



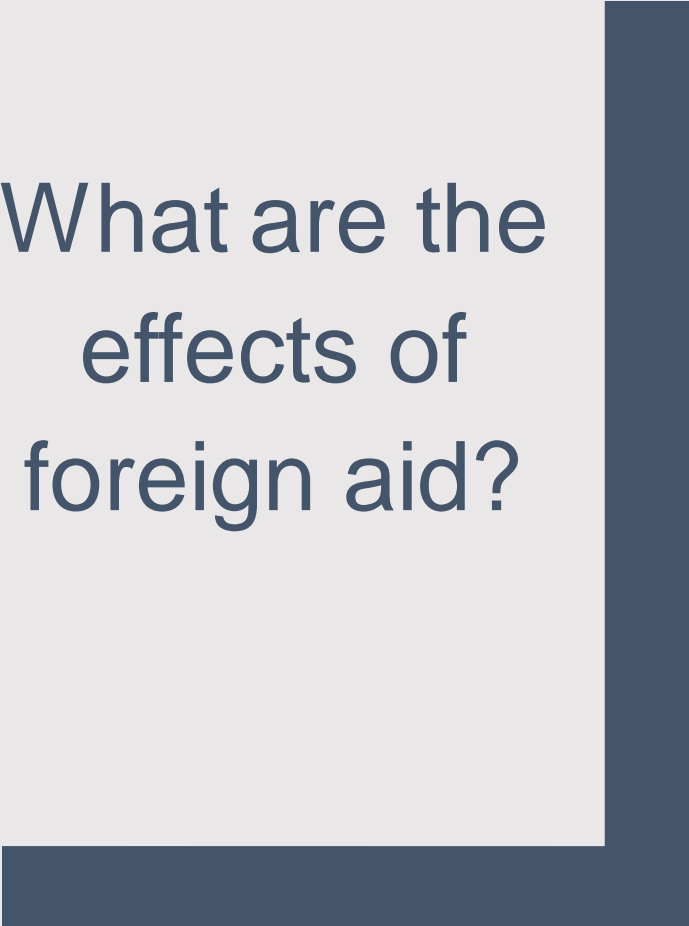
DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

US Foreign Aid and the Loss of Indigenous
Culture in Guatemala by Jessie Atkinson



RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the
effects of
foreign aid?



THESIS

I argue that international development does not reach the indigenous population of Guatemala due to discriminatory obstacles put into place by the urban, elite population or government; and when it does reach the indigenous communities, it has a negative impact on their distinct cultures.

Presentation Outline

- 01 Theoretical Framework
- 02 Background Information
- 03 Agricultural Aid Programs
- 04 Social Aid Programs
- 05 New Approaches to Development

Theoretical Framework

Friction: “Awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference”

Power Geometry: A concept to describe who moves and who does not within the global world, as well as power in relation to global flows and movements



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN GUATEMALA

Origins of Foreign Aid

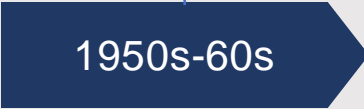
- Post World War II
- Inequalities became exceptionally apparent
- The Cold War & red scare
- Prominent development theory: westernization will bring progress



IMPORTANCE OF INDIGENOUS LAND

Agricultural Aid Programs

Military Aid Masquerading as Agrarian Development Programs



Green Revolution



Rural Development Plan & Agricultural Development Project



Rural Value Chains Project, Feed the Future Initiative



Social Aid Programs



1960s: Alliance for Progress



1970s: Primary Health Care programs



2016: Alliance for Prosperity



NEW APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

"No more waiting for the hemisphere's dominant culture to do the right thing" - Evo Morales

Conclusion

- Culturally Sustainable Development will...
 - *Decrease power hierarchies*
 - *Increase productive friction*
 - *Celebrate indigenous knowledge*



QUESTIONS?

Sewanee: The University of the South

Doing More Harm Than Good:

US Foreign Aid and The Loss of Indigenous Culture in Guatemala

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign aid is a relatively novel topic, mainly surfacing after the Second World War and during the Cold War. Its origin is partly rooted in self-preservation, ‘red scare’ instincts in uncertain post-war times. Foreign aid is defined as “private or public bilateral or multilateral assistance to nations suffering the ravages of war, natural calamity, or long-standing poverty” with the hope of creating self-sufficient, capitalistic economic growth for the receiving countries (Godfried & Lynch 1). However, the focus has recently shifted to emphasize humanitarian aid and supporting the wellbeing of people, aligning with the United Nations’ sustainable development goals. Despite the goal appearing to be humanitarian aid, there are still national interests being protected through foreign aid by the sending countries. For example, the United States protects their neoliberal interests through free-trade agreements and industrializing foreign aid programs. The varied intentions for giving foreign aid create interesting effects on the receiving countries.

Throughout this paper, I will investigate the impact of international development and foreign aid being sent from the United States to Guatemala, and specifically its impact on the indigenous populations. What are the effects of foreign aid? What are the United States’ motives for sending aid? Are they considering the priorities and concerns of the entire population, including indigenous peoples? Does the aid reach all Guatemalan citizens or does the racist power hierarchy stand in the way of equal disbursement of aid? Does the Guatemalan government get consent from those they govern to accept this aid? Do the indigenous populations even want international help? I argue that international development does not reach the indigenous populations of Guatemala due to discriminatory obstacles put into place by the

urban, elite population or government; and when it does reach the indigenous communities, it has a negative impact on their distinct cultures.

The obstacles put into place use outdated, colonial ideas of racial hierarchy in order to keep the indigenous populations below the poverty line and decrease their agency. In return, those in power have the opportunity to maintain or improve their social and economic positions. I will be studying agricultural and social foreign aid programs from the 1950s to present day in order to prove the existence of hurdles in place to marginalize and oppress indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

My research uses diverse disciplinary sources, including anthropological, cultural, political, ethnographic, and economic sources. Anthropological and cultural sources will provide me with the history of indigenous populations and foreign aid but will also show the effects on Guatemalan indigenous cultures. The political and economic sources, such as US and Guatemalan government websites and reports, will show how certain aid projects are chosen, how aid is dispersed, and the socio-economic effects of aid projects. I will begin by stating the theoretical framework for this paper before moving on to background information of Guatemala, indigenous peoples, and U.S. foreign aid. In the rest of the paper, I will present my research on agricultural and social aid programs with their effects on indigenous cultures. Finally, I will introduce new approaches to development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Under the framework of Massey's power geometry concept of time-space compression and Tsing's friction theory, I will discuss how the negative friction between the United States, Guatemala, and indigenous communities, due to racially-motivated power imbalances, has

prevented indigenous peoples from benefiting from agricultural and social aid programs. Instead, the power geometry causes less prioritization of indigenous concerns and impedes indigenous communities from receiving aid.

Tsing defines friction as the “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (4). Friction can be social, political, or economic interactions and can happen on local, national, or global levels. Studying friction and practical encounters is pertinent to understanding how global interconnections are made. Friction is the driving force behind globalization; “friction makes global connection powerful and effective” (Tsing 6). Without diverse entities interacting, positively or negatively, globalization would not exist. Global interconnectedness is created through these practical interactions of friction.

Tsing does not pretend that all friction is positive and that globalization is a well-oiled machine; however, she reinforces the importance of all interactions, whether it be resistance or compliance (6). Tsing uses the uncertainty and volatility of friction to prove that globalization is not predictable. The shaping and effects of globalization rely on the interactions between various entities with diverse values. Globalization is not unilinear or inevitable. Through the lens of friction, it is apparent how globalization has different, unpredictable results. While friction is uncertain and awkward, it is also unequal and can play into certain power dynamics, like Massey’s concept of power geometry.

Within globalization, Massey argues that power geometry is at play. Power geometry is a concept to describe who moves and who does not within the global world, as well as power in relation to global flows and movements (Massey 149). Power geometry is a power hierarchy in the way people experience and influence time-space compression, or globalization. Everyone

experiences globalization differently due to power geometry, which can be affected by gender, race, ethnicity, and income among others (Massey 147). Power geometry affects one's ability to move within time-space compression and how one can perceive or experience events.

Massey's concept of power geometry argues that certain powerful elites benefit more from globalization than others. Those higher up in the power geometry or power hierarchy affect those who do not have as much agency. Massey states that some people or entities are able to "initiate flows and movement" while others on the receiving-end are "imprisoned by it" (149). Elites with the agency and resources to manipulate globalization at their will can create institutions that benefit themselves and other elites. These decisions greatly impact people and communities farther down in the power hierarchy. Placement within the power geometry can be a result of racial-discrimination, economic marginalization, lingering colonial-based hierarchies, and many other factors. Massey's concept of power geometry emphasizes the inequality and discrimination within the globalized world. Globalization can be controlled and influenced by the elite to protect their existing power; however groups with less agency are often taken advantage of or restrained to keep them from gaining power.

As seen in Tsing's theory of friction and Massey's concept of power geometry, globalization creates and sustains inequalities. These inequalities boil down to racial, gender, and socioeconomic discrimination. These discriminatory institutions affect the way marginalized groups experience globalization. It is not an equal world system in which every person, group, and community have equal access to resources and progress. Instead, it is a system that has been manipulated to benefit the global elite and keep the developing countries and impoverished peoples from gaining power. Marginalized groups do not have the same agency and voice that

those at the top of the power hierarchy have. Globalization creates a stage for the exchange of ideas and values, but it has been exploited to benefit a small percentage of the global population while cutting out certain groups. Friction promotes globalization, while the concept of power geometry deteriorates certain people's access to globalization and progress.

This phenomenon is happening all over the world and in every country, but it can be seen through the lens of U.S. foreign aid given to Guatemala. The indigenous peoples are at the bottom of Massey's power geometry due to a long history of oppression and racist institutions that are still in place. Those at the top, including United States Agency for International Development (USAID) officers, Guatemalan elites, and Guatemalan government officials, are able to affect policy and resource allocation in order to continue the cycle of racial and ethnic marginalization against indigenous peoples in Guatemala. The friction between indigenous peoples, foreign aid officers in the United States, and powerful Guatemalan government officials, or lack thereof, exposes the power geometry at play. Then, the glaring power geometry affects the type of foreign aid being sent to Guatemala and its indigenous communities and how it gets implemented. This interruption by the power geometry creates negative effects on indigenous cultures.

GUATEMALA & INDIGENOUS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Guatemala is a country positioned in the Northern Triangle region of Central America and is home to a large population of indigenous peoples. The Spanish invasion of 1524 was the first major conquest to attack social structures of the indigenous peoples and kick them off their land, which in turn destroyed their spirituality and way of life (Paz y Paz 27). They were racially discriminated against and the indigenous lifestyle was deemed barbaric and backwards.

However, this rhetoric attacking the indigenous populations has continued to the present day. This marginalization continues despite the fact that Guatemala has a majority indigenous population, with over 51% Maya and over 60% indigenous (MacNeil 304). The three largest indigenous groups in Guatemala include the Maya, the Garifuna, and the Xinca; however, there are more diverse indigenous communities within these three larger groups (“The Indigenous World”). Despite the majority of the population being indigenous, there is very little indigenous representation in politics in Guatemala and indigenous peoples continue to rank well below the non-indigenous population on virtually all major indicators of socioeconomic development (Madrid 166). Specifically in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, home to many Maya communities, the GDP is one seventh of that in the Pacific coast which is due partially to unequal land distribution and the absence of institutional framework to modernize agricultural production (Copeland 982).

Ever since the Spanish invasion, there have been institutions and policies put into place in order to oppress the indigenous peoples living in Guatemala. Much of the economic hardships of indigenous peoples stem from the illegal acquisition of land that began during the Spanish conquest and has continued into present day Guatemalan politics. There has been a “historical and political creation of landlessness, hunger, and exclusion in the rural highlands” for centuries (Copeland 983). Race-based hierarchies continue into present day politics and social life in Guatemala in order to keep the indigenous peoples from participating in politics and society, but they are also kept from experiencing life the way they have been taught by their ancestors and through indigenous knowledge. There has also been an “intergenerational loss of traditional knowledge” documented throughout Guatemala and in indigenous communities across the world

(Fenton 21). The centuries old idea of indigenous peoples lacking knowledge and the Western idea of the white man's burden has plagued many countries throughout history and is still prevalent today. The problem in Guatemala is that the culture of the Maya and other indigenous communities represents the antithesis of the Western-based aspirations of the Guatemalan government, and the political elites are attempting to force the Maya to give up their "primitive" culture for what is seen as a more "civilized" lifestyle that is believed to lead to economic growth (Fischer 52). The idea of cultural domination is causing indigenous peoples in Guatemala and across the world to lose their indigenous knowledge, spirituality, and connections to their homelands.

As the marginalization and racism against indigenous peoples continues, there is a massive call for international indigenous rights. In 2009, the Constitutional Court in Guatemala acknowledged indigenous peoples' rights including the right to consultation; however, in its decision, the Court declared that "the consultations are not binding" (Gomez 5). Based on the rhetoric from the court, the right to consultation over policies and programs affecting indigenous communities and their land is merely a formality that must be completed but not taken into consideration. As seen in 2009, legal and constitutional rights in Guatemala fail to be enforced, "meaning that rights continue to exist on paper but not in practice" (Reynolds 1). Despite certain strides being made for indigenous rights, there continues to be institutional obstacles in place for indigenous peoples.

Many of these marginalizing institutions were put into place during and after the Guatemalan Civil War in the 1960s. Before the civil war, Guatemala's democratic governments legalized unions, abolished forced labor, ended feudalism, and redistributed land to indigenous

peoples (Copeland 977). However, this was not favorable to the United States' economic foreign interests in Guatemala. With Cold War tensions rising, the United States was also worried about the spread of communism throughout Guatemala at the time. In 1954, the U.S. assisted in the military coup d'état to overthrow Arbenz, the democratically elected president (Copeland 977). The new U.S.-backed military government "reversed land reform, banned radical parties, and repressed unions" (Copeland 977). With the idea of defeating a possible Marxist insurgency in the rural highlands, there were massacres in hundreds of Maya communities, repression and killing of Mayan spiritual leaders, and destruction of sacred Maya sites (Copeland 978 & Paz y Paz 32). This period of repression, violence, and displacement of indigenous peoples in Guatemala is referred to as *la violencia*. After the end of the civil war and *la violencia*, the legacy of repression and violence had lasting effects on the indigenous communities which translated into fear of political participation and obstacles to mobilization for social organizations that are still common in indigenous communities (Pallister 129-130). This history of racial and ethnic violence against indigenous peoples in Guatemala has left countless repercussions that continue to plague the highlands and indigenous communities.

FOREIGN AID & USAID HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Foreign aid began its life in the post-World War II era when colonialism dwindled, inequalities between nations and cultural groups became exceptionally apparent, and the belief that imposing western ideas of development would spur economic growth in the developing world became popular (Copeland 980). However, many foreign aid programs have selfish objectives on behalf of the sending countries. For example, the U.S. initially got involved in Guatemala due to the lack of development and fear of communist revolutions amongst the

impoverished citizens, specifically in the indigenous highlands (Copeland 979). In the post-World War II era, many development theorists thought development explicitly meant becoming Western, so notions of modern, scientific, and western progress became the prominent development theory (MacNeill 301). This Western development theory imposed neoliberal concepts and free markets into the developing world, assuming it would lift up economies and ‘better’ these nations in the global south. Anything besides free market and capitalist theories were thought to be inefficient by development theorists during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The economic growth brought by capitalism and neoliberalism was thought to bring political stability and allegiance to the West (Godfried & Lynch 1). U.S. foreign aid organizations, including USAID, had similar ideas about modernizing the developing world.

In 1994, a USAID administrator declared that “failed states threaten our nation,” have the possibility to destabilize other nations, hinder economic growth, and “deny us economic opportunity in the largest new marketplace — the developing world” (McHugh 52). His statement proves that often foreign aid and development projects reflect national interests and prioritize free markets rather than creating aid programs that will most benefit the marginalized and oppressed communities in receiving countries. Historically, USAID programs have sustained current power hierarchies in Guatemala, which has only increased the social and economic pressures put on indigenous communities. USAID officials speaking on early Guatemalan aid projects declared, “‘primitive’ Mayan indians... need to be ‘integrated’ into the national fabric lest they fall prey to communism” (Streeter 59). The rhetoric of calling indigenous peoples ‘primitive’ and ‘indians’ only enhances the race-based power geometry at play, as does the idea that the indigenous communities must be assimilated into the national fabric rather than the act

of cultural hybridization and appreciating diversity. The goal of development was not about encouraging change to accommodate the rural and indigenous populations, but rather about finding ways to integrate indigenous peoples into “national life” (Copeland 986). Along with this marginalization and oppression of indigenous peoples in the rhetoric from USAID, U.S. foreign assistance played into power geometries in other ways. Much U.S. foreign assistance ended up in the pockets of elites during the Cold War due to the ignorance of socio-economic class conflicts; despite the lack of range through these programs, USAID officers still believed that eventually economic growth would occur and everyone in the country would reap the benefits (Godfried & Lynch 1). Despite its controversial past, there have been integral changes made to USAID programs over the past few decades, but the agency did begin its foreign aid relationship with Guatemala by promoting national interests without diving fully into the local politics and cultural tensions of the receiving country. This ignorance had major ramifications on local cultures and indigenous populations.

AGRICULTURAL AID PROGRAMS

Many agricultural aid programs have had a negative impact on indigenous culture, specifically their connection to and relationship with sacred land. Many westerners view the earth and its resources as something to be taken advantage of, which is reinforced through local and global capitalist and neoliberal policies. However, the Maya people believe that Mother Earth gives them life, she protects them, and they are part of Mother Earth just as she is part of them (Gomez 2). The Maya have a harmonious and mutualistic view of the earth. The indigenous Maya way of life is not about exploitation of natural resources, instead it is based on community and sustainable development (Reynolds 2). Over thousands of years, the Maya have developed

“a deep, profound knowledge and agrarian practice that afford wellbeing and allowed them to achieve complete economic, political, social, and cultural development” (Paz y Paz 27).

However, their views on development are not accepted worldwide or even nationwide due to the power geometry and racial hierarchies in place that claim indigenous peoples are ‘primitive’ or ‘backward’. In the Maya religion the family unit is not the major factor that binds people, rather it is a community centered on bonds established through communal land and agricultural practices (Fenton 12). However, the systematic destruction and appropriation of indigenous land since the Spanish invasion has altered the indigenous culture and spirituality over the years.

Indigenous Mayas believe that "without land or dignity there cannot be the kind of communion that feeds spirituality” (Paz y Paz 27). Indigenous land and their agricultural practices, that have been passed down for countless generations, are an important part of their culture. Any development programs that affect indigenous relationships with sacred land, whether it be removing indigenous peoples or forcing them to adopt different agricultural practices, interfere with local culture and ignore thousands of years worth of agricultural modernization.

After years of land being stolen from indigenous peoples, the democratically elected Arbenz administration created land reform policies that were able to increase national agricultural production and improve rural livelihoods (Carey 292). The successes of Arbenz’s redistribution policy are moot as a result of its short lifespan. Due to fears of the spread of communism during the height of the Cold War, the United States assisted the Guatemalan military in a coup d’état of the Arbenz administration and reversed land reform policies, which resulted in wealthy farmers and U.S. companies like the United Fruit Company gaining more land (Streeter 58). When the new U.S. backed government reversed the Arbenz land reforms,

they took ancestral lands away from Maya and other indigenous groups yet again. As previously stated, land is an integral part of indigenous traditions, customs, and spirituality. Sadly, this was not the only discriminatory act of the new Guatemalan government. Due to atrocities attributed to military attacks during the Guatemalan Civil War, U.S. military aid programs were terminated. However, United States' military aid continued under the facade of development programs, specifically through agrarian policies. These U.S. funded development programs made it possible to disguise U.S. military intervention and the Guatemalan government's violence as a "temporary necessary evil, an exception to the broader trend of developmentalist reform" (Copeland 1987-988). The U.S.'s compliance with the state terror led to the massacre of many impoverished, revolutionary Guatemalans in the highlands, especially indigenous peoples. Despite the horrors that occurred, it was condoned by the U.S. and sanctioned as a move towards a more developed and modern Guatemala. During the civil war, the killings endorsed by the United States and the redistribution of land to please U.S. based companies and wealthy farmers heavily impacted indigenous culture. The systematic killing of indigenous peoples spread fear of indigenous practices and repressed indigenous life. The fear created during this period carried on during the decades following the civil war and are even active in present day Guatemala. The pillage of indigenous land also hindered indigenous peoples from practicing their communal customs and separated them from sacred land, which decreased their ability to deepen their spirituality through their connection to the land.

A land redistribution program was promised by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund during the peace accords following the civil war; however, it failed to address the problem and produced greater land inequality concentrated in the hands of the elite (Fenton

14). Early reparation programs did not have the effect promised and were not beneficial towards indigenous peoples who were wronged during the civil war. U.S. interests are highly prevalent in early agricultural aid programs during the 1950s and 1960s. The results of these programs benefited the U.S. and Guatemalan elites in such a way that proves Massey's power geometry to be true; those with more power have the ability to affect policies and initiate certain programs to support their place in power hierarchies (Massey 149). Many early U.S. development plans ignored indigenous needs leading to the destruction of indigenous cultures due to the power geometry at play in the international sector and within Guatemalan politics, the Green Revolution is no exception.

The Green Revolution was a program initiated in the 1960s in order to create loans for agricultural development, unfortunately these loans were quickly plagued by effects of the power geometry including corruption, racism, and structural inequalities (Paz y Paz 31). The obstacles restricting the loans from reaching indigenous peoples show the power geometry's effect on blocking aid from reaching indigenous communities. However, when the Green Revolution's programs did reach indigenous peoples, it disrupted their traditional farming practices. Peasant farmers could no longer complete agricultural spiritual practices like preparing the field to be sown, blessing seeds, and sharing and celebrating the harvest (Paz y Paz 32). Indigenous communities were expected to adhere to western agricultural practices and technologies. However, foreign seeds were more expensive, required dependency on new technologies, and eliminated traditional, indigenous crops that were better suited for their environment (Paz y Paz 33). Indigenous farming practices took into account which seeds grew best in certain environments, did not use excessive and expensive technologies, and celebrated harvests and

traditional foods. The imposition of the Green Revolution forced out indigenous knowledge and foods in exchange for western ideas and practices. Policies, practices, and programs associated with the Green Revolution benefited many large and medium-sized producers, but also established a dependency on inputs from the United States, created an abundance of the same products at harvest time, and left small producers with debts which resulted in more indigenous loss of land (Paz y Paz 33). Not only did the Green Revolution mainly benefit the more powerful and well-off producers, but it also resulted in loss of indigenous crops, land, and farming practices. All three of these are important aspects in indigenous spirituality, but they were ignored and repressed in the promotion of the more 'modern' ideas of western agriculture. Agricultural development projects did not take into account indigenous or impoverished needs and ideas. Instead, they adhered to the power hierarchies and imposed what was believed to be more developed practices on Guatemalan farmers. Unfortunately, the Green Revolution was not the only program to do this.

The Rural Development Plan (RDP) was created in the 1970s in order to resolve the agrarian problem in Guatemala: "the stark inequality of land tenure between agro-export plantations and indigenous subsistence farmers" (Copeland 976). Despite the immense inequalities in land concentration, the United States' foreign aid plans did not push for redistribution reforms and did not address land inequality. Rather, in agreement with previous agrarian aid programs, they removed far-reaching redistribution reforms from the agenda, despite agriculture demographics showing a rate of subsistence farming that would not support the growing population (Copeland 982-983). RDP officers had statistics to prove that the emphasis on export agriculture was draining national resources and impeding subsistence and indigenous

agriculture. However, they defined the problem as indigenous peoples being handicapped by traditional knowledge, and their solution was to bring indigenous communities into modern and national life through access to the free market (Copeland 984 & 988). The distinction between indigenous life and so called national life is a form of friction that upholds the power hierarchy between indigenous peoples and Guatemalan elites. Also, the social and political changes deemed necessary to bring indigenous peoples into the 'superior' culture are created and controlled by the elites in the power geometry. Increased interactions and friction between indigenous communities and so-called elites would bring about an understanding of the different values that traditional, indigenous knowledge could bring to development projects. However, the RDP only gained acceptance on the condition that cooperative peoples and organizations would be non-confrontational and subordinate to the state (Copeland 990). Creative and productive forms of interaction with indigenous peoples were not wanted. This is just one of the tactics that allowed the race-based power geometry to keep the rigid social order in tact. These programs not only benefited those with more agency and power, but also assisted in preserving the hierarchy that oppresses the people that are supposed to be benefiting from these programs.

The Agricultural Development Project (ADP) was a central tenet of the RDP, and its goal was to promote modernization in the Guatemalan agrarian sector by providing market access, implementing green revolution technologies, and introducing new agricultural methods (Copeland 976). The RDP and ADP were not programs to promote indigenous agricultural knowledge or practices. They were plans to change the entire institution of agriculture throughout Guatemala without remorse over lost indigenous customs or technologies. The ADP aimed to shift farmers from subsistence farming to market production and declared that the lack

of modern technology and access to markets was the problem, not lack of land (Copeland 984). The ADP's mission was to get rid of indigenous farming practices altogether in order to implement western agricultural practices. Generations of indigenous knowledge, technologies, and customs were ignored and lost in the implementation of the RDP and ADP in order to achieve the goal of bringing impoverished, indigenous peoples into the market economy. However, the results of both projects mirrored the half-hearted policies imposed on the indigenous communities.

The Rural Development Plan's economic results were scattered. Differences in total family income did increase for some, but there was a lack of measurable effects on production and benefits only reached a small percentage of wealthier farmers (Copeland 994). The RDP was created in order to reach the impoverished subsistence farmers, but there was little to no improvement made in the lives of the most impoverished peoples. They still faced obstacles to reaching and participating in the markets. The ADP also ignored the essential benefit of subsistence farming, ensuring a food supply free from the volatile cash economy (Copeland 984). The motivations, practices, and approach to indigenous farming were permanently altered by the implementation of the Rural Development Plan and yet little economic progress was actually made. The RDP and ADP did not stimulate the economy in the ways predicted and destroyed indigenous cultural practices in its wake. Many indigenous peoples in Guatemala link their newfound dependence on the market to the eradication of their traditional culture (Fischer 66). This dependence was forced on indigenous peoples through power hierarchies and inflated superiority complexes about culture. Along with all the failures and destruction created by the RDP, the aid programs failed to address the main concern of the indigenous peoples: land reform.

Sadly, the subsequent aid programs of the late twentieth century continued to ignore the pleas of indigenous communities.

As part of USAID's Feed the Future initiative, the U.S. government began a Rural Value Chains project in 2016 in order to invest in horticulture and coffee, with an emphasis on products grown for export, in areas with the most concentrated rates of poverty and indigenous peoples (Paz y Paz 35). The goal was to help rural, indigenous communities once again gain access to the market in order to pull themselves out of poverty. The idea that inserting indigenous peoples and impoverished peoples into the global market was and continues to be common throughout foreign aid programs. Unfortunately, export-based agriculture does not agree with traditional indigenous farming practices. The Rural Value Chains project also created a reliance on products bought from U.S. companies, similar to the Green Revolution (Paz y Paz 36). Inserting rural, indigenous farmers into the global market would assist in the U.S.'s promotion of free markets, create a new market to sell U.S. agricultural products, and create a new market to buy exported crops. Many of these results from the Rural Value Chains project were beneficial to the United States and other developed countries with access to the free market, but the project again diminished the ideas and practices of indigenous agriculture. Indigenous peasant farming has advantages that are constantly overlooked: it is more efficient and productive, it produces a large amount of the global food supply, creates employment in rural areas, and its techniques assist in cooling the planet (Paz y Paz 36). Despite these advantages that benefit many external communities, indigenous farming practices are also important in supporting and maintaining indigenous culture. To Mayas, food sovereignty is as important as any other part of their culture, and the "struggle to defend food sovereignty is also a way to defend Mother Earth" (Paz y Paz

40). The implementation of projects encouraging and forcing export agriculture diminishes sustainable agriculture, and in turn reduces food sovereignty. Once connected to the market, people and their food supply are reliant on market prices and supply and demand chains. The unpredictable market is not as reliable as sustainable agriculture, and without food sovereignty the Maya drift farther and farther away from their indigenous culture. Unfortunately, it is not just agricultural development projects that are changing and suppressing indigenous culture. In their attempt to provide humanitarian relief, social aid programs are also negatively affecting indigenous culture.

SOCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Guatemala was one of the leading advocates for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in the year 2000, but the state did not develop their social service programs nor did they invest in making them accessible to the entire population (Roesch 3). Social service institutions did not have the support or resources to create sustained solutions to social inequalities, and the institutions did not have the avenues to reach the most impoverished peoples, most notably the indigenous communities. For these reasons, Guatemala was not able to complete the MDGs by 2015 as planned. As Reynolds argues, indigenous communities are the most cut off from social services and are not allowed to exercise their basic rights (2). There are certain power hierarchies in play between the government and indigenous communities that seclude them from access to basic rights and social services. Schorr asserts, “local power inequalities as well as deficiencies in knowledge and education... hamper the capacities of local institutions to create public goods and deliver public services” (15). The unequal power geometry not only decreases resources allocated to indigenous peoples for social services, but

also diminishes the efficiency of local institutions to create and deliver these services. These harmful power inequalities continue to be sustained through a lack of electoral motivation for government officials to increase indigenous access to social services (Schorr 19). Those in power are not fearful of repercussions for not sending aid to indigenous communities due to the lack of indigenous political power. Through sustained marginalization and oppression, those in power are able to protect their socio-economic status and reinforce the power geometry that was first put into place centuries ago. However, USAID and other foreign aid organizations are attempting to bring social programs to the most impoverished communities in Guatemala, which happen to be indigenous communities.

One main sector in which a lot of foreign aid programs operate is the health sector. Primarily Health Care (PHC) programs became the dominant health approach in the 1970s and that is the approach that USAID took when sending aid to Guatemala and other countries (Bossert 444). PHC programs include training local volunteers and auxiliary health workers to promote preventative health strategies in relation to sanitation, water purification, nutrition, and maternal and child health (Bossert 441). This model encourages communities to actively participate in social programs, which creates space for local ideas, priorities, and concerns to be emphasized and addressed. However, problems do arise with PHC projects due to power hierarchies within receiving countries. Some national governments are reluctant to commit national resources to health policies, and the steps taken between drafting a program and the implementation stage can alter the program's activities and priorities (Bossert 442-443). Governments can take advantage of the friction that must occur between sending states and receiving communities. In this timeframe, they can edit programs or redistribute resources and

funds. Despite the downfalls of implementing health programs, USAID is involved in funding PHC programs in Guatemala.

The USAID PHC programs in Guatemala are not immune to problems stemming from lack of friction and the presence of power geometries. USAID declared that they wanted to reach the “poorest of the poor” through their social service initiatives, specifically their PHC programs (Bossert 446). Unfortunately, obstacles related to friction and power inequalities blocked the health programs from reaching the most impoverished communities. The PHC projects in Guatemala relied heavily on a cooperative relationship between trained health care professionals and local volunteers; this collaboration was not achieved (Bossert 447-448). There was not enough friction between those in power and the rural, indigenous populations that were depending on these programs. This lack of communication created a breakdown in the PHC programs and aid was not able to be distributed as it was intended. There was also a lack of communication between local, successfully trained workers and the aid agencies (Bossert 449-450). The larger goals of the community are unable to be met unless there is cooperation and understanding between those acting locally and those organizing the programs. However, the biggest problem is clearly the power dynamics at play. It also became extremely difficult for USAID and other sending agencies to compromise with national actors leading to poor implementation and resource allocation (Bossert 453). PHC programs have taken a step in the right direction by including community members in more leadership roles in social aid programs; however, power dynamics continue to favor the government and the elites who can block services from reaching indigenous and poor communities in the ways intended. Lack of friction

and practical interactions between indigenous peoples and people with more power also hinder social aid programs from reaching their full potential.

Other social programs have also been plagued by a lack of effective friction and power dynamics created to marginalize indigenous peoples. The Alliance for Progress was created in the 1960s as a nation-building project to promote rural development in Guatemala through programs including but not limited to rural leadership training, construction of infrastructure, and literacy projects (Streeter 61). The goal of the Alliance for Progress was to create development opportunities in the Northern Triangle, but it too had its troubles. One State Department official asserted that when implementing the Alliance for Progress and its subsequent programs, the U.S. should not “unnecessarily antagonize Latin America’s ruling class” (Streeter 59). Influential U.S. foreign officers were invested in keeping the existing power hierarchy alive in Guatemala. Upholding the existing power hierarchy was important due to the U.S.’s fear of revolutionary ideas and communist uprisings, but also because if change was too radical the Guatemalan elites would not support it and terminate U.S. foreign aid projects. They were not interested in creating social change that would anger the elites, but this social change would have created a more democratic state and allowed for indigenous peoples to have a voice and be less fearful of consequences for living their traditional lifestyle. Unfortunately, the Alliance for Progress was not created to incite social change, rather it was careful to keep the existing power geometry intact. Despite their best efforts to protect the social hierarchies, the Alliance for Progress did excite some grassroots movements and revolutionary ideas. The Alliance also sent counter-insurgency military aid and training to Guatemala in order to quell these ideas brought about by the Alliance’s development projects (Streeter 60). Not only did the U.S. aid programs excite

revolutionary ideas, but they assisted in squashing these uprisings, effectively cutting off friction from the indigenous peoples that form a majority of the country's population. During this counter-insurgency campaign, over 10,000 Guatemalan citizens were killed which set the scene for the systematic killing of many Maya peoples during the 1970s (Streeter 65). During the Alliance for Progress programs, the United States inadvertently sparked ideas of revolutions, participated in upholding race-based power hierarchies, and helped to set the stage for the targeting of the indigenous peoples in Guatemala. The U.S. once again assumed that Americanizing economic and political institutions in Guatemala would spur development (Streeter 63). Unsurprisingly, imposing their ideas on a country with diverse cultures and communities was not effective. However, it is not all to blame on the United States in their attempt to bring development and social services to impoverished, indigenous peoples in Guatemala. The Guatemalan oligarchy harassed anyone who supported or worked for the social and economic reforms attached to the Alliance for Progress (Streeter 63). Once again, there is evidence of Massey's power geometry at play in order for the elites to secure their position of authority and to marginalize and repress indigenous peoples in Guatemala. There were too many obstacles related to power dynamics for the Alliance for Progress to be successful, but the United States tried again years later with another foreign aid plan for the Northern Triangle.

The Alliance for Prosperity was created with the goal of reducing illegal migration and increasing border security; however, it took money that was traditionally managed by development agencies and channeled it through intelligence agencies and military groups (Roesch 8). This program is similar to the Alliance for Progress with their focus on military assistance. Both programs reinforced the power of Guatemala's military. The Alliance for

Progress fortified military power before and during the civil war, and the Alliance for Prosperity once again strengthened the Guatemalan military many years later. USAID officials have pointed out that development projects through the Alliance for Prosperity have been small, fragmented, and did not lead to any successful cumulative impacts on indigenous peoples (Roesch 8). The aid and development sector of the Alliance for Prosperity is not as prominent as the security efforts. Critics claim that this program was a missed opportunity to create sustainable development in Guatemala by addressing the causes of migration and underdevelopment in Guatemala and other Latin American countries (Roesch 9). Instead, the Alliance for Prosperity focuses on the problem of migration without identifying or addressing root causes. Despite the facade of bringing social services to poor and indigenous communities in Guatemala, both the Alliance for Progress and the Alliance for Prosperity adhere to the existing power geometry, support military intervention, and put the concerns of the Guatemalan and United States government above all else. The power inequalities and lack of indigenous input in development projects are the biggest restrictions to successful projects.

NEW APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

Indigenous participation and input are the most important aspects of development projects, and without it these projects will not be sustainable. An indigenous Maya claims that Western-based development seeks improvement to the quality of life, but often results in inequality (Leffert 1). As with many early development projects of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, social inequalities are not addressed and are even worsened through foreign aid programs due to lack of friction with indigenous populations and existing power geometries that are rooted in sixteenth-century colonial ideas. However, the key to avoiding

worsening these power inequalities is social and cultural energy. Cultural energy is defined as “a force that acts to revitalize a cultural tradition as well as stimulate collective action and in doing so affects the motivations and behavior not only of a selective group but of all the members of a culture” (Fischer 51). Encouraging traditional and cultural practices in development projects is the only way to avoid fragmentation. Some post-development writers assert the extreme importance of traditional knowledge, because indigenous knowledge and participation are “the conditions for and of change” (Briggs 99). Indigenous peoples have their own ideas of sustainable development, and they must be heard and implemented in aid programs. A fundamental tenet of Maya culture is the equilibrium found in the relationship with nature and the cosmos, so it is through understanding Maya cultural practices and traditions that sustainable development can be reached for these indigenous communities (MacNeill 313). Without accounting for the Maya belief of equilibrium, development projects will not be accepted or sustainable. Each culture and community has its own ideas of development and sustainability, and because of this, sustainable development is only attainable when taking into account local views and priorities. Evo Morales, a prominent indigenous rights activist and Bolivian politician, declared that “indigenous people must be the ones to decide how they would live, how they would think, and how they would make their living... no more waiting for the hemisphere’s dominant cultures to do the right thing” (Leffert 1). The socio-economic power geometries will only stand in the way of development and create further divisions. Foreign aid programs must allow indigenous peoples to decide how they would like to live and assist in ways that uplift and celebrate indigenous lifestyles.

Despite overlooking local indigenous demands and preferences for decades, USAID has been attempting to form a new approach to development. The agency decided that by 2015 thirty percent of its resources would be allocated to local organizations like local governments, civil society, and firms in the private sector; unfortunately, this goal was not met and USAID now refers to this target as purely aspirational (Dichter 1). Another goal initiated in the early twenty-first century was to find local solutions to development. In order to find local solutions, they strived to establish personal working relationships with community groups, local governments, and civil society (Dichter 1). These new objectives represent a turn towards more inclusive development programs. Despite the good intentions of these goals, they did not gain much support. In an article written in 2016, Dichter investigated USAID's new approaches by visiting different offices and embassies while talking to agency staff about their experiences. In his research, Dichter discovered that USAID personnel tended to be misinformed about local cultures, trends, and organizations (1). However, this was not due to lack of effort. There are external factors that can separate aid officers and the people they are attempting to reach. Two major factors creating the divide are safety and security concerns, as well as officers getting moved to different posts every two to four years (Dichter 2-3). It is hard to understand cultural significances and customs when being separated and constantly moving to different cities or countries. There is also the presence of an underlying patronizing attitude towards local communities that can hinder cultural understanding (Dichter 2). The friction between aid officers and community members can cause tension due to opposing views about the right way to do things, especially when it comes to development projects. These strained interactions can cause even more division between diverse cultural groups which blocks cooperative, cultural

understanding. Despite the divides between aid officers and indigenous peoples, USAID's attempt to find 'local solutions' and give directly to local communities is integral in the success of development programs.

Local peoples receiving aid argue that aid establishments need to adopt the idea of "country ownership" (Dichter 3). Those being affected by aid must be consulted when drafting programs and be included in the implementation process, or else there will be unforeseen obstacles that block development. Starting in 2010, USAID began their Locally Led Development Initiative (LLDI). Locally led development is defined by USAID officers as a "process in which local actors — encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments — set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality" ("Locally Led Partnerships"). These programs are being implemented in many countries where USAID is working, there are even active LLDI programs in Guatemala. The active LLDI projects in Guatemala include locally led development research, cooperative development programs, and local works which entails locally led decision making on development projects ("Map of USAID's LLDI"). The adoption of country ownership and local solutions by USAID is a huge step towards making development projects sustainable and productive for indigenous peoples. In 2021, USAID employed more than 10,000 people with 65% of them working in country (Bandura 23). A percentage of the employees working in country are expatriates working directly for USAID, but the goal is to work with as many local institutions and peoples as possible. Some new programs are even trying to bypass certain political and social structures in order to deliver aid directly to certain communities (McHugh 59). The direct implementation of aid can sidestep

obstacles created by local and national power geometries. USAID claims their goal by 2030 is to have 50% of their programming place local communities in the position to “co-design a project, set priorities, drive implementation, or evaluate the impact of [their] programs” (Bandura 23). With this direct implementation and local cooperation, there is a smaller chance of aid programs being altered to fit national agendas or money and resources being allocated elsewhere. USAID officers can see the detrimental effects of power geometries across the world and the importance of local solutions; however, the implementation of these observations is crucial for the future of development and foreign aid.

The call for local solutions and indigenous participation in development is not an attempt to reverse the existing power dynamics, instead it is a plea to eliminate the power imbalances altogether. Maya cultural activists understand that the view of material progress is inherently western, and they gladly accept funds from development agencies in the United States and Western Europe (Fischer 68). They do not turn down economic, social, or political assistance based on cultural differences. New approaches to development must understand and value every culture equally. Only after indigenous peoples have been culturally empowered and create initiatives for sustainable development can true substantive change occur in the pluralistic Guatemalan society (Fischer 70). The culturally empowered indigenous peoples will be able to take part in the development projects that are shaping their communities and their country. Social programs that are compatible with indigenous culture will be able to reach more indigenous communities, and that will in turn decrease social hierarchies and erase barriers to national economic and political systems. Access to economic institutions and political agency will decrease indigenous inequalities throughout Guatemala. Culturally sustainable development

(CSD) emphasizes the importance of a political space in which culture can be freely defined and embraced without fear of violence or strict power imbalances (MacNeill 320). CSD opens avenues for productive friction to thrive without being hindered by power hierarchies. A political arena free of discrimination and power inequalities will create massive benefits for indigenous peoples and the entire nation, not only in the implementation of development projects.

Discrimination and the idea of a dominant culture must also be eliminated from foreign aid agencies. Jan Pieterse, a distinguished development scholar, argues that “development is about changing the world,” despite the cynicism that comes with that phrase (187). His definition of development does not play into power hierarchies or Westernized ideas of progress. Pieterse simply states the necessity to change the world for the better. The move from western-dominated rhetoric defining foreign aid to culturally inclusive ideas will have an abundance of benefits for indigenous peoples, developing nations, and countries on a global scale.

LOCALLY LED & CULTURALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKS

While the examples of indigenous led and culturally sustainable development projects are limited, there are cases that prove the effectiveness of these development strategies. One prime example comes from the indigenous Maya community living in San Jorge La Laguna in Guatemala. Dr. Krogstad, a professor specializing in colonial Latin America and indigenous issues, spent time interviewing indigenous community members about their fight against a businessman who had stolen their ancestral land. After peacefully protesting, military aggression, and five years of negotiations in the 1990s, San Jorge did not prevail in their fight to have their sacred land returned (Krogstad 78-79). This community faced the same fate many others did in their search for reparations and land reforms, but their activism and determination did create

lasting change in their community and across Guatemala for indigenous peoples. During the fight to return their ancestral land, the Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina (CONIC) was created “in order to address the fact that the majority of Guatemalans have very little land, if any” (Krogstad 86). CONIC embodies the locally led development strategy that is pertinent in creating lasting progress through foreign aid and development projects. This organization also celebrates and uses indigenous culture throughout the development process, perfectly exhibiting the culturally sustainable development strategy. Since its creation, CONIC has been able to assist the San Jorge La Laguna community in successfully completing development projects.

According to local community members, “these projects include sustainable garbage management, the construction of a water treatment plant, and the process of sensitizing and training in regard to the conservation and care of Lake Atitlán” (Krogstad 87). The indigenous Maya of San Jorge were able to create, direct, and implement these development projects with the economic and managerial assistance of a local indigenous organization, CONIC. Every aspect of the San Jorge development projects were locally led and culturally sustainable, which explains the great success of these programs.

CURRENT USAID PROGRAMS

USAID has many active programs in Guatemala, each addressing different social and economic opportunities for growth. One program is titled Strengthening Governance in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, and its goal is to strengthen conservation efforts, civil society, and indigenous communities’ participation in the forest, among other things (“Strengthening Governance”). USAID’s acknowledgement of the importance of this biosphere as well as the indigenous significance of this land is a step in the right direction for foreign aid programs. The

project description also recognizes that “the conservation efforts usually rival with development based on extractive industries or land use change,” but is attempting to reduce this threat to the Selva Maya (“Strengthening Governance”). USAID’s description shows indigenous knowledge and cultural acknowledgement during the planning of this project. The project will run until 2026, so definite project results and outcomes are not yet available. However, the description is promising in its attempt to understand the importance of this indigenous land.

Another program being implemented by USAID is the B’atz Local Institutional Strengthening Project. Their goal is to “strengthen USAID’s engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities by supporting their development priorities” and creating a culturally inclusive environment where indigenous peoples can advocate for their rights (“B’atz Local”). Again, the project is not yet finished and will not be completed until September of 2024, so there are no tangible results. However, the project description seems to be accepting a culturally sustainable development approach. These new programs are attempting to emphasize indigenous priorities, ideas, and knowledge while using new approaches to development that will create lasting progress for Guatemala.

CONCLUSION

For centuries following the Spanish invasion of Guatemala, indigenous peoples have been discriminated against and marginalized due to their differing customs, views, and traditions. Foreign aid institutions continued this trend of dominating indigenous peoples through a lack of friction and meaningful interactions, but most notably through power hierarchies rooted in racial discrimination dating back to colonialism. Historically, allowing for indigenous knowledge and agency jeopardized the hegemony of western science and the ‘dominant’ culture (Briggs 106).

Power hierarchies were integral in upholding the Western hegemony in development.

Unfortunately, these race-based power geometries are still prevalent today. However, in the past few years, new ideas about development and foreign aid have emerged. Diversity used to be seen as a bad thing, but now it is increasingly recognized as an essential ingredient of life; “to be different is not to be opposite but complementary” (Paz y Paz 27). The new route for development and foreign aid is to collaborate with those who will be receiving aid while ignoring power imbalances and creating a safe space for people from different backgrounds. Culturally sustainable and locally led development is the only path to achieve feasible development, to eliminate power hierarchies, and to increase productive friction, thereby increasing the agency and wellbeing of indigenous and marginalized peoples. More sustainable and culturally aware development projects will create more indigenous representation, increase democracy in Guatemalan institutions, and bring lasting progress that will bolster the entire Guatemalan economy.

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