

WELCOME TO CANCUN

The master plan for Mexico's most modern city.

In the mid-twentieth century, banknotes printed and coins minted in Mexico City were distributed throughout the country in Banco de México's DC-3 airplanes.



On board one of these planes, bank officials accompanied by architects Enrique and Agustín Landa Verdugo began exploring Mexico's coasts to select sites for new sunny vacation destinations.

Sites were chosen for Ixtapa Zihuatanejo, Huatulco, Los Cabos, Loreto and Cancun.

These cities were developed by FONATUR, a trust fund of Banco de México.

It is a beginning, however, this institution did not exist and much of the preliminary work for its construction was done in the office of the Landa brothers.



Cancun would be the first destination to be developed.



The area was practically deserted.

On the island of Cancun where the hotel zone is located today, there were three people dedicated to the care of coconut farms.



In their first visits the architects, Landa explored the area guided by Rudy - Don Rodolfo Leal Moguel - who was then sixteen or seventeen years old.



In this way they got to know the mangroves and the different beaches.



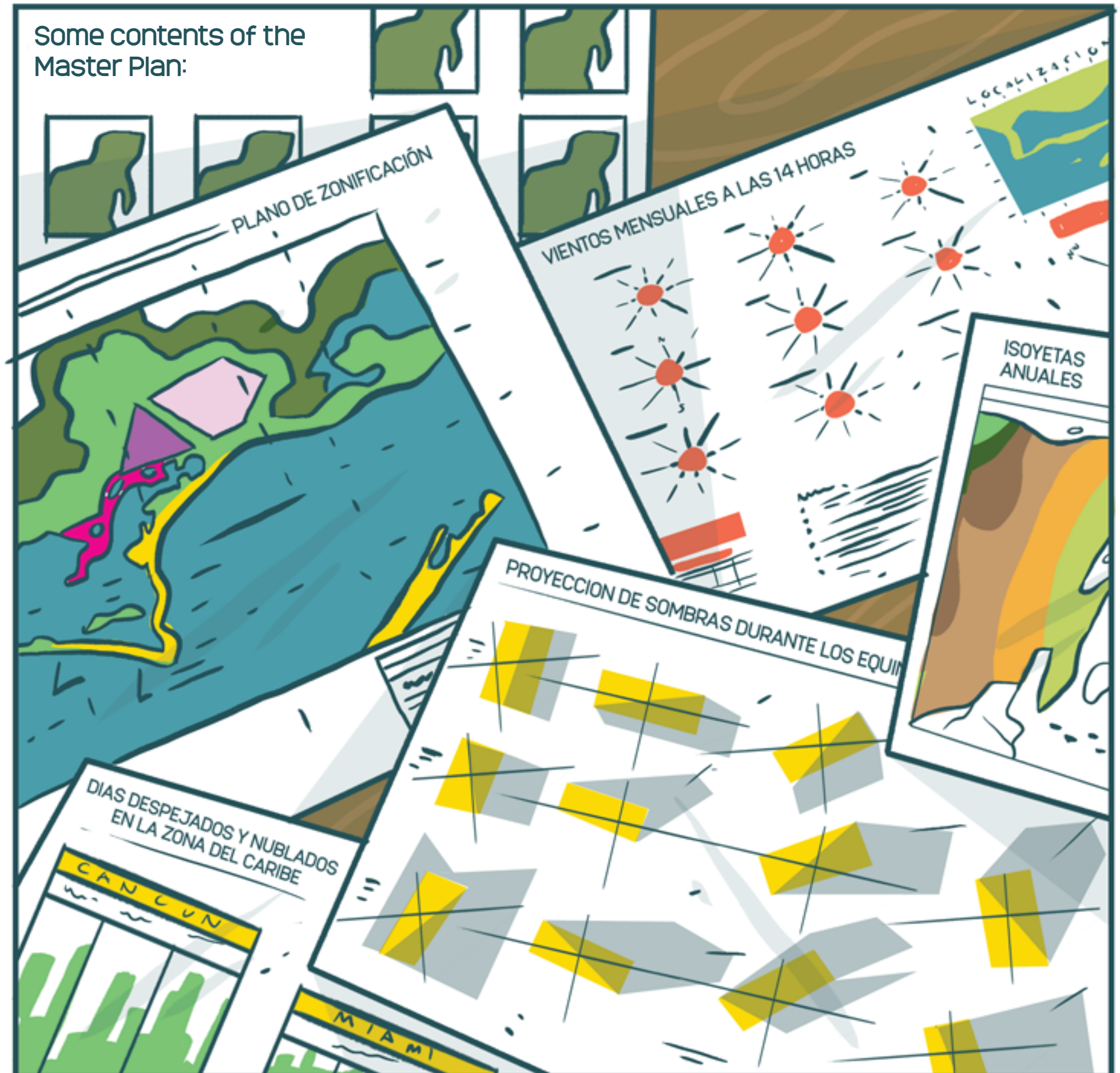
Their project would respond to the opportunity they detected to locate the hotels between the sea and the lagoon, with views to both sides and cross ventilation.



The Landa's office collected the necessary studies to build the new city.



Some contents of the Master Plan:



Architect Javier Solorzano was one of those in charge of directing the project within the firm.

He later headed the urban design division of FONATUR.



In 1968 Landa Architects presented Cancun's master plan, based on this document the executive project was developed and the city was built.

FOUNDATIONAL
ZONE



The foundation stone was laid in 1970.

The plan was to create a city like no other in Mexico.

The hotel zone is arranged around a street that runs along the island of Cancun and embraces its mangroves.



The golf courses were an integral part of the project from the beginning.

HOTEL
ZONE

NICHUPTÉ
LAGOON

PUNTA
CANCÚN

Large blocks of streets (called Supermanzanas in Spanish) with generous green areas and streets named after archeological sites instead of Mexican heroes



In addition to the fact that the hotel zone was planned to be much less dense than it is today, the project contemplated zones without buildings with direct access to the beach.

Unlike traditional Mexican cities, Cancun is not organized around a central plaza dominated by a church.

PTO.
MORELOS

Cancun was born as a modern city and since 1970 has built its own history.

Cancun was largely disconnected from the rest of the country. At the beginning of its construction, the first thing that was done was to take an old airstrip used by chewing gum producers and turn it into an airport.



The Landa architects designed a control tower using locally available materials such as parota wood and palm leaves.



Today, the old runway is Kabah Avenue, where the control tower was rebuilt as a monument to the early history and pioneers of Cancun.



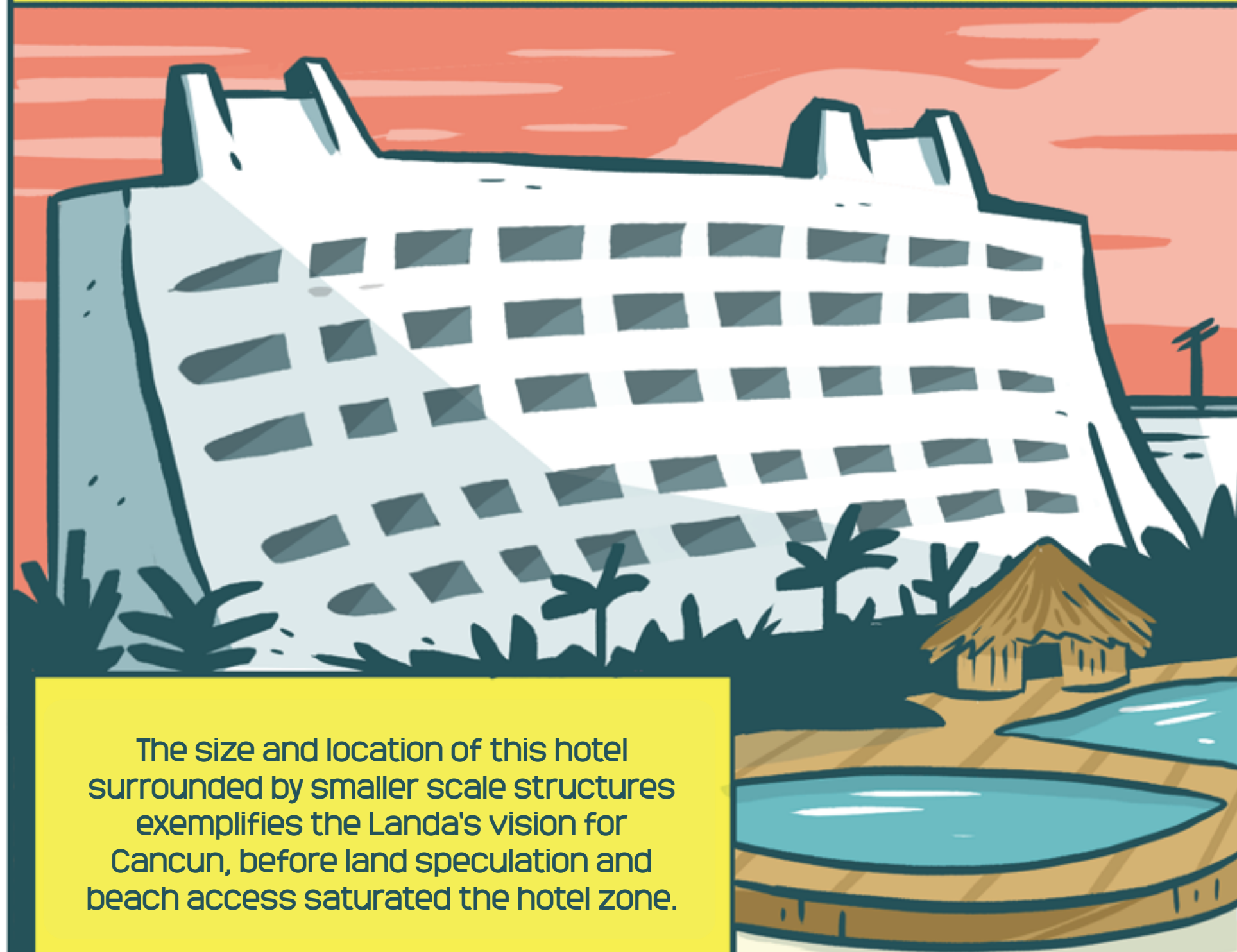
In addition, dormitories were built around Nader Avenue for the workers who started the construction of the city, as well as the first fifteen houses.



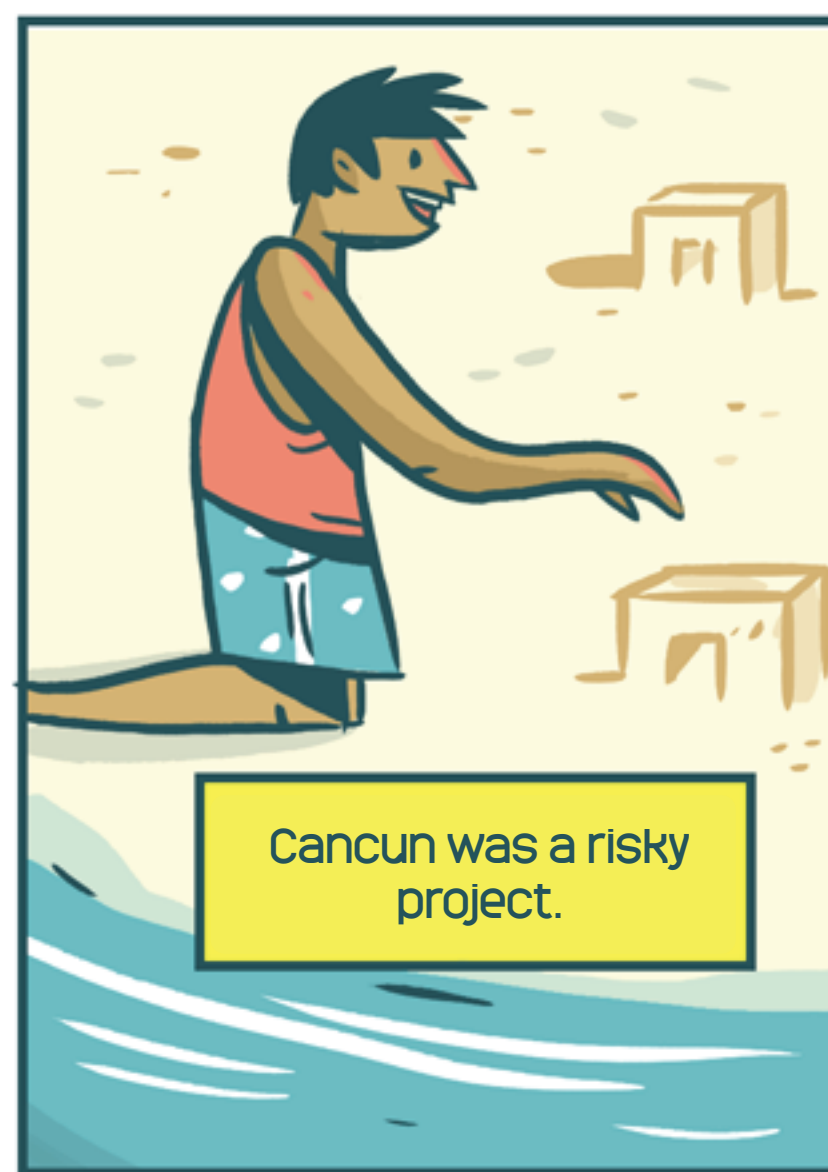
In 1970 the first settlers arrived in Cancun. They made the dream of living in paradise come true.



In addition to the master plan, the Landa architects designed one of the city's first hotels, the Cancun Caribe, today known as the Grand Park Royal.



The size and location of this hotel surrounded by smaller scale structures exemplifies the Landa's vision for Cancun, before land speculation and beach access saturated the hotel zone.



Cancun was a risky project.

It was a comprehensively planned new city for a then remote location with no basic infrastructure.



Its promoters were visionaries who paved the way for millions of people to visit or move to the Mexican Caribbean.

What actions can be painted today to honor the work of Cancun's developers, designers, builders and pioneers?



They proved that dreams can come true. What city do we dream of today? How can we shape it?

THE
END.

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This comic is part of a series of architectural publications by the firms: Landa + Martinez and Landa Suberville.

You can consult them in the pages:

landamartinez.com
landasuberville.com

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