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Everyday Negotiations with Guatemalan NGOs

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Cover art: The chaotic process of taking attendance in the Fraternity. Photograph by the author.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After my first year of graduate school, I decided to spend the summer in Latin America, practicing Spanish and relaxing at the same time. I was on a graduate student's budget and flights to Central America were cheap, so I booked a flight to Guatemala City without much thought. Little did I know that I would be challenged and inspired over the following decade by what I found.

I spent my first few weeks in Guatemala in the style of so many foreigners, volunteering and attending classes and seminars with a left-leaning language school in Quetzaltenango. Early on, I was asked to translate for a guest presenter while he discussed his personal experiences during the U.S.-backed coup (1954) and the subsequent armed conflict (1960–96). I was unprepared for the task and struggled to find the words to respectfully translate the detailed story of this man's capture by members of his own community (organized into state-sponsored civil defense patrols) and his subsequent torture. At the time, he was living in an impoverished town lacking basic services. When he organized his peers to undertake an irrigation project, he was labeled a guerrilla and was subsequently kidnapped, beaten, and thrown into a pit, where he was starved and periodically urinated on. Translating his firsthand account left me emotionally exhausted, wondering how any person, or any country, could recover from such trauma.

A few weeks later, I accompanied a group of foreigners to a small community associated with the language school. The community's residents were mostly former refugees who had returned to the country from Mexico after the democratic opening in the mid-1980s. One of the residents puffed up in pride, telling me that they had built the community, the school, the clinic, and the homes on their own. "The only thing the government provided was the road," he said, pointing to the narrow brick road running through the center of the small town. They relied on support from foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), small-scale agricultural projects, and selling

locally manufactured goods to gringos like me. *Poco a poco* (little by little) they were leveraging local and foreign connections to build a new community for themselves, bypassing the racist, corrupt state that had previously driven them from the country.

Thereafter, traveling around the country, I was repeatedly struck by two observations that arose from these initial encounters. First, I was impressed by Guatemalans' creativity and resilience in their daily struggles to *salir adelante* (get ahead), even in the face of dramatic events like armed conflict and genocide and of hidden but equally dramatic structures that marginalized them. These were not passive recipients of social, economic, and political forces but agents adeptly navigating and actively shaping (although in a constrained way) their local realities.

Second, I was struck by the impressive number of mostly foreign-funded NGOs claiming to contribute to democracy, empowerment, and development. I became interested in how the visions of these NGOs were interacting with local understandings of progress. Additionally, I could not help but wonder how foreign-funded projects were being incorporated in a national context that had previously been so dramatically influenced by foreign interventions, including interventions that interrupted efforts at redistribution and oppressed even seemingly harmless grassroots development efforts, such as irrigation projects.

Many people and organizations have helped me to translate these initial impressions into a defined research project about the daily interactions in and around development interventions in Guatemala; they have animated my thinking and buoyed my spirits over the subsequent decade. I have been fortunate enough to locate my intellectual "homes" in two institutions—Brown University and the University of Oregon—in which important questions were valued over disciplinary bounds. At Brown University, Richard Snyder helped to nurture the initial seeds of this research project and pushed me to think about how different NGOs embody varying visions of development—a key insight that contributed to the analysis presented here. Pauline Jones Luong had the unique capacity to find insight in even the most jumbled ideas as well as to offer substantive critique coupled with sincere encouragement. I am glad that Jane Jaquette agreed to work with me after only one meeting, as I now consider her to be one of my most important mentors and a close friend. Her expertise in gender politics has been immensely valuable, and observing her commitment to conducting research that focuses on, and contributes to, gender equity has been an inspiration. The mentorship of Patrick Heller ensured that my research would always be interdisciplinary at its core. Patrick

consistently challenged me to ask "bigger" questions, and I have become a more ambitious scholar as a result.

Also at Brown University, members of a writing group—Sukriti Issar, Shruti Majumdar, Esther Hernández-Medina, Dikshya Thapa, Sinem Adar, Myungji Yang, Christopher Gibson, Oslec Villegas, and Angélica Durán-Martinez—provided insightful feedback throughout the early stages of my research. I especially would like to thank Jennifer Costanza for her friendship and intellectual companionship over the years. Our shared passion for Guatemala, along with Jennifer's detailed feedback, has served as a constant source of motivation.

At the University of Oregon, my colleagues in the Department of Political Science, the Center for the Study of Women in Society, and the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies (CLLAS) have provided intellectual homes in which I feel inspired and supported daily. From my first year at the University of Oregon, Lynn Stephen provided crucial mentorship and friendship, helping me to navigate the university while pushing me to stay true to my values and vision. I thank her profoundly. Ron Mitchell, Karrie Koesel, Craig Kauffman, Burke Hendrix, Craig Parsons, David Steinberg, and Will Terry all read and gave comments on early drafts of chapters included here. Gerry Berk read multiple versions of the entire manuscript and gave me the intellectual push I needed to draw out the book's broader implications for the field of development. Cary Fontana helped compile data on trends in international funding over time and was a delight to work with. The Department of Political Science generously funded a book workshop, which was instrumental to my success and profoundly shaped this book's theoretical framework. I am forever grateful for those who participated, including Yvonne Braun, Gerry Berk, Craig Parsons, Jocelyn Viterna, Phil Oxhorn, and David Lewis. I thank them for dedicating so much time and energy to this project and for their continued encouragement. Their enthusiasm pushed me through the final stages of this project and motivated me when I felt discouraged. Elizabeth Bennett and Kyle Lascurettes helped me put the finishing touches on the book when I felt too overwhelmed to make any more choices.

Most people can point to at least one teacher in their lives who changed the way that they saw the world and expanded their sense of what was possible. For me that was Doug Blum, who also happens to be the reason I am a political scientist. He taught the first class in political science that I took, hired me as a research assistant, pushed me to go to graduate school, and continues to cheer me on to this day. I hope one day to be even half as effective and compassionate a mentor as he has been for so many.

Friends and family have been instrumental to my sanity during this process. Sarah Jane Smith saw me through the emotional ups and downs of fieldwork and writing and continues to surprise me with her generosity and intellectual curiosity. Elizabeth Bennett and Huss Banai rooted for me, laughed with me, and believed in me even when I did not. Allyson Vinci, Pablo Paniagua, Álvaro León, Michael Tallon, and Rayza, Angelica, and Carlos Chava provided much-needed support and friendship during my time in Guatemala. Jake and Danea DeGlee helped me get my feet wet (literally) in all things Oregon and have given me a sense of family on the West Coast. The fierce females of Oregon—Shelley Harshe, Martina Ferrari, Julia Mahncke, and Shabnam Akhtari—have given me a sense of community. The loving support of my East Coast family—my grandparents, cousins, aunts, and parents—has been constant throughout many intellectual and personal roller coasters. As they are supposed to do, family members assured me that I was brilliant even when I felt like a complete fraud. My parents, Bernadette and James Krueger, are perhaps the world's most generous people. My father, William Beck, and my sister, Julie Beck, stepped out of their comfort zones and onto Guatemala's precarious roads to explore the country that I love so much. My aunts, Roselle Ricotta and Julie Ricotta Gusmerotti, prove that one can never have too many mothers. The animals in my life—Weezy, Maxine, and Taco—have reminded me to take time to revel in the present. They cannot read (yet), but I will acknowledge that rare gift just the same.

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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL ENGINEERING FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

In the village of Santana[1] in southwestern Guatemala, Mariana placed chairs under the shade of a crooked tree so that we could sit and talk. Old Toyota pickup trucks rumbled past us, heading south to the large fields of sugarcane, cotton, coffee, or cacao that populated the nearby export agricultural zones. Mariana was a seventy-four-year-old widow, mother to six children who were grown with children of their own. Like her, most of her children were uneducated and had difficulty finding secure work. When I asked how many grandchildren she had, she flashed a smile missing a few teeth and sighed, "*Ay*, who knows? Many." When I asked her about her business, she looked over her shoulder into the small store that she managed out of the front room of her cinderblock house. Shiny bags of chips and small packages of sweets hung from the plastic strip dangling from the ceiling. A refrigerator with a condensation-covered glass door was sparsely stocked with bottles of Coca-Cola and Sprite. "I hope God allows me to pay back what I borrowed," she said.

For almost a year and a half, Mariana had been receiving loans from an NGO called Fundación Namaste Guatemaya (Namaste). Namaste offered women small loans accompanied by classes on business and financial literacy and one-on-one meetings with business advisers who helped the women calculate their profits or losses and discuss strategies to improve sales or reduce costs.

Namaste was the brainchild of a Californian businessman who valued specialization and the application of a business mentality to nonprofit work. Reflecting this history, Namaste focused "exclusively on helping women make profits from their businesses," as the founder explained in a 2010 staff meeting. This specialization was based on a model of "bootstrap development," which entailed a focus on the individual and a belief that, given the opportunity and resources, the poor could lift themselves out of poverty through their own entrepreneurship.

Roughly forty miles north of Santana lived Lorena, a thin Maya K'iche' woman who participated in a very different NGO. She wiped the dust off a plastic chair for me to sit on while she gathered items from a chest of drawers that divided her concrete house in two. She proudly displayed her products: colorful scarves from Taiwan that she bought in bulk to sell in the market; long strips of cloth that K'iche' women wrap around their waists as belts; reams of fabric that she sewed into aprons with the help of her daughter's dexterous fingers. Lorena was able to purchase these goods using a loan from a NGO called Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas (the Fraternity). She needed every penny she earned to support her two daughters' studies because her husband was not there to contribute to their expenses. He was incarcerated about a decade previously, thus ensuring that the day-to-day struggles to provide for the family fell squarely on Lorena's shoulders. Shouldering the weight was difficult; because of an illness that affected her hands, Lorena was unable to perform agricultural or factory work, and because she only reached the third grade, steady employment in a nonmanual job had been hard to find.

Like Namaste, the Fraternity provided women with loans and classes. But whereas Namaste focused on business and financial literacy, the Fraternity required women to attend classes on a variety of topics, including Bible study and lessons about self-esteem, caring for the environment, and recapturing Mayan culture. Other classes taught women handicrafts, composting, and how to make and use organic fertilizers and prepare nutritious meals. The organization's roots informed its multifaceted approach. Indigenous women had previously organized in the Presbyterian Church to fight ethnic and gender discrimination and eventually separated to establish the Fraternity as an independent NGO. The NGO's policymakers believed one could not separate indigenous women's economic well-being from their emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being, or from that of their families, churches, and communities. They therefore pursued a holistic model of development—one that taught women to recapture their Mayan identities, value themselves, care for the environment, participate actively in their faiths and communities, and earn incomes in ways that were consistent with their cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Mariana and Lorena represent the very type of beneficiaries that many development interventions today target, especially those that incorporate microcredit, or the provision of small loans to impoverished borrowers who lack collateral. As women, they are seen as having greater levels of need because of unequal access to schooling, resources, and decision-making authority. Targeting women like Mariana and Lorena with loans is additionally seen as more efficient than targeting men. Based on their reproductive roles and gender stereotypes, it is assumed that women will channel economic benefits to their families and communities and manage their money more responsibly.

Namaste and the Fraternity represent distinct approaches to development that are common the world over. Namaste is a foreign-founded and foreign-managed NGO that operates according to a bureaucratic structure, leverages the market, and values specialization and quantifiable results. It embodies the push toward professionalization, results-based management, and social entrepreneurship in the field of development. The Fraternity, on the other hand, is a grassroots organization that adopts a multifaceted approach, criticizes neoliberal policies, and seeks environmental sustainability, cultural recuperation, and personal transformations—goals that cannot be easily quantified. It embodies the call for grassroots alternatives and culturally appropriate development. The contrasts between Namaste and the Fraternity inevitably lead to the question, Which type of NGO and which development model works better? Which more effectively empowers women, contributes to development from the "bottom up," and has the more meaningful impact in the lives of women like Mariana and Lorena?

This book makes the case that although these questions are central to the study and pursuit of development, they are the wrong questions with which to start. For too long, scholars and practitioners studying NGOs' development interventions have fixated on outcomes and have seen development projects as phenomena that *happen to* people like Mariana and Lorena, thus ignoring the ways that these people transform projects in practice. As a result, many have ignored questions that are analytically prior, namely, How are NGOs' development projects constituted in the first place? What determines what actually happens on the ground? Answering these questions requires delving into the sources of development models, the relationships between these models and the actual practices and meanings, and the ways that development projects are embedded in, and transformed by, particular environments and lives.

Once we get inside them, it becomes clear that development NGOs are not neatly bounded and fixed organizations, and their projects are neither linear nor predetermined. Long-term comparative ethnographies of Namaste and

the Fraternity reveal the interactional origins of development projects and demonstrate that international trends, development models, and organizational characteristics influence, but do not determine, actual practices and experiences on the ground. This suggests that abstract debates about the "best" development models or approaches, detached from close analyses of practices and experiences, are misplaced. Thus, this book does not arbitrate debates about the value of different development models. Moving away from binary assessments of success or failure, it does not reveal the "best" strategy for development or empowerment, nor does it universally condemn or celebrate NGOs and microcredit. Instead, it addresses a significant gap in the literature between "increasingly grandiose vision[s] of international development" and "relatively low levels of transparency and clarity about how development institutions work" (Lewis and Mosse 2006, 15).

To that end, this book explores the diverse meanings, motivations, and strategies that are continuously unfolding under the label "NGO" and under the guise of development. It focuses on the interactions among international trends, local histories and contexts, and developers' experiences, alongside the quotidian interactions between development workers and beneficiaries. This analysis reveals that development interventions are not merely the implementation of technical plans or expressions of hegemonic tendencies. Instead, they are interactive processes in which multiple dispositions, interests, and meanings conflict, interlock, and interpenetrate, and in which accommodation, reinterpretation, struggle, and adjustment are ongoing (Lewis and Mosse 2006). What happens on the ground in the context of development is not only the product of international trends, development models, and formal policies; it is also shaped by the ways that various stakeholders creatively interact with each other and with materials (paperwork, databases, evaluation reports, and technologies) over time in a given context. Thus, we cannot ask what development does for people without also asking what people do for development.

This book focuses on various "types" of people as they affect and are affected by development interventions. Tracing the development "chains" created by Namaste and the Fraternity, it explores the meanings and practices of funders and policymakers, which in turn shape development and organizational models and strategies. Funders are those who contribute resources but who do not make organizational decisions themselves, even if they influence them explicitly or implicitly, whereas policymakers are those who craft NGOs' formal policies (regardless of the degree to which these formal policies reflect on-the-ground practices) and have final say over evaluation and hiring processes, among others. Tracing development chains to the ground, the book

also focuses on NGO leaders, workers, and beneficiaries. NGO leaders (directors and upper-level management) often spend most of their time in offices and oversee operations acting as key brokers between workers and policymakers. Workers carry out development strategies in offices or communities, often interfacing with communities and aid recipients on a regular basis but having little say over formal policies or operations. When grouped together, these people—funders, policymakers, NGO leaders, and workers—are labeled "developers" in this book. Those whom developers target with goods or services are referred to as "beneficiaries." The degree to which developers actually induce development (however defined) is debatable, and of course, the degree to which those targeted by development interventions actually benefit varies. What is more, the term "beneficiary" implies an assumption of passivity this book is actively attempting to combat. Thus, although these terms appear throughout this book, readers should remain aware of these notes of caution.[2]

Although they cannot reveal the "best" development model, case studies of particular interventions and organizations are still able to reveal generalizable conclusions about the nature of development. The comparative ethnographies at the heart of this study demonstrate that development projects represent social engineering from above and below. Those involved in development projects—developers and beneficiaries alike—leverage their respective expertise, networks, and meanings in attempts to bring about their visions of the good life, either for themselves or for others. Because there is always room for diverse actors to maneuver in pursuit of their own goals and meanings, and because those goals and meanings never completely overlap, development projects will inevitably be characterized by incoherencies and contradictions that interrupt clear, predictable paths between inputs and outputs or between plans and practices. Development is not one thing but many things to many people; that is why it is always decidedly "messier" in practice than on paper, and perhaps why it persists even when it fails to develop communities and countries.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS ONGOING INTERACTIONS

This book focuses exclusively on development as project-based, intentional activity with roots in the post–World War II intervention into the global south and NGOs geared toward development rather than advocacy and activism. However, some scholars focus on development as a long-term, ongoing process that alters the organization of economies, social relationships, and politics. These scholars often dismiss projects as irrelevant practically and

theoretically because after six decades of internationally funded development interventions, "no country in the world has ever developed itself through projects" (Nyoni in Edwards 1989, 118; Cowen and Shenton 1996; Hart 2001; Banks and Hulme 2012). While initially there was hope that development NGOs could buck this trend by advocating for structural change, more recently, scholars have found that at best, development NGOs simply support alternative forms of project-based intervention (Bebbington, Hickey, and Mitlin 2008). Others have emphasized that governments, not NGOs and projects, develop countries, and have thus focused their attention on national economic policies relating to trade, fiscal policy, and the like, alongside state institutions, rather than development projects and NGOs.

If NGOs and their development projects do not contribute to national economic development and poverty reduction, why study them? Although they may have failed to live up to their stated goals, development projects and NGOs continue to exist, proliferate, and generate numerous effects. Regardless of the degree to which development "works" (i.e., does what funders and policymakers intend), it endures—affecting local economies, formal and informal institutions, social relations, and subjectivities (Viterna and Robertson 2015; Babb 1996; Schofer and Hironaka 2005; Leve 2014; Sanyal 2009; Swidler and Watkins 2009). And just as development affects people's lives in multiple, contradictory ways, people in the global south (NGO workers, beneficiaries, communities) transform development interventions and NGOs by interacting with them and assigning them new meanings and goals. Understanding how development projects and NGOs are transformed, leveraged, and appropriated, how developers and beneficiaries interact, and how interventions affect and are affected by local social relations is therefore key to understanding social reality across the global south.

Development projects of the kind explored here are often studied in one of two ways. Some scholars highlight the global politico-economic power structures in which projects emerge, and explore the various ways that development interventions involve technical solutions for inherently political problems, thus distracting from structural change and reproducing hegemony. Others focus less on structural conditions and more on local-level effects in the short and medium term. This latter group of scholars evaluates the effectiveness of development projects in achieving their stated goals with the hopes of distilling best practices. Yet both of these contrasting approaches risk reifying development projects and thus obscuring development's messy, power-laden processes and the diverse ways they interact with people's lives on the ground.

This book, by contrast, conceptualizes development projects not as pre-

packaged products that arrive in the global south from the global north, but rather as ongoing series of interactions in which diverse actors in the global north *and* the global south play an active role. In so doing, it demonstrates that by focusing on what development projects are supposed to do (whether it be reproducing neoliberal hegemony according to some, or lifting significant portions of the population out of poverty according to others), we overlook what development projects really do: namely, become imbricated in the daily strategies and meanings of diverse beneficiaries and developers operating in particular contexts in significant but unexpected ways.

When scholars and practitioners insist on reifying development projects and focusing on their (presumed or stated) goals alone, they blind themselves to the tensions inherent in development that allow projects, even those that fail to meet their intended goals, to be reproduced. Instead, by exploring development projects as emergent interactions among diverse actors, this book is able to uncover that even when international discourses shift, underlying mentalities and practices may persist, allowing development projects to endure in repackaged forms even if they have not led to widespread community or international development. Projects are repackaged, but not as the result of a worldwide conspiracy or because they are particularly effective. Rather, they are perpetuated as the accidental result of various actors pursuing their own goals in the context of development projects and casting a variety of outcomes as "success," thus obstructing critical reflection on the value of particular development projects, or of development projects generally. Policymakers and NGO leaders draw on their existing habitus (often shaped in previous development projects) to craft future projects and point to evaluations that leverage various measures of success to keep their jobs, get promoted, secure future funding, or feel like they are making a difference. The NGO workers look to projects as, among other things, a relatively rare source of steady or prestigious employment and often draw on and replicate strategies and meanings honed in their previous experiences in other projects. Meanwhile, beneficiaries attempt to leverage the latest projects to their benefit, learning how to skillfully manipulate developers' expectations, express the appropriate form of gratitude, or sidetrack projects to their own benefit so that they can view their participation as "successful" even when policymakers' stated goals are not met.

Reifying development projects is also problematic because it generates unrealistic expectations that a particular development schema will produce similar effects across widely varying contexts and people. It also encourages inadequate systems of evaluation and measurement that cannot capture what development projects *really* do (positive or negative)—whether that be in-

creasing divisions or inequalities between beneficiaries or providing steady employment and prestige to NGO workers in contexts in which both jobs and status are in short supply. As the findings presented here demonstrate, viewing development projects as emergent interactions encourages us to abandon quests for the "best" development model, to rethink our evaluation strategies, and to question our ends rather than merely reforming our means, all while simultaneously opening up new lines of inquiry.

THE FAILURES OF GUATEMALA'S DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Guatemala is representative of many countries in which development has generated a variety of effects, even as it has fallen short of transforming economic and political power structures. Despite a long history of development projects undertaken by a variety of actors (described in chapter 2), Guatemala remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. While it is home to 235 "ultra high net worth" individuals, with a combined net worth of $28 billion (Wealth-X 2013), over half of the population lives in poverty. In rural areas, rates of poverty climb to roughly three-quarters of the population. Despite the country's abundance in agricultural products, half of Guatemalan children under the age of five nationwide and 70 percent of children in indigenous areas are undernourished—the highest rates in the Americas (World Food Programme 2014).

Inequalities rooted in ethnicity, geography, and gender intersect. Roughly half of Guatemala's population is indigenous—belonging to one of twenty-three distinct ethnolinguistic groups, most of them of Mayan descent. Guatemala thus appeals to international funders who wish to promote the now-popular goal of "culturally appropriate development." Indigenous populations are concentrated in rural areas, where poverty and malnutrition are rampant and state services are missing, weak, or privatized. During Guatemala's protracted armed conflict (1960–96), these areas were most affected by human rights abuses and acts of genocide, committed by government agents.

Women in Guatemala have long endured discrimination and marginalization. Historically, educating girls was seen as a waste. Many adult Guatemalan women describe the tendency to celebrate the birth of a son but not the birth of a daughter, and to keep girls home to cook, clean, or work in the markets and fields while their brothers attend school. Today, women have limited access to property in their name and are overrepresented in the informal sector and the maquiladora industry, ensuring that when they undertake wage labor, they receive low wages, limited job security, and little to no benefits.

Politically, women continue to be underrepresented in local and national political institutions, making up just 13 percent of the national legislators. Even in the face of peace accords and recent legislation that address indigenous and women's rights, racism and sexism continue to be widespread, and discrimination based on gender and ethnicity magnifies social exclusion. Indigenous women therefore experience a dramatically different reality than nonindigenous men. For instance, while the average nonindigenous Guatemalan man has received seven and a half years of schooling, the average indigenous woman has received just two and a half years (Inter-American Development Bank 2012).

Yet those who are most marginalized are in many ways central to Guatemala's economic well-being. The labor of the rural poor is central to the production of coffee, sugar, bananas, African palm, and other key agricultural exports. The informal sector—employing three-quarters of the population, mostly women—fuels local economies and feeds the tourist industry. Tourism, the country's second-largest earner of foreign currency, rests on images of Mayan women, who are more likely to wear traditional clothing and produce handicrafts that attract and delight foreigners from around the world. In the context of tourism, but also missionary work, Spanish schools, voluntourism, NGOs, and academic research, Guatemalans and foreigners participate in the "economy of desire" and the "economy of humanitarianism," in which culture, gender, and poverty are precious commodities (Nuñez 2009, 113). Local and foreign NGOs alike rely on images of indigenous populations and poor women in order to secure international funding and support, tapping into the global popularity of culturally appropriate and women-empowering development.

A long history of persistent inequality and poverty, state weakness, privatization, and waves of international funding, alongside the legacies of collective action and religious outreach, has established a patchwork of development NGOs spread unevenly across the country. As a result, NGOs have been said to represent the "face" of development for many Guatemalan communities (Rohloff, Díaz, and Dasgupta 2011) and to be "one of the most prevalent features of [Guatemala's] late capitalist landscape" (Way 2012, 186). Guatemalans, like citizens of most countries in the global south, are increasingly accustomed to interacting with NGOs, especially small NGOs like those at the center of this book, which are more numerous and are more likely to engage in sustained action than larger, better-studied NGOs. As elsewhere, many of these NGOs have religious origins or ties, although these types of NGOs tend to be overlooked in the literature on development and NGOs, influenced as it is by a secular bias (Hofer 2003; Bornstein 2005; Clarke 2007).

Postwar Guatemala encounters various challenges that other countries face: poverty, inequality, ethnic and gender discrimination, political corruption, and uneven state reach. It has long been influenced by international actors, discourses, and practices that have also influenced countries around the globe and is home to development actors who are present the world over—government agents, international agencies, social movements, religious organizations, and local and international NGOs. Development projects in Guatemala are characterized by the same tensions that characterize development projects everywhere. Thus, while the stories told here are intimately embedded in the Guatemalan context and shaped by the lives of particular people, the book's conclusions remain global in scope.

NAMASTE AND THE FRATERNITY: DIFFERENT ENDS ON MULTIPLE DEVELOPMENT SPECTRUMS

This book's central findings about development's constitution are based on comparative ethnographies of Namaste and the Fraternity. These two NGOs are similar sizes, working with between four and six hundred beneficiaries, depending upon the time in question. They target similar populations—poor women living in mostly rural and semirural communities. They also deploy similar technologies, providing women small loans (known as microcredit or microfinance) accompanied by education. Both have managed to secure relatively stable international funding and long-term partnerships. Yet, despite their similarities, Namaste and the Fraternity are located at opposite ends of various spectrums in the field of development: they embody distinct development models, NGO types, and international trends that are popular in many areas of the world. Their comparison therefore stands to illuminate the origins, expressions, and effects of varied development and NGO models. It also reveals how these different international ideas and development models are translated into practices on the ground, as well as how the poor subsequently experience, react to, and transform them.

Development Models: Bootstrap versus Holistic

Namaste and the Fraternity operate according to development models that are popular across the globe. I define development models as comprising ideas about the sources of underdevelopment, a vision of what development entails, and beliefs about the most appropriate means of moving from one to the other. Even when they are implicit, these models influence decisions about the resources or services to be provided (Should we focus on loans, grants, clinics,

or consciousness-raising?), the intermediary and end goals to prioritize (What is immediately necessary and what should be postponed?), and the appropriate targets of interventions (Should we target communities, businesses, or individuals? Men or women or both?). Models therefore affect (but do not determine) practices on the ground by informing views of beneficiaries and developers, as well as strategies, formal policies, and organizational values.

Namaste operates according to a development model that I label bootstrap development. Bootstrap development relies on resource-based definitions of underdevelopment and development and focuses on the individual. It is based on the assumption that given the opportunity, the poor are able to lift themselves up "by their bootstraps." Although Namaste's policymakers recognize nonmaterial aspects of development and human well-being, they specialize in increasing women's incomes because they believe that doing so will contribute to broader goals and ensure stability by helping the poor help themselves. This reflects a popular trend in the field of development in which, while scholars and practitioners recognize the multifaceted nature of poverty, they see limited access to health, education, and political power as consequences, rather than the causes, of resource deficiency (Kabeer 2004, 2).

In this model, development can be reduced to a technical challenge of providing the poor access to resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. Bootstrap development therefore has an elective affinity with a focus on "expertise" (narrowly defined) and fits well with the new managerialism that values results-driven action and quantifiable goals. Those who pursue bootstrap development, like Namaste, often target women because women are assumed to give them more "bang for their buck." Policymakers highlight that women are less likely to have access to resources and are more likely to channel resources toward their children's and community's well-being, producing positive spillover effects.

The Fraternity, on the other hand, operates according to a model that I label holistic development. This model challenges resource-based definitions of underdevelopment and development and instead argues for addressing multiple obstacles to development at once—including the relational and institutional sources of social exclusion, as well as people's identities and capabilities (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2001). The Fraternity, as a NGO run by and serving Christian Mayan women, operates according to the belief that "it is not enough [for Mayan women] to have food to eat," as the Fraternity's director explained in a 2009 interview. In its vision, Mayan women should also be physically and psychologically healthy, educated in their rights and obligations as women and citizens, active in their churches and communities, and connected to their

Christian values, Mayan spirituality, and nature. The Fraternity's development model reflects a broader trend in which development is seen as entailing personal, internal transformations alongside other changes in the poor's environments (Rowlands 1997; Nussbaum 2001; Appadurai 2004).[3]

In this model, development is viewed as a political challenge of transforming individuals and communities and entails internal transformations alongside other changes. Because they often seek to address the relational nature of poverty and social exclusion, those applying holistic models of development are more likely to see their beneficiaries as members of excluded groups, rather than as individuals, and value their inclusion in key institutions in their lives (families, churches, development councils, political parties, etc.). Holistic models of development imply comprehensiveness over specialization and the pursuit of multiple, long-term goals that are often difficult to quantify.

Organizational Origins and Networks: Foreign versus Grassroots

Namaste and the Fraternity each have origins that are common among development NGOs. Namaste is a foreign transplant that is similar to many other foreign-founded NGOs operating in developing countries. Its roots are in social entrepreneurship, an increasingly significant force in the field of development that encourages applying business mentalities to philanthropy and leveraging the market (Edwards 2010). Like other social entrepreneurs, Namaste's policymakers champion specialization, efficiency, measurement, innovation, and "results-driven" action. Successful North American businesspeople themselves, Namaste's early policymakers applied the "strategies of action" that they learned in business to the nonprofit world when designing and managing Namaste. These origins continue to influence the NGO, informing its "audit culture" (characteristic of many development organizations today) and providing it with many foreign, but few local, connections, such that beneficiaries see it as a "gringo bank."

On the other hand, the Fraternity, like many NGOs in Latin America, grew out of social mobilization. A small group of Mayan women in the Presbyterian Church mobilized for participation and leadership opportunities for indigenous women in local and national churches. They received funds from international sister churches and religious organizations, which they distributed to groups of Mayan Christian women for small projects such as raising chickens or cultivating small plots of land. In the face of resistance from nonindigenous and male members of the church, the Fraternity eventually separated to become an independent NGO providing small loans and classes to groups

of indigenous women. These origins led policymakers to view women's participation, internal transformations, and inclusion as intrinsically valuable. They also provided the Fraternity with relatively stable international funding through religious networks while embedding it in local religious and ethnic networks and imbuing it with a local identity.

Organizational Norms: Faith in the Market versus Faith in God and Culture

Namaste's and the Fraternity's organizational norms, which are intimately connected to their origins, also diverge. Although Namaste's central founder was called to social entrepreneurship through a spiritual awakening, the "faith" that influences Namaste's development model and policies is not religious. The framework established by Namaste's policymakers and formal policies is rooted instead in a faith in the market. The NGO is designed to provide women small loans to be used in their businesses based on the assumption that one of the key obstacles to development is the poor's lack of access to capital. Once this obstacle is overcome, the policymakers believe, women can help themselves and their families by engaging in and leveraging the market. They think this contributes not only to women's well-being but also to the development of local economies. To integrate women into the market, Namaste's interest rates have been aligned with those of commercial banks, and limits have been placed on the number of loans women can receive from the NGO, so that women can prepare themselves to move seamlessly from nonprofit to market-based borrowing.

By contrast, the Fraternity's origins in the Presbyterian Church imbue the organization with Christian practices and beliefs. The NGO incorporates required and optional Bible study and theology classes, NGO leaders and workers include prayer and Bible verses and stories in the vast majority of their activities, and the organization's goals are informed by Christian values. In addition to its religious nature, the Fraternity's organizational norms are influenced by policymakers' interpretations of Mayan culture, which emphasize recapturing traditional practices, caring for the environment, eschewing foreign products, and focusing on the community rather than the individual. Drawing on both Mayan *cosmovision* and Protestant values and beliefs, the NGO promotes an alternative development that includes nonquantifiable goals such as community well-being, culturally different citizens, and indigenous women's voice and inclusion, as well as a revalorization of nonhuman life that results in "communities that are green, with crystal waters [and] pure air."[4] In this way, the Fraternity represents localized, indigenous understandings

of development championed by post-development scholars and indigenous movements across Latin America, which challenge Western conceptions of progress (Escobar 1995; Acosta 2010; Gow 2008).

Bureaucratic versus Charismatic Organizational Structures

Namaste and the Fraternity are also influenced by distinct organizational structures that are emblematic of contrasting NGO types. Namaste is typical of professionalized NGOs. Its structure is bureaucratic, organized internally according to impersonal rules and valuing technical capacity, efficiency, and measurement. Decisions are made at the top with little to no input from workers or beneficiaries, and NGO staff members specialize in a limited number of activities. Meticulous files and internal feedback mechanisms contribute to a high degree of institutionalization.

The Fraternity, on the other hand, is typical of many NGOs that grew out of grassroots collective action. I label its structure charismatic (Beck 2014), drawing on Weber's description of charismatic authority (Weber 1921). The Fraternity is organized hierarchically—the director has historically made the majority of decisions with little input from workers or beneficiaries, and there is an informal hierarchy among workers and beneficiaries. Unlike in Namaste, however, this hierarchy is not based on technical capacity or task differentiation, but rather on personal relationships, valuing loyalty and personal characteristics over formal training or technical expertise. The organization's larger-than-life director has traditionally made decisions based on her personal judgments and relationships rather than impersonal rules.

THEORIZING DEVELOPMENT: AN AGENT-BASED APPROACH

How, then, are we to move forward comparing these contrasting organizations? The existing literature provides surprisingly scant direction because while social scientists are generally interested in the fine-grained nature of people's lives, meanings, and motivations, this has not always been the case when it comes to those involved in NGOs or development projects. Instead, many researchers have unintentionally relied on caricatures of the people involved in development, assuming or imputing the meanings and motivations of beneficiaries and developers rather than taking them as objects worthy of social science inquiry.[5] And in contrast to their detailed studies of other institutions, researchers have all too often promoted simplistic views of development interventions themselves, seeing them as arriving, more or less fully formed, in communities in the global south, rather than springing from or

interacting with national and local-level histories and actions (Lewis 2014). The result has been sparsely populated depictions of NGO-led development interventions, curiously lacking any sense of living, breathing human beings dealing with the "incoherences, uncertainty and contradictions" (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 5) inherent in their social, political, and organizational contexts (Beck 2016).[6]

As a corrective, this book explores the socially constructed nature of development interventions, investigating how developers and beneficiaries exercise agency by reflecting on their experiences, assigning various goals and meanings to development projects, and acting in diverse ways in the face of given development models and policies (Giddens 1984; Long and Long 1992; Olivier de Sardan 2005). It brings to the forefront human agency rooted in ongoing practices and webs of meaning, interactions between people and things, and multiple forms of power. It demonstrates that those involved in development strategize, negotiate, and collude, and through acts of translation they enroll human and nonhuman actants in pursuit of their projects. As a result, the book shows, development projects are never linear and policymakers' hopeful predictions are rarely fulfilled.

Starting at the top of the development chain, this book views policymakers as social actors. As such, it moves past simplistic images of them as cogs in an "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1994) or as simply searching for the most efficient solution to an obvious problem, in order to explore the interactional origins of their worldviews and models of development. Doing so allows us to understand the processes by which these actors, often motivated by good intentions, come to define "messy, indeterminate situations" (Schön 1987, 4) as problems that require their expertise and intervention (Shore and Wright 1997; Apthorpe 1997; Escobar 1995; Fairhead and Leach 1997; Li 2007). Analyzing policymakers' somewhat idiosyncratic personal trajectories and dispositions reveals that, both Namaste's and the Fraternity's organizational values, structures, and models of development fit well with founders' and policymakers' habitus (Bourdieu 1990): their dispositions, values, and strategies of action, informed by their previous experiences and interactions. Through their subsequent efforts to materialize their positions, values, and visions, founders and early policymakers contributed to the "organizational habitus" of Namaste and the Fraternity in ways that influenced various actors' meanings and behavior well into the future (Ebrahim 2003; Lewis 2008; Yarrow 2011; Venkatesan and Yarrow 2012).

The agent-based approach adopted by this book predicts at best a loose coupling between workers' and beneficiaries' meanings and actions and those

inscribed in written policies, based on the reality that even the most meticulously developed policies cannot account for the diversity and agency of implementers (NGO leaders and workers) and beneficiaries (Olivier de Sardan 2005; Rottenburg 2009; Fechter and Hindman 2011). We will see that actors involved in Namaste's and the Fraternity's projects come to these projects with multiple goals and meanings that often diverge from the projects' stated rationales. They subsequently act in ways not predicted by policymakers, sidetracking and transforming development interventions in the process.

Such an approach not only helps us explain why development projects are unlikely to proceed linearly toward "successful" development; it also forces us to prioritize people's multiple goals and experiences of development and thus abandon neat assessments of project outcomes as success or failure. Projects have many more effects than those sought by policymakers and funders because people use projects for their own purposes. Outcomes are never uniform across beneficiaries, and assessments of project success depend on whom you ask and whose definition of success gets prioritized (Pigg 1992; Pawson 2006; Mowles 2013). When we reject the assumption that people join NGOs or development projects for the same reasons that policymakers design them, we open ourselves up to the very real possibility that some may judge an intervention as successful even when the goals established by policymakers are not met, and some may judge an intervention as a failure even when the goals established by policymakers are met.

POWER IN AN AGENT-BASED APPROACH

It is important to note that although this book highlights the agency of diverse actors, it does not imply that anything is possible in the context of development. Macrophenomena, such as international trends and political and economic structures, shape project trajectories and possibilities, and some actors exercise much more power than others. Yet its findings highlight that macrophenomena are themselves the result of a "complex interplay of specific actors' strategies, 'projects,' resource endowments (material/technical and social/institutional), discourses and meanings" (Long 2004, 15), and power inequalities themselves result from processes of translation and composition.

In the context of development NGOs, policymakers often leverage relations with actors and materials to further entrench their positions, visions, and values through the creation and manipulation of organizational structures, employment guidelines, evaluation procedures, documentation and calculation techniques, and databases, with lasting effects. In these contexts, knowledge

does not involve the "simple accumulation of facts" about the global south, poor women, and "best practices," but rather a way "of construing and ordering the world" to the benefit of some over others (Long 2004, 15; see Foucault 1980; Sletto 2008). As a result, development projects are akin to living games of chess, "where some control many more pawns, some are only allowed a few moves, whereas others can change the rules to their advantage" (Bierschenk 1988, 146; Gareau 2012). In the chapters that follow, we will see that despite their differences *both* Namaste's and the Fraternity's developers seek to govern women's economic, social, and political behavior. By leveraging relationships and material and by reinforcing ideas about "good" entrepreneurs or "good" Christian Mayan women, they encourage women to work on themselves.

Still, power in development projects is not limited to that of developers deploying power over and through their beneficiaries. Power may be uneven, but it is also diffuse, and "government is a congenitally failing operation" (Rose and Miller 1992, 190). Even though developers and beneficiaries possess unequal resources (status, time, money, valued expertise, networks, or alternatives), beneficiaries are able to exercise power, at the very least because they can "refuse to do what is expected of them or to do it another way" (Friedberg in Olivier de Sardan 2005, 186). Indeed, the diversity of goals, meanings, and criteria for evaluation involved in projects provide actors with opportunities to do much more than resist or comply (Mosse 2013; Olivier de Sardan 2005). Often, workers and beneficiaries alike exercise agency through collaboration, manipulation of dominant rhetoric, aid seeking, or undertaking small acts of reinterpretation (Olivier de Sardan 2005; Bending and Rosenda 2006; Rossi 2006). Even when developers appear to succeed in enlisting beneficiaries in their projects, we cannot assume that beneficiaries are mere dupes. When beneficiaries support top-down narratives, it is often a legitimate strategic response that expands their room for maneuver in the short term, even if it further reinforces the existing order in the long term (Rossi 2004; Mosse 2005; Bending and Rosendo 2006; Beck 2016).

In both Namaste and the Fraternity, women learn NGOs' "lessons" but also reappropriate, resist, or reinterpret them. Some women "go through the motions," use NGO spaces for their own purposes, or reinterpret NGO lessons in creative ways. Their actions demonstrate that although developers write development scripts, beneficiaries are active (although not equally powerful) characters in those scripts, jointly recrafting the plot and able to improvise.

LONGITUDINAL, COMPARATIVE ETHNOGRAPHIES OF DEVELOPMENT INTERFACES

Because people practice, experience, and transform development interventions in concrete settings, it follows that a researcher interested in these processes must embed herself within these settings. But given that even small NGOs are embedded in webs of relations that cross multiple borders and are affected by international, national, and personal trajectories, where then does one locate the "field"? Following in the tradition of actor-oriented sociology, I conducted ethnographies at the interfaces of developers, beneficiaries, and their material reality (technologies, office space, credit), where different and often contrasting lifeworlds intersected and ongoing series of negotiations over resources, meaning, legitimacy, and control took place (Long 2001, 1; Gareau 2012).

What did ethnographies at development interfaces look like in practice? During my time with Namaste and the Fraternity, I spent some of my days in the NGO offices, attending staff meetings and planning sessions, taking part in informal conversations, and analyzing NGO databases, office space, and paperwork. I spent the rest of my time observing NGO activities with beneficiaries that unfolded in NGO offices, community buildings, and women's homes. In this way, I was able to analyze the ways that NGO policymakers, leaders, and workers talked about their work and beneficiaries, as well as the quotidian ways that developers enacted and transformed development models through their interactions with beneficiaries, communities, paperwork, and databases. I supplemented informal conversations with formal interviews of fifty-two beneficiaries. Through observations of and conversations with beneficiaries in the context of NGO activities and outside of them, I was also privy to the ways that beneficiaries themselves pursued their own diverse goals and meanings, along with the multiple ways that they accommodated, reinterpreted, resisted, or leveraged NGO discourses and strategies.

All told, the findings presented in this book are based on twenty months of field research in Guatemala and regular engagement from afar, spread out over the course of over seven years. During this time, in addition to ethnographies and interviews with beneficiaries, I undertook formal and informal interviews with Namaste's and the Fraternity's policymakers, leaders, funders, and workers (in person in Guatemala, Toronto, and Oakland and via email, Skype, and phone). The longitudinal nature of this study allowed me to study the experiential learning curves of developers and beneficiaries, investigate the nature of individual and organizational change, and thus more fully understand the in-

teractional, dynamic nature of development and NGOs. Observing NGOs and beneficiaries over time allowed me to explore not only the ways that NGOs affected women's identities, strategies, and well-being, but also the multiple ways that women in turn affected NGOs and their projects.

Development interfaces are not self-contained spheres of interaction—they are embedded in personal, local, national, and international landscapes and histories. In order to situate the interactions I observed in Namaste and the Fraternity in a broader history and context, I drew on national and NGO archives; newspaper searches; interviews with a wide variety of NGO leaders, journalists, and government officials; and life histories of policymakers, leaders, and workers. To situate these two NGOs in the reality of women's lives, I additionally conducted surveys with over 250 women not participating in Namaste and the Fraternity about their experiences with NGOs and microcredit organizations (known as microfinance institutions, or MFIs) and drew on life histories of beneficiaries at each NGO. Combined, this research highlighted the importance of international trends, national histories, and local institutional landscapes for present-day development projects. But it also demonstrated that personal histories and dispositions, alongside memories and knowledge of other development projects, informed the expectations, meanings, and goals that developers and beneficiaries assigned to development interventions (see the appendix for further discussion of research methods and the ethical and practical issues they raised).

GENERALIZING USING AN AGENT-BASED APPROACH

Because the two NGOs represented radically different development models applied to similar technologies, reflected contrasting organizational "types" that figured prominently in debates about NGOs, and embodied distinct, noticeable trends in development, I originally saw the comparison between Namaste and the Fraternity as ideal for arbitrating debates about the value of competing development models, NGO types, and development trends—debates that were intimately linked to the field's focus on outcomes. Yet once I got inside these organizations to observe their quotidian practices, I realized that such abstract models and debates did not capture the reality of these organizations, nor did they translate seamlessly and predictably into the NGOs' outcomes. The realities of these NGOs and their projects were not merely products of development models, organizational types, and international trends. They were also products of the emergent interactions between real people, who acted and assigned meaning creatively, and sometimes unpredictably. These inter-

actions transformed NGOs and their projects and served as the critical link between development models, organizational types, and international trends on the one hand and NGOs' mixed outcomes on the other. Thus, abstract questions about the "right" or "wrong" development model or NGO type were misplaced, because models and types did not convert predictably into actual practices and experiences.

I concluded that despite my original hopes to the contrary, case studies of particular projects could not arbitrate abstract debates about the "best" development or NGO models. The contingent nature of the NGOs' respective projects indicated that the best I could do was to generalize about development's interactional terrain, rather than the value of particular development technologies, approaches, or organizations. Applying an agent-based approach to the comparison between Namaste and the Fraternity revealed generalizable tensions that result from the plurality of dispositions, goals, and meanings that exist within *any* given NGO-led development intervention, even those (like Namaste and the Fraternity) that embody diverging development models, organizational types, or international trends.

In subsequent conversations, scholars who study very different projects, from those focused on disaster relief to those focused on assisting former sex workers, have reported that the tensions I identified for development NGOs resonate with them as well. Thus, I suspect that the tensions uncovered here are common even beyond the field of development. I do not believe resources need to be changing hands for these tensions to occur, as the coming together of diverse lifeworlds and multiple, at times contrasting, organizational goals characterize a wide variety of internationally stretched projects, which can be seen as various forms of "global social engineering" (Bierschenk 2014) that, while influential, are never coherent.

These tensions—resulting from intersecting lifeworlds and the confluence of NGOs' organizational and developmental goals—may be inevitable, but they are not resolved in predictable ways. Rather, they are productive in the sense of generating multiple potential meanings and actions, enabling some forms of agency while constraining others. They thus ensure room for maneuver in even the most meticulously planned projects and challenge attempts at prediction and "scaling up."

When Simplified Views of the Other Collide

Development insiders and scholars alike have noted the tendency of policymakers to rely on stereotypical views of beneficiaries, creating reified categories for people or places as part of the process of rendering development

"technical" (Trinh 1989; Mohanty 1991; Pigg 1992; Mosse 2003, 2005; Olivier de Sardan 2005; Soss 2005; Korf 2006; Li 2007). Project frames that represent beneficiaries according to social, demographic, or economic categories such as "the landless poor," "indigenous women," or "informal workers" serve to "stabiliz[e] and homogeniz[e] specific people within a larger group" (Craig and Porter 1997, 52). Doing so overlooks the diversity and ongoing dynamics within these groups and assumes subjectivities and cohesion that may not exist. While developers draw on simplified views of beneficiaries (often associated with a degree of powerlessness), they also draw on their own experiences and perceptions to imagine beneficiaries' needs and desires. Often these align with the needs and desires of developers themselves (Long 2001, 85–8). It is assumed that women in the global south wish to engage in paid labor outside the home and seek independence from their husbands (Pearson 2007; Kabeer 2011) or that informal workers want to expand their businesses.

In parallel fashion, those targeted by development interventions construct simplified conceptions of developers (Olivier de Sardan 2005), drawing on their own experiences to judge developers' power, needs, and desires. They compare development institutions to others with which they are familiar, generating expectations about what participation in them will entail. Based on their previous experiences with other developers, they are likely to ask for things that they expect developers to be willing and able to provide (Olivier de Sardan 2005). Indeed, ethnographers have found that "even in the most remote village of the third world, people have developed an impressive capacity for decoding the language of the project offers on hand. . . . They rapidly sense whether to talk of 'poverty,' 'gender,' 'care for the environment,' or 'small business dynamism'" (De Herdt and Bastiaensen 2007, 877). In this context, "participatory sessions" may act as "schools" where the poor develop expectations of developers and "learn to speak in the global language of poverty and development" (De Herdt and Bastiaensen 2007, 877). Thus developers' and beneficiaries' meanings and expectations alike are grounded in simplified views of each other, informed by their respective past experiences and sociomaterial surroundings, and in many cases contribute to the reproduction and repackaging of past projects.

Simplified views of the other are also connected to varying views of development interventions themselves. Based on their views of beneficiaries' levels of need, policymakers and NGO leaders often see interventions as "central, omnipresent, unique" (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 33) and ask workers and beneficiaries to give projects more time, energy, and importance than they are willing or able to give. Funders and policymakers often suffer from "amne-

sia" (Lewis 2009, 34; Bierschenk 2014, 89) when it comes to previous projects (Bierschenk, Elwert, and Kohnert 1993; Richards 1985), living in the "perpetual present" (Lewis 2009, 33) in part because they tend to be embedded in their own cognitive structures, knowledge systems, and communication channels that exist apart from those of local contexts and subjectivities (Bierschenk 2014). As a result, failed technologies or approaches often reappear as "new" development in the eyes of "experts." In other cases, projects may simply be repackaged using the latest rhetoric (Bierschenk 2014, 91).

Policymakers and funders may be prone to amnesia, but beneficiaries are not. Instead, they consider interventions in light of their previous experiences and knowledge of other projects (Hilhorst 2003) and are thus likely to see interventions as "temporary, relative, and incidental—just another link in a chain of consecutive interventions" (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 33). Development workers are likely to have their own views of the intervention, seeing it as philanthropy, a job similar to previously held positions, or a stepping-stone to something more prestigious. Some may be motivated by altruism, but others may not even believe in the principles of the intervention at hand.

In sum, when different lifeworlds meet at development's interfaces, developers and beneficiaries alike construct and act on simplified conceptions of each other while maintaining more nuanced views of themselves, thus assigning various meanings and goals to development projects and experiencing these projects differently. Because their goals, expectations, and meanings arise from their different histories and networks, communication and relational practices at development's interfaces proceed through series of "mutual misunderstanding[s]" that open up room for negotiation and interpretation (Rossi 2004, 559; see Marsland 2006).

When simplified views of the other collide—both with their opposition and with real people—it can lead to a variety of interactions: beneficiaries may talk back to stereotypes, act in ways that challenge policymakers' assumptions, or play into higher-ups' simplified views of them in order to access benefits which they assume developers are able to distribute. Policymakers, for their part, may readjust their policies to better fit the complexity of the social reality they find on the ground or allow for a decoupling of policy and practice to simultaneously satisfy funders and beneficiaries, among other responses (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Workers might leverage stereotypes of the "backward" beneficiaries to NGO leaders to explain unsatisfying results while simultaneously relying on stereotypes of "prestigious" or "demanding" policymakers/NGO leaders to pressure beneficiaries to comply with expectations (Sharma 2014; Lewis and Mosse 2006).

When Developmental Goals Meet Organizational Goals

In the field of development NGOs, tensions additionally arise from the intersection of NGOs' developmental and organizational drives. Development NGOs are value-based organizations that are guided by distinct worldviews (Lissner 1977; Kilby 2006), including visions of development, *and* by typical organizational pressures. Yet developmental goals and organizational pressures often run in opposite directions. Development NGOs of *all* stripes—foreign and grassroots, Western and indigenous, bureaucratic and charismatic, secular and religious, bootstrap and holistic—seek to "help" but also to govern their beneficiaries. Their desire to govern beneficiaries is understandable because even when NGOs control the distribution of resources, their ability to achieve their particular visions of development depends on beneficiaries utilizing these resources in ways that advance their broader, long-term goals (Li 2007). Thus, they work to create subjects that are both instrumental to and constitutive of their visions of development (Mosse 2005, 6; Adams and Pigg 2005; Li 2007; Swidler and Watkins 2009). The result is that NGOs inevitably undertake moralizing and managing work in the process of helping.

What is more, as organizations generally accountable to external donors, NGOs inherently face high demands for effective management, requiring central control and meeting pre-established objectives. These demands often run counter to the messy reality of interactions on the ground and to the inefficient, uncertain, and undisciplined nature of bottom-up participation, helping to explain why behind participatory rhetoric, one often finds "projects as usual" (Craig and Porter 1997; Mosse 2003, 2005; Quarles van Ufford 1993; Nauta 2006).[7] In their desire to help, development NGOs aim for lofty goals but, unlike firms, lack "specific technologies with known relationships between inputs and outputs" (Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan 2012, 289). These lofty goals often include transforming beneficiaries' lives in ways that make further projects unnecessary. Yet, as organizations, they crave predictable, reproducible, manageable processes and are influenced by system goals of their own long-term survival and growth (Bob 2001; Olivier de Sardan 2005; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan 2012; Fox 2014; Krause 2014).

Developers may address this tension in a variety of ways, leveraging materials (forms, contracts, photographs) and monitoring and evaluation technologies (site visits, databases), as well as adjusting the ways that they frame their goals to make the situation more manageable. They may enlist ritualistic documentation and measurement techniques like logframes (logistical frameworks) to create a virtual reality in which cause-and-effect relationships

predominate, unknowns are knowable, and projects are coherent and manageable (Craig and Porter 1997; Chambers 2010; Rossi 2004; Eyben 2007). By relying on reports, evaluations, databases, and surveys, policymakers and NGO leaders attempt to provide their funders and themselves a semblance of linearity, certainty, and coherence. Quantitative measurements, surveys of beneficiaries, headcounts at NGO activities, photographs, and detailed reports give the impression of certain relationships between inputs and outputs. Alternatively (or even simultaneously), they may leverage ignorance by neglecting to verify certain project characteristics or to measure particularly problematic outcomes (Quarles van Ufford 1993; Mosse 2003; see Bierschenk, Elwert, and Kohnert 1993; Arce and Long 1993). They may reframe goals in processual rather than "outcome-based" terms, or select measurable outcomes that are unproven proxies for those that are not so easily measured.

These conflicting developmental and organizational drives affect many aspects of NGOs' trajectories, including learning processes. As such, the relationship between "feedback" and subsequent policies and practices is neither automatic nor linear. Even policymakers, NGO leaders, and workers who believe deeply in an NGO's vision of development have a host of other goals, including status, job security, and a sense of purpose. Because these other goals are tied up with management and organizational survival, it is quite rare that evaluation leads to recognition of contingency or questioning the "whole idea of planned intervention and the rationality of planning," much less the project itself. Instead, one may interpret ambiguous feedback as proof of success, attribute failure to outside forces, or see failure as "the starting point for the elaboration of the next round of interventions" (Long 2001, 37). As a result "single-loop learning," concerned with improving organizational performance, is more common than "double-loop learning," concerned with questioning underlying power relations and worldviews (Ebrahim 2003, 109–10).

The tension between NGOs' development and organizational drives manifests in a number of ways, generating inconsistencies in NGO discourses and practices that in turn open up significant room for maneuver on the part of those involved in development. Beneficiaries may leverage discourses of helping in order to make claims on NGOs, hold workers to account, shift NGO activities to meet their own needs, or resist developers' attempts to govern their behavior. Workers may rely on anecdotes, headcounts, or quantitative measure to prove their effectiveness in order to keep their jobs. Leaders and policymakers may decouple policies, practice, and evaluation, maintaining distinct "frontstage" and "backstage" scripts (Lund 2001).

The agent-based approach applied in this book, and its recognition of development's central tensions, has implications for the ways we go about studying and pursuing development in the global south. Such an approach forces researchers and practitioners to view development interventions as a set of ongoing, contingent relationships rather than one-sided, static interventions on the part of the global north into the global south. In the face of development's inherent tensions, even workers and beneficiaries are afforded significant room for maneuver. By navigating and expanding that room to maneuver, they cocreate development practices and experiences on the ground. This insight should lead researchers and practitioners to question their desire to locate best practices or scale up the best development models, because these models will never convert predictably into practices, experiences, and outcomes. It also means that researchers and practitioners should *expect* gaps between policies and practices and view them as valuable sources of information rather than flaws to be eliminated.

Finally, an agent-based approach and appreciation of development's central tensions help to explain why development projects persist even when they fail to live up to our expectations: operating based on multiple meanings and assigning various goals to development interventions, developers and beneficiaries' often interact to produce something not quite intended but something that can be recast by various agents as success (Long and Long 1992; Mosse 2005).

PLAN FOR THE BOOK

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of development projects in Guatemala, demonstrating the multiple ways that international discourses and practices influenced but did not dictate local development efforts. Instead, they interacted with the sociopolitical context in which local actors (military and government forces, religious organizations, indigenous movements, grassroots NGOs, credit unions, and private businesses) exercised varying degrees of agency. This chapter demonstrates that these interactions often resulted in the repackaging of past projects, strategies, and discourses, contributing to projects' endurance even in the face of changing buzzwords. It also explains how NGOs came to be one of the key faces of development in many Guatemalan communities and how organizational diversity was able to persist even in the face of international pressures such that NGOs as different as Namaste and the Fraternity could coexist.

Chapters 3 through 6 focus on the organizational and individual levels of analysis, first for Namaste and then for the Fraternity. These chapters explore the NGOs' interactional prehistories, organizational trajectories, and resulting organizational characteristics, before delving into interactions at Namaste's and the Fraternity's interfaces to explore the processes by which beneficiaries form expectations of the NGOs and the quotidian and power-laden interactions between and among developers and beneficiaries.

Chapter 3 analyzes Namaste, demonstrating how its prehistory, rooted in Western business practices and social entrepreneurship, contributed to its model of bootstrap development, which focuses on resources, individuals, and cultivating self-sufficiency through engagement with the market. This history also informed Namaste's other organizational characteristics, including its values, bureaucratic structure, and embeddedness in foreign, rather than local, networks.

Chapter 4 zooms in further, focusing on the spaces that Namaste creates in carrying out its activities as concrete sites where employees and beneficiaries enact and transform bootstrap development, and where attempts to create entrepreneurial subjects are undertaken and reinterpreted. It highlights how women's initial interactions with Namaste inform their perception that Namaste is more or less just another MFI, which in turn shapes their expectations of the NGO and their participation. Once they enter Namaste, their expectations remain relatively unchallenged—Namaste values efficiency, specialization, and women's participation instrumentally. Women, for their part, continue to see Namaste as similar to other MFIs and their participation as a "cost" to access a loan; they thus participate at minimal, relatively uniform levels. Namaste attempts to cultivate "good entrepreneurial subjects" by using future loans as incentives and by offering explicit lessons about "good" behavior. Women in turn respond in a variety of ways—with hidden transcripts, guile, and accommodation. The chapter concludes by connecting the ongoing interactions in Namaste to the NGOs' mixed outcomes. Women participating in Namaste generally reap short-term economic benefits but rarely experience the positive spillover effects that are often attributed to NGOs generally, and to microcredit NGOs particularly.

Chapter 5 provides an organizational analysis of the Fraternity, a foreign-funded but locally founded and locally managed NGO that grew out of indigenous women's collective action in the Presbyterian Church. Connecting this prehistory with its subsequent trajectory, the chapter demonstrates how NGO leaders' fight for greater inclusion in religious spheres informed the NGO's

holistic model of development and view of indigenous women's participation as intrinsically valuable. It then details the Fraternity's other organizational characteristics—its charismatic organizational structure and its strong international and local ties.

Chapter 6 begins by demonstrating that the Fraternity's local identity informs women's view of the Fraternity as not just another MFI but rather an extension of religious or ethnic networks. This means that women join for a greater variety of reasons than those who join Namaste, and carry with them diverse expectations for participation. Thereafter, the Fraternity struggles to balance its multiple, overlapping goals in ways that allow for creativity and numerous interactions, but also lead to a good deal of inefficiency and frustration. The Fraternity's policymakers and leaders view women as having intersecting identities and as members of groups rather than individuals and see their participation as intrinsically valuable. However, only some women share this view of their own participation—some see it as a cost, others see it as valuable, and still others enter the organization seeing their participation as a cost but eventually come to see it as valuable in its own right. This variety leads to diverse levels and forms of participation across women and across time. Throughout, the NGO attempts to cultivate "good, Christian, Mayan women" subjects, although women respond in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways to these attempts. The chapter concludes by connecting women's diverse experiences in the Fraternity to their uneven and mixed outcomes. The Fraternity has questionable effects on women's incomes but is able to significantly transform *some* women's self-esteem and identity. Yet the benefits of participation are uneven and at times the organization actually reinforces economic and social hierarchies among its members—demonstrating that empowerment and disempowerment can unfold simultaneously.

The concluding chapter reflects on the implications of an agent-based approach for the ways we study and pursue development in the global south. It demonstrates that an agent-based approach like the one pursued here shifts how we conceptualize development interventions, what we can expect of them, and what types of generalizations and normative questions we can address. Rather than viewing development as a northern intervention into the passive global south, we should instead see it as a set of relationships being worked out in a particular terrain that is characterized by inherent tensions and is navigated by people using different conceptual and experiential "maps." Therefore researchers and practitioners should not be surprised when they

encounter gaps between policy, practice, and outcomes but should rather expect these gaps as the inevitable result of human agency and interaction. Rather than asking if development is successful or unsuccessful, we should ask what kinds of agency particular relationships constrain and what kinds of agency they enable.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1. *Social Engineering from Above and Below*

1. Community and municipality names, as well as the names of individuals other than Robert Graham, have been changed to protect women's identities, but NGOs' names have been maintained. For a discussion of the reasoning behind these decisions, see the appendix. Quoted material from individuals will feature a pseudonym and the year comments were made.

2. These terms refer to ideal types, and the positions of these actors are likely to vary across organizations and across time. For example, Namaste's policymakers have historically included the founder and board of directors, located in San Francisco. The regional director in Guatemala influenced policy but did not have the final say, and was more appropriately labeled an NGO leader. In contrast, the Fraternity's director, for the majority of its history, could be seen as both the NGO leader and the main policymaker. After her death, however, the board of directors took on a more active role in crafting formal policy, and its members could subsequently be seen as NGO leaders and policymakers (even though some of them were simultaneously beneficiaries as they continued to receive goods/services in their loan groups). The fluidity of these roles further demonstrates the dynamic and contingent nature of development on the ground.

3. The capabilities approach developed by Martha Nussbaum, for example, distinguishes between internal capabilities and external capabilities in order to demonstrate that human flourishing requires not just adequate external conditions but also people's own sense that they are actually capable and worthy of doing so (Nussbaum 2001). Arjun Appadurai similarly emphasizes developing the capacity to aspire as crucial to development, entailing the ability to link the more and less immediate objects of aspiration and to develop, articulate, and work effectively toward an expanded vision of the good life (Appadurai 2004). These works mirror earlier feminist theories of power that emphasize the "power within" (Rowlands 1997).

4. Alicia, director of Fraternity, interview with the author, 2009.

5. I thank David Lewis for this observation.

6. Some studies that have relied on in-depth ethnographies of NGOs and development interventions have begun to uncover the multiple ways that beneficiaries,

NGO leaders, and workers leverage or sidetrack development projects to produce contradictory effects that are likely to be overlooked by traditional modes of evaluation (Fortun 2001; Riles 2001; Magno 2002; Hilhorst 2003; Bornstein 2005; Mosse 2005; Olivier de Sardan 2005; Lewis and Mosse 2006; O'Reilly 2006; Hemment 2007; Murdock 2008; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Yarrow 2011; Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2012; Schuller 2012; Venkatesan and Yarrow 2012; Bernal and Grewal 2014; Krause 2014). Perhaps the clearest example of this type of research applied to NGOs is represented in Dorothea Hilhorst's *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development*, which draws on actor-oriented sociology to treat NGOs "not as things but as open ended processes" (Hilhorst 2003, 5). Recognizing that "there is no single answer to the questions of what an NGO *is*, what it *wants* and what it *does*" (Hilhorst 2003, 3), Hilhorst focuses on how various individuals involved in NGO-led projects exercise agency by leveraging competing discourses to pursue their goals. She thus depicts NGOs as power-laden networks, affected internally by status differentials and intertwining with local political and cultural struggles and histories.

7. The fact that NGOs are able to act creatively to "integrate critics and critiques in their policy discourse with limited effect on practices" (Bierschenk 2008, 10) challenges typical instrumental views of development policies in which policies address development problems and guide practice. Yet, even when they do not guide on-the-ground practices, policies continue to serve other ends, including enrolling other actors (donors, media, government officials) in one's project (Mosse 2003, 2005).

CHAPTER 2. *Repackaging Development in Guatemala*

1. Catholic Action was a movement in the Catholic Church that initially sought to combat radical, Communist politics and syncretic forms of Catholicism by providing acceptable outlets for local frustrations and teaching contemporary Catholic doctrine. Eventually, a progressive strand, influenced by the Second Vatican Council and the Medellin Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council, focused on improving the material conditions of the poor and raising the poor's consciousness (Fischer 1996, 58).

2. For example, while U.S. investment in Guatemala represented 11 percent of FDI in the early 1970s, it only was responsible for employing 1 percent of the labor force. At that time, $100,000 of total assets on average was associated with 658 employees, compared to a measly 58 employed for the equivalent in U.S. capital (Booth 1984).

3. They also promoted tax reform, yet, to date, Guatemala's congress has failed to pass even the most basic tax reforms, maintaining Guatemala's tax rate as one of the lowest in Latin America.

4. The Law for the Promotion and Development of Export Activities and Drawback (1989) lured maquiladoras with a ten-year exemption from incomes taxes, exemptions from duties and value-added taxes on imported machinery, and suspension of duties and taxes on other inputs and packing material. Given their home country's long-standing diplomatic ties with Guatemala and Guatemala's proximity to the United States, Korean investors found Guatemala a particularly attractive place to invest. By