Annex 1: Research methodology

The general introduction to this study described the fieldwork activities carried out for this research. Here, the choice of the research location, the sampling methodology, the resulting databases and their uses will be discussed. Most importantly, the interviewees are listed – in gratitude for their cooperation.

Research carried out in El Paso in 1996 showed that most of the jeans production capacity concentrated in this border city was being shifted to Mexico. A few destination areas appeared of particular importance: La Laguna in Northern Mexico, Puebla/Tehuacan and Aguascalientes in Central Mexico. The areas surrounding Mérida in Yucatán was also booming with garment factories. Secondary sources, most notably census material published by INEGI, were consulted to gain insight into the developments in these regions, but they offered little useful information. Therefore, an exploratory fieldwork was carried out to these production locations, where information was gathered and local informants were interviewed. Experts in Mexico City were also consulted. Based on the interviews and available information La Laguna was chosen as a research location.

La Laguna
The most important source of information for this study is the company database which was compiled on the basis of an extensive, standard survey carried out at 73 local garment firms. The survey covered a broad range of subjects, including company history and structure, products, clients, subcontracting practices, human resource policies and business strategies. It was developed at IDSUU on the basis of the research proposal and tested and adapted in La Laguna.

As discussed at some length in Chapter 6, in Mexico, and certainly in La Laguna, interpersonal relationships carry great weight in business relations. In addition, there is a general atmosphere of secretism and mistrust in the local garment industry. The combination of these facts made the construction of the company database – the main database used for this study – based on an extensive company survey, in an industry where the researcher had virtually no contacts, a fairly complicated and time-consuming task.

As available information was highly fragmented, data from different sources were combined to create a more complete listing of companies. Since export networks are the central theme of the study, the decision was taken to select a number of very large companies that could be identified as local lead export firms. This selection was made based on interviews with key persons in the industry and other available information. The selected companies – generally large or very large companies – were first contacted ‘cold’ without using references or letters of recommendation of the CNIV or FOMEC. After many hours on the phone, a few appointments were made and surveys were carried out in a small number of firms. The aim of the study was to cover the local export networks as extensively as possible. Therefore, following the interviews with the large firms where possible the subcontractors of these firms were contacted and visited and this process was continued until no more (subsequent tiers of) subcontractors were found. Simultaneously, the contacts with the managers/owners of garment companies in
several cases resulted in direct recommendations with their friends or acquaintances in the industry who were hard to persuade to cooperate without a direct network contact. As a result of this strategy, the top-end of the local industry was well covered. The consequence of this manipulated snowball methodology could have been a possible over-sampling of large companies and a bias towards the export sector. In order to avoid such a bias and to get an accurate picture of the garment cluster as a whole, the data obtained during the first survey round was complemented by randomly selecting a number of medium- and small-sized companies. These companies were selected from the company listing, but some that were not on the listing were visited as they were accidentally encountered in the cities or villages. At these companies the same standard questionnaire was applied after which they were included in the survey.

To complement the survey information of the garment companies, information was also systematically collected from a number of suppliers of different supplies, ranging from machine parts to needles and thread. Suppliers were asked about developments in their own business but also about the general trends in the cluster. In addition, ten laundries, including laundries belonging to multi-plant companies and specialist, independent laundries were visited and information was collected using a short questionnaire. Since little specific information on employees, employment structure and labour conditions in the local garment industry was available, a small employee survey was carried out in a medium-sized garment plant in Gómez Palacio and in two small co-operative plants in ejidos; one close to the urban core of the region and one much further removed from the cities. At all three locations the workers interviewed were randomly selected. Although the results can not be used to generalize beyond the plants surveyed, they gave a valuable first impression of socio-economic characteristics of the urban and rural workers, their families and living conditions.

Finally, more in-depth information – in particular on topics such as rural garment factories, informal local linkages, relations with buyers and the impact of the 2001 crisis – was gathered by means of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with key-entrepreneurs and key persons at institutions such as SECOFI, Bancomext and CNIV. Also, several immediate ‘bystanders’ such as suppliers, specialist merchandise and personnel transporters were interviewed and gave the researcher a different angle on the relevant developments. Information obtained in an informal manner and by day-to-day observation has also been very important and in some cases highly valuable and informative. A visit to the annual regional garment Expo – where suppliers, US buyers, regional garment producers as well as producers from other regions in Mexico gather, present their products and socialise – was both interesting and useful as it provided many new and valuable contacts.

During all the fieldwork rounds, both national and local newspapers were frequently consulted and valuable information was obtained from them. In addition, a large body of other secondary sources was consulted, including statistical material published periodically in economic censuses, population censuses and a yearly publication dedicated specifically to the national garment industry, by INEGI.

El Paso
During the first and third fieldwork period El Paso was also visited. The database of the El Paso garment industry created in 1996 for a MSc. thesis (van Dooren & van der Waerden, 1997) was used as the entrance point for a follow-up study, parallel to the research in La Laguna. In order to trace the developments in the El Paso garment industry and the changes it went through during the late 1990s, the 1996 database was compared to 1998-1999 listings of the Chamber of
Commerce and the Yellow Pages of the same years. The aim was not only to monitor the collapse of the – then former – Jeans Capital of the World in itself (see van Dooren & Verkoren, 2003). Rather, successful and unsuccessful firms, firms with different backgrounds and strategies, with and without productive linkages to Mexico and/or La Laguna were identified and contacted. Managers and/or owners of these companies as well as labour representatives were interviewed with the aim of drawing lessons for and parallels with its successor Jeans Capital, La Laguna. Where relevant, direct business linkages between El Paso and La Laguna were discussed at length. The interviews in El Paso were open-ended and semi-structured. El Paso data was used in Chapters 3 and 8.

Elsewhere US

A few of La Laguna’s main buyers in the US were visited. The interviews held with them in Miami and New York were focused specifically on their global sourcing and business strategies, and on the role of Mexico and La Laguna within these strategies. These interviews helped to see the Laguna region and its development from the buyers’ global perspective. All the buyer interviews were open-ended and semi-structured.

Puebla/Tehuacan and Mérida

Finally, in order to be better able to position the Laguna cluster in its national context (Chapter 9), brief exploratory fieldworks were carried out in two other regions that are booming on garment production for export: Puebla/Tehuacan and Mérida. There the managers or owners of randomly selected firms were interviewed on a number of pre-determined topics, using open-ended interviews. In addition, secondary sources of information – including statistical data, industry listings, and studies – were gathered. Local key-informants of the garment chambers and SECOFI were also interviewed.

During the course of the fieldwork for this study, many people were interviewed. There names are listed below.

Garment entrepreneurs, La Laguna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. Nahle</td>
<td>807 Co. de Mexico</td>
<td>D. Youtsee</td>
<td>Aals de Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Garcia</td>
<td>Industrial Denim</td>
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<td>Industrial JM</td>
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<td>R. Soto Ramos</td>
<td>Acateix</td>
<td>I. Puente</td>
<td>Industrias Mirsa</td>
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<td>I. Rodríguez</td>
<td>Alaska Jeans</td>
<td>R. Tohmé sr.</td>
<td>Industrias Pantalonera Mexicana</td>
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<td>K. Abularach</td>
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<td>V. Medrano</td>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>R. Tohmé</td>
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<td>E. Arias</td>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>F. Muñoz</td>
<td>Industrias Zarpa</td>
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<td>L. Rosas</td>
<td>Bordados y conf. La Laguna</td>
<td>V. Iza</td>
<td>Los Cedros</td>
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<td>J. Ramirez</td>
<td>Bull Denim</td>
<td>J. Arreola Valdes</td>
<td>Madesa</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Mexen Flores</td>
<td>Cameexport</td>
<td>H. Chamut</td>
<td>Manufacturas Chamanta</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>L. Juan Marcos</td>
<td>Camisas Siete Leguas</td>
<td>Maquiladora La Texana</td>
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<td>P. Callau</td>
<td>Casolco</td>
<td>Maquilas Harper</td>
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<td>P. Torres</td>
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<td>Marcas de Impacto Mundial</td>
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<td>M. Cardona</td>
<td>Comercial Waco</td>
<td>Marylys Castell</td>
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<td>I. Rodriguez</td>
<td>Confecciones Roper</td>
<td>Meromex</td>
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<td>E. Valadez</td>
<td>Confecciones y Maquila Montana</td>
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<td>G. Chan</td>
<td>Creaciones Lobo</td>
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<td>M. Rodriguez</td>
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<td>Dustin</td>
<td>OMJ C</td>
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<td>F. Salinas</td>
<td>Fersal</td>
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<td>Ma. Pamanes</td>
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<td>Vikingo</td>
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<td>Basic Co.</td>
<td>Maquiladora Santa Maria</td>
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<td>R. Albeniz Franco</td>
<td>Creaciones Crisma de la Laguna</td>
<td>Maquila y Servicio de Confección</td>
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<td>A. Herrera</td>
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<td>Maquilas Tauro</td>
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<td>Cowboy</td>
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<td>Eslo</td>
<td>Ralph Lauren Childrenswear</td>
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<td>J. Castellanos</td>
<td>Felsa</td>
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<td>K. Gidi</td>
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<td>TexBlast</td>
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<td>C. Martinez</td>
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<td>H. Ramos</td>
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<td>C. Ortíz Perez</td>
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<td>T. Bello</td>
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<td>J. Lara Aguirre</td>
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P. Garcia Lajat R. Palacios Tramex del Norte
A. Hinojosa Lajat K. Gidi Tower Apparel
S. Bañuelos Manufacturas BAHER J. Kort Van Kort de Mexico

Cd. Lerdo
S. Villalobos Diaz Industrial de Ropa Morales
J. Zarzar Maquillas Zarzar
Antonio Gil Castro Laßa
Walter Gil Castro Laßa
J. Miranda Pami
E. Salas Siete Leguas
M. Martinez Siete Leguas

Rural municipios
G. Uribe Aramark San Pedro
E. Lopez Dickies de Parras Parras de la Fuente
E. Alvarez Fabrca la Estrella Parras de la Fuente
A. Hernandez Grupo Onsite de Mexico San Pedro
H. Sheheb Jaidar Industrias Maquiladoras Ejidales F.I. Madero
S. Schwartz Liga Mayor F.I. Madero
A. Hernandez Madero Internacional (Hanes) F.I. Madero
F. Pamanes Pafer Huichita La Florida, Coah.
E. Cox Parras-Cone Parras de la Fuente
F. Gaytan UCOMEX La Union
G. Marshall Wrangler San Pedro

Suppliers La Laguna
M. Silos American & Efird Torreón
F. Garcia American & Efird Torreón
J. Melendez CIRO Torreón
J. Rosar Coats Timon Torreón
B. Flattmann Dunlap Sales de Mexico Torreón
E. Pena Mayoreo y Confecciones del Norte Torreón
E. Vera Parras de La Laguna Torreón
A. Mafud Productos West Torreón
S. Guerra Scovill Torreón
Ma. Aguilera The Fox Company Gómez Palacio
E. Puihes Comercial Samy/West Texas Textiles Torreón/El Paso
C. Alatorre Volunteer Thread

Government institutions and organisations La Laguna
J. Castañeda Bancomext Gómez Palacio
J. Ayala CANACINTRA Torreón
C. Gonzalez CANACINTRA Gómez Palacio
B. Ordúña CNIV-La Laguna Gómez Palacio
O. Juárez Presidente CNIV-La Laguna Gómez Palacio
F. Pamanes Presidente CNIV-La Laguna Gómez Palacio

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El Paso: Intermediaries and suppliers

A. Mowad  
A. Mansur  
R. Shapiro  
M. Azouley  
M. Valdez  
L. Lazaro  
J. Alcantar  
A. Levine  
C. Betancourt  
C. Arnold  
E. Lopez  
H. Whitley  
J. Mainwearing  
T. Bruder  
C. Zwezerijnen  
J. Adames  
J. Ramirez  
J. Sierra  
T. Turley  
J. Ferguson  
B. Isaac

Buyers and suppliers elsewhere USA

J. Elekes  
R. Narvaez  
G. Ross  
J. Cox  
F. Attwood  
C. Campbell  
D. Brewer  
P. Freeze

VF Jeanswear  
JC Penney  
Liz Claiborne  
Polo/Ralph Lauren  
Polo/Ralph Lauren  
The Limited  
Bend’n Stretch  
American &Efird

Greensboro  
Dallas  
New York  
New York  
New York  
New York  
Miami  
Mount Holly
Mérida
G. Cortes American & Efird
H. Rosado CNIV
G. Cohen Createx
J. Dalton Doulton de Mexico
M. Herrera Oxford de Mexico
F. Atta Produce Mexico
G. Mendez Promoción Industrial
M. Mayr VF Jeanswear

Puebla/Tehuacan
L. Marlon Camera de la Industria Textil Puebla
J. Lopez CANACINTRA Tehuacan
O. Castañeda Centro de Confección Puebla
R. Osorio CNIV Tehuacan
S. Patricio CNIV Tehuacan
O. García Confexpo Tehuacan
J. Vargas Jones Apparel Group Tehuacan
A. Anaya REMCO Tehuacan
I. Velázquez SECOFI Puebla
I. Balderas Secretaria de Obras Publicas Tehuacan
A. Carrasco SEDECO Tehuacan
P. Toscano Gil Martinez Ajalpan
C. Lopez Grupo Exportador Jeans Ajalpan