The politics of civil society building: European private aid agencies and democratic transitions in Central America
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Chapter 1


2 Others argue that minimal as the Schumpeterian conception might be, if one starts with civil war or authoritarian regimes and the complete absence of any democratic process, a model that requires the circulation of elites through competitive elections is better than nothing (Shapiro 1993).

3 The analytic coherence suggested by the term South America is of course problematic, as huge differences exist in political-historical patterns throughout South America. However, the difference between South and Central America could be justified on these grounds, as long as it is clear that Mexico (although geographically located in Central America) is understood to be part of 'South America'. For a discussion of this analytical pitfall see Slater (1991).


5 Exceptions include Drake and Silva (1986), Huntington (1991) and Rueschemeyer et al. (1992).

6 In the middle classes of Latin America they include 'urban professionals, state employees, employees in the private sector, artisans and craftsmen, and small entrepreneurs, sometimes joined by small and medium farmers' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 185).

7 In a recent article, they elaborate on the term 'full democracy' by distinguishing between 'participatory democracy' and 'social democracy', and replace 'restricted democracy' by 'formal democracy' (Huber et al. 1997).

8 Exceptions are Costa Rica after 1948 and Guatemala between 1944 and 1954, as will be argued in Chapter 4.

9 See for example Linz and Stepan (1996), who in their broad empirical study on democratic transition and consolidation only refer to Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras in a tiny footnote.

10 See Beetham (1994). However, this implies that the term 'transition' would become useless, as the 'end stage' would be a utopian situation. Despite this caveat, I believe the concept 'democratic transition' should not be dismissed, as it provides a valuable tool for comparative analysis.

11 These sequences were partly inspired by Gary Hansen (1996), and are further specified in 1.2 and in Chapter 4.

12 Although superficially elaborated in O'Donnell and Schmitter's chapter 'Resurrecting civil society (and restructuring public space)' (1986: 48-56), the idea of 'resurrecting civil society' apparently triggered the imagination of many scholars, as it is still commonly used. However,
both the concept and the chapter are rather descriptive, and no definition of civil society is provided.

13 The concept 'societal public sphere' was introduced by Habermas to distinguish it from the 'public authority of the state', and to avoid that civil society is understood only as the 'private (economic) sphere'.

14 The definition is taken from Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), who say 'production-related', instead of 'economic', to stress that entities that produce goods or services are excluded from civil society, whereas employers' associations and labour unions do belong to civil society. However, this definition could be criticised for its 'class' and 'male' bias, by excluding gender balances in the private domestic sphere.

15 Pearce (1997a: 79) concludes that the current Chilean political elite, among them many ex-socialists, believe that 'a depoliticized, disarticulated population is more likely to guarantee democracy than the highly mobilized population of the pre-Pinochet period.'

16 Fine (1997: 9) therefore makes a useful distinction between the concept 'civil society' (as a product of the Enlightenment) and 'civil society theory'. The latter is a combination of approaches that emerged during the anti-authoritarian struggles of the 1980s in Latin America and Eastern Europe which 'privileges civil society over all other moments or spheres of social life, on the ground that civil society furnishes the fundamental conditions of liberty in the modern world', in other words 'civil society theory justifies the primacy of civil society over the political and economic spheres.' For variations on this argument, see Foley and Edwards (1996).

17 Wood (1990: 79) even argues that these 'loose conceptions of "civil society" represent a surrender to capitalism and its ideological mystifications'.

18 Based on his research in Africa, Bayart (1986: 112) writes: 'civil society is not necessarily embodied in a single, identifiable structure. It is by its very nature plural [...] covers all sorts of different practices [...] is not merely the expression of dominated social groups.'


20 See Fowler (1993b), who elaborates on Bratton's three dimensions.

21 Gramsci (1971: 262-3) writes: 'the general notion of the State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society, in the sense that one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.' Various analysts have pointed at inconsistencies in Gramsci's definition of political society (which was for him in fact synonymous with the state); I therefore will not use Gramsci's equation. Instead, throughout this book I prefer to use the equation in which the nation is composed of state and society, and in which political society is the realm that organises relations between the state and civil society.

22 Linz and Stepan (1996: 8) define political society as the 'arena in which the polity specifically arranges itself to contest the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus.' A 'democratised political society' is composed of political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, inter-party alliances and legislatures.

23 Schmitt (1996) makes the same point; I will come back to this in 1.3.

24 Notwithstanding this limitation, Robinson (1993a: 75-76) correctly points out that most donor agencies prefer to use this 'pluralist notion' of civil society, in which civil society organisations work towards a common goal of strengthening democracy without conflicting interests.

25 Cohen and Arato (1992: 53-8) point at the implicit tension between civil and political society during democratic transition by discussing the potential impact of pacts and elections on the strength of civil society: 'the turn to political society has potentially demobilizing consequences with respect to civil society.'

26 Pearce (1997a: 70) argues that much of the transition and consolidation literature is dominated by the pluralist-elitist view which assumes no contradictions between economic liberalisation, a
stronger civil society and the goals of political and social equality: 'The concerns are with the stability, sustainability, and legitimacy of the political order. The associations of "civil society" can positively contribute to these as long as they accept the limits of their role as well as the fact that the health of the entire order demands the aggregation and channelling of their interests by political parties. Associational life, by implication, will disrupt rather than deepen democracy if it retains the over politicized role which helped it bring down non-democratic governments.'

27 Fowler (1993b) refers to 'informal expressions of civic associations', particularly in Africa, where civic systems existing prior to colonialism were overruled by Western norms and behaviour.

28 This sectoral analysis, an approach popular among pluralists, identifies three sectors with complementary functional characteristics. The first function is to protect the rights of citizens and the sovereignty of the nation by maintaining the rule of law and applying the monopoly of coercive power. This function has been assigned to the government and is in the liberal tradition labelled as the 'first sector'. The second function is to ensure livelihoods by creating and accumulating wealth, assigned to the business sector, in which both for-profit and non-profit organisations serve their customers. The 'third sector' comprises organisations in society that serve personal and social interests based on shared values, commonly referred to as 'voluntary organisations'. All three sectors have distinct but complementary functions with a common objective to serve others. For an elaboration of the three-sector approach related to NGOs see Korten (1990), Nerfin (1992), Brown and Tandon (1994), Fowler (1996b).

29 Tandon (1996: 120) notes that many NGOs in India, or 'voluntary development organisations' as he calls them, have been exclusively dependent upon state funding. Because of their increasing tendency to function as governmental organisations, a point could be made to include them in the first sector.

30 Writing for USAID, Gary Hansen (1996) and others introduced a 'subset' of civil society organisations, which they call civil advocacy organisations (CAOs), referring to 'non-state groups that engage in or have potential for championing adoption and consolidation of democratic governance reforms.'

31 The term 'voluntary' is often misleading, as it refers to income from voluntary donations (which is rarely the case in the South) and unsalaried work (while most staff is actually employed by these voluntary organisations).

32 Diamond (1994) identifies seven categories: (1) economic, (2) cultural (including religious), (3) research and education, (4) interest-based, (5) developmental (including NGOs), (6) issue-oriented and (7) civic associations. Diamond also includes media as part of civil society.

33 Synonyms that will be used in this book for membership organisations include popular organisations, and grassroots organisations. The latter actually refers to the level of activity, but is commonly used to refer also to membership organisations operating at macro-level.

34 Farrington et al. (1993: 4) propose a useful method to differentiate among NGOs, using the following criteria: location (North or South), scale (community or supra-community), ownership (MSOs or non-MSOs), orientation (profit or value-driven), approach (top-down, 'functional' participatory or 'empowering' participatory) and operational dimensions (research and innovation or action and implementation).

35 Accountability is understood as the degree to which members (or citizens) can hold their leaders (or politicians and bureaucrats) responsible for their actions. For a discussion of measures of accountability see Fowler (1993b: 26-28).

36 Recent examples include the essays in Clayton (1996), Cleary (1997) and Fisher (1998). This point will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

37 Many urban-based NGOs – such as research centres or human rights organisations – during democratic transitions often have operated as a legal voice for underground popular organisations or political parties, although officially they had no members. These 'pseudo NGOs' were formally
independent, but in practice directly accountable to their underground constituency. These NGOs thus served four purposes: (a) they gave a shield of legal protection for their members to operate above ground; (b) they served as policy think-tanks and as institutions for political training of leaders; (c) they provided banned parties and popular organizations with an infrastructure to maintain and develop their constituencies, both in rural and urban areas; (d) they were an important channel for deriving income from external aid agencies to finance political campaigns, and sometimes also to finance armed struggles. Many of these party-controlled 'pseudo NGOs' vanished or entered a crisis soon after political parties were legalised in the course of democratic transitions. See Brunner and Barrios (1987) for Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay; and Levy (1996) for Latin America in general.

38 The concept 'social movements', to point at certain 'collective actions' by organisations of civil society, will be avoided in this book. It is preferred to use the term 'popular' or 'social' organisations and to be specific about the purpose of this 'collective action'. For discussions about the pitfalls of defining (new) 'social movements' see Escobar and Alvarez (1992: 1-8) and Foweraker (1995: 38-9).

39 The term societal actor, to label a member of civil society, is preferred over the use of non-governmental organisation or non-state actor with their state-centred bias.

40 For example, the role of NGOs in Latin America changed dramatically after democratic transitions of the 1980s in the Southern Cone; their role was also seriously altered by the consequences of structural adjustment programmes (Wils 1995). I will return to this theme in the next chapter.

41 This classification is an elaboration of categories developed by Renshaw (1994), Diamond (1994), Robinson (1993a), VeneKlasen (1996) and Fowler (1993a, 1996b). It also incorporates some of the ideas of White (1994) that were mentioned earlier in this chapter. Although these categories apparently resemble White's four roles, they do not totally overlap. The first two functions (establishing the foundations of civil society and building alliances) are necessary conditions for civil society to perform all four political roles that White mentions. Building intermediary channels is a condition to perform the 'disciplinary role', but also the intermediary role, which can be oriented at the state but also beyond the state towards transnational societal actors or foreign governments. Building citizenship is a condition for sustaining and consolidating democracy, and is the only category that overlaps with the 'constitutive role' that White identifies.

42 The term 'transnational political space' is borrowed from Pritchard (1996). It is a broader formulation of what could be called 'global civil society', a concept that will be examined later in this chapter.

43 The 'transitologists' have also started to recognise this in recent years, and are now reviewing their earlier transition stages of 'liberalisation' and 'democratisation' (see O'Donnell 1993; Linz and Stepan 1996). For example, a USAID-sponsored study on the role of civil society in democratic transition and consolidation identified four phases of democratic transition: pre-transition, early transition, late transition and (democratic) consolidation (G. Hansen 1996). These categories were further elaborated for the present analysis in the way that was earlier mentioned in this chapter.

44 The stages of 'mid' and 'late' consolidation are not discussed here, as they refer to degrees of 'participatory democracy' or 'social democracy' that are still utopian in the present Central American context.

45 Schmitter (1996: 27) remarks: 'Regime change tends to be a domestic affair, and democratisation is a domestic affair par excellence', whereas Whitehead (1996a: 24) concludes that 'in the contemporary world there is no such thing as democratisation in one country, and perhaps there never was.'

46 US administrations from President Wilson to President Hoover implemented policies promoting democracy (or better: electoralism) in Latin America, using the tool of direct military intervention
in small countries such as Haiti, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic to impose proxy regimes. The primary goals of US intervention in the inter-war period were to guarantee regional security and economic expansion, for which the promotion of democracy was a useful tool, but certainly a subordinate objective. In the period after World War II the United States used indirect instruments for promoting democracy abroad, but the covert overthrow of democratic governments (such as in Guatemala 1954) and simultaneous support for authoritarian regimes in Europe (Greece) and Latin America suggested that the level of rhetoric of this policy remained unchanged. Although the Kennedy administration initially intended to foster democracy with its 'Alliance for Progress', it soon favoured military regimes in Latin America. This policy became less strident under President Carter (with his active human rights policy), but President Reagan's support to authoritarian regimes again illustrated the paradoxical undertone of promoting democracy abroad (see Lowenthal 1991; Carothers 1991; W. Robinson 1996).

47 The US blockade against 'communist' Cuba, and the extension of sanctions toward those nations that continue trade relations with Cuba (Helms-Burton act) suggests that this characterisation is still valid in the post-Cold War period.

48 Whitehead (1991, 1996a) elaborates on the variety of these efforts of imposing democracy by distinguishing between 'incorporation', 'invasion' and 'intimidation'.

49 One exception where US imposition of democratic rule might have had a lasting effect is Puerto Rico, which was 'democratised by incorporation' (Whitehead 1991).

50 It is important to recognise that the international context for democratisation is probably more relevant at a regional level than at a global level. By pointing at the influence of the 'contagion' factor during democratic transitions in the Southern Cone and in Eastern Europe, Schmitter (1996: 40) suggests that the really effective international context 'has increasingly become regional, and not binational or global'.

51 A related question is: What is the point at which the international context is most influential? In other words, in which stage of democratisation are external actors most effective? Schmitter (1996: 40-41) suggests that 'regardless of the form that it takes, external intervention will have a greater and more lasting effect upon the consolidation of democracy than upon the transition to it' (emphasis added). His hypothesis seems to be inspired by the transitions in Southern Europe of the 1970s. And even then, this might be valid for governmental actors in other regions, where a change from covert operations to more open and longer term interventions proved to increase the likelihood of success. But does it also apply to transnational actors? I would challenge this proposition and suggest that transnational actors are probably most influential during stages of democratic transition and that they become more marginal, as political players, in the stage of early consolidation. This assumption will be further examined in following chapters.

52 'With one's neighbours and the world watching, the cost of repression has gone up and, most of all, the benefit of increased resistance has greatly increased' (Schmitter 1996: 34).

53 Lipschutz (1992: 398-399) refers to a 'global consciousness' of actors in global civil society, challenging not only the cultural shape of international relations but also the logic governing them.

54 Wapner (1995: 315) illustrated the magnitude of these transnational environmental actors by pointing at their combined budgets (US$ 200 million in 1992), being four times the budget of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP).

55 New terminology has not yet been agreed upon. For example, Wapner (1995) speaks of TEAGS (Transnational Environmental Activist Groups), and Sousa Santos (1995) uses the term TANGOS (Transnational Advocacy NGOs).

56 Due to the absence of a 'global state', I do believe it would be wrong to speak of a 'global political society'. The earlier mentioned 'transnational political space' refers to the sphere in which transnational societal and political actors operate, and is therefore part of global civil society.

57 I prefer to avoid the term 'international NGOs', as it is used by Willets (1996) and others, basically
because it disguises the crucial power difference between donor and recipient NGOs.

Lehmann (1990: 139) analyses the origins of these CEBs, and talks of 'an informal Church, loosely related to the Church hierarchy, and organised principally to communicate the message of liberation'.


Although informal access to key political leaders in the North via these transnational party organisations was probably more relevant for Southern members than the impact of political activities undertaken by these organisations. (Author's interview with Jaime Castillo Velásco, former president of ODCA, the Latin American section of the Christian Democratic International, Santiago de Chile, 18 December 1988). For a detailed analysis of transnational party networks see Kopsch (1987) and Biekart (1989).

An additional advantage for (mostly Latin American) party leaders to participate in transnational party networks was their access to political funding from (mainly German) party foundations. International financial aid to party-related training and research centres was crucial in maintaining the infrastructure of domestic political parties in periods of repression and financing election campaigns in periods of democratic transition. This 'political aid' proved to be very effective at particular moments, such as the support to the election campaign of Napoleón Duarte, the Salvadoran Christian Democratic presidential candidate in 1984, or to the Chilean moderate opposition in 1987-88. It is often argued that the political foundations were a useful non-governmental instrument of governments during the Cold War, but their impact is often overstated. Pinto-Duschinsky (1996: 248) argues, for example, that the Konrad Adenauer Foundation 'has not been very successful in Latin America'.

Private aid agencies are absent actors in the transition literature, but also in subsequent comparative studies on democratisation. Short references to private aid agencies are sometimes made in enumerations of transnational societal actors, such as Schmitter (1996: 39) who mentions 'foundations' among many other non-governmental actors, or Shaw (1994: 23) who refers to 'humanitarian aid agencies'.

Analogous to the discussion on domestic civil society, a point could be made about the material, organisational and ideological dimensions that have shaped the emergence of global civil society. It is likely that private aid agencies particularly possess a comparative advantage over other transnational actors in strengthening the 'material dimension' of global civil society with the provision of private aid resources.

Chapter 2

1 This distinguishes private aid agencies also from 'public service contractors', who are market-oriented 'non-profits' selling their services to official aid agencies and governments. For a discussion of this category, see Korten (1990: 102-4) and Robinson (1997).

2 Unlike figures of official development assistance, it is difficult to get reliable statistics on private aid transfers, as Smillie and Helmich (1993: 40-41) point out. Official OECD statistics give figures on private aid spending that do not include contributions in kind (food aid). OECD figures also are incomplete as figures from some major official donors are not available.

3 Sommer (1977: 8) and Lissner (1977: 46-51) point at the inaccuracy of quantitative figures concerning private development aid because they do not take into account the value of the 'voluntary' component. They argue that the 'actual benefit' of private aid for the South is up to fifty percent higher than that of official aid, although this seems highly speculative.
The Red Cross in the United States was an exception, as the US government was unwilling to get involved in aid overseas prior to the Spanish-American War of 1898. The main reason was that the US constitution did not authorise Congress to use public funds for foreign relief (Lissner 1977).

Hoover's committee received substantial contributions from the French, British and American governments and enjoyed diplomatic privileges, and could actually be considered as a quasi-governmental organisation (Curti 1963: 231-7).

Although the new Soviet leaders considered foreign relief as a potential instrument that could undermine the revolution, a great variety of private aid agencies was allowed to enter the Soviet Union, including the counter-revolutionary and semi-governmental American Relief Administration of Herbert Hoover. The Russian famine relief programme was the largest private multi-agency relief operation up to that period (Curti 1963: 279-293; Smith 1990: 33-35).

Most of the early Canadian private relief agencies were also created immediately after the Second World War, often as branches of foreign aid agencies; see Brodhead et al. (1988).

These UN campaigns were the Children's Emergency Fund UNICEF (1948), World Refugee Year (1959) and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign of the FAO (1960). European private aid agencies founded in this atmosphere of the 1950s include the Swiss World Vision and Helvetas, the Dutch NOVIB, the Danish Refugee Council, and the German Kindernothilfe (Smith 1990).

The new 'Third World' nation states became members of the United Nations and urged the General Assembly to adopt a resolution to designate the 1960s as the UN Development Decade. The target was to achieve minimal annual growth rates of five percent by the end of the decade in the developing world. The resolution asked the industrialised countries to dedicate one percent of their GNP to developing countries in the form of development aid and technical assistance (OECD 1988).

Special ministries to administer development aid were created in France, Germany and Switzerland in 1961; Belgium, Denmark and Sweden in 1962; the Netherlands in 1963; Great Britain in 1964; and Canada in 1968. An active role was played by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD (created in 1960) through which the United States urged European governments to become more involved in development aid (Smith 1990).

WUS-Denmark was founded in 1966 as a branch of the World University Service (a Geneva-based cultural exchange network) and changed its name to Ibis in 1992.

Major fund-raising campaigns were launched after emergencies in the South, such as the famine in India (1969), the civil war in Nigeria and the famine in Biafra (1967-70), the famine in Bangladesh (1971), the drought in the Sahel-zone and Ethiopia (1973-74), and the earthquake in Guatemala (1976). Agencies specialised in emergency aid such as Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) were set up as a response to these disasters. With branches in several European countries, MSF is currently among the largest private aid agencies in Europe (see Table 2.1).

Early critics of development aid already pointed at the false assumption that an increase in foreign aid would accelerate economic growth (cf. Jepma 1995).

The figures are from OECD (1988). Hellinger et al. (1988) and Clark (1991) remark that part of the increase in official funding to private aid agencies is sometimes 'tied', and that it is not always clear from the figures how much of the private aid share is actually free of conditions.

Lobbying by private aid agencies in the mid-1970s became better coordinated at a European level by the Catholic network CIDSE and the NGO-EC Liaison Committee, complementing the UN-oriented lobbying efforts by ICVA. The European Community, and the governments of the United Kingdom, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland, France and Ireland all started new co-funding programmes for private aid agencies in the late 1970s (Smith 1990).

In the United Kingdom alone the Band Aid Trust collected £35 million in private donations, and worldwide over £100 million (Burnell 1991: 203).
Although this point should not be overstated: in the previous chapter it was argued that ‘NGOs’ became a container concept in which many organisations in civil society of the 1960s and 1970s would easily fit today. In other words, it is a matter of how ‘NGOs’ are defined.

A survey among official donor agencies in 1984 showed that governments developed particular interest in supporting private aid agencies, as they were expected to ‘strengthen partner NGOs in developing countries’ (OECD 1988: 26).

Smith (1990: 126) quotes a director of Catholic Relief Services in the early 1980s who experienced negative public reactions in a campaign to raise awareness about the deeper structural causes of injustice in Central America: ‘US people respond better to appeals to the heart than to the head’.

Spoerer (1987) uses the term ‘informal diplomacy’ to refer to non-governmental contacts between European diplomats and Latin American NGOs in the era of authoritarianism.

Earlier critical analysis of private foreign aid and the effectiveness of local development NGOs, notably the report by Tendler (1982), did not generate these denouncements. In the Netherlands, the debate slowly started around 1988-89 (cf. Achterhuis 1993; Lieten and Van der Velden 1997) and gained momentum after the impact study (Stuurgroep 1991) was published. In Belgium, a critical report on private aid agencies from an ex-agency staff-member (Barrez 1993) initiated the debate on private foreign aid, followed by a public response from the major Belgian private aid agencies (De Ekstermolengroep 1994) and others (Vandepitte et al. 1994). In the United Kingdom this debate was concentrated in (and partly fuelled by) the ‘Manchester workshops’ in 1992 and 1994 (cf. Edwards and Hulme 1992, 1995; Hulme and Edwards 1997).

A 1993 survey among European private aid agencies revealed that three out of four agencies just had completed (or were in the process of) major staff and management reorganisations (Biekart 1995). Four Protestant European aid agencies (Christian Aid, Brot für die Welt, ICCO and EZE) started a process of internal reflection on their role as private donor agencies (Riddell 1993), and major Catholic agencies such as Cebemo and Misereor organised profound discussion rounds with overseas partners (Cebemo 1993), to give only two examples of this internal reflection process.

An additional consequence of increased ‘direct funding’ to Southern organisations in civil society was that the latter started to be more openly critical of earlier interventions by private agencies. See for example Perera (1997) on private aid support by the Dutch NOVIB to the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement in Sri Lanka.

Toye (1993) points out, however, that the start of this ‘counter-revolution’ in development thinking had started already in the early 1980s.

Moreover, private aid agencies are very slowly adapting to the fashions borrowed from the corporate sector. Edwards (1997: 241) remarks that many are still using formalistic strategic planning models which were abandoned years ago by the corporate sector.

Emergency aid from bilateral donors increased on average from 1.6 percent in 1984 to 8.4 percent in 1994. For several official donors these figures were even more spectacular, such as the European Community (from 1.7 to 16 percent), the Netherlands (from 2.2 to 17.8 percent), and Norway (from 4.4 to 21.9 percent) (Randel and German 1996: 236).


These impact studies will be further examined in Chapter 3; a synthesis of these studies was published by Kruse et al. (1997).


There are several ‘gradations’ of pessimism; Smillie (1993, 1995b), Van der Velden (1996) and Sogge et al. (1996) still see ‘away out’, while Tandon (1991), Barrez (1993), Vandepitte et al. (1994) and Maren (1997) are rather negative about this prospect.
In the same way, Lissner (1997) argued that the behaviour of agencies is determined by three organisational considerations: (i) the desire to maximise the influence of agency values on public opinion, (ii) the desire to maximise income and (iii) the desire to maximise agency respectability and leverage.

Although Smillie (1995b) remarks that other motivations to help the poor also play a role, such as 'guilt' and 'shame'.

Van den Berg and Ojik (1998: 119) admit that the 'disaster strategy' of private aid fund-raising is unavoidable and more beneficial in the shorter term than emphasising positive results of private aid interventions.

This simplified version of the aid chain is inspired by Padron (1988) and Fowler (1993b) and will be further elaborated on at the end of this chapter.

As the primary focus of this book is on financial transfers of private aid agencies, non-financial aid (such as volunteer sending or advocacy and development education work in the North) is not examined here. See Brodhead et al. (1988), Clark (1991), Burnell (1991), Edwards and Hulme (1992) and Smillie (1995b).


Critical external reports from independent analysts are generally internally welcomed and seriously discussed by policy departments, while publicly dismissed as 'old arguments' and 'nothing new' (cf. Achterhuis 1993).

Although some governments have decided to maintain (and even increase) their aid contributions to private aid agencies (such as in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), this was likely the result of effective policy advocacy by agencies towards their (Social Democratic) governments and not so much a product of fundamental changes within these agencies. The Dutch agencies, for example, although maintaining that they had indeed structurally improved their internal management, still remain weak in strategic accountability as will be shown in Chapter 6.

Smillie (1995b: 212) criticises some of these transnational private aid agencies for trading 'long-term development impact for growth, short-term child sponsorship and emergency donors'.

There is no consensus in the literature on what ‘partnership’ actually means, and it is more likely referring to an ideal relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs than to a description of real existing relations (Malena 1995). The concept ‘partnership’ entered the development vocabulary in the late 1970s, when the rapidly expanding Southern NGO sector demanded more autonomy from Northern donors and more control and responsibility over design and implementation of development projects. In contrast to mainstream development thinking of large bilateral and multilateral donors, Southern NGOs and Northern private aid agencies emphasised the need for small-scale and decentralised development projects with active participation by beneficiaries at the grassroots level. This required the construction of local organisational capacities to sustain development initiatives in the long run and to diminish dependency on external resources. More equal and interdependent relationships between Northern donors and Southern recipients were needed to pursue these goals, as traditional top-down donor-recipient relations turned out to be inadequate to guarantee sustainability and grassroots participation. In other words, to improve longer term outputs of development interventions, private aid agencies acknowledged that their traditional 'operational' role in the South had to be reconsidered.

Examples of the unchallenged reproduction of Korten’s framework can be found in Thérien (1991: 273-5) and Smillie (1995b: 31-34).

The reference to Myrdal is taken from Smith and Lipsky (1993: 15-16).

This typology is inspired by combining the approaches of Elliot (1987a), Korten (1990) and
Carroll (1992). Carroll developed evaluation criteria for private agency-sponsored projects along three patterns of goals: (i) development services, (ii) participation and empowerment, and (iii) wider impact.

That is why several agencies started to classify their activities according to the ‘primary purpose’ of their intervention. The Dutch agency NOVIB, for example, classifies activities into three categories of ‘primary goals’: direct poverty alleviation, civil society building and policy reform, and allocates resources to these areas following a 6:3:1 ratio (Interview with Theo Bouma 1995).

Not included here is private aid income from official contributions of multilateral donors, such as the European Union. For some agencies, such as OXFAM-Belgium, this contribution accounts for one-third of total agency income.

Korten (1990: 118-9) points at the considerable gap between the appearance of Sommer’s influential book Beyond Charity (1977) in which a plea was made for a ‘development approach’ and against a ‘welfare approach’, and the practice of applying ‘second generation’ strategies: ‘too many of these interventions give little more than lip service to self-reliance and, in fact, build long-term dependence on the assisting NGO’.

Chapter 3

1 According to the 1993 Mission Statement of OXFAM-UK/1.

2 The governance agenda was a result of both economic and political concerns of bilateral and multilateral donors. Archer (1994: 11) summarises the agenda as follows: ‘The good government approach claims that sustainable prosperity is generated by an inter-dependent organic relationship between the market economy, the state, and civil society. A wealth-producing economy and a well-run government will help to sustain the vigour of civil society; a well-run government and a vigorous civil society will give impetus to economic growth; a strong efficient economy and a well-organised civil society are likely to produce efficient government.’

3 These new official donor policies for democracy assistance and supporting pluralism in civil society are analysed in Crawford (1995), De Feyter et al. (1995), Robinson (1996b) and Van Rooy (1998).

4 This was a major critique from Southern organisations directed at private agency representatives at the INTRAC-sponsored workshop ‘NGOs, Civil Society, and the State’ in Oxford in December 1995 (Clayton 1996).

5 Since a distinction can be made between economic and political purposes in strengthening civil society, Robinson (1995a) suggests the term ‘foreign political aid’. Although this might be helpful in identifying democracy assistance programmes of official donors, it also suggests that donor interventions with predominantly economic objectives would not be political, which is questionable. Therefore, the term ‘foreign political aid’ is avoided.

6 Macdonald (1997) calls the ‘inclusive’ approach to civil society building the ‘Gramscian approach’. I prefer not to use this term, as many other thinkers have contributed to the inclusive concept of civil society. However, I also agree that a more appropriate label is still needed.

7 As was pointed out earlier, donor agencies could of course contribute to democratisation in three different ways. They could either put pressure on public institutions in the South and try to make governments more accountable to their citizens, or they could strengthen civil society by making it more inclusive and increase its autonomy from the state, or they could combine these two efforts. Only in the last case are (private and official) donor interventions contributing in a sustainable way to democratisation, by building up and sustaining the functions of political society.

8 The scheme is of course simplified for analytical reasons. Not included are ‘direct funding’ aid
flows from official donors to Southern organisations in civil society, or, for example, direct aid
flows to municipal governments.

9 A policy officer of Oxfam-USA indicated that it preferably supported 'those elements of civil
society that most reflect our vision and values' (Renshaw 1994).

10 USAID and other official donor agencies sometimes use the term 'civil advocacy organisations' (CAOS)
for societal organisations operating in political society. However, this term is avoided here
as it suggests that the political and economic roles of societal actors can be separated, which is
actually very difficult. See Gary Hansen (1996) and Robinson (1996b).

11 Support from the Dutch private aid agency ICCO to the Philippine trade union federation KMU
led to a special investigation in 1991 by the Dutch ministry of development cooperation, following
accusations that funds to the KMU allegedly had been channelled to the armed struggle. Although
no evidence was found that private aid had been used to purchase weapons, ICCO was implicitly
criticised for directly supporting revolutionary organisations of the political opposition.

12 Carothers (1995: 67) relates the current attention for 'bottom-up' approaches in US democracy
assistance programmes to the arrival of the Clinton administration: 'Within the field of democ­
racy assistance US liberals tend to favour a relatively stronger emphasis on grassroots development
and bottom-up programmes, generally, than do US conservatives.'

13 Crawford (1995) analyses 'governance aid' from the European Union, Sweden, the United
Kingdom and the United States. Interestingly, 25 percent of this support for civil society building
(mainly to human rights activities) in 1995 was allocated to Central America and the Caribbean,
whereas only 2 percent of total ODA went to this region in the same year.

14 Van Rooy (1998) interviewed Gary Hansen, one of the authors of USAID’s civil society building
programme, who explains that USAID had been selectively supporting organisations for over 30
years, in particular trade unions. But ‘up to the end of the Cold War, we feared that supporting
nongovernmental groups would destabilize friendly governments’. It still has to be proven that
‘after the end of the Cold War’ this policy has fundamentally changed.

15 This was one of the recommendations of the Dutch Advisory Council on Development
Cooperation. Not only could this so-called ‘twinning’ contribute to more sustainable North­
South relationships, it could also strengthen the support base for development cooperation in the

16 Smillie (1995a: 13) notes that this project orientation is reinforced by Southern governments who
contract Southern NGOs to implement bilateral aid projects, and by direct funding from
Northern donors to Southern NGOs: 'These arrangements are almost exclusively designed within
a project framework.'

17 As 'impact' refers to longer term consequences and to ongoing change, 'impact evaluation' can
rarely be retrospective. Therefore the term 'impact assessment' is more appropriate, as it
emphasises that impact is analysed at certain stages in this process of social change. For a
discussion see Oakley et al. (1998: 35-42).

18 Although I agree with Fowler (1997: 166) that ‘in practical terms it is seldom possible for NGOs
to measure their organisational impact, especially for international NGOs with a global vision
and mission. From a performance point of view [...] vision and mission function primarily as
reference points for judging coherence between impacts and strategic choices and policy
decisions.'

19 A detailed elaboration of problems implicit to impact assessment can be found in Fowler (1995,
1997) and Fowler and Biekart (1996).

20 In fact only the direct output of a private aid agency (resources or training) and the impact on
behaviour or capacity of recipient organisations can be assessed with some 'safety' (Charlton and
May 1995).

21 An additional advantage of examining the external context of project results is that this can
contribute to assessing the prospects for replication in other regions or countries (Riddell and Robinson 1995).

22. This came up in a discussion with Chris Roche of OXFAM-UK/I, who pointed out to me that the absence of linear cause-effect relations does not automatically exclude the possibility of correlations between aid interventions and development achievements. In his critique of linear approaches, Uphoff (1992: 394) suggests we are dealing with ‘deterministic disorder’: ‘Systematic knowledge and effective action are possible if we learn to “go with the flow”, trying to hit moving targets and influence evolving relationships.’

23. A more traditional method to judge social change as a result of aid interventions is to use a control group that did not benefit from external aid, but experienced similar circumstances prior to, and during, the period of intervention. However, control groups are seldom useful in assessing impact of social development as it is impossible to find identical groups, let alone social, political and economic circumstances that are similar (Couderé 1994).

24. This is why good monitoring systems are generally considered to be a key condition for successful evaluations and impact assessments (Oakley 1996).

25. This last issue is relevant if impact assessment is meant to be a learning exercise; active participation of the ‘primary stakeholders’ (also in the identification of indicators) is considered to be an important condition for determining impact. This is based on the conviction that only those directly affected are best able to judge how and how much their situation has changed.

26. To avoid this problem, it is sometimes suggested that ‘rolling baselines’ be used, in which information collected through monitoring of running projects is used to construct baselines for future projects; see Oakley et al. (1998: 141).

27. Although progress has been made in developing and ‘translating’ qualitative indicators for ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ (Shetty 1994), less advance has been made in the development of indicators for ‘strengthening civil society’. As each process of social change is unique, new indicators need to be developed for every attempt to assess impact. I will come back to this issue when the methodology of the case studies is discussed.

28. A third group of ‘tertiary stakeholders’ includes those organisations that try to influence an aid agency, but to which it has no formal obligations. These are generally groups that oppose aid agencies, or obstruct their activities in the field, and are often considered to be illegitimate stakeholders.

29. A rather new method in the assessment of an agency’s performance against standards negotiated among multiple stakeholders is the social audit. This method has been used recently by small organisations involved in alternative trade and even by transnational corporations such as The Body Shop, in which the entire performance of these organisations is judged by the stakeholders on a regular basis. The social audit technique was further developed by the New Economics Foundation, which has conducted social audits of Tradecraft and Shared Earth since 1993. See Zadek and Gatward (1995).

30. In recent years, several agencies (such as NOVIB and OXFAM-UK/I) have started to experiment with new participatory evaluation methods to involve their stakeholders more actively in policy advice and planning (Es et al. 1996). Results suggest that private aid agencies should acknowledge the need to change current practices despite all the problems and obstacles intrinsic to impact assessment.

31. The Inter-American Foundation is in the strict sense not a private aid agency. It is a semi-autonomous governmental organisation, set up to support NGOs and social organisations in Latin America, and could therefore be compared with many Nordic, Dutch and German private aid agencies that also are highly dependent upon governmental aid resources.

32. A useful synthesis of several of these studies was published in Kruse et al. 1997, listing major results and analysing evaluation methods. For a more detailed analysis of these impact studies see
Van Dijk (1994), Fowler and Biekart (1996) and of course the studies themselves.

33 The final report of the Dutch impact study, coordinated by an independent Steering Group, was rather critical about both the transparency and efficiency of the four Dutch private aid agencies. But the implicit goal of the study, to consolidate or increase official contributions to private aid agencies, was nevertheless secured. Van der Velden (1994b: 5) therefore classified it as a 'political rather than an empirical report'. See also Van Dijk (1992) and Hoebink (1994).

34 Riddell et al. (1995: 10) use the phrase 'promoting development by proxy'.

35 These criteria were: reaching the poorest; extent of people's participation; gender characteristics; environmental factors; performance of Swedish technical assistants; innovativeness; extent of pre-project appraisal, monitoring and evaluation; sustainability; inclusion of issues related to democracy and human rights. It could be questioned whether it was justified to judge project achievements against criteria that were not applied initially to projects (Riddell et al. 1995: 49-54).

36 In their search for the final project executor the evaluators were faced with SIDA, Swedish 'framework organisations', Swedish NGOs, local recipient organisations local executive organisations and beneficiaries (Riddell et al. 1995: 44).

37 Not surprisingly, the Swedish study hence found a major gap between the development objectives of funders (either SIDA or Swedish private aid agencies) and the achievements of development impact (Riddell et al. 1995: 109).

38 The 19 projects selected in the Dutch impact study on average received donations from six different foreign aid agencies (Stuurgroep 1991: B:30).

39 The four Dutch agencies were running 5,500 projects in 104 countries at the time of the impact study, for which 19 projects were selected (Stuurgroep 1991).

40 The Danish study selected India, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, West Africa and Central America (total 17 projects); the British study selected Bangladesh, India, Uganda and Zimbabwe (16 projects); the Dutch impact study selected Brazil, Chile, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, India and Indonesia (19 projects); the Finnish study selected Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Uganda (29 projects); the Swedish study Bolivia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and India (37 projects).

41 The Dutch private aid agencies were directly involved in the selection of case studies and proposed (for obvious reasons) the better performing projects, although the 'Steering Group' recognised that those selected were 'illustrative' rather than 'representative' (Stuurgroep 1991: 6-7; Hoebink 1994: 28). The same procedure was used in the British and Swedish studies, which resulted in a selection of 'less contentious' projects (Riddell and Robinson 1995: 65), that was 'biased more in favour of better development impact' (Riddell et al. 1995: 48). The evaluators thus explicitly recognised that the selection was not random.

42 The evaluators identified three project types: production projects, social services, and training and awareness raising. These categories were not mutually exclusive; projects were selected on the basis of having their primary focus on either one of these categories (Stuurgroep 1991: B-14).

43 Twelve out of sixteen projects broadly achieved their objectives, and had a positive impact in alleviating poverty, even if only one was clearly successful in achieving all the objectives set' (Riddell and Robinson 1992: 7).

44 This does not imply, however, that larger capital investments should be the key to tackling poverty. On the contrary, evaluations from large bilateral aid programmes suggest that this depends largely on an existing 'enabling environment' (Jepma 1995).

45 Riddell et al. (1995: 88-89) point at some exceptional cases (popular education projects or training of union leaders) in which it might be preferable to remain autonomous from governmental resources.

46 In considering sustainability as a process, Riddell et al. (1995: 55-59) are making a useful distinction between financial, institutional and environmental sustainability, which are all complementary elements.
Carroll (1992: 114) admitted this by stating: 'Evaluators lack the means to adequately measure or illustrate progress in organisational capacity. Furthermore, the interaction between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' is a protracted and subtle process that is exceedingly difficult to grasp and document.'

The Dutch impact study mentioned some techniques that are used by Southern NGOs for pressuring governments, but provided no data concerning results (Stuurgroep 1991: 36-7). The Finnish study did the same, and suggests: 'NGOs across many countries [...] worked with, nurtured and opposed a range of popular movements to oppose (often successfully) the excess of national security states and unrepresentative military juntas' (Riddell et al. 1994: 13). The British ODA study (Surr 1995: ix) concluded that NGOs can 'play an important role both in strengthening civil society and in promoting good government', providing examples from two Indian organisations supported by Oxfam-UK/1.

This situation apparently changed after the study was completed in 1990. In a postscript, Fowler notes that the 1992 presidential elections, and introduction of a multi-party system, improved democratic conditions and prompted more unity among Kenyan NGOs, which was necessary for them to be able to play an intermediary role in civil society.

As causes for low performance, Macdonald (1997:144) mentions ill-conceived or poorly executed projects, lack of pre-project consultation with beneficiaries, and most of all an unfavourable political and economic environment, both national and international.


Couderé (1994), for example, distinguishes between three sets of variables that affect the outcome of project activities: context variables, project variables and project-system variables. Context variables (political and economic environment) can only be marginally influenced, whereas project variables (stakeholders, sector, region) are determined before the project starts, but once decided cannot be influenced by project activities. However the project-system variables (project design, organisation, implementation) can be influenced, as these are determined by the way the project is executed. By making this distinction between independent and dependent variables, the connection between internal and external factors that determine project outcome or impact become more explicit. This is generally the weak point of impact studies in which the country context analysis often is delinked from the case study analysis.

Chapter 4

Although Belize and Panama are nowadays also part of the Central American Integration System (SICA), their histories are quite distinct from the five other Central American states. Belize, the eastern zone of Guatemala, was incorporated into the British empire in the mid-nineteenth century and only became independent in 1981. Panama, which is culturally more connected to South America, was part of Colombia until its independence in 1903, and since then has been an ‘unofficial US protectorate’ due to the construction and exploitation of the Panama Canal.

It would be erroneous to consider the Liberal regimes as a dramatic break with previous Conservative rule, although secularisation and the expansion of the public sector certainly were new policies. But most of the new nation states had Liberal and Conservative characteristics (see Pérez-Brignoli 1989: 94-5).


Cerdas (1992: 27) points out that Anastasio Somoza García was not simply a tyrant, but that his dictatorship was very solidly constructed. He combined military power (as head of the US-trained National Guard), political power (president of the Republic), economic power (after his marriage with Salvadota Debayle, a woman from a leading colonial family) and regional power, by
becoming the key interlocutor in the region for US governments.

The predominance of authoritarian rule in Central America for over one and a half centuries did not mean that it was simply rule by coercion. Since the Liberal reforms, regular elections were convened to legitimise the forces in power, although only male literates were eligible to vote. With illiteracy oscillating between eighty and ninety percent of the population, the oligarchy was easily able to restrict the electoral participation of other social or political sectors (Taraceno 1993: 170). This was justified by arguing that the people were still not mature enough to vote and had to be educated first. In a later stage, when universal suffrage was introduced and political exclusion formally was abandoned, outcomes of elections were determined by a combination of co-optation, clientelism, compadrazgo and electoral fraud. Even the latter was for a long period not considered to be a violation of the rules, but a legitimate measure accepted by all contenders as a necessary practice, although rhetorically rejected (Acuña 1993: 85-4).

Paige (1997: 26) even argues: 'the dominance of lawless military regimes has made family ties the only effective guarantee of personal safety and the only institutional route to political power'. Paige looks at the coffee oligarchy in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador. For a similar study on Guatemala, see Casaus (1995).

For a detailed analyses of civil society growth in the 1920s see Acuña (1993). Among the new women's organisations was the Sociedad Cultura Feminina, which later became a founding member of the Federación Sindical Hodureña. In Costa Rica female teachers founded the Liga Feminista Costarricense, which (among other things) rallied for civil rights for women. Their campaign eventually succeeded with the adoption of the new constitution in 1949.

The new labour federations were fragile for two reasons. One, they were relatively small as they had no rural base, except for some combative unions of railway workers in the banana enclaves. Second, because they were ideologically weak and therefore often manipulated by North American and Mexican communist 'fellow travellers', especially in Guatemala and El Salvador (Dunkerly 1988: 74-76; Acuña 1993: 296).

Between 10,000 and 30,000 peasants were killed in the insurrection, also virtually eliminating Indian culture in El Salvador. According to Dunkerly (1988: 97) the absence of any major peasant rebellion in the coffee zones during the civil war of the 1980s could be explained as a result of this traumatic event.

For details on these parties see Acuña (1993) and Bulmer-Thomas (1987).

Urban middle-class employment had grown since the 1920s (notably in health and education, governmental institutions and services) and had increased the numerical importance of the middle classes (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).

The lead was taken by university students who had been demanding the replacement of faculty deans at the San Carlos University. A march, at the end of June 1944, demanding institutional autonomy of the university evolved into a larger demonstration in which full political democracy was demanded, in line with the new UN charter (Dunkerly 1988: 136).

Although Arevalo called himself a 'spiritual socialist', he obstructed the legal foundation of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT) until 1952 (Dunkerly 1988: 140-1; see also LaFeber 1993: 115-6).

Membership of the PGT was estimated at a few hundred, with a little over a thousand sympathisers. For a detailed analysis of the PGT see Dunkerly 1988 (145-8) and Jonas (1991: 30-8).

Fierce competition emerged between the Communist-led Costa Rican Workers Confederation (CTR,C, founded in 1943), which also was supported by the government, and the Rerum Novarum Workers Confederation (CRTN), which was set up in 1944 with support from the Catholic Church. This competition boosted unionisation, especially after the introduction of the Labour Code (see Rojas 1993: 91-2).

José Figueres, a wealthy agro-industrialist, Social Democrat and above all anti-communist, often
is considered to be the intellectual founder of modern Costa Rican democracy (Dunkerly 1988; Salom 1991).

17 Paradoxically, all these factors actually contributed to democratic transition in Costa Rica. Bulmer-Thomas (1987: 151) observes that 'by the beginning of the 1960s, Costa Rica stood out as the republic best able to combine the export-led growth model with agricultural diversification, fiscal and social reform and political democracy'.

18 Paige (1997: 317) analyses how part of the old agrarian coffee oligarchy gradually transformed into an agrarian-industrial elite: 'The division between the agrarian and the agro-industrial factions of the elite is fundamental to understanding what happened in Central America in the eighties.'

19 In Honduras, the National Honduran Peasant Association (ANACH) was founded in 1962 with support from the AFL and ORIT, and was supported by the government of Villeda Morales to prevent independent organising during the introduction of agrarian reform. In the late 1960s ANACH also radicalised (Dunkerly 1988).

20 Church-sponsored peasant unions were for example FECCAS in El Salvador (1965), ACASH in Honduras (1964) and FCG in Guatemala (1967). Most of these unions radicalised in the 1970s, or were challenged by more radical peasant unions such as CUC in Guatemala, ATC in Nicaragua and FUNC in Honduras (Bulmer-Thomas 1987; Rojas 1993).

21 I am referring to the Revolutionary Movement of 13 November (MR-13), founded in 1960. In the same year, the Communist party PGT also had decided to support 'all forms of struggle'. Two years later the Rebellious Armed Forces (FAR) was formed, which (despite being defeated twice by the armed forces) later became part of the URNG (Rojas 1993).

22 Dunkerly (1988) points at the different origins and tactics of the early guerrilla struggles in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The former was rooted in the overthrow of the Arbenz government and had closer relations with the Cubans. Moreover, the FAR and MR-13 really were a challenge for the state and suffered (just as their successors after their defeat in 1971) from more sustained repression in several waves, ending in the massacres among the indigenous communities in the early 1980s. Although the early FSLN in Nicaragua also was seriously weakened by repression by Somoza's National Guard, its rural *foquismo* strategy until 1971 had been a failure due to a lack of political and military infrastructure.

23 In 1977 the FSLN had only 200 active militants, who were moreover divided on their strategy. The organisation was split into three factions: the 'proletarian faction' (emphasis on the urban workers, led by Wheelock, Carrión and Núñez), the 'protracted people's war' (prolonged rural campaign, led by Borge, Ruiz and Arce), and the 'tercerista faction' of the Ortega brothers and Tirado, who promoted multi-class coalitions to prepare for insurrection, which became strongest (Black 1981).

24 The Communist Party, which had been established in 1930, turned to armed struggle in the 1970s even though its secretary-general Cayetano Carpio had left the party in 1970 to form the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL). Other emerging political-military organisations were the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP, founded in 1972), of which the Armed Forces for National Resistance (FARN) split off in 1975, and the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC, founded as a regional party in 1976 and active in El Salvador after 1979) (Montgomery 1995: 101-9).

25 Christian Democratic parties were founded in Guatemala (DCG, 1957), Nicaragua (PSC, 1957), El Salvador (PDC, 1960) and Honduras (PDC, 1968), although the last remained marginal. Social Democratic parties generally have been smaller, but received some electoral support in coalitions with Christian Democrats, such as the PSD (1960) and the MNR (1964) in El Salvador. See Goodman et al. (1992); Rojas (1993).

26 The Independent Liberal Party (PLI) and the Social Christian Party (PSC) led a broad coalition in the 1967 elections, but due to manipulation and repression Somoza won the presidency with
seventy percent of the vote (Vilas 1995: 94). In Guatemala the United Front of the Revolution (FUR), an opposition coalition of Christian and Social Democrats, was unable to win the 1970 presidential elections, although it won the important mayoralty of the capital. This mayor was, just as many other moderate opposition leaders, assassinated in the late 1970s.  

27 The limited land reforms in Honduras of the late 1950s and early 1960s were largely the result of a better organised peasant movement (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).  

28 In El Salvador these paramilitary activities were carried out by the National Democratic Organisation (ORDEN). In Guatemala the comisionado militares already existed in rural areas, and were complemented by a large number of private anti-communist death squads. In Nicaragua this role was performed by the jueces de mesta (Torres Rivas 1987; LaFeber 1993).  

29 This was particularly true for Nicaragua; the turning point for institutionalisation in El Salvador was the coup of January 1961 (Torres Rivas 1989).  

30 The first three factors are a further elaboration of key elements identified by Bulmer-Thomas (1987: 225-9) to explain the ‘breakdown of the established order’.  

31 The process of radicalisation among indigenous communities and the evolution of Indian organisations and their links with the guerilla groups EGP, ORPA and FAR is further elaborated in the Guatemalan case study in Chapter 6. For details on the Guatemalan revolutionary movement, see Jonas (1991) and Le Bot (1992).  

32 The political-military organisations were strongest in El Salvador, where popular fronts allied (and later merged) with military fronts. Five alliances of military and popular fronts were formed, prior to the foundation of the FMLN from previously existing organisations (dates refer to the year of foundation): EPL (1970) and BPR (1975); RN (1975) and FAPU (1974); ERP (1972) and LP-28 (1978); PCS (1930) and UDN (1967); PRTC (1976) and MLP (1979). In 1980 the popular fronts were dissolved and only the military organisations continued (Montgomery 1995).  

33 Torres Rivas (1989: 93) comments that the FSLN probably came closest to the model of a popular army, as it managed to receive unconditional support from practically the entire population in the final offensive against Somoza’s National Guard.  

34 The presidential candidate of the PDC-led coalition UNO was retired Colonel Ernesto Clara-mount, with the former PDC mayor of San Salvador José Antonio Ehrlich Morales as candidate for the vice-presidency.  

35 Low voter turnout in 1974 (42 percent) also reflected lack of confidence in the Christian Democratic Party (DCG). The presidential candidate of the Christian Democrats was General Rios Montt, who had been the chief of staff during the counter-revolutionary campaign of the late 1960s, and would continue to lead the campaign of terror in the early 1980s. Between 1957 and 1985, the Guatemalan Christian Democrats never proposed civilian candidates for presidential elections (Dunkerly 1988).  

36 Jonas (1991) points out that divisions within the Guatemalan military were not about the content of policies (like in El Salvador) but about the right person to lead the counter-insurgency campaign. Rios Montt was removed by his defence minister Mejfa Victores (in August 1983) basically to polish up Guatemala’s human rights record internationally and to prepare for a so-called ‘authoritarian transition’ to democracy.  


38 It is sometimes argued that the economic recession of the late 1970s also was a factor fuelling the Central American crisis. But it is important to note that the impact of the global recession, deteriorating terms of trade and balance of payments, affected the Central American economies only after 1979, the year in which the political crisis escalated (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).  

39 In left-wing circles all over the region the popular slogan was actually reminiscent of Reagan’s domino theory: ‘si Nicaragua venció, El Salvador vencerá’ (Freely translated as ‘a victory in Nicaragua will inevitably lead to a victory in El Salvador’).
40 Costa Rica is not part of the analysis because democratic transition started there already in the late 1940s. Equally, the Nicaraguan democratic transition will not be further analysed as it started essentially as a democratic transition from ‘below’ and was not initiated ‘from above’ by the military as happened in El Salvador in 1979, in Honduras in 1980 and in Guatemala in 1982. Another reason for excluding Nicaragua in the analysis is that since 1979 the political process there has received enormous academic (and political) attention, disproportionate to, for example, the Honduran democratic transition. In addition, conditions for field research in Nicaragua were adverse in the early 1990s, due to chaos in the NGO community after the electoral defeat of the FSLN.

41 I recall Schmittens observation (mentioned in the first chapter) about the existence of ‘multiple regime transitions’, which was implicitly a warning to apply ‘transitology’ too strictly in the Central America context, particularly concerning Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala (and Nicaragua after 1990).

42 There are two reasons why ‘democracy’ only became an ‘issue’ in the 1990s. First, it has been a postponed discussion, as it made no sense to think of the construction of democracy when state repression and civil wars were contributing to large numbers of victims among the civilian population. Second, as Torres Rivas (1989) observes, democracy in the 1980s was very much associated with the counter-insurgency state. The driving ideology of revolutionary movements therefore was to defeat the authoritarian political system entirely, and build on its ruins a genuine democratic political system.


44 Although in 1963 they ended a reformist period, the armed forces under López Arellano took the initiative in 1972 to renew the programme of land redistribution which had started in 1962. In fact, it had been one of the most radical agrarian reforms in Central America (Lapper and Painter 1985).

45 US pressure on the Honduran armed forces started in late 1979 by Carter’s Assistant Secretary of State Viron Vaky, resulting in the 1980 parliamentary elections. After the election of civilian president Suazo (November 1981) the US embassy was upgraded (with the arrival of Negroponte), and the Reagan administration increased military aid by fifty percent in early 1982 (LaFeber 1993; Schulz and Sundloff 1994).

46 Sieder (1996b: 22) takes December 1977 as a starting point when Melgar Castro passed legislation facilitating a de jure enlargement of political society. However, the April 1980 elections for a Constituent Assembly could be regarded as a de facto start of transition for several reasons: it produced a victory for the (more progressive) Liberal Party, an extremely high voter turnout (81 percent) and the entrance of the small opposition party PINU into parliament. This indicated confidence and hope by the electorate for political change.

47 Several political-military groups emerged in Honduras: Frente Monurazista, Lorenzo Zelaya, Cinchoneros and PRTC. However, none of them had a broad popular base nor managed to develop military strength; only the Cinchoneros staged some spectacular actions in 1981-82, and the Honduran branch of the PRTC tried to establish a foco in southern Honduras, which was crushed by combined US-Honduran military action. Although severely weakened during the Alvarez period, all groups remained active until the early 1990s.

48 The irony of Honduran political culture was that when these struggles escalated into a constitutional crisis – President Suazo was trying to continue his mandate and the armed forces threatened to remove him by force – negotiations between the parties to overcome their internal fights were mediated in May 1984 by the armed forces at the Air Force headquarters.

49 Not only were half of the ballots misprinted, but Nationalist candidate Callejas actually received the largest amount of votes. However, as was agreed in the May 1985 ‘arbitration’ to add up votes
of candidates from one party (in which the Liberals performed slightly better), Azcona was designated the victor (Dunkerly 1988).

The rebellion by young nationalist officers was possibly prevented with CIA support: the US was keen to get rid of dissident officers on key army posts, although it is unclear whether the purge of López was US-inspired (Schulz and Sundlof 1994). The military hierarchy apparently feared that López had made unfavourable concessions to President-elect Azcona (Rosenberg 1994).

This was also caused by the intransigence of new army commander General Humberto Regalado, a hardliner who reintroduced repressive measures against the opposition. Major victories by human rights groups were achieved in 1988 and 1989, when the Inter-American Court on Human Rights sentenced the Honduran government for systematic disappearances in the early 1980s (see Chapter 6).

The Frente Montazanista was the first to renounce armed struggle in April 1990. The Lorenzo Zelaya front conditioned this step upon guarantees for their safety and an amnesty, which was granted in July 1991. By the end of that year most of the left-wing opposition leaders had returned from exile. Several former guerrilla groups formed the Democratic Unification Party (PUD) to participate in the 1993 elections (Norsworthy and Barry 1994).

Military impunity had been a major issue in the 1993 electoral campaign, due to public pressure by human rights organisations and women's organisations. This point is further elaborated in Chapter 6.

On military involvement in drugs trafficking, see Jelsma and Celada (1997) and Maldonado (1998).

This Popular Forum (Foro Popular) was formed in September 1979 by the PDC and MNR, and supported by popular unions like FENASTRAS and LP-28 (with strong Communist Party influence). The Forum rallied for free elections, economic reforms and a clean-up of the armed forces (Dunkerly 1988: 380-1).

Rubén Zamora would later say that the democratic movement in late 1979 was at a dead end, that alternatives were exhausted and that it was either a question of joining the revolutionary movement (and 'reinstate democratic practices later on') or going into exile. But with hindsight he concluded that it had been an error to join the junta, and another error to step down in order to provoke a crisis that would spark off an insurrection: 'My decision to provoke a crisis was premature and not well analysed' (Zamota 1997: 169-70; 176).

The agrarian reform of the Duarte government ('the most sweeping land reform in Latin American history', according to US Ambassador White) was announced in March 1980 and would be implemented in three phases, of which only the second phase would affect the principal coffee fincas. However, after a number of estates as part of the first phase had been expropriated, fierce reaction by the oligarchy made the government decide (after less than two months) to stop the programme (Pearce 1986; Dunkerly 1988).

The Socialist International openly declared its support for the FDR-FMLN in January 1981 and in August 1981, when Mexico and France issued a joint declaration recognising the FDR-FMLN as a representative political force in El Salvador.

Six meetings were convened between 1984 and 1989 to negotiate a peaceful settlement: three during 1984 in La Palma, Ayagnalo and Sesori (postponed), one after the 1987 Esquipulas agreement in San Salvador and two in 1989 (Mexico and San José) prior to the November offensive.

The CD first participated in the 1989 presidential elections (candidate Ungo), but only received 3 percent of the votes. In the 1991 parliamentary elections its support rose to over 12 percent, growing to 25 percent in the 1994 presidential elections with the Zamora candidacy on a combined FMLN-CD ticket.

In Chapter 6 this crucial period of late 1989 is analysed in more detail with special attention...
to changes in civil society favourable to peace negotiations.

62 As this process has been analysed elsewhere in detail, only the main outcome will be discussed here. See Karl (1992), Munck (1993), Montgomery (1995), United Nations (1995) and Byrne (1996).

63 Military, judicial and electoral reforms required an amendment of the constitution to be ratified by two consecutive parliaments. The outgoing parliament would have its last session in late April 1991 and was thus under pressure to agree to reform the constitution. With hindsight, this was the key breakthrough in the negotiation process (Karl 1992: 157).

64 This *concertación* also was visible in the creation of other institutions such as the national civilian police (PNC), the Socio-economic Forum (FOCES), the *Ad hoc* Commission and the Truth Commission.

65 Gramajo (1997) and many other officers involved in the 1982 coup consider this moment as the start of democratic transition, despite the genocide against the Indian population that they were responsible for in the months following the coup.

66 US military aid was cut under Carter in 1977, after which the Guatemalan military received arms and training from US allies such as Taiwan, South Korea, Argentina and Israel. US economic aid was not interrupted, and military assistance was resumed under Cerezo (Aguilera 1989). However, the Guatemalan armed forces refused to participate in Reagan's regional counter-insurgency project and often took a 'nationalist' position, indicating sensitivity with regard to the 1954 US-supported coup (Dunkerly 1988).

67 The small Social Democratic Party (PSD) also participated in the presidential elections after pressure from General Mejía, but apparently had no substantial following in Guatemala. Most leaders had gone into exile between 1979 and 1985, and candidate Mario Solórzano only received 2 percent of the vote. The Christian Democratic DCG of Cerezo probably won the elections because it was least associated with corruption and military repression in the past. The DCG received 68 percent of the presidential vote, 51 percent of the parliamentary seats and 73 percent of the mayors (Painter 1989).

68 Despite national and international pressure to also include the URNG in this National Dialogue, Cerezo went along with Defence Minister General Gramajo who maintained that the URNG first had to lay down arms before any dialogue with the government could be a topic of discussion. And even then, Cerezo made clear, he distrusted the National Dialogue and was unwilling to accept a role for intermediaries between the government and the URNG (Delli Sante 1996: 221-3).

69 After the destruction of Indian organisations by the counter-insurgency campaigns of the late 1970s, two new coordinating bodies were formed in 1990 following the Oslo meeting: *Majawil Q'ij* and COMG. The rebuilding of Indian organisations is further analysed in Chapter 6.

70 Eleven issues figured in the 'Mexico agreement' of April 1991: democracy and human rights, strengthening civilian power over the military, Indian rights and identity, constitutional reforms, socio-economic reforms, agrarian issues, resettlement of the displaced, incorporation of the URNG in the political arena, preparations for a ceasefire, implementation schedule and verification, and the signing of the final peace agreement.

71 One of the key obstacles to accelerating Guatemala's democratic transition is the weakness of political parties, which lack clearly defined principles and are poorly rooted in civil society. As a result, political society is highly fragmented and based on fragile leadership pacts. Serrano's government, for example, was based on a political alliance between his right-wing Solidarity Action Movement (MAS), the right-wing National Centre Union (UCN) and the Christian Democrats, but collapsed shortly before the municipal elections of May 1993 (Torres Rivas 1996b).

72 A special body, the National Consensus Instance (INC), was formed after the May 1993 coup which included virtually all societal sectors and political parties. It made proposals to Congress
about the election of a new president and the implementation of several constitutional reforms to weaken the influence of the executive on the legislature, the judiciary and municipal government. These reforms were endorsed by a national referendum in January 1994, although boycotted by a group of popular organisations supporting the URNG and organised in the Multisectoral Forum (Inforpress 1995; Palencia 1996). The low voter turnout for this referendum (16 percent) and for the parliamentary elections of August 1994 (20 percent) illustrated the lack of confidence of the public in these elections.

73 These preconditions were negotiated in late 1993 and finally laid down in the Framework Agreement of January 1994. The main points were: to negotiate on the basis of the 1991 agenda; to tackle both 'operative' and 'substantive' issues under UN mediation and supported by a group of paises amigos (Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, United States, Spain and Norway); a commitment from both sides to rise above their individual military interests contributing to reconciliation; and an active involvement of civil society in the peace process.

74 Initially the plan was to set up a 'broad front' of popular organisations and various small political parties, but this effort failed due to personal rivalries. The FDNG, using the legal status of the old Revolutionary Party (PRI) of Arbenz, was a political instrument of the 'popular sector' of the ASC, and tacitly supported by the URNG (Palencia and Holiday 1996).

75 Arzú had been elected mayor of the capital (1985-90), representing the National Advancement Party (PAN), with a two percent margin against Alfonso Portillo of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), the party of General Ríos Montt. A victory of Ríos Montt's party would have meant a serious blow to the negotiations, as the URNG would have had to make a deal with the man responsible for the massacres of the 1980s (Rosada 1997).

76 It was above all a 'declaration of good intentions' concerning social justice, a minor land reform programme and tax reform that had already been planned anyway. For details, see Inforpress (1996: 224-39).

77 See Rosada (1997) who served as president of COPAZ under De León and criticised the URNG for making a political deal with the government to guarantee its incorporation into the political arena instead of being tough in the last negotiation phase.

78 Between 1980 and 1991, the United States officially channelled US$ 1.7 billion in military aid to Central America (of which 65 percent went to El Salvador, and 30 percent to Honduras). In practice, the amount was even higher because the figure does not include covert operations (Aguilera et al 1991: 36-7; Sanahuja 1992). The domestic incentives for Reagan's Central American policy have been analysed from different perspectives by Chomsky (1985), Sharpe (1988), Aronson (1993) and Whitehead (1996b).

79 Of course, the revolutionary option in Guatemala had already been buried following the successful military offensive of the early 1980s. Whitehead (1996b: 221-2) and others convincingly argue that the two main revolutionary movements in the region, the FSLN and the FMLN, had been 'strategically defeated' by 1985, after Reagan's re-election and well before the end of the Cold War.

80 When US officials argue that the battle for peace in Central America was finally won in Washington, it should be added that the battle for a continuation of counter-insurgency war also was lost in the US: the Iran-contra scandal and the Jesuit killings were the key elements contributing to the demise of US low intensity warfare in Nicaragua and El Salvador respectively (Moreno 1994; Whitehead 1996b). The assassination of the Jesuits was one of the key reasons for the US Congress to cut military assistance to El Salvador in 1990 (see Chapter 6).


82 FUSADES received over US$ 150 million over a ten year period for research, implementing programmes to stimulate export-diversification and small business, and strengthening business
associations. Leaders of FUSADES in 1989 became key government executives: Cristiani (President), Murray Meza (Director Social Investment Fund, FIS) and Orellana (President Central Bank). See Rosa (1993).

83 It is beyond the scope of this analysis to elaborate on this issue and I refer to some excellent studies on AID’s policies in Central America: Sojo (1991); Rosa (1993); Salomando (1992); Escoto and Marroquin (1992). On the impact of US Food Aid on small farmers see Garst and Barry (1990); on the impact of non-traditional agricultural export promotion see Conroy et al. (1996); and on the impact of structural adjustment policies on the public sector see Evans et al. (1995).

84 The ‘Project Democracy’ initially proposed by Reagan’s advisers was more ambitious and larger, including the creation of political foundations similar to the German Stiftungen and propaganda activities previously implemented by the CIA, but the US Congress turned down the proposal and only approved the creation of NED and a package of AID democracy assistance programmes: NED’s budget rose from US$ 18 million in 1984 to US$ 48 million in 1993 (Carothers 1996: 127-9; W. Robinson 1996: 73-116).

85 The ‘core group’ of these private US foundations were the two party foundations of the Democrats (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI) and the Republicans (NRI, later IR), the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) of the US Chambers of Commerce and the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI) of the trade union federation AFL-CIO. In addition to these organisations, many other US foundations, think-tanks and universities (such as Freedom House, the Council on the Americas, the Center for Democracy) served as channels for support to civil society sectors in the South (Carothers 1996).

86 Since 1990 AID has scaled down its operations in Central America, although democracy assistance programmes have continued with an emphasis on civic education, judicial reform, strengthening municipal governments and civic advocacy.

87 In addition to Canadian and European (private) aid, US progressive churches and US private aid agencies and solidarity groups also were important supporters of the progressive opposition. This support will be further examined in the next chapter.

88 Hertogs (1985) argues that the role of the Socialist International in formulating EC policy often has been overstated, for example by Schori (1982). For a US critique on the role of the European Social Democrats in Central America see Mujal-León (1989).

89 European Community aid to Central America would increase from US$ 13 million in 1980 to US$ 164 million in 1993, whereas total bilateral aid from European countries in the same period grew from US$ 81 million to US$ 396 million. The five largest providers of aid in this period were Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and Spain (in that order) (F. Hansen 1996). See also Freres et al. (1992), Smith (1995) and Table 5.1.

91 I therefore disagree with Paige (1997) who argues that this ‘revolutionary break with the past’ (next to Nicaragua and Costa Rica) also was realised in El Salvador: the previous analysis has shown that continuity actually prevails.

92 This position has been extensively documented for the Central American region in Stein and Arias (1992), Rojas (1995) and Vilas (1996).

Chapter 5

1 These figures are estimates (based on data collected by the author) as it is impossible to define exactly how much aid the hundreds of European agencies and solidarity committees channelled to Central America. It is assumed that the forty largest European private aid agencies represent approximately eighty percent of private aid flows to Central America—an assumption based on
a 1991 survey of Nordic private aid flows to Central America (Sparre 1992).

2 The Norwegian agencies entered Guatemala for an odd reason: Guatemalan President General Kjell Laugerud (1974-78) was of Norwegian descent, and made a special appeal to Norway for humanitarian assistance after the 1976 earthquake. This also explains the dominant presence of Norwegian private aid agencies in Guatemala throughout the 1980s, and the key role Norway played in the peace talks of the 1990s (Interviews with Petter Skauen 1995; Hans Petter Buvollen 1995).

3 An indication of the number (and variety) of European agencies can be found in a list of the Nicaraguan Secretariat of International NGOs, which in 1989 registered 109 private aid agencies and solidarity groups with representatives residing in Nicaragua. Over eighty percent of these organisations were of European origin. The total number of European private organisations supporting projects in Nicaragua in the 1980s certainly was much higher, as many agencies had no local field office.

4 European private aid to the Nicaraguan opposition actually started only after 1978 (Interviews with Claire Dixon 1995; Sally O’Neill 1995).

5 Smith (1995: 153-7) also points at the close relationship between many progressive private aid agency staff members in Europe with solidarity groups and with the peace movement in the early 1980s.

6 Europe’s ‘rediscovery’ of Latin America is analysed in Grabendorff (1984) and Van Klaveren (1986).

7 The increased strength of Christian Democratic governments after 1982 (notably in Germany, the Netherlands and Italy) that were more supportive of US policy towards Nicaragua and eager to give legitimacy to their political sister-parties in El Salvador and Guatemala, also influenced this changing attitude. For an analysis of the policies of the European Social Democratic parties, see Mujal-León (1987, 1989), although my impression is that he overestimates their role.

8 NGOs established as local charity organisations have a longer history, but do not correspond to the definition of ‘local development NGOs’ that was given in Chapter 1. González (1992) discusses a number of these ‘charity NGOs’ that emerged in El Salvador in the 1950s.

9 AID often used Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the private agency of the US Catholic Church, as an intermediary agency; CRS channelled food aid to the Caritas agencies of the local Churches (Garst and Barry 1990; González 1992).

10 Examples of these AID-supported NGO coordinating agencies are ASINDES in Guatemala, ACORDE and FOVIPIDEH in Honduras.

11 Data on the early history of Central American NGOs for El Salvador are taken from González (1992), for Guatemala from Sugranyes and Gutiérrez (1990), for Honduras from Ventura (1990) and for Nicaragua from Pinzón (1989).

12 International aid to Nicaragua after the Sandinista victory of July 1979 tripled compared to the pre-revolutionary level. Between 1980 and 1986 international assistance to Nicaragua was on average US$ 600 million annually (to a country of three million inhabitants) of which twenty percent came from Europe and Canada. The share of the Socialist bloc increased from 30 percent in 1981-83 to 65 percent in 1984-86. (Barraclough et al. 1988).

13 The Nicaraguan government established a special foundation for private aid contributions, the Augusto César Sandino Foundation (FACS), meant to coordinate (or to ‘control’, as opponents argued) the enormous variety of private aid flows. Many agencies bypassed FACS to avoid bureaucracy, causing the head of FACS to complain that ‘In some cases the projects implemented reflected, first and foremost, their (private aid representatives’) priorities, which were not necessarily those of the Nicaraguan government’ (cited in Barraclough et al. 1988: 62). However, in the mid-1980s not only popular organisations, such as the small farmers organisation UNAG, but also municipal governments started to criticise FACS for wanting to control all private aid...
flows, which was a reason for them to establish direct contacts with private aid agencies (MacDonald 1997: 136-9).

1 OXFAM-UK/I spent around ninety percent of its aid to Nicaragua between 1980-83 on development projects. After 1983, this dropped to less than fifty percent: the other half was dedicated to emergency relief as a result of the contra war (Melrose 1985: 27-38).

1 A considerable share of this private aid either went to FACS or to Sandinista state institutions such as the Nicaraguan Institute for Social Security and Welfare (INSSBI). Protestant private aid agencies generally preferred to channel support to the Evangelical Committee for Development Aid (CEPAD) (Barracough et al. 1988: 87-8; see also Pearce 1997c: 446).

1 By 1982-83 Central America counted two million internally displaced persons (mostly in Guatemala) and almost one million registered refugees (Sollis 1996).

1 Project Counselling Service (PCS) was formed in 1979 by a dozen European private aid agencies (among them EZE, HEKS, ICCO and Brot für die Welt) with the purpose of coordinating assistance to Latin American refugees in the region, thus preventing a massive flow of refugees from coming to Europe (Pearce 1996a; Interview with Gordon Hutchinson 1995).

18 It should be repeated here that the Salvadorean Catholic Church, despite suffering many casualties (ten priests were assassinated between 1977 and 1980), under Archbishop Romero continued giving a voice to the opposition. By taking a clear position against increased human rights violations since the late 1970s (through the Socorro Jurídico) the Salvadorean Catholic Church positioned itself more explicitly on the side of dominated sectors than any other Catholic hierarchy in Central America (see Cardenal 1995).

19 DIACONIA came out of several efforts to set up an ecumenical humanitarian aid agency in El Salvador, with participation of the Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal and Baptist Churches, and two federations of the cooperative movement: FUNPROCOP and FEDECOOPADES. In 1981 DIACONIA worked with an annual budget of US$ 6 million; during the war it would channel in total about US$ 65 million to the uprooted population (Gonzalez 1992; Eguízabal et al. 1993; Thompson 1995).

22 Although this was for security reasons never openly admitted during the war (Interview with Victor Gonzalez 1992; Gonzalez was director of DIACONIA in the 1980s).

23 As one leading NGO director commented: 'Support from some European private aid agencies was more than just humanitarian assistance: it was solidarity aid. With those committed agencies we had a consenso tácito about the focus and reach of our activities; without using many words, they knew exactly what it was about' (Interview with Salvador Orellano 1995).

24 FUSADES (Salvadorean Foundation for Economic and Social Development) created or supported with AID funding for example the following private sector development NGOs and associations: the Industrial Foundation for Labour Risks (FIPRO), the Business Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE), the Programme for Strengthening Associations (FORTAS), the Salvadorean Anti-drug Foundation (FUNDASALVA), the Coordinating Committee for the Economic Development of Eastern El Salvador (COMCORDE) and the Centre for Support to Small Enterprises (CAM). Between 1983 and 1992 FUSADES received over US$ 150 million from AID.
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(Rosa 1993; Foley 1996). In addition, AID supported several other private sector programmes in El Salvador such as the Association of Young Entrepreneurs (APROSIJU) and the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), and channelled support through operational US private aid agencies such as Foster Parents Plan and Sister Cities (Barry 1990: 117).

25 AID even paid the trips of US private aid agency representatives to El Salvador. US agencies working with AID support included World Relief, Project Hope, Technoserve, International Rescue Committee, but also the Knights of Malta and the Family Foundation of America which are known for their close relationship with the military. US private aid agencies such as Save the Children, OEF International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and World Vision are known to have rejected AID funding in El Salvador. CRS, for example, had worked closely with the Catholic Church and refused in 1985 to implement Plan Mil, the large AID-funded resettlement programme for displaced persons (Smith 1990: 172-3; Barry 1990: 117-20).

26 Although the US Congress decided in 1984 that AID funding was not meant for counter-insurgency operations of the Guatemalan army, AID support for the National Security and Development Plan continued indirectly through infrastructural programmes (road construction), social programmes of CNR in conflict zones and food assistance programmes (Barry 1992: 263-4).

27 US evangelical churches and their relief organisations started to pour into Guatemala after the 1976 earthquake and their membership has grown since then by twelve percent annually; by 1987 almost one third of the Guatemalan population belonged to an evangelical church. The great majority of evangelicals preach individual salvation and strongly oppose Catholic liberation theology. Social programmes of these evangelical churches have been financed predominantly by US private aid agencies such as CARE, 700 Club and World Vision (Barry 1992: 200).

28 Several new business associations were formed with AID support: in 1982 the Enterprise Chamber (CAEM) and the Guatemalan Non-traditional Export Association (GEXPORT) were founded, and in 1983 the Free Market Chamber (CIE). Under CAEM several new private sector development NGOs emerged: the Foundation for Integral Development (FUNDAP), the Guatemala Development Foundation (FUNDESA), the Technology Foundation (FUNTEC) and the Foundation for Financial Assistance to Development Institutions (FAFIDESS) (Barry 1992; Escoto and Marroquin 1992).

29 COINDE actually was a continuation of an informal umbrella of historic NGOs formed after the 1976 earthquake (Interview with Ana Sugranies 1991a).

30 See the overview of US-financed Honduran organisations in Resource Center (1998a). As some local NGOs received funding from governmental agencies or through US private aid agencies they were often not aware that they enjoyed AID funding (Interview with Victor Meza 1991).

31 Some FOPRIDEH members formed an informal group of NGOs critical of AID funding, including among others CCD, CEPROD, ASEPAD and EDUCSA (Resource Center 1988a).


33 According to Efrain Diaz Arrivillaga, member of parliament for the small Christian Democratic Party and president of the Centre for Human Development (CDH) (Mangelschots and Ventura 1994: 22).

34 Catholic private aid agencies had been supporting the Social Christian movement in Honduras since the late 1960s, particularly through the local NGO coordinating body CONCORDE. However, after a massacre of peasants in Olancho in 1975 the Church hierarchy withdrew its support of CONCORDE and of the popular church, leading to the disintegration of CONCORDE in 1978. After that, the organisations supported by foreign Catholic aid agencies suffered from mounting state repression (Resource Center 1988a: 4-7).

35 These European-funded Honduran development NGOs, created between 1978 and 1982, included the Honduran Institute for Rural Development (IDHER), the Christian Development Commission (CCD), the Centre for Human Development (CDH), Counsellors for Development
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(a Sepade), the Centre for Studies and Promotion of Development (Ceprod) and the Community Health Education (Educsa). Although not institutionally linked, most of these NGOs were connected through their leaders to one of the small revolutionary parties (Interview with Xiomara Ventura 1991).

36 A regional tendency was visible in the mid-1980s, including in Nicaragua, of European private aid agencies to prefer direct support to membership organisations (instead of indirect through intermediary NGOs) despite the limited capacity of these organisations to administer large (external) resources. With hindsight, many agency representatives consider this to have been a problematic tendency (Interviews with Stefan Declerq 1991; Alois Möller 1993; Gitte Hermansen 1996).

37 In Honduras it is not exceptional for the government to financially support particular peasant leaders when they are up for re-election, which enables them to 'buy' a majority of delegates. Accusations of corruption and fraud usually accompany these conflicts often leading to internal divisions, although in some cases ideological differences also have caused these internal splits (Posas 1992: 5).

38 The largest funder of CNTC was the Dutch private aid agency ICCO (Interviews with Rafael Alegria 1991b; John Contier 1995b).

39 CNTC also was keen to obstruct agency coordination (Interview with Oscar Avila 1991). With hindsight, most agencies conclude that CNTC lacked the administrative capacity to handle large sums of aid and that indirect support through development NGOs would have been preferable. Information on the CNTC case is based on interviews with agency staff (Interviews with Stefan Declerq 1991; Frans van Ballegooij 1993; Alois Möller 1993; John Contier 1995b; Sally O'Neill 1995; Gitte Hermansen 1996; Rolando Sierra 1996) and CNTC staff (Interviews with Erik Nijland 1991; Rafael Alegria 1991b; Doris Hernández 1991).

40 Some private aid agencies admit that their decisions in the 1990s to scale down private aid to Honduras have been influenced by the negative experience with the CNTC in the late 1980s (Interviews with John Contier 1995a; Gitte Hermansen 1996).

41 The formation of COCOCH and the Plataforma de lucha was financed by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), especially to boost the role of ANACH and CTH. Although some believe that FES was very influential (though not successful) in Honduras in the 1980s, a FES representative voiced his disappointment about the lack of unity and the weak leadership inside Honduran popular organisations (Interviews with Aníbal Delgado 1991; Hilmar Ruminski 1993). For an analysis of the demands of the Plataforma de lucha see Noé Pino and Posas (1991).

42 After 1987 FOPRIDEH wanted to move away from AID dominance and decided to incorporate more European funded NGOs. However, this effort was only partially successful: in 1991 an alternative NGO network was formed, which soon fell apart due to internal divisions and personal rivalry. Coordination among NGOs has since remained weak in Honduras (Interviews with Xiomara Ventura 1991; Gilberto Ríos 1991b; Sally O'Neill 1995).

43 These women's groups were either membership organisations such as CODEMUH and CODIMCA, development NGOs such as CEM-H, or human rights groups such as Visitation Padilla and CDM. All these groups received support from European private aid agencies (Mangelschots and Ventura 1994; Wils et al. 1992. Interviews with Gilda Rivera 1996; María Elena Méndez 1996).

44 This was particularly the product of Operation Phoenix in 1986, a search and destroy operation by special military battalions in the Guazapa volcano area (one of the FMLN strongholds) and surrounding departments. Many displaced soon returned to their destroyed communities, initiating a broader repopulation movement (Thompson 1995: 126-9).

45 Fundasal, funded by the Catholic agencies CEBEMO and Misieron, is often considered as the 'mother' of the historic NGOs in El Salvador and as a training centre for various directors of the 'new' NGOs emerging in the late 1980s (Interviews with Rafael Villalobos 1991; Edín Martínez 1995b; Rafael Guido Béjar 1995).
Apart from a wide range of predominantly European (Dutch, British, Belgian and Nordic) private aid agencies, the Tenancingo project also was financed by the EC and the Swedish governmental agency SIDA. It was however not reproducible because of the large amount of investment involved (Eguizábal et al. 1993: 49). Despite its failure, Tenancingo definitely put the issue of the internally displaced on the national agenda. According to an OXFAM-UK representative, Tenancingo was the first coordinated effort by external funding agencies towards rebuilding civil society in El Salvador and an important lesson for later repopulations (Interviews with Víctor González 1992; Martha Thompson 1993; Patricia Ardon 1993; Pauline Martin 1995; René Ramos 1995).

The first repatriation of 4,000 refugees from Mesa Grande to Chalatenango started in October 1987, followed by massive return operations between 1988 and 1990. The FMLN was well-organised in these camps: Mesa Grande was dominated by the FPL (and partly by the RN), San Antonio by the PRTC and Colomóncagua by the ERP. Refugees in these camps were repatriated to zones of conflict controlled by these three FMLN-tendencies: Chalatenango, Cabañas and Cuscatlán (FPL and RN), Usulután (ERP and PRTC) and Morazán, San Miguel (ERP) (Interview with Víctor González 1992).

The dilemmas and tensions of private aid agencies resulting from the security situation in El Salvador are described in Thompson (1997a).

All five parties of the FMLN had their own coordinating NGOs: the FPL had CORDES (1998) and later en (1991, in which CORDES and several NGOs such as Procomes, Provida and a number of unions worked together); the ERP established FASTRAS (1987), the Communist Party worked with FUNSALPRODESE (1988), the PRTC with ASDI (1986) and the RN with REDES (1989) (Martell 1994).

González (1992: 54) shows that the number of Salvadoran NGOs increased by 125 percent between 1984 and 1989, numbering 70 by 1989. In 1992, after the peace agreement was signed, the number of Salvadoran development NGOs had risen to 186 (UNDP 1992). Aid-related sources claim that the number of NGOs in El Salvador was even higher (Urra 1993).

The International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) was a combined effort by European donor governments and UNHCR to contribute to a lasting solution to the problems of displaced persons and refugees, and a direct response of the international community to the Esquipulas agreement of 1987. The CIREFCA programme ran from 1989 to 1994, and channelled US$ 438 million to resettlement programmes, of which an estimated forty percent was handled by NGOs and beneficiary organisations (Stein 1997: 169). The other major international programme for reintegrating the uprooted population was PRODERE, which was executed by UNDP and later integrated into CIREFCA. For a discussion of these programmes see Sollis (1995, 1996) and Stein (1997).

The ERP tendency and their NGO FASTRAS was the second largest recipient of private aid resources, especially after the establishment of the Segundo Montes community. FPL’s dominance in securing private aid can be explained by its more developed international diplomatic network (Interview with Hans Peter Dejgaard 1996).

These regional councils were the Coordination of Repopulated Communities (CCR) in Chalatenango; in Cuscatlán and Cabañas (CRCOC) and the Development Council of the Repatriated Communities of Morazán and San Miguel (PADECOMSM) (Thompson 1995: 136-7).

As was mentioned earlier, after 1990 private aid was complemented by large official aid flows, channelled through local NGOs, from the EC, the CIREFCA programme and its related Italian government sponsored programme PRODERE.

No less than ten human rights groups or institutions were active in El Salvador in the 1980s, some of them linked to the churches (such as Tutela Legal and Socorro Jurídico), others linked to universities or to the opposition (Torres Rivas and González-Suárez 1994: 57).
CST organised seven major national federations of trade unions with a total of 65 member organisations, whereas the UNTS united around 100 organisations and claimed a membership of 350,000 workers (Montgomery 1995: 193-5).

Organisations of marginalised communities arose in 1986 to respond to the failure of the Duarte government to attend to the needs of the earthquake victims; they formed councils which would later merge into the Salvadorean Communal Movement (MCS), representing over two hundred urban popular communities. MCS received European private aid support through local NGOs such as CREPAC and PROCOTES (Resource Center 1988b; Martell 1994).

CPDN's activities and its relation with European private aid agencies will be examined in Chapter 6.

This El Salvador Information Project (ESIP) was financed by a group of European private aid agencies and provided updated information on developments in El Salvador prior to and after the peace talks. It also served as a valuable source for journalists, for example in the investigations following the Jesuit killings.

This is the conclusion of a study by Martell (1994), and affirmed by perceptions of many agency staff and Salvadorean popular leaders interviewed by the author, including FMLN cadre (Interview with Blanca Flor Bonilla 1995; Celina de Monterrosa 1995; Alberto Enriquez 1996). An additional, and not less important, achievement of European private aid was of course that many lives of Salvadorean opposition leaders were saved (Interview with Pauline Martin 1993).

There were actually less than a dozen historic NGOs that made up COINDE, among them IDESAC, CIF, ALIANZA, CAPS, ASECNA and CONCAD. Most of them came into existence after the 1976 earthquake, although some were older and were often linked to the social work of the Catholic Church from the 1960s.

These displaced populations were organised in three separate Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPRs): La Sierra, Ixcan and El Peten, and only announced their existence publicly in 1991.

Community development programmes were for example re-established after the mid-1980s by ALIANZA (with programmes in Huehuetenango and El Quiche), CIF (in Baja Verapaz) and ASECNA (in Alta and Baja Verapaz). All these programmes received majority support from European private aid agencies. Moreover, these were large programmes: ASECNA’s budget (mainly for public health) was higher than that of the Guatemalan health ministry (Gálvez and Klüsmann 1992).


The Danish private aid agency Ibis, for example, supported these Indian NGOs in order to strengthen collaboration between popular organisations, NGOs and local governments, in the expectation that local ‘anti-militaristic’ candidates would eventually run for local municipal elections on the local comité civil lists (Bye et al. 1995).

After all, the simple fact of having lived in a conflict area was for security forces often enough proof of sympathy for the URNG, with all its consequences: 66 leaders of the internally displaced were killed by government forces between 1987 and 1989 (Reunión, August-September 1994, Vol. 1, No. 4-5, p. 2).

Led by the International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the International Group for the Accompaniment of the Guatemalan Returnees (GRICAR) was established in the early 1990s, which supported the CCP in their negotiations with the UNHCR and the Guatemalan government. The World Council of Churches participated in GRICAR from 1993 (Garcia et al. 1994: 62).

In addition to the refugees recognised by UNHCR, there also was a large group of dispersed refugees, not organised within the CCP. In 1992 some of them founded the Association of Dispersed Refugees in Guatemala (ARDIGUA), which only represented about ten percent of non-recognised Guatemalan refugees (Burge 1995: 154).
69 Stein (1997) reports that for the entire Central America programme of CIREFCA and PRODERE between 1989 and 1994 US$ 438 million was raised, including the US$ 115 million provided by the Italian government for PRODERE.

70 Most of the 'old' COINDE affiliates (such as ALIANZA, IDEASAC, CONCAD, ASECSA, CIF, GAPS) and the newer members (COINDI, PRODESSA, FUNDADESE) also were part of CONGOOP, which brought together over twenty development NGOs, two NGO coordinating agencies (COINDE and SAT) and the Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives (FEDECOAG).

71 Problems were generated by the division of the CCPP into three vertientes (North, North-west and South). Despite their negotiating a common deal with the government, each had their own priorities and policies for repatriation to their respective zones of return. This created considerable friction with the NGOs of CONGOOP that assisted in the return (Burge 1995: 157-8; Krznaric 1997: 73. Interviews with Danuta Sacher 1995; Helmer Velásquez 1996).

72 Only the private aid agencies working together in the Project Counselling Service (PCS) – to support returning refugees and the displaced – and a group of Protestant agencies that had established a Regional Coordinating Office (OCR) achieved a workable level of mutual coordination (Interviews with Beate Thoresen 1995; Corina Straatsma 1995; Wendy Tyndale 1995; Hans Magnusson 1996).

73 A 1991 survey among 44 Guatemalan organisations found that 75 percent received external support, and 22 percent expected to receive external support in the short term. Three quarters of this external support was provided by private aid agencies. Given the growth of private aid to Guatemala after 1992, these numbers would probably have increased if the survey had been done in 1993 (COINDE 1991).

74 Several other Latin American networks started a special Central American section in the 1980s. ALOP should be mentioned here (a network of development NGOs which founded a Central American secretariat in the 1980s), FLACSO (a continental network of social sciences faculties, with members in Costa Rica and Guatemala, and after 1993 also in El Salvador) and CELADEC, an ecumenical network founded in 1962, in which Protestant educational institutes were organised.


76 This has been a central goal of one of the firmest supporters of regional networking, the Danish IBIS (Bye et al. 1995).

77 The analysis of this section is based on a survey of private aid policy documents and interviews with agency representatives between 1993 and 1996. The following organisations were included: Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam-UK/I (United Kingdom); ICCO, CEBEMO, NOVIB, HIVOS (Netherlands); DCA, IBIS (Denmark); Brot für die Welt, EZE, Misereor, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Germany); Trecaire (Ireland); Diakonia, Ridda Barnen (Sweden); Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid (Norway); Oxfam-Belgium, FOS (Belgium); ACSUR Las Segovias, IEPAL, Manos Unidas, Solidaridad Internacional, Intermón (Spain). Preliminary results were published in Biekart (1994).

78 Interview with Frans van Ballegooij (1993). A similar conclusion was reached by evaluators of the Central America programme of the Swedish private aid agency Diakonia, who add that the 'institutional strength' of partners as one of the key selection criteria had become more important in the 1990s than political criteria (Torres et al. 1996: 29).

79 The director of CONGOOP, the Guatemalan coalition of NGOs assisting the resettlement of refugees and the displaced, remarked that the demand of European private aid agencies to shift the emphasis of their activities from 'emergency' to 'development' was too radical and could hardly be implemented given that the new requirements were made when the repatriation process
was already in motion. It surprised him that the agencies of 'solidarity aid' were suddenly so demanding compared to a few years before (Interview with Helmer Velásquez 1994).

80 These comments were for example voiced in 1991 by counterparts of the agencies icco, EZE and Brot für die Welt at consultas nacionales (national meetings), in which the new agency policies were presented (Interview with Rolando Sierra 1996).

81 Of course, it was impossible to really control the destiny of redirected funding to revolutionary organisations. The German Misereor, for example, was aware that its funding to DIACONIA was directed at FMLN-controlled conflict zones, and it therefore posed strict conditions on the purchase of food and medicines (Interview with Heinz Öhlers 1995). An urban popular organisation in El Salvador complained after the peace accords that due to stricter administrative criteria it ran into financial problems as the traditional share channelled to the party could no longer be justified to the funding agencies (Interview with Allan Martell 1993).

82 This observation was made in an independent programme evaluation of income generating projects funded by icco in El Salvador in the early 1990s (Hardeman et al. 1995).

83 See Pensamiento Propio 87 (January-February 1992) in which ASOCODE coordinator Wilson Campos openly criticised those NGOs which had been supporting peasant organisations in a paternalistic way in the past. It generated a heated discussion in Pensamiento Propio 91 (June 1992) about the relation between NGOs and popular movements. This issue is discussed further in the ASOCODE case study in Chapter 6.

84 The need to redefine the role of development NGOs in this direction was a central issue of a consultation process by CEBEMO with its key Latin American partners (CEBEMO 1993: 20-21).

85 One representative commented that after the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas many agency workers 'of the 1968 generation' searched for new prospects and were replaced by a younger (and less ideologically driven) generation (Interview with Alun Bürge 1993).

86 This change of discourse in the early 1990s was confirmed in interviews with several agency representatives (Interviews with Pauline Martin 1993; Sally O'Neill 1994a; John Contier 1995b; Ulrik Sparre 1995). See also Ianni (1998).

87 Thompson (1997b: 461) points at the rapid shifts Salvadoran NGOs had to make towards funders after the peace accords: 'NGOs were supposed to move from emergency responses into comprehensive development work, almost overnight. Funders wanted complex project proposals based on economic growth and a neoliberal model, different in both conception and philosophy from the communal economic survival projects that had been developed in the conflict zones during the war.'

88 Sollis (1992) points at a considerable increase since 1990, when 25 percent of World Bank-supported projects involved local development NGOs.

89 The Central American representative of Oxfam-Belgium warned that a 'real revolution' was taking place in the Central America NGO world, with the danger that the supply of multilateral aid resources and the need to survive would fundamentally alter their priorities (Declerq 1994).


91 This lobbying activity was coordinated by the European networks CIDSE, APRODEV, EUROSTEP and by CIFCA, a network of European private aid agencies and solidarity groups founded in 1991 to influence the San José Dialogue (the annual ministerial summit between Europe and Central America).

92 For the Central American IDB strategies in the 1990s aimed at strengthening civil society see Ferraté (1995); Rosenberg and Stein (1995); Pearce (1998); Ianni (1998).

93 For example, several regional networks (CODEHUM and ASOCODE) received direct support from the EU, as well as a number of development NGOs (such as those working with refugees), peasant unions, women's and indigenous organisations (Munting and Dejgaard 1994). Of course, many European private aid agencies also received part of their income from the European Commission:
OXFAM-Belgium for example covered over forty percent of its budget between 1987 and 1991 from this source.

Notably HIVOS (Netherlands) and *Ibis* (Denmark) felt that after a decade of support to Honduran organisations with little results, prospects for continued presence were bleak; many other agencies scaled down their allocations to Honduras (Interviews with John Nielsen 1994; Sally O’Neill 1994b; Chris Bransz 1995; Ulrik Sparre 1996). See also Sparre (1996).

This waning interest for Honduras can be understood by pointing at a 1992 *Christian Aid* policy document, stating that donor countries were selected on the basis of their strategic importance and on the probability of social changes which would potentially have a regional influence.

Burke (1995) and others have confirmed this by commenting that the Salvadorean NGOs have been the most sophisticated of all Central American counterparts in securing external private aid funding by closely monitoring and addressing Northern aid agendas.

This was in fact an argument used by AID to guarantee that reconstruction funds only were channelled to private sector NGOs which had been supported by AID during the war, and which were loyal to the government (Yariv and Curtis 1992).

FIS was created in late 1990 and was funded mainly by the IDB, UNICEF and several bilateral donors such as Japan and Germany. By 1994 it had a budget of US$ 75 million, which was considerable but not enough to address local reconstruction needs (Murray 1995: 83-4).

In a later version of this article he adds: ‘In short, the gap between local NGOs and their national governments, accentuated by international efforts, became constraints on sustainable development and effective democratic practice’ (Sollis 1996: 27).

It can even be argued that, given the top-down direction of aid flows, civil society building with foreign aid resources by definition cannot have a ‘bottom-up’ character, unless priority-setting and aid allocations are entirely controlled by recipient organisations and their beneficiaries.

With its Salvadorean programme Municipalities in Action (MEA, running since 1986) AID had determined the local debate on NGO-local government collaboration. After the 1994 municipal elections, in which the FMLN won several mayoralties, the historic NGOs would complement this support of municipal governments (Blair *et al.* 1995; Interview with Ulrik Sparre 1993).

An example is the Social Initiative for Democracy (ISD), an NGO linked to the FMLN and created in December 1992 to stimulate voter participation, train community leaders and forge consensus at municipal levels. This civic education was no luxury, as an opinion poll just before the 1994 elections showed that 83 percent of the electorate ‘had no or little interest in politics’ (Spence *et al.* 1997: 10).

A distinction should be made between Social Emergency Funds (FES) and Social Compensation Funds (FIS). The first was introduced in Bolivia, Honduras and El Salvador and aimed to set up short-term projects for local infrastructure development and employment creation. The latter was more long-term orientated and focused on social programmes (education, health, water) and productive projects. It was this type of FIS that was planned for Guatemala (Garst 1993: 10-11).

Initial funding for FONAPAZ was provided by UNDP, the Italian-funded PRODERE programme, Bbie, UNICEF, WHO and the government of Taiwan. After 1993 funds for FONAPAZ were also provided by the IDB, the World Bank and the European Union (Garst 1993: 32-6).

An example was the PRODECA programme of the Danish government, a regional programme started in 1992 which aimed to strengthen the peace process, support democratisation and enforce human rights (Macdonald *et al.* 1997).
Chapter 6

1. These organisations were: FUNDASAL, CPDN (El Salvador); CAPS, FUNDADESE (Guatemala); CNTC, CODEH (Honduras); CCOD, ASOCODE (Regional).

2. This choice reflects a mix of membership organisations and development NGOs, several strategies of civil society building, a wide variety of aid chains, and interventions by key private aid agencies from the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark.


4. The outbreak of civil war in El Salvador spurred reconciliation between Honduras and El Salvador, whose relations had been tense ever since the 'soccer war' of 1969. In May 1980 six hundred Salvadorean refugees were killed by Salvadorean military forces when crossing the Sumpul River on the Honduran border, where they were forced back by Honduran troops. Similar massacres by combined Salvadorean-Honduran troops occurred in March, October and November 1981 at the Lempa River (Comisión de la Verdad 1993).

5. According to Lapper and Painter (1985: 83), the three members of this 'triumvirate' complemented each other: 'Suazo's role was to turn the Assembly into a rubber stamp for executive policy. Negroponte's relationship with Alvarez was never as crude as that of puppeteer to puppet. In fact they shared the same basic goals: a deep anti-communism and desire to bring down the Sandinista government.'

6. Officially the US refused to confirm human rights abuses by Honduran security forces. However, diplomatic officials knew very well what was going on, but often preferred to look the other way (Schulz and Sundloff 1994: 87).

7. From 1981 to 1984 CODEH documented 133 political assassinations (almost half of them Salvadoreans), 25 non-political assassinations (by abuse of power), 124 permanent and 169 temporary disappearances, and 169 cases of torture (Custodio 1986).

8. Padre Guadalupe (his real name was James Carney) was a North American Jesuit priest who had been in Honduras since 1962. Having become a follower of liberation theology in the 1970s, Padre Guadalupe started working closely with peasant organisations in northern Honduras. He promoted the conversion of local 'Justice and Peace' church commissions into human rights committees, by incorporating leaders of progressive popular organisations. These Regional Commissions for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras (CODDERHH) were formed in early 1979 to give, according to Carney, 'the poor their own strong voice' (Carney 1983: 192-5). Given the enormous division between and within popular organisations, Carney considered the Church as the only neutral force capable of uniting the poor to defend their rights. Carney was expelled from Honduras in November 1979, but returned clandestinely in July 1983 as part of a guerrilla force led by PRTC leader Reyes Mata, which entered Olancho from Nicaragua. The offensive was sabotaged and after the group was captured by the armed forces (with US assistance), General Alvarez ordered their assassination. Nearly seventy people were killed, including Carney (Schulz and Sundloff 1994).

9. These celebradores de la palabra worked with the peasant and labour unions CGT and UNC and were often persecuted by the Honduran oligarchy and the armed forces, who had been responsible for the massacre in Olancho in 1975 in which twenty people were killed, among them two Jesuit priests and several lay-priests (Cardenal 1995).


11. Between 1985 and 1994 CEBEMO channelled over one million guilders (approximately US$ 550,000) to CODEH, half of which came from the co-financing scheme of the Dutch government. CODEH's annual expenditures were on average in this period US$ 220,000. During one decade, CEBEMO therefore financed around one quarter of CODEH's annual budget (Inter-

12 Beside CODEH, CEBEMO also supported legal assistance activities of the parishes of El Progreso and Las Mercedes, which were both linked to local human rights groups of CODEH.


14 The Danish agency Danchurchaid, on the other hand, decided in 1996, as a result of disagreements over these conditions, to end its relationship with CODEH (Interview with Dorte Ellehammer 1996).

15 Speech by Manuel Torres to the 9th National Assembly of CODEH, Valle de Angeles, December 1993 (author's translation).

16 Initially only civil and political rights were mentioned. Since the late 1980s, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups (indigenous people, women, children and others) also are explicitly defended (CODEH 1995a).

17 This Commission was established in 1959 by the Organisation of American States (OAS). It supervises the American Convention (adopted in 1969) and one of its functions is to process and investigate petitions by individual citizens when domestic remedies have been exhausted. The Commission can refer cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica, whose decisions are legally binding (Hydén 1996).

18 Manfredo Velásquez, a student and labour activist, was arrested by the DNI in Tegucigalpa on 12 September 1981; Saúl Godínez, a teacher and activist in the teachers' union, was arrested by military personnel in Choluteca on 22 July 1982. The Inter-American Commission combined these two cases with the disappearances of Francisco Fairén and Yolanda Solís, two Costa Rican students, who were apparently arrested in Honduras in December 1981 when travelling from Costa Rica to Mexico. The cases of Velásquez and Godínez were brought to the Court by CODEH in 1981 and 1982, the case of the Costa Rican students was handled by one of their parents.

19 This death squad member, Florencio Caballero, admitted that he and 25 others had received special training from US, Argentinian and Chilean military advisers. During his testimony, he gave names of key military officers involved. One of them was José Vilorio, who was assassinated on 7 January 1988 in Tegucigalpa, shortly before he was to testify before the Court. The government blamed his death on the Cinchoneros, a small revolutionary left-wing organisation, but the murder was never resolved and had all the signs of a death squad execution (Schulz and Sundloff 1994: 226).

20 Just like the assassination of José Vilorio (see note 19), the January 1988 murders of Pavón and his friend Moises Landaverde (who was killed at the same time) were never solved. The government even suggested that Custodio was the intellectual perpetrator of the assassination, just as it linked the murder of Vilorio to CODEH (Interview with Ramón Custodio 1996b).

21 However, in the case of the two disappeared Costa Rican students (which was not handled by CODEH) the Honduran government was not found guilty.

22 See Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Godínez Cruz Case, Judgement of 20 January 1989, §191.

23 After General Alvarez was removed in a military coup by his colleagues in March 1984, he went into exile in the United States where he worked as a consultant for the Pentagon. While there he was converted to Pentecostalism and decided to return to Honduras in early 1988 to convert his countrymen. Although Alvarez had many enemies, he refused to accept a bodyguard as he was convinced that God was watching over him. The perpetrators of his assassination were never found, but his family is convinced that the military was responsible for his death (Schulz and Sundloff 1994: 250-1).

24 Interview with Marjet Uitdenwilligen (1996).

25 It should be mentioned that Riccy Mabel had no political background, unlike many victims of apparently 'common crimes' who indeed often were student or peasant leaders or otherwise
political activists. The assassination in May 1991 of five peasants of the cooperative *El Astillero*, presumably by military officials, definitely also influenced the storm of indignation following Riccy Mabel's murder.

26 Riccy's sister Ony confirmed this suspicion; she heard Colonel Castillo declare on television that he had never seen Riccy before, but she knew that Castillo had known Riccy for about a month (Méndez and Salomon 1995).

27 *El Tiempo* (19 July 1991). Méndez and Salomon (1995: 12) point at the amazing solidarity among top-level officers, which is totally absent in the lower ranks of the (Honduran) armed forces.

28 *El Heraldo* (27 July 1991). However, the two officers were not arrested immediately by military authorities, as the 'Military Code' proscribed that this could be done only after clear evidence was presented to prove their guilt.

29 In a desperate reaction, Colonel Castillo, the main suspect, accused the US anti-drugs agency DEA of being responsible for the murder of Riccy Mabel (*El Tiempo*, 26 February 1993).


31 Captain Andino however was absolved from any charges. The lawyer for Mabel's family, Linda Rivera, was not satisfied with the sentence because the maximum penalty for rape and murder was 28 years but, according to Rivera, Judge Maria Mendoza de Castro was pressured by the military to lessen the penalty. The staff of the judge also had been intimidated by the intelligence service DNIT (Interview with Linda Rivera 1996; see also Rivera 1994). Two years later, the sentence was upheld by a court of appeal.

32 A good illustration of the drastic changes in relation to military impunity is that only five years earlier (in 1988) a low-ranking military officer killed a judge of the Supreme Court and was released shortly thereafter by a military court.

33 For example, in 1988 journalists from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were expelled from Honduras after reporting on death squad activity and military involvement in extrajudicial killings. In the same year, US Ambassador Briggs labelled Custodio an 'old-fashioned, hard-line communist with terrorist proclivities' (Schulz and Sundloff 1994: 246).

34 According to Custodio the Plataforma de lucha represented an artificial union between leaders of left-wing political parties and was too much a product of external funding from the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Interview with Ramón Custodio 1996b).

35 One year after Mabel's murder a broad alliance was established within the *Comité Interinstitucional del primer Aniversario sin Justicia para Riccy Mabel Martínez* that organised a national protest in July 1992. But this alliance (in which human rights groups, churches, teachers' unions, student and women's associations worked together) did not last (Méndez and Salomon 1995). Friction also occurred when CODEH in July 1993 published a newspaper advertisement without the signatures of other organisations rallying against impunity, although they had requested to make a joint declaration. According to Custodio this was normal, as the other organisations wanted to sign the declaration but refused to share the costs (Interview with Ramón Custodio 1996b).

36 After Valladares was appointed in mid-1992, Custodio suggested that the government wanted to establish a parallel human rights committee in order to eliminate CODEH. However, after the report on disappearances was published in December 1993, the relationship between Custodio and Valladares considerably improved. In 1996 both even admitted to fulfilling complementary tasks (Interviews with Leo Valladares 1996; Ramón Custodio 1996a).

37 Dunkerly and Sieder (1995) note that the publication of the Truth Commission Report in El Salvador (March 1993) might have had a 'demonstration effect' on Honduras, where the disappearances were one of the key electoral issues. The presidential candidate for the National Party, Ramos Soto (who allegedly was involved in supporting General Alvarez in the 1980s), was severely damaged by this issue.
The legal status was personally presented to CODEH by President Reina on 8 November 1994, while praising CODEH for having contributed in 'a valuable and decisive way to promoting citizenship in Honduras' (CODEH 1995b: 31).

The American Civil Liberties Union in the United States served as an example for Custodio of how to remodel CODEH in the future (Interview with Ramón Custodio 1996a).

Interview with Xiomara Ventura (1995). However, this position was not only to protect CODEH: Custodio also affirmed that he blamed the weakness of the left-wing Honduran opposition on the poor quality of its leaders (Interview with Ramón Custodio 1996b).

Among them Bertha Oliva, the current President of COFADEH (Interview 1996). As a result of the internal crisis of 1989 some reorganisation led to an improvement of internal decision-making and to the recruitment of a more professional staff. However, complaints about the pyramidal structure of CODEH and bad communication between regional assemblies and central office continued, according to Diakonia's evaluation of CODEH (Ramos 1996).

The special prosecutor for human rights asserted that certain cases against military officers were about to be lost as a result of CODEH's refusal to submit crucial information (Interview with Sofía Martina Dubon de Flores 1996).

Diakonids also decided to withdraw its support after friction arose (among other issues) about CODEH's refusal to search for local funding sources in order to increase its self-sufficiency. Custodio considered Diakonids' demands to be a lack of respect for the achievements of CODEH.

Custodio had high esteem for CODEH's vice-president Miguel Angel Pavón, who was assassinated in 1988. A second candidate that was supposed to succeed him, vice-president Jorge Sierra, suddenly died in 1993. Since then, no acceptable candidates have been proposed to Custodio for following him.

Interviews with Ramón Custodio (1995, 1996a, 1996b). Brat für die Welt decided in the early 1990s to end its support for CODEH as it refused to submit detailed financial reports (Interview with Rolando Sierra 1996). Danchurchaid also decided to withdraw its support after friction arose, according to Custodio's refusal to search for local funding sources in order to increase its self-sufficiency. Custodio considered Danchurchaid's demands to be a lack of respect for the achievements of CODEH.

Interview with Henk Dielis (1996).

Custodio had high esteem for CODEH's vice-president Miguel Angel Pavón, who was assassinated in 1988. A second candidate that was supposed to succeed him, vice-president Jorge Sierra, suddenly died in 1993. Since then, no acceptable candidates have been proposed to Custodio for following him.

Interviews with Rene Ramos (1995, 1996), who reviewed a number of local CODEH committees in 1996 as part of an evaluation for the Swedish agency Diakonia. He found that only a few of these committees functioned properly. Some committees could not even say whether they belonged to CODEH, the Church or to the governmental Human Rights Commission.

CEBEMO had already been planning to phase out its support to CODEH between 1996 and 1998, at a time when CODEH was experiencing serious financial shortages (Interview with Eric Bloemkolk 1996).

To facilitate legal action, in 1995 CODEH started to coordinate the exhumation of bodies, with support from foreign experts. Apart from ending impunity, these legal cases were started to demand indemnification from the Honduran state.

Initiatives for such a national debate had been proposed by the bishops since early 1987, before the Esquipulas agreement urged the Central American governments to also go in this direction (Acevedo 1988; Ramos 1993).

The preparation and logistics of the meeting were coordinated by Ignacio Ellacuría, rector of the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador (Ramos 1993). Ellacuría is generally considered to be the 'intellectual founder' of the CPDN although the bishops had a delicate relationship with him (Whitefield 1994). Moreover, he was accused by the army of being a key advisor to the FMLN (Rosa Borjas 1995).

Of the 164 propositions presented, 147 were approved by a majority vote in the plenary. Propositions that were rejected were for example 'The Sandinista revolution had a demonstration effect on the origins of the Salvadoran civil war', or 'Armed struggle is not a valid method to legitimise power.' This caused some participants to comment that the debate was dominated by...
FMLN-directed organisations (Acevedo 1988: 779). For a discussion about whether these organisations were fachadas of the FMLN see Lungo (1995).

Archbishop Rivera wanted to prevent the Catholic Church from being identified with opposition to the Christian Democratic government of Duarte. Pressure from ARENA and the (conservative) nunciature to refrain from political activities (given the upcoming elections) also influenced the decision of Rivera to leave the CPDN (Berryman 1994: 94; Interview with Carlos Ramos 1996).

It was the first time the CD participated in elections and had expected to get ten percent of the votes. However, they only received 3.8 percent due to fraud and a low voter turnout caused by a transportation strike and ongoing fighting during election day between the army and the FMLN (Zamora 1991).

These Encuentros Nacionales por la Paz, convened by the CPDN in July and September 1989, were positively influenced by a declaration of support for negotiations from the Central American presidents during their summit in Tela in early August, in which Daniel Ortega mediated between Cristiani and the FMLN (Proceso no. 397, 23 August 1989, p. 4).

Inside the FMLN leadership few believed that the November offensive could lead to an armed insurrection. FPL leader Samayoa has acknowledged that some sectors in the FMLN pursued this option, but that the comandantes knew that it was foolish to believe the occupied areas of the capital could be militarily defended. The military purpose might have been to overthrow the government, but the political goal was to relaunch the negotiation process. See interviews with Salvador Samayoa in Ueltzen (1994: 162-4), and with Francisco Jovel in Montgomery (1995: 217-20).

Discussions about US military aid cuts had been going on for years and were only effectively implemented in October 1990, when the US Congress decided to cut military assistance by fifty percent and to make the other half conditional upon prosecution of the murders of the Jesuits and advances in the peace talks. However, when the FMLN launched a new offensive in late 1990, using sophisticated surface-to-air missiles and killing two US soldiers, the Bush administration restored aid (Byrne 1996).

The final agreement of the presidential summit in San Isidro de Coronado (10-12 December 1989) urged the FMLN to cease hostilities and requested the UN Secretary General 'to do everything within his power to take the necessary steps to ensure the resumption of dialogue between the government of El Salvador and the FMLN' (United Nations 1995: 101). The surprising element was that Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega supported the declaration, in which 'any armed action' was explicitly condemned.

Between April 1990 (Geneva) and the final talks in December 1991 (New York) agreements were negotiated (under UN mediation) in five major areas: human rights abuses in the past (Truth Commission), demilitarisation (demobilising the FMLN and reducing the armed forces), police reform (installation of a new National Civilian Police), judicial reform and a land transfer programme. For a detailed account see United Nations (1995) and Byrne (1996).

This document was called 'Contributions for the Project of a New Nation and a Programmatic Platform for a New Government' and was publicly released by the CPDN in September 1993 with
the purpose of influencing the electoral campaign. It was based on extensive consultations with all member organisations.

63 As was shown in Chapter 5, DIACONIA coordinated large projects for resettling refugees and the displaced all over the country and was in the late 1980s one of the key channels for private foreign aid to the opposition.


65 MacDonald (1998) argues that the CPDN soon became 'another support base' of the FMLN, the main reason why the Catholic Church stepped out in 1988. However, according to leaders of the CPDN who were also FMLN members, the CPDN was deliberately not transformed into an instrument of the FMLN, among other things so that less radical organisations would not leave the alliance (Interviews with Celina de Monterrosa 1995; Héctor Córdova 1996).

66 One of the key demands of the CPDN to the negotiating parties had been to allow for maximum transparency during the talks. However, both parties decided to keep up a certain level of secrecy, which left the CPDN only the task of informing its constituency about the proceedings of the talks.

67 The influential CPDN march of 14 December 1991, with more than 100,000 participants (the CPDN claimed 200,000), was a response to mobilisations by the right-wing initiative Unidad y Paz 91 and the death squad-related Cruzada por Paz y Trabajo, which wanted to prevent a reduction of the armed forces and accused Cristiani of being a traitor (Estudios Centroamericanos Noviembre-Diciembre 1991, Vol. 46, No. 517-518, p. 1055; Interview with Héctor Córdova 1996).

68 Rubén Zamora and eight other delegates elected to the National Assembly in the March 1991 elections, decided to take their oaths of office before a massive first of May rally organised by the CPDN (Montgomery 1995: 233).

69 The Grupo de los países amigos was formed by Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Spain.

70 According to Palacios, UN mediator De Soto on several occasions admitted that proposals from the CPDN had been incorporated into the agreements. However, David Escobar Galindo, member of the negotiation team for the government, asserted that the influence of the CPDN had been marginal, also because the CPDN was considered to be an instrument of the FMLN, rather than a 'third party' (Interviews with Edgar Palacios 1996; David Escobar Galindo 1996).

71 Zamora became the principal leader of the Democratic Convergence after the previous leaders died: Héctor Oqueli was assassinated in Guatemala in January 1990 and Guillermo Ungo died in a Mexican hospital in March 1991.

72 A third institution that should be mentioned is the Human Rights Ombudsman, which took over the verification role of ONUSAL. Apart from these official institutions, a number of NGOs were created to work specifically on election monitoring and civic education (such as ISD, CAPAZ and ISED), which also took over key functions of the CPDN (Interview with Celina de Monterrosa 1995).

73 Which does not mean that the CPDN would have been able to press successfully for socio-economic reforms. As Rubén Zamora (1993: 146-7) noted: 'although political exclusion and material injustice were the origins of the war, it is clear that the negotiation process dealt with the first and postponed the second [...] because the political theme was a priority' (author's translation).

74 This was a unanimous opinion shared by the 'covert' FMLN members and others in the CPDN leadership (Interviews with Celina de Monterrosa 1995; Leonardo Hidalgo 1996; Héctor Córdova 1996; Víctor Rivera 1996).

75 This is also reflected in the documents of the CPDN, in which prior to 1992 it presented itself as 'the representative of social forces', and later as 'an important sector of civil society'. The most active sectors in the CPDN after 1992 were the churches, NGOs, and women's, slum dwellers' and peasant organisations (Morales 1994).
Palacios asserted that many activities of the CPDN simply would not have taken place without private foreign aid. Absence of aid would have affected the media and lobbying work, and to a lesser extent the public marches, as these were sometimes also financed by member organisations such as the UNTS (Interview with Edgar Palacios 1995b).

For example, a CPDN project from September 1991 in which it requested funding for activities scheduled for 1992 was only approved by ICCO in November 1992.

Even in 1996, one of the agency representatives was still quite positive about the role of the CPDN, an opinion largely based on observations from several CPDN member organisations. Possibly, the replacement of ICCO’s desk officer responsible for the CPDN in early 1993 (a key moment for the CPDN) was a coincidence that influenced this perception (Interviews with Frans van Ballegooij 1995; Karel Roos 1996).

This was admitted by the independent evaluator to the author. His impression was that ICCO wanted to have a ‘positive report’ (Interview with Abelardo Morales 1995).

According to field representatives from ICCO and Beat for die Welt (Interviews with Henk Gilhuis 1995; Rolando Sierra 1996). Palacios not only was a leader of the Baptist Church, but also the secretary of the Salvadorean Council of Churches. An additional factor is a general dynamic within (private) aid agencies relating to ‘partnerism’: once a partnership is established, strong arguments have to be presented to end this relationship, rather than providing arguments to continue it.

In relative terms, ICCO assumed that it was decreasing its contribution from over 50 percent of the income of the CPDN between 1990 and 1992 to 25 percent in 1993-94. However, the real income of the CPDN turned out to be only half of the proposed budget, which made ICCO still the largest funder, covering more than half of the budget of the CPDN (Interview with Karel Roos 1996).

Another reason for the existence of large reserves was the gap between planned activities and disbursements of agencies. Several activities had to be cancelled while agreed funding had not yet arrived at the CPDN. However, when these delayed funds were disbursed, they were allocated to other activities, thus creating a circulation of internal resources and the growth of a reserve fund.


The blame for overfunding cannot be attributed entirely to the funding agencies: the CPDN itself also inflated budgets and activities, knowing that the Salvadorean post-war democratic transition would attract foreign aid only for a short period of time. After the euphoria about peace had died down it was expected that external funds would become much more difficult to acquire, which proved to be true in hindsight.

According to an external evaluation led by Morales (1994) and confirmed by Edgar Palacios (Interview 1995b). The ‘sectorial directorate’ was reinstalled in 1995 but did not perform the representative role as it did in the period 1988-1992 (Interview with Leonardo Hidalgo 1996).


The use of the term Mayas to identify the indigenous population of Guatemala is contested, as not all indigenous peoples in Guatemala (such as the Xincas and Garifunas) have Mayan roots. The term was promoted in the late 1980s by several Indian organisations to stress their common identity and history. Instead of Mayas, I prefer to use the term ‘Indian’ and ‘indigenous’ to translate the word indigena, but stress that I am not referring to the term indio, which has a negative connotation in Central America (Barry 1992: 216; see also Carmack 1988; Le Bot 1992).

Among them PRODESSA, COINDI, SERJUS, CAPS, FUNDASESE and ALIANZA: all of them Guatemalan NGOs that had worked closely with indigenous communities at least since the 1980s and all of them members of the Guatemalan NGO coalition COINDE.
Interviews with Maribel Carrera (1995) and Santiago Bastos (1996). My attention was drawn to Fundades by a case study for a TNI-PRISMA sponsored research project (1992-94) focusing on private aid and Fundades’s community development programme (Carrera 1994).

The origins of the current blossoming of indigenous organisations in Guatemala could even be traced back to the ‘Guatemalan revolution’ (1944-54), when indigenous people were first granted political rights. This initial phase of democratisation suddenly ended with the US-backed coup, followed by decades of military rule (see Chapter 4).

Financial support not only came from the Catholic Church, but also from the US-sponsored Alliance for Progress (Carmack 1988).

The emergence of CUC deserves much more attention, but in this framework it is unfortunately not possible to elaborate more on the development of this important peasant organisation. I refer to Le Bot (1992), Carmack (1988), Santos and Camus (1993) and to the testimony of one of its leaders and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú (Burgos 1983).

The oldest guerrilla force in Guatemala, the FAR, formed in 1962, was of Ladino origin and active on the eastern coast and in the capital. After FAR and other guerrilla groups were defeated in the late 1960s due to a failing foco strategy, they decided to rebuild forces in the 1970s based on broad popular support, particularly from indígenas. The strongest organisation became the EGP, set up in the mid-1970s in Ixchán, and adopting the mass-based ‘prolonged people’s war’ strategy. CUC soon was closely related to the EGP. The other strong force, besides smaller factions of FAR and PGT, was ORPA. This organisation was formed in the early 1970s, and only publicly announced its existence in 1979. ORPA had its base in the highlands (particularly around Lake Atitlán) and on the southern coast (Jonas 1991; Le Bot 1992; Perera 1993).

The (unarmed) peasants of Panzós demanded property rights for land that they had been cultivating for decades. A meeting was called by the army to resolve the issue, but the peasants were killed upon arrival (Dunkerly 1988).

Carmack (1988) and Falla (1994) describe in detail how indigenous communities generally did not share the ideological goals of EGP or ORPA, but joined these Ladino-led movements as a way to protect themselves from selective repression and death squads. See also Bastos and Camus (1993).

A first alliance between ORPA, EGP, FAR and PGT was established in October 1980. Out of this the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) was formed in February 1982.

Still no agreement exists about the total number of victims, as it remained unclear how many ‘disappeared’ actually were killed or managed to flee to Mexico. Painter (1989: xiv) speaks of 30,000 victims, while Jonas (1991: 149), based on Americas Watch, reports 100,000 civilian victims. Here I use estimates given by Falla (1994: 8). More consensus exists over the number of widows (50,000) and orphans (250,000) (Bastos and Camus 1993).

The EGP established its base in the north-western part of Quiché together with thousands of refugees who had refused to be incorporated in model villages. These Popular Resistance Communities (CPR’s) kept a low profile, but announced their existence publicly in 1991. ORPA was pushed back to the western San Marcos department and FAR to the Petén forest in the north (Dunkerly 1988).

Other new organisations included the peasant organisation CCDA, formed in 1982 and organising (predominantly Indian) peasants from the highlands, the Permanent Commissions CCP (the organisation of refugees in Mexico) and the Popular Resistance Communities (CPR’s) of the Sierra and the Ixchán. For a detailed analysis see Bastos and Camus (1993).

Two coordinating bodies served this purpose. One was the Labour and Popular Action Unity (UASP), an alliance of various popular sectors in which labour unions and the CUC also participated. UASP was created in 1987 and showed some ‘mobilisation power’ in 1988 and 1989, but was vulnerable to political repression and lacked coherence as an alliance (Barry 1992). The other was the Coalition of Sectors Resulting from Repression and Impunity, formally created in 1991, in
which organisations representing refugees, the displaced, widows and relatives of the disappeared were organised. It called for an independent investigation into the fate of the disappeared and punishment of those responsible for the genocide of the 1980s (Bastos and Camus 1993).

Another important event in 1990 was the massacre in December in Santiago Atitlán, an Indian town in the highlands that managed to chase the military troops out of town after a protest march was responded to by bullets. Eleven civilians were killed and 21 wounded. The withdrawal of the 600 troops from Santiago Atitlán received national and international admiration, and gave a new impulse to the discussion on 'Maya autonomy' (Perera 1993).

**Majawil Q'i'j** means 'New Dawn'. Although for security reasons denied publicly, most of these organisations were directly linked to one of the tendencies of the URNG (see Le Bot 1992).

The idea of setting up a coalition of Maya organisations dates back to 1984, but only at the end of the Cerezo administration did COMG feel that the right conditions existed for making its existence public. COMG and the 15 institutions it assembled were run by young professional Indian leaders, who had broken with traditional political and cultural groups in Guatemala (Bastos and Camus 1993).


104 During the first cycle of peace talks (from 1990 to 1992) several sectoral coalitions were formed to follow up conversations with the URNG in 1990. They have been named after the towns in which these talks took place: Ottawa (CACIF, entrepreneurial sector), El Escorial (political parties), Atlixco (universities, cooperatives and professional associations), Metepec (unions and popular sectors) and Quito (religious sector). From the talks in Metepec the Coalition of Civil Sectors (CSC) was formed; the Atlixco talks generated the Civilian Peace Council (COCIPAZ). These two coalitions later merged into the Civil Society Assembly (ASC), which was established in early 1994 (Ponciano 1995).

However, during the discussions new frictions emerged between Majawil Q'i'j and COMG, which made the latter decide to stop participating in the Mesa Maya. The final proposal was published on 20 May 1993, five days before the autogolpe of President Serrano, which totally changed the political dynamic of the peace process. For a detailed treatment of these internal discussions, see Bastos and Camus (1993: 42-44).

107 Interview with Manolo García (1995a).

108 For a detailed analysis of the deadlock in the peace talks after the coup of May 1993, and the various positions of the two parties that were publicly discussed, see Aguilera and Ponciano (1994).

This Framework Agreement, signed on 10 January 1994 in Mexico, was in hindsight a breakthrough for the Guatemalan peace process. The main points of this agreement were: (i) that the agenda would be based on the Mexico agreement of 1991 (in which first 'substantive' issues would be discussed, before the operative issues on demobilisation and demilitarisation); (ii) that the UN would moderate the talks and verify the agreements; (iii) that a group of países amigos (Colombia, Spain, United States, Mexico, Norway and Venezuela) would accompany the process; (iv) that the ASC would be created to give input to the talks; and (v) that negotiations would in principle be concluded before the end of 1994 (which was of course far too optimistic). For details see Aguilera et al. (1996).

109 These issues were (i) human rights, (2) refugees and the displaced, (3) Indian rights and identity, (4) socio-economic and agrarian issues, (5) relationship of civilian and military power, (6) constitutional reforms. This was also the order in which the two parties negotiated their agreements between 1994 and 1996.

111 Present in the ASC were the following sectors: religious organisations, unions and popular sectors, political parties, women's organisations, research institutions, NGOs, Indian organisations, human rights organisations, the media and the Atlixco sector (a mixture of academic institutions,
cooperatives and small and medium enterprise). Every sector had five representatives in the ASC, and although they were appointed, the ASC was recognised by the two negotiating parties, the UN and the group of *padres amigos* as a legitimate platform representing Guatemalan civil society (Palencia and Holiday 1996).

112 *Tukum Amam* ('Movement of the Grandfathers') was created in 1994 in Quetzaltenango and coordinated a dozen Indian organisations from the western highlands. Some of these organisations (such as *FUNDADESE*) had previously participated in *COMG* or in the *Meso Maya*. *UPMAG* was formed in 1994 by several Indian peasant organisations that previously had been active in Majawil Q’ij (such as *UNICAN* and *CCDA*) and were now united in *CONAMPRO* (the umbrella organisation also part of *ASOCODE*, see 6.5). In *UPMAG* also some women’s organisations and local community groups participated (Bastos and Camus 1995).

113 *FUNDADESE* started in 1983 as the Association for Socio-Economic and Educational Development (*ADESE*) and applied for legal registration as a 'foundation' in 1990, when it was renamed *FUNDADESE*. Formal legal status was only granted in 1992.

114 Rosalina Tuyuc, the leader of *CONAVIGUA* and in 1995 elected as member of Congress for the *FDNG*, would become part of the human rights sector of the ASC. Juan León, a leader of *TUCM* and co-founder of *CUC*, *Majawil Q’ij* and *Defensoría Maya*, was nominated by the *FDNG* as a vice-presidential candidate for the 1995 elections (Solano and Torres Escobar 1995).

115 Since 1991 Mazariegos tried to bring *COMG* and *Majawil Q’ij* (which was associated with the URNG-related ‘popular Indian’ current) closer together, although this move was rejected by ‘Mayanist’ leaders such as Demetrio Cojti of *ALMG*. Publicly, Mazariegos never associated himself with the URNG (whose leadership was severely criticised within the Mayanist current as being Ladino-biased and alienated from daily Guatemalan reality), but close observers considered him to be a leader of the ORPA faction within the URNG (Interviews with Santiago Bastos 1996; Manolo García 1996b; Alberto Mazariegos 1996b).

116 Plans to form a coalition of Indian organisations in the area of Quetzaltenango date back to the large gathering of Indian organisations in 1991, when Mazariegos and others realised that few local Indian organisations of this region participated in national alliances. Mazariegos left *COMG* in late 1993 to prepare the foundation of *Tukum Amam*, although its formal existence was only announced in September 1994. In early 1995 *Tukum Amam* became officially part of *COPMAGUA*, as it first had to prove that it was an alliance of Indian organisations, rather than an individual organisation (Bastos and Camus 1995: 103). In a formal sense, Mazariegos did not represent any alliance in 1994, although *Tukum Amam* allowed him in March 1994 to become part of the ‘Maya sector’ of the ASC, after he was invited by Bishop Quezada (Interview with Alberto Mazariegos 1996a).

117 Riquiac, as a member of *COMG*, also was invited by the EC to represent the Guatemalan Indian organisations in a new Central American coalition of Indian organisations (*CICA*). But after a visit to Spain in 1993 (financed by *FUNDADESE*) she withdrew from this coalition because *CICA* appeared to be dominated by *ALMG* members (Interviews with María Riquiac 1995; Alberto Mazariegos 1996b).

118 *Wuqub’Noj* emerged during the quincentenary campaign in 1992 and was formally established in 1993 with support from *FUNDADESE*, which also provided a legal umbrella. Although initially a member of *COMG*, it switched to *Tukum Amam* when this alliance was set up in 1994 (Interviews with Félix Valerio 1996; Israel Sequen 1996).

119 A list of 14 specific rights was approved including the right to administer territories inhabited by Mayas, the right to participate in all political decisions of the state and the right to be educated in their own language (COPMAGUA 1995).

120 Participants of the ASC all agree that the period May-June 1994 was the most dynamic and productive phase of the ASC.
In June 1994 the parties signed the agreement for the establishment of a Commission for the Clarification of Human Rights Violations, a controversial issue that was left out of the Global Human Rights agreement of March 1994. Human rights organisations and other popular sectors from civil society strongly condemned the agreement as the investigations of the new Commission would not determine responsible perpetrators, nor would the report have legal consequences for those responsible for the genocide of the early 1980s (Palencia and Holiday 1996).

The Episcopal Conference decided in January 1995 to withdraw Quezada from the ASC. The formal reason was that Quezada’s term was over, but most observers agree that he left because the URNG was getting too much influence in the ASC (Interview with Rolando Cabrera 1996). The ASC was seriously weakened by Quezada’s departure; he had worked very efficiently and was the glue that held the ASC together. It would take eight months for the ASC to get organised again (a new secretariat was established only in September 1995) in which time it lost its momentum, but performed an important role as a discussion forum (Palencia and Holiday 1996).

Instead, the government of De León Carpio delegated its only Mayan cabinet member (vice-minister of Education Manuel Salazar) to participate in the talks (Bastos and Camus 1995: 75). The other demand of COPMAGUA, active participation in the verification process, was formally accepted.

Mazariegos and Sequén confirmed that since 1996 FUNDADESE (that is, the offices in Quetzaltenango and in Chimaltenango) had been providing technical support to the representatives of Tukum Amam in the working groups preparing the new comisiones partitarias (Interviews with Israel Sequén 1996; Alberto Mazariegos 1996a).

N’ukuj Ajpop (‘exercise in popular government’) did not consider itself a political party but rather a Maya forum active in the FDNG, in which three major Indian alliances (IUCM, UPMAG and Tukum Amam) took part, illustrating that these corresponded with the three major tendencies of the URNG: EGP, FAR and ORPA. The other two Indian alliances inside COPMAGUA (COMG and ALMG) refused to participate in N’ukuj Ajpop. COMG preferred to remain politically independent, and ALMG supported the development of a separate Mayan party (K’amal B’e, meaning ‘pathfinder’), also advocated by Rigoberta Menchú (Interviews with Gabriel Aguilera 1995; Alberto Mazariegos 1996a; Vitalino Similox 1996. See also Bastos and Camus 1995: 154-8).

Tzuk Kim-pop was founded in August 1995 in Quetzaltenango as a coalition of existing local NGOs that had rather been isolated from international aid flows. Its priority areas are community development, organisation building and productive projects in agriculture and artesanía.

In addition, Ibisfinanced a Danish expert in public health to be based in Chichicastenango. From 1990 to 1992, Ibis supported FUNDADESE’s activities in five communities in El Quiche and Totonicapan. In a second phase (1993-95), five communities were added to the programme by FUNDADESE. In this period Ibis contributed US $1 million (on average US $200,000 annually) (Interview with John Nielsen 1994).

NOVIB’s annual contribution started in June 1993 and was on average US $100,000 (Interview with Ale Dijkstra 1996). The work of the Quetzaltenango office, which was opened in 1993 by Mazariegos to support returning refugees and the displaced, was financed by the ecumenical agencies of the Project Counselling Service (PCS).

Interview with John Nielsen (1994). Contacts with FUNDADESE came through recommendations by other Guatemalan NGOs working in the highlands. FUNDADESE was suggested to Ibis by a leader of CAPS, who knew the founders from earlier training programmes (Interview with Marco Azurdia 1995). NOVIB had already established contact in 1987 through its local consultant (Interview with Ale Dijkstra 1996).

Both Ibis and NOVIB simultaneously supported other Indian NGOs working with integrated rural development, such as the programme sponsored by COINDI in the nearby Sololá area. COINDI also was a founding member of COMG. However, COINDI and FUNDADESE were different.
COINDI was, more than FUNDADESE, a community-based organisation, because the local community councils were directly part of its formal structure. For a comparison see Vinding (1995).

According to the NOVIB desk officer in the Netherlands (Interview with Ale Dijkstra 1996). Most of NOVIB’s partners in Guatemala (such as GAM, Tierra Viva, CDRO, COINDI, COMG, INIAP, AVANCISO, UASP, UNSTRAGUA) were active players in at least five different sectors of the ASC.

Between July 1994 and July 1996 NOVIB funded Mazariégos’s work in the ASC with approximately US$ 35,000 annually, consisting of salaries, travel, meetings and publication and distribution of the final Indian rights agreement to local organisations (Interview with Theo Bouma 1995).

External evaluations of this programme were executed by OXFAM-America (Méndez 1988), NOVIB (Puac and Ramirez 1995), and IBIS (Cabrera and Campoceco 1996). Independent studies include Carrera (1994), and Hojrup Jensen (1995). My analysis is largely based on these documents, in addition to fieldwork in 1995-96.

Most communities have an alcalde auxiliar (assistant mayor) who relates to the municipality; a Civil Defence Patrol (PAC) and a military commissioner directly responsible to the armed forces; a principal (spiritual leader); the Catholic Church and several (up to nine) evangelical sects; seven or eight Maya priests and an improvement committee in which most of the leaders mentioned are participating. In addition, some popular organisations (such as CUC, GAM, CONAVIGUA and SERJ) have a covert presence in the communities (Carrera 1994; Hojrup Jensen 1995).

Hojrup Jensen (1995: 17) notes that the Rios Montt regime used two political tools to disperse organisations and political mobilisation in indigenous communities: organised physical violence, followed by the installation of PAC’S and the entrance of evangelical sects actively discouraging community participation.

A comité pro-mejoramiento (improvement committee) was set up in most communities during the Arévalo government of the 1940s. After the 1976 earthquake these committees were used for channelling relief from the governmental Committee for National Reconstruction (CRN). In the 1980s the armed forces used the committees for their civic action programmes, whereas FUNDADESE tried to transform them into a structure for political action.

The number of communities increased from 8 in 1988 to 28 communities in 1996, covering an area that included approximately 100,000 inhabitants (Méndez 1988; Carrera 1994).

FUNDADESE also was an active member of two NGO coalitions (COINDE and CONGOOP) that were key fora for getting access to international aid agencies and for exchanging experiences with other development NGOs about how to deal with foreign aid. Based on that experience, Mazariégos decided in 1995 to form his own NGO coalition Tzuk Kim-pop in Quetzaltenango, when the upcoming peace agreement was expected to attract a new influx of private foreign aid.

Many non-Mayan organisations and NGOs 'had not been created to unite but to disunite', he argued at the International Seminar of Indigenous People’s, held in Guatemala, 4-7 December 1990.

Other key persons were the leaders Cooji, Tuyuc and León. A crucial role also was played by Bishop Quezada, who was keen to prevent any exclusion of Maya sectors in the ASC (Interviews with several ASC-delegates: Enrique Alvarez 1995; Carmen Rosa de León 1995; Oscar Azmitia 1995; Edgar Cabnal 1995, 1996a; Vitalino Similox 1996; Rosalina Tuyuc 1996; Helmer Velásquez 1996).

The majority of elected FDNNG deputies were prominent leaders of Indian organisations: Nineth Montenegro (GAM), Rosalina Tuyuc and José Antonio Móvil (CONAVIGUA), Amilcar Méndez (CERI), Manuela Alvarado (Indian leader from Quetzaltenango) and Carlos Alfonso Barrios from San Marcos.

Interview with Roger Plant (1996), responsible for indigenous issues of MINUGUA.

For example, the peasant organisation Kabawil, a member of Tukum Amam, managed to give
input on ASC position papers through the national networks of human rights committees, peasant organisations and Indian organisations. However, leaders of Kabawil complained in 1996 about the delay in receiving final texts of the agreements. This was caused by Mazariegos withdrawal from the ASC, which had frustrated communication between the national and local level (Interview with Walter Castro 1996).


146 The NOVIB consultant rarely visited the Chichicastenango office, although this was not considered a problem by director Riquiac (Interviews with Bo Rasmussen 1995; Maria Riquiac 1995). The Ibis consultant, who had known FUNDASESE from its early start, also rarely visited the communities. FUNDASESE complained that 'it was difficult to communicate with him as he never had time' (Cabrera and Camposeco 1996). Apparently, Ibis relied too much on the presence of its Danish expert and on the positive reports submitted by FUNDASESE (Interview with John Nielsen 1994).

147 Interestingly, the German agency Brot für die Welt (only supporting Pop Wuj) had been aware of FUNDASESE's problems through its Central American consultant. However, regardless of the fact that coordination with NOVIB was poor, Brot für die Welt did not take action: it considered the national activities of Mazariegos and Sequén to be crucial to creating broader political space for Indian organisations (Interview with Rolando Sierra 1996).

148 Interviews with Manolo García (1996a) and Mario Silvestre (1996).

149 The term is from the former CIPIE representative (Interview with Luisa Cabrera 1996). Also NOVIB and Ibis were aware that Mazariegos worked simultaneously for several organisations. As one person remarked: 'from the moment we started a meeting, he would tell us he already had to go to the next meeting' (Interview with John Nielsen 1996).

150 As alliances rapidly shifted inside COPMAGUA, NOVIB tried to spread its funding over the various Indian coalitions, relying on the advice from its local consultant. In that sense, NOVIB certainly was an active donor (Interview with Manolo García 1996b).

151 Interview with René Poitevin (1995). Some ASC members even complained that private aid agencies refused to support their organisations if they were not in some way active in the ASC (Interview with Rolando Cabrera 1996).

152 According to a leader of COMC and a coordinator of COPMAGUA (Interview with Mariano Cox 1996).

153 Similar critique was voiced in Bye et al. (1995: 23). Ibis started to support the ASC secretariat in early 1996, but this was delinked from support to any of its partners participating in the ASC.

154 If it is taken into account that FUNDASESE had been receiving private aid funding since 1987, it is reasonable to assess its achievements after almost ten years. Even if it is argued that results of the community development programme were hampered by severe political conditions up to the early 1990s, disarticulation was caused by the implementation of the organisation model in which community councils became dependent upon FUNDASESE.

155 Mazariegos was conscious of the fragile structure of these organisations and in 1995 began promoting (with the NGO coalition Tzuk Kim-pop) the incorporation of local communities in projects to strengthen municipal governments in the south-western highlands. A key purpose of these activities was to build up new leadership capacity, which would be essential to occupy the newly conquered political space (Interview with Alberto Mazariegos 1996a).

156 Agrarian cooperatives and small coffee producers were already organised at a Central American level in the 1980s. The Confederation of Cooperatives of the Caribbean and Central America (CCC-CA) was set up in 1980, and the Union of Small and Medium Coffee Producers (UPRO-CAFFE) in 1989.

157 The Spanish campesino is generally translated as 'peasant', but the problematic nature of this
translation is acknowledged. In Central America, the 'campesino sector' also includes (beside peasants) *parceleros* (smallholders) and medium-sized farmers (generally export crops). For a discussion of these categories see Baumeister (1994).

158 Since the 1987 Esquipulas agreement, peasant organisations from Costa Rica (who were first affected by structural adjustment policies) tried to set up a regional network of peasant organisations. But they encountered a number of obstacles, ranging from bad communication and governmental interference to mutual distrust and manipulation by political parties (ASOCODE 1991b).

159 One of Costa Rica's representatives in ASOCODE's first Regional Commission, Jorge Hernández, was a trained sociologist. Wilson Campos, regional coordinator from 1991-95, completed two years of university before dropping out. It should be pointed out that ASOCODE's academics came exclusively from Costa Rica, which has an education system that is better than anywhere else in Central America.

160 The traditional perception of *campesinos* is still widespread, even in Europe. When ASOCODE's coordinator Wilson Campos visited a Dutch private aid agency in 1993, desk officers wondered whether he was a 'real peasant', as his appearance reminded them of a young successful entrepreneur, rather than a traditional peasant leader (Biekart and Jelsma 1994: 216).

161 Costa Rican *campesinos* were well organised, generally better educated and had suffered least from the repression of the 1980s. In the rest of Central America, Costa Ricans were often viewed with politically and culturally motivated suspicion; prejudices that can be traced to the colonial past. Costa Rica would provide the regional coordinator even though it was the smallest national alliance within ASOCODE, representing less than two percent of its regional membership.

162 UNAG was also viewed with some suspicion by organisations from other countries, as it often presented itself as *the* organisation for all Central American peasants. There was also jealousy about the broad funding base of UNAG. This created friction in the early years of ASOCODE, particularly because a Costa Rican and not a Nicaraguan was appointed as the first regional coordinator (although the Nicaraguans did receive the post of vice-coordinator). Tensions increased between UNAG and ASOCODE in late 1992, partly due to conflicts between personalities, almost leading to a split. The central office was transferred from Costa Rica to Nicaragua, and the dispute was finally settled in late 1993. After that, the Costa Ricans and the Nicaraguans became close allies in ASOCODE (Interviews with Wilson Campos 1993; Jorge Hernández 1994; Sintfioriano Cáceres 1996).

163 As an early document stated: 'no governmental or non-governmental institution has the right to consider itself as the father or the facilitator of our process' (ASOCODE 1991b: 4).

164 The seminars were part of the food security programme (PFEA) of the Panama-based intergovernmental research programme CADESCA, run by Salvador Arias (who was Minister of Agriculture of El Salvador in the 1970s) and Eduardo Stein (who was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala in 1996). Financed by the European Community, these seminars aimed to bring together peasant leaders from all over Central America to discuss possible alternative strategies for peasant organisations to respond to structural adjustment programmes. The technical advisers of the PFEA, in combination with agronomists from the French institute IRAM, were crucial in the early years for their contribution to ASOCODE's sophisticated political discourse. See Edelman (1995: 7-9); Stein and Arias (1992).

165 In July 1991 a large peasant conference was organised in Honduras with the participation of peasant organisations from six Central American countries (this time including Belize; only Guatemala was absent). At this occasion it was formally decided to found ASOCODE later that year (ASOCODE 1991b: 5).

166 The letter to the presidents was titled 'La urgencia del desarrollo exige concierta' (The urgency of development requires concerted action). The 'productive strategy', ASOCODE's first policy
A major obstacle to the formation of ASOCODE was the different and often contrary political dynamics in the seven Central American countries. For some national associations the struggle against structural adjustment was the major issue, for others the roll-back of agrarian reform (Honduras) or military repression (El Salvador and Guatemala) (ASOCODE 1991b; Román 1994; Tangermann and Rios 1994).

National alliances participating from the start in ASOCODE included UNAG (Nicaragua), CNA (Costa Rica), ADC (El Salvador), APEMEN (Panama), COCOCH (Honduras) and BEAC (Belize). See Hernández (1994).

The problem was that internal splits inside the Guatemalan armed opposition URNG in the early 1990s impeded unity among the Guatemalan peasant organisations. ASOCODE insisted that only a unified instancia nacional from Guatemala could be accepted as a member. However, when this national association (CONAMPRO) was finally founded in early 1993, two major peasant organisations (CUIC and CONIC) left it for political reasons. Among other things, they felt that the leaders of CONAMPRO represented more the NGO sector than the (indigenous) peasants (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994: 41-2. Interviews with Juan Tiney 1994; Wilson Campos 1996c; Helmer Velásquez 1996).

In 1993 ASOCODE's member associations organised an estimated 1.5 million small and medium-sized farmers and peasants. The total number of economically active members in this sector in Central America is an estimated 5.5 million, corresponding to 45 percent of the economically active population (Baumeister 1994; Herrera 1995).

At the founding congress it was decided to send an ASOCODE delegation to the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, and to participate in the foundation of the Via Campesina, an international network of farmers' organisations (ASOCODE 1992; Blokland 1995).

This was decided for two reasons: some national associations were 'richer' than others, and the fear was that the 'richer' organisations would possibly impose their agenda; plus it was soon clear that private aid agencies from Canada and Europe were rather eager to finance a new regional coalition of peasant organisations. It was also decided that the Nicaraguans would raise 40 percent of the projected US$ 100,000 for 1991, and the Costa Ricans 60 percent. However, in the end all funding was raised by the Costa Ricans (Interview with Dineke van den Oudenalder 1996).

This was not entirely true, as the Costa Rican NGO Nuestra Tierra was the legal channel for funds received by Justicia y Desarrollo. Members of the provisional Regional Commission also mentioned their good relations with the Costa Rican NGO Cecade, whose director (William Reuben) at that time coordinated the Central American NGO coalition COOD. In addition, their close relations with CADESCA contributed to getting the confidence of private aid agencies for the new proposal. The provisional Regional Commission initially presented itself as the Coalition of Small Agricultural Producers of the Central American Isthmus (COPIC) and requested funding for preparatory meetings in 1991, a small office in Costa Rica and for a bound of consultations within all member organisations to discuss the proposal for the new coordinating body. The agencies were impressed by the broad participation of peasant organisations from all over Central America and by their open rejection of paternalism by NGOs who had been speaking in their name without serious consultation. The only doubt about COPIC (later ASOCODE) was the lack of reference in their documents to the position and participation of women in peasant organisations (Interviews with Dineke van den Oudenalder 1996; William Reuben 1996).

Other agencies that approved small funds were Brot für die Welt, Diakonia, OXFAM-UK/I, CUSO and PCS. Initially, it was tried to get all starting expenses financed by the four Dutch co-financing agencies, but CEBEMO and NOVIB were reluctant to do so. CEBEMO because it feared that regional networks would only create new bureaucratic layers; NOVIB because its policy was to
support intermediary NGOs, and not membership organisations (Interview with Dineke van den Oudenalder 1996).

173 It was a tactical move to criticize private aid agencies in public, when one agency representative had just expressed his honour and pride for being able to support ASOCODE; Campos very well understood that his criticism would be shared by most agencies. In his final declaration he even sharpened his point by saying that some agencies had been supporting peasant organisations indirectly with good intentions, but that he had had enough of good intentions and that ‘full respect for popular processes’ was needed (ASOCODE 1993b: 22).

176 Among the new private aid agencies that decided to support ASOCODE in 1992 were NOVIB (Netherlands) replacing ICCO’s role, Ibis (Denmark) and Horizons of Friendship (Canada). The EC support was offered in April 1992, when Campos visited Europe to lobby the 8th San José ministerial conference between Europe and Central America. Through contacts of Cadesca, Campos was invited to meet top EC officials in Brussels.

177 This was, for example, the reason for the Protestant agencies ICCO and Danchurehaid to reject (new) requests from ASOCODE (Interviews with Lone Hogel 1993; Frans van Ballegooij 1993).

178 Some agencies even threatened to withdraw support from ASOCODE if its financial administration was not improved. This was a sensitive area as the major reason why peasant organisations had been supported indirectly through NGOs was their incapacity to administer foreign aid resources (see the example of CNTC in Chapter 5). Wilson Campos admitted that the unexpected acceleration of ASOCODE’s ‘process’, combined with the lack of administrative experience of its leaders had caused this ‘process of disorganisation’ (ASOCODE 1993d: 86-89).

179 The office in Managua (Nicaragua) was opened in October 1992 (one block from the UNAG office), but the appointed executive director turned out to be incompetent. Besides that, regional coordinator Wilson Campos was most of the time outside Nicaragua. Only in late 1993 did the office start to function properly with a staff of five administrative workers, five technical advisors and a more regular presence of the coordinator.

180 At the First Regional Conference on Solidarity Aid in Panama (17-19 March, 1993) representatives from nine private aid agencies from Europe and Canada attended; nine agencies were unable to attend and seven others requested to be involved in the future (ASOCODE 1993a: 39-40).

181 A Hivos representative voiced concerns in the plenary that ASOCODE had been too much a coalition of leaders and that it was the task of national associations to increase participation from grassroots organisations (ASOCODE 1993d: 32).

182 In March 1993, national associations participating in ASOCODE jointly presented a large package of projects to foreign aid agencies, in which a total of more than US$ 15 million was requested.

183 According to ASOCODE’s statutes (Article 38b) every national association is obliged to pay annually US$ 1,000 for ASOCODE’s running costs. However, as Edelman (1995) correctly points out, the flow of resources has been exclusively in the other direction. As a result of the growing inflow of aid resources, in 1993 every national association received annually around US$ 15,000, growing to US$ 60,000 in 1995 and an estimated US$ 100,000 in 1996.

184 This was the main reason why the Dutch ministry for development cooperation had doubts about a US$ 1 million aid package for ASOCODE for 1993-94 which was requested by Hivos. Only forty percent of this request was finally approved (Interview with Dineke van den Oudenalder 1996).

185 See ASOCODE (1993b). In 1995 ASOCODE received financial support from Hivos, NOVIB, Ibis, Diakonia, Oxfam-UK/1, CCFD, Oxfam-Belgium, ACSUR Las Segovias, Horizons of Friendship, Oxfam-Canada, the Ford Foundation and the European Union. The two Dutch agencies covered about 45 percent of the US$ 1 million annual budget.

186 In Nicaragua UNAG and FECAOCOOP formed the national association, but the rural workers union ATC and smaller peasant organisations such as UNAPA and associations of the Resistencia did not participate (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994). In Belize, the organisations forming the instancia
national (BFAC and CCC-B) represented only a minority of Belize’s rural workers. The language (Belize’s national language is English), the different productive structure (for example, Belize has the second strongest fishermen’s cooperatives in the world) and its orientation towards the Caribbean obstructed national unity for participation in ASOCODE (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994; Interview with Julián Avila 1993).

ASOCODE realised that it could only push for changes at this level if it managed to convene the broadest possible coalition of agricultural interests. Lobbying started a few months before the summit and was targeted at technical experts preparing the summit. As Campos noted, if lobbying was aimed at higher-level politicians in an early phase, the efforts would be counter-productive (ASOCODE 1994b: 4).

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188 The reason that this fund was never established was that the ministers of agriculture, who were supposed to work out the proposal, delayed and frustrated the dialogue with ASOCODE (ASOCODE 1995b).

189 Belize was excluded, but was associated with SICA as part of the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES). SICA was formally established by the Central American presidents in Tegucigalpa in December 1991, and the General Secretary (the Honduran Roberto Cáceres) formally started to function in February 1993, with headquarters in San Salvador.

190 Although the (elected) Central American parliament PARLACEN also is part of SICA, the fact that it was not lobbied by ASOCODE illustrates its symbolic function. In general, ASOCODE did not put any effort into lobbying politicians except those in power. According to Wilson Campos, political parties had lost their legitimacy as true representatives of the people, and ASOCODE at some point even considered setting up its own political ‘peasant’ parties. This idea, although still alive in Costa Rica, was not put into practice (Interview with Wilson Campos 1994b).

191 In June and September 1992 small ASOCODE delegations visited Europe. A large delegation of eight leaders made a one-month trip to nine European countries in April-May 1993. In March, May, August and September 1994, and March and June 1995 small delegations visited several European countries, generally invited by private aid agencies. Delegations visited Canada and the United States four times between 1993 and 1995. A delegation made a tour in the Caribbean (September 1994) and, as part of the Via Campesina, several conferences were attended in Belgium, Peru, Mexico and the Philippines. See ASOCODE (1993b, 1995b).

192 Campos was invited as a coordinator of ICIC to address the International Conference on Peace and Development for Central America in Tegucigalpa (24-25 October 1994), where he severely criticised the presidents (who were also present) for promising more participation of civil society in their regional decision-making, but failing to put this into practice. His speech drew attention from several high-level representatives of international financial organisations who were open to more frequent dialogue and collaboration with ASOCODE and ICIC.

193 Unlike ASOCODE, FEDEPRICAP participated in technical commissions preparing the presidential summits, but its international contacts were less well-developed (Rivera 1995).

194 Edelman (1995) identified seven functions of ASOCODE’s lobbying strategy: buffering national organisations against repression; providing information on policies; demonstrating the willingness to negotiate; contributing to democratisation; giving a presence to popular sectors in supra-national bodies; widening the debate on credit, trade and agrarian reform; helping national platforms to win specific national demands. An important function should be added here: getting access to foreign aid.

195 During a visit to Canada in November 1994, ASOCODE mentioned the alarming human rights situation in Guatemala to Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Stewart, who then personally undertook action in the UN (ASOCODE 1995b: 16). Similar requests were made to the European Union through the European network of private aid agencies CIFCA.

196 ASOCODE’s leaders were afraid that a frontal attack on the Guatemalan president would harm
their good relations with him, particularly because the Guatemalan government at that time coordinated the regional presidential summits (Interview with Wilson Campos 1994a; Edelman 1995: 29-30).

197 This started in 1992 when COCENTRA and CTCA supported ASOCODE’s proposal for alternative agricultural policies at the December Panama summit. During preparations at the Central American Peasant Forum, in which CCC-CA and UPROCAFE also took part, it was decided to present proposals to the summit in the name of a broad forum whose organisations presented ‘another space in civil society’. From then on, these regional associations maintained close communications, and when CTCA learned that SICA was open to incorporate regional representatives from civil society into its Consultative Committee, a preparatory meeting was held in October 1993 in Costa Rica. At this occasion, funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, it was decided to found ICIC (Rivera 1995).

198 ICIC was founded in May 1994 in Costa Rica by ASOCODE, COCENTRA (labour unions), CTCA (labour unions), CCC-CA (cooperatives), UPROCAFE (coffee producers), CCOD (NGOs), FCOC (community organisations), and CONCAPE (small and medium private enterprise). In 1995 Frente Solidario (coffee producers) entered ICIC, and a year later CTCA (organisations of indigenous people), CODEHUCA (human rights committees) and FOCAMI (women’s organisations).

199 Wilson Campos pushed for a joint coordination role together with Ayax Irias (COCENTRA) and Roberto Ayerdi (CONAPE); however, Campos remained the public face of ICIC. ASOCODE allocated its own funds to ICIC that came from the European Union, OXFAM-UK/I, OXFAM-Canada and CUSA. The technical coordination was delegated to CCOD, which had a staff member permanently working for ICIC. In 1995 several European private aid agencies (Ibis and OXFAM-UK/I) financed part of ICIC’s running costs. In 1996 the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and HIVOS also contributed to ICIC (ICIC 1995a; 1996a). Not surprisingly, except for FES, all these donors also were funders of ASOCODE.

200 FEDEPRICAP, the federation of the Central American business associations, dominated this Committee as part of the Central American Inter-sectoral Coordination (CACI), a small coalition of regional associations (private universities and right-wing unions) all promoting a neoliberal agenda (Rivera 1995). As soon as ICIC was also admitted to the Committee it started negotiations with CACI’s member organisations to isolate FEDEPRICAP (ICIC 1995a; Interview with Sinforiano Cáceres 1996).

201 Here the echo of ASOCODE’s arguments within ICIC is evident. For an overview of ICIC’s political position and organisational structure, see ICIC (1996a, 1996b).

202 Wilson Campos stated in an interview: ‘We have forced them [the presidents] to recognise us as a legitimate force, but now, after two years, we have participated in four summits and over 20 regional fora. We are seeing that they have made a lot of promises that they have not kept’ (Edelman 1994: 31).

203 Particularly the Salvadoreans had little confidence in diplomatic pressure and pushed for more systematic use of traditional forms of protest (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994).

204 The idea of incidencia (‘incidence’, or lobbying) was to search for common positions in contacts with governments and international organisations, but also with like-minded farmers’ organisations and private aid agencies, without making any concessions and based on self-perceived strength. Its basic goal was to get political recognition and develop a basis for further collaboration. Later the word cabildeo (lobbying) started to enter ASOCODE’s discourse. However, this was considered to be the next step after incidencia, a long-term process of trying to influence policies. To speak of ‘lobbying’ was probably a result of intensified relations with European and North American networks who are more used to pushing for changes without speaking in the name of a broad constituency. This difference became clear in a lobbying workshop organised by some European private aid agencies in Managua in May 1994 (ASOCODE 1994b).

206 However this accusation appeared to be untrue. Campos used some of ASOCODE's funds to finance activities of ICIC, including a small team of technical advisors that worked from ASOCODE's regional office. By not explicitly separating the expenses of ASOCODE and ICIC (which were often intertwined) he admitted to having created confusion. The advisory team had to be fired in March 1995 which seriously affected ICIC's performance that year. Behind this conflict was an effort by Salvadoran and Panamanian leaders to get control of ASOCODE, but they were voted out at the 3rd Congress in January 1996. Sinforiano Cáceres from Nicaragua was elected at this Congress to succeed Wilson Campos. He acknowledged that the crisis had harmed ASOCODE and that improved financial control and more transparency would prevent this confusion in the future (Interviews with Wilson Campos 1996c; Julio Bermúdez 1995; Eulogio Villalta 1996; Sinforiano Cáceres 1996; Wilber Zavaleta 1995).

207 Coordination among peasant organisations within the national associations worked best in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and (to a lesser extent) Honduras. In the other countries the mesas nacionales were often either weak, in a process of construction, or sometimes even artificial (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994: 82).

208 This was one of the conclusions of the external evaluation carried out in 1994 (financed by HIVOS). It concluded that internal disagreement existed about whether or not to prioritise the demand for agrarian reform, the participation of women or the participation of indigenous people; which organisations should be members and whether to prioritise political work or limit activities to productive issues (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994).

209 HIVOS considered ASOCODE to be one of its most important partners in the region and also the most ‘flexible’ (Interview with Chris Bransz 1996). ASOCODE, in turn, perceived that the open and critical attitude of private aid agencies had deepened and strengthened its relationships with funders (Interview with Wilson Campos 1996c).

210 This was one of the conclusions of an evaluation of Ibis's regional programme. It was also concluded that agencies lacked adequate coordination, that partners often followed agency priorities instead of elaborating proper agendas, that agencies poorly coordinated local programmes with those of their regional networks and that they failed to prioritise exchange of information between member organisations in different countries (Morales and Craneshawl 1997: 55-6).

211 This position was shared by various funders, among them Oxfam-UK/I and Brot für die Welt (Interviews with Eduardo Klein 1995; Rolando Sierra 1996).

212 Interview with Wilson Campos (1996c). In the circles of the Central American presidents and their ministers it was commonly assumed that ASOCODE and other (regional) societal actors were a creation of foreign aid agencies, as these financed the large number of seminars in which lobbying issues were discussed (Interview with Sinforiano Cáceres 1996).

213 The first public statements about NGOs were made at the first Congress in December 1991 (ASOCODE 1991b), followed by interviews in Pensamiento Propio (No. 87, February 1992) and several European magazines (cf. Biekart and Jelsma 1994: 215-221).

214 It was worked out in a document prepared for the Earth Summit in Rio (ASOCODE 1992), but received only minor attention in the Strategic Plan of 1996 (ASOCODE 1996).

215 This was suggested by Candanedo and Madrigal (1994: 122-9), who concluded (after interviewing a number of leaders) that there was no consensus on this issue. One part did not see the need to have separate Indian organisation structures within ASOCODE, another part saw the need to give autonomous space to indígenas in the association, but more importantly to look for common problems. The problem was more or less resolved when CICA (the regional network of indigenous people's organisations) was accepted as a member of ICIC in 1995.
At the Panama conference on ‘solidarity aid’ (March 1993) private aid agencies urged ASOCODE to come up with concrete proposals about how to incorporate women in the regional coordination process. They warned that ASOCODE would face problems securing external support if these proposals remained vague.

See ASOCODE (1993d: 79). Campos also realised that gender balance was such a strong demand that it could have endangered funding relations. In fact, the acceptance of women in leading positions actually grew through the years. At the 2nd regional assembly of ICIC (in August 1996) Campos proposed a rule that ASOCODE had adopted in January 1996 to have a true fifty-fifty gender balance at all levels of the coalition; this was finally negotiated to the rule that every set of representative and alternate in the regional assembly would be shared by a man and a woman (ICIC 1996b).

See for example the intervention of HIVOS representative Dineke van den Oudenalder at ASOCODE’s 2nd Regional Congress, in which she stressed that women were not equally integrated in the production process, and even less so in the organisational process (ASOCODE 1993d: 32). This was supported by conclusions of a survey conducted around that time showing that women accounted for 30 percent of the agricultural labour force, and not for the 8 percent that misleadingly appeared in official statistics (IICA 1993; Román 1994).

The 2nd Regional Congress in 1996 decided to elect a gender-balanced Regional Commission, although El Salvador and Belize refused to meet this requirement.

This was considered to be the most concrete result of a trip by the Regional Commission to Europe in 1993 (ASOCODE 1993b; 1993d).

With some jealousy colleagues from other regional networks observed that ASOCODE’s leaders travelled by airplane and were often hosted in luxury hotels, where they (due to less financial resources) were used to travelling by buses and sleeping in cheap hostels (Edelman 1995). Overfunding also was a product of poor coordination among agencies, who often were not aware how funds of other private agencies were allocated.

The December 1993 Congress also decided that the members of the Regional Commission (representatives of the national associations) all would receive their salaries from ASOCODE in order to guarantee their commitment to the regional work.

This interpretation is based on conversations with several representatives of aid agencies. In the case of ASOCODE, HIVOS was very critical of ASOCODE’s poor efforts to look for alternative sources of income. Despite that, HIVOS continued to be ASOCODE’s largest funder, with an estimated donation of US$ 500,000 annually, more than one-third of ASOCODE’s budget. It should be added that HIVOS receives 7.5 percent overhead on this annual sum from the Dutch ministry of development cooperation. This system thus encourages the allocation of large sums of aid, although this is contrary to the principles of both HIVOS and the Dutch ministry.

Interview with Guido Vargas (1996). Another regional representative for Costa Rica, Jorge Hernández, wrote in 1992 that he considered the acceptance of foreign aid as one of the ‘original sins’ of the organisation (Hernández 1992). These concerns about aid should be understood in the light of the prevailing ‘poverty gap’ between Costa Rica and the rest of Central America, and (related to that) the withdrawal of many private aid agencies from Costa Rica in the early 1990s.

Interview with Chris Bransz (1996). As an additional problem he mentioned that ASOCODE demonstrated a lack of ability to set clear priorities. One reason for this was, paradoxically, its democratic internal system of consultation. All longer term ‘strategic plans’ were substantially discussed by the national associations, leading to delays in planning and to a broad array of priorities – too broad and diverse to implement simultaneously, which made new priority-setting then necessary. But Bransz acknowledged that more authoritarian ways of decision-making also were not desirable.

Interview with Wilson Campos (1996c).
Members of the Guatemalan national association CONAMPRO discovered, for example, that ASOCODE leaders had easier access to governmental offices in Guatemala than its Guatemalan member organisations. As a result, ASOCODE negotiated agreements with the Guatemalan government and CONAMPRO did the follow-up (Candanedo and Madrigal 1994: 46).

Some argued that ICIC would not have existed without the organisational capacity and strategic vision of ASOCODE leader Wilson Campos, who coordinated ICIC until August 1996 (Interview with Comberthy Rodríguez 1995).