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AGENCY IN THE SHADOW OF A CO-OPTED STATE:

TERRITORY, DIFFERENCE

AND

DEMOCRATISATION IN POSTWAR GUATEMALA

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Territory, Difference and Democratisation in post-war Guatemala

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Abstract

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Key words: Agency, collective action, state co-option, elites, natural resources, ethnicity, difference, democracy.

This thesis examines a new form of agency for change that has surfaced in rural areas of post-war Guatemala around the defence of territory and natural resources. I argue that this new form of agency emerges in the shadow of a state co-opted by elite factions and manifests distinct qualities from previous expressions of revolutionary and democratic activism. It is localised and characterised by varied aspects of what I call 'difference', an antagonistic stance based on locally embedded political, economic and cultural meanings which challenges the elite-promoted reordering of relationships and spaces. This 'difference' is enacted through the 'defence of territory', which expresses a socio-political and cultural attachment to particular physical spaces and has instigated collective resistances to the implementation of projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources.

The thesis analyses this form of agency through two case studies, one among indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché, the second among primarily non-indigenous communities in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc. As this research demonstrates, given the firm integration of conventional channels of democratic participation into the patterns of state co-option, the primary aim of these struggles is the re-appropriation of decision-making processes and the carving out of spaces, in which their 'difference' can evolve. In the context of a co-opted state, these local expressions of agency create spaces in which fragile, embryonic forms of collective interaction and deliberation that represent a condition for democratic processes, are kept alive. However, their non-linear articulations and specific local character are also a testament to the complexity of the construction of democratic processes in countries like Guatemala.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AC	Acción Católica (Catholic Action)
ACOGUATE	Acompañamiento de Guatemala (Accompaniment of Guatemala)
AIDPI	Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas (Agreement on Indigenous Peoples' Identity and Rights)
ASC	Asamblea de Sociedad Civil (Civil Society Assembly)
CACIF	Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (Coordinating Committee for Agricultural, Comercial, Industrial and Financial Associations)
CEH	Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico (Historical Clarification Commission)
CIACS	Cuerpos Ilegales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad (Illegal Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatuses)
CICIG	Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala)
CIG	Cámara de Industrias Extractivas (Chamber of Extractive Industry)
CMI	Centro de Medios Independientes (Centre for Independent Media)
CNEE	Comisión Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (National Commission for Electric Energy)
COCODES	Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo (Community Council of Development)
CODISRA	Comisión contra la Discriminación y el Racismo (Commission against Discrimination and Racism)
COMUDE	Consejos Municipales de Desarrollo (Municipal Council of Development)
CONAVIGUA	Coordinadora de Viudas de Guatemala (National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows)
CONDEG	Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala (National Council of Displaced Persons of Guatemala)
CONIC	Coordinación Nacional Indígena y Campesina (National

	Coordination of Indigenous Peoples and Peasants)
COPMAGUA	La Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala (Coordination of Organisations of the Mayan People in Guatemala)
CPR	Comunidades de Población en Resistencia (Communities of Population in Resistance)
CUC	Comité Unidad Campesina (CUC, Peasants Unity Committee)
DEMI	Defensora de la Mujer Indígena (Defence of the Indigenous Women)
DR-CAFTA	Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreemen
EGP	Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor)
EIA	Estudio de Impacto Ambiental (Environmental Impact Report)
EXMINGUA	Exploraciones Mineras de Guatemala (Mining Explorations of Guatemala)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FDNG	Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala (New Guatemala Democratic Front)
FGEI	Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra
FONPETROL	Fondo de Petróleo (Petroleum Fund)
FONTIERRAS	Fondo de Tierras (Land Fund)
FTN	Franja Transversal del Norte (Northern Transversal Strip)
GAM	Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (Mutual Support Group)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GREMIEXT	Gremial de Industrias Extractivas (Board of Extractive Industries)
ICEFI	Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales (Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies)
IGSS	Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social (Guatemalan Institute for Social Security)
IIN	Instituto Indigenista Nacional (National Indigenist Institute)
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMH	Iniciativa Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Initiative)
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (National Institute of Statistics)
INDE	Instituto Nacional de Electrificación (National Institute for Electrification)
IPNUSAC	Instituto de Problemas Nacionales de la Universidad de San Carlos (Institute of National Problems of the University San Carlos)
IRRMH	Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Initiative for the reconstruction and recuperation of Historical Memory)
MEM	Ministerio de Energía y Minas (Ministry for Energy and Mining)
MLN	Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Movement)
NORC	Nueva Organización Revolucionaria de Combate (New Revolutionary Organisation of Combat)
ORPA	Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas (Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms)
PAC	Patrulleros de Autodefensa Civil (Civil Self-defence Patrols)
PDH	Procuradoría de Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Ombudsman)
PER	Programa de Electrificación Rural (Programme for Rural Electrification)
PET	Plan de Expansión del Sistema de Transporte de Energía (Plan for the Expansion of Electric Transmission)
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (Guatemalan Communist Party)
PNUD	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (United Nations Development Programme)
PRONACOM	Programa Nacional de Competitividad (National Program of Competitiveness)
RENAP	Registro Nacional de las Personas (National Registry of Persons)

RIC	Registro de Información Catastral (Register of Catastral Information)
RMT	Resource Mobilisation Theory
RPLP	Resistencia Pacífica La Puya (Pacific Resistance of la Puya)
SIEPAC	Sistema de Interconexión Eléctrica de los Países de América Central (Project for the System of Electrical Interconnection of the Central American Countries)
SNDP	Sistema Nacional de Dialogo Permanente (System of National Permanent Dialogue)
TRECSA	Transportadora de Energía de Centroamérica
UASP	Unidad de Acción Sindical y Popular (Unit for Union and Popular Action)
UDEFEGUA	Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSITRAGUA	Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (Guatemalan Trade Union Confederation)
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity)
VAT	Value-added Tax

Introduction

This thesis examines a new moment in the history of agency for change that has surfaced in rural areas of post-war Guatemala around the defence of territory and natural resources. I argue that this new form of agency emerges in the shadow of a state co-opted by elite factions and manifests distinct qualities from previous expressions of revolutionary and democratic activism. It is localised and characterised by varied aspects of what I call 'difference', an antagonistic stance based on locally embedded political, economic and cultural meanings that challenges the elite-promoted reordering of relationships and spaces in the historic indigenous lands of Guatemala.

This 'difference' is enacted through the 'defence of territory', which expresses a socio-political and cultural attachment to particular physical spaces and has instigated collective resistances to the implementation of projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources. The defence of territory highlights the incompatibilities between elites and this locally based agency not just at the level of meanings, as local community members advance contrasting understandings of 'land' and 'resources' as well as how to frame development in their local surroundings. Instead, they are also evident at the level of practices, as the organisational processes evolving from this agency create spaces that reflect their divergent understandings of decision-making and participation. As this research demonstrates, given the integration of the conventional channels of democratic participation into the dynamics of state co-option, the primary aim of these struggles is the re-appropriation of decision-making processes and carving out of spaces, in which their collective agency and 'difference' can be kept alive and developed.

In order to understand the features of this agency as well as its implications for debates around democracy, I argue that it has to be analysed in the light of Guatemala's particular state-formation process. Traditional elites have been the prime drivers of this process and have periodically adjusted the legal, coercive and political mechanisms to perpetuate their privileged societal position and processes of accumulation. They have done so without articulating a nation-building project, or attempting to integrate the indigenous majority, or taking into account the demographic complexity of the 24 linguistic communities in Guatemala. Instead, over the course of centuries their dominance has been

marked by authoritarian governance, periodic use of violence and repression, racist ideology and its enactment through state policies. However, I argue that over recent decades new patterns have started to mark the relationship between elites and the state. Against the backdrop of the transitional framework towards a formal democratic constitution in 1985, a gradual shift from openly authoritarian forms of governance towards patterns of 'state co-option' can be perceived.

I draw on authors such as Garay and Salcedo-Albarán (2012) as well as Gutiérrez and Méndez (2012) to define this gradual shift in the mechanisms applied to control the institutional framework of the state. In contrast to the authoritarian control based on an alliance with the military elites exercised up to the transitional period, 'state co-option' implies the use of an array of legal and illegal, formal and informal mechanisms by elites to modify and influence the design as well as application of laws and policies. In this scenario, a bidirectional dynamic develops, as different elite factions strike alliances with officials within the state or with political operators with the capacity to influence the actions of key actors positioned within the institutional framework. Bribery, corruption, exchange of favours and coercive strategies feature among the mechanisms used by different elite factions to co-opt the operations of the state and in some cases even reconfigure the functions of institutions as such.

In turn, formal actors within the state also develop an interest in the continuation of these patterns as they reap benefits from this interaction (Garay and Salcedo-Albarán, 2012). They do so among other things by drawing on the capacity of actors outside the state to use violence. I argue in the case of Guatemala that sections of the traditional, historic elites as well as elites emerging over recent decades, some with a more explicit capacity to exercise violence and linked with illicit modes of accumulation, engage in state co-option. Using strategies beyond the realm of legality, the different elite factions are locked into competition and cooperation as the formal institutional functions and rules are co-opted or reconfigured to promote specific interests, strategies of accumulation and capture rents.

The impact on wider society of the patterns of governance resulting from the co-option and reconfiguration of state functions becomes evident through specific policies and influences the forms collective agency takes in response to the

antagonisms generated at the local level. This has been exemplified in this post-war period by the state policies promoting the exploitation of natural resources. The rural sections of Guatemala have been targeted through various dimensions of these policies including licenses for oil-extraction, mining, hydroelectric projects as well as the expansion of electricity grids. This is in line with regional and global trends, as many governments in the Latin American region and the Global South accept their role in the international division of labour as providers of energy and raw materials such as hydrocarbons, metals and minerals. Different national elite factions have integrated these economic interests into their strategies of accumulation. In the outlined context of state co-option, elites within and outside the institutional framework cooperate at a local and national level, to pursue the implementation of projects linked to the extractive and energy producing industry.

I do not argue that the interests and policies linked to the exploitation of natural resources completely explain the emergence of agency around the defence of territory, which is the central focus of this thesis. A socio-historic lens has to be applied in order to de-construct the multiple layers of cultural and political complexity and identify further factors that account for collective action among communities. Nevertheless, this thesis does argue that due to the way in which these recent elite-determined policies impact upon rural communities, they constitute a crucial variable that has stimulated antagonistic affinities and responses based on local problems and experiences. In the course of local sense-making activities, frameworks of collective action have consolidated to constitute signifiers that are filled with the meanings and practices produced by the local community members.

At the same time the nature of Guatemala's state-formation process and the current scenario of state co-option influence the characteristics of this agency. Rather than broad, over-arching movements that challenge national power-structures, localised nodes of resistance have emerged and gradually consolidated. In contrast to previous periods of authoritarian military rule, they maintain strategic interactions with the institutional framework. However, these connections are sought with the local and the community in mind, in order to highlight and seek recognition of their dissenting voices, frequently with references to national and international legislation. Notions of 'territory' acquire

special weight among local community members as they do not just symbolise the incompatibility of understandings between local communities and elites on the use of land or the model of development. Instead, 'territory' also represents the space in which local community members can determine their own production of meanings and frame their political interactions in ways that contrast with institutional spaces marked by patterns of state co-option. Accordingly, in the context of a co-opted state, the 'local' becomes the space in which fragile, embryonic forms of collective interaction and deliberation that represent a condition for democracy can be kept alive.

To illustrate the aspects of this central argument, the thesis examines two localised expressions of agency that have surfaced among the various organisational processes in rural parts of the country.

One of the organisational processes analysed in this thesis is located among indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché region.[1] I also examine a second expression of collective action, the Pacific Resistance La Puya, (*Resistencia Pacífica La Puya,* RPLP) that has emerged close to the capital city among predominantly non-indigenous communities in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc. Both processes have been driven by local community members as they have engaged in strategies to defend their territories, livelihoods and communities from the impact of projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources. The variations in the demographic characteristics and composition of the communities featuring in the case studies enable me to explore and contrast how territory and meanings 'interact', when indigenous identity comes into play. Meanings rooted in indigenous language and cosmovision, a system of practices and knowledge deriving from a specific cultural worldview, play a central role in accentuating and revitalising holistic understandings of territory among indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché. In the case of the RPLP the differential meanings around territory that frame their resistance are based on more immediate and short-term sense-

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[1] In the course of the thesis the term 'Northern Quiché' will be used to refer to the area of 5 municipalities of Nebaj, Cotzal, Chajul, Cunén and Sacapulas. These do not constitute an administrative region and are 5 of a total of 21 municipalities in the department of Quiché. The community members of the network analysed in this thesis commonly use this definition as a general term of reference for their organisational space. Accordingly, it will be referring to 5 municipalities, in which members of the network operate.

making processes. However, by drawing on the demographic complexity and various forms of knowledge, they too develop meanings that challenge the divide between nature and humans as well as the elite-promoted understandings of territory.

Additionally, the two case studies allow me to outline their implications in the context of the Guatemalan state. They highlight how the most sustained collective organisational patterns in this post-war period emerge outside the formal political system and beyond the social centres of society. The communities' desire to determine their immediate surroundings based on the flow of locally produced and collectively legitimated meanings represents the central dimension of their struggle. In both cases this differential production of meanings is translated into fragile attempts at redesigning patterns of political interaction. As the case studies will show, this is reflected in aspects such as the organisation of community consultations as well as the introduction of horizontal patterns into the processes of decision-making and representation. In doing so, they do not adopt the strategies of previous revolutionary or democratic activism that orientates its organisational strategies towards the state or follows more conventional, institutional lines of participation. The discourses and practices of these communities engage in strategic interactions at different scales beyond the local, however, the constant search for legitimacy and acceptance at the community level as well as the claims to determine their immediate surroundings, represent the crucial features of these organisational processes.

The specific character of collective agency in the context of co-opted states with demographic complexity and its implications for democracy will constitute the central contribution of this thesis to existing research. This idea of state co-option has to be contextualised among the state formation processes in Latin America. In the region, the formation of nation-states was driven by the external colonization of the native peoples by European colonizers and gave way to the consolidation of a centralized state that delineated a conquered space of domination. According to the rationale of the colonizers this process required the destruction of the indigenous peoples' ways and views of life as well as their forms of self-government in addition to the physical elimination of large sections of this population, especially those unwilling to conform to the colonial rules and demands.

Even following independence, the post-colonial regimes continued to evolve and operate along these lines as they sought to conquest indigenous territories and peoples, eliminate their cultural frameworks and their capacity to resist. These measures were seen as necessary to homogenize national populations and enhance the process of constituting nation-states. Accordingly, the process of independence for Latin American states did not translate into a decolonization of society. Instead, as Qujiano has argued, it represented a "re-articulation of the coloniality of power" upon new institutional bases (Quijano, 2000, p.228), which in the second half of the 20th century was guided for extensive periods by brutal, authoritarian regimes. Accordingly, the structure of power in these states was and to a large extent continues to be organised around a colonial matrix (Qujiano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011; Lander, 2012).

However, this continuity of the colonial matrix dominating the state in the region has over centuries been met by multiple expressions of defiance and resistance, as peoples and collectives have sought to respond to the various forms of imposition and politics promoted by the institutional frameworks. The forceful emergence of the Latin American social movements has represented the most recent feature of this trend and marked the socio-political dynamics of the region, often by engendering an explicit challenge to neoliberal policies. From the perspective of many indigenous peoples they represent a continuation of the colonial structuring of power-relationships and its translation into policies. Numerous movements across the continent have framed their articulations around an explicit quest to decolonize power-relationships and gain autonomous spaces of self-determination. They have done so without necessarily seeing the state as the prime objective of their articulations, while the pursuit of a political, economic and social development in line with their own cultural understandings has represented more of a common denominator of these movements.

Picking up on the central contribution of the thesis, the research aims to speak to contexts where the state-formation processes have not just continued along this colonial axis. Instead it refers to settings, where the last decades have given way to particularly advanced levels of co-option of formal institutional functions and decision-making processes by elite-factions. Accordingly, illegal and informal patterns of relating with the institutional framework and

determining policies and laws predominate. These features combine with periodically and often violently reinforced political, economic and cultural forms of exclusion, which are enacted against large sections of an ethnically diverse population. By referring to these contextual characteristics, the thesis relates to various strands of literature as it highlights the particular features this agency takes on in these contexts and discusses its implications.

Based on the experience of European states, an extensive body of literature on democracy and state-formation in the Global South has tended to focus on elites and their role in conceding openings that pave the way for more inclusive and democratic societies (Burton et al., 1992; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; North et al., 2009; Putzel and Di John, 2012). In the course of the thesis I discuss the limitations of this emphasis on the promotion of conditions for agreements between elite factions that fail to sufficiently acknowledge the excluding social relationships and undemocratic practices they perpetuate. Further insights can be gained from literature looking at the state in the Global South, often by adopting a neo-patrimonial perspective in order to reflect the combination of patrimonial dominance and a 'modern' bureaucracy that marks many regimes. A series of analyses have highlighted the economic patterns of patronage, rent-seeking and corruption at work, as many societies are marked by a perpetuation of exclusive social orders with elites locked into patterns of accumulation (eg. Bratton and Van der Walle, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Erdmann and Engel, 2006; Niemann, 2007).

Additionally, a recent body of literature has shed further light on how elite factions establish co-optive relationships around the state to determine the formulation of policies and legal frameworks (eg. Garay and Salcedo-Albarán, 2012; Gutiérrez and Méndez, 2012; Briscoe, 2014). Informal and illegal mechanisms predominate as elite factions seek to control, co-opt and reconfigure the formal functions and ways of operating of the state by establishing alliances with agents and networks within the institutional framework. Based on these alliances, short and long term strategies of accumulation of elite-factions are promoted, while the formally democratic structure of the state is eroded.

Given that elites have proved unable to consolidate democratic regimes beyond Dahl's (1989) 'procedural minimum' that had represented a benchmark for many

theorists on democratic transitions, it seems important to explore the role of alternative sources of agency. A substantial body of literature has examined non-elite forms of agency and their relationship with democratisation processes. Tilly (1978, 1984) has been especially influential in relating collective action and social movements to interactions with the institutional framework. Other scholars (Giugni, 1998; McAdam, 1998) have followed similar approaches to establish the impact of social movements on the state and outcomes relevant to democratisation. On the other hand, another line of research has emphasised that collective action does not necessarily take place on established political and institutional terrain (Melucci, 1996; Avritzer, 2002; Della Porta, 2013). Instead, these scholars have preferred to emphasise the cultural processes at work in collective agency and the challenge to dominant meanings it represents. In doing so, they argue for the relevance of expressions of collective agency *'per se'* and see them as forms of incipient associational patterns, among which alternative and more democratic processes can develop.

My argument with regards to the processes of defence of territory in Guatemala follows a similar line. The expressions of dissent are articulated from localised spaces, outside the formal political system and beyond the social centres of society. These nevertheless represent the primary spaces of struggle for community members in order to shape the political, cultural and economic relationships of their immediate surroundings. Despite the seemingly dispersed features of these local nodes of agency, this thesis does not concur with a significant body of literature in political science that eschews the importance of collective action and its relevance for democratic processes. The argument for this perspective is not made in order to encourage a top-down integration of rural communities or emphasise their potential as a revolutionary or democratising force that targets central state power. Instead, it is presented through the 'condition' for democratic processes these rural communities articulate by asserting that they cannot be constructed without them. Thus, they highlight the respect for the determination of their local spaces, meanings and organisational practices as a starting point for these processes. In doing so, they challenge not just the imposition of specific policies, but also outline forms of interaction that can contribute to make their social realities and everyday lives 'more democratic'.

The focus on the cultural challenge of expressions of collective agency to dominant meanings has also been highlighted in research on Latin America (eg. Escobar, 1992, 2008; Álvarez, 1998; Dagnino, 1998). This view has emphasised the importance of research that pays attention to local cultures and epistemologies to develop an understanding for these organisational processes that frequently emerge in contexts with high demographic and cultural complexity (Santos, 2007, 2010; Escobar, 2008). The agency of indigenous movements has been tracked by a number of authors to show how policies, which are perceived as undermining cultural understandings, organisational autonomy and control over territories, can generate antagonistic responses from those they target (Yashar, 2005; Van Cott 2007, 2008). They have also emphasised the importance of space and territory in the course of these organisational processes, highlighting the attachment and meanings attributed by indigenous communities to their local surroundings.

I will argue that in the context of a co-opted state, this spatial, territorial dimension acquires special weight in processes of collective agency. On one hand, territory symbolises the incompatibility of meanings between local communities and elites around the use of land and ideas of development. On the other hand, this territorial aspect becomes crucial as local communities seek to consolidate spaces, in which they can remain in control of their own designs of political interaction and decision-making that contrast with the patterns predominant in formal institutions marked by state co-option.

In the same vein, the thesis contributes to the body of literature on collective action and social movements in Latin America that has sought to come to terms with the ethnic and cultural diversity predominant in many of these countries. As mentioned above, significant attention has been paid to the emergence of indigenous movements and their contestation of state policies. A growing number of scholars have also analysed non-indigenous movements and expressions of collective action (Porto Gonçalves, 2001; Ceceña, 2008; Zibechi, 2007, 2011; Svampa, 2011; Dinerstein 2013, 2015). This thesis will conceptualise the antagonistic meanings and practices that generate collective affinities and agency at the local level around the outlined understanding of 'difference'. Accordingly, 'difference', which in this case is expressed through a socio-political attachment to specific territories, is not limited or exclusive to

particular ethnic identities. Instead, it will be suggested as a conceptual framework for the agency among indigenous as well as non-indigenous communities. I indicate how even in areas with an ethnically diverse population, community members have consolidated spaces around a shared antagonistic stance. The case studies will also show how in the course of the organisational processes, the emphasis of designing political interactions in ways that can address without suffocating the 'difference' among the community members, increases.

The research objective to examine these grass-root processes engaging in the defence of territory, and analyse their implications for democracy, required a methodological approach that goes beyond those commonly used in political science. On one hand, my methods had to address the cultural and demographic complexity of grass-roots Guatemala, marked by multiple layers of local histories and processes. On the other hand, they were also required to deconstruct the dynamics surrounding the institutional framework of the state as well as the political and economic processes they are embedded in. To achieve this goal, I used a political ethnographic approach moving at the interface of methods ascribed to political science and ethnography. Methods closer to anthropological research were indispensable to arrive at an understanding of the characteristics of specific expressions of agency, the ongoing processes of production of meaning as well as their procedural and organisational understandings. Political science approaches enabled me to examine political processes and relationships surrounding the state institutions as well as the implications for democracy emerging from this grass-roots agency.

The central focus of the thesis

In the course of the research process three interlinked research objectives are being addressed:

Firstly, the thesis seeks to explain the emergence of the current nodes of collective agency based on the 'defence of territory' among rural communities and how it relates to previous generations of agency in Guatemala. Secondly, it will characterise this community-based agency by highlighting the specific features it acquires in the context of a co-opted state such as Guatemala.

Thirdly, it explores the insights and implications for debates around collective action and democracy emerging from the analysis of the previous research objectives.

The **first research objective** aims to develop an understanding of the emergence of the current processes of collective action in Guatemala. A conceptual exploration (chapter 2) of collective agency in elite-dominated and multi-ethnic settings will provide the theoretical framework for this understanding. This sets up the process of convergence of community members into an expression of collective action around the production and struggle for the re-appropriation of meanings. Antagonistic affinities are generated and community members converge to defend their own production of meanings or in Melucci's words, 'coding' of social realities (Melucci, 1996). Their agency focuses on highlighting the antagonisms resulting from policies or mechanisms that are perceived as incompatible with local understandings and sense-making activities. This framework will also outline why this emergence of agency cannot be restricted to original or ethnically rooted difference. Instead, it emphasises the complexity and contingency of social realities and how this collective antagonistic stance or 'difference' can be developed in multiple social settings and contexts.

An understanding of the characteristics of the current expressions of agency will be established by bringing them into relation with previous generations of agency (chapter 4). Different attempts at breaking with the elite-dominated societal order have been undertaken, among them, a popular, urban movement headed by a middle-class leadership challenging authoritarian rule in 1944; a community-based agency, seeking to consolidate an autonomous economic and political model in rural areas of the country in the 1960s; the revolutionary challenge by guerrilla factions in the course of the armed conflict (1960-1996); and the Mayan articulations emerging in the context of the Peace Accords of 1996, based on a civil society framework as well as party activism. By examining these different expressions of agency I discuss some of the limitations or constraints they have encountered. This socio-historical lens leads me towards explaining the emergence of the current agency around the defence of territory and examining its relationship and differences with regards to these previous generations of agency.

The data collected for the case studies through interviews and participant observation adds empirical detail to this analysis by reflecting the internal processes of convergence, the cultural understandings nurturing these resistances, as well as the organisational patterns developed in the course of the agency. The case studies explore how meanings associated with the defence of territory develop when indigenous identity comes into play. The case of the communities in the Northern Quiché region demonstrates how this accentuation of particular meanings featured among indigenous communities and consolidated a network across ethnic and municipal borders (chapter 7). The revitalisation of meanings around territory and community indicates the role of ethnically rooted meanings in the framing of their resistance. The RPLP on the other hand shows how this affirmation of 'difference' is articulated in a space among primarily non-indigenous community members (chapter 8). In this case the framing of the resistance is a much more immediate and short-term process. By drawing on the local demographic complexity and diverse knowledge the RPLP has also consolidated an antagonistic stance with regards to the elite-imposed understandings and policies.

The **second research objective** seeks to identify the specific features of this community-based agency by relating it to the context of a co-opted state. A review of literature on state-formation and democratisation processes in the Global South will provide the background for this analysis (chapter 1). It will set up the link between elites as the prime drivers of these processes and their aspirations to ensure their privileged status by promoting their strategies of accumulation and access to rents, which in turn has consolidated elite-dominated social orders in many states of the Global South. I will also draw on literature highlighting 'state co-option' that provides more detail on how elite factions use formal and informal, legal and illegal mechanisms, to influence policies and reconfigure areas of the institutional framework to respond to particular economic interests.

This literature represents the link for the analysis of the particular formation of the Guatemalan state, which I will explore by looking at its evolution over various historical stages (chapter 3). In doing so, I will highlight some of the legal, political and economic mechanisms used in the course of this process that have periodically reaffirmed the exclusion of large parts of the population,

while enabling elite-networks to consolidate their dominant societal position. Additionally, I will indicate the shift from authoritarian forms of government to a mode of governance based on 'state co-option' in the context of the transition to formal democracy initiated in 1985. As mentioned above, elites increasingly used new mechanisms to control the formulation of policies and rules by establishing alliances with individuals and networks within the institutional framework to benefit particular strategies of accumulation. These mechanisms of state co-option have not only been used by traditional elites. Instead, elites emerging on the basis of legal as well as illegal opportunities of capital accumulation in the context of the Peace Accords have used similar mechanisms of state co-option to promote their interests. This has consolidated complex and multilevel networks around the state institutions, as different elite factions are locked into competition as well as cooperation in their drive to ensure a privileged access to wealth and rents. The thesis also highlights how the co-option and reconfiguration of state functions as well as policies in accord with particular elite-interests have coincided with the growing influence of neoliberal policies and new strategies of accumulation for elites, among them the exploitation of natural resources in rural areas. This has translated into a wave of licenses for mining, oil extraction, and hydroelectric plants as well as the expansion of electricity grids in various parts of the country.

Based on this context and by analysing the organisational processes around the defence of territory, I will seek to identify some of the specific features collective agency acquires. As the case studies demonstrate, it fails to emerge along conventional channels of democratic participation. Only in specific moments does this agency engage with institutional spaces as the communities seek to gain recognition of their dissent and advance their claims to determinate their surroundings on the basis of national and international legal frameworks. Their opposition to the policies aimed at the exploitation of natural resources is voiced primarily in local spaces among sections of the population that have been politically and socially marginalised. This agency differs from previous experiences of revolutionary or democratic activism as the appropriation of decision-making processes and the determination of their local surroundings, rather than the targeting of state power, constitute the central objective of their organisational processes. 'Territory' becomes crucial in this struggle, as it also

represents the space in which communities seek to remain in control of their production of meanings and decide on the design of their social and political interactions.

The **third research objective** to examine insights for the understandings of democratisation based on the analysis of collective agency in the context of a co-opted state, is tightly linked to the previous research aims. It underlines the importance of the political ethnographic approach since it connects the analysis of the grass-root processes, and their implications for meta-political issues such as democracy. The case studies and the in-depth analysis of the processes of collective action focus on the epistemological processes and practical mechanisms the community members engage in to carve out local spaces. These range from the use of direct action, the attempts to experiment around and redesign patterns of political interaction, to the demand for recognition of their autonomous practices based on legal frameworks.

In the case of the communities of the Northern Quiché, the organisation of local community consultations to re-appropriate decision-making processes reflects the attention paid to procedural aspects in their struggles. A reformulation of mechanisms of representation has been another feature that reinforces the participative elements of this collective agency. Similar aspects have been developed in the case of the RPLP. An assembly, integrated by all participating community members was established as the central space for deliberation and decision-making. Additionally, horizontal understandings and the idea of accountability have been reinforced in patterns of representation. This experimentation around procedural mechanisms means their struggle for the re-appropriation of meanings implies not just a discursive affirmation of 'difference'. Instead, in the course of this agency they have also introduced fragile attempts at experimenting and imagining new ways of organising political processes. Accordingly, these efforts oriented towards the re-appropriation of decision-making processes, highlight the often disregarded relevance for meta-political issues of this agency. It shows how this agency and the commitment to redesign political interactions constitute a crucial attempt at making their local realities 'more democratic' in the face of the vertical imposition of elite policies and co-opted institutional spaces.

Some working definitions:

One of the concepts central to the thesis is that of 'elites'. An economic perspective in line with Mills (1956) has emphasised the elites' capacity to appropriate resources. However, a definition of 'elites' based on their capacity to accumulate, capture rents and organise economic processes seems to only provide a partial explanation for the persistence of elites in states such as Guatemala. Accordingly, it is important to complement this understanding by drawing on Parry (1969), who emphasises the elites' ability to influence political processes. Additionally, scholars such as Burton et al. (1992) and North et al. (2009) have highlighted the elites' ability to form and/or lead organisations, networks and alliances that enables a sustained and regular pursuit of their respective interests. In the context of Guatemala, the focus will be on 'traditional' elites on one hand and 'emerging' elites on the other. 'Traditional' refers to the sustained period of their elite status, which in line with the work of Guatemalan scholar Casaús Arzú (2007), has been consolidated in most cases since the 19th century. 'Emerging', on the other hand refers to elites that have emerged since the transition to democracy, primarily by seizing on legal as well as illegal opportunities for accumulation arising in this context. Drawing on Burton et al.'s (1992) classification of elites, especially given the emergence of new elite factions over recent decades, Guatemalan elites can be seen as a "disunified elite", with minimal "structural integration or value consensus" (Burton et al, 1992, p.10). In the context of the outlined scenario of state co-option, this is reflected in the complex and multilevel alliances elite factions have established with individuals and networks positioned outside and within the state institutions. Accordingly, different elite factions are locked into evolving patterns of competition as well as cooperation in their drive to influence policies and institutional functions to ensure a privileged access to wealth and rents.

The idea of the 'state' is strongly linked to this understanding of 'elites'. It refers to the political and legal apparatus that in Marxist tradition has often been described as an instrument used by the dominant capitalist class in pursuit of its economic interests. However, I regard this understanding as too reductive and advocate a view that reflects the evolving correlation of forces that surround this apparatus as well as the range of cultural, social and political processes and relationships that are promoted through the multiple institutions, norms, rules

and values. This amplified view pays reference to the state as a form of exercising and stabilising power-relationships, while also acting as an 'apparatus of capture' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) that seeks to integrate relationships and processes that escape its control, be it in a coercive or bio-political way. For many states in the Global South, this integration or capture can be interpreted as a 'sub-sumption by exclusion' (Dinerstein, 2014), as peoples are integrated into the grammar of state and capital, however in a position of exclusion and invisibility.

In the case of Guatemala, similar to many states in the Latin American region, the relationships that mark the state and its political regime cannot be disconnected from its colonial and mono-ethnic characteristics as well as its role in reinforcing class-divides. The colonial articulation of power has continued throughout post-colonial periods, without the introduction of a formal democratic framework constituting a break with this colonial axis. As the essentially mono-ethnic character of the Guatemalan state has persisted, this also highlights the lack of independence of the political regime from traditional and emerging elite factions.

The mechanisms of domination exercised through the state have also continued to be articulated along class divides, in this sense consolidating a structure that stabilises colonial and class-based exercise of power. The mentioned absence of independence of the political regime from elite factions leads me to conceptualise the Guatemalan state as marked by an advanced level of co-option to highlight the predominant patterns relationships around the institutional apparatus follow. While all states are marked by some degree of co-option, these dynamics are especially predominant in states such as Guatemala, where there is evidence of a 'co-opted reconfiguration of the state' (Garay et al., 2010). Thus, political and legal processes as well as entire state functions are reconfigured in accord with the interests of traditional and emerging elites. This idea of state co-option seeks to emphasise the multiple mechanisms used in the competition among elite factions to control the institutional framework, which is framed by a consensus or pact around the informal as well as illegal determination of formal decision-making processes.

The definition of 'agency', another key element of my conceptual framework, will be based on an understanding of the capacity of individuals to act. Agency will

be used primarily at a collective level, with 'collective agency' implying a convergence of individuals in order to act together. The concept of 'collective agency' was preferred over that of 'movements' with previous work of Guatemalan scholars such as Bastos and Camus (2003) or Brett (2006) in mind. I chose this terminology in an attempt to indicate the particular features of the organisational processes under analysis in this thesis and highlight their much more local and subaltern character. This distinguishes them from the earlier broader articulations these scholars have referred to as social, popular or indigenous movements and that spring to mind in the Guatemalan context when the term 'movement' is used. However, to emphasise the contingent character of this collective agency I also move away from a dualistic definition of agency in relation to structure. Instead, I seek to build on a more fluid understanding provided by authors linked to complexity theory (eg. Urry, 2003; Chesters and Welsh, 2010; Chesters, 2012). This enables the analysis to emphasise the unpredictable, undefined flow of agency and, especially when referring to collective agency, the immanent characteristics of these processes. Accordingly, as individuals converge in processes of collective agency or in De Landa's (2006) understanding agglomerate to form 'assemblages', they have the capacity to develop properties in the course of their actions or practices that are not just drawn on their relationship with structure. This requires an engagement with the epistemological processes at work that are often developed on the basis of different ontological frameworks. Additionally, the various local assemblages can constitute 'nodes' -that is particular 'places' marked by intense communicative work within the broader organisational network (Chesters, 2012). The processes of collective convergence to form assemblages will in turn be explained by referring to the processes of production or appropriation of meanings. This idea of escaping a too narrow structure-agency debate also implies removing the state as the prime target or objective of the collective articulations. Instead, it equips the expressions of collective agency with more flexible properties and pays justice to the ways in which they shuttle between different scales and strategies. This means the state apparatus and its arenas only represent one among various areas of interaction.

The concept of 'meanings' will be central to examine the embedded understandings and emergence of the expressions of collective agency. In line

with a number of authors (e.g. Melucci 1989, 1996; Álvarez, 1998; Dagnino, 1998; Escobar, 1992, 2008), I emphasise that societies are not just based on production in the economic sphere. Instead, there are ongoing processes of production of symbols, social relationships, needs and identities among others. Behind these different words lie a plurality of meanings that in turn imply practices, policies and actions, which can come into opposition and conflict. Following this understanding, Melucci (1989, 1996) sees the emergence of social movements and collective action as a 'symptom' of these conflicts over meanings. Collective action constitutes an attempt to re-appropriate and remain in control of the production of meanings, not just in their semantic sense but also in terms of the practices they imply. According to this view, expressions of collective agency can be seen as engaging in what Escobar has labelled "cultural distribution conflicts" (Escobar, 2008, p.14). This highlights struggles not just over access and control over resources but instead embedded in a perspective of 'difference' to fundamentally question their use and the meanings attached to them.

A further aspect of my conceptual framework is that of 'difference', which is closely linked to this dimension of production of meanings. The differential production of meanings points to the variety of understandings that underlie words, processes, policies and symbols (Melucci, 1996; Escobar 2008). 'Difference' will draw on contrasting ways of coding economic, social, political and cultural relationships that are reflected in practices and thinking. I highlight how processes engaging in an affirmation of 'difference' feature not just at the level of meanings but also at the level of political practices. Accordingly, an explicit political notion can be associated with 'difference', as it is embedded in auto-poietic processes that seek to redefine power relationships, social patterns and rules. Additionally, it is important to understand 'difference' in its integral and evolving sense of a 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), rather than limiting it to an oppositional understanding or a specific set of characteristics such as ethnic identity. Instead, drawing on Deleuze (1994), I propose seeing the collective enactment of 'difference' as 'a movement in itself' that in the case of collective action is reflected in practices and discourses.

Thesis structure:

The first chapter reviews various bodies of literature to present different understandings of democratisation and state-formation processes in the Global South. By examining literature on democratic transitions I will indicate how an emphasis on elites and their role in providing openings predominates in literature focusing on democratisation. Another strand of literature on state-formation processes in the Global South sheds a more critical light on this perspective. This literature highlights how elites have frequently perpetuated their dominant societal position based on economic strategies of accumulation such as patronage and rent-seeking. I will also introduce literature examining patterns of 'state co-option' to show how elite factions use legal and illegal, formal and informal mechanisms to establish alliances with individuals or networks within the state institutions. Seeking to overcome the 'elite-bias' in literature on democratisation, I will then turn to review a body of literature based on the non-elite expressions of agency and their relationship with democratisation processes. In doing so, I will argue for the importance of exploring alternative, non-elite sources of agency not just in terms of their impact on the institutional framework of the state. Instead, despite engaging outside institutional terrains they represent a crucial condition for democratic processes, as these grassroots movements struggle to make their local surroundings and every-day lives more democratic.

The second chapter develops some of the conceptual elements, which will be used for the analysis of the expressions of collective action in the context of a co-opted state in the second part of the thesis. It will outline these processes by emphasising the antagonistic dimension integral to struggles around the appropriation of meanings. In doing so, I will introduce the idea of 'difference' and 'space' as categories to examine some of the characteristics acquired by processes of agency in societies marked by a multi-ethnic constellation and the context of a co-opted state. The chapter will frame this collective action as emerging from the margins of society and finding its incentives primarily in locally embedded meanings and problems. While failing to engage along the conventional political and institutional terrain, the chapter will also highlight how this agency can build on attempts to re-appropriate decision-making processes and develop alternative ways of organising political interactions.

The third chapter examines the genesis of the Guatemalan state to provide a contextual framework for the analysis of collective agency in the chapters which follow. It will focus on the elite-dominated societal order across different historical moments. In doing so, I will argue that the attempts to perpetuate strategies of accumulation and capture rents have acted as the defining dynamics of this state-formation process. While authoritarian forms of governance have predominated during long periods of the state-formation process, I will also highlight the shift in mechanisms used to ensure privileged societal positions in the course of the transitional framework to formal democracy initiated in 1985. Patterns of state co-option began to mark the relationships between elites and the state. Accordingly, different elite factions seek to determine policies and legal formulations through a series of mechanisms and alliances with individuals and networks within the institutional framework. This has indicated the consolidation of a formal democracy that is marked less by the institutional relationships and spaces than the informal networks and opaque negotiations surrounding them.

The fourth chapter will trace some of the most important expressions of agency that have emerged to challenge elite domination in Guatemala. After analysing the urban uprising by a popular movement with a middle-class leadership in 1944 and its attempt to break with the oligarchic structure of the state, I will turn to a generation of agency emerging in the 1950s primarily in the Quiché region. Under partial influence of the Catholic Church, a community-based network was consolidated with an emphasis on economic and political autonomy. Next, the guerrillas' attempt to challenge the coalition of military and economic elites will be examined, while also paying attention to the indigenous organising emerging in the shadow of the insurgent project. Subsequently, the role of civil society organisations in the context of the Peace Accords as well as the articulation around a Pan-Mayan discourse will be reviewed. In the course of the chapter I will highlight some of the limitations the different expressions of revolutionary, democratic and community-based expressions of agency have faced in terms of dealing with the societal complexity as well as overcoming the constraints imposed by the elite dominated state.

The fifth chapter brings together two oppositional dynamics: Firstly, the targeting of natural resources and territories as part of global economic and political

trends. Secondly, the emergence of localised expressions of agency around the defence of territory. While contextualising the exploitation of natural resources against the background of global and regional economic patterns, I will indicate how this trend has been reproduced at a national level. Thus, Guatemalan elites have integrated this dimension into their economic interests, which are promoted through a series of state policies. I will also highlight how a 'new' generation of agency has gestated as over the last decade a number of expressions of collective agency emerged to challenge a series of projects and policies linked to the exploitation of natural resources.

In preparation for the case studies, the sixth chapter presents the combination of various methods used in the course of the research process as a 'political ethnography'. I have moved at the interface of different methodological approaches, using methodology closer to ethnographic research such as participant observation and interviews. I have also engaged with a methodological perspective closer to political science. This perspective enabled me to explore the implications of the community-based agency for understandings of democratisation in the context of a co-opted state. This chapter also reflects on the selection of the case studies and on my role as a researcher engaging in an environment marked by cultural complexity, linguistic diversity and a high degree of public insecurity.

The seventh chapter looks at a specific organisational process among indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché region. In the course of the chapter I analyse the organising patterns emerging in response to the projects oriented at the exploitation of natural resources. In doing so, I argue that these projects have accentuated meanings around 'territory' to reflect a socio-political and cultural attachment to specific places among the local community members. Based on these culturally rooted meanings a revitalisation of the 'community' has been engendered that has constituted a signifier which has been defined by the resistance linked to the defence of territory. At the same time the community members have added an explicit political element to their 'difference'. The struggle to re-appropriate decision-making processes becomes a central dimension of their collective action. In doing so, they emphasise the voice of the local, its differential production of meanings and autonomous decision-making as an alternative way of organising political processes.

The eighth chapter examines a second process of collective agency among community members in the municipalities of San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo, the RPLP. In the course of the chapter I argue that in the case of the RPLP local community members have also consolidated a collective position of 'difference' in their resistance to a mining project. This stance has resulted from a process in the course of which a physical and symbolic space for the community members to engage in collective sense-making activities was created. The RPLP draws on a diversity of meanings and knowledge, in doing so reflecting the complex multi-ethnic constellation of the local population. Additionally, similar to the previous case study, a political notion has been added to the consensus around the communities' central demands: In their struggle to contest vertically imposed decisions, the community members have also introduced a deliberative arena and horizontal political practices into their organisational processes that contrast with those predominant in institutional spaces.

The final chapter brings together insights developed in the course of the thesis referring to the methodological and theoretical aspects and addressing the central research objectives outlined in this introduction. Additionally, it discusses some of the research limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

After having introduced the argument, the main research objective and the structure of the thesis, the following chapter establishes the links between this research and bodies of literature taking different perspectives around democratisation and state-formation processes in the Global South. In doing so, it sets up a first aspect of the central argument by signalling the importance of exploring non-elite forms of agency and their implications for debates around democracy.

1. Democratisation and social change: Reviewing elite-relationships, state co-option and democratisation 'from below'

This chapter aims to review different strands of literature which shine light on one of the central aspects of this thesis, the argument for the importance of non-elite agency for understandings of democracy. This review will prepare for an analysis of the specific expressions of collective agency in Guatemala in the second part of the thesis. It will indicate empirical and conceptual limitations in literature, which has chosen to emphasise the centrality of elites in democratisation processes. Additionally, it will outline the argument for conceptualising grass-root agency and its cultural challenge as a crucial condition for democracy.

Based on the experience of European states, significant emphasis has been placed on economic conditions and the role of elites in setting in motion and guiding the necessary economic and political processes towards democracy. Transitional literature on Latin America has been particularly explicit in viewing successful transitions as an outcome of elite-interactions, while non-elite actors such as popular or civil society organisations are relegated to a secondary, restricted role (e.g. O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1988). However, when examining states in the Global South elite-guided processes have been marked by a series of patterns, which in many cases severely curtail their democratic character. A number of scholars looking primarily at the state in Africa have sought to highlight some of the economic and political processes at work that tend to perpetuate the elite-dominated societal structure (e.g. Bratton and Van der Walle, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Erdmann and Engel, 2006; Niemann, 2007).

Recent work has added more detail to the analysis of inter-elite relationships and the role of elite pacts in framing state-society relationships (e.g. Khan, 2005; North et al., 2009; Putzel and Di John, 2012). With regards to Latin America a strand of literature has highlighted patterns of state co-option and the insertion of illicit strategies and actors into elite networks (eg. Garay and Salcedo-Albarán, 2012; Gutiérrez and Mendéz, 2012; Briscoe, 2014). In line with this analysis, a number of countries in the Global South seem to have reached a situation of a democratic impasse or reversal. Despite complying with Dahl's (1989) criteria of a 'procedural minimum' this has not translated into a

democratisation of societies. Instead, the institutional framework is dominated and reconfigured by legal and illegal elites locked into cycles of accumulation, without showing any democratising intent.

Given this scenario, I will argue for debates around democracy to be approached through an exploration of non-elite expressions of agency based on the review of a body of literature which emphasises the potential of democratisation 'from below'. Several strands of literature have emerged to highlight the role of class, social movements and different forms of collective action in providing a democratising impetus (e.g. Moore, 1966; Tilly, 1984; Rueschmeyer et al., 1992; Foweraker, 1995; Melucci, 1996; Della Porta, 2013). However, many of the conventional social movement approaches developed primarily in the Global North seem insufficient to capture the motivations, directionality and cultural understandings of different ways of imagining political and democratic processes emerging in contexts of the Global South. As I will argue, it is in these contexts that the role of culture acquires special importance in collective action to challenge dominant understandings of democracy and to do so without necessarily focusing on institutional spaces or structures.

Identifying structural conditions and agents for democratisation

By the second half of the 20th century there was general agreement among scholars that democracy represented the best system of government to frame societal relationships. At the same time debates were marked by the search for an adequate conceptualisation of the term. Dahl's (1989) concept of 'polyarchy' proved especially influential and offered an understanding of democracy whose implementation seemed feasible. 'Polyarchy' was defined around seven institutional criteria focused on establishing a procedural minimum and was complemented with certain freedoms, or "primary political rights", which were seen as necessary in order for elections to be acknowledged as democratic (Dahl, 1989, p.170). This approach consolidated an institutional view of democracy framed around a model that combined a restriction on participation and sovereignty with a consensus around electoral processes. Drawing on these understandings, a number of scholars would go on to base their work on a procedural or minimalist definition of democracy by drawing on Dahl's definition, among them O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Diamond et al. (1988),

Burton et al. (1992), Linz and Stepan (1996) as well as Diamond (1999). This also meant elections would constitute the crucial benchmark for the analysis of political developments in the countries that became democratic in the course of the second half of the 20th century.

Another strand of literature emerged choosing to emphasise the structural conditions required for democratisation and exploring the relationship of democracy with forms of capitalist development. The underlying assumption was that a certain level of economic and social development represented the necessary conditions for democracy to flourish. One of the classical comparative analyses was that undertaken by Lipset (1959), who linked capitalism and democracy by arguing that capitalism distributes wealth to larger segments of the population and translates into economic prosperity. Increases in wealth, education, communication and equality were seen as leading to an enlargement of the middle class, which in turn would go on to constitute the main pro-democratic force. Where these preconditions are not given, the likelihood of a return to authoritarian forms of government was seen as increasing (Lipset, 1959).

A similar view was advanced in modernization theories based on the assumption of a 'backward' society that was being transformed into 'modern' (Parsons, 1949; Rostow, 1960; Eisenstadt, 1966). For the Global South this obviously meant that "the encounter of European and non-European civilisations leads the latter to assume the characteristics of the former." (Avritzer, 2002, p.59) Despite its economic focus, this body of literature also carried suppositions about democracy. They were based on the idea that in the long run economic growth represents the structural condition decisive for democratisation processes. Democracy is seen as the final stage of social processes resulting from a gradual transformation in economic structures that elevates countries into modernity.

Despite differing in its understandings of the causes of underdevelopment and taking a more critical stance with regards to the world market, dependency theory (eg. Cardoso and Faletto, 1979) also shared this focus on economic variables to explain societal features. In doing so, both strands followed a simplistic, dual framework to explain the transformation of societal structures. In modernisation theory this was constituted by the dichotomy of non-modern and

modern, whereas in dependency theory the binary categorisation was based on central and peripheral positions in the world market. This also pretended to set out the route for countries in the Global South to follow (Avritzer, 2002). However, in both strands of literature, modernisation and dependency theory, democracy was seen as a side-product of the transformation of economic structures.

Scholars also began to focus on the actors who would promote and guide the required political processes towards democracy. Nurtured by a line of democratic elitism, the focus on elites became predominant. Schumpeter in his work 'Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy' published in 1942 had already outlined this view by arguing that "democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the terms 'people' and 'rule'. Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them." (Schumpeter, 2005, p.285)

Scholars such as Pye (1953), Lipset (1959), Almond and Verba (1963) and Huntington (1969) also advanced this understanding of setting limits to public participation. Their work focused on the challenges faced by "the transfer of democratic institutions to the Third World" by identifying and implementing mechanisms, which would "enhance governmental and elite authority from the start." (Cammack 1994, p.357) This stance reinforced the idea that democratic governments were to be run by active minorities while a plurality of intermediary groups were to act as a guarantee for societal participation. Accordingly, a view was taken that "democracy does not seem to require a high level of active involvement from all citizens; it can work quite well without it." (Held, 1987, p.192)

Transitional literature (e.g. O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1988) represented a further strand that was influential in maintaining the focus on elites. It emerged to analyse the transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes with a regional focus on Latin America and Eastern Europe. Transitions to democracy were framed primarily as a political process based on interactions between civil and military leaders. While delegating this process to elites, transition theory did not assume them as *a priori* possessing democratic values. Instead, it distinguishes between three different groups of actors within the political system. Firstly, *duros* (hardliners), who seek a perpetuation of

authoritarian rule or at least to maintain the hierarchies of power-distribution. Secondly, the *blandos* (soft-liners), who agree that some form of electoral legitimation should be introduced into authoritarian regimes in the near future. Thirdly, the democratic opposition, who demand the institutionalisation of electoral competition while at the same time acknowledging the need to negotiate a transitional framework with the authoritarian power-holders (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). This means actors and their strategic choices move into the centre of analysis. Liberal democracy is presented as only one possible outcome, depending on the patterns of interaction between dominant elites (O'Donnell et al., 1986).

Accordingly, transition is understood as an institutional arrangement or pact that aims at the re-establishment of political competitiveness between civilian and military elites based on a procedural minimum. Broader societal participation or a role for civil society is only seen as convenient and encouraged in specific moments. Thus civil society is viewed as playing a role in mobilizing and generating a "popular upsurge" against the authoritarian regime in order to highlight the crisis of legitimacy as well as accompany the negotiation processes (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, p.65). However, once this initial objective is achieved, transition literature advocates a more passive role for social movements and civil society. As a number of critics (eg. Pearce, 1997; Avritzer, 2002; Della Porta, 2013) have indicated especially with regards to post-transitional scenarios, transitional scholars see their mobilisational strategies and sustained demands as putting the fragile new regimes at risk. The stability of the agreement as well as the post-transitional order was prioritized, with non-elite actors being side-lined and only called upon in specific moments. Thus, the necessary processes of institutional engineering are to be led by 'rationally acting elites'.

As Della Porta (2013) has indicated, scholars such as Huntington (1991) as well as O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) also extended the call for moderation to the opposition parties involved in the negotiations: "If the opposition menaces the vertical command structure of the armed forces, the territorial integrity of the nation state, the country's position in international alliances, or the property rights underlying the capitalist economy or if widespread violence recurs, then even bland regime actors will conclude that the costs of tolerance are greater

than those of repression." (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, p.27). Without considering how this could influence the characteristics of the post-transitional order, these scholars advocated a role for moderate political parties instead of movements. In doing so, they failed to anticipate how these political parties would engender the demobilization of considerable sections of society, as evidence from various post-transitional democracies suggests (Bermeo, 1990; Della Porta, 2013).

Even prominent transitologists such as O'Donnell (1996) would later admit that the outcomes of transitions in many cases could not be classified as democratic. The euphoria over transitions soon gave way to a growing recognition that these states in many cases did not surpass the minimum criteria of electoral processes. While elections were initially seen as a mechanism to inject a democratic routine that would encourage the consolidation of a regime of rights, scholars have highlighted contradictory developments. Thus, the transitional processes resulted in a number of ambivalent regimes that continue to be marked by elements associated with authoritarian forms of government. Among the characteristics identified are a weak state of law, inadequate guarantees for social, economic and civil rights, high levels of inequality, fragile institutions with deficient control and supervision over administrative functions of the state as well as low levels of legitimacy of the respective governments (O'Donnell, 1996, 1999, 2012; Diamond, 1999, 2002; Ansaldi, 2008; Velasco, 2008).

Realising that the linear changes to form Western liberal democracies and to fulfil the criteria for Dahl's ideal of 'polyarchy' were not taking place, transitional scholars (eg. Linz and Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell, 1996) turned their attention towards the 'consolidation' of democratic regimes. As Linz and Stepan (1996) argued this stage begins once democracy becomes "the only game in town" and "when all actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict within the state will be resolved according to established norms" (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p.15). Among the six conditions for democratic 'consolidation' they establish, they also advocate citizenship participation through a "free and lively civil society" (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p.15). Nevertheless, they continued to distinguish 'civil society' and its role from that of the 'political society' represented primarily by political parties. As Pearce (1997)

argues, this continues to represent a view that civil society was to be restrained and instead political parties were seen as the adequate instruments to set up a stable, sustainable and legitimate political order: "The associations of 'civil society' can positively contribute to these as long as they accept the limits of their role as well as the fact that the health of the entire order demands the aggregation and channelling of their interests by political parties. Associational life, by implication, will disrupt rather than deepen democracy if it retains the over-politicized role, which helped it bring down non-democratic governments." (Pearce, 1997, p.70) This means social mobilisation and collective agency is not considered as relevant to these post-transitional orders, while instead an 'ontological superiority' is attributed to elites (Avritzer, 2002, p.34).

O'Donnell (1996) sought to frame his revision of previous transitional literature around the idea of 'delegative democracies'. He indicates a gap between norms of democratic institutions and the practices of social actors, thus highlighting "various sorts of non-universalistic relationships ranging from hierarchical particularistic exchanges, patronage, nepotism and favours to actions that, under the formal rules of the institutional package of polyarchy, would be considered corrupt." (O'Donnell, 1996, p.40) Accordingly, in his work on 'consolidation' O'Donnell (1996) points to a number of issues related to political culture and highlights how patterns from the authoritarian past continue to overshadow the new democracies. However, without pursuing the implications of this cultural dimension with more detail, he was instead led to an emphasis towards reforming the state institutions in an attempt to enhance democratic regimes. A similar line of research was followed by other scholars, whose work focused on aspects such as constitutional reforms as well as the comparative advantages between presidential and parliamentary systems (eg. Linz and Stepan, 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997).

Accordingly, the role of institutions began to be seen as the crucial aspect for democratic consolidation, as the political elites occupying them were entrusted to pursue the respective processes. While in more recent work there is recognition of the undemocratic patterns developing around these institutions, the literature fails to deliver enough detail and empirical depth to deliver a more concise framework for the relationships that evolve around these institutions. A body of literature focusing on the nature of the state in the Global South that will

be analysed in the next section, has added more precision to these elite-relationship and economic processes that surround state-institutions.

Patronage, rent-seeking and elite-networks in the Global South

Over recent decades a considerable body of literature has emerged to focus on the nature of states in the Global South. A number of scholars have used the terms of 'state failure' and 'fragility' to frame their analysis often in attempts to establish criteria for comparative analysis (eg. Zartman, 1995; Rotberg, 2003; Torres and Anderson, 2004). In many cases this is based on a view that economic liberalisation and democratisation can be seen as the best ways to approach the negative features of states in the Global South. However, a substantial field of literature has chosen to provide more depth in the analysis of these regimes, often by taking a neo-patrimonial perspective that seeks to reflect the combination of characteristics deriving from patrimonial dominance on one hand and the legal-rational bureaucratic aspects on the other. In doing so, this research predominantly focusing on African states, has argued that it is pointless to measure 'state failure'. As Niemann points out, these scholars "assert that the state in Africa is not any different from other states. It fulfils functions, although this may not be in accordance with ideal held notions of statehood." (Niemann, 2007, p.22) Accordingly, these scholars are less intent on identifying elements for relational analysis. Instead, they seek to discuss the way these states in Africa 'work', despite their clear differences to understandings of statehood in the West.

As Chabal and Daloz outline: "in most African countries, the state is no more than a décor, a pseudo-Western façade masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations. … In Western Europe the Hobbesian notion of the state led to the progressive development of relatively autonomous centres of power, invested with sole political legitimacy. In Black Africa … such legitimacy is firmly embedded in the patrimonial practices of patrons and their networks" (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.16). Additionally, these scholars have highlighted some of the particular features of states and have been keen to point out their ability to maintain processes of capital accumulation and a certain level of legitimacy, despite failing to comply with conventional attributes of western states. In doing so, they pay special attention to the particular ways in

which economic processes are structured around the state and how they in turn involve political mediation and interactions.

One of the central features identified in this literature is the role of 'patronage' or politically motivated distribution of favours to groups. The establishment of these pyramidal patronage or patron-client networks is not just a feature of authoritarian models. Instead, they are seen as compatible with multi-party systems as they reflect a repeated relationship of exchange between a patron and usually identifiable clients. This means the exchange takes place between two agents or between one agent and a collective, distinguished either by status, power or other characteristics. As Khan (2005) in his work on South-east Asia has argued, it is important to understand how these patron-client relationships, predominant in the economic system, also permeate the political system and are reproduced in its organisational patterns. He indicates how this leads to a "proliferation of patron-client networks" and a consolidation of a personalised way of doing politics, which stands in contrast to liberal ideals of democracy (Khan, 2005, p.17). As these dynamics become integral to the political system, this also consolidates a political culture among elites that links the drive to capture rents with ways of organising the political system (Khan, 2005).

Accordingly, 'rent-seeking activities' constitute another central element of this body of literature. 'Rents' is generally used to refer to incomes or returns on an economic asset, which is above what the individual or collective economic agent/s would have received in its best alternative use (Khan, 2000; North et al., 2009; Di John, 2010). This means 'rents' include a wide range of legal and illegal incomes among them monopoly profits, illegal transfers by mafias or state distributed subsidies and transfers (Khan, 2000). However, in this body of literature a lot of attention is paid to 'rents' that imply a certain level of political mediation and capacity to obtain wealth from non-productive activities or resources (Gallagher, 1991; Boone, 1994; Erdmann and Engel, 2006). There is, equally, a wide spectrum of activities that can be ascribed to 'rent-seeking' ranging from bribery or coercion to legal political activities such as lobbying and advertising. As Khan outlines, all these activities share the objective "to create, maintain or change the rights and institutions on which particular rents are based." (Khan, 2000, p.6)

In this analysis the state acquires a key role as a means for enrichment of elites, with Bayart (1993) developing the idea of the 'politics of the belly', as leaders 'eat' from state resources. According to his argument this coincides with the incursion of informal political networks into formal economic activities and an increasing 'criminalisation of the state' (Bayart et al., 1999).[2] Various authors have also sought to highlight the mutually reinforcing relationship between the activities linked to a rentier economy and patterns of patronage (Lewis, 1994; Van de Walle, 2001; Erdmann and Engel, 2006).

As mentioned, this literature has also outlined how rent-seeking and patronage networks are replicated within the political domain, with clientelism and corruption seen as playing a greasing role. Most scholars view the combination of these factors as constituting a difficult scenario for expressions of collective action or participative dynamics, although there is acknowledgement for the ongoing potential for mass protests, given the level of discontent among the population (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994). This discontent is however usually seen as a temporary feature or as bound to be integrated into counter-patronage networks that represent the only real alternative channel to issue dissent (Reno, 2002).

In contrast to some of the transitional literature outlined earlier, these scholars are less focused on outlining ways to replicate the western models of statehood and democracy. Instead, they take a functionalist approach to establish some of the specific processes and relationships into which institutions in the Global South are embedded. Despite at times lacking empirical depth, this literature highlights the proliferation of mechanisms of corruption, rent-seeking and patronage that make these states 'work' in a fundamentally different way.

Recent research by a group of scholars close to Institutional Economics has sought to add further elements for the analysis of societal orders in the Global North and South. In doing so, North, Wallis and Weingast (2009, 2013) have sought to examine not just the functional logics of states but also to address one of the shortcomings of neo-patrimonial literature by developing a framework for state trajectories over time. They have argued for a focus on elites, the

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[2] 'Criminalisation' in this understanding signals that functions and state institutions are being used to facilitate criminal activities (Bayart, 1999).

economic incentives behind their interactions, as well as the analysis of elite-settlements to achieve a precise characterisation of states.

North, Wallis and Weingast introduce a basic distinction between 'open access orders' and 'limited access orders' to indicate differences in relationships and power equations at the level of elites. In turn, this is linked to an explanation for the control of violence. They see 'open access orders' as characterised by political and economic development, vibrant civil society organisations, big decentralised governments and positive growth rates. 'Limited access orders' on the other hand, refer to states marked by policies implemented without generalised consent, a small number of organisations, a slow growing economy, small centralized government and social relationships organised along privileges and hierarchies.[3]

Concordant with other authors (e.g. Khan, 2005; Putzel and Di John, 2012), North et al. (2009, 2013) have argued that at the heart of states lies an 'elite bargain' or 'settlement'. This guarantees privileged access to resources and positions for the different political, economic, religious and educational elite factions. Their incentives to come together and form a dominant coalition is based on an economic rationale, which in turn implies a shared interest to control violence. Hence, the respect for each other's privileges (e.g. property rights, access to resources) prevents any outbreak of violence between elite factions as this would also result in a reduction of rents. This means the interests of powerful elites are tied to continued cooperation within the coalition, and in doing so, guarantee the survival of this 'elite pact' by abstaining from the use of violence (North et al., 2009, 2013).

In their comparative approach, North et al. (2009) focus on changes in elite relationships to identify how they translate into different state trajectories. They argue that the evolution of states towards 'open access orders' is achieved when elites based on the above-mentioned economic rationale begin to accept the expansion and progressive institutionalisation of impersonal relationships. This progressively opens their coalitions up to the point of permitting open access even to non-elites. But for this process to go ahead three necessary

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[3] As these authors indicate, 85% of the world's population currently lives in social orders marked by the characteristics of a 'limited access order' (North et al., 2009).

doorstep conditions have to be reached: 1) The establishment of rule of law[4], 2) the implementation of perpetually lived organisations[5] (e.g. state, institutions) and 3) the control of the military[6]. Based on these assumptions, this group of scholars argues for the importance of a strong institutional framework through which impersonality, rule of law and control of violence can be ensured.

Similar to the previously outlined neo-patrimonial literature, these scholars offer elements to understand the particular characteristics of states in the Global South, especially with regards to elite-interactions. However, they fail to offer a convincing explanation for the motivation of elites to concede openings or in North et al.'s (2009, 2013) understanding, pave the way for 'doorstep conditions'. This seems to represent a crucial limitation and there is little empirical evidence to suggest that the outlined economic rationale acts as an incentive to establish control over violence or for concessions by elites. The pursuit of economic interests and the individualistic behavioural patterns this rationale implies seem to be incompatible —especially in the short term— with a move towards the above-mentioned door-step conditions. Instead, as the analysis of Guatemala in chapter 3 will also reflect, different elite factions become locked into the reproduction of drives for accumulation with patterns of patronage and rent-seeking reinforcing these dynamics. As some elite factions and their strategies of accumulation are intimately linked to personalised, illegal as well as coercive patterns, this makes it unlikely for elite-factions to agree to concede control to an impersonal institutional framework or to support a more inclusive societal order.

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[4] At this point the authors are quick to indicate that a completely 'impersonal' rule of law is rarely the case since legal systems create other ways to differentiate or discriminate among categories of legal persons according to the requirements of the dominant coalition (North et al., 2009).

[5] This means the character of organisations is defined by function and not by person (North et al., 2009).

[6] North et al. state that this represents a consequence of the ability of members within the dominant coalition to discipline the military force through non-military means. This is a result of elites specialising in economic resources developing more powerful organisation and providing an institutional arrangement for allocating resources. The control of these resources makes it possible to put the military under civilian control. Therefore, military leaders can decide "when to fight but not how to fight" (North et al., 2009, p.171).

Additionally, North et al.'s approach of conceptualising elites as following rational economic interests and then generalising this as a pattern to understand state-society relationships seems to reduce the complexity of the social processes at work. Similar to the literature closer to a neo-patrimonial perspective, North, Wallis and Weingast almost completely side-line the variety of cultural frameworks as well as the potential for resistance to emerge from within societies. This limitation becomes apparent as they expand the behavioural logics and aspirations they identify among elites to non-elite sections and all forms of collective organising. While emphasising the importance of a "broad-based and active civil society" (North et al., 2009, p.118) they are also clear in delineating their incentives for action which is marked by a rather reductive economic understanding: "Organisations are the lifeblood of both political and economic competition. They are the vehicles through which economic and political entrepreneurs implement their ideas and affect the dynamics of the economy and the polity. … Most organisations seek rents and some … succeed in gaining policies that provide them with government-run cartels, subsidies and rents." (North et al., 2009, p.141)

Before exploring the variety of cultural and political motivations beyond this economic reductionism that underlie collective action in the fourth section of this chapter, I will introduce another strand of literature that has focused on the permeation of elite circles by dynamics linked to illicit economic activities and networks of organised crime. This adds another dimension to the analysis of inter-elite relationships. As the logics of trans-national capitalism and the potential of accumulation offered by illicit activities reconfigure inter-elite relationships, the co-option of states and their institutional functions has thrived.

The intrusion of the illicit: Criminal networks capturing and reconfiguring states

Over the last decade increasing attention in social science has been paid to the growing impact of criminal networks and organised crime. This has encouraged an analysis beyond a conventional security perspective in order to determine the nexus organised crime establishes with institutional frameworks and how it influences economic as well as political relationships. Accordingly, a body of literature has emerged to examine states in the light of 'state capture' to indicate

the increasing intervention of criminal actors in the formulation of laws, regulations and public policies in the short and long term, usually in detriment of the broader public (Hellman et al., 2000; Garay et al., 2010). This analysis continues to rely on a focus on elites and elite-interrelationships, since this scenario in many cases develops with different levels of participation or complicity of established economic and political elites. In many cases it also signals a certain level of social mobility as new elite factions emerge, often by seizing the opportunities granted by transitional moments and a redrawing of the political or economic landscape.

Chelokhine and King (2007) have indicated how networks of organised crime have consolidated around the state in the context of the transition towards post-communist Russia. They identify a paradoxical effect in corruptive practices since they played a "greasing role" during the initial phase of the transition and paved the path for democratic reforms (Chelokhine and King, 2007, p.111). However, on the other hand these practices also expanded exponentially, with the individually isolated criminal transactions reaching new levels by forming well organised and coordinated corruption networks.

As these scholars indicate, this adds complexity to traditional patron-client relationships between state officials and corporate interests as networks are established that include not only vertical (relationships within one institution) but also horizontal interdependences (relationships between different institutions). A series of corruptive practices such as the allocation of budget funds or contracts in favour of networks, enhancement of illegal profits or competitive advantages for financial and commercial structures have become routine operations for these networks (Chelokhine and King, 2007).

Other authors have indicated how the level of corruption and penetration by organised crime and drug trafficking networks reaches a level they identify as 'state capture', as individuals outside the state seek to manipulate legislative institutions through bribery (Hellman et al., 2000; Garay et al., 2010). This implies a certain level of coordination and complicity among actors within as well as outside the state institutions engaging in practices to ensure the promotion of particular interests, mainly of economic nature, to the detriment of public interests.

Garay et al. put forward an understanding of state capture that includes "(i) the action of lawful groups such as economic groups, domestic and transnational companies; (ii) taking the form of corruption with economic motivation and consequences; (iii) implemented mainly through bribery at a domestic and transnational level and (iv) exercised over the legislative and executive branches at a central level" (Garay et al., 2010, p.17).

These forms of state capture have an obvious influence on the nature of societal constellations, in some cases reaffirming existing forms, in others encouraging the emergence of new unequal and oligarchic social relationships. Building on a similar understanding of state capture in her analysis of Serbia, Pesic identifies the political party leadership and the 10-15 richest tycoons as "the most important capturing agents" (Pesic, 2007, p.6). While the former have engaged in the seizure of state property including public companies, public offices and institutions, by financing all relevant parties, the latter have undermined the separation between particular economic interests and political institutions. According to Pesic, the "high convertibility of influences between political and economic sectors has created a non-transparent and unaccountable government, which undermines the main state institutions, including the judiciary, the parliament and the principal regulatory and controlling institutions, thus creating a framework for systemic corruption."(Pesic, 2007, p.30)

The experience of Latin American countries and more specifically the influence of drug-trafficking networks have led Garay and Salcedo-Albarán (2012) to develop a framework for a more advanced scenario of state capture, a "co-opted reconfiguration of the state". Garay and Salcedo-Albarán put forward the following definition for this scenario:

> "The action of lawful and unlawful organisations, which through unlawful practices seek to systematically modify from inside the political regime and to influence the drafting, modification, interpretation, and application of the rules of the game and public policies. These practices are undertaken with the purpose of obtaining sustained benefits and ensuring that their interests are validated politically and legally, as well as gaining social legitimacy in the long run, although these interests do not follow the

founding principle of social welfare." (Garay and Salcedo-Albarán, 2012, p.36)

These scholars develop this understanding of state co-option on the basis of case studies in Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia. It goes beyond state capture by adding special emphasis on two criteria. Firstly, the involvement of individuals or groups capable and prepared to exercise violence to complement or substitute bribery. Accordingly, individuals seek to increase their impact by threatening to or actually engaging in "techniques of violence" (Garay et al., 2010, p.19). Secondly, the bidirectional character in this process of co-opted reconfiguration signals the various positions taken up by illicit actors in this process. Relationships take on a networked shape and are not limited to attempts of agents external to the institutional framework of the state to co-opt lawful state agents. In this advanced scenario the relationship is consolidated bi-directionally and reveals an increased level of coordination between lawful and unlawful agents, as agents within the state seek benefits by coordinating with agents outside the institutional framework (Garay et al., 2010; Garay and Salcedo Albarán, 2012).

This co-opted reconfiguration of states can follow a top-down logic when processes of co-option are led from the central level of state institutions. On the other hand, bottom-up processes can take place through reconfigurations promoted from local or regional levels that seek to capture different sections of the public administration (Garay et al., 2010).

These dynamics indicate a high level of fluidity in the divides separating formal and informal spheres as well as legal and illegal practices, with agents engaging in different modes of capital accumulation as well as moving at their interface. Briscoe (2014) also highlights the complexity of the resulting scenario as actors from the criminal economy compete for rents in the public as well as private sector. Firstly, he points to the rapprochement between the financial policy of the state and the processes oriented at large scale money-laundering. Accordingly, public funds or debts are used to integrate illegally accumulated capital into the formal economy. Secondly, he points to an evolving nature of illicit activities and their reorientation towards new sources of accumulation such

as mining or other forms of natural resource extraction.[7] This means no clear separation between the different spheres of the legal and illegal economy can be made: Just as illicit capital flows enter the formal economy, the agents behind illegal activities move between the realms of institutional and informal spaces.

Beyond Garay and Salcedo-Albarán's emphasis on emerging, criminal elites, the inseparable paths of capital-flows explain the existing connections between established, traditional elites and emerging elites as their respective patterns of accumulation and rent-seeking overlap and consolidate around a vague separation of legality and illegality. At least in part by capitalising on the absence of firm regulation or oversight, financial institutions, banks as well as companies owned by traditional elites are just as likely to act as platforms or play their role in introducing illicit capital into the formal economy.

Recent studies have also been keen to highlight the wider impact on societal interactions (PNUD, 2013; Briscoe, 2014). For individuals that find themselves marginalised from the centres of power, the illicit economy is perceived as offering opportunities for upward mobility or integration into social and political groups. Accordingly, the illicit sphere is viewed as a means to fulfil social aspirations and to access economically as well as politically elevated social strata. As elites resist a broader distribution of rents as well as regulatory frameworks, illegal actors with coercive potential seem most likely to scale social hierarchies and gain access to state institutions or at least increase their influence on them.

In the case of the Latin American region the fluidity of the divide between legal and illegal practices also has to be contextualised historically. Here extensive periods of the state-formation processes have been driven by the various post-colonial regimes on the basis of arbitrary rule (Centeno, 2002). Thus, while the distinction of legality and illegality varies across time, as Schirmer (1998) points out in the case of Guatemala, elites have tended to use the law to govern rather than govern in accord with law. Accordingly, the current nexus between politics and criminality at multiple institutional and non-institutional levels is no

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[7] Briscoe (2014) points to the example of Perú, where the profits of illegal gold mining (3.000 million USD) exceed the income of drug-trafficking, despite the country being the second largest producer of cocaine.

coincidence. Instead, the underlying historical processes indicate an assertive link between the state and traditional elites as well as their attempts to perpetuate societal domination, enhance their strategies of accumulation and capture rents. As Briscoe signals:

"Various examples reveal situations in which the involvement of public officials in illegal business is not just the result of 'a few bad apples' succumbing to a tempting opportunity within the state apparatus, but rather the result of an intrinsic legacy of states with a history of authoritarianism or complicity with crime (...)." (Briscoe, 2014, p.42)

Adding to this nexus with the tradition of arbitrary rule in Latin America, Pearce (2010) has maintained the emergence of a particular, 'perverse' form of state, as elites fail to contribute to the establishment of a monopoly around violence. As a result, she sees the state as playing a key role as it "contributes to violence, it actively transmits and reproduces violence, sometimes through its own acts, sometimes through complicity with violent acts of others and often through criminal negligence in ceding spaces to privatised expressions of violence." (Pearce, 2010, p.295) Accordingly, violence becomes crucial to structure relationships across society, as elites prioritise the preservation of their exclusive societal status over making concessions to institutions that could escape their control in some aspects.

Pearce's account as well as the literature exploring state co-option enhances the scepticism outlined in previous sections with regards to the role of elites in engendering processes towards more equal or democratic societies. The co-optive and arbitrary patterns have historically been part of the elites' mechanisms to structure social orders as they insert themselves onto the colonial and post-colonial legacies. In many countries in Latin America they continue to draw on conservative, ideological frameworks to substantiate their exclusive social status. In addition to these deeply engrained historical patterns, the increasing weight of the illicit economy and its superior potential for accumulation alters the balances of inter-elite relationships. As traditional and emerging elite factions are locked into cycles of competition and accumulation they operate on the basis of similar mechanisms and strategies with the aim to influence and determine policies as well as functions of the institutional framework of the state. Additionally, despite the competitive nature of inter-elite

relationships, the inseparable flows of capital between illicit and licit accumulation represent a crucial nexus between different factions.

This scenario begs questions for perspectives on social change or democratisation. Mechanisms of state co-option clearly erode and side-line the mechanisms of accountability and participation designed as part of formal democratic systems. The political system and the control of the institutional framework becomes key to pursue economic interests, while the co-optive mechanisms used to do so erode the checks and balances established as part of a democratic polity. The resulting regimes tend to comply with a procedural minimum as outlined by transitional literature. However, a large proportion of their political and economic decision-making processes at a national, regional and local level are informally and/or illegally determined.

Despite these scenarios of state co-option expressions of collective action and social movements have represented another key feature of Latin America's social realities as they challenge forms of discrimination, injustice, violence and inequality. Accordingly, the following section will move towards identifying features of this non-elite agency by reviewing some of the literature that has analysed the role and characteristics of social movements and collective action in different contexts.

Subaltern classes and social movements in democratisation processes

A significant body of literature has focused on non-elite forms of agency to approach the issue of democracy. A prominent attempt at framing democratisation 'from below' was made by a group of authors exploring social constellations and pathways towards democracy by focusing on the interaction of classes, including the role of subaltern ones. Barrington Moore (1966) can be seen as the scholar initiating this line of research while other authors sought to expand, confirm or question his findings.

In his research in the 1960s Moore identified three pathways to modern society, one leading to liberal democracy based on a combination of capitalism and parliamentary democracy, a second leading to fascism, based on a form of capitalism combined with reactionary political expressions, and a third option leading to communism. While the factors favouring the implementation of

democracy in the West are multiple, he singles out the bourgeoisie as playing the central role in promoting democratisation processes (Moore, 1966). He sums up his argument with "no bourgeoisie, no democracy" to underline the importance of this societal sector participating in an alliance to achieve democratic outcomes (Moore, 1966, p.418). Accordingly, the chances to establish parliamentary democracy are seen as rising, when the bourgeoisie is able to displace the landholding elites and avoid becoming a subordinate partner in an alliance against the peasantry.

Moore's central argument was placed under scrutiny as a number of scholars sought to contribute new elements to his original case studies or test the applicability of his hypothesis in other regions. Rueschmeyer et al. (1992) are one group of authors exploring the relevance of Moore's argument to Latin America. They also framed their research around class-based categories in an attempt to identify the driving forces and alliances behind the emergence of democracy. In their outcomes they questioned the central role attributed by Moore to the bourgeoisie and instead preferred to emphasise the working class as "the most consistent democratic force" (Rueschmeyer et al., 1992, p.8). Their argument is also based on the idea that capitalist development favours the emergence of democracy, however, in an understanding that clearly contrasts with Lipset's view as outlined earlier. They argue that capitalist development encourages the expansion of organisational spaces for the working class, which in their view favours the emergence of a stronger civil society and allows subordinate classes to seek alliances in their push for democracy (Rueschmeyer et al., 1992). Accordingly, the working class is identified as the crucial collective agent, thereby questioning the centrality of the bourgeoisie often emphasised in more orthodox Marxist work.

Rueschmeyer et al.'s analysis can be seen as an attempt to introduce the role of non-elite actors in the promotion of democracy and introduce a view of democratisation as a bottom-up process. However, their understandings do remain biased towards a too simplistic explanation of change through structural conditions, thus "predicting democratisation when democracy-demanding classes (especially the working class) are stronger than democracy resisting ones." (Della Porta, 2013, p.128)

Additionally, as the work of various scholars (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Mann, 1986; Kymlicka, 1995; Habermas, 1998; Centeno, 2002; Lander, 2012) has shown, the category of social class does not suffice to explain and contextualise the processes of collective action in the Global South. They have highlighted the multiple divides as well as racial tensions that mark societies in the South, where class does not represent the predominant signifier for the formation of collective identities. In many cases even the coherence as a nation is put into question given the level of demographic complexity. In European contexts it has been argued that the evolution of most states was marked by a homogenisation of identities, which involved an imposition of common languages, religions, currencies and legal systems on a designated territory (Tilly, 1990). However, this argument does not hold for the Global South. Here, in most cases state-formation processes were either externally or elite induced processes that have engendered a strong hierarchisation of society. These hierarchies often coincide with "centuries-long racial gulfs" between colonial elites and the non-white subalterns as well as the distribution of political and economic power (Centeno, 2002, p.150). As de-colonial scholars such as Lander have emphasised, even today in Latin America, states in many cases "continue to be mono-cultural colonial states in heterogeneous and pluri-cultural societies." (Lander, 2012, p.74)

The idea that subaltern actors and groups have a role to play in democratisation has been reinforced by a second strand of literature focusing on social movements and collective action. Attention to collective agency was revitalised in the course of the 1960s, as the approaches of the Collective Behaviour School and research emphasising structural functionalism were unable to adequately explain the protests and mobilizations in the USA and Europe. Despite similarities in the movements as such, differences were identified in terms of the methodological approach and research focus of scholars in Europe and North America (Chesters and Welsh, 2010).

North American scholars such as Oberschall (1973) as well as Zald and McCarthy (1987) predominantly focused on the question of 'how' social movements emerged at particular moments by looking into organisational resources and the rational orientation of political actors. This body of literature developed Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) to frame their approach. In

doing so, it followed a line of research seeking to produce objective, generalisable knowledge based on the premise, "that social discontent is universal but collective action is not" (Foweraker, 1995, p.15). This strand of literature focused on highlighting the participants in collective action as rational and strategic agents able to evaluate constraints and resources as well as levels of organisation.

Critiques of the body of literature engaging with RMT pointed to its too mechanistic structure-agency approach to explain the strategies of movements, while remaining indifferent to political and ideological content (chapter 4 will expand on the structure-agency debate). Thus, the framework was deemed as being overly rationalising with regards to personal interests and evaluating chances of success. Foweraker (1995) and Melucci (1996) also criticised the fact that this calculative feature was extended to identity issues without acknowledging cultural, affective or intuitive dimensions. This resulted in a premised stance on collective identity issues without sufficiently acknowledging the processes of constant negotiation involved in its construction.

Apart from this North American line of research, a second approach followed by European scholars (e.g. Touraine, 1981; Habermas, 1985, 1987; Offe, 1985; Melucci, 1985, 1989) developed an understanding of 'why' non-traditional or 'new' social movement actors got involved in particular collective struggles. These theoretical frameworks gave rise to the New Social Movement approaches that aimed to explain the struggles enacted by a range of societal groups such as women, student, environmental and anti-nuclear movements (Chesters and Welsh, 2010). According to Klandermans the 'newness' was reflected in three aspects of these movements, firstly, the new constituencies that were not formed by a conventional proletarian membership; secondly, the challenge to consolidated values around political representation and economic development; thirdly, new forms of autonomous organisation outside established groups or parties, which in many cases also emphasised an antagonistic stance towards state institutions (Klandermans, 1991).

In many cases this perspective differed from the theories of American scholars by looking into causal relationships behind the changes in mobilisation practices, rather than paying attention to the organisational processes or mobilisation as such. Authors such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Melucci

(1996) and Habermas (1996) set aside concepts such as class or basic needs and instead emphasised identity, production of meaning and structural conditions underlying these emerging movements.

New Social Movement approaches have however also been submitted to criticism. Especially their overemphasis on macro-theoretical aspects while remaining unable to shed light on to the resources and opportunities seized by movements in their struggles has been highlighted (Foweraker, 1995; Chesters and Welsh, 2010). Melucci also argues in his later work that the adherents of the New Social Movement approach, just like the RMT, share an epistemological problem with regards to identity: They continued to conceptualise the movements as unitary empirical objects and neglect the complexity of collective identities. This means they disregard the ongoing process of negotiations involved in the collective construction of meanings and challenge to dominant understandings (Melucci, 1996).

The most explicit linkages between social movements and democratisation processes were initially established by North American scholars. They did so by focusing on the Political Opportunity Structure of movements, which "corresponds to the process by which a national political system shapes, checks and absorbs the challenges to it" (Tilly, 1984, p.312). This approach inserted movements into the broader political context and examined their potential to impact on the political system or to influence changes in public policies. Tilly (1984) was one of the scholars who prepared the ground for this analysis of collective action in relation to the institutional framework of the state. This interaction also framed his understanding of social movement, which he saw as a "sustained interaction between a specific set of authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those authorities" (Tilly, 1984, p.305). He sought to highlight how changes in the 'action repertoire' related to changes in power structures at regional and national levels. In more recent work Tilly reemphasised "a broad correspondence between democratisation and social movements", despite insisting it did so only under specific terms (Tilly, 2004, p.125). "The proliferation of social movements only promotes democracy under limited conditions: it only occurs when movements organise around a wide variety of claims including explicit demands for democracy and the state gains

capacity to realize such claims at least as fast as the claims increase." (Tilly, 1994, p.22)

This perspective of embedding social movements into political processes and channelling their agency towards political institutions also seems to have reinforced a tendency seeking to establish 'outcomes' of these organisational processes. Accordingly, various scholars have turned towards highlighting the impact of social movements and collective action on institutions (e.g. Giugni, 1998; McAdam, 1998). One of the crucial dimensions associated with their agency is the expansion of citizenship rights. In line with this idea Giugni (1998) has argued that for social movements to have a democratising impact they would have to affect at least one of the aspects that according to him define democracy: broad citizenship; relative equality among citizens; a binding consultation of citizens to state policies and personnel; as well as the protection of citizens from arbitrary state action. Accordingly, he argues that "the process of democratisation develops when a transfer of power couples with a modification of the mutual rights and obligations between the state and its citizens" (Giugni, 1998, xv).

Beyond this role in the expansion of rights, Della Porta (2013, 2014), in her review of social movement literature, has highlighted context-specific aspects to emphasise the relevance of social movements to democratisation processes. Firstly, she indicates how their protests - at times in coordination with transnational actors - can initiate a liberalisation phase as authoritarian elites are left with no other choice than conceding democratic openings. Secondly, she emphasises the importance of mobilisation to demand rights during the transition to democracy as well as support for the pro-democracy groups in the context of inter-elite negotiation. Thirdly, she also introduces an aspect that emphasises the role of social movements and collective action following the transition to formal democracy. On one hand, during the consolidation phase and the holding of free and open elections, social movements can be seen as channelling their energies into political parties. On the other hand, in the case of low-intensity democracies, they can play an important role demanding more inclusive forms of democracy or mobilising against persisting exclusionary patterns (Della Porta, 2013, p.134).

While the first two points correspond to the aspects highlighted in transitional literature, this third point especially establishes a crucial nexus to this thesis, as it emphasises a role for social movements and collective action not just in transitional democratisation processes. Instead, it also enhances attention to the sustained role and importance of collective organising once formal democracies have been established. This introduces new elements into the debates around the relevance of different forms of collective action for democracy, especially with regards to contexts in which it fails to surpass a procedural minimum. It also encourages a shift away from a perspective seeking to determine concrete outcomes of organisational processes or measure their impact on procedures, rules and institution. Instead, it provides an opening towards recognition of the importance of collective organisational patterns *'per se'*.

This is a view that Pearce had noted as persisting in radical discourses of civil society in Latin America, a context that has seen a continued emergence of collective action over recent decades. "…the hope persists that the associationalism and activism of Latin America's grass-roots may still constitute the embryo of an alternative, both to the dominant economic model and also to the persistent elitism and exclusions of the liberal democratic model." (Pearce, 1997, p.75)

This shifts the research perspective towards the political and cultural patterns of these grass-roots processes, while also opening the door to a more systemic critique by its protagonists. Especially the emergence of indigenous movements over recent decades have been characterised by issues around identity, culture and disputes over meanings. In their resistance to specific economic, social and cultural policies various scholars have seen them as engaging in a symbolic challenge to question the dominant frameworks of meanings into which policies and understandings of democracy are embedded (Álvarez et al., 1998; Dussel, 2000; Quijano 2000; Escobar 2008).

According to this understanding, social movements and collective action represent struggles to determine meanings, or "wars for interpretation" that question imposed notions of democracy, modernisation and development (Slater, 1998, p.385). This constitutes a perspective that links culture to politics, with the former representing the basis for a challenge to a variety of policies. As

the case of indigenous movements indicates, collective action is in many cases driven by historically marginalised societal factions that emerge as specific cultural understandings and organisational patterns come under threat. Escobar has argued that these movements can be seen as highlighting "cultural distribution conflicts" (Escobar, 2008, p.14). This means they call attention not just to a conflict over access and control over resources but instead take on a position that fundamentally questions the persistent colonial and marginalising dimensions of this cultural project and its claims to universality (Dussel, 2000; Quijano, 2000; Escobar, 2008).

This emphasis on culture and resistance to coloniality advanced by social movements in Latin America has implications for the ways in which they address dominant understandings of democracy. Scholars such as Avritzer and Santos (2005) have indicated how collective action can challenge unresolved issues in democratic theory as well as the idea of a 'standard option of democracy'. Rather than accepting a "reduction of proceduralism to a process of elections of elites" (Santos and Avritzer, 2005, p.xxxix), conceptions of democracy are presented as highly disputed and based on a series of unresolved assumptions. Santos and Avritzer (2005) point to three different aspects around which debates on understandings of democracy have emerged: Firstly, the relation between procedure and societal participation in an attempt to challenge and redraw relationships between state and society. Secondly, the questioning of the implementation of non-participatory and bureaucratic modes of governance at the local level and thirdly, the relation between representation and cultural or social diversity. Accordingly, "demo-diversity", based on a variety of democratic models and practices, is counter-posed to universal and Western-dominated understandings of democracy (Santos and Avritzer, 2005, p.lxiii).

This literature brings into play a number of aspects with regards to the role of collective action and contextualises some of its features. Additionally, it shifts the attention from an exclusive focus on the level of elites and their role in 'administering democracy'. The agency of non-elite actors is highlighted as contributing to partially transform or destabilise dominant discourses and exclusionary practices of existing Latin American democracies. In doing so, these debates set up social movements and expressions of collective agency as following multiple but interlinked lines of action that will also be reflected in

the case studies of this thesis (chapters 7 and 8): On one hand, they can be seen as putting forward demands towards changes in policies and institutional aspects of democratic regimes by challenging features such as the limits on decision-making processes or the definition of policies through elites. On the other hand, they can be conceptualised as subjectivities engaging in their own production of knowledge and discourses. This also implies a struggle to establish 'more democracy' not necessarily through institutional bodies but by reconceptualising relationships and meanings that have an impact on their concrete every-day lives.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to review strands of literature that examine the relationship between elite and non-elite forms of agency and democracy. In literature on democracy, a focus on establishing a 'procedural minimum' (Dahl, 1989) has predominated and, in part fuelled by a strand of democratic elitism, elites were identified as the agents to guide political and economic processes towards democracy. Literature on transitions and democratic consolidation continued in this tradition, although in more recent work the 'low-intensity democracies' in Latin America with strong discrepancies from a liberal ideal of democracy are acknowledged.

A second body of literature has highlighted some of the economic processes as well as the way states in the Global South 'work' to perpetuate excluding state-society relationships, often by emphasising neo-patrimonial characteristics. Thus, networks resulting from rent-seeking activities and patronage are seen to be dominating the political and economic spheres of these regimes. Authors such as Khan (2005), North et al. (2009), Putzel and Di John (2012) have added more detail to the analysis of elite inter-relationships by focusing on elite-settlements or pacts. They view them as central to understanding the nature of states as well as their links with society. However, I have questioned the assumption that this protagonist role of elites will translate into concessions to an impartial institutional framework beyond their control that can pave the way for democratic openings. Literature on state co-option in Latin America seems to further enhance this scepticism and has also signalled how violence complements conventional forms of corruption, as elites reconfigure and co-opt

functions of the institutional framework to determine state policies and legislation (e.g. Garay et al., 2010). It also adds ideas to contribute to an understanding of the bi-directional dynamic that consolidates as individuals and networks positioned within the institutional framework engage in alliances with agents outside the institutional framework in order to promote particular interests and rent flows.

However, in Latin American states these co-optive patterns have to be contextualised within their particular state formation processes. This indicates the link between current patterns of state co-option and traditional elites' historical aim of perpetuating their privileged societal position by enhancing their strategies of accumulation and capturing rents. As different elite factions are locked into cycles of accumulation and competition, this has led to a proliferation of co-optive modes of operating and the informal and/or illegal determination of formal decision-making. This has meant a number of societies have reached a point of democratising impasse or reversal, while elites are unwilling to make any concessions to impartial procedures and institutions beyond their control. This constellation clearly calls into question the view of seeing elites as democratising agents.

Building on this argument I have indicated the importance of exploring the role of non-elite actors in relation to democratisation processes. Approaches focusing on class, resource mobilisation and political opportunity structures propose too mechanistic and rationalising a framework to grasp non-elite actors' emergence, despite suggesting a role for agents 'from below' in democratisation processes. Other strands of literature emphasising the cultural dimension inherent to this form of agency seem more appropriate for capturing the complexity of societies and their movements in the Global South. Accordingly, a number of scholars have highlighted these collective struggles to remain in control of the production of meanings and organisational practices (Álvarez et al., 1998; Dussel, 2000; Quijano, 2000; Santos, 2007; Escobar, 2008). This literature highlights their challenge to elite policies as well as the imposition of meanings by dominant societal actors. It also signals their engagement outside institutional terrains in a more 'systemic' critique of meanings and the ways of structuring relationships inherent to dominant understandings of democracy. In doing so, it emphasises the capacity of these associational patterns to develop

and imagine their own ways of organising political processes as they struggle to make their every-day lives 'more democratic'.

The next chapter will draw on some of the aspects of this literature on non-elite agency presented here. Furthermore, it will develop a framework for the discussion of the particular characteristics of expressions of collective action in contexts marked by state co-option and cultural complexity.

2. Conceptualising collective agency in elite-dominated and multi-ethnic settings

In the previous chapter I examined different bodies of literature to analyse the relationships between elite as well as non-elite agency and processes of democratisation. In doing so, I highlighted the predominant focus on elites in literature on democracy and argued for the importance of exploring non-elite expressions of agency. This argument was made due to evidence of the perpetuation of excluding patterns, as elites are locked into cycles of competition and accumulation and establish co-optive relationships around the state. I have also argued for this perspective by emphasising collective action as engaging not only within but also outside the conventional institutional terrain as it aims to make concrete and every-day relationships 'more democratic'.

This chapter aims to elaborate on some of the conceptual elements I will use for the analysis of collective agency in the context of Guatemala in the second part of this thesis. The concepts featuring in the following sections are based on scholars engaging with different theoretical approaches, some closer to the field of collective action and social movements, others working with aspects of complexity or post-structural theory. In doing so, I will examine concepts of collective agency, difference and space, leading up to their relationship with understandings of democracy. This will allow me to set the stage for the analysis of ongoing processes of collective agency in a society marked by cultural complexity and patterns of state-co-option in the second part of the thesis.

In the course of the chapter I will argue for an understanding of expressions of collective agency as resulting from convergences or 'agglomerative processes', as antagonistic affinities are generated in response to the hierarchical imposition of meanings by states and elites. In the course of these organisational processes this collective agency can develop its own emerging properties, which are expressed in an affirmation of difference and reflected in their struggles for a re-appropriation of meanings. Accordingly, processes of collective agency such as the defence of territory are not limited to their engagement in oppositional strategies. Instead, they also put forward a more comprehensive critique of the design of institutional political processes, by

carving out spaces in which alternative ways of organising political interactions and decision-making can be developed in the context of a co-opted state.

Beyond structure and agency: Relationality and complexity in analysis of collective action

As already mentioned in the final section of the previous chapter a crucial aspect in debates around social movements and democratisation has evolved around the relationship of agency and structure. In social science this issue has been discussed across various academic fields, with different disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology and economics adding to the debate. In his famous statement in the "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", Marx pointed to the constraints posed to human activity:

> "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." (Marx, 1978, p.595)

Marx, in the context of the historical settings of the 19th century, turned towards a class-based approach to indicate the role played by class structures in determining the nature of agency. Linguists on the other hand advanced a conceptualisation of the term that created the basis for work of sociologists such as Giddens (1979; 1984) or Bourdieu (1977). Saussure's (1983) distinction between *langue* (the grammatical rules that make possible the production of grammatical sentences) and *parole* (the actual production of sentences in speech) constitutes one of the starting points. He saw language not as a social institution that represents the creation of the individual speaker. Instead, he argued that the speaker passively assimilates the pre-existing forms that language assumes and accordingly enacts its structures. *Parole* on the other hand represents a heterogeneous mass of events and meanings (Loyal, 2003). Accordingly, Saussure introduces a contingent view of the speaker and his ability to explore the potential of his speaking agency, while the determining influence of structures started to be reduced in linguistic theory.

Derrida (1978) overcame what he perceived as a too rigid Saussurian separation of *langue* and *parole* as well as the divide between synchrony and diachrony. In order to do so, he introduced the idea of "the structurality of structure" as resulting from an infinite and continuous process of production (Derrida, 1978, p.354). His linguistic framework was framed around the understanding of *différance*, the idea that terms obtain their meaning through differentiation from each other, thus emphasising the differential between what is signified, that is the difference between signifier and signified. Derrida (1978) also set out the idea that meanings are never complete or total and the contingent understanding of structures as evolving and never completed processes. Accordingly, he introduced a temporal link with history and present required for analysis beyond the field of linguistics.

These ideas were taken on board by Giddens in an attempt to overcome rigid determinism attributed to economic structures in Marxist traditions and to further de-construct the determining relationship between agency and structure. He proposed to use agency not in reference to separate, isolated acts and instead understood it as a "continuous flow of conduct" (Giddens, 1979, p.55). At the same time he pointed to the importance of identifying this flow "as situated practices … in the context of historically located modes of activities" that can be linked with the idea that "the agent could have acted otherwise." (Giddens, 1979, p.56)

His understanding of structure reflects a dynamic, interrelated conception of agency as he argues for the potential of agents to put their structured knowledge at work in a creative or formative way (Giddens, 1979). As such he gives structure not just a constraining notion but also places an emphasis on its enabling characteristics. Giddens attaches a purely virtual existence to structures, while he argues that weight or impact of structures can be distinguished in terms of their historical durability and their spatial breadth. At the same time he introduces the concepts of rules and resources as "structuring properties" into his framework in order to convey an understanding of structures as the binding of time and space in social systems and to indicate the notion of constant reproduction integral to social systems (Giddens, 1979, p.64).

Accordingly, Giddens outlines a recursive understanding of social life. Structures are drawn upon to generate actions but are also the unintended

outcome of actions undertaken by agents. In doing so, the duality and the conventional distinction between structure and agency is disrupted and instead characterised as interlinked and co-evolving. The agent is seen as being constituted and defined by a complex set of relations, thus, integrating a relational perspective of society. The re-framing of the structure-agency relationship through his model of 'structuration' certainly represented an attempt to introduce a more contingent understanding into the analysis of agency and contributed to de-construct notions of structural over-determination. However, a number of shortcomings have been pointed out that put into question the ability of this framework to represent a generalisable model to illustrate social relationships.

Especially the criticism voiced by scholars close to complexity theory such as Urry (2003) offers insightful elements for the conceptual framing of this thesis. He has argued that Giddens' view of relationality remains too simplistic and fails to equip agency with sufficiently contingent characteristics to adequately grasp its dynamic movements. Instead, he suggests an approach based on an understanding of 'complexity', in which even small-scale changes can generate transformations in large-scale structures through iteration[8]. Accordingly, Urry tries to re-conceptualise agency as embedded in a wide array of networked and circulating relationships that are affected by performances from a variety of positions and distances. In doing so, the idea of juxtaposing structure and agency is replaced by an understanding of non-linear relationships, as he seeks to come to terms with constantly evolving social constellations. This conceptualisation also questions the ability of conventional approaches in social science to grasp the complexity of patterns of social interaction and formation of collective identities, given the perpetual alterations in the levels and balances of relationality agents are embedded in.

Another line of critique of Giddens' work has pointed to the epistemological shortcomings resulting from his failure to address ontological questions. Accordingly, he is seen as failing to elaborate sufficiently on the multiple

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[8] Urry proposes to replace the concept of 'recurrence' through 'iteration', which means that "the tiniest local changes can generate over billions of repeated actions unexpected, unpredictable and chaotic outcomes, sometimes the opposite of what agents thought they were trying to bring about." (Urry 2003, p.47)

components of relationships as well as the conceptual frameworks that underlie agents and their practices (Stones, 1996; Chesters, 2012). This flaw can be highlighted especially in Giddens' later work, where his approach ends up being not just too mechanistic but also too homogenising for the analysis of agency and social organising, especially when applied to different global contexts. Escobar outlines this flaw by arguing that Giddens' work is based on the assumption that globalisation processes imply an "universalisation of modernity", which "although hybridized, contested, uneven heterogeneous, even multiple … end up being a reflection of a Euro-centred social order." (Escobar, 2008, p.167) [9]

In addition to the limited attention to the diversity and ontological complexity characterising expressions of agency, Giddens' work also chooses not to focus on the variety of patterns and forms it can take on. As Urry argues, he hardly takes into account expressions of collective action or social movements in processes of social change (Urry, 1991). This again seems to be a consequence of a too mechanistic understanding of agency, which, as outlined in the previous chapter, has also been a predominant feature of literature on social movements in the Global North. In doing so, it fosters a line of analysis of collective action based on a view focused to a large extent on identifying 'correlation of forces'. This has also tended to act as a research-filter by setting limits to the potentiality and diverse forms grass-roots agency can take. This means it side-lines especially those expressions of collective agency that fail to pursue or develop along conventional political and institutional channels.

To address some of the weaknesses identified in Giddens' framework, I will introduce aspects of De Landa's (2006) assemblage theory to set up the analysis of collective agency presented in the second part of the thesis. His conceptualisation draws on a Deleuzian perspective and offers the chance to develop Giddens' relational understanding. In doing so, it also overcomes some of the limitations of more conventional social movement approaches.[10]

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[9] The argument made by authors such as Stones (1996) or Chesters (2012) point in a similar direction by questioning Giddens' willingness to engage in reflections on the epistemological framework underlying his methods.

[10] E.g. RMT, criticism of which has been outlined in the previous chapter.

Based on Deleuze's challenge to conventional dualist ontologies, De Landa (2002, 2006) has advocated an understanding of a 'flat' and strongly 'relational' ontology. Social relations are viewed as "contingently obligatory" between "unique, singular individuals, different in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status" (De Landa, 2006, p.11). This conceptualisation builds on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) work to frame assemblages as units resulting from processes of assembly that interlink physical, biological and social entities in recurrent processes. They advance the idea of assemblages as a rhizomatic web of interactions between individual parts. Through interactions individuals become components of social assemblages at different scales, such as the community or the state. This aggregative framework of social assemblages offers a platform to integrate a notion of 'relationality' into the analysis of collective action that breaks with the linearity still present in Giddens's understanding. In doing so, it aids to uncover the multiple layers of social complexity in contexts such as Guatemala.

Since this thesis deals primarily with the social aspects of assemblages, it will focus on how individuals engage in relationships and form assemblages at different scales, such as the community, regional or national level. As De Landa (2006) states, social assemblages always exist in populations and consist of self-subsistent parts that are linked up through 'relations of exteriority'. Contrary to 'relations of interiority', where components have no independent existence, in 'relations of exteriority' parts may be detached and become a component of another assemblage (De Landa, 2006, p.10). Additionally, the properties of the component parts can never totally explain the relations, which constitute an assemblage. The agglomeration of elements or parts, allows the assemblage to develop properties of its own, thus constituting 'emergent properties' (De Landa, 2006).

When inserting this framework into the context of Guatemala for the analysis in the following chapters, it is difficult to outline a generalisable pattern for social assemblages. However, rural Guatemala is marked by collectivities, whose structure and intensity of relationships are predominantly determined by their social, economic and political interaction at the local level. The concept of 'community' is usually used to refer to these collectives, which in Wolf's influential work had been suggested as constituting closed, corporative social

units (Wolf, 1957). However, later anthropological work has at least partially contradicted this notion (Arias, 1992; Lutz and Lovell, 1992; Smith, 1992a). Instead, especially the economic and political features of communities have been highlighted as evolving in line with external influences and relationships despite maintaining a certain level of unity.

De Landa's assemblage theory provides a theoretical framework to further develop these anthropological understandings. In line with his view these communities can be seen as changing, aggregative bodies, which consist of individuals that converge into collectives or assemblages. At the local level social assemblages are formed based on families, neighbours and friendship, leading up to larger collectives such as the community. In the analysis of the collective processes around the defence of territory in this thesis, I will frequently be using the term of 'community' to refer to the organisational units or nodes. This means from an analytical point of view communities can be seen as social assemblages engaging in collective action.

In the same vein meanings, discourses and practices produced by social assemblages or communities can be understood as an example for 'emergent properties' that stabilise these bodies of collective action and determine their degree of cohesiveness. This encourages a research perspective, which is sensitive to the distinctive character of each body of collective agency, while also emphasising their capacity to engage in organisational and knowledge-producing processes. Escobar and Osterweil (2009) have emphasised this link between the idea of assemblages and their immanent, auto-poietic characteristics. In doing so, they prepare the terrain for an understanding of the co-existence and co-construction of multiple worlds that stands in contrast with ideas that tend to assume an over-codification of collectives and spaces. Instead, they provide elements to emphasise the capacity of local articulations to produce their own meanings and spaces.

This links well with the emphasis of this thesis on the struggles of local communities to remain in control and having a voice over their immediate surroundings. The case study chapters (chapter 8 and 9) will highlight how in the defence of territory and natural resources, 'community' has constituted a signifier that has been revitalised in the course of the resistances and given way to 'emerging properties'. However, the constantly evolving character and the

dynamic tensions immanent to 'community' also have to be recognised: A 'community' established around shared ontological frameworks or meanings always risks disguising or overshadowing inequalities and differences within the respective assemblage. This also means periods of disintegration of the 'community' can be followed by periods of collective convergence around determinate meanings and political practices.

Additionally, De Landa (1998) advances a useful idea to frame the relationships between various assemblages or 'nodes' of agency by introducing a distinction between the different types of networks that are established: On one hand, he puts forward the idea of 'hierarchies', which are characterised by a degree of centralised control, ranks, overt planning as well as a tendency towards homogenisation, particular goals and rules of behaviour. They tend to operate under linear time and treelike structures that are most evident in social bodies such as the military, capitalist enterprises or bureaucratic organisations. On the other hand, he advances the concept of 'meshworks', networks based on decentralised decision-making, self-organisation and heterogeneity as well as established around non-hierarchical relationships that cannot be subordinated to the pursuit of a single, overt objective.

De Landa emphasises the fact that it is hard to find pure cases of 'hierarchies' or 'meshworks' in social realities as the different phenomena are made up by a mixture and evolving combination of these two types of structure (De Landa, 1998). Especially in the course of the case studies I will suggest that in the local, place-based assemblages I analyse, there is a tendency for establishing relationships and networks closer to the model of 'meshworks'. This is in part due to the local scale at which they operate, but in part it can also be linked to their conceptual framing that emphasises the self-determination and autonomy of the different communities integrating the organisational processes.

Drawing on the elements presented in this section, the assemblage approach brings into play two interlinked aspects for the analysis of collective agency in complex social realities: Firstly, it escapes a too rigid structure-agency framework in line with approaches that focus on the potential of agency as seeking to achieve a concrete impact on the polity. Instead, it emphasises the contingency of collective agency, the variety of forms and relations it engages in as well as the immanent characteristics it can develop in the course of

organisational processes. Secondly, by invoking greater ontological sensitivity, it also prepares the path for greater attention to the epistemological processes and ongoing production of meanings at work 'within' the respective assemblages. Accordingly, it provides a bottom-up perspective to examine how collectives or assemblages at a local scale escape coding by apparatuses of power to produce differential understandings and practices. These aspects will be revisited with more detail in the following section.

Production of meaning and re-territorialisation: Defending ontological difference through collective action

The previous section has sought to outline a contingent and relational understanding of agency, while also introducing the idea of assemblages of collective agency as emerging at a local level. This section examines two conceptual elements, 'difference' and 'meaning', in an attempt to provide more detail to the convergence of subjectivities into assemblages of collective action around differential meanings.

Melucci's work (1989, 1996) has proved influential in highlighting the role of meanings in processes of convergence into bodies of collective action. He emphasises how a variety of agents dispute the distribution not just of economic but also cultural or symbolic resources produced by dominant societal groups. Accordingly, the potential for conflict to emerge is constant since the production of these cultural resources or meanings involve relationships, symbols, and identities, as well as individual needs.

This analysis of meanings in Melucci's work helps address one of the weaknesses identified in Giddens' agency-structure model in the previous section. It focuses on the evolving social relations, affinities and sense-making activities from which practices of collective action emerge, thereby demonstrating a greater sensitivity to issues related to ontological positions and the epistemological processes deriving from them. As indicated in the previous chapter, it also breaks with other traditions in social movement studies such as RMT, which to a certain extent expanded individual cost-benefit calculations to a collective level. Instead, Melucci's framework around meanings emphasises the fact that collective action can emerge along a structure of various

incentives, which are not always motivated by the cost or benefit of acting nor the immediate availability of resources (Melucci, 1989). Together with other authors following this 'cultural' line of thought (e.g. Escobar, 1992, 2008; Álvarez, 1998; Dagnino, 1998), he argues that collective action represents attempts to re-appropriate meanings in the context of processes frequently promoted by dominant social actors that aim to define social and cultural objects. As this re-appropriation comes into conflict with impulses for integration or pressures to conform, collective action plays a central role in making these tensions manifest (Melucci, 1989, 1996).

Melucci (1996) uses the concept of 'antagonistic agency' to frame this oppositional relationship. This conceptualisation continues to be based on the relationship between actors participating in the production of social resources. As he argues, this process can give way to conflictive situations that are generated by a "systems' requirement of subduing any threat to structural integrity" (Melucci, 1996, p.52). Accordingly, collective action can represent a fundamental challenge to the imposition of social, economic or political meanings by a dominant section of society that aims to reconfigure social and cultural patterns. In many cases it is in the course of collective engagement that certain meanings are revitalised or acquire special weight, thus leading to struggles that highlight antagonisms.

Although the main focus of Melucci's work is on post-industrial societies in the West, I argue that aspects of his framework around differential meanings can be extended to expressions of collective agency in the Global South. On one hand, the impersonal character of power-relationships associated with post-industrial societies in the West tends to be less disguised in the Global South, where many societies are marked by a strong imbalance of power and hierarchical social structures. On the other hand, in societies of the Global South the conflictive dimension surrounding the meaning of words, symbols and objects is even more pronounced since in many cases it merges and correlates with these unequal power-relations. The emergence of articulations based on references to ethnic roots and differential cultural understandings that feature in many societies of the Global South seem to confirm this hypothesis.

When looking towards the Global South and its expressions of collective agency this articulation of differential meanings has also been associated with a

challenge to dominant understandings deriving from western hegemony on the production of knowledge. Santos (2007, 2010) has challenged this hierarchy and argued for an 'epistemology of the South' to frame the construction of alternative meanings and knowledge:

"In many areas of social life, modern science has demonstrated an unquestionable superiority in relation to other forms of knowledge. There are, however, other interventions in the real world that are valuable to us today in which modern science has played no part. There is, for example, the preservation of biodiversity made possible by rural and indigenous forms of knowledge which, paradoxically, are under threat from the increasing science-ridden interventions." (Santos, 2007, p. 33)

This means collective action is often embedded in processes that question power-relations underlying the production of knowledge. Santos points to the resistance led by indigenous movements in Latin America as the most convincing example of what he calls "post-abyssal thinking" (Santos, 2007, p.1). In his view this reflects a type of knowledge that overcomes the colonial divide and locates its epistemological perspective in the experience of the Global South. It indicates the importance of learning "from the South through an epistemology of the South" to overcome the basic assumption of supremacy of Western thinking over indigenous forms of knowledge (Santos, 2007, p.11).

This challenge to established hierarchies of knowledge and differential production of meanings by assemblages of collective action will also be taken up in the course of the case studies (chapter 7 and 8). As they indicate, in the course of their resistance the respective assemblages contest central aspects of elite-promoted knowledge around development and the design of political processes by insisting on the production of their own meanings and epistemological processes. At the same time, I argue that this form of dispute through collective action cannot be limited to determinate identities, although the prominent role of indigenous and afro-descendent people in these struggles has to be highlighted. In Latin American literature a lot of attention in recent decades has focused on the challenges advanced by indigenous movements emerging from rural areas (Warren, 1998; Yashar, 2005; Diaz-Polanco, 2006). However, some authors (Porto Goncalves, 2001; Ceceña, 2008; Zibechi, 2007, 2011; Dinerstein 2013, 2015) have also documented how collective action

among urban as well as non-indigenous population emerges to contest dominant economic and social understandings in a similar way.

This signals the importance of not confining the potential for agglomeration of subjects into bodies of collective action and their antagonistic agency to a determinate set of biological, social or contextual characteristics. Instead, the challenge for research seems to be to de-construct the variety of aspects that allow certain meanings to gain importance and stimulate processes of collective convergence. Without doubt the constellation of rural, indigenous communities based on close social, economic and political relationships between their members represent propitious conditions for processes of shared and collective reproduction of meanings. However, as this research aims to show primarily in the course of the case studies, non-indigenous or urban population can also converge around the production of differential meanings and consolidate organisational bodies and spaces around these understandings.

Deleuze's (1994) understanding of 'difference in itself' provides an interesting framework to reinforce this idea of not submitting processes of production of differential meanings to specific or fixed identities. His conceptualisation of difference begins with a challenge to what he sees as a premise of western thinking deriving from Plato's framing of the world as something certain and real. Following this line of thought, difference is attributed to the identical or whole, while identity is seen as ontologically prior to the systems of classification used to categorise social realities. Accordingly, difference becomes a negation or contrast to this real identity. Deleuze (1994) on the other hand argues for seeing 'difference in itself' rather than based on the differentiation from other ideal elements, thus rejecting a static and unchanging reality based on ideal forms or identities. Instead, he links difference with a relational approach that replaces a passive notion of identities with the idea of 'becoming' to outline the constantly evolving character of subjectivities.

This evolving notion can also be linked to the previously outlined understanding of collective convergence into assemblages and reinforces the contingent character of flows of agency. Additionally, it paves the way to imagine 'difference' beyond an association with fixed ethnic identities. Instead, a constantly evolving notion of individuals converging around ongoing processes

of production of meaning and the struggles for their re-appropriation is suggested. As Escobar and Osterweil signal,

"any over-codification by any apparatus of capture such as capitalism or the state also unleashes simultaneous de-codified flows that escape from them e.g. the impulse of neoliberal globalisation to reduce to the market all aspects of social life, liberates many other forms of organisation and requirements of economic and social life, including some of them perverse." (Escobar and Osterweil, 2009, p.146)

Assemblages of collective action can be seen as engaging in this de-codification through the production of differential meanings. In order to characterise the strategic and expressive characteristics of these assemblages, scholars examining collective action have resorted to a distinction between processes of 're-territorialisation' and 'de-territorialisation' as developed by Deleuze and Guattari (e.g. Day, 2005; Chesters and Welsh, 2006; De Landa, 2006). In their work, processes of re-territorialisation are seen as contributing to rigidify the identity of assemblages. They constitute a stabilisation of social systems that can occur through a series of mechanisms such as legitimacy provided by tradition in hierarchical bodies or coding of social realities promoted by governmental policies. On the other hand, de-territorialisation represents processes that break this rigidification and constitute processes of recoding and destabilisation of meanings (De Landa, 2006).

Building on these ideas and in line with other authors (eg. Day, 2005; Chesters and Welsh, 2006; Escobar and Osterweil, 2009), the localised sources of agency under analysis in this research can be conceptualised as assemblages engaging in processes of re-territorialisation. In the course of these processes they can be seen as seeking to avoid the recoding or de-territorialisation of their spaces and practices through agents acting to impose their meanings onto this local level. As the case studies presented in this thesis will show, this implies that these local assemblages in some cases insist not only on their own production of meaning but also on designing their own patterns of political interaction, an aspect that will be developed in the fourth section of this chapter. Additionally, this insistence on control over processes oriented at the production and attribution of meanings seems to acquire special impetus when related to and situated in specific places. In order to link the collective convergence

around meanings with the struggles for the defence of territory, the next section will elaborate on the relationship with, and signification of, space.

Production of the 'local', production of 'differential' space

As indicated in the previous section, the outlined processes of re-territorialisation and de-territorialisation can bear a spatial connotation. In their struggle to re-appropriate meanings, expressions of collective action engage with understandings of territory, autonomy and auto-determination, often contributing to theoretical and political innovation while doing so. In Latin America the articulation of indigenous movements around these ideas has been especially forceful. New frameworks of rights for autonomy and self-determination for indigenous people accompanied their struggles and provided tools to advance an affirmation of difference, which also expresses an attachment to a specific territoriality.

Additionally, the generation of antagonistic affinities as well as the accentuation and public convergence around meanings attached to territory has to be related to dynamics of spatial re-organisation in line with the incessant expansion of market-based capitalism. The exploitation of natural resources has constituted a central dimension in this expansion with Svampa (2013) indicating how a 'Commodity Consensus' has followed the Washington Consensus to equip these dynamics with renewed impetus. This has translated into a consensus or passive acceptance by Latin American countries of their role in the international division of labour as a provider of raw materials, among them hydrocarbons, metals, minerals and food. She sees this 'Consensus' as being sustained by conservative or progressive/centre-left governments alike. In her view this indicates „the existence of an accord— tacit or explicit —around the irrevocable or irresistible character of the current extractivist dynamics, in response to the growing global demand for primary goods." (Svampa, 2013, p.5)

This rise in articulations around territorial rights on one hand, and the state-promoted focus on natural resources on the other, has inevitably led to a clash of contrasting understandings of space and territory. Although the implementation of projects oriented at natural resources has taken on different modalities in various countries, in many areas it has coincided with patterns

outlined by David Harvey (2003) as 'accumulation through dispossession'. According to Harvey, Marx had rightly highlighted the link between processes of capital accumulation and the use of predation, fraud and violence. However, he saw these features as limited to a primitive or original stage of capitalism. Harvey on the other hand considers these processes as very much part of the neoliberal era and exemplified in this strategy of 'accumulation by dispossession'. Apart from the mechanisms identified by Marx, he has argued that a renewed enclosure of the commons is taking place as new measures to ensure accumulation are implemented. He sees this tendency as reflected in the enforcement of intellectual property rights on seeds or genetic material, the depletion of the global environmental commons, the commodification of cultural forms, histories and intellectual creativity as well as the privatisation of public assets (Harvey, 2003).

Harvey sees the re-emergence of this 'accumulation by dispossession' as encouraged by the problem of over-accumulation, as redundant capital seizes on newly available or recently released assets and integrates them into the stream of capital accumulation. The expansion of capitalist logics is part of these patterns, as territories that had only marginally been integrated, are introduced into the flows of accumulation:

> "The implication is that non-capitalist territories should be forced open not only to trade (which could be helpful) but also to permit capital to invest in profitable ventures using cheaper labour power, raw materials, low-cost land, and the like. The general thrust of any capitalistic logic of power is not that territories should be held back from capitalist development, but that they should be continuously opened up." (Harvey, 2003, p.139).

In the context of neoliberal strategies of integrating, recoding and reorganising, the potential of previously disregarded rural territories and resources of the Global South are considered in strategies of accumulation. Accordingly, spaces are integrated that "have been affected and produced by European modernity but never fully subsumed nor instrumentalised" (Grosfoguel, 2009, p.29). As a feature common to many elite-dominated societies in the Global South, the economic integration of these rural territories through projects oriented at natural resources does not coincide with a political or social integration. In this sense, it bears similarities with a process Dinerstein labels "a subsumption by

exclusion" that continues to rely on strategies such as expropriation, displacement, invisibilisation and expulsion that combine with a misery, "that constitutes the everyday reality of both indigenous as well as non-indigenous, rural, urban workers' people, alike." (Dinerstein, 2015, p.220)

However, the nature of these economic processes also engenders scenarios of incompatibility, which are especially evident in local contexts. They clash especially with those populations that engage in processes of production of meanings that do not or only partially correspond to the economic as well as social coding of realities promoted in line with a neoliberal rationality (Ceceña, 2008). As a result of these encounters an accentuation of meanings around place and territory has occurred among local communities and collectives as they make manifest the conflict emerging around these contrasting understandings. The processes of collective action that have emerged to highlight these antagonisms in some cases reaffirm or revitalise existing collective assemblages, in other cases they encourage a convergence from which new bodies of collective action emerge. The aspects shared by many of these organisational processes are those of affirming notions of place, territory and the 'local' as an essential space for cultural and economic reproduction.

In a differentiation that seems to echo the outlined Deleuzian ideas of re-territorialisation and de-territorialisation, Escobar has summed up the two tendencies that in his view also encourage a renewed focus on the 'local' and place:

"1. Strategies of global localization by capital, the state and technoscience. Capital, state and technoscience engage in a politics of scale that attempts to negotiate the production of locality in their own favour. Nevertheless, to the extent that these strategies are not place-based (even if locally articulated), they inevitably induce a de-localizing effect with respect to local places. …

2. Subaltern strategies of localization by communities and, particularly, social movements. These strategies are of two kinds: place-based strategies that rely on the attachment to territory and culture; and glocal strategies through meshworks that enable social movements to engage in the production of locality by enacting a politics of scale from below." (Escobar, 2008, p. 32)

A substantial body of literature has examined this second notion of place-making by pointing to the bond collectives develop as well as the multiple strategies they engage in to defend local territories (e.g. Casey, 1993; Basso, 1996; Swyngedouw, 1997; Escobar, 2001, 2008; Oslender, 2002). Accordingly, strategies of localisation or place-making express the relationship with particular places, as individuals and communities build around experiences and memories to develop profound sentiments of attachment (Oslender, 2002). Place-making strategies are attributed to a host of movements, organisations, communities and collectives as they oppose aspects of 'production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991a) in accord with economic and cultural frameworks linked to global patterns of capital accumulation. As signalled in the previous section, the arbitrary manner and coercive strategies used to access new territories in line with Harvey's understandings seem to encourage this accentuation of meanings and the agglomeration around discursive bodies that emphasise these local spaces.

This is also reflected in the organisational patterns of collective action emerging in the context of states marked by the co-opted and criminal patterns as outlined in chapter 1. Given the reluctance of elites to provide openings or concede their control on access to formal political spaces, frequently the focus of engagement and dissent of non-elite actors is confined to local spaces. However, in many cases it also seems to correspond to a strategic choice of collectives and communities to engage in a "defensive localisation" (Escobar, 2001, p.149). Thus the 'local' tends to offers more promise to determine and remain in control of their own production of meanings. As the case of Guatemala suggests, rather than broad movements, it is in these local settings that convergences occur and it 'makes sense' to challenge aspects of state policies based on concrete every-day experiences.

Additionally, these expressions of collective action can coincide with attempts to consolidate movement-produced organisational spaces and local public spheres as they seek to respond to the imposition of elite-based decision-making. Beyond the cultural or conceptual attachment that ties individuals and collectives to specific places and territories, Lefebvre (1991a) has emphasised the idea of ongoing political, economic and social practices that contribute to 'produce spaces'. His understanding echoes a socially constructed nature of

space around historical and natural elements embedded in political processes. Echoing the previously outlined ideas, he also introduces the idea of 'difference' in order to highlight contrasting practices and sense-making activities in determinate spaces. Instead of constituting closed and homogeneous spaces, resistance and contestation emerge around different moments of space[11] to accentuate difference and produce differential spaces (Lefebvre, 1991b).

This understanding also indicates how the constitution and development of practices of political interaction that contrast with those promoted by hegemonic actors are an integral part of collective agency. Again, this connects well with the outlined idea of processes of re-territorialisation. It inserts local agents and assemblages into political processes and encourages the analysis of their patterns in processes of deliberation or decision-making. In many cases this results in the 'local' being suggested as a space, where public spheres can be consolidated that are meaningful for the respective population (e.g. Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus, 1997; Escobar, 2001). As will be argued in the course of the thesis, the antagonistic affinities generated among local population in response to the exploitation of natural resources in various regions of Guatemala, has also revitalised organisational practices aimed at consolidating local public spheres. In many cases these can operate in the shadow or alongside formal channels of participation as they seek to defend their immediate surroundings from the impact of processes targeting the exploitation of natural resources.

Additionally, as Zibechi has indicated in the case of resistance to industrial processes of exploitation, the revitalisation of localised engagement can constitute a platform for 'potentiating difference' (Zibechi, 2011, p.160). It brings up new opportunities for exchange and relationships between marginalised agents, thus creating a platform for experiences, solidarity and knowledge to be exchanged and produced. It also paves the way to introduce other antagonisms such as discrimination around culture, race and gender into the respective

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[11] Lefebvre distinguishes three moments of space in his analysis: a) 'Spatial practices' refer to forms and mechanisms through which we use and perceive space. b) 'Representations of space' is the creation of an abstract space based on technologies and science in an attempt to create a 'true space'. c) 'Spaces of representation' are the spaces created by social agents based on local knowledge and experiences, attempting to create a counter-space to the mentioned abstract space (Lefebvre, 1991b).

organisational patterns. This enables a mutual exchange of knowledge as well as an appropriation of the organisational process between the different expressions of agency, while also allowing them to discover and address their own internal contradictions.

It is from these local spaces that assemblages of collective action insist on remaining in control, having a voice and role in processes of decision-making, especially when this involves their immediate surroundings. Accordingly, the next section will examine the meta-political implications of these expressions of agency and their challenges to dominant understandings of democracy.

Reconciling democracy and difference? Multiculturalism and power in political practice

The previous sections have outlined the connection between processes of re-territorialisation and the different strategies of 'producing space' to highlight the ongoing struggles to determine the production of differential meanings in the course of collective action. This section will focus on the aspect of political practices by looking at institutional as well as non-institutional approaches to deal with difference and outline forms of structuring political processes and institutional relationships accordingly.

Liberal democratic theory has sought to solve the tensions between 'difference' and democracy by conceptualising relationships around the idea of multiculturalism. Kymlicka has been influential in discussing these approaches on how to deal with diversity among the population within states. He indicates that the attempts to address the issue of minorities or ethnic groups first consolidated in the 70s in Canada and Scandinavian countries as a result of mobilisation, pressure and demands from these groups of population. This engendered a recognition that the "nations within" had failed to assimilate the dominant national culture and that it was instead "morally illegitimate to try to suppress the desire of national groups to maintain their national identities and their institutions." (Kymlicka, 2002, p.72) In order to address this issue, Kymlicka has suggested a system of multicultural citizenship in a multinational federation as a model that allows states to deal with the demands emerging from minority and indigenous groups. This is framed around three group-

specific rights: Special representation rights, self-government rights and poly-ethnic rights. Accordingly, this approach maintains that the introduction of these collective rights would make it possible to reconcile these demands with the liberal guarantees of individual rights (Kymlicka, 1995, 2002).

With the emergence of indigenous movements and their insistence on reframing their relationship with states in Latin America, multicultural demands were incorporated by supranational institutions such as the UN. Following the implementation of a Working Group on Indigenous People in 1982, decades of struggle and lobbying gave way to the expansion of a variety of bodies of rights up to the approval of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007. Additionally, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), with the drafting of the convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal People, established a normative framework that has since represented an important reference point to sustain demands in countries that are members of the ILO.

While international laws represented a general framework for this body of rights, states have gone about integrating multicultural aspects into their national legislation. As a result, the respective laws have also been introduced into the demands and discourses articulated by indigenous movements and ethnic groups. Accordingly, the demands for self-determination, territorial autonomy and collective rights feature consistently in the defence of territory and resistance to the mentioned policies oriented at the exploitation of natural resources. However, frequently this has occurred with only limited success, especially in cases where the compliance with these rights collides with economic and political interests of influential elite factions.

Additionally, in many countries this has coincided with what Hale denominated a "multicultural neoliberalism" that tends to drive "a wedge between cultural recognition and empowerment." (Hale, 2002, p.510) He argues that powerful economic and political actors use the notion of multiculturalism "to affirm cultural difference" while retaining the privilege to decide which cultural rights are consistent with their interpretation of "liberal, democratic pluralism", thus, in fact engaging in "a defence of the neoliberal capitalist order." (Hale, 2002, p.491) A number of scholars (e.g. Žižek, 1998; Díaz Polanco, 2006) have expressed similar views, indicating how elites as well as international institutions such as the World Bank have remained receptive to some demands as long as they

don't interfere with their core economic and political interests. In the same vein multicultural approaches can be seen as representing a key discourse to appease and integrate de-politicised forms of diversity that are often based on folkloric connotations.

This means 'difference' in the multicultural understandings suggested by Taylor (1992) and Kymlicka (1995) becomes subject to recognition and interpretation by governing bodies. As Day states in his criticism of these top-down approaches, this implies that "self-governing communities would have some say in matters of society, economy, polity as well as culture, but they would remain under the ultimate control of the Euro-colonial state apparatus" (Day, 2005, p.86).

Additionally, the particular limitations in the implementation of legal regimes in the context of states in the Global South as outlined in chapter 1 have to be taken into account in these debates. Thus, especially in social settings where legal frameworks and politics are subject to co-option by elite factions, in practice, the implementation and compliance with legal frameworks establishing these guarantees for indigenous rights has remained very limited. The space for interpretation tends to be significant and as the promotion of projects linked to natural resources shows, a hierarchy of laws favours the implementation of elite interests in detriment of local communities. The implications for the character of democratic relationships are exemplified by cases in which the local population has no say over projects that are being established in their immediate surroundings.

Despite the gap between the intended scope of these laws and their implementation, even in contexts marked by state co-option such as Guatemala, the rights deriving from multicultural political frameworks continue to feature prominently among the demands of social and indigenous movements. Communities and movements can be seen as engaging in a bidirectional strategy: On one hand, they pursue the consolidation of local public spheres as well as the appropriation of decision-making processes, which carry a strong reference to notions of self-determination and autonomy. On the other hand, their articulation also engages with the institutional levels to push for a state-recognition of their autonomous production of meanings and practices, often as part of a multicultural legal framework.

As Dinerstein (2015) has argued, a contextualised understanding of the communities' notion of autonomy and self-determination is required in order to understand their strategic orientation. Latin American social movements cannot necessarily be seen as emulating struggles "against the state" and advocating "an abandonment of the idea of the state as the main locus for social emancipation", common to the organisational patterns of autonomous movements in the Global North (Dinerstein 2015, p.32). Instead, movements in the South can be seen as engaging in what at times seems a contradictory dynamic: As the case studies in this thesis (chapter 7 and 8) will demonstrate, the different strategies aimed at defending territorial spaces and carving out local spheres dominate in their articulations. However, simultaneously they can engage in strategic interactions with institutional spaces to demand recognition of these rights to self-determination in cultural, economic and political practices. Especially in the context of state co-option, these interactions can also be of strategic or protective nature, as collectives or communities seek to gain time in specific organisational moments or aim to deter the state from using violent or criminalising measures.

Nevertheless, an analysis of this appeal to legal frameworks and search for recognition from the state also suggests that the conceptual problems linked to the administrative top-down attempts to integrate 'difference' persist. In line with Deleuze's and Guattari's (1987) work, one could argue that multicultural approaches and the recognition of regional autonomies would only translate into the constitution of a new majority in terms of elements at a lower scale.[12] In their place, they advance the idea of "Minority as a universal figure, or becoming of everybody", by linking it with a fluid, evolving understanding of 'difference' as outlined in the previous sections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.473). Accordingly, this idea of 'becoming minoritarian' emphasises the contingent characteristics of subjectivities engaging in resistance to processes that foster subordination to reductionist identities and meanings.

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[12] Deleuze and Guattari (1987) do accept that the mentioned legal frameworks represent important tools to underline demands for self-determination and autonomy and can be seen as worthwhile political ambitions. Nonetheless they argue for the awareness of other co-existing struggles that go beyond this.

In doing so, this 'becoming minor' addresses two conceptual problems that mark institutional approaches to multiculturalism: Firstly, echoing the notion of 'difference' presented above, it does not restrict the possibility of 'becoming minor' to a specific ethnic group or minority. In doing so, it opens the possibility of affirmation of 'difference' to subjectivities that are not determined by a specific set of biological or social criteria. As Escobar has indicated, this also represents a feature of the mentioned processes of localisation:

> "Locality and community cease to be obvious, and certainly not inhabited by rooted or natural identities but very much produced by complex relations of culture and power that go well beyond local bounds. Most clear in the case of refugees and diasporic peoples, this condition affects all communities worldwide to a greater or lesser extent." (Escobar 2001, p.147)

I will also draw on this understanding of 'difference' as detached from specific identities to frame the case study of the RPLP in chapter 8, where indigenous as well as non-indigenous community members have converged in opposition to mining concessions.

Secondly, the conception of 'becoming minor' implicitly directs attention to the question of power relationships and the different forms the 'enactment of power' can take among others, in processes of representation or decision-making. This understanding echoes the work of scholars that have sought to introduce a distinction between different strategies or ways of engaging with power. Foucault's (1988) distinction between 'power' and 'domination', Lukes' (1974) differentiation between 'dominating' and 'non-dominating' forms of power as well as Holloway's (2005) proposition of an 'anti-power' to contrast forms of 'power-over', can be highlighted in this regard.

Again in preparation for the case studies in chapter 7 and 8, the conceptualisation suggests a framing of power relationships on the basis of patterns that combine an affirmation of 'difference' with attempts to introduce horizontal notions into processes of representation and decision-making. It points to a 'recoding' of the modes of political interaction predominant in institutional spaces, a process that has been ongoing among a variety of social movements and expressions of collective action over recent decades (Avritzer, 2002; Van Cott, 2008). Up to a certain extent this also reflects attempts to

address the problems of vertical leadership and top-down structures that marked organisational processes during previous periods of revolutionary activism. Expanding on the differential production of meanings outlined earlier, 'difference' is politicised by these movements, as they integrate an emphasis on horizontal political practices to reconceptualise the design of political interactions, processes of representation and decision-making. In doing so, they also take tentative steps towards addressing, without suffocating, the diversity 'within' the respective collective articulation.

In the ongoing processes of defence of territory, the participation, opening up or re-appropriation of decision-making processes tends to represent a central demand of assemblages of collective action. This seems to be especially relevant in contexts of state co-option as outlined in the previous chapter, where the features of democracy fail to surpass the procedural minimum, while the formal institutional channels prove to be inadequate to foster participative dynamics. In many cases the resulting vertical imposition of policies that leave the local population without a say in issues regarding their surroundings seems to stimulate this demand for the creation of local public spheres. As the case studies in the second part of the thesis will indicate, the fact that these deliberative spaces are embedded among people facing concrete experiences and problems has encouraged the appropriation of the organisational process as such among local community members. Additionally, it has encouraged them to articulate a more comprehensive critique of the dominant designs of political interactions and decision-making procedures.

Accordingly, the defence of territory comes to represent the defence of differential meanings as well as the defence of autonomous spaces of democratic experimentation. Echoing Melucci, public spaces independent of institutions of government, the party system and state structures can open up new possibilities to democracy: "these spaces assume the form of an articulated system of decision-making, negotiation and representation, in which the signifying practices developed in everyday life can be expressed and heard independently from formal political institutions." (Melucci, 1989, p.174)

In complex environments marked by multi-ethnicity and co-opted state institutions, a multiplicity of local arenas can consolidate, at times based on contradictory patterns or even explicitly antidemocratic characteristics.

However, as the case studies will demonstrate, expressions of collective action that experiment around horizontal and participative features to make their everyday spaces more democratic can also emerge. They often do so by challenging institutional politics and organising outside its delineated spaces, thus disturbing hegemonic discourses and practices.

As the organisational focus of expressions of collective action integrates these strategies seeking to appropriate decision-making, they contest the exclusion of their voices from the respective decision-making process. They also challenge the ways in which decisions within formal and institutional spaces are taken, while they consolidate local spaces to advance their own deliberative and procedural patterns. These expressions of collective action rarely intend or acquire the force to represent a democratising agency in a conventional sense, especially as state policies and complex societal constellations limit opportunities for broader convergences. Nonetheless, many of these local articulations can be seen as engaging in a shared quest to highlight antagonisms and imagine alternative ways of organising political processes in the wake of failed elite-guided transition and democratisation processes.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to outline elements of a conceptual framework to analyse collective agency in the context of elite-dominated and multi-ethnic settings, with Giddens' structure-agency approach constituting an entry point. Despite acknowledging an important notion of relationality, this conceptualisation was still perceived as too mechanistic to frame the contingent character of collective agency and its focus beyond institutional structures. Additionally, Giddens failure to address ontological aspects results in the weaknesses of his approach in addressing the complexity of agency especially outside Western contexts (Stones, 1996; Chesters, 2012).

De Landa's (2006) interpretation of Deleuzian concepts in his assemblage theory provided a series of elements to address some of these shortcomings. Based on his understanding, expressions of collective action can be seen as aggregative bodies with different degrees of cohesiveness. This idea of assemblages also makes it possible to place an emphasis on the emerging and

immanent properties of collective action. With regards to this thesis, the framework can be linked to the revitalisation of community as a collective signifier, while its 'evolving properties' are reflected in discourses and practices aiming at the defence of territory.

At the same time, I have argued for the importance of analysing processes of production of meaning to frame convergences into bodies of collective action. Based on Melucci's work I have outlined how antagonistic action emerges to re-appropriate meanings in the context of vertical processes that seek to redefine social and cultural objects. Collective agency develops to escape the coding by dominant economic and political actors and at the same time cannot be restricted to determinate or fixed identities. By introducing Deleuze's (1994) understanding of 'difference in itself', the immanent as well as evolving characteristics of processes of collective action have been emphasised.

The 'consensus' around the exploitation of natural resources (Svampa, 2013) as well as policies in line with Harvey's (2003) understanding of 'accumulation by dispossession' have made it possible to integrate a spatial dimension into this conceptualisation of collective action. Accordingly, these processes of reorganisation of spaces uncover as well as revitalise networks of local production of meanings around place and territory that fail to or only partially correspond to a 're-coding' in accord with neoliberal rationality. In line with authors such as Lefebvre (1991b) and Zibechi (2011), I have suggested that this local production of space is not just reflected at the level of meanings, but also by political practices that enhance their 'difference'.

Multiculturalism has represented the most prominent attempt to reconcile ethnic difference and democracy through legal frameworks by attributing special rights to minorities and ethnic groups. Obvious shortcomings in the implementation of these rights as well as conceptual limitations in these multicultural ideas were identified. As a result, in many contexts of the Global South, a binary notion seems to characterise articulations and their strategies. On one hand, there is a push away from the state towards carving out autonomous spaces and fending off vertically implemented policies. On the other hand, collective action engages in a strategic appeal to the state for recognition of their difference and autonomy on the basis of certain regimes of rights.

At the same time, I have indicated how expressions of collective action go about reconceptualising patterns of political interaction and decision-making, in many cases outside formal political spaces and institutional channels. Accordingly, collective action can combine its affirmation of 'difference' at the level of meanings, with attempts at re-appropriating decision-making processes as well as redesigning patterns of representation and political interaction. In doing so, they develop a more comprehensive critique of dominant understanding of democracy by creating local public spheres framed around people and collectives situated in specific experiences and problems.

After having examined a series of conceptual elements to frame the analysis of collective action in elite-dominated societies marked by ethnic complexities, the next chapter will turn towards a crucial contextual aspect of this thesis by looking at the Guatemalan state-formation process and link it to the understanding of a co-opted state. By tracking its historical emergence up to its contemporary features, I will outline some of the central actors and processes defining its nature as well as constituting the context for the collective action analysed in the second part of the thesis.

3. Genesis of the state in Guatemala: An elite structured social order (1524-2014)

In the previous chapter I set out the conceptual framework of the thesis by exploring some of the aspects that can provide an understanding for agency in elite-dominated and multi-ethnic settings. By referring to these contexts, I outlined the potential of collective agency to emerge on the basis of social aggregations and construct democratic processes in non-linear ways. I also emphasised the complexity and need for a contextualised understanding of these processes as they are embedded in local, grass-roots dynamics. After setting out the conceptual corner stones of the thesis, this chapter will approach the Guatemalan context by tracking the genesis of the state up to the current scenario of a state, whose functions and processes are reconfigured and co-opted by different elite factions. This will provide the context to understand how elites, the state and their modes of governance have impacted on different forms of agency, which will be analysed in the subsequent chapters.

Across different historical moments elites have represented the most influential agents of the Guatemalan state formation process, while the institutional framework of the state has acted to stabilise power relations in their favour. Therefore a large part of the analysis will centre on the role of elites, their interactions, their relationship with the state and their attempts to perpetuate a dominant societal position and strategies of accumulation.

In the course of this chapter I will indicate how the elite's drive to promote strategies of accumulation and capture rents has represented the central driver for this state-formation. Almost without interruption elites have been able to determine the nature of state policies and laws across the different historical periods. Authoritarian governance and repressive strategies backed by an alliance of economic elites with the military have predominated over large periods of time. However, the implementation of a transitional framework towards democracy in 1985 also engendered a gradual shift in strategies to maintain control over the institutional framework. This has given way to a scenario in which different elite-factions compete and cooperate as they use an array of formal and informal, legal and illegal mechanisms to reconfigure and co-opt institutional processes and functions. These mechanisms aim to guarantee particular interests and to benefit specific strategies of accumulation

in the short and long term by determining policies and laws. This has consolidated an institutional constellation very resistant to change, as elites control crucial decision-making processes and channels of participation following the transition to a formally democratic system.

Laying the foundations: Guatemala's colonial order

The moment of the Spanish invasion obviously constituted a fundamental watershed for the territories that were to be conquered. At the same time, it represented the meeting point of two cultural frameworks in which the respective reading and structuring of reality was embedded. As de-colonial literature has argued with regards to Latin America, prior to this encounter, local modes of life and social organising was rooted in other ontological frameworks and life-worlds. This moment tied the fate of the indigenous population and that of the invaders for the centuries to come on the territory of what would become Guatemala. Contrasting forms of political, economic and social imagining of society met, each embedded in cultural frameworks and legacies.

The ideas of the colonizers were translated into an administrative system and institutional apparatus as they sought to consolidate their control in line with their drive to secure revenues. The territory of Guatemala initially proved disappointing for the invaders compared to other regions of the Americas, given the absence of accessible natural resources such as gold and silver. However, this initial disappointment was soon overcome as the economic and social relationships were structured around the possession of land and the exploitation of indigenous labour. Additionally, as Martínez Peláez (1994) stated, "the land without *indios* was not worth anything", which translated into the systematic enslavement of the indigenous population as the colonizers were determined to extract wealth from the colonial territory.

However, this colonial 'coding' went beyond the consolidation of a racial hierarchy based on biological features to represent a transversal axis that cut across the different economic, social and political dimensions of society, as Quijano pointed out:

"… along with America a new mental category was produced to codify the relations between conquering and conquered populations: the idea of

'race', as biologically structural and hierarchical differences between the dominant and dominated. … And since both terms of such a relationship were considered, by definition, superior and inferior, the associated cultural differences were codified as well, respectively, as superior and inferior by definition" (Quijano, 2000, p.216).

The economic implications of this recoding were evident. In many cases it interrupted the economic modes of collective supply and distribution that had represented a guarantee for self-sufficiency of the indigenous communities. Collective units had been crucial to maintain a resilient economic and political balance during the strictly hierarchical, pre-colonial societies. With the arrival of the colonial powers the understanding of use of land was replaced by the notion of property, while the idea of sustainability, predominant among precolonial indigenous production, was supplanted by an understanding of production for gain (Brunner et al., 1993).

A tribute-system based on the laws of Burgos from 1512, constituted the outline for the labour and tribute duties of the colonized population that was only slightly adjusted in the course of the colonial period. In rural areas land and indigenous communities were divided into socio-economic units, the *pueblos de indios,* with a certain amount of common land, the *ejido,* ascribed to them. In turn, through the system of the *encomienda* (entrustment) these units and their population were assigned to Spanish officials, the *encomendero*. This position was initially only granted for two generations. However, the crown soon gave in to the demands of the Spanish administrators and their descendants, the Criollos, by making it hereditary and handing over land for private possession, thus, consolidating their elite status (Martínez Peláez, 1994). In the *Leyes Nuevas* (New Laws) of 1542 the *repartimiento* (distribution) replaced the *encomienda* system without really altering its scope. It continued to play a central role in the legal frameworks that obliged the indigenous population to pay tribute through services, ditto forced labour, in these socio-economic units.

In many cases this also left the growing number of ladinos[13], the non-indigenous, unable to acquire possessions of land. Instead, they were forced to

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[13] The term 'ladino' has had an evolving meaning. During the colonial period it referred to 'Spanish-speaking Indian' and was then used to refer to people of mixed biological descent. While the term 'ladino' disappeared in the rest of Central America and was replaced by

work on the haciendas in exchange for a plot of land in usufruct or to seek a living at the cost of the *pueblos de indios*, the indigenous municipalities, mostly by usurping their land (Murga Armas, 2007). As Guzman Böckler (2002) indicated, in doing so, the ladinos on one hand complemented the economic model of the colonial society. They compensated for the reduction of the indigenous workforce that was decimated by epidemics and as a consequence of the work on the haciendas. On the other hand, it also created an intermediate stratum in the colonial society that reproduced the contempt and racism with regards to the indigenous population without recognizing their own condition of exploitation and subjugation in the colonial society (Guzman Böckler, 2002).

In this context the situation of the indigenous population depended on the degree to which they were integrated into the model of agricultural production of the Criollos. Dispersion into the highlands proved one of the most effective ways to avoid integration into the colonial system and its workforce (Lutz and Llovell, 1992; Brunner et al., 1993). The autonomous structure of municipalities in the highlands also offered some protection. Although they constituted a system of enclosure and the land assigned to the pueblos was clearly insufficient or administered by arbitrary authorities, they still offered a certain space of movement and autonomy within the designated areas (Murga Armas, 2007).[14]

A renewed wave of pressure on indigenous land and existence would arise in the 19th century as the colonial elites' thirst for profits ignited a renewed expansion of their *haciendas*. This coincided with the idea of independence gaining ground among different sections of the population. The initial drive came from smaller scale commercial and agricultural producers that saw their economic potential blocked by the monopolistic status of the big commercial warehouses and landholding elites. However, the Criollan elites soon also identified the opportunity to overcome the constraints the empire and its commercial rulings represented for the commercialisation of their production

'mestizo', its use has persisted in Guatemala to refer to the non-indigenous population.

[14] As Lutz and Llovell argue, in many areas of the highlands even the introduction of an individual tax-system was unable to break down the community networks that tended to ease the weight of tribute. Instead, a variety of tactics such as temporary dispersion into the highlands were used to maintain this burden as low as possible (Lutz and Llovell, 1992).

(Murga Armas, 2008). Without ceasing to draw inspiration from Spain's civilising approach they went on to take control of the move towards independence, which was finally achieved in 1824.

After a brief period as part of a Central-American Federation the Guatemalan national territory was established. However, the competition to fill the gap left by the Spanish colonial administration persisted between two societal sections, both emerging from the upper strata of the societal hierarchy. On one hand, the liberal factions had originally emerged from young members of Criollan families inspired by the ideals of the French revolution. Their ranks were boosted by a group of medium scale agricultural producers as well as a section of landholding and commercial elites. They all shared the interest of expanding their property for agricultural use and modernising production methods to promote their links with international markets. On the other hand, the conservative factions of Criollan elites who were intent on maintaining the patrimony amassed in the course of the colonial period and unwilling to share their exclusive social status with emerging ladino elites (Brunner et al., 1993; Taracena Arriola et al., 2002).

While these inter-elite tussles that marked the initial decades of independence did involve a certain level of mobilization of rural and indigenous workers, it did not alter their subordinate integration into the structure of the colonial society. Any lip-service to liberal ideals of equality was undermined in political practice as the liberal factions led by Miguel García Granados and Justino Rufino Barrios consolidated at the helm of the state in 1871. Their so-called 'liberal revolution' was promoted primarily by ladino factions consisting of agricultural producers, coffee-planters from the highlands and the western coastal region of Guatemala as well as regionally based merchants, whose attempts at promoting the new product, coffee, had been ignored by the conservative central authorities (Taracena Arriola et al., 2002). However, Criollan elites were soon reintegrated into an elite coalition, thus demonstrating the absurd nature of these inter-elite struggles. As a central feature of this elite alliance, networks based on kinship and marriages were established to guarantee their long-term access to rents that continued to be based on the possession of land and indigenous labour. These elite networks would also constitute a central building

block for their dominant position in Guatemalan society over the following century.

Coffee represented the core component of the economy and led to a gradual expansion of the state and its institutional apparatus, which was structured in accord with the requirements for its production and exportation. Legal frameworks were periodically up-dated to guarantee the supply of indigenous labour[15] to the landholding class and to ensure the concentration of huge extensions of land[16] in the hand of the elites, thus translating into a "second conquest of the indigenous population" (Tischler Visquerra, 2001, p.55). Although these measures were not new, as Murga (2008) argues, it was the liberal state under Barrios that equipped them with a new legal and institutional efficiency by consolidating the hacienda system and promoting further expropriations of communal land.

The political and economic elites continued to rely on the security of rents provided by their feudal status rather than engaging in productive investments to achieve profit. In doing so, it perpetuated features of primitive capitalism with profits not depending on an increase of productivity or rationally planned investment, but instead on the control of forced labour. Accordingly, the commercial patterns of the coffee economy merged with "pre-capitalist forms of

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[15] The regulation of day laborers (*reglamento de jornaleros)* established the obligation of the indigenous population to provide labour services. A local political chief was made responsible for coordinating their supply to estate owners. In 1878 this law was reinforced by the decree 222, vagrancy act (*ley de vagancia*, also taken up under Ubico in 1934) that considered all people without a profession, access to rents, income, occupation or other legal means from which to live, a delinquent. Later, in 1894 these laws were replaced through a system according to which all *campesinos* were equipped with a control booklet in which labour obligations were registered (Murga Armas, 2008).

[16] The measures included 1.) a law obliging every *campesino* to register and buy his land by 28th February 1877 with the price for unregistered land being fixed at 3% of its value which made it easy for landholders to amass enormous extensions of land; 2.) A law to declare land covered by the *censo enfiteutico* (long lease) as illegal, thereby ordering the registration of all properties to specifically target the communal lands of the indigenous communities. 3.) The sale of land held in state property as well as the confiscation of church properties. Additionally, it included the option to 'denounce' the existence of unused land and stake property claims to it. These properties were auctioned at derisory prices or often even conceded without pay to liberal allies (Murga Armas, 2008; Martínez Peláez, 1994).

exploitation." (Tischler Visquerra, 2001, p.50) In this context the scale of profits was determined by external demand rather than an internal market or levels of national consumption (Torres-Rivas, 1975).

The intense promotion of coffee production was accompanied by a gradual institutionalisation of coercive patterns, as elites recognised an increasing importance of establishing a regular army as part of the state, thereby replacing the previously operating militias. The indigenous population was exempted from the obligatory military service since their role was seen "in providing services of other nature" (Taracena Arriola et al., 2002, p.186). The liberal leaders were convinced that the national army should be integrated by individuals with a certain national vision. It was not until decades later that the army represented a mode of calculated ladinisation, as indigenous were allowed to join the army in exchange for cultural adaptation (Adams, 1995).

A more authoritarian and militaristic pattern of governance emerged, as military caudillos headed governments for most of the first half of the 20th century, reflecting the growing importance of the military institution. One of the key responsibilities of the coercive arm of the state in the established economic patterns was to add a dimension of control over the labour that produced agricultural exports. The coercive mechanisms of the state were developed and strengthened, laying the foundation for the army to expand its control throughout the country while acting as a guarantee for the elite coalition's access to rents (Brunner et al., 1993; McCleary, 1999; Tischler Visquerra, 2001).

Ladinos were used strategically to multiply elites' domination especially in local contexts by taking over positions to control the workforce *(contratistas)*, while laws such as the regulation for day labourers (*ley de jornaleros*) also assigned them a status as salary-dependent workers. This meant the indigenous-ladino polarity was maintained and a deterrent against an alliance between poor ladinos and indigenous workers was kept in place. In fact, the figure of the ladino, understood in a cultural perspective as the non-indigenous, would go on to establish himself as the prime agent of Guatemalan nation-building (Brunner et al., 1993; Taracena Arriola et al., 2002).

The agriculturally based economy did gradually bring about changes in the urban economic system as trade-houses and banks consolidated private

economic power. However, the urban economy was equally determined by the rents produced by the national coffee-economy. The monopolies on commercial and financial capital as well as the agrarian orientation of the economic regime did not represent advantageous conditions for industrial modernisation. Those businessmen that did emerge, owed their position to the privileges the state had granted to them without coming close to a Schumpeterian prototype of businessman (Tischler Visquerra, 2001). This was reflected in various business areas as families such as the Castillo family in the beverage industry or the Novella family in the cement-production gained overwhelming control of the market. The advantageous tax and tariff conditions offered by the governing authorities had enabled them to eliminate any competition (Dosal, 2005).

The last in the row of military caudillos, the dictatorship of Ubico, signalled how in the midst of the global economic crisis of the 1930s and the contraction of coffee exports, the coercive dimension once again became crucial to stifle growing social discontent in the urban areas. Ubico concentrated power around his authoritarian figure, with sixty loyal officers, the *generalato*, constituting the nucleus of his militaristic system.

A strict regime of austerity was introduced as public spending was cut by 50% in 1933, while forced labour programmes were updated to guarantee the construction of infrastructure and road projects through the highways law (*ley de vialidad*).[17] Additionally, the system of debt peonage for the agricultural economy was replaced with the vagrancy laws (*ley de vagancia*)[18] in order to upgrade the system of forced labour, which targeted the indigenous population. At the same time a wave of repression was unleashed onto the urban worker's organisations.[19]

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[17] According to the highways law every adult (not owning land and/or not exercising a profession) was obliged to either pay the equivalent of 2 Quetzales or work for two weeks in road construction. Since the large majority of the indigenous peasant population was not able to pay this amount they constituted the main work force.

[18] The vagrancy laws obliged all citizens without a registered land title or with small possessions to work between 100 and 150 days on the estates, which basically covered the harvest period on the coffee-plantations.

[19] The increase in vitality of the urban economy had unleashed organisational dynamics among the urban working class, leading to the formation of more than 90 union organisations between

These measures, however, failed to dissolve the crisis, with the changes in the urban landscape proving especially decisive in the downfall of the Ubico regime and opening a window of opportunity for democratisation in 1944. A fundamental contradiction had emerged between the logic of an economy dominated by agricultural exports and that of an urban social class that instead depended on the expansion of commercial relations and the modernisation of society (Torres Rivas, 1981; Tischler Visquerra, 2001). This seemed to pave the path for a historical break with the oligarchic structure of the state in a period that was also marked by an international economic crisis.

As the crisis of the regime spread, despite the climate of repression and persecution in urban areas, students and teachers constituted the core of a popular, middle-class led movement that assembled around, Juan José Arévalo, to confront Ubico's government. At the same time a split within the army proved crucial. A group of young officers with democratic tendencies led by Colonel Árbenz was able to win the support of sections of the army disgruntled by the corruption and blocked opportunities for promotion represented by Ubico's *generalato*. The various factors combined for a shift in power and paved the way for elections as well as the subsequent victory of Árevalo in 1944 (Tischler Visquerra, 2001).

An urban, popular challenge to elite rule (1944-1954)

The events of 1944 have often been referred to as a revolution, although as Torres-Rivas has signalled this perception only holds with regards to the national scale. Compared to an international level it seemed more a moment of catching up with time, given the magnitude of the social, economic and political backwardness that marked Guatemala (Torres-Rivas, 2011). The political turnover ignited by an urban popular movement with a middle class leadership, reignited discussions around the questions of national identity and on how to deal with the 'indigenous problem'. Incidentally, the constituent assembly of 1945 selected the term of 'republic' instead of 'nation' based on the conclusion that the social reality did not really comply with the perceived criteria for a

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1920 and 1930. This constituted a shift from previous forms of organisation as well as an attempt to develop certain autonomy with regards to the state (Tischler Visquerra, 2001).

'nation' associated with a single culture and a homogeneous race (Taracena Arriola et al., 2004).

Among the first steps with regards to the indigenous population, a National Indigenist Institute (Instituto Indigenista Nacional, IIN) was established in 1945 to concentrate on the analysis and resolution of the 'indigenous problem'. This constituted an attempt to investigate the reasons for the perceived "low cultural, social and economic development" of the indigenous population, their "tendency towards isolation" as well as the persistence of "traditions distinct from the dominant occidental culture" (Taracena Arriola et al., 2004, p.42). Implicit in these attempts to develop an understanding of the indigenous population were strategies to introduce and assimilate them to Western civilisation, which continued to be seen as the national culture and was exemplified by the ladino.

Education was to play a key role in encouraging this process. The successive governments initiated campaigns against illiteracy and promoted the establishment of educational centres such as farm-schools to teach Spanish and to encourage the incorporation of the indigenous masses into the national culture. Nonetheless, as Brunner et al. (1993) and Taracena Arriola et al. (2004) indicate, the reach and success of these literacy programs were limited at best: The bad distribution of educational centres as well as the difficult economic conditions represented clear impediments as children failed to attend school, instead seeking to contribute to the family income. Additionally, in many cases parents were not convinced by the benefits of these initiatives, adding a further element to explain the meagre results of these hispanicising campaigns.

At least in the short term the revolutionary governments did prove more successful in restructuring the Guatemalan rural economy. The agrarian reform and the Decree 900 represented key dimensions of their efforts to address inequalities and redesign access to land. As a result, a large number of tenants and day labourers went on to become lifelong owners of plots or formed cooperatives in estates. In addition, all forms of serfdom and slavery were prohibited, bans were implemented on unpaid services and schemes of paying off debts through work and the modality of the *repartimientos* was abolished (Taracena Arriola et al., 2004).

The extent of the reforms and their impact is debated, but Tischler Visquerra signals that by 1954 a total of 1.002 estates with an extension of 1.901.073

hectares (1 hectare equals 2.47 acres) had been redistributed. Additionally, plans were in place for a further 603.615 hectares of private land and 280.000 hectares of national land to be redistributed (Tischler Visquerra, 2001).[20] However, as Handy (1992) indicates, these measures did not dissolve the persisting inequality between indigenous and ladino campesinos: Although from a total of 348,647 land owners about 65% were indigenous, they only controlled about 20% of the land. Meanwhile 35% of the land owners were in possession of 81.3% of the available land, with the average size of land to which ladinos had access to amounting to 35 manzanas (1 manzana equals 1.7 acres). The indigenous population on the other hand only had access to an average of 4.5 manzanas (Handy, 1992).

Another central dimension of reforms attempting to instil a democratising trend was the approval of a labour code seeking to sustain the defence of economic and social rights of the workers. In doing so, it was meant to introduce a basic regime of rights into the agrarian economy that up to that point had been determined by the different forms of slave labour and debt peonage. Similar to the agrarian reforms its implementation during the short period in power of the revolutionary governments proved arduous, since the urban world of reforms and governmental decrees in many cases remained distant from the realities of the estates. Nonetheless, as Taracena Arriola et al. (2004) indicate, the changes did engender collective organising among rural workers in some areas and began to redefine local power structures. Additionally, in some local contexts the clientelistic networks that had been established by the recruitment agents of estate owners, the *habilitadores*, were dissolved (Taracena Arriola et al., 2004).

However, the various reforms also engendered an increasing polarisation between the societal factions close to the government and sections of the traditional economic elites, who were clearly opposing these reforms and unwilling to give up on any of their historical privileges. The increasingly aggressive stance of the US in the region added to the rising tension. Echoing

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[20] The United Fruit Company was strongly affected by the state-led confiscations. Their land benefited more than 100.000 peasants, while a further 30.000 were benefited by state-land. Tischler signals that this translated into a salary rise for the peasants while also enabling workers to negotiate their contracts on the estates (Tischler Visquerra, 2001).

Rueschmeyer et al.'s (1992) argument, in this context the landed elites, dependent on a large supply of cheap labour represented the most consistently anti-democractic force. As Árbenz won the elections in 1952 despite this growing national and international pressure, these conservative sections realised they would not be able to displace the revolutionary government in electoral competitions (Tischler Visquerra, 2001). Instead, they sought a strategic alliance to achieve their objectives and under the pretext of fighting international communism linked up with the US interests to promote a coup and topple the government.

Árbenz' abrupt resignation in 1954 in response to the plot of the CIA left his followers unable to react. Torres-Rivas (2011) indicates this scenario as exemplifying the limits placed by structures on the potential of agents. In this case the constraints were represented by the fact that the state, economy and society had not completed a shift towards modern capitalist patterns. The pre-capitalist structure of agrarian production and the estate based economy continued to represent the predominant features and determined power-relationships (Torres-Rivas, 2011). However, this situation also indicated the persistence of a conservative and unevolved ideological framework among the traditional economic elites. As they were unwilling to give up on any of their historically accumulated privileges, they used a favourable international context to re-establish their dominant societal position.

Accordingly, democracy did not consolidate in Guatemala as the middle class and workers that had emerged on the basis of the urban economy were unable to defend the initiatives implemented in the course of this democratic interlude. This scenario revealed the multiple, parallel realities in Guatemalan society, exemplified by the persisting divide between the urban world of reforms and the rural realities. The latter had continued to remain very much detached from the patterns of this urbanely focused and middle-class led nation-building project in its economic as well as cultural dimensions. For large parts of the rural area the failure of this democratising attempt at a central level meant that the established patterns of production based on primitive capitalist mechanisms would continue to represent the dominant feature for the decades to come. The counter-revolution of 1954 prepared the way for military factions to govern, most of the time in consonance with the main economic elites of the country.

Counter-insurgency and rent-seeking under a military state (1954-1982)

The coup promoted by the authoritarian, oligarchic factions and supported by the US brought about a new constellation at the helm of the state. The military institution was converted into a counter-insurgent army and after overcoming internal opposition, moved towards taking control of the institutional framework. The regime instantly undertook steps towards reversing the reforms in agricultural and labour policies implemented during the democratic interlude. Following the trend of other Central American countries, the economy was re-oriented towards an import-substituting industrialisation, building on the expansion of the Central American Common Market in 1960. Satisfied with the reversal of the reforms, the economic elites seemed happy to leave the military in charge of consolidating an anti-communist regime. Accordingly, the military positioned itself as the agent to implement the required policies, especially after Ydigorias Fuentes put into place a military cabinet in 1962.

Following the counter-revolution, in 1957 the economic elites established an entity to represent the private sector interests at the national level, the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (*Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agricolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras,* CACIF). The CACIF was founded to represent a unified front and to fend off any government policies that could impact negatively on their interests. Over the coming decades it would evolve into a crucial organ to articulate and protect private sector interests against any perceived encroachment by governments. This became especially evident in fiscal policies, as the CACIF represented the prime organ to fend off any attempts by military governments to implement tax reforms that could have impacted negatively on their economic interests (ICEFI, 2007).

The founding of CACIF also signalled a certain formalisation of elite networks without constituting an open-access organisation. Its exclusive character was based around the characteristics that had marked elite relationships over decades and would continue to do so in its representation of some of the most powerful elite sections. As Casaús Arzú (2007) has outlined, traditional family-ties continued to be crucial to control access to these formal as well as informal elite networks. Marriage, geographic proximity, socio-racial aspects, the

participation in political, religious or socio-cultural associations and an intellectual, ideological articulation constituted some of the criteria that allowed traditional elites to shield their exclusive networks (Casaús Arzú, 2007).

Given these criteria military elites struggled to gain access to the circles of traditional elites. However, around the state a collaborative alliance between the military regime and the economic elites was formed. Accordingly, a political arrangement of "elected but appointed" was consolidated, which equipped the military institution, the private sector and their respective political parties with a veto with regards to government appointments and key decisions (Schirmer, 1998, p.18).

Opposition or reformist parties were prevented from participating in politics and a democratic façade was established through the holding of periodic elections. Repression against opposition groups in urban and rural areas became crucial as the military gradually deepened its control over the state and strengthened its presence in rural areas. For the economic elites the security issues that threatened to impact on their strategies of accumulation became a priority, especially after they had become alert to the danger posed by emerging guerrilla forces in the Eastern parts of the country. As Adams indicates, by the time Julio César Méndez Montenegro took over the government in 1966, it was already obvious that the military would be "free of civilian government controls" in its pursuit of the guerrilla forces (Adams, 1973, p.268).

The existence of an armed oppositional force strengthened the military's position at the helm of the state with the army elites also seizing opportunities to pursue economic benefits and create their own access to rents. As Handy (1994) argues, already the first steps aimed at reversing the agricultural reforms implemented during the revolutionary government provided these opportunities, as 79% of the land distributed during the Árbenz government was re-confiscated. Out of a total of 74 national estates 11 were distributed among individuals close to Colonel Castillo Armas. Under the following government of Ydigorias Fuentes a further 28 were redistributed among allies. Accordingly, more than 170.000 manzanas of highly fertile land were handed over to individuals linked to the two army officials (Handy, 1994).

The strongest impact on the indigenous world in the course of these measures was achieved by the reintroduction of the debt peonage system in December

1954 through the governmental decree 170. This re-established the pre-revolutionary estate system, with physical labour established as a mechanism to pay off debts and/or gain access to small plots of land, so that by 1964 over 100.000 people were again living in a situation of debt servitude on 5,217 estates (Handy, 1994).

This suggests that the link between the military and the economic elites was strongest in the field of the agricultural economy. The land-holding elite's dependence on a coercive apparatus to ensure cheap seasonal labour translated into their political and economic support for the counter-insurgent operations. The initial search for enrichment among military officials such as the development of estates in the northern regions of the country as well as the expansion of the military industry did not seem to enter into competition with that of the economic elites. In the meantime, the latter were content with the opportunities to expand their business interests in a favourable international context.

As in other Central American countries, frictions in inter-elite relationships emerged as the industrialists began to demand a more active role in terms of restricting imports and setting up tariff barriers to promote their production. The agrarian elites, on the other hand, continued to advocate the role of the state as limited to its coercive tasks. These contrasting views of the different factions were nevertheless not as clear-cut as in neighbouring countries. In Guatemala a certain level of internal cohesion was maintained and reinforced through the mentioned networks based on family-ties and marriages. Additionally, the diverse range of business interests of different families also contributed to this union. In many cases the industrial elites continued to pursue a variety of interests including the field of agricultural production. In the short term this overlapping of business interests paved the path for a certain degree of cohesion among the different elite factions (Dosal, 2005).

The military, however, established and projected itself through the institutional framework of the state and moved towards a gradual expansion of its competences beyond traditional functions. A spirit of nationalism was invoked as they sought to assert themselves as agents for the promotion of development and production, which was coupled with strategies aimed at eradicating "any type of collectivism", associated with communism (Taracena

Arriola et al., 2004, p.75). The indigenous character of the population in rural Guatemala was left largely uncommented in their plans, with only implicit references to the "system of primitive life", which was to be overcome in these rural areas (Ministry of Economy, 1966 quoted in: Taracena Arriola et al., 2004, p.76).

According to this view modes of autonomous development in the highlands were not to be tolerated given that these areas could become susceptible to the influence of subversive ideas and agents. The promoted mechanisms of development such as state-guided cooperative systems and control on access to credit were intent on reducing the margins of autonomy and draw the rural population into a relationship of economic dependence. In turn, this acted as a guarantee for the reproduction of the elites' strategies of accumulation, especially in the case of the estates.

A racist coding of the population as well as their behavioural and cultural patterns represented a transversal aspect in the various security and economic mechanisms, thus reflecting the military and economic elites' ideological framework. This was enacted through a simplistic mind-set, according to which, sections of the population that failed to comply with these programmes or embrace the military's nationalist spirit, ran the risk of being associated with communism or the insurgency.

As mentioned, the dual role of the military state in providing development and security also presented opportunities especially for higher ranking officers to develop their own strategies of accumulation and expand their own access to rents in the shadow of the state's institutional and territorial expansion. These aspirations increased in line with their attempts at gaining control over the national territory, while at times neglecting the military's historical role of defending the privileges of the economic elites. Building on a favourable international context that gave the army a free hand to expand its campaign against insurgent forces, the military passed from controlling the monopoly over violence towards consolidating the institutional and personal interests of its members as part of the military state.

Among the prime dimensions that illustrate this struggle to gain access to rents were:

1. Land-grabbing, among others in the course of the state-guided colonization programs to promote the use of uncultivated and state land, especially in the area of the Northern Transversal Strip (*Franja Transversal del Norte*, FTN) and the Petén region. In many cases these colonizing communities were later evicted and the property registered in the name of army officers (Adam 1973; Smith, 1990; Solano, 2005).[21]

2. Military operations, rescue missions or the expansion of colonization programs tended to be accompanied by missions to explore the potential reserves of natural resources in form of minerals, oil or locations for hydro-electric projects, which left military officers in possession of strategic and privileged information (Solano, 2007). In addition to engaging in illegal mining activities and timber trading during the conflict, officials sought to strategically appropriate sections of land, where they suspected the existence of non-renewable natural resources such as petrol and minerals (Interview anthropologist, Guatemala City, 03/10/2014)

3. The expansion of the institutional apparatus of the state as the military started to acquire businesses, television stations, sections of the industry and insurance companies for army members. By the 1980s a clique of high-ranking officers had further elaborated these mechanisms and functioned as a central committee to create a financial network that consolidated the army's economic interests within the state (Schirmer, 1998; Keen, 2003; Dosal, 2005).[22] Large scale infrastructural projects

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[21] Different legal frameworks accompanied these policies and paved the way for the accumulation of land. Among them was the derogation of laws for supplementary land titling, the registration of estate excesses situated on state-land as well as the governmental 'Decree 60-70' issued under Arana in 1970 which declared the northern strip of the FTN a zone of national interest, thus nullifying any previous claims to private property or indigenous community lands, only to later distribute huge extensions of land among the military elites and allied sectors of the oligarchy.

[22] This was achieved by taking charge of some forty-three semi-autonomous state institutions with an active capital of US$119 million while virtually the entire budget of military as well as civilian state agencies was used to satisfy the demands for enrichment among the army ranks. The state budget almost tripled from Q355 million in 1974 to Q942 million in 1978. Among the enterprises and agencies created by the military were the National Institute of Electrification (*Instituto Nacional de Electrificación*, INDE), *Guatel* (telecommunication), *Aviateca* (national

such as the Chixoy hydroelectric project, the FTN road project as well as the Pacific Port project offered further possibilities to capture rents and redirect flows of capital towards military officers (Schirmer, 1998)

4. The expansion of territorial control by the military as well as its responsibilities in border control, immigration and customs represented additional opportunities to engage in illicit activities under the cover of counter-insurgent operations. Important networks were established to organise drug-trafficking and contraband activities, directly involving high-ranking military and government officials (Interview Economist, Guatemala City, 02/10/2012).

In contrast to the economic elites, the army officers' access to the various strategies of accumulation and ability to capture rents depended primarily on their role in institutions and control of the state. Accordingly, military elites shifted from protecting the interests of the economic elites towards consolidating their modes of accumulation, while they increasingly sought to articulate their own vision of a state-project under military control (McClintock, 1985). While a constant updating of legal frameworks provided a dimension of legitimacy for these dynamics, interests of the state and those of the military actors at its helm became inseparable. In turn the flow of rents towards military elites represented an incentive for the continuation of counter-insurgency as the *modus operandi* of the state and its war-economy.

The economic elites accepted and backed the hard line of the military in the 1970s, agreeing with the importance of containing the communist threat. Their backing for the formation of death squads that killed more than 700 union leaders and political activists between November 1970 and March 1971 exemplified this consensus around repression and violence (Handy, 1984).

Additionally, the representatives of the private sector continued to advance their own claims to government positions to ensure their influence in crucial decision-

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airline), Housing Bank (*Banco nacional de la vivienda*, BANVI), Bank for Agricultural Development (*Banco para el Desarrollo Agricola*, BANDESA), Office for Agricultural Services (*Dirección General de Servicios para la Agricultura*, DIGESA), National Institute for Agricultural Transformation (*Instituto Nacional para la Transformación Agraria*, INTA), Petén Development Agency (*Agencia para el fomento y desarrollo de Petén*, FYDEP), National Financial Corporation (*Corporación Financiera Nacional*, CORFINA) (Dosal, 2005).

making processes. While agreeing in principle with the counter-insurgent orientation, frictions especially with regards to fiscal policies continued to appear between the army and factions of the economic elites. These increased after the collapse of the Common Central American Market in 1973 as the economic elites firmly opposed any expansion of the state public sector and the rising debt, while at the same time resisting tax increases. The disputes between the military and the economic elites culminated under the Lucas regime. The military regime's decision to directly target specific elite-interests[23] and raise the tax on exports represented a tipping point and the traditional economic elites began to consider options to get rid of the regime (Dosal, 2005).

The Guatemalan state-formation process had once again approached a crossroad as the distribution of rents no longer sufficed to satisfy all elite sections and the military's way of governance started to restrict aspects of the economic elites' strategies of accumulation. This coincided with a renewed peak in repression and violence that left the regime increasingly isolated at the international level after the Carter government had imposed an embargo in 1977. Accordingly, a number of actors, among them economic elites, the US administration, as well as dissenting military officials started to promote a shift in the leadership of the regime that occurred in 1982: The elections in March 1982 at first seemed to indicate continuity as Anibal Guévara, a member of Lucas García's high command was selected. However, he would only head the country for a couple of days before a military coup brought Ríos Montt into the presidential position in March 1982.

Moving towards an elite-guided transition (1982-1996)

Various factors contributed to this restructuring of the military state that culminated in the coup of March 1982: The rampant corruption and the focus on capturing rents among high-ranking military officers combined with economic mismanagement became too much to bear for the economic elites. They

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[23] Among others, the military command targeted one of the most prestigious families of the industrial elites, the Novellas and their monopoly on the cement production by creating a state-owned cement company.

became especially restless as the consequences of inflation and sinking prices on the world market started to affect their own strategies of accumulation. The industrial factions of elites led this demand for a switch in state policies.

The 1982 coup also shed light on the splits within the army, with struggles for power and economic wealth as well as disputes on the strategies of the counter-insurgent campaigns ongoing. The coup against Lucas García represented an attempt by some army factions to side-line the military structures inherited from the Aranismo and contain the rampant corruption and rent-seeking networks among its ranks. As a result, the entire high command and associated intelligence officers were dismantled and sent to commanding positions in rural areas, while a group of young officers took over key positions in the Ministry of Defence and the Army General Staff.[24] The ousting of these high-ranking commanders, many with a strong counter-insurgent intelligence capacity also refocused but did not interrupt the pursuit of strategies of accumulation and rent-seeking networks. These officers went on to establish decentralised networks of organised crime, parallel to the state and often in competition with the networks established by their successors in the state intelligence structures (Interview sociologist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012).

This reordering of crucial positions within the military hierarchy was repeated periodically over the following decades setting out a pattern of revolving doors, as ousted officers returned to key positions under later administrations (Schirmer, 1998; Peacock and Beltrán, 2003). Rather than stable, hierarchical constellations, the balances of power between different networks and military factions tended to evolve constantly. Despite personal and historical animosities between individual military actors, the complex negotiations for positions, influence and rents brought about almost cyclical phases of overlap, cooperation and competition among different sections of the military networks. In addition, as the intensity of counter-insurgent operations diminished, the links of commanding military officers— especially those linked to army intelligence— with the protection and expansion of illicit modes of accumulation increased.

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[24] The newly constituted command under Montt together with an advisory council, the 'juntita', which was occupied by lower ranked officers, provoked concern among senior officers of the Army General Staff interpreting this as a breach of military hierarchy (Jonas 1991; Schirmer, 1998; McCleary, 1999).

In the short term the shift in military leadership in 1982 also represented an attempt to revitalise the counter-insurgent approach. Economic elites as well as sections within the military had been getting frustrated with the inability of the Lucas García regime to design an effective strategy for an expansion of state-control over territories and population in the rural areas. The newly introduced national security doctrine signalled the emergence of an 'institutionalist line' within the military. The influence of US-counter-insurgent experience in Asia and their think-tanks was reflected in this approach as the army set out to win the 'hearts and minds' of the local population in order to grind them into the nation-building project envisioned and represented by the military. In this sense there was no place for cultural diversity or differential processes of signification outside the framework of military control.[25]

These strategies were reflected in the attempts at reconfiguring indigenous life in the rural areas. The ideological re-education of the local population, the reshaping of local realities through model villages, the expansion of Civil Self-defence Patrols *(Patrulleros de Autodefensa Civil,* PAC) throughout the country as well as the establishment of 'poles of development' were the main strategies to guarantee this cultural change. In doing so, the military aimed at the centre of the life-world of the local communities and confronted what they saw as their primitive nature and inclination to avoid military control. A 30/70 formula replaced the earlier 100/100 strategy, as 70% of the population were to be

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[25] The Ixil Operation, a plan elaborated in the course of 1981 reflected the new national security doctrine introduced in 1982 and indicated this approach of dealing with the local indigenous population. It advanced three options of how to implement these new counter-insurgent ideas in culturally complexity of the Ixil area:

1. "To organise all efforts of the unit for civil development in order to comply with the mission to intensify the Ladinisation of the Ixil population in order for it to disappear as a strange cultural subgroup of the national way of being.

2. Continue a policy based on the respect of the Ixil identity, its traditions and its language.

3. Leave the cultural aspect as it is found at current moment in order to focus all governmental effort on improving the conditions of life of the Ixil population." (Cifuentes 1982, p.38)

While the plan recommends the second option, it goes on to underline that "whatever option one adopts it should include an intense, profound and well-studied psychological campaign to re-establish the Ixil mentality in order to make them feel part of the Guatemalan nation." (Cifuentes 1982, p.45) The option put into practice during the following years continued to be closer to the first option.

recovered and integrated into a relationship of dependency from the state and its institutions through programmes such as 'work for food' (Schirmer, 1998; Rosada-Granados, 2011).

These developmental strategies and their impact on local life complemented the coercive counter-insurgent operations and represented another expression of the genocidal character embedded in the campaigns.[26] They implied a concentration of the population in a delimited space to put the state in a position to control its movements, while fundamentally disrupting links to culture, processes of signification, as well as physical reference points of time and space (Brunner et al., 1993; Schirmer, 1998; Taracena Arriola et al., 2004).

At the level of inter-elite relationships, the sections of the traditional economic elites organised in CACIF had welcomed the Montt regime in 1982, seeing their interests as compatible with those of the military government. As a recent report by Rodríguez Pellecer (2013) suggests, this alliance between military and economic elites was framed around four elements: Firstly, four members of established elite families joined the Montt cabinet, a further six representatives were designated by the CACIF to participate in the Council of State, a body responsible for assisting and advising the government. Secondly, in exchange for an agreement with the Montt government not to go ahead with an agrarian reform and the nationalisation of the banking sector, the private sector pledged in a public statement to comply not just with its tax duties but to also contribute additional, specific funds to promote the 'eradication of subversion'. Thirdly, the private sector engaged in lobbying activities in an attempt to reactivate diplomatic channels with Washington and guide Guatemala out of international isolation, following the embargo implemented by the Carter regime in 1977. Additionally, the economic elites put their own civilian airplanes and pilots at the disposal of the army for reconnaissance flights and rescue missions as well as bombardments (Rodríguez Pellecer, 2013).

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[26] According to official data between June and September 1983 106.000 Guatemalans were recruited into the counter-insurgent operations. At specific moments up to a million men were organised in patrols, which with a total population of 8 million constituted the *de facto* militarisation of the country (Taracena Arriola et al., 2004). Apart from the discursive shift towards the 30/70% formula, the brutal military campaigns reached a new peak under the Montt regime. During his time at the helm of the state 64% of the 626 massacres documented by the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) took place.

Despite this intense collaboration, relationships deteriorated as Montt went about implementing state-centred policies exemplified by the promotion of an economic package that included the introduction of VAT. Leaked information on an agrarian reform and plans for a state controlled oil company further increased fears among the economic elites over a nationalisation of the oil production, thus eroding ties between the private sector and the military (McCleary, 1999; Solano, 2005, ICEFI, 2007).[27]

Splits also appeared within the army ranks as some factions supported a stronger economic role for the state as promoted by the Montt government, while other factions, especially those close to the land-holding elites, continued to oppose any expansion of the state's functions. Additionally, the protagonist role of young, lower-ranked officers under Montt had provoked unrest within the hierarchy of the army. These factors combined and led to a military coup with general Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores replacing Ríos Montt on 8th of August 1983. Importantly, he had gained the backing of the high command as well as the US, which was seeking to set the army *en route* towards a democratic opening.

In this context the military high command also concluded that a certain degree of democratisation was inevitable, in large part due to the pressure of the US and the international financial institutions, who were conditioning the urgently required military and economic assistance (Schirmer 1998; McCleary, 1999). Even though reactionary factions among the army ranks persisted, the military project was soon heading for a democratic constitutional framework as outlined in the Plan of National Stability.

Tensions between the military government and the traditional economic elites continued throughout this period especially over issues of taxation. However, when their interests were at stake, the latter managed to resist any increase based on their capacity to overcome internal splits and present a united front in key moments (Dosal, 2005). Among the industrial elites the influence of a new generation of elites was growing. They sprang on the bandwagon of neoliberal

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[27] Dosal also points to frictions even within the economic elites, as the agricultural elites supported the implementation of the VAT, an aspect which the neoliberal industrial elites opposed. At the same time the latter faction sought a devaluation of the Quetzal to increase their exports, an option the landholding elites firmly rejected (Dosal, 2005).

ideas seeking the elimination of protectionist measures and promoting a shift from an economic model based on the import-substitution towards gaining access to the lucrative North American and European markets. The agricultural export-sector soon joined this line by embracing free-trade agreements, while the CACIF consolidated its role as the most influential body in economic decision-making.

Despite initial scepticism, the approval of the 1985 constitution left economic elites at ease as it integrated a series of safeguards, most crucially the absolute pre-eminence of private property, the confidentiality of fiscal information and the introduction of the Constitutional Court as a space that would allow them to legally challenge any attempts at fiscal reforms (Jonas, 1991; Gutiérrez, 2013b; ICEFI, 2014a). Accordingly, traditional economic elites felt increasingly reassured they could endure the introduction of a formal democratic state of law without major sacrifices, while identifying the opportunities it offered to gain access to global markets.

However, the traditional economic elites also recognised the importance of remaining in control of the political system to preserve their influence and privileged societal position. Over the following decades with the institutionalisation of electoral contests, political parties would consolidate as a key mechanism to ensure access to public power. As Castillo (2008) argues, the timing and framework of the political party system in 1984 clearly favoured factions of the economic elites. They represented the only societal sections able to mobilise the necessary resources to finance political parties and campaigns. This meant that parties emerged on the basis of established elite-networks and at the expense of a broader participation of Guatemalan society. Their ability to keep control of the internal hierarchies of party structures (eg. through the definition of candidates) and uphold the dependence of parties on their resources contributed to consolidate their dominant societal position (Castillo, 2008). This represented a platform from which to influence crucial aspects of the institutional framework and locate allied 'operators' in key positions in order to determine decision-making on policies and laws. In doing so, the economic elites also contributed to undermine the formally democratic character of state-society relationships as outlined in the constitution, from the outset.

For the army elites, military intelligence was crucial to ensure it maintained its influence on the transitional process and remained in a position to safeguard its institutional and personal interests. This was exemplified under the first elected government in 1986, as key intelligence positions were filled with the officers who had served under Lucas García such as Ortega Menaldo and Callejas y Callejas. Despite having been implicated in the G2's[28] most violent periods and having evident links with illicit activities they were swiftly reintegrated into the democratising project (Schirmer, 1998). The biggest challenge for the military was that of finding a level of internal cohesion between the multiple structures and networks competing for rents and positions of influence. Throughout the transitional period divides within the intelligence apparatus frequently became evident as different factions struggled for control over transitional governments to gain concessions and engender settings favourable to their own networks, often linked with illicit business interests (Interview sociologist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012).

While the army as an institution gradually lost its central role in the state, the presidential election of Serrano Elias in 1990 was a clear indication of a renewed direct engagement of traditional economic elites in public roles. The nomination of a number of economic elites into the governmental cabinet reflected this shift as they sought to guarantee the implementation of neoliberal thinking and free market policies.

Additionally, the coup by Serrano in 1993 offered the economic elites another possibility to raise their public political profile. As Serrano dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court and suspended the constitution, the economic elites strategically opposed the government as its popularity started to decrease. By opposing the coup, which was most probably induced by high ranking army officers, they not only highlighted their abilities as political operators, they also presented themselves as the agents to guide the democratic transition. After negotiations between the military and economic elites, De Leon Carpio, was selected as a successor. This calmed the fears of economic sanctions or restrictions on access to the international markets, while also enabling the finalisation of the peace negotiations. As the following section will outline, in the course of the Peace Accords and especially through the Socio-economic

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[28] G2 was the official code for the Guatemalan military intelligence section.

Accord various factions of the traditional economic elites were able to further consolidate their hegemonic position and reconfigure their strategies of accumulation.

Neoliberal peace and state co-option (1996-2014)

The transitional paradigm as well as the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 in Guatemala has to be contextualised within the broader political and economic changes taking place in this period. As the Cold War came to an end, neoliberalism represented the ideological paradigm to advance the insertion into a globalised economy. For the Global South this translated into the promotion of specific economic reforms in accord with the guidelines of the International Financial Institutions as economic elites embraced these adjustments of social and economic patterns.[29]

In Guatemala policies were brought into line with the international prescriptions, which were presented as an appropriate response to the corruption and low efficiency that had marked the public administration under military rule. This newly promoted image of the state was meant to contrast with the model the military had sought to implement in its state-building project of the 1980s. Instead of centralising control and development tasks, the downscaling of the state as well as measures to further economic liberalisation were introduced. However, as the reforms of the 1990s reorganised state functions in line with these ideas, they also paved the way for a "second generation of public corruption" through a wave of privatisations[30], concessions[31] and contracts[32] that occurred in a highly non-transparent manner (Gutiérrez, 2012, p.15).

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[29] The 1989 Washington Consensus provided one of the frameworks with its well-known postulates of fiscal discipline; prioritisation and cutting back of public expenditure; widening of the fiscal basis and improvements in tax-collection; privatisation of public enterprises; de-regularisation of the economy and liberalisation of external commerce and finance system, all measures that aimed to modernise the economies and promote their integration into a global market (Yaganova, 2010).

[30] E.g. Telephone service, railway service, postal service, electric energy.

[31] E.g. Concessions for mining, generation of electricity and construction of hydroelectric plants, airports and ports.

[32] E.g. A row of over-valued infrastructural contracts.

The privatisation of state assets constituted an important business opportunity for the private sector, giving it the chance to offer public services free from competition after a series of discretionary deals. These measures were implemented in an inconsistent fashion, for example, by promoting competitiveness without consolidating a regulatory framework to limit the power of monopolies. Similarly, political and financial decentralisation was undertaken without strengthening the administrative and financial capacities of municipalities or the planning of these processes (Palencia Prado, 2002).

The various reforms were combined with the liberalisation of the external commerce and finance system as well as campaigns to attract foreign investments. As mentioned, industrial and commercial elites had recognised the importance of shifting from a protectionist to an export-oriented economy in an attempt to revitalise their strategies of accumulation. Aspiring to deepen their links with the lucrative markets of North America and Europe they advanced the necessary reforms hand in hand with the international financial institutions. This also completed the evolution towards policies in accord with neoliberal views, with the market representing the central axis for allocation of resources, the promotion of efficiency and improvement of general welfare.

The Peace negotiations and Accords of 1996 did not interrupt these changes. They brought the armed confrontation to an end and at first appeared to represent an opportunity to set in motion a series of institutional and democratising reforms. However, their impact remained limited to advances in the expansion of legal guarantees by introducing frameworks aimed at the recognition of the indigenous population, the formal consolidation of political and civil rights as well as certain progress in the demilitarisation of public security by restricting the role of the military.[33]

Especially with regards to socio-economic issues, the Accords ended up representing a ratification of the elite-designed modernisation project and set up a scenario marked by a combination of market fundamentalism and highly vulnerable state institutions. The institutional aspects were strongly compromised by the failure to break down the resistance of economic elites to a fiscal reform and to equip the state with sufficient resources to comply with its

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[33] The following chapter 4 will expand on this analysis of the Peace Accords.

basic functions and services (Palencia Prado, 2002; Torres-Rivas, 2006; Gutiérrez, 2012; ICEFI, 2014a).

In turn, this left a state open to co-option and determination by elite factions, with a range of informal and illegal mechanisms being used to favour particular interests in the short and long term. As an interviewee argued, "the formal expressions of the state such as the political parties, the justice system, the MPs, they all function on the basis of financing, consent and protection. You owe (somebody) favours in order to be in the position you are in and that determines your margin of action. We have seen this permanently in all the governments and especially since the government of Arzú." (Interview Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 02/10/2012)

Accordingly, the transition to a formal democratic framework also consolidated the bi-directional patterns of state co-option in line with Garay and Salcedo-Albaran's (2012) understanding as outlined in chapter 1. Actors within the institutional framework also develop an interest in perpetuating the informal and illegal determination of policies and laws as they reap benefits from it. The state, its institutional functions as well as its decision-making processes' are reconfigured by these evolving alliances between actors within, as well as elites outside the institutional framework.

In this context the control over the political system and the channels of participation were crucial in reaffirming the elite-dominated societal structure (Mack et al., 2006; Castillo, 2008; Ortiz Loaiza, 2008). With regards to the relevant political parties this meant that internal party structures were based on hierarchical patterns that leave elites in charge of key decisions such as the nomination of candidates.

An instrumental approach to political parties developed, reducing them to electoral vehicles that lost their importance straight after electoral processes. This is exemplified by the *transfuguismo*, the constant change of political party affiliation that follows elections as the focus shifts towards negotiations in congress.[34] The volatility of political parties has meant they emerge just as rapidly as they disappear, while elites have resisted any institutionalisation or

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[34] In the past two legislative periods (2007-2011; 2011-2015), over 50% of the Members of Congress changed party in the course of their four-year mandate.

long-term electoral projection. The constant changes in the landscape of political parties contrast with the perpetual control of elite factions over them, as all relevant parties group around a conservative and neoliberal political consensus.

The patrimonial management of political parties also influences the dynamics of the broader political and electoral system. The hierarchies within the political organisations reduce the role of citizens to voting in electoral contests while clientelistic relationships with the electorate proliferate. As Castillo (2008) has outlined, citizenship as well as militancy in parties becomes associated with the short term incentives that can be obtained either in the course of the electoral campaign or once the respective party reaches government. On the other hand, in order to obtain the right to be elected or to take up a public position, one has to gain access to the elite networks or have the financial capacity to fund a separate party (Castillo, 2008; Ortiz Loaiza, 2008).

These patterns can be traced in the conduct of elected representatives, as reflected in a report by *Plaza Pública* in 2014 on the relationship between particular elite factions and Members of Congress. After having identified the degree of relationship between Members of Congress and the CACIF, analysts monitored the voting behaviour during decision-making processes in Congress. The result clearly highlighted how their voting was determined to a much higher degree by the relationship of Members of Congress with the CACIF, than by the relationship with their political parties (Herrarte, 2014).

Over extensive periods in post-war Guatemala factions of traditional economic elites have had a determining influence over the orientation of public policies. As the main parties have depended on economic elites' funding, this put them into a position to determine the individuals that take on key positions in the economic and financial ministries of the central government.[35] This control has proved crucial for elites since these positions are equipped with certain liberties

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[35] As Gutiérrez outlines, it is also an open secret that since salaries of ministers tend to be lower than those of business executives, the salaries of ministers are topped up with bonuses paid by the business chambers or the big corporations. These patterns establish a guarantee for loyalty through the redistribution of rents as well as their social and economic reintegration into the different enterprises for the ministers once their career in public office comes to an end (Gutiérrez, 2013b).

to grant privileges such as the discreet award of business contracts, the concession of exemptions and reductions on tax for economic allies on a wide range of issues such as licences as well as the privatisation of state assets (Gutiérrez, 2013b). In doing so, they have been able to influence decisions that have provided important business advantages and consolidated a monopolistic status in various market sections (e.g. drinks, liqueurs, chicken, sugar, fertilizer, pasta, oil), often at the cost of small or medium-scale producers (Palencia Prado, 2012).

This influence of traditional elite-networks prepared the path for the corporatisation of their business structures with financial capital playing an important role. The boom in the banking and financial sector, can in part be traced back to the constitutional reform in 1993, which prohibited the state-bank from acting as a lender for state-funds. This enabled elite-owned private banks to consolidate their status as sole lenders and equipped them with a key mechanism, the control of interest rates (Interview political scientist, Guatemala City 12/09/2012). By building on business advantages procured by their control over state policies, they have been able to take over and incorporate small or intermediate producers into their business structures and diversify their economic interests.[36]

However, traditional economic elites have not been the only societal factions to determine the operations of the institutional framework and consolidate their strategies of accumulation, as a certain level of social mobility among elites can be detected. Analysts tend to identify three groups at this elite level. This distinction gives an indication of their origin, although the different factions clearly cooperate and establish alliances across these divides: 1. An established faction that maintains power quotas due to their tradition and social prestige, even if their economic power has declined over recent decades. 2. The successful oligopolies that have consolidated as transnational corporations in a variety of market sections. 3. Various emergent factions of elites involved in

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[36] The diversification and consolidation as transnational business corporations is reflected especially among the so-called 'G-8' families, seen as representing the economically and politically most powerful family-business groups in Guatemala: They include the Novella; Herrera Ibargue/Herrera Zavala; Torrebiarte Lanzendorf; Leal Pirabal; Castillo; Campollo/Codina; Botrán and the Bosch Gutiérrez.

legal and illegal activities with rapid growth (Gutiérrez, 2012; Interview journalist, Guatemala City, 03/09/2012; Interview sociologist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012).

While the first two groups have established and consolidated their elite status on the basis of their historical privileges and trajectory, the third group has emerged at different stages since the transition from a counter-insurgent state initiated in 1985. Economic liberalisation, and a deregulated economy as well as thriving corruptive practices, created new opportunities for emerging elites to pursue strategies of accumulation or access sources of rents with potential for rapid growth. Some have done so by operating from within the institutional framework as such. They have been able to take advantage and reproduce the patterns by which traditional economic elites relate to institutions. This has made it possible for emerging actors to develop their own networks or link up and penetrate established elite networks around the institutional arenas of the state at a national and local level as they pursue their interests based on opaque negotiations or trading of favours.

Various authors (Briscoe and Pellecer, 2011; Insight-Crime, 2011; Gutiérrez and Méndez, 2012; Waxenecker, 2015) have highlighted the role of privatisation and decentralisation policies in fomenting this emergence of new elite factions. In many cases this has coincided with the increased transfer of functions and funds to regional and municipal levels.[37] A business area that has acted as a springboard for these economic and political shifts is the decentralisation of construction contracts, which led to the emergence of new regional contractors, who seized the opportunities of winning lucrative contracts through local state institutions. Economic decentralisation combined with the political decentralisation of the electoral system has engendered changes in quotas of political and economic power. A shift towards these regional actors can be perceived as they 'invest' in electoral campaigns of candidates for local municipal councils or regional members of congress in order to 'win' contracts once their allies take up their positions.

As ICEFI argues in their analysis: "The objective of this financing of electoral campaigns coincides with that of the big and traditional contractors: Invest

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[37] The constitution of 1985 established 8% of the governmental budget to be assigned to the municipalities, a percentage that was later increased to 10%.

economic capital in order to gain quotas of economic power. The idea is that in the case of electoral victory of the sponsored individuals, they will return the favour." (ICEFI 2014, p.102) This scenario gains complexity through the ability of many of these regional elite factions[38] to forge alliances with centrally positioned elites and state officials. In many cases this engenders a dialectical relationship between central and regional nodes of power as the capacity to obtain funds from the centre depends on their ability to obtain a social backing at the regional level and guarantee electoral success.[39]

This growing influence of emerging regional elites has also translated into a shift in the private financing of political parties as the proportion provided by traditional elites has diminished over recent years. As a recent report by the International Commission against Impunitiy in Guatemala (*Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala,* CICIG)[40] indicates, while the elite groups linked to CACIF had for decades represented the main funders of the political parties, they are currently thought to be contributing only about 25% of the financial resources of political parties. 50% of this funding is instead provided by groups of state contractors linked primarily to emerging elites, with the rest proceeding from criminal structures, especially those linked to drug-trafficking networks (CICIG, 2015).

Construction is just one business area in which corruptive dynamics have

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[38] Waxenecker identifies 36 consolidated and emerging regional 'power groups' spread over 21 national departments that have emerged on the basis of 'winning' state contracts (Waxenecker, 2015).

[39] A study by Insight Crime (2011) has documented the mechanisms by which deputies for the northern department of Petén, were able to establish themselves as central nodes of regional networks using their position in congress to influence the distribution of state funds for infrastructure. Hence, extensive networks have established themselves around these sources of revenues and in search of lucrative contracts or rents while multiple actors including public officials as well as actors linked to organised crime integrate these networks. Additionally, drug cartels have linked up with these networks seeking opportunities for money-laundering as well as being involved in constant processes of negotiation within these networks to guarantee exemption from legal prosecution and seek guarantees for territorial control (Insight Crime, 2011).

[40] The CICIG was created in 2006 as an independent UN-body to support the Public Prosecutor's Office in high profile cases and investigations targeting illegal groups and clandestine security apparatuses.

thrived and that has paved the path for the emergence of elites. Similar patterns have developed around the Guatemalan Institute for Social Security (*Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social,* IGSS) one of the largest government agencies responsible for awarding lucrative contracts that are awarded via no-bid contracts (Dudley, 2014). Accordingly, a generalised system of corruption, trading of favours and opaque negotiations has consolidated, with networks operating to consolidate specific strategies of accumulation and capture rents. To do so, the undermining and reconfiguring of institutions as well as their functions become key to guarantee the reproduction of this system.

One crucial aspect in this co-option of institutional sections is the control over the judicial system. This inserts a 'padlock' to guarantee that anybody who participates in this system will not be prosecuted (Dudley, 2014, p.8). The main mechanism to ensure this is the determination of the nomination of judges, as different elite factions seek to guarantee the loyalty of justice operators at all levels up to the Supreme and Constitutional Courts. The nomination is controlled through the periodically constituted Postulation Commissions, which were set up in the constitutional framework of 1985 to select the candidates from a long list of applicants, before Congress makes the final selections based on a shortlist. A variety of factions struggle to determine who joins these Commissions, in order to control the court system. Instead of being selected on the basis of their record of service, experience or education, aspiring judges have to count on the backing of individuals within the Commissions, who in turn are linked to or engage in negotiations with different elite factions (Dudley, 2014). The resulting co-opted system of justice has equipped emerging elites with quotas of power, as they have proved especially apt in getting 'their judges' elected and ensure their subsequent loyalty. It also highlights the important role of operators or "political fixers" (Bull, 2014, p.121) that move in grey areas of negotiation between individuals positioned within institutions and elites outside these frameworks.

In the context of these struggles between elites to determine the operations and functions of different institutional aspects, an important dynamic is inserted by the links— primarily of sections of the emerging group of elites— with illicit activities and modes of accumulation. The transitional and post-war context has represented an ideal breeding ground for transnational and national crime

syndicates that have transformed the country into one of their platforms for their economic activities based on the illegal trafficking of drugs or other licit and illicit products (persons, goods). Estimates in 2009 believe that 90% of the cocaine moving towards the US-market passes through Guatemalan territory (UNODC, 2012).

In part based on the dynamics of the mentioned political and economic decentralisation, cells of former counter-insurgent structures have been able to reinvent themselves as part of local power constellations or more expansive rent-seeking networks. An important part of these groups has emerged from circles of army officers that were part of the counter-insurgent intelligence apparatus, initially referred to as Illegal Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatuses (*Cuerpos Ilegales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad,* CIACS).[41] In many cases they lost relevance within the state institutions as the level of intensity of the armed confrontation descended in the course of the transition. In an attempt to guarantee their own access to rents these former intelligence officers have put their skills in coercive, security and espionage operations on offer to a variety of actors, including drug-cartels. CIACS take on a variety of forms as some have consolidated around local power structures or have constituted permanent and legal enterprises, while at the same time engaging in illicit activities. Others form sections specialised in coercive operations as part of larger corporative structures with long term objectives in commercial and political activities (Gutiérrez, 2013a).

The evolving nature of these criminal structures has led the CICIG to develop a new conceptualisation of 'illicit economic-political networks', to reflect their spread across different political and economic arenas. Accordingly, these networks are seen as operating in a 'grey zone' between the 'private' and the 'public', the 'governmental' and the 'entrepreunerial', the 'licit' and the 'illicit' as well as the 'formal' and the 'informal' as they pursue economic and political power, influence as well as impunity for illicit activities and modes of enrichment (CICIG, 2015).

In a similar way, the separation between the above mentioned elite factions is fluid as they inter-relate as well as compete in a variety of institutional and

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[41] The concept of CIACs was used in the establishment of the original mandate for the CICIG in 2006.

economic fields. The competition is becoming especially evident between sections of the emergent and traditional elites. The latter elite faction continues to be superior in terms of its capacity to control governments and state institutions, primarily due to its ability to maintain a level of internal coherence at key moments (Gutiérrez, 2013b). Additionally, apart from the informal networks based on anonymous societies, family organisations and interest groups, in the CACIF, the traditional elites have a formal apparatus with a strong operative capacity to confront governments or other players when key interests are at play.[42]

However, as traditional elites have consolidated a way of structuring relationships around and within the state, this has set up patterns that have been reproduced by recent generations of elite-factions. The reluctance of traditional elites to give up any privileges that in the short term could impact on their economic interests, has prepared the way for emerging elites to pursue their own licit or illicit strategies, often with an even higher potential for accumulation. The links between the different factions is evidenced in the financial sector, where the combination of anonymous societies, banking secrecy as well as the confidentiality of tax information has set up ideal conditions for money laundering (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 18/09/2012).

Additionally, some sections of emerging elites have added a more explicit capacity to organise or exercise coercion to ensure their interests. In doing so, they tend to innovate the repertoire of mechanisms to influence and capture state-functions in this post-conflict context. At the same time the different elite factions are interlinked not only through similar ways of operating but also on the basis of the inseparability of their flows of capital, which more often than not use the institutions of the banking system owned by traditional elites (Interview sociologist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012).

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[42] It is also an open secret that since salaries of ministers tend to be lower than those of business executives the salaries of ministers are topped up with bonuses paid by the business chambers or the big corporations. These patterns establish a guarantee for loyalty through the redistribution of rents as well as their social and economic reintegration into the different enterprises for the ministers once their career in public office comes to an end (Gutiérrez, 2013a).

The operative features of what one interviewee described as "anorexic state institutions" (Interview political scientist, Guatemala City, 14/09/2014), the consolidation of a culture of corruption and a willingness of state officials and politicians to cooperate from within the state institutions in the various strategies of accumulation have set up a complex constellation. The self-organising capacities of these constellations are not to be underestimated as these dynamics generate their own order and regularity, thereby structuring expectations and complying with many of the formal democratic requirements. Legal frameworks are unlikely to contain these dynamics as they only frame formal relationships and norms, whereas the majority of relationships develop on the basis of networks determined by their informality. As different elite factions are locked into competition and cooperation, a consensus around the informal and often illegal determination of economic and political relationships has consolidated and is reflected in social and institutional constellations that are highly resistant to change. The extent to which political parties, seen as the prime vehicles for democratisation have been co-opted into the same patrimonial patterns that mark economic relationships, exemplifies the entrenched and reproductive nature inherent to the Guatemalan social and political order.

Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the genesis of the Guatemalan state across different historic periods. The analysis of the colonial regime outlined how the encounter between the Western and indigenous cultural frameworks led to the imposition and to the structuring of economy and society in compliance with the colonial powers. A racial and cultural hierarchy was established based on a tributary and administrative system that was to guarantee the feudal and aristocratic existence of the colonial landowners and rentiers, the Criollos. Over the following centuries the elites' strategies of accumulation based on the appropriation of territory and exploitation of indigenous labour laid the foundations for an oligarchic structure of the state. The short democratic interlude between 1944 and 1954 constituted the only attempt to break with these established patterns. Nevertheless, the reach of the integrative and reformist intentions met its limitations in the continued predominance of pre-

capitalist patterns; the distance between the urban world of reforms and the rural hinterland; the economic elite's conservative-authoritarian cultural framework as well as shifts in international relations that paved the way for decades of military rule.

Development and counter-insurgency became the maxims that favoured the expansion of control over territory and institutions as the army took up a position at the helm of the state. With the support of the economic elites, the army engaged in a brutal counter-insurgent campaign that increasingly focused on the indigenous communities in the highlands, seeking to eliminate any potential for dissent or difference. At the same time aspirations to pursue their own strategies of accumulation and capture rents grew among army officers while consolidating at the helm of the state. However, international isolation due to the counter-insurgent excesses of the army, the failure to advance in the defeat of the insurgent threat as well as the fact that the distribution of rents no longer sufficed to satisfy the different military and economic elite factions, led to a gradual shift towards a transitional framework in the 1980s.

Despite the military's attempts to hold on to power, the traditional economic elites close to CACIF consolidated their privileges in the 1985 constitution. They identified the strategic possibilities for modernisation and commercial expansion offered by accepting a formal democratic framework. As traditional elites embraced a neoliberal economic paradigm, which enabled them to innovate and expand their strategies of accumulation, this context also saw the emergence of new elites often with links to illicit activities. In the course of the transition to democracy elites consolidated particular ways of establishing relationships around the state as well as the political system that have at least in part, replaced previous authoritarian forms of governance. Instead of making concessions to an institutional framework beyond their control, they have used political operators or established alliances with individuals within the institutional framework and through an array of informal and illegal mechanisms determined, reconfigured and co-opted state functions and operative processes. Emerging elite factions have followed similar patterns as they compete and cooperate to determine policies and laws in order to consolidate specific strategies of accumulation and benefit particular interests. As the different elite factions are intent on maintaining an exclusive societal order and are locked into strategies

for accumulation, this has consolidated an implicit consensus around the informal and in many cases illegal determination of formal spaces and institutional mechanisms.

Building on this genesis of the state and the tracking of elites across time, the following chapter will shift the emphasis towards examining different generations of non-elite agency. Accordingly, it will analyse how the historical and present context of the Guatemalan state has impacted on the forms agency has taken in different moments of this state-formation process.

4. Changing forms of indigenous agency: External challenges and internal differences

In the previous chapter I tracked the genesis of the Guatemalan state from its colonial foundation up to its present character. I indicated how it has evolved from forms of authoritarian governance towards a situation of state co-option, as different elite-networks co-opt and reconfigure state functions and its modes of operating. In this chapter I will look at a number of non-elite expressions of agency, referring to agency emerging especially from those sections of society that have been marginalised from the elite-guided state-building process. Accordingly, in many cases they have not had the possibility to influence political and social processes in ways that impact at a broader societal level. In doing so, I will highlight some of the constraints and challenges this agency has faced in its relationship with the state and the military as well as the elites and how this has marked its evolution. It will also analyse some of the internal organisational features of community based, revolutionary and democratic activism.

I focus on the decades following the military coup of 1954, which as outlined in the previous chapter, interrupted the ongoing attempts to break with the oligarchic structure of the state. I do not assume to be providing anything close to a complete overview of the multiple expressions of agency that have occurred over these decades. Instead, I intend to focus on those articulations that have gained a certain level of public projection and help to explain some of the challenges agency for social change has faced. This is in line with the central research interest of the thesis which is to determine the particular characteristics the current expressions of agency take on in the context of a co-opted state, which will be explored in the following chapters.

The chapter is divided in four sections focusing on different forms of agency. The first section focuses on a community-based agency emerging in the 1960s in the highland areas of the country. The following section will explore the revolutionary struggle of the guerrilla forces. The third analyses the emergence of a Mayan articulation in the shadow of the insurgent project in the 1980s. The last section will look at indigenous attempts to articulate demands from within institutional spaces. These divisions only aim to offer a general structure to the chapter as they obviously do not do the continuous flows of agency justice, as

different expressions of agency overlap, relate and emerge from one another.

In the course of the chapter I will argue that the different generations of agency have been marked by two crucial challenges: The external constraints imposed by the state and elites through coercive, legal and co-optive mechanisms during the different periods of counter-insurgent and elite-controlled rule, and the sacrifice of the complex cultural character of the 'local' by democratic and revolutionary activists for a project aimed at the transformation of a national state. This has come at the cost of consolidating sustainable expressions of agency for change from the community level.

Community activism and autonomous development in the central highlands

As outlined in the previous chapter, the Árbenz government in 1944 represented an attempt at breaking with the authoritarian regimes that had dominated the Guatemalan state. The temporary shift in power initiated a period of reforms based on the introduction of a number of legal frameworks such as the Guatemalan Agrarian Reform Law, decree 900, aimed at reorganising the rural economy and addressing the unequal societal structure. This democratic opening spurred organising processes among the rural as well as urban population. In the rural area large sections of the population were integrated into local agrarian councils, which in turn were affiliated to a national peasant union, the *Liga Campesina* (Handy, 1992). Similarly, in the urban areas the laws allowing the formation of unions and the introduction of the Labour Code paved the way for a quantitative and qualitative increase of union organisations. They also represented one of the main support bases for the governments of this democratic interlude (Yaganova, 2010).

The spread of peasant unions and increasing presence of political parties in local elections did put certain pressure on the community institutions in the indigenous highlands. However, as scholars have been keen to point out (e.g. Handy, 1992; Smith 1992a), they did not dissolve the indigenous communal organisation and their organisational forms were not fully appropriated at this grass-roots level. Instead, in the highland communities' electoral politics were frequently strategically defined in accordance with their own local interests. The

affiliation with peasant leagues and parties was seen as a strategic choice with local goals in mind such as getting rid of a repressive mayor or ensuring the redistribution of local estates, while the community continued to represent an oppositional pole to the state (Handy, 1992; Watanabe, 1992). This indicated the extent to which the communal framework continued to represent the most trusted and important reference frame for collective organising among the indigenous population. It also reflected the distance between the urban world of reforms and the rural areas as well as the limited success of attempts to promote the integration of the indigenous population into a national culture and state-building project guided by an urban, middle class leadership.

The geographical and political distance also meant the military coup of 1954 and the almost immediate reversal of the reforms implemented by the Árbenz and Arevalo governments had a much stronger impact on the urban areas. Here aspects such as the prohibition of union affiliation for public employees, the annulment of the Labour Code as well as restrictions to the right to strike had an immediate effect. Given the union's demands towards the state, they rapidly became targets of the military regime's repressive operations and experienced a closure of organisational spaces.

In rural areas on the other hand, the military state's attempts at establishing control were initially more gradual and discontinuous, thus, also leaving more space for organisational dynamics to continue. Additionally, the drive to seek distance from a gradually expanding state and its agents, who were directly associated with the sustained periods of repression, forced labour and the imposition of cultural frameworks, was stronger among the rural communities. This displacement and dispersal had over centuries been a constantly recurring pattern among the indigenous population as they sought to guarantee collective economic and cultural survival. Starting in the 1950s, this translated into the search for land by the highland communities. In most cases the colonization of land was directed towards inhabited areas, far from central administrative control. Religious organisations such as the US Maryknoll missionaries as well as the Catholic Action (*Acción Católica*, AC)[43] played an important role in the

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[43] The *Acción Católica* was originally founded in 1946 by the church hierarchy as a conservative reaction to policies implemented by the reformist government of Árbenz. While originally aimed at furthering Christian conversion in the communities, the work of many missionaries challenged

revitalisation of the communal framework that merged well with the collective understandings rooted in Mayan worldview and language.

Encouraged by the organisational dynamics instilled by the religious organisations in the areas of Quiché and Huehuetenango, a new leadership emerged among the communities. In many cases this resulted in an adjustment of power relationships within the communal framework. Traditional community elders that were seen as being linked to the interests of political parties or economic interests of the estate-owners and contractors lost their privileged positions (Warren, 1978; Falla, 1978; Le Bot, 1995). This power shift within the communities provided incentives especially for the younger generation among the communities in the highlands to join this search for unsettled land and target the areas in the northern parts of Quiché and Huehuetenango.

While individual decisions were behind the impetus for this displacement, the community continued to represent the main reference point. Thus, members of the community that decided to move towards new lands normally continued to build on the support and to maintain close ties with their communities of origin (IRRMH, 2013). This displacement also offered an opportunity to escape the exploitative conditions community members faced working on the plantations and offered a solution to the limited availability of land suitable for cultivation in the highlands. On the newly colonised territory families from different communities, ethnicities and a ladino minority converged in places such as Santa María Tzejá, Xalbal and Cuarto Pueblo (Le Bot, 1995; Manz, 2005).

The influence of the religious associations was evident in these dynamics of community-based empowerment, in some areas taking on paternalistic features, as charismatic priests dominated the social, political and economic interactions within the communities (Le Bot, 1995; Manz, 2005). However, they also bridged an organisational vacuum by linking the indigenous communities with markets and local institutions (Iniciativa de Memoria Historia, 2007). The use of chemical fertilisers, the availability of loans, the formation of cooperatives and campesino associations as well as the extension of schooling and radio-

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not just traditional Mayan hierarchies but also the systems of social control benefiting ladinos. This in many cases stimulated a revitalisation of the community framework as well as challenges to what were perceived as repressive and exploitative relationships (Warren, 1978; Falla, 1978; Le Bot, 1995).

stations had a strong impact on these developments. Accordingly, the modernising notion was clearly present in these processes, thus, also reflecting the evolving characteristics of indigenous communities.

The model of community-based development expanded and a network of cooperatives was established, which gradually integrated not only the newly colonized northern parts of the country but also the southern parts of the Quiché region (Smith, 1992b; Iniciativa Memoria Historica, 2007). As Manz (2005) mentions, by 1967 there were 145 rural cooperatives in the country involving more than twenty-seven thousand peasants. A later study by US-AID revealed that a total of 510 rural cooperatives in eight large federations with a combined membership of 132,000 people had established themselves by 1976, underlining this rapid expansion (Cabanas, 1992). 57% of the cooperatives were established in indigenous areas of the highlands. This meant they were having a strong impact on the organisational dynamics of the indigenous population, their market strategies and techniques of agricultural production (Davis, 1988). Additionally, these processes engendered an intense revitalisation of communal frameworks, where despite casting off some traditional religious beliefs and adapting to the contextual changes, Mayan language and thinking persisted.

As indicated in chapter 3, by the 1960s the military was firmly in power and was keen to consolidate its role at the helm of the state in close alliance with the landholding elite. The latter were especially focused on reversing the reforms of the democratic interlude and re-implementing mechanisms to guarantee the supply of labour they required. At the same time the decrease in seasonal labour migration from the highland areas to the Costa Sur between 1969 and 1977 had started to become apparent. This implicitly questioned the local power structures under control of local ladino contractors and regional estate owners, who in many cases also possessed plantations in the area of the Southern Coast. In the urban departmental centres, the unease of ladinos and the small fraction of indigenous merchants grew, as the expanding cooperatives increasingly represented competition for them (Manz, 2005; Iniciativa Memoria Historica, 2007).[44]

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[44] The consequences of these shifts and stratification of the regional economies were highlighted by the developments in the Ixil area, where a strong network of cooperatives had

Additionally, the national military and economic elites started to follow up on the economic potential identified in the area of the Northern Transversal Strip, targeting the land where the colonizing and cooperative movement had settled (Solano, 2005). They had recognised the ideal conditions for the production of agricultural crops, the establishment of extensive cattle ranches and potential presence of natural resources in the form of oil and minerals. As a result, a variety of measures were promoted to take control of the areas and bring an end to the community organising in the northern highlands of the country:

A first reaction was the publication of a governmental decree by the Arana government in 1970 that declared the FTN a zone of 'national interest' and put an end to the possibilities of acquiring land titles in the area (IRRMH, 2013).

In addition, with the financial support of US-AID and Israeli technical advice, a separate colonizing project was established, leading to the foundation of communities, which aimed to copy Kibbutzim modelled villages and established communities such as Nueva Jerusalem, Sinai and Belén in the area of the FTN. In contrast to the local and regional model implemented by the cooperative movement, the agricultural output of these newly-founded villages was oriented towards exports to international markets. This state-promoted colonisation project aimed at providing a counter-weight and limiting the space available to the previous community-based colonizing project (Manz, 2005; Iniciativa Memoria Historica, 2007).

In southern parts of the Quiché region a further counterweight to the communal development model was implemented by US-AID through a network of cooperatives. Given their superior financial capacities the community cooperatives were unable to compete and in many cases were pushed towards bankruptcy (Dioceses del Quiché, 1994).[45]

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been established around the parish of Nebaj. Here over 400 members of AC were involved in the promotion of a network of local production that resulted in people and communities being able to avoid the influence exercised by the local ladino structures that had traditionally dominated trade and production in the area (Le Bot, 1995).

[45] In a report the dioceses of El Quiché accused these new cooperatives of seeking to undermine the former cooperative movement, which had been developed by the communities. Additionally, the pressure of economic shifts at a national level such as the inflation in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 1973 is likely to have played a role (Arias, 1992).

In the Ixil region the state responded with the establishment of military control posts in two of the largest local land-estates, La Perla and San Francisco in 1968. While it seems probable that this initial movement of troops occurred in response to requests by local landowners, these demands for military presence were publicly voiced in 1973. At this point the indigenous mayor together with local contractors, representatives of the indigenous bourgeoisie and land-owners of Nebaj directed a letter to President Arana alerting him to the presence of communists in the region and calling for the intervention of the army (Arias, 1992; Le Bot, 1995; González, 2011).[46]

The respite the rural areas had enjoyed from the coercive strategies, which the military and allied paramilitary death squads had already been employing against political dissidents and union organisations in the urban areas, was over. Apart from the urban area of Guatemala City, the military operations had up to that point focused on the eastern departments of Zacapa and Izabal, where the first major guerrilla faction, the Armed Rebel Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes*, FAR) had opened fronts in 1963. However, in the 1970s this coercive attention turned towards the highland region, with repressive strategies being employed even before the presence of guerrilla forces in the area. The initial violence and orientation of the military operations in the highlands was clearly targeted at interrupting the consolidation and expansion of the community-based model. This translated into the massive disappearance and detention of community leaders, cooperative members and organisers of the church organisations and had a devastating impact on the organisational dynamics. By 1980 alone in the Quiché region 400 catechists had been murdered, ultimately leading to the withdrawal of the Catholic Church from El Quiché in 1980 (Cabanas, 1999).

Primarily in the area surrounding the departmental capital, Santa Cruz del Quiché, the first wave of repression also spurred the formation of a new campesino organisation, the Peasants Unity Committee (*Comité Unidad Campesina*, CUC) in 1978. In specific areas of the region, this organisation inserted itself into the dynamics of the ongoing community based organising. Confirming the overlapping characteristics of the different forms of agency, most

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[46] Given that at the time there was no guerrilla presence in the area the 'communist' label was clearly used to refer to the cooperative movement and its leadership.

scholars (Le Bot, 1995; Palencia and Holliday, 1996; Payeras, 1997; Bastos and Camus, 2006) see a strong link between the founders and initial leadership of the CUC and one of the major guerrilla factions, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (*Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres,* EGP) almost from the outset. As will be analysed in the following section, a handful of members of the EGP had started to operate in the region in the mid-70s.

Accordingly, the coercive expansion of the military represented a response to the challenge the autonomous organisational patterns among the communities posed to the strategies of accumulation of the economic and military elites. In the context of an increasingly repressive and violent response by the state, new organisational forms inserted themselves among the indigenous communities, as the EGP sought to consolidate its operational base in the area.

The growing levels of confrontation started to draw two distinct projects closer, a community-based, indigenous project that was emerging from a period of intense revitalisation of their collective framework and autonomous notions, as they sought to escape the centres of exploitation and domination, and an insurgent project with the objective of taking control of the institutional centres of power in order to rebuild society (Le Bot, 1995). As the military regime stepped up the intensity of their counter-insurgent campaigns, they did not differentiate between the guerrilla factions and the indigenous populations of the highlands at a discursive or operational level. This generated a complex and evolving relationship between communities and the insurgent factions.

The revolution and the indigenous people: Encounters and dis-encounters

The initial emergence of the guerrilla factions can be directly linked to the context of the counter-revolution of 1954 that ousted the Árbenz regime. The military coup fundamentally impacted on the field of political organising in Guatemala with labour and urban organisations close to the outlawed Guatemalan Communist Party (*Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo,* PGT) dominating these first attempts to respond to the newly implemented military regime. Over the following decades three main guerrilla factions would emerge: The FAR represented a first guerrilla group founded by dissenting army officers

in 1962. In part as a result of internal splits from this first group, two further factions, the aforementioned EGP and the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms *(Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas*, ORPA) were eventually formed. Since the initial insurgent activities were rapidly isolated, the operational strategies of the guerrilla operations were based primarily on the *foquismo*, which Jonas describes as "a strategy of irregular warfare leading to popular insurrection, with the 'subjective conditions' being created by the exemplary actions of a revolutionary vanguard" (Jonas, 1991, p.67). This approach based on small, mobile units launching attacks on targets followed by an almost immediate withdrawal also indicated the attempts among the leadership to replicate the strategies that had led to the success of the Cuban revolution in 1959. Efforts to establish a territorial project would be limited to the EGP's operations in the highlands.

It is generally acknowledged that none of the guerrilla factions acquired sufficient logistical capacity or manpower to threaten to overthrow military power, despite the fact that military intelligence and state propaganda strategically sought to exaggerate the strength of the guerrillas (Torres-Rivas, 2006). There were obvious military constraints as the guerrilla factions faced one of the best equipped armies in Central America, which also counted on the constant logistic and tactical support by the USA. However, it is the analysis of the internal structure and relationship with the sections of the indigenous population that also reveals conceptual and practical limitations of the revolutionary project of the guerrillas. These are especially reflected in their failure to adequately address the complexity of the population and their organisational forms. This added to the previously mentioned constraints posed by the military state as well as its allies and would go on to influence patterns of later agency.

The first references made to indigenous demands by the urban PGT were largely implicit and based on the assumption that the fight against the rule of the dominant classes would also engender the liberation of the indigenous people from cultural oppression. Intellectuals such as Joaquín Noval, Otto René Castillo and Luis Cardoza y Aragón were keen to underline the priority of maintaining national unity and advocate an alliance among the subaltern classes in this confrontation (Escobar Urrutia, 2013). This tendency continued

as the first major insurgent faction, the FAR, was formed.[47] The direct participation of indigenous people in these initial insurgent attempts was limited and often restricted to specific tasks. Within the PGT scepticism prevailed with regards to indigenous integration into the revolutionary struggle, as they remained unconvinced by what they perceived as a passive political attitude among the indigenous peasants (Guerra Borges, 1964).[48]

However, within one of the emerging guerrilla factions that later integrated the FAR, the *Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra* (FGEI), voices did begin to emphasise the importance to reflect on the ethnic composition of the country. This role of advocating the indigenous revolutionary potential has been largely attributed to Ricardo Ramírez and Aura Marina Arriola. They attempted to consolidate the idea that indigenous members should be able to integrate the guerrilla factions under the same conditions as ladinos in order to lead their own struggle against inequality and oppression (Escobar Urrutia, 2013).

Their views would also be key to a strategic shift of insurgent operations towards the north-western highlands of the country. They identified this area as more apt for the guerrilla's operations due to its rugged geographical conditions, the weak presence of the state as well as the predominance of semi-proletarian, indigenous population (Escobar Urrutia, 2013). Failing to find space for their opinions within the FAR, Aura Marina Arriola and Ricardo Ramírez withdrew and went on to participate in the foundation of the EGP.[49] This opened a new chapter in the relationship between the indigenous population and the insurgent forces as the EGP sought to establish a much closer bond in the highlands.

While the EGP went on to become the numerically largest guerrilla faction to establish itself in indigenous territories, another group emerging from the FAR went on to form ORPA. The latter's ideological line was influenced by Jean-Loup Herbert and Carlos Guzmán Boeckler, who had generated considerable

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[47] The FAR emerged from three smaller insurgent groups, the Revolutionary Movement 13th November, the Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra (FGEI) and the Guerrilla of Concuá.

[48] As Escobar Urrutia points out this corresponds not just to the typical racist position of the ladino petty bourgeoisie but also to the classic Marxist view that attributed a conservative character to the indigenous *campesinos* (Escobar Urrutia, 2013)

[49] They first formed the New Revolutionary Organisation of Combat (*Nueva Organización Revolucionaria de Combate,* NORC) which would go on to be called EGP.

debate through their work that introduced the idea of "internal colonialism" into the relationship between indigenous and ladinos.[50]

When comparing the attention paid by the insurgent organisations to the relation of the indigenous population with the revolutionary projects, ORPA and EGP stand out as the guerrilla factions seeking to develop a conceptual understanding that would allow their integration.[51] The command of ORPA identified racism as a central element of the economic production processes and not just as an effect of the economic superstructure. They saw it as having extended into every aspect of public and private life, thus becoming a natural component in the exercise of power and oppression (ORPA, 1978). In contrast to other guerrilla factions, ORPA did have indigenous members in commanding positions almost from the beginning. However, despite contributing to stimulate the debate on racism among the revolutionary organisations, they fell short in integrating aspects such as internal colonialism into their articulation (Macleod, 2013).

The EGP followed the line of Latin American Marxism in its analysis of the ethnic-national dilemma with a leading role in its analysis attributed to Mario Payeras.[52] While recognising the cultural specificities of the indigenous people it also stopped short of including an analysis on colonialism or highlighting the subordinate position attributed to indigenous culture. However, this faction did take tentative steps towards recognising the multinational constellation of the country. Accordingly, the EGP sought to address two interlinked objectives: On one hand, it highlighted the importance of class struggle, on the other it also issued a call to end the oppression and discrimination against the indigenous

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[50] By 'internal colonialism' Guzmán Böckler and Herbert (2002) refer to a process of historical and continued submission of the indigenous sections of the population not just to the Criollan factions. Instead they see this racist, colonial submission as also being reproduced by the ladino sections of the population.

[51] The PGT would also seek to consolidate a framework around the 'indigenous question' in the 70s to address issues of discrimination and exploitation of the indigenous population. However, they continued to see their integration as the solution to the 'ethnic-national problem'. As such the alliance between proletarian and semi-proletarian ladinos and indigenous was maintained as the overwhelming objective in the confrontation against the dominant classes.

[52] Most reflections on this topic are found in Payeras' work "The indigenous people and the Guatemalan revolution" (Payeras, 1997).

people by the dominant class, aspects that constitute the "ethnic-national contradiction" (EGP, 1982, p.22).

Nevertheless, as Macleod (2013) indicates, the EGP also attempted to reduce this ethnic-national contradiction to cultural expressions that did not interfere with the economy by differentiating between cultural elements they perceived as valid and those that should be abandoned. This was based on the assumption that racism or cultural oppression would automatically disappear with a change in the economic relations of production. It also attributed the role of deciding what aspects and rights of the indigenous people were acceptable or not to the high command of the organisation. As Macleod emphasises, this assumption becomes especially problematic given the practically non-existent representation of indigenous in the high command of the organisation (Macleod, 2013).

Among the different guerrilla factions, the prime motivation to address the indigenous issue was clearly down to the strategic goal of uniting forces in their struggle against the military government. Few attempts were made to develop an understanding of indigenous conceptual frameworks or knowledge. While the proposition of integrating the indigenous population into the revolutionary project represented an acknowledgement of their position as an excluded and repressed societal section, it did not necessarily imply a recognition or appreciation of their difference. Instead, the command of the revolutionary factions was intent on keeping control of the debates and potentially diverging opinions on the conceptualisation of the relationship between the indigenous population and the guerrilla forces. This can in part also be linked to the militaristic character of the insurgent factions, with the nature of state violence making a hierarchical structure a necessary condition to sustain their own operative patterns. However, the militaristic hierarchy was clearly also reproduced at the level of conceptual debates.

The attempt to keep control of internal debates was evident in the reaction to a statement that had been elaborated by the Indigenous Movement Tojil, a group of Kaqchikel and K'iche members of the EGP. They had sought to highlight the weaknesses of an approach focusing exclusively on class struggle and pointed to the importance of integrating anti-colonial perspectives into the revolutionary framework. As part of this stance they also introduced the idea of autonomy for

the Mayan nations. These ideas clearly went beyond the conception of a multinational country as had been proposed by Mario Payeras and were strongly rejected by the command of the insurgent factions. Instead they accused the members of the Movimiento Tojil of causing divisions by overemphasising the ethnic dimension.

These indigenous members ended up being marginalised with authors such as Macleod (2013) and Dary (2013) arguing that this approach of keeping control over conceptual debates contributed to an alienation of indigenous members. They also highlight this aspect as preparing the ground for the split between Mayanist and popular organisations. This divide that will be analysed in the following section would continue to mark patterns of indigenous organising especially in the course of the 1990s.

Apart from the analysis of these debates at a conceptual level, as the guerrilla factions sought to address the indigenous population, there have also been attempts to analyse the relationship on the ground to establish the degree of indigenous participation in the insurgent project. Within these discussions two general lines of literature can be identified: One has interpreted the war and the conflict as external to the culture and interests of the indigenous and sees them as having been caught between two opposed armed sections (e.g. Stoll, 1993; Le Bot, 1995).[53] The second strand of literature has tended to highlight a more active role played by the indigenous population during the war. It suggests an alliance with the guerrilla forces as the indigenous people identified them as a way to address their situation of exploitation and oppression (eg. Smith, 1992c; Grandin, 1997; Hurtado Paz y Paz, 2011; González, 2011; Gutiérrez, 2011)

Covering this debate would clearly breach the objectives of this chapter as geographical differences and diverging modes of operating of the different insurgent factions and indigenous groups add a huge complexity to this relationship. But following up on the agency presented in the previous section, a short overview of the dynamics in this relationship in the Northern Quiché can give a sense of its complexity. This seems to suggest the need for a nuanced

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[53] More recent work also indicates a more nuanced approach by highlighting how groups who criticized the guerrillas' reluctance to deal with issues of culture ended up being accused of being traitors by members of the guerrilla (Bastos and Camus, 2003; Brett, 2007)

approach to grasp the trajectory of organising and resistance ongoing among the indigenous population in the area.

In the case of the Northern Quiché, where the biggest guerrilla faction, the EGP, sought to establish itself, the wave of repression against the indigenous communities and its leaders had already begun before the presence of the guerrilla in the area. The persecution of the cooperative movement obviously contributed to fuelling the antagonistic relationship of the indigenous communities with local and state elites. Accordingly, the increase of repressive strategies against the communities drew them closer to the revolutionary project as Gurriarán states in the case of the Ixil people:

"The Ixil people had a long trajectory of struggle, for a long time and it was as if two rivers united in a common struggle. There are wrong ideas about how the Ixil (people) got involved with the guerrilla. The people think it was the guerrilla that sought the Ixil (people) but the history I know is that the Ixil (people) went to seek the guerrilleros who were in Ixcán, looking for a way of entering the Ixil territory. Two traders from Cotzal (Town in the Ixil region) after a meeting with Acción Católica were sent by their communities to talk with the guerrilla." (Gurriarán quoted in González 2011, p.45)

While this clearly restores the initiative with the indigenous population, this did not result in the revolutionary project absorbing the indigenous communities. Instead, the relationship of the communities and the insurgent forces continued to be relational. As Le Bot (1995) points out, this was in part also due to the diverging organisational logics inherent to their reading of realities: While the guerrilla was aiming to constitute and present themselves as a quasi-state or a counter-state, the indigenous communities were directed at goals embedded in their everyday relationships such as land, community and survival. Additionally, the guerrilla movement's hierarchical notions and its idea of forcing the course of history stood in contrast to the processes of communal decision-making and the long-term thinking integral to the sense-making activities of the indigenous communities.

The revolutionary project and many of its intellectuals failed to take into account the existing levels of communal organisation that marked the area previous to the insertion of the guerrilla forces. Instead, as Payeras critically pointed out, the insurgent factions considered themselves as playing an avant-guardist role

and as bearing the responsibility of "bringing revolutionary conscience" to the indigenous population (Payeras, 1998).

In the region the tolerance and support for the guerrillas' presence among many communities increased with the rising levels of repression. The decision by community members to take up arms and join the guerrilla ranks was in many cases not taken just at an individual level. Instead, in many cases it was backed by the community if its members saw this as concordant with community interests. This in turn tended to strengthen the bond between the insurgents and the communities, whose members had integrated the guerrilla ranks (Interview anthropologist, Guatemala City, 04/10/2014).

However, as the cases of many communities in the Quiché region showed, even at the height of the military operations they remained wary of external imposition and the community represented the most trusted entity from which to establish strategies of resistance. As the EGP attempted to foment its own organisational dynamics in the course of the 80s by expanding the peasant organisation CUC into the areas further north of the regional capital Santa Crúz del Quiché, this was frequently rejected by communities. At the same time "the call for arms for protection from the military operations among the communities was a permanent one, however these arms were never provided" (Interview anthropologist, Guatemala City, 04/10/2014).

Even in areas of intense collaboration, the community structures never ceased to give up a certain degree of organisational and functional autonomy with regards to the hierarchical structure of the insurgent project. This can be attributed to the fact that the EGP never developed the logistical and organisational capacity to incorporate broader sections of the population into their struggle. However, the collective sense of the communities as well as their organisational logics required a space for the reproduction of this communal life that the insurgent project could not offer. In the context of the violence this translated into forms of agency in the shadow of the insurgent project, often far from the public spotlight, while the army showed no intent to differentiate between the communities and the insurgents.

A recent analysis (IRRMH, 2013) sheds light on the patterns of dispersion into the highlands that as mentioned constituted a frequently returning strategy of resistance among the indigenous communities. In the Quiché area this was the

case of thousands of people who for years lived in constant displacement in the mountains to form the Communities of Population in Resistance (*Comunidades de Población en Resistencia*, CPR). Although in many cases this brought them closer to the insurgent factions, the relationship was also constantly marked by tension.[54] Thus, the communities sought to preserve a degree of autonomy and the organisational patterns they trusted most to evade political and military control by the state (Cabanas, 1999; IRRMH, 2013; Interview community activists, Nebaj, 06/11/2013).

However, in areas that became the focal points of counter-insurgent campaigns and state penetration, the chances for the indigenous communities to struggle as communities against the state diminished. Between 1978 and 1985 601 massacres would occur murdering tens of thousands of unarmed civilians and destroying over 400 villages, the majority of them in the western highlands (CEH, 1999). As the military began to expand its territorial control, the sections among the indigenous communities collaborating with the army increased, even though in most cases this represented an attempt to guarantee survival or responded to imposition. This was especially the case after the shift in military strategies following the 1982 coup by Rios Montt indicated in chapter 3. Thus, the brutal waves of repression were complemented by the militarization of the country with the forced introduction of PAC units and the expansion of military controlled 'poles of development'. In this context any dissent was brutally eliminated and the impact on community networks was severe as they were left disrupted and penetrated by the state's attempt to redefine them.

By 1984 the guerrilla forces were practically defeated, although they held on for another 12 years until the formal Peace Agreements were signed in 1996. As the chances for peace between the military and the guerrilla forces increased, the framework of the community seemed to pale into insignificance. New forms of agency appeared more appropriate to articulate demands and indigenous understandings. Additionally, a new indigenous leadership had emerged in part from within the ranks of the insurgent groups and increasingly questioned the subordinate role they were playing in the revolutionary project.

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[54] Payeras (1998) also provides a series of accounts of these tensions between indigenous communities and the guerrillas.

Emerging Mayan discourses in the context of the Peace Accords

As indicated in the previous section an important part of the indigenous organising during the armed conflict took place in the shadow of the insurgent groups often distant from the public spotlight and without being absorbed by the revolutionary project. Other patterns of agency such as the CUC were directly stimulated by the guerrilla factions, especially the EGP. Although originally founded and promoted by non-indigenous intellectuals in the capital, the organisation was able to establish itself in certain areas of the highlands. This was especially the case in the areas around Santa Cruz del Quiché in the southern Quiché region, where it benefited from the previous communitarian organising (Le Bot, 1995; Velasquez Nimatuj, 2008). Following the patterns of AC, it initially aimed to incorporate communities into an organisational framework to counter the state's offensive that was undermining the autonomy of the communities and violently targeting their leadership.

While the CUC's expansion in some areas of the highlands such as the northern parts of the Quiché and Huehuetenango was restricted as its organisational forms clashed with the communal structures[55], it did consolidate as the biggest campesino organisation at a national level. It proved especially influential in the Southern coast amongst the permanent and seasonal workers on the plantations in organising their demands for higher pay and better working conditions. At the same time their members became a target for political persecution and after the occupation of the Spanish embassy in 1980[56] as well as the protagonist role in the strikes in the plantations of the Southern Coast during the first months of the same year, the organisation was forced to go

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[55] Hurtado Paz y Paz (2011) comments on the unsuccessful attempts of the CUC to expand in Huehuetenango by arguing its failure was due to the fact that the initiative for this expansion had not come from the communities. Instead it occurred on orders of the EGP. Interviews in the Ixil area echoed this view.

[56] On the 31st of January 1980 a group of indigenous peasants associated with CUC and students had occupied the Spanish embassy, seeking to echo their denunciation of the ongoing massacres and persecution in the highlands. However, security forces stormed the embassy killing 37 people leaving only two survivors, among them the Spanish ambassador. The other survivor, a peasant from the Quiché area was kidnapped the same day, tortured and killed. The events have remained a crucial symbolic aspect in indigenous consciousness for resistance and would also remain a crucial aspect of later mobilisation.

underground. In this period the links between many members of CUC and the armed struggle of the EGP were strengthened.

Forms of non-violent collective action practically played no role in the implementation of a democratic constitution in 1984. The ferocity with which the counter-insurgent strategies targeted any dissent meant public popular organising was practically non-existent and no mobilisation preceded or accompanied this first step towards a formal transition (Brett, 2006). As outlined in chapter 3, this clearly constituted a top-down driven transition that coincided with a reformulation of military counter-insurgent strategies and the pressure of economic elites, who were keen to access international markets and attract foreign investment.

However, in the midst of the continuing political and military confrontation of the 80s a new indigenous leadership emerged from within or close to the ranks of the insurgent organisations. This was accompanied by a growing attention to indigenous people and their rights at an international level, the Declarations of Barbados (1971, 1977, 1994), the increasingly public demands of indigenous people, as well as the creation of indigenous frameworks within the UN's institutional body (Rangel Romero, 2013).[57]

As analysed in the previous section, the growing attention to indigenous issues around identity, language and spirituality also impacted on internal discussions of the insurgent groups. While the indigenous positions within the EGP were primarily articulated by the Movimiento Tojil, other organisations close to this guerrilla faction were also involved in the publication of the so-called 'Declaration of Iximché'. The presentation of the Declaration in February 1980 at the Mayan ruins of Iximché has been identified by some authors as the foundational moment for a new generation of indigenous agency that would emerge over the following decades (e.g. Vela 2008; Esquit 2010; Macleod

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[57] The attention to indigenous people at a national and international level also continued over the following decades: The approval of the convention 169 of the International Labour Organisationa (ILO), the international year of indigenous people in 1991, the Nobel Peace Prize for Rigoberta Menchú in 1992, the Declaration of the First International Decade of Indigenous People from 1994-2004, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Questions in 2000 as well as the nomination of a Special Rapporteur for Indigenous People constituted an ideal framework to promote similar demands.

2011). Its content was primarily aimed at denouncing human rights violations perpetrated by the army and the massacre in the Spanish embassy, while also issuing a call to the indigenous people to rise up against the oligarchic state. It also integrated novel elements such as explicit steps towards re-vindicating the Mayan cultural heritage and denouncing the historic racism to which the indigenous people were subjected (Declaración de Iximché, 1980).

Accordingly, the fact that the indigenous communities and their territories had become the focal point of state repression translated into calls for a stronger position within the insurgent factions and demands for more attention to be paid to the aspect of ethnic difference. Macleod (2011) argues the Declaration seemed to correspond to a strategy by the indigenous members of CUC and EGP to seek alliances outside these organisations in order to strengthen their demands within the EGP. At the time they were still wary of breaking with the insurgent groups (Macleod, 2011). Nonetheless, a divide would consolidate, as a number of organisations pushed towards gaining independence and limiting the influence of the guerrilla factions that by 1982 had united under an umbrella organisation the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*, URNG,).[58]

This revitalisation of organisational patterns beyond the guerrilla organisations would increase in the course of the 1980s and was also linked to contextual changes. The military and restrictive counter-insurgent policies continued to play a crucial role in governance, the context of the transitional framework, which as mentioned in the previous chapter, was formalised with the constitution of 1985. It did however also leave more space for other types of civil organising. This fomented new kinds of social activism and was crucial for the ability to denounce human rights violations that led to the emergence of organisations such as the Mutual Support Group (*Grupo Apoyo Mutuo, GAM)* in 1984, the National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows (*Coordinadora de Viudas de Guatemala, CONAVIGUA)* in 1988, the National Council of Displaced Persons of Guatemala (*Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala, CONDEG)* in 1988 and the Permanent Commissions of Refugees (*Comisiones Permanentes de Refugiados)* in 1989.

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[58] The URNG represented an attempt to increase coordination among the four most important insurgent factions (EGP, FAR, ORPA and PGT).

The URNG continued to exercise strong influence on a section of emerging popular organisations during the end of the 1980s and reinforced the attention to socio-economic issues among them. The articulations of popular groups such as the union organisations Unit for Union and Popular Action (*Unidad de Accion Sindical y Popular*, UASP) and the Guatemalan Trade Union Confederation *(Union Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala,* UNSITRAGUA) followed in the line of traditional left policies and were concentrated in the capital and the Southern Coast. However, these union organisations soon lost impetus, whereas the popular movements proved more capable to adapt to the changes in the political landscape as the peace process approached and the formal negotiations were taken up in 1990 (Brett, 2006).

In this context the debates on the role of ethnicity also led to a deepening divide within the organisational spectrum: 'Culturalist' groups emerged to challenge the guerrilla movements due to their neglect of ethnic dimensions of oppression and exclusion. They went on to emphasise demands related to linguistic and cultural identity as well as the preservation of Mayan cosmovision. Conversely, a 'popular' wing of organisations emerged with closer ties to the URNG and a continued focus on socio-economic issues (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Bastos, 2010; Dary, 2013; Macleod, 2013).

As Howell and Pearce (2001) indicate, this did not imply unity within the respective organisational wings. Instead divisions and rifts would continue between the different organisations and factions within these camps, as they fought over the representation of the indigenous people. International dynamics such as the congress for the anniversary of 500 years of indigenous resistance and the Nobel Prize to Rigoberta Menchú did not reconcile these cleavages within indigenous organising. Instead the divide between the 'popular' and 'culturalist' indigenous organisations was consolidated as the negotiations for the Peace Accords were formally initiated in the 1990s. The cultural wing formed the *Asamblea Permanente del Pueblo Maya* as a coordinating body, while the *Instancia de Unidad y Consenso Maya* was formed as the representative entity for the groups with closer links to popular organisations. The split of the National Coordination of Indigenous Peoples and Peasants *(Coordinación Nacional Indígena y Campesina*, CONIC) from CUC in 1992 was seen as symbolising a further push towards ethnic aspects, this time within the

peasant movement. CONIC attempted to integrate an ethnic perspective into their struggle for land by placing emphasis on the central role of land in indigenous culture. Additionally, this move represented a definitive break with the command of the EGP, which continued to have a strong influence on CUC (Brett, 2006; Velásquez Nimatuj, 2008).

The organisational patterns entered a new phase in 1994 as the creation of a Civil Society Assembly *(Asamblea de Sociedad Civil*, ASC) was brokered by the UN to act as a consultative body in the peace negotiations. The ASC was to elaborate proposals on the most important aspects of the peace process such as refugees and displacement, human rights, indigenous rights, socio-economic reforms and demilitarisation. Multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank were also embracing the idea of enhancing non-governmental programs as an alternative to the discredited political parties (Howell and Pearce, 2001). This meant the participation of the ASC was primarily down to the pressure exercised by these international actors, who were able to convince economic and military elites to accept some kind of societal involvement.

However, this international influence went beyond facilitating these spaces for participation, given that virtually all organisations taking part in the negotiations were funded by international donors. It consolidated conditions and criteria for the organisations and in many cases led them to embrace de-radicalised discourses validated by the international institutions. The indigenous leadership was increasingly professionalised and institutionalised, aspects that were reflected in their demands that ceased to be directed at seeking societal backing for their demands. Instead, in many cases, their attention shifted towards seeking to develop specific activities or projects with the support of international donors (Biekart, 1999; Bastos, 2010). Accordingly, as Howell and Pearce argued with regards to the increase of organisations, "foreign donors rather than real social processes were behind a great deal of the growth, which was divorced from grass-roots organising in rural communities and rural consciousness." (Howell and Pearce, 2001)

As indigenous leaders were invited to be part of the ASC, the different coordinating bodies of the popular and Mayanist organisations had reunited in 1994 under the Coordination of Organisations of the Mayan People in

Guatemala (*Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala*, COPMAGUA) to put forward their delegates. Accordingly, COPMAGUA united over 100 indigenous organisations with the mandate to develop drafts for the Aggreement on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People (*Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, AIDPI).

One feature of this evolution in the context of the peace negotiations was that the articulations began to place a stronger emphasis on a broader identity of the indigenous people around the term "Maya". This evolved into a concept that built on the understandings of difference based on criteria such as language, rights and spirituality. At the same time, it proved to be an attempt at advancing a broader identity and finding common elements among the 21 different linguistic Mayan groups (Bastos, 2010). COPMAGUA represented a space for a wide range of perspectives and expressions of indigenous struggles to converge, while also adding the discourse of indigenous rights to the articulations of the different organisations. By emphasising these aspects, it also consolidated the separation of the organisational processes around ethnic demands from the class-focused approaches that had dominated social articulations up to that point (Brett, 2006; Ba Tiul, 2009).

However, de facto participation and influence of the indigenous organisations on the writing of the Accords was marginal. Only a limited number of proposals presented to the ASC by COPMAGUA actually reached the negotiating parties (Dary, 2013). Despite this vacuum in indigenous participation the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous People (AIDPI) was initially perceived as surprisingly progressive in its formulations and as paving the way for a more inclusive nation-building process. However, as a closer examination indicated, the strong influence of international conventions such as the convention 169 of the ILO also translated into weaknesses. Based on international conventions, the Accord does outline reforms to ensure constitutional recognition and mechanisms to guarantee the participation of indigenous people, however, its formulation remains vague (Dary, 2013). Additionally, polemic issues such as territorial control and the demand for autonomy based on the administration of indigenous territories through the designation of their own authorities, forms of organisation and participation, were not incorporated. Indigenous organisations failed to gain the support of the URNG and civil society groups for this idea of

regional autonomy for ethno-linguistic communities, as the idea of 'national unity' remained central to the Accord (Costello and Sieder, 1996; Bastos and Camus, 2003; Brett, 2006; Bastos, 2010;).

The impact of civil society organisations on a second crucial part of the Peace Agreement, the "Accord on Socio-economic aspects and the Agrarian Situation", was even more restricted. From the outset the agrarian elites made sure their core interests would not be affected, while the peasant organisations had to concede that they would not be able to press for a substantial agrarian reform. As a result, the Accord stipulated market-based approaches such as the allocation of credits, technical and commercial assistance instead of redistributive measures. The broader influence of neoliberal policies in the context of the post-war period seemed to provide no space to question the liberalisation mechanisms or market-based approaches with regards to the land issue (Brett, 2006).

To ensure the implementation of the Accords a number of parity commissions were set up. Government officials and representatives of the indigenous organisations of COPMAGUA were meant to elaborate proposals aimed at changes in legislation and making them adequate to the requirements of the Indigenous People. However, as Arzú's government took office in 1996, decision-making power and high-ranking government officials were withdrawn from the commissions. This indicated a strategy to weaken these spaces that had been set up to guarantee civil participation in policy formulation (Ba Tiul, 2009). Additionally, the dynamics of the parity commissions had followed logics similar to those of the ASC, as the participants were not delegated by a larger collective or sections of the indigenous people. Instead, they were selected according to individualising modes of representation that continued to undermine their link with the grass-roots communities (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 17/07/2012).

Accordingly, the indigenous organisations had been drawn towards spaces and mechanisms, although the economic elites had already taken control of the institutional framework as such. This is reflected in the sarcastic comment of a government official to a member of a permanent commission, "don't worry, even if you elaborate a proposal it will not be passed in Congress" (quoted in Bastos and Camus, 2003, p.177). This suggests that a large part of the decision-

making on functions, policies and laws was undermined by informal determination and opaque negotiations, as the co-optive mechanisms of elites were already firmly in place to ensure their core interests would not be at stake.

A further set-back for indigenous issues followed in the referendum of 1999 in which a series of reforms that had been negotiated as part of the Peace Accords were rejected. These reforms had been meant to at least formally redefine Guatemala as a multicultural, ethnically plural and multilingual nation, but failed to gain the necessary support, with only 19% of the registered voters participating. Additionally, political parties linked to economic elites and sections of the army had been efficient in using scare tactics, alleging the risk of 'balkanization' and 'reverse racism' if the reforms were passed (Warren, 2002). The dissolution of COPMAGUA, which occurred at the same time, seemed to bring the indigenous organising within a civil society framework to an end. However, another pattern of indigenous articulation would gain impetus as some leaders persevered in their focus on institutional participation.

Institutional representation and electoral participation: Indigenous leaders entering an elite-dominated state

As indicated in chapter 3, following the transitional framework implemented in 1985 political parties had been established as the prime vehicles for participation and formulation of political agendas. In 1995 for the first time a left-leaning party, the New Guatemala Democratic Front (*Frente Democratico Nueva Guatemala*, FDNG) took part in the electoral contest, supported by sections of the left as well as indigenous organisations close to Rigoberta Menchú.[59] As they achieved 8% of the votes and 6 seats in congress, some saw this as an important advance for indigenous and popular participation in electoral contests. Additionally, a number of civic committees participated in

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[59] Rigoberta Menchú, is the daughter of Vicente Menchú, a member of CUC, who was killed in the massacre of the Spanish embassy in 1980. She rose to fame after her story was published in 1985 by Venezuelan Anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos, "My Name is Rigoberta Menchú and this is how my conscience was born". Since, she has campaigned for human and indigenous rights issues and has been involved in court cases aiming to bring members of the Guatemalan political and military establishment to justice. In 1992 she received the Nobel Peace Prize.

local elections and resulted in Rigoberto Quemé Chay remarkably winning the mayoral position in Quetzaltengo, Guatemala's second largest city (Brett, 2006).

However, the first electoral processes reflected a low indigenous involvement in party activism in the midst of a general apathy towards electoral contests. As the electoral processes failed to spark a political appropriation among large sections of the indigenous population this situation also played into the hands of elites as they took charge of the institutional framework of the state. Especially the referendum of 1999, which was designed to measure support for a range of reforms, among them those dealing with indigenous issues, gave an early indication of the elite's capacity to strategically mobilise the necessary sections of the electorate. In this case the abstention rate of 81% indicated how the distance between the institutions and especially the rural communities, worked to their benefit in electoral competitions.

It also highlighted how the participative impetus of the ASC in the context of the Peace Accords had not gone beyond the directly participating organisations and leadership. Instead, they were drawn into elitist patterns of exclusive negotiations and decision-making, while at the same time undoing the link with broader society. The rejection of the referendum and the proposed reforms that were meant to initiate a multicultural reformulation of the country were followed by the break-up of COPMAGUA, bringing this attempt at coordinating and articulating a broader Mayan organisational spectrum to an end.

Despite the fact that the process of the ASC and the referendum had illustrated the detachment of the indigenous leaders especially from the rural communities, this did not bring about a definitive shift in their strategies. Instead, a new chapter of interaction with formal institutional spaces began as individual leaders accepted offers to occupy state positions. These institutional positions were taken up despite the fact that the respective governments were controlled and dominated by factions of the economic elites and held a clearly antagonistic view to indigenous issues. Rigoberta Menchú, Otilia Lux and Demetrio Cojti were only some of the indigenous leaders that went on to take up positions under the different governments in the aftermath of the Peace Accords.

A variety of authors (Bastos and Camus, 2003; Quemé Chay, 2008; Ba Tiul, 2009; Brett, 2010) have questioned this involvement signalling it as representing an individualised entrance into politics that lacked strategic vision.

They have argued that while the indigenous leaders' role in terms of political impact and presence has been marginal they played an important symbolic role for the various governments. Accordingly, they contributed to legitimate the respective government and their supposed commitment to the promotion of indigenous issues, although they were actually assigned to marginal ministries that were left without resources or subordinate positions within the state dependencies.

On the other hand, the discourses pronounced by the indigenous functionaries from the so-called 'indigenous windows' (Cojti, 2005) contained maximalist notions and were framed around the concept of the Maya as a civilizational, original identity. This meant the Mayan identity was linked primarily to cultural aspects such as the promotion of bilingual education and Mayan languages as well as the protection of sacred Mayan sites. Underlying these attempts to access institutional power and penetrate traditional elite circles, was a rather naïve assumption that "the actions of a small group of professionals would have the capacity to solve the problem of exclusion of the entire indigenous people" (Bastos, 2010, p.26).

However, this indigenous institutional participation coincided with economic policies of the respective post-war governments that were in effect furthering exclusion and inequality especially among the rural indigenous communities. This meant the indigenous presence in the government's ranks enabled them to participate in a discursive definition of Mayan identity and a multicultural approach from power. In doing so, they rubber-stamped policies Hale (2002) has signalled as representing a form of 'neoliberal multiculturalism' expressed in a combination of democratic opening and persistent authoritarian practices. He points to the sophisticated modes of operation this form of multiculturalism takes on as it articulates from an institutional level while reaching out to the indigenous communities. In Hale's view the democratic opening goes just far enough to discourage frontal opposition without allowing substantive change, thus differentiating between cultural recognition and empowerment. This also seems to represent an attempt to erode any political connotation to ethnic and cultural difference. Instead a politically un-problematic, folkloric meaning is

celebrated that does not pose a challenge to the political and economic interests promoted by the elites.[60]

On the other hand an institutionalisation of public mechanisms with regards to the rights of indigenous people in order to attend issues related to racism, discrimination and access to justice for indigenous people has been acknowledged: The Unit for the Defence of the Rights of the Indigenous People part of the Human Rights Ombudsman, the Defence of the Rights of Indigenous women (*Defensora de la Mujer Indígena*, DEMI), the Commission against Discrimination and Racism (*Comisión contra la Discriminacion y el Racismo*, CODISRA), the Advisory Council for of Indigenous People for the Vice-presidency are only some of a total of 30 dependencies. However, the inefficiency of these mechanisms and institutions has been persistently pointed out. Accordingly, the vague and complex formulation of their mandate, strong limitations on funds, unqualified staff as well as the thriving corruption and general shortcomings of the Guatemalan state-bureaucracy have contributed to impede any significant results (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012; Dary, 2013).

Additionally, the various institutional mechanisms to promote indigenous issues seem to have fomented a tendency to focus agency on reformulating and reforming legal aspects. The field of legislation has been an aspect in which considerable progress has been achieved. Thus, decrees and accords have been approved for a range of issues such as the recognition of indigenous identity, indigenous organisation and costumes, indigenous mayors as well as the right for consultation of indigenous communities and authorities. However, this strong focus on creating a legal basis has also fomented a type of "legal co-option" (Ba Tiul, 2009), which means that all demands and struggles are oriented at becoming legally binding through ministerial accords or governmental law. At the same time their implementation remains highly deficient, reflecting the power constellation surrounding the state institutions and their functions. Accordingly, as an interviewee stated, "even if the state wanted to concede these rights, elites make sure it does not really have the

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[60] Bastos (2010) provides an example for the state's appropriation of the definition of 'Maya' by pointing to the fact that Mayan spirituality is even used to legitimate mining projects in indigenous territories.

capacity to guarantee their implementation." (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 02/10/2012)

Apart from the outlined integration into institutional spaces another dynamic was injected into indigenous organising by the electoral participation of Rigoberta Menchú in 2007 and 2011. It soon became clear that there would be little support among rural popular organisations and communities, where this decision was perceived as having been taken by urban indigenous leaders. Instead of consolidating a broader movement, this renewed attempt at articulating a political project contributed to deepen divides among the different indigenous organisations and recently emerging coordinating bodies such as *Waquib Kej*. Although it drew some support among sections of indigenous peasant organisations such as CONIC, Menchú's initial nomination had again tended to follow the pattern of top-down decision-making and failed to relate or build on the participation of the rural communities she was seeking to represent. Additionally, in 2007 Rigoberta Menchú decided not to launch her campaign around an indigenous platform and instead formed an alliance with *Encuentro por Guatemala*, a party that had no links to indigenous organising.

The disenchantment was reflected in the electoral results of 2007 and repeated in 2011 as Rigoberta Menchú undertook another attempt to run for presidency, this time as a representative of a leftist coalition, *Winaq* which included the former URNG. In both electoral participations the errors of the 1999 referendum were repeated, as the support at an international level was mistaken for that of popular backing (Bastos, 2010; 2013). As an interviewee stated: "One asks, how it is possible that in the village of Rigoberta (Menchú), Rigoberta achieved 17 votes? That means not even the people affiliated to the party voted for her. She was not capable of deciphering the codes that make active the participation of the people that are frequently political and not ethnic. They are pragmatic and are so from the local, therefore to understand them, you have to be with the people. These are the dimensions of the distance between the current leadership or 'Mayan elites', with regards to the rest of the population." (Interview UN-official, Guatemala City, 24/09/2012)

The discourses failed to link with the experiences of every-day life in the rural hinterlands. In these areas the indigenous communities were already mobilising

around the opposition to exploitation of natural resources, an aspect Menchú's campaign hardly addressed.

However, building on the elements presented in the previous chapter, the electoral dynamics had been inserted into a context in which elites had taken control of the institutions. Political parties had a clear instrumental purpose to access institutions and favour determined strategies of accumulation and political interests. The establishment of clientelistic relationships with potential voters rather than political processes became crucial for electoral success, while the dependence of political parties on the financial resources of elite factions was upheld. Accordingly, the electoral arena was converted into a framework for competition between different elite factions seeking access to state institutions in order to determine institutional functions, policies and laws in line with their strategies of accumulation.

This generation of agency based on institutional and electoral participation faced various limitations: Firstly, it was confronted with a post-war state firmly under control of traditional and emerging elites, intent on reconfiguring and co-opting the institutional functions and operations. In this context spaces for top-down changes were clearly restricted by the elites' dominance, which was primarily based on the informal and illegal determination of formal spaces and decision-making processes.

Secondly, in the course of the various attempts at institutional participation the detachment of the indigenous leadership from the grass-roots communities had increased. This was not just reflected in the distance between the urban institutional spaces and the rural communities but also in their discourses that failed to speak to the communities and the problems they were facing. Accordingly, this approach was unlikely to overcome the historically consolidated and widespread suspicion with regards to the state and elites, especially among the highland indigenous communities. As the following chapter will outline, this distrust was further fuelled as the reconfiguration of rural territories in line with policies oriented at the exploitation of natural resources, gained pace.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present a general overview of different forms of agency over time in Guatemala by focusing on the period following the 1954 counter-revolution. As stated initially, this analysis does not pretend to represent a complete overview of these social challenges. Instead, it has focused on a number of expressions that have achieved a certain level of public projection and in order to highlight some of the challenges they have faced in their inter-relationship with the state and elites.

In the course of the chapter I have paid special attention to two aspects that mark the different generations of agency. Firstly, the constraints imposed by the state and the various coercive, legal and co-optive mechanisms used during the different periods of counter-insurgent and elite-controlled rule. Secondly, the ability of the different forms of agency to address the culturally complex composition of the population and grant space for local community-based organising.

In the case of the community-based organising of the 1950s as well as the insurgent factions, the coercive and repressive mechanisms of authoritarian military rule represented the obvious external constraint. While it practically terminated the public community-based organising by eliminating its leadership or forcing it to go underground, it drew the communities closer to the insurgent guerrilla factions. This did not resolve the tensions between them that were based on their contrasting organisational logics with the communities and a tendency to escape the state and its integrative mechanisms, and the insurgent factions that followed an orthodox logic of targeting power at a central state level. Thus, the communities required a space for the organisation and reproduction of communal life that the hierarchical and militaristic insurgent project based on an economistic lens could not offer.

The expressions of indigenous agency emerging from sections within or close to the insurgent forces shifted their focus more explicitly towards the aspects of indigenous culture and the struggle against discrimination. This shift was in part also due to the fact that the indigenous population took the brunt of the military repression that led them to demand more attention to issues of ethnicity as well as the struggle against discrimination. As the communities' articulation was drawn into the context of the Peace Accords, the international community

played an important role in facilitating and ensuring their participation in the negotiations. However, this participation also had an impact on the trajectory this agency would follow as it cemented the geographical and discursive distance between the indigenous leadership and the grass-roots communities as well as drawing this leadership closer to institutional spaces, where they were confronted with elites and their co-optive mechanisms. This also explains the minimal political impact of indigenous leaders that were integrated into state positions under different governments after the Peace Accords. As these forms of indigenous representation lost their societal backing in their constituencies, it enabled the state under control by different elite factions to simulate a commitment to multi-cultural rights and discourses. The electoral participation of Rigoberta Menchú in 2007 and 2011 also confirms that this generation of indigenous agency had clearly underestimated the control of elites over the state and electoral contests on one hand, and their own detachment from the grass-roots communities on the other.

The rural communities were already facing new challenges and problems as they were confronted with policies promoting the exploitation of natural resources. As they risked losing control over their territories and resources a new form of agency emerged in defence of territory. The context of the policies targeting natural resources as well as the emergence of communities to defend their territories will be introduced in the following chapter.

5. Antagonisms around the relationship to space: Exploitation of natural resources and the defence of territory

In the previous chapter I outlined how different forms of agency have evolved over time in Guatemala. In doing so, I focused on their relationship with the state and elites to arrive at an understanding of how the coercive, authoritarian and co-optive mechanisms have impacted on and constrained these forms of agency. I also examined their internal organisational patterns to show how especially the forms of revolutionary and recent indigenous democratic activism failed to speak to and grant space to the cultural complexity of the rural grass-root communities.

In this chapter I will explore a more recent form of agency emerging around the defence of territory, as rural communities challenge the implementation of projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources. I will offer a general overview of the conflicts emerging around natural resources in Guatemala and insights into processes operating at different scales to indicate how actors and policies interrelate to respond to demands of global, regional and national markets.

I will start by outlining the global dynamics linked to the extractive economy and provide a review of some of the literature analysing the cultural, political and economic implications surrounding the natural resource issue. I then focus on the specific implementation of the policies oriented towards the exploitation of natural resources in Guatemala. In doing so, I will outline some of the central characteristics of the elites' economic modernisation project. This will also lead me towards the agency in defence of territory and natural resources that has emerged as the most sustained form of agency in different parts of post-war Guatemala to contest various dimensions of this project. Accordingly, I will analyse some of the general features of these nodes of agency that will be examined with more detail in the case-study chapters later on.

In the course of the chapter I will highlight how national elites have reproduced and integrated the economic potential of natural resources into their strategies of accumulation. The state is used to promote an elite-designed modernisation project for the rural areas which fundamentally reorganises territories and spaces in line with particular interests. However, these policies have clashed with locally embedded meanings and an antagonistic agency from rural

communities that has emerged into the public. As argued in chapter 2, antagonistic agency emerges around incompatibilities or a dispute over the production of meanings and can engender processes of collective convergence that challenge the imposition of meanings through dominant societal actors. In the current context of a co-opted state the organisational processes around the defence of territory led by rural communities take on forms that are different from expressions of revolutionary and democratic activism outlined in the previous chapters. They surface from the margins of society and outside the political centres and engage only in strategic interactions with the institutional framework, while they remain locally centred, as communities attempt to remain in control of their immediate social realities.

Neoliberalism and the commodification of natural resources

A consensus has emerged that neoliberalism can be seen as representing the most influential conceptual framework for the reordering of economic and political relationships over recent decades. It has done so by emphasising the self-regulating power of markets as well as by linking the freedom of the individual to markets. As Connolly argues, neoliberalism should not be equated with *laissez-faire* capitalism, as the former requires "careful protection and nurturance by states and other organisations" (Connolly, 2013, p.20). While its initial promotion is largely attributed to the Thatcher and Reagan governments, state after state has embraced a version of neoliberal theory or adjusted at least some of their policies to its guidelines. Accordingly, it has established itself as the dominant school of thought at the level of discourse as well as political and economic practices. This has occurred to an extent that it is incorporated into "the common-sense way we interpret, live in and understand the world."(Harvey, 2007, p.22) As its social and economic dimensions have spread across the globe penetrating even the most remote corners, "no place can claim total immunity" (Harvey, 2007, p.22).

Hardt and Negri (2000) have analysed the power dynamics central to the establishment of this set of global relationships by pointing to the role supranational institutions and transnational enterprises play in consolidating this new world order. They label this constellation of de-territorialised and de-

centralised sovereignty a modern form of imperialism, 'Empire', as these supra-national structures are seen as playing a crucial role in its reproduction:

"The U.N. organizations, along with the great multi- and transnational finance and trade agencies (the IMF, the World Bank, the GATT, and so forth), all become relevant in the perspective of the supranational juridical constitution only when they are considered within the dynamic of the bio-political production of world order. The function they had in the old international order, we should emphasize, is not what now gives legitimacy to these organizations. What legitimises them now is rather their newly possible function in the symbology of the imperial order." (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p.31)

Accordingly, the importance of these institutions lies in their role to design and influence rules of engagement in accord with neoliberal frameworks that are reflected in a horizon of values, mechanisms of accumulation, and means of circulation and language. Hardt and Negri (2000) point to the fact that this intervention occurs not only at the level of production of commodities, but also in forming subjectivities to determine their needs, social relations, bodies and minds.

A number of authors, (eg. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2007; Escobar, 2008) have been keen to emphasise the cultural dimension embedded in this reconfiguration, as capital and capitalist valorization becomes the prime operational mechanism of modernity and spatial reorganisation. State, capital and a discourse of development are seen as introducing hierarchies and transforming the nature of workforce, the function of land and gender or ethnic identities (Escobar, 2008). Additionally, the expansion of neoliberal capitalism through globalisation is presented as an inevitable and natural process, which will ultimately translate into the production of a global marketplace. In line with this objective, the limitations and restrictions national states have historically exercised over societies are to be overcome by transnational corporations and their representatives. They are seen as the ideal agents to promote the expansion of these dynamics across the globe (Urry, 2003).

In this context, territories and natural resources in the Global South have come under increasing scrutiny as economic agents in the Global North seek to revitalise their cycles of capital accumulation (Gudynas, 2009; Svampa 2012;

Brand, 2012). As mentioned in chapter 2, Harvey (2003) outlined a geopolitical understanding of this link between accumulation and territory as countries in the North have approached a crisis of capital over-accumulation. Given an excess in available labour or capital, ways are sought to overcome this crisis through temporal[61] or spatial displacement. The latter, spatial dimension is especially relevant for the purpose of this research as it refers to the incursion into new territories, encouraged by foreign investments in an attempt to avoid stagnation on capital gains. This scenario is completed by the convergence of external investments with local interests and the formation of investment alliances in order to ignite a phase of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003; 2007).

As Harvey argues, the wave of privatisation of state assets and services in the 1990s can be identified as constituting a first generation of 'accumulation by dispossession'. The acquisition and concentration of territory as well as natural and strategic resources constitute the most recent expression of this trend. Transnational corporations in a multilevel alliance with national governments and elites are seen as the main drivers behind these policies (Seone, 2006; Svampa, 2013).

As a result countries in the Global South are locked into reproductive patterns centred around the market, while the criteria for satisfying material demands is progressively displaced towards the financial sphere and 'markets of the future' (Ceceña, 2013).[62] This leads to the predominance of a logic of "fictitious, potential and excessive amounts" that results in the satisfaction of global market demands exceeding real values (Ceceña, 2013, p.110). The need for a constant expansion and revitalisation of strategies of accumulation takes over, with the

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[61] The temporal displacement refers to investments that do not immediately enter the realm of production or consumption. Instead, these investments target long term capital projects (eg. Infrastructure, power-generating capacities) or social expenditures (eg. Education, research) (Harvey, 2003).

[62] Ceceña (2013) points to a mechanism that encourages this displacement towards the financial sphere in countries of the Global South: To continue with the norms and modes of production of the dominant technological and productive paradigm, it is absolutely necessary to obtain foreign currency, which in turn allows these countries to obtain technology. This keeps them locked into the same patterns of production, as a failure to do so would result in a loss of competitiveness in the global markets.

race for the exploitation and commodification of nature representing a central dimension of this process (Ceceña, 2013).

The analysis of natural resources in the context of the Global South is not new to social science with an extensive body of literature examining the implications and relationship of resource abundance or resource scarcity in relation with conflict and civil war. Scholars emphasising the link between 'scarce' resources and 'war' put forward the hypothesis that people or nations will fight each other to secure access to the resources necessary for their survival. Accordingly, the more 'scarce' the resource, the higher the probability of violence (Bennett, 1991; Renner, 1996; Suliman, 1998; Homer-Dixon, 1999). On the other hand, within this body of literature the idea of a 'resource curse' has been widely discussed. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) put forward the hypothesis that the availability and the export of primary commodities increase the likelihood of civil war. This is substantiated in the so-called 'greed thesis' that builds on rent-seeking theory in an attempt to explain causal mechanisms behind conflicts in many areas of the Global South. Rents deriving from mineral resources are seen as acting as a motivator to capture the state and provide the means to finance rebellions (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Collier, 2000).

This literature has been subjected to considerable criticism, referring especially to its inability to adequately historically and socially contextualise conflicts in settings with ethnic, regional or religious cleavages (Di John, 2008). On the other hand, the expansion of an economistic rational-choice model based on 'greed' and individuals focused on promoting their self-interest has been criticised as too simplistic to grasp the multiple motivations of actors in resource conflicts (Pearce, 2005). Apart from these conceptual limitations, the problem of this body of literature seems to be the inability to offer an adequate framing for the typology of current conflicts around natural resources emerging in Latin America.

In the region an increasing amount of conflicts can be observed in which the opposing parties are not struggling over the distribution of economic resources. Instead, as the case studies in the following chapter will also demonstrate, conflicts are marked by a constellation in which one party opposes their appropriation and exploitation. In line with the argument presented in chapter 2, to frame these conflicts adequately, attention has to be paid to the cultural

dimension of production of meanings. This dimension becomes crucial to understand the antagonisms that emerge as a result of the reconfiguration of local life-worlds through practices or policies such as projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources.

A significant body of literature has emphasised the antagonistic character of collective action around the issue of natural resources (eg. Martínez Alier, 2002; Escobar, 2008; Zibechi, 2011; Svampa, 2013). Within this body of literature Escobar has been especially prominent in framing the conflicts not just in terms of a conflict over the distribution of resources or on the basis of a material threat. Instead, he highlights the existence of a "cultural distribution conflict" with expressions of collective action emerging to contest a colonization of local life-worlds (Escobar, 2008, p.14). Political ecology has been influential in this line of research by emphasising the dimension of 'ecological distribution'. It has indicated how the control over and access to natural resources represents a source of subsistence and is linked with costs of environmental destruction. People and collectives are seen as mobilising against the destructive effects resulting from globalisation, as subjectivities representing particular cultures, economies and ecologies (Martinez Alier, 2002; Escobar, 2008; Svampa, 2011). [63]

In Latin America the surge in conflicts around natural resources can in part be linked to the economic potential that has been identified in the region: In its territory 25% of the forests, 40% of global biodiversity, a third of the global reserves of copper, bauxite and silver, 27% of coal, 24% of oil, 8% of gas and 5% of uranium are estimated to be found. This panorama is completed by the

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[63] At this point it is also important to indicate another field of literature that has emerged around the issue of natural resources through the work of scholars such as Arellano Yanguas (2011) and Bebbington (2012). Based on particular case studies they have made an important contribution in signalling differences among the conflicts surrounding mining projects. Accordingly, Arellano Yanguas has highlighted cases in which the local population use contentious tactics not in outright opposition to the project but in order to strengthen their position to negotiate a larger share of profit from the mining operations. This seems to represent an important dimension particularly in order to analyse the evolving nature of conflicts, especially after initial opposition to projects ends up divided or quashed. However, while there are conflicts in Guatemala that have taken on similar traits, the oppositional, antagonistic dynamic still seems to be the predominant constellation and features in the case studies analysed in this research.

water resources as the continent's rivers are believed to represent an estimated 35% of global hydro-energetic potential (Seone, 2006).

As global and national strategies of accumulation are being revitalised these resources are being targeted for exploitation and in the process converted into commodities. In turn, countries are integrated into the global economy in a role as suppliers of primary goods such as minerals or agricultural products. Echoing Mignolo's view, an 'idea of Latin America' is promoted that coincides with a view of the region as an enormous surface of land, rich in natural resources and cheap labour. Understandings that equate natural resources with capital and measure the range of potential profits predominate despite remaining a 'hidden transcript' in the discourses of the global institutions such as IMF, the World Bank and the Washington Consensus. Instead, in public Latin America is presented "as a region in waiting of its development" (Mignolo, 2007, p.38).

In the case of Latin America this 'idea' linked to the exploitation and commercialisation of natural resources has been primarily operated through two processes: The concession of resources to big transnational enterprises that take charge of the extraction and the introduction of the resources into global markets, and the exploitation operated by state or national enterprises in a process that in some cases alter the degree of participation in the distribution of profits. Despite these differences, as scholars such as Ceceña (2008), Gudynas (2009) and Svampa (2013) have indicated, this latter modality does not alter the predominant economic matrix of focusing on exploitation without taking into account its environmental and social impact. Instead, it continues Latin America's particular integration into a world economy and paves the way for a redefinition of territories and people in accord with the global flows of capital. In the process, the international division of labour is upheld as the rural territories of the Global South are converted into a space dedicated to the extraction of hydrocarbons, minerals, biodiversity and food (Galafassi, 2008; Gudynas, 2009; Svampa, 2013).

Echoing this argument Svampa (2013) has argued that in Latin America a 'Commodity Consensus' has followed the Washington Consensus. This has translated into a passive acceptance by governments of their role in the international division of labour as a provider of raw materials, among them

hydrocarbons, metals, minerals and food. She sees this consensus as being sustained by conservative or progressive/centre-left governments alike and indicates "the existence of an accord- tacit or explicit- around the irrevocable or irresistible character of the current extractivist dynamics, in response to the growing global demand of primary goods." (Svampa, 2013, p.5) This implies a political and ideological agreement as even left-wing governments in Bolivia or Ecuador argue in favour of extractive policies by indicating their importance in generating income and foreign currency for the national economy. Accordingly, the support for the exploitation of natural resources is upheld, although obvious differences in the distribution of profits and extractive policies have to be acknowledged.

Despite the distinctive features this model takes on in national contexts, the state has been highlighted as playing a crucial role in reproducing and facilitating the economic redefinition of national territories in line with the exploitation of natural resources (Diaz Polanco, 2006; Gudynas, 2009; Svampa, 2013). This is not just the case in countries with left-leaning governments that favour a redistribution of income and an expansion of social programmes. Instead, it is also a feature of conservative regimes as the state and the institutional apparatuses act to stabilise power relationships and encourage strategies of capital accumulation that favour a particular constellation of national or local elites. Urry (2003) has suggested a reinterpretation of Hardt and Negri's concept of 'Empire' to emphasise this multi-scale reproduction of global dynamics: While Hardt and Negri had conceptualised the world order around the dynamic properties of global relations, Urry has attempted to fill the vacuum left by their failure to explain the role of national states and societies in the context of these de-centred and de-territorialised dynamics. He puts forward the idea of "societies … becoming more like empires" as they are reconfigured by globalisation processes (Urry, 2003, p.129). This idea seems to describe current patterns more adequately by highlighting the tensions between relationality and autonomy reflected in the operations of these states. Accordingly, they are drawn into reproducing as well as re-interpreting certain characteristics of 'Empire'. As the rise in the criminalisation of protest movements, an increase in militarization as well as a closure of public space indicate, the coercive and authoritarian aspects embedded in this reproduction

are also very much part of the reconfiguration of strategies of accumulation (Seone, 2006; Zibechi, 2011).

The history of exploitation of natural resources in Guatemala

As outlined in chapter 3, the drive to expand and perpetuate strategies of accumulation as well as capture rents have represented processes integral to the genesis of the Guatemalan state. Based on these patterns the institutional framework has at different moments played a key role in providing legal, political and coercive advantages for elites in the pursuit of their interests. The international context dominated by neoliberal economic policies and the political openings following the formal transition to democracy enabled national elites to revitalise their strategies of accumulation and enhance their links with global markets. There has also been a renewed focus on ensuring access to rents by promoting foreign investments as well as establishing alliances with foreign capital around a variety of projects targeting the rural areas of Guatemala. The economic potential of natural resources on national and global markets has over recent decades clearly added to this renewed impetus in focus on the rural areas.

Historically, opportunities to link up with foreign investors and international markets in the field of the exploitation of renewable as well as non-renewable natural resources in Guatemala first presented themselves at the start of the 20th century as the first oil fields were established. By the 1920s two oil companies based on a combination of national and foreign capital had set up in Guatemala. Further concessions to companies were granted during Ubico's reign with the transnational company Shell among the enterprises to obtain licences in 1937 and 1938. However, the revolutionary governments of Arévalo and Árbenz (1944-1954) imposed their own nationalist line on the extractive industry by establishing that hydrocarbons could only be exploited by the state, by Guatemalans or by companies operating on the basis of a minimum of 50% Guatemalan capital. This legal restriction on the oil extraction and production was reinforced by the governmental decrees 648 and 649 approved in 1947 and 1949. These decrees also made the companies subject to increased royalty and tax regimes as the governments attempted to bolster state finances.

While this resulted in a gradual withdrawal of the US-oil companies it did not put a definite halt to their interest. With the start of the Cold War, the search for alternatives to oil from the Middle East continued to represent a central dimension of US-foreign policy. These interests also encouraged a convergence between the natural resource companies and some traditional elite factions such as the Skinner-Klee or Arenales families. They had identified the promising investment opportunity the mining and oil sector represented. Other elite factions also showed interest since their industrial production processes such as the Novella's cement-company depended on the supply of crude oil. This reaffirmed their objective of expanding the oil-industry and encouraged their opposition to the nationalist policies the revolutionary governments were implementing (Dosal, 2005; Solano, 2005; Casaús Arzú, 2007).

The counter-revolution of 1954 and the consolidation of a military regime initially reversed the nationalist approach with regards to the exploitation of natural resources: Changes in legislation lifted the restriction of oil-extraction to companies with 50% Guatemalan capital, extended licences for exploration and perforations for periods of 44 years with the option of a 20-year extension and assigned 60% of profits deriving from the production to the respective oil company. This led to a number of transnational companies returning or initiating operations in Guatemala not just in the petroleum but also in the mining sector (Solano, 2005).

The traditional economic elite factions with interests in the promotion of the oil extraction had been supportive of the initial constitution of the military state and grouped around the right wing party, the National Liberation Movement *(Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*, MLN,). However, as outlined in chapter 3, the frictions between a strongly expanding, interventionist military state and the elites, in favour of an extractive industry without state participation, steadily increased.[64] The latter were also central in providing the finances and founding the University Francisco Marroquin in 1972 to guarantee the supply of 'social capital' required in the different areas of natural resource exploitation. This

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[64] As outlined in chapter 3 this tension was especially evident under the Lucas García and Arana Osorio governments leading to the inter-elite tensions between military and economic elites.

University established itself as a think-tank to promote free market ideology with the training and education for engineers as well as other professionals relevant for the extractive industry constituting a central aspect.

With the consolidation of the military at the helm of the state, the economic dimensions and the exploitation of natural resources also started to become central to their designs for national development. Military elites increasingly viewed the oil and mining sector as strategic to capture rents and negotiate directly with foreign investors, much to the dismay of the economic elites (Solano, 2005). As indicated in previous chapters, the FTN exemplifies the military's attempt to set in motion a territorial reorganisation in line with its interests. In doing so, the army's engineer corps played a pivotal role in gathering privileged information on the potential of renewable as well as non-renewable resources in different parts of the country (Solano, 2012; IRRMH, 2013; Rogers, 2013).

The field of renewable energy production in the form of large scale hydroelectric plants soon became an issue of state interest and a priority on the military's economic agenda with a number of projects being designed in the 1970s, although the construction of many projects never went ahead.[65] One of the plans to be implemented at the time was the Chixoy hydroelectric dam project in the Verapaz region. Its construction also reflected the means the military state was willing to employ in order to achieve its economic objectives. For military officers it represented a golden opportunity for personal enrichment as the primarily international funds were executed without any degree of transparency (Schirmer, 1998). The construction process continued for 8 years between 1975 and 1983, driven by the financial support of the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

However, the project also resulted in the displacement of 23 Maya Achi villages with more than 6.000 people losing their land due to the flooding of the area

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[65] Among the large-scale hydroelectric dam projects designed at the time were the Serchil, Chulac and Xalalá projects. In recent years the search for investments for the different projects have been intensified. In the case of the Xalalá feasibility studies have already been conducted, however it has met local opposition as the controversial dam project would mean the flooding of an extensive area affecting more than 50 communities. More information on the Xalalá project can be found in CIFCA (2008) and Solano (2009).

(CEH, 1999). Brutal violence, massacres and repressive measures accompanied the different phases of the construction. What started with the execution of community leaders in the 70s gave way to a series of massacres executed by military and PAC, the worst taking place in the community of Río Negro in March 1982, killing 70 women and 107 children. These operations were officially justified in the context of the counter-insurgent campaigns and any population that could potentially constitute an opposition to the construction of the hydroelectric project faced ruthless repression and execution (CEH, 1999). The CEH identified the massacres in the area as a clear example of the state-guided genocide campaigns. Its report outlines how acts of resistance to administrative decisions, even though pacific, were considered *a priori* as guerrilla actions and confronted with repressive violence (CEH, 1999). Additionally, the implementation of this project also exemplifies how the 'mandate' of engaging in counter-insurgent operations in many cases camouflaged the pursuit of strategies for personal enrichment promoted by the military elites.

However, it was the context of the Peace Accords that provided the impetus for elite factions to push for the opening of the country and its natural resources to foreign investment and in doing so, multiply opportunities to revitalise their own strategies of accumulation. As signalled in chapter 3, a first round of privatisations through the selling and concession of state companies initiated this trend (Palencia Prado, 2002; Gutiérrez, 2012). The liberalisation of trade through the elimination of taxes on imports and exports, the privatisation of the banking and telecommunication system, the reorientation of agricultural production towards new crops as well as the planning of a series of large scale tourist projects constituted some elements of this trend. The distribution rights for electricity, up to that point owned by INDE, also featured among this wave of privatisation and concentrated the electricity generation among a reduced number of companies.

Initially, electricity production tended to be based on petroleum products, leading to some of the highest electricity prices in Latin America. However, over the following decade sugar refineries and large landowners entered into this energy market, by shifting their production towards crops convertible into agro-fuels, or by setting up their own electricity generating plants. Under the Berger

government (2004-2008) a definite shift in the energy production would occur with the planning of hydroelectric projects, the promotion of plantations for the production of agro-fuel, as well as the extension of new licences for the exploitation and production of crude oil (Solano, 2009). A series of large-scale infrastructural projects were to enhance the various dimensions, as elite factions used their control over state policies to reconfigure Guatemala's social and economic realities.

The renewed focus on rural areas means the Guatemalan context bears similarities with what scholars have identified as the creation of a 'New Rurality' (Echeverri and Ribero, 2002; Schejtman and Beerdegué, 2003; Ramírez-Miranda, 2014). The accelerated insertion of rural economies into globalisation processes, the dissolution of borders and orientation towards global food markets as well as the requirement of global competition posed to rural economies mark this process. Additionally, a distinction is introduced with regards to rural spaces by identifying "efficient", cultivable territory on one hand, and territories that can be "emptied of social life" or "sacrificed" for its natural resources by being placed under control of private companies on the other hand (Svampa. 2011, p.191).

As part of a general modernising shift, since Alvaro Arzú (1996-2000) consecutive governments have gradually brought into place an institutional framework oriented to a highlighting and promoting of Guatemala as an investment opportunity. This is framed by a discourse of entering a globalised economy, in which the requirements of competitiveness and efficiency represent the crucial conditions for development. The creation of the National Program of Competitiveness (*Programa Nacional de Competitividad,* PRONACOM)[66] exemplified this trend of bringing the state institutions into line with these objectives with a mandate to encourage "the development of competitiveness of entrepreneurial and human capital in order to generate investments" (PRONACOM, 2014). This has been complemented by the agency Invest in Guatemala, whose tasks are focused on engaging with potential investors and advertising the investment opportunities in close coordination with bodies of the institutional framework such as the Ministry for

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[66] The Program was formally established in 1999, although its mandate was reformed twice in 2002 and 2004.

Energy and Mining (*Ministerio de Energía y Minas*, MEM), the National Commission for Electric Energy (*Comisión Nacional de Energía Eléctrica*, CNEE) as well as the National Institute for Electrification (*Instituto Nacional de Electrificación*, INDE) (Solano, 2009).

De la Torre, Economy Minister summed up these priorities in the context of the yearly investment summit 2013: "The strategy to attract investments is aggressive, following clear objectives not only of the government but also of the private sector, especially the Industrial Chamber of Guatemala. We want to prove that by working together big things and excellent results can be achieved" (quoted in: El Pais, 26/06/2013). The openings towards the global economy and the search for investment has translated into a clear increase of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) over the last decade: In 2003 the FDI amounted to $217 million, by 2014 the FDI had reached a total of $1080.6 million. Of this investment, 30.6% targeted the areas of agriculture, mining and quarries, and 18.4% was directed towards the energy sector (Banco de Guatemala, 2014).

In a variety of dimensions, the 'production of space' in line with the interests of national and transnational elites has gained pace. This is reflected in the implementation of mining projects, the growth of the energy sector which includes hydroelectric plants, electric transmission grids, oil production as well as the reorientation of agricultural production towards crops for agro-fuels. This panorama is completed by a number of large scale infrastructural projects. The following section will examine with more detail some of the dimensions of this neoliberal design focusing on rural Guatemala.

The dimensions of neoliberal order in rural Guatemala

As already mentioned, the reorientation of the national energy matrix, expressed in the search for new energy sources, as well as the plants for the generation of energy constitutes a central dimension of the modernisation project in Guatemala. In line with international trends aimed at a reduction of energy production deriving from fossil fuels, the promotion of renewable sources has gained importance and that has translated into an increasing number of hydroelectric projects being planned and constructed. Currently, there are 21 hydroelectric plants operating in Guatemala, with the process of

granting licences and construction of a further 44 projects ongoing (MEM, 2015a).

Regional integration has been important in this expansion of the energy supply, with the *Projecto Mesoamerica*[67] representing a framework for the connection of the Central American electricity markets aimed at reducing electricity prices. This reduction is seen as crucial to attracting investments for a variety of development projects and in part explains the promotion of hydroelectric projects in the region. As part of these measures to stimulate Central American integration, the Initiative for the Interconnection of Energy has outlined four projects: 1. The Project for the System of Electrical Interconnection of the Central American Countries (*Sistema de Interconexión Eléctrica de los Países de América Central*, SIEPAC), 2. The Project for the Interconnection of Guatemala and Mexico, 3. The Interconnection of Guatemala and Belize, and 4. The Interconnection of Panama and Colombia (Proyecto Mesoamerica, 2014). In Guatemala, these plans translate into an ambitious project aimed at interconnecting five national electricity grids[68] and contemplate the construction of networks stretching across 817,9 kilometres at a cost of 350 Million US$ (Solano, 2009).

Accordingly, the Plan for the Expansion of Electric Transmission (*Plan de Expansión del Sistema de Transporte de Energía*, PET) was designed to connect all hydroelectric plants with a national network and is vital for the supply of the main industrial centres, trading and service infrastructure, agricultural industry, mining, and ports of the country. Analysts have been keen to point out that a number of the hydroelectric plants are to be constructed in the main mining areas of the country, while mining companies represent some of the biggest consumers of electricity (Interview economist, Guatemala City, 12/07/2012).[69] Additionally, the oil extraction, maquilas, industrial zones, the

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[67] The Project Mesoamerica succeeded the Plan Puebla-Panama as a framework to outline the initiatives aimed at furthering Central American integration.

[68] The current electricity network consists of 5 grids called Metropacífico, Hidráulico, Atlántico, Oriental and Occidental.

[69] As Ilescas (2013) indicates, mining companies feature among the top energy consumers in Guatemala. *Montana Exploradora*, the company operating the Marlin Mine in San Marcos is registered with a yearly consumption of 16,113kw, one of the 5 top industrial energy consumers in 2012. Two other non-metal mining projects operated by the cement company, *Cementos*

planned construction and modernization of a series of infrastructural projects such as ports, airports, railway line and highways such as the FTN all require substantial energy supply.

Additionally, significant profits can be made from the export of electricity, thus representing another incentive for producers and investors in the energy sector, as the regional interconnections enable the transmission towards other sections of the Central American Market. A look at the actors involved reveals that important factions of the Guatemalan economic elites such as the Gutiérrez-Bosch, Ayau, Arenales and Castillo families have invested into this business sector. In some cases they have sought to implement their own projects, in other cases they have established alliances with international investors. Transnational companies such as the Italian company Enel or the US Company Duke Energy International are already operating hydroelectric projects and have acquired licences for further projects. Additionally, following the privatisation of the distribution rights under the Arzú government, they have since been in the hands of transnational companies, with the British investment fund Actis acquiring the rights for the main distribution network for electricity from the Spanish company *Union Fenosa* in 2011.

In different moments the state institutions have promoted the different interests linked to the hydro-energetic and electricity market, beginning with the General Law on Electricity approved in 1997 that paved the path for the subsequent privatisation by separating the different activities of generation, commercialisation, distribution and transmission. Future governments have used legal and institutional mechanisms to promote the different aspects. In recent years the coercive role has been increasingly called upon, as the respective governments sought to address the conflicts generated at the local level by the various projects. The case of a hydroelectric project in the municipality of Santa Cruz Barillas, in the Western region of Huehuetenango, where the local population had rejected the project in a community referendum in 2007, is only one among various examples. After protests followed the murder of a community leader by a private security guard who had been hired by the company involved in the construction of the project, a state of siege was declared. Military forces were deployed and multiple arrests of community

Progreso, also feature among the top five energy consumers (Ilescas, 2013).

leaders followed, with state prosecution as well as local judges playing a key role in ensuring sanctions and the criminalization of members of the local protest movements on the basis of questionable evidence (UDEFEGUA, 2013, 2015).

The reorientation of the energy matrix has also had its effect on the use of land and agricultural production as the expansion of crops of sugar cane and African palm indicate. The production of sugar cane to generate sugar, sugar cane molasses and alcoholic drinks has a long tradition in the country. The plantations of African palm on the other hand have emerged over the last decade and were initially oriented towards industrial production and the food-market. However, the recent expansion of these plantations, which is linked to the growing market for international bio-diesel and ethanol, has engendered a further appropriation of land and the displacement of peasant communities (Actionaid, 2010; Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2011).

The announcement of the European Union in 2006 establishing that in the future 20% of its energy supplies should derive from renewable sources with a minimum of 10% coming from agro-fuel, reflects the relationship between global dynamics and local spaces. As part of this agenda the EU also started to directly promote the production of agro-fuels in countries in development.[70] The US decree on energy independence and security from December 2007 further stimulated this trend, by mandating a production of 36,000 million gallons of agro-fuels by 2020. This represented five times the amount produced in 2007, as agro-fuels were seen as crucial in the attempts to reduce dependence on oil imports from the Middle East (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2011) Even if at this stage the palm oil is not used for the production of biodiesel, the range of profit on the global markets is high.[71] The cultivated area dedicated to palm oil in Guatemala has quadrupled over the last decade expanding to an estimated 110,000 hectares, while the volume of palm oil production has doubled between 2003 and 2008 (Guereña and Zepeda, 2013).

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[70] This policy framework is currently under revision.

[71] In 2013 on the international markets the price for a tonne of palm oil was $845, which means a hectare of palm plants generates $5,915 US dollars. Accordingly, an estate of 45.12 hectares, which is a common size in the FTN region, generates a profit of approximately $2.66 million per year (El Enfoque, 2013).

In the intersections of this production with global markets the strategic character of the free-trade agreements comes to the forefront: The framework of the Central American Free-trade Agreement allows an unlimited export of ethanol at a 0% tax rate among countries that are part of the agreement. Similar conditions have been negotiated with the European Union as part of the Association Accords. At a national level the Strategy of Sustainable Energy for Central America 2020, which was negotiated in 2005 was integrated into the National Agenda for Competitiveness under the Berger government with the aim of substituting 15% of the petrol and diesel consumption in public and private transport through agro-fuels by 2020 (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2011).

The impetus for these strategies derives from multiple levels as reflected in the supporting role of the International Financial Institutions. They have provided vital financial support to promote the framework of the *Projecto Mesoamerica* and influence the orientation of regional development plans.[72] At a national level a variety of actors intervene to directly or indirectly promote the expansion of plantations for the production of agro-fuels. A program of the Land Fund (*Fondo de Tierras,* FONTIERRAS) and the Register of Catastral Information *(Registro de Información Catastral,* RIC)* offering legal registration of land and together with a number of NGOs has persistently echoed a discourse insisting that collective property represents an obstacle to development. In the areas identified as adequate for palm plantations this is combined with different strategies to pressure local producers into selling land and expand palm plantations (Interview economist, Guatemala City, 12/07/2012). These strategies were evidenced in the Ixcán area as programs such as PROPALMA, providing credits to potential producers, were integrated into governmental agricultural policies while companies offered orientation for local producers.

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[72] With regards to the palm industry Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2011) highlight a series of measures in terms of the role of the international financial institutions: 1) The loan of $408,000 to Guatemala in 2008 for feasibility studies. 2) The BCIE funding of $26 million for the transport, construction and planting of the ethanol producer Guadelupe in the Polochic region and donation of $100,000 as part of the project Mesoamerica to cover the costs of installation of a agro-fuel plant donated by Colombia. 3) The World Bank through its International Financial Corporation issued a loan of more than $60 million to the producer Pantaleón as well as further 30$ million for the construction of four production plants in Brasil, Colombia and Guatemala to the joint venture Pantaleón Sugar (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2011).

However, after the first amount was paid, the successive payments were suspended, leaving more than 300 independent producers in a vulnerable situation and struggling to keep hold of their land (Actionaid, 2010; El Enfoque, 2013; Guereña and Zepeda, 2013).

The shares of this market are concentrated in the hands of a limited number of business groups: The sugar cane industry and the production of ethanol is dominated by 5 producers, each business group is composed by families that are part of the traditional, agricultural elites, among them the Herrera and Botrán families. Similarly, the production of palm oil is divided among 6 business groups which again are integrated by families of traditional economic elites such as the Maegli, Weissenberg Campollo or König Vielman families (Actionaid, 2010; Palencia Prado, 2012).

The turn towards renewable energy sources does not mean that the production of non-renewable energy sources has been side-lined. This also fuels suspicions that the general reorientation of the energy matrix is not down to concerns for environmental issues or a shift towards more sustainable development models. Instead, the potential for profits in the renewable energy sector explains its attraction. The different post-war governments have been intent on promoting the expansion of oil extraction and attracting foreign investment, with the current government of Otto Pérez Molina (2011-2015) following this line by announcing the intention to multiply production. By 2020 a production of 50 thousand barrels a day, five times the current amount has been outlined. In this context licences for seven additional oilfields have been offered in the Petén and the FTN region and are promoted in an intensive campaign to attract the required investment.

The controversial renewal of extraction in the Xan oil field operated by the Anglo-French company *Perenco* in 2010 reflects the collusion of private and institutional interests around the extractive industry. The renewal of the contract for the oil field that is being operated in the centre of a National Park in the Petén region, Laguna del Tigre, had been signalled as illegal and contrary to national legislation,[73] even sparking the resignation of the Environment Minister

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[73] Civil society organisations such as Centro de Acción Legal y Ambiental Social (CALAS) took legal action to question the legality of the renewal primarily by referring to article 64 of the constitution that establishes the protection and conservation of national parks as of 'national

Ferraté in 2010. However, with the Constitutional Court rejecting all legal action against the contract renewal, President Colom's government brushed aside concerns over the renewal and extended the extraction for a further 15 years.

In this case an important mechanism to stifle dissent in the area seems to have been the strategic use of royalties as established in the Law for the Fund of Economic Development of the Nation that outlines the Petroleum Fund (*Fondo de Petroleo,* FONPETROL). Accordingly, funds are distributed in the following manner: 20% to the local Development Councils of the municipalities in which the oil production is operating; 5% to the respective Departmental Councils and 3% to the public entities responsible for the conservation of the protected areas (Decree 71-2008, Ley FONPETROL). This has made it possible to consolidate clientelistic networks in the area, while turning a blind eye to the presence of powerful agents linked to illicit economic activities in the region, where at least two of the biggest national drug-trafficking networks, the Lorenzana and Mendoza families, operate (InsightCrime, 2011).

Mining constitutes a further dimension in the projection of economic interests into the rural areas. According to information by the MEM by January 2015, 79 licences for metal mining had been granted. Of these licences 44 were at an exploratory stage, while 35 are in the extraction-phase (MEM, 2015b). Profits in the mining sector had risen from 3,269.1 million Quetzales in 2006 to 10,512 million Quetzales in 2011 (ICEFI, 2014b). However, in terms of tax revenues, in 2013 the mining sector was still only contributing 1.8% of the GDP (ICEFI, 2014b). [74]

This is largely down to the lenient fiscal regime in the mining law approved in 1997 by the Arzú government. Yaganova et al. (2012) emphasise three aspects in this legislation that contributed to the increase in mining over the following decades: Firstly, it introduced a recognition phase to create a three stage model in which the companies pass from a recognition phase, to an exploration phase before reaching the stage of exploitation. By inserting this first phase the licence

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interest'. Nonetheless all legal recourses were rejected by the Constitutional Court.

[74] The drop of 36% in production levels registered in 2012 is largely down to an order issued by the Inter-American Court against the Guatemalan State given the concerns about the violation of human rights of the local population due to the impact of the Marlin Mine in San Marcos. This forced the company to temporarily halt its operations.

holder can investigate broader extensions of territory and based on its results decide on the eventual number of licences for exploitation. Secondly, the law introduced a reduction on the percentage of royalties which passed from 6% to 1%. Thirdly, the need for a written permit from owners of the land targeted by the mining activity was abolished, thus creating an advantageous framework for mining companies to gain access to rural territories (Yaganova et al., 2012).

Primarily in reaction to the multiple situations of conflict emerging in areas targeted by mining companies, the government of Otto Pérez Molina (2011-2015) has promoted attempts to reform the mining legislation. He shocked the economic elites grouped in CACIF and the Board of Extractive Industries (*Gremial de Industrias Extractivas*, GREMIEXT) in 2012 by putting forward the proposal of creating a state-mining company that would participate in up to 40% of the profits from mining projects. However, the government soon retracted from this initial plan and instead submitted a reform-proposal of the mining legislation whose most controversial aspect consisted in a slight rise in the percentage of royalties for the state and local municipalities. According to analysts this had clearly been agreed in advance with mining companies and constituted an attempt to appease local discontent (Interview environmental activist, Guatemala City, 11/11/2013).

Since then debates over reforming the mining legislation as well as the percentage of royalties have continued. In December 2014 congress approved a renewed increase in the context of the debates for the 2015 budget and approved a reform of article 63 of the mining legislation, which outlines the amount and distribution of royalties. This most recent reform outlines an increase in royalties by establishing different categories: 10% on the exploitation of minerals and construction materials; 5% on Nickel, 6% on Jade. 9% of the royalties are to be directed at a national Common Fund and 1% attributed to the municipalities, where the respective project is operating (Ley de Presupuesto, 2015).[75]

These adjustments to the fiscal regime have done little to dissolve the concerns around the environmental impact of both, mining as well as oil extraction. The

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[75] However, various legal appeals have been submitted to challenge the constitutionality of the reforms outlined in the budget proposal 2015, among them the mining legislation. Therefore, the implementation of the respective reforms is still on hold.

complicity of the state institutions responsible for the approval of the Environmental Impact Studies that constitute the basis for the granting of an exploitation licence, has been repeatedly pointed out by civil society organisations. The limited human and financial resources dedicated to this body, the absence of a clear legislation to halt extraction in cases of environmental degradation, as well as the failure to establish clear responsibilities for the control, evaluation and monitoring of extraction have all been signalled as contributing to undermine its operations (Yaganova et al., 2012).

The scenario linked to the exploitation of natural resources is complemented by large-scale infrastructural projects that constitute the links between the different aspects of the elite-guided modernisation. Among them the FTN represents a revival of a project designed under military rule. Its construction has been ongoing since 2009 with a variety of licences for resource extraction in the area making the highway a vital interconnection for transport routes (Solano, 2012; Rogers, 2013). Additionally, since December 2009 preparation for the construction of a Technological Corridor that will cross four of the eastern departments has been under way. The project is meant to constitute an alternative to the Panama Canal and a similar canal project that is being constructed in Nicaragua. In Guatemala, it is planned to include a motorway, a railway line, an oil pipeline as well as a system of cables for optical fibre communication.[76]

In sum, driven by national and international elites a complete reconfiguration of territories and places in line with neoliberal designs is underway in the rural parts of Guatemala. The approval of legal frameworks to spur the implementation of projects, the use of public forces and paramilitary structures against opposition, the co-option of decision-making spaces in state institutions as well as the creation of clientelistic networks around the promotion of the different projects, feature among the strategies used. While this creates an

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[76] In August 2015 the project of the interoceanic corridor was put on hold after the NGO meant to administer the funds and the implementation was found to be fraudulent. On the other hand, plans for the construction of an oil-pipeline administered by a different private entity along the same route received initial approval in November 2014. This case also reflects the disputes between different factions of emerging and traditional elites over the implementation of the project. More information in Solano, 2015.

extremely difficult environment for collective action and social mobilisation, as the following section will outline, the emerging antagonisms have nonetheless been highlighted and contested by local communities in a variety of local contexts.

The defence of territory in Guatemala: Antagonistic agency in local spaces

Before 2003, challenges to projects aimed at the exploitation of natural resources were promoted primarily by environmental organisations and often restricted to specific areas, such as the Izabal region. In that region the company *Exmibal* had acquired a permit to extract Nickel, and while close to Lake Izabal a licence for oil extraction had also been conceded. At least in the short term, the oppositional groups consisting primarily of environmental organisations and local Q'eqchi' communities were successful as their pressure translated into the cancellation of the licence for oil extraction in 2002.[77]

At the time the broader context was marked by a general frustration over the absence of advances in democratisation and the failure to address the persisting structural inequalities. Public protest actions and mobilisations were dominated by established peasant, indigenous, women's and labour organisations often with links to urban NGOs, without a broad, sustained articulation emerging from these movements. These organisational processes were primarily oriented at challenging the liberalising policies which post-war governments had been promoting, supported by transnational agreements such as the Puebla-Panama Plan and the DR-CAFTA. Issues around the exploitation of natural resources became part of the agenda of social organisations from 2003 onwards, as information on the first mining concessions began to emerge.

Although the licences in various parts of the country had been conceded in previous years, the secretive way of operating of governments and mining

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[77] Environmental activist Magalí Rey Rosa describes in an interview with Martínez Alier how local environmentalists and Quepchí communities organised in an attempt to stop the installation of an oil field by Basic Resources in Izabal based on the experience of the negative impact of the Exmibal nickel mine in the area. The license for oil extraction was cancelled by Portillo in 2002 (Martínez Alier, 2003). However, a number of further mining licenses have since been conceded in the area.

companies meant rural communities had in most cases not been aware of the planned projects in their surroundings. One of the first mining licences to be conceded in this post-war period, the Marlin Mine in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos, highlighted these in-transparent procedures. No information had been provided to the local population while the company had over years gone about acquiring the land alleging it would be used for agricultural projects (Van de Sandt, 2009). This land would go on to constitute the area for the up to date biggest mining project in Guatemala, operated by *Montana Exploradora*, at the time subsidiary of Glamis Gold Inc., today Goldcorp Inc.

A range of local and national organisations played an important role in spreading initial details on the existing licences and potential environmental impact of these projects among the indigenous communities surrounding the mining area. In February 2004, a first protest march took place with 500 people protesting in the municipality of Sipacapa against the proposed mining project in San Miguel Ixtahuácan. The failure to consult the population on the project, the possible environmental damage and the violation of municipal autonomy were among the main concerns raised by the protesters (Yaganova et al., 2012). The fact that the majority of these initial mining licences were being granted in areas populated primarily by indigenous people also influenced the discourses developing to contest the exploitation of natural resources. Led by indigenous organisations, the articulations were framed around the defence of territory and linked to national as well as international legislation on indigenous rights.

By 2005 the issue of exploitation of natural resources had already consolidated as an important point of convergence for grass-roots organising in various regions of the country. The antagonistic dimension inherent to the issue was evidenced in the course of confrontations that took place in January 2005. As the mining company operating the Marlin Mine sought to transport a cylinder required for the extractive activities towards the mine in San Marcos, this engendered a stand-off over various days as community members from Sololá and Totonicapán blocked the road to stop the convoy from passing. As the army and police were called in to free the road blocks, dozens of people were left injured and one community member died in the course of the confrontations.

While this gave an indication of the conflictive potential around the mining projects, the implementation of hydroelectric projects was also gaining pace and

communities were mobilising in order to halt their construction. Over the following years multiple nodes of resistance emerged as environmental, social and human rights organisations encouraged the spread of information on the various aspects of this post-war elite-guided modernisation project. A variety of tactics began marking the organisational processes with the challenge to the official decision-making processes, which paved the way for the implementation of the projects, increasingly gaining weight. In doing so, communities especially highlighted the violation of the legal obligation to consult the local population in the affected territories as established in international and national legislation. Accordingly, local community members challenged the implementation by developing their own locally embedded procedural mechanisms to politically enact and highlight their dissent. A non-indigenous area, in Río Hondo, Zacapa, represented one of the first areas where sections of the local communities converged in 2005 to exert pressure on the municipality to organise a community consultation on a hydroelectric project. The prime concerns leading the communities to reject the project were linked to the environmental impact, the diminishing of water supply as well as the failure to consult the local population. Based on a slightly different legal framework, in June 2005 the indigenous communities of Sipakapa also held a community consultation to reject the San Miguel mining concession.[78]

This represented the starting point for a process that up to date has been replicated in over 70 municipalities where community consultations have been held. This has consolidated as a key dimension of the oppositional agency with the consultations in the different areas sharing certain features: Firstly, all referendums involved a preparatory phase consisting of meetings and assemblies usually held at a community level in order to share and debate information on the projects to be implemented in the area. This is also a phase during which accompaniment and inputs are sought from a variety of organisations specializing on environmental or legal aspects. Secondly, the consultations are based on local issues and problems identified by community members that drive the organisational process independently from central

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[78] The community referendum in Sipakapa was held as a good faith consultation based on the ILO convention 169 while the community referendum in Rio Hondo was held as a municipal neighbourhood consultation based on Municipal Law.

government institutions or political parties. In some cases and to a varying extent, local municipal councils have supported the organisation of the consultations. Thirdly, the holding of the consultation represents a step towards formalizing and voicing local dissent to state policies. Accordingly, this appropriation of decision-making processes among the local community members represented an attempt to counter measures aimed at narrowing down participation or to co-opt individual and collective decision-making processes. In all cases the referendums were linked to legal frameworks. In the case of indigenous communities, references to the ILO convention 169 (articles 6, 7, 15.2) that outlines the right of indigenous people to be consulted on issues affecting them or their territories predominated.[79] In the case of non-indigenous areas, consultations were held on the basis of national legislation such as the Municipal law (Decree 12-2002, articles 63-65) that outlines the consultation of residents on issues affecting the whole municipality.[80]

The trend of consolidating these processes of community consultations as a crucial feature of the defence of territory have continued despite a decision by the Constitutional Court in May 2007 that declared the process of organising and holding consultations as 'valid' but 'not binding' for government authorities. However, these community consultations have constituted just one among a number of strategies to voice demands in a limited public space. Direct action including road blocks, protest marches, community assemblies, workshops and visits to congress has constituted an important part of these organisational practices, which are embedded in a discourse emphasising the defence of territory.

The different dimensions of this organising have been driven primarily by the local communities and their members. As a result, changes in the landscape of collective organising in Guatemala can be perceived: The historic campesino organisations and primarily urban human rights NGOs had achieved a certain protagonism in the civil society framework of the Peace Accords and had dominated articulations in the public space during the post-war context. They

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[79] The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People represents a further international legal framework establishing the right to consultation.

[80] In national legislation references have also been made to the Law on Urban and Rural Development Councils, article 26.

continue to play a role in accompanying the local nodes of agency during the current organisational processes, often by supporting them on logistical or legal issues or aiding the coordination of broader, joint actions on specific legislation. However, a large part of the organisational energy and protagonism has been appropriated by the communities faced with the respective projects and has consequently been transferred into these local spaces. As Sieder and Bastos (2014) indicate, former activists of the URNG as well as Mayan organisations continue to play an important role in these processes. Nevertheless, they tend do so through their communities and in most cases "without the organic presence of the organisations in which they had been educated" (Sieder and Bastos, 2014, p.159). While the communities draw on ties with national organisations, in many cases there is an emphasis on guarding the autonomy and specific character of the respective organisational process, as their prime focus is determined by the local problems and experiences.

In most areas the incentives for the convergence at the local level are found in the incompatibility of the projects— even before their implementation— with locally embedded meanings and the everyday life of the community members. Accordingly, the engagement in 'defence of territory' indicates an attachment to specific places that at the same time develops a socio-political expression. In this sense 'territory' comes to represent more than just physical surroundings and is instead filled with associations and meanings to represent a life-world. In turn, this has generated the focus of the organisational processes on the constitution of social and political 'relationships' within determinate spaces. In the different processes of defence of territory this relational notion has consolidated primarily around two aspects. On one hand, by undoing the divide between 'nature' and 'humans' to understand 'nature' as part and not external to the social agent. On the other hand, it has also enhanced a view of relationality that emphasises the link between the 'individual' and 'collective' dimension, which is reflected in the revitalisation of the 'community' as a collective signifier and the focus on re-embedding decision-making in this collective dimension. Although this 'relational' notion can be seen as a general feature of processes engaging in defence of territory, the particular assemblages of collective action develop their own interpretations and strategies around it. As the case studies in chapter 7 and 8 will indicate, in indigenous communities these relational

meanings are mostly rooted in traditional features of language and cosmovision. In communities with less or no indigenous influence, these relational understandings tend to be the result of more instinctive experiences based on rural life, which are activated in relatively short-term processes and linked with diverse sources of knowledge.

Additionally, the implementation without local consultation or providing information has contributed to fuel a sense of injustice and in turn stimulated solidarities and a sense of collective belonging among rural community members. These sentiments and the emergence of these antagonistic nodes of agency also have to be linked to the established, historical patterns of state-society relationships. Especially among the rural population, these relationships have consolidated deeply embedded levels of distrust and wariness with regards to the elites, state institutions and their policies. These perceptions are reinforced as the current integration of territories under an excluding economic logic fails to coincide with the search for local consent. The community based responses have often taken on a dispersed character and the differences between the nodes of agency reflect the complex constellation of the population. Additionally, they have implied a "defensive localisation" (Escobar 2001, p.149), as most resistances focus their challenge on the respective local context. However, this reflects how in the context of a co-opted state the 'local' is seen as the prime platform of interaction as well as the most efficient and trusted arena for resistance to be constructed.

In May 2012 the Human Rights Ombudsman's office identified 82 potential sources of social conflict in 13 departments, which are related to the failure of communities to accept the establishment of companies promoting mining, hydroelectric projects, electricity grids or large-scale plantations in their territories (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 25/07/2012). An increase in the intensity of confrontations can be perceived as infiltration, provocation as well as the revitalisation of historical divides within communities figure among the strategies used to favour the implementation of the respective projects. The use of paramilitaries and public forces in combination with the declaration of states of 'siege' or 'prevention' represent further measures aimed at containing the resistance of community members.

Another aspect that links directly with the co-optive patterns surrounding the institutional framework is the strong rise in the criminalisation of human rights defenders. Over the last years more than dozens of activists engaging in struggles linked to the defence of territory have faced detention orders, legal charges and prosecution, in the overwhelming number of cases on the basis of questionable evidence. The aim of these strategies is to "convert social activists into criminals" and subsequently into "political prisoners with the complicity of the security and justice apparatus." (Sieder and Bastos, 2014, p.169) This also reflects crucial aspects inherent to contexts of state co-option outlined in chapter 3, as the functions of the institutional framework, as well as state prosecution and the decision-making of judges, act in line with the promotion of particular elite interests. Actors behind the implementation of projects transfer conflicts into institutional arenas and courts where they can count on these instances to contribute at the very least, by stalling resistance processes and at best, by dismantling its leadership (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012). In addition, patterns of coercion reminiscent of counter-insurgent periods continue. This is reflected in a surge in direct attacks on human rights defenders and the increase in human rights violations that has accompanied the different dimensions of this elite-guided modernisation.[81]

Despite this climate of repression, it is at the level of these grass-root communities that the interests promoted by elites in line with global cycles of accumulation encounter the most sustained friction. The antagonistic agency led by the communities has represented a profound questioning of the vertical imposition of policies that accompany the different projects. Additionally, the specific character of each node of resistance has to be acknowledged as they reflect the complex demographic composition. In order to provide a better impression of some of the specific characteristics of these nodes, chapters 7 and 8 will look at two expressions of collective action that have emerged around the defence of territory.

Chapter 7 will analyse a community movement in the Northern Quiché region, which has formed among indigenous community members from the municipalities of Cunén, Sacapulas, Nebaj, Chajul and Cotzal. It has

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[81] UDEFEGUA (2015) registered 813 attacks on human rights defenders in 2014, a persistent rise from the year 2000 when 59 attacks were registered.

consolidated as a loose network of communities around the defence of territory in response to a series of mining licences, hydroelectric plants as well as the construction of electric transmission lines as part of the PET program. Over recent years they have taken to the public space through a series of statements, by putting questions to ministers in congress, by organising community consultations and community assemblies as well as by engaging in direct action through road blocks or protest marches. While focusing on the issues of their own localities, relationships of solidarity and mutual accompaniment based on the phrase 'same situation, same resistance' have developed among the different Quiché, Ixil and Sacapulteco communities.

While the resistance of local communities has tended to be most sustained in indigenous areas, oppositional dynamics have also emerged in areas with a predominantly ladino population. This has been the case of the RPLP, which involves residents from the neighbouring municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayumpuc located in the outskirts of Guatemala City. Here, the ladino and Kaqchikel communities have responded to the concession of a gold and silver mining project operated by the company Kappes, Cassiday & Associates. In March 2012 the communities established a protest camp in the place known as La Puya, blocking the entrance to the mining project as a signal of dissent. Since then various strategies have been used to oppose the project including strategies of direct action to avoid evictions, round-table talks with government officials, as well as legal action to challenge the environmental feasibility study.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the exploitation of natural resources has been integrated into the modes of capital accumulation at a global, regional and national level. External investors establish coalitions with national governments to reproduce neoliberal policy frameworks in order to reinforce strategies for capital accumulation. The role of international institutions as well as the state needs to be highlighted in this process of consolidating the commodification of nature and natural resources. Accordingly, Latin America's territories are being reordered in line with economic interests as global patterns of accumulation are reproduced and reinterpreted at the nation-state level. For the different

countries on the continent this translates into a role as suppliers of primary goods for global markets.

In Guatemala the Peace Accords represented the contextual framework for an opening towards external investment as well as integration into global markets. Since that time institutional bodies have been put in place to enhance competitiveness as elites used the state to implement their vision for rural Guatemala. A combination of extractive projects, large scale infrastructural projects and a variety of projects oriented at expanding the production of energy have since consolidated as the central aspects of this elite-designed modernisation project. The co-option of state-institutions, the approval of adequate legal frameworks, the use of governmental programs and coercion have featured among the mechanisms to reconfigure spaces in accord with determinate economic interests.

This chapter has also emphasised how the penetration of rural territories through the different projects focused on the exploitation of natural resources has activated multiple nodes of resistance at the local level. They have represented a new generation of agency that has emerged to highlight the incompatibility of these projects with locally embedded meanings. Accordingly, in the various communities a contestation of the elites' plans for rural areas has surfaced. This challenge is based on meanings that express an attachment to specific physical spaces and question the view of 'territory' as restricted to an exploitable resource. Instead, across the different organisational processes, a relational notion that questions the divide between 'humans' and 'nature' on one hand and emphasises the link between 'individuals' and the 'collective' or 'community' on the other hand, has gained importance.

Additionally, the process of implementing projects without consultation or providing information has fuelled a sense of injustice among community members and in turn stimulated solidarities and collective convergences at this local level. Dissent has been expressed through a variety of strategies, among them the local appropriation of decision-making processes through the organisation of community referendums. At the same time, it is the local problems and experiences that dominate the orientation and strategies of these nodes of agency, while the complex constellation of the population is reflected in the differing patterns of their organisational forms.

Before exploring two specific expressions of agency that have emerged firstly, among the communities in the Northern Quiché Region and secondly, among community members in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc, the following chapter will outline the methodological framework used to research these case studies. Accordingly, I will indicate how this exploration moves at the interface of methods associated with anthropology and political science to determine the specific characteristics of these organisational processes, while exploring their implications for democracy.

6. Methodological framework

Having set up the context and some of the general features of the agency that has emerged around the defence of territory, this chapter will outline the methodological framework used to approach the research objectives linked to the specific characteristics and implications of two organisational processes that will be analysed in chapter 7 and 8. I will begin by explaining my relationship to the field and how this influenced the data collection process. This will be followed by a presentation of the type of data collected during my fieldwork in Guatemala. Next, I will outline my methodological approach as 'political ethnographic', moving at the interface of methods used for political science and anthropology. Subsequently, I will reflect on my selection of the case-studies that have constituted one of the central aspects of the research before covering the limitations of my research.

Relationship with the field

The data collection for this thesis involved several stretches of fieldwork in Guatemala. The four field-visits of varying length encouraged a constant process of refining the research framework. My research interest was directed at understanding the forms collective action takes in the context of states with characteristics similar to those marking Guatemala, among them strong social asymmetries, a large and diverse rural population as well as an institutional framework co-opted by elite factions. Following an initial analysis of different types of historic and present agency in Guatemala, I identified the community-based agency engaging in the defence of territory as representing the most sustained type of action to command collective allegiance and challenging state policies. This led me to focus on the characteristics and specific features of the local nodes of agency emerging among historically marginalised sections of the population to engage in the defence of territory. The inductive process was complemented by another aspect of my research that emerged in the course of this exploration and which led me to examine the implications of this collective agency for debates around democratisation.

A first exploratory field-visit of three weeks was undertaken in October 2011 and involved initial conversations on the general ideas of the research project. These were held with a number of contacts from my previous work in Guatemala, most of whom were working with different human rights and social

organisations, academic institutions or community based movements. This was followed by a second period of field research between May and October 2012, which constituted the main period of data collection. A third and fourth field trip of three weeks each were undertaken in October 2013 and September 2014 to gather additional data as well as discuss initial results with colleagues and key contacts in Guatemala.

As the sequence of field trips may suggest, rather than following a clear pre-structured plan, the research has evolved along the journey of this thesis. During the different stages, the research questions have been refined and adjusted on several occasions based on discussions with my supervisor as well as the insights gained in the course of the engagement with the research. Throughout this process my previous and current engagement with Guatemala on human rights related issues had an obvious influence on the research design as well as my acting in the field. My previous relationship with Guatemala had been that of an activist, volunteering in an international accompaniment platform, Accompaniment of Guatemala (*Acompañamiento de Guatemala*, ACOGUATE) in 2005 and then taking over a permanent position within the coordinating body of the same organisation between 2007 and 2010. My engagement with ACOGUATE was followed by several months of work with a Historical Memory Initiative (*Iniciativa Memoria Histórica*, IMH) in the second part of 2010 focusing primarily on the Northern Quiché. Members of this collective had already been working in the region for decades and had initiated a process of collective reconstruction of memory with local communities. Even after starting my research project in October 2010, I continued to engage with Guatemala from an activist perspective by collaborating with the Peace Brigades International project in Guatemala.

My most extensive engagement in Guatemala was that with ACOGUATE, a platform consisting of 10 different international solidarity committees, which provides international accompaniment to individuals and collectives, who have received threats or were attacked due to their work in defence or promotion of human rights. My role involved coordinating aspects of this program that includes among others physical accompaniment and advocacy work as well as periodic drafting of reports, newsletters and appeals for urgent action directed at the international community. These tasks required constant communication and

coordination with a number of activists, organisations and movements involved in a variety of human rights and social struggles. This proved to be an invaluable experience and learning opportunity as I was able to gain insights and accompany different organisational processes, among them struggles for land, demands for an end to impunity for crimes of past and present as well as resistances to different projects linked to the exploitation of natural resources. Apart from the strictly work-based relationships, my stay in the country also meant I established personal relationships and friendships with a range of people engaging in different struggles for social change. This previous experience of living and working in Guatemala constituted a central incentive for me to continue my relationship with the country and its people. I felt a research project would allow me to explore in depth some of the complexities and contradictions I had encountered during my time in the country. Especially as a steady increase in conflicts around the exploitation of natural resources became evident, I felt that the resistance of the local communities highlighted some of the crucial contradictions at the heart of the Guatemalan state and society, thus offering an intriguing field of research.

While my previous experiences in Guatemala enabled me to get insights into everyday lives and challenges faced by people and communities in rural and urban areas, it also generated certain scepticism with regards to the role played by the state and elites. This critical position was based on their historical role in perpetuating exclusion and violence, while it was also encouraged by the negative impact and conflictive situations I could perceive as resulting from some of the economic policies which were being promoted. However, I was intent on making sure these previous perceptions did not act as a bias in setting up the research and that my views were developed on the basis of observations and the investigative process as such.

The previous spells of working in the rural areas of the country also gave me a feel for the evolving complexity among the population. The population consists of four main ethnic groups that can be divided into Mestizos, Garifuna and indigenous Xinca as well as 21 linguistic Mayan groups, with the indigenous population making up about 60% of Guatemala's total population. This cultural diversity and the inter-ethnic relationships marked by racism and discrimination are a defining aspect of Guatemala's past and present. Reinforced by centuries

of racialised exercise of power and in recent history, the armed conflict and its legacy, this creates multiple layers of local histories, tensions and excluding relationships that persist in the current societal constellations. As I was able to confirm during my field-trips, in many cases deep communal divisions as well as conflictive environments especially in the rural area, mark a context in which the struggle for a living and survival constitutes the main daily challenge for large sections of the population. The features of the highly unequal society are reflected in data provided by the United Nations Development Programme (*Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo*, PNUD), according to which 62.4% of the population live in poverty (PNUD, 2012)

Already during my work as part of the coordination of Acoguate, I had established close links with the IMH, which was working on the recovery of historical memory in the Northern Quiché region. It consists of a small group of ladino activists based in Guatemala City and over 40 indigenous community members from the Northern Quiché region. I accompanied them in their work as part of my role in Acoguate between 2007 and 2010 and then continued to collaborate with the Initiative during various months in the second half of 2010. Over the years their focus on memory and collective reconstruction in areas strongly affected by the armed conflict was adjusted to incorporate the contemporary challenges the communities were facing. This meant the issue of natural resources was introduced and gained increasing importance as part of the process of the IMH. In recent years many of the community members of the IMH would also become key drivers of the network among communities that developed in the Northern Quiché Region and which I analyse in my case study presented in chapter 7. My relationship with the IMH continued throughout the research process as I supported different aspects of their work in the region, which in turn was crucial to increasing my understanding of the present and past of these communities. Additionally, this engagement and the long debates and discussions with members of the group were also crucial in recognising the limits to my ability to understand and decode the complex social and cultural relationships in the area (outlined below).

My previous work in Guatemala as part of the international accompaniment project as well as during my collaboration with the IMH also equipped me with a degree of sensitivity with regards to local processes. I became well aware of the

danger of reinforcing hierarchies of knowledge and practices that could in many cases occur just on the basis of the perception of my western origin. Therefore, when the opportunity arose, I was intent on underlining my respect for the autonomy of the organisational processes and acknowledge the communities' own knowledge production. Despite this respect for the local forms of organising, I was also determined to develop a critical lens. Accordingly, in the course of writing the thesis I have attempted to reflect the fragility, limitations and imperfect nature of the processes of collective agency I was analysing.

The years of relating with community-based processes had led me to reflect on the importance of understanding these expressions of agency, which despite their localised and often disperse dynamics represent one of the most persistent forms of agency in Guatemala. This encouraged me to try to get an in-depth understanding of these nodes of agency that in most cases don't develop along the institutional channels of the political system. In doing so, I realised they were in many cases engaging in a more radical critique of Guatemala's deficient formal democracy by operating outside institutional spaces and putting into practice alternative ways of designing political interactions at this local level. This is reflected as they draw and insist on the relevance of their localised production of knowledge and meanings. Additionally, this is evidenced in their struggle to appropriate decision-making processes, redesign political interactions and create local public spheres that by integrating participative elements become meaningful to the local population.

The possibility to engage in an in-depth investigation of the organisational processes in the Northern Quiché region was clearly facilitated by my continued engagement with the IMH. Their work in the region was continuously oriented towards accompanying community-based processes, while putting an emphasis on their collective and grass-roots character. As mentioned, many of the local community members participating in the IMH had become key actors within their communities, as they started to contest the interests linked to the exploitation of natural resources in their territories. The relationship with the IMH as well as the respective local community members was crucial during my field-trips, since it enabled me to accompany them on visits to the rural parts of Guatemala as well as access, participate in and observe numerous community meetings and assemblies.

The selection of the case studies for this thesis was also based on the idea to offer a reflection of the previously mentioned complexity of Guatemala's social actors. My initial plan had been to focus only on the organisational patterns of the Northern Quiché, where I had worked over several years. Nonetheless, in the course of my field-work in 2012 the RPLP was formed in response to the concession of a mining licence. As I had the chance to meet some of its members, it represented an opportunity to also integrate an examination of an organisational process among primarily non-indigenous communities and insert a comparative dimension into my research design.

I continued with this plan to include the RPLP in my research despite the fact that the previous links with the Historical Memory Initiative, the communities in the Northern Quiché region, as well as the contextual insights accumulated in previous years meant that there would be an obvious imbalance in terms of the level of information and in-depth understanding between the two case studies. Nonetheless, the fact that the RPLP's formation was a much more recent organisational process that I could track practically from its emergence in 2012 inclined me towards including it in my analysis. Additionally, the proximity of the protest camp to the capital city, where I was based during the field work, facilitated the research: Firstly, it meant that it was easier for me to visit and access the protest camp. Secondly, the proximity to the capital city also meant that the process enjoyed a much higher coverage by mainstream as well as alternative media. In turn this made it easier to stay up to date with ongoing developments even when I was not in the country.

Following the first exploratory visit in Guatemala I developed the main criteria for the selection of the case studies in line with my research framework:

They reflected ongoing processes of collective action; they constituted localised, community-based and promoted processes; their articulations were based on an antagonistic stance that challenged elite promoted notions of development and discourses around the natural resource issue; their organisational patterns were marked by attempts to re-appropriate local decision-making processes.

The two processes selected for my case study represented two examples among a number of expressions of agency that had emerged to highlight the antagonisms resulting from the policies targeting natural resources in rural

areas. Their focus on local and immediate issues exemplified by the defence of territory reflected characteristics they share with multiple nodes of agency across the country. The insistence on remaining in control of their immediate surroundings by seeking an appropriation of decision-making processes represents another common feature of this generation of agency that has emerged in historically marginalised spaces.

Additionally, I felt that both processes were reflecting on the design of internal political interactions and attempting to emphasise collective and horizontal understandings. This indicated that they did not just represent purely oppositional strategies of resistance. Instead, they were also seeking to revitalise and develop an affirmation of difference around organisational patterns. This meant I was also able to explore the implications of these localised expressions of agency for meta-political issues, not just due to their challenge to elite-designed policies, but also due to their experimentation around different ways of organising and engaging in politics. By insisting on the determination of their local spaces and on having a voice in policies regarding their territories, they both put forward a crucial condition for alternative ways of imagining democratic processes.

Type of data collected in the field

Primary data

As mentioned above, a central source of data gathered were the 40 face-to-face semi-structured interviews that were conducted during the field-trips to Guatemala. While the main period of fieldwork took place between April and October 2012 other visits were combined with trips I was undertaking due to my collaboration with Peace Brigades International. I was able to extend some of these visits to Guatemala to complete my data-collection. The first stay in October 2011 represented an opportunity for an exploratory visit to discuss the main ideas of my research project. Accordingly, I held conversations with a number of people working on issues close to my topic, whom I knew from my previous experiences in Guatemala. The second field-visit between May and October 2012 was centred on the actual process of data-collection. I had the opportunity of further trips to Guatemala in October 2013 and September 2014

to complement existing data and share initial results with key contacts.

Accordingly, the majority of interviews and participant observation was conducted during the 2012 field-work, while the following visits allowed me to bring my data up to date with the rapidly evolving processes and context in Guatemala. To achieve a variety of perspectives on the central issues of my research the people interviewed included members and representatives of a number of NGO's engaging in a range of topics around social, labour, economic and human rights issues; members and representatives of indigenous, community and campesino movements; members of think tanks and academics specialising on issues around social movements, democratisation and the state; current as well as former state officials. The initial interviewees were selected on the basis of the contacts I had made during my previous stays in Guatemala. In the course of the interviews I was introduced to other potential interviewees or received advice on who to contact based on my research interests.

The interviewees for the semi-structured interviews were selected in accord with two of the central levels of analysis of the thesis: The nature of the state, its central policies and internal organisational patterns, the role of institutions, the key actors surrounding it, as well as its economic policies. In doing so, I was paying special attention to the issues surrounding policies oriented at the exploitation of natural resources and the insights this aspect provided on the nature of the state as well as state-society relationships. The second emphasis was placed on the different social articulations emerging over recent decades and their organisational patterns; the conflicts and agency around the defence of territory as well as their implications for broader, meta-political issues such as the construction of democratic processes. As part of this second aspect the case studies obviously received a significant amount of attention.

Accordingly, the focus of the interview tended to vary slightly according to the perceived expertise of the interviewees. Many interviews also tended to shift towards ongoing events such as newly emerging conflicts related to natural resources developing in Totonicapán, San Rafael las Flores, Monte Olivo or San José del Golfo. Other themes featuring in the interviews were the nature of the state and its strategies to control the articulations in rural areas or to map areas of resistance and conflict. The interviews with individuals related directly to the processes examined in the case studies, were focused primarily on the

respective organisational dynamics and the context in which they were operating.

Apart from the formal interviews, numerous informal conversations were held with friends and former colleagues, mostly activists engaging in a variety of organisations. Due to my close relationship with the IMH and my continued engagement with this collective, the research process was filled with extensive debates on current political developments, analysis of events and media coverage as well as meetings with different organisations related to activities of the IMH. The group was also working on a publication on the Northern Quiché area that was based on numerous years of working on a collective process of reconstruction of memory, which I had accompanied during my previous work in Guatemala. In the course of writing-up for this publication, topics which in many aspects related to my research were constantly debated among the group. A further valuable source of information during the writing process was the field-diary in which I recorded my reflections and analysis almost on a daily basis during my fieldwork in Guatemala.

In addition to collecting primary data through written documentation and oral communication, participant observation played an important role in complementing this data. It constituted an important part of my visits to the areas where the organisational processes of my case studies were based, among them the visits to the Northern Quiché area. They were primarily conducted together with the members of the IMH. A series of meetings with community representatives in Nebaj, Cunén and Sacapulas, community assemblies at a municipal level as well as visits to specific communities featured among these journeys into the rural areas. During this process I was intent on limiting my role to observations as well as engaging in tasks for the IMH, such as writing up notes for the meetings or participating in elaborating preparatory materials. Following the same patterns, I engaged in participant observation in my visits to the protest camp of the RPLP, during which group and individual interviews as well as a series of informal conversations with community members were held.

A further aspect of this dimension of participant observation were the events, such as book presentations, press and thematic conferences which I attended during my stay in Guatemala. This information complemented the data collected

in interviews and participant observation by providing detailed information on ongoing events. Additionally, my links with a group of activists that had formed a Centre of Independent Media (*Centro de Medios Independientes*, CMI) allowed me to attend events such as a series of panel discussions between experts which they had organised. They had invited a number of activists and academics to debate and analyse some of the key aspects of ongoing economic and political developments. A large part of these debates that were recorded and later posted online, focused on the exploitation of natural resources. The observation of these discussions as well as the informal conversations around them again contributed interesting inputs for my research.

In the research process I clearly viewed the analysis of qualitative data as crucial to addressing my research objectives. This data was nonetheless complemented with a limited number of sources of quantitative data to add some statistical and economic information. For example, data from institutions such as the UNDP or the World Bank have been used in order to strengthen the qualitative analysis that constituted the main dimension of the research project. However, I felt that in order to uncover the outlined aspects of cultural complexity and the multiple socio-historical layers encountered in the field, the core analysis of the thesis would have to be based on qualitative data.

Secondary data

In order to complete the contextual understanding and to stay up to date with the rapidly evolving situation in Guatemala, secondary sources were consulted to frame the different aspects of the research project. Books and journal articles of scholars made up the core parts of the contextual as well as theoretical background. This was complemented by a continuous review of Guatemalan newspapers, primarily the daily editions of *Prensa Libre, El Periódico, La Hora* and *Siglo XXI*. Intermittent publications of *El Observador* as well as the Institute of National Problems of the University San Carlos (*Instituto de Problemas Nacionales de la Universidad de San Carlos,* IPNUSAC) with their analysis and review of ongoing events were further reports that were part of the body of literature used in the course of the thesis.

Online versions of *Plaza Pública* and alternative media-blogs such as

Comunitariapress as well as the CMI constituted further sources of information. They were especially important in providing a different perspective on ongoing social and political occurrences to the coverage offered by the main-stream media. Additionally, due to my links with individuals from the CMI, I also had access to video-material and recordings of events the organisation had covered while I was not in the country, such as the dialogue meetings between the RPLP and the government. This strategy of recording meetings and interlocution with state representatives has become relevant to the organisational processes as such. It enabled them to transmit the complete information on the ongoing negotiations to other members of the RPLP. Additionally, it made sure they would have graphic evidence of the claims and results of the negotiation process, in order to ensure government officials and company could not retract from them or issue false public claims. In a context where the mainstream media was in many cases directly nurturing a criminalising discourse against activists and communities, the importance of these alternative media sources has grown by creating a counter-discourse which is at least in part based on graphic evidence.

Methodological and ontological framework

Throughout the research process I was working on refining the research objectives, thereby implementing a 'problem-induced' research approach (Shapiro, 2005). Accordingly, I was focused on employing methods and theories best suited to explore the problem at the centre of the research. This approach bears strong similarities with the understanding of 'political ethnography' put forward by Schatz. As he argues, "the term political ethnography implies a creative tension. Ethnography suggests a particularising impulse, a desire to avoid premature empirical generalisation, and a preference for inductive thinking. … Political suggests a willingness to bracket aspects of what we see, to simplify for analytic coherence and to seek to produce generalisations." (Schatz, 2009b, p.306)

Accordingly, my research was moving at the interface of methods ascribed to political science and ethnography. This seemed to represent the appropriate combination for me as a trained political scientist who was also aiming to get to grips with the local complexities and cultural differences which I continued to

find in the field. Therefore, I saw my engagement with methods closer to anthropological understandings as indispensable. This was reflected by my interest in the characteristics of specific nodes of agency, the ongoing processes of production of meaning as well as their procedural and organisational understandings. The research was also examining meta-political implications of this agency by seeking to determine the implications of localised and non-linear articulations for issues at the heart of political science, such as the inter-relationship with institutions, the nature of the state as well as their role for understandings of democracy.

By engaging with social actors, community leaders and activists I was also intent on generating a bottom-up perspective on the research problem, which was encouraged by the ethnographic tools of data collection such as participant observation as well as interviews. In this line I aimed to take the complexity that was represented by the particular characteristics of these nodes of agency and their locally embedded processes of production of meaning as a starting point. By rejecting simplistic understandings of a supposed over-codification by modernity I argue for the importance of engaging with a range of methodological tools. This is crucial to generate a bottom-up perspective and grasp the complexity that in states with features like Guatemala is reflected in these localised responses and the understandings they articulate.

As Wedeen points out, ethnographic tools such as participant observation constitute "a good way to gain insight into actor's lived political experience, to observe how people make sense of their worlds, to chart how they ground their ideas in everyday practices and routines and to analyse the gap between the idealised representation and actual apprehension of events, people, and political orders." (Wedeen, 2009, p.85) Accordingly these tools were essential to exploring the localised understandings that are being advanced by communities around the defence of territory. Participant observation was especially crucial in getting these insights on the meanings that are produced in the course of their organisational processes.

By taking into account the methods of political science as well as borrowing from methods primarily associated with anthropological research I was able to relate this local agency with the context of a co-opted state. This linking of perspectives allowed me to put forward the idea of organisational processes

taking on specific features in this kind of context. Instead of engaging along the conventional channels of participation, they seek to appropriate decision-making processes and carve out spaces in which their 'difference' at the level of meanings and in terms of organising political processes can be kept alive.

Rather than producing clear-cut conclusions or generalisations around their implications for macro-political issues, the research attempts to introduce new ways of seeing and understanding the particular features of this collective agency. This coincides with Schatz's view of one of the central contributions of political ethnography. He highlights its ability to contextualise theory and consider alternative ways of understanding determinate aspects of empirical realities (Schatz, 2009a).

The engagement in contexts that are very much outside the area of influence of Western epistemologies also required an ongoing reflection on how my 'conceptual baggage' (Kirby and McKenna, 1989) as a Western researcher plays into the process of construction of knowledge in the course of the thesis. From the outset I was conscious of the fact that my research would represent a subjective interpretation of ongoing developments in Guatemala. Since the process involved translating my findings into meanings, I attempted to maintain a level of flexibility with regards to my conceptual framework in order to adapt it to the social realities on the ground. This aspect was especially important in establishing an assertive link with the analysis of the case studies during which I sought to integrate indigenous understandings and pay attention to the epistemological processes developed by local communities in the course of their resistance. While the thesis was always going to represent an approximation to social realities enacted through processes of interpretation, translation and production of meaning, I was intent on finding concepts and ideas that could reflect the movements and central understandings of the articulations and their own readings of social realities.

In the case of Latin America authors emphasizing the importance of de-colonial approaches have been influential in developing research that emphasises multiple worldviews and the epistemological processes deriving from them. Additionally, I have also engaged with a number of concepts developed by western scholars, whose conceptualisations are not specifically oriented towards the context of the Global South. In this line I have chosen to recur to

Deleuze's work since it grants space not just for different epistemologies but also places an emphasis on different ontologies. As outlined in chapter 2, this is evidenced in his understanding of 'difference'. This enables to frame the assemblages of collective action examined in this thesis with an immanent and auto-poietic understanding that evolves from different ontologies. 'Difference' in this sense does not only set up the assemblage engaging in collective action in an antagonistic stance, but also provides space for ontological difference as well as the epistemological processes evolving from it.

Based on these ideas I have also drawn on authors who have developed an understanding for a 'flat' and strongly 'relational' ontology that has been implemented in the analysis of collective action.[82] Scholars like Escobar and De Landa have argued for this ontological shift based on Deleuze's challenge to the conventional dualist ontologies that these authors see as having dominated social science (e.g. De Landa, 2002, 2006; Escobar, 2008; Escobar and Osterweil, 2009). Instead, they propose a flat ontological position that implies a perspective based on "unique, singular individuals, different in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status." (De Landa, 2002, p.41)

This prepares the terrain for an understanding of the co-existence and co-construction of multiple worlds that stands in contrast with ideas that tend to assume an over-codification of collectives and spaces. Instead, these authors provide elements that allow analysts to emphasise the capacity of local articulations to produce their own meanings and spaces. This is supported by ideas that point to the 'lines of flight' or 'patterns of re-territorialisation', which are operated by and from different nodes of agency. In doing so, they constitute a route for escape from the attempts of dominant actors to recode people and territories in accord with determinate interests (De Landa, 2006; Chesters and Welsh, 2006; Escobar and Osterweil, 2009).

In the course of my attempts to reconcile political science perspectives with methodological approaches such as participant observation that tend to be associated with anthropological research, I was also encouraged to reflect on my role with regards to the social actors at the centre of my research.

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[82] This has been treated more extensively in chapter 3. In this section I just mention the general features that have implications for the methodological aspects of the thesis.

Scholars such as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Burnham et al. (2004) have advocated the importance of maintaining a level of social and intellectual detachment while in the research context, in order to guarantee the production of viable analytical work. These positions stand in contrast to social movement scholars that criticise attempts to position research "outside or above the circular observer-actor game" (Melucci, 1996, p.396). As Chesters (2012) argues, this gives way to the danger of converting expressions of collective agency into objects of knowledge with the sole objective of enhancing a researcher's career. Instead he has argued for an ethical responsibility to respect the "ontological and epistemological frameworks of knowledge production that emerge from social movements" (Chesters, 2012, p.158).

The research relationship with the subjects in the field was an aspect I was confronted with in various interviews. A number of interviewees expressed their frustration over the flood of researchers coming to seek data for their respective research projects. While agreeing with the perspective outlined by Chesters (2012), in the course of my research project I found it difficult to balance some of the formal requirements of a research process for a thesis with the possibilities of engaging in a co-production of knowledge. As such I felt that the process of real co-production would demand a much more continuous and fluid relationship with the communities and actors. This, however, was met by logistical, financial as well as temporal constraints.

In line with the experience deriving from my previous roles as well as the ethical dilemma of seeing social actors as exploitable objects of knowledge, I attempted to ensure that my research project could flow alongside the organisational processes. This meant that my data collection methods should not interrupt or influence their strategies or objectives. In many spaces of participant observation this was made easier by the already consolidated relationship, based on my previous role in Guatemala.

In particular, the collaboration with the IMH in their work of providing accompaniment and support to the communities in the Northern Quiché area enabled me to introduce certain elements of a co-production of knowledge. In addition to support in specific tasks such as preparing materials or taking notes, on various occasions I was able to share my analysis or provide points for discussion during meetings and workshops. In the course of my fourth visit to

Guatemala the preliminary results of my research were shared and discussed with members of the two organisational processes that figure in the case studies of the thesis. Furthermore, with individuals linked to these case studies communication over Skype and email were continued and the chance for feedback on translated sections of the thesis was provided. Accordingly, a dimension of participative inquiry and co-production was inserted into the research process and enabled me to ensure a certain flow of information and analysis back to the communities.

Research Limitations

One of the main limitations in the course of the research was linked to my position as a western researcher examining a non-western context with the above-mentioned cultural and political complexities. Especially in the indigenous Northern Quiché region I was aware of limits on being able to adequately observe and interpret events. Despite the patient explanations by friends and community members from the Northern Quiché, I would struggle to develop a profound understanding of their thinking, views and ongoing production of knowledge.

The local Mayan languages (Ixil, Quiché, Sacapulteco) clearly represent a central element in guaranteeing the reproduction as well as evolution of cultural codes. My very limited knowledge of these languages that hardly went beyond the odd word or phrase has obviously represented barriers in terms of my capacity to de-construct and understand their sense-making activities. On the other hand, the fact that conversations between the different linguistic groups were often held in Spanish meant I was able to follow a large part of the conversations and meetings that took place between the different groups. Members of the Historical Memory Initiative, many with decades of experience in the region, were tireless in providing explanations and a translation across cultural barriers of events and discourses. At times the presence of ladino members of the IMH as well as myself was taken into consideration and discussions held in Spanish. However, especially at the small scale community meetings, the respective local Mayan language was predominantly used. Additionally, even in the communication in Spanish between the different communities across ethnic barriers, I am aware that much more was

communicated than verbally expressed.

I was faced with similar limitations with regards to the Mayan cosmovision: While I was able to gain insights in the basic ideas of this world-view, achieving a profound understanding would have required a prolonged and much more focused immersion in the field. This is also due to the fact that cosmogonic knowledge and linguistic structures as well as their reproduction among the population are constantly evolving. Even in the case of the predominantly ladino communities in the region of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc I realised the limitations in grasping the ongoing local processes of production of meanings and organising. Additionally, in this case the limited period and specific focus of my research meant I would obviously be missing many contextual elements that would add to a better comprehension of community members and their organisational patterns.

Although the significant differences and complexities between organisational processes stand out in Guatemala they also share features, especially with regards to the complex environment in which they are acting. This is marked by exorbitant rates of impunity and violence. This combines with widespread conditions of poverty, marginalisation and persisting expressions of racism to create an extremely difficult environment to exercise any kind of political or social agency. These contextual features also meant taking into account the safety of local interviewees and members of the organisational processes I was visiting. These considerations were crucial since the visit or participation in meetings of a foreigner was likely to attract attention that could have negative repercussions for the respective interviewees or participants. In some cases this led me to abandon ideas of holding interviews, while in other cases the context put certain restrictions on my movements in Guatemala City as well as the rural areas I visited.

As my research progressed I also realised that I would struggle to come to clear-cut, generalised conclusions for meta-political issues based on the restricted number of cases I had focused on during my fieldwork. Among the different nodes of agency that have consolidated around the defence of territories strong differences in their production of meanings, their organisational patterns as well as strategies are evident. As such the case studies I analysed cannot be seen as representative for the various nodes of agency that have

emerged in different parts of the country. However, this absence of generalisable conclusions also represents a research finding in itself, as it identifies the importance of dealing with differences as well as the complexity of localised processes and their understandings as a condition for any deepening of democracy.

The next chapters will turn towards the case studies that reflect the analysis of some of the main data collected in the course of the research. Accordingly, the following chapter will focus on a network of communities that over recent years has emerged around the defence of territory in the Northern Quiché. The analysis of this case study will also reflect the political ethnographic approach outlined here, by examining the production of antagonistic meanings and organisational patterns and also exploring how the communities relate with the elite-dominated institutional framework and how this has impacted on their agency.

7. 'Difference' in meaning and political practice: Community-based agency in the Northern Quiché region

In the previous chapter I outlined the methodological approach used in the research process for this thesis. I indicated the importance of combining anthropological and political science research perspectives in order to grasp the complex nature of non-linear social interactions and examine their relevance for the construction of democratic processes. In this chapter I will turn towards the analysis of some of the central aspects of the data collected in the course of the research process. I will seek to deconstruct some of the specific characteristics of 'assemblages' of collective action that have emerged in defence of territory by looking at a particular organisational process located in the Northern Quiché. After outlining the contextual aspects and the projection of elite interests in the region, I will examine the response to projects targeting natural resources which these local communities have generated. In doing so, I will develop a more detailed understanding of some of the key characteristics of this localised and community-based agency operating in the context of a co-opted state.

During the analysis of the organisational processes I will explore how the elite-guided modernisation project has encouraged the communities to highlight antagonisms related to two interlinked aspects: Firstly, at a symbolic level of the production of meanings, which are rooted in evolving linguistic and cultural frameworks that persist despite strong external pressures. Secondly, I will outline how based on the influence of meanings rooted in indigenous culture, the communities have also sought to organise political interactions in ways that contrast with those predominant in the formal political system.

In the course of the chapter I will argue that this elite-guided modernisation project has accentuated meanings around territory among the local community members that lie at the heart of their cultural reproduction and sense of collectiveness. Based on culturally rooted meanings, this has engendered a revitalisation of the 'community' that has acted as a signifier for the resistance and its political processes, in some cases overcoming divisions left by the legacy of the armed conflict. Additionally, the community members have added an explicit political notion to their 'difference' as these meanings translate into attempts to redesign political interactions and a struggle to re-appropriate decision-making processes. In doing so, they emphasise the voice of the 'local',

its differential production of meanings and autonomous decision-making as an alternative way of organising political processes.

Elite-designed modernisation in the Northern Quiché

This chapter focuses on an organisational process engaging in the defence of territory among communities in the Northern Quiché region. In the course of this thesis I use this geographical denomination to refer to the area of 5 municipalities, Nebaj, Cotzal, Chajul, Cunén and Sacapulas. They do not constitute an administrative region and are 5 of a total of 21 municipalities in the department of Quiché. However, among the community members of the network, it is the most commonly used term to refer to the space in which their organisational process has developed. Over 90% of the population in the mentioned municipalities is indigenous Maya, belonging to the Quiché (Cunén, Sacapulas), Ixil (Nebaj, Cotzal, Chajul) and Sacapulteco (Sacapulas) ethnic groups.

In the previous chapters I have already touched upon the region at various moments to point to its history of state repression and violence, while also indicating the trajectory of ongoing resistances in the area. Violence repeats itself throughout the Guatemalan state-formation process taking on multiple forms. In the region it has frequently complemented patterns of exploitation, such as forced labour for local estate-owners or the pattern of seasonal migration to the Southern Coast to work on the plantations. The strongest coercive impact in the region is linked to the armed conflict, which drew unprecedented levels of repression to the area. Additionally, the legacy of this period left large parts of the region militarised as different strategies of controlling and concentrating population sought to reconfigure cultural, social and economic relationships. However, as indicated in chapter 4, the region also has a history of acts of resistance, among them uprisings against the colonial and post-colonial administrations, the flourishing of cooperative networks in the 50s and 60s as well as the different strategies seeking to counter military control during the armed conflict. The various moments reveal the existence of latent networks of grass-root organising and coordinating— usually based on the framework of the community— that in certain moments appear in the public limelight.

As in other rural areas of Guatemala, the communities represent the predominant collective framework in the Northern Quiché region. Many are situated in the highlands of the region, withdrawn and only loosely connected with the urban centres. As discussed in chapter 2, based on Wolf's (1957) understanding, the concept of 'community' has often been suggested as constituting a 'closed, corporative social unit'. However, various scholars (Arias, 1992; Smith, 1992a; Lutz and Lovell, 1992) have emphasised the fact that communities should not be seen as 'closed', especially when looking at their economic or political relationships. Instead, this literature has indicated the tendency of communities to reconstitute themselves in relation to changing historical circumstances. This may explain a certain persistence in their unity, while also indicating their evolving nature, which is reflected among other changes in their economic orientation towards artisanal or commercial activities. Presently, strong differences among the various local constellations have to be acknowledged as they have developed by relating and responding to the variety of external impacts and contextual features.

As outlined in the definition presented in chapter 2, from an analytical point of view communities constitute aggregative bodies of individuals grouped into collectivities or 'assemblages' in De Landa's understanding. Varying degrees of social cohesiveness mark each unit. In Guatemala, anthropological literature has been keen to point to the relationship with the state as determining this level of cohesiveness. Accordingly, Smith has argued, "community relations remain strong, … not because of the dead weight of the past, but because of the continuing importance of community relations to an oppressed people ruled by an extremely repressive state (Smith 1992a, p.20).

While as mentioned, constantly evolving characteristics have to be taken into account, it is especially when shared meanings are activated by collectively perceived acts of injustice or threats. This can be the case when communal land or water is under threat, thus engendering a strengthening of the degree of cohesiveness as it 'makes sense' to act as a 'community'. A renewed convergence can be perceived in areas of the Northern Quiché region in the context of the struggles in defence of territory, even though the level of state repression has left many networks disrupted and penetrated by the counter-insurgent attempts to reconstitute 'community' in accord with the military's view.

The 'emerging properties' developed in the course of processes of convergence or 'assemblage', such as the discursive capacities, an increase in interactions or the articulation of shared cultural meanings, further stimulate a collective sense of belonging. This is reflected in the current struggles to defend local territory that has translated into a revitalisation of the evolving collective signifier of the 'community'. Given the contextual features of the region, the rural local population perceive it as the most efficient and trusted space from which to develop strategies of resistance and organise political interactions.

Despite constituting the primary framework of collective identity in the area, the communities in the Northern Quiché cannot be seen as idyllic social units. 'Community' represents a constant, dynamic tension and always risks to camouflage and repress internal differences or to stabilise certain hierarchies. In many cases the legacy of the 36 years of armed conflict continues to be reflected in the internal distribution of power and structure as perpetrators and victims share common spaces. In other cases, *principales* (elders) have consolidated a hierarchy to dominate decision-making processes within communities. Often this also constitutes a legacy of the past and a consequence of the redrawing of communal power-structures during the armed conflict. Other influences, such as the revitalisation of the role of indigenous authorities through funds and programmes led by international donors have also in some cases created tensions between different competing community authorities.

Additionally, the influence of the expansion of the market economy can be perceived even in remote areas of the region, constituting a further aspect that contradicts the notion of 'closed communities'. Instead it reflects the multiple layers of relationships communities and their members are embedded in. Especially, social programmes and projects targeting micro-societal levels and aimed at enhancing individual economic entrepreneurship in the communities, have added pressure on the collective framework.

In many communities the significance of shared cognitive and ethical understandings has also diminished as other identities are embraced and compete with the community identity. The association with one of the thriving evangelical or Pentecostal religious groups, many of which were originally introduced in the 1980s as part of counter-insurgent plans, feature among these

identities 'on offer'. Furthermore, the recruitment into one of the numerous NGOs that have entered the region during the post-conflict period, with different aid and development programs in many cases also encourage a tendency to disregard the collective community framework.

The complexity and variety of the communal organisations is also reflected in the formal political representation of the communities in the Northern Quiché region. Leadership tends to be conferred on traditional community authorities as well as authorities elected in line with the Law on Urban and Rural Development Councils. This legal framework was implemented in 2003 corresponding with the decentralisation policies outlined in the Peace Accords. Giving communities the right to nominate the members of the Communal Development Councils (*Consejos de Desarrollo*, COCODE) as well as their community representative, the *alcalde comunitario o auxiliar* (community or auxiliary mayor), was meant to ensure a stronger participation of communities in municipal policies.

However, in many areas of the region the Development Councils have been co-opted by municipal authorities, who have insisted on nominating favourable representatives as members of COCODEs and community authorities to avoid opposition to municipal policies. This has often engendered the constitution of new hierarchies, with some representatives claiming a status of a "COCODE for life." (Interview community activist, Sacapulas, 03/10/2012) In some cases this has also led to the consolidation or revival of power-structures that were established during the armed conflict within the communities with former military commissioners or members of PACs being nominated.

Community members voiced their scepticism with regards to these decentralisation policies that set out the Development Councils:

> *"The decentralisation laws have represented an arrow in the heart of communal autonomy and in many cases prepared the path for their (the communities') division. They have instilled a dynamic in the communal network that subordinates the internal decision-making as well as the internal search for solutions to problems. ... Instead, the communities are re-oriented towards the municipalities to look for projects, which in turn*

makes them vulnerable to the clientelistic policies that dominate the local level." (Interview community activist, Sacapulas, 26/09/2014) [83]

In the view of these community members, instead of empowering communities, these policies have encouraged processes of vertical integration of the rural communities into municipal structures. These have in turn in many cases been co-opted by local strong-men or national party networks that tend to undermine the autonomy of the community. A proliferation of patterns that makes community members vulnerable to short term electoral purpose can be perceived. In contrast to the original ideas, the role of many COCODEs has become limited to providing a type of democratic legitimacy or symbolic approval for municipal policies based on foregone decision-making.

In addition, the municipalities of the region have come to represent an important axis in rent-seeking activities with political parties acting as a web for relationships to transcend scales and link local groups with structures operating at a departmental or national level. Within these networks the multi-level links are crucial to guarantee the implementation of projects and contracts at the local level, since they ensure the transfer of funds for the municipal budget. This process on one hand allows rent-seeking networks and actors attempting to promote particular strategies of accumulation to consolidate around the municipal councils. On the other hand, it also ensures the implementation of projects essential for the consolidation of a clientelistic party following, which is required for local electoral success.

At the local level these networks involve a variety of agents including company representatives, municipal authorities, local estate owners, contractors, former local military commissioners, military officials or former commanders of PAC units.[84] The consolidation of political and economic networks rooted in the

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[83] In other areas such as Nebaj, the competition for community representation between the municipality and the communities has been strongly disputed over recent years. The former mayor (2007-2011) had nominated his community representatives, while the communities had nominated their own representatives, thus creating divisions and strong tensions within the communities. In some cases, even two years after the elections of 2011 the former COCODEs had refused to give up their position as community representatives.

[84] Historical and army connections are key to link local actors with regional and national networks. One is represented by the so-called 'promotion 108', which is integrated by former army members close to the current president of Otto Pérez Molina (2011-2015) and his party,

counter-insurgent past is especially strong in the Ixil, given the level of military penetration of the area. To a lesser degree, it also characterises the other municipalities of the Northern Quiché. However, the tensions brought to the communities by the organisational dynamics and structure of political parties represents a common feature. Especially in the context of electoral processes the divides and conflicts within the communities tend to peak. This constitutes the period when the national political parties arrive to distribute presents and bribes among the communities. Truckloads filled with cheap clothes, cans of food, fertilizers and in some cases even cash are distributed among the communities to win votes. Although the parties are promptly abandoned by voters after elections, this practice has often done enough to divide communities or bring processes of social organising to a halt (Trentavizi and Cahuec, 2012).

Similar to other parts of Guatemala, the region's natural resources have become the target of national and transnational actors. The renewed employment of coercive, economic and cultural strategies to advance these interests has led many local community members to highlight the link between the present penetration of the Northern Quiché region and the previous promotion of strategies of accumulation and rent-seeking embedded in the counter-insurgent campaigns. The IMH, a collective which has been working in the Quiché area since 2003, has undertaken an exhaustive analysis of this phenomenon in the region:

"In the communities we know and recognise the military has never left our areas. They have always been there, some permanently, others arriving (later) to claim rights over land, we have no idea of how they achieved them (property rights) unless they represent spoils of war. Now, as the companies came to implement their hydroelectric projects they again did so hand in hand with the military. In the Ixil area the military people

the *Partido Patriota*. In the region the most visible, high-profile actor is the Member of Congress and former military official, Estuardo Galdámez. In line with the dynamics outlined in chapter 3 he has benefited from a series of contracts for his construction companies while in turn ensuring 'projects' for local constituencies. Additionally, his involvement in acts of corruption and other illicit activities has been repeatedly signalled. For more information, see Palma (2012); Corvo (2014).

prepared their access. Subsequently, they went on to give them security,
they created their security firms for the companies to control the dissenting
and resisting population." (Resistencia de los Pueblos, 2008, p. 8)

The potential in terms of natural resources has long been identified by different sections of military and economic elites. However, as outlined in the previous chapter, the transition to a formally democratic framework as well as the global consensus around neoliberal policies has provided renewed impetus to set in motion this reorganisation of spaces in accord with the elites' interests. The link with the recent counter-insurgent past is reflected by the local actors that surround the implementation of the project. This is especially evident in the Ixil area, where landowners with a close connection to the military, former military commissioners and officers, as well as former PAC members have been crucial in paving the path for transnationals such as the Italian energy company Enel to establish itself in the area. Some of the historic landowners in the region have sold or leased their land in lucrative deals with companies. Other actors linked to a counterinsurgent past act as *testa-ferros* (frontmen) to acquire the plots of land required for the respective projects or provide security for the operations of the respective companies (Interview community activists, Nebaj, 08/11/2013).

The modernisation project in the region is expressed in concessions for mining and projects for hydroelectric power generation, the expansion of electric grids, as well as pressures to adapt local production to the demands of external markets. Hydroelectric projects such as the Xacbal or Palo Viejo projects are partly already in operation, others are under construction or awaiting authorization. Similarly, a number of mining licences have been granted for the exploration and exploitation of a variety of natural resources, ranging from oil and nickel to minerals such as barite.[85]

As indicated in the previous chapter, the transport and commercialisation of energy goes hand in hand with the exploitation of natural resources through mining or hydroelectric projects. It represents a lucrative business opportunity through electricity-exports to other Central American countries. Additionally,

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[85] Apart from the officially granted licenses, community members cited a number of unregistered extraction sites as well as exploration processes ongoing in the region. One was spotted by community members in Nebaj in November 2013 with subsequent investigations indicating that the company was operating illegally in the area.

supplying electricity represents a crucial pre-condition to enable the implementation and operation of projects aiming to exploit natural resources. Thus, the construction of an extensive network of electric interconnections and grids in the area represents a further, very visual dimension of the ongoing reorganisation of territories and spaces. In the region they are implemented through the governmental programs, the Programme for Rural Electrification (*Programa de Electrificacion Rural*, PER) and the mentioned PET, which are being executed by the Colombian company *Transportadora de Energía de Centroaméric*a (TRECSA).[86]

These programmes aim to establish a grid to connect more than 10 hydroelectric projects planned for the region and their implementation in ways that are similar to the promotion of hydroelectric and mining projects: Rights to previous information and consultation of the local communities are side-lined, while the governmental institutions seek to speed up their implementation through the approval of legal frameworks. The expansion of the electricity grid reflects this interplay between different scales, as the governmental accord 145-2013 was approved in 2013 to declare the implementation of the PET and PER a matter of 'national urgency and public necessity'. In doing so, restrictions on access to private and communal land to install posts and the transmission lines were abolished and instead legal frameworks were brought into place, which grant companies the option of a free usufruct of properties and land for a period of 25 years.

As the different dimensions of this modernisation project are based on legislation, which is often rushed through congress without debate, national elites frequently link its implementation to a discourse of governance and respect of the state of law. As an analyst commented, this represents an opportunity to appeal for the "preservation of governance from the centre of economic power, while the places where processes of resistance take place are deemed to be ungovernable. The intention is to reorder and organise territories in line with elite interests." (Interview human rights activist, Guatemala City, 25/07/2012) Additionally, the discourse on governance is accompanied by an explicit threat to use force in order to guarantee the rule of law. In the regional

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[86] TRECSA is the Guatemalan subsidiary company of the Bogotá Energy Group, one of the biggest electricity companies in Latin America operating in Colombia, Peru and Guatemala.

context this is reflected by patterns of militarisation, such as the temporary establishment of military posts in the local municipalities of Cunén in 2009 or Cotzal in 2012.

In addition to the concession of licences for natural resources, the projection of elite interests into the rural spaces also includes strategies targeting a micro-societal, individual level as pressure for changes in social behavioural patterns is exercised. This is especially persistent in agricultural production, which represents the prime source of survival and a crucial aspect of everyday life among rural communities. Community members are encouraged to 'modernize' by deepening their links with the broader market economy. A variety of governmental and non-governmental programmes— the latter in many cases linked to international development agencies— seek to pave the path for the integration of local *campesinos* into the national and global markets. A flood of international loans, grants and projects based on the premise that „prosperity can best be achieved through unfettered capitalism" seek to spurn this shift (Toruño, 2010, p.150).

The constant increase of institutions offering micro-credits as well as centres for social entrepreneurship for training and technical assistance to the local producers are part of this trend.[87] In the different programmes, orientation is provided to ensure local production corresponds to the demands of an external market. However, the exposure to the perils of climate, the lack of experience in growing unfamiliar crops as well as the cost of gaining access to markets has in many cases halted this evolution at an early stage. Instead, as community members have signalled, it has left large sections of the local population faced with a mounting level of debt (Interview community activist, Sacapulas, 26/09/2014).

The aspects highlighted in this section are only some of the dynamics that impact and reconfigure social, economic and cultural relationships in the Northern Quiché. Some features of this elite-guided production of space focus

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[87] *Fundación Agro*, one of the institutions that has been identified by the local community members as promoting these changes in production in the Ixil area, is especially paradigmatic due to its historic continuity in the area. Its work advocating changes in production patterns has been ongoing for decades with links to counter-insurgent strategies in the area during the 1980s.

on the individual level, seeking to instil entrepreneurial habits in the rural population. Others, such as the approaches linked to the exploitation of natural resources, due to their scale, impact at a collective and community level. The interests targeting natural resources introduce important shifts in the regional socio-political constellations, not only due to the reordering of local realities but also due to the resistance they have generated among local communities. Antagonisms have been highlighted as contrasting perspectives on how to organise social, economic and cultural relationships meet. As the following sections will indicate, it is especially in cases where the collective, community level is targeted that oppositional agency emerges.

'Same situation, same resistance': Establishing a network in defence of territory

As the projection of interests linked to the exploitation of natural resources in the region have gained pace, this has spurred collective organising as community members reacted to the penetration of their territories. The most intense coordination and exchange of information has occurred between community members within the same municipalities, which have also consolidated as the prime local focus points for their agency. However, at the same time a network was established with communities from neighbouring municipalities.

The case of Cunén, a small municipality about 68 kilometres north of the departmental capital of Santa Cruz del Quiché can be seen as an example of a seemingly spontaneous emergence of communities. A period of rising discontent over different aspects of municipal policies was followed by the militarisation of the municipality at the request of the mayor. This constituted a turning point and in January 2009 an estimated 4,000 community members gathered to establish a road-block on a regional highway passing close to Cunén.[88]

The emergence of these protests was unexpected since it constitutes an area with a limited tradition of social protest. It is part of a region which was marked by strong, local PAC-units that had kept control of the area during the armed

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[88] This place is known as the 'Entronque', the junction.

conflict. The events of January 2009 did however reveal latent community networks that were solidified in the face of a series of collectively perceived injustices and threats. Accordingly, the protests represented a specific moment of an organisational process that had been preceded by meetings and debates at a community level to prepare for this taking to the public space.

In the course of this mobilisation a series of demands were put forward by the communities that became known locally as the 'Accords of the Entronque' in reference to the place where the mobilisation took place. Multiple demands and concerns were featured in the document among them the chaotic and overly bureaucratic process to obtain new Personal Identification Documents, promoted by the National Registry of Persons (*Registro Nacional de las Personas,* RENAP); the withdrawal of the military from the municipality; the rejection of the presence of the National Police Force, as the population had grown tired of a series of incidents reflecting abuse of power and corruption; the increase in public transport costs; the high electricity fees charged by *Union Fenosa*, a Spanish transnational company at the time in charge of the distribution of electricity; concerns about privatisation of water due to a proposed governmental reform on the legislation on water; the communities' rejection of a mining licence in municipal territories, granted without consulting or informing the local population.

Over the following years it was especially the demands around the defence of territory and natural resources that consolidated as the central aspect of the organisational processes of the communities of Cunén. Together with other communities in Northern Quiché, they have gone on to constitute nodes in a loose network as community members in the neighbouring municipality of Sacapulas and the three Ixil municipalities of Nebaj, Chajul and Cotzal also developed organisational strategies around the defence of territory to respond to the penetration of policies and agents targeting the exploitation of natural resources. In most localities of the region the community represents the central organisational framework of interaction, decision-making and mobilisation. In areas, where inter-communal division persists, it is sections of the community that converge into assemblages of collective action and like other communities, go on to constitute nodes in a broader, regional network. This means the community-based organising at the municipal level has been complemented by

a loose network of alliances across municipal borders under the slogan of 'same situation, same resistance'. As part of the network, community delegates have engaged in periodic coordination and exchange of information to frame their resistance to the elite-designed policies targeting their territories and natural resources.

> *"It started with a frequent exchange of information which became very important for the respective communities, it is the moment where you realise that we all face the same situation and resistance. As we were exchanging information, we said, come over and struggle here with us as well, accompany us and it is this mutual accompaniment that has really strengthened and encouraged people to carry on."* (Interview community activist, Nebaj, 25/09/2014)

Over the years the mutual visits and the presence as an act of solidarity and political support in the different activities of the communities have consolidated as a crucial part of the network, thus determining the movement of people and information across municipal and linguistic borders of the Quiché, Sacapulteco and Ixil communities. Despite this integration of the communities into a regional network together with other communities facing similar challenges, the orientation of the different nodes is determined by the respective local antagonisms. Similar to the outlined process in Cunén, in Sacapulas, community members of Parraxtut, one of the largest hamlets in the municipality, had already formulated a statement that was sent to the then President Oscar Berger in 2006 to reject a mining licence. They reinforced their position by seeking an alliance with other community members from Sacapulas, as well as neighbouring municipalities to demand the cancellation of the concessions in their areas.

The strongest ties were established with the above-mentioned neighbouring communities of Cunén and the Ixil region. This means the network is marked by a bottom-up perspective as the local collectives seek alliances motivated by their respective needs and understandings.

> *"When the communal framework is used as a mobilisational framework it is automatically characterised by a horizontal understanding and a bottom-up dynamic, because they work on the basis of a constant search for internal balance and ideas of collective deliberation that are not always*

there but are integral to an understanding of a functioning community. ... In this sense they contrast with the organisational models promoted by the state." (Group interview community activists, Guatemala City, 07/11/2013)

Accordingly, the network of communities has been careful not to establish an internal hierarchy, specific format or central structure. Instead, it constitutes connections closer to what De Landa (2002) defines as 'meshworks': networks, based on decentralised decision-making, self-organization and heterogeneity. The different communities engage on the basis of their reading of social and political realities and while taking on a networked shape, the organisational process has sought to avoid the emergence of any hierarchical leadership structure.

These organisational processes also indicate that despite strong pressure on the communal framework by the different dimensions of the elite-designed modernisation project, these policies have in many cases failed to completely dissolve feelings of collective belonging or to reconstitute communities in accord with external interests. Just as there are factors that contribute to the breaking down of collectivities, "there is always the potential of a return to the community as other temporary identities lose their function or attraction. This means communities can in some cases re-consolidate and overcome deep divides." (Group interview community activists, Guatemala City, 31/10/2013)

The cases of Cunén and Sacapulas indicate how past divides between communities or community members can be overcome. This is at times even possible in cases of deep divisions and mistrust created by the participation of sections of the population in PAC units, while other community-members were victims of state and patrol violence. The antagonisms linked to the pressures on territory and natural resources instil dynamics into the Northern Quiché that encourages sections of the population to re-frame their sense of belonging around the community.

The drive of the communities to engage in interactions beyond the 'local' is, at least in part, down to the difficult contextual features outlined in the previous section. In doing so, they seek to avoid remaining isolated as they face powerful interests ready to engage in multiple strategies to ensure the implementation of their projects. The logic of the network with other communities has helped local community members gather information on planned projects in their territories.

It has also allowed them to seek support from human rights organisations with better access to institutions and the ability to give a broader resonance to their messages:

> *"The accompaniment and relationship with organisations is central to our struggle, while the communities have to remain at the heart of the process, this allows us to echo their voices and denounce our situation to a national public, so nobody can say they did not know about it."* (Interview community activist, Cunén, 24/07/2012)

They have repeatedly used these connections to echo their demands linked to frameworks on indigenous rights to a national audience by visiting congress or seeking alliances with other communities engaging in struggles to defend their territories.

In turn, the exchanges and alliances with other organisations and collectives beyond the region have also nurtured the strategies and discourses of communities in the Northern Quiché. One influence is the increase in references to and appropriation of legal language, such as indigenous rights. The legal frameworks represent useful tools to translate the struggles around the defence of territory into institutional understandings and add a notion of legality to their articulation. This link with legal frameworks to demand respect for communal autonomy and decision-making on issues regarding their territories is also reflected in most of the statements issued by the communities who form part of the network.[89]

Even though the knowledge of the exact legal framework can be vague among the community members there is a generalised conscience around the importance of demanding the compliance with laws as a strategy to defend their

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[89] An example for this link with legal frameworks is their prominence in statements such as the one issued by the communities of the Northern Quiché region in 2010: "That the word, opinion, decision and auto-determination of communities over their own lives, their own projects and their own lands be respected. In the same way we demand from the authorities that they exercise their functions in accord with those established in the political constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, the municipal code, the Law of Urban and rural Councils of development, as well as the International conventions and Treaties ratified by the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala, where they guarantee self-determination for the present as well as the future of the original people of the country." 'Memorial of Memorials' of the communities of the Northern Quiché Region, 06/05/2010.

territories. Legal references link well with the sense of injustice felt in the face of the external imposition of policies without consultation promoted by public and private actors. Additionally, in their discourses, the community members place an increasing emphasis on the fact that the indigenous people are subjects of rights. Therefore, their territorial claims should prevail over the respective national laws that regulate the exploitation of natural resources (Trentavizi and Cahuec, 2012). The embedded claims for self-determination also indicate how these interactions with the institutional framework as well as legal demands continue to be made with the 'local' and its problems in mind.

In the course of their organisational processes 'community' has acted as a signifier to revitalise resistance and highlight this antagonism emerging around the issue of natural resources. However, the analysis of the contrasting perspective between the communities and the actors seeking to implement the various projects cannot just be framed as a dispute over territorial borders and the distribution of resources. Instead, as the following section will indicate, it is important to take into account the symbolic aspects of action, where meanings and motives of behaviour are constituted. This provides an underlying explanation for this community-led agency based on the production of differential meanings and its rootedness in cultural and linguistic understandings.

Locally embedded meanings and cultural difference in the defence of territory[90]

> *"When the communities and peoples lose control over their own natural resources they at the same time give up their local and communitarian autonomy, therefore they also lose their internal democracy, their spaces of survival, their food security and the dependence from the outside begins. ... It is more, it interrupts the thread that connects the present life with that of their ancestors and their interpretation of reality."* (Interview community activist, Cunén, 25/09/2014)

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[90] Many of the conceptual elements presented in this section are a result of ongoing conversations and interviews with members of the Historical Memory Initiative, during November 2013 and September 2014.

As this statement of a community leader from Cunén indicates, in the course of the struggle around the defence of territory a conceptual framework of locally as well as culturally based meanings comes into play. Although continually evolving, in these processes of production of meanings a link between past and present is maintained and reflected in a reproduction of certain meanings, understandings and organisational patterns. Consequently, as community members stated, attempts to suppress elements of this conceptual framework, are perceived as an attempt to dissolve a collectively perceived root, which is reproduced in different aspects of language and thinking.

In the local Mayan languages of the Northern Quiché region there is no exact equivalent term for community and often the Spanish term is used. However, in the languages of the region the most common term to refer to a collectivity would be the term corresponding to a 'people', in Ixil *'tenam'*, in Quiché *'tinamit'* or *'tujaal'* in Sacapulteco. The meanings attached to these terms contrast with Western understandings and are based on a holistic notion of 'a people' that includes land, humans and all other cosmic elements sharing a determinate space. Accordingly, even when the term community is used, it refers to the *'c'omon'*, a more specific or geographically and numerically reduced notion of 'a people' with the same holistic understanding embedded in it.

These holistic understandings are reproduced in different linguistic features in the Northern Quiché Region and represent a central aspect of Mayan cosmovision and feed into their everyday practices. In Quiché *'jun k'abal'*, (literally one house) constitutes a term to refer to this unit or constellation of origin, which is made up of different cosmic elements. This origin is conceptually expanded into different scales going from the *jun k'abal* on to the *k'alebal* as the next unit integrating different *jun k'abal*. This leads to the next scale represented by the *c'omon*, the concept closest to the community, which in turn is followed by the *tinamit*, a people.

In an ideal-typical model the various spatial and political scales are framed around a matrix of time and space, which is characterised by a constant search for an equilibrium based on the complementarity between the different and diverse elements. This means within these conceptual frameworks elements are not distinguished according to their quality but according to the function they play or acquire as part of the respective unit. According to this understanding,

every element is indispensable and the current defence of territory in the Northern Quiché region represents a struggle not just for a determinate piece of land. Instead, it constitutes the defence of an integral part of a holistic constellation and understanding of reality. This conceptual framework at the same time maintains the link with the origin of a people and the failure of its reproduction would endanger a collective future or 'becoming'[91] of the people.

As part of this differential production of meaning, the local communities put forward an understanding of territory and space tied to the four cardinal directions. The dynamic properties of space are reflected in the fact that physical as well as social realities are framed as vectors not as fixed points. These directional coordinates derive from the passage of the sun with both, time and space being mapped along these axes. Accordingly, the east has a directional as well as a temporal connotation, constituting a moment 'where', as well as 'when' the sun 'comes in'. The west on the contrary represents the moment 'where' and 'when' the sun 'goes out' (Watanabe, 1983). This means they do not represent two points frozen in abstract space but instead constitute two moments in the sun's movement through physical space. As Watanabe indicates: "Space is only defined in reference to time, the diurnal and annual movement of the sun, and horizontal spatial directions themselves are more accurately conceptualised as vectors between or along the eastern and western horizons rather than as points in abstract space." (Watanabe, 1983, p.718)

Among the communities of the Northern Quiché, space and time maintain these dynamic properties, with the four vectors combining with a cyclical view of time to constitute a matrix into which the everyday social and political realities of the communities are woven. The different moments and elements within this matrix are located and filled with meanings, thus constituting a symbolic framework charged with meanings that are attributed to moments, locations as well as physical objects. Seemingly trivial aspects such as rocks, mountains or trees can acquire key meanings and associations according to their functions in this collectively constructed cobweb.[92]

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[91] 'Becoming' here bears similarities to Deleuze and Guattari's coining of the term that rejects the idea of fixed, static identities. Instead they emphasise the relational character of elements resulting from a generative process of influences (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

[92] This conceptualisation is close to an understanding put forward by Tischler Visquerra in his

This framework continues to develop in order to come to terms with the evolution that is integral to cultures and identities. The introduction of Spanish words into the local languages represents a clear example of this constant process of actualisation. On the other hand a link with traditional meanings is maintained over time and the revitalisation of these meanings acts as a guarantee to stimulate a sense of collective belonging. Despite its evolution, language seems to continue to have a stabilising effect on the collective sense-making activities and encourages a shared coding of social realities despite strong pressure on the collective processes of production of meaning.

The consciousness of the fact that their individual and collective reproduction depends on the territory feeds into the revitalisation of collective communal frameworks:

"*The territory is the environment that surrounds us, the mountains, air, water and all the hills. The earth is our mother that provides us with food to survive in our everyday life. She is also the mother of animals and trees. To join our community and struggle as a community to defend our territory is the only option left for us to do.*" (Community meeting Nebaj, 27/12/2012)

Additionally, as Trentavizi and Cahuec outline, the meanings attributed to land are not that of a source of enrichment or an opportunity to exploit:

"Space is not objectified as a resource, territory constitutes the life-space. The identification between land and life is a personal and collective relationship that attracts the individual but also the collective in its totality. The threat to the territories represented by the extractive licences and the concessions are seen and felt as a direct threat to the life of the communities …." (Trentavizi and Cahuec, 2012, p. 64).

Accordingly, in the course of the engagement around the defence of territory the attachment to land and territory accentuates cultural, political as well as spiritual meanings that are embedded in Mayan cosmovision. These processes can be seen as a reaffirmation of trust in the knowledge produced by the indigenous people and their ancestors, thereby contributing to upholding the connection

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essay „La memoria ve hacia adelante. A propósito de Walter Benjamin y las nuevas rebeldías sociales." (Tischler Visquerra, 2010).

and inter-dependence between land and the collective identity of the communities. It is seen as having been transmitted over generations and representing the most reliable framework to enable their survival:

"It is also a political and historical fact that in Guatemala the real administration and control of the natural resources has been in the hands of the peoples and communities of the country. It is thanks to them and their knowledge that the peoples have been able to survive until today." (Interview community activist, Sacapulas, 26/09/2014)

As the policies around the elite-guided modernisation target the local communities or '*c'omon*' as a holistic unit, they are also seen as side-lining the production of knowledge and meanings around which their collective dimension evolves. As a member of the IMH indicated:

"The central dimensions are the collective and the exchange of forms of knowledge, they mix, change and correct themselves. From this experience "words" (or meanings) emerge but they constitute a type of knowledge that the state does not value, it seems irrational to the state. Nevertheless, it is this knowledge that has guaranteed the survival of the peoples and therefore they prefer to trust in it." (Interview community activist, Sacapulas, 26/09/2014)

These references to knowledge bring up parallels to the 'epistemological divide' (Santos, 2007)[93] that has been highlighted between different forms of knowledge production, as local community members resist the hierarchies of knowledge that are very much part of the vertical imposition of development and policies.

Accordingly, the defence of territory led by local communities also addresses a symbolic level closer to the Deleuzian notion of 'reterritorialisation' outlined in chapter 2, as they contest dynamics that interrupt their production of meanings or constitute a threat to crucial aspects of their holistic understandings and

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[93] This is based on Santos' work framed around the idea that western thought has attributed the universal distinction between true and false to modern science, granting it a monopoly on epistemological disputes between scientific and non-scientific truth. This occurs at the cost of marginalising other forms of knowledge such as those based on epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2007).

epistemic processes. This means their struggle also becomes a struggle to defend a relational conceptualisation of reality which, on one hand links the 'individual' to the 'collective', and on the other hand, relates 'humans' to 'nature'. In turn, these understandings act as a collective reference to indicate a common root or the 'origin' of a people. The collective perception of the threat at this symbolic level posed by the elite-guided modernisation projects has added to this revitalisation of the communal framework, leading them to take to the public space in order to articulate their dissent. While this increasingly public character of their articulations has contributed to make their 'difference' at the level of meanings more evident, it has also given indications of how these culturally rooted meanings contribute to alternative ways of organising politics, thus politicising their 'difference'.

'Difference' in political practice: The community consultations in the Northern Quiché

As mentioned in the previous section, the threat posed to the local territories has contributed to a revitalisation of the conceptual framework and accentuated meanings for communities to engage in the defence of territory. This section will examine to what extent this difference in meanings has also translated into political patterns in the course of the organising processes among the communities in the Northern Quiché region.

These processes have led to the organisation of community consultations[94] in Cunén and Sacapulas. Two crucial aspects have been associated with these consultations. Firstly, the internal aspect to discuss and consolidate a position that ensures the support of the community members for the articulation of the defence of territory. Accordingly, an inclusive process of decision-making on the basis of 'good information' is seen as a guarantee for the sustainability of the organisational process by emerging from specific needs and problems faced by

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[94] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the consultations with regards to the exploitation of natural resources had consolidated as a practice of struggle following the first consultations in the municipalities of Sipakapa and Rio Hondo in 2005. Although historically constituting part of communal decision-making in indigenous territories, the format of municipal and communal consultations has been revitalised by the organisational patterns of communities in resistance to the exploitation of natural resources across the country.

the community. Secondly, as an external aspect, the consultations also represent a symbolic act to convey a political statement to society and the state institutions. They highlight the capacity to create public spheres on the basis of the communities' realities, their participation and conceptual understandings in an attempt to appropriate decision-making on issues that have a transcendental impact on their territories.

As one community member stated:

"The community based consultations grow from the needs and problems of the communities, as we try to determine how we shall go about defending our communities as well as our territories and natural resources that are part of them. This is not a matter of political parties, it is not a question of struggling for power, it is a question of protecting our communities and emphasising their own legitimate right to decide on how we shall march as peoples." (Meeting of community delegates, Nebaj, 07/06/2012)

Additionally, the conceptual framework presented in the previous sections continues to feed into these ways of designing political decision-making and deliberation:

"The community assemblies that are being held by the people of the Northern Quiché result from the needs and views of the communities that are under threat. They are based on our ways of understanding the world that have always been part of the peoples' decision-making even though they have been weakened in many cases. As community members it is our role to guarantee that they represent inclusive processes to agree on a consensus and find decisions for common responses and solutions to our problems." (Meeting of community delegates, Nebaj, 23/07/2012)

In Cunén, the proposal to hold a Good Faith Community Consultation[95] was first brought up during a series of community assemblies which represented the

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[95] As indicated in the previous chapter the Good Faith Community Consultation is one of the two types of municipal referendums that have been held in different parts of the country with the Neighbourhood consultation representing the other. The main difference is the legal frameworks they are based on: While the Good Faith Community Consultation is based on international conventions such as the ILO convention 169 the neighbourhood consultation is based on national legislation such as the Municipal Law.

follow-up to the mobilisation of community members in January 2009 (mentioned in section 2). In the course of this community assembly, local authorities and state officials were called to respond to the population's demands with over 1,000 community representatives taking part in the meetings. At the same time immediate solutions to certain demands were sought, such as the withdrawal of the military from Cunén. The intervention of the military had been called upon by the municipal authorities in response to the growing unrest preceding the mobilisation.

Additionally, in the aftermath of the protests, a Community Council was formed and 16 community leaders were nominated with a mandate, "to defend territory, land and natural resources of Cunén" in line with the ideas of representation outlined in the previous section. In doing so, the communities created a body parallel to the formal municipal institutions, tasked with monitoring municipal policies. On the other hand, it was also equipped with a mandate to echo the voice and decisions of the communities, especially with regards to the opposition to the exploitation of natural resources.

The subsequent assembly of all the communities of the municipality in July 2009 was already oriented towards the preparation of a Good Faith Community Consultation. Different organisations and experts were invited to explain legal and political dimensions of the community referendum as well as analyse the potential environmental impact of the planned projects oriented at the exploitation of natural resources. In the course of these assemblies the communities also consolidated a network of organisations and actors - specialising in indigenous, human rights or environmental issues- to provide accompaniment, logistical support as well as observation in the course of this community-led process.

The patterns of Cunén were up to a certain point replicated in neighbouring Sacapulas, where since the beginning of 2009, information on the different plans for the exploration and exploitation of natural resources through mining and hydroelectric projects had begun to reach the communities and sectors of the municipality. A provisional committee was created to promote a community referendum and on 7th February 2011 the communities established the Coordination of Communities of Sacapulas in Resistance and in Defence of the Natural Resources and the Environment. This was integrated by community

delegates with a similar role to that of the Community Council of Cunén. As in Cunén, in Sacapulas the Coordination played a key role in distributing and facilitating information to the communities in the period leading up to the first general assembly of communities held on the 9th of April 2011. It was in the course of this assembly that the organisation of the Good Faith Community Consultation for the 20th of May 2011 was approved by more than 2000 delegates from the different micro-regions and sectors of Sacapulas.

These general community assemblies brought together community delegates from the entire municipality as well as delegations from neighbouring regions. They played an important part in strengthening the role of the Coordination of Communities of Sacapulas as well as the Community Council of Cunén with regards to the municipal authorities, who continued to question their role and representativeness. In this context the capacity of the community delegates to mobilise the communities around the defence of territory represented a show of strength. Thus, the assemblies were often held in presence of thousands of community representatives and residents, adding pressure on the local authorities to respond to the communities' demands or at least not to stand in the way of their organisational processes.[96]

The Good Faith Community Consultation in Cunén was held on 27th of October 2009 with a total of 18.924 people of a total population of 32.903 participating in the voting, representing a turnout of 58% of the population, of which 11,116 adults and 7,808 minors rejected the presence of national or foreign companies

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[96] As a result, in the case of Cunén the mayor and the municipal council in 2009 adjusted their position not towards leading or organising the process but by validating it and the relationship with the Council of Communities even if only temporarily, improved. In Sacapulas, the communities had strategically waited for the newly elected major to take up his position before outlining their strategies regarding the defence of territory and natural resources. However, the relationship with the municipal council continued to be tense. Nevertheless, the reiterated mobilisation of the communities did in this case also create openings and the municipality gave in to the pressure of the communities by publishing two municipal accords, one to call for the referendum, the second to validate its results. In the case of Sacapulas the Catholic Church also constituted an important ally, as it acted as a platform to strengthen the coordination and exchange of information between community leaders, while also constituting an important symbolic backing for the community based movement.

and/or individuals that appropriate and exploit the natural resources of Cunén.[97] In Sacapulas the consultation was held on 20th of May 2011 with 103 communities and a total of 28,209 people participating in the consultation to emphasise their rejection of the mining and hydroelectric activities proposed by the central government.

As the numbers indicate, the degree of participation in the assemblies, organisational processes and consultations around the defence of territory easily surpasses participation in formal electoral contests. This signals a different kind of appropriation of these processes as they are framed around needs and demands emerging from the community members. It also indicates the potential for meaningful public spheres to emerge at this local level, when they are embedded in the production of meaning and spaces of the communities.

Following these consultations, a series of further municipal assemblies have been held in Cunén and Sacapulas to re-emphasise the 'voice of the communities' and the decision taken. In the Ixil region, given the weaker organisational patterns due to the contextual reasons outlined in the previous section, no municipal consultation was organised up to date. However, a series of consultations at a community level have been organised. Additionally, in April 2013 a municipal assembly, in the presence of almost all communities was held, to re-emphasise their position around the issue of the defence of territory and the different dimensions linked to the exploitation of natural resources.

The various municipal assemblies in the Northern Quiché have had an impact in solidifying the organisational processes and mutual recognition among the communities. They have constituted a platform for participants from the communities to engage in an exchange of experiences and information, collectively frame their articulations as well as consolidate spaces of solidarity and mutual support. Additionally, it is important to not just take into account the more public events at the municipal centres that often take place with thousands of participants. All the municipal assemblies and consultations were preceded by dozens of preparatory meetings and assemblies within the

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[97] While a number of consultations had been held in other departments, Cunén represented the first case in the Quiché region and has since been followed by others. Accordingly, it acted as an incentive for other municipalities in the region to promote consultations.

communities that at the same time constitute the central deliberative arenas. It is also at this level that the attempts at re-conceptualising representation or creating more inclusive processes of decision-making are initiated.

As part of the struggle for the defence of territory, among the communities in the Northern Quiché the model of a community 'delegate' as elected and legitimated by the community assembly has been promoted. In an attempt to counter the co-optive practices of the institutional nomination process, the 'delegate' is submitted to the collective decisions of the community. This is seen as a way of revitalising understandings of community authority "not as an authority but as providing a service to the community." (Interview community activist, Cunén, 25/09/2014) The community delegate' is seen as receiving the faith of the community assembly to transmit their 'word' with regards to a certain problem without being equipped with decision-making power. The most important aspects in the nomination of community representation are the merits and services in the name of the community as well as the degree of representativeness in the eyes of the community members.

The community delegates who form part of the mentioned coordinating bodies in Cunén and Sacapulas played a crucial role in the preparatory process as well as in the follow-up by bringing information to the communities to ensure it constitutes part of the decisions at the community level. At the same time the 'word' of the community, i.e. the decisions and demands are then brought to the general, municipal assemblies through the respective community 'delegate'. A similar process is followed after the general assembly, as the 'word' of the assembly is brought back to the communities by the community 'delegate' and the information shared. This circular dynamic that has been highlighted by Trentavizi and Cahuec (2012) in the case of Cunén, has been promoted among all the communities participating in the network of communities in defence of territory in the Northern Quiché region.

As mentioned, the delegates are not equipped with decision-making powers when they take part in meetings outside the community space since the information has to be presented, discussed and validated by the community. It is in these communal spaces, where the decisions are taken which means that they can represent laborious and time-consuming processes, as the different stages have to be respected in order to reach a decision. Often this lengthy

decision-making process can cause friction with formal institutional spaces that demand immediate decisions to be taken and implemented. However, within the network there has been an insistence on the fact that any decision with a potential impact on the community has to be taken by the community-plenary in order to guarantee a consensus is shared and sustained within the community.

While these measures of inserting participative dynamics into decision-making processes clearly represent steps towards organising political processes in a more inclusive way, there remain many challenges. A crucial challenge can be identified with regards to the gender balance. The large majority of delegates elected by the communities continue to be male, even though a considerable part of the participants in the respective community assemblies are female. To develop a deep understanding and get to the ground of the complexities of gender relationships especially within the communities obviously surpassed the possibilities of this research. However, patriarchal patterns that constitute such a dominant aspect of Guatemalan society also clearly feature in social interactions within the communities in the Northern Quiché.

On the basis of insights gained during the visits and conversations in the communities, I was able to identify two dynamics: On one hand, the interiorisation or reproduction of patterns on behalf of female community members within the communities that the roles of representation and taking part in meetings should be assumed by men. On the other hand, the little encouragement on behalf of male community members to break with these established patterns that consolidate a certain masculine dominance in the communities. Although community members emphasised that the prime space of decision-making was that of the community assembly, where the participation tends to be inclusive, there still seem to be limitations in terms of an approach to promote a greater degree of inclusiveness with regards to female participation. These aspects also underline that 'community' cannot be romanticised. Just as in any other social assemblage it is always marked by dynamic tensions and risks hiding or stabilising internal differences and hierarchies.

Nevertheless, the various moments of these decision-making processes still indicate how the 'difference' deriving from their production of meanings is also translated into a 'difference' in political practices. Hence, by emphasising

participatory and inclusive aspects, 'difference' translates into practices and equips their antagonistic stance with an explicitly political notion. Additionally, within the communities of the network there is a strong feeling with regards to the irreversibility of a position that has been articulated. This means that once the decision has been consulted, discussed and taken, it is to be respected and implemented by the responsible authorities.

This stance is also maintained in their interrelationship with state institutions and national elite factions as the communities have sought national platforms to echo their position. In the course of the process surrounding the community consultations, community delegates from the Northern Quiché have repeatedly visited congress to present demands of the communities as well as the results of the community consultations by putting emphasis on the decision that has been taken: "... we have to bring the word of the communities of the Northern Quiché … the word of the communities has already been spoken, the government and the ministries are not the ones to decide, we already told them no, which comes from the peoples, the communities." (IRRMH, 2013, p.431)

In this sense the engagement with legal frameworks as well as a link with state institutions constitutes an inevitable part of the communities' strategy in defence of their territories. As an analyst stated:

"They won´t find any responses there (with the institutions), they find their responses in the communities. The state on the other hand will try and even use force to introduce the communities into a different logic. There is a certain recognition involved in them arriving at congress but the idea is to seek the necessary information in order to be able to take decisions and react on the basis of it. Additionally, it represents a strategic rapprochement so they can´t just wipe them out by force." (Interview anthropologist, Guatemala City, 03/10/2014)

Hence, the relationships with the institutional framework can be seen as part of a strategy to avoid falling into the trap that can await antagonistic agency. In line with Melucci (1996), Chesters and Welsh (2006) have indicated that some kind of engagement with institutional spaces and political representation is key to avoid an "expressive escapism" or zero-sum constellations that elevate the risk of violence in the conflict (Chesters and Welsh 2006, p.118). The communities of the Northern Quiché recognise they are walking a thin line given the

characteristics of a co-opted state, and that elites will use informal mechanisms, the support of state-officials, legal frameworks and public security forces to challenge the potential opposition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the established patterns of criminalising communities and activists constitute a crucial feature of these dynamics.

The communities move between different levels and discourses in their articulation as they seek to carve out spaces that can guarantee the future and difference of their communities. The engagement with national arenas such as congress or national institutions is far from the trusted space of the community. However, this inter-locution with the centres of policy and decision-making is promoted with the 'local' in mind and to advance a message to the national public by stating their dissent with the patterns of neoliberal reordering targeting their territories. In the process they also seek to deepen their spaces of coordination with communities from other regions facing similar situations and with urban organisations with the legal know-how to translate their demands into the language of the state. Accordingly, crucial organisational energy is oriented towards carving out local spaces and appropriating decision-making processes. Though there is also a demand towards the state on the basis of the respective legal frameworks to recognise their right to self-determination and the existence of autonomous practices.

This means in the course of their organisational processes to contest the elite-guided modernisation project, the communities also outline a crucial condition for the framework of democracy in Guatemala. It is in these local spaces where meaningful public spheres can be established that enable the integration of these differential meanings and practices into political processes. The communities signal that the voice, spaces and rights of the communities as well as their difference, which up to date have been ignored, are to constitute a starting point for different ways of imagining democratic processes.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on expressions of community-based agency in the Northern Quiché region that have emerged over the last decade to contest an elite-designed reordering of spaces and territories. The various aspects of the

modernisation project for the area include concessions for mining and hydroelectric power generation that go hand in hand with programmes for the expansion of electric grids. Due to their scale, these aspects impact at a collective and community level, while other features, such as programmes seeking to instil entrepreneurial habits among the local population, also target the individual level. Especially in cases where the collective, community level is targeted, antagonistic agency has emerged into the public space.

Over the last decade the communities of the Northern Quiché region have gone on to consolidate a loose network with different spaces of coordination in their struggle in defence of territory. These activities involve meetings to discuss and analyse information, coordination for the organisation of events and public action, mutual accompaniment and solidarity in demands to local authorities as well as the joint framing of demands directed at national institutions. In the course of their agency the community members face a complex environment as they overlap and share spaces with the divisive influence of political parties as well as networks with a counter-insurgent past that in many cases have connected to and promoted interests around natural resources.

In order to conceptualise the resistance of the local communities, I have argued for the importance of taking into account their culturally rooted meanings that are reproduced in language and thinking. These meanings have been accentuated in the course of organisational processes and framed around the community, which has been revitalised as a collective signifier around which the defence of territory and various strategies of resistance have been constructed. The revitalisation of meanings around 'community' and 'territory' has also nurtured the forms of local political practices as evidenced in the organisation of municipal and community consultations that rejected the exploitation of natural resources in the region. Based on understandings of 'delegates' instead of 'representatives', the 'circular' flow of information, and by promoting the community assembly as the centre of decision-making, the communities have sought to introduce modes of political interaction that contrast with dominant institutional patterns. While challenges remain, from their local spaces the communities contest elite patterns of decision-making as they signal that the voice, spaces and rights of the communities as well as their difference are to constitute a starting point for democratic decision-making.

To give an understanding of the particular character of each organisational process engaging in the defence of territory, the following chapter will turn towards analysing an expression of collective action that has emerged among primarily non-indigenous communities in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc. The chapter will highlight how 'difference' at the level of meanings and political practices can be constructed not just by being rooted in cultural traditions. Instead it indicates how this antagonistic stance can be developed in relatively short-term processes and draw on the demographic complexity found in local contexts.

8. The defence of territory as an affirmation of life: The Pacific Resistance of La Puya

In the previous chapter I focused on an expression of collective agency that has emerged among indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché Region. I highlighted a revitalisation of culturally rooted meanings as crucial to the organisational process and as translating into attempts at redesigning political interactions at this local level.

This chapter will offer a detailed account of another expression of collective agency that has emerged around the defence of territory. It examines an organisational process involving community members struggling against a mining project in a region, where the influence of ethnic difference is less apparent: The composition of the communities in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc is marked by a majority ladino population, although there is presence of Maya Kachiquel population concentrated primarily around the community of Nacahuil. Accordingly, a significant part of the local community members opposing a mining project, *Progreso VII Derivada, El Tambor*, located in an area between the two municipalities, is non-indigenous. They have converged into an assemblage of collective action, the RPLP and have established a protest camp at the entrance to the prospective mining project. This camp has since consolidated as an important space of reference for their struggle and has been maintained by community members since March 2012, despite various eviction attempts by public security forces.

In the course of the chapter I will argue that in the case of the RPLP their antagonistic stance or 'difference' has consolidated as a result of a short-term process, in which a physical and symbolic space for the community members to engage in collective sense-making activities was created. In doing so, the RPLP has drawn on a diversity of meanings as well as knowledge that draws on the experience of rural life as well as the complex constellation of the local population. Additionally, similar to the previous case study, a political notion has been added to their 'difference' and is reflected in their central demands: In their struggle to contest vertically imposed decisions, the community members have also introduced a deliberative arena and horizontal political practices into their organisational processes that contrast with those predominant in institutional spaces.

Municipalities beyond the outskirts: San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo

The municipalities of San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo as well as the respective communities that form part of their administrative unit are located in an area between 15 and 30 kilometres from the capital, Guatemala City. Too withdrawn to form part of the capital city they are nonetheless too close not to be affected by its dynamics. The municipalities are often referred to as the dormitories of the capital due to the number of residents that commute to the capital on a daily or weekly basis. This also means that some communities are almost deserted during week-days with a flux of returning residents revitalising them during week-ends and holidays.

In the country's recent history, the area was spared from large-scale violence during the armed conflict. The region was largely under control of the military due to the proximity to the capital, which meant it could displace itself swiftly into the area when required. Additionally, a well organised network of PACs stretched across the area, exercising its own control in the municipal centres as well as in the surrounding communities. In the course of the post-war period this network has since been reactivated on various occasions as different political parties have promised to meet their demands for compensation-payments for their services during the war in exchange for electoral support.

Over the decades following the Peace Accords the official political interactions were dominated by the urban centres of the municipalities with the main national parties competing for control over the municipal councils in the electoral contests. As in many other parts of the country this has led to local figureheads being in power for lengthy periods with local and regional rent-seeking networks consolidating around the municipal governments. These are intent on promoting their business interests and negotiating access to rents primarily through construction contracts and municipal funds. The longevity of mayors in the respective positions combines with their frequent change of political parties as they seek to ensure their permanence in power in line with

the predominant patterns in the national political landscape.[98]

One of the most obvious rent-seeking networks based on local power structures in San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc has been set up around Alfonso Medrano, mayor in the neighbouring municipality of Chinautla since 1986, referred to as the Medrano-network. Through a range of over 24 private entities and companies he is seen as a powerful influence in municipal governments of the area, primarily by brokering contracts and public funds for infrastructural works.[99] As a local community member stated "over the last decades the local mayors have constituted little more than Medrano's puppets." (Group interview, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012) While his direct control over the municipal council of San Pedro Ayampuc seems to have diminished slightly since the 2011 electoral contest, his influence in San José del Golfo, where he possesses a number of properties remains strong.

Zamora quotes a cynical comment made by Medrano, which sums up the clientelistic dynamic integral to these networks: "No way, once one comes to power one will be giving work and assign projects to his enemies...They have to be for relatives, friends, employees and fellow party members." (Zamora, 2014) The operations of this network have largely remained unperturbed by state institutions. When public investigations are stepped up this is usually down to alterations in the political equilibrium, with negotiations behind the scenes determining if cases are dropped or not. Recent evidence for this trend was the arrest of Medrano and Elzer Palencia, the mayor of San José del Golfo in April 2013 under charges of corruption and money-laundering, only to be released hours later.[100] Despite facing various legal claims and allegations on corruption, money laundering and influence peddling, up to date Medrano and his allies have been able to avoid prison sentences.[101]

When looking at contextual aspects of the expression of collective action that

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[98] E.g. in the case of San Pedro Ayampuc Eduardo Ávalos had been mayor for 22 years until the elections of 2011 brought Roberto Amparo Aquino Catalán to power. The mayor of San José del Golfo, Elser Fidelino Palencia Mayen is currently serving his third period in office.

[99] More information in Gamazo (2012).

[100] More information in Montenegro (2014).

[101] In July 2015 the CICIG indicated a reactivation of the case against Medrano and publicly called for a preliminary trial to be set up.

has emerged in the area, the composition of the local population has to be taken into account. The predominant part of the population in the two municipalities is ladino, although San Pedro Ayampuc has a considerable proportion of Kaqchikel indigenous population, especially in and around the community of Nacahuil.[102] Historically in the region, a presence of Xinca people has been identified (Campbell, 1972). However, different generations of movements to and from the region have clearly diminished the Xinca self-identification and an explicit collective reproduction of this root among the population. In the case of Nacahuil on the other hand, the tightly knit community network as well as the internal organisational patterns have sustained a strong sense of ethnic belonging despite the constant flow of migration to the close lying capital by its inhabitants (Pixtún Monroy and Sales Morales, 2009). As the following sections will indicate, this presence of indigenous population in the area of San Pedro Ayampuc adds social and political complexity as their sense-making activities feed into the characteristics of the discourses and patterns of the collective agency that has emerged in the area.

The organisational processes which have surfaced over recent years around the defence of territory in response to the mining project were initially led by the community members living on the outskirts of the urban municipal centres. Their relationship with the urban centres has mirrored that of many other rural communities in the country. The municipal council tends to represent the central counterpart for public funds and national politics, while also constituting the centre of local decision-making, as municipal policies are dictated to the surrounding communities. In the eyes of a community member it represents "the submission of the community to a municipal structure it should respond to and which in turn permits the reproduction of national politics." (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013)

Similar to the patterns outlined in the previous chapter, here too the co-option of processes for the nomination of community representatives has represented a key mechanism to undermine communal participation in municipal affairs. The election of communal authorities in many communities fails to follow the legal frameworks that outlines their election through the communities. In doing so, it

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[102] According to data from 2011 provided by the National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas*, INE) 27% of the population is indigenous.

erodes the participative dimensions outlined in the laws for decentralisation. Instead, the municipal mayor tends to nominate the majority of the community representatives.

However, this trend is not followed in all communities, with Nacahuil representing the most evident exception. Here the tightly knitted community network and an insistence on nominating their own authorities has enabled it to contest specific aspects of municipal policies. In Nacahuil similar understandings to those outlined among the indigenous communities in Quiché in the previous chapter can be identified. The role of community authorities is linked to a view of offering a service to the community and based on a notion of power that stands in contrast to the vertical imposition enacted from the municipal centre. Instead the obligation of constant consultation of the community members as well as the community assembly dominates decision-making processes. In turn, the backing and support of the community members for the community representative is ensured while his role is closely monitored to detect any abuse of power. [103]

The patterns of internal organisation of Nacahuil to counter the role of the municipal council had not been reproduced in other communities in the area which were marked by weaker internal networks. The mixed composition of the population means racism and prejudices played a role in determining the relationships between the different communities as well as their members. This was especially the case in San Pedro Ayampuc, where the indigenous community members of Nacahuil were singled out as the prime source of troublemakers and distrust. As a community member indicated, "the municipal centre has always looked towards Nacahuil with contempt, Nacahuil was and has been a population that has never been subordinated and they have always seen us as a '*bochinchera*' (troublemaking) community." (Interview community activist Guatemala City, 13/11/2013)

However, the dismissive attitude of the urban centres of the municipalities has

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[103] A collective land-title in the case of Nacahuil seems to have played an important role in reproducing meanings that see the community as the most trusted framework of reference (Pixtún Monroy and Sales Morales, 2009). In this sense the defence of communal autonomy remains at the heart of its organisational patterns and even led to the community taking legal action against the municipal council, on accusations of racism.

not just been a feature of its relationships with the indigenous population. Similar patterns of subordination were perceived by the ladino communities in the area:

> *"The mayor has always seen the communities as of second category, for example La Choleña … they always see us as if we were stupid, sleepy. The people of the town have always sat on the side of the mayor and there is a discrimination, I have lived it when I studied in primary school they called us barefoot Indians and I will never forget to show them that one can be barefoot but reason better and with more dignity than they."*
> *(*Group interview community activists, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012)

Another aspect of inter-communal tension in the area is down to geological features: The area of the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc are located in what is called 'the dry corridor'. This represents a corridor marked by constant shortage of water and constitutes one of the driest areas of the country. Accordingly, the water distribution was also a constant source of disputes as community members felt certain communities were being favoured over others especially during the dry season, as some communities have water only two or three times a week. This meant tensions between the communities as well as disputes with the municipal councils were frequent. The concern for water has obviously been exacerbated by the threat of a mining project in the area and consolidated as one of the central dimensions of the oppositional agency.

The projection of mining interests into the area has seen an introduction of new interests and economic dynamics into the local context. It has demonstrated how rent-seeking agents at different scales converge to promote the mining project. Emerging elites linked to the national subsidiary company and traditional elites such as the sections of the Novella family, which are close to the Chamber of Extractive Industry (*Cámara de Industrias Extractivas,* CIG), combine efforts to ensure the implementation of the mining project. On the other hand international capital plays a central role in the different stages to obtain the licence and in the exploitation as such, with the US-company Kappes, Cassiday &Associates, acquiring 100% of the property rights in 2012. Currently the project *Progreso VII Derivada* is the only metal mining project in the municipalities of San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo. However, the

company with the licence for this project has a further 4 exploratory licences in the area. Apart from this and seen in a wider regional perspective a total of 18 licences (14 exploratory, 4 exploitation) have been conceded. This suggests that this project only constitutes a starting point from which further mining projects are to be implemented.

As indicated for the Northern Quiché Region the expansion of the electricity grid accompanies the concession of the first mining licences in the area of San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo. Especially in the course of 2014, the Colombian company, TRECSA, on various occasions has attempted to enter machinery to start its work in various communities of the area as part of the PET project.[104] However, it was faced with a context in which local community members had already mobilised to contest the implementation of the mining project. As early as 2010 the news regarding the concession began to spread and organisational patterns to search for information, organise meetings and discuss findings had been injected into the local context. This on one hand created conflict but on the other hand also provided a platform for new convergences and relationships that will be analysed in the following sections.

Resistance in practice: The protest-camp of the RPLP

Information claiming that a mining licence had been granted in the area began to spread in 2010 and unleashed inquisitive dynamics among local community members as they attempted to verify the nature of the potential project. Links were established with NGOs from Guatemala City and through contacts with a Member of Congress, Carlos Mejia. In 2011 official information was sought under an act guaranteeing public access to official information.[105] This resulted in the first official data on the project being handed over to the community members confirming the news and indicating that the first exploratory licence in the area had been granted as early as 1999. Following this concession, the

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[104] In fact, in April 2015 community members of the canton La Laguna in San Pedro Ayampuc initiated a second point of resistance in the area by establishing the protest camp of the Pacific Resistance La Laguna. This was established with the objective of impeding the construction of a local power-station that is part of the Plan for the Expansion of Electric Transmission (PET), which is seen as a crucial precondition for the mining operations in the area.

[105] Law of Access to Public Information (Decree Number 57-2008).

company had been working silently on exploring territories in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc without the communities' knowledge. The first underground tunnels in the area of the mine were already built as early as 2005.

Local residents would recall how over the last decade they had seen strangers in the area taking samples of earth or rocks and loading them onto pick-ups. Individuals linked to the company had started to rent parts of the land which had previously been rented by community members to cultivate crops. Most of these sections of territory were then acquired by the mining company as people appeared to make offers, often paying well over the odds to acquire comparatively valueless land: "If the *campesinos* said they wanted 2 million *Quetzales* for a piece of land the representatives of the mining companies, without mentioning these companies would offer more, 5 or 7 million *Quetzales* over the initial price and buy the land." (Quoted in Hernández and Ochoa, 2012)

Over a decade had passed without anybody in the area knowing about the *Tambor project* and the 14 licences that had been granted for exploration. In 1999 the Ministry of Energy and Mining had granted the exploratory licence to a joint venture of the Canadian company Radius Explorations and the South African company Gold Field, giving it permission to examine the soil in a geographical area of 107,072 hectares. An area locally known as La Puya was subsequently granted for extraction in 2011(0.15 hectares) and has since represented the centre of the conflict around the mining activities.

The initial incredulity among local community members soon gave way to a process of collective framing as people started to discuss the project and the potential impact it would have on the area. Information was shared with the communities and make-shift film-screenings on other regions such as San Marcos, where a mining project had already been implemented, were organised on community-squares and in village halls. In the second half of 2011 protest marches were organised and in preparation for the elections a forum was held with the mayoral candidates in the two municipalities. This represented an attempt to ensure they would oppose the mining project if they reached office.

However, with the government ignoring their initial expressions of dissent by granting the licence for exploitation in November 2011, the preparatory activities associated with the mining project were gaining pace. This was reflected in an

increase in transit and movements around the area known as La Puya. In this context the oppositional strategies were also taken to a new level with the establishment of a protest-camp which was not part of a previously planned strategy. Instead, it was result of a spontaneous act of rebellion in March 2012 as a local resident saw huge machinery and workers near the entrance to the mining project along the road between San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc.

In a first reaction she blocked their path by stopping her car in front of the gate leading to the mining compound thereby preventing machines and workers from entering the compound before calling other community members for support. As the community members responded, a collective decision was taken to establish a permanent protest camp at the entrance to the mining compound. The aim of the camp would be to impede the transport of materials and machines into the mining compound by blocking the entrance, a task the community members succeeded in for over 2 years. In doing so, they consolidated the space that would become a reference point for the expression of collective action that emerged as the RPLP.

Shifts were established to guard the entrance with alternating groups taking on a shift of 24 hours 7 days a week to guard the entrance. This made it possible to combine the task of controlling the entrance to the mine with the communities' every-day life. Fittingly, a member of the communities likened the dynamics at the protest- camp to that of a bee-hive:

> "*It is not necessary for everybody to be here all the time, there are times when there are only a few of us present but just like with a bee-hive, when something happens we all arrive.*" (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 20/09/2012)

This movement mirroring the dynamics of the bee-hive was called upon on various occasions in the course of the years as the mining company resorted to various strategies to advance in the implementation of the project. Direct action has represented a key aspect among the strategies the group developed to defend the space occupied at the entrance to the mine. Additionally, this space acquired a profound meaning for the community members by symbolising their struggle for the defence of territory, environment and life.

A first attempt to overcome the protesters' blockade at the entrance to the mine in La Puya was undertaken on the 8th of May shortly after midnight as a convoy of heavy machinery approached the mine accompanied by over 30 police cars and 100 members of the anti-riot police. This represented a first evidence that the government was not going to be receptive to the demands of the RPLP and was willing to use public security forces to ensure the implementation of the mining project. However, the local community members responded swiftly to the call from colleagues on shift that night and turned out in hundreds. By forming rows to peacefully block the narrow road leading to the mining compound they were able to ensure the machinery could not pass. The mining company as well as the police, obviously surprised to find the opposition turn out in numbers and unsure of how to deal with the situation, were forced to withdraw a few hours later.

After this initial success in fending off the mining company and hindering it from stepping up operations, the company increased its efforts through its national subsidiary company *Exploraciones Mineras de Guatemala* (EXMINGUA) to ensure the implementation of the project.[106] Locally, a wave of attempts to de-legitimise members of the opposition group through public defamations and rumours were ongoing.[107] A local company run by a number of former military officials had been contracted and was to prepare the terrain for the implementation of the project. In an initial attempt to infiltrate the RPLP, they had approached its members claiming to oppose the mining project. However, soon the former army officers Mario Figueroa Archila, Pablos Silas Orozco and José Arias Méndez turned out to be directors of *Servicios Mineros de Centro América* which had been contracted by the national subsidiary company of the mining project, EXMINGUA. They would play a key role in attempts aiming to disintegrate and weaken the RPLP.

Strategies to implement the project turned violent as Yolanda Oquelí, one of the

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[106] Incidentally the legal representative of EXMINGUA, Selvin Morales, was Minister for Energy and Mining under the Colóm government until December 2010, which had granted the license for the *Tambor* project. This gives another indication of the intimate links between mining companies and governmental representatives.

[107] The rumours spread ranged from claims that resistance members were receiving money to allegations on the private lives of members targeting especially the female members of the RPLP.

leaders of the resistance suffered an assassination attempt on June 13th 2012. She had been at the protest camp but went to fetch petrol for the small electric plant to supply light to the community members on shift. A few minutes later she was ambushed and shot three times. As members of the RPLP heard the shots they rushed to the scene and she was rapidly taken to hospital, surviving the assassination attempt with a bullet still lodged in her body. Ultimately among the members of the RPLP the indignation over the company and its strategies seems to have prevailed over the initial shock and furthered the consolidation of the resistance. This became a feature of all the aggressions on members of the RPLP: Instead of weakening the movement they stimulated feelings of injustice and solidarity that in many cases enabled the RPLP to connect with other sections of the population who had not been participating as actively.

The slow progress in the implementation of the project had its implications for the ownership of the project, with the Canadian company Radius Gold selling its participation in the *Tambor* mining project. Its president stated this represented part of a "corporative strategy to sell its problematic shares allowing the company to concentrate capital and experience in less conflictive areas with regards to development in the region." (La Hora, 07/12/2012) The RPLP on the other hand, interpreted this as a signal that their persistence had paid off and led to these changes.

At the level of ownership, Kappes, Cassiday &Associates, a US company, which up to that point had played a subordinate role as an investment partner has since acquired 100% of the property rights. Together with the national subsidiary company EXMINGUA it has represented the public actor behind the mining project.[108] The agglomeration of interests around the project became clearer with an increasingly public role of Rodrigo Maegli Novella,[109] acting as the US-

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[108] Kappes, Cassiday &Associates paid approximately $ 400.000 with a quarter of this amount being transferred at the moment of signing and the rest due at the start of the gold extraction at the mine. Additionally, as part of the agreement Kappes, Cassiday & Associates agreed to make four-monthly payments to Radius Gold depending on the amount of gold extracted from the property (La Hora, 07/12/2012).

[109] Rodrigo Carlos Maegli Novella represented the US-company Kappes, Cassiday & Associates in meetings with the government. The Maegli family is one of the traditional elite families today heading the business corporation *Grupo Technico Universal (Grupo Tecun)* which has established itself across Central America in a variety of business sectors but primarily

company's representative. This provides an indication that some of the most powerful sectors of the national elites are also behind the implementation of the mine.

In the second half of 2012 the pressure and efforts by the mining company to get operations under way continued to rise. This was in part due to a clause in the national mining legislation according to which companies risk the cancellation of their licence, if exploitation has not begun within one year of its concession. Tensions culminated in November 2012 as in the course of a new offensive the promoters of the mining company sought to organise a group of alleged employees and break through the RPLP that was blocking the entrance to the mine. This led to a first stand-off on 22nd November as the retired military official Pablo Silas led a group of alleged workers— with youth gang members among them— towards the RPLP, hurling insults and threats at their members.

The presence of the representatives of the Human Rights Ombudsman, national and international human rights organisations as well as journalists from alternative media that documented and registered the ongoing events, were key in preventing the use of physical violence. Especially, the decision to call upon the CMI proved to be highly strategic. They were able to document the aggressive strategies and create a counter-discourse to that of the corporate media, which in its coverage depicted the community members as manipulated and radicals. Despite the fact that the journalists were forced to withdraw given the level of pressure and threats, their presence clearly had a dissuasive impact.[110] Additionally, the coverage of the stand-off through alternative media

focusing on agro-industrial business. Through marriage in 1954 the Maegli family has also established links with the Novella family another of the powerful traditional elite families and has since been part of the board of directors of the cement company, *Cementos Progreso*. The role of Rodrigo Carlos Maegli Novella in the promotion of the mining project *Tambor* indicates the elites' interest in its implementation is probably down to investments of elite factions in the project. More information in Solano (2011).

[110] Three journalists of the CMI filed a case based on the events. On the basis of the graphic evidence they provided, the retired military officials Pablo Silas Orozco Cifuentes and Juan José Reyes Carrera were condemned to a two years' prison sentence for threats and coercion. The sentence was commuted to payments of Q25 per day. The court proceedings also indicated the networks surrounding these actors as Fernando Linares Beltranena, a lawyer well known for his defence of high-profile clients such as Ortega Menaldo in cases of corruption, drug-trafficking and money-laundering acted as their defence attorney. More information on the case in: De

made it possible to circulate a discourse in the web that contrasted with that of the main-stream media. This means there was an iterative effect, as the images of the arrogant and aggressive behaviour of the mining company and its employees spread at a national and international level.

These developments also gave an indication of the measures the different actors were prepared to take, to ensure the implementation of the respective projects. Legal as well as illegal strategies constitute an integral part of their mechanisms, with the company contracting 'professionals of violence' such as the former army official Silas and a known member of youth-gangs, Franklin Francisco Moratava, to provoke a violent confrontation (Bastos, 2012). Additionally, the private sector led by CACIF was urging the government to set a precedent against the RPLP, accusing them of breaking with the state of law and alienating potential international investors (Vásquez, 2012).

On 22nd November a few days after the confrontation with supposed employees of the mining company, the state responded to these calls as the protest camp came under siege from public forces underlining the governments' support to the project, as reflected in a statement by Interior Minister Bonilla:

> "As a state, Guatemala has the responsibility to comply with its legal framework and contracts. It is unthinkable that the government is calling for national and international investment, if we are not able to comply with the contracts established by law. … this is not a game and the intervention we are undertaking is to guarantee that the mining operations can recommence." (Quoted in Prensa Libre, 09/05/2012)

This time hundreds of members of the Police Special Forces approached the blockade intending to evict the protest camp without a judicial eviction order. However, through desperate, last minute negotiations the community members had gained enough time for staff from institutions such as the National Human Rights Ombudsman, the Representative of High Commissioner of Human Rights of the United Nations to arrive and the eviction was ultimately aborted. Instead an agreement on a dialogue between state and the RPLP was reached with the System of National Permanent Dialogue (*Sistema Nacional de Diálogo*

Leon 2013.

Permanente, SNDP)[111] responsible for scheduling meetings and seeking a solution to the conflict (this will be revisited in the 4th section of this chapter).

The different coercive approaches to evict the protest camp and ensure the implementation of the project were complemented by strategies aimed at criminalising members of the RPLP. As mentioned in chapter 5, the use of this strategy against activists engaging in defence of territory has been on a steady increase over recent years (Sieder and Bastos, 2014; UDEFEGUA, 2015). Cases were initially filed against a total of nine members of the RPLP, accused of having illegally detained and threatened workers of the mining company in May 2012. After months of hearings, three members of the RPLP were eventually sentenced to three years in prison, though the jail time can be waived if a fee of $4,212 is paid. As mentioned in chapter 5, the cases evidence a significant level of collaboration between private interests and state institutions, especially the state prosecution, in seeking to target, disrupt and weaken the RPLP as well as their organisational process.

Despite the strong pressure from state and private actors behind the mining project, the RPLP was able to defend the protest camp and consolidate it as a symbolic and physical reference space for the resistance. On one hand, it constituted a space where resistance was put into practice, with direct action playing a key role in the course of their articulation. On the other hand, it also constituted a framework in which knowledge and understandings were discussed to consolidate a collective stance with regards to the mining project. The following section will look into these processes of collective framing resulting from their antagonistic agency.

Collective framing: Towards a position of difference

Two interlinked aspects can be highlighted as the overriding discursive elements that frame the resistance of the RPLP: The concern for the environmental impact of the mining project which is linked to a discourse highlighting an affirmation of life. Especially fears of an exacerbation of the

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[111] The SNDP was initiated as a governmental platform by the Pérez Molina government (2011-2015), in an attempt to deal with the growing number of social conflicts in different parts of the country.

water problems have acted as one of the prime motivations behind the antagonistic agency. As a community member stated, local community members are aware of the consequences a project could have in terms of the water supply in the area which is located in the so-called dry corridor:

"One of the main concerns is the use of water in an area that is part of a dry corridor, as for many communities, water supply is already limited to twice a week as its distribution is rationed. ... At one stage they diverted the water for the mine from a fountain that supplied the communities, but the people realised and occupied the fountain as the communities would not be supplied with water until after midnight while they were bringing truckloads for the (mining) companies and to the Turi-centre[112] during the day and the people would have to get up at night to receive it. … Now they have requested an area of 20 square kilometres to exploit for 25 years and after this how will the communities end up? We can live without gold, but not without water." (Group interview community activists, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012)

The RPLP's discourse and concerns around the environmental impact have also been nurtured by listening and learning from the experiences of other communities in Guatemala that have been affected by mining projects, such as San Miguel Ixtahuacán.[113] These exchanges were not only crucial in getting first hand reports of the impact on local communities but also offered insights and lessons on the challenges of engaging in resistance to the project once the mine is installed and operating. Although the perceptions of most members of the RPLP are not rooted in a holistic framework similar to that of the indigenous communities in the Northern Quiché region, a relational perspective with regards to the environment also marks their discourses. Based on the everyday experience of the rural life, the communities are aware of their dependence on

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[112] The Turi-centre consists of a waterpark that is owned by the mayor of Chinautla, Arnoldo Medrano, mentioned in the previous section.

[113] The decision to engage in dialogue only with the state and to focus on its compliance with legal responsibilities instead of engaging in negotiations with the company was one of the key lessons the RPLP took from the resistance in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos. In the area these negotiations are seen as having contributed to division among communities and organisations who had originally opposed the mining project. (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 17/11/2013.

their natural surroundings and their incompatibility with a mining project in the area. One community member signalled that the receptivity to these concepts that express a relationality with environment and surroundings is also down to an activation of certain meanings that persist in the everyday practices of the local communities, even though links to their ethnic roots have in many cases been strongly weakened:

> *"In their practices the people maintain many principles and values that relate with nature and the environment as well as a clear view that the network of life depends on nature, although many community members do not have a link with an indigenous identity. Nonetheless, this goes beyond an issue of ethnicity, it is an issue of common sense among rural communities that here, life is at risk."* (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013)

At the same time the RPLP has sought to complement locally embedded knowledge based on the experience of rural life as well as the debates in and around the protest camp with technical arguments by seeking support from environmental organisations and experts. At the RPLP's request, US engineer and environmental specialist, Robert Robinson, undertook an analysis of the official environmental impact assessment report and signalled a number of deficiencies:

> "The mine Progreso VII is a high risk mining project. … In the first place, there is the presence of extremely toxic arsenic in the rocks, the surface water and the ground water. Furthermore, the mining will probably release additional concentrations of arsenic into the environment. Secondly, the EIA contains grave deficiencies in information, planning and guarantees for recuperation. The deficiencies in the EIA do not provide any confidence in the capacity of the owners to implement the mining in a way that protects the public health and environment." (Robinson and Laudeman, 2013, p.2)

The specialist report echoed and provided a technical perspective on some of the concerns identified by the communities. The information linked to the impact on the water administration in the area as well as the details questioning the data provided on the project, further eroded the trust in the public authorities. This has led the RPLP to question the neutrality behind the technical

procedures and scientific discourses on the basis of which the state decided to grant the licence for the mining project. The community members are keen to highlight the relationships of power and the collusion of interests involved in the definition of terms and the promotion of the process. Together with the use of force, the misleading manner that has accompanied the implementation from the start has clearly contributed to stimulate the antagonistic stance among the community members:

> *"There are some fundamental problems of how the company entered the communities as it has not done so in the right way. It is one thing to fulfil the demands for the Environmental Impact Analysis but it is another thing to proceed in a legitimate way. Here the communities are in resistance because it has not been done in the right way, we have never been correctly informed of anything."* (Member of the RPLP during meeting with National System of Permanent Dialogue 25/06/2013)

However, despite the perception of illegalities and the feelings of injustice that have been exacerbated by the coercive strategies used to implement the project, the RPLP has not shifted from a second crucial dimension of their struggle. Based on their discursive affirmation of life they have insisted on the pacific nature of their resistance. As a local community member explained:

> *"We have always tried to understand the pacific struggle as the best way to obtain objectives. There will always be provocations that aim to cause problems. They attacked our colleague 500 metres from here, they wanted the people to have fear and leave from here. They also thought we would be infuriated by the attack on our colleague and would go and burn their machines or offices. But if the struggle is understood as being for life, we have to defend life and not take away life as they do, therefore the centrality of the pacific struggle."* (Group interview community activists, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012)

The idea of attributing this central role to the pacific nature of their struggle had originally been inspired by the ongoing exchange of information, projected videos on non-violent resistance such as Gandhi as well as advice they had received from human rights organisations.[114] This dimension of their struggle

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[114] With regards to the pacific aspect in the struggle of the RPLP, Christian religious beliefs are

has been maintained throughout the organisational process of the RPLP despite the constant provocations, threats, attacks and violent evictions.[115]

Additionally, women have played a central role in the implementation and encouragement of this non-violent dimension, an aspect that is also acknowledged by the male members of the RPLP:

> *"The fact that we have not had any dead or more serious problems than the ones we have faced, is down to the participation of the women. It has been a bit difficult for us men to learn this, because in Guatemala we have a history of violence, eviction and repression and our instinct is to treat somebody the way we are treated. But here the women have played a very important role because they have helped us to understand and integrate these pacific actions and not to fall into the provocations of the company."* (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)

Accordingly, this protagonist role of women has been reflected in two ways. During the stand-offs and situations with risk of eviction, women represented the first row of members of the RPLP in confronting the respective threat. This was in part as they were seen as less likely to react to the provocations of the adverse agents. Also, given the fact that many men leave for work during the day, women have been central in taking on the weight of the shifts in the camp

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also likely to have played a role. The majority of the community members are part of religious groups, in part catholic, in part evangelical. Priests of the Catholic Church have been especially explicit in their support for the resistance and frequently celebrate mass at the protest-camp. Additionally, it has been a feature for the local community members to defiantly sing prayers and hymns during the different evictions or confrontations.

[115] In the course of this chapter not all attacks and security incidents have been mentioned, in many cases it is difficult to establish a proven link with actors promoting the mining project. For example, the murder of 11 community members in Nacahuil on the 7th September 2013 and the successive pressure to establish a military post in the community has been interpreted by the members of the RPLP as well as analysts as a strategy to militarise the area and prepare the ground for the planned mining operations. In the aftermath Nacahuil engaged in an exhaustive process to reject the presence of the military in the community and instead implemented a community led security program that sets up specific conditions for the work of the police in the community, who had been linked to the crime. In the eyes of members of the RPLP, the process of de-militarising Nacahuil "was a highly important contribution to the process of resistance in La Puya." (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)

as well as guaranteeing the supply of the members of the shifts. They are widely acknowledged as representing the 'heart of the RPLP' and guaranteeing a long-term vision of the struggle:

"It is very difficult to balance the struggle as well as taking care of family and children. However, it is especially for our children that we struggle because I do not want them to suffer problems due to the mining project. This is where being a woman puts us in a specific situation and at the same time makes taking part in the struggle a lot more difficult for us." (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 20/09/2012)

An important detail to add in the analysis of this important level of engagement of women that stands in contrast to many other social articulations in Guatemala is the key role women have played in the leadership of the resistance.

This acknowledgement of the crucial role women are playing in the struggle of the RPLP has also strengthened a notion of horizontality among the different community members. This is also reflected in another crucial feature of their organisational patterns, that of drawing on the local demographic complexity. This has up to a certain extent allowed the RPLP to overcome the constraints of ethnic divides, often seen as a central challenge in previous generations of agency in Guatemala (as outlined in chapter 4). From the start some central elements for the collective framing of the organisational process had been established:

"It is important to understand that the work against the mining project already started in 2011, before the establishment of what would become the protest-camp La Puya. But from a start the participation occurred following certain principles and one was that we would not be using an ethnic banner, this is not of ladinos, indigenous or Xinca, the struggle is collective because we have united under the banner of life and water and no sector is to be excluded, instead it was based on the knowledge of all the peoples." (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)

This means the closer relationship between different sections of the population in the course of the process has altered previously established negative

perceptions and prejudices. They have been replaced by an attribution of importance to the various contributions that are seen as nurturing the RPLP. This view indicating changes in the inter-cultural relationships is echoed by a member of the RPLP from a non-indigenous community by seeing the defence of territory as an "opportunity for a sensibilisation of human values" that allows "a community to be consolidated." (Group interview community activists, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012)

The process of collective framing has enabled community members to identify similar understandings as well as appreciate the different contributions made to the resistance by the various sections of the population.

> *"The problem of mining has created a social cohesion due to the need to demand and exercise rights and it is a question that transcends issues of racism or patriarchy because one sees how the things men do can complement with those of women, and the things women do complements with those of men. In this political, public and social space there is a clarity of the complementarity of engagement towards the same objective, without it being important if they can read and write, whether they are Mayans or not."* (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)[116]

The idea of drawing on diversity is also reflected in the cultural and linguistic elements of indigenous communities that have influenced RPLP in different dimensions. This is reflected in the discourse where symbolic language and concepts such as 'Mother Earth' are taken up and incorporated by non-indigenous community members. It is also evident in certain organisational patterns, such as the emphasis on a collective dimension as well as internal processes of consultation and decision-making processes that draw on practices of indigenous communities (this aspect will be outlined in the following section.)

At the same time the organisational dynamics are part of an open-ended process, as a community member stated: "we are constructing something from

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[116] At the same time, as the members of the RPLP recognise, this does not mean that the problems of discrimination and patriarchal relationships have been resolved eg. within families in the area. Nonetheless, within the space of the Puya there is a firm stance of not tolerating these patterns.

bottom-up, it is in the process that we are learning and we never know how it will end up." (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014) However, this bottom-up process has provided the opportunity to create an autonomous physical and symbolic space, independent from government and political parties. Accordingly, the RPLP has represented an organisational framework, which has allowed the community members to address features that are deeply embedded in the behavioural patterns of Guatemalan society, such as the persistence of racist and patriarchal patterns. In doing so, it has consolidated their antagonistic position of 'difference' with regards to the public and private actors seeking to implement the mining project. As the following section will show, they have also sought to link this 'difference' at the level of meanings with changes in procedural patterns in order to consolidate these inclusive patterns in their resistance.

Revealing antagonistic political practices: The dialogue with the state

In the previous chapter on the communities in the Northern Quiché Region the revitalisation of mechanisms emphasising communal decision-making had been signalled in the course of their organisational process. The contextual features of the RPLP represent clear differences to the relatively consolidated and homogeneous communities in Quiché. As has been indicated in the previous section, it has still been possible to consolidate as a space in which diverse knowledge and meanings from the various sections of the population are drawn upon. This approach of dealing with the complexity of the population while consolidating a collective position of 'difference' to contest the mining project has also been mirrored in their organisational features.

In the course of their resistance an assembly, which is made up of all the community members participating in the RPLP, has consolidated as the central space of deliberation and decision-making. The integration of these patterns was a result of a search for measures that would allow community members to strengthen the appropriation of the process among the community members. A shift in emphasis from expert knowledge to giving a voice to the 'common' members of the resistance is part of this process that translates into a recognition of the contribution and potential of marginal actors in transformational processes. As members of the RPLP confirmed, the

consolidation of the space of the assembly is also a reflection of the influence of organisational traditions and knowledge of indigenous communities. Accordingly, it is not just at the level of discourse and understandings that this inter-cultural dimension feeds into the process. Instead this interplay of diverse sources of knowledge is also reflected in the political practices. As the collective character of the struggle has consolidated as a central feature of the RPLP, their attempts to make the decision-making processes as inclusive as possible are seen as a constant challenge.

The integration of participative spaces of deliberation and decision-making into the process of the RPLP also means placing trust into the collective dimension of the process and the ability of the assembly to reach adequate decisions:

> *"If the resistance decides to hand over to the mine, well, it is their decision, this process of collective participation, the collective consensus I believe is one of the biggest challenges that we have not just in the case of La Puya but in many processes which apparently are based on the taking of consensual decision but in reality are not. … It has a lot to do with the managing of power. If we do not start this change of conscience and procedures in things, they can appear as good ideas but the way in which one proceeds takes away the legitimacy from these processes."* (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013)

Among many communities in the municipalities of San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo in recent decades there has been little experience with this type of collective decision-making. However, at least in part drawing on the experiences of the indigenous communities in the area, here too, attempts at restoring power to the local communities are ongoing. In contrast to the process in the Northern Quiché the process of the RPLP did not start off with an explicit reference to the 'community' as an organisational framework. Nonetheless, current dynamics indicate how the resistance feeds back into the communities as they are injected with dynamics based on the reformulated patterns and relationships developed in the space of La Puya. The approach of changing organisational patterns has been easier in the communities, where the support for the opposition to the mining project is strong. A number of communities have taken up the modality of nominating their own representatives in a community assembly, thereby countering a consolidated tradition in municipal policies

according to which the mayor nominates favourable community authorities or COCODEs (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013). [117]

This means the 'legitimate' community representatives, as the community members refer to them, have started to represent another channel to exercise pressure on the municipal council. Especially in the case of San Pedro Ayampuc, based on communal decisions, a number of COCODEs have since begun to create a strategic counterweight within the formal system to reject the mining project.

These changes in political practices also seem to have deepened the antagonistic character with regards to the public and private actors behind the mining project. This incompatibility became especially evident in the interaction with the institutional framework of the state. As mentioned earlier, following the incursion by the police forces in November 2012 a dialogue guided by the SNPD was set up between the RPLP and the state.

Although the mechanism has only recently been institutionalised, given the unsuccessful history of dialogue between social actors and the state in the country, the RPLP maintained a sceptical position with regards to potential gains for the communities. As a member of a civil society organisation close to the movement analysed:

> *"All the governments from Portillo to now have always sought to set up dialogue rounds. This has represented a way to entertain people and to seek to diminish the strength of the movements of the people. This has been one of the main objectives of the government, while at the same time convincing people that the mine will bring benefits etc. The movement has seen it as a moment in the struggle, a form of struggle. They know they will not gain anything from the negotiating tables but it allows them to catch their breath, because opposing a mine in a place so close to the*

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[117] Nonetheless, even the election of their own authorities does not always guarantee communities a voice and participation in municipal matters showing the deeply rooted traditions of exclusive decision-making in formal institutions. Some communities have insisted on nominating their authorities only to find out that they are not taken into account or consulted on certain matters. Instead issues are dealt with at the level of the *Consejos Municipales de Desarrollo* (Municipal Council of Development) even if this contradicts Municipal Law that establishes the COCODEs as the prime organ for decision-making.

capital city is difficult." (Interview environmental activist, Guatemala City, 11/11/2013)

In this sense the acceptance of engaging in the dialogue constituted a strategic dimension in the struggle of the communities and indicates the ambivalent role of time and the determination of its flow for the resistance. On one hand, the passing days represent a physical, mental and economic burden for the RPLP to endure and maintain its organisational patterns and presence at the protest camp. On the other hand, the increasing duration of the standstill does not favour the interests behind the implementation of the project, since the fluidity of capital can also encourage impatient investors to seek other opportunities. The corporative media for its part does not cease to highlight the financial losses incurred by the company due to the standstill in the mining activities.[118]

The meetings with the authorities also represented an arena in which the communities were able to highlight antagonisms, contradictions and their counter-positions to the views of the institutional actors. In the course of the meetings the incompatibility of their conceptions around 'territory' and 'development' and also with regards to the procedural patterns became increasingly evident.

Already the first meetings indicated a strong asymmetry between the two parties in the dialogue:

> *"When we started the process of dialogue it became clear that we needed minimal conditions, a central one is to have equality in conditions when dealing with the different aspects…. But in the course of the initial dialogue we realised there is a total asymmetry in the dialogue and in the relationship between the community and the state. In their discourse, in their attitude, in their gestures they continued to affirm that they are the ones to take decisions and be in control."* (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)

As a result, in the course of various meetings with institutional actors, the

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[118] The biggest national newspaper, Prensalibre pointed out that during the first year alone in which the company had not been able to operate, it had lost $3 million. Additionally, the report argued that the state had lost between $8 and $10 million in terms of royalties although it is unclear how these calculations were made, e.g. Prensalibre 23/05/2014.

communities and their representatives sought to counter what they perceived as institutional arrogance in the face of the resistance by setting up their own conditions for the dialogue. Even as high-level talks with President Pérez Molina and members of the cabinet were set up, the communities remained unfazed. They made their participation conditional on a series of demands in line with their own organisational patterns that emphasised the collective and horizontal characteristics of their struggle.

Firstly, they insisted on an adequate representation of the communities during the high-level meetings, rejecting the government's position of only inviting two representatives. Even as they ultimately agreed on only a slight increase on delegates participating in the meetings, dozens of community members accompanied them to the location and waited outside. As such they sought to counter the strategy of the government to identify and isolate a leadership which would make them vulnerable to co-option.

Secondly, they insisted on the presence of journalists from the CMI and the invitation of honorary witnesses. The former were to record the entire meeting and ensure that the information could be transmitted as complete as possible to the communities. This was meant to prevent the government from using the dialogue to distort information on any agreements or discredit the representatives. The invitation of honorary witnesses from civil society with experience in human rights issues as well as representatives of national or international human rights bodies were an additional mechanism to ensure the transparency of the meetings.

Thirdly they refused to meet or enter into any dialogue with the mining company or its representatives,[119] forcing the government to ask the company representatives to leave the room during the meetings. As a community representative indicated:

> *"We were clear we did not want to commit similar mistakes to the ones made by the communities in San Miguel (Ixtahuacán). Initially, in San Miguel the company and the state had been included (in the dialogue),*

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[119] As mentioned Rodrigo Carlos Maegli Novella represented the US company Kappes, Cassiday & Associates in these meetings with the government. More information see footnote 104.

then the state withdrew from its responsibility and the conflict developed between them, leaving the communities to negotiate with the company. As a people we did not concede any licence, it was the state, so if anybody has an issue to resolve with the company it should be the state." (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 17/11/2013)

A further condition was related to decision-making in the spaces of dialogue. Even under pressure by the government to reach immediate agreements during the dialogue, the 'delegates' of the RPLP rejected possessing any decision-making power. Instead, they insisted on the consultation and debate with the communities before any agreement could be reached.

"The idea was to listen to their petition and not give any response and to take the information to the communities for them to decide, in this space we did not have a voice or vote to decide. … They gave us their petitions at the level of a proposal and we accepted them at the level of a proposal to consult with the communities. They did not allow a representative of each community to come, so we will have to go back to them for consultation." (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 17/11/2013)

This represented a pattern similar to the circular dynamic identified in the Northern Quiché: The delegates are not equipped with any decision-making power, instead they are responsible for transmitting decisions agreed by the communities as well as returning the information from the institutional spaces to the assembly for discussion and decision-making. Again this brings up the temporal tension and incompatibility as this form of inclusive but more arduous decision-making meets with institutional patterns.

The last dialogue meeting was planned to take place on May 20th. However, as the community representatives arrived at the Presidential Palace they were denied access. The authorities alleged that the presence of journalists from the CMI represented a breach in security regulations although their presence had obviously been agreed during previous meetings.[120] Three days later, on May

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[120] The members of the RPLP suspect that the decision to deny access to the members of the CMI was only an excuse. They believe the government had received information that an environmental expert, Roberto Moran was accompanying the representatives of the RPLP for the meetings in order to point out the deficiencies in the EIA which risked to further undermine the weak technical arguments supporting the implementation of the mining project. (Interview

23rd 2014 hundreds of policemen proceeded to violently evict the protest camp from the entrance to the mining compound injuring dozens of community members who had defiantly blocked the path based on their pacific resistance patterns. The private sector applauded the actions, congratulating the government on guaranteeing the state of law and the property rights. Human rights organisations on the other hand denounced the violence used by the police forces on peaceful demonstrators, leaving dozens injured and destroying the protest camp.

The coercive response to implementing the mining project highlighted the inability of the state officials and the different elite sections linked to the mining project to engage on equal conditions in a dialogue with the dissenting sections of the population. Firstly, it evidenced the clearly biased role of the state and its representatives who saw the dialogue as a mechanism to convince the community members of the benefits and advantages of the mining company and its activities. They saw this as a way to dissolve supposed misunderstandings on the mining project. Secondly, there was a clear avoidance of speaking about the obvious irregularities in the legal basis of the process to implement the project or the violations of rights which had occurred. Accordingly, the violation of the rights to previous information and consultation of the communities on the mining project as well as the different direct attacks on members of the RPLP were not addressed.

As a community member argued, the violent response was the only solution left for the authorities:

> *"In this case the party opposing dialogue is clearly the government. The government clearly does not have the capacity to dialogue because it does not have the technical nor legal arguments to do so and the only remaining alternative is repression. It is under pressure from the company and so it ends up repressing in order to ensure the company can start to operate."*
> (Interview community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014)

In the course of the dialogue, the RPLP had aimed to counter the risk of state-agents following the co-optive patterns that mark decision-making procedures by introducing a number of conditions, among them: The reformulation of

community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014.

representation; transparency and public character of the meetings; an appeal to the state's legal responsibilities; the introduction of participative decision-making processes. In the end a combination of the conditions issued by the RPLP seeking to halt these patterns and the weak legal and technical arguments provided by the institutional actors, left coercion as the only option to implement the project.

However, despite the biased or often even criminalising coverage of the mainstream media, the community members have in the course of their articulation been able to advance their agenda into a national public arena. By insisting on the role of the local population in decision-making regarding their territories, the RPLP echo the idea of "recuperating the real sense of democracy starting with the inversion of political processes." (Interview community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013)

While articulating messages towards a national level, the RPLP has also persisted in the local context after the eviction of 23rd May 2014. The coercive responses by the state advance the direct implementation of elite-interests in the short run. However, the generalised sense of injustice resulting from these measures also nurtures the possibilities for new convergences around the differential perspectives. The flow of messages and actions of solidarity following the violent eviction were key in convincing the RPLP to continue: The day following the eviction the community members went about setting up a new protest camp, only a few yards from the previous one. In the course of the following months this has been expanded and has retaken its previous position at the entrance to the mine. While a 24-hour presence of the police guarantees the access for vehicles and personnel of the company to the mining compound, the RPLP has persisted, although it was forced to adjust the direct objective of their resistance: The protest camp represents a signal of dissent, not just with regards to the mining project *Progreso VII Derivada* but also with regards to the other licences planned for the region and for which La Puya constitutes the entrance point. This means the RPLP maintains its affirmation of 'difference' and struggle to voice the local demands, while at the same time protecting a space where their 'difference' is consolidated and continues to evolve.[121]

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[121] On 15th July 2015 a Guatemalan court ordered the suspension of all operations linked to the *Progreso VII Derivada* mining project, in response to a legal complaint filed by two *alcaldes*

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the implementation of a mining project in the municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc has sparked processes of convergence among local community members. The establishment of the protest-camp as an autonomous physical and symbolic space, independent from government and national political parties has constituted a crucial dimension in the organisational process of the RPLP. This collectively created space has acted as a signifier whose meaning was constructed in the course of the resistance based on a discourse articulating concerns on the environmental impact of the mining project and an affirmation of life. The organisational process has consolidated an antagonistic position of 'difference' among the community members. In contrast to the previous case-study, in the case of the RPLP the ethnic root of this 'difference' is less explicit. Instead, their antagonistic stance has resulted from a relatively short-term process and draws on a variety of locally embedded meanings based on the experience of rural life as well as the local demographic complexity. Within the social and political space of La Puya this has also enabled the reconciliation of gender and ethnic differences, setting a contrasting example in a society marked by patriarchal and racist patterns.

The process of collective action has encouraged the integration of participatory notions that seek to emphasise the horizontality of relationships and a rejection of hierarchical forms of leadership. Accordingly, the assembly of the RPLP, which is open to the participation of all members, has consolidated as the central decision-making space. In doing so, it has also exemplified the collective appropriation of the organisational process among the local community

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auxiliares (auxiliary mayors) of El Carrizal and El Guapinol, two communities of San Pedro Ayampuc with a strong participation in the RPLP. They had argued that the company had been operating without a construction permit as well as not having the required documentation on various environmental aspects. The court found the company to be operating illegally and without the authorization of the municipality of San Pedro Ayampuc. Additionally, it ordered all activities to be suspended until a community consultation is held. This has represented an unexpected and positive turnaround for the RPLP, however, it is unclear to what extent this judicial order will halt the project and legal battles are likely to follow, as the mining company launched an appeal against this decision.

members. These inclusive modes of decision-making have been reproduced within a number of communities involved in the opposition to the mining project, reflecting a similar process towards empowering the 'local' that was noted in the previous chapter.

The engagement of the RPLP with the institutional apparatus has emphasised the antagonistic character of this collective agency and brought the incompatibility of contrasting perspectives and practices to the forefront. However, these interactions also offered a platform to highlight the inconsistencies in the discourses of elites and the state and enabled the RPLP to articulate its demands to a national public. The violent eviction of the protest camp ultimately represented the state's response to the attempts of the RPLP to safeguard their positions from co-optive patterns and establish a dialogue on the basis of transparent and equal conditions. By insisting on remaining in control over their local spaces and setting out their participation in decision-making as the starting point for political processes, the RPLP, like the communities in the Northern Quiché, articulate this aspect as a key condition for the construction of democratic processes in Guatemala.

9. Conclusion

Methodological and theoretical insights

The central research objective of examining the collective agency in defence of territory emerging in the context of a Guatemalan state co-opted by different elite factions and exploring its implications for democratisation, encouraged me to engage with different methodological approaches. Accordingly, while engaging in a problem-driven, inductive research process, I moved at the interface of methods generally associated with either political science or anthropology. On one hand, the engagement with ethnographic tools reflected my interest in the characteristics of specific nodes of agency, the ongoing processes of production of meaning as well as their procedural and organisational understandings. On the other hand, the research also examined the implications of this agency in relationship to Guatemala's specific institutional constellation and social setting. Therefore, this aspect also sought to determine the role of localised articulations for issues at the heart of political science, such as the inter-relationship with institutions as well as insights with regards to the construction of political and democratic processes.

The engagement with approaches closer to political science and anthropology was also motivated by the idea of bridging two disciplines not just with regards to their methodology but also in terms of their research focus. Anthropological research has frequently engaged with grass-roots movements and expressions of collective action. Nonetheless, the insights they offer and their implications for meta-political debates, which lie closer to political science, have often been neglected. Political science, on the other hand, has had a tradition of focusing on debates around democracy and institutions. However, in many cases this has side-lined the attention to the level of meanings and cultural complexity at a grass-roots level. This means not enough attention is paid to understand how these aspects influence the patterns of political processes or the relationship with institutions at the 'local' and beyond. In the course of the research I have bridged these two fields, not just in a methodological sense but also by expanding their respective research perspectives.

The incentive for me as a trained political scientist to engage in methods closer to anthropological work was also based on considerations around my position as a researcher in a context marked by cultural complexity such as Guatemala.

Accordingly, I have argued that the engagement with ontological and epistemological frameworks is crucial for an understanding of the behavioural patterns and motivations underlying the collective action I was analysing. Despite not engaging in a 'thick description', the methods of participant observation as well as interviews provided me with essential insights into the flow of meanings and organisational patterns among local communities.

The approaches closer to a political science perspective, on the other hand, were in part also motivated by the experiences made in the course of the fieldwork. They evidenced that the communities and collectives are very much aware of being immersed in a broader context marked by correlations of power and mechanisms of domination. Thus, as highlighted in the course of the thesis, the confining and overlapping dynamics of a co-opted state constitute an extremely challenging environment for this agency. Therefore, community members frequently recognise that their struggles involve strategic negotiations and relating with institutional levels at different scales especially by demanding the compliance with legal frameworks, in order not to remain isolated in this context. Additionally, the predominantly local orientation of the community-based articulation reflects the importance of recognising the concrete experiences embedded in every-day relationships that drive the organisational processes and constitute its primary focus.

The features of the political ethnographic approach also had implications for the theoretical understandings that frame the research. Instead of an overly mechanistic structure-agency approach, I have introduced a conceptual framework that gives space to ontological and epistemological difference at the level of the research subjects. This seems to be of special relevance in countries like Guatemala with evident levels of cultural complexity among the population. I have argued that although Giddens' (1979) structure-agency approach made an attempt to address this dimension by introducing a relational perspective, it still has three central shortcomings.

Firstly, the failure to acknowledge different ontological frameworks that underlie the motivations for action and behavioural patterns of subjects and collectives (Stones, 1996; Chesters, 2012). Secondly, although I obviously acknowledge that agency is also about correlations of power and antagonisms, Giddens' approach struggles to escape from an overly mechanistic framing of agency

(Urry, 2003). Thus, he fails to sufficiently recognise the contingent as well as the frequently 'non-linear' orientation of collective action. Thirdly, by failing to pay attention to collective agency he side-lines the potential for production of knowledge and meanings at this grass-root level. In doing so, he fails to create space for these ongoing struggles to make everyday lives 'more democratic' resulting of convergences into bodies of collective agency.

While emphasising ontological differences in contexts of cultural complexity such as Guatemala, I have refrained from conceptualising subjects and collectives as static, non-evolving bodies and identities. Instead, based on a Deleuzian understanding, I have emphasised them as being situated in a constantly relational settings and immersed in processes of 'becoming' (Deleuze, 1994). Following this line of thought I have used assemblage theory to argue that expressions of collective agency can be seen as aggregative bodies characterised by varying degrees of cohesiveness (De Landa, 2006). As the experience of community-based organising in Guatemala shows, processes of collective convergence involve the revitalisation of shared meanings or collective signifiers such as 'community' that are defined by discourses and practices in the course of organisational processes. Accordingly, the often locally based assemblages or communities in their struggle for the defence of territory develop 'emerging properties' (De Landa, 2006) in the course of their resistance, which are reflected in evolving, collectively articulated discourses and practices.

The concept of 'meanings' adds more detail to the understanding of this convergence into bodies of collective agency. I have argued that this is reflected in attempts of collectives to re-appropriate or to stay in control of the production of meanings as they are faced with mechanisms aimed at redefining social and cultural objects. This view is in line with scholars who understand individuals and collectives as producing and contesting not just economic resources, but also symbols, relationships, needs and identities (eg. Melucci, 1989, 1996; Álvarez, 1998; Dagnino, 1998; Escobar, 1992, 2008). As I have highlighted, these conflicts around meanings are especially evident in countries, where the cultural complexity combines with hierarchical and often coercive attempts at imposing meanings on other groups of population. Accordingly, the sources of agency under analysis in this research seek to escape from and are contesting

the 'coding' of their spaces and practices through elite or state actors seeking to re-signify the 'local'. The exploitation of natural resources as well as policies in line with Harvey's (2003) understanding of 'accumulation by dispossession' represent ongoing processes that seek to integrate rural areas of the Global South into strategies of accumulation. It is in the course of this expansion into new territories that networks of production of meanings are uncovered or an accentuation of meanings is sparked and in turn ignites processes of "defensive localisation" (Escobar, 2001, p.149) among the rural population.

I have also used the conflict or antagonism around the production of meanings to outline an understanding of 'difference' as underlying the antagonistic agency. A differential production of meanings refers to the variety of understandings associated with symbols, words and processes, which are seen as originating in certain cultural practices and thinking. In addition to this 'difference' at the level of meanings, I have emphasised how this has translated into a political notion of this 'difference', which is conveyed through practices and alternative designs of political interactions. In this regard 'space' and understandings of 'territory' acquire special relevance for local community members since they constitute a basic condition for their 'difference' and its reproduction. The potential for an affirmation of 'difference' cannot be restricted to determinate or fixed identities nor limited to a purely oppositional sense. In line with Deleuze's (1994) understanding of 'difference in itself', I have argued for this collective action to be seen as constantly evolving expressions of agency with immanent characteristics, which are reflected in practices and discourses. This approach aids to deconstruct 'essentialising' understandings of culture or tradition and indicate their imperfect nature as well as the dynamic internal tensions that mark social assemblages. Additionally, it recognises the potential for 'difference' that goes beyond a purely antagonistic stance to be constructed by social collectives based on diverse characteristics, without being restricted to specific ethnic or cultural criteria.

Research findings

Understanding agency and its constraints

The first research objective of the thesis aimed to provide an understanding for the emergence of the agency around the defence of territory in Guatemala. In doing so, I have also related it with some previous forms of agency that have obtained a certain level of public projection, to identify differences and similarities that help to specify the characteristics of the current expressions of collective action. The present organising among communities in defence of territory has obviously developed in a context in which it has been preceded by a variety of organisational processes that have sought to challenge the elite-dominated social order. Two lines of analysis were pursued while examining some of the previous generations of agency and their features: Firstly, the external constraints they have faced, which in most periods were represented by a repressive state dominated by economic and military elites. Secondly, their internal patterns to assess their ability to address the cultural complexity of the population.

All generations of agency have at some stage been confronted with constraints imposed by the state controlled by different elite factions. In the case of the democratic interlude between 1944 and 1954, the community-based organising of the 1960s as well as the guerrilla factions, the coercive arm of the state either halted or set limits to the respective articulation. Even the guerrilla factions, whose military and logistical capacity has often been exaggerated, failed to pose a sustained and serious threat to one of the most numerous and well-equipped armies in Central America. For later articulations emerging in the course of the transitional framework as well as the context of the Peace Accords, the limitations were to a lesser extent coercive. Instead, it was the level of control elites were able to exercise on different state institutions and the formally democratic political system that strongly limited the impact a new indigenous leadership and other civil society organisations could make on the institutional framework. The informal determination of decision-making processes, the watering down of or failure to implement legal frameworks, the restrictions on ministerial budgets and influence of indigenous state officials as well as the consolidation of clientelistic electoral dynamics were among the

mechanisms that impeded any significant challenge to elite rule along institutional channels.

While the constraints posed by the state were clearly the most evident, in the case of the expressions of agency aiming for central power the failure to gather enough organisational strength, especially in the rural hinterlands also marked the respective articulation. The popular, nationalistic, middle class-led democratising attempts in the 1950s as well as the guerrilla forces were unable to assemble sufficient grass-roots support or outline projects that would bridge the rural-urban divide and speak to the different sections of the population. The reformist governments between 1944 and 1954 clearly had a democratising intent that translated into a series of progressive legal frameworks. However, they were also driven by an assimilative mission, aiming to integrate the indigenous population into a ladino-led nation-building project. This distance between the urban world of reforms and the rural world also left the urban pro-democratic forces isolated as they attempted to respond to the 1954 coup.

The guerrilla factions that went on to set up their base in the rural areas made timid approaches to integrate issues of culture and questioning racism. Their discourse nevertheless continued to be dominated by an economistic analysis of class-relationships and the objective of taking power through a revolutionary project. In practice, the level of repression and genocidal character of the military campaigns drew indigenous communities in the highlands and the guerrilla factions closer, however, without resulting in a convergence. On one hand, this can be attributed to the fact that even the main insurgent factions never developed the logistical and organisational capacity to incorporate broader sections of the population into their struggle. On the other hand, the organisational logics of the communities required a space for autonomy that the insurgent project could not offer.

The latter aspect also contributed to the detachment from the rural communities that was identified with regards to the new indigenous leadership emerging in the course of the transitional framework. Their multiculturalist discourse focusing on indigenous rights, culture and a reversal of racism was increasingly framed around a particularist agenda, as they claimed to speak for the indigenous communities. However, their failure to base articulations within the communities and their casting within a clearly delimited civil society framework

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as advocated by international donors, undermined ties with the rural, indigenous hinterland. NGOs became the most frequent organisational format, which translated into a professionalisation and a gradual demobilisation of indigenous activists. Additionally, these articulations were unable to prevent the consolidation of elite control over institutional spaces to ensure the implementation of the reform processes outlined in the Peace Accords.

The analysis of the different generations of agency has signalled the parallel and overlapping flows of collective agency and in many cases their contrasting directionality. Some articulations were orientated towards the institutional framework as a means to gain power. Others, such as the community-based agency of the cooperative network in the 1960s or the CPR, at least in part sought to avoid the reach of the state. The current policies linked to the targeting of natural resources, which translates into an economic integration of rural territories sets up a new panorama. While this expansion of the reach of the state in economic terms is not accompanied by an extension of social or political rights for the population, it also leaves the grass-roots communities without the possibility to avoid the antagonistic dimension of the resulting conflicts. The local orientation of the expressions of agency signals a reluctance to engage with a co-opted institutional framework beyond this local scale. However, a certain engagement with institutions, especially through the demands around national and international frameworks of rights, is seen as necessary in order not to remain isolated and to carve out spaces in which 'difference' can be reproduced and developed.

Despite a certain level of public engagement, I have argued that the incentives for the convergence are to be found in the locally embedded meanings as organisational processes are consolidated that flow alongside the formal political spaces and institutions. Therefore, to understand the public emergence of these patterns of 'localisation', the incompatibilities between policies promoted by elites and locally embedded attachments to 'place' and 'territory' have to be taken into account. As the case studies have indicated, these meanings can be rooted in cultural traditions and worldviews or emerge on the basis of instinctive experiences of rural life. However, it is the revitalisation and production of these meanings in the course of the organisational processes that

have nurtured the resistance among community members and also encouraged them to continue to politically 'develop' their 'difference'.

Contextual features: The genesis of a co-opted state

The second research objective established the contextual link of the community-based agency with the evolving character of the Guatemalan state. The tracking of the state-formation process across different periods allowed me to highlight some of the features that characterise its current nature. I have identified economic elites and their drive to access rents and perpetuate strategies of accumulation as central to this process. Since colonial rule, this has translated into attempts to impose a specific cultural system of understanding society and ordering it in accord with the elites' interests. The conversion of social realities into resources and population into labour became a central feature of this 'colonial coding'. Throughout the different periods of colonial and authoritarian rule, elites' behavioural patterns and policies have been strongly influenced by the cultural imaginaries enacted by global elites. Accordingly, they derive their right to power and a privileged position in society from their capacity to access rents and accumulate wealth.

The state has played a central role in stabilising societal power-relationships. The almost permanent authoritarian control of elite factions over the institutional framework has enabled them to strongly influence legal frameworks, policies and discourses. During the post-colonial period this elite dominance consolidated a regime based on features of primitive capitalism with the exploitation of the indigenous population as well as the concentration of land and resources representing its crucial axis. This also translated into the racist hierarchy that has accompanied and continues to be reflected in the constitution of a mono-cultural state in a pluri-cultural society. Additionally, this elite dominated order was characterised by the periodic use of coercion to consolidate an exclusive societal structure and perpetuate strategies of accumulation. This reinforced the image of the state as a means to perpetuate strategies of accumulation and gain access to rents, as in the course of the brutal counter-insurgent campaigns, military officers went about establishing their own state-project and schemes of enrichment.

Different moments of inter-elite tensions became apparent in the course of the armed conflict as the interests of traditional economic elites and military elites clashed. Confrontations between different factions of the economic elites were also frequent, with the drive for accumulation of the different factions setting limits to cooperative behaviour. However, the capacity of the traditional economic elites to unite in key moments or at least find points of shared interest has been crucial to consolidating their dominance and allowed them to take charge of the transitional process.

I have argued that the 'top-down' transition to a formal democracy initiated in 1985 has gradually adjusted the mechanisms used by elites to maintain a determining influence over the state. I have identified the control over the political system as well as key institutional spaces as paving the path for this renewed period of elite dominance. Their crucial role in the creation and financing of political parties allowed elites to transfer the patron-client patterns from the economic sphere into other societal spaces and to structure political and institutional relationships accordingly. Additionally, a certain level of social mobility at the level of elites was pointed out: Based on the patterns by which traditional elites relate with the state, emerging elites— some of them linked to illicit activities— have also been able to establish similar economic and political networks, gain access to institutional spaces or link up with sections of networks of traditional elites. An array of legal and illegal, formal and informal mechanisms are used by elite factions as they seek to control the design and implementation of laws and policies, thus consolidating a scenario of 'state co-option'. A bidirectional dynamic has developed as different elite factions establish alliances with officials within the state or with political operators with the capacity to influence the actions of key actors positioned within the institutional framework. Bribery, corruption, exchange of favours and coercive strategies are used as different elite factions are locked into competition and cooperation. In this context the formal institutional functions and rules are co-opted or reconfigured to promote specific interests, strategies of accumulation and capture rents. Accordingly, an implicit elite pact has consolidated at the intersections of formality and informality, legality and illegality, while the different elite factions are unwilling to make any concessions towards the establishment of an impersonal institutional framework beyond their control.

Within this context of state co-option, the current orientation towards natural resources has represented the most recent attempt at revitalising and adapting strategies of accumulation to the requirements of global and national elites. At the same time the population of the rural areas, is left without a voice with regards to these policies that impact and reconfigure their immediate surroundings. The resulting conflicts reflect the nature of state-society relationships in this context, as aspects of the institutional framework, policies and laws are oriented towards advancing these economic interests linked to natural resources. A reactivation of human rights violations, the criminalisation of expressions of resistance as well as coercive policies— often under the pretext of re-establishing governability— have added an authoritarian notion to this trend.

Defending difference and territory, imagining democratic processes

The third research objective aimed to explore insights for democratising agency emerging from the expressions of collective action in the context of a co-opted state. The challenge to the exploitation of natural resources indicates how collective agency becomes a mechanism to highlight fundamental incompatibilities that are produced by the implementation of these policies especially at the local level. Given the inadequacy and erosion of the established channels of participation as well as the informal determination of institutional spaces, expressions of dissent emerge from outside the political centres of society. Rather than broad societal movements or expressions associated with national political parties, they constitute localised assemblages of resistance, confined and overlapping with the patterns of a co-opted state.

As I have indicated, the grass-roots organisational processes around the defence of territory have been marked by a strengthening of locally embedded meanings around 'territory', as well as a revitalisation of the 'community' as a collective signifier. As the case of the communities in the Northern Quiché has shown, culturally rooted meanings reproduced in language and worldviews provide a crucial underlying dimension in their process of resistance. The case of the RPLP has on the other hand highlighted how the meanings that frame the collective organising have emerged in relatively short-term processes, drawing on the experience of rural life as well as multiple sources of knowledge, among

them that of indigenous community members. In both cases their 'affirmation of difference' has been reflected in 'relational' understandings that highlight the profound incompatibilities with the elite-promoted 'commodifying' views of natural resources and territory. Accordingly, these processes advance an understanding of territory that emphasises the relationship between humans and nature as a condition for the physical and cultural survival of their communities. The various nodes of agency engaging in defence of territory have been met by a renewed increase of human rights violations, criminalisation of their actions and coercive state intervention. However, the perception of injustice and threats posed by the elite and state promoted projects or policies have also spurred a sense of solidarity among local community members. In doing so, it has in many cases strengthened a further 'relational' dimension by enhancing the bond between the individual and the collective or the 'community'.

The attempts to re-appropriate decision-making processes have represented one of the central aspects of the local response to the elite-promoted modernisation project. This has been evidenced by the organisation of community consultations among the communities in the Northern Quiché region. In doing so, the communities have highlighted how, in the course of the convergences or aggregative processes at this local level, a politicisation of their 'difference' takes place. This has been reflected in the attempt to consolidate participatory spaces of decision-making at this grass-roots level, framed around the community assembly. Accordingly, the consolidation of local public spheres based on the experiences and problems of the community members has been promoted.

In both case studies analysed in the thesis I have indicated how the emphasis on the 'assembly' as the central space of decision-making has also been complemented by the figure of a 'community delegate' replacing that of a 'representative'. This has constituted a further measure to embed decision-making among the community members and encourage an appropriation of the organisational process as such. Additionally, there have been attempts at creating deliberative spaces on the basis of criteria that stress 'inclusiveness' as well as their 'horizontal' character. Especially the RPLP has been emblematic in

this sense by placing an emphasis on addressing issues of patriarchy and racism.

Accordingly, as elites and the institutional framework have pressured for the implementation of the policies around natural resources, they have been unable to organise consent at this local level and have instead brought the agency among the communities to the surface. Fragile and imperfect processes of production of knowledge and practices continue to develop as the nodes of resistance go beyond a purely antagonistic stance. In doing so, they highlight the potential of creating meaningful public spaces at this local level based on the experiences, problems and voices of the community members. As this takes place in a context marked by coercive and co-optive dynamics, the primary aim of these struggles remains that of keeping alive their 'difference' and attempting to find ways to make their everyday lives 'more democratic'.

Socio-political implications of the research

The central contribution of the thesis has been that of indicating the features collective agency takes on in the context of a culturally complex society as well as an institutional framework co-opted by elite factions. In recent years an increasing number of authors have focused on the issue of state co-option. Among them a body of literature has emerged to examine Latin American states, linking the expansion of co-optive mechanisms especially with the rise in organised crime and emerging illegal elites (Garay et al, 2010; Briscoe 2014).

However, as the thesis shows, an understanding of state co-option cannot be separated from the historical trajectory of elites in state-formation processes. As the case of Guatemala shows, their dominant societal position had been established around an exclusive way of relating with the institutional framework that paved the path for patterns of state-co-option. Although the mechanisms to control and reconfigure state institutions have been adapted in the course of the transition to a formal democracy, it indicates how the attempts to stabilise power relationships and exclusive social orders have been an integral part of the elites' behavioural patterns. Additionally, it is on the basis of similar ways of operating and relating to the state that an increasing permeation of traditional elite

networks with emerging illegal elite actors and criminal activities has taken place.

The essentially undemocratic cultural framework of elites makes the exploration of non-elite forms of agency more relevant. This is not in order to fit them into conventional categories or channels of democratisation. Instead I have suggested this in terms of highlighting the persistence of fragile, non-linear and imperfect attempts at destabilising dominant discourses and redesigning political interactions on the basis of often disregarded local understandings and knowledge. Accordingly, I have pointed to the importance of acknowledging and taking into account these local processes in which embryonic forms of collective interaction and deliberation that represent a condition for democratic processes are ongoing.

The complexity deriving from the pluri-cultural constellation of societies in the Global South has been analysed in different fields of social science. In the Latin American context scholars have highlighted the emergence of social and indigenous movements from marginalised sections of society. This challenge has been linked primarily to state policies that are perceived as detrimental to the local ways of life, territories and needs (Yashar, 2005). Especially in the Andean region broad social movements have emerged as a result of neoliberal policies and gone on to connect to or form political parties in order to promote their demands (Van Cott, 2007). However, although this has given way to a fundamental reconceptualization of state-society relationships in these countries, the tensions between the formal associative patterns of states and those of the rural communities have remained. This indicates the challenge of constructing broader democratic processes in countries with demographic complexity such as Guatemala. Additionally, in the case of Guatemala these tensions between ethnic groups as well as local organisational processes and the state are even more evident, as histories of repression and racism constitute the foundations on which the formal institutional spaces have been built.

In the absence of 'real' channels or incentives for participation in decision-making processes in a context of state co-option, the prime orientation of collective agency is determined by the local and the carving out of spaces independent of national political parties, the state or formal institutions. In this

context the defence of territory acquires special relevance as it also represents the space in which community members consolidate their own processes of production of meanings, social and political interaction as well as decision-making. Additionally, as the case studies have demonstrated, the defence of territory and the affirmation of 'difference' cannot be associated exclusively with indigenous communities. In the case of the indigenous communities, 'difference' emerges with a strong bond to the past and ways of reading realities that draw on indigenous culture. However, differential meanings and practices are also produced among non-indigenous communities, in many cases to express their dissent with regards to the reconfiguration of their immediate surroundings. This highlights the challenges articulations face in terms of consolidating not only a position of 'difference' with regards to the external factors, but also having to address the diversity within and among the various nodes of resistance.

At the same time these local articulations should not be romanticised. These spaces and social assemblages are also permeated by power-relationships as well as behavioural patterns that reproduce forms of cultural, political and economic domination. This underlines the importance of procedural mechanisms in these organisational processes to counter organisational patterns that tend to reinforce and stabilise hierarchies. Additionally, the defence of territory is not the only ongoing dynamic of localisation. The 'local' also represents an important level in processes of state co-option as it is frequently integrated into legal and illegal rent seeking networks based on formal or informal power-structures. This indicates the complex task of distinguishing between different processes of localisation and identifying their potential role within a context of state co-option that operates at multiple scales.

The future holds big challenges for Guatemala's communities as the elite-guided reconfiguration of the rural area is bound to gain pace over the coming years. This is also likely to be accompanied by a persistence of co-optive and coercive strategies to ensure the implementation of these interests. However, the incompatibilities the various state policies and economic projections produce at the level of 'every-day' relationships also tend to multiply the articulation of dissent and nodes of agency not just in rural, but also in urban areas. Additionally, given that indigenous as well as non-indigenous areas alike are the focus of economic interests, new opportunities will arise for resistances

to 'find each other'. In this context it will be crucial to see how the local attempts at creating more inclusive processes and dealing with cultural complexity can be translated into trans-local relationships. In these processes of trans-local and inter-cultural dialogue the crucial challenge will be that of preventing organisational processes from falling into the trap of hierarchical and protagonist leadership or from embracing procedural patterns that especially in the long term, are inadequate to address or create space for local complexities and differences.

Research limitations and future lines of research

Given the complexity of Guatemala's contextual features, the research has clearly encountered limitations in getting an in-depth understanding of the different nodes of agency. In the case of the communities examined in the case studies a more sustained research and ethnographic approach would have been able to provide more precision in deconstructing the levels of production of meanings and knowledge. Additionally, I do not claim that the insights gained from the two case studies can be generalised or seen as representative for other nodes of agency that have emerged in Guatemala. Instead, it is important to emphasise the differences and contrasting patterns that mark the specific characteristics of these expressions of agency. The analysis of a variety of expressions of collective action would be required in order to reach a more general perspective on the common and diverging features of this generation of agency.

With regards to future research the analysis of expressions of collective action based on a comparative perspective with other countries with similar levels of cultural complexity and/or of state co-option could represent an intriguing line of research. Comparisons with countries such as Ecuador or Bolivia would allow the identification of differences in terms of the orientation and characteristics of the collective action engaging in defence of territory and natural resources. At the same time, cases in Honduras, Colombia or Mexico could provide insights in terms of analysing similar patterns of organising and strategies in contexts of state co-option. While a focus on elites has predominated, it seems to be increasingly important to use a political ethnographic approach to highlight the

complexity and multiple arenas of democratic processes in these contexts and exploring the role non-elite agency plays in them.

This kind of comparative research could also be pursued in the context of the increasing focus on the exploitation of natural resources across Latin America. The tensions and conflicts surrounding the issue of natural resources are likely to continue over the coming years and generate flows of antagonistic agency. On one hand, research is required to examine the implications for democracy posed by these policies promoting the issue of exploitation of natural resources. On the other hand, a broader exploration of the characteristics of this recent generation of agency around the defence of territory and its attempts to resist these policies and redesign political interactions, can provide important insights on these evolving, locally specific articulations as well as their epistemological processes.

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Appendix: List of Interviews

Anthropologist, Guatemala City, 09/07/2012.

Economist, Guatemala City, 12/07/2012.

Community activist, Guatemala City, 17/07/2012.

Political analyst, Guatemala City, 24/07/2012.

Community activist, Cunén, 24/07/2012.

Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 25/07/2012.

Member of indigenous organisation, Chimaltenango, 16/08/2012.

Sociologist, Guatemala City, 20/08/2012.

Former state-official, Guatemala City, 22/08/2012.

Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 28/08/2012.

Political scientist, Guatemala City, 28/08/2012.

Anthropologist, Guatemala City, 31/08/2012.

Journalist, Guatemala City, 03/09/2012.

Member of social organisation, Guatemala City, 05/09/2012.

Anthropologist, Guatemala City, 09/09/2012.

Member of peasant organization, Guatemala City, 10/09/2012.

Political scientist, Guatemala City, 10/09/2012.

Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012.

Political scientist, Guatemala City 12/09/2012.

Sociologist, Guatemala City, 12/09/2012.

Former state official, Guatemala City. 13/09/2012.

Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 18/09/2012.

Anthropologist, Guatemala City, 19/09/2012.

Community activist, Guatemala City, 20/09/2012.

Journalist, Guatemala City, 20/09/2012.

UN-official, Guatemala City, 24/09/2012.

Group interview community activists, San Pedro Ayampuc, 24/09/2012.

State official, Guatemala City, 25/09/2012.

Member of peasant organisation, Guatemala City, 27/09/2012.

Member of private sector organisation, Guatemala City, 28/09/2012.

Journalist, Guatemala City, 28/09/2012.

Human rights activist, Guatemala City, 02/10/2012.

Economist, Guatemala City, 02/10/2012.

Community activist, Sacapulas, 03/10/2012.

Anthropologist, Huehuetenango, 04/10/2012.

Group interview community activists, Guatemala City, 31/10/2013.

Community activist, Nebaj, 06/11/2013.

Group interview community activists, Guatemala City, 07/11/2013.

Community activists, Nebaj, 08/11/2013.

Community activist; anthropologist, Huehuetenango, 10/11/2013.

Environmental activist, Guatemala City, 11/11/2013.

Community activist, Guatemala City, 13/11/2013.

Community activist, Guatemala City, 17/11/2013.

Political scientist, Guatemala City 14/09/2014.

Community activist, Nebaj 17/09/2014.

Member of indigenous organisation, Chimaltenango, 20/09/2014.

Community activist, Nebaj 25/09/2014.

Community activist, Cunén, 25/09/2014.

Community activist, Nebaj, 26/09/2014.

Community activist, Sacapulas, 26/09/2014.

Community activist, San Pedro Ayampuc, 29/09/2014.

Community activist, anthropologist, Guatemala City, 01/10/2014.

Environmental activist, Guatemala City, 03/10/2014.

Anthropologist, Guatemala City, 03/10/2014.

Political scientist, anthropologist, Guatemala City, 04/10/1014.

Community activist, Guatemala City, 06/10/2014.