

Hello, It is an honor to be here. My name is Emma Vrijzen, I am a Master's student both at the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University in the Netherlands.

Within the last half year I have been researching and conducting fieldwork on the economic, environmental and socio-political impacts of Tren Maya in Mexico, specifically within the State of Quintana Roo.

During this time I talked with many different Mayan individuals, including academics, business owners, community leaders, government members and more.

Experiences and examples were shared with me on how Tren Maya impacts communities, youth, and women and girls in particular, amongst many other things. How the fast-track for development is not only impacting people right now, but is causing deep and fundamental changes in local societies that will only come to the surface more down the line.

Even more notable, many shared a concern of how Mayan identity and culture is threatened by the things that Tren Maya hopes to bring, more tourism, more investment, more economic development. There are concerns that if no action and measures are taken both by the government, and by local initiatives, the experiences lived will only worsen.

Tren Maya takes pride in promoting the Ancient Mayan culture in the peninsula, yet there is a clear lack of consideration and assistance for the modern Mayan.

However, it does not have to be this way. Many Mayans have shared a willingness to participate in the positive development Tren Maya aims to offer. In order to actualize the "right to development", agency and capacity must be provided.

There are tangible action items that can be taken to minimize negative impacts and assist in ensuring that local indigenous communities can benefit and be an important and crucial part of the development trajectory. In my analysis, I use the framework of Social Justice to clearly identify how each principle of participation, access, equity and human rights can miss its target and how it can be addressed.

The project of Tren Maya has also shown something bigger. It shows how big infrastructure projects impact indigenous communities. Mega-projects act as an accelerator. Government engagement is crucial in ensuring that a foundation is created and maintained to ensure benefits are shared and not perpetuate further exploitation and appropriation of indigenous cultures.

It seems obvious, yet there is little done to actualize it.

With the global increase of mega-project development, it is crucial to further investigate the impacts and relation to indigenous communities. Tren Maya can be used as an example of what should, and what could be done to realize the right of development for indigenous peoples.

Thank you.