

MASTER THESIS

INTERCULTURALISM IN A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

A Very Particular Universalism

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Abstract

The purpose of this master thesis is to reflect on interculturalism in a development perspective from the discourse theoretical perspective of Laclau and Mouffe. This area of development studies has escaped critical investigation of why interculturalism is important to development, and how different social contexts influence the way interculturalism is understood in different societies. From this debate, the inherent incompatibility between universalism and particularism emerges and challenges the applicability of interculturalism in a development perspective.

The thesis seeks to contribute to a more elaborate discussion of the meaning or multiple meanings of intercultural development, to highlight the complex nature of international development. The objective of the thesis is to discuss: 1) the implications of introducing interculturalism in a development strategy that is based on universal principles, and 2) how to position the dividing line between cultural relativism and liberal universalism.

IBIS as a Danish-based development NGO, cooperates with local organisations from different social groupings and cultures to promote equal access to education, influence and resources. The case of IBIS in Guatemala serves as a point of departure, and the analysis will be based on interviews with representatives of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, IBIS in Denmark, and IBIS in Guatemala.

Through the use of post-structuralist discourse theory it will be argued that interculturalism is a floating signifier, which has been articulated with elements and floating signifiers from the discourse on universal human rights. Furthermore, it will be highlighted that people construct their own realities based on their own historical, cultural, natural, social, etc. context, and that these realities influence how people understand society. Finally, it will be discussed how the relation between humans, nature and the universe has an enormous influence on how people understand and articulate the exploitation of resources in relation to the economic system and development.

From an examination based on post-structuralist discourse theory, the thesis will discuss the dilemma between universal human rights and the right to cultural diversity, and how IBIS tries to find this balance through intercultural development. The reason for the emergence of interculturalism is a significant shift in the development discourse, after decades of imposing

'universal' and 'modern' values to start embracing different social and cultural beliefs and values. This, however, has created new conflict areas of what to accept on the basis of respect for cultural diversity, and what not to accept. Based on the findings the thesis will argue that intercultural development can be understood as a depoliticised strategy to overcome conflicts in the name of 'universal' values, rather than to solve the underlying sources of the problems.

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1 Introduction

This master thesis with the title “Interculturalism in a Development Perspective” rounds off the two-year master programme in Development and International Relations with a Latin American Specialisation at Aalborg University. The thesis aims to investigate and analyse the different views and perspectives on development, and how peoples’ social context affects their perception of the concept.

In this chapter I will explain the background and my motivation for the choice of this topic as well as a contextualisation from which the research question will be formulated and specified.

1.1 Background

It seems that many abstract concepts, not just within development, have turned into buzzwords that need to be present simply to make something sound appealing, and to make the world more simple and straightforward. But this creates the danger of concepts becoming empty and almost without meaning, because of its numerous different articulations. For that reason I would like to investigate how some of those buzzwords are understood in different groups of society and why they are important. To be able to discuss and analyse the importance of working with, for example human, rights based development, intercultural development, democracy, freedom, equality. Is everyone really interested in the same things? Do universal values exist? Is developed ‘better’ than developing – and can we ‘measure’ development? Why is this so? And why and how do we construct a difference between them and us through discourse?

Development is used as a concept everyday in many different contexts without further discussion of the meaning of the word – if there is any. We, as scholars and practitioners, need to think about what is taught at universities and how this is perceived in other parts of the world; and the development NGOs need to be critically examined so misunderstandings can be avoided. Since many misunderstandings arise because of different worldviews, realities and understandings of the world, and because interculturalism is an important part of IBIS’ work, I believe that it is crucial to look into what interculturalism means in a development perspective, and how it affects the work of IBIS as an NGO.

1.1.1 Contextualisation, IBIS in Guatemala

IBIS is a Danish development NGO that emerged out of World University Service (WUS) in 1991, and has worked with development projects since the 1960's (IBIS A). IBIS is an independent membership based development organisation with the objective of creating a world where everyone has equal access to education, influence and resources. Members are encouraged to participate in shaping IBIS' areas of interest and there is a large degree of transparency with open access to annual reports. IBIS' projects in Africa and Latin America aim to eradicate inequality and poverty through education and support of the civil society. IBIS is a firm believer in the theory that development projects should be carried out in close cooperation with the local cultures (IBIS B).

In Denmark, IBIS has various campaigns and programs. At the moment two focus areas stand out: 1) the Danish branch of "The Global Campaign for Education" (Hele Verden i Skole) which focuses on creating attention about children's right to education, and 2) a campaign against tax evasion and capital flight focusing on changing tax legislation so profits from transfer mispricing cannot be transferred to tax havens. Additionally, IBIS has an ongoing focus on promoting and discussing development in the public sphere.

As a result of IBIS' policy of close cooperation with counterparts only one Danish person works at the office of IBIS in Guatemala – the communication advisor, Claudia. The rest of the staff is mostly from different indigenous backgrounds and the director Ana María is from Costa Rica. This is part of IBIS' intercultural approach to cooperation in development. In Guatemala, IBIS has worked since 1990 to secure a peaceful transition and development of a country that has suffered from numerous dictatorships and civil wars. What interests me about this specific country is that even though the country has a long history of oppression and suffering there is still today a right-wing conservative government in a country where the majority of the population descends from indigenous peoples¹. The elections are generally seen to be fair and free, also from international observers, so what is it that makes oppressed people vote their oppressors to power? The country ranks as one of the most economically unequal nations, and a large majority of the people living in poverty is of rural indigenous descent.

¹ The current president was a high ranked officer during the armed conflict.

1.2 Motivation

I have lived in Latin America for several years and have worked with peoples from the middle of the Amazonian jungle trying to protect their forest from foreign oil companies' exploitation of natural resources; I worked and lived on the pampas with Argentine 'gauchos' who after having gone through a good educational system and having lived and worked in the city they found satisfaction by escaping from life in the fast lane of modernity; and through an internship I worked with people who one day suddenly had found themselves without a job because their factory went bankrupt or the owner simply disappeared, and today these people are running the factories as cooperatives where they take the decisions. These people were all questioning the 'normal' in society. In many places it is simply taken for granted that you follow the development of the society, and if you do not, then you are a little bit strange.

So I started to wonder what the normal is and how does it become the norm. Surely it is a contextual thing. But what if the normal is associated with many things depending on the context? What if people's articulation of the normal reinforces it? Or what if the way we talk about concepts change depending on the context we are in? If the normal is one thing in one social context, what is then normal in another? How does IBIS know what is normal in the societies where they work? One thing is to claim that you work interculturally, but what is interculturalism and what is culture? On a broader level, one could also ask what is intercultural development, or even development? To point out how important interculturalism is to IBIS' work in Guatemala, it can be mentioned that the actual word 'interculturalism' appears more than 50 times in the 35-page country strategy for Guatemala, and this clearly caught my attention and sparked my interest for research on this topic.

During my academic career I have always wondered how language and discourses construct and maintain our life and society, and how concepts and discourses are constructed, maintained and changed. So if for instance interculturalism means something in one social context and something different in another (maybe there are even different understandings of interculturalism within the same organisation), how can people then communicate? How do 'we' strike a balance between being able to communicate through language and at the same time having to define what 'we' 'mean' with every single 'word'? Paradoxically, in everyday language no one is really able to explain what many of them mean with the specific words used in everyday discourse; and even if they are able to explain what they mean, it might mean something different to another person. I find it puzzling that after decades of 'development',

there are so many understandings of what development constitutes and how it is achieved that the word in itself almost seems to have lost its meaning.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the previous my problem formulation is:

How and why does IBIS apply interculturalism as a development strategy in Guatemala? How is it possible to work interculturally while at the same time promoting universal values in development?

This problem formulation consists of two parts.

- The first part concerns the word interculturalism in itself and how it is understood and how it changes articulation in different social contexts. To answer this, I will by use of discourse theory see how the articulations of interculturalism as a signifier changes between different actors, depending on their social context. It is my hypothesis that interculturalism is a floating signifier, i.e. an element that has not yet become a nodal point with a temporary fixed meaning, and that each actor through intervention in the antagonistic relationship try to articulate their definition into hegemony.
- The second part of the research question treats the theoretical combination of development and interculturalism. From the findings of the first question I will analyse and discuss how it is possible to work interculturally while at the same time promoting 'universal' values in development. Here my hypothesis is that IBIS' intentions are to promote interculturalism, but in doing so interculturalism ends up being a discursive development strategy that promotes the 'universal' values of development.

1.4 Relevance and contribution

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on international development, where I, during my research, have found that there is written very little within the discourse theoretical approaches. For that reason, it can be said that the field is in need of examination and I hope that this thesis can create more interest within the academic circles. On the academic level, the analysis can be beneficial to development students, since, in my opinion, many development programs lack a critical examination of the language used.

IBIS can benefit from an investigation of their communications strategy to see how it is aligned with their practice, and furthermore it can be beneficial for IBIS to understand how their discourse on development is understood in other contexts.

1.5 Literature Review

During the research for this thesis, I have gone through a large selection of primary resources from the different organisations combined with a range of interviews of actors from some of the organisations involved. Regarding IBIS, I have interviewed representatives from the headquarters in Denmark and IBIS in Guatemala, and I have used the development programmes and strategies that are accessible as downloads on the IBIS website regarding Guatemala. All this can be treated as primary sources and is good for analysis of the discursive strategy of IBIS, and it is especially interesting to analyse if the official documents are in line with what the interviewees say.

Regarding the indigenous organisations in Guatemala, I have conducted a range of interviews with representatives of different groups in the area of Huehuetenango. These people do not necessarily cooperate with IBIS or between them, nor are they from the same ethnic or cultural group; they even have different native languages. None the less I believe it is possible to interpret how they view the society and how they understand the words that are used in the intercultural development discourse.

Unfortunately, I did not have the possibility of carrying out interviews with representatives from the Guatemalan State, so I have used speeches and documents that are available on the State's website, as well as statements brought by both national and international media.

Most of the data being used in this thesis is from primary sources, and hence perfectly suited for discourse theoretical analyses, because it comes directly from the people or organisations. In the cases where secondary literature is being used, it will mostly be for background information.

Finally there is a wide array of theoretical literature, which has been used to construct the methodological foundation of this thesis. Much has been written about discourse theory, but many people who enter the world of Laclau and Mouffe will encounter a need for a step-by-step instruction of how to conceive of the whole analytical framework, and how to get started. These were also my initial worries, but thanks to the literature of Marianne Jørgensen, Louise Phillips, and David Howarth I have found the process more doable.

1.6 Delimitations

It needs to be mentioned briefly that this thesis does not aim to generalise about the discourses in the development industry as a whole, nor do I wish to say anything about how the indigenous peoples in other parts of the world understand intercultural development. Instead my objective is to interpret and be able to understand how development is

understood and what it means in the social sphere of the involved actors; and this is exactly what the qualitative research excels in.

I am aware of the inherently euro-centric academic system I am a part of, and I know that this affects my mindset, but I believe that with a solid and transparent methodological and theoretical framework I will still be able to analyse and draw conclusions based on the collected data. Furthermore, since IBIS is positioned within this same euro-centric system as a so-called 'developed world NGO', the representatives from the indigenous organisations are from 'developing world organisations', and the State is somehow caught in the middle, I find that they make good representations of how different social groups can articulate concepts differently and hence create antagonistic relationships and counter-hegemonic struggles.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Methodology and Theory

Chapter 2 outlines my position in the philosophy of social science and my research methodology. The chapter relates social constructivism to the analysis of discourses along with explaining how the research is carried out and data is collected.

Chapter 3 will explain the theory applied in this thesis, and will begin with an explanation of interculturalism and how it relates to multiculturalism, before moving onto a discussion of the role of NGOs in society and how social processes take place; and finally, an explanation of the dilemma between universalism and particularism. The second part of chapter 3 explains discourse theory, its analytical concepts and the implications of social constructivism and discourse theory on social change.

Analysis:

Chapter 4 will analyse discursively the different articulations of interculturalism from the perspective of IBIS, the indigenous organisations of Guatemala, and the Guatemalan state.

Chapter 5 treats the discourse on nature and natural resources. This analysis deals with the counter-hegemonic discourses on nature being either a resource for exploitation, as a part of human beings, or as something in between. It will be shown that some of the articulations are mutually exclusive, and therefore in a constant discursive struggle for hegemony.

Chapter 6 explicitly analyses and discusses how development can have different meanings depending on the ideology of the actors. This leads on to a discussion of how antagonistic articulations on development struggle to gain hegemony but also can create counter-hegemonic alliances.

Conclusion

Chapter 7 concludes this paper and sums up on the analysis and based on the findings, answer how and why interculturalism influences the development strategy of IBIS in Guatemala, and how IBIS balances between universalist and particularist values.

2 Philosophy of Social Science

In the following, I will go through and discuss my philosophical view and perspective of the social sciences. I believe that it is important for a scholar to be aware of his/her view of the world at both an ontological and an epistemological level, since, in my opinion, one will not be able to make a proper methodological analysis without having had the reflections on what constitutes *being* and *knowledge*. I follow in the steps of Moses & Knutsen who claims that there are three members of the metaphysical gang: (1) ontology concerned with what the world is made of; (2) epistemology asking what knowledge is; and (3) methodology discussing how we acquire knowledge and “how do we know?” (2007:5). By making this discussion explicit I will invite the reader to take part of how I view the social world (and to some extent the natural world as well) in order to create a level playing ground for later discussions. I believe that we, as people, always understand a topic from within a wider set of ontological, epistemological and social boundaries.

First, I will discuss ontology and epistemology and how it is connected from a social constructivist perspective; then I will go through my methodological considerations during the pre-research for this project; and finally I will explain the method that has been utilised in this project. This is to make sure that there is coherence between theory and method on a philosophical level.

2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

When approaching a specific topic, be it a question in everyday life or the topic for a thesis, I find it important to be aware of what existence is – i.e. to philosophise about the world of *being* and *knowledge*. A person’s view of this can vary according to the context and what is discussed; for instance whether discussing the size of the reinforcements on a bridge or if divine interference exists. In the following I will focus on how I perceive the social world to make sure that this fits with the methodological framework I intend to use.

2.1.1 Social constructivism – how constructivist am I?

Constructivism refers to the concept of people *constructing* their own perception of reality; what they perceive as truth, facts, existence, etc.; that there cannot exist any *objectivity* since what is claimed to be true is contingent on the social, cultural, historical, etc. context; and that all perspectives in theory can be equally true. I will in this thesis not go through a philosophical discussion of different ontological positions, but will instead focus on my own view of how meaning is constructed, changed or maintained within the social sphere.

As stated above, I am of the opinion that the social constructions of the world have an enormous impact on how we perceive and experience everyday practices, and what we make of them; here I refer to social constructions like language, science, society, culture, history, etc. These are all human constructs and imbued with a certain idea, which then again is open to interpretation and change, which takes place almost constantly. (Krørup 2008:164).

My position is what Krørup (2008:165) would call ontological constructivism with regards to human relations in believing that social praxis, systems, thought, etc. are socially constructed phenomena. This also means (as previously mentioned) that I believe that all human beings, since we are reflecting individuals, understand and experience life through a frame of reference that is a result of a social, cultural and historical past, which itself has been constructed and transmitted through generations. And exactly because of this, one of the most important aspects of critical thinking is to look at how we construct society, what effects the constructed society has on our reality, and furthermore how different ideologies affect this reality and how it can be changed, if so wished. Furthermore, being ontological constructivist comes with a specific view on epistemology, since the two are a 'package', in that the ontology shapes how epistemology is perceived.

Since social constructivism is build on the premise that society is constructed (and therefore malleable) it implies that the world is filled with meaning(s) by us, and that meaning is contestable since there exists no given objective reality. The constructivist does not disregard phenomena, but instead she/he interprets them from a perspective that is embedded in a context that is constructed through human relations (Andersen *et al.* 2005:16-18), and this is exactly how I perceive the social world, and what I would like to investigate in this thesis. I do not claim to be able to hold a particular universal truth or that I somehow have access to independent and objective knowledge about the world. Instead it is maintained that this is one interpretation of the topic, based on one frame of reference, readings of the literature in

the field, and the reliability of the data collected through the methodological framework, with the objective of finding an answer to my problem formulation.

From having briefly explained my perspective and position on ontology and epistemology, and how they are intertwined, I will move on to a brief description and interpretation of how Laclau and Mouffe view the world.

2.1.2 Structuralism and post structuralism

I will now provide a brief description of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's view on structuralism and post-structuralism, since this is important to be able to distinguish and understand the different variations of discourse analysis and theory, which will be explained later. This affects how one understands and interprets social change – through conflict or through gradual change of agreement; and finally it involves the debate of structure-agency, which is interesting in understanding how social change is started.

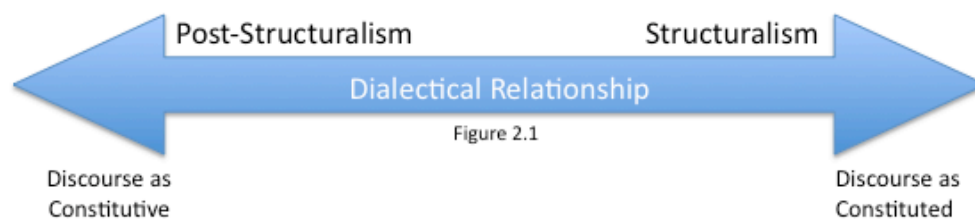
2.1.2.1 Discourse in Structuralism & Post-Structuralism

Structuralism is the understanding that culture and other social constructs need to be interpreted and understood through their interrelationship with the society they are embedded in, i.e. the structures. Post-structuralism completely dismisses these structures and claims them to be constructed.

Post-structuralism (Laclau and Mouffe) and post-modernism is said to be the root of social constructivism and arose as a reaction to the, sometimes, universalising theories of structuralism, e.g. Marxism (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:15). Discourse analysis and theory are based on structuralism's understanding of language, but post-structuralism opens up for the possibility of social change through a conflictual alternation of language and meaning, whereas structuralism in itself is more deterministic and totalistic. Through discourse and language we can create representations of reality, but these representations are not simple objective snapshots, they are constructs and in that way they reproduce the reality. This does not mean that reality and facts do not exist, but it means that they are made meaningful through language and discourse. Understood in this way, language is not just a transfer of information and fact about the world; language is what constitutes the social world, relations, identities, cultures, etc.

Jørgensen and Phillips describe the relation between discourse theory and post-structuralism as: "No discourse is a closed entity: it is, rather, constantly being transformed through contact

with other discourses" (2002:6). The way discourses are changed is, from this perspective, through a constant discursive antagonistic struggle, i.e. several distinct discourses, each representing a certain way of articulating and understanding the social world, are struggling to become dominant and hegemonic; in other words to temporarily lock the otherwise changing structure of language and meaning (J rgensen & Phillips 1999:18). I will elaborate on the concept of antagonisms, hegemony and social conflict in section 3.1. To visualize the different view of the role of discourse as being either constituted or constitutive, J rgensen and Phillips (1999:29-30) draw out this simple sketch.



To the far right where the view is that discourse is constituted, discourse analysis is rarely seen, since structuralists view discourses as a reproduction of fixed social practices, and it therefore makes more sense to analyze other topics of the society, e.g. the economic system. To the far left, social constructivists hold that language can constitute and change the society.

Social constructivism (and other discourse analytical schools) comes out of the structuralist way of understanding language and the world, and post-structuralism opens up for a more changeable world because language is no longer seen as a total and unchangeable structure. In both systems, signs get their meaning from being different to other signs, but in post-structuralism signifiers construct meaning, and this can change depending on the social context. So, post-structuralism does not neglect the structure of language, but understand the structure as being temporary and open to contestation and hence change, which is relevant to this project because I analyse how the different articulations on intercultural development change depending on the social context and grouping.

From having explained my ontological and epistemological perspective, and how it relates to the language and discourse, I will now move on to explain the methodology of the thesis to stress the importance of coherence to be able to draw conclusions in relation to how interculturalism, as understood by IBIS, influences the way IBIS works with development.

2.2 Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss the methodological considerations and reason to why I have applied the chosen methods in this thesis. It can be debated whether it is possible at all to discuss the concept of methodology from a discourse perspective, since constructivist science questions the traditional set of rules and norms of how science is carried out. Constructivism, and therefore also discourse theory, can be termed more as a stepping-stone for reflexion of the epistemological insights of the social world (Hansen 2009: 391). I have done the reader the heuristic favour of artificially separating the philosophy of social science, methodology and method into individual chapters to make it more accessible.

2.2.1 The Hermeneutical Tradition of Qualitative Research

This project is taking its point of departure in the hermeneutical, or interpretative, tradition. In stating this, I am trying to make it obvious that as a writer I am affected by my own background and understanding of how to analyze and interpret the world. The object of the hermeneutic approach is to create or achieve a broad understanding of the intention of a social context. This means that we construct a social reality (albeit constructed and understood in different ways), which is open to different interpretations, but this is not to say that each individual necessarily makes his/her own interpretation. People are also influenced by other peoples' interpretations of the topic. Being aware of this will enable me to relate critically to my own context, and at the same time try to include a broad understanding of the studied topics' context as well. An important part of hermeneutic research is to understand that interpretation and understanding is a circular and/or dialectical process in which one should strive to understand both the totality, but also the individual parts of the topic.

Another aspect of my choice of the hermeneutic research tradition is that I do not intent to produce generalised knowledge about a very broad subject. My aim is to interpret and understand the topic of research, i.e. interculturalism in a development perspective, and how the discourse of development affects the different organisations. Finally, this methodology opens up for other understandings and realities of the actors, which, in turn, can give me a new understanding.

2.2.2 Discourse as a sociological analysis

The methodological approach to the topic of this thesis is a sociological analysis of discourse, and this chapter will explain the reason for this choice.

Ruiz 2009 divides the analysis of discourse into three levels: (1) Textual analysis where the discourse is treated as an object of analysis; (2) Contextual analysis which looks at discourses as single events that can be analysed; and (3) Sociological analysis that understands discourse as a social product of ideology. I will be operating on the second and third level throughout this analysis, and hence treat discourse as something that can be and/or requires interpretation.

The concept of discourse is in itself a difficult one to define, and there is limited specific agreement about what exactly constitutes discourse theory and analysis. At the same time, there is fair agreement about discourses having a connection to linguistics and how different realities are created (Hansen 2009: 389), but from a sociological perspective “discourse is defined as any practice by which individuals imbue reality with meaning” (Ruiz 2009:3).

Choosing a methodology that analyses this level enables me to understand how the articulation of development and interculturalism is dependent on a wider social context, and how the maintenance or change of this discourse might change the social context of the individuals working with it.

2.3 Method

The interpretation and understanding of this case study is carried out through the collection of qualitative data, using methods that will be described in this section.

2.3.1 Case study

In this paper I will through a case study interpret the way IBIS understands interculturalism; how this understanding influences the development projects they support; the way IBIS works; why they find interculturalism important; and how the balance ‘universal values’ with respect for diversity. The case study gives me access to an otherwise complex reality of interculturalism and development. By choosing the case of IBIS in Guatemala, I take advantage of the possibility of studying a phenomenon that encapsulates my main interests from the master program at Aalborg University in Development and International Relations with a Latin American specialisation. When carrying out a case study in the hermeneutical research tradition it is important to be aware of the contextual implicit understandings that can arise, since they can be highly relevant for the object of study (Yin 2003:13). For that reason it is up to the researcher to prepare well the questions and topics of research, since they define both

the content and the shape of the study, and because there are many (sometimes diverging) interests, when working with human beings.

With regards to the possibility of making generalisations, the case study is of course rather limited in its generalisability, but this does not mean that the case cannot be representative of a wider societal context. However, being able to generalise is not the aim of the case study, on the contrary, the point is to be able to interpret and understand the different qualitative layers and nuances of the specific case, rather than making a superficial and simplified generalisation of a complex reality (Yin 2003:21).

2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

To be able to understand the different perspectives on interculturalism in a development context, I have chosen to perform a number of interviews with representatives of different organisations in Guatemala and representatives of IBIS in both Denmark and Guatemala. The interview, in general, is a great way to collect information from different actors, and I was in this case lucky that many people were interested in participating in the interviews.

The reason I find the semi-structured interview to be a good method is because it enables me to get a broader understanding of the interviewees' reality, since it opens up for dialogue and for the respondent to come with his/her own interpretation, reflection, and elaboration of time and space (Kvale & Brinkmann 2008:17).

The only methodological challenge of the semi-structured interview is that it "reduces [the] ability to make systemic comparisons between the interview responses" (Klandermans & Staggenborg 2002:92-93, *author's brackets*). This, however, was never the goal of this project. Instead the possibility to experience and listen to how people understand and construct the social world compliments the methodology of hermeneutics and discourse theory, since it gives me a better understanding of people from other social contexts. Finally, the semi-structured interview gives me examples of discourses from another space and time, and this gives me the possibility to experience how these discourses relate and contradict with the discourses used by other interviewees, and hence it enables me to interpret and analyse it from a theoretical standpoint.

2.3.2 Further Collection of Data

2.3.2.1 Text analysis

On top of the data collected from interviews I will make use of analysis of texts from IBIS; more specifically the thematic programs regarding education and governance, the country strategy for Guatemala, as well as the country strategy for Denmark.

2.3.2.2 Participant Observation and Field Notes

I will make use of the experiences made during my field trip to Guatemala to perform the interviews. These observations might not be analysed explicitly, but they have added to my understanding of the Guatemalan society and have given me the possibility to experience how everyday life is in both Guatemala City and in Huehuetenango. As a researcher and traveller I tried to get in contact with as many people as possible on busses, taxis, hotels, food stands in the street, etc. All these conversations (both short and long) have given a more diverse and nuanced image of the country and its many cultures and identities. All of this would have been impossible to experience through research from Aalborg.

2.3.3 Individuals, informants, connections and confidentiality

Since the interviews are part of a qualitative and in-depth discourse oriented research approach I have tried to access representatives from IBIS' different counterparts in Guatemala. This, however, has proved difficult due to several reasons. Firstly, because I only was in Guatemala for two weeks, and many of the counterparts are busy organisations, so to just arrive and hope for the best was probably a bit naïve. Secondly, due to social uprisings during my stay, I was recommended/ordered by the director of IBIS Guatemala not to go outside the main cities. This was underlined by the ministry of internal affairs in Guatemala who through media stated that all foreigners interfering in internal affairs would be expelled. Since some of the organisations I was in touch with are against the government, I decided to follow that advice. This meant that I stayed in Guatemala City and in Huehuetenango, and arranged for people to come to me for the interviews, and since the organisations do not have very large budgets, I had to cover their travel expenses (which admittedly was not very high).

Thirdly, IBIS put me in contact with the center of study CEDFOG² in Huehuetenango who were very open, welcoming and helpful with arranging bus, taxi, hotel and an office for me. They also arranged interviews for me, since they knew all the contacts very well. These people are

² Centro de Estudios y Documentacion de la Frontera Occidental de Guatemala [Study and documentation centre of the western border of Guatemala]

not necessarily directly connected to IBIS work. There is, however, a constantly present fear or precariousness of the authorities, and many of the interviewees preferred to be anonymous, and the information from these people is used as background knowledge. Some of the people I talked to in the streets were also suspicious of criticizing the government – and in this context I would like to underline that I did not myself bring up the topic of government criticism. Fourthly, a number of the interviews had to be cancelled due to manifestations in remembrance of a person who was killed by the military during a demonstration the year before.

3 Theory

3.1 Discourse Theory

I will in this thesis use discourse theory to introduce and contextualise some of the concepts that are being used in the world of development. The previous section on my ontological and epistemological view of reality, society and science explained why I am able to use discourse theory in this thesis, even though discourse theory is sometimes a contested topic within the social sciences. This chapter will explain the theory in itself, and how I understand discourses as temporary systems of signifiers representing and creating the entire social and political system of interactions. As claimed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, that because of discourse “every social configuration is *meaningful*” (Laclau & Mouffe 1987: 82, *italics in original*).

The last couple of decades have seen a rise in the use of discourse theory within the humanities and social sciences, and several universities have created departments of discourse analysis. At the same time the general idea of language as a carrier of meaning have spread to communications advisers, marketing directors, etc, who spend their whole career thinking about how to articulate the ‘right’ words with the ‘right’ meanings to achieve certain goals and persuade people to ‘buy’ their product – be it a toothpaste or politician.

Rather than having any ‘agreed-upon definition’, discourse theory consists of a variety of different ideas and theoretical practices (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000:1127). It evolved from the “linguistic turn” in the twentieth century denoting different intellectual movements and traditions such as structuralism influenced by the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger (Strydom 2000:34). The post-structuralist approach applied in this thesis looks at “discourse in a social context, including the social and political dimensions in addition to the

discursive” (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000:1127). Language or “discourses” are thus seen as a form of social interaction embedded in a certain historical context.

Even though the concept of discourse analysis arose from subjects like linguistics and semiotics, it has spread to studies like sociology, political science, history, development studies, etc. in an increasingly inter- and intra-disciplinary study tradition, to help people interpret and understand specific happenings throughout history. There could be many reasons for this, but one of the generally acknowledged reasons is a growing dissatisfaction with the positivistic approach to social science and its inability to complement the hermeneutic tradition. Additionally, the worldview of critical theorists of post-modernism, post-structuralism, etc moved increasingly towards acknowledging constructivism as, on the one hand, helping the understanding of social change, and on the other, an understanding of the maintenance of social structures, e.g. through hegemonic discourses.

Post-structuralists and post-marxists like Derrida, Foucault and Laclau & Mouffe all have a broad understanding of discourses. They see social structures as ambiguous, incomplete and contingent systems of meaning. In early writings, Laclau and Mouffe started deconstructing the Marxist ideology drawing on post-structuralist philosophy, whereby they developed a concept of discourses that contained all the practices and meanings that shape a certain community of social actors. According to their perspective, a discourse is the symbolic system and social order, and the role of discourse analysis is to investigate the historical and political construction and function.

In opposition to the empiricist, realist and Marxist understanding of reality in which the objective world's nature create the character and truth of the discourses, Foucault argued that certain discursive rules make the subject able to produce objects, concept, strategies, etc which together constitutes a discourse. In other words, Foucault claims that discourses are shaped by social practices while simultaneously shaping social relations and institutions. Building on Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe expanded the discourse theory to include *all* social practices in a way that discourses and discursive practices are synonymous with systems of social relations.

After a brief introduction to discourse theory I will before going into a discussion of the analytical levels of discourse analysis and how the social reality is viewed, present the specific discourse theoretical concepts that will be operationalised throughout the analysis.

3.1.1 Discourse Theoretical Concept

Because this thesis will analyse the abstracts concepts of interculturalism, nature, and development, it is important to first explain the distinct elements of the discourse theoretical framework that will be applied throughout this analysis. For a more comprehensive explanation of the many parts of discourse theory see appendix 1.

3.1.1.1 Sign, signifier and signified

In the semiotic tradition a sign is divided into the *signifier* (the form of the sign) and the *signified* (the meaning of the sign); in social constructivism the meaning of the sign (i.e. the signified) is constructed through social interaction. An oft-used example is the “tree” which is split up into a generic picture of a “tree” and the word *tree* in itself.



- Sign = signifier + signified =

The actual meaning of the signifier “tree” is then a social construct and is then contingent on many different premises. For the owner of the forest it is an income; for a person interested in constructing a road it might be a hindrance; for others it might be the “earth’s lungs”; for an ornithologist it is the home of a certain species; etc.

However, in the post-structuralist understanding of language and discourse a word does not exist in itself as an empty concept to be filled. Instead, various signifiers are articulated into elements or moments to construct a discourse and a meaning. This articulation is dependent on the social context of the person articulating. This thesis will treat the rather abstract concepts of interculturalism, nature and development, which are elements with highly contested articulations (floating signifiers), and not ‘simple’ material objects like a tree.

3.1.1.2 Key signifiers

3.1.1.2.1 Elements and moments

An element is a signifier with multiple meanings that are not fixed in a discourse yet, whereas moments are elements with an articulated partially fixed meaning. In other words, to use the metaphor of discourse as a fishnet, a moment is the knot in the fishnet, whereas an element is a ‘meaning’ that has not yet become a knot (articulated discursively). A discourse ‘tries’ to make elements into moments by reducing their multiple meanings to a single meaning by

constructing a temporary “closure” (or net) in the otherwise constant transformation of the signs’ meaning. So, a discourse is a system of moments in which the meaning of the individual signs is determined by the signs’ relation to the other signs (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:36-38).

3.1.1.2.2 Nodal Points and floating signifiers

The temporary closure of a discourse is built around nodal points. Nodal points are privileged signs that other signs are ordered around and get their meaning from through chains of equivalence. Nodal points are signs that have been floating signifiers but through struggle and contestation have established a meaning within a specific discourse. In the words of Jørgensen & Phillips: “Nodal points are floating signifiers, but where the concept nodal points refers to a point of crystallisation in the specific discourse, the concept floating signifier refers to the struggle over important signs between the different discourses” (1999:39, *own translation*). This means that nodal points can combine otherwise “free flowing” elements into a discourse on a social topic or field. In the case of this project, some of the floating signifiers of interest are interculturalism and development.

3.1.1.3 Antagonisms and Hegemony

Discourses are constructed through struggles over meaning where nodal points via chains of equivalence capture moments into the temporary closure of meaning. This is done through antagonistic differentiation and conflict in an attempt to exclude other meanings of certain moments and discourses. The antagonistic struggle between discourses can only be dissolved (temporarily) through hegemony, which is a force of monopolisation that silences the surrounding potential threat to the specific discourse. This is because the excluded elements of a discourse is also the thing that makes it possible – understood in the way that a discourse is identified by, on the one side, what it is, and on the other side, what it is not. Identities are constituted by being different to and/or challenging other identities, i.e. it is almost impossible to speak about other people without referring to “us” and “them”.

Hegemony and discourse are “similar” in function in that they both temporarily structure and exclude something, but hegemony is, so to speak, on a “higher” level, in that hegemony intervenes to structure several discourses that are in an antagonistic relationship. So hegemony is present and successful when one discourse dominates the social field where there used to be conflict, and constructs an “objective truth” by structuring particular meanings around certain privileged signifiers – nodal points. Laclau and Mouffe bring in politics and ideology here, since “hegemonic discourse is [...] political in the sense that it admits only one contingent fixation of meaning, excluding other possible meanings” (in Müller

2010:13), thereby making it an ideological project to achieve or break hegemony through a constant struggle of fixing meaning to create a dominating perspective. In the context of this paper, we might find antagonistic relationships between the different articulations of the floating signifiers (interculturalism, nature and development).

3.1.1.3.1 *Social Change Through Conflict*

Following this train of thought, where discourses are constitutive of the social sphere through antagonistic and hegemonic struggle between ideologies, it becomes evident that societal change happens through conflict. This is related to Karl Polanyi's concept of change through a double-movement, in which society, through iterative steps moves towards a new *status quo*, where it stays for a while, until new antagonistic forces arise and contest the existing. The reason that antagonisms arise is because social actors become unable to connect with what they identify with³, and in this way antagonisms are constitutive of change, since social formations are dependent on who is 'inside' and who is 'outside' (Howarth 2005:153-154).

3.1.1.3.2 *The Structure is the Agent*

Post-structuralism acknowledges the classical dialectical relationship between structure and agency, but here the power is within the agent. The structure is a discursive closure, understood in the way that social systems are the results of former hegemonic struggles and antagonistic relationships. At the same time, the agent is a subject that has identified with a discourse (through interpellation) to become an ideological subject that either represents the existing hegemonic order or support the counter-hegemonic discourse (or doesn't care). This highlights that social relationships are given meaning through language, and that this meaning shapes and maintains everything in society (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:25). An example could be the case of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, who as agents are unable to identify with the capitalist structure, and therefore constructs a discourse that is counter-hegemonic.

This section explained the theoretical terms of discourse theory, and I will now move on to explain discourse theory in a societal context, to understand how discourse and society influence each other.

³ For instance, a peasant who loses land, becomes a landless peasant, and hence unable to identify with what it means to be a peasant.

3.1.2 Three Levels of Discourse Theory

Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourses takes as a point of departure the view that all objects and actions are meaningful and that this meaning is the product of specific historical systems of rules. This means that social practices and actions construct and challenge already existing discourses that constitute the social reality, because actions can challenge an existing system of meanings since the system is contingent on the agent.

According to Howarth (2005), it is necessary, in order to be able to analyse into detail these systems of meanings, rules and statements, to investigate three different levels of the discourse: 1) the discursive, 2) the discourse, and 3) the discourse analysis. The *discursive* (1) means that all objects are discourse objects since the circumstances for what constitutes meaning depends on a socially constructed system of rules and meaningful differences. An example of this could be how a mountain for one person is something beautiful to climb, for another a possible source of minerals, while someone else would see it as an hindrance for the daily commute to the next valley, etc. In this way the mountain has a meaning not only contingent on the eye of the beholder, but also on the system in which it is inscribed. This does not mean that the existence of the mountain is questioned, as a typical realist would argue against constructivism. Instead, the *discursive* claims that we always find ourselves within a world of already existing meaningful practices and objects, and that we as human beings are thrown into this world of discourses and should strive to, and do always, create our own meaning of it. (2) a *discourse* is a set of historically specific meanings that create the identity of both subjects and objects as concrete systems of social relations and practices. The shaping of identities has the purpose of creating antagonisms and political borders between an *inside* and an *outside*, i.e. us-them. An example of this could be the discourse on 'developed' and 'developing' countries that has created a delineation between those who are 'more developed' ('us') and those who are 'less developed' ('them'). The discourse carries with it many meanings of social relations and practices, and immediately creates pictures and thoughts in one's mind. Finally, (3) *Discourse analysis* is the process of actual analysis of the discourses as carriers of meaning, in which the analyst processes a wide variety of linguistic and non-linguistic material (interviews, reports, speeches, institutions, organisations, etc.) which enables subjects to experience a reality of words and practices.

Throughout this thesis I will work on all three levels, since I will conduct an analysis (3) of different development discourses (2), and will specifically investigate three actors'

articulations of three distinct, but still connected, signifiers (1), i.e. IBIS, the indigenous peoples and the Guatemalan state's articulation of interculturalism, nature and development.

3.1.3 Discourse Theory: Challenging the Many Realities.

I find it interesting to analyse how people from different social contexts articulate and understand the many realities; how cultures, identities, etc. are constructed, maintained and changed discursively; and how discourses can become hegemonic on many different levels and in many different contexts (local – global, not just geographically but also contextually).

Discourse theory is not concerned with the revelation of any hidden underlying meanings of everyday social praxis. On the contrary, discourse theory is about the problematic transfer of meaning through language since language is an already existing (albeit temporary) closure of meanings and differences based on a social context. The study of language is therefore used to create new understandings of the social praxis placing or imposing these meanings in wider social and structural contexts. This is done to create awareness of the meanings and signs carried by individual signifiers and discourses, so people are able to create new meanings from the same words or start using new words to create a new discourse with another meaning⁴. Hence, discourse theory is about challenging the sometimes deterministic or status quo of structuralism, and not accepting social life as simple and observable positivist facts. Instead, discourse theory creates the foundation for discursive investigation of articulations from specific social contexts, and what and how the rules and conventions that structure the production of meaning are constructed. Discourse theorists learned from Marx that social actors play an important role in criticising the theories of dominance and utility, but in opposition to the classical Marxism's focus on production and the workers' struggle, the post-structuralist and post-Marxist discourse theorists focus on the anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist perceptions of society as well as stressing the material and practical properties of the ideology (Howarth 2005: 24).

3.1.4 Is Discourse Theory Missing Something?

The critique coming mainly from realists, Marxists and positivist is aimed at discourse theory's alleged idealism and claims that the theory simplifies social systems into language. In this way there is, supposedly, a danger of losing or ignoring the importance of the material

⁴ An example of this could be the discourse on the year many students take to travel, work, etc. By using the word sabbatical- or gap-year a meaning is created about the time as being relaxing and partying, whereas for many people it is more of an existential and educative experience that can shape the persons life.

conditions of the society on the creation and change of social meaning, i.e. how institutions and nature limit our room of manoeuvrability, or in the overly dramatic words of Marx:

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living” (Marx 1852).

Furthermore, criticism focus on the problem or the inability of discourse theorists to state absolute truths and valid, objective statements about the object of study, due to the claimed conceptual and moral relativism within discourse theory. At the same time, positivists stress the importance of the systematic collection of objective facts and criticise discourse theorists for replacing this recollection with a subjectivist and methodological anarchistic view of social phenomena (Howarth 2005: 25). As a response to the criticism, Howarth (2005) states that the criticism is invalid because it works on the ontic level, i.e. about how to measure and describe being, rather than on the ontological level, i.e. the philosophy of being. In other words the critique is about *how* we perceive the social world (being), which in this context is irrelevant, since it is dependent on *what* you perceive as the social world (being) (*ibid.*). It should be mentioned that the validity of a conclusion could be contested on a methodological level, i.e. if the argument does not lead to the conclusion.

After having explained discourse theory’s terms and concepts, view of society, and social change, I will now move on to an explanation of culture, multiculturalism and interculturalism. After this I will finish off with a brief introduction to development and national and international NGOs.

3.2 Culture and Identity – The Construction of Different Realities

I will in this chapter discuss the concept of culture and identity within social constructivism, and how interculturalism is, and can be, used when interacting with other cultures through development projects. After having discussed different cultures and how they interact I will through a debate of universalism and relativism move on to the issue of what to accept in the name of culture.

When analysing the discourses on interculturalism and development, I will treat culture as a complex discursively constructed system of intangible symbols and traditions, including knowledge, beliefs, values, moral, customs, language, art, myths, etc. i.e. a temporary hegemonic construction among a group of people in order to create meaning of the reality. This refers not only to the social reality, but also to the nature and the natural world. Cultures

are not static and fixed structures of meaning; instead, because cultures are dynamic and evolve under constant impression from the surrounding society since self-reflecting people discursively construct them.

With post-modernism there came an increase in the focus on to what extent the behavior of individuals affects the construction and maintenance of cultures and how people interact between and within different cultures. This was most likely due to the increase in migration facilitated by easier movement and the ease of which international economy and communication suddenly took place. Since culture as a social construction gives people a sense of belonging to and identification with a larger group in society, it may add stability, order and structure in the everyday life (Halloran, 2007); an understanding that is shared by Ted Cantle, who claims that: "To a large extent, identity can now be regarded as chosen, rather than given" (Cantle).

Identity is here regarded as a discursive construction, in which identity is a representation of and identification with a temporary discursive closure. The subject is basically divided and tries to create an identity through sorting different signs and discourses into what the subject is and what it is not, i.e. in relation to something else. And since discourses can be changed, so can identities, and the possibility of having several identities in one person also exists, but is contingent on the subject itself (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:56). This means that a subject can 'be' different personalities within different collectives, but it also means that cultural concepts can be contested, e.g. what it means to be a 'man', 'woman', 'Danish', etc.

Because of this I will not look so much at the identity of the different actors in this thesis, but instead focus on how and why culture and interculturalism influences IBIS' work.

3.2.1 Multi- and Interculturalism

We live in a globalised world with multiple cultures, where we all have our own historical and cultural background. This means that we inevitably will encounter and have to interact with many different understandings of reality on an everyday basis. For an international development organisation it is important to try to understand the culture and understanding of reality of the partner organisations, to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. The different cultures are not necessarily equal, and since some cultures are more dominant or hegemonic than others, intolerance towards other worldviews or realities can create conflicts when people evaluate others based on their own worldviews. At the same time, the risk of being either ethnocentric or folkloric can arise when we are interacting with other cultures, because

“too” much intolerance or tolerance can legitimise something, which is not acceptable to other people. For that reason, a need for a model that could handle intercultural encounters arose to help mediate between the ethnocentric and the folkloric position within the framework of intercultural understanding. This is related to the discussion of universalism against particularism, which I will get back to in chapter 3.2.4.

Many international NGOs have been accused of forgetting the locals’ social groups and as a result of that not being sufficiently democratic, as underlined by Shankar: “It is now widely accepted that one of the reasons for the relatively unsuccessful results of four decades of development effort is that culture was overlooked in development thinking” (1998:1). Shankar refers to the failure of bilateral national top-down development projects, but his statement can be applied to international NGO development projects on a local level as well, where the lack of a contextual cultural understanding has led to problems with unsuccessful development projects. This has caused many international NGOs to include national/local civil society organisations in carrying out projects on the local level, because of their closer contact and understanding with the peoples whom the projects are aimed at, and hence the culture they identify with.

Interculturalism and multiculturalism accept and recognise that the world is multicultural (Alsina 2009). In this context it is important to notice that interculturalism refers to the normative ideology of practising interculturality, which is the relation between people of different cultures, and multiculturalism is the ideology of practising multiculturality (Olivé 2004). Both ‘-isms’ accept and understand the ‘-ities’, which is not the case the other way around. During my research for this project I noticed that in Spanish the ‘-ism’ is very rarely used. Instead the ‘-ity’ form of the concepts is used, which means that there is a difference in discourses and content, which could pose misunderstandings. I have, however, chosen to conflate the two concepts in this project, because I believe that they in this context are metonyms.

According to Ted Cantle’s there is a need for interculturalism in multicultural societies, because interculturalism breaks down the separatism that can arise within the relativist and ethnocentric approach to other cultures of multiculturalism (Cantle). This is not a feature of multiculturalism in itself, but it has been the result because multiculturalism, has a strong inclination towards a us-them separation, whereas the concept of interculturalism means,

according to Ted Cattle, to value what we have in common instead of flagging the differences between us. In that way peoples' identity becomes less important to our co-existence and cooperation. We should not conceal our individual identity, but people should learn to relate to other people who are different, and see them as an opportunity to learn and understand something new, and to see that categorizing people according to stereotypes and presuppositions is rarely the successful way to get to know people. Teaching people the intercultural competencies of interaction and understanding could create confidence so people are not afraid of losing their identity to the 'threatening' other culture.

Regarding faith, people should respect that to some people faith can be a valuable contribution, "but if faith is in the public sphere faith communities must expect their views to be contested too" (Cattle). So when IBIS operates in multi-cultural, multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-faith, etc. countries they aim to be aware of and open to other ontological, philosophical and hermeneutic views of the reality than their own.

Sometimes people fear that multiculturalism, interculturalism and globalisation erase or assimilate all cultures into one homogeneous culture. I am under the impression that as long as cultures and social groupings are seen as discursively constructed and no cultural values are seen as universal, people are free to approach other cultures with an open mind, and globalisation gives people the opportunity to 'choose' between the values that are most interesting and appealing, such fears are ungrounded.

With regards to interculturalism and development, interculturalism is seen as a political project with relations between different cultures, in which the 'common' is emphasised, as well as the respect for culturally different individuals and groups (Alsina 2009). Hence, the interaction on a level playing ground is important for a proper functioning of the cooperation in IBIS' development projects. When practicing intercultural cooperation it is also important to overcome our own cultural understandings, not to ignore them, but to be open to other ways of understanding the world. This does not mean that we should leave our own understanding and put us self in the 'others' place, since this would be impossible. Rather, we should aim to transcend and understand the culture of the other – but not become the other.

3.2.2 Why Develop – What is Development?

Etymologically the verb 'to develop' has traces many centuries back, and has been articulated in various ways depending on the context. The direct synonym of the verb 'develop' is: to

unroll, unfold (Etymology online), bring out the capabilities or possibilities, elaborate, expand, generate, evolve, bring to a mature or advanced state (Dictionary.com), etc. A search on Wikipedia reveals more than 50 different types of development, so it comes as no surprise that we need to be clear about what we think development is, before developing the argument further (pun intended). In everyday media and political speak development usually refers to economic growth and poverty relief (normally measured through GDP), and discussions are about how to resolve this. According to the United Nations development is:

“Reducing poverty, promoting prosperity and protecting the planet. United Nations development efforts profoundly affect the lives and well-being of millions of people throughout the world. They are based on the conviction that lasting international peace and security are possible only if the economic prosperity and the well-being of people everywhere is assured” (UN A).

A large problem with definitions like that is that they raise more questions than they answer, since 1) the definition has a sender with a purpose, 2) the discourse is constructed and therefore open to contestation, 3) How the definition is understood depends on a social context. What is for instance economic prosperity, well-being, knowledgeable, decent? Another problem is how to achieve these goals, which of course is a completely different and ideological discussion.

The traditional development theories, i.e. modernisation theory, centre-periphery theory, and world-systems theory can be and have been criticised heavily, for being biased and deterministic, for favouring or focusing too much on economic development and for ignoring the different understandings and realities in the social and natural sphere. Additionally, it is important to remember that all theories arise as articulations of a social construction and as a product and producer of a social context. This means that the theories are not universally applicable, since people articulate and understand the concepts in different ways. For instance modernisation theory has been criticised for constructing a world where ‘modernisation’ = ‘better’, which might be true for some people, whereas others might articulate ‘better’ as something different.

As a response to this, and as a result of post-modern approaches to development, the concept of interculturalism as a development theory and method arose.

3.2.2.1 Interculturalism as a Development Theory

Since we constantly interact with people who have different backgrounds, and because the ways we understand their culture depend on how we view the world, it is important to understand individuals as social actors, instead of isolated beings (*no man is an island*). With

this understanding in mind it becomes apparent that cultures as dynamic phenomena change over time due to interaction between people, and therefore also new articulations of the context, which in turn create new meanings about the society and reality. The inevitable contact between peoples can cause (and have caused) conflicts on various levels, but maybe by understanding that our different backgrounds shape our different worldviews, and acknowledging this as something positive some of those conflicts could be resolved peacefully. The dilemma here, which be explained later in this chapter, is how to balance the line between ethnocentrism and relativism, i.e. how to decide what to accept, and what not, in the name of 'culture' and 'diversity'.

Within the development organisations, interculturalism was welcomed as a solution to the earlier eras copy-paste approaches to development project, which were, firstly very state-centric in methodology, and secondly had a bias towards copying the development model that the so-called developed countries had followed. Traditionally these projects were not equally successful for all the involved parts, which arguably were due to the lacking understanding of the cultural framework in the specific areas. With interculturalism as a development model, the level of analysis is much more specific. The focus is on specific groups and organisations in society, and it is important that there is a degree of autonomy in the individual organisations, so as to avoid making the mistakes of earlier times. IBIS, for instance, only has two foreigners in Guatemala, and the remaining 16 are from different areas of the country, which makes the cooperation with the local counterparts much easier, because there seems to be a deeper understanding of how the country works, on a local level. Furthermore, many of the employees are from the indigenous cultures, which traditionally have been discriminated during the years of the dictatorship and armed conflict.

But as previously mentioned does the interaction between people from different backgrounds and cultures bring up the dilemma of values and how people judge other people based on their own background. This brings up the debate between universalism and particularism, which I will treat in the next section.

3.2.3 The Particular Universalism

The universal emerges out of the particular not as some principle underlying and explaining the particular, but as an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity (Laclau 1996:28)

In theories about the concept of culture a dilemma has arisen: does absolute criteria exist on which we can decide what systems of norms are preferable (the criteria that are 'above' any

culture), or are there no absolute criteria and everything always depends on a specific cultural concept? Proponents of the absolute perspective claims that there exist universal principles and values that we all should accept no matter the cultural context. It presupposes a notion of common rationality of all human beings independent of culture and it supposes beliefs that are objectively true. Contrary to this the relativist positions claims that customs should be evaluated with the meaning of the act and its elements for the participating agents in mind. In this way, the relativist denies that absolute values and universal norms exist (or at least that they are constructed by the everyone) and maintains that cultural relativism helps to recognize the logic of the culture and the ethnocentric barriers that are inevitable in any cultural grouping.

Obviously the two positions have been criticized. The absolutist positions has been criticized for sustaining that it is possible to suppose that the criteria for the justification of an aggression is absolute, in other words independently of any cultural context. Furthermore, if the absolutist were right, the position that maintains that indigenous peoples should abandon their system of moral evaluation and traditional justice in favour of a modern and liberal system would still hold, but only because they have yet to find the right moral principles. In this way the absolutist holds a position that is intolerant to diversity. The relativist position, that maintains that no absolute criteria nor procedure exists, claims what turns out to be difficult to sustain: if any practice or belief can be justified from the adequate point of view, there cannot exist a legitimate point of view to evaluate any action. In this way, the relativist runs the risk of permitting everything. Additionally, this relativism does not give us an answer to how we should act, but it does help us diagnose the situation. Finally, according to some, we have to develop a pluralist position that is supreme to the others and that permits us to create a healthy base for cultural relations.

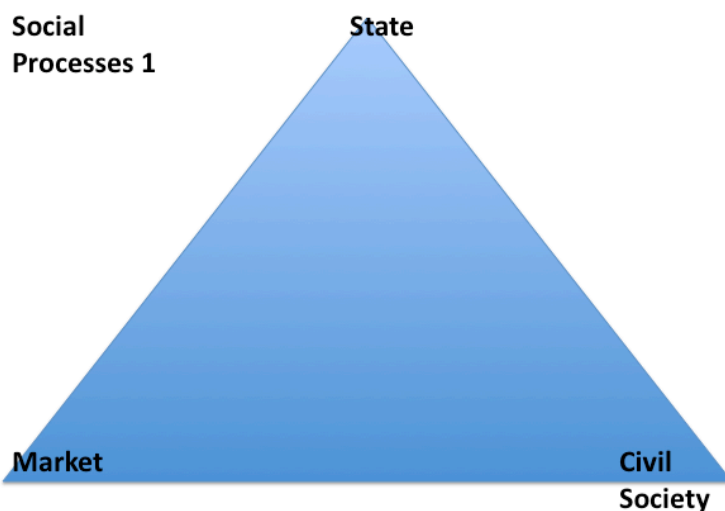
Ernesto Laclau discussed these inherent contradictions philosophically in his 1996 book "Emancipations" by asking: "Are the relations between universalism and particularism simple relations of mutual exclusion?" (Laclau 1996:22). He asserts that the universal, if truly universal, should be reachable through reason, no matter from which cultural, historical, social, etc. starting point (*ibid.*22), since previous experiments with universal value systems have only had functioned in specific cultures. An example of this is religion, which the rationality of the Enlightenment made an effort to terminate, only to replace the divine with the Eurocentric culture of man-over-nature (*ibid.* 24). Basically this means that at any point in

time and space where a particular ideology has tried to become dominant and universal, it has eventually failed thereby proving that the universal cannot exist exclusively. In a social context, it has been proved throughout history that referring to universal values creates more conflicts than is being solved.

Contrary to this, I am under the impression that the existence of the particular as an ideal in society will not solve any of the problems IBIS are facing in their development projects, since, theoretically, by accepting the particular IBIS will have to accept all kinds of atrocities as being culturally dependent. This means that even though IBIS from an intercultural perspective should respect and accept particular behaviour, they must try to establish some kind of level playing ground appealing to some sort of universal principles; “there is no particularism which does not make appeal to such principles in the construction of its own identity (*ibid.*26)”. Additionally, a pure particularism would cause a complete meltdown of the social in society, since all groups in society are constituted through difference, and everyone would be different from the other. Most likely, this would create conflict as groups and individuals tend to identify themselves discursively through differences, antagonisms, exclusion and power relations (*ibid.*27).

So the inherent dilemma in development is what to accept in the name of differences in social context. I will touch upon this during the analysis, but to conclude this section I will emphasize the difficulty IBIS is facing, because the right to be different (particular) should be respected from an intercultural (‘universal’) perspective of coexistence, but at the same time IBIS works to “develop” the particular cultures based on universal values.

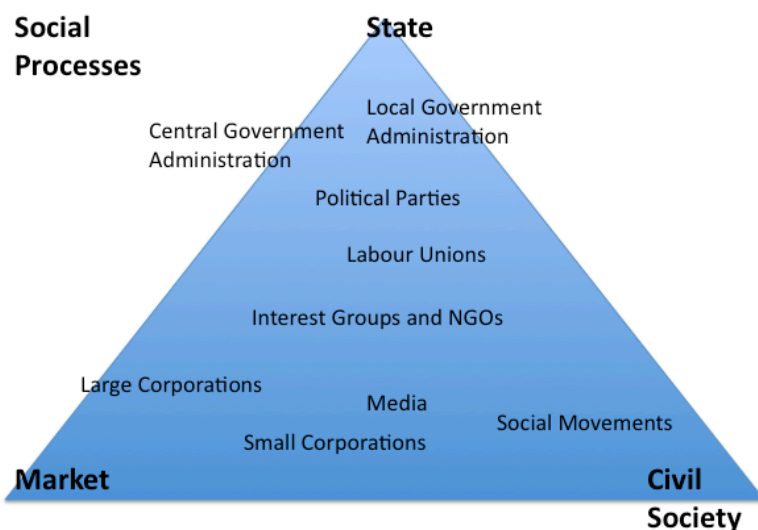
3.2.4 The Role of the NGO in Society



Although there is no legal definition of what constitutes a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) it is normally understood, as the name suggests, that NGOs operate autonomously from the government and state administration, but in reality this is rarely the case. Additionally, according to ngo.org, an NGO is a “non-profit, voluntary

citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level" (NGO.org). It could be debated, however, that with regards to finance, not all NGOs are necessarily non-profit, but the vast majority do not have profit as a goal in itself, but instead they try to reinvest the eventual profit into new projects. IBIS as a Danish-based international development NGO received in 2012 around 53 % of the income from the Danish state, and the rest from institutional and private donors (IBIS C 2012:6 & 10).

In the simple model of society (above), the NGO is placed in civil society, from where it can seek influence in, and is influenced by the market and the state, both on a national and international.



But the real world is complex (even more than this figure) and everything is connected and influenced by other actors and institutions. To make complicate things even further, each organisation consists of people who have their own worldview and interprets and understands reality in their own ways.

Additionally there is a difference between national and international NGOs. An international NGO has to be able to manoeuvre between different social contexts and will always rely on the permission from the state to operate in the country. Furthermore, both the national and the international NGO represent a group of people with an objective of changing or maintaining something in society.

3.2.4.1 NGOs as agents of social processes

The NGO consists of people with a common interest who work on specific tasks to perform important functions in civil society that they feel are not taken care of by the states and existing institutions. This can be humanitarian, environmental or development (IBIS) causes and issues, social problems, forwarding peoples concerns to governments, supervision and monitoring of projects, promotion of political participation, etc. In performing these functions the work as interest groups in society by conducting expert analyses of topics which are used to gain influence and affect public or government opinion on a local, national and/or

international level through means of lobbyism and public relations. Different types of NGOs include private independent organisations and associations providing or implementing development projects or “public” goods (e.g. education); international charities, research institutes, lobby-groups, churches, etc. On a broader level one can find several forums where independent NGOs meet to discuss cooperation, share knowledge, and work towards the same goals. In a Danish context NGO-Forum comes to mind, and on a global level World Social Forum and the “Cumbre Continental de los Pueblos Indígenas”.

NGOs are officially separated from state interest and control, and are in theory free to criticise and oppose whatever they feel for. The catch, however, is that many NGOs receive their funding partly from the state, and their finance is therefore dependent on working towards the same goals as the government find worthwhile. On the other hand, the government uses the information provided by the NGOs and interest groups to formulate the policies, and it becomes a, sort of, circular interdependence of NGO and state cooperation. In this way, the NGO fulfils an important role in society bridging the gap between the state apparatus and the people, who might feel distanced from the democracy. This is, obviously, based on the premise of a functioning democracy in which people can say what they feel. It is a whole different case when applied to a country in which groupings are oppressed and discriminated by others, be that state, business, racial, economic, educational, etc. In this case, the NGO can, from the perspective of the state, be seen as interfering in national politics and as a threat to national sovereignty. Examples of this could be the case of IBIS being expelled from Bolivia in December 2013 (IBIS D) accused of turning the indigenous peoples against the government. Another example, albeit not yet enforced, is how the government in Guatemala threatens to expel all foreigners interfering in national matters (Sin Embargo 2013) after alleged observations of foreigners on tourist visa being present at demonstrations, or Greenpeace members being accused of terrorism after a protest. In cases like these the state will normally be the authority making the decisions, no matter how unfair they might be, which again shows that a case can have different meanings depending on the eyes and interests behind.

In the case of IBIS who operates internationally with partners in many countries, the question arises whether they should cooperate with the indigenous population within the framework of the existing ‘democracy’, or if they should support the complete change of society – and how will they do it.

3.2.4.2 *How can the NGO affect discourses*

Ideally the NGO can play, and have played, a large role in society in shaping legal processes and reforms on all levels of society, due to their rather specialised knowledge on certain topics and issues (UN B). One can, of course, discuss where there is a need for NGOs and interest groups in society, and if it really is democratic if some organisation have better access to the decision-making processes than others. From this perspective, an NGO is comparable to the lobbyists of a weapons- or tobacco-producer by representing a group of people with a common interest, albeit with a more humane purpose, and it is often seen that NGOs are used as government consultants or supervisors when politics are shaped, i.e. Greenpeace on environment, IBIS on development, etc. In Denmark, DANIDA (The official Danish Development Agency) used, among others, IBIS policy advisors to formulate the official development policies. At the moment (March 2014) there is an ongoing round of government hearings in which the new politics of the civil society in developing countries where IBIS plays an important role among other NGOs (U-landsnyt 2014). However, this might change if the government changes to another political inclination putting emphasis on other values than IBIS.

The amount of NGOs globally is endless, which could be seen as both a positive and a negative feature. Positive, because there is an active civil society, which is concerned with others problems; and negative because the need for NGOs shows that the democratic system might not work perfectly, unless, of course, you consider NGOs as an integral part of a democratic system. Furthermore, it raises the question of all parts really are represented in society, and if an NGO from one social context really can represent people in other social contexts, i.e. are the people from the NGO able to understand the people they cooperate with.

This chapter started out with an explanation and discussion of the aspects of discourse theory that will be utilised in the analysed, after that it went into a discussion of culture, identity and interculturalism, before moving into a brief explanation and problematisation of development theories. This led to a discussion of the dilemma between universalism and particularism, and finally brief debate about NGOs and their role as an actor in society. This project will analyse different articulations of interculturalism, and why it is important for IBIS to apply it to their development work in Guatemala. Furthermore, I will discuss how it is possible for IBIS to work interculturally and at the same time promote universal values.

4 Interculturalism and the Three Articulations

As we have seen in the theoretical part of the thesis it is important to understand how different discourses constitute social realities, and how it is important to try to understand these realities. Since each articulation of interculturalism in itself is a product of a social context and discourse, it is interesting to see how the different actors in the context of IBIS' development work strike a balance between their own and the others' understanding of interculturalism. In other words, can interculturalism be understood as a universal value that should be practiced everywhere if the different articulations of interculturalism are antagonistic? As we will see in the following part, there is an inherent challenge in some articulations of interculturalism when it comes to understanding other social groups and contexts, since interculturalism can represent a relativist approach toward understanding other cultures. Therefore it is important to look at, understand, and analyse the different articulations of interculturalism with regards to how they treat the dilemma between universalism and relativism.

4.1 The Application of Interculturalism: IBIS in Guatemala

According to IBIS' country strategy for Guatemala (IBIS E 2011), there is a need for a focus on the intercultural (which I will get back to). But how is 'intercultural' understood and why do IBIS articulate it in a development discourse?

Vision

IBIS is working for a just world in which all people have equal access to education, influence and resources. Together with our partners, IBIS combats global inequality and poverty.

Mission

Locally: We strengthen individual rights and opportunities to take part in society by ensuring access to knowledge and good education.

Nationally: We support democratic development that promotes collective rights and popular participation in policy decisions to benefit the poor and oppressed groups.

Globally: We defend poor people's interests and we find intelligent solutions to structural problems causing global economic inequality and poverty

It is interesting to see that nowhere in IBIS' vision and mission (IBIS F 2011) is interculturalism mentioned – nor can their vision and mission be seen as intercultural. On the contrary, they position themselves as working for “democratic development”, “collective

rights” by finding “intelligent solutions” to protect the “poor and oppressed groups”, i.e. a sort of one-way development. The discourse of promoting supposedly universal values to “defend poor people” maintains the traditional superior-inferior discourse towards developing the peoples of other cultures and social contexts that are not as developed as IBIS is (the discussion on development will be continued in chapter 6).

The problem is that different social contexts have different values, and not everyone has the same worldview as IBIS. To get away from a discourse of us-them many organisations (including IBIS) introduced interculturalism in the context of development.

In IBIS’ country strategy for Guatemala interculturalism is defined as:

“the concept of inter-culturalism is understood as a political process that seeks to build a society and a state respectful of diversity and the rights of different cultures, so that the groups, which have been historically excluded, can contribute most effectively in building a truly democratic country. a picture of IBIS’ definition of interculturalism emerges as something highly important”
(IBIS E 2011:7)

The word interculturalism is mentioned 52 times on the 38 pages, and the country strategy carries the name “Moving towards inclusion and interculturalism”. IBIS demands that the government and the indigenous peoples work towards equality and respect for diversity, human rights, etc. because the current situation in Guatemala proves (from IBIS’ point of view) that the state does not live up to its obligations as a state. In simple economic terms, according to IBIS’ own documents, Guatemala is one of the most unequal countries with the “richest 10 % of the population accounts for 42 % of income, while the poorest 10 % accounts for 1.3 % of the national income” (IBIS E 2011:4). Although economy has played and is playing a central part in the hegemonic development discourse, IBIS also looks at various social indicators. IBIS highlights four trends that have “resulted in a loss of governance and an increased vulnerability of the most excluded population [...]: 1) violence, criminality and impunity, 2) social and economic insecurity exacerbated by the effects of climate change, 3) political confrontation and 4) social conflict” (*ibid.*).

Asked directly on what makes IBIS’ work intercultural, Morten Bisgaard from IBIS in Denmark replied that:

“[...] deep respect for other peoples’ cultures and way of seeing the world, and respecting that the point of departure is with them, and that we do not come with the ‘truth’, we do not come with a recipe of how to do this work. We come with some values and strategies in relation to how we

would like to cooperate, and we have some ambitions, but how precisely it will be carried out is very much up to the cultures we work with, and they are very different from Africa to Latin America, and even within Latin America. So the respect for the 'other' based on some common global principles that are founded in the signed conventions and human rights, that's where you can find something you could call interculturalism, maybe" (Morten 2013:31.50, own translation, inverted commas indicated by Morten).

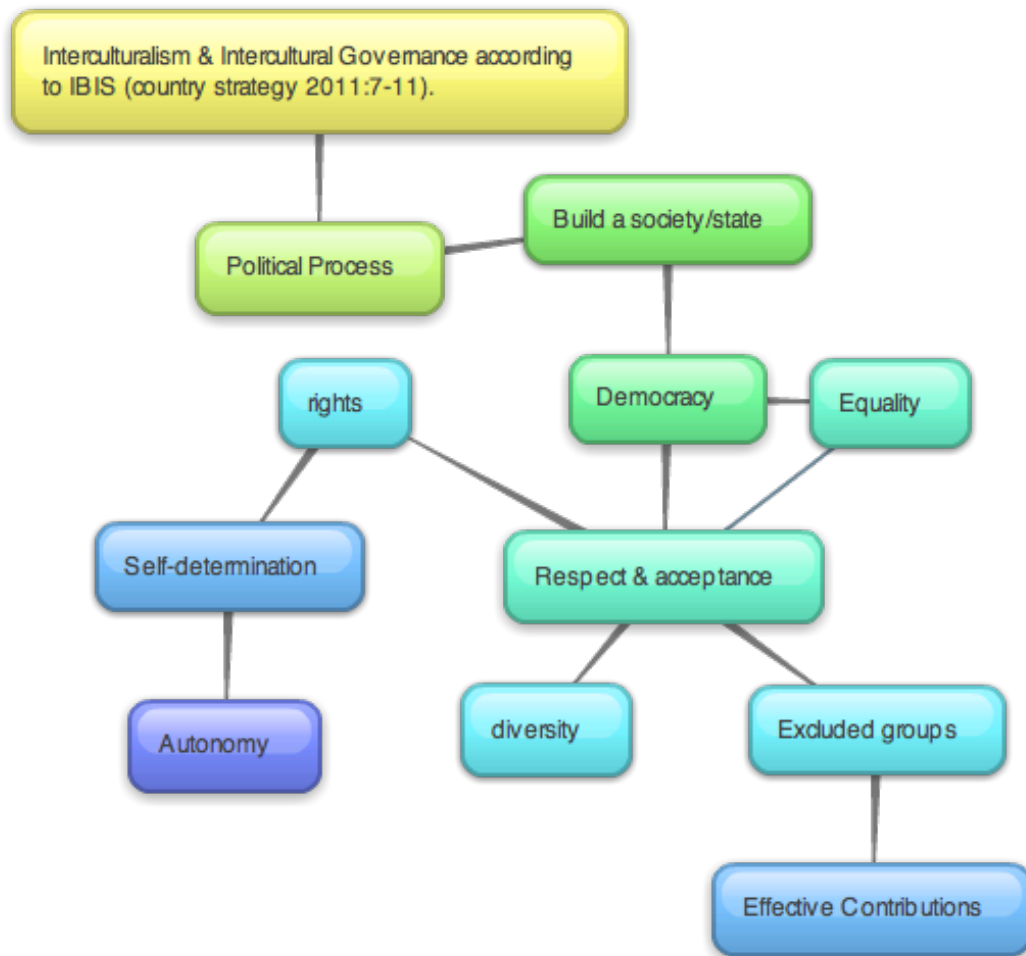
Morten highlights the importance of respect and understanding of the 'other' cultures, and arriving with an open mindset towards the implementation of values. This in itself fully lives up to both IBIS' and the theoretical definitions of what constitutes interculturalism in that there is respect for diversity, and there is interaction. But "deep respect" is only a passive understanding of other cultures, and this does not necessarily equal understanding, and when he in the same context talks about "respect for the 'other' based on common global principles" he is articulating a demand which goes ahead of dialogue. This does not invite to open and respectful interaction since the relationship is from the outset out of balance. In the statement the difficulty in explaining why interculturalism is important in IBIS' development work can be seen. This is something that IBIS has received criticism for because it is a concept that is very difficult to communicate and explain. For instance, if an indigenous spokesperson is asked during an interview to explain briefly what an intercultural society is or *buen vivir* is, and he/she is not able to do it (*ibid.*:50.54) the element simply continues as a floating signifier without being able to form a nodal point in an articulated discourse. Furthermore, this opens up the discourse to contestation from counter-hegemonic articulations, as we will see later.

IBIS has a human rights based approach to development of the Guatemalan society. The focus is, besides the intercultural perspective, on the universal human rights taking its point of departure in the United Nations declaration of universal human rights, which is signed by almost all nations and territories in the world, including Guatemala. But whereas both IBIS and the Guatemalan state can agree on the importance of the content of the human rights, there is widespread disagreement on how much effort should be put into securing the peoples' fulfilment of the basic human rights. Furthermore, to secure equal opportunities for the whole population it is sometimes necessary to treat people differently, e.g. focusing more on the part of the population that suffers from the unequal society.

From the perspective of the intercultural encounter, the discourse on human rights can be problematic, because it comes out of a specific social context and discourse, which not traditionally has favoured the indigenous peoples around the world. It is also important that the discourse on human rights articulates a wide variety of floating signifiers, and it therefore ends up being a meaningless discussion, since the articulation of the different elements is contested. Furthermore, there is a risk that, as in this case with IBIS, universal human rights become a pre-demand for interaction between different cultures and contexts.

IBIS tries to articulate a temporary closure of a discourse on interculturalism combined with the discourse on universal human rights, because they complement each other in the discourse on intercultural development. In this articulation the (universal) democratic society is built around respect, understanding of and interaction between the different cultures in the society, instead of one group of people dictating how the society should be (relativist). But that articulation does still not resolve the problem of what to respect and understand in other cultures.

As can be seen in the figure below, IBIS articulates many signifiers when referring to interculturalism as a political process towards an equal and democratic society. Furthermore, the articulation of interculturalism is ordered around the nodal point of 'respect and acceptance', with the floating signifiers of 'equality', 'democracy', 'rights', and a chain of equivalence composed by the rest. The problem is that IBIS articulates a floating signifier with other floating signifiers, which means that their articulation is open to interpretation and contestation, since other all the floating signifiers can be articulated differently in each social context. But why is it necessary for IBIS to articulate what interculturalism and intercultural governance is? And can IBIS' articulation of interculturalism be contested from another point of view?

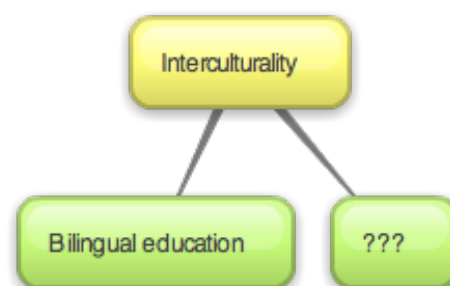


In IBIS' articulation of interculturalism the emphasis is on equal opportunities, respect and acceptance of the diversity there is in the Guatemalan society (floating signifiers of universal values with relativist implications). These values are not necessarily in themselves exclusively intercultural values, since they are IBIS' articulations of values that should be present in any (multi- and intercultural) democratic society with universal rights. So a reason for IBIS to emphasise and articulate it specifically like this might have something to do with how the Guatemalan society is constructed today and how the Guatemalan state articulates interculturalism. For that reason I will bring forward the ongoing discursive struggle between the antagonistic articulations of IBIS and the Guatemalan state in defining and articulating signifiers into nodal points to construct a hegemonic discourse on interculturalism and intercultural development. Furthermore, I will discuss if both actors could argue that they follow the 'universal' principles.

4.2 IBIS vs. the State; Antagonistic Articulations of Interculturalism

In none of the Guatemalan government's official papers have I been able to find a clear articulation of how interculturalism is understood but reading through the official websites I have found various references and mentioning of the word. Often, however, it is in the context of bilingual education (Government A) or the creation of a national day of multiculturalism and interculturality (Government B). In direct reference to development, interculturality was mentioned in a speech by President Molina when referring to the new long-term development plan "K'atun: our Guatemala 2032"⁵, in which he states that the plan is based on "including and intercultural planning, respectful and in harmony with the nature, that will generate opportunities for sustainable development for all" (Government C, *own translation*)⁶.

From this reading a diagram of the articulations of the floating signifier 'interculturalidad' in the Guatemalan States' discourse. On several occasions it is mentioned in speeches together with signifiers like: energy, mining, security, integral rural development, climate change, etc. Through this analysis it becomes evident that interculturalism and interculturality is two completely different things for IBIS and for the Guatemalan State, and that the two articulations are struggling to hegemonically define the floating signifier.



The ways that IBIS and the State articulate interculturalism mirror different political concepts and contexts. IBIS has tied many different connotations together to create a nodal point with a complex set of supposedly universal values. In this way, IBIS can articulate interculturalism as a necessary method of reaching their goal of social change. On the contrary, the State of Guatemala has not explicitly given thought to how interculturality is understood and should be articulated. It becomes evident that interculturality is used because it is a 'popular' and contestable concept that the state itself can articulate, and because many of the countries in Latin America with multiple indigenous populations, as well as the United Nations and many other organisations use the signifier. This also shows that the state adopts the discourse of some of the international society and then tries to shape it according to its own social context.

⁵ The K'atun is a Mayan unit of time corresponding to a little less than 20 years

⁶ "planificaci n incluyente e intercultural, respetuosa y en armon a con la naturaleza, que generar  oportunidades de desarrollo sostenible para todos"

In this way the government can claim towards critiques and dissidents that they do indeed work towards an intercultural society aligned with the goals of the international society, but in everyday practice very little is done to change the government's conservative rule, and this is exactly both the problem and the feature of a floating signifier.

This is not to claim that bilingual education is not intercultural. The point here is that, unless you actually make an effort in reflecting on and defining the signifiers that are being articulated in public discourses, it could be concluded that the signifier has very little content, when compared to IBIS' definition of interculturalism. But it might also be a strategy from the government's side, since the international society prescribes a set of 'universal' values and norms (floating signifiers) that should exist in all societies, which are up for contestation through counter-hegemonic discourses. Furthermore, the social contexts and audiences are not always the same, and although the government is addressing the whole population, much of the Guatemalan state's rhetoric is directed towards uncritical media and a few political analysts. Additionally, it gives the state the possibility to disarm critical organisations both from the civil society, but also from other states, etc.

IBIS, on the other hand, is based in a completely different cultural setting, where the discourse is very different and the audience is the members of the NGO, but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark, which provides IBIS with around 50 % of their funding. So IBIS has to live up to the demands of the Danish Development organisation, DANIDA, in order for IBIS to be able to carry out the projects they find necessary based on their own articulation of intercultural development. As complex as the networks are within the development organisations, the language is remarkably similar no matter if you read documents from UNESCO, DANIDA, IBIS, etc. This highlights that discourse, culture and social context are parts of the same tightly woven fabric, and that it comes as a complete package, which is why it is important to have an intercultural understanding, when cooperating with people from other social contexts. Moreover, the floating signifier interculturalism arose out of the international society, and it should therefore be suspected that it is part of a more elaborate closure of moments ordered in chains of equivalence.

By bringing in a third actor, the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, I will in the following investigate their discourse on interculturalism/interculturality, so see how their articulation is positioned in comparison with IBIS' and the Guatemalan state, and how they relate to the

possibilities of social change within the discourses on interculturalism. Finally, I will discuss the indigenous peoples' understanding of 'interculturalism based on universal principles' in relation to the debate on respect for cultural differences and universal values. This will help me in the understanding of why IBIS finds interculturalism important in promoting 'universal principles', how the different groups interact to create social change, and how they each construct meaning in relation to each other.

4.3 The Multicultural Guatemala and Interculturalism

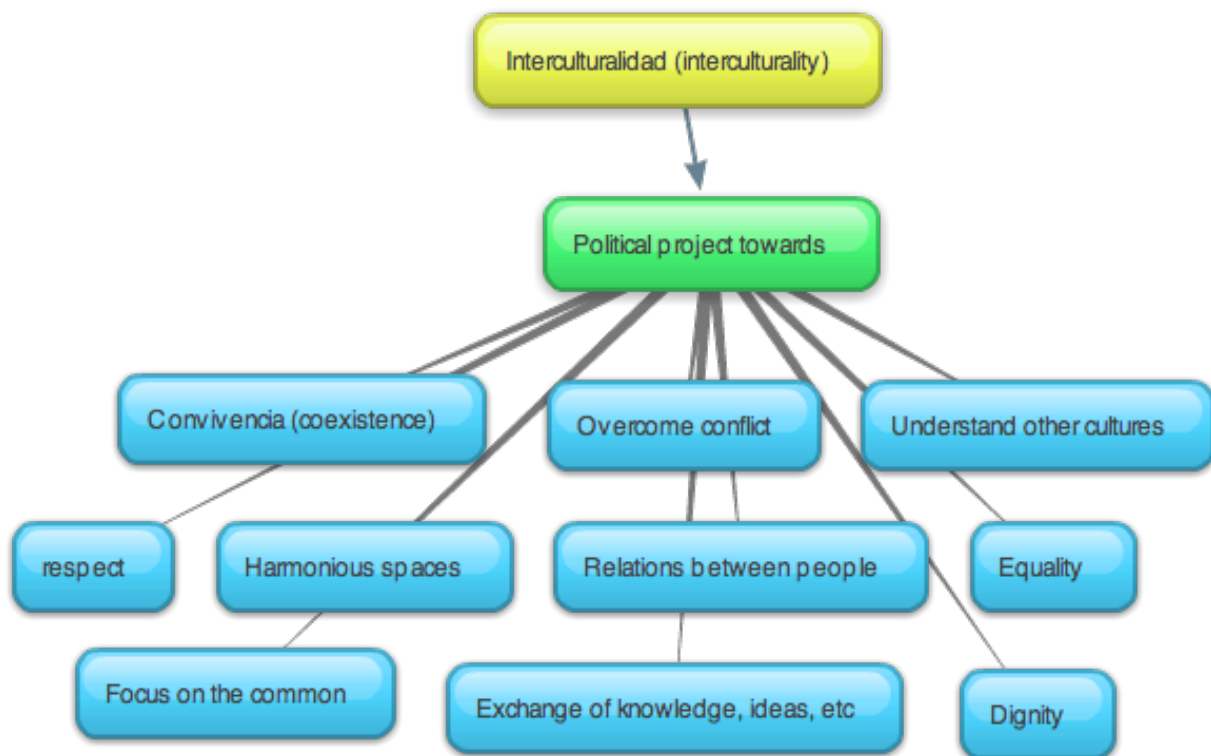
Through interviews performed at the study centre CEDFOG in Huehuetenango, I asked a number of interviewees how they would articulate interculturalism, and how they saw it working in society. This gave me an interesting insight of how there is a discrepancy between what the state preaches and what it practices – at least from the perspective of the people I interviewed.

During the interview with Antonio from Oxlajuj Ajpop, an organisation that works to recover, systematise and promote the Mayan spiritual values and services (Oxlajuj 2013), he was very clear on that in his understanding interculturalism is “political proposals of how to overcome conflicts, acquire harmonious spaces and relations between peoples (Antonio 2013: 40.10, *own translation*).” And to emphasise, he said that this definition is not only what he “thinks” it is – “it is like that” (*ibid.*). Continuing he stated that what interests him the most is the relationship between the cultures and to him interculturalism is exactly that “aquí nadie es mas grande que otro [here no-one is larger than the other]” (*ibid.*). So, Antonio, as a representative of an indigenous organisation, shares his definition of what constitutes interculturalism very much with that of IBIS and other international organisations, which points towards an antagonistic relationship between Oxlajuj Ajpop, IBIS and the Guatemalan State.

IBIS' and Antonio's articulations do, however, diverge a bit, since Morten stressed the intercultural encounter should be based on universal principles, which can be interpreted as condition for dialogue, whereas Antonio's articulation of interculturalism comes as an open invitation. This opens the debate of what to accept and respect in the name of culture. Furthermore, “nadie es mas grande que otro” can be interpreted as a floating signifier, since, if we translate it into equality, there are varying degrees and articulations of equality. With regards to social change, Antonio's articulation is clearly shaped by his experienced reality of conflict.

This is backed up by Rubén Herrera who is the coordinator of the assembly of peoples in Huehuetenango. When defining what he sees as interculturalism he brings forward the importance of coexistence (*convivencia*) between peoples; how people interrelate; and how people view the universe. To Rubén, interculturalism is to see each other as equal and to focus on what unites people, i.e. the common. He acknowledges that people are not similar, but believes that through an “integrated” understanding of one’s own culture and others’ it becomes easier to coexist with other peoples (Rubén 2013: 22.59). The Guatemalan government highlights none of these values when referring to interculturalism, and in that way it suddenly appears like the State is not interested in actually articulating the concept, because in that way the state can use the concept as pleased. Another interesting point is that Rubén’s understanding diverges from IBIS’ in that Rubén focuses a lot more on equality and the “common”. As with Antonio, the impact of the social reality and context is clear in the articulation of interculturalism, which in this articulation becomes an articulation of his own social reality.

In the following figure I have outlined the elements and signifiers that was mentioned during the interviews in the context of interculturalism. There was a large degree of agreement on the articulation of interculturalism, but when asked about the practical implications of this, the vast majority replied with discontent with regards to the implementation of interculturalism at the level of the state. When the interviewees articulated their understanding of interculturalism it was often explained as being in contrast with government praxis, which is normal when different social actors wants tries to create social change through a discursive struggle. In this case the negative relationship between the state and the indigenous communities mirrors their antagonistic discursive relationship. To exemplify this, these are some of the points that was brought forward by Antonio: the society is designed for and by money, control and registers (Antonio 2013: 45.02, *own translation*); the state talks about intercultural education, but the society is neoliberal (Antonio 2013: 18.03, *own translation*); the state talks about equal and intercultural access, but through corruption the power is held within the same circles (Antonio 2013: 49.10, *own translation*); the indigenous peoples do not feel that the state understands the values of the Cosmovision (*ibid.*).



With regards to this last point, one could of course argue that the indigenous groups do not understand and respect the ‘neoliberal’ world-view either. This is probably true to a certain extent, but to take the standpoint of the indigenous peoples, the neoliberal values do actually oppress the original cultures of the Guatemalan society to the benefit of a relative small group of people. So judging from the statements of the indigenous organisations it can hardly be claimed that the State acts according to the broad (in this case) articulation of interculturalism, but instead acts within its own articulation of interculturalism.

4.4 Discussing Interculturalism

After having gone through the three actors articulation of interculturalism I have seen that IBIS and the indigenous peoples’ articulation of the concept stands in contrast to the State’s articulation, but also that IBIS’ and the indigenous peoples’ have different articulations of the concept. From this understanding it can be claimed that the State (which supposedly is representative of the population) constitutes an antagonistic sphere against the hegemonic articulation of interculturalism as articulated by IBIS and the indigenous organisations. There is however differences between the chains of equivalence that are articulated.

IBIS’ articulation of interculturalism is conditioned on “universal principles” and with this in mind it could be interpreted as if IBIS applies interculturalism to their development strategy

to avoid conflicts instead of overcoming them. This means, that IBIS promotes respect, understanding and interaction with other cultures through interculturalism as long as they live up to and support the universal principles. In this way the differences and antagonisms between IBIS and the Indigenous peoples are toned down, to stand stronger together against the state. Furthermore, from a discourse theoretical perspective interculturalism is articulated by IBIS as an apolitical approach to development, where relativist values of respect and understanding 'soften' the implementation of 'universal' values of democracy and inclusion. To be fair to IBIS, they do cooperate with the indigenous peoples of Guatemala even though there are differences in articulation of interculturalism, and according to Morten IBIS always listens and tries to understand the social realities of the partners.

It is very likely that the indigenous peoples have adopted the articulation of interculturalism from IBIS and other international organisations, and if this is indeed the case it can be concluded that the Eurocentric discourse on intercultural development have hegemonised the indigenous peoples. Underlining this point the State has adopted interculturalism as a word to show that it is including and respectful of the culturally diverse society. Unfortunately, the politicians abandon the hegemonic meaning of interculturalism and acts according to their own neoliberal ideology. This has two implications: 1) that the state enter into a counter-hegemonic struggle for the articulation of interculturalism in which it tries to change the meaning of the word; or 2) that the state uses interculturalism as a political marketing strategy because it mostly have positive connotations. The latter is obviously the most cynical, and undermines the possibility for negotiations with the peoples who could benefit from a more intercultural society, since it takes the content out of the debate, because the State is able to claim that it operates interculturally.

5 Nature and the Articulation of Life and Progress

From having discussed interculturalism as a floating signifier in the context of development, and having established that IBIS, the indigenous groups, and the Guatemalan State have different articulations of the concept, I will in this chapter go into an analysis of how the three actors have different ontological views of what constitutes life and being and what nature is understood to be. Since our social context influences how we understand and interpret different concepts and discourse, and in turn how we re-articulate signifiers, I believe that peoples' worldview of the nature and universe affects the way we understand and articulate

development. At the same time, people construct their realities in relation to other realities, and it is hence the interaction between these different realities and how they affect each group's discourses that is interesting. This is relevant for IBIS' articulation of interculturalism because peoples' understanding of different cultures is connected with their worldview.

I will start with an analysis of the Mayan Cosmovisión, before moving onto the role of nature within the capitalist society and finally an analysis of how IBIS supposedly positions them discursively.

5.1 La Cosmovisión and the Balance of Man and Nature

To be able to discuss the differences between and within cultures and how cultures are social discursive constructions of realities, it is important to look at the Mayan Cosmovisión and try to understand how the universe is viewed within this set of beliefs, which is radically different than the rationalist understanding. I believe it is possible to compare the discourses and articulations of the indigenous groups in Guatemala with those of the Guatemalan State and IBIS, even though Spanish is not the native language of many of the indigenous groups, since the hegemonic struggles take place within the same discursive spheres, centred on the Spanish language.

The Cosmovisión is portrayed as a set of values and principles in which everything from the spiritual to the physical and biological, and from humanity to nature, is considered to be of eternal connection. This means that nothing can exist outside of this universe, because nature is a part of humanity and humanity is part of nature, and people live to protect the nature, which at the same time provides shelter and food for humanity. This understanding of the cosmos does not only refer to interaction; it also refers to the relationship between everything (animals, humans, plants, mountains, valleys, rivers, etc.) as being a part of everything else. Hence, all objects and subjects have to balance organically, because if something offsets the equilibrium it might have catastrophic effects on the cosmos. Humans are allowed to take from the nature as long as the balance and reproduction of the nature is secured, and the cosmos does not end up worse off than before.

In this way, it can be seen that both the natural and the social spheres of society both constitute the Cosmovisión *and* are constructed around the nodal point of the Cosmovisión, with a chain of equivalence consisting of sustainability, equality, respect, harmony, balance, etc. which at the same time are floating signifiers in other discourses. As discussed in the

previous chapter, the indigenous peoples, IBIS and the Guatemalan state struggle over many of the same floating signifiers in their different articulations, because they are in antagonistic relationship, and in this context sustainability is the floating signifier that is used in all discourses on nature across the globe. And for that reason it is important to be critical when met by discourses on sustainability, since the articulation can be very different depending on the social context and goal of the articulator.

The Guatemalan scholar Ajb'ee Jiménez is connected to the study centre CEDFOG in Huehuetenango and provides research and data for many different organisations, including IBIS. In a speech about development he stated that: “[...] we propose a system of Mayan thinking that takes us to the search for a full, complete and dignified life, but not just of being human but for all the lives that coexists with us in this world” (Jiménez 2013:96, *own translation*).⁷ Here he underlines an important distinction from the capitalist society in which nature exists for the people (i.e. to exploit) instead of with the people. Furthermore, through his statement he indirectly claims that a complete and dignified life is not possible in a capitalist society where people live increasingly distanced from the nature that supports their life. Through this articulation he builds up a counter-hegemonic discourse against the rational capitalistic way of exploiting the nature for profit and thereby undermines all previous claims from the ‘developed’ society about development through exportation of natural resources as being beneficial to the local society. Additionally, it is seen that his articulation (re)emerges as an antagonism of the existing discourse on nature, and hence identifies by being in opposition to the already existing norms.

Life in the Mayan Cosmovisión is a (constructed) reality that one lives and internalises, and it is important to be aware of one’s own wellbeing as both depending on and constituting of the wellbeing of the rest of the collective, i.e. as a harmonious bubble, in which everything has a vibrant energy – a heartbeat (Mysticomaya.com).

⁷ “[...] queremos proponer un sistema de pensamiento Maya que nos lleve a la búsqueda de una vida plena, completa y con dignidad pero no sólo del ser humano sino la de todas las vidas que convivimos en este mundo” (Jiménez 2013:96).



Figure 5.1 Selection of elements from the Cosmovisi n

By visualising a selection of elements (which is not an exhaustive list) inside a globe/bubble I have tried to outline how the Cosmovisi n constructs everything as being interrelated, and not as individual and separate objects. Figure 5.1 shows that all the signifiers are interrelated and dependent on each other, something that contrasts with how nature is viewed within the neoliberal capitalist worldview (I will get back to this later). The elements listed are the signifiers that were brought up during the interviews and texts, and it is seen that many of the signifiers of the Cosmovisi n are also signifiers in the indigenous peoples' articulation of interculturalism, i.e. nodal points within this articulation.

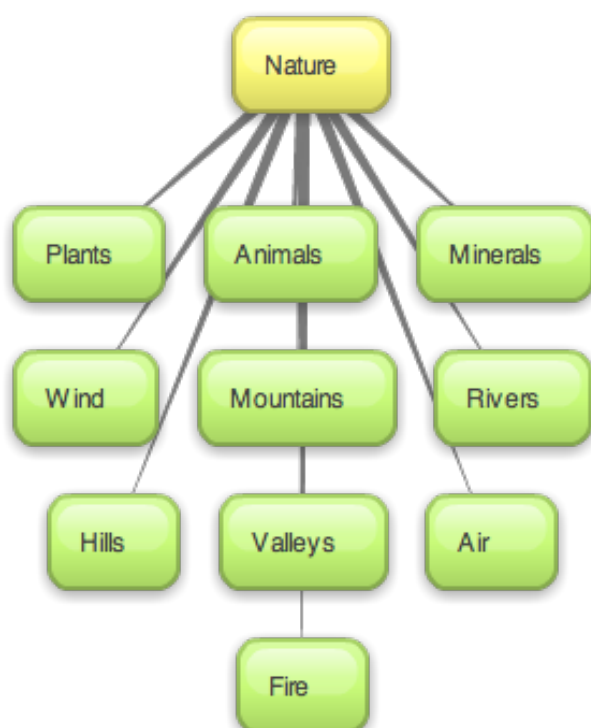


Figure 5.2 shows some of the elements of the articulation of nature in the Cosmovisi n. It is important to understand that all these parts contain energy, and that this energy needs to be in balance with the rest of the cosmos. These energies are called Nawales and are crucial for the functioning of all of the society, i.e. political, economical, cultural, social, etc. By maintaining the strong discourse of the Cosmovisi n it is ensured that the cultural roots are not forgotten, and it is avoided that

humans fall in the modernistic trap of living for the accumulation of material wealth.

Ajb'ee Jiménez maintains that there is a spiritual relationship with the nature. But he does not acknowledge the criticism of the Cosmovision for being a religion and criticise that rational capitalists only focus on nothing but the images from the ceremonies and thereby judging the indigenous peoples from a rationalistic point of view. By viewing the territory as spiritual and sacred he articulates the territory as being part of humans and *vice versa*, instead of separated. "We are talking about a perspective in which territory is a sacred space that starts with me, from my thoughts and feelings and that feeds from my conscience" (Jiménez 2013:98, *own translation*⁸). In the statement Jiménez articulates that humans have to live with the nature and not just from it, and for that reason the indigenous peoples have to be consulted prior to exploitation of the area. At the same time, the indigenous peoples of Guatemala have had bad experiences with the development projects that have previously been implemented in their areas, which have damaged the nature and impoverished the locals by relocating them to other areas without farmland and water. This has created a strong opposition and have increased the identification with the Cosmovision, because it is counter to the articulation of nature and development of the state. An example of this is the dam Chixoy that was constructed in 1982 against the will of the local population. 32 communities were deprived (*despojados*) of their land and 400 people were assassinated for demonstrating against the construction⁹. These people were killed by the government or military by people who have still not been in front of a judge¹⁰, and this creates a very strong mistrust towards all authorities (including the UN, the World Bank, IMF, etc. that supported the construction) except for the ancestral authorities that base their decisions in the local democracy. Furthermore, the social context of resistance against the state influences and reinforces the counter-hegemonic discourse against the rational, capitalist neoliberal regime.

The extraction of natural resources that is so inherent to capitalist economy, and which traditionally has not been implemented with consensus in many parts of the world, plays a large role in shaping the indigenous peoples' daily life. Here interculturalism becomes

⁸ Estamos hablando de una perspectiva de territorio como un espacio sagrado que empieza conmigo mismo, desde mi pensamiento y sentimiento y que se alimenta a través de mi conciencia (Jiménez 2013:98)

⁹ A very educative film about this case can be seen here <http://www.rightsaction.org/content/la-represa-chixoy-30-a%C3%B1os-sin-reparaciones-ni-justicia-ni-paz>

¹⁰ Remember that this was during the armed conflict/civil war in which more than 250.000 people – mostly indigenous – were killed. A large majority of those were killed by the military on the military bases.

interesting, because ideally the different cultures and actors that are involved and affected would be consulted prior to implementation, and in this case where the culture is constructed around the Cosmovisi n and nature as being a part of humans the projects would not be approved. The exact same debate is still taking place in Guatemala today, where during my research for this thesis there were uprisings in the north of the country, Barillas, and I was advised not to travel to the area by IBIS Guatemala. The government wants to construct a hydroelectric dam to generate electricity for ‘development’, but the communities fear that the electricity will only reach the industrial industries of the area, i.e. the maquiladores, mining and oil-extraction (Fitzpatrick-Behrens 2009), whereas the communities will be relocated out of their native area, which is sacred to them. In a locally organised consultation more than 21.000 people from 144 communities voted, and the result was that 19.000 voted against the construction of the dam, which will burry 17 of the communities under the water (*ibid.*). From this perspective it is seen that the discourse on the Cosmovisi n highlights a counter-hegemonic discourse against the exploitation of natural resources constructed around the articulation of destruction of land, impoverishment of the communities, destruction of sacred cultural spaces and the inability of the state and business-sector to understand the spiritual relationship with nature.

An example of how the government articulates intercultural development and respect for natural resources as an important part of the political agenda, but then after the election the politics carried out leans more towards the business sector and attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) and exports of natural resources and raw materials (mining, petroleum, sugar and African palms). According to the North American Congress on Latin America, a US-based organisation known for criticising elitist interests, FDI grew by 56 % in 2008, and most of those funds went into the above-mentioned projects, thereby benefiting foreign contractors or local landowners. Furthermore, the companies involved in the construction work are closely linked to the corporations that will benefit from the construction of hydroelectric dams and a large highway through the north of Guatemala (*ibid.*), i.e. the maquiladores and industry.

The projects are ‘sold’ through a discourse on development of the rural areas of the country, but the hydroelectric plants are always placed nearby a mining or extractive industry site, and the large projects are known for “corruption and rubber stamping of environmental impact reports,” and this has clearly led to a “severe lack of trust in public institutions” (Jones in

Reeves 2014). The capitalist government's discourse on development through the extraction and exploitation of natural resources is articulated on the cultural basis of what Polanyi called a fictitious commodification of land and an artificial ownership of the nature. Thereby, the actions of the government can be interpreted along the same lines as the last 500 years of foreign ownership of the indigenous peoples' territories, and an exploitation of the natural resources as being a public good for the majority at the cost of the minority.

This elaborate analysis of the Cosmovision has served to create a deeper understanding of the social context of the indigenous peoples and their antagonistic relationship with the state, which is necessary to be able to understand in which context IBIS operates when they apply interculturalism in a development perspective. I do, however, believe that to be able to fully understand the relationship between the Cosmovision and the capitalist approach to nature, it is necessary to analyse and discuss the neoliberal and conservative state's articulation of nature as a resource.

5.2 Neoliberal Capitalism and the Nature as a Resource

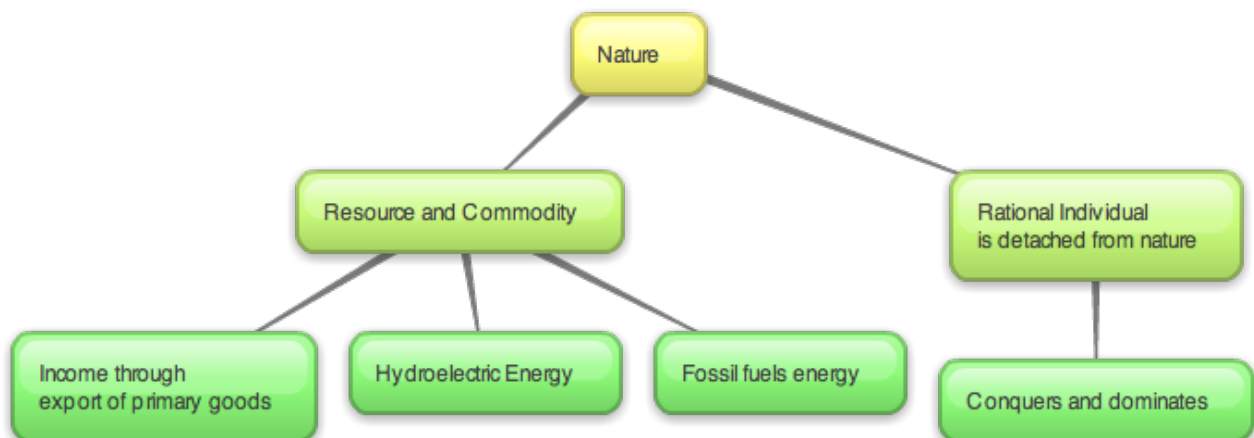
To the 'modern' 'man', nature is perceived as a resource of food, water, forests, oil, gas, mining, etc. and these resources are all to be exploited to a degree where it has been necessary to calm humans down in their short sighted search for profits and impose a legal and moral framework of sustainability. Throughout history there has been many examples of de-territorialisation and displacement of indigenous peoples or communities for the extraction of resources and exploitation of the nature. This has created mistrust towards the governments' and corporations' discourses on natural resources, since every articulation of natural resources have caused an intrusion and offset of the Cosmovision. Over time, the articulation of nature as a resource to be exploited for the benefit of the nation, corporation and humanity as a whole has come to signify ignorance, displacement and killing of the local inhabitants as well as destruction of nature and the ecosystem. To make matters worse, the recent decades' discourse on sustainability and intercultural governance has not changed anything for the rural communities in Guatemala.

The International Labour Organisation's article 169 states that prior to exploitation of land indigenous communities need to be consulted. Being an international organisation it has power to construct and articulate different discourses on 'universal' rights, and also power to have them ratified by governments. But even though the government facilitates a consultation it does not mean that the consultation will change anything. The government listens to the

communities because it has to and by acting like this the government constructs a discourse around a Janus-faced strategy of pretending to be interested and respectful of other cultures' view on certain issues, but at the same time only working to protect business interests. When the indigenous peoples manifest themselves through demonstrations the state uses military violence to silence the communities, which shows support for the companies and investors benefitting from the exploitation of resources.

This way of acting outlines perfectly the clash between two articulations of nature that are antagonistic. There is the indigenous discourse of a respectful relationship with the nature as being an inseparable part of human beings against the capitalist discourse based on a supremacy over nature and the economic logic of extraction and exploitation for profit. Furthermore, it shows that the government cynically has no interest in understanding how the Cosmovisi n affects the indigenous peoples relationship with nature. As such the government does not act interculturally, according to IBIS' and the indigenous peoples' articulation of interculturalism, but according to the state's own articulation it does.

From this we can visualise how nature is articulated with the capitalist state (figure 5.3), in this case the Guatemalan state. There can be more or less liberal versions of this articulation, e.g. fair trade, sustainability, etc. but the articulation of nature as a resource for exploitation is the same. The signifiers that, held together, construct the state's articulation of nature are in a counter-hegemonic relationship with the indigenous discourse of Cosmovisi n and nature.



From discussing the antagonistic relationship between the capitalist articulation of nature and the Cosmovisi n's, I will now move on to include IBIS in the discussion to see how they articulate nature, and how this influences their articulation of interculturalism.

5.3 IBIS and Nature

In this chapter I will analyse how IBIS articulates nature, and discuss their alignment, if there is any, i.e. whether they are mostly in line with the capitalist nature-as-a-resource discourse or if they follow the counter-hegemonic discourse of the Cosmovisión. In any case, IBIS as an NGO that claims to work interculturally has to be able to understand and respect the different cultures as well as be able to interact with them.

5.3.1 From an Intercultural Perspective

The director of IBIS Guatemala, Ana Maria's, initial understanding of the Cosmovisión is that it is a very beautiful way of living in coexistence with nature and humans, but, according to her understanding, recent decades has, due to different circumstances, shifted some of the values in the Cosmovisión away from non-violence and respect. This is her understanding, and there might be a discrepancy between her understanding and the indigenous peoples' articulation, as with any discourse, but she takes a highly critical stance towards the articulation of the Cosmovisión as something unconditionally positive and humane. According to her the indigenous communities are strongly influenced by a machismo culture, lynching due to lack of public justice, and general violence against people. If this is what Cosmovisión is about, IBIS cannot support it since it goes against the universal principles that shape IBIS' vision and mission. But referring to her colleagues at the head office in Guatemala City who live in the Cosmovisión (according to themselves), those violent people are not living according to the inherently non-violent discourse on co-existence with nature (Ana Maria 2013:1.12.00, *own translation*).

Ana Maria also mentions that people outside the Cosmovisión can learn a great deal about the relationship with and how to protect the nature, and continues by criticising the international development organisations for implementing 'Green Departments' with the objective of teaching indigenous peoples how to manage the nature. In reality the 'developed' world should learn from the 'developing' indigenous peoples (Ana Maria 2013:54.20, *own translation*). This critique was backed up in a recent article in the Danish newspaper Politiken that in cooperation with a Danish Environment NGO (Verdens Skove) had been in Panama to assess the UN program to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD). The program was criticised by the indigenous peoples of Panama for being arrogant and not aligned with the locals' culture of living in harmony with the nature. Gilberto Arias, a leader from the Guna community stated: "We have not amputated the forest like you have. Can you teach us anything about conserving the forest?" (Rothenborg 2014, Eberlein 2014,

own translation). This is interesting because in the 'rationalist' capitalistic discourse of humans being knowledgeable about everything within the natural sciences, and articulating scientific solutions to all of the world's problems it is not usual to encounter counter-hegemonic discourses. In recent years the counter-hegemonic discourse has actually been strengthened alongside a more powerful discourse on indigenous cultures and identity, which has created a pride of belonging to an indigenous culture. This is very likely to have emerged from the work of development organisations' (including IBIS) work to promote knowledge, respect and equality in the interaction with other cultures, whereas previously other cultures have been met with aggression and arrogance. Hence, from IBIS' point of view there is a great deal to be learnt about the co-existence with nature from the interaction with other cultures.

5.3.2 From a Capitalist Perspective

When IBIS talks about development projects relating to the nature, the nodal point of importance is "resources" and how the indigenous cultures can benefit from the exploitation of the resources. Around 60 % of the poor people in the world, live in countries that are rich in natural resources, and all of the countries in which IBIS is present have large deposits of natural resources that can be exported, and the deposits are mostly in areas where the indigenous communities are located (IBIS G, *own translation*).

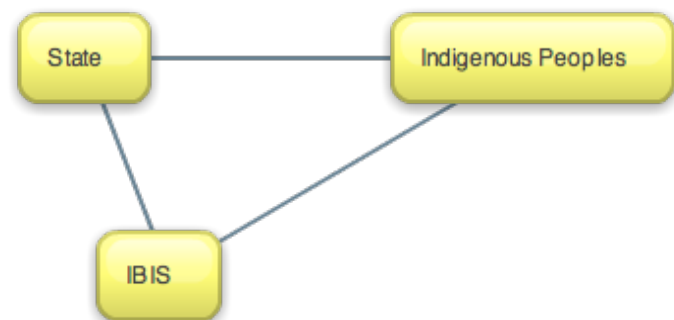
With regards to their development strategy, IBIS: 1) supports and teaches local communities about their rights and opportunities; 2) helps the locals in supporting the rights and getting their voices heard by central decision makers; 3) makes sure that official and national directions are agreed upon regarding the extraction of natural resources and the peoples' human, environmental, social, cultural and economical rights; 4) increases transparency in the administration of natural resources, to make it clear for the population how much money is made on the resources and how large a part of the profit that stays in the country and what it is used on (*ibid.*).

This articulation of nature as a resource that is available to be exploited is very close to that of the Guatemalan government, and the government would probably officially agree on the principles, but in practice not put a lot of effort into carrying out the principles. IBIS' discourse on natural resources articulates the rights of the peoples who are affected by the exploitation, and the signifiers that are articulated the most are inclusion and prior consultation in the process leading up to the implementation of the project. This makes sense, since as previously mentioned, earlier projects have created vast destruction of the nature and caused social

conflicts due to an ignorance of the interests of the indigenous populations¹¹. To many communities the discovery of natural resources is a curse and an omen of natural destruction, and according to IBIS the solution is to teach the locals about their rights, facilitate prior consultations so the locals have a say in the shaping of the contract, and to educate them as agents that are able to monitor the process of exploitation to make sure that all legal agreements are fulfilled.

This solution to the challenges, however, puts IBIS in between the state and the peoples, since the peoples are not interested in exploitation at all, and the state will never agree to not exploit the nature. In Guatemala there are large deposits of gold, silver, nickel, zinc, etc. and according to the state it creates employment and profit for the national economy. According to IBIS the tax- and mining-legislation means that a very small part of the profit (1%) stays in the country with the rest being sent abroad (IBIS H; Ana Maria 2013:32.07, *own translation*), information that is backed up by Antonio who wonders why he pays 12 % tax when a multinational corporation only pays 1 % (2013:28.58, *own translation*). It is here seen that both IBIS and the indigenous peoples articulate neoliberalism as the antagonistic pole of the indigenous peoples' interests.

But by analysing IBIS' discourse on the nature it is also seen that they articulate nature as being a resource available for exploitation, which is more aligned with the state's rationalist and capitalist discourse. Where they differ is in IBIS'



intercultural approach, which articulates the inclusion of the local communities' attitude to the exploitation of the resources, but without supporting the indigenous peoples completely.

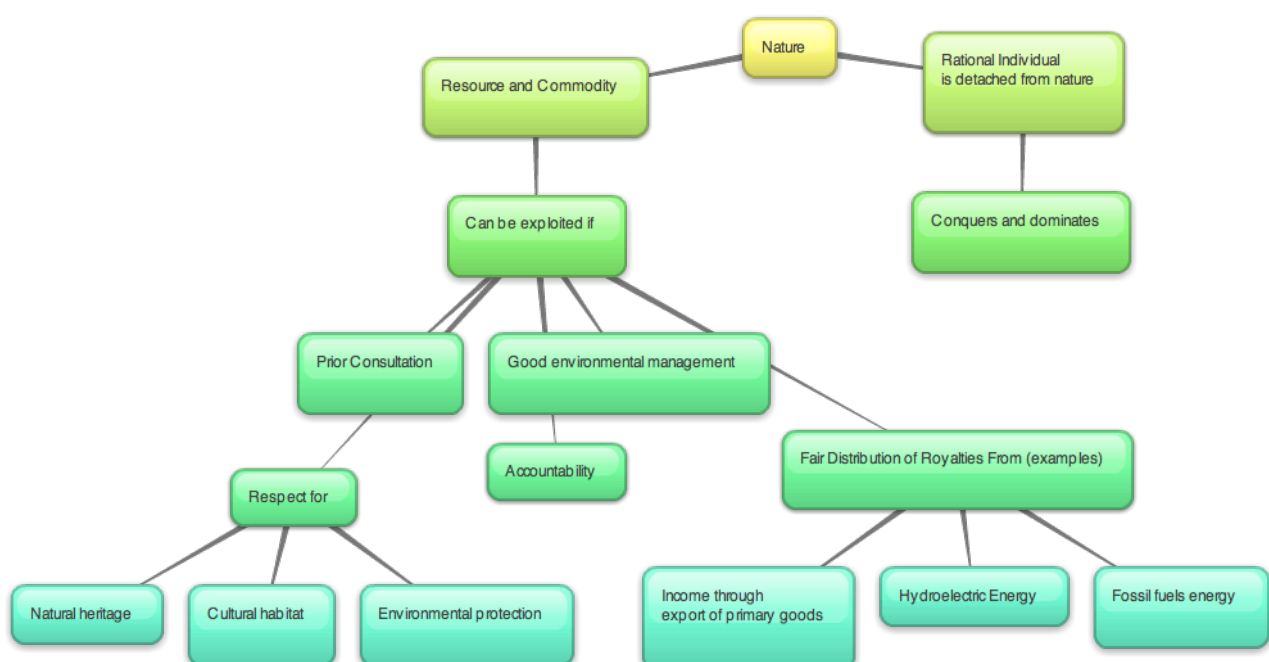
In IBIS' country strategy for Guatemala the articulation of how IBIS understands the antagonistic relationship between the government's and the indigenous peoples' discourses on nature and its resources can be found. Through education and information IBIS aims to help the indigenous peoples defend the: *"territory and natural resources of indigenous peoples' communities within the framework of collective rights for the respect of natural heritage,*

¹¹ See for example the film "También la Lluvia" (Even the Rain) that treats the Bolivian water wars, where the water supply was privatised to a multinational corporation.

environmental protection and preservation of their cultural habitat” and *“promote accountability and good management, in natural resource extraction, improving technical and practical skills on environmental management and fair distribution of royalties”* (IBIS E:29).

The discourse is clearly that of an international NGO embedded in a capitalist discourse, which is highlighted through the use the signifiers: management, royalties, technical and practical skills, natural resources, accountability, etc. The articulation of IBIS’ work to help the indigenous peoples in the struggle against the capitalist state is aimed at the state and therefore has a focus on change from above.

The articulation of nature is as such not counter-hegemonic, since it has the same signifiers as the state’s articulation, but IBIS includes a more rights based approach to the exploitation of natural resources, and thereby positions themselves close to the state. Interculturalism is not mentioned specifically in this context, and it could be argued that interculturalism is irrelevant to this type of development strategy. But at the same time, the discourse draws on the same signifiers as IBIS’ articulation of interculturalism, i.e. respect, cultural habitat and collective rights. The problems is that the signifiers can be understood as articulations of either interculturalism or universal values, and this highlights the schizophrenia there is present in some of IBIS’ articulations, i.e. if ‘respect for other cultures’ is a universal value, why is interculturalism then relevant?; or if ‘respect for other cultures’ equals interculturalism, what are universal values?



Compared to the capitalist state's articulation of nature as entirely a resource, IBIS' articulation is a lot more complex, and tries to mix values from an international human rights approach to help the indigenous peoples protect their sacred and spiritual nature, with the capitalist articulation. At the same time it is a combination of a bottom-up and a top-down approach because IBIS targets the state by articulating the politicians' 'obligation' to include the indigenous communities in consultations concerning the peoples who live in the areas; and IBIS articulates an empowerment of the indigenous peoples, so they can create changes in the political system from below, by being aware of how the political system works. This articulation, however, is not a part of how IBIS' discourse on nature, but instead on empowerment of people, which I will look at in the following chapter on different articulations and understandings of development.

6 Development?

Almost every time I tell someone about the master program in development and international relation I am met with the same question: what is development? And each time I have to reply that development can be many different things depending on the context. In the context of IBIS and interculturalism as a development strategy in Guatemala, I found it interesting to investigate the different articulations of interculturalism, and how these articulations were influenced by the way people see the world and their social realities. But to find out why interculturalism is important in IBIS' development strategies, I need to look into how the involved actor each articulate and understand development as a concept. In doing this I will discuss how the respect and understanding of other cultures from interculturalism is combined with development, which normally is articulated through universal rights and values.

6.1 Neoliberal Capitalist Development

So how is development understood in the neoliberal economy in this case exemplified by the Guatemalan state? In Guatemalan political economy there is a large focus on the attraction of foreign direct investment, and President Molina has done much to protect the interest of private corporations. For his work he was awarded the "2013 leader of the year" at the Latin Trade & BRAVO business awards. The prize was given to him because the attraction of foreign investors is important to the president – on all his travels he brings business leaders to

emphasise that there is a shared interest in development between the public and the private sector in Guatemala (Gutierrez 2013).

That the Guatemalan state's development program is highly dependent on private investors is seen in the Corredor Interoceanico de Guatemala (CIG) [The Interoceanic Corridor of Guatemala], which aims to connect the two newly constructed harbours on each side of Guatemala with a 372 km long highway for lorries, two railway lines and four hydrocarbon lines for petrol, crude oil and natural gas. The objective is to create competition for the Panama Canal and development in Guatemala through a large infrastructural project with a budget of 7 billion US\$ - all private investments (Government D). Projects like this highlights the aspects of development that are articulated in the neoliberal discourse, which focuses on exports of natural resources and primary goods, as well as foreign direct investment, economic growth, etc. – in general a top-down approach to development through economics.

Ana Maria, the director of IBIS Guatemala, claims that the Guatemalan state still believes in the theory of trickle-down economy, has no intentions of 'development' and that it "is oriented towards serving the business structures" (Ana Maria 2013:28.55, *own translation*). This implies putting the power of political decisions into the hands of economic analysts, and that a thriving private business economy eventually will 'develop' the country. Furthermore, the level of development of the country is measured in GDP, economic growth, the interest rate and the inflation.

Development can be many things, and to the question of how the population in general views the project of IBIS, Ana Maria replied that when she talks to people that are not part of the partner or other solidarity organisations, she often only tells that IBIS works with development, without going into a deeper discussion of what development is. The reason for this, she continues, is that large parts of the population do not think about other people than their closest family and their income, nor do they know about how the indigenous population of Guatemala lives and wishes to live. "(...) the people do not understand. It is people who do not know their country. Here, there are many Guatemalan who sincerely do not know their country. The furthest they have gone is to the Atitlán Lake, because it is enormously beautiful"

(Ana Maria 2013:38.57, *own translation*)¹². The state with its focus on economic development combined with very little understanding and tolerance for other cultures has through a long maintenance of a neoliberal discourse created a highly separated population, both culturally and economically, in which the rich do not understand the poor, nor are they interested in trying. Furthermore, an organisation like IBIS has to avoid talking about their projects, because they can be seen as political and in opposition to the government's politics.

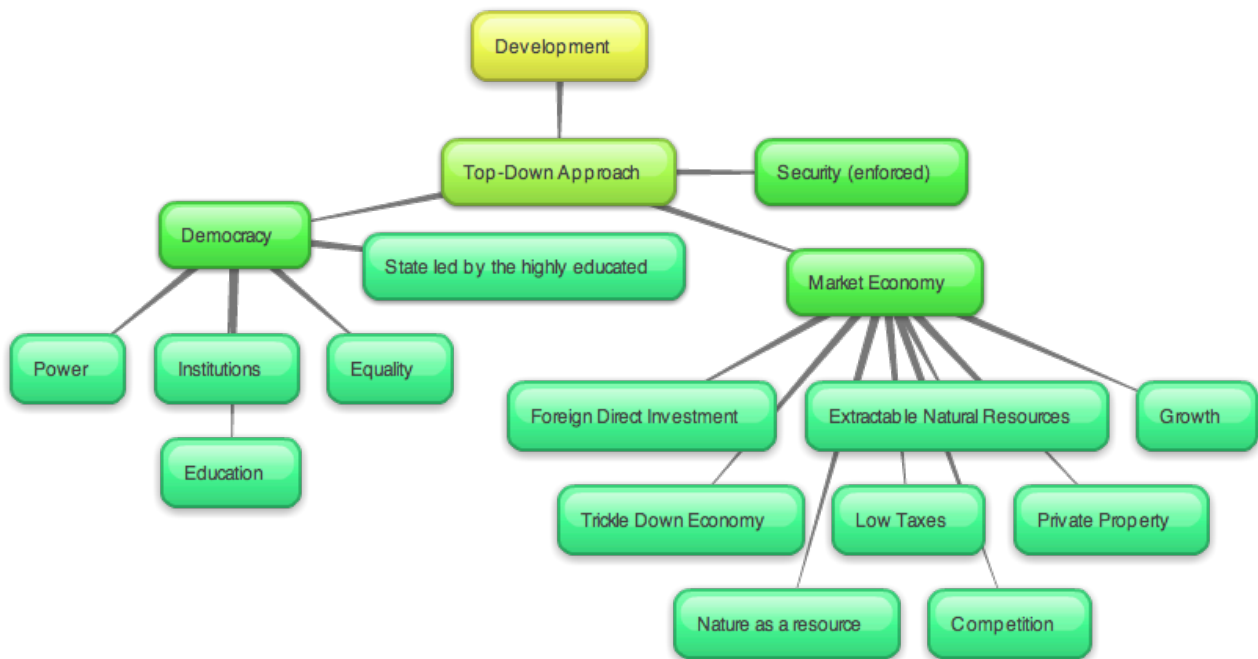


Figure 6.1

Figure 6.1 shows how the state of Guatemala articulates development in the context of a construction of a conservative-liberal state, i.e. a state with strong religious ties and liberal economic politics. In addition to this, the state articulates their development discourse in relation to the Cosmovisión and the indigenous peoples' rejection of neoliberal development. In this way the two actors enforce the antagonistic relationship by accusing the other of not understanding what development is. In general, it can be seen that the articulation of development is based on the same signifiers and floating signifiers as used in international discourses on development. To be able to compare the state's discourse on development, I will now move into an analysis of the indigenous population and groupings' discourse on development.

¹² “ (...) la gente no entiende. Porque es gente que no conoce su país. Aquí hay un enorme cantidad de Guatemaltecos que sinceramente no conoce su país. Decir lo mas largo que han llegado es el lago Atitlán, porque el lago es enormemente bonito. (Ana Maria 2013:38.57).

6.2 The Peoples' Perspective on Development

The economic and political elite of Guatemala has their way of understanding life and their realities, and this affects their articulations of development. In this section I will look into how development also can be articulated, when people have another understanding of the world. After decades of 'development' in Guatemala a counter-hegemonic struggle is gaining influence at the moment, as a combination of new approaches from development NGOs and a stronger social mobilisation on behalf of the indigenous peoples in Latin America. The Post-development scholar Gustavo Esteva claims that previously, the articulations of development with regards to education, health, and eating only brought misery and poverty because there were no teachers and schools; there were no medical services, doctors, hospitals, drugs, etc.; and there was no income and food to buy and feed the people. This has created a movement back to a stronger articulation of the ancient values of the indigenous cultures in which the culture, tradition, and the commons again are in focus. "For people on the margins, disengaging from the economic logic of the market or the plan has become the very condition for survival" (Esteva 2010:17-18). As we will see, the post-development and post-colonial scholars share the antagonistic discourse against capitalist development with the indigenous communities.

For the indigenous population of Guatemala, development is articulated as something completely different than the state's articulation. Antonio from Oxlajuj Ajpop speaks culturally on behalf of the community when stating that: "development really is to have the basics for survival" (Antonio 2013:5.54, *own translation*¹³). This articulation of development is at first glance in agreement with the neoliberal discourse – or the neoliberal is at least not opposed to this articulation, in that everyone can agree on the 'positive' in survival. The antagonistic relationship arises in how to achieve this survival. The Cosmovisión is not about "grey cement projects, it is about the home, the land, it is where to have the corn, beans, chicken, have your forest that supplies you with firewood, maintain the water (...) to work like farmers and to have a good relationship with the community" (*ibid.*). Among the indigenous peoples who live in the Cosmovisión the focus of the community is 'community' – not competition and individuality like in the neoliberal system, and everybody helps each other if for instance a house burns to the ground, and so the community constructs a new one in a few days. Nobody buys anything, everybody and exchanges in the market; money is not a necessity or basics for

¹³ "el desarrollo propiamente es tener lo basico para sobrevivir" (Antonio 2013:5.54).

development, but Antonio is worried that now, when the system has been ‘corrupt’ by money and when some people have gone to the US to work and have become interested in buying things, the system will fall out of equilibrium (*ibid.*).

Antonio’s counter-hegemonic discourse goes against the capitalist articulations of development because they: “look at the cement, at what is expensive, the infrastructure, electricity, and say that it is development. But what kind of development? (...) Development here is money. The kind of development that has to do with politics and consumerism. Focusing on mercantilism, competition (...)” (Antonio 2013:14.12¹⁴, *own translation*). In the government’s articulation of development, if one is opposed to development as in the case of the hydroelectric plants one does not understand development. And if you are against the state’s development model, and instead articulate development as in the Cosmovisión, the state will criminalise you as a terrorist because you do not share the same ideology, “they look at development in one way and we see it as something different. So where is the respect in that. The corporations, through the authorities, are in reality violating the traditions or the values that really have power and authority” (Antonio 2013: 28.58, *own translation*¹⁵).

Antonio’s choices of signifiers to articulate development are all connected to the Cosmovisión through community, survival, land, and nature (corns, beans, chicken, forests, water). Thereby the discursive system of the Cosmovisión becomes at complete hegemonic entity in which all relations are aligned in a set of discourses and articulations of the universe and its inhabitants. In the social context of Mayas it can be argued that the discourse of the Cosmovisión has become “objective”. Interestingly, however, is it when it comes to the interrelationships with other cultures of another mindset, which is where interculturalism becomes interesting. It can be argued that the indigenous population has only been met with hostility and disrespect the last 500 years, which can be the reason that they recently have gained success in articulating another and counter-hegemonic understanding of the world than the previously dominant and hegemonic discourse.

¹⁴ “miran el cemento, miran el dinero, se mira a lo que es caro, la infraestructura, la luz. Llego la luz, eeeee y ahí desarrollo. Pero que desarrollo? (...) el desarrollo acá es pisto. Entonces el tipo de desarrollo acá es mas que tiene que ver con las políticas y de consumismo. Entonces va enfocado mas ahí del mercantilista, de competencias” (Antonio 2013:14.12)

¹⁵ “Ellos miran el desarrollo de una manera y nosotros miramos de otra manera. Entonces, donde está el respeto en eso. Las empresas, a través de las autoridades, están violando realmente esas tradiciones o esos valores, que realmente tiene un poder y tiene una autoridad” (Antonio 2013:28.58).

Antonio's view of development is backed up by Basilio Tzoy, advocacy coordinator in CEIBA (Friends of the Earth Guatemala), who highlights the importance of sharing, first, within the community, second, within the culture, and finally on the market, where the alimentation that the families could not consume, is exchanged for other produce. This diversification and exchange of alimentation stands in sharp contrast to the agro-industry that specialises in producing a few crops¹⁶ in large quantities. Basilio claims that if the population does not produce it will lose its sovereignty, and that a large part of development within the Cosmovisi n is balancing agriculture with politics (Basilio 2013:9.11). Basilio then supports the counter-hegemonic discourse of the indigenous population against capitalism's industrialised approach to nature, agriculture and production. And he continues by claiming that: "Estamos claros que el desarrollo capitalista destruye [we are clear that capitalist development destroys]" (Basilio 2013:14.35). Here he refers to the methods of maximising profit through the use of chemicals in industrialised agricultural production, and how it destroys the soil and all of nature. Basilio also supports Antonio in his accusations against the state for criminalising the people who are against neoliberal development referring to the ongoing struggle in Santa Cruz Barillas in the north of Guatemala where the construction of a hydroelectric plant is scheduled. The companies, supported by the state, abduct people from the organisations that are in opposition, which "revives the memories of the internal armed conflict in Guatemala during the 36 years of civil war" (FOEI 2013).

Feliciana, a student of ancestral authorities and development within the Mayan tradition from a Mam¹⁷ region of Huehuetenango, describes development in the Cosmovisi n' articulation as focusing on "buen vivir" [good living] where the people "really take into consideration what is the earth, la madre naturaleza [mother nature] and the integrity of all this, because it is integrated with being human" (Feliciana 2013:1.00, *own translation, author's note in brackets*). Thereby, she brings out the important nodal point of the indigenous peoples of Latin America, *el buen vivir*, which the last 10-15 years has become an increasingly powerful counter-hegemonic discourse, and even the hegemonic discourse in some social groups and nations (e.g. Bolivia and Ecuador) where it has been inscribed in the constitution.

¹⁶ Also termed monocultures in which a large area of land is dedicated to producing only one crop. E.g. in Argentina many farmers produce solely soy, because the prices are high, but this means that there has been a lack of other crops in the country.

¹⁷ Mam is a group of native peoples from the western parts of Guatemala

With this articulation of development, it does not seem like the Cosmovisión and neoliberal development can co-exist, since they are in an antagonistic relationship and hence struggle to gain hegemony. In this case history underlines that social change cannot happen through gradual harmonic change, but happens through conflict – mostly discursive and not necessarily physical violent conflict. Rubén Herrera, coordinator for the peoples' assembly in Huehuetenango who himself has been kidnapped, arrested and imprisoned for opposing the construction of the hydroelectric plant (Burke 2013), believes that the neoliberal state by selling out everything to the private sector has not succeeded in creating jobs nor improving the conditions for the peoples. It has only created more poverty, more exploitation and more malnutrition; "We are not interested because it goes against all the possibilities we have to be able to live in peace, have something to eat, can be sustainable, can strengthen our identity and make our life larger. On the contrary, they are obliging us to make our struggle more extensive" (Rubén 2013:42.30, *own translation*)¹⁸. Rubén articulates the struggle against the neoliberal development discourse as being important to the culture and identity of being Mayan. Thereby, he enforces the discursive struggle inherent to the counter-hegemonic discourse of the indigenous peoples with regards to development.

¹⁸ "No nos interesa porque va en contra de todas las posibilidades, para que nosotros vivamos en paz, para que nosotros tengamos que comer, para que seamos sostenibles y sustentables, para que se fortalezca nuestra identidad y hagamos mas extensa de nuestra vida. Al contrario, nos están obligando hacer mas extensa nuestra lucha, en el tiempo" (Ruben 2013:42.30).

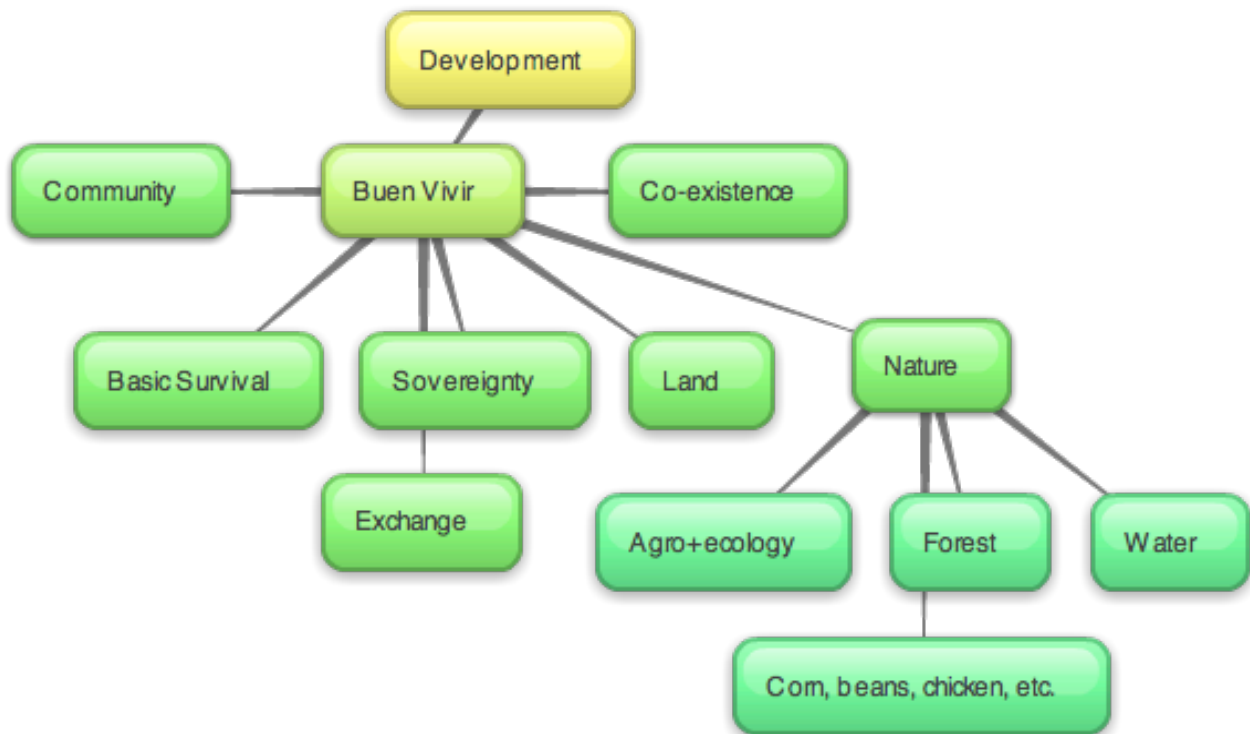


Figure 6.2

Figure 6.2 visualise the articulation of development in the Cosmovisi n. A comparison with the neoliberal articulation of development in figure 6.1 shows that the indigenous peoples incorporate development, politics and the market into the same system, whereas neoliberalism have separate systems for market, politics and the social, and then ‘add’ development to soften the impact of capitalism. It can, however, be discussed whether ‘development’ is articulated discursively in the Cosmovisi n. It is more likely that it is a signifier from a capitalist discourse, which has been adapted and articulated differently to fit the values and traditions of the indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, as spokespersons of organisations that promote the values and traditions of the Mayan Cosmovisi n the respondents are all deeply embedded in their view of the world and the universe, and it is important to remember that even though the Cosmovisi n is an ancient culture, it is still a construction of language, values, traditions, etc. and hence it is open to social change through discursive change. A discourse does not become ‘more true’ or ‘more hegemonic’ by being ancient, and all discourse should be critically examined. In this case they construct a powerful counter-hegemonic articulation of development as being something completely opposed to the neoliberals’ articulation.

As with interculturalism, development is arguably not a part of 'original' Mayan vocabulary, but is a concept that has been articulated in the context of the *Cosmovisión* because a need arose to construct a counter-hegemonic discourse to change society from an otherwise oppressive regime that threatened to extinct the indigenous peoples through assimilation into a neoliberal regime.

This section has explained and analysed the indigenous peoples' articulation of development and how it relates to the neoliberal articulation, and it was seen that the two articulations are antagonistic to each other on nearly all levels. In the following section I will analyse how IBIS relates to the two antagonistic discourses, before going into a discussion of how all three articulations relate, and why interculturalism is interesting in this context.

6.3 IBIS as a Development NGO

So how does a Danish based development NGO operate in an international context of antagonistic discourses of development? IBIS is allowed to operate in Guatemala by the government, and if the government is sufficiently annoyed by IBIS, they will loose their permit of operations; but at the same time they have to show to their members that they make a difference to the partner organisations and create social change. In this section I will analyse IBIS' articulation of development to see how IBIS understands "a just world" (IBIS F).

The general development objective of IBIS in Guatemala is: "to promote the building of a democratic, intercultural and equitable society by empowering men, women and youth of indigenous people, so they can exercise and defend their rights, as well as fulfilling their obligations" (IBIS E:5). The articulation of development shares element and moments with IBIS' articulation of interculturalism. This stands in contrast to the state's articulation of development, which contain no references to any articulations of interculturalism, coexistence, respect, etc. Whereas the indigenous peoples' articulation of development emphasizes and makes use of the same set of moments as their own articulation of interculturalism does, because these moments are crucial to the whole construction of the *Cosmovisión*.

The governance advisor of IBIS in Denmark, Morten Bisgaards, states that to him development is to take the point of departure in the realities of the peoples that IBIS works with, and continues by pointing out that development is not a static concept, and that there is no formal definition of what constitutes development. Instead, he emphasizes, how one

understands development is very different, and that is how it should be. To Morten, it is moving out of the development paradigm when someone starts to break a set of conventions of rights, but he (personally) thinks there is something attractive to the Cosmovisión's approach of leaving minerals in the ground, and instead articulate development as based on human relations. Highlighting that IBIS does not have a patented definition of what development is, he states with regards to the peoples around the world: "the role of IBIS is to facilitate significant steps forward in relation to development of the civil society and to democracies around the world, but it has to be based on their dreams and visions for the world they want" (Morten 2013:19.19, *own translation*). Nonetheless, in their strategies IBIS relies on a set of values that are rights based, and IBIS' understanding of democracy is about giving influence to the groups of peoples that the politicians represent, i.e. deep democracies (*ibid.*).

A recurring signifier in IBIS' articulations is facilitation, and it is emphasized by other interviewees that IBIS does not have a definition of what development is, instead IBIS supports partner organisations in the civil society to reach their goals. This is backed up by Claudia, head of communication of IBIS in Guatemala, who states that IBIS never interferes or works directly with projects, but always supports already existing organisations in their work (Claudia 2013: 1.00, *own translation*). The projects that IBIS supports, however, are always connected to marginalised peoples who do not have their basic rights fulfilled, as Ana Maria (director of IBIS Guatemala) points out when talking about development being to generate "better quality of life" (Ana Maria 2013:1.00). When asked what better quality then is she answers: "Quality of life is to respect the essential elements. Vital to being human is a life in community. From a very early infancy, to the right to education, the right to a healthy alimentation, the right to health, the right to the access to generate an income, to work, to develop with dignity as a human being" (*ibid. own translation*).

The articulation of development from the perspective of IBIS can even though it is stressed that IBIS supports whatever the counterparts want, be visualised in the following figure. The reason I do this is because IBIS do not support organisations that work against IBIS' articulation of development. I therefore believe that IBIS' articulation of development can be analysed through the organisations they support.



Figure 6.3

IBIS articulates development as being whatever the counterparts wants as long as it lives up to international rights conventions – in other words IBIS articulates development as being the fulfilment of an international rights regime, and in the case of Guatemala combined with the promotion of the Cosmovisión. Regarding the Cosmovisión, Ana Maria strongly supports the values and traditions, but without being folkloric (Ana Maria 2013:54.20). In this way IBIS lives up to both their own articulation of interculturalism, in which there should be room to respectfully criticise other cultures. Ana Maria is especially critical towards the way women are treated in Guatemalan society today, where the women has to take care of everything, because the man is at work, and come drunk home at night, beat up his wife and rape his daughter. In her opinion this cannot be accepted in any society, and should not be respected on the grounds of cultural differences. She believes that man and woman are articulated as equals in the Cosmovisión, but in reality the women are doing it all (Ana Maria 2013: 1.06.01-1.13.00). The staff at CEDFOG supported this a day during lunch and one of the female staff jokingly said that ‘the only thing a Guatemalan man does is to move his chair closer to the

table' (own observation). The point here is that IBIS criticises the indigenous peoples and the Cosmovisi n for not living up to universal values of equal opportunities.

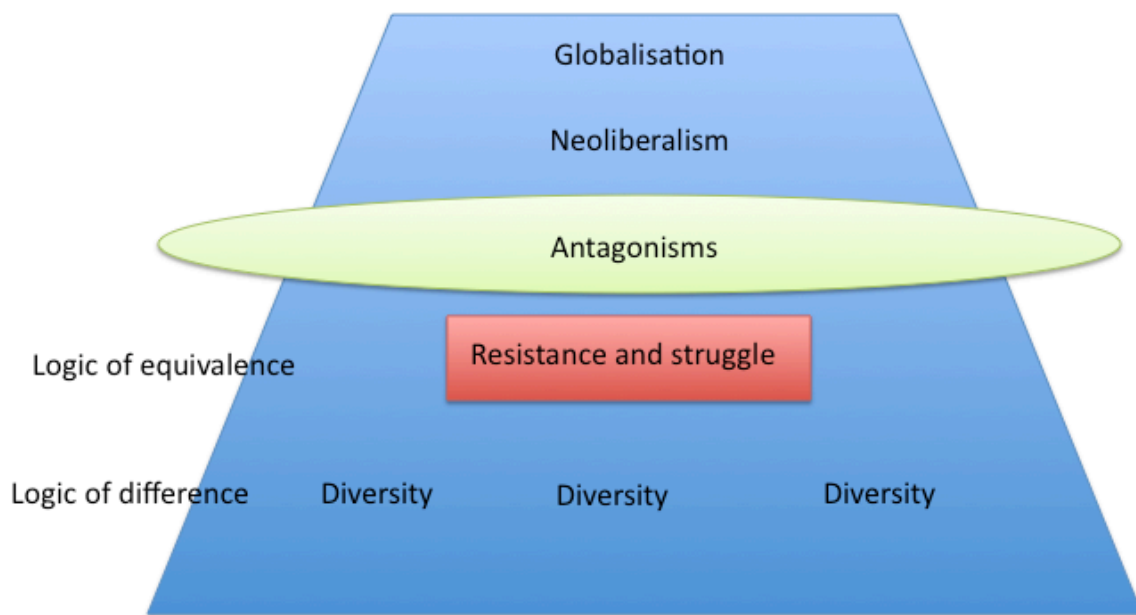


Figure 6.4 (Agust n 2013:92)

On the one hand IBIS follows (maybe unknowingly) the recommendations of post-development scholar Arturo Escobar in multiplying "the centres and agents of knowledge production – in particular to give salience to the forms of knowledge produced by those who are supposed to be the 'objects' of development" (Escobar in Ziai 2007:21). In this way IBIS deconstructs the 'traditional' development NGO's articulation of development as being top-down, and instead of relying on the development industry's expert knowledge support the local organisations' articulation of development. To visualise the relationship between the different discourses and how alliances are possible, it can be seen in figure 6.4 that since both IBIS and the indigenous peoples operate on the level of resistance (equivalent), but different in articulation, they can agree to struggle against the neoliberal state in Guatemala. On the other hand IBIS articulates universal values above cultural norms, which theoretically goes against the particularistic ideals of interculturalism. In this case, it places IBIS as part of globalisation and hence in the antagonistic relationship, which counters cultural relativism and promotes globalised 'objective' values.

The list of floating signifiers in IBIS articulation of development is almost never-ending, since all the moments in their articulation can be articulated differently in another articulation. In this way IBIS never actually manages to create a closure of meaning, since all the signifiers are

or can be contested in different articulations, which in turn makes IBIS' articulation open to different ascriptions of meaning.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer: 1) how and why IBIS applies interculturalism as a development strategy in Guatemala; and 2) how it is possible to promote interculturalism and universal values at the same time.

This thesis analysed three actors' different articulations of interculturalism, and compared these articulations of how and why interculturalism is relevant in a development perspective. I found that IBIS applies interculturalism by cooperating with organisations from different indigenous communities and different social contexts, and by promoting indigenous peoples' rights in a society that is highly economically unequal, racist, culturally divided and still wounded after decades of oppression and civil war. One problem with interculturalism is that the two institutions that IBIS works with/against articulate interculturalism differently because they are embedded in a different social context. This means that IBIS can advocate their own articulation of what constitute interculturalism as a development strategy and at the same time the Guatemalan government can claim that they already have implemented interculturalism, because the state has another articulation, and none is more correct than the other. Another problem is that the indigenous peoples' understanding of interculturalism is already articulated through the *Cosmovisión*, which articulates coexistence, equality and respect for the other as universal values, so in the everyday life within the indigenous communities interculturalism does not change much. They do however, together with IBIS, form a counter-hegemonic alliance against the government to promote their common articulation of interculturalism to change the multicultural society from the both the bottom and the top. The result of this antagonistic struggle will depend on the hegemonisation of one of the articulations into a temporary closure of 'objective' meaning, but since there can never be one single discourse that constructs all social relations, the struggle will continue.

The second part of the research question treated the theoretical combination of development and interculturalism from the perspective of IBIS, and how the two can be combined in different social contexts. IBIS base their development strategy on universal values with respect for other cultures, and this constitutes a dilemma between the universalism of development against the relativism of interculturalism. Since the different groupings have

different articulations of development, and since they are in a somewhat antagonistic relationship, IBIS proposes an intercultural approach to development. The reason for this proposal is that IBIS believes that intercultural development can create a more respectful and equal approach to changing the society according to a rights-based understanding of development. From a discourse theoretical perspective that takes culture and identity to be discursive constructions resulting from an articulation of, for example, the relationship with nature, combining interculturalism with the articulation of development does not change the antagonistic relationship between the different articulations. Instead, it adds another floating signifier to the articulation of development, and hence makes the articulation contestable since very few people have an *a priori* understanding of neither interculturalism nor development. Differences and conflicts of interest are disarticulated, thereby depoliticising IBIS' development strategy to focus on more on overcoming social problems than solving their structural reasons.

Common to all three articulation, is that they are discursive construction of groups of signifiers that can change society to something 'better', and in this context it becomes clear that each part construct their own articulation in antagonistic relationship with what they believe is wrong with the existing society.

If it is possible to work interculturally while promoting universal values cannot be answered, because it depends on how one articulates interculturalism and universal values. I have found that IBIS articulates interculturalism as being "respectful of diversity and the rights of different cultures" (IBIS E:7) which can be interpreted as a relativism towards the multiple cultures and social groupings of society. Meanwhile IBIS articulates a rights-based development strategy, which can be interpreted as an articulation of a universalism. From a discourse theoretical point of view there cannot exist a total universalism since all things 'exist' by being different to something else and the universal would have to exclude everything else; and there cannot exist a pure particularism since there would be no antagonistic relations on which we form groups and it would break down all cultures, identities and discourses (Laclau 1996:22-27). It opens the debate about the possibility the rights of peoples self-determination excludes or supplements the universal rights. In the context of IBIS, it can be argued that since the universal human rights-based development strategy was criticised for being too foundationalist, essentialist, and articulated by a group with a special political interest, interculturalism was introduced to create an apolitical balance between universalism and particularism. How the exact dividing line is found must be

up to the negotiations of the individuals in the specific social context, and this depends on a relation of power between the actors, e.g. a bottom-up change of the development discourse to become temporarily hegemonic and in that way constitute social change through a discursive struggle.

But at the same time, IBIS opens up to criticism, because interculturalism as a development strategy is a contested concept, since it is a concept consisting of floating signifiers, which makes it a concept that, for instance, the government could adapt and articulate differently. Furthermore, one could argue that since IBIS conditions intercultural development on a set of universal principles, IBIS might as well just have the universal principles as a development strategy, e.g. if it is the Millennium Development Goals, why not just have them as a development strategy? Finally, since IBIS is operating in a society where the social relations are very unstable, the antagonisms are very large between the indigenous peoples and the state, and there are therefore relatively few problems for IBIS to partner with the indigenous communities.

The conclusion of this thesis is that interculturalism and development are complex and complicated concepts, and it demands a lot from an organisation in articulating its understanding of the concepts to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. At the same time the use of floating signifiers as interculturalism and development, can give an organisation room to manoeuvre in, because the organisation is not bound to specific definitions of what constitutes the strategy.

Through interculturalism, IBIS promotes the creation of bottom-up alliances between different indigenous groupings. In this way, IBIS manages to make a difference in changing civil society to something the local peoples want by producing new organisational alternatives to the political parties. I have not been able to find the exact dividing line between universalism and particularism since it does not exist, and IBIS leaves the line floating since every negotiation depends on the social context of the involved parts, and this impact of IBIS' and the indigenous peoples' articulation of intercultural development against the neoliberal conservative state should not be neglected.

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9 Appendix 1 – Discourse Theory

M ller, Martin 2010 “Doing discourse analysis in Critical Geopolitics” accessed at <http://espacepolitique.revues.org/1743>

Apparatus	Term	Concept
Discourse: A relational ensemble of signifying practices creating meaning, which extends to the whole social space, both linguistic and extra-linguistic. Discourses are organised through nodal points.	Elements	Signifiers whose meaning are multiple and have not yet become fixed in a discourse
	Articulation	A practice through which a partial fixation of the meanings of elements is achieved
	Moment	Elements whose meaning has been partially fixated through articulation
	Closure	The fixation of the meaning of a signifier within a discourse
	Fields of discursivity	The surplus of meaning which is outside discourse. A discourse is always constituted in relation to a field of discursivity. The field of discursivity harbours the potential for the contestation of a discourse.
	Nodal Points	Privileged signifiers within discourses around which other moments are ordered in chains of equivalence

	Floating Signifiers	Elements which are particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning and may form nodal points in different discourses
Identity: Articulation of a subject position in a discourse which is always incomplete. Identity is organised through master-signifiers.	Subject Position	Different possibilities of the construction of meaning of a subject in different discourses
	Contingency	A given identity is possible but not necessary. There can never be one single discourse which exclusively structures the social
	Split subject	The split subject is perpetually incomplete and constantly strives to become whole
Politics: The organisation of society in a particular way that excludes other possible arrangements. The social sphere is organised through myths.	Antagonism	Discursive exteriority which presents a threatening force for a hegemonic discourse
	Hegemony	The fixation of meaning in an antagonistic terrain naturalising a particular articulation
	Objectivation	Discourses becoming seemingly natural and uncontested through hegemonic intervention
	Dislocation	A contingent event that

		cannot be symbolised or represented within a discourse and thus disrupts and destabilises orders of meaning
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