generate a synergetic body of scholarly inquiries, see NORFACE Research Programme on Migration, "Migration in Europe: Social, Economic, Cultural, and Policy Dynamics. Programme Specifications," (2007), <http://www.norface-migration.org/>, (accessed 16.02.2012).

analysis of the German-speaking people at a group level. Considering the objectives and scope of this work, I will focus only on a few, selected aspects.

#### 1.4. SOURCES

In the subsection above I explained how the interviews and field notes were obtained, as well as the way in which a comparison to other migrations will be established. Here, I discuss the material I will analyze critically, which is the fourth technique I included in my methodological mix. These are historical records, secondary texts—including hemerography—and other materials, such as physical artifacts and photographs.

The sources were safeguarded in several archives in different countries and some of the collections are incomplete. Many papers were destroyed during the Mexican Revolution and the Second World War in Germany, while others failed to survive Yucatán's extreme weather conditions. Consequently, it was necessary to search for material in many depositories, in an attempt to find parallel correspondence that would contribute to filling in the gaps. On the other hand, many micro-filmed collections—such as passenger lists, civil registry records, and other official documents—are now available online through different historical records websites. Moreover, 32 families in México, France, Spain, the United States and Germany generously granted me access to their private collections of documents, objects, personal and business correspondence, and photos. It was not possible to conduct research in all of the places of origin of the migrants included in this study; that would be a forthcoming project. Given the time period this work is concerned with, enough meaningful and reliable material has been recovered to answer the research questions, although not without certain aspects being left open.

I will now detail the information obtained from specific archives.<sup>106</sup>

106. The acronyms of the open archives consulted were formed from the initial letters of their designations. Exceptions are those that expressly indicated that they would like to be cited differently, such as the Siemens Aktenarchiv München (SAA). Those of the family collections depend on the families' wishes and whether they have one or two surnames. In the first case, the first two letters were taken, in the latter, a combination

#### 1.4.1. *Archives in Germany*

In Germany, research was conducted in 11 archives. Information about the lives of some of the migrants before they left to the peninsula, as well as about concrete return migration cases, was obtained in the Stadtarchiv Dresden, and Stadtarchiv Nordhausen, in the Staatsarchiv Hamburg, the Landeshauptarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt in Magdeburg and in Merseburg, as well as in several Catholic and Protestant parish depositories—such as the Church archives of Bitterfeld, Niedergebra, Oranienbaum, and Stassfurth, to mention but a few. The Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes in Berlin safekeeps the consular correspondence pertaining to the Mérida-México-Berlin affairs. This offers statistics, newspaper clippings, diplomatic memorandums as well as letters written not only by officials, but also by commoners, which provide general knowledge about the residents and their political, economic, social and sometimes even personal matters. Additional information in this regard was also acquired in the collections housed at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. A good part of the material used for the analysis of inter-ethnic as well as intra-group experiences was consulted there.

The Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde preserves important data generated by administrators and politicians during the German Empire and beyond, such as the correspondence of the Deutsches Ausland-Institut, personal folders about Germans living in foreign countries, political affiliations, and information about German schools abroad. These files supply, at an individual level, governmental data and biographical information about some people prior to their migration and during their stay abroad. Regarding communal life, they give insights into the wishes, expectations and challenges faced by some of the families while overseas.

The notebooks and personal letters of Teobert Maler—an important German-Austrian immigrant who lived in Yucatán for more than thirty years—were consulted in the Special Collections section of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, in Berlin; the Lippisches Landesmuseum in Detmold also preserves some of his correspondence. These

of the two initial letters of both last names. To facilitate their identification, all carry the prefix “FC,” for Family Collection.

sources gave access to important facts about Maler's social networks and professional life in the Mayab.

The conglomerate Siemens & Halske had a power station in the capital of Yucatán during the time here investigated. Several of its German-speaking employees, sometimes with their families, were residents of Mérida. Information concerning them, as well as on the business of the electrical plant, was acquired from the Siemens Archive in Munich.

#### 1.4.2. *Archives in Mexico City*

Moving on to the archives consulted in México, it must be said that their inventories are highly heterogeneous and access to them is often very challenging. Nevertheless, it was possible to obtain useful information for this work.

In México's capital, documents were studied at the Archivo General de la Nación, the Archivo Histórico de Relaciones Exteriores, and the Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración. They contribute with government files from all different administrative levels, and with personal records of the immigrants. These provide an adequate basis for estimating the number and family configuration of the Mayab-Germans, when taken under consideration together with other sources generated on both sides of the Atlantic, such as diplomatic correspondence, civil and religious registry books, travel records, permits, legal cases files, censuses,<sup>107</sup> and registrations of foreigners in México. They also offer information about the length of the migrants' residency, the legal parameters under which they emigrated, socio-economic conditions by origin, social mobility achieved in Yucatán and, in some cases, their reasons for acquiring Mexican nationality.

107. Mexico's first population reckoning was carried out in 1895. Relevant for this analysis are the censuses from 1895, 1900, and 1910. These, according to a specialist in Mexican demographics, disclose inaccurate data partly because of the inexperience of those who carried them out, the different grades of omission by their execution, and the political instability of the county at that time. See Camposortega Cruz 1997: 24f, and cuadro 1. Therefore, it is necessary to cross-reference several sources, which I will do in the present research.

### 1.4.3. *Archives in Yucatán*

The socio-political and financial context in which the *yuca-alemanes* lived in the Mayab, as well as some biographical and personal information, have been reconstructed based on data obtained from the Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán, the former Centro de Apoyo a la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán,<sup>108</sup> the Archivo Histórico del Ayuntamiento de Mérida, the Registro Civil de Yucatán, and several local offices of the Civil Register.<sup>109</sup>

It was possible to retrieve information about part of the life paths of various germanophone-born migrants in Yucatán by consulting the files of the Cervecería Yucateca,<sup>110</sup> and those of the hardware store Ritter & Bock, preserved by the Patronato Pro Historia Peninsular de Yucatán en el Centro Cultural PROHISPEN, based in the city of Mérida.

Given that the consular lists located in different archives are incomplete it was vital to obtain access to the Archivo Histórico del Registro Civil de Yucatán, and to the Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de Yucatán. Those records were very useful first, for finding non-elite immigrants; second, for differentiating between temporary and permanent residents in the Yucatán; third, as indicators of social practices of some of the migrants, and fourth, for allowing me to identify and explicitly distinguish between the different immigrants' generations. Additionally, the second of the depositories here mentioned provides invaluable information about the religious formal practices and communal and familial relationships of the newcomers of different money-making status, besides data about their occupations, residence, and whom they chose

108. The hemerographic compendium, as well as the Fondo Reservado, a valuable collection of manuscripts from the Centro de Apoyo para la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán (hereinafter CAIHY), have been unified as of August 2012 into the Biblioteca Yucatanense de la Secretaría de la Cultura y las Artes del Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán.

109. Statistical data is, however, rarely found. This could be partly due to the fact that the Dirección General de Estadística de Yucatán was not established until 1894, cf. Carlos Adémar Méndez Díaz and Orlando Rodríguez Núñez, *Calendario cívico de Yucatán*, (Mérida: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, PROHISPEN, 1997), p. 28.

110. An important brewery that started large-scale production in 1899. Several of their brewers, brewer masters, and probably technicians, came directly from German-speaking countries.

as *compadres* (godfather or godmother) for their children and witnesses by diverse religious rituals, that is, to identify part of their social and familial networks. Especially informative were the Matrimonios Ultramarinos and the Expedientes Ultramarinos folders, which document the procedures that people who did not belong to the Yucatecan Archdiocese, or were not Catholic, had to follow if they wished to be baptized by the Roman Catholic rite, to marry a Catholic, or to celebrate a mixed-marriage. They contain first hand testimonies, translations, and older back-up documents.

Summarizing the nature of the findings in these archives, we could say that these are reports of wages, housing conditions, data related to religion, education, travel, residential patterns, tax and property records, mortgages, money lending practices, legal matters, mercantile and household appraisers' lists, hospital admission records, membership rosters of some social organizations, permits related to ethnic institutions, intra- and inter-webs, and involvement in local political matters, among others. All of this information is useful not only for the case studies, but also for addressing the issue of intra-ethnic differentiation.

### *Grey Literature, Ephemera, and Hemerography*

Grey literature and ephemera were also examined. These included address-, phone-, and business-directories, greeting cards, pamphlets, patents, product catalogs, house and business inventories, personal and technical notes, as well as private correspondence. Information was acquired also from registers and tombstones in several cemeteries and churches in Mérida, other Yucatecan locations, and Mexico City.

Six depositories of large hemerographic collections were inspected in six cities: In Mérida, at the former Centro para la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán, and the Hemeroteca Carlos R. Menéndez; in Mexico City at the Biblioteca Nacional de México; in Stuttgart, Germany, at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, in Augsburg in the Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, in Nürnberg at the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, and in Berlin at the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut. Additionally, other relevant North American, Mexican, and German newspapers were consulted either online or in microfilm form though interlibrary

loans. Thanks to these resources it was possible to recreate to a certain degree the context of reception the immigrants found, as well as parts of their social, financial, and political life in the Mayab. Evidence about celebrations and events, lists of credits, foreign direct investments in several local projects, and partial minutes of diverse ethnic and mainstream institutions was also found among the material.

#### 1.4.4. *Private Collections*

Regarding private collections of documents, photos and objects, I was generously granted access to the 32 family and personal collections of descendants of the germanophone immigrants, now living in 13 locations, in five countries. I am in great debt to all of them. Particularly invaluable are the large collections of over 200 photos and more than 400 postcards kept safe by the Schirp Milke family, as well as the correspondence of the businessmen Johannes Crasemann and Francisco Glükher.

#### 1.4.5. *Structure*

This monograph consists of eight chapters. Chapter 2 details the theoretical perspectives that are guiding this inquiry. Chapters 3 through 7 reconstruct and examine the movement and post-migratory experience of the germanophone-migrants in Yucatán. Specifically, Chapter 3 presents background information about the relationships between México and Germany. Chapter 4 offers an ethnography of Mérida, which I hope will help to envision how life in the Yucatecan capital was as the nineteenth century was coming to its end, when it became home to these immigrants. Chapter 5 is devoted to a qualitative and quantitative group portrait of the newcomers at their point of arrival to the peninsula. Chapter 6 presents a panorama of how this minority group interacted, among itself and with others, while in the Mayab. This is followed by Chapter 7, where the dimensions of integration are analyzed by sub-groups, and five concrete migrants' *Lebenswelten* bring life into the varied trajectories and incorporation modes of the Mayab-Germans.



The Conclusion, numbered as Chapter 8, is followed by six annexes: a list of sources, a chronology, a glossary, a list of the immigrant generation, the specific inventory of sources consulted to create the five family portraits, and the corresponding family trees.

Before ending this introduction, I would like to address the challenge posed by the question of how to write German names. These are inscribed in many different forms, even in official documents. Additionally, there was a tendency among the immigrants to hispanicize their names. In light of this, for the immigrant generation I have relied as much as possible on what appears to be the correct spelling in original papers and permits originated in their country of departure. The full name of the immigrant is given as a footnote the first time he or she is mentioned, along with the corresponding birth and death information as follows: (place of birth, year – place of death, year); a question mark within indicates unknown information. If the immigrants chose names in Spanish, these will be used in the text.