**The Discourse of Development: A Close Study of International Actors in Guatemala**

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**I. Abstract**

There have been many developments in development scholarship. I am interested in researching how these development theories impact, if at all, the discourse of development used by international actors in Guatemala. Currently, there is no research that analyzes the shift in development discourse specifically in the context of Guatemala. My research focuses on the current scholarly discourse of development and considers how it has or has not has or has not aligned with changing discourse of development used by international organizations on Guatemala. I study the discourse used by the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID in order to determine how they characterize the needs of Guatemala. I then compare this discourse to development theories in order to draw conclusions about how development scholarship influences actual development policy. To accomplish this goal I use country reports that detail the project goals and outcomes. I find that these international organizations use human development theory in their discourse but will not have advanced in any significant way in their project implementation. This research illuminates how actual development policy has shifted in terms of appropriate development strategy. If we can assume that the scholarly trajectory is always moving the development field toward “what is best”, then international organizations should reflect this change in their policy.

**II. Introduction**

*“We [Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador] will undertake over the medium term to create development conditions that will allow people to keep living in our countries.”[[1]](#footnote-1)* This is an excerpt from the Alliance for Prosperity, which is an important development text because it connects development ideology with policy and practice. But what does development really mean, and how has the discourse around development changed and created different power implications? The implications and meanings of “development” vary among development organizations operating in different areas of the world with individual needs. In my research I study the discourse of development and its policy implications in the context of the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and USAID operating in Guatemala. When researching development scholarship I noticed that there is a shift in the dominant discourse from neoliberal theory to human development theory. This observation shaped my research question, which asks; how is this shift in scholarly discourse reflected in the language employed by large development organizations in Guatemala? And what are the policy implications of this shift?

In order to really understand the implications of this research it is important to have an understanding of how “development” became such a prevalent aspect of international relations. The field of development is relatively new and only emerged after World War II with the Marshall Plan and the U.S. desire to help rebuild Europe. This desire to help poor countries develop was then expanded to the rest of the world as the Western way of life was exported. Development; however, has not stayed the same and with every decade there is new scholarship about how to most successfully conduct development and what the goals of development are.[[2]](#footnote-2) I talk more about this scholarship and the interactions of different theories in my literature review.

I decided to focus on Guatemala because of the complex but interesting relationship Guatemala has with the United States. In 1954 the CIA sponsored a coup of democratically elected Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz.[[3]](#footnote-3) The official reasoning was that Guatemala was on the verge of becoming communist and by accusing Árbenz of being a communist the U.S. government had the self-proclaimed authority to replace him with someone they felt would be more responsive to U.S. interests. This was the catalyst for a series of military dictatorships in Guatemala that lasted until 1996 with the signing of the Peace Accords and the official end to the civil war. Currently, the U.S. is supportive of the prosecution of key military officials that were trained by the U.S., such as Rios Montt.[[4]](#footnote-4) The U.S is failing to acknowledge the wrongs that they have done, however the U.S. has been able to do some good by setting conditions on aid money. The U.S. gave over one hundred million dollars to Guatemala for development and other aid related activities in 2012 and has passed legislation that conditions this money on Guatemalan government compliance with the Peace Accords.[[5]](#footnote-5) Guatemala is in a stage of transition from dictatorship to democracy but corruption is a major obstacle. Ensuring smooth transitional justice could be a priority for development organizations. This political context is important for understanding development because it gives insight into potential motivations or interests for projects as well as context for a shift in how Guatemala is understood and framed by international actors.

This research is important because it looks critically at who is constructing the meaning of development and what implications it has for the people and areas that are being developed. Once the relationship between discourse and policy is understood the scholars can begin the philosophical endeavor of trying to make moral judgments about development. My research also offers insight about the extent to which discourse is created to justify policy or policy is created as a result of an ideological discourse. While it is easy to say that discourse creates policy I need to pay attention to situations where discourse is published in order to justify, to the public, a policy agenda that is already implemented.

My research grew out of my desire to connect the complex political situation in Guatemala to the field of development. I am working in the interpretivist world because I am less interested in drawing conclusions across cases but rather I want to have a deeper understanding of this case in particular. I conduct a genealogical discourse analysis, which is concerned with “reading history through discourse to see how power and knowledge functions in society”.[[6]](#footnote-6) By using this methodology I draw conclusions about how the dominant discourse has the power to shape group thought and action.

The rest of my paper is research and analysis that is grounded in schools of thought that already exist in the development scholarship and have evolved from one another. In chronological order the schools of thought are Neoliberal Development, Human Development, and Post-Development theories. For my research I frame the progression of development discourses in Guatemala within these theories and scholarship that already exist. I can apply the theoretical frameworks to my texts in order to track key language for each theory and make conclusions about the dominant discourse among development organizations. It is important that I identify and apply the theories to monumental texts; texts that help create a communal understanding.[[7]](#footnote-7) In my research, Country Strategy Reports for Guatemala are the monumental texts.

**III. Literature Review**

*Research Topic and Question*

In order to answer my research question, I focus particularly on the current scholarly discourse and its impacts. The reason I made this choice is because there is good record keeping by the development agencies that clearly states the goals and plans for how development will be conducted. This is also an interesting time for development because the human development theory has started to gain legitimacy in the scholarly world.[[8]](#footnote-8) I am particularly interested in Guatemala because it has one of the highest GDPs in Central America but also some of the highest levels of inequality in the world and worst social indicators meaning development priorities for Guatemala will probably be different from those for other areas.

In order to understand the power relationship between discourse and development policy it is important to know about the current dominant development theories. This is vital because it gives context and framing in order to deconstruct and understand development. Theory gives me frames and guidelines to critically analyze how development projects are implemented. When considering the development theory scholarship that I present, it is important to know that development theories constantly interact with, and critique one another. I am going to present three theories in chronological order as best I can but there is frequent overlap and all three theories do still exist today with varying importance.

*School of Thought 1: Neo-Liberalism of Development*

Neoliberalism is a theory that emerged in the late 1970s and dominated the development discourse during the 1980s but neoliberal scholars and discourse do still exist. The emergence of neoliberalism is grounded in the belief that we are better off today than we were about two hundred years ago because of globalization and international trade.[[9]](#footnote-9) Because of the rise of globalization and capitalism, deals made between corporations have the most influence on policy. Scholars argue that policy that attempts to limit globalization actually hurts a country’s development. The global economy will not change because a certain country refuses to participate in it and, in fact, this will only hurt that country’s development.[[10]](#footnote-10)

There are several ways that neo-liberal scholars, such as Jeffery Sachs, Peter Marber, and Milton Friedman, suggest that development organizations try to end poverty. One way is through “clinical economics:” the idea that carefully tailored aid money can jumpstart a country’s economy so that they can be a better participant in the global economy. This would greatly reduce the amount of aid money needed in the future because capitalism will allow economic prosperity.[[11]](#footnote-11) In order to accommodate this, all barriers to trade need to be eliminated because the free market allows for more investment in a country’s economy. The result is a trickle down effect and all aspects of life will be improved, including better living conditions and an increased wage.[[12]](#footnote-12) Additionally, scholars argue that economic freedom leads to political freedom because as people gain more economic freedom they have the ability and the means to demand that their country does more to improve the quality of life in the country.[[13]](#footnote-13) Finally, neo-liberalists posit that welfare and government social programs are actually harmful and unfair and ideally should be completely avoided. This is because they circumvent the capitalist system and reproduce inequality. One example of this is in low income housing which groups struggling children into a single school district where the wealth distribution problem is only exacerbated and becomes cyclical.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This theory has been met with criticism (as is seen in the following two theories) since it arguably favors economic growth above the well being of all citizens.[[15]](#footnote-15) The following two theories were partially created in response to the challenges, problems, and negative aspects of neoliberalism.

*School of Thought 2: Post Development Theory*

The foundation of post-development is that the field of development itself has created underdevelopment. Essentially “underdevelopment” is something that has been socially created and people did not consider a country to be lesser developed until the development field was created. Poverty is only understood in terms of wealth and while poverty should not be romanticized, not all poverty is equally bad and, in fact, some people living in poverty are actually happier than those with wealth.[[16]](#footnote-16) Poverty is multidimensional and trying to prescribe a “one size fits all” solution (as neoliberals do) is not affective. Furthermore, the neoliberal system is inherently flawed because it places the West as a pinnacle of development and creates a power dynamic where the global south has problems that only the West can solve while portraying the West as the ideal society.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Because of the nature of the post-development theory, it can be difficult to what they advocate for in terms of development policy. The key to remember is that outsiders should have no part in development and everything should be grassroots from the local community.[[18]](#footnote-18) The role that “privileged” people should play is a minimal one but it includes solidarity, fostering an equal global community, support for local movements, and reconsidering the way one thinks about development.[[19]](#footnote-19) Essentially, conducting development is problematic and a country should progress naturally on its own without outside influence.

*School of Thought 3: Human Development Theory*

Human development theory is currently gaining popularity to become one of the most common schools of thought and the most widely supported. At the core of this theory is the belief that development cannot be measured in terms of economic power but rather in terms of human development, which led to the birth of the Human Development Index. The focus is on human capacity: life expectancy, literacy, and nutrition to name a few factors.[[20]](#footnote-20) Human development holds that development is a “process of expanding human freedoms” and in this frame a wealthy country is still in need of development if not all freedoms are protected. Economic growth will follow as a secondary thing once the well being of individuals is protected.[[21]](#footnote-21) Another term for human development is the Capabilities Approach because the goal is for everyone to have the capability to achieve their own forms of development. Essentially without these capabilities there is no human dignity.[[22]](#footnote-22)

It is easy to understand human development recommendations for development once one subscribes to its core beliefs. The goal, overall, is to conduct sustainable development projects that are rooted in local capacity, or building up local capacity.[[23]](#footnote-23) In order to create sustainable development, some recommendations when designing a development project are: culture must be accounted for, all stakeholders must be consulted, the project must be uniting within the community, and it must be adaptive.[[24]](#footnote-24) This is in response to the development projects that are not thoughtfully designed and have little preplanning. As a result these projects end up with reworking costs to make the project better adapted to the local culture, that are more expensive than the project itself. In the human development framework what is less or more developed is very subjective and comes down not to the economy of the country but rather the well being of the people.

*International Organizations, Theory, and My Research Question*

I am interested in how scholarly discourse impacts the discourse of development organizations and whether or not that is then being adequately represented in the implementation of development projects. It is possible that international organizations are using a discourse that is popular in the scholarly world in order to justify program implementation that may not completely align with their discourse. This is a topic that has not been addressed before and so I want to fill the gap in this research. I attempt to understand the relationship between how development is framed and how it is conducted. I selected the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID in particular because of their dominant presence in development in Latin America. I do not consider how this relationship may differ for small, grassroots development organizations because they have a smaller impact in Guatemala. Large international organizations play the most significant role in shaping the discourse of development in Guatemala.

**IV. Methodology**

*Why Discourse Methodology*

In a discourse analysis the focus is on meaning making and understanding a specific context. As an interpretivist, my goal is to “understand and describe how the participantsin a discourse are making sense of their world”.[[25]](#footnote-25) I am interested in studying how discourses have the power to effect change.[[26]](#footnote-26) While conducting initial research about development in Guatemala I noticed that neoliberal development scholarship, which was largely uncontested in the 1980s is now less popular as human development scholarship has gained scholarly support. I wanted to take a closer look at this shift in discourse and wondered what relationship a changing discourse has with the discourse of development organizations and their policy implementation. To do this I use a genealogical discourse analysis, which focuses on how discourse establishes norms.[[27]](#footnote-27)

*Genealogical Discourse Analysis*

I chose to conduct a genealogical discourse analysis because the focus is how actors are involved in the creation of the discourse and what their power effects are. In terms of my research, I am analyzing how discourse about development has shaped development programs in Guatemala. In order to do this I trace the history of the dominant discourse and development programs that have emerged during the time frame.[[28]](#footnote-28) Neoliberalism and human development are the two main scholarly discourses. Human development emerged in the 1990s as a critique of neoliberalism which ineffectively conducts development by prioritizing economic growth over human well-being. For my research I am analyzing texts in order to understand how the international development institution’s discourse about development in Guatemala has been created. Furthermore, I will analyze how discourses have power and influence policy and action given the cultural context of Guatemala.

The first step is to identify themes by reading reports written by the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and USAID and making note of topics that are consistently discussed.[[29]](#footnote-29) Patterns I am looking for are language or words that are indicative of neoliberalism, human development, or post-development. One theme I have noticed is the trend from the priority of economic growth to a priority of socioeconomic development with more diverse consideration to education, the environment, and health. While neoliberalism has traditionally been the dominant discourse for the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID, human development has started to gain traction as well as the realization that pure economics doesn’t guarantee sustainability and well-being.[[30]](#footnote-30) These texts help create the dominant discourse which informs how members of the development community think and interact. The texts I use to identify the dominant development discourse specific to Guatemala are the Country Strategy Reports that are published by the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID.[[31]](#footnote-31) Because of the research I did to create my literature review I knew that neoliberalism was dominant in the 1980s but currently human development has started to gain more support. While reading the Country Strategy Reports I highlighted in different colors where I saw evidence of neoliberal or human development language being used. I also pay attention to what language I expect to see but do not. This could indicate a personal bias I need to be aware of or could further illustrate a shift in thinking. I then connect the discourse to development programs by doing a critical analysis of actual policy and scholarly sources in order to draw conclusions about whether the shift in discourse has resulted in a shift in policy.[[32]](#footnote-32) As I analyze development projects that are implemented by international organizations I need analyze and think critically about how discourse could have influenced policy language. I do this because the key of a genealogical discourse analysis is being about to identify the power relationships at play.[[33]](#footnote-33) I need to investigate what role competing discourse had in shaping policy if at all.

I am also conducting “sense-making” checks using Schwartz-Shea and Yanow’s “doubt, trustworthiness, and explanatory coherence”.[[34]](#footnote-34) This is not like neo-positivist research where the goal is to test for falsifiability in an attempt to mirror the outside world. In the interpretivist research the goal is to understand the sources and to make sure that they haven’t overlooked other possible factors. In order to do this I address intertextuality by making sure that I consider how the texts interact with one another, if there are competing discourses and how they push back. I have seen some evidence of this in the interaction between the two main theories that I am using, human development and neoliberalism. While neoliberalism still does exist, human development was formed as a critique of neoliberalism and has started to gain dominance in the development world.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Another way of “sense-making” is through self-reflexivity. This is when a researcher purposefully searches out data that will challenge an opinion or theory that they hold which forces them to critically analyze the topic.[[36]](#footnote-36) This is important to my research because I have a lot of preconceived notions about how the development discourse has been formed and what is the most sustainable. It is important for me to challenge my way of thinking so that I recognize how my position influences my research without letting it dominate the discourse. I address this by using all Country Strategy Reports that were written within the last ten years and not strategically selecting one or two.

In my analysis I expect to find language of human development but used with neoliberal motivations and goals. The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID were all created as neoliberal organizations so I do not anticipate any substantive change that would change the ideology and values that these organizations were founded upon. They would publish human development language because that theory has gained the support of scholars and these institutions need to be reflective of what their constituency wants. It is no longer socially acceptable to talk about economics as if it is more important than the human experience.

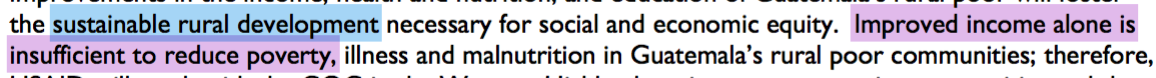
**V. Analysis**

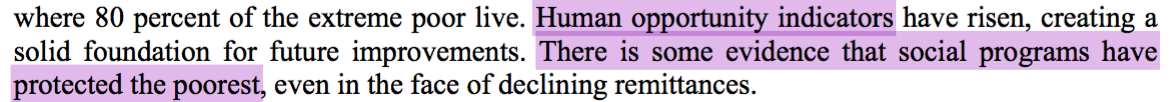
In order to tackle my research question I first analyze how the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and USAID characterize development in Guatemala in order to identify the dominant discourse. I consider what they identify as challenges, risks, goals, implementation strategy, and focus issues. To do this I use the Country Development Strategy Reports that are published by the development agencies themselves. I marked places where there was language used that reflected one of the key development theories. Once I have clearly outlined the discourses I start to discuss how these discourses have impacted policy or how the discourse have been created to justify policy. As I mentioned earlier, what I mean by justification of policy is the efforts of some multilateral organizations or governments to present themselves in an overly optimistic light in order to ensure public support. This distinction is important because experts in the field who I talked to pointed out that foreign policy decisions are often made for reasons very different from those that are presented to the general public.[[37]](#footnote-37) I need to be aware of this tension and not naively assume that everything in the policy world is at it appears. Finally, using the information and analysis I have complied, I draw conclusions about the power relationship that exists between discourse and policy.

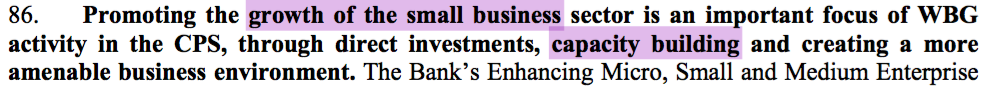
*i. Identifying the Discourse of International Development Organizations*

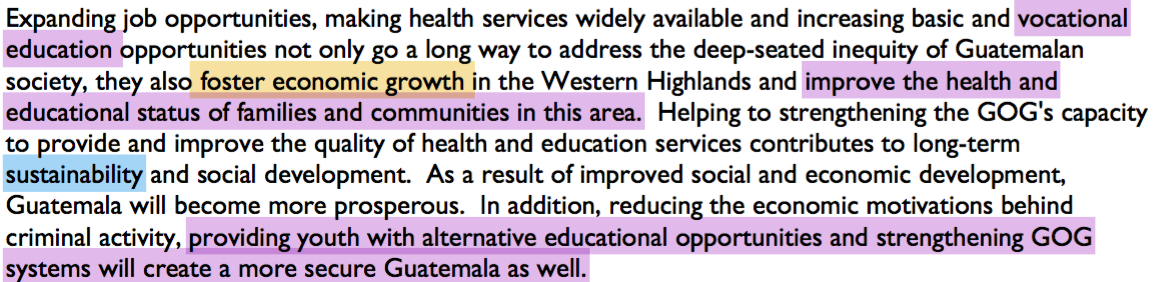
The discourse that is used by development organizations is representative of how the organization wants to present itself to the world. Therefore, the discourse used is going to be representative of the dominant ideology so that the organization can be taken seriously and considered legitimate. Within the past decade, and even more so within the past five years, these organizations have started to heavily incorporate language that is reflective of the human development theory. While the neoliberal discourse is still present, it is secondary to the language of human development. There is a lot of similarity in direct language used in the reports of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and USAID, which show a dominant discourse and ideology.

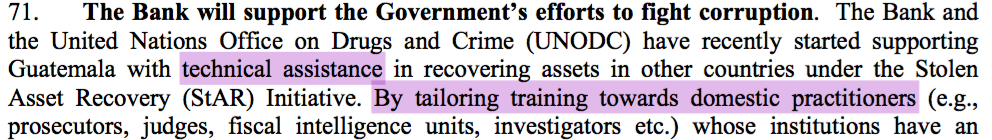
The country strategy reports for Guatemala were the texts that I read to understand the discourse and language that development organizations are using to outline their goals and strategies for implementation.[[38]](#footnote-38) I carefully ready through the texts between the years of 2008-2016 specifically looking for language that reflected either neoliberalism or human development theory. Neoliberal language would be “reduce trade barriers” “trickle-down economics” or even specifically “neoliberalism” while human development language would be things like “vocational training” “local leadership” and “community based”. I read the most recent reports for each development organization, highlighting neoliberal language in yellow and human development language in purple.

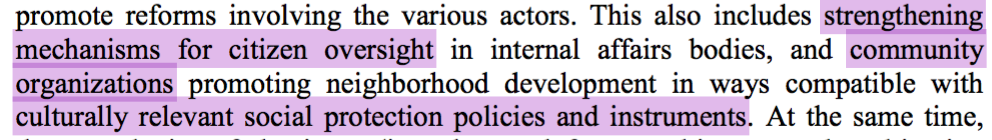
Ultimately, what I have found is that, while there are still traces of neoliberalism reflected in the implementation of development projects, the language and ideology they are primarily promoting is that of human development. One important piece of evidence that I found was that nowhere in the texts were the phrases “neoliberalism” or “trickle-down economics” used. This is a core principle of neoliberalism that is not being represented in any of the texts. The image below is a screenshot from the USAID report.[[39]](#footnote-39) I have highlighted human development language in purple to give an example of the language that indicated a shift away from neoliberalism. This phrase is particularly indicative of the shift toward human development because it acknowledges the “multidimensionality” and “interculturality” of development challenges and is admitting that a purely economic focus (that is key to neoliberalism) is not effective.[[40]](#footnote-40) A more multi-dimensional approach is reflective of human development.

Furthermore, “social programs” were a key component of all the strategies indicating the shift away from neoliberalism as neoliberal scholars condemn social programs. Also important is that the phrase “capacity building” or “capacity development” was used in all four of the texts I analyzed. The capacity building model is something that was created by Sen and is a foundational element to the human development framework.[[41]](#footnote-41) The following two images are from the World Bank report which use the “capacity building” and “social programs” language.[[42]](#footnote-42)

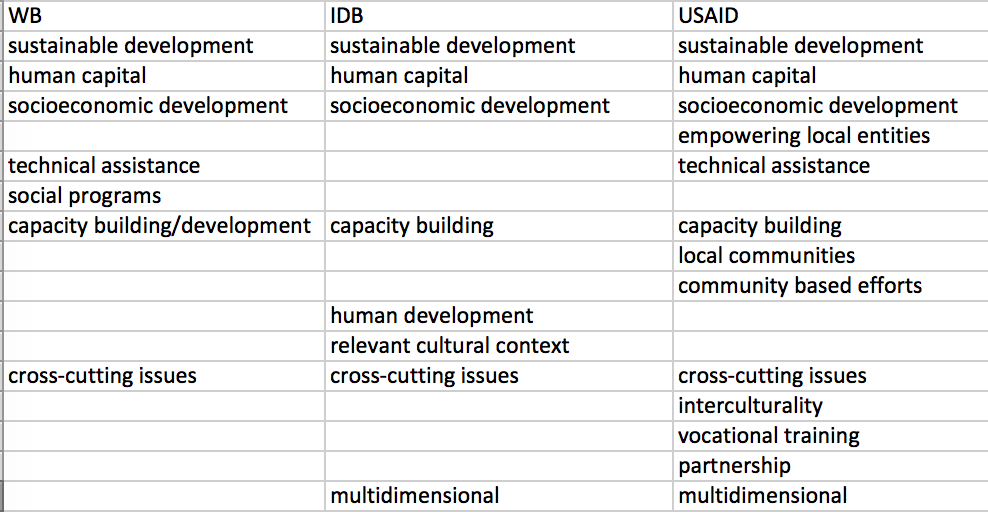


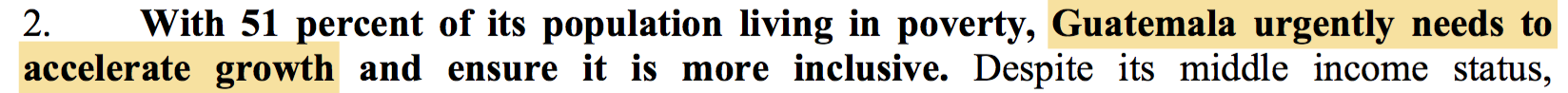
Considering the specifics of the development organizations, USAID employed the most human development language. One key tenet of human development that is reflected in the discourse of USAID is “vocational training” as seen in the image blow.[[43]](#footnote-43) 

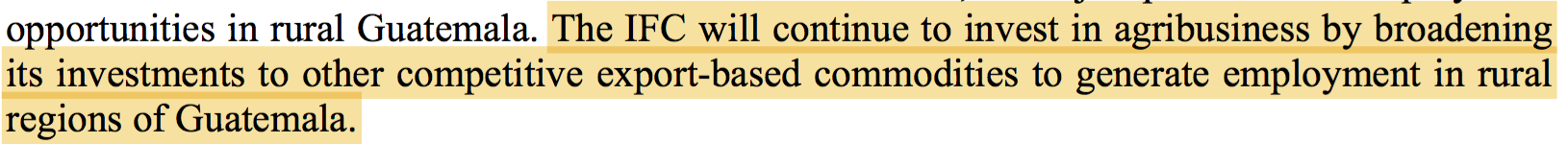
Human development theorists believe that development should help others to help themselves and the goal of vocational training is exactly that. The discourse of the WB is the least strongly aligned with human development but there are key moments where this theory does shine through. For example the text says, “tailoring training” and “technical assistance” which is important because it recognizes that development cannot be homogenous.[[44]](#footnote-44) 

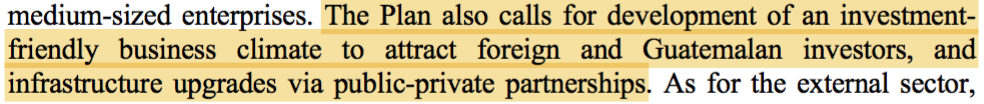
Finally, a crucial piece of discourse used by the IDB is that development should be “culturally relevant”.[[45]](#footnote-45) Human development is about community movements that are specific to the cultural context and the IDB is reflecting that in their discourse. The image below is from the IDB report and gives an example of how they are using human development language.[[46]](#footnote-46) 

The image below is a chart that I created while reading the documents written by all three organizations. Whenever a word or phrase was used that was particularly indicative of human development I wrote it down and tracked the overlap between the organizations. What this shows is that there is significant overlap and indicates that this is the dominant discourse among all three organizations. It also makes it clear that USAID is using more human development buzzwords than the other two organizations. I think that the reason for this is the fact that USAID has a more direct and clear constituency than the IDB or WB does. If USAID is not reflecting the popular ideology they are more likely to lose funding because their funding only comes form congress while the IDB and WB get funding from many international actors.



There is still, however, some evidence of neoliberalism hiding behind the human development buzzwords. The World Bank, for example, has a fairly large focus on expanding markets and promoting economic growth as evidenced in the images below.[[47]](#footnote-47)



Agribusiness directly contradicts human development because large corporations buy land that local producers are living on and force them to move. This eliminates a person’s livelihood and prevents other local farmers from being able to compete. The IDB also uses a fair amount of neoliberal language. Mainly, the IDB wants to create an environment that is friendly to business interests in Guatemala. This will increase investment and boost the economy but it doesn’t consider how the high levels of inequality means the poorest Guatemalans feel no benefit. The image below is an example of this language.[[48]](#footnote-48) 

Finally, USAID has virtually no neoliberal language, the only evidences of it being their desire to tackle the problem of low tax revenues and connect local farmers to a larger international market.

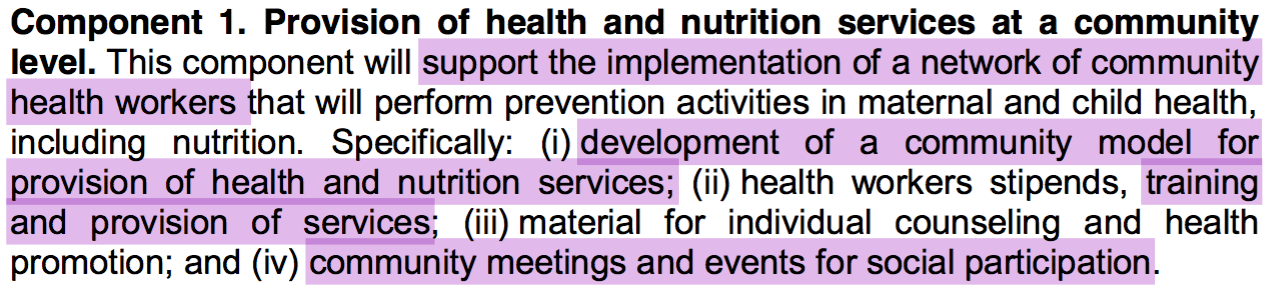
*ii. Disconnect Between Discourse and Policy*

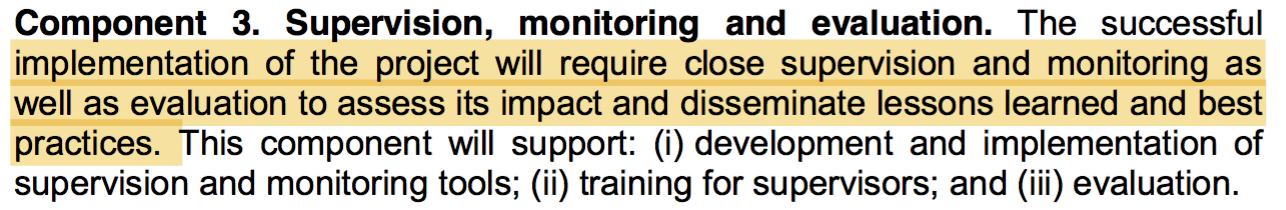
Identifying and understanding the power relations of the development discourse in current times is fairly easy because of the systematic ways development agencies are keeping a digital record of everything they do. Currently, development priorities that are identified by international development agencies include: energy, anti-corruption, education, foreign private investment, creation of jobs, health, safety, and transparency.[[49]](#footnote-49) This is a much more diverse discourse of development and is something that has been reflected in all three development organizations that I analyzed.[[50]](#footnote-50) The main areas that receive the most funding and attention are state reform and modernization, private investment, and social programs. This is especially clear for the IDB because on their website under the “projects” tab there is a chart that tells you how much money goes to each project theme; “social investment” is by far the largest receiver of IDB money.[[51]](#footnote-51)

In order to study the power relationship between policy and discourse more closely I focused on the Alliance for Prosperity (AFP) because of the renown it has in the development community. This is a development agreement that is written by the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras for their own development. It was created in response to the surge of child migration to America and has received extreme support from the U.S. government and USAID. AFP was written as a result of pressure from the U.S. and Joe Biden has visited Guatemala several times to show support for the AFP by meeting with government officials and giving speeches about the benefits that the AFP will have. It uses language around energy expansion and cutting the cost of energy in order to attract private investment, specifically citing, “low quality infrastructure, high energy costs and limited connectivity [which has] made it difficult to attract more investment to the region”[[52]](#footnote-52). This type of characterization of development has certain implications for policy because while AFP does not directly endorse large-scale hydroelectric projects and other infrastructure projects, they are necessary in order to achieve the goals outlined given the urgency of the situation and the resources available.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In order to evaluate development programs I critically analyze specific programs that have been most recently approved and implemented (as they are more likely to reflect the dominant discourse of human development) and have implementation reports available. I also want to find projects that appear to fall into the category of human development because I am interested in researching whether or not the implementation of these projects reflects the goals of human development theory. I am less interested in grant money but rather social programs that require community involvement. I was also only interested in projects that had documents available in English because Spanish texts would throw off the patterns of discourse I have observed.

One such project is the World Bank’s “Pilot to Improve the Development and Nutrition of Young Children in Poor Rural Areas in Guatemala”. There is some evidence of human development because there is a plan for the project written by a local organization that is partnering with the World Bank.[[54]](#footnote-54) The plan does discuss prior and informed consultation of the local indigenous people and consideration of the local context, however this is contradicted later in the potential adverse effects section. The only adverse effect is the “Disregard and/or misrecognition of Mayan health care and cultural illness belief systems and diet”.[[55]](#footnote-55) They say that to address this concern they will include local voices but do not give specifics about how they will achieve this.[[56]](#footnote-56) If they claim they are being “culturally appropriate”, then the disregard of Mayan culture shouldn’t even be brought up.[[57]](#footnote-57) Another red flag was in the implementation report for this project: “While there have been some delays in implementation, sometimes due to unfamiliarity with World Bank procurement processes…”.[[58]](#footnote-58) This indicates that true, meaningful local participation is not happening. According to the human development framework, development should come from the locals and organizations should work to cater to the needs of the locals. If this cultural clash is happening, the World Bank is having too much of a dominant presence.

In order to evaluate the Inter-American Development Bank I study the “Technical Cooperation Abstract” for the project “Increasing access, use, and sustainability of community health and nutrition services in rural Guatemala”.[[59]](#footnote-59) There is quite a bit of human development language and the implementation seems to be fairly representative of human development goals. This project was more aligned with human development values than the World Bank project. One key aspect of this project that aligns with human development was the “provision of health and nutrition services at a community level”. In the image below I highlighted in purple all language of human development project implementation.[[60]](#footnote-60) There is an emphasis on building local capacity so they can effectively manage their own health system. This is an example of the capabilities approach, which is crucial to human development theory. 

However, there is also some language that does not reflect human development theory, though less so than in the World Bank’s implementation report. The image below comes from the text and highlighted in yellow are examples where human development may be undermined.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The phrases “close supervision” and “disseminate lessons learned” implies a top-down approach to development. “Close supervision” implies that the locals cannot successfully implement a project for themselves without an outside actor making sure everything is going the way they want it to. It also is not clear who will “disseminate lessons learned”. This could contradict human development if all the lessons are written by the IDB and do not reflect a partnership with the locals. Human development is supposed to come from the people who are receiving development and this supervision and monitoring run the risk of overpowering local evaluations if they are not carefully included.

*iii. Findings*

I have come to the conclusion that the current dominant discourse of development institutions mostly aligns with the human development theory because of the dominant use of neoliberal language. There is some nuance to this conclusion though because neoliberal language was still reflected in the discourse of development institutions. This is because while the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID were founded on neoliberal values, they need to reflect the changing ideology of development scholars in order to be perceived as legitimate. It is no longer socially acceptable to directly promote the neoliberal ideology because of the strong critique that it manifested in problematic ways in Guatemala.[[62]](#footnote-62) Furthermore, I found that the implementation of actual policy does not come from the local people in a meaningful way as evidenced by cultural clashes that could be diminished if development organizations took a more supportive and less dominant role. The idea of including local voices is constantly talked about but there was no actual strategy outlining how exactly to make that happen. I think that the fact human development language is being taken seriously by development institutions could act as gateway and in the future we may see more specific human development strategy. My findings do not make specific conclusions about whether or not discourse is being reflected in policy because it is in some cases but not in others.

*iv. Connections*

My results have shown that there has been little real change to development in terms of what projects are implemented. While scholarship and development discourse have progressed to human development theory, development agencies are not entirely clear how to implement human development in their projects.[[63]](#footnote-63) Neoliberal development scholars emphasize economic reform and investment as the key to development because it will allow a country to be a better participant in the world economy and can then provide more for its citizens.[[64]](#footnote-64) This discourse is prevalent in the AFP with its focus on infrastructure improvements and anti-corruption institutions that will make it easier for business to operate in Guatemala. This challenges the literature because while there is an educated debate about how to best conduct development among scholars it is not being translated into practice. Human development is the idea that the potential in humans should be developed so that locals can conduct development projects in their own communities. You have to develop the capacity in someone to be successful on their own.[[65]](#footnote-65) AFP and the “new” way of development claims that they are doing these things but has no actual plans to achieve human development. Development policy runs in circles claiming that it is evolving to be more sustainable and effective when in reality it is perpetuating the same ideology.

*v. Alternative Interpretations and Reflexivity*

In order to conduct my policy analysis I have to rely on implementation reports that are made available to the public and do not have the ability to observe these projects directly. It is possible that there could be slight differences in conclusions if an ethnographic study of the development implementation had been possible.

I mostly used government or development agency sponsored texts because those are the discourse that will have the most direct impact and connection to development policy. However, by doing this I don’t account for competing discourses or the ideology of the people being affected.

I selected certain emblematic texts and events to analyze in order to limit the scope of my research and have more specific texts to look for. While this was necessary given the time constraints of my project it also has its limits. I cannot generalize my findings but simply better understand the specific contexts I am operating within.

*vi. Further Research Needed*

In my research I tackled only the question of how discourse shapes policy or vice versa. However, I think an important, but complex, question to ask is what is the ideal form of development? Is it okay that development implementation in Guatemala is not significantly employing human development theory? Or would Guatemala see more benefit if a strategy of human development or post-development were employed? As I mentioned before, an ethnographic study to further research the implementation of development policy would be interesting to have a more detailed, and nuanced analysis.

**VI. Conclusion**

The development discourse in Guatemala has shifted from neoliberalism to human development. The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID describe their development goals and projects in terms of the human development framework, which has some impact on the implementation of development projects. Human development is the theory that development should be grassroots based and has a focus on building the capacity of community members. The goal is that communities can become self-sufficient and sustainably continue to better the community even after outside support has ended. Vocational training and leadership programs are key components of human development that have been embraced by development organizations.

Development organizations are promoting human development because there is an emphasis on multidimensional development programs and not simply a focus on the economic well being of a country. Development indicators that are used include health, infant mortality, literacy rates and access to clean water, which shows a more comprehensive understanding of what development is and should be. The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID all mention having culturally appropriate development projects that includes vocational training in poor, rural communities.

My research and analysis shows that while the discourse may have transitioned to human development, the policy implementation is not as truly grassroots and community based, as they would claim. There is some attempt by development organizations to include local leadership and opinions but it is meaningless if Mayan culture is being sacrificed and a top-down approach is used. Human development cares about local autonomy and needs so it is contradictory of development institutions to claim they do but still work advance their own agenda. The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID were founded as neoliberal organizations and it would be unrealistic for them to completely change the way they do development in just a few years. The fact that they are embracing human development language is a significant step and it is possible that more concrete change will come with time.

My research could be expanded upon if an ethnography was added to analyze the policy implementation because there is only so much you can learn though documents. Further researchers could also use this research in order to draw conclusion about what type of development is best or most sustainable and if human development is even something that should be strived for. One implication of this research is the necessity to take a critical look at development organizations and not always take what they say at face value.

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