# Defining the Problem, Defining the Cure

## - On Education as Poverty Reducing Strategy

Un pueblo que lee,
progresa
Visita la Biblioteca del Banco de Guatemala
...a un costado del Parque Central de Huehuetenango
2005
BANCO DE GUATEMALA

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## Abstract

This dissertation is a study of official education and its ability to improve the lives of people defined as ”poor.” The United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (2000) define education as the number one development strategy for the reduction of poverty. It is believed that the poor will be able to lift themselves out of an economically difficult situation, if only they have the resources necessary to do so. This is not the first time education has been promoted as an agent for change, and over the years it has become an unquestionable truth within development practice that education is a human right and vital for the well-being of a country and its people. Critiques of such a view are not lacking from the development discourse, however, the power held by multilateral institutions such as the United Nations seems to be sufficient for this view on development to prevail. In my investigations, I try to shed some light on how education impact the lives of the rural poor among indigenous communities in Guatemala. I do not single out negative or positive effects, but look at the actual changes education has contributed to for families in the villages. Through different case studies I show how individuals generate income and how their income relates to their level of education. As my observations will show, education does enlarge their choices to some extent, but their financial situation seems to remain the same as before they acquired an education. I therefore move on to find out what factors may prevent education from being an income generating resource for individuals. I look at the labour market, salaries, living costs, as well as gender and fertility rates. I also include how education is interpreted within a local system of values and to what extent education is able to create ethnic integration and social equality. Through my analysis, I try to show that there is no one- to- one relationship between the reduction of poverty and the implementation of an official educational system. But in defining lack of education as a cause of poverty, the definition leads to a belief that the solution is to educate the poor. The poor are at the same time made responsible for their own situation. But because the causes of poverty are mainly political, the idea that it can be solved at the individual level does not hold water. Nevertheless, building schools and matriculating students is far less complicated than initiating necessary political and economical reforms. Like so many other development strategies, education becomes a solution derived from a definition of poverty that avoids the complexity of the issue. My work engages critiques of the simplification of development solutions as presented by multilateral institutions. Nevertheless, I also try to show that there indeed are positive spin-off effects as a result of education, effects which in time might prove vital for positive social-, political- and economic development.

## Preface

Many people deserve acknowledgement for their contribution to the end result of this dissertation. Most of all I want to thank all the people I met during my time in Guatemala, without the hospitality and friendship they all showed me, my investigation would never have become a reality. To all of my friends in the villages, in Quetzaltenango, in Antigua and in Guatemala City, I owe this result to you.

The Royal Norwegian Society for Development has been very helpful in providing information and to introduce me to the villages, a special thanks to Jan Borsheim, Gina Zamora and Elky Zamora for their assistance. To all the members of Kak' chu Mil and their families, to all employees in CDRO, and to Arthuro, Dora, Laura, Pablo and Fernando, they all deserve a special thought.

I also want to thank my supervisor Signe Howell for keeping me on track, and my former supervisor Eduardo Archetti who sadly passed away during my time in the field.

Special thanks go to my parents for their support, my sister for interesting comments, my fellow students and to Bobby, for keeping my motivation up throughout the process.

Necesitamos más educación para vivir en armonía y para ser un país más próspero, con desarrollo humano. Necesitamos profesores más capacitados, buenos libros de texto, aulas adecuadas, alimentación para nuestros niños y niñas e innovaciones que nos permitan ser competitivos. Estamos promoviendo un nuevo sistema, con mayor calidad y pertinencia cultural. Deseamos llevar la educación a los centros rurales más pobres y lejanos. La tecnología en las aulas nos hará poderosos en un mundo globalizado.

Nuestros niños y niñas desarrollarán una mejor capacidad de soñar.

Cambiar nuestro destino es una tarea común. Debemos ser solidarios, para ampliar la cobertura, lograr que la reforma educativa llegue a las aulas, convertir a la escuela en el centro cada comunidad, hacer que nadie quede excluido de la primaria, buscar y fortalecer la identidad nacional. Las metas que nos hemos fijado para los próximos años son ambiciosas. Depende de todos alcanzarlas.

Unidos podemos lograrlo.

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## Odilia's Story

It is early morning in the village and Odilia and I are preparing breakfast for her younger siblings who will soon be leaving for school. We are alone in the smoky kitchen and we talk like we always do, while making tortillas, complaining about the cold weather, catching up on the latest village gossip and other every day things. Odilia is a 23-year-old unmarried girl who graduated with a secretarial diploma a few years back, and until recently worked in a nearby town. She told me she liked the job because it felt different and exiting to wear western clothes in a modern office. But since leaving her position a few months ago, she has not been employed or even looked for a new job. Her income was important to the family since few were employed and I wondered why she did not worry more. I had known her for several months and never heard any talk about going back to work, and so I asked her why. Hesitantly she answered "*well… I guess I will have to start looking soon, but… it is just that… working in an office is really quite boring. And besides, I earn about the same embroidering blouses and aprons at home, and then I can work when I want to.*" She explains that so many girls in the area have a secretarial diploma but that there are few jobs available. She did not feel comfortable in her former position, in part because she only worked with men and in such a different environment, and was forced to commute on the crowded buses every day. With her responsibilities in the house, she now finds it easier to work from home producing traditional handicrafts. But Odilia does not see her education as a waste of time or money. On the contrary she is very satisfied with what she has achieved and her diploma is framed on the wall for all to see. Her father can proudly explain that all of his nine children have acquired an education; "*My eldest son even has a university course!*" he says smiling. The father only had a few years in school, just enough to become literate, and his deceased wife never went to school at all. *"It was all different back then"* he says. "*But now we know education is important.*" To sustain his family he works with traditional handicrafts together with some of his children, the two eldest sons work in a t-shirt factory and Odilia and her sisters are producing traditional handicrafts from their modest adobe house. None of their jobs requires any formal education, nor pay more than minimum salary also received by uneducated individuals.

**Why do not Odilia and her siblings have work according to their education? Why do they not benefit economically from it, and why do they still consider education to be so important?**

## Defining the Problem, Defining the Cure

### - An Introduction

In the year 2000, the United Nation General Assembly agreed on eight goals which are to serve as guidelines in the global fight against world poverty. The guidelines are known as the *Millennium Development Goals* and include eight strategies believed to reduce poverty by half within the year of 2015. An estimated 2.5 billion people live in poverty today and their situation is considered a threat to life, to democracy and to peace. Therefore, in signing the Millennium Declaration the world's governments gave a "*pledge to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of poverty.*" The United Nations, together with the Bretton Woods Institutions, have through the creation of the Millennium Goals assumed the role of international coordinator of development work. They refer to themselves as the "bank of knowledge" indicating they hold the knowledge and the answers to today's social development challenges, particularly regarding poverty.

The first of eight strategies as defined in the MDG is *to provide all children the opportunity to complete a full course of primary education.* Education is perceived as a human resource enabling the poor to participate in society both economically and politically, and if educated this global "underclass" will have the tools to work their way out of poverty. The belief in education is taken over by governments, development organizations and the poor alike, and has become the developmental mantra of our time. Defining lack of education as a source of poverty, it follows logically that the cure is in providing schools for the people.

But what lies behind this belief in education? Is it possible to reduce poverty by educating the poor? Is education a resource they can utilize within their given reality, or are other political, economical and social processes preventing the expected effects of education from taking place? Who are the poor and what is poverty? Is education interpreted differently in different societies and in whose interests was the educational system established?

Through anthropological methods of investigation and analysis, I try to shed some light on these questions. My findings show there is no direct relation between education and the eradication of poverty, the reality is clearly much more complex. And when defining lack of education as a cause of poverty, individuals are made responsible for a problem that is as much caused by deeper underlying social and economical structures that can only be altered through political reforms. In the following pages, I investigate the factors that complicate the effectiveness of education as a development strategy and which can, in part explain why Odilia and her siblings are not benefiting economically from their investment in education.

Development strategies are never introduced into a vacuum and people are not passive receivers of development. Although the expected results pre-defined in the MDG's do not always apply in real life, it is not the same as claiming education cannot contribute to improve people's lives. Education is interpreted within each local reality where it is applied, people invest different meanings in it and adjust it to their experienced universe. Therefore the process of education sometimes lead to other changes than those intended, and thus even if the aim of economic improvement is not met, education may have succeeded to contribute positively in other spheres; changes that ultimately might lead to economic improvement in the future.

## Gathering Information

In order to investigate the issues presented in the introduction, that is *education as a possible strategy for poverty reduction*, I have carried out an anthropological field study primarily concentrated in the Guatemalan highlands, in the area of Totonicapán. However, my field also extends to Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango (the second largest city) in order to understand how education affects rural and urban realities differently. There are myriad ways to undertake such a project. My research involved a combination of careful pre-planning, countless coincidences and a chunk of good fortune. As one can never predict what will happen in the field encounter, what comes out of it all is just as much a result of where you end up, the people you meet and who you are as a person. I chose the topics of the thesis because of my genuine interest in development issues, something that has been central throughout my university education. Thomas Hylland Eriksen introduces his latest book by saying that "*anthropology, the study of human cultures and societies, is exceptionally relevant as a tool for understanding the contemporary world* (Eriksen 2006). I believe anthropology can provide valuable contributions to the development discourse as it makes the people targeted by development, their perceptions and internalizations of development strategies the analytical point of departure. Their perception of development strategies and how there are internalized is important to communicate. R. D Grillo writes that an important component of the anthropology of development is an engagement with critical perspectives on development and the development process (Grillo 1997: 10). I will return to this argument in the next section. I believe the anthropological approach has endowed me with significant insight into the issues I wish to study.

Due to limited time for research and analysis, it was imperative that I clearly define my project before beginning fieldwork. The risk in doing so is entering the field with presupposed answers to your questions, resulting in deductive research. We all carry a backpack of cultural understandings and perceptions of how the world is stitched together. However, as Ladislav Holy and Milan Stuchlik point out, all research must start with some a priori definitions, otherwise the anthropologist is unlikely to know where to start and what to pay attention to; ethnocentric definitions are unavoidable in this process, they write (1983: 31). Nevertheless, during my time in the field I discovered that many of my presumptions necessarily gave way for new understandings. My thesis is a result of these experiences.

For my project, I needed a group perceived to be poor in a country defined as underdeveloped, and which had been exposed to formal education for an extended period of time. Through a Norwegian organization, The Royal Norwegian Society for Development

(Kongelig Selskap for Norges Vel), I encountered a group of young Guatemalans who had established an organization working for participation and education amongst the local youth population. The organization was helpful with information about the area, and after discussing my project with their Norwegian and Guatemalan representative, I found the area to be appropriate for my investigation. Primary education was introduced in the villages more than twenty years earlier. Development organizations and the government promoted education as a life improvement strategy, and locals participated on a large scale. Cooperating with the Royal Norwegian Society for Development became my ticket into the villages. The youth organization was waiting for me upon arrival; I initiated the difficult first contact and began to build a network of informants. The total number of informants grew rapidly as they lived in extended families, closely surrounded by friends and other villagers. Other informants I met in buses, in the market or when writing home from an internet café. My selection of informants was primarily coincidental, but some I sought deliberately, such as representatives from organizations and university students in the cities. What they all had in common was a relationship to the institutions of education, either as students, teachers, and dropouts or as parents of school- age children. I did not experience much difficulties obtaining information about relationships and views on education, Guatemalans love small talk.

I spent a total of eight months in Guatemala, from December 5th 2004 to August 5th 2005, using the first month to improve my language skills in a Spanish language school. Having spent some months in Guatemala the year before I already had contacts in the city, whose experiences later provided important comparative material to the rural areas. Five small villages make up the foundation of my study; and once I had been introduced to each community, it was fairly easy to establish contacts. The villagers were open, friendly and very curious to know what on earth a white person could be doing there, "*so far from Texas. Had she married someone here?"*

I wished to familiarize myself with social life in the villages, work, family structure, gender roles, leisure, values and educations place within the villages. Anthropological fieldwork is a technique of gathering data, which can consist of many different methods. Participatory observation is central to anthropological fieldwork and can be described as interaction with those one wishes to study over an extended amount of time, taking part in their activities, conversations and every day lives. Ideally, a researcher has the opportunity to spend enough time with the individuals being studied so that the researcher's presence no longer affects their behaviour. However, as a European woman, blond, blue- eyed and scared of cows, I did not quite fit the local profile. I was considered much too old to be unmarried, alone and yet so far away from home. My presence puzzled many and exited some: "*Hello baby! Adios gringa!*" shouted people in the streets, sometimes wanting an autograph in their notebook. It was hard to escape the role of the foreigner. I was also a university student, a level of education few in the villages had reached. Because of this, I was afraid I would be treated with exaggerated respect, thus distancing me from the locals. However, I soon discovered that my lack of fluency in Spanish removed this image, as I could not express myself as expected from a university-educated individual. They possessed better language skills than I, and enjoyed teaching me. Nevertheless, I was often treated as a person who could explain anything from how a tsunami forms to why the USA is at war with Iraq.

An unexpected challenge was how my age (25) and unmarried status created a problem acquiring male informants my own age. As I was perceived to be "in a rush to find a good husband," there was much ado around introducing me to unmarried cousins and brothers. It was mostly a joke on the part of my informants, but they enjoyed teasing me about how beautiful, our children would be or how I would look in traditional clothes. Still, it made the young men shy in my presence and it was seen inappropriate behaviour for me to spend time with them alone. This resulted in most of my informants being female, although I managed to obtain many informants amongst the older men and younger boys. I later discovered that the overabundance of female informants was an advantage as it has provided valuable insight into the special challenges women face in order to take advantage of educational resources and opportunities.

I chose to alternate between different families, spending from four to six days with them during each stay and returning many times during my fieldwork. I decided to take this approach on the recommendation from representatives in the Royal Norwegian Society for Development who suggested that I would be a burden to the families who barely had enough room for their own family members. I found this to be a good way to organize my stays, and in this way, I did not grow tired of the families, nor they of me. The houses had no sanitary facilities and lacked a consistent flow of electricity. It was cold and crowded, with little possibility to write field notes each day. In other words, I was engaged in old fashioned, hardcore anthropology. But as I am no Chagnon or Malinowski, it was a bit much for me to spend all my time here. I do not believe one needs to suffer in order to perform a good investigation, I therefore arranged to use an office/bedroom in a conference centre situated in one of the villages. It was a modern facility built by a local indigenous organization and a place of employment for many villagers. In the interim between each family stay, I would spend a couple of days writing my field notes, enjoying a warm shower and preparing the next stay. At first, I felt somewhat disappointed in myself that I needed such a refuge, but soon discovered that my lack of lust for anthropological hardship actually provided me with a completely new network of informants amongst the employees in the centre. From the director all the way down to the boy sweeping the floor, I gained access to important sources of information. Due to the organisations work with local development, they possessed a vast amount of knowledge about the area, something I benefited greatly from. Closeness to informants may hinder the researcher's effort to achieve analytical distance. With an office to retreat to, I managed to create a balance between "being there" (Watson: 1999) and distancing myself from the people I was writing about.

In order to become acquainted with the educational system, I visited several schools, observed classes and talked to students and teachers. This was always done after I had informed the teachers or headmaster about my project. Spending time in the schools allowed me the opportunity to compare verbally expressed opinions about education to the facilities, the children's behaviour, performance and social interplay, and the instruction level in the classroom.

I felt welcomed and accepted in the villages. It is my perception that "my" families went on with their lives as normal, not behaving fundamentally differently due to my presence. Nevertheless, how one positions one self in the field is important as it affects the investigation and later analysis. There is no one single truth to be retold from experiences in the field,  therefore I place myself and my experiences within the text to show how my own cultural background may have influenced situations, relations, perceptions and later analysis.

When undertaking an investigation about the effects of education in a rural setting, it becomes necessary to have some insight into how urban realities are affected as well. To what extent does ethnic belonging and place of residence determine the possibility to make education a resource? In order to find answers to this question, I needed to find informants representing different ethnic backgrounds from the urban areas. I already had many contacts in the capital, people I knew from my time in language school and from my stay in Guatemala the previous year. To obtain more, I moved to Quetzaltenango, a city situated only 40 minutes from the villages. I rented a room in the home of a white, middle class family with whom I spent six weeks. Through their network of friends, I was introduced to a different Guatemala from what I had experienced in the villages. I visited universities, and various exhibitions, obtained informants amongst the students, and participated in seminars on social issues. During these weeks in the city, I continued to visit the villages several times a week, sometimes even spending a few days. Keeping abreast of news reports, especially in the national and local papers gave me insight into the public debate about education and how related questions were handled. By not geographically limiting my investigation within the villages, I write myself into the post-modernist tradition in which a field of investigation is not to be understood as a closed unit, but as a part of a larger context (Kearney 1996).

## The Analysis

I will now explain my approach to the understanding of the development literature based on the analysis of development as both discourse and practice. Anthropologists who come before me in the area are; Kristi-Anne Stølen who has done extensive research on Guatemalan refugees (2003) and gender (1996). Stener Ekern has contributed investigations from Totonicapán, focusing on local political systems (2005), and Kay Warren has written about Mayan activism (1998). I refer to their work, but as they focus on different topics, their work is not the most central in my thesis.

I opened my introduction with a presentation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as defined by the United Nations (UN), and more specifically, the goal describing primary education as a poverty reducing strategy. Understanding why the UN is able to proclaim that education is a resource people in poverty can make use of serves as my point of departure. To find out whether or not the strategy applies to real life scenarios is the purpose of this analysis. Choosing the UN and the MDG is because the UN is one of the key agents within development practice, and because most governments and non-governmental organizations support their role as a coordinator of global development work. The UN and the MDG can therefore be said to represent dominant attitudes and practices within both development discourse and practice. Morten Bøås and Desmond McNeill introduce their book by saying that even if the impact multilateral institutions have on development is hotly debated, few doubt their power and influence (Bøås and McNeill 2004). They attempt to show how institutions like the UN have the power to “frame the world” by drawing attention to a specific issue, deciding how the issue is viewed by the international public, and finally transforming it into a development policy. According to Bøås and McNeill, an effective “frame” is one that makes favoured ideas seem like common sense, while being against those ideas will be like “being against motherhood or apple pie” (ibid: 2). Education as a development strategy can be seen in this light.

Throughout the chapters, I use the work of the American economist Jeffrey Sachs, a special adviser to the UN Secretary General, who has been deeply involved in the realization of the MDG. Sachs is known for his work as an economic advisor to governments in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Asia, and Africa. He is currently a professor at Columbia University. He is also known for his work with international agencies on problems of poverty reduction, debt cancellation, and disease control- especially HIV/AIDS, for the developing world. Sachs' research interests include the links of health and development, economic geography, globalization, transitions to market economies, international financial markets, international macroeconomic policy coordination, emerging markets, economic development and growth, global competitiveness, and macroeconomic policies in developing and developed countries. Sachs writes his publications almost as manuals, using titles titling such as *The End of Poverty- How we can make it happen in our lifetime* (2006). Although his views are not popular amongst everyone within the UN, he enjoys significant influence within the organization. By writing accessible books for the public, and with the help of Bono, the lead singer from the music/rock band U2, Sachs influences mainstream opinions on both development and poverty. I use Sachs as a representative for the simplified view of the causes and solution to poverty, a view which is represented by many development organisations, the UN and their MDG included.

The overall goal of the MDG is reduction of extreme poverty. However, the eight listed goals also serve as strategies for medium-income countries such as Guatemala, who experience great inequality within its people. According to the UN, a country's achievement of the goals defines their level of development ranking in the yearly-published Human Development Index (HDI). In the thesis, I use data presented in the 2005 index. I approach all statistics with precaution aware that the numeral facts might not always be reliable. Escobar writes:

> Statistics tell stories. They are techno-representations endowed with complex political and cultural stories. Within the politics of representation of the Third World, statistics such as these function to entrench the development discourse, often regardless of the political aim of those displaying them (Escobar 1998: 213).

Still, the HDI is used by the UN as a foundation for definition of development challenges and areas of intervention, and as they proclaim on the very first page, the HDI enjoys "a well deserved global reputation for excellence." The statistics therefore represents a "truth" the way it is perceived by many within development practice. It is important to note that that this thesis is not an analysis of the UN as an organization, of neither their position within development practice, nor an evaluation of their work.

When writing about development and development strategies it is important to engage with the vast collection of literature within the discourse, covering disciplines such as economy, sociology, biology, political science, medicine and so forth. However, as this is an anthropological thesis, my choice of theories will be centred around anthropological approaches to development studies. Historically, intentional development already existed as a part of political policies in nineteenth- century Europe as a way to deal with poverty and stagnation (Cowen and Shenton 1996: 5). But Escobar argues that after 1945 the doctrine of development turned into something entirely different. It became a new paradigm, a new way to conceptualize the global situation and to find solutions to the problems it presented. The founding of the International Monetary Found (IMF) and the World Bank in 1944, and the United Nations in 1945 marks this change as they were established to deal with development issues (Escobar 1995: 31- 40). Simultaneously, the process of decolonization was intensified, and with the emerging problems of poverty and political unrest, eyes were soon turned to what became known as “The Third World.”

Although multilateral institutions like the UN have adopted the doctrine of political neutrality (Bøås and McNeill 2004: 4), their critics perceive them as anything but neutral. Some compare development practices to colonialism (Escobar 1998), to the nineteenth- century-idea of trusteeships (Nustad 2003) or as part of a country’s foreign policy creating political allies and protecting commercial interests (ibid 2004). Others point to the ethnocentric aspect of development strategies and accuse them of promoting a western social, economic and political organization of society as a global ideal. With development having these and other implications than “helping the world’s poor,” anthropological involvement has been hotly debated within the discipline due to traditional ideals of cultural relativism and observation without intervention.

If we distinguish between *development anthropologists* as the ones working within development institutions, and the *anthropology of development*, as an approach taken by those who critique development from outside the institutions (Grillo 1997: 2), my work falls into the latter category. Escobar criticises development anthropologists and accuses them of producing knowledge in the interests of the development institutions, instead of describing the realities of life in the Third World. In this way, he argues, development anthropologists participate in reifying ethnocentric and dominant models of development (Escobar 1991: 658). Against this Green states  that ”It is worth sacrificing strict scientific neutrality and cultural relativism if the lives of the worlds’ poor majority can be improved; development projects and programs informed by anthropology are better to those not so informed” (Green cited in Escobar 1991: 669). I believe the distinction between development anthropology and the anthropology of development is not necessarily always clear, as one can move in and out of these roles and contribute to both “sides.” The anthropological agenda for each can be to provide critical perspective on mainstream perceptions and practices of/ in development work, such as the work done represented by the UN and MDG, and question both goals and methods.

As an anthropological context for my thesis, I rely on critical approaches to development as presented by *Escobar, Hobart*, and *Ferguson*. Escobar calls for an “end of development” claiming that the agenda has failed and that it is time to give people back their right to self-determination (Escobar 1995). This has been a central idea within the Mayan Movement in Guatemala, but has proved difficult to achieve (Warren 1998). Others claim an end of development is just another doctrine of development (Cowen and Shenton 1996). Regardless of its failure to reduce poverty, as claimed by Escobar, the institutions of development are a reality to which we all must relate, and it is certain that they will not disappear any time soon. The knowledge produced within the institutions and the practice generated from them, should therefore be considered when dealing with issues of poverty and development.

Ferguson shows how poverty is “depoliticized” through the “industry of development” by providing technical solutions to political questions (Ferguson 1994). Ferguson’s understanding of development provides insight into my investigation of the construction and rapid spread of school facilities in Guatemala, which can be seen as attempts to provide technical solutions. In my analysis, I will show how the seemingly neutral strategy of providing education is also a political strategy to integrate indigenous peoples into the dominant culture. In addition, as a poverty reduction tool, the expected effects of education are limited, not only by the poor and their “cultural barriers” (Sachs 2005), but by political, social and economic structures so deeply embedded, they are unlikely to be altered by education alone. Ferguson adds that the reason development organisations provide technical solutions is that they are incapable of changing these overlying structures, which in his opinion is the only way to deal with poverty. I argue that as the major agent promoting education, the Guatemalan government does not share the same political limitations as development organisations and therefore should be able to create such structural changes. Mark Hobart investigates how western “expert” knowledge dominates the practice of development causing indigenous knowledge to be ignored. The process leads to “a growth of ignorance” as other types of knowledge are lost (Hobart 1993). This process is taking place in Guatemala where Mayan knowledge is further undermined by an educational system that is dominated by a certain type of knowledge promoted through the introduction of widespread official education. The locals no longer see their knowledge as valuable.

What all three anthropologists have in common is their focus on the uses of ethnography to explain development processes. I do not use all of these theories explicitly throughout the thesis, but they provide a theoretical background and explanatory foundation for my material. Other writers used in the same manner are Bøås and McNeill (2004), Eduardo Galeano (1998) and Knut Nustad (2003, 2004). In section 2.1 and 2.2 I return to theories explaining the terms "poverty" and "development." I have chosen other theoretical approaches in response to what I found during my investigation, in order to analyse factors preventing education from providing the expected economic growth, and to other consequences education may contribute. These will be discussed in chapter four.

In his recently published book, "Engaging Anthropology," Thomas Hylland-Eriksen encourages anthropologists to involve themselves in social- and political debates (Eriksen 2006) and I share his desire for anthropology to be more visible in public debate. It is imperative that anthropologists be able to communicate research in a language accessible to non-academics and in a manner that will not put the reader to sleep. I believe this is important even at the master-degree level. My data is collected within a specific area and social reality, therefore my analysis of the impact of education does not apply everywhere. Still, it is my belief that an investigation like this may provide some general insight into the matter, as several countries defined as underdeveloped face similar social, economic and political challenges.

## The Chapters

In the previous section, I introduced the topics and aim of the thesis, explained which methodologies I employed in gathering material, and provided a theoretical background for my analyses. In **chapter one** I review the historical, political and social contexts in Guatemala clearly affecting the outcomes of a development strategy such as education. I begin by briefly describing Guatemala in general and the area of investigation in particular. Section 1.1 deals with Guatemala's historical background, because understanding Spanish colonization is important when attempting to unravel the social, economic and political structures of Guatemala today. Drawing on data from the Human Development Index (HDI), I describe the present situation; life expectancy, education, demography, politics and the indigenous movement. In section 1.2, I move closer to the topic of the thesis, describing the level of education, the educational system and its policies in Guatemala. Section 1.3 and 1.4 provide descriptions of the field sites where my investigation is carried out, accompanied by a map of Guatemala in chapter to identify the area and location of the villages. Their proximity to urban areas is an important factor in evaluating the impact of education in the area, as most employment is found in the cities.

In order to analyze poverty and poverty reduction, it is necessary to explain what the concept of poverty implies. Poverty indicates an absence of sufficient resources necessary for basic comfort and survival. But who defines an adequate level of survival; who are the poor and why do they need to be helped? The same can be said for the concept of development: What do the United Nations mean when they create strategies to promote development? Who are in need of development and what are the aims? Different perceptions of what is implied by the terms poverty and development can in part explain how development projects do not always provide the expected outcomes. This is relevant in **chapter two** when I place education within a development context. Here I look at how the belief in education became so strong within the development policies. After giving a geographical and a theoretical background, I move to **chapter three** and begin the empirical descriptions of the local economic situation within the villages. I relate individual economy to level of education, and consider how education has affected villagers' abilities to generate income. I treat primary, secondary and tertiary education separately based on the assumption that each educational level affects individual economy differently. In **chapter four,** I present five factors, which, according to my observations are affecting education and its ability to reduce poverty. I begin with an investigation of the labour market and its inability to receive the hordes of existing educated people, and argue that education does not create more employment, as expected by some. Further, I suggest that the low minimum salaries for both unskilled and skilled work is an obstacle for reducing poverty, as it does not correspond to cost of living and to some extent removes the economic incentive to invest in education. Next, I include a gender perspective, looking at traditional female responsibilities and how they are not easily combined with employment outside the home. The pressure to be a "good woman" and fulfil expected domestic responsibilities is an additional factor preventing women from entering formal wage labour. Contrastingly, men do not find that traditional male responsibilities place them in conflict with work outside the home. Continuing my discussion, I look at the high fertility rates in the villages, which have long been perceived as a cause of poverty within development discourse. Although women themselves express a desire to limit the number of children they have, I suggest the Catholic Church and the culture of the *machismo* limits their choices. In addition, my research indicates that locals do not only perceive their children as a "cause of poverty" as much as they consider them a source of wealth, although not one defined in economic terms. This indicates that local values are not always consistent with those of developers, and that not everything can be seen in the perspective of economic rationality.

The factors mentioned above reflect the expected impact education has on the villages, and that education has yet to create much individual economic growth. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, education is never introduced in a vacuum, and in this case, the locals have another agenda than economic growth when investing in education. In section 4.4, I look at how education has become a way to socially differentiate one family from others and a way to achieve higher status. Through analyzing local homes and economic priorities, I find that demonstrating economic wealth and modern values through commodities is important to the villagers. Since not everyone can afford education, education becomes a valuable commodity, symbolising the family's economic situation. In a society with little to differentiate people, education becomes a factor that can do exactly this, especially for those who can afford to send their children to private education facilities. As a result, locals continue to invest time and limited resources in the pursuit of a diploma in spite of little economic gain. The final issue I include in my investigation is whether or not a more equal Guatemalan society will result from the massive increases in school enrolment. Exclusion from education is perceived as a perpetuation of indigenous oppression and discrimination. But although increasing numbers of indigenous peoples are now included, the privatization of the educational system is preventing integration and equality by only allowing economically strong individuals/families to acquire quality education. In sum, the society remains as unequal, although in this system the discrimination follows the contents of one's wallet, more than ethnic belonging. In my concluding remarks, I summarize my findings and consolidate my main arguments. I do not present definite conclusions or solutions to the challenges Guatemala and development practice face, but indicate that such practice cannot be "depoliticized," to use Ferguson's term, if substantial improvement is to take place.

# Chapter 1

## Geographical Context

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### 1.1 Guatemala – History and Present

Guatemala is a country of vast differences, both in its landscape, its demography as well as in its distribution of wealth and power. The 2005 Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Guatemala as number 117, placing it among the *medium income countries*[1]. The same report indicates a life expectancy of 67.3 years; the adult literacy rate is 69.1 percent and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools is 61 percent. The GDP per capita in Guatemala is measured to 4148 US$. Norway, which is the highest ranked country, has a GDP of 37670 US$, and Niger ranking lowest on the index with 835 US$. Although Guatemala is not ranked among the least developed countries, its medium income placement does not reveal the realities of unequal wealth, health and education distribution among the population. Nor does it show that this unequal distribution reflects ethnic inequalities.

Coffee, sugar, cotton and bananas are the most important export products. Guatemala depends on the natural wealth of the land, but the same resources have caused great inequalities within the population. Much of Guatemala's current social, political and economic situation can be explained by historical events starting with the Spanish invasion and subsequent colonization in 1524, which lasted almost three hundred years (Trish O'Kane 2003). After independence from Spain during 1811- 1821, the USA greatly influenced the course of the country due to its keen interest in natural resources and its focus on preventing left-wing movements from gaining political power.

When the Spanish arrived in 1524, the indigenous Maya population lived in highly complex societies; they possessed architectural skills, astronomical knowledge, well-developed agriculture, and long distance trade. There were approximately fourteen million Mayans throughout Guatemala and the bordering areas of Mexico. But although they outnumbered the Spanish, the Europeans were technically superior and conquered the Mayas using horses and guns. The Maya population decreased dramatically, as a result of diseases introduced by the Spanish and the brutality of being forced into slave labour on the emerging plantations. Independence from Spain mostly benefited those already in economically and politically powerful positions, and so the oppression of the Mayas continued. A series of military rules followed, creating a state of civil war, where the right wing government, helped by the United States, fought the guerrillas and all suspected supporters; including students, intellectuals, writers, journalists and others. The opposition wanted democracy and social and agrarian reforms to decrease the great inequalities within society. The civil war had a deep impact on the rural areas; individuals "disappeared[2]" and villages were burned down in the search for the opposing guerrillas. About 250,000 indigenous peoples were killed in the process.

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[1] The UN categorizes countries in high-income countries, medium- income countries and low-income countries, indicating three different levels of development. The index measures the average achievements in a country in three dimensions of human development; a long, healthy life, measured in life expectancy at birth; knowledge, measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (Human Development Report 2005: 214).

In 1996, the peace process was initiated, assisted by the UN, and today Guatemala is a democracy. The political scientist Susanna Jones argues that Guatemala cannot be described as a democracy, for its deep social inequality and no attempts for structural reforms (Tooley 1997: 45) A small upper class of Spanish descendents still holds political and economic power, controlling both the parties and the land. Approximately half of the total population is indigenous, a small percentage are black descendents from African slaves, while "mestizos," hispanicized indigenous people and people of mixed parentage[3], compromise the other majority percentage. Nevertheless, the demarcation between indigenous populations and the mestizo mainstream is not clear- cut (Warren 1998: 9).

The capital Guatemala City lies between forest covered mountains and volcanoes 1250 meters above sea level, and much like the other capitals in Central America, it is growing rapidly as people migrate to the city in search for work. Of 12 million people, approximately four million live in the capital, and on a national scale, 46.3 percent live in urban areas. This is causing an urbanization of poverty, which largely is affecting the indigenous peoples who are forced to reside in slum areas on the outskirts of the cities.

An awakened Maya activism has caused the indigenous people to organize themselves into political groups promoting their causes and demanding civil rights and justice (Warren 1998).

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[2] "Disappeared" is the term used for the thousands that were arrested by the government, accused of supporting the opposition. Many never returned and were most likely killed in imprisonment.

[3] Another term often used is "ladino." Kay Warren writes that ladinos were hispanicized indigenous people living outside their communities, and that the term "ladino" displaced "mestizo" by the eighteenth century (Warren 1998: 222). However, I chose not to use the term "ladino" as I was told on several occasions by Guatemalan scholars that it has racist connotations and that "mestizo" is the proper word to use. Still, the word ladino can be heard in everyday speech also when people refer to their own group identity.

The UN and other indigenous groups worldwide back their activism. Today, the indigenous population are no longer ignored and much political life and public debate revolves around indigenous issues. Regardless, the Mayas still make up the majority of the economic underclass and few obtain political positions.

### 1.2 Education in Guatemala

According to the HDI 2005, the Latin American region has the second highest school life expectancy after Western Europe and North America. For Guatemala, the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools is now at 61 percent[4]. Of total government expenditure, 11.8[5] percent goes to education. Norway, ranking highest on the list spends 16.2 percent. Out of the Guatemalan total of 11.8 percent, 31.1 percent is spent in primary education, 12.9 in secondary and 21.2 on tertiary education. However, with an adult literacy rate (age 15 and above) of only 69 percent Guatemala is as far behind as many of the least developed countries. The statistics also show that a gender inequality exists within the educational system with an adult female literacy rate of 63.3 percent, compared to the adult male literacy rate of 84 percent. Nevertheless, this inequality seems to be changing if we take into account the enrolment ratio among the younger generation. In primary education, 86 percent of all females are enrolled, in secondary 29 percent and in tertiary 8 percent. The ratio female to male is steadily decreasing as we move up in the system, from 0.97 in primary, 0.95 in secondary and 0.78 in tertiary education. As a result, the youth literacy rate (ages 15- 24) has risen to 78.4 percent for women and 91 percent for men. The report show no records for ethnic inequality in education. But according to the Human Development Report from October 2000, 58 percent of the indigenous people in Guatemala are literate, and in rural areas, where most of the indigenous peoples live, the total percentage of literate people is 57. Compared to 85 percent in the urban areas, the figures indicate that illiteracy is closely connected to residence and ethnic belonging.

On the internet pages of the Ministry of Education in Guatemala (www.mineduc. gob.gt), they admit to the great difficulties the country faces in relation to the low literacy rate and the fact that so many are not able to complete their education. As early as 1835 a law was passed stating that education should be free and mandatory for all (Ekern and Bendiksby 2001: 85), but from the data presented above, it is obvious that many have not been able to access education. Nevertheless, access to education has improved dramatically over the past decades, and public education fees are maintained relatively low.

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[4] Gross enrolment ratios are based on enrolment data collected from national governments (usually from administrative sources) and population data from the UN's Population Division's 2002 Revision of World Population Prospects (UN 2003). The ratios are calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in all level of schooling by the total population in the official age group corresponding to these levels (Human Development Report 2005: 215).

[5] 11.8 percent is in 1990 numbers as the numbers for 2000-02 are not available in the report. In 2000-02 the total spending in Norway was 14.6 percent of total government expenditure.

The educational system is divided into public schools, private schools and non-profitable schools initiated and administrated by cooperatives in rural areas. The system is divided into primary school (called primaria and basico), secondary level consisting of technical/general studies (diversificado) and; tertiary level consisting of university studies. During the past ten years, there has been an increasing process of privatisation within the educational system, resulting in numerous private schools at all three levels. The trend is most evident in urban areas, but is increasingly taking place in rural areas as well. According to the law of education from 1991, the government is obliged to provide education for all, without discriminating. The law describes an education that responds to social demands of the country; one that is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Further, the educational system is by the government justified in its ability to create equality, social justice and liberty, which will provide the best foundation for a good community and create internal development.

### 1.3 The Area of Investigation

It is early afternoon and the children are pouring out of the school building; they are running, shouting, flirting, drinking coke and eating frozen fruit on sticks. A million little pathways run from the school towards all the small houses, and the cornfields suddenly come alive as the children make their way home to eat with their families. Four hours in school is plenty, and most of them have been up since dawn to finish all their chores before being allowed to study.

The dogs are going wild as Juana, José and Miguel enter the house, throwing their backpacks on the floor and storming into the living room, just in time for their favourite soap opera “La Madrastra.” Juana is fighting with the antenna to get better reception, José is commanding “*to the left!*” and Miguel makes sure he gets the best spot in the bed. In the kitchen, the mother and an older sister, Maria, are preparing tortillas and soup on the wood fuelled stove. And from the room next door, the rhythmic sound of the fathers loom is penetrating the house as he makes another traditional fabric ready to sell.

The house, like most of the houses in the area, is constructed in concrete with rooms arranged around a patio. Most of the family sleeps in the living room, sharing beds, the eldest girls have their own room. The kitchen is built in adobe, a construction technique using mud and water. The room fills with smoke and the smell of vegetables as the food is prepared three times a day. Outside the kitchen is a fenced area for chickens and a few rabbits, food which is prepared on special occasions. A small plot of land surrounds the house where corn is grown for the family's consumption. Twelve people live in the house, ranging from one month to seventy-three years old.

Abuelita is hanging colourful meters of traditional clothing to dry in the midday sun and talking to herself in Kitché, when Maria calls everyone in to eat. They gather around the stove and the little wooden table, and the conversation soon picks up. A vivid blend of Spanish and Kitché is spoken. The younger children have problems pronouncing words in kitché, and the rest are laughing heartily at their mistakes. I am also forced to try, and with all the strange sounds coming out of my mouth, even the quiet mother is laughing from the back of the room. Maria and Lourdes, the two older sisters, are in charge. They make sure everyone has their food, correcting their younger brothers when they are not eating properly, and kicking the dogs outside every time they try to get near the stove; "*Fuera*!" they raise their voices when they give their commands. In the midst of the meal, the eldest brother tiredly drags in the door. He is studying to be a mechanic in a nearby town. "*Have you been out with a girl? Someone in school told me he saw you with his cousin!*" his sister shouts. They are all teasing him, and he tries desperately to change the subject.

After the meal the table is cleared and they all go back to their different chores. The father continues weaving, the mother is taking care of the baby, and the girls gather a pile of clothes and sheets, and walk down to the public washbasins. Here, they will get news about everything and everyone; "*Have you heard Melissa is getting married? She must be pregnant!*", informs a neighbour. "*I have not seen Marvin in school for over a week, I think he has gone to the USA to work. How his mother must miss him!*" another woman is telling the girls. She leans over to Juana and asks; "*What is the gringa doing here? Has she married someone in the village?*"

The younger brothers are supposed to help their father weaving, but they seem to have other things in mind and are headed for the tienda on the corner to meet with their friends. From the radio, reggeaton is pumping on high volume, and the guys are shouting out the lyrics and dancing in their baggy jeans and hooded sweatshirts. Deep inside seven meters of a hand-woven skirt, a girl's cell phone is playing a Shakira tune. From a distance, it might look as if the village is cut off from the outside world, lying there on the foot of a volcano, 2853 meters above sea level. But inside the little houses people follow world events on their blurry televisions, and discuss the Tsunami in Asia, Nicole Kidman's dress at the Oscar Awards and mourn the Pope, John Paul the second's death.

It is getting dark; the boys are on their way back to the house, and up the path Maria and Juana are returning with a pile of clean, wet clothes. Inside the house, the two youngest brothers are getting out their schoolbooks, and are seated on some wooden stools their uncle made for them. The girls are embroidering, the mother is nursing the baby and the father is watching TV. Miguel has to write the roman numbers and is struggling to get it right. Maria yells at him for not having finished his homework "*Miguel! You have had all day, why did you not do this before? And this is not right at all, you have to write the X first!*" She tears out the sheet of paper from his book and shows him how it should be. The father is laughing following the situation with one eye and watching the TV with the other. –*"It is not funny!"* Maria, insists and turns to her brother; *"Do you want to show up in school without knowing anything? You will embarrass yourself in front of everyone!*" Maria takes the role of a teacher, clearly influenced by the courses in pedagogy she attends at the university during the weekends.

It is already late, and knowing they all have to get up around 5.30 am the next day, they start to get ready for bed. They keep their clothes on when they crawl underneath the blankets; it is hard to keep warm throughout the night as the temperature drops below zero.

The case story above illustrates a normal day in a village, a small taste of what life is like for the people I shall describe in this study. Totonicapán is situated in the highlands of Guatemala. The four-hour drive from the capital takes you through beautiful, green mountain scenery, small villages and busy crossroads. Large billboards promoting fashionable shoes and potency pills stand in interesting contrast to old, crooked men in woollen pants carrying bundles of firewood and corn on their backs. Alongside the road, women and children are sitting in the grass, waiting for a bus to take them to the market. Old and rattling, the American school buses are characteristically painted and decorated with Jesus or the Virgin Mary. They run at incredible pace, leaving clouds of dark fumes and dead dogs behind. On the roof of the buses, fruit baskets, chickens and corn are clinging on, and inside the bus, an anthropology student is doing the same, praying that the breaks will hold as we speed down the hill.

### The Towns

The five villages where this study is undertaken, are dotted around a major crossroad called Cuatro Caminos (four roads), situated in between the city Totonicapán and Quetzaltenango, the second largest city in Guatemala. About ninety percent indigenous people inhabit the municipality of Totonicapán, they are mainly Kitché, the most numerous group within the Maya[6]. The area is mostly rural, with several small- and medium sized towns inhabited by mestizos and some of the more prosperous individuals in the indigenous community. The town closest to the villages is called Salcajá, and it is known as a centre for traditional handicrafts. Especially on market day, the importance of merchant activity becomes visible, as the little town crowds with people pouring in from surrounding villages to sell artefacts and other necessities. Besides the churches, a few cantinas and a football field, there are few recreational activities. Strolling the plazas, or people- watching from the front steps of the pastel- painted houses, seem to be the pastime activities most people enjoy. However, like in most parts of the country, internet cafés are popping up everywhere, filling up with youngsters eager to absorb the world outside and play the latest video-games. They wear the latest fashions from the USA; guys with baggy pants and bandanas around their heads, and young girls in thigh-hugging trousers and pink lipstick. In between the young fashion-victims, indigenous women walk in their colourfully embroidered outfits with food from the market. The major road towards the capital runs right through the town, creating a chaotic atmosphere as trucks squeeze their way through.

### The Villages

Around Salcajá, green mountains rise towards the skies, surrounded by mist and clouds and with hillsides covered in cornfields and apple trees. Winding dirt roads lead to numerous villages, the crowded pick-up trucks will take you wherever you need for a quetzal or two. Relatively small in both size and population, the villages are homes to indigenous people only. The roads which are nearly invisible during the dry season due to for the swirling dust transform themselves into rivers of mud during the rainy season. This makes transportation uncomfortable and slow. A few small tiendas with super- cola and long strips of chips and lollypops hanging from the walls, there is an ice-vendor with his cart, an evangelistic centre, a little church, and a school. Angry dogs barking, a lonely cow, sounds from TV- sets and reggeaton from a radio. The villages seem peaceful and green, surrounded by majestic nature at the foot of volcanoes ranging over 3000 metres above sea level.

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[6] There are about twenty Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala, and the indigenous people are classified by the language they speak, making Kitché the largest group counting about one million speakers (Warren 1998:16)

### Housing and Living Conditions

Traditional white or brown coloured adobe houses, separated from one another by small patches of cultivated land, blend naturally into the landscape. In between, flashy constructions of whitewashed concrete, tower over the more modest adobe houses. These houses are built by the migrants who work illegally in the United States and send money home to their relatives. The architecture looks like something in between a Roman palace and a Miami beach house; mirror reflecting windows, pillars and balconies with green plants hang over the wrought iron railings. However, for most people, the houses and decoration are very modest, containing neither sanitation facilities, nor modern home appliances, but nearly everyone has access to water and electricity.

### Family and Gender

Families are typically large with somewhere between six and twelve children, grandparents and unmarried siblings of the father often live in the house as well. The houses are surrounded by the homes of relatives. If the house is big enough, male children will remain in it after marriage. The marriage age is around 19-25 for girls and normally some years older for men. Still, if a girl becomes pregnant before she reaches marital age she is obliged to marry right away. Young couples can choose their partner, but need the approval of their families to complete a marriage. Married women work primarily in the house taking care of chores such as cooking, cleaning and raising children, but several unmarried women are employed in handicrafts or wage labour. Men have the primary responsibility for generating economic income. They have no responsibilities in the house, but it is not uncommon that they take part in childcare. Men are seen as the head of the household.

### Livelihood

The traditional livelihood is subsistence farming combined with production of handicrafts. But today, this is increasingly combined with other sources of income. Corn is the most important crop, vegetables and fruit are also grown. The fields are worked manually. A family will typically have a small patch of land providing some of the yearly food supply. The production of handicrafts is as important as farming. In some of the villages, nearly all the men, and some women, work the large manual looms. It is complicated and time-consuming, demanding good skills. The fabrics are sold to a buyer who comes to the village a couple of times a month, and a few run their own stores in Salcajá. Women work with smaller looms and embroider the colourful blouses. Almost all women wear the traditional costume, which is referred to as the “traje.” It consists of seven metres of woven fabric wrapped around the waist, and a blouse which is either woven or embroidered fabric. The production of handicrafts keep the villages alive both economically and culturally, and much pride and effort is put into this work.

Wage labour in nearby towns represents another option besides traditional work. For the ones who have acquired an education, jobs such as secretarial work, primary school teacher, accountant or mechanic are available, albeit scarce. Without an education, small-scale factories producing cheap t-shirts, employs many of the villagers. Another alternative is migration to the USA, an option available mostly to men, as it is seen as too dangerous for women. Money sent home by the emigrants, is an important economic contribution for many families, and some depend on it completely.

### Language

Spanish and Kitché are the languages spoken in the villages. Amongst the elderly there are still some who only speak Kitché, most adults speak both languages equally well, and in the age group below twenty-five, Spanish is now the first language. In many families Kitché is no longer taught to children, or it is first taught when they have reached the age of four-five years old, resulting in lack of fluency. The languages are commonly mixed within the families, and both languages are spoken in public. Nevertheless, it seems young people make more use of the Spanish language between one another, and this is also the language ysed in schools at all levels.

### Religion

The Catholic- and Evangelist Churches are the main religions. Attending church once or twice a week is normal, and many children engage themselves in different church activities. Some families own a bible, although it is seldom read. Houses are decorated with religious posters and have an altar with figures of the Virgin Mary, candles and plastic flowers. Religion is deeply embedded in the culture and everyday speech. They see God as someone who is watching over them and someone to turn to in times of need.

### Schools and Organizations

Primary education has been available in the villages for about thirty years, but it is more recently that it has become so widely accessible. Most people aged 25 and below have primary education. Nearly all children attend school, but the number of years varies greatly. Now that both levels of primary education is found in the villages, a great many people acquire nine years of schooling. The schooling facilities vary greatly in condition and size. In some villages, they can be quite decent, with a proper concrete building and enough desks and chairs for all. Others are in a poorer state, without a proper roof or floor. All schools lack books, about four-five children have to share one, indicating that they can never bring books home. There is also a lack of teachers, resulting in class sizes ranging from 35 to 50 children. Parents pay a yearly enrolment fee and utilities throughout the year. There are no uniforms in primary schools in the villages, but most secondary schools demand it. For education above primary level students must commute to the urban areas, and many do. A few make it to university level, but most who do, take weekend courses and work during the week to pay the fees. Amongst the older generations, few have an education. Most men have some years of primary education, but many women are illiterate. Attitudes towards education have changed considerably over the last years, and most villagers express the importance of education. Traditionally, girls were excluded, but they are now participating on all levels. These observations from the villages reflect in large part the numeric facts from the HDI presented in section 1.2.

Different development organisations have projects in the area. The most visible is the international organization **InterVida**, which is responsible for the construction of many schools and provides utilities. They operate under an agreement with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, but see themselves as an independent development agent. Cooperación para el Desarollo Rural de Occidente (**CDRO)**, is a Guatemalan Maya organization with projects concerning health, education, women's issues and political awareness. They have built a large conference centre in one of the villages and employ locals. **The American Peace Corps** conduct health- and hygiene projects in local primary schools, and **the Royal Norwegian Society for Development** supports a local youth initiative working for education.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical Context

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### 2.0 Chapter Introduction

To investigate education as a strategy to reduce poverty and create development, it is essential to define what is meant by these terms. As I will show, different meanings are invested in the concepts. What is poverty and who are the poor? What does it mean to be developed and what is the goal of development? Differences as to how such questions are answered can explain much of the disagreement found between development agents, their critics and the ones targeted by development. Education introduced within the discourse and practice of development, rests on theories emerging in the era of enlightenment when education was connected to development of social equality and democratic nations. But the implementation of an official educational system can also be seen from different perspectives, keeping in mind that poverty, development and education are highly influenced by power and political intention.

### 2.1 Defining Poverty

Several definitions of poverty have been proposed, and this is not an attempt to find the "right" one. What is of importance here, is that different perceptions of what causes poverty and of who the poor are, lead to different ideas about how to handle it. Poverty can be defined in absolute terms, in relative- or cultural terms, and what causes it may be seen from structural or individual angles.

The UN defines poverty as people who live on less than 1 US$ a day[7], the accepted minimum for survival. This is a definition of extreme poverty, and an estimated one billion people survive on this or less. Another one and a half billion survive on 1US$ - 2US$. Together they make up about 40 percent of the world's population (HDR 2005: 24). The necessities for survival are defined as sufficient food, clean water, shelter and a minimum of healthcare. With a definition of poverty as a matter of individual economy, reducing poverty becomes a question of increasing individual income. At the same time it is assumed that insufficient economic capital is what prevents people from covering their different needs. This is poverty in absolute terms and Sachs can be seen as a proponent of this view (Sachs 2005).

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[7] The measurement of 1 dollar a day was initially set in 1985, but later adjusted to 1993 value. Therefore, it does not indicate what you can get for a US$ in today's value (Statsmelding nr 35 2003-2004: 6)

Critiques of an economic definition of poverty point to the simplification it represents. If poverty means the lack of certain essentials, presumably there is global agreement on what is essential in order to have a decent life. To define people as poor from their level of material wealth clearly represents an ethnocentric aspect of poverty definition. The UN uses an economic definition because they depend on accurate data for administrative purposes. According to Escobar, poverty was “discovered” after the Second World War when the “per capita” measurement was first used. Over night, two-thirds of the world population were transformed into poor people because they lacked money and material possessions available in the First World (Escobar 1995:23). However, arguments that the cure for poverty is economic growth, does not take into account the fact that growth can simultaneously reduce and produce poverty (Øyen 1992: 26). Thus, poverty also becomes a question of distribution of wealth.

Defining poverty in economic terms may be the most accurate, but at the same time most limited definition (Øyen 1992: 24). The UN has attempted to account for this in the Human Development Index (HDI). The index measures the average achievements of a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge, as measured by adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and a decent standard of living, measured by GDP per capita (HDR 2005: 214). Nevertheless, an economic view of poverty prevails within the UN, reflecting the strong influence of economists and the World Bank within development discourse (Escobar 1995: 55).

Other indicators of poverty are more difficult to quantify, such as cultural, political and social aspects of defining the poor. Anthropologist make an important contribution in considering such factors and also attempt to demonstrate that a local definition of poverty is an important part understanding how development strategies are perceived. It is also vital to comprehend the social and political context in which poverty manifests itself to know which kinds of development communities themselves aspire to, if they aspire to development at all. In this context, poverty can also be perceived as lack of self-determination and lack of political influence over the course of development, which easily can happen with outside institutions controlling the process.

In opposition to absolute definitions of poverty, poverty can be seen as a relation of inequality. If poverty is relational, it becomes impossible to eradicate it, as wealth will never be equally distributed. Poverty becomes an experience of not having what others have. Both the absolute measure and the relative perception of poverty are relevant to the understanding of poverty in the villages I investigate. The locals do not feel that their survival is threatened as they have food, shelter, clothes, water and access to health services. In daily life they seem content with what they have, but they often mention to me that they are poor. Escobar writes that defining the poor has retrospective effect as “the poor” are likely to adopt this image of themselves (Escobar 1995: 5). I believe the villagers are increasingly experiencing themselves as poor as they have more contact with the greater Guatemalan society, in part a result of their participation in the educational system.
Historically, poverty has been perceived as the normal state for the majority of the world’s population (De Vylder 1992: 33). Escobar writes that it was not until the poor were considered a threat that the fight against poverty became a political issue. The world as divided between rich and poor areas became a new way to conceptualize the global situation, and developing the undeveloped areas was placed on the political agenda (Escobar 1994: 22).

### 2.2 Defining Development

In the post war era, the understanding of the world as divided into developed and underdeveloped areas has been a determining factor in politics, policy making and the establishment of international developing organisations. The UN defines a world divided into four areas; the First World, referring to the industrialized, capitalist countries in the West; the Second World, as the socialist economies in the East (no longer existing); the Third World, as the underdeveloped areas in the South, and finally the Fourth World, referring to indigenous peoples in all regions of the world. Of these four worlds, only the first is seen as fully developed. To divide the world in this way is clearly a simplification, and many argue that the divide is pointless. Nevertheless, a definition of certain areas as underdeveloped has been necessary in order to justify intervention through development projects.

All societies change over time, but “development” also indicates an idea of progress and a belief that development can be intentionally directed towards a desired end (Cowen& Shenton 1996: 1-6). Cowen and Shenton introduce *Doctrines of Development* stating that “development seems to defy definition,” as it has been defined by so many people in so many ways (Cowen& Shenton 1996:1). The number of definitions points to the lack of agreement about what development actually is. Numerous critiques towards development strategies have been put forward, and some criticize the existence of the practice itself (see Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1994, Hobart 1993).

The UN defines development as enlarging people's choices (HDR 2005), and with this emphasizes the individual aspect of it. Poverty is seen as an obstacle to development and therefore considered vital to remove, achieved through improved economy, as explained in the previous section. The Norwegian word for development, "utvikling," translates into the English word "untangle," something I find illustrative for how the process of development is perceived by many within the practice; the state of un- development is like a knot that needs to be untied.

The villages in this study can be described both as part of the Third- and the Forth World, when applying the UN's definition. People from the villages are also perceived as peasants (campesinos), and as Kearney points out, part of "developmentalism" has been to develop the peasant category out of existence[8] (Kearney 1996: 38). Their non-productive lifestyle does not contribute to national development, and Kearney mentions that peasants are perceived as people with disruptive and revolutionary tendencies. Kearney's investigations are carried out in Mexico, however, Guatemala shares a similar history of violent upheavals and revolutionary movements formed amongst the peasants (see section 1.1). The spread of official education in the rural areas of Guatemala can in this light be seen as an attempt to integrate peasants into the formal economy and to prevent social unrest.

Some critics of development argue that people have a right not to be developed. Escobar, a main spokesperson for this view, claims the development project has failed because of the increasing opposition towards such projects from the "development targets" (Escobar 1995: 212). This is especially the case in the Latin American region, where several indigenous groups claim the right to control their own course of development. However, in the villages where this study is undertaken, the local people want to take part in development processes, which in this case refers to education. The Maya Movement fights for the indigenous people to be included in official education, and my informants clearly express a desire to participate in it. Maria Stern writes that for the Guatemalan women in her study, to be excluded from education was seen as a strike of doom, as it excluded them from society all together.

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[8] For more elaborate treatment of the category "peasant", see Kearney 1996, where he argues the category is no longer useful because it was constructed in another social setting.

The villagers are well aware of the concept of development. Within public discourse and political life in Guatemala, the rural indigenous are portrayed as underdeveloped, and villagers have adopted this view. It is possible that the presence of development organisations in the area have even reinforced this self- image. The local understanding of development organizations manifest itself in daily speech, and many people see the organisations as “money bags.” Assuming I represented a foreign organization, villagers would ask me if I could be so kind to contribute to their project. On occasion, I knew there was no project, but what is interesting is their comprehension that an economic contribution must be justified in a social project. Teachers share the same perception; if a school lacks utilities, or the building needs upgrading, they contact local development organizations before they contact the Ministry of Education. In spite of much development activity in the area, few villagers were active in such work or other social movements.

### 2.3 Education in Development

> “Investing in education, especially that of girl’s, is one of the strategies that give the best results in fighting poverty. Education gives people the opportunity to learn, utilise their own resources and gain insight into- and influence society. By 2015, all children must have the opportunity to complete a full course of primary schooling” (Millennium Development Goals 2000).

The belief that education will generate political, social and economic development is strongly held by governments and development organizations alike. The introductory quote is taken from the UN Millennium Development Goals (www.un.org) where primary education is the first strategy listed, reflecting the importance of its considered effects. But why is the belief in education so strong within development discourse and practice? As with *poverty* and *development*, education also has implications beyond the technical aspect of providing it.

The idea that educating the masses would result in benefits for both society and the individual stems from the era of Enlightenment, a philosophic line of thought dominating the European continent from the eighteenth century and onwards. Before this, education was considered a preoccupation for the upper classes only. But as the sciences were freed from religious constraints, traditions and unfounded beliefs thus came to be perceived as a hindrance to development (Myhre 1970:196). Scientific knowledge and discoveries gained status as factors able to revolutionise society, and as the best foundation for democracy.

The heritage from the era of Enlightenment can today be seen in relation to what David Coulby refers to as the "knowledge economy" (Coulby 2005: 23). He writes, "A change is taking place in the global economy which is simultaneously becoming more internationalized and more centred on knowledge." As the economy becomes increasingly dependent on technological advancements, scientific knowledge and finance becomes closely intertwined. Developing countries are seen as the ones loosing the global technological competition, and part of the explanation is the lack of an adequate educational level. With an economic definition of poverty (see section 2.1) and on knowledge as vital for economy, education has become a number one strategy to reduce poverty. Today, education is even seen as a universal human right, a right made official by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all countries except for the United States and Somalia. In doing this, the UN performed what Bøås and McNeill calls a "framing exercise," making the benefits of education unquestionable (Bøås and McNeill 2004).

Many, including several anthropologists, comment on the effect of education on societies. Bourdieu explains social inequalities as a result of unequal distribution and access to "capital." He divides this term into: "economic capital," "social capital" and "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1995). Social capital refers to factors such as class- or ethnic belonging and formal education. Cultural capital is the command over social codes, language and common knowledge. In this light, one might see education as a mean to increase social and cultural capital, and thus decrease social inequalities. On the contrary, Bourdieu claims the educational system will reproduce social inequality, because the system is developed by the dominant classes to serve their interests (Bourdieu 1990). Its primary function becomes to imprint respect for the dominating culture at all levels of the population. If knowledge is capital, that is, a means to achieving exclusive advantages, it cannot be available to all. I will return to this argument in section 4.5, when I analyse if the participation in education is creating integration or discrimination in Guatemala. The Human Development Report indicates that

> "In an increasingly knowledge based economy 115 million children are denied primary education. The gap between rich and poor countries measured in terms of average education is increasing, this is before taking into account the difference in quality of education" (Human Development Report 2005: 24).

This development trend may illustrate Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction of inequality within the educational system. Bourdieu writes about educational on national level, but his theories can fruitfully be applied on an international setting.

Escobar, another critic of development, writes; ”Knowledge is what western science knows, progress is what the West’s dominant groups have achieved, and the only kind of life worth living is what that knowledge and achievements define” (Escobar 1991:676). With this statement he points to the ethnocentric aspect of development, but also to what sort of knowledge can be expected to dominate within official education. Because the educational institutions are the main transmitters of knowledge, those who have the power to define curriculum will play a significant role in shaping the frames of reference for citizens in a country. In Guatemala, the Ministry of Education is solely responsible for the production and distribution of books for educational purposes. In spite of the indigenous movement, which is perceived as influential, the Hispanic culture and knowledge seems to predominate the educational system. Despite this, indigenous peoples continue to fight for integration through official education. Using the theories of Paulo Freire, their struggle exemplifies the ultimate form for oppression, as the oppressed identifies with their oppressors and want to become like them. In his opinion, it is impossible for education to lead to improvements for marginalised groups in society, because the educational system is in it self part of the oppression (Freire 1968).

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To provide different perspectives on the implications of poverty, development and education; from the way it is perceived within the UN, by critical scholars, and by the local people, will prove important for the empirical context and analysis which will be presented in the following chapters.

# Chapter 3

## Empirical Context

## Social and Economic Effects of Education

### 3.0 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter and in chapter four, I will present my empirical material in relation to the questions that are yet to be investigated; Is education in fact generating the social and economic changes defined by the MDG: higher income, improvement in life quality, more self- determination and expanded choices? And if not, what factors are preventing it from doing so? In order to shed some light on these questions, I begin by describing case studies to illustrate the extent to which individuals are able to exchange their investment in education for increased income. I treat economy on an individual level, as this is the practice within the UN. In the villages, the family traditionally constitutes an economic unit, with the husband as the main economic provider. But as an increasing amount of young people enter wage labour, economy moves towards becoming more an individual matter, at least for unmarried individuals. In my analysis, I will distinguish between the different levels of education as they present different opportunities for economic gain. The case studies are in framed boxes, and many of the individuals presented here will be discussed throughout the thesis. Income and prices will be stated in the local Guatemalan currency *quetzales.* At the time of investigation, 10 quetzales equalled about 1.2 US$.

### 3.1 Work and Income with Education at Primary Level

#### Case Study 1: Weaving an Income

Behind a large loom standing in the middle of the patio, Juana is working at a steady pace making yet another fabric woven in the traditional manner. Her children are playing around her feet, and chickens and ducks are trotting about. Next to Juana, her husband is operating a similar loom; he is the one who taught her about weaving when she married and moved into his household. All the adults in the family take part in the manufacturing of traditional fabrics, and between them they work six large looms from early morning until late at night. The children help in the process of preparation, colouring and sorting out the yarn. Within the large family of eleven people, only one daughter has education above primary level. Juana, and most of the others have between four to six years of primary education, and are literate. Arnulfo, the father of the house, never went to school, not because there were no schools, but because they saw no point in education back then, he tells me. He wanted his five sons to get an education, "*I even paid the fees, but they never showed up in school. They wanted to hang around with their friends instead, I guess*," he sighs. "*And now it is too late with wives and children to look after.*" Arnulfo is the one who has taught all his children to weave, and he operates the whole family business.

In spite of not having much education, the family manage economically. The fabrics they make are sold to a buyer who comes by once or twice a month. One piece measures nearly seven metres and depending on the quality of yarn, colour and pattern, they charge from 200 to 350 quetzales. To prepare for weaving takes about 24 days; the yarn is bought, the patterns are applied, the yarn is coloured, dried, then the loom is prepared. This will be sufficient for 20 pieces. An efficient weaver can make one piece a day, but the production level varies, especially for women who also have the main responsibility for housekeeping and caretaking. Weaving is their main source of income, supplied with inconsistent money transfers from a son who works illegally in the United States. In addition, they have a little store in part of their house, selling candy, sodas and bread. The women are also skilled in making the belts that form part of the traditional outfit, which are sold to neighbours and friends. Paying the "coyote" to smuggle the son into the United States has left the family without enough land to sustain the yearly supply of corn, and they now need to buy it at market price. Their living standard is modest, living in a traditional adobe house, sparsely furnished. Still, they have food, water, electricity, clothes to keep them warm (even in fashion!), some toys for the children, a TV and a VCR. A refrigerator is placed in the kitchen, they share a cell phone and a stereo plays music all day long. This family also owns a pick-up truck, something that is quite uncommon in the area.

The family seems content in their daily life, but sometimes verbally express a feeling of being poor. They are well aware that they do not have access to everything, and the daughter who is educated on secondary level, wishes they could afford to send her to university. But after the death of her mother during childbirth a few years back, the pressure is on the daughter to fulfil her role in the house.

This case study illustrates a family's way of generating income in a situation where most of the members have some (primary school) or no education. The family is representative of the area both in composition, level of education, standard of living and means of income. Traditionally the people in the village produces hand-woven fabrics and weaving skills are transferred between generations; no school teaches this trade. Being self-employed in handicrafts represents an alternative way of generating income for those without much formal education, but the intricate work takes time to learn. Depending on the complexity and quality of the pattern, payments for an embroidered blouse range from 250Q to 400Q, a belt from 50Q to 150Q and an apron from 70Q to 200Q. They produce on demand and receive the payment on completion. Necessary material expenses such as yarn, thread, pearls and fabrics are normally covered prior to payment.

There are also other possibilities to generate income for villagers without education or with education only at primary level. Adult men work their own land and provide food for the family. Excess harvest can be sold on the market, although few have sufficient land to do this. And because agriculture is seasonal work and does not generate cash income, it is necessary to have additional work. As described in the case study above, several families have a small convenient store on the house premises. These stores are plentiful in the area, and because they only sell candy, bread and other simple necessities, they represent no main source of income. All women are occupied in housekeeping and caretaking. This does not generate any cash income, although some of the poorer families send off daughters to work as maids in other families, for which the girls receive food or a small amount of money. A common alternative is employment in t-shirt production, a possibility open to both men and women. Some families operate small business within their homes, taking orders from buyers from the cities. The t-shirts are cut and sown together on privately owned machines. In addition, there are some mini-factories in the area producing t-shirts, raincoats and similar, where one can be employed.

**Case Study 2: Ana in T-shirt Production**

The noise from five manual sewing machines, cartoons from the TV and pop-music flowing from the radio creates a somewhat chaotic, but friendly atmosphere on the open patio. The dogs are barking and pulling on their chains, and the door slams as the children run in and out, and in again. Everywhere, piles of t-shirts are stacked up against the walls and the floor is covered with cut-offs of unused fabrics. Ana is at work in the home of her uncle and next-door neighbour, where he runs a t-shirt production. Every day from nine in the morning until about seven or eight at night, Ana makes t-shirts here, earning two quetzales for every shirt made. "*On a good day I can finish as much as a hundred t-shirts,*" she proudly explains, "*but normally it will be around seventy to eighty.*" Ana is twenty-three, unmarried and the oldest of ten siblings. She has finished a full course of primary education, but was not able to continue at the secondary level because her parents could not afford it. Her parents are both uneducated, and the family survives by making traditional handicrafts. Ana began to work with her uncle, hoping she would earn enough money put aside for secretarial school. Now she is reconsidering and wants to continue working for her uncle to save money and buy her own sewing machine. "*There are so many secretaries graduating these days, almost all the girls I know are taking the course, and there are just not enough jobs to go around*. *Working as a secretary does not pay more than what my uncle is paying me."* In addition to the school fees, she describes all the extra costs added when working outside the house; new clothes (western clothes she is obliged to use in the office, clothes she does not have, and does not like), transportation costs and buying lunch. Although she finds herself economically better off to in an unskilled trade, she is very concerned about the importance of education and she wishes she could have taken more. "*I would love working as a nurse," she says. "But I like this work as well, it is not so hard to do.*" She tells me she does not fear the future, that she will always find something to do.

Many of the villagers are engaged in t-shirt manufacturing and some prefer it over traditional handicraft as it is not as physically demanding. They work long days but most operations are family run and the work pace is normal, nothing in comparison to the exploitative factories sometimes described in the Asian region. Most get paid on provision, the ones who own their own machines benefit the most. But the machines are costly, and it will take time to save up for one.

The final option for unskilled workers I shall describe here is migration to the United States and the business of trafficking migrants through Mexico and over the boarder. Many have migrated and send money home to their families. The ones who smuggle people over are called "coyotes," as explained in section 1.3. To work as a "coyote" is the single most lucrative income generating activity available to men in the area, but since it is illegal, it is considered risky business.

**Case Study 3: The "Coyote"**

Listening to pop music and painting her nails, Ofelia is in her father's house watching TV. It is early afternoon and in a short while, she will start preparing food for the rest of the family. Ofelia is twenty-three, unmarried and has no education past 6th grade, like the rest of her siblings, nor is she employed. We sit in a nice, big sofa in a little "local palace," built in whitewashed concrete with roman pillars in the entrance. The house is equipped with all sorts of modern facilities, the floors are tiled and there are more rooms than there are people. Quite a contrast to the neighbouring houses built in adobe. "*Do you want to see the pictures from my vacation?*", she asks me holding her hands out to dry the nail polish. She flips out an album from the shelf, and sits down next to me. Colourful photos from the beach in Miami, from restaurant visits enjoying a bloody steak, and her family on the porch of a luxurious Miami Beach house. She has gone to the United States on several occasions, travelling and enjoying vacations for as long as a month at a time. She has told me that the source of all this material wealth is her father's work as a coyote. For each person he charges forty thousand quetzales, and he can take as many as eight to ten each time he goes. Some of the money goes to bribing police officers and boarder guards, but the coyote is left with a solid sum. Not all coyotes demonstrate their wealth with large houses and other visible signs of money. It is illegal, and some are afraid to show it. It is not talked about openly, but all villagers know who is involved in this line of work. This family spends an enormous amount of money on material commodities and travelling, but none of the family members have any education past sixth grade. When talking to Ofelia, she tells me she is not interested in getting one either, "*What for*?" she asks me, "*I don't need to work.*"

This case study shows a family with a relatively high level of income due to the fathers work as a coyote. The father is the only one working in the family, and he is often away from the village for longer periods at the time. Very few in the villages enjoy the level of living standard that this family does. At the same time, education is not a priority among the children. According to a local head master, this is not uncommon. In fact, she explains that many children from families with good economic means, where the father is a coyote or he earns money in the United States, do not continue beyond primary education. "*Children see that their fathers earn money without education, and do not see the point with education,"* she tells me. And not far from Ofelia's house, two young sisters have just decided to drop out of the first year of secondary education and stay home instead. They do this in spite of their fathers' monthly money transfers from the United States, which would enable them to pay the school fees. Instead they do household chores and occasionally weaving belts. When I ask the girls why they are not in school, they tell me that they do not want to.

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To sum up, we see that there are several ways to generate an income without education; handicraft production, agriculture, running convenient stores, sell products in the market, t-shirt manufacturing, as a "coyote" or emigrating to the United States. All of these ways to earn money demand different skills and knowledge, none of which are taught in school. Still, the income generating activities described in this section continue to be the most important sources of income in the villages in spite of the increased level in education. Nevertheless, the value of reading, writing and simple math is helpful in all the trades, and a few years of primary education will be valuable to most, although not necessarily in an economic sense.

### 3.2 Work and Income with Education at the Secondary Level

#### Case Study 4: Female Secretaries

Lourdes is busy answering telephones and sorting out long lists with names written down on sheets of papers. In the hallway, two young men are running back and forth, carrying blankets and pillows, detergents and a mop. From the kitchen, the smell of food is penetrating the building and the noise of cutlery being placed on long tables echoes in the dining hall. A bus full of women is pulling up in the driveway and religious songs can be heard all the way into Lourdes office. We are in a conference centre situated in one of the villages and Lourdes is at work. She is getting ready to receive 125 women now arriving to attend an evangelistic weekend seminar, and it is quite the job handling the task. But Lourdes has done this many times before.

Lourdes is twenty years old and has been working as a secretary in the conference centre for little over a year. Completing a secretarial course means that she has acquired twelve years of education, and she received her diploma just last year. She comes from a village nearby where she lives with her parents, grandparents and six siblings. Her father is a weaver and owns a store where traditional outfits are sold, they also have a small grocery store in the house and a cash crop of apples. The family is not amongst the poorest in the villages, but their living standard is much like everyone else, with a traditional house sparsely decorated and furnished. The father has a few years of primary school, the mother is illiterate, but the business they run, enables all the children to receive an education. Although their family income is not a result of education, both parents express faith in the possibilities education will give for their children. Still, the father does not agree with the quality public education can offer; "*The government would rather see us die than do anything for the people up here,*" he tells me the first time we meet. He therefore pays extra for his children to attend a local private school, something Lourdes has also benefited from. She was lucky to get the job in the conference centre, as it is the only secretary position in the village. Others have to commute in order to be employed in this line of work. She works six days a week from eight to five, her monthly salary is 1300Q. She will often work much longer days, especially when the centre has many visitors, and sometimes she even has to spend the night attending to the guests. For this she receives no extra payment. On the weekends, she attends classes at a private university in the city to get further qualifications in administration. She seems very content in her work and she manages her position with skill and confidence. Two other young women are also in the centre, working in accounting. Like Lourdes, they are unmarried girls from the village, in their early twenties and educated at a secondary level.

In the same conference centre, a young man is sweeping the floor, and with a cloth in his hand he wipes off the tables as he works his way through the rooms. Angel works here every afternoon, five days a week, and in addition to cleaning, he runs errands for the other employees. He comes from a nearby village, is unmarried, and lives with his family and all his siblings. His parents are both uneducated and do not have much money, but managed to cover the costs of his primary education. But Angel wanted more education, and for this reason he managed to get a job so he can pay for secondary school himself. Working at the centre he earns about 600 quetzales a month. During the day he attends a school in order to become a qualified primary school teacher. "*I really want to be a lawyer, but I don't think I can manage to pay for six years of education,"* he tells me. "*But being a teacher is not so bad either.*" He wants to teach mathematics and science. Then one day, he comes running along the road towards me, looking very exited to tell me the news "*I got a job teaching in the village where I live!*" he exclaims. "*It is a full time job and I start next month already.*" His happiness is unmistakeable, he continues at high speed along the dusty road to tell his parents the news. Some time later, after he has started his new teaching job, I meet him again. Angel tells me he is very happy in his new job, but that he continues cleaning the centre in the afternoon because he is only paid a minimum salary at the school. He tells me that he will start weekend courses at the university with the extra money, and hopes to one day become qualified to teach in secondary school.

For Lourdes and her colleagues, education is the ticket into a wage labour market, and they can all serve as good examples for the expected effects provided by education. None of the individuals described are skilled in handicraft, and education has provided an alternative to unskilled work. Hence, education has *expanded their choices*, as the UN defines development, and they prefer this work over the unskilled trades available. Necessary to mention is that the individuals described in this category does not earn more than those employed in unskilled trades, especially if the transportation and food costs are subtracted.

In addition, they work longer hours. Angel reinvests the money he earns in education. Although he comes from an economically poor background, Angel found a way to pay for additional education through employment in an unskilled trade. He is only keeping his old job temporarily in order to afford university, but does not want to go back to his unskilled work. For a woman secretary, the scenario looks different.

**Case Study 5: Working from Home**

In a little adobe house surrounded by high corn plants, Odilia and her sister are embroidering and chatting about an upcoming wedding in the village. The rain is pouring down, leaving little desire to go outside where the field has transformed itself into a river of mud. But there is enough work to keep them busy throughout the day, embroidering blouses and belts ordered from customers in the surrounding villages. Their hands move skilfully as little flowers and figures appears on the colourful fabric. In a little while, their younger sister will be home from school to join them. Odilia is twenty- one years old and living with her family in a modest house surrounded by cornfields and the houses of other relatives. Her father works the loom, selling fabrics to a buyer who comes by every other week. With pride, he tells me that all his children are educated, although he only has three years of primary school. Odilia is his next oldest daughter and graduated as a secretary, with a scholarship from a local youth organization. Until recently, she was working in a town nearby in a company selling medical supplies: "*In the beginning I really liked the work, wearing nice clothes and being in a modern office all day. But working as a secretary, they only paid me 1000 quetzales a month, even if I know this is less than they are supposed to. And out of that I had to pay for transportation, lunch and the nice clothes to wear at work."* After six months in the job she resigned and went back to handicrafts. She works every day and because she is working from home, she can now find the time to contribute in the house. Her mother died in childbirth many years back, and Odilia and her older sister therefore have the sole responsibility. "*There are always many orders on blouses and belts around here, they know we do good work so they even come from other villages to buy the blouses we make,*" Odilia smiles. During the six months that have passed since she left her secretary job she has not applied for a new, and seems in no hurry to do so. Selling handicrafts, her income depends on how much she produces, but normally she will earn somewhere between 800 and 1500 quetzales, which is more than she earned as a secretary. In spite of this, she never expresses any regrets for taking an education, and as one of the few in her neighbourhood having one, she enjoys the status of someone other people consult in different matters. "*People around here know I have gone to school, and they sometimes ask me if I can help* *them write something, a card maybe, or to read a letter from the bank.*" She seems proud of what she has accomplished, and her secretarial diploma hangs nicely framed on the living room wall with a picture of her in a cap and gown next to it. She tells me that her dream is to live off of the income from embroidering together with her sisters, which is exactly what she is doing and has been doing for many years. Still, she finds education very important, something she often makes remarks. On occasion, she even mentions that she wishes she could have taken more education, but never expresses what she would have done with it.

Odilia's case is the one introducing this thesis and her story is illustrative of many stories in the villages. With the relatively high level of education in the area, it seems surprisingly few are actually occupied in work they are trained to do through their education. Odilia's three brothers are also educated at the intermediate level, one has even attended courses at the university in the capital. Still, they all work in the local t- shirt production. *"Education is the most important, I wanted my children to be educated so that they can have a better life than I could give them. You see, everything was different before, we didn't think of education as anything good."* The father never mentions the fact that none of his children actually work in skilled trades and the fact that they do not benefit economically from the investment in education.

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Skilled work available to individuals with an secondary level education (twelve years) includes work such as mechanics, electricians, nurses, primary school teachers, and work in hotels- and restaurants, shops and internet cafés. All of the jobs pay minimum wage, which in Guatemala is 1300 quetzales, but depending on experience and place of work, there are possibilities for an increase in salary. As a rule, villagers must commute to the urban areas daily in order to be employed in these types of work, however there are a few positions in the villages. Education at this level can serve as an alternative, and to some the work might be preferable as the tasks are of another character. There is also an aspect of status connected to the level of education and type of work, as we can see from the case of Odilia.

### 3.3 Work and Income with Education at the Tertiary Level

#### Case Study 6: Teaching in Local Schools

It is 1.30 am and Gladys is still up writing a paper for the university that is due the next day. The rest of her family went to bed more than three hours ago; the house is quiet apart from the typing noises from the living room. *Just a little longer*, she knows she has to get up again in less than four hours to be in time for work. Five days a week, she travels for two and a half hours to a primary school where she teaches a class of about forty- five children. Three days a week, she also does secretarial work in the city. Friday evenings and Saturdays, she attends sociology classes at the university, staying behind after periods to work as an assistant teacher. Then travels for two hours back to her village and her family. For the past five years, this has been her life and she is quite an exception in her village. Her dream is to graduate with a master's degree, preferably from a university abroad. "*Maybe from Mexico, I have heard the university is very good there,*" she says. Her only chance to go is with a scholarship, and that is why she works so hard. The job as a schoolteacher provides enough money to pay for the university fees at the private university she attends. However, she enjoys her work and hopes to continue teaching even after completing her master's degree. "*I really want to give back to my community, and educating the children is so important."* She is very popular amongst her little students, and creative in her teaching; because there are never enough books for everyone, she uses newspapers and alternative books that everyone can afford.

In her family education is emphasized more than in most, maybe because her father is the head master of the local primary school and teaches in a secondary school nearby. Her mother is illiterate and never went to school, but all of the children are receiving an education. In the living room, a white board hangs on the wall where the father gives lectures to his children. Stacks of books and newspapers are placed against the wall and a computer stands in the middle of the room. Gladys and her younger sister are the only children in the household, as one brother died and the other is married. They enjoy a slightly higher living standard, with a refrigerator, gas-stove and tiled floors.

As Gladys approaches twenty- four, she worries about marriage. She does not have a boyfriend, and tells me it is impossible to find a man who will agree with the life she wants to have. "*I had a boyfriend, and I really thought he was open minded. But the men here are used to their women being at home making life comfortable for them, these communities are* *very conservative, much more than the ladinos*," she explains. And her mother is even more concerned, telling me that Gladys has never learnt to cook or any practical chores around the house. The parents have always been supportive of her education, relieving her of most responsibilities at home. Without their support, it would not be possible for Gladys to lead the life she does. Still, she sees that it has consequences. Everyone in the village knows who she is, and many talk about her. Being a woman spending so much time on her own in an urban setting is not seen as normal behaviour. With everything she experiences through her education, she feels somewhat alienated from the other villagers. "*Most of my friends from the village are already married with children. I cannot talk to them about the things I experience, they do not understand. If I do, they feel inferior, and I do not want that*." For Gladys, this represents a dilemma, as she does not want to give up the life she has, but at the same time she wants to have a family and take part in village life. "*It is here I want to live,*" she says.

With her level of education and strong dedication to achieve her goals, Gladys is quite the exception in the village. Still, there are a few in the same situation, both young women and men. With university courses now available on weekends, tertiary education has become increasingly available as it allows students to work during the week to afford the fees. Girls need acceptance and support from their parents due to their domestic responsibilities. Not all parents are as supportive as Gladys' is. Those who take university courses during weekends have jobs where intermediate level education is required, thus already benefiting from their education. In order to work in positions that require university level education, it is necessary to commute or move to urban areas. Like Gladys, many do not want to leave the village to live elsewhere. Few adults have reached a tertiary level of education for reasons such as fewer schools, less possibility of transportation, poor roads and a general lack of emphasis on education earlier. But as always, there are exceptions to the rule.

**Case Study 7: Local Organisations**

In a modern building, Santos is sitting in his office behind a desk overflowing with papers and books. Along the wall are shelves with countless reports and the walls are decorated with posters, one saying: "*No a las minerías*!" The phone rings constantly and members of his staff knock on his door, giving messages or asking for advice. Santos is the director of a Guatemalan development organisation working to promote development in the area. He is an economist, and teaches in both the public and a private university in the city. In his forties, he is established with his wife and three children in a nearby town. Santos is one of the few local people in his age group who has acquired a university degree, despite his background from a family with limited means. He often tells me of his struggles to get this far. There were no weekend courses at universities in those days, the university was far and he received little support from his family. But more than that, he remembers the feeling of not being accepted by his fellow students. “*I did not want to be an indigenous, and I thought that I could escape it through education.. I had to work twice as hard as the others to prove I was not a stupid Indian*,” he explains. Santos did the very uncommon thing of marrying a mestizo woman, he tells me he wanted his children to be whiter and better than himself. But today, he has changed his attitude towards his background, and he is now proud of being Kitché: *“I started to read about the Mayan culture and how we were oppressed by the Spanish. I know now that we should not feel inferior to the mestizos*.” Working for the local development organization is his attempt to contribute to the indigenous community. All of his staff are of indigenous origin, and he constantly reminds them of their proud past. He also sees lecturing at the universities as a way to inspire and be a role model for young students, especially indigenous students. “*But teaching here is almost like charity, I only receive twenty quetzales for each lecture, and it barely covers my transportation costs*.” But even if he sees education as important, he worries about the poor quality in schools, which in his opinion is not creating a generation of individual thinkers, only a generation of repeaters. Santos will not tell me his monthly income, but judging from his lifestyle, a house in an urban area, two children in expensive private schools and a car, it is evident that he has improved his standard of living significantly.

The case of José shows that it is possible for an economically limited individual to improve his standard of living through tertiary education. In both the case of Gladys and José, we see that they are concerned about contributing to the community with the skills they have obtained and that they both regard education as necessary for the betterment of the villages. Their education has given them access to another reality than most get to experience in these areas. Gladys and José remain exceptions, both with their level of education as well as being employed according to their skills. But why do so few work according to the skills they have acquired though education? Why are so few able to create economic improvement for themselves and their families? At all three levels of education people seem to have the same standard of living, the same lifestyle and the same values. And why do some even prefer unskilled work to skilled work even when possessing the qualifications, like in the case of Odilia? And why do people, in spite of everything mentioned still consider education as such an important factor in their lives? In the following chapter, I shall investigate factors that are affecting the expected outcomes of education, and how locals interpret the value of education.

# CHAPTER 4

# Analytical Context

## Factors Affecting Education as Poverty Reducing Strategy

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### 4.0 Chapter Introduction

In chapter three, I use different case studies to illustrate various economic situations and how education relates to their income generating activities. Schools at all levels are available in the area, the public university charges five quetzales monthly, and it is also possible to afford private universities if working during the week. Education is widely accepted as an important investment, and as a valid reason for postponing marriage for both young men and women. This has resulted in a relatively highly educated young generation, normally with between six and twelve years of schooling. However, as I have shown, few work according to their skills and few benefit economically as a result of their education. In section 2.3, I refer to arguments justifying the implementation of official education: its ability to generate political, social and economic development, to reduce poverty, to provide equality, and even as indispensable to survive in a global "knowledge economy." The Guatemalan Ministry of Education proclaims that education is necessary to become a more prosperous country, to change Guatemala's destiny, and to become more influential in a globalized world. In order to investigate why life in the villages do not correspond reality to the government's expectations, it is necessary to find factors affecting the expected outcome. In the following sections, I shall investigate the labour market, the level of salaries and living costs, and how the situation in each of these areas directly are influencing the possibility to benefit from investments in education. Secondly, I analyse local gender roles and family structures, which primarily affects women who want to enter formal wage labour. I continue by investigating to the high fertility rate as a possible cause of poverty, analysing how the Catholic Church and the "machismo" influence family planning. Further, I place education within a local system of values in an attempt to explain why education is so highly valorised in spite of its inability to create economic improvement. I will indicate that investments in education are related to social status. Finally, I investigate the presumption that education will lead to integration and equality, and find that the privatisation within the educational system on the contrary creates further exclusion and discrimination. I will show that different values, different perceptions of poverty and economical priorities, combined with the realities of Guatemala's social, economic and political condition are factors affecting educations' ability to reduce poverty.

### 4.1 Labour Market, Salaries and Living Costs

Promoting education as a strategy to reduce economic poverty presupposes the existence of a labour market adequate to employ educated people. In addition, if entering the labour market is to improve individual economy, salaries must correspond to the cost of living. I shall argue that the implementation of the educational system and its expected effects for economically marginalized groups, does not account for the low-level salaries and the differences between rural and urban areas regarding labour market and living costs. Not simultaneously treating limited availability of work and low minimum salaries as causes of poverty, reduces the possible effects of education.

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In Guatemala the official unemployment rate is currently 37%, but the number is difficult to estimate as many work in the informal sector. Agriculture remains the most important field of employment with 50 percent of working men and 18 percent of working women engaged. In the industrial sector there are 23 percent women and 18 percent men, and in the service industry 56 percent women and 27 percent men (Human Development Report 2005: 313). The villages of this study can be described as peasant communities, indicating that they are mainly involved in agricultural production on their own land, a production which is oriented more towards subsistence than reinvestment. Nevertheless, this definition presented by Eric Wolf (1955) is now questioned, as peasant communities are increasingly less cut off from capitalist economy. As Kearney shows through his studies in Mexico, and as my case studies demonstrate, all are involved either formally or informally in wage labour. And as they become more connected to urban areas, agriculture is less and less the base of their economy (Kearney 1996).

Within the actual villages there are few jobs demanding an education, and as shown most are employed in agriculture or informal wage labour. But despite this lack of job opportunities few are employed in the surrounding urban areas although many are skilled to do so. This fact presented in the case studies in chapter three may seem puzzling. An investigation of the labour market reveals that there are actually few skilled jobs to be found, both in the villages and in the cities. As Ana explains in case study two, the number of newly educated does not correspond with the number of positions available. Most villagers are aware of this fact, and for some it influences the incentive to seek relevant work.

Another obstacle to entering the labour market is the villager's lack of networks, and what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as *social-* and *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1995). This he describes as ethnic belonging, social class, common knowledge, command of cultural codes, physical appearance etc. Surprisingly many graduates do not seem to enter the job search process at all, and many return to whatever they did before graduating. A lack of initiative prevails. Odilia, the woman described in the introduction and in case study five, had been unemployed for several months when I first met her. She seemed in no hurry to look for work, when I asked her she would answer that she would start soon. Nevertheless, she did not quite know how to go about it. *"I sometimes see an advert posted on a wall or someone I know tell me if they know about anything.*" Considering that few in her social circle are employed, it follows logically there are not many tips. The daily papers advertise available positions, but papers are seldom read in the villages. Only one of the eight families I lived with bought newspapers on a regular basis. Asking around in the village, I found that newspapers were not sold anywhere, and no one knew where to get them. Thus, the main sources of job advertisements are little used, or not used at all.

In an article Bourdieu writes together with Patrick Champagne, they state that although marginalized groups are included in education, it is the social factors that determine if they succeed or not (Bourdieu and Champagne 1993). If they do not succeed, they are doomed to an even more stigmatizing and total exclusion than before, because they have been "given a chance." The high hopes created from education, can easily result in a massive collective disappointment when the young generation discover that their future will not be as promised. Even the law of education is introduced by saying children will develop a better capacity to dream. I return to this in section 4.2.

Education is often perceived as a factor able to create independent individuals with the capacity for entrepreneurship resulting in more employment and economic growth. Jeffrey Sachs sees lack of innovation as one of the most fundamental reasons poor countries are left behind (Sachs 2005:62). Nevertheless, my material shows little signs of the villagers being able to utilize knowledge acquired in school to create new ways of generating income. Having such well developed skills in handicraft, one might think that they would see potential in selling their products to tourists who frequent areas nearby. Instead, this is taken advantage of by urban buyers who buy local handicraft for pennies, and re-sell to tourists for many times the amount they pay to the villagers. Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, a South- African anthropologist, and one of 4 directors in the World Bank, is convinced that only through developing quality higher education can such innovation and following reduction of poverty take place (Ramphele 2003). But the UN and the World Bank has for the past decades left higher education out of their development policies. The reason is based on economic calculations, which concludes that primary education gives the highest yield of the three levels of education. The yield measures the value of education to the availability of work, but Ramphele criticises it for calculating benefits in short- term, and argues that higher education is needed to reinforce local capacity, innovation and productivity within a country.

Equally significant as the difficulties to enter wage labour, is the low wage paid for most work available after twelve years of education. As a secretary, a primary school teacher, an accountant, a nurse or a mechanic you will normally receive a wage of 1000- 1300 quetzales[9], which is the same amount paid for work in many unskilled professions. By selling handicrafts, driving a taxi or having a food stand in the street you can receive about the same or even more. A monthly income of 1300 quetzales does not correspond to the cost of living, especially with the introduction of obligatory education. As a frame of reference, the cost of the smallest TV set is approximately 1000 quetzales, a soda drink costs 3 quetzales, a pair of cheap sandals is 70 quetzales and a notebook five quetzales. Alain de Janvry points out that agriculturalists can enter wage labour markets as semiproletarianized workers who, because of partial support from their own food production, are able to accept low wages below subsistence costs (in Kearney 1996: 91). For some people the low minimum wage for skilled work may remove the incentive to pursue education in the first place. But for those who do not have alternative skills, or do not want to work in unskilled professions, education still represents a valuable alternative. As the numbers of people who have access to skilled work increases, the pressure on unskilled positions will decrease as more positions become available for the uneducated. However, competition for the few skilled jobs available becomes harder for the same reason. In addition, the increased availability will result in a devaluation of education. Positions that earlier did not demand education now do, demanding increased investments in education in order for the individual to benefit.

Most skilled positions are found in urban areas and employment creates a need to commute daily, but is not desired by everyone. In case studies two and five, both Ana and Odilia represent normal attitudes towards commuting, and bring up travel- and food expenses and lost time, leaving less time for domestic responsibilities. Many find public transportation expensive and uncomfortable, and for those employed in urban areas, it is common to spend from two to four hours travelling daily. This may seem like an invalid reason to remain unemployed, still it is something the villagers often complain about, and for those with alternative work in the village, although not according to their education, it is reason enough to stay.

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[9] The official minimum wage in Guatemala at the time of study was approximately 40 Q daily, most work six days a week.

An alternative is to take residence in the urban areas. The process of urbanization, where rural poor move into the cities in search of work, characterises the entire Latin American region. In Guatemala 46.3 percent of the total population live in urban areas, and it is expected to grow to 51.9 percent by 2015 (Human Development Index 2005: 234). However, this trend is not reflected in these villages. On the contrary, there is an evident attitude amongst the villagers to fear the violent city, to resent an urban lifestyle and the moral decline they believe it represents. In 2005, Guatemala was ranked the most violent country in Central America. The tabloid press broadcast an endless flow of city crime stories that are followed closely by the villagers who shake their heads in disapproval. Within the villages, relatives constitute social network and security, and families keep together in close, personal relationships. To be separated from your family is seen distressing both for the one who leaves, as well as for remaining family members. They often express this when they talk about relatives who has migrated. One girl who was chosen to participate in an exchange programme to Norway, told me that her mother had cried and begged her not to go, fearing she would never come back. Parents are concerned boys will be caught up in crime gangs, and that girls will be sexually taken advantage of, if spending time away from the family. It is interesting that to be away from the family, to be forced to live in violent surroundings, and to be without moral values are part of their definition of poverty. As part of the deconstructionist debate, represented here by Kearney, emphasizes the dualism of rural/urban is no longer valid because the borders between such areas are fluid (Kearney 1996). Nevertheless, the villagers tend to draw clear borders between rural and urban areas, and although crossed mentally and physically on many occasions, the villagers do not identify themselves with urban dwellers and do not desire to migrate. This is not to prove Kearney wrong, but to indicate that villagers draw a mental border, which is an important part of their identity. And as Fredrik Barth points out, boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them (Barth 1967).

In addition to the villagers' lack of desire to move to urban areas, another obstacle is the actual possibility to do so. The cost of living in cities tends to be much higher than in rural areas, especially house rental fees. In the villages, most own their own houses and do not pay rent of any kind. To move away from the village also implies losing the possibility to grow food supplies for the family. Together this represents a great economic loss, which would have to be compensated for by higher salaries in urban areas. However, work in the city does not normally pay more than in the villages. On a minimum salary or somewhat above it, you will be forced to live on the outskirts, in rapidly growing slum areas housing the urban poor[10]. With little economic incentive to take a job outside the village, and little desire to live an urban lifestyle, many chose to stay even if it means working in an unskilled profession.

Nevertheless, as the level of education increases amongst the villagers and their access to land is steadily decreasing, migration to the cities might soon become a necessary alternative. A process in danger of leading to nothing but creating an urban underclass from the rural poor. The importance of agriculture for employment is not reflected in the distribution of the land, and this is the single most important factor sustaining poverty in Guatemala, according to Trish O’ Kane (O’ Kane 2003: 44). Nearly 90 percent of all farms are too small to provide adequate subsistence, while two percent of farms cover 65 percent of land (ibid). In the 1950s Guatemala experienced rising political will to alter the unequal distribution of land; President Arbenz initiated the first real agrarian reform redistributing land, land that had been confiscated by the Spanish conquistadores. But the reform affected the interests of wealthy landowners, amongst them the United States, and together with the Catholic Church, landowners and the army, the CIA organized a coupe d’etat, replacing the democracy with a new dictatorship that reversed all reforms (ibid: 20). Since then there has been no attempt to change the situation. Using education as poverty reducing strategy instead of land reforms can therefore be seen as a way to prepare rural dwellers for a future where even fewer will have access to land. As Ferguson points out, development is a depolitization of poverty (Ferguson 1994) and to build schools can be seen as a technical solution to the political problem of land distribution. Making it a strategy to provide a certain type of development, controlled by political interests.

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Educating the masses in Europe happened simultaneously with massive industrial and economic growth, which created numerous job opportunities and a need for skilled labour. This process is not found in Guatemala. The Ministry of Education emphasise the importance to provide education in the poorest and most remote areas in Guatemala. But it does not account for the differences between the rural and urban reality in terms of availability of work and differences in social- and cultural capital necessary to benefit from education. Education by it self does little to prepare the young rural generation for work, nor create more work, nor does it raise minimum wage or alter access to land. Without land reforms, education can even be seen as a part of an urbanization process, normally not known to improve living standards or life quality for marginalized groups. With the minimum salary remaining low, it is not only lack of education but also exploitation of workers that causes poverty. To the extent that education represents a choice, it is also a choice between two different lifestyles, which for some might be experienced as a forced choice.

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[10] See Skauen (1992) for vivid descriptions of life in the urban slum areas

### 4.2 Family and Gender

In all the families I spent time with, parents are concerned that both their daughters and sons receive an education. The Human Development Index shows that the combined gross enrolment ratio in Guatemala is 59 percent for females and 63 percent for males (Human Development Report 2005:301). Observing school classes in the area leaves the impression that the gender ratio is about equal, confirming the statistics. Girls are actively participating in class and teachers confirm that girls do well in school. Still, surprisingly few women are engaged in wage labour outside the house, and amongst the few who are, most are unmarried. Within the practice of development, a focus on “women” was introduced in the mid-seventies. This has later been replaced by a focus on gender.[11] Ruth Pearson writes that the reality of women’s lives and the gendered nature of economic, social and political processes is still central to understand development processes (Pearson 2000:384-85). Gender relations are part of social relations as well as the social organization, she says. On the other hand, family, or kinship is often described as the most important social institution, providing security, belonging and socializing members of society. Or as Hylland-Eriksen says “kinship is society” (Eriksen 1998:115). The family unit in the villages is very strong, indicating that individual behaviour is closely connected to existing norms and expectations from relatives. Including these perspectives in the analysis, shows that education and its possibility to generate income is highly affected by gender and family structure. However, at the same time education is influencing these very structures. My focus will be on women, not because men are not gendered, but because my observations show that women represent a group who face more difficulty exchanging their education for economic gains.

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[11] The focus on women is often referred to as WID (Women in Development), and the focus on gender as GAD (Gender in Development). For more elaborate overview on this change, see Pearson 2000: 386-390)

*“Can you speak Kitché? No?  Well, the most important word in our language is Utz ali’. It means “beautiful woman” but has nothing to do with external beauty. It describes what a good woman is to us*; *her behaviour, her skills and her qualities as a wife and mother.”*

It was my very first day in the village when a man told me this and I did not think much about it at the time. But later I came to understand how important the expression is to understand the situation for the local women who feel desire and pressure to be the woman it describes. The expression “Utz ali’” illustrates gender relations and the social meaning of what is considered appropriate behaviour for women. “A good man” as defined by the women, is a man who manages his responsibility as economic provider for his family, a man who does not drink or use violence, and a man who cares for his family. Men will add being the undisputed head of the household and to have many children to this list. His role corresponds well with being employed in wage labour outside the household, as his responsibilities are not physically attached to the home. “A good woman” is a virgin on her wedding day, maternal, caring for her relatives, and able to keep a good home. She is a woman who wears the traditional outfit, gives birth to healthy children and respects her husband’s wishes. As I will show, this cultural perception of female qualities is not easily compatible with employment outside the house. Both men and women share the image of “a good woman” and village gossip functions as social control for the image to be realized. Much talk concerns women who are “not good.” Men are very concerned about the concept, especially when it comes to their own daughters or the women their sons will marry. I will use this concept of Utz ali’ (a good woman) as an analytical starting point to understand why so few women are engaged in wage labour in spite of their broad participation in the educational system.

### Male and Female Responsibilities

From an early age both boys and girls have responsibilities in the house, but the main responsibility rests on married women. After reaching a certain age, or if the mother dies,[12] the responsibility is given to the daughters. Typical female responsibilities include doing laundry, provide food supplies, prepare meals, prepare for the weaving process, wash dishes, and to take care of children and sick family members. They enjoy no help from electronic household equipment to ease their chores, and washing clothes is especially

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[12] The maternity mortality ratio in Guatemala is an estimated 240 death per 100.000 live births (Human Development Report 2005: 252). In the area of investigation many families had lost the mother this way.

physically demanding and time consuming. Handicraft is done if there is time to spare, nevertheless it is mostly unmarried women who occupy themselves with this.
For male members of the household, chores revolve around the weaving process and farming the land, they never participate in chores described as female. To farm the land is seasonal work and can be combined with other types of labour. As described earlier, most have very modest cultivated areas and farming is seldom their main occupation. Women's responsibilities are not seasonal and child rearing often last for many years as normal fertility rate is between six and twelve. To work from home with traditional handicrafts makes it easier for women to manage their household and caretaking responsibilities, than if employed in wage labour where there is little opportunity to control their workday. When Odilia (case study five and introducing case story) was employed as a secretary, she worked five days a week from eight am to five pm. In addition, she spent about 45 minutes travelling each way. As she explains, this left her little time to do all her chores, produce handicrafts or to see her family, and for most women, this is a normal scenario. Without kindergartens or household devices to ease their responsibilities, chances to combine traditional female responsibilities with wage labour are limited. A minimum salary is not enough to pay for such services or commodities, and if it was, the houses are not fit to install them. There is no maternity leave and no payment if a child is sick, in short, the labour market is not adjusted to the needs of women who cannot afford nannies or maids.

Pearson writes that development projects directed at women can be of two kinds; either as an attempt to make it more feasible for women to carry out their gendered responsibilities, by focusing on better cooking stoves, water and sanitation, health facilities or family planning (Pearson 2000: 386). The other type is the projects that aim to change current gender relations and to increase women's abilities to challenge contemporary social structures and practices. Education as development strategy can be linked to the second alternative. Jeffrey Sachs writes that women's lack of education gives them few options in the labour force and that "the cultural environment may be an obstacle to development" (Sachs 2006:60). By "cultural environment" he means cultural- or religious norms, and he emphasizes the high fertility rates, which make it impossible for women to contribute to overall development. He wants women to use education to break out of existing gender roles. His statement can both be perceived as a devaluation of female contributions and as representing an ethnocentric view on gender roles. In addition, he fails to see that women are excluded from wage labour due to a lack of adjustment to their realities within the educational system and in the labour market.

### Handicrafts and Identity

To work with traditional handicraft is an important part of local identity. Much tradition, historic memory and knowledge is found in the traditional outfit worn by virtually all women in the area. Employment outside the household makes it hard for women to find time to continue this type of work. In addition, many employers do not permit traditional outfits in the workplace, and require women to dress in western clothes. Although some do not mind this, many women do not feel comfortable. Men have not dressed in their traditional outfit for generations, some adults tell me they remember their grandfathers did. One woman told me she would go to work with the western outfit tucked in her bag, then change in the bathroom at the office. She did not want anyone to see her in western clothes. However, many educational facilities have obligatory uniforms and it may seem like the practice is influencing how the locals dress. The girls' uniform includes short skirts with blouse and sweater, and sweatpants for gym, and already some young girls are picking up on western fashions. The overall image is still that most prefer the traje, and much of female interaction within the family and between friends evolves around the fabrics, the styles and the fashion of the outfit. The women take a lot of pride in their handicrafts and are admired for their work.

Amongst the women employed in wage labour outside the home, most are unmarried. For most of them, employment will be a temporary stage. Young women I asked told me that they wanted to continue in their work after marriage. But at the same time they were all prepared to let their husbands decide. Thelma, a young woman who was working as an accountant and liking her job, came to work very exited one day. *"I am engaged!*" she exclaimed to her friend who was working as a secretary in the same office. Her friend breaks into a smile and gives her a big hug; "*Congratulations! Are you going to resign?" "Off course"* she answered, and the same day Thelma gave her resignation. I encountered several cases like Thelmas'. Odilia (case study five) did not quit for marriage, but chose to work from home because she says she prefers it. However, as Henrietta Moore explains, gender performativity is never just a matter of conscious wishes and desires, as a subject is never at one with their consciousness (Moore 1999: 166). Choices always reflect societal norms, questioning the element of free choice. I shall not undermine the women who may actually prefer to work from home. In many ways, it represents a daily life with more freedom than to be employed elsewhere. From my observations of Odilia and her sisters for months, I can see how much they enjoy their work, and that it provides an income equal to the minimum wage given for other available work. But not all are as accepting of local gender roles and education does create high expectations for many young women who are not prepared for the challenges that await them. When they find their expectations do not correspond with what parents or future husbands want, many experience disappointment or find themselves in conflicting roles, as in the case of Gladys:

**Case Study 8: Conflicting Roles**

Gladys and I are sitting in a popular coffee shop in the city, she invited me over the phone and told me she wanted to see me. She looks a bit depressed when she tells me she is tired from all the work in university and that she feels homesick. She spends all week in the city, renting a small room in the house of a divorced women, does not have much time to visit her family in the village. “*My parents’ biggest fear is that I get pregnant, but I think they trust me,*” she says. “*It is worse with the others in the village, though. I know they are talking about me, that I am like a man, just home to eat.*” *You know, it is not normal for women to stay out late at night, our culture is very conservative*. *Now my mother is worried that I will not get married, she is pressuring me a lot. But, Ana, I don’t know if I can. I have worked so hard for everything; I cannot just give it all up! I mean, I really want to find a husband, to have children and everything, but it seems almost impossible. Men are used to their women at home.”* She lays her head down on the table and fiddles with a fork. She tells me that her friends from the village are all married and have children. At family reunions, they are busy cooking and organizing, but she is never included. She mostly ends up talking to the men. “*Attitudes toward women are changing, but not in the villages. It is different here in the city, but I do not want to live here. It is so impersonal and cold.*”

In spite of all her eagerness and excitement to attend university, and the support from her parents to do so, Gladys was not prepared for the sacrifices. Other highly educated indigenous women I came in contact with had similar feelings. Of the women I met who were actively working in positions requiring higher education, no one was married. It is an alternative not to marry, and there are also several examples of this in the different villages. One day when I was doing the dishes with one of the maids in the conference centre where I lived for a while, and I ask her if she has any children. Cruza tells me she is not married, and that she never wanted to be. “*I want to work, I have been working since I was seven,*” she says. “*There are so many bad men, they drink and get violent. I do not want to serve a man like that.”* However, to not establish a family is seen as somewhat sad and all mothers worry much about their daughters’ marriages. But as Moore points out, categories like gender are shifting meaning through repetitions of performance and by individuals challenging the norms (Moore 1999:156). By making alternative choices, these women like Gladys and Cruza can contribute to change the definition of an “utz ali’.”

It is clear that family structures and social expectations of "a good woman" influences women's possibility to make education an income generating resource. But at the same time I believe education is influencing the very same reality that prevents them from doing so. This is especially the case if we move away from a economic definition of poverty and look at other effects education might contribute to. Girls' participation in school is relatively new, within the adult generation very few women have received an education and many remain illiterate. The major effort invested in education has resulted in a youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) of 78.4 percent for women and 91 percent for men (Human Development Report 2005: 309). Literacy in itself must be seen as an achievement as it can lead to the inclusion of women on more equal terms. Statements from locals show major changes in attitudes, both towards education in general and towards women's participation. Cruza, the maid from the conference centre, told me that she went to school for almost a year, but that she did not learn anything. "*It was a waste of time,*" she said. And Juana's father (case study one) never went to school as "*nobody saw any point in it back then.*" In many families, fathers would tell me that nobody sent their daughters to school in earlier days, but now everything has changed. "*We understand that education is important for all our children, it will give them a better life,"* is a common phrase. It is difficult to say why the attitudes have changed so drastically, but increased availability of educational and more interaction with urban areas might have been influential factors. However, it is a common perception amongst women that boys receive more education. Many young women are well aware of the concept of gender discrimination, and eager to talk to me about it. Ana (case study two), explained that she had a very hard time to convince her father to allow her to continue her education after third grade. With a poor family economy, the father only wanted his sons to finish primary school. When Juana's mother died (case study one), the oldest unmarried girl of the family was taken out of school to take over the household responsibilities. A son likely would not have been expected to make a similar sacrifice. Men express fear that wives and daughters spend time amongst other men who are not related to them, and they fear that the girls will get pregnant. There are many stories about "a girl from a village nearby" who is pregnant at the age of 13. Although there are surely some girls in this situation, it is not the norm. Thus, attitudes expressed by the fathers are not always consistent with practice, still it is a commonly used argument to exclude girls from education.

Another change in gender relations is visible in the young women's attitudes and how they handle situations, seeming more confident and outspoken than their mothers. An incident I find illustrative is the way a young woman told me about being sexually harassed at work. On several occasions she had been sexually approached by a married man in the office, then one day she dragged the man into the manager's office and demanded a stop to it. She was aware of her rights as a woman and used it when she argued with the harasser and the manager. In much the same way I have observed girls do the same towards their fathers when they demand permission to continue their education, or to participate in different activities. I believe their confidence is, at least in part, a result of schooling and from their experiences of managing the same tasks as boys, and therefore they feel they have the same rights as them. The educational facilities represent a new arena where both sexes can interact and develop friendships. This cross-gender socializing was not common earlier and may lead to increased acceptance of women in education and of women as equals. Boys see from an early age that both genders are able to perform equally well. What will be the result of this in the future remains to be seen, but as I have observed there are already tendencies towards changes in gender relations creating more opportunities for women.

As men no longer have monopoly on education, women achieve a more equal position both as wives and as daughters. Although most women do not work after marriage at this point, it is very likely their children will benefit from an educated mother who can assist with homework and maybe argue for their daughters' education. Today the daughters possess a new position within the household as they are often more educated than both their parents. They are actively helping their younger siblings with homework and make sure they get to class in time. From being excluded in the last generation, women have now the possibility to influence, at least within the household. Another possibility is that married women can get employment when the children are old enough to manage without their mother. I have yet to see signs of this in the villages, but when talking to women in other areas I see that this is a possibility some take advantage of.

**Case Study 9: A Second Chance**

Marina, a woman in her late forties told me that when she got married at 22 she had just finished her education as an accountant*. "But I was never employed anywhere,*" she *says. "I got pregnant, and you know how it is here!"* About a year ago she was told by a relative that there was a position available in a tourist office, not far from where she lived. *"I thought long and hard before I accepted it, I was so used to be at home after 25 years."* Then she tells me that she has not regretted it a single day, and that although she finds it a bit strange to have a job outside the home, she loves all the new people she meets. "*But look around!*" she exclaims while lifting her arms, "*only men work around here, all the women are home doing housework."*

Statistics of school enrolment in the Human Development Index indicates that Guatemala is close to reaching an even gender distribution in the educational system. But as I have shown the difficulties women experience when attempting to benefit from education, appears first after graduating, and especially after marriage. This does not show up in statistical presentations. Pearson mentions that development must be informed by gender analysis with special attention to the needs of poor women (Pearson 2000: 383). But as it is now, education as a development and poverty reducing strategy in Guatemala does not include a gender-specific focus and therefore does not answer to the needs of marginalized, rural women. To be able to benefit from education, you have a much better chance if you are a man belonging to the middle or upper classes who lives in an urban area. But all societies change over time and with them norms, attitudes and practices. Through his "process analysis" Fredrik Barth shows how societies are generated through individual interaction and that society will change when actors change their behaviour (Barth 1967). It is probable that women will have more opportunities to take advantage of education in the future. However, it will require the political will to make family life and wage labour compatible and not to forget, a desire from the women themselves to enter wage labour. The question is if the local women want this change, or if this is only another ethnocentric idea of gender equality.

### 4.3 Fertility Rates

Within the development discourse, high fertility is considered a cause of poverty, both preventing women from contributing to economic development and increasing family expenses. As I have already mentioned, families in the villages are numerous and women normally give birth to somewhere between six and twelve children. They see children as a sign of health, fertility and a source of joy, but at the same time consider the number of children as a cause of their difficult economic situation. Especially women express a desire for fewer children. The Guatemalan population is expected to grow from 12 million today to about 16 million in 2015. On a global scale, the growth is one billion every twelve years, and the United Nations predicts ninety-five percent of this growth will be in Third World countries. Jeffrey Sachs writes that high fertility rates are a "poverty trap," an "obstacle to economic growth" and a "cultural barrier" to development (Sachs 2005:14, 60- 65). But "as with the other obstacles to economic growth, the demographic trap is avoidable. Girl's education would allow women to more easily join the labour force and literacy will transform into a desire for fewer children," he writes.

But can education provoke a demographic transition in Guatemala? Sachs states that when impoverished families *choose* to have many children, their choices are understandable, but disastrous. I shall argue that the element of choice is limited by the strong position held by the Catholic Church and its attitudes towards family planning. Together with what is referred to as the culture of machismo, best explained as male dominance over female sexuality these factors are influencing the demographic transition and education as a strategy to promote it. But because these issues are politically controversial, the Church and the machismo are not dealt with in development strategies.

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Demographic transition is characterized by a reduction in child mortality and increase in life expectancy due to better healthcare and nutrition. The result is rapid population growth, but after a delay of a generation or two, fertility rates drop and population growth is stabilized (Dyrvik 2005: 14). Within development practice there is a strong consensus that it is necessary for a demographic transition to take place in development countries. The belief is funded in several theories, maybe most explicitly (and most pessimistically) expressed by Malthus, who claims that rapid population growth will always outpace economic growth and thus sustain a situation of mass poverty. In his opinion, the only way to escape poverty is to control fertility rates (Dyrvik 2004: 39). The more optimistic economist Schumpeter believes technology and innovation can solve the problem, creating the necessary economic growth to sustain a growing population (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 1998:30). It can be said that both views have been adopted within development practice, which consider both family planning and education (as source of progress and innovation) to be factors triggering the demographic transition.

The normal perception of reasons for high fertility rate is that children are needed to work the land, and due to high infant mortality, many children assure that some reaches adulthood (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 1998: 224). However, the small cultivated areas in the villages in question does not depend on large labour force. Infant mortality in Guatemala is 35 per 1000 live births, and 47 in every 1000 live births can be expected to die before the age of five (Human Development Report 2005: 252). Nevertheless, most families do not experience many infant deaths, in fact it seems as common that mothers die in childbirth. Combined with the fact that the locals themselves connect the high number of children to their economic poverty, it may seem puzzling that fertility rates remain high. Education is said to improve knowledge about how to control fertility and to provide an alternative to early marriage and a possibility for women to enter the work force. Finally, it is said mandatory education increases the cost of each child and therefore makes it necessary to keep the number of children down (Dyrvik 2005). I will in the following look how these expected results apply to the villages.

### Improved Knowledge

Family planning requires available methods of birth control, knowledge about the fertile periods in the menstrual cycle, or abstinence after the desired number of children are born. But it also demands that the women apply the knowledge or methods in their lives.

### Case Study 10: Sex Education

Ana and I are sitting in her uncle's house where she is at work sewing t-shirts. No one is around to listen in on our conversation, and I use the opportunity to ask her if they receive sex education in school. She acknowledges that it is: "*But the problem*", she says, "*is that it is taught in secondary level, and not everyone get this far.*" My observations of street corners tell me that it is indeed normal to be involved in romantic relationships at a much earlier age. To show affection in public is normal and signals that it is accepted. "*Many young girls get pregnant because they do not know how it happens. The ones who are educated, they know*." I ask Ana about condoms and contraceptive pills and if it is commonly used in the area. Quickly she answers that she has heard about condoms, but is unaware of contraceptive pills. I explain how they work, and she looks at me and says, "*You are not supposed to have sexual relations outside of marriage, it is not good.*" "*They have taught us how babies are made but not how to prevent it like that. You prevent it by not having sex.*" I ask, "*But unmarried people have sex still, like you have just told me*?" She agrees, "*but you are not supposed to*."

On a later occasion, I talk to another young woman about the same topics. She has heard about the contraceptive pill. "*But no one is using it, it is very sinful. Or at least many think it is,*" she adds. I ask her if she would consider using it. She looks at her feet and slowly answers "no."

Sexual relations are not directly talked about in families or with friends. However, jokes indirectly referring to sex are quite commonly uttered. In my first visit to Lourdes family her brother came in, surprised to see a white girl his own age in the kitchen, he exclaims "*Will you spend the night here? You can come sleep in my room!*" with the whole family laughing. In an overnight excursion with a local youth group the same types of jokes are made when rooms are distributed, but only on the initiative from the boys. Nevertheless, the conversations I had with Ana and Odilia took place after many months of friendship, and it did not seem to be a topic they normally discussed. Ana also told me that it is not common for mothers to explain anything about puberty or sexuality to their daughters, and that she was very insecure about everything. "*When I got my period, I thought I would die,"* she says. *"I told my mum I was bleeding, she gave me a napkin and told me never to mention it again."*

It seems from these examples that sex education in school is necessary, but the information given is not complete. Abstinence is considered the only method to prevent pregnancy or diseases, something that does not correspond with the reality as experienced by the young villagers. In July 2005 Prensa Libre, the largest national newspaper in Guatemala, published a series of magazines with the topic "youth and sexuality." Contraceptives were never mentioned. On the same newspaper's internet site, a forum exists where adolescents can ask questions about sexuality answered by a doctor[13]. Most questions concern contraceptive methods and sexuality, and Doctor Leonel Santizo advocates abstinence. In one letter a girl explains that she is afraid that she will get pregnant with her boyfriend and asks advice on what contraceptive is the best to use. He answers: "*When you have doubt about your sexual relation, the best thing is abstinence. There is no such thing as safe sex.*" He adds that protecting oneself might reduce the risk, but he never mentions the word "condom" or "contraceptives" or how to use them properly. Another question is from a young man who says he is obsessed with sex, and now masturbates every day. He is worried if it is normal and asks advice about contraceptive methods for his girlfriend. The same doctor answers "*Try to distract yourself, read, go out with your friends and try not to think about sex.*" The young mans' question about contraceptives is not answered at all.

Attitudes expressed privately by Ana and Odilia, and publicly in the Prensa Libre reflect the strong position held by the Catholic Church in Guatemala and in Latin America in general. The exclusion of birth control in sex education, the ban of abortion and strict sterilization rules are having direct consequences. Official education is not replacing the church as producer of knowledge to the same extent as it did in Europe during the years of enlightenment (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 1998:32). Even with information about birth control, neither Ana nor Odilia can use it because of the sinfulness it represents. The church holds both a moral and political power, which in turn influences development strategies. A teacher who had been employed in a foreign development programme to teach about contraceptives in rural areas told me "*One day the manager told us the programme no longer existed. We all knew why."*

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[13] www.prensalibre.gt is the main site, www.aula2pl.gt is the newspapers sire for youth, visited 3rd of February 2006. By March 2006 the forum was removed from the site all together.

### Machismo

In addition to how the Church influences women's attitudes and feelings towards contraceptive pills, the culture of the *machismo* causes many married women to leave decisions about child rearing to the husband. The term "machismo" is used throughout the Latin American region, and there is no simple explanation of the expression so often referred to both in everyday speech and in the literature (Melhus and Stølen 1996) The locals describe machismo as male dominance, which seems to be especially directed towards women's sexuality.

### Case Study 11: Attitudes towards Marriage and Children

"*Yes, I want to get married! Off course, my parents would be very sad to see me without a family.*" Ana is talking to her friend Dominga, laying on a lawn one Sunday afternoon. "*But my mum thinks I should get married soon. I tell her that I want to finish my education but she is worried that I will not get a good man."* Ana is twenty-three and is just one year from finishing her secretarial course. "*I want to get married at twenty or maybe twenty-one*" Dominga is smiling at the thought. "*If not, who will take care of me when my parents no longer can?"* She is now eighteen. "*And two children I want, first a boy and then a girl!"* "*I only want one,"* Ana says. "*Or better I get two, one of them might die and it would be sad to be left with just one."* Both girls come from families with more than seven siblings and Ana vividly describes the amount of money it takes to feed a family of ten. Dominga nods *"You should see all the food my mother has to buy in the market."* She explains that with fewer children she can afford to give them all an education. "*But what if your husband wants seven children?"* I ask. They both laugh, before Dominga say it is the husband who decides, but that she hopes her future husband is willing to discuss these things with her.

The attitudes presented by Dominga and Ana show that men have decision-making authority directly affecting women's choices. However, as I explain in the previous chapter, schools have become a new social arena for inter-sexual interaction. As a result, I observe that young women behave with more confidence in their social relations, also towards men. During the conversation referred to above, the topic of future residence is brought up. Normal practice in the villages is that women always move to where the husbands' family is located, but Dominga says she does not want to move away from her village when she marries. "*So* *my husband will have to move to where I live!*" she says and smiles. A male friend interferes in the conversation "*But I do not want to move away from my mother either, we will have to find a compromise, somewhere in between, maybe Cuatro Caminos!*" They all laugh. Cuatro Caminos is a traffic junction that connects main roads leading to different parts of the country. It is too early to say if education in fact is causing changes in attitudes, or giving more decision authority to women. Nevertheless, this example illustrates that the young generation may be ready to discuss these matters more openly.

According to Sachs, education is also seen to create an alternative to early marriage. A common perception in the area is that women get married at the age of fifteen or sixteen. However, I never met any women who had married earlier than nineteen, more commonly in fact, between twenty and twenty four. Teenage marriages seem to be exceptions still, "everyone" seem to have stories about such early marriages, also urban dwellers seemed convinced that this is common practice in the villages. Nevertheless, education has become a legitimate excuse to delay marriage, shown through Gladys in case story ten, as well as in the case above. Although parents worry, most people agree that it is important to graduate before marriage engagement. However, as most only have primary or secondary school, graduating happens at the age of 12 or 16, which must be considered a premature marital age. If this is the case, education is not likely to become an alternative to early marriage, especially when development strategies as they are promoted by the UN focus only on primary education (Ramphele 2003). Normal marital age in the villages is already at an acceptable age, and it is little likely that education is the primary reason for this. If education in itself impacts women's desire for reduced fertility as Sachs believes, is not easy to say. However, an interesting observation is that most women verbally express a desire for reduced fertility, their level of education did not seem to decide their attitudes towards this.

The third reason said to provoke demographic transition is that if women enter the work force, child rearing is no longer their main concern. In chapter 4.2, I discussed the difficulties women experience to enter the work force. Because the trend seems to be that women either never enter wage labour, or that they resign when they marry, we cannot expect a demographic transition to take place as a result of education and employment.

Lastly, education is said to increase the cost of each child and thus leave the family with a desire to have fewer children. However, most families in the area already provide education for their children, although it might be limited to primary school. They complain about the costs, even if it is not much compared to other priorities. This has not yet resulted in fewer children, though it is clear that if the number of children are reduced it will be easier for a family to provide more education for each child. This would not leave the family with a better economy in absolute terms, but each child would reap greater benefits. Education is perceived as a strain on family economy but it is not certain that what is “saved” by having fewer children will automatically be reinvested in education. I will analyse this question in section 4.4.

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My material shows that attitudes are changing and that the young generation look at their future and family planning differently than their parents did. However, women face a great conflict, as lack of cultural acceptance to use birth control, which together with male domination, do not correspond with their desire for fewer children. An interesting fact is that demographic transition has to a greater extent taken place in urban areas amongst the middle- and upper classes who live under the same influence from the Church and the culture of the machismo. Sachs writes that urbanization is seen as the crux of demographic transition (Sachs 2006: 37), as urban lifestyle makes it difficult to sustain high fertility. However, within the villages the Church and male domination over female sexuality, combined with a resentment of urban values (see section 4.1) in this case causes the demographic transition to be far away at this moment. Sachs claims that “Education, law and social action can empower women to easily make fertility choices. (….) family planning and reproductive health services can easily be provided even in very poor communities” (Sachs 2005:65). I have tried to show that the matter is somewhat more complicated. It is also a question if high fertility really is such a great cause of poverty as it is often claimed. Few would regard population in the Netherlands as a problem, although it is one of the most densely populated countries in the world.

### 4.4 Local Interpretations of Education

During the time I spent in different families, I observed with great interest local money priorities and attitudes towards consumption. Their modestly furnished houses, the plain, unvaried food and overall impression of economic poverty in everyday life, stand in sharp contrast to the flamboyant spending on social events, women’s wardrobes and electronic equipments. Also fascinating to me as an outsider were all the mansion-like, modern houses that stand un-used, when large families were crowded together in small, traditional houses next door. Gullestad writes that *the home* is central to understand peoples perception of reality, and that the home reflects cultural values within a society (Gullestad 1989). A home is a compact symbol of what is important to us, and economic priorities within the families can be seen as part of this. As education has become part of everyday life in the villages, attitudes, expenditure and symbols that surrounds the institution of education can serve as indicators of how education is positioned within a local system of values. As explained in chapter 4.1 there is not much economic gain from an investment in education, a fact most villagers seem to be aware of. Why they still stress the importance of education for their children's future and continue to invest in it became the greatest puzzlement during my time in the field. But by focusing on the home and economic priorities to understand local cultural values, one can begin to understand their focus and expenditure on education. Through the analysis it becomes clear that economic gain is not the only incentive for the villagers to invest in education. Acquiring an education has also become a symbol of wealth, modern values and a means to achieve social status both within, and outside the villages.

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### Case Study 12 Local Economic Priorities

"*Do you want to see my clothes? Come!*" Lourdes takes me by the hand and drags me into the living room where she opens a closet with an exited smile. Inside are two impressive stacks of traditional outfits, neatly folded and smelling of fresh detergent. In between each stack are bottles of nail polish and glittery hairclips, and on the bottom shelf lie several pairs of high-heeled shoes in different styles. She pulls out different skirts saying, "*here try it!*" Her mum and younger sister nod from the bed where they sit wrapped up in a blanket. It is close to zero outside and there is no heating or insulation in the house. Walls and floors are constructed with unpainted concrete, which make the room seem even colder. The TV broadcasts the latest murders from the capital, and from the outside patio the younger brothers are blasting music. There are a few homemade chairs around, a bookshelf made out of brick and plank and two large beds that are shared by eight people. There are not many things in the room, beside some shoes and clothes lying around. The walls are decorated with old calendars with pictures from different cities of the world and happy, white children in the grass. In the corner sits a brand new computer. I make my choice from the grand selection of outfits, but to undress when the temperature is almost freezing is nothing to be desired. My bear feet step directly on the concrete, there are no carpets covering the cold floor. "*That is much better! The boys will steel you off the street!*" They all laugh and Lourdes looks very satisfied with my make over. My traditional Norwegian outfit of worn and torn jeans and hooded sweater is never received with any excitement amongst the women,

and in every family I visit I receive a similar makeover. The eldest sister, Maria, is bustling through the door, carrying books and folders from the university. She looks very smart in her traje, high- heeled shoes and little glasses on her nose. Her cell phone rings and she jumps on the bed and starts chatting with a friend. I sit down next to her; there is no mattress, just hard plank covered with a blanket.
Later, we all move into the kitchen, it is late and time for a supper of tortillas, a thin soup of vegetables and pasta, a boiled egg and a cup of week coffee, heavily sweated with sugar. The mother hands out plates in all shapes and colours, dusting them off with her apron. "*Que rico*!" the father looks hungry and pleased with his meal. We sit around a small, crocked table, a few homemade stools, and some sit on plastic buckets. The kitchen consists of a dirt floor and a concrete stove fed with wooden logs. Halfway through the meal, the eldest son comes home. He is studying to be a mechanic in a nearby town. "*Did you have enough money?*" asks the father. The son has been out to buy tools he needs for school. "It is all so costly!" the father sighs. "*And with the bus fares and everything,*" he lifts his hands and looks dejected.

Later that evening we are all gathered in the living room when the father announces they will arrange a big party for his parents who have been married for fifty years. "*There will be more than 200 people, food, drinks, marimba band and everything!*" He smiles and waves with the booking receipt for the band. They all look very exited. The father turns to me "*Look! 15,000 quetzales just for the band! It will be the best fiesta this village has ever seen!*"

Following Gullestad's analysis of the home as a compact symbol that reflects social values, it becomes possible to use the case study above to analyse local economic priorities. Within most private homes, decoration, improvement and restoration is not a priority. There is little use of colours on walls, decorative fabrics or artefacts. This is somewhat surprising as many of the families produce woven fabrics within the house, and because Guatemalas' indigenous communities are world famous for their vivid use of colours in their clothes and handicrafts. Furniture is often homemade and there never seems to be enough chairs or kitchenware for everyone. The overall impression is that homes are grey, cluttered and without many comforts. Most families only receive visits from close relatives, thus few outsiders actually see the interior of the house. However, in most homes there will always be electronic devices such as TV, stereo, cell phones, typing machines and sometimes a computer, and for the girls, as many pieces of clothing as can possibly fit in one closet. The nice clothes are for the most part worn outside the house, inside they often change to an inexpensive t-shirt and an old traje. The mother, who rarely leaves the house, never owns much clothing. All of the consumer goods mentioned here are costly. A small TV will equal one month's minimum salary (1200 quetzales) and a stereo about half of that. A traditional outfit may cost anywhere from 500 to 3000 quetzales, depending on quality. Based on the observations it looks as if costly items visible to the outside community are prioritized over what is confined within the house. To own electronic devices such as a TV or stereo is visible as much conversation evolves around soap operas or the tabloid news. Another example are the relatively wealthy families who build modern houses, with roman pillars, terraces and mirror reflecting windows, which stand out like little palaces compared to the traditional houses. Equipped with all imaginable facilities such as soft beds, large sofas, shower, big screen TV, and kitchen with a gas stove, they are an image of modern lifestyle. But when taking a closer look, one discovers the commodities within the house are not in use. There is no running water to fill the shower and toilets, no gas for the stove, and only two or three rooms are in use. Moreover, most such houses are not inhabited at all as they are owned by illegal workers in the USA. The houses are left in the care of their relatives, who continue to live in small adobe houses next door, and only go inside the modern house to water plants on the balconies. One women who lived in such a house even went over to her mothers house to prepare food on the wood fuelled stove there, instead of using her own gas stove.

To create an image of one's family as well dressed, to own modern electronic devices, and a modern house, or spending money to arrange a grand party, signals economic wealth and modern values. To be poor and "backwards" are stigmas attached to indigenous communities ever since the arrival of the Spanish, it is therefore important to them to prove that things have changed. Because the inside of the home is inaccessible to most, the interior is de-emphasised in comparison to what is more visible to outsiders. The wealthier families who can afford to spend money on furniture do, but not using the items demonstrates that they are symbols of wealth and modernity more than a response to actual need. Gullestad writes that the process of modernisation can lead to a feeling of liberation, but at the same time alienation (Gullestad 1989:28). To continue to live traditionally within a new setting, represented here by the modern houses, can be seen in this light. A self identification with modernity, while at the same time sustain the traditional is normal for many communities, according to Harrison and Crewe who write about modernisation projects in Asia (Crewe and Harrison 1998:134).

To spend money on clothes, parties or electronic devices, seems to be followed by feelings of joy and excitement and they are never complained about. However, Educational costs, which tend to be small in comparison, are always discussed within families as an economic burden. In a country like Guatemala where education is not affordable to all and with the system largely being privatized, it becomes possible to view education as a commodity for consummation like any other, and thus invested with locally understood symbolic meaning. Gullestad writes that symbols are understood through commonly shared knowledge and that classification is central in all symbolic life (Gullestad 1989: 43- 44). Over the last 25 years or so, education has become more and more available to the villagers and in the public eye there is much focus on its benefits. "*A reading village will progress!*" (picture on front page) is written on enormous billboards along the Guatemalan highways. Public buses are covered with advertisements from the Ministry of Education who praises teachers and schools for securing the country's welfare and future. On the radio, private schools advertise courses, and promise a brighter future for the ones who enrol, and school buildings are painted with slogans about the importance of education. People in the villages seem to have adopted this public opinion of education, and as I refer to in earlier chapters, positive statements about the effects of education are often expressed. Helga Baitenmann argues that education is a key part of any nation building process, and that the creation of the state and its the state subjects is part of this same process (Baitenmann 2005: 174). Explaining how the Mexican state created categories of people using censuses, she shows how the created categories were internalized by the people and shaped how they perceived themselves. I argue that in much the same way, the Guatemalan government advertises its official view on education, a view that is then internalized by the people and becomes how they express opinions on education. During my time in the villages I never heard negative statements about the effects of education, only about the lack of books, teachers etc. Nevertheless, as Crewe and Harrison point out, what people say cannot always be taken as face value as representation of reality (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 135). Because as they praise the benefits of education, they are aware that education has not economically revolutionized the lives of anyone around them. They do not express this knowledge vocally for fear of being perceived as "backwards;" education has come to symbolise modernity and progress, meanings promoted by the government and organisations. To admit that they do not gain economically from their investments in education is at the same time admitting that they have not managed to use the resource, even if given the chance. This is related to how poverty is considered an individual responsibility and a matter of personal qualities, a perception fortified by education being used as a poverty reducing strategy. Positive statements on education and the participation in the system becomes a way to prove to the outside world that they too are intelligent people and part of the modern Guatemala. Within the villages education is a way to achieve social status as it proves that a family possesses surplus money and modern values. In communities where there are not many factors that can differentiate people from one another, money and education are the primary status symbols.

Which school a student belongs to is visible through the different school uniforms made obligatory by most schools (except for the universities). Everyone recognises the school on the colour and pattern of the uniform, and the style is like an advertisement for a family's financial situation. Uniforms are worn with much pride, and many children keep them on long after the school day has ended. In addition to the uniform, there are also other symbols of education. Graduation diplomas are always hung in a visible place in the house, often over the small alter where the Virgin Mary is honoured. The diploma is mainly observed by other family members, but graduates are quick to show it to any visitor. Pictures from graduation parties often accompany the diploma, together with and neatly organized photo albums families love to demonstrate. In addition, there is a graduation ring, made of gold and inscribed with institution and year of graduation. The ring can cost up to 2000- 3000 quetzales, the equivalent of two months minimum salary.

Sachs believes that improvements in family economy will automatically be re-invested in education (Sachs 2005: 14). His prediction assumes that such families prioritize education and will reinvest in it to accomplish even greater benefits in the future. But for the locals, who do not experience the economic lift, the more direct result of education is social climbing which can be achieved either through education or through accumulation of money. Those already rich do not need education to achieve social status. As I have show in Ofelias' case study in section 3.1, children from wealthier families are not very interested in education, and like Ofelia claims that she does not need it as her father already has money. Other villagers do not seem to mind the illegal aspect of the economic activities, coyotes are not talked about badly and the emigrants are admired for their achievements. But for the many who do not have economic wealth within reach, education becomes an alternative route to reach status. Private schools obviously have more status than the public, and all who can manage send their children to private institutions. Some families spend nearly all their money on this, and many students work full time during the week in order to attend the overpriced weekend courses at private universities. They do this even if the public university is nearly free and has a reputation for being very good. "*It is not the quality which differentiates the public universities from the private ones, it is the students,*" a university professor once told me. The difference between public and private has come to illustrate a class divide within the population, and to attend private schools is to buy social status.

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By analysing local homes and money priorities, I have been able to place education within a local system of values. I have tried to show that despite the fact that education at this point does not generate economic growth, it is still prioritized as it enables social climbing. The focus on private education in spite of economic limitations can be seen in this light. For neither economically limited nor well to do families, education is not determining when generating income. That they still claim that it is can be seen as a desire to present themselves as modern to the outside world. However, one can wonder if it is the underlying knowledge that education does not create economic improvement that causes school expenses to be regarded as such a costly affair. Nevertheless, they do not simply adopt state categories, as advocated by Baitenmann and education is interpreted locally within a system of local values. Sachs, and many with him, is of the opinion that "modernity" equals a western lifestyle defined by certain values, institutions and material goods. The more material goods people acquire, or the more education they have, the more developed they are perceived to be. This I argue, creates an illusion of what development is, as neither a TV nor a cell phone can improve the situation for marginalized groups in terms of more income, better jobs or more participation in political life. By focusing on materialistic development, focus is taken away from social and political poverty, which can only be changed through political reforms.

### 4.5 Integration or Discrimination?

For children in the villages, education is part of everyday life and routine, representing to them a new social arena and a new reality they relate to. Experiences from daily life in the villages, from accompanying children to school and participating in other activities, made me realize that through the educational system the new generation of indigenous people achieve confidence and interact with the greater Guatemalan society in a different way than their parents. In this process they acquire new social and geographical references, which in turn seem to influence attitudes and behaviour in their relations to parents, other ethnic groups and economic classes. The establishment of an educational system is based on believes in its ability to create social equality. Being exempt from education has also been perceived as a reason for the continuation of indigenous oppression in Guatemala (Stern 2001, Warren 1998: 216). But can education create more equality and integration? There are many signs that a process of integration is taking place, and I believe the educational system is an important influencing factor since it provides a new arena for interaction between ethnic groups. Nevertheless, I shall argue that the integration process as it is provoked by official education and dominated by the Hispanic culture, is giving the indigenous little influence. In addition, education in itself cannot create equality as long as it does not generate economic growth for the individual, as shown in section 4.1. But more than that, the process of privatisation within the educational system is preventing integration because high quality education can only be accessed by economically strong groups. However, privatisation does not only discriminate on ethnic grounds, but everyone who cannot afford expensive school fees.

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For a long time education in Guatemala was a privilege for the prosperous classes in urban areas. In this way education or the lack of it, also represented an ethnic divide as the majority of the indigenous population was poor and lived in rural areas.[14] Today, indigenous people participate in the education system and as a result indigenous communities experience interaction with other areas and groups in a different way than before. Participating in education at the secondary and tertiary level demands commuting to urban areas, and education combined with increased interaction seem to reduce insecurity in social situations, which is so often found in the older indigenous generations.

### New Arenas

I It is afternoon in the village; I have just arrived and met my new family where I will stay the following week. A young woman, Maria welcomes me and we take a seat in the patio and start talking.  She knows about me through her younger sister and is curious about my project. She tells me she studies pedagogy at the university and after I have explained my project she immediately gets up and say "*but let us go and visit the schools then! I will take you. And there is an organization called InterVida, you should talk to them as well, we can go first thing in the morning.*" Maria acted upon her words, and took me to visit the different schools in the area, setting up meetings with headmasters and representatives of organizations. As she was making phone calls and talking to different people first hand, I noticed with interest how she handled herself in these different social settings. From what I had experienced so far, most villagers were behaving with much less confidence, and did not know how to help me when I asked. Maria's initiative was impressive and she demonstrated how comfortable she was in different situations.

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[14] The low representation of indigenous people in urban areas can to a large extent be explained by the persecution and slaughtering of indigenous people during the time of civil war which made many flee into remote areas to hide.

The case of Maria illustrates how the young generation behave with self-confidence in public spheres. The way the young talk, how they move in public space and how they seem to feel the right to do so, is striking. In many families, the young serve as a mediator, taking care of practical errands, such as paying bills or enrolling younger siblings in school. This shift in behaviour I find mostly amongst those with education at the secondary and tertiary level, although adults who are employed or active in the local cooperative behave more similarly to the young, demonstrating the importance of interaction to integrate the rural indigenous population. At the primary level, schools do not serve as arenas for ethnic interaction in the same degree as at the secondary and tertiary levels. Only indigenous people live in the villages, nevertheless, children's social arena is broadened compared to the children who do not go to school. They encounter new challenges, new knowledge and most importantly they become literate in the Spanish language, crucial for their participation in society. Basic literacy skills provide a foundation for interaction and self- esteem in social situations. The indigenous inhabitants of the rural areas have a tendency to remain within their villages both for work and leisure, leaving only to attend weddings or other special occasions. This is now changing amongst the younger generation as their mobility increases as a result of better communication and participation in education. They involve themselves in new activities and are more mobile, and through the children, parents take part in this change, although to a lesser extent.

**New Mobility**

One weekend a group of youngsters from the village organized an outing to a popular leisure park about two hours journey from the village. Seven people going together to enjoy the Sunday afternoon in the sun, we are all very excited as we wait for the bus to arrive. We approach the park and see a beautiful garden with flowerbeds, a swimming pool and picnic tables spread out on the lawn. It is already full of people relaxing in the shade or splashing in the pool, most seem to be upper class mestizos in fashionable clothes, talking into expensive cell phones. Except for a few people, the group I arrive with are all dressed in traditional outfits, the girls with their dark, flowing hair. They seem somewhat insecure as we enter, but after a while they are running around playing football, swimming in the pool or walking around in the park. None of the other guests take much notice of them, nor do they talk with them. We spend all day in the park, and they enjoy themselves, excited to do something special on their day off school.

The excursion was one of many I participated in. The situation show how the younger generation makes use of new social arenas and activities, and spend more time outside of the villages than what has been common before. Other popular activities with the young are internet cafes where they chat online, play games and visit the shopping mall *Hyper Paiz* with stores, arcades, cappuccinos, American blockbuster movies and off course a McDonalds. They all seem to love the place, and although they normally cannot afford what is sold, many pass time there with their friends. In addition, both girls and boys seem to be involved in sport activities like football and basketball, something that women were excluded from before. Girls tell me they often have to spend much time to convince their fathers to be allowed to play, but that they love to participate. The increased interest in sports amongst the young generation can be related to the introduction of sport in the curricula a few years back.

### Interaction = Integration?

The increased participation amongst the indigenous youth may be perceived as positive, however, interaction is not the same as integration. The Maya Movement has advocated participation in the educational system as a way to social change (Warren 1998: 216, 225). Their goal is a democracy where the different ethnicities are recognized, what the movement refers to as a "unity within diversity." However, through the spread of official education, the influence of the dominant culture is intensified and reaches more people than earlier. As a result, the indigenous language is suffering. All schoolbooks and lectures are in Spanish and to become fluent in Spanish is often the main reason parents give for investing in education for their children. During my stay, I only met one person who was able to write in Kitché. A headmaster told me that their school had initiated a programme teaching Kitché, but closed it down due to parents protesting. The current adult generation has grown up and experienced their language as a social stigma, she told me, and do not want their children to experience the same. Many indigenous people, especially women, experience limitations due to poor command of the Spanish language. In most families, parents no longer teach their children Kitché as a first language, when I asked parents why, they would respond with "*That's just the way it is*" or "*Spanish is more important today*." I asked many if they saw the disappearance of their language as sad. Not many seemed to reflect much on this, and an old man told me; "*But is it not a good thing that we all have the same language? That way we can all speak together*." Harald Eidheim writes about how people in a Lappish community in Norway try to under-communicate their ethnic identity by not using their native language in public (Eidheim 1969). Some families restrict the use of it to the private home sphere, and some leave the native language all together, all in an attempt to present themselves as integrated in the Norwegian society. A similar process is now taking place in these communities. In the name of integration a loss of a language may be defendable, as expressed by the old man, however it does not correspond to the desire for a "unity in diversity" as advocated by the Maya Movement.

A father observed his son doing his homework and said to me; "How *strange that our children have to learn the Roman numbers, when we used to have our own system for counting?"*[15] In school, children memorize the names of European rivers, American politicians and learn about the great adventures of Christopher Columbus as he reached the shores of the "new world." Many have argued that the curriculum does not reflect the reality within the villages. All schoolbooks are written and published by the Ministry of Education, giving the government full control of what is taught in school. The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire says that the only way education can lead to a society of equals is if the poor and oppressed form their own education (Freire (1970) 1999).The United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples have stated that indigenous peoples have the right to develop their own cultural and ethnic characteristics. Promotion of their own languages and control of their own schools are listed as ways to fulfil this goal. Warren is of the opinion that the Maya Movement has been influential and contributed to important changes (Warren 1998:9). But within official education there are not many signs of Mayan influence. Freire would argue that education is still emphasised for the Mayas because they identify with their oppressors and wish to be like them. According to him, this represents the ultimate oppression as the oppressed themselves contribute to the continuation of the system that oppresses them.

Although the integration process to some extent is controlled by the elite, causing cultural traits such as the Mayan language to diminish, ethnicity is not disappearing in Guatemala. Visible signs that differentiate the indigenous populations, like their lifestyle and the traditional costume, are persisting in spite of influence from the dominant culture. Nevertheless, as Fredrik Barth and many with him points out, ethnicity is not to be understood as the objective cultural traits that distinguish them from others, but as relations between groups (Barth 1967). He says further that ethnic distinctions exists because of interaction between groups, and that they will therefore continue to exist, although be likely to change over time. This seems to be the case for Guatemala.

### Privatisation and Discrimination

A process of integration is taking place, although maybe not in the way the Maya Movement had hoped for. However, at the same time as education is used as a strategy of integration, the privatisation within the system creates a new form of discrimination and exclusion. Bourdieu and Champagne writes that by including marginalised groups in the educational system, they will become even more stigmatised and excluded than before because that are doomed to fail within the system (Bourdieu and Champagne 1993). If they succeed, they will discover that it is still not enough to obtain positions in society because they lack other social factors necessary to advance. Bourdieu's and Champagnes analyses can be used to understand the situation in Guatemala. Due to significant differences in educational quality in Guatemala between urban and rural areas, and public and private schools, children graduate unequally prepared for higher education and the labour market. Education has become available to all, but trough privatisation, the social structure persists because education leading to economic- and politic positions is restricted for the few (ibid).

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[15] The Maya culture had their own system for counting numbers

### A Village School

The noise and racket creates a chaotic atmosphere as thirty-five children are trying to find their desks and settle down for class. In the midst of the whirlwind, a young teacher is trying to calm them down. The building is not really a school, but a private building loaned out by a local in the village. The room is small with crooked walls and the uneven dirt floors make the desks and chairs unstable. Most of the furniture is nailed together pieces of wood but some of it is donated by a development organization and looks much nicer. Above the thirty-five black-haired heads lies a crooked laminate roof. Last week, when the storms were strong, the wind blew the entire piece off. Olivia, the young teacher, is finally getting the class to quiet down and is ready to start the lecture. A pencil is passed around to the children who have to stand up and read a piece of their homework. They are shy and giggly, but they all manage to mention several different mammals and reptiles and explain how they reproduce. After they are done, Olivia dictates a story "*Some animals feed on insects and some on mice…"* They are all write down the words.

As the lessons come to an end, it gets harder to keep the children's attention. Some have brought younger siblings who are playing around on the floor. A boy finds a nail and hammers it into the wall, making a hanger for his backpack. Some girls walk out the door, returning with ice cream five minutes later. "*Please pay attention, I am going to give you your homework now,*" Olivia sighs. "*Does anybody know who the Mayas were?*" Nobody answers. She explains that they were an intelligent people who lived in Guatemala, that they had an advanced civilization and knew about the systems of the stars. "*We are Mayas, and this is our heritage,*" she says while she lifts a book showing the children some pictures of the Maya pyramids in Tikal. There are not enough books for everyone, so they have to write the homework down in the notebooks. On the wall hangs a poster saying, “Remember to bring your lunch!”, but none of the children have any food with them.

Not all schools in the villages are as poor as this one. Still, the lack of supplies and distracted children are common throughout the area. Inadequate number of books is a problem that reduces the quality of teaching and prevents children’s progression. Classes are often crowded and many children do not have parents who can assist with homework. As Bourdieu would phrase it, the villagers lack the social- and cultural capital to succeed in the educational system as it is developed by the dominant cultural elite.

### A Private School

On the other side of the mountain, in a private primary school in Quetzaltenango, some thirty children are gathered in a brightly lit classroom, already in their seats waiting for the teacher to enter. All are dressed in clean, blue uniforms, their books opened and their homework ready to be presented. The teacher is in his forties with a university degree in social sciences, the subject for today. He looks around the classroom and chooses Laura to come up to the blackboard and tell the rest of the class about Christopher Columbus and his discoveries of the Americas. She is well prepared after spending the night before writing with help from her father who is a lawyer. All the students listen, and when she is done, the teacher compliments her work “*Well done, Laura!*” She smiles happily and rushes down to her seat. At the sound of the bell, the children reach for their coats and run out into the schoolyard. Some are playing basketball, some get out a football and Laura brings along her skipping rope and invites her friends to join. The yard is spacious and fenced in, a security guard stands at the gate. Inside are trees and grass lawns, where the older students are relaxing. When the bell calls the students in to class, Laura and her friends are quick to take their seat, it is her favourite class, computing skills.

A school like this will charge somewhere between 300 to 1000 quetzales per month, uniforms and utilities are added to this cost. Public schools in urban areas are usually in better shape than the rural school described earlier, but they cannot come close to the standard of the private schools. The public school system cannot (or will not) compete with the private. A young boy from a wealthy family illustrates clearly the vast difference when he tells me that if they do something wrong, their teacher threatens that he will transfer them to a public school. Since the public schools offer a poor education compared to the private, the private ones are preferred by all who have the means. Private schools and universities are popping up on every corner charging hefty fees and promising the best education. The system favours the economically strong and excludes people with limited resources. Nevertheless, as I show in chapter 4.4 many in the indigenous communities manage to pay for private education. The question is if they will be accepted as equals by the other students, or if ethnicity is still an obstacle for integration.

### A Private University

It is Saturday afternoon in the private university *Rafael Landívar* in Quetzaltenango and Santos Norato a professor of Economics, is about to teach a class on social movements in Latin America. About forty students are present, nearly all of whom are girls and about half are dressed in the traditional traje. Professor Norato is also indigenous, and so is his assistant teacher. It is still thirty minutes until the class starts, and everyone is discussing an upcoming test. Even if belonging to different ethnic groups, they mingle and seem to be good friends, laughing and braiding each others' hair. During the test, they help each other cheat, whispering the answers or discreetly showing their papers. After class, they stand outside socializing, drinking sodas and some leave together heading for an internet café or to have a cup of coffee.

The students in this class seem to be enjoying each others' company in spite of ethnic differences. Speaking with the professor teaching the class, he tells me a very different story from his days in a public university in the seventies:

"*Nowadays*" he says, "*I can see the students sit together, girls in their traje with the city-girls, helping each other with assignments I give out."* Indigenous himself he studied at the public university of *San Carlos*, just across the street from the private university where he now teaches. "*I remember never mingling with anyone. I had to work twice as hard as anyone else to prove that I was not a stupid Indian. There were not many indigenous students back then.*" He comes from a rural area outside of Quetzaltenango from a peasant family with limited economic means and he had to struggle hard for his education. "*The discrimination was there all the time, it is hard to explain exactly how. I could not afford the activities the* *other students were involved in, my clothes were dirty and they all knew I came from a poor village."*

From this story, the professor points out many changes have taken place over the years. Nevertheless, the normal perception of Guatemala is that the ethnic discrimination is strong, a perception which was often confirmed when I spent time in the capital. Racist attitudes are normal amongst the upper class, where people rarely have indigenous acquaintances, except for the ones who work for them. A friend from the capital asked me "*Anna, how can you live with those people? I remember driving passed a village once, and I swear to you, I would not stand a day in that place. It's disgusting."* I had many similar statements directed at me, but off course, not all urban dwellers would agree to this, and no one expresses their thoughts in the presence of indigenous people. Nevertheless, the discrimination manifests itself within the educational system, firstly as complete exclusion due to high school fees, but also something that continues when they enter.

**Young, Urban Thoughts**

A group of friends from the capital have invited me to take a weekend trip to visit a beautiful summerhouse by the lake owned by a prominent politician. They are all in their twenties and studying in private universities. We are lying on the deck of a boat sun tanning when I ask if any of them have indigenous friends. They look at me, astonished by my question, and then one of them says, "*I only know about one or two indigenous in the entire school. But they are not a part of the social life there.*" He explains that groups of friends are very tight and it is hard to get accepted for newcomers. "*And I guess they cannot afford to do the things we do anyway, maybe they live far away or something.*" He assumes that they are there on scholarships, she cannot imagine how they could afford the school in any other way. "*They are not like us*," she says. No one else cares to answer my stupid question.

What can these three stories tell us? In the first example, the students are integrated and accept one another, in the two other examples the indigenous students are excluded.

The first case story is from a university in Quetzaltenango, the second largest city in Guatemala, situated right in the hart of an area mainly populated by indigenous people. The city is mainly inhabited by mestizos, but rural indigenous people frequent the city with merchandise or in other errands. In addition, there is a group of urban indigenous people who have managed well economically, often referred to as the “Mayan intellectuals” (Warren 1998). This group is very visible in the public sphere, participating in- and organizing numerous seminars, exhibitions, book presentation and other events. Many are highly educated, also when it comes to Mayan heritage and culture. Overall, there is more interaction between the different ethnic groups in Quetzaltenango, than seems to be the case in the capital. The case study show that this is reflected in the classroom, and indicate that the importance of interaction *on equal terms* for integration to take place. The ethnic interaction in the capital take place on more unequal terms, as relations between the groups more often than not are a relationship of employers and employee. They work as maids, nannies, cleaners, gardeners, night guards and similar and do not participate in the same social activities. The last case study which describes young people from the capital, shows that discrimination prevails within the educational facilities, and maybe most interesting how the girl assumes that the indigenous students in her school, must be there on a scholarship, and therefore are not worth her attention. A determining factor for acceptance in the first case-study, was that the students in Quetzaltenango are all able to afford the school fees, they dress nicely, and can afford to participate in at least some after school activities. In the second case study it was clear that the young mans appearance as a poor, rural student, without means to participate in social activities were excluding factors. In addition, the university was free of charge and his presence there did not prove he had money or a social right to be there. Nevertheless, his case shows there have been changes over the years that have passed. The existence of a group of Mayan intellectuals also shows that education can result in participation and influence on the public discourse. However, important to understand is that they do not identify themselves with poor, rural Mayas, and through the type of traditional outfit, jewellery and command of social codes, they are easily distinguished from rural dwellers. It also shows that a combination of economic means and cultural capital is necessary for inclusion, education alone is not enough.

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There is no doubt that education is provoking many changes in Guatemala. As a new arena for ethnic interaction, the rural, indigenous people are more familiarized with life outside the villages, and the mestizos get more used to the presence of indigenous groups. Freire writes that there has never existed people who live “outside” society, people are always ”inside,” although not as equals (Freire 1999:57). Integration through an educational system, which favours mainly the dominant culture, cannot be seen as integration on equal terms. According to Barth, ethnic groups are defined by their borders, which constantly need to be redefined. Education can be seen as a border that earlier divided the elite from “the people,” and now that this border is challenged, the elite needs to find new markers of their group identity. Private educational facilities can be seen as such markers. Therefore, as much as a question of ethnicity, integration is also a matter of private economy. With privatisation within the educational system, it is not only indigenous students who cannot afford quality education, the process affects everyone with limited economical resources. Bourdieu and Champagne say that by making sure the best education remains a privilege to the elite, the “democratisation” of education can be introduced without threatening the current social structure (Bourdieu and Champagne1993). Even Sachs, who speaks so warmly about privatization acknowledges that a privatisation within the educational system will not create a beneficial development (Sachs 2005: 252).

## Summarizing and Concluding Remarks

Investigating the correlation between education and development is not a straightforward task. Many social, cultural, political and economical factors intervene, and it is difficult to analyse every issue within the restrictions of a Master's thesis. In the previous chapters, I chose to point towards some of the outcomes education can contribute to, while analysing the factors I consider important in order to understand the dynamics of education and poverty. The issues that arise are a result of an oversimplification of development strategies as defined by the UN, and different perceptions of poverty, development and expected effects of education which lead to different ways of defining the "problem" and thus defining the "cure."

I begin the thesis with Odilia's story, as a way to introduce the dilemma, as it must present itself to development agents: why are the poor not utilizing education as a money generating and life improving resource? If education is defined amongst the most efficient ways to deal with poverty, why are not Odilia and her siblings working according to their educational level and why do they seemingly choose to lead a life similar to their parents? In my introduction, I use what Bøås and McNeill refer to as "framing" to describe how certain concepts within multilateral institutions (such as the UN), come to represent the only plausible solution to deal with development concerns. They write that these "ideas" or "concepts" "has some reputable intellectual basis, but it may nevertheless be found vulnerable on analytical and empirical grounds" (Bøås and McNeill 2004:1). I have shown that this is particularly the case with the strategy of education. In chapter two, I show that there are indeed theoretical grounds for support of the implementation of official education. Since the Enlightenment until the emergence of today's "knowledge economy," the concept of education has gained a solid position as an agent of change and improvement. Education has been "framed" as the primary solution, and as Bøås and McNeill express, being against it is like being against motherhood and apple pie. This belief in the power of education is reflected both within the development organizations in the area as well as amongst the locals. In spite of what they observe in their surroundings, namely education's inability to alter their economic situation, they remain convinced of its benefits and ability to provide a better future. In Guatemala, it is not only the multilateral institutions, but also the government that is participating in the "framing exercises" (although the latter is probably heavily influenced by the first). By looking at how education is promoted by the government, international organisations and in advertisements, I use Helga Baitenmann to show how the state influences the indigenous self-perception as a people in need of development. Simultaneously the reason for their poverty is defined as an individual responsibility, which can only be solved by the individual itself.

This strong, internalized belief in education, which seems to be shared by both development agents and their targets, must be identified to explain why the focus on education in development practice prevails. As I show in chapter three, education has not become the life-altering factor it is expected to be. Through case studies, I demonstrate how different individuals generate income and how their education often does not correlate to their employment. I divide the cases into three different levels of education, as one would expect this to influence how villagers benefit from their investment in education. Quite surprisingly, I find that this is normally not the case. For the people who have no or only primary education, available work consist of agriculture, handicrafts, t-shirt manufacturing, shop assistant in local convenient stores or similar. Payment for these positions will be around the defined minimum wage, but in handicraft, it can both exceed and go below this sum. Individuals who have acquired education at the secondary level, signifying that they are qualified as secretaries, accountants, mechanics, nurses, primary school teachers and similar, do not receive more than minimum wage, which is the same paid for unskilled jobs. Those who have reached a tertiary level of education, find themselves not to benefit extensively either. One factor is that the salaries paid for work available to them, might still be quite low, although it will surpass minimum salary. More importantly, there seems to be an unwillingness to leave the villages in order to obtain such work, this is especially true of young, educated women who are typically not employed in jobs corresponding to their education. That the educated seemingly lead the same lifestyle as the uneducated, calls for an analysis of what causes this scenario, which I go on to explain in the next chapter.

In chapter four, I focus on the factors that keep education from becoming the resource it is expected to be. I begin with a discussion of the labour market, salaries and living costs. It seems logical to start with labour since few are working, or if they are working are unable to raise their standard of living. Not very surprising, I find that the labour market is not adequate to receive all educated people. It is believed by some that education will create new jobs, particularly through entrepreneurship and new innovations. Nevertheless, I find this is not the case for the reason education is not related to local reality and the villagers have difficulties utilizing their knowledge in practical life. Also, people show little general interest in altering the conditions under which they live. In addition, as more people become educated, the education becomes less valuable, and jobs previously not requiring an education, now do. Surprising maybe I found that people do not want to leave the villages to find work in urban areas. Their strong family attachment, preference for the rural lifestyle and resentment of urban values make the locals prefer a more traditional lifestyle within the villages. This might prove chocking to develop professionals who often assume that economic gain is the primary motive behind participation in development initiatives. But theories about “rational economic man,” cannot explain why villagers prefer the “undeveloped” over the “developed.” This can be interpreted as a different perception of poverty, which within the villages also includes being without ones family, being without good moral values and living in violent areas. The UN’s economic definition of poverty does not include any of these aspects, however these aspect determine the choices made by the villagers.

In section 4.2 I deal with local gender roles and family structures. My observations in the villages revealed that married women are nearly never employed outside the home. I found that the local perception of a “good woman” is rarely compatible with wage labour. The pressure to fulfil such a role comes both from the community as well as the women’s desire to fulfil these expectations. Nevertheless, I find gender roles to be in a process of change, attitudes towards women in education are positive, and the schools serve as a new arena for interaction between the sexes. I believe this new way of socializing will lead to many changes in the next generation as positive spin-off effects from education.

It is a common perception within development discourse that high fertility rates are a cause of poverty and that it is vital to provide knowledge about contraceptives to the poor in order to reduce the number of births. The women in the villages normally give birth to six to twelve children, but verbally express a desire to only have two or three. Nevertheless, I question if their wishes can become reality since the Catholic Church strongly influences the spread of contraceptive methods, prevents complete sex education in school and has made abortion illegal. In addition, the culture of machismo leaves decisions about child rearing to the men. Children are also viewed as a source of wealth, meaning they find happiness in their numerous families. Women’s expressed desire for fewer children might also be seen as a wish to identify themselves with modernity, something that becomes more clear in the next section where I analyze local value systems.

After looking at factors preventing locals from utilizing education as predicted by development agents, I was left with one critical question: why do villagers still invest in education and why do they consider it to be so important? Through analysing local values by looking at money priorities within the home, I found that identifying themselves with modernity and demonstrating material wealth are important factors that provide social status within the community. In a country like Guatemala, where education is not yet for everyone and largely privatized, education becomes a commodity to be consumed. Through symbols such as school uniforms, diplomas, graduation rings and the likes, a family can make their financial state visible to others. To be able to afford education for all children also indicates that the family is taking part in development processes and that they have modern values. This is important in an indigenous community where people have lived for centuries with the stigma of being "backwards." In section 4.1, I argue that the villagers oppose urban lifestyle and the moral decline they believe it represent, but that does not mean they oppose modernity per se. Barth writes that regardless of what population we choose to observe, we will find that the culture is continuously changing, that ideas and perceptions are often contradictory and unsystematic, and unequally distributed between people (Barth 1994:177). Development is never introduced into a vacuum, and modernity is defined locally through extracting the elements they want to identify themselves with. For the locals this is represented through education, modern electronics or a desire for fewer children as explained in section 4.3, but simultaneously rejecting urban lifestyle and its lack of moral values.

In the very last section, I analyze whether or not education can, as the Maya Movement hopes, create more ethnic equality in Guatemala. It is a difficult and complex question to address, and one can only try to identify some processes. Nevertheless, I find the educational system to be a good source of information about ethnic relations as they provide a new arena for ethnic interaction. Looking at behaviour in different universities, I find that the tendency to accept each other as equals is stronger in schools where the students come from similar economic backgrounds, than in schools that are mixed due to scholarships given to indigenous students. It seems like identification with economic class can be as important a determinant as ethnic belonging, although the concept of class is often overlooked as social differentiator in studies about Guatemala. I argue that this indicates that education in itself cannot produce ethnic equality if it does not also lead to economic improvement, for reasons I have shown throughout the chapters. Nevertheless, I believe ethnic interaction within educational facilities can lead to more integration, as I have shown is the case in Quetzaltenango.

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As I outlined in the summary, I find the problem to be a failure to acknowledge how the political, cultural and social complexities relate to education and development. It is not that multilateral organizations lack awareness of this complexity that they do not develop strategies to deal with such factors, but because they cannot. This has been pointed out by many investigations of development processes. Bøås and McNeill write that "framing" can limit the power of potentially radical ideas introduced into development policies, indicating that there is political intention in directing development work in a certain direction. Building schools and providing education for the poor is clearly easier than political and economic reforms maybe leading to a radical shift in power, something the elite would not be interested in. As Ferguson argues, delicate political operations take place under the cover of neutrally technical missions, defined as "development." This can in part explain why years of academic critiques and opposition from the poor themselves is not leading to any real changes of development policies. Therefore, you will not find increasing employment, increasing minimum wage, securing workers rights, preventing exploitation or decreasing inequality amongst the MDG political strategies to reduce poverty.

An investigation of the consequences of education in rural Guatemala could have been done in many different ways. One method could be to analyse the educational system and the quality of education. Another could be to analyse national education, or investigate development organisations in the area and how they promote education. Perhaps, a more interesting approach would have been to include all aspects, taking advantage of the different academic disciplines, sociology, political science, pedagogy and anthropology, in a group research project. This would provide a more holistic picture of the effects of education at different levels. The factors I treat in chapter four as influencing the effects of education are not exhaustive, and each of the sections could easily provide for a whole thesis by itself. However, I made the choice to look into several issues, as I believe it gives a better understanding of the larger context. My decision to structure my analysis in this fashion comes with a cost, as it does not permit a deeper insight into each factor presented. To scrape the surface may limit a full understanding (if such is ever possible), nevertheless it also raises new questions and provide a foundation for further investigation.

The amount of time that has passed since education was introduced in the villages in this study might seem long in the eyes of developing workers. However, development is a slow process, and although education at this point has not created the expected economic changes, we might be at the very beginning of new changes about to take place. That is not to say that education has failed as a strategy so far. Crew and Harrison write that the effects of development are usually overestimated. Success is defined as responding to development intentions, but this is an ethnocentric idea of success (Crew and Harrison 1998). Amongst the villagers, education must not be considered a useless investment, because it gives them more status within the villages and a feeling of accomplishment. But this alone cannot reduce global poverty or create more equality. Another concern is that the expectations created through participating in education are not fulfilled when children graduate, and the great frustration and social unrest it may lead to as seen in some countries, most recently amongst the unemployed immigrants in Paris in the fall of 2005. Nevertheless, such frustration amongst scholars may just be exactly what is needed to force the political and economic changes needed in order to make education a resource as it was expected to be in the first place. The Latin American region is currently a continent where great changes are in process, and with the left wing movement growing politically strong the radical political changes needed to reduce poverty from within, might just be closer than any time before.

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